TEACHER LANGUAGE IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM: AN EXPLORATION OF THE LANGUAGE USED BY TEACHERS WHEN PREPARING CHILDREN AGED 6-11 FOR IMPORTANT TESTS

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List of Abbreviations

BATs  Behaviour Alteration Techniques
EP   Educational Psychologist
EPS  Educational Psychology Service
EPPM Extended Parallel Process Model
GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education
IPA  Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KS1  Key Stage 1
KS2  Key Stage 2
LA   Local Authority
Ofsted Office for Standards in Education
PISA Programme for International Student Assessment
QTI  Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction
RQ   Research Question
RREA Research Risk and Ethics Assessment
SATs Standard Assessment Tests
SDT  Self-Determination Theory
SEED School of Environment, Education and Development
SEN  Special Educational Needs
SES  Socioeconomic Status
Yr   Year
Abstract

The University of Manchester

Ismail Mamaniat

Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology

Teacher Language in the Primary Classroom: An Exploration of the Language Used By Teachers When Preparing Children Aged 6-11 for Important Tests

Teachers in classrooms use a vast array of language to support children in their educational development. Previous research with teachers and children in secondary schools has identified that, when supporting children to prepare for important tests, teachers use supportive statements as well as statements stressing the negative outcomes associated with poor performance. However, in the primary school context, research has not identified the specific language that is being used by teachers for test preparation. In this explorative mixed methods study, eight teachers completed communication diaries and were interviewed to identify the types of communication they were using in the classroom towards children aged 6-11 in order to support their test preparations. Two focus groups were also held with children to determine their awareness of teachers’ communicative messages. The final phase of the study gathered data from a questionnaire distributed to a large sample of 112 primary school teachers allowing broader exploration of test-related language use in the classroom. Results identified various forms of communication being used by primary school teachers when preparing children for important tests, with children also aware of these statements. This included informative communication about test arrangements, outcome based statements, efficacious statements, reassuring and calming messages, language statements that related to the importance of tests, and test reminders. The findings further suggested that efficacious communication was the most frequent form of communication that was employed in primary classrooms, though use of language varied amongst teachers. Furthermore, the research identified that teachers were combining particular forms of communication, and it is likely that this communication fluctuated over the academic year. Teachers were also judicious in their use of communication towards children, where statements were chosen to have maximum effect on children based on teachers’ assessments of children’s characteristics. Additional factors such as teacher control, teacher philosophy, a view of children as dependent, views about testing, and teacher-held beliefs about particular forms of communication were also explored to judge their impact on the language used by teachers. The findings of this study provide a preliminary foundation for future research to explore teacher communication and its effects on children’s test preparations in primary schools.
Declaration

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the context within which the research was situated. The rationale underlying the research is also stated, followed by an overview of the main chapters presented in the thesis (Table 1.1).

1.1. Researcher’s Context and Area of Interest

The research presented in this thesis is for the part fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology. Whilst completing the research, the researcher was on placement as a trainee Educational Psychologist (EP) for a local authority (LA) in the northwest of England. The LA within which the researcher was based covered a wide area that included a diverse population in terms of its demographics, with many areas of affluence as well as multiple areas of deprivation. Furthermore, in terms of service delivery the role of the EP was limited to fulfilling the statutory requirements of the LA, which included identifying children’s needs and the provision needed to meet these needs. Local funding arrangements also meant EPs working within the statutory arm of the LA simply focused on children with the greatest special educational needs (SEN), and schools and academies could purchase additional EP time for other children from a number of traded services operating in the area. The researcher’s decision to pursue research in the area of teacher communication was based on an interest of working at a strategic and systemic level for the benefit of all children. This interest in improving the outcomes of all children prompted the researcher to focus on investigating teacher communication in the classroom with respect to important tests, as any new knowledge gained in this area had the potential to improve outcomes for all children.

1.2. Context of Research and Rationale

Since the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988, all state schools in England were prescribed to teach the National Curriculum; a standardised curriculum covering core and supplementary subjects. For primary schools, these reforms also introduced the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), a form of summative tests, which were to be completed by children in Years 2 and 6. The legislation also introduced the publication of the results of these SATs, which would go onto form the basis of school league tables that ranked schools according to their results. The notion underlying these developments was to hold schools accountable for the education they provided for children, and to raise the standards of education for all children (Wyse & Torrance, 2009). In the current climate, schools are given targets for the percentage of children who should attain a floor standard in these tests, and schools are considered to be underperforming if their children do not achieve these targets. Given this importance, the tests have inevitably become ‘high-stakes’ for primary schools. Research has demonstrated that these educational reforms have been effective in raising standards for primary-age children (Wyse, McCreery, & Torrance, 2008). However, many criticisms have been levelled at these reforms, such as the narrowing of the school curriculum to the detriment of children’s education, where the focus is primarily on children’s test performance in core subjects (B. Boyle & Bragg, 2006;
Tymms, 2004; Wyse et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this trend of testing and the emphasis on raising children’s educational attainments is set to continue in primary schools in England, with recent developments indicating that children will be expected to attain higher and undergo more demanding tests (DfE, 2013).

In attempting to raise the educational outcomes of children, Fraser (2001) argues that the quality of the learning environment is often ignored. The learning climate not only comprises of the physical environment e.g. the school and the classroom, but also the social interactions that occur within, such as those between teachers and children (Diekhoff & Wigginton, 1992). Plentiful research has demonstrated the favourable effects of positive classrooms on children’s motivation, attitudes and academic achievement (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Fraser, 1991; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Wentzel, 1994). These pieces of research identify that the classroom environment is a pivotal micro-climate where learning takes place, and in attempting to raise children’s educational standards this climate should receive sufficient consideration. Critically, the role of the teacher is of prime importance here in fostering children’s personal, social and educational development. A substantial amount of literature has examined the benefits of positive teacher-student relationships, where this relationship has been shown to be important for school adjustment, motivation, belonging, educational progress and children’s attitudes (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Chouinard, Karsenti, & Roy, 2007; Davis, 2003; Eccles et al., 1993; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Research has also examined the process in which positive teacher-student relations develop. Based on this research, Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) theorise that communication from teachers on multiple levels (e.g. verbal, non-verbal) is significant in determining whether over time children will have a sense of closeness and warmth for their teacher. In the development of these positive relational patterns between teachers and students, which have been associated with better outcomes for children (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), it seems messages communicated by teachers play an important role.

Research into teacher communication has also investigated the types of communication that occurs in classrooms, and the effects it has on children. Teacher feedback is one form of communication generally occurring in school classrooms, and is referred to as instruction that provides information regarding some aspect of a person’s performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). In terms of the effectiveness of feedback, a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses completed by Hattie (1999) found that feedback was in the top ten influences on children’s achievement. Another form of communication used in classrooms related to feedback is praised-based language. The term praise refers to the positive evaluations made by a person over another’s performances or attributes (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). The research into the use of praise and its effects on children suggests that it has little effect on children’s achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 1999; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), and in some cases overpraising may deceptively increase children’s self-esteem (Humphrey, 2004). Intriguing research by Kamins and Dweck (1999) and Mueller and Dweck (1998) demonstrate that the type of praise delivered can have differential effects on children. For example, praise related to the process has been shown to be more effective for children’s persistence, motivation and
development of healthy notions of intelligence. However, research in teacher communication has been limited to the general communication in classrooms, and has not specifically focused on the role of teacher communication particularly when directed towards increasing performance in tests (Putwain, 2009; Putwain & Roberts, 2009).

An emerging body of literature, albeit limited, has attempted to investigate the teacher language used when preparing children for important tests (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b), though the majority of research has been limited to secondary school environments. This emerging literature has found teachers to use fear appeals, efficacy statements and reassuring messages, which have been identified by both teachers and students (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012). Fear appeals refer to threat-based communication that is repeatedly used by teachers and emphasise the negative outcomes of test performance, such as affecting future life trajectory e.g. future career, university admission for particular courses, etc. There is also evidence to suggest that the use of fear appeal type messages can directly affect students’ test anxiety, as well as affecting their test outcomes (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). Putwain and Best’s (2011) study is a rare study to have focused on the primary school setting, which looked at the effects of fear appeals on children during test preparation, and found the use of fear appeals to correlate with poorer test outcomes. Despite this study, there is scant evidence for the types of language statements being used in primary classrooms towards test preparation, where children are exposed to high-stakes national testing in Years 2 and 6. This notable absence in the literature emphasises the need for researchers to identify what messages are being used in the primary classroom when preparing children for tests in order to then evaluate their effectiveness, and this forms the basis of this study.

1.3. Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this thesis was therefore to explore the language teachers in primary classrooms were using to encourage children to prepare for important high-stakes tests i.e. national tests commonly referred to as the SATs. In addition to this, another aim was to identify how these communicative messages were being used and possibly the underlying reasons for their use. A final aim was to determine whether children in primary school were aware of these messages directed at them from their teachers. Implicit within this research was to also discern if differences existed between communication in Year 2 and Year 6 classrooms. The research aims were represented through four distinct research questions, outlined below.

- RQ1: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?
- RQ2: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?
- RQ3: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom when preparing children for important tests?
- RQ4: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important tests?
1.4. Thesis Overview

This thesis has five chapters in total. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 -</td>
<td>Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the broader literature related to teacher communication. In presenting the relevant research, auxiliary literature related to the English context, classroom environment and the role of the teacher is also considered. The chapter ends by reviewing the key studies relevant to the thesis and identifying notable absences in the literature, as well as further outlining the research aims and questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 -</td>
<td>Chapter 3 presents the philosophical position that informed the research, followed by the research design, which included a mixed methods approach. The mixed methods design consisted of four distinct data collection phases. These phases are further documented together with the analytical methods employed to analyse the data. The chapter ends by outlining the data integration phase that was implemented to produce valid and reliable conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 -</td>
<td>Chapter 4 documents the findings of the research. This includes outlining the analysis for each of the data collection methods in relation to the research questions of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the data within each data collection method, as well as considering divergent data produced within each method. This is also the stage where the raw data from the various methods was reduced and visually presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 -</td>
<td>Chapter 5 represents the stage where the data from various stages were integrated to answer the research questions, so as to generate meta-inferences. In presenting the findings for each research question, a discussion is also provided in relation to the extant literature. The chapter ends by considering the implications of the research and avenues for future research, as well as implications for EP practice. Limitations of the thesis are also noted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
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Table 1.1. Overview of chapters.
2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to the research questions and research aims of this thesis. The central aim of this thesis was to explore teacher communication in primary classrooms when preparing children for important tests. Additional aims included identifying how these communicative messages were being used and possibly the underlying reasons for their use. A final aim was to determine whether children in primary schools were aware of these messages directed at them from their teachers. These research aims were represented in four distinct research questions, outlined below.

- RQ1: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?
- RQ2: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?
- RQ3: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom when preparing children for important tests?
- RQ4: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important tests?

In attempting to provide a background to these research questions, the chapter begins with a historical overview of the introduction of the National Curriculum in schools, to provide a background into the developments in education that have informed current school policy in England. National tests commonly referred to as the SATs are then discussed. These SATs are considered to be the important high-stakes tests that children take during primary school. Reference is also made to the accountability and performativity pressures that schools and teachers are currently under in ensuring that by the end of primary school children have made acceptable levels of progress. Several studies are also cited about the impact of SATs on children and teachers alike. Providing an overview of this context emphasises the achievement driven agenda that exists in English school policy. Thereafter, an argument is presented that to improve standards in education, attention needs to focus on the classroom environment, which is followed by an overarching overview of the importance of the classroom environment for children’s developmental and educational outcomes. In this discussion, the decisive role teachers have in the classroom in structuring and promoting an optimal learning environment, where children can excel and prosper, is emphasised. A model of the process in which teacher-student relations develop is also discussed.

The focus then turns towards reviewing the literature on the explicit messages teachers are communicating to children, as well as the motives underlying these communications. In exploring this, a historical overview is provided of the literature on compliance and persuasion within classroom environments e.g. behaviour alteration techniques, particularly examining the knowledge obtained from this area. The behaviour alteration techniques comprise a number of strategies that teachers use in the classroom to persuade children to engage in particular behaviours, with the verbal messages communicated by teachers forming an important element of the strategies, though not explicitly recognised. The literature review then concentrates on the specific forms of language statements that are being used in the classroom, particularly with
reference to test preparation. Fear appeals are introduced which refer to messages that teachers are using in the class to instil a fear of failure within children, particularly during the build-up to high-stakes tests. The emerging literature in this area is scrutinised to evaluate the knowledge gained from these studies. Furthermore, the links between fear appeals and test anxiety are also discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the use of efficacy based communication that attempts to provide students with information on how to avoid failure. The evidence in this area is considered, with the broader concept of efficacy and its implications for children further discussed. The latter section of the literature review focuses on the broader language teachers are using in classrooms, such as feedback and praise. The extensive literature on feedback is presented, together with an overview of the different types of feedback that may be used in classrooms. In addition to this, a related form of communication referred to as praise-based language is then discussed. The literature on praise demonstrates that the wording used in these messages can have differential effects on children, which is further explored. The chapter culminates by summarising the literature on teacher language communication and identifies the strands that are worth exploring to advance the evidence base, particularly with respect to language used in primary school in preparation for key tests, which then leads to the research aims and questions pertaining to this thesis.

2.1.1. Literature Search Strategy

In identifying the relevant literature, a thorough systematic review was conducted. This review method was completed a number of times throughout the years 2013-2014, with the last literature search taking place in April 2014. To generate relevant literature the terms: ‘behaviour alteration techniques’; ‘children’; ‘classroom’; ‘communication’; ‘efficacy’; ‘EPPM’; ‘fear appeals’; ‘feedback’; ‘instruction’; ‘instructional communication’; ‘language’; ‘learning’; ‘environment’; ‘messages’; ‘motivation’; ‘persuasion’; ‘praise’; ‘school’; ‘students’ ‘teacher’; ‘verbal’; and ‘young people’, were inputted in various combinations in databases such as the British Education Index, ERIC, PsycINFO, Web of Knowledge, and Zetoc, as well as unconventional databases such as Google Search and Google Scholar. After reviewing the ‘hits’, additional terms were also added to ensure a thorough literature search. The search was initially limited to research taking place in the English context, though later international archives were searched due to the paucity of initial ‘hits’, and to also explore whether international literature provided knowledge relevant to the research questions. Any ‘hits’ that were not in the English language were excluded. All relevant studies were reference harvested to identify further appropriate literature, followed by a phase of secondary reference harvesting to identify further literature relevant to the topic area. This process ensured that the literature was directly relevant to the research questions, as well as identifying the wider research that was relevant to the topic area.

2.2. The National Curriculum and SATs

A brief history relating to the introduction of the National Curriculum and corresponding SATs is detailed to provide a background into the developments in education that have informed current school policy and educational arrangements for children. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to
review these in depth; readers are guided to Sainsbury (1996), Whetton (2009), and Wyse and Torrance (2009) for a thorough overview of the development of the National Curriculum and SATs since their inception. Prior to 1988, there was no statutory regulation of the National Curriculum in primary schools. The responsibility for devising the curriculum that met the needs of children in primary schools was conferred to individual schools and teachers, though LAs tended to exercise an influence on the contents of this curriculum (Wyse et al., 2008). This was based on historical guiding principles that were heavily influenced by localism, which provided flexibility to teachers and afforded them the autonomy to be influential in what they taught, though understandably across schools in England there was considerable variability in the curriculum content being taught (Bennett, Andreea, Hegarty, & Wade, 1980). Government ministers were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with schools for not being accountable for what they taught, with criticisms indicating that the approach by schools was tantamount to an unstructured ‘child-centred’ approach. Other concerns related to whether the variable curriculum offered by schools was equipping children with the necessary skills for the future, which would also meet the future economic needs of the country (Wyse et al., 2008).

These apprehensions prompted the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988, which amongst other things introduced the National Curriculum for all state schools in England and prescribed what children should be taught, thus ensuring all children across England regardless of the school they were in would receive the same standard of education. The National Curriculum set out to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and to prepare such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The primary curriculum contained three core subjects: English, mathematics and science, and additional foundation subjects such as art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. The Education Reform Act 1988 also introduced Key Stages (periods of education) together with attainment targets that children were expected to achieve at the end of each Key Stage. In primary school, Key Stage 1 (KS1) corresponded to Year groups 1-2 (children aged 5-7), and Key Stage 2 (KS2) corresponded to Year groups 3-6 (children aged 7-11). The legislation also advocated the use of summative assessments known as SATs alongside teacher assessments. It was also around this time that the first notions of accountability emerged, where central government tightened its control over education and wanted to ensure that its investment in education was value for money (Wyse et al., 2008). The Education Reform Act 1988 and later legislation also introduced the publication of SATs, where these results were made available for everyone to see, and formed the basis of school league tables that ranked schools on their results (Wiggins & Tymms, 2002). Later legislation prompted the formation of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to inspect schools (Lee & Fitz, 1997). The aim of these developments was to raise educational standards and make schools accountable to the government and general public.

Initial reception to these reforms was criticised by schools and teachers, and resulted in revisions to the curriculum and SATs in order to make them more feasible to implement (M. Johnson et al., 2007; Webb & Vulliamy, 2007) Furthermore, the arrival of SATs in the primary school and the publication of results meant that they became ‘high-stakes’ for schools, as they were used to
monitor standards. Primary schools were also given targets for the percentage of children who should attain a floor standard at the end of KS2. Currently for 2014, schools are considered to be underperforming if:

- fewer than 65% of pupils at the end of KS2 achieve level 4 or above in all of reading, writing and mathematics - an increase of 5% from the previous year;
- and below the average percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 make expected progress in reading - 2013 national median was 91%;
- and below the average percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 make expected progress in writing - 2013 national median was 95%;
- and below the average percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 make expected progress in mathematics - 2013 national median was 92% (Standards & Teaching Agency, 2013b).

These initial changes to the curriculum and the introduction of national testing implemented after the Education Reform Act 1988 have largely remained unchanged and continue to operate in schools today across the country (Whetton, 2009; Wyse & Torrance, 2009). Currently in primary schools, it is compulsory for them to provide assessment information for reporting purposes at the end of KS1 and KS2. In Year 6 (KS2), SATs\(^1\) are taken in English and mathematics. The English SATs include a reading paper, and in 2013 a grammar, punctuation and spelling test was introduced. English scores for writing, and speaking and listening are provided through teacher assessments and are no longer assessed through SATs. Science SATs were taken until 2009, but now only a sample of children complete them and the scores are not returned to schools nor are they used for school accountability or performance tables. SATs are typically taken in the month of May and they are marked by external examiners, with the results published (Standards & Teaching Agency, 2013b). In Year 2 (KS1), as a minimum teachers have to administer tests\(^2\) or tasks in reading, writing and mathematics to help them arrive at a secure judgement for their final assessment at the end of KS1. The teacher has the flexibility to decide which tasks or tests will be suitable for a given child taking into account their level of knowledge. The tests and tasks can be performed at any time during Year 2, so children may not be aware that they are being formally assessed. Children’s overall scores in English, science and mathematics based on teacher assessments and tests/tasks are reported and published, individual test scores are not typically reported. Teacher assessments are externally moderated, though not every school is moderated every year (Standards & Teaching Agency, 2013a). Both in Year 2 and Year 6, the tests have to be taken in test-like conditions. Furthermore, in terms of ‘high-stakes’ testing, the SATs in Year 6 can be considered higher stakes as they are the ones that are reported and are utilised in performance tables.

Research has found since the introduction of the National Curriculum and compulsory testing primary schools have undergone dramatic changes (B. Boyle & Bragg, 2006; Tymms & Merrell, 2007), with significant criticisms over the years for their impact on children and their education (Dearing, 1994; Tymms & Merrell, 2007; White, 2004). Whether the introduction of National

\(^1\) In recent government documentation, they are not described as SATs; these tests are referred to as compulsory assessments, national tests or National Curriculum tests. In this thesis, SATs will be used to refer to these tests as this is the acronym that has been used historically and is the descriptor that teachers generally use.

\(^2\) Commonly and historically referred to as the KS1 SATs, though not by all teachers in the current context.
Curriculum tests has raised the standard of education over time has been ardently analysed and discussed, though not the focus here (see Tymms, 2004 and Tymms & Merrell, 2007). A brief review would suggest since their introduction there were initial improvements in KS1 and KS2 attainments followed by a plateau where results have been relatively static since 2000 (Wyse et al., 2008). Various explanations have been offered for this trend, with some suggesting that results improved dramatically because of the children’s low starting point, as well as teachers becoming familiar with the tests and being able to better coach children, thus explaining the plateau in educational standards. Additional improvements in tests have not occurred as teachers have not been able to further exploit the benefits of coaching children (Tymms, 2004; Wyse et al., 2008), though others have asserted the value of SATs and performances tables in raising the educational standards of children (Bew, 2011). It is also important to note that the SATs are a form of summative tests, referring to the process of testing at the end of a particular period for evaluative purposes, as opposed to formative tests which are completed more regularly to monitor children’s learning and provide relevant feedback. In addition to the criticisms directed towards SATs, the value and purpose of summative assessments generally for children have also been criticised across the globe, with concerns over how they are detrimental to teachers’ personal agency and freedom to teach, as well as undermining curriculum reform and development of teacher-student relations (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Harlen, 2007; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003; UNESCO, 2013). Recent political conversations in this area have also implied that this form of testing will continue in the near future, with the introduction of a new National Curriculum in September 2014. Moreover, the new tests in 2016 to coincide with these changes are likely to be strengthened and more demanding for children in order to raise their level of education and give them a strong grounding in the basics of primary education (DfE, 2013).

A consequence of these developments in educational policies is that there is an emphasis on children’s attainments. Furthermore, the means to improve attainments is reiterated through a number of methods that address practices within the classroom and also schools as organisations (Putwain & Best, 2011). Within the classroom, high attainment may be encouraged through rewards and punishments, and at the school-level high attainment may have funding implications. Moreover, schools not performing well may be put into ‘special measures’ and labelled as ‘inadequate’ or ‘failing schools’ (Putwain & Best, 2011). The consequence of such an approach is that schools and teachers are more willing to engage in activities and practices that seek to improve children’s attainments. However, this has also meant that schools are more prepared to engage in activities that diminish learning e.g. by teaching to the test and eradicating activities that are not tested, which results in superficial and non-transferable learning (Putwain & Best, 2011). Troman (2008) refers to the emphasis on high-stakes testing and school accountability as the performative school culture, and finds that such a culture affects educational approaches and arrangements. For example, Troman (2008) found that primary schools expected teachers to put more effort and commitment into improving test scores, and noted the prominence of testing regimes. Surveys have also found that primary schools were devoting more time for general test preparation and to complete practice papers, with the focus mainly on the core subjects and a reduction in the time allocated to non-tested curriculum subjects, thus narrowing the curriculum for children (B. Boyle & Bragg, 2006).
In terms of the effects on children, longitudinal studies that followed children over an eight-year period found a decline in the self-esteem of children in Year 2 after the SATs were introduced, the study had started prior to the introduction of the SATs, though in subsequent cohorts self-esteem did improve. For Year 6 children, their self-esteem remained relatively unaffected prior to and after the SATs were introduced (Davies & Bremer, 1998, 1999). Other reviews (e.g. Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003, and Tymms & Merrell, 2007) suggested that the focus of SATs in Year 6 resulted in an increase in test-related anxiety and stress in children. The impact of these tests was more significant in lower achieving children, considerably affecting their motivation and self-esteem. Similar effects were also found in a survey by Neill (2002). In addition to these reviews, some studies have directly investigated test-related stress and anxiety in English primary schools. The study by Hall, Collins, Benjamin, Nind and Sheehy (2004) is particularly enlightening as it is based on ethnographic data from two primary schools that were rooted within this culture of performativity and accountability. The study focused on the degree to which SATs affected the manner in which the school positioned teachers and children in Year 6. Hall et al. (2004) found test taking in preparation for SATs contributed to the majority of classroom activities in the latter half of the final year of primary schooling. SATs preparation involved submissive activities that demanded effort, attention and concentration. The children within the school were well aware of the importance of doing well in these exams and the fear of failing. Moreover, the test importance rhetoric communicated by teachers indicated to children that the consequences of the test went beyond the test itself and would affect future educational outcomes. At this time point in the final two terms of primary schooling, the frequency of reference to the SATs, the avoidance of failure messages, and the need for success in SATs were persistently apparent to children, and caused anxieties for children preparing for the tests. This performativity culture within the schools also endorsed reflections within children of their status within school e.g. their ability and value, and also ensured that they accepted the crude hierarchy of ability that existed in the classroom.

Similar observations have also been made by other researchers, for example Kyriacou (2003) and Seiffe-Krenke (1993) propose that school assessments and examinations are influential factors in causing stress amongst children. Denscombe's (2000) qualitative study into students’ experiences of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) coursework and examinations also elicited similar views of assessments causing stress and worry. Furthermore, Hall et al.'s (2004) study together with a similar study by Connor (2001, 2003) on children’s stress, which focused on younger children, suggest that teachers may unintentionally pass their anxieties regarding performativity and accountability to children through regularly communicating achievement statements to them. For instance, Hall et al. (2004) identified that primary school children may be made overtly anxious about high-stakes tests by teachers making constant references to these tests and stressing the need to avoid failure, as well as articulating to children that they have to obtain certain grades. Furthermore, Connor (2001, 2003) found elevated levels of stress and worry in children as they were in a context where comparisons were being made about their ability and competence. The seminal papers by Connor (2001, 2003) and Hall et al. (2004) investigating experiences of primary school children around important tests indicate that the classroom context and teacher communication are important factors in shaping the children’s
perceptions, beliefs and cognition. Their studies had a broader focus and were looking at the impact of high-stakes testing on primary-age school children. Despite this broader focus, it is evident that the messages teachers were using were critical in initiating negative responses in children e.g. stress, anxiety, and fear of failure.

2.3. Classroom Learning Environment

Children and young people spend a considerable amount of time in school. By the end of primary school, children are likely to have spent 7,000 hours in the classroom (Jackson, 1968), with this figure extending to approximately 15,000 hours by the end of secondary education (Rutter, 1982; Thorp, Burden, & Fraser, 1994). For those that attend university, they would have spent in the region of 20,000 hours by the time of their graduation (Fraser, 2001). Appraising these figures, it is evident that children and young people spend a substantial proportion of their time in classrooms and educational institutions. Given the amount of time spent in classrooms, Fraser (2001) notes that the emphasis is firmly positioned towards children’s attainments, as discussed in Section 2.2, without sufficient attention paid towards the quality of the learning environment. In the past two decades, the quality of the classroom environment has been given a greater focus in research in terms of its importance on children’s developmental and educational outcomes (Diekhoff & Wigginton, 1992; Fraser, 2001).

This learning climate, which Diekhoff and Wigginton (1992) describe as the psychosocial milieu of the classroom, should not be underestimated in promoting children’s outcomes. Indeed, the classroom environment represents a complex hub of activity where the physical environment and the social interactions that occur within are geared towards advancing children’s learning. The social interactions do not only occur between school staff (e.g. teachers, teaching assistants) and children, but also between children themselves, all of which contribute to their psychosocial development. Children’s personal development is linked in tandem with the social interactions and encounters that take place on a daily basis. In addition to these interactions, there also exists other contextual influences including those that have a historical basis, and these are also subconsciously apparent to the children within the classroom. The atmosphere, culture and ethos of the classroom are all prominent in having an effect on children’s learning outcomes (Fraser, 2001). Thus, the classroom environment is a pivotal micro-climate where learning takes place, defined by the many contextual, inter-, and intra-personal elements (Putwain & Roberts, 2009).

Research probing the effects of the classroom environment, both as an outcome measure and an antecedent, has identified how this environment can positively and negatively affect children’s outcomes (Fraser, 1991; Putwain & Roberts, 2009). Positive classrooms have been found to be associated with favourable effects on children’s motivation, attitudes and academic achievement (Battistich et al., 1997; Fraser, 1991; Wang et al., 1994; Wentzel, 1994). International literature has found children’s perceptions of their teachers and the immediate classroom environment to affect their cognitive outcomes and practical skills (Henderson, Fisher, & Fraser, 2000), as well as their attitudes towards their curricular subjects (Wong & Fraser, 1996). Furthermore, research into school transition has recognised it to be a critical phase where
considerable changes occur in the classroom environment and consequent teacher relations (Ferguson & Fraser, 1998). Fraser (2001) illustrates how environmental assessments are important in attempting to improve the classroom environment, with the classroom environment also having benefits beyond the classroom affecting the effectiveness of the school as a whole. In all, these pieces of research identify the classroom environment, with all its complexities and interactions, as having a profound impact on children's learning and the culture of the classroom.

2.3.1. The Prominent Role of the Teacher in the Classroom

Implicit in the aforementioned literature is the central role of the teacher in augmenting the classroom environment. The teacher has a prominent role in the classroom, and it is their demeanour that dictates the atmosphere. The teacher's behaviour can determine whether children will feel comfortable, motivated, relaxed, threatened or worried (Fraser, 2001). An example of this power afforded to the teacher is eloquently put by Ginnott's (1971) personal reflections:

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I have a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanised or dehumanised. (Ginnott, 1971, p. 13).

Despite the many other influences on children's learning (internal, external or otherwise), teacher-student interaction represents an important facet associated with children's learning. Various pieces of research have highlighted the significance of the teacher-student relationship, and this relationship has been shown to be valuable for school adjustment, motivation and belonging (Davis, 2003). Supportive relationships between the student and teacher have also been identified as being optimal for their progress (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002). Evidence has further shown how the support teachers offer is influential in moulding students' motivations, attitudes and their beliefs (Chouinard et al., 2007; Eccles et al., 1993; Vallerand et al., 1997). The classroom environment inherently has a power imbalance, where the teacher is allocated to take control and assert certain values. Even though the interactions with children are bi-directional, the teacher is prominent in asserting the structure of the classroom (Gayle, Preiss, Burrell, & Allen, 2009). Positive classrooms include environments where the teacher asserts and maintains control in a welcoming manner, whilst at the same time affording children a level of respect, responsibility and the freedom to learn (Burnett, 2002).

Therefore the teacher has a crucial role within the classroom. Given this prelude, an important role of the teacher is to develop effective teacher-student relations. In what is described as the communicative systems approach by Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005), teaching can be viewed as a form of communication. In the communicative systems approach, any form of behaviour that one displays in the presence of another is communication, and will inevitably result in the other making an inference about that behaviour. For example, a child’s question that is ignored by the teacher may infer that the teacher is too busy or the question is not relevant.
Furthermore, every form of communication has a content and relational/interpersonal aspect to it (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). For example, the content may be the message, e.g. I want to help you learn, and the relational aspect the facial expression that accompanies the message, e.g. a smile, frown, etc. In the communicative systems approach, the messages are the lowest levels of communication, and when directed at another person it represents an interaction. These interactions are occurring on a daily basis and support the development of an understanding of the other's behaviour and consequently the interpersonal relationship. Over time as these daily encounters occur between teachers and students, students' perceptions of their teacher are confirmed and reaffirmed, and generalised relational patterns are borne. These perceptions of the relationships with their teacher have been investigated and mapped, and research has identified two vital dimensions of relational behaviour, influence (dominance-submission) and proximity (opposition-cooperation), which underlie eight types of teacher behaviour: leading, helpful/friendly, understanding, student responsibility, freedom, uncertain, dissatisfied, and admonishing/strict (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). The influence dimension relates to who is controlling the communication and the frequency in which the communication occurs, whereas the proximity dimension relates to the cooperation, closeness and warmth in the relationship. The Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) was based on this communicative systems approach and developed to measure these relational patterns between teachers and students (den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004; van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, Wubbels, Fisher, & Fraser, 1998; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). International literature using the communicative systems approach and the QTI have been able to characterise the effects of these relationships on a range of student outcomes, e.g. school enjoyment (Fisher, Waldrip, & den Brok, 2005), higher cognitive and attitudinal outcomes (den Brok et al., 2004), motivational beliefs (Lapointe, Legault, & Batiste, 2005), and achievement and subject preference (Goh & Fraser, 1998).

In the development of these positive relational patterns between teachers and students, which have been associated with better outcomes for students, it seems messages by teachers have an important role in the development of students’ perceptions of their teacher. This research has also shown the communication between teachers and students to be important in developing a relationship that will benefit the students’ educational and general development. The language the teacher uses and the messages that are communicated in the classroom play an integral role in shaping children's perceptions of their teachers, and is crucial in the development of the interpersonal relationship that will eventually exist, which is necessary for effective learning (van Tartwijk et al., 1998). For example, van Tartwijk et al. (1998) found strong correlations between students’ perceptions of their teacher’s interpersonal style and the interpersonal messages that were used during whole class teaching. Generally, positive statements made by teachers have been shown to be more beneficial for children than receiving verbal criticism (Burnett, 1999). A study comparing communication between nurture group teachers and typical classrooms also found that nurture group teachers were more positive in their communication, which had the consequence of enhancing children's self-esteem (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). Therefore, the teacher has an important role as a communicator and the teacher’s instructions are important in initiating learning endeavours and developing personal characteristics. For
instance, instructional methods and strategies that emphasise effort, and attribute achievements to this effort, have been shown to consequently motivate children (Bandura, 1997; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Similarly, non-threatening, mastery-orientated feedback (Perry, Vandekamp, Mercer, & Nordby, 2002) and endorsing self-regulated learning (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) have also been shown to promote learning. In summary, this body of research represents the crucial role of teachers’ communication and behaviour in the classroom in developing relationships with children, which are also influential in affecting their learning and outcomes.

2.4. Influencing Children’s Behaviour

The language and communication used by teachers in the classroom is also decisive in gaining compliance from children and persuading them to engage in certain behaviours. As outlined in Section 2.3.1, within classrooms a power imbalance exists where the teacher of the classroom is afforded the role of developing the structure and maintaining control the majority of the time. This element of power is important in understanding how teachers gain compliance from children. Sprinkle, Hunt, Simonds and Comadena (2006) refer to power and compliance in the context of classroom communication as the ability of one individual to influence another in behaviours that they would not normally have engaged in without the encouragement. The encouragement may consist of a positive or negative element. Furthermore, power exists in all relationships, and this power is likely to differ based on the relationship and the balance within it (Richmond & Roach, 1992). This suggests that even in an equal or shared power relationship, there is still the interplay of power that exists. In terms of communication, any power differential that exists in a relationship is likely to be communicated through the social interactions that take place (Richmond & Roach, 1992). In the case of a teacher, the teacher would assert power through deliberate messages that have the aim of changing attitudes, beliefs and the behaviours of children (Richmond & Roach, 1992; Sprinkle et al., 2006). This form of power and control is necessary in a classroom, as the teacher has the role of stipulating learning opportunities, keeping children on task, and ensuring children engage in appropriate academic and social behaviours (Richmond & Roach, 1992). The benefit of this power and control is that teachers are resourceful and proficient in ensuring children learn, which ultimately improves children’s educational outcomes (Sprinkle et al., 2006).

The research into gaining compliance from children initially focused on how teachers ensured children stayed on task and how they prevented misbehaviours (Richmond, Mccroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987). Early research beginning in the 1980s examined the specific techniques and strategies that are used to gain compliance and persuade children to engage in certain behaviours that are beneficial to them, either in the short or long term. This primitive research identified a typology of strategies collectively known as behaviour alteration techniques (BATs) that were useful in gaining compliance from children. BATs consisted of strategies that teachers could use proactively or reactively. The use of BATs was based on the superiority of the teacher in the classroom environment, and the obligation for children to respect the status of the teacher, their knowledge and expertise (Richmond & Roach, 1992). Some of the strategies included techniques such as rewards from the teacher, self-esteem boosting language and guilt
statements, as well as modelling correct responses. Furthermore, these BATs could be characterised into two dichotomous categories, either those that had pro-social elements or those that were coercive and anti-social (Richmond et al., 1987). Pro-social BATs included immediate reward, deferred reward, reward from others, self-esteem boost, responsibility to class, normative rules, altruism, peer modelling, teaching modelling, expert teacher and teacher feedback (Paulsel, 2004). The pro-social BATs also included statements that indicated the required behaviour, whereas the anti-social BATs included punishment from teacher, punishment from others, guilt, negative teacher-student relationship, legitimate higher authority, and debt (Kearney, Plax, & Burroughs, 1991; Kearney & Plax, 1987; Kearney, Plax, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1985). The research into the use of BATs found that a negative relationship existed between the use of coercive anti-social BATs and children’s cognitive, learning and motivational outcomes, whereas BATs that had pro-social reward elements had positive effects on children’s learning and motivation (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Weber, 2004). Pro-social BATs were also favourably viewed by children and improved their behaviour, whereas anti-social BATs were found to show the opposite effect (Kearney, Plax, Smith, & Sorensen, 1988). Richmond and Roach (1992) suggest that this research is not surprising given that anti-social BATs are based on oppressive tactics that deter student engagement and satisfaction. The use of anti-social BATs did not only affect the interpersonal relationships with the teacher, but also affected the development of a conducive learning environment, as the class environment was viewed as threatening and more punishing (Richmond et al., 1987). The use of pro-social BATs also had positive effects on teachers’ job satisfaction and was correlated with effective teaching (Plax, Kearney, & Downs, 1986). The use of BATs signified that teacher language is a critical factor in influencing children’s behaviour and outcomes in the classroom, though the importance of language used by teachers was implicit within the typology of techniques, with the research more focused towards the techniques as a whole. Thus, it is not possible to dissociate the language/message element and the significance of these key messages on children’s positive outcomes. However, the research does imply that the language/message component of these techniques is likely to be influential in the ensuing teacher-student relationship that develops, and any subsequent outcomes.

2.4.1. Fear Appeals

More recent research has advanced this knowledge base further by looking at specific forms of language statements used by teachers, and the effects they have on students. A body of literature does exist, albeit limited with respect to education, on a form of language collectively known as ‘fear appeals’. Fear appeals refer to persuasive language used in classrooms that attempts to manipulate behaviour by stressing the negative and threatening future consequences of certain courses of action or behaviours (Putwain & Roberts, 2009). These messages can be considered threat-based messages and are likely to be perceived by children as threatening. In the context of tests, fear appeals are simply messages that are relayed to children, often repeatedly, to convey the consequence of not performing well (Putwain & Roberts, 2009). Therefore, fear appeals have a persuasive element as they attempt to change behaviour (Witte, 1992). In classrooms, fear appeal type statements are intended to initiate some form of alarm to
an event that is personally relevant and significant. Examples may include teachers stating to students how certain grades are needed for particular college courses or for future employment in a particular profession. The focus in these messages is on the possibility of failure and the consequences of failure e.g. difficulty getting a job, inability to enrol on a particular college course (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012).

There is considerable overlap over the language used in fear appeals with language used in the health promotion literature that seeks to prevent individuals from engaging in behaviour damaging to their health e.g. smoking and excessive drinking (Witte & Allen, 2000). Furthermore, evidence within the health promotion literature suggests that messages such as these are beneficial in initiating change in people (Witte & Allen, 2000). Witte and Allen (2000) also note that in the health promotion literature fear appeals are said to have two crucial components: perceived susceptibility and perceived severity. Perceived susceptibility refers to the extent to which a person will experience the danger (e.g. chance of failing an exam), and perceived severity refers to the degree to which an individual feels they will be harmed (e.g. effect of failing an exam). A number of meta-analyses have taken place looking at the effectiveness of fear appeals in health campaigns and their findings have suggested that fear appeals work in producing change, though this varies according to the strength of fear in the message, with the meta-analyses suggesting that a strong fear appeal is associated with greater attitude, intention or behaviour change (Maloney, Lapinski, & Witte, 2011; Witte & Allen, 2000).

Putwain (2009) explains how teachers in classrooms use fear appeals as a motivational tool e.g. by reminding children of forthcoming exams, highlighting the importance of these exams for future educational and/or occupational aspirations, and stressing the negative consequences of failure. Importantly, the use of fear appeals is reported by both teachers and students as a routine strategy used by teachers when preparing students for their GCSE examinations (Putwain, 2009, Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012;), though some teachers held mixed views about using these messages in their classrooms (Putwain & Roberts, 2012). As Putwain (2009) notes, teachers’ use of these communicative messages are used in good faith with the intention of motivating students. However, the use of fear appeals prior to these high-stakes tests e.g. GCSEs have been shown to be associated with increased performance-avoidance goals (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b), decreased motivation (Putwain & Remedios, 2014), and also decreases in test performance (Putwain & Remedios, 2014; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). These findings are consistent with research into the use of anti-social BATs, as discussed in Section 2.4, that have shown threatening language and techniques to have negative effects on children (Kearney et al., 1991, 1988; McCroskey et al., 1985)

Importantly, the effects of fear appeal type messages on students varied in research. Putwain's (2009) qualitative study of students’ views found that teachers’ talk of the importance of assessment and the need to avoid failure was disregarded by some and did not bother them, whereas for other students this use of language increased their anxiety and stress. Similarly, Sprinkle et al. (2006) in their study did note that fear appeals may be beneficial for some students, which recognises the variable responses when students are exposed to this form of
communication. It is plausible that certain children with particular characteristics may respond positively to fear appeals from the teacher depending on their appraisal of the message. Certainly, emerging research in this area suggests fear appeals may only have a negative impact if they are perceived as threatening (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b), and a threatening appraisal may be linked to how much an individual values attainment (Putwain & Symes, 2014). For example in Putwain and Symes (2014) messages appraised as threats were correlated with low academic self-efficacy, high attainment value and low intrinsic value, whereas appraising them as challenging were correlated with high academic self-efficacy, high intrinsic value, and high attainment value. Fear appeals also seem to have mixed motivational effects with secondary school students, where their appraisal is linked with their mastery-approach goals, e.g. their desire to learn as much as they can, and performance-avoidance goals, e.g. their fear of performing worse than their peers (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). For example in Putwain and Symes (2011a, 2011b) fear appeals related to the timing of tests were related to performance in the test through a mastery-approach goal, and when fear appeals were appraised as threatening they were associated with lower test performance through a performance-avoidance goal. These findings therefore highlight how the effectiveness of fear appeals is dependent on children’s characteristics, and for some children can lead to positive outcomes, whereas for others they can lead to negative outcomes.

In terms of the use of fear appeals in classrooms, the majority of research has targeted students and teachers in the secondary phase of schooling (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b), with the research finding that fear appeals are particularly frequent around examination time, and for some students they can be anxiety provoking and upsetting. In terms of research in the primary phase of schooling, Putwain and Best’s (2011) research specifically looked at the effect of fear appeals on children in this context. The research highlighted the negative effect fear appeals had on children e.g. raising their test anxiety and also negatively affecting their test performance (Putwain & Best, 2011), though it remains to be seen whether this applies for all subgroups of children, and whether a similar effect would be seen in ecologically valid settings, as Putwain and Best (2011) took children out of the classroom for the intervention. The initial evidence would suggest fear appeals can be viewed as having a detrimental impact on children’s outcomes, though more research is needed to verify these claims. Furthermore, the relationship between fear appeals and children’s outcomes may be more complex that a simple cause-effect relationship due to varying characteristics of children.

Putwain and Best (2011) only investigated the use of fear appeals, and the design of the experiment was manipulated so that the teacher was or was not using fear appeals when instructing the group of children. The purpose of their research was not to evaluate the effect of other forms of language communication. Similarly, research in the secondary phase of education has also not considered the effect of using a combination of statements or other forms of language statements when preparing students for important tests (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). A study by Sprinkle et al. (2006) using a vignette approach did investigate the use of a combination of statements, and found that fear appeals can be effective when combined with efficacy statements (see Section 2.4.2), but they are not as effective on their own or when
compared simply to efficacy statements. The combination of statements that gave information to students about the course of action to avoid a future negative outcome seemed to help eradicate some of the negative effects of the fear appeal. This study did have limitations with respect to its design. The study used hypothetical scenarios which the participants had to read. These scenarios communicated the language to the students e.g. fear appeals/efficacy statements. As Sprinkle et al. (2006) note, this design is not a replication of the classroom environment and is not the mode of instruction which occurs regularly in the classroom, thus this study lacked ecological validity. Bearing this in mind, it can be assumed that in a typical classroom teachers are communicating a number of messages, some of which may be fear appeals and others such as efficacious language. It is unlikely that a teacher in the classroom will be communicating the same type of language statements all the time. Thus, it is important to consider the impact of a combination of statements on children’s outcomes and test preparations.

2.4.1.1. Fear Appeals and Test Anxiety

At a fundamental level, test anxiety can be defined as synonymous with a fear of failure, though a broader definition incorporates various other aspects e.g. a tendency to evaluate tests as worrisome, ego/esteem threats, and fear of being judged by others (Lowe et al., 2008; Zeidner, 1998). According to Zeidner and Matthews (2005), the test anxiety construct incorporates a number of components including cognitive (e.g. related to thoughts about assessment), affective-physiological (e.g. referring to sensation and feeling), and behavioural (e.g. relating to the observed behaviour). Transactional models related to test anxiety view it as interacting with an individual’s characteristics, such self-efficacy, self-esteem, and the perceived threat of the contextual situation. Transactional models of test anxiety also contend that test anxiety is mediated through the cognitive component (Zeidner & Matthews, 2005). Furthermore, in the development of test anxiety the situation (e.g. high-stakes testing, examination rooms) are proposed to be influential in an individual’s threat appraisal (Zeidner & Matthews, 2005).

Test anxiety is extremely important in the educational context as heightened anxiety has a debilitating effect on children’s learning and performance. Research previously discussed in Section 2.2 suggests that in primary-age children teachers may be passing their anxieties about accountability pressures to the children (Connor, 2001, 2003; Hall et al., 2004). Studies have also found test anxiety in children to increase as children go through the early years of education, with this increase attributed to the increasing amount of pressure from parents and teachers, and the development of a fear of failure based on previous failings (McDonald, 2001). In a study by Putwain, Connors, Woods and Nicholson (2012) that investigated the anxiety of primary school children in England, higher levels of self-reported test anxiety was found to be significantly associated with lower grades in SATs. The children’s resilience was also found to be a key individual characteristic that was related to the children’s anxiety. Initial studies have also suggested that test anxiety may be linked to messages communicated by teachers (Putwain & Best, 2011; Putwain & Roberts, 2009; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). Research into the use of fear appeals in the classroom has identified a link between test anxiety and the use of fear
appeals (Putwain & Best, 2011; Putwain & Roberts, 2009). Secondary age students who perceived fear appeals as threatening also reported high scores in tension and bodily symptoms indicative of test anxiety (Putwain & Roberts, 2009; Putwain & Symes, 2011b). The research also suggests that children who receive a high number of fear appeals eventually experience more test anxiety (Putwain & Best, 2011). Research with secondary school students has also shown that the increased frequency of fear appeals, as reported by students, is correlated positively with test anxiety (Putwain & Roberts, 2009) and predicts future test anxiety, especially when fear appeals are perceived as threatening (Putwain & Symes, 2011b). Research with students in sixth form has also found that teachers who emphasise the negative outcomes of failure to motivate students results in an increase in test anxiety in students, if they similarly adopt a fear of failure (Putwain, Woods, & Symes, 2009).

Other research tested whether test anxiety is an important factor for reduced performance (Putwain & Best, 2011). The authors of this study also speculated that the reduced performance in the tests was mediated by test anxiety. However, the mediational analysis suggested that this was not the case. The absence of the mediational effect may be due to the study not having the necessary power to detect the effect. Furthermore, the authors surmised that a measure of general test anxiety in addition to state test anxiety would provide further knowledge of the process. General test anxiety refers to the test anxiety that is existent all the time regardless of the situation, whereas state test anxiety refers to the anxiety encountered momentarily prior to the test situation. In a follow up study, Putwain and Best (2012) incorporated a pre-measure of general test anxiety and found that children who were generally highly anxious were more likely to notice and attend to fear appeals. There was no effect of general test anxiety on children’s test anxiety at the time of testing i.e. state test anxiety, and state test anxiety was not found to be a mediator for lowered test performance, but again these findings may have been significant had there been a larger sample size. The findings from the latter study are interesting and identify general test anxiety to be an influential factor in how children respond to fear appeals. This is consistent with a body of literature that suggests highly anxious people have a bias towards attending to negative stimuli (e.g. Calvo, Eysenck, & Castillo, 1997). These studies also suggest that the mechanism by which fear appeals reduce test performance needs further research and may include other factors. Furthermore, this highlights individual traits and characteristics as important factors in the appraisal of fear appeals, thus investigation of teacher messages in the classroom when preparing children for important tests is an area worth exploring.

2.4.2. Efficacy Statements

Given that fear appeals may have negative consequences, the logical question to ask next is what type of instructional language promotes students’ learning and improves their outcomes? Although this question has not been comprehensively answered in the education literature, the health promotion literature provides a valuable insight. Morman (2000) suggests the steps or behaviours presented in the language to overcome some form of future negative impact is important, and this determines whether the individual will change behaviour, though equally
important is whether the individual believes they have the capacity to do so. In educational practice, it is therefore important for teachers to communicate messages that allow individuals to overcome a future adverse event, and efficacy statements are an example of this. Efficacy statements highlight the specific steps that an individual would need to complete in order to succeed and avoid failure, and also emphasise the support that is available and how it can be requested. The efficacy statement is intended to promote self-regulated learning and curriculum mastery (Putwain & Roberts, 2009).

Some research suggests that efficacy appeals form part of the classroom instruction given by teachers to children (M. Johnson & Crisp, 2009; Putwain, 2009). These efficacy appeals, as you would expect, are used routinely and include comments related to answering test questions such as how marks are awarded and the sharing of example answers, all of which aim to assist students in preparing for the eventual test (Putwain & Roberts, 2012). Furthermore, Putwain and Roberts (2012) identified that the efficacy appeals made by teachers were used to boost the students’ self-efficacy e.g. attempting to develop mastery and self-regulated learning. However, efficacy appeals were not only limited to the assessment/academic task, but also referenced esteem and self-worth value, which represents a broader use of efficacy appeals similar to their use in the health psychology literature (Morman, 2000). The health promotion literature suggests that communicative messages that contain a high danger/threat element together with low perceived efficacy from the individual is likely to result in the message being rejected (Witte & Allen, 2000). Furthermore, Morman (2000) notes that in situations where the danger/threat is high together with high perceived response efficacy, then the individual will engage in a process to control the perceived danger, which has the impact of dominating the individual’s responses and ultimately resulting in acceptance of the message and subsequent behaviour change. In the health literature the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) is a theoretical framework that offers to predict these behavioural responses of individuals based on the constructs of threat and efficacy illustrated above, and there is evidence to support its use in health interventions (Maloney et al., 2011; Witte & Allen, 2000). The EPPM model is also further supported by evidence that finds response efficacy is positively associated with message acceptance and negatively associated with message rejection (Tay & Watson, 2002).

Such a theoretical framework may potentially explain why researchers simply evaluating the effect of fear appeals have generally found them to have a negative impact on student outcomes. The absence of an efficacy directive in these instructions seems to erode any personal self-efficacy an individual possesses to overcome the situation, As discussed in Section 2.4.1, the use of fear appeals together with efficacy statements was investigated by Sprinkle et al. (2006). The study found that when students were solely given efficacy statements their motivation was higher than receiving fear appeal messages combined with efficacy statements, and also fear appeals on their own. Furthermore, fear appeals combined with efficacy messages were more effective than fear appeals alone. The authors hypothesised that messages that had pro-social elements, e.g. fear appeals with efficacy statements or efficacy statements on their own, would encourage the students to comply in a non-threatening manner, thus allowing the relationship between the teacher and student to remain intact. Whereas, fear appeals alone would be
considered anti-social BATs, and thus lead to negative learning outcomes. The study's findings confirmed these initial hypotheses. This piece of research situated in an educational context identified that efficacy statements alone are the most effective, however if they are combined with fear appeals their efficacy decreases. This piece of evidence is consistent with the research base on the use of BATs described in Section 2.4, and indicates that communicative messages with solely anti-social elements are ineffective in altering children's behaviour. Sprinkle et al. (2006) also offer an explanation as to why pro-social BATs are more effective in persuading children to engage in certain behaviours. This is based on the premise that learning is effective when there is a positive dialogue between teacher and student, which affords the development of positive teacher-student relations, as discussed in Section 2.3.1. Furthermore, the research also crucially finds that fear appeals together with efficacy statements are more effective than fear appeals alone. This dual use of communicative language is more representative of the instruction that occurs in everyday classrooms. Putwain and Roberts' (2012) study involving secondary school teachers found that they strongly endorsed using efficacy and reassuring language statements, and the findings were indicative of a diverse use of language by teachers. The efficacy component is important as it instils within individuals the capacity to overcome a perceived threat or danger. The research therefore suggests that the effects of specific forms of teacher language may vary depending on the combination in which they are used. Apart from Sprinkle et al.'s (2006) study, research into use of fear appeals with efficacy statements and the effect it has on children and young people has not been fully explored. Finally, the findings from Sprinkle et al.'s (2006) study should be treated with caution due to its methodological limitations, e.g. vignette design, lack of ecological validity, which is not representative of the classroom environment.

2.4.2.1. The Broader Concept of Efficacy

The efficacy language described above relates to their use as an instruction to a recipient, where the purpose is for the recipient to be persuaded into some change. The health literature has found that in order for this change to happen instructions need to have an efficacious element, as without this the instruction is ineffective (Morman, 2000). The communicative messages incorporating an efficacious element alert the individual to the steps needed to complete the intended task. In addition to this, another element of efficacy relates to an individual's ability to perform the actions to complete a task. In the health literature and within the EPPM model, these have been referred to as response efficacy, where the individual considers whether the messages provided are effective and useful strategies, and self-efficacy which refers to whether they feel they have the ability to do what is required (Rimal & Real, 2003). Research into this area has found both response efficacy and self-efficacy to be important determinants for message acceptance (Floyd, Prentice-Dunn, & Rogers, 2000; Tay & Watson, 2002; Witte & Allen, 2000). Bandura (1997) put forth that beliefs that people hold about their capabilities influence the way they behave, for example their persistence and perseverance when faced with difficulty. The research into academic self-efficacy is extensive, with studies suggesting that high self-efficacy results in calmness, whereas low self-efficacy can result in individuals perceiving something to be more difficult than it actually is, which in turn increases stress and
anxiety. Furthermore, self-efficacy has been shown to be an important predictor of students’ achievement and academic progress (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Given this research, it is plausible that statements communicated to children may result in them responding negatively and not changing their behaviour, e.g. if an individual has low academic self-efficacy. This has important implications for classrooms where teachers are encouraging children to perform certain behaviours in order for them to develop their knowledge and skills. Indeed, students’ self-efficacy beliefs have been shown to be important in their appraisal of threat-based messages such as fear appeals (Putwain & Symes, 2014). Here, students with lower academic-self efficacy were reported to show greater test anxiety and were more likely to appraise fear appeals as threatening. This research further emphasises that individual characteristics are an important factor in message acceptance from teachers.

2.4.3. Teacher Feedback

Feedback is defined by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) as any action taken by an external agent to provide information regarding some aspect of a person’s performance, though a recent conceptualisation by Hattie and Timperley (2007) is much broader and views the agent as a broader medium. In this conceptualisation, the agent may include an individual e.g. parent, teacher, peer, or a personal reflection or experience, as well as information provided in books. In all the agents of feedback, the common concept is that feedback is a consequence of performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). To provide clarity over several forms of feedback, it is helpful to view feedback and instruction as entangled. Kulhavy (1977) argues that the two are inseparable. Feedback that has an instructional component must include a correctional element where the task or process is prompting the learner to bridge the gap between what is currently understood and what is aimed to be understood (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The process by which feedback can reduce this discrepancy can be through many routes including, cognitive processes (e.g. restructuring understandings, indicating alternative strategies, confirming their understanding), and affective processes (e.g. increased effort, motivation). The purpose of feedback is for the learner to reaffirm or develop their understanding of a particular element, which can be their domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, their beliefs, or cognitive strategies (Butler & Winne, 1995). In a school context, feedback is typically delivered by the class teacher, but feedback may also come through peers, other adults in the classroom (e.g. teaching assistants), and informational resources (e.g. books, mark schemes). When feedback is provided by the teacher over a child’s task performance, this would be the instruction, and the subsequent process is for some learning to take place within the learner (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kulhavy, 1977). However, whether this subsequent process takes place is dependent on the quality of the feedback and its relevance, as well as how it is accepted by the other. Feedback received can be accepted, modified or even rejected by the learner (Kulhavy, 1977).

In feedback, the purpose is to reduce the discrepancy between current understanding and the desired goal. This reduction in discrepancy is facilitated by both the learner and those who are supporting the learner e.g. teachers, peers (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Hattie (2011) outlines typologies that demarcate the major dimensions of performance that feedback may address in
ensuring that it is effective for the learner. In feedback, there are three key notions: 1) the setting of goals is important in feedback as it communicates to individuals what is to be attained. The purpose of goals is to challenge learners appropriately and assist them in knowing where they need to get to in terms of their knowledge and understanding; 2) progress feedback, which provides information to the learner about the progress they are making, the expected progress, and success/failure on a specific element of the task; and 3) consequential feedback about where the learner should go next. This may include the next step of learning, choosing appropriate challenges and understanding what needs to be further developed. These three notions of feedback are equivalent to feed up, feed back, and feed forward, which characterises a general overview of how feedback develops an individual's knowledge (Hattie, 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Furthermore in Hattie and Timperley's (2007) model of feedback, each notion of feedback has an additional four levels: 1) task level (how well tasks are understood/performed); 2) process level (the main process needed to understand/perform tasks); 3) self-regulation level (self-monitoring, directing, and regulating of actions); and 4) self-level (personal evaluation and positive affect about the learner). This model provides an overview of what feedback needs to address in order for it to be effective. The model also shows that feedback can be targeted at multiple components e.g. feedback about the task, about the process, about self-regulation, etc. In a typical school classroom, teachers will be providing instruction to their students, and on many occasions the aim of this instruction will be to act as feedback to develop their understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kulhavy, 1977). Therefore, a prominent form of teacher communication in the classroom is feedback. However, research would suggest that the frequency of feedback in the classroom is low, though it is something that has been difficult to measure (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In terms of the effectiveness of feedback, a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses completed by Hattie (1999) found that feedback was in the top ten influences on achievement with an average effect size of 0.79, which was almost double the effect size of gains expected while attending a typical school (0.40). This meta-analysis highlights how significant feedback is for children's outcomes. The meta-analysis did also note the variability in the type of feedback given e.g. task related, confirmation of success, and the different effects it had on children. Instructional feedback that was goal related was found to be the most effective, whereas praise, punishment and extrinsic rewards were the least effective (Hattie, 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

2.4.3.1. Praise-based Language

Praise can be considered a form of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In Hattie's (1999) meta-analysis praise was found to be ineffective in developing children’s educational outcomes. A substantial body of literature has been amassed for the use of praise on children, and to many it is commonly accepted that praise is good for children and results in positive outcomes (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Importantly, praise is also a strategy that is used in school classrooms and is likely to form part of teachers’ communicative messages (Burnett, 2002). Furthermore, Hyland and Hyland (2001) note that almost half of the feedback delivered by teachers to children is praise. However, the kind of communication that falls under praise is broad and this has been shown to be influential in the way it affects children. The term praise
refers to the positive evaluations made by a person over another's performances or attributes (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Meta-analyses looking into the effectiveness of praise (Hattie, 1999; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) have shown that it has little effect on student achievement. Hattie and Timperley (2007) do note that studies have failed to distinguish between praise that directs attention away from the task to the self (low informational value e.g. well done) and praise directed to effort, engagement and the process, where the latter is more likely to have an impact on student achievement. Incidentally, the use of praise is important in developing children's self-esteem, though caution is needed in terms of its frequency of use and the type of praise given (Humphrey, 2004).

Other studies have attempted to identify the forms of praise that are effective. A study by Mueller and Dweck (1998) investigated the effects of praising children’s ability. They hypothesised that praising children for their ability would lead them to be more performance oriented, and praising children for their effort would encourage a mastery approach. They thought praising children for their ability would lead towards demonstrating their intelligence, whereas praising for effort would prompt the children to develop their skills and knowledge. These hypotheses were confirmed in their experiments, but they also found that praising children for their ability meant that after a failure they were less persistent and performed poorer than children who were praised for effort. Other research in this area has also suggested that praising children for effort is likely to be more beneficial (Kamins & Dweck, 1999). In this study, children who were given person praise (e.g. you’re a clever boy) were more likely to show a pattern of helplessness when subjected to failure compared to children who were given process praise (e.g. you’ve tried really hard). Furthermore, a study by Cimpian, Arce, Markman and Dweck (2007) found that similar statements worded in person terms (e.g. you’re a good drawer) or process terms (e.g. you did a good job drawing) also demonstrated the same effect. Children who were praised in person terms were more likely to be unhappy and quit the task when compared to children praised in process terms. The children praised in process terms were not fazed by their mistakes and were more likely to persist with the task. These effects of praise also apply to criticism, where person criticism leads to lowered motivation, whereas children receiving process criticism demonstrated more favourable responses (Kamins & Dweck, 1999).

The studies described above remarkably illustrate the impact of teacher communication, though it should be noted that these studies have primarily looked at the short-term immediate effects of praise and have not exhausted the longer term impact. Nevertheless, these studies highlight the importance of teacher communication and the significant impact it has on children's educational engagement. Importantly, as outlined above, praise that comments and focuses on a child's effort or the strategies they are employing have been shown to make the children more resilient to failure or setbacks (Dweck, 1999; Kamins & Dweck, 1999). Moreover, several authors have suggested that the way children are praised can influence their implicit theories of intelligence (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). This would mean praising children as a person would imply to the child that their ability is a fixed and innate trait i.e. implying an entity theory of intelligence, whereas praising children for process would communicate to them that their ability is malleable and can be changed by their effort
i.e. implying an incremental theory of intelligence, and there is evidence to suggest these effects (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Other studies have found that praise is infrequently used in the classroom (Brophy, 1981; Harrop & Swinson, 2007; Merrett & Wheldall, 1990), and that praise is important in building close relationships between teachers and students, with more recent research suggesting that negative praise has a detrimental impact on students’ relationships with their teachers (Burnett, 2002).

2.5. Summary

The aforementioned literature review has provided a tailored overview of the pertinent research relevant to the topic of this thesis. The research finds that since the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 and subsequent National Curriculum significant changes have occurred in schools in England (Sainsbury, 1996; Whetton, 2009; Wyse et al., 2008). In primary schools, the introduction of national testing known as the SATs was accompanied by schools being accountable for the results of their children (Wiggins & Tymms, 2002). Research shows that this educational reform has been effective in raising standards for primary children, though recent results would suggest that standards have plateaued (Wyse et al., 2008). Analysis and evaluation of this plateau has led researchers and politicians to question whether standards are really improving or whether they were an artificial effect as a result of teachers becoming accustomed to teaching to the tests (Bew, 2011; Tymms, 2004; Wyse et al., 2008). Nonetheless, this trend of national testing and school accountability are set to continue, with recent discussions suggesting the need for tougher testing and higher expectations for children at primary school (DfE, 2013), especially as recent international comparisons have shown that the educational standards for children in England have stagnated, e.g. as identified in the results of the Programme for International Assessment (PISA, 2012). Furthermore, the introduction of national testing in primary school has had a direct impact on children with evidence suggesting increased anxiety and stress levels in children (Connor, 2001, 2003; Denscombe, 2000; Hall et al., 2004; Kyriacou, 2003; Putwain et al., 2009; Seiffe-Krenke, 1993).

Given this context within which primary schools operate, it is necessary to evaluate the factors that result in improving children’s achievement and reducing negative responses e.g. stress. However, this achievement driven agenda has overpowered research into the educational climate and the role this climate plays in developing children’s skills and knowledge (Fraser, 2001). Indeed, positive classroom environments have been shown to be associated with favourable effects on children’s motivation, attitudes and academic achievement (Battistich et al., 1997; Fraser, 1991; Wang et al., 1994; Wentzel, 1994). In developing this classroom environment, teachers are said to have a vital role, where their approach and demeanour dictates the atmosphere of the classroom, as well the relationships they develop with the students. Research into the quality of teacher-student relations and teacher interactions has found this interpersonal relationship to be pivotal for a whole host of outcomes, such as enjoyment (Fisher et al., 2005), higher cognitive and attitudinal outcomes (den Brok et al., 2004), motivational beliefs (Lapointe et al., 2005), and achievement and subject preference
(Goh & Fraser, 1998). Therefore, the prominent role of the teacher cannot be understated and ignored in attempts to improve children’s educational outcomes.

Historical research has identified a number of ways teachers attempt to influence children to engage in behaviours that will lead to an improvement in their learning, this may involve the use of rewards, or even the use of threats to deter unwarranted behaviour (Richmond & Roach, 1992). Plentiful research also exists on the use of teacher feedback and praise-based language (Dweck, 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). However, research has tended not to focus on the specific role of teacher communication particularly when directed towards increasing performance in tests (Putwain, 2009; Putwain & Roberts, 2009). Literature solely focusing on the key messages that teachers are using when preparing children for key examinations is limited. The majority of the research has taken place with samples of older students in secondary school (e.g. Putwain, 2009; Putwain & Roberts, 2009; Sprinkle et al., 2006), where the use of fear appeals, efficacy statements and reassuring messages have been identified by both teachers and students (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012). There is also evidence to suggest the use of teacher statements can directly affect students’ test anxiety and affect their test outcomes (Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). However, there is scant evidence for the types of language statements being used in primary classrooms, where similarly children are exposed to national testing at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Furthermore, research into the teacher language used for test preparation in primary schools cannot continue based on the premise that teachers are using statements such as fear appeals and efficacy statements on a regular basis. This affirms the need for researchers to identify what messages are being used in the primary classroom when preparing children for tests in order to then evaluate their effectiveness. Putwain and Best’s (2011) study is a rare study to have focused on the primary school setting, which looked at the effects of teachers’ language on children during test preparation, though this study was experimental and did not attempt to ascertain the types of language statements teachers were actually using in real classroom settings. In Putwain and Best (2011), it was assumed that fear appeals were a regular form of communication in the primary classroom, and anecdotally this may be the case, but there is a need for the systematic analysis of what language statements teachers are using in reality. Overall, a major question still remains over the types of language statements teachers are using in the primary classroom in order to prepare children for tests, and also how they are using this language, as well as whether primary-age children are perceptive of the key messages being communicated by their teachers.

Addressing this absence in the literature with respect to teacher communication in the primary classroom will provide a valuable contribution to classroom practice and pedagogy, and help focus future research towards signalling the optimal language when preparing children in classrooms, especially for important tests. Further investigations into the effects of particular language statements and the variable effects it may have on particular children can only proceed once a comprehensive account of teacher communication is collated. The process of collating the language statements that teachers are using will assist in identifying other potential factors that are significant in producing better outcomes for children. This research alone will provide a comprehensive account of teacher language in the primary classroom when preparing children.
for important high-stakes tests, which will be beneficial for practitioners and researchers allowing them to reflect on the content of these messages, their intended effect and justifications for their use. To build on the extant literature, the aim of this thesis was to explore: the language teachers in primary classrooms were using to encourage children to prepare for important tests; how the language statements were being used; to identify possible underlying reasons for their use, as well as determining whether children were aware of these messages. An additional focus was to also see whether a difference existed between Year 2 and Year 6 across the research questions listed below.

- **RQ1**: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?
- **RQ2**: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?
- **RQ3**: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom when preparing children for important tests?
- **RQ4**: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important tests?

The subsequent chapter provides the methodology that was used to answer the research questions.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by further restating the research aims and research questions that were the focus of this thesis. This is followed by outlining the philosophical position within with which the research is based, including a discussion about the ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations that informed the methodology and general approach. A discussion of the mixed methods research design then follows outlining how the research attempted to answer the research questions. The data collection methods are then described which include teacher interviews, focus groups with children, teacher diaries and a questionnaire aimed at teachers. When presenting these data collection methods, an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses and their appropriateness for the study is also provided. Furthermore, within each data collection method, participant sampling and implementation procedures are detailed and presented, which includes relevant additional information about the participants of the study. The latter half of the chapter is concerned with outlining the data analysis methods implemented in relation to the data collected at various stages, as well as detailing how the data were integrated to answer the research questions. This includes a discussion about the reliability and validity of the methods utilised. The chapter culminates by outlining the key ethical considerations that were addressed continually within the research. As the chapter proceeds, the various stages of the method are critiqued, with discussion provided over the limitations of the study and how certain weaknesses in the design were addressed.

3.2. Research Aims and Questions

The central aim of this thesis was to explore the language teachers in primary classrooms were using to encourage children to prepare for important high-stakes tests i.e. national tests commonly referred to as the SATs. In addition to this, another aim was to identify how these communicative messages were being used and possibly the underlying reasons for their use. A final aim was to determine whether children in primary school were aware of these messages directed at them from their teachers. Implicit within the research was to also discern if differences existed between communication in Year 2 and Year 6 classrooms. The research aims were represented through four distinct research questions, outlined below.

- RQ1: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?
- RQ2: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?
- RQ3: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom when preparing children for important tests?
- RQ4: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important tests?

3.3. Philosophical Position

Theoretical and philosophical assumptions about science, knowledge, truth and evidence are all influential in the design of psychological research and the manner in which research proceeds. These implicit theoretical and philosophical assumptions that an individual subscribes to
consequently go onto inform the methodology that is implemented (Forrester, 2010). Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe this as the basic belief system or world view that the researcher holds that guides them through the research they conduct. Therefore, in the design of psychological research it is important to make explicit these implicit assumptions so as to understand the thought processes concerning the key decisions that are made in research, particularly during the process of adopting a certain methodology. For this reason, the researcher’s ontological, epistemological and axiological position is further detailed.

3.3.1. Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of being. It asks questions about what exists in the world and is about defining and cataloguing the things that exist. It mainly relates to issues about what people believe to be real and what they believe to exist in the world (Forrester, 2010; Frost, 2011). Ontological concerns can be viewed as being fundamental in our thoughts, as it would be impossible not to make assumptions about the nature of our world. Ontological positions can be broadly viewed as ‘realist’ and ‘relativist’, which concern the nature of reality. In a realist ontological position, there would be an assumption that in our world there is a link between the surface representations (e.g. knowledge) and underlying entities or reality (Forrester, 2010; Willig, 2013). Contrastingly, a relativist position would reject the realist position that there is a link between what we observe and what can be defined as truth, and would assume that the world is a disorderly entity where a number of interpretations can be applied to it, all of which are equally valid (Forrester, 2010; Willig, 2013). Epistemology on the other hand refers to a branch of philosophy that pertains to questions about knowledge, beliefs and truths. It specifically asks questions about knowledge, how it is understood and what differentiates knowledge from truths. It also considers the relationship about what is known and what can be known (Forrester, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Bearing in mind the need to position one’s self in a philosophical paradigm guided by an ontological and epistemological view, the research within this thesis is positioned within a critical realist position (Bhaskar, 2008). This was prompted by the researcher’s general philosophical view of the world and its applicability to the research completed here, e.g. social research. Critical realism provided a balanced position in terms of the value of knowledge obtained here in relation to whether it represented reality. In critical realism, reality is assumed to exist but can only be imperfectly ascertained because of flawed intellectual mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008), which operate based on current knowledge and method. As time progresses and as new developments occur, this knowledge can fundamentally change. Furthermore, some of the phenomena that we study are of an obstinate nature, by which they are abstract and intangible. This deficiency is recognised in critical realism, thus purporting the need to critically scrutinise emerging theory before it is endorsed, though it is accepted that the developing reality can never truly represent reality i.e. it will always be imperfect (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998; Robson, 2011). Critical realism therefore differs from positivism in that knowledge is a social product driven by existing theory, though they both assert the existence of some kind of real entity (Bhaskar, 2008). Research within critical realism is geared towards
conducting research so that theory is developed that is close to representing reality. The position
the researcher takes within critical realism states the possibly that knowledge can be acquired
about the external world independently from human subjectivity. However, critical realism
recognises that perception is a function of the human mind, and thus acquiring knowledge of the
external world requires critical examination of perception (Archer et al., 1998; Robson, 2011). In
critical realism, the ultimate goal of research is to develop deeper levels of explanation and
understanding, thus differing to positivism which seeks to derive generalisables laws, and to
interpretivism which seeks to identify beliefs and experiences of social beings (McEvoy, 2006).

For critical realists, an external reality exists independent of our beliefs and understandings, but
this reality is gained through socially constructed meanings and personal understanding (McEvoy,
2006). To accurately describe our experience of reality is beyond human form, as we are limited
by our cognitive and linguistic capacity (Bhaskar, 2008). Attempting to describe and explain our
world is bound to be fallible, as those ways of ordering and categorising the world cannot be
considered the absolute truth, and is susceptible to critique and new understandings (Scott,
2005). For the research described here, the critical realist position offered to explore the use of
teacher language in primary classrooms taking into consideration the substantial influences that
may be acting on and prompting their use, rather than attempting to simply ascertain formal
associations and regularities devoid of context. This position recognised that the world is
differentiated and operates in a multi-dimensional system (Sayer, 2000). Moreover, adopting
such a position addressed some of the limitations of the research design e.g. in terms of
generalisability and the conclusions drawn (see Section 3.7). Positioning the research within this
critical realist position also meant that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches
would be most apt in developing conceptualisations of teacher language in the classroom. This
prompted the use of a mixed methods design with the sole purpose of using qualitative and
quantitative methods to develop a deeper level of understanding and knowledge about teacher
language use when preparing children for important tests.

Qualitative and quantitative methods are typically associated with competing ontological and
epistemological positions, and combining the two may violate the assumptions of their
theoretical underpinnings, which is a common criticism levelled at using both types of methods
in a single study (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). However, it is their use that
defines their ontological and epistemological position, as they are not inextricably linked to
notions of reality and knowledge. For example, a qualitative interview could be transcribed and
the lived experience detailed, or alternatively it could be quantified to satisfy some
preconceived schema. Utilising competing methods that are typically laden within different
paradigms allows the methods to complement each other providing an additive outcome, as well
as allowing methodological triangulation to further substantiate the findings (Creswell et al.,
2003). Furthermore, adopting a critical realist perspective also helped overcome the many
problems associated with paradigm ‘switching’ that is typically associated in mixed methods
designs (McEvoy, 2006).
3.3.2. Axiology

As a critical realist, the researcher acknowledged that all research is fallible and any conclusions drawn are limited by what is conceivable. In addition to this, personal beliefs and values are also recognised as likely to shape research, which forms the branch of philosophy known as axiology. Axiology is concerned with judgements and the values that people ascribe to. It does not only refer to values about aesthetics and ethics, but can also include values related to processes of social enquiry. Axiology recognises that a researcher’s personal and professional values will impact the whole research process, from identification of a particular topic of study, development of the methodology, analysis, dissemination of information and consequent evaluation (Ponterotto, 2005). Heron (1996) argues that values are the basis of making judgements and a researcher conducting research is demonstrating their values throughout this process. For this reason, researchers should be mindful of how their personal and professional values can influence the research process, and being aware of the impact of these values helps ensure that the research produced is credible and ethically acceptable. Thinking about these values also assists researchers in heightening their awareness of value judgements when probing or drawing conclusions (Ponterotto, 2005; Robson, 2011). Furthermore, engaging in this process also helps a researcher make ethically appropriate decisions. Therefore, it is important to state the researcher’s core values in order to identify how they may affect the research process (Heron, 1996). The following list presents the beliefs and values of the researcher that are relevant to the area of study and any consequential actions.

- In addition to parents, teachers are role models for children and they have a responsibility in ensuring favourable outcomes for them e.g. supporting them in education and also their general development. Consequently, this was the focus of the study, and the study was aimed at the primary-age school population. Primary schooling was viewed as a critical period for children’s development.

- Teachers should nurture and support children in school through developing a positive relationship and a positive learning environment, thus using language that is friendly and supportive. Consequently, it was plausible that teachers may be using some forms of language that may be negative and unhelpful. The teacher interviews ensured that a wide range of language statements that were being used in the classroom could be elicited through the interviews. Teacher responses that were negative or believed not to be in the best interests of children were not judged or frowned upon, but discussed without judgement to obtain relevant knowledge in this area.

- People should be involved when making assumptions about their life and behaviour. Consequently, the research involved teachers and children. Teachers were interviewed and their thoughts and views gathered. Children were also involved in the research through the implementation of focus groups to gather their views and thoughts.

- Any knowledge gained should be utilised for the benefit of others. Consequently, the findings of the research will be disseminated to the LA and the participants involved outlining the knowledge gained is this area.

3.4. Research Design

The research is based on a mixed methods design, and uses qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the proposed research questions. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in research is referred to as the ‘mixed methods’ approach, and adoption of this approach has been growing steadily in educational research since the 1960s (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Mixed methods research is the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection, data analysis and the forming of conclusions. A mixed methods approach is considered to be most effective when the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods
can comprehensively answer the research questions, where using one or the other would not do justice to the research questions (Powell, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Suldo, & Daley, 2008). Traditionally, qualitative and quantitative methods have been treated as distinct methods, which are situated in different paradigms (Creswell et al., 2003; McEvoy, 2006). At a simplistic level, qualitative research primarily focuses on the collection of qualitative data, i.e. non-numerical narrative such as words, where the purpose is to obtain rich data. For example, qualitative methodologies primarily investigate human life through an in-depth study of people in a particular situation (Patton, 2002). On the other hand, quantitative approaches are concerned with quantitative data, i.e. numerical data, which allow for a certain degree of objectivity and generalisability. They are usually concerned with measures and statistical information. Although there are merits to using both approaches in isolation, authors have increasingly recognised that using the two approaches together is compatible as long as they are mixed to best answer the research questions in hand (Creswell et al., 2003; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As eluded to in Section 3.3.1, this is also in line with the critical realist stance, where the aim is to use methods that will comprehensively provide knowledge in the research area (Scott, 2007).

Despite the growth in application of mixed methods to educational research, there are many unresolved issues, particularly with respect to research design. In Tashakkori and Teddlie’s (2003) book, 35 different mixed methods research designs are documented, known as typologies, which is representative of the diversity that can be obtained through mixed methods. A common criticism levered at mixed methods research is that the number of typologies available makes mixed methods research unnecessarily complicated, and results in mixed methods research being inconsistently implemented (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) address this by developing a three-dimensional typology of mixed methods design. They conceptualise that designs can be represented as a function of the following three dimensions: 1) level of mixing (partially mixed versus fully mixed); 2) time orientation (concurrent versus sequential); and 3) emphasis of approaches (equal status versus dominant status). Level of mixing refers to whether a study is fully mixed or partially mixed in terms of the qualitative and quantitative methods, though it is acknowledged that mixing of methods exists on a continuum.

The mixed methods design/typology adopted here is further discussed; discussion of the numerous alternative designs is not provided here, and readers are directed to Creswell et al. (2003), and Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009). The ‘sequential exploratory design’ (Creswell et al., 2003) was utilised in this study, and is referred to by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) as the ‘fully mixed sequential equal status design’. This design was adopted as it complemented the aims of this research. The ‘sequential exploratory design’ allowed exploratory qualitative data to be obtained initially about teacher language, which then informed the questionnaire stage to further extend and scrutinise findings. The combination of these two stages allowed the research questions to be answered comprehensively. The ‘sequential exploratory design’ adopted is further outlined below according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie’s (2009) three-dimensional typology.
• Dimension 1: In terms of the level of mixing, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) consider a study to be a fully mixed design if mixing occurs at a number of stages e.g. research objectives, type of data, type of analysis and type of inference. The study here is considered a fully mixed methods design because answering the research questions prompted the use of both qualitative and quantitative information. Furthermore, there are qualitative and quantitative data collection stages, which are analysed independently and combined later to form meta-inferences (Creswell et al., 2003). There was also a process of converting some qualitative data into quantitative data (see Section 3.6.1.2 and 3.6.3).

• Dimension 2: A ‘sequential exploratory design’ allows the use of qualitative information about a phenomenon (e.g. teacher language directed at children for test preparation) to inform a subsequent stage (e.g. the questionnaire in this study). The sequential nature also assists in determining whether the qualitative findings are applicable beyond the original sampling, as well assisting to confirm, cross-validate and corroborate (Creswell et al., 2003). This study is sequential as the predominantly qualitative phases (teacher interviews, teacher diaries, focus groups with children) preceded the questionnaire distributed to teachers.

• Dimension 3: In answering the research questions, both methods were given equal status and inferences were made using data from both methods. Qualitative or quantitative data were not given priority over the other, and both were treated equally in their value in answering the research questions. Importantly, the research questions of this study were suited to a ‘sequential exploratory design’. The research included four distinct phases: 1) teacher interviews; 2) focus groups with children; 3) teacher diaries; and 4) teacher questionnaire. The initial phases included the use of teacher interviews, teacher diaries and focus groups with children, which were necessary to provide an accurate and fuller account of the types of language used by teachers. Similarly, the qualitative data obtained from children also allowed a broad exploration of their awareness of the language used by their teachers. Teacher diaries acted as an additional source of qualitative information that further supported the other qualitative findings. The interviews and focus groups did not seek to impose preconceived categories or conditions on the teachers and children, and were intentionally left general and broad to allow an exploration of teachers’ and children’s views, though exploratory questions were asked that resembled relevant themes that existed in the available literature. These initial phases were analysed and then informed the design of the questionnaire which was distributed to a large sample of teachers. Throughout the methodology, the researcher was mindful of distinct differences between Year 2 data and Year 6 data, and these differences were considered when making inferences (see Section 3.7).

The implementation of the questionnaire was to extend the findings of the qualitative information to a larger sample and ascertain whether the findings were generalisable to a certain extent, or whether they were an artefact of the participants recruited in the study. Furthermore, the questionnaire assisted in drawing more information about how teachers were using language statements, and attempted to understand further why teachers were using particular forms of language. Similarly, converting qualitative data into quantitative data (e.g. in teacher interviews and diaries) provided information about the saliency of topics discussed and frequency of particular teacher language. Although the study was sequential, the resultant data were used simultaneously when attempting to answer the research questions. The ‘sequential exploratory design’ allowed for development (e.g. an initial phase developed a subsequent phase), expansion (e.g. broadened the study’s focus and scope), triangulation (e.g. qualitative findings were compared with quantitative findings and vice versa), complementarity (e.g. results from each analysis were utilised to enhance, expand and clarify understanding) and initiation (e.g. contradictions from both elements helped clarify understanding about research questions). Table 3.1 outlines the research questions, specifically delineating the data collection and analysis methods that were used to answer them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question (RQ)</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Analysis Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis/quantitising data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepare for important tests?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus Groups with children</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher diaries</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher diaries</td>
<td>Content analysis/quantitising data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when preparing children for important tests?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus Groups with children</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tests?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Research questions and their corresponding data collection and analysis methods.

3.5. Data Collection

The methods of data collection were a crucial aspect of this study, and were aligned with the research questions (Table 3.1). The data collection methods were also consistent with the philosophical position of this study. The combination of data collection methods ensured that the research questions could be answered comprehensively, with data elicited from both teachers and children. In summary, there were four distinct data collection phases in the study. These included teacher interviews, focus groups with children, teacher diaries and a questionnaire directed at teachers. Each data collection method is described, with further discussion about its use, development and sampling procedures.

3.5.1. Teacher Interviews - Phase 1

Interviewing as a research method typically involves the researcher asking a number of questions for the interviewee to answer. Interviews can take various forms, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Robson, 2011). The type of interview conducted can be linked to the ‘depth’ and ‘variability’ of responses expected from participants. Structured interviews have pre-identified questions and standardised wording that are asked in a fixed order, whereas less structured interviews allow for more flexibility in responses and may have no format largely allowing a participant to talk at freedom about a particular topic (Robson, 2011). In this study, data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews with teachers. Semi-structured interviews are loosely based on an interview schedule that acts as a guide covering a set of questions that should form the content of the interview, though the researcher can deviate from the order and wording in order to establish rapport with the participant and create a natural flow to the interview (Robson, 2011). This ensures that relevant topics are discussed, but also gives participants the opportunity to dictate the content of the interview, and for the researcher to explore unanticipated pertinent topics, yielding divergent data.
(Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were selected in line with the exploratory nature of the study. It was felt that this form of interviewing would produce rich and illuminating material relative to the research questions. The interviews sought to identify the teacher language being used in classrooms related to tests (RQ1), the frequency of particular language use (RQ2), and possibly teachers’ underlying intentions and reasoning when using particular forms of language (RQ3).

Furthermore, face-to-face, one-to-one interviews were decided upon to ensure that the researcher was able to relate and establish a rapport with the participants. This is also necessary for the researcher to be able to recognise non-verbal cues which assists in understanding participants’ verbal responses, thus allowing the follow up of important lines of enquiry. Interviews were preferred over a group interview or focus groups as it was considered that a one-to-one interview would allow participants to respond without being limited by other participants, as well as allowing the researcher to follow the participants’ thoughts, thus making the interview more personal. The one-to-one interview was also preferred over a group interview as there would be a lesser emphasis on socially desirable answers, particularly with respect to sensitive topics such as the use of threatening communication, which teachers may not be willing to share in a group situation. Decisively, the semi-structured interviews that were implemented prompted an open collaborative approach allowing scope for exploration of alternative issues. By implementing semi-structured interviews, the researcher was not bound by the codes of standardisation and replicability (Banister, Bunn, Burman, & Daniels, 2011). The aim was divergence and variety.

However, there are some limitations with interviews related to their use, particularly with respect to their reliability and validity that need to be considered (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Robson, 2011). The implementation of semi-structured interviews can also affect the reliability of data obtained, as the information elicited is based on the interaction between the researcher and participant. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) questions whether interviews are a valid research tool suggesting that they should not be mistaken for restriction-free modes of communication, but rather a product of an interaction that is bound by researcher mediated intentions, which inevitably affects the data elicited. Interviews are also prone to biases, where participants may give socially desirable answers. The development of an interview schedule (Appendix 1) and the triangulation of data attempted to address some of the reliability and validity issues pertinent to interviews as a data collection method (see Section 3.7).

3.5.1.1. Procedure and Sampling

Data were collected from eight semi-structured interviews with teachers from primary schools from a LA in the northwest of England. The schools were contacted based on ease of accessibility. Table 3.2 provides some additional information related to the participants and the schools they were working in. The participants’ age was not obtained, as it was considered that some participants may not want to divulge this information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Appendix/Transcript</th>
<th>School Ofsted Rating/School</th>
<th>Year Group Taught</th>
<th>Experience in Year group</th>
<th>Experience as Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 2/Transcript 1</td>
<td>Good (School A)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Appendix 3/Transcript 2</td>
<td>Good (School A)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 4/Transcript 3</td>
<td>Good (School B)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 5/Transcript 4</td>
<td>Good (School B)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 6/Transcript 5</td>
<td>Outstanding (School C)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 7/Transcript 6</td>
<td>Outstanding (School C)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 8/Transcript 7</td>
<td>Outstanding (School D)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Appendix 9/Transcript 8</td>
<td>Good (School E)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Additional information about participants involved in interviews.

Four Year 2 teachers and four Year 6 teachers were recruited from five schools, and their consent obtained (see Section 3.8). Interviews took place during July 2013. The interview schedule (Appendix 1) was designed in line with the critical realist philosophical position of the study. Research relevant to the area (e.g. Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b; Sprinkle et al., 2006) identified certain recurrent themes and these were used to develop the interview schedule. Crucially, this ensured the research questions would be answered, and to also ensure sufficient coverage of various topics related to the aims of the study. The schedule and interview format allowed flexibility and deviations from the list to explore novel topics that were not previously anticipated. This approach allowed exploration of the previous evidence base, as well as exploration of new information relevant to the primary school context. Guidelines from Robson (2011) were utilised with respect to interviews as a developing process and the interview guide followed Kvale’s (1996) stages of ‘warm up’, ‘main body’ and ‘cool off’. During the interview, various techniques were used to elicit valuable information, e.g. use of paraphrasing, asking clarification questions. Furthermore, the interviews ended with a specific ending question as suggested by Charmaz (2006), which ensured that participants had an opportunity to discuss topics that had not been covered during the interview. During and on completion of the interview, field and post-facto notes were written down recording various occurrences to inform the subsequent analysis, as recommended by Banister et al. (2011), and Lankshear and Knobel (2004). The interviews lasted approximately 40-50 minutes. This was considered to be a suitable length of interview to allow for an exploration of relevant topics, and to make sure the interview was pithy and did not overburden participants. Once the eight interviews were completed, they were fully transcribed verbatim (Appendix 2-9), as the focus was to identify themes and patterns from teachers’ verbal responses. The nature in which they responded, e.g. tone, pitch, hesitancy, were not areas that were being addressed in this study, though in-depth studies of this would inevitably provide further information about the interviews.
3.5.2. Focus Groups with Children - Phase 2

Focus groups are a research method that allows researchers and participants to meet as a group and discuss topics that the researcher is interested in (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Similarly like interviews, focus groups can be highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured depending on the type of data intended to be elicited. The focus groups took place with children and were based on a semi-structured format, for the same reasons as identified in Section 3.5.1. The advantage of a focus group is that is allows an efficient way of generating substantial amounts of data relevant to a topic area (Robson, 2011). However, similar to interviews there are concerns about their reliability, validity and social biases. Repeated focus groups with the same children are likely to provide different data, as the data is dependent on the interactions that occur between the researcher and other participants. Furthermore, the content may be skewed as participants may be more likely to succumb to socially desirable answers, as well as the potential for one or more participants to dominate discussions (Robson, 2011). To address this, a focus group schedule was developed (Appendix 10) to ensure coverage of topics was consistent across the two focus groups. The focus groups also gave participants the opportunity to explore and discuss other strands relevant to the research. During the focus groups, the researcher was mindful of children not being able to communicate their views, which was addressed by the researcher prompting particular children to express their thoughts, if they wished to do so. Focus groups were preferred over individual interviews as it was considered that the focus group would support the children in sharing their views and empower them to participate (Kitzinger, 1995). It was thought that in one-to-one situations, children would feel under pressure to answer questions, and attention would be directed at them continuously, which would inevitably affect the quality of their responses. The use of focus groups allowed the children to participate at their own accord and join in to expand on discussions already taking place with other children. This group interaction was beneficial in producing rich data, which may not have occurred if individual interviews were utilised. The focus groups sought to identify what language teachers were using towards children (RQ1) and the children's awareness of the language being used for test preparation (RQ4).

3.5.2.1. Sampling and Procedure

Data were collected from two focus groups with children from primary schools from a LA in the northwest of England. The schools were contacted based on ease of accessibility. This included children from the classes of the teachers interviewed. Specifically, this included Year 6 children from School A and Year 2 children from School B (see Table 3.2). Two focus groups were completed, one for Year 2 children and another for Year 6 children. Each focus group included five children. The focus groups took place in December 2013. In selecting the children for the focus groups, teachers were asked to send out information sheets and consent forms to parents of particular children (see Section 3.8). The aim was to include a group of children in the focus group that represented the diversity of the class. Teachers were given a set of criteria when contacting parents of particular children (Appendix 11). Table 3.3 provides information about the children that participated in the study based on the criteria given to teachers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School (see Table 3.2)</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Confidence (teacher rating)</th>
<th>Attainment (teacher rating)</th>
<th>Anxious in Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3. Information about children participating in focus groups based on criteria given to teachers.

The focus group schedule (Appendix 10) was designed in line with the critical realist philosophical position of the study. Research relevant to the area (e.g. Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b; Sprinkle et al., 2006) identified certain recurrent themes and these were used to develop the focus group schedule. The thematic analysis of the teacher interviews was also utilised when developing the focus group schedule. This ensured the research questions would be answered, and to also ensure sufficient coverage of various topics related to the aims of the study. The schedule and focus group format allowed flexibility and deviations from the list to explore novel topics that were not previously anticipated. This approach allowed exploration of the previous evidence base, as well as exploration of new information relevant to the primary school context directly from children. Similar to the interview implementation, guidelines from Kvale (1996) and Robson (2011) were used when developing the focus group schedule and structuring the focus groups. During the focus groups, various techniques were used to elicit valuable information, e.g. use of paraphrasing, asking clarification questions. The focus groups also ended with a specific ending question as suggested by Charmaz (2006), which ensured that the children had an opportunity to discuss topics that had not been covered during the focus group. During and on completion of the focus group, field and post-facto notes were written down recording various occurrences to inform the subsequent analysis, as recommended by Banister et al. (2011), and Lankshear and Knobel (2004). The focus groups lasted approximately 20 minutes. This was considered to be a suitable length to allow an exploration of relevant topics, and in making sure the focus groups were focused and maintained children's attention. Once completed, the focus groups were fully transcribed verbatim (Appendix 12-13), as the focus was to identify themes and patterns from the children’s verbal responses. The nature in which they responded was not addressed, as this would be a finer level of analysis beyond the scope of this study.
3.5.3. Teacher Diaries - Phase 3

Participant diaries/journals are a research tool that can be used to extract meaningful information from participants regarding a particular aspect of study. Participant diaries differ from reflective journals in that they are documents created by participants at the request of the researcher, whereas reflective journals are personal and are completed for the purpose of developing an individual’s knowledge and understanding (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004), though researchers may want to analyse reflective journals. Equally, the process of completing diaries, as instructed by the researcher, may initiate the participant to reflect over their role. Diaries, like interviews and focus groups, can range from being extremely structured to those with relatively little structure (Robson, 2011). The benefit of using diaries is that they allow the generation of rich data with minimal effort required by the researcher (Robson, 2011). However, it is also quite possible that participants being asked to complete diaries may change their behaviour or similarly complete diary entries that they feel will please the researcher (or their perception of what is expected by the researcher). Furthermore, diaries place a great deal of responsibility on the participant to complete without constant researcher direction. To overcome some of these difficulties, arrangements were made to ensure that diaries were completed (see Section 3.5.3.1). The use of teacher diaries as a data collection method was preferred over naturalistic observation. The aim of teacher diaries was to collect information about teachers’ language use in the classroom (RQ1) and how they were using these language statements (RQ2).

It was considered that the sole use of teacher interviews and focus groups with children would possibly not yield the data that was required about the language being used in the classroom, due to the limitations of the methods. For example, during the interviews, teachers had to think and reflect in that situation and provide immediate responses, which may mean some important elements of language use may not have come to the fore of their mind. Similarly, in the focus groups, the emphasis was on the children’s awareness, which again may differ from the actual language being used in the classroom. Observation as a data collection method was considered, however it was deemed to be too insensitive to collect valuable information, as there may be large periods of time in an observation where the language did not relate to test communication. For these reasons, teacher diaries were utilised. Indeed, diaries have been used in research as a proxy measure when direct observation is not possible or inefficient to implement (Coxon, 1988; Waddington, 2005).

3.5.3.1. Procedure and Sampling

Data were collected from eight diaries completed by teachers from primary schools in a LA in the northwest of England. The schools were contacted based on ease of accessibility. This included four Year 2 teachers and four Year 6 teachers. This included teachers who participated in the interviews. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (see Table 3.2) completed the teacher diaries. Participant 2 at School A no longer taught Year 6, as the research spanned across academic years, thus the teacher who had taken over to teach Year 6 at the school was recruited. A further two teachers (Year 2 and Year 6) were recruited from another school, who had no prior involvement in the study. The diaries were completed during March 2014. Mini notebooks were
distributed to the participants, which included a cover page of the instructions (Appendix 14). The instructions were developed based on guidelines from Robson (2011) and gave the diaries a small amount of structure relevant to the research questions. The issue of socially desirable diary entries was addressed by providing instructions that were open-ended and not leading. Triangulation of data also reduced the impact of biases (see Section 3.7). The researcher then outlined the purpose of diaries to the participants and invited any questions they had. Participants were asked to complete diaries over a two week period with a minimum of five days of completion, where they inputted entries into the diaries. Contact information was also collected from the participants, and participants were sent regular reminders to complete the diaries, and were given further opportunities to ask any questions related to completing them. Informal evaluation of the teacher diaries suggested that half the participants completed diaries on an ad-hoc basis, whereas the other half completed diaries at the end of the lesson or at the end of the school day. All participants felt the diary entries were reflective of the regular comments they typically made in the classroom, and did not feel they made these because they were involved in the research.

3.5.4. Teacher Questionnaire - Phase 4

A questionnaire is a list of written questions to be completed by participants, and is a means to gathering data to test opinions or patterns of behaviour (Coolican, 2009). Questionnaires can be completed in the presence of a researcher e.g. akin to a structured interview, or alternately the respondents can complete the questionnaire without the presence of the researcher e.g. self-administered questionnaire (Robson, 2011). The strengths of a questionnaire allow the researcher to collect data from a large number of people quickly and efficiently. An additional benefit of the self-administered questionnaire is that it gives distance from the researcher and respondent, thus allowing greater anonymity. Here, issues of acquiescence and socially desirable answers are less profound than other methods such as interviews and focus groups (Oppenheim, 1992). As part of the mixed methods design, a self-administered questionnaire for teachers was the final phase of the study and was designed to compare, validate and corroborate the findings from the previous phases, as well as identifying any additional information about teacher language use that was not collected in the previous phases. The focus of the questionnaire was to synthesise the findings from the teacher interviews, diaries and focus groups such as the language teachers were using (RQ1) and evaluate whether they were applicable to a larger sample. Furthermore, another focus of the questionnaire was to obtain information about the frequency of particular language statements (RQ2), and to extract further information about the underlying reasons as to why teachers may be using particular forms of language (RQ3). The use of a questionnaire in this study can be said to be of a ‘pilot’ nature where the focus was exploratory, with the subsequent data supplementing the analyses that preceded it. Therefore, the intention was not produce a questionnaire that was robust in terms of its psychometric properties e.g. reliability, validity. The small number of respondents also meant that additional refinement of the questionnaire did not occur, e.g. item analysis, internal consistency checks and factor analysis (Oppenheim, 1992). This form of development and refinement was not the aim of this study, as the study was primarily exploratory.
In designing the questionnaire, the data obtained from previous phases was used to develop an initial questionnaire draft (Appendix 15), which included a number of questions. Following this, the list of questions was collaboratively discussed with the research supervisors of this study. The initial draft was then refined through a ‘domain mapping’ exercise, whereby items were selected and omitted that related to certain domains (Oppenheim, 1992; Robson, 2011). Items that were removed were considered to be superfluous due to other items covering a similar construct. A decision was also made to omit some domains to ensure the questionnaire was a suitable length. Appendix 16 provides an overview of the key constructs/domains and the items that were included to represent that domain. Guidelines from Oppenheim (1992) and Robson (2011) were used to refine the wording of the questionnaire statements so that they were clear for respondents. This included avoiding double-barrel questions, avoiding double negatives, making sure statements were unambiguous and avoidance of leading questions. The majority of these questions were closed questions, with a final section allowing respondents to give a qualitative response. For the closed questions, Likert scales (Likert, 1932) were decided upon due to their ease when responding. Likert scales were considered to be less laborious than scales such as a Thurstone scale (Oppenheim, 1992). The revised questionnaire comprised of five distinct sections.

- Section A obtained information about what language teachers were using (RQ1).
- Section B was related to the frequency of use for particular types of language statements (RQ2).
- Section C concerned why teachers may be using particular forms of language (RQ3).
- Section D gave respondents an opportunity to provide additional qualitative information about teacher language in the classroom for test preparation (RQ1, 2, 3), and/or general comments about the questionnaire.
- Section E obtained some biographical information about the respondents.

Furthermore, the order of items for Sections A-C was randomised to improve respondent quality and motivation (Herzog & Bachman, 1981). The final questionnaire was piloted with two primary school teachers and their feedback was incorporated into the final revised design (Appendix 17). The questionnaire was also timed to determine the duration it took to complete, which was 6-7 minutes; this was considered an acceptable amount of time that would encourage participants to complete the questionnaire. As a result of the piloting process, minor adjustments were made to the wording of certain statements, and keywords such as ‘not’ were made bold and italicised.

3.5.4.1. Sampling and Procedure

The questionnaire was completed by 112 teachers from primary schools. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the biographical information obtained from respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>15 (13%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>97 (87%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Taught</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>40 (36%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>72 (64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>4 (4%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>39 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>25 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience as Teacher (Years)</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>11 (10%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>40 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21+</td>
<td>14 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School’s Ofsted Rating</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>26 (23%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>77 (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires Improvement/Satisfactory</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate/Special Measures</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Rating of school</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>78 (70%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>29 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Additional biographical information about respondents of questionnaire.

Questionnaires were distributed in May 2014 to schools in the LA within which the researcher was employed, as well as through university supervisors and colleagues that had links with primary schools in England. Two forms of the questionnaire were developed; a paper based questionnaire and an online questionnaire. Some schools received a paper based questionnaire, whereas others were directed to complete the online questionnaire. The questionnaire included standardised instructions (Appendix 17). The questionnaire was only focused towards Year 2 and Year 6 teachers in line with the aims of the study. It is difficult to ascertain the response rate, as the online questionnaire was distributed to a large number of people, and it was not possible to establish who had replied from the contacted schools, as the questionnaire was anonymous. However, given the large number of schools contacted and the small number of responses, it is estimated that the response rate was about 10-20%.

3.6. Data Analysis

The mixed methods design of this study consisted of four distinct data collection phases. In the ‘sequential exploratory design’ (Creswell et al., 2003), the teacher interviews, focus groups with children and teacher diaries preceded the questionnaire data collection phase. The sequential nature of the design was necessary to inform the development of the questionnaire, therefore the analysis of teacher interviews, focus groups with children and teacher diaries were all completed prior to the development of the questionnaire. Table 3.1 illustrates the phases of the research, the accompanying analysis and how they related to the research questions of the study. Throughout the analyses, the researcher was mindful of any distinct differences between
Year 2 and Year 6 data. As part of a mixed methods design, Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) have conceptualised processes that occur during the analysis. The processes that were implemented in this study are listed below.

- Data reduction (which involves reducing the dimensionality of the qualitative data).
- Data display (which involves displaying data pictorially).
- Data transformation (which refers to qualitative data that is converted into numerical data to be represented statistically or vice versa).
- Data integration (which involves the consolidation, comparison and integration of qualitative and quantitative data into a coherent whole to make inferences and answer research questions).

The data in teacher interviews were reduced through a thematic analysis (see Section 3.6.1.1) and displayed in thematic maps (see Section 4.2.1). The qualitative data from the teacher interviews were also converted to quantitative data (see Section 3.6.1.2 and 4.2.2). Focus groups were analysed through a thematic analysis (see Section 3.6.2) and displayed in thematic maps (see Section 4.3.1). Teacher diaries were analysed through a content analysis that also included a quantitising process (see Section 3.6.3), and the analysis displayed visually (see Section 4.4). These analyses informed the questionnaire design, which was then analysed through descriptive statistics (see Section 3.6.4) and the data displayed in charts (see Section 4.5). Qualitative responses in the questionnaire were analysed through a content analysis (see Section 3.6.4. and 4.5.4). All data is visually displayed in Chapter 4 (Findings), and analyses provided. Chapter 5 (Discussion) represents the stage the data were integrated into a coherent whole to make meta-inferences and answer the research questions. The specific analyses completed in the study are further described below organised according to the data collection method.

3.6.1. Teacher Interviews

The qualitative data within the teacher interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to identify potential themes and patterns within the data. The codes of the thematic analysis were also converted into numerical information to determine the saliency of particular forms of discussions.

3.6.1.1. Thematic Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Alternative potential methods of data analysis were considered (e.g. interpretative phenomenological analysis, IPA, discourse analysis and grounded theory), but were rejected as they were incompatible with the epistemological position of this study and the research questions. IPA focuses on an interpretative methodology, where a double hermeneutic exists that requires a dual interpretation process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This study did not intend to investigate the lived experience of teachers, and therefore IPA was not used. Discourse analysis was also deemed incompatible with the aims of this study as the emphasis was not on analysing discourses in trying to understand interactions. Narrative forms of inquiry were also disregarded as the intention was not to analyse the way people created meaning in their lives through narratives. The use of grounded theory was also rejected as the aim was not to generate or discover a theory, but rather to identify the type of communication
that was occurring in the classroom. Thematic analysis was chosen as it allowed the language of teachers being used in the classroom towards tests to be summarised effectively without having to surmise intensively about the concealed elements of their accounts. The aim was to identify the language being used, how it was being used, and the potential reasons for using this language. Thematic analysis therefore preserved the individuality of the teachers’ accounts, and satisfied the research questions and aims. A criticism of thematic analysis is that it is not tied to any particular epistemology, which may mean that the analysis that ensues is not in line with the theoretical position of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This dissociation of thematic analysis from a theoretical framework essentially has the consequence of making thematic analysis a flexible and widely adaptable technique for analysis. In line with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this study, the thematic analysis reflected the critical realist position adopted, which was that an external ‘reality’ existed independent of our beliefs and understandings, though the reality could only be gained through socially constructed meanings and personal understanding.

Guidelines produced by Braun and Clarke (2006), and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) informed the thematic analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify two distinct forms of thematic analysis, inductive and deductive. Deductive refers to ‘top down’ thematic analysis that is based on existing knowledge or theory, whereas inductive refers to ‘bottom up’ thematic analysis that is based solely on the data that have been extracted from the data collection methods e.g. interviews, focus groups. Braun and Clarke (2006) imply within their writings that the researcher must identify with either one of these approaches. However, the researcher considers that by treating data to either an inductive thematic analysis or a deductive analysis would result in a loss of quality in analysis. Within the critical realist position, the goal is to study phenomena to get close to the ‘truth’, but at any time our best knowledge may change dependent on society, new evidence and new understandings. For this reason, a ‘hybrid’ inductive and deductive thematic analysis was implemented, as described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). This allowed the evidence gained from existing theory and knowledge to be included in the analysis (deductive analysis), together with a data driven inductive analysis that would allow the data to identify additional patterns and themes, as well as refining existing knowledge. A decision was also made to identify themes at the semantic level as this was compatible with the purpose of this study. Here, themes were generated based on the explicit or surface meaning of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and there was no inclination to go beyond this semantic content towards an interpretative analysis. However, in attempting to understand the reasons underlying teachers’ use of language (RQ3) thought was given to underlying constructs that may be influencing language that could be further investigated in the questionnaire. Furthermore, consideration was also given to psychological processes that may be involved.

The interviews were fully transcribed verbatim, and the data analysis proceeded through a staged process that was adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Table 3.5 outlines the stages of the thematic analysis in further detail.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Analysis Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Development of a coding manual.</td>
<td>A coding manual was produced using Crabtree and Miller's (1999) a-priori approach. Literature relevant to the research questions (e.g. Putwain &amp; Roberts, 2009, 2012; Putwain &amp; Symes, 2011a, 2011b; Sprinkle et al., 2006) was used to construct a coding manual (Appendix 18), which was in line with the research questions of the study. The coding manual was to be used as a tool when generating initial codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Familiarisation with data.</td>
<td>Through the process of transcription the researcher gained initial familiarisation with the data; the transcription process included several readings of the data set. Following transcription, repeated readings of the transcripts took place until the researcher was familiar with the interviews. At this stage, any field and post-facto notes written during the data collection phase were also reviewed to assist data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Generating initial codes.</td>
<td>Coding occurred through a two stage process. Initially, the coding manual (Appendix 18) was used to identify codes within the transcripts. The second stage involved the data driven code generation stage based on the research questions of the study. Codes generated as the analysis proceeded through the transcripts were also referenced back to earlier transcripts to determine whether codes existed or needed refining. The coding of the data were completed by hand, different coloured pens were used to identify codes related to the different research questions (Appendix 19 provides an illustrative example together with the range of codes identified).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Searching for themes.</td>
<td>After the code generation stage, the researcher organised the codes into initial themes (Appendix 20 provides an illustrative example). Deciding whether codes would become themes was dependent on the prevalence of the theme across the data set, as well as significance, i.e. richness in answering the research questions. At this stage Year 2 and Year 6 differences were noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reviewing themes.</td>
<td>At this phase of the analysis, the aim was to refine the themes that had been generated at the previous stage. Some themes were discarded as it was decided that the codes were not prevalent across the data set, and were not sufficient in answering the research questions. Some themes were also collapsed and amalgamated into more global themes. The aim was to identify themes that were mutually exclusive and distinctive from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Defining and naming themes.</td>
<td>This process involved an on-going analysis, where themes were further refined and named. The names of themes were also amended here so that the named themes encapsulated their content, which would immediately give the reader knowledge about the content of the theme (Appendix 21 provides the final themes and their content). Furthermore, at the end of this stage a colleague was also invited to review the data, codes and themes (see Section 3.7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Report production.</td>
<td>This stage is provided in Chapter 4 (Findings). The purpose of this stage was to communicate the analysis to readers to convince them of the merit and validity of the analysis (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006). Quotes/extracts were used to further support themes, with the findings integrated when discussing the research questions (Chapter 5, Discussion).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5. Stages of thematic analysis.

3.6.1.2. Data Transformation

Although the thematic analysis was an effective exercise, it did have a limitation in that it was not able to distinguish between themes that were more prevalent than those that were less prevalent. While deciding themes, decisions were made regarding whether a theme would exist based on its prevalence, significance and relevance to the research questions. However, even though the codes that constituted a theme were identified, the researcher felt there was a loss of data in terms of the prevalence of particular codes/themes. Therefore, a decision was made to convert the qualitative codes and corresponding themes into numerical information, which would allow the reporting of statistical information, a process known as quantitising (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003); specifically, the percentage of the interview that was attributed to discussions of particular themes. This would provide information about the saliency of topics discussed and give further information about the types of discussions that dominated the interview. In order to do this, the final themes that were identified from the thematic analysis were converted into thematic codes (Appendix 22), and then the initial codes from Step 3 of the thematic analysis (see Table 3.5) were coded according to these themes (see Appendix 22 for an illustrated example). This process only occurred for codes relevant to RQ1, as the aim was to ascertain saliency of discussion in the interviews about particular forms of language statements. For each transcript, this then allowed the production of descriptive numerical information e.g. the percentages of various codes that related to the various themes.
that were identified across the data set. Any Year 2 and Year 6 differences were also noted at this stage.

### 3.6.2. Focus Groups

The qualitative data within focus groups were also analysed using thematic analysis to identify potential themes and patterns across the data set. The process of thematic analysis undertaken for the teacher interviews was replicated for the focus groups, with the only amendment occurring to the development of the coding manual. The information gained from the thematic analysis of the teacher interviews was incorporated into the existing coding manual, and this revised coding manual (Appendix 23) was used to code the data (deductive approach), together with a data driven inductive approach. This was in line with the theoretical position of the study, as the information gained from teacher interviews represented new knowledge gained in this area, which was also applicable to the content of the focus groups. Appendix 24 provides an overview of the final codes and themes.

### 3.6.3. Teacher Diaries

The qualitative data within teacher diaries were analysed using a content analysis. Content analysis is referred to as the process by which valid inferences are made from texts in relation to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 1980; Mayring, 2004). The process typically involves a systematic, objective and quantitative analysis of the data, where a data set is categorised, compared and contrasted. This content analysis process helps the researcher identify statements of substance (Robson, 2011; Schwandt, 1997). The aim of the teacher diaries was to allow the teachers to note the language they were using in the classroom, and how they were using the language e.g. frequency, towards the whole class, individual children, etc. The documents in this content analysis were the teacher diary entries which were distributed under a given pretext (see Section 3.5.3). A content analysis was preferred over other forms of analysis as it allowed the researcher to identify common use of language statements across participants, as well as information about how statements were being used. A disadvantage of content analysis is that it does not provide information about underlying motives (Robson, 2011), though this was not a concern here as the content analysis was not attempting to understand why teachers were using particular forms of language. The three main approaches when completing a content analysis include conventional, directed and summative approaches (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The conventional and directed approach was used here, which used information from pre-existing theory (conventional) and analysis directly from the data (directed); this was in line with the philosophical position of the study. The stages of the content analysis are provided in Table 3.6.
Appendix 18, he scale. A five point . An ordinal scale refers to
nts falling under each category
ts were reviewed and refined. A
vers how language was being used,
alyzed with its main purpose to further explore the research area.
that may be
further clarification o
beeded whether the qualitative information obtained from the study was valid,
ntegrated
information was simply collated when presenting the analysis.
Section D, the qualitative element, included two areas for
ystems was then used to categorise the different teacher diary entries (Appendix
some statements were represented in more than one category due to their dual purpose e.g. the statement 'you can do it' can be motivational, as well as reassuring.
The number of statements falling under each category were also counted, and converted to percentages to show their presence across the data set (Appendix 25).
Finally, categories and codes were reviewed and refined. At the end of this stage a colleague was also invited to review the data, codes and categories (see Section 3.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Analysis Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collating the data.</td>
<td>Initially, the information within teacher diaries was collated into a single document. This involved extracting all the data from the eight separate diaries. Year 2 and Year 6 diary entries were kept separate at this point, as the categorisation could have identified differences between teachers of these two Year groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Developing categories.</td>
<td>Categories were then formed based on the written data. This information was then compared to pre-existing coding manuals that had been developed (Appendix 18, 23) to determine extra categories. Any superfluous categories were also omitted at this stage. The aim was to produce a list of categories that were mutually exclusive. This formed the basis of the category system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Categorising diary entries.</td>
<td>The category system was then used to categorise the different teacher diary entries (Appendix 25). Some statements were represented in more than one category due to their dual purpose e.g. the statement 'you can do it' can be motivational, as well as reassuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quantitising.</td>
<td>The number of statements falling under each category were also counted, and converted to percentages to show their presence across the data set (Appendix 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Further coding.</td>
<td>Each statement was also coded according to whether it was directed at an individual child, whole class, or both, to signify how the language was being used. Any statements that included a mixture of messages were also identified (Appendix 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reviewing categories.</td>
<td>Finally, categories and codes were reviewed and refined. At the end of this stage a colleague was also invited to review the data, codes and categories (see Section 3.7).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6. Stages of content analysis.

3.6.4. Questionnaire

The questionnaire included five distinct sections (see Section 3.5.4). Sections A-C comprised of different statements and were answered using Likert items. A five point Likert item scale was used for all the items (Appendix 17). The data obtained were treated as ordinal data, as there is contention over whether Likert items and scales can be considered interval data (Allen & Seaman, 2007; Brown, 2011; Jamieson, 2004; Oppenheim, 1992). An ordinal scale refers to responses that can be ordered or ranked, whereas interval scales show the order of items, but with the distinction of having equal intervals between the points of the scale. In Likert item scales, there is disagreement over whether the points in the scale are equidistant and truly represent an interval scale. For this reason, the responses were analysed in terms of the proportion and percentages of responses for particular items. For analysis, respondents' scores were converted to numbers. For example, for every statement the item scale ranged from numbers 1-5, with 5 indicating the highest scores (e.g. strongly agree, always), and 1 indicating the lowest score (strongly disagree, never). Negatively worded statements were reverse scored. Questionnaire items were then submerged into their pre-identified constructs (Appendix 16) when presenting the analysis. Section D, the qualitative element, included two areas for responses, and therefore responses were separated according to whether they related to teacher communication, or whether responses related to a general aspect about the questionnaire. This information was simply collated (Appendix 27) and subjected to a content analysis (the process used for the content analysis of teacher diaries was largely replicated), and this information was integrated when drawing meta-inferences (Section 3.7). The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine whether the qualitative information obtained from the study was valid, as well as further clarification over how language was being used, and the potential beliefs and attitudes that may be affecting language use. The questionnaire was considered to be of a ‘pilot’ nature, with its main purpose to further explore the research area. For these reasons, and the limitations of the questionnaire (e.g. small sample size, lack of statistical power and selective sample) further refinement and analysis such as item analysis, factor analysis and correlational analysis was not completed. Furthermore, some of the constructs only consisted of two items,
which is not considered to be statistically acceptable when surveying beliefs and attitudes (Oppenheim, 1992).

3.7. Triangulation, Reliability and Validity

Triangulation is the combination of methods in a study of the same phenomenon. The combination of several different kinds of data from different sources allows greater accuracy in analysis (Denzin, 1978). Bouchard (1976) states that the convergence of methods or the agreement between methods has the effect of increasing researchers’ confidence that results are valid and are not a methodological artefact. A mixed methods design was employed in this study to allow multiple methods to examine teacher language being used in primary classrooms when preparing children for important tests. The data from the different methods was largely analysed separately with the data integrated at the end of the analysis. The researcher did not feel that a single method e.g. interviews or the questionnaire was sufficient to answer the research questions. Furthermore, data also needed to be collected from children to ensure the research was not skewed towards teacher perspectives. The qualitative and quantitative information from a number of sources was intended to supplement each other and allow a critical examination of teacher language, thus providing a meaningful account of the phenomena under the study. The triangulation of methods in this study was for the purpose of increasing validity (Denzin, 1978). This triangulation alleviated some of the weaknesses that were present in the methods of data collection. For example, the interview and focus groups were prone to biases such as socially desirable answers, but the use of questionnaire alleviated this issue to a certain extent. The questionnaire and its distribution created a greater social distance between the researcher and respondents, and thus allowed greater anonymity that reduced the likelihood of respondents providing responses to please the researcher. Furthermore, the qualitative component of the questionnaire also provided greater generalisability of results, as well as allowing further information to emerge related to the area of study that may have not arisen in the sample of teachers and children that were interviewed. The content analysis of the teacher diaries was also compared to the thematic analysis of the teacher interviews to further enhance validity. Ultimately, the use of multiple data collection stages counter-balanced the strengths and weaknesses of the methods within the research design to produce more valid results (Jick, 1979).

This cross validation triangulation approach was able to generate rich and comprehensive exploratory data related to the use of teacher language in primary classrooms towards tests. The data from the various methods were largely consistent, though there were discrepancies e.g. mainly due to variations in language use by teachers. The various data were incorporated and reconciled during the data integration phase, where meta-inferences were generated. This process enriched the information that had already been obtained and provided greater insight into teacher language use. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the analysis and subsequent data integration. The end product of this mixed methods design is ‘thick description’ and ‘holistic work’ (Jick, 1979). This was obtained by the use of qualitative and quantitative data. The
qualitative data provided richness and clarity, whereas the quantitative data provided precision and reproducibility.

A criticism geared towards mixed methods design is the reliability related to the overall data integration; the stage at which all the data analyses are integrated to produce the final report respective to the research questions (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). The researcher is the sole person who has the task of organising the methods and analyses to find a logical pattern. This piecing of information into a coherent whole is based on the researcher’s ingenuity, intuition and familiarity with the research and methodology. It is undoubtedly an idiosyncratic process, whereby another researcher or reader is unlikely to replicate the processes and thinking that has occurred in integrating the data. Thus, a question remains over the reliability of the data integration process. To overcome these issues, the researcher subscribed to conducting and documenting research through principles such as commitment and rigour, and transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2000). The aim of this general approach was to increase the trustworthiness of the research, which included providing information on processes undertaken, together with further documentation presented in appendices, so as to provide an audit trail. In addition to this general approach, reliability issues were addressed within particular methods. For example, the thematic analysis and content analysis stages all involved another researcher (trainee Educational Psychologist completing a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology) coding sections of qualitative data, and comparing these codes with the researcher’s codes (see Appendix 26 for a detailed overview of the inter-coder process). A similar process was also conducted on the content of themes. For the questionnaire, although internal consistency of the items was not calculated, the responses to the items that related to the same construct
In mixed methods designs there is a dual issue with respect to reliability and validity. There is the reliability and validity of the general approach, as well the reliability and validity of individual methods. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) suggest that ‘legitimation’ as a reliability and validity measure is more acceptable to mixed methods research. Legitimation refers to the process whereby the researcher draws inferences from the different methods, with these inferences being credible, trustworthy, dependable, transferable, and/or confirmable. Inferences occur at the end of individual stages of analysis, whereas meta-inferences relate to the global inferences that are made when data is integrated (Figure 3.1). Onwuegbuzie and Johnson’s (2006) framework for legitimation was considered throughout the study. Table 3.7 provides further detail of the processes that the researcher engaged in to produce credible research i.e. to improve inference quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Relevance to Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Integration</td>
<td>The extent to which the relationship between quantitative and qualitative sampling designs produces quality meta-inferences.</td>
<td>The purpose of this research was to use both qualitative and quantitative methods from a number of sources to yield quality meta-inferences. The researcher acknowledged that the samples for the teacher interviews, diaries and questionnaires were primarily selected on ease of accessibility and were not a random sample. Furthermore, those that decided to participate in the study were a self-selecting sample of designated teachers. The types of schools that participated were generally ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ schools. Similarly, the focus groups, although diverse, were also from schools where the headteacher had accepted for the research to proceed. Therefore, the information obtained in this study can only be considered to be representative of a subset of the knowledge there is with respect to teacher language use in primary classrooms when preparing children for important tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside-Outside</td>
<td>The extent to which the researcher accurately presents and appropriately utilises the insider’s views and the observer’s views for description and explanation.</td>
<td>Insider views were presented through the combination of teacher interviews with the questionnaire. The thematic analysis of the teacher interviews informed the questionnaire, and respondents completing the questionnaire would be validating the thematic analysis that was initially completed. During the interviews and focus groups, conversations were summarised and relayed back to participants to determine whether they represented their views; a form of member checking. Also during this process field notes were taken that were incorporated into the analyses. Outsider views were provided by the researcher through the analyses, but also through the involvement of a colleague researcher. The colleague researcher reviewed codes and themes until there was 100% agreement. This occurred for the thematic analyses and content analyses. For the questionnaire, the data were objective and presented without any modification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness Minimisation</td>
<td>The extent to which the weaknesses from one approach is compensated by the strengths of another.</td>
<td>Qualitative data provided richness and clarity. Quantitative data provided precision and reproducibility. The questionnaire also provided greater generalisability (taking into consideration the sample limitations). Teacher diaries offered greater sensitivity to elucidating data that could have been missed in interviews and focus groups. Triangulation of methods increased reliability and validity of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>The extent to which the researcher has minimised the potential problem where the meta-inferences could be affected by reversing the sequence of the qualitative and quantitative phases.</td>
<td>The qualitative stages e.g. teacher interviews, focus groups with children and teacher diaries preceded the questionnaire design. It is plausible that the selective sample in these stages may have provided data that was skewed towards a particular sample and not representative of the wider population. For this reason, the questionnaire was distributed to a wider sample beyond those initially interviewed. The questionnaire also included a qualitative section for respondents to provide information about other forms of language they use. This hoped to address the sequential biases on the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>The extent to which quantitising or qualitising produces quality meta-inferences.</td>
<td>To prevent the researcher underweighting or overweighting particular themes in the teacher interviews that were of a substantial nature, the researcher converted codes/themes in the teacher interviews into numerical information representing their prevalence across the interviews. In the content analysis of teacher diaries, a similar approach was also adopted. The purpose was to obtain more meaning into the data that could not be represented by simply using qualitative information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paradigmatic mixing | The extent to which the researcher's philosophical beliefs that underlie the quantitative and qualitative approaches are successfully combined into a usable package. | The philosophical beliefs of the researcher informed all stages of the research, including design, data collection, data analysis and data integration. For example, analyses incorporated inductive and deductive approaches. The researcher was also mindful that the research, with its sample limitations, could only produce knowledge that was relevant to a certain sample, and future research would need to address these limitations.

Multiple Validities | The extent to which all relevant research strategies are utilised and the research can be considered high on the multiple relevant validities. | The reliability/validity of individual methods was considered throughout the research. The qualitative analyses included a form of member checking as the interviews/focus groups progressed, as well as outsider reliability checks. The questionnaire items were compared to the other items within their constructs, as a proxy internal consistency check. When paper questionnaires were collected, respondents were asked if they felt it was representative of their classroom instruction, and the responses suggested this was true.

Political | The extent to which consumers value the meta-inferences that are derived from qualitative and quantitative components. | Pluralism of perspectives was advocated to participants and the university’s research team. The emphasis was to generate practical results that people would value, as it provides important answers to questions about teacher language in primary classrooms.

| Table 3.7. Legitimation considerations. Description obtained from Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006).  

3.8. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines (BPS, 2009a, 2009b). An application for ethical approval was submitted to the University of Manchester School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED) Research Risk and Ethics Assessment (RREA) team, and permission was subsequently given in July 2013 to conduct the study. All teachers and children involved were given as much opportunity as possible to understand the nature, purpose and anticipated consequences of taking part in the study. The process of informed consent ensured the school, teachers and children understood what they were agreeing to, what would happen to the data produced and how the data would be used. Teachers and children were advised of the voluntary nature of the research and their right to withdraw at any time without incurring any consequences. For children, consent for their involvement was obtained from their parents. A simplified information sheet was also produced for children. Prior to initiation of the research, children participating in the study were also thoroughly informed of the nature of the research in child-friendly terms, and their verbal assent was obtained. All teachers and children were assured of complete anonymity and all information gathered was treated as confidential. Identifying information (e.g. a teacher/child’s name) was not collected. Finally, teachers and children were debriefed at the end of their participation in accordance with ethical guidelines (BPS, 2009a, 2009b). The school and teachers that took part will be provided with a summary of the findings of the study in the near future once this thesis has satisfied the examiners. The intention is to provide a summary of the themes and findings to teachers of schools that participated; the summary will also be provided on a website for those that completed the online questionnaire, with an opportunity to contact the researcher to further discuss. Furthermore, a summary will also be presented to the LA’s educational psychology service (EPS). Children that participated in the study will also receive a child-friendly summary of the information obtained through the focus groups.

In addition to the above ethical considerations, the research did not attempt to address any sensitive or contentious issues that would have caused distress within the participants e.g. children and teachers. However, within any research involving participants there is always a
chance that in the rare instance a participant may become distressed. Specifically, the researcher was mindful that the process of interviewing could challenge a teacher’s professional competence, and the context which they worked in (e.g. performance related pay, challenging class, prospect of poor results in tests) could have resulted in the teacher becoming distressed. This did not occur within this study, though safeguards were implemented to ensure these situations could be managed. Throughout the interviews, the researcher ensured all questioning occurred in a non-judgemental manner and the aim was to put the participant at ease. Furthermore, as the researcher was conducting the interviews and focus groups, the researcher was mindful of any signs of distress in the participants, where it may be necessary to console the participant. The researcher also had a protocol to stop the data collection if participants were distressed, and to also support them. If this were to occur, then participants would be offered opportunities to discuss any issues, and the content of interviews and focus groups would be reviewed to identify the likelihood of the research continuing and causing distress to other participants. The researcher was also aware of further referral avenues to support participants that became distressed e.g. pastoral support, supervision.

3.9. Summary

This chapter has comprehensively discussed the methodology that has been used to answer the study’s research questions. The philosophical position within which the research was conducted was initially described, with further discussion throughout the chapter in terms of how it related to the data collection and analysis methods. The data collection methods e.g. teacher interviews, focus groups with children, teacher diaries and teacher questionnaire were also detailed, together with the analysis of these methods. The chapter ended by discussing the data integration, reliability and validity issues concerning the research, as well as important ethical considerations. Throughout the chapter, a critique has been provided related to the design, data collection methods, data analysis and data integration. The subsequent chapter presents the findings of this study focusing on the analysis from the data collection methods.
CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter is organised into the different phases of data collection. The order of the phases is representative of the order in which they occurred during the study.

- Phase 1 - Teacher interviews.
- Phase 2 - Focus groups with children.
- Phase 3 - Teacher diaries.
- Phase 4 - Teacher questionnaire.

Within each data collection method the analysis and findings are presented. Furthermore, each analysis begins by referencing the research question(s) to which the analysis relates to. Table 4.1 is provided below to illustrate an overview of the methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question (RQ)</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Analysis Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis/quantitising data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus Groups with children</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher diaries</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How are teachers using these different forms of language statements?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher diaries</td>
<td>Content analysis/quantitising data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: Why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom when preparing children for important tests?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive analysis/content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: Are children aware of the language being used by teachers related to important tests?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus Groups with children</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Research questions and their corresponding data collection and analysis methods.

4.2. Teacher Interviews

The teacher interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis (see Section 3.6.1.1). Furthermore, the codes generated during the thematic analysis were also converted to numerical information through a process known as quantitising (see Section 3.6.1.2.). Throughout the analysis, Year 2 and Year 6 differences were considered, and subsequently commented upon if deemed to be significant.
4.2.1. Thematic Analysis

When reviewing the data, the thematic analysis identified a total of eight global themes that summarised discussions. The global themes were typically comprised of constituent themes that organised pieces of data. For RQ1, ‘what types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?’, four global themes were identified (Themes 1-4). Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the thematic analysis related to this research question.

Figure 4.1. Themes 1-4 - Thematic analysis of teacher interviews (RQ1).

For RQ2, ‘how are teachers using these different forms of language statements?’, three global themes were identified (Themes 5-7). Figure 4.2 provides an overview of this thematic analysis.

Figure 4.2. Themes 5-7 - Thematic analysis of teacher interviews (RQ2).
For RQ3, ‘why are teachers using particular forms of language statements in the classroom?’, a single global theme was identified (Theme 8), which comprised of a number of themes relating to this research question. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of the thematic analysis for this research question.

These eight themes are further explored in this chapter. It is noteworthy to mention prior to any analysis that only a selection of interview extracts are used in support of the emergent themes and subsequent global themes, which is necessary to maintain the flow and succinct nature of the analysis, and to also adhere to the word count of this report. Complete interview transcripts are attached for interested readers (Appendix 2-9).

4.2.1.1. Consequential Outcome Based Language Statements - Theme 1

This global theme encapsulated teacher language in the classroom that was concerned with the outcomes of tests, such as the SATs. The analysis identified that teachers were using language that communicated to children the importance of the test outcome, and the effect the outcome
would have for the children. Rewards were used to motivate children to do better in tests. This included tangible materialistic rewards.

P: I try to say that we’re really good and we’re going to show them, and sometimes there’s a carrot involved, we’ll have to go on a trip or treat, we have ice creams. [Participant 5, Appendix 6, Yr 2, Lines 105-106]

Other types of statements were more geared towards emphasising the internal self-reward element of doing well in the tests.

P: It’s more for them, look where you started in September, look where you are now, I think it’s just that self-belief and that self-reward that we try and do more than anything. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 389-390].

Furthermore, the consequence of test performance was framed in both a positive and negative manner. For example, teachers’ communicated what outcome a positive performance would have, and conversely the outcome of not doing well in tests.

P: I think it’s making a comparison like of what it would be like if they did well and what if they didn’t. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Line 194].

The positive outcomes of good test results, e.g. in SATs, was communicated to children. This included the effect on their future career, as well as implications for secondary school, such as the ability class they would be placed in.

P: And say well do you want to do well, and if you don’t do it, if you’re not doing the best now, it makes it so much harder later on to do things. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, Lines 182-183]

P: We might say wouldn’t it be great if you went with those marks, you know good grief they’ll be looking at you thinking, or they might say a comment like will I be in the top set because I’ve got that you know, and I think trying to put it on them to say it rather than us to make a judgement, I think you know they do that, if they get good SATs results then they’ll be in the top sets. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 366-369].

The outcome of the test result was also referenced to how others would view the result e.g. parents and teachers, as well as how the child would feel if they attained a particular grade. In some situations, it was explained to children that the teacher would also be culpable for their poor performance.

P: Sometimes if a child hasn’t been doing so well you go oh me and you are going to be stood in Mrs [-----]’s office together explaining why we haven’t got there. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, Lines 168-170]

P: Keep the parents involved, make the parents proud, you make us proud and most important is make proud of yourselves really, do you know to work hard all year then to throw it all away by not doing your best on your paper. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 209-211]

P: If you open your piece of paper and it says a level something when really you’re capable of being a level higher then how are you going to feel, how are your parents going to feel, and we will say it only if we like, the child is like not really pulling their weight and could work a lot harder and have a lot more potential. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 203-206]

Across the interviews, it was also identified that teachers were using threat-based language to motivate children to do better in the tests. However, conversations suggested that this form of communication was infrequent and was used as a last resort due to frustration, and was
generally directed towards particular children e.g. those underperforming rather than the whole class.

P: The only thing I might veer towards that is, I’ve got a child whose genuinely underperforming because they’re not actually applying themselves in which case I might say to them actually you’re not actually doing as well as I thought you might be and I’m a little bit worried about you, and I perhaps will have the conversation then, but actually using that sort of threatening ultimatum kind of language would actually just worry your low achievers. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Yr 6, Lines 151-154]

P: So sometimes it’s just sheer frustration and I don’t know, and I think it’s marginally fairer than yelling at them because we don’t yell, but what else can you do when you’ve done all the coaxing that you need to do. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, 217-218]

Finally, some teachers were averse to using threat-based communication or even any communication that related to outcomes, which highlights the variability in teacher communication in primary classrooms.

P: Don’t really dwell on the negative side to be honest really, don’t do a lot of negative really, it’s rewarding the positive and encouraging them and again like I said before my huge philosophy in class is the mutual respect thing, and you know I rarely have to tell them off like that, I just, it’s more positive than negative definitely. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 224-226].

P: No, I don’t think I even use it on the other side, like I don’t put the emphasis on the result, I put the emphasis on showing, just showing what they can do and what they can do is good for them you know. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, 189-190]

4.2.1.2. Efficacious Communication - Theme 2

This global theme encapsulated a range of statements that had the purpose of prompting children to do better in tests. The contents of the theme included motivational language statements, effort oriented language and praise-based language, as well as teacher communication that provided feedback to children about their work and helped them develop their skills and knowledge. Skill development communication was also specifically related to exam technique. This global theme was broadly related to improving children’s self-efficacy at a number of levels e.g. self-belief, confidence, skill development and knowledge development.

In the interviews, the teachers made reference to using challenging and competitive language to motivate children to do better in tests. Children were challenged by communicating to them to push themselves and achieve a certain grade e.g. during preparations. Some communication also challenged children to determine who could perform the best in the class. This type of challenging and competitive language was generally reserved for children considered high attaining.

P: It’s hard, children have different opinions, the more academic children are probably going to be more excited about the highest possible they can get, either a 3/4 or a 5. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 69-70]

P: Just basically almost make a bit of a competition, let’s see can you beat your last score, how are we going to, and lots and lots of praise. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Lines 140-142]
Teachers in the classroom were also communicating to children that the tests were an opportunity for them to demonstrate their skills and progress to the teacher and other people. This included comments such as showing off skills, showing off improvement, and showing knowledge through tests.

P: So I’d say things like we need to show off, we need to show how clever we are and that’s what we can do, and I don’t see, I try to say that we’re really good and we’re going to show them. [Participant 5, Appendix 6, Yr 2, Lines 104-105]

P: And I think some of them, I kind of say it’s a way to show off what you can do you know, if you can do it show me it and I’ll give you credit for it. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 411-412]

P: So I do say you’ll be doing writing next week and this reading to show how good you are and what you’ve learnt in Year 1 and Year 2, so I try to put it as a chance for them to show off what they’ve got. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, Lines 60-61]

A substantial number of statements were also identified across the teacher interviews that were related to effort and communicating to children to try their best. This form of communication seemed to be directed towards the whole class. Some teachers also communicated to children that as long as they have tried their best then the teacher would be pleased regardless of the outcome of the tests.

P: So it’s all about encouraging them to do the best that they can do, …we do a pinky promise at the beginning of the year and we say, what do we want to do from our work, and they say, we want to try our best, so that’s part of our pinky promise that we try our best. [Participant 1, Appendix 2, Yr 2, Lines 138-140]

P: No matter what level you get at the end if we are talking about the SATs, if you’ve tried your very best then that’s all anyone will ever ask of you, so that’s something we will constantly repeat throughout the year, so even if things aren’t going well for them and they find some things difficult or they’re worried they’re not going to get a certain level then we’ll keep relaying that message that if you’re trying your hardest then you’ve done as much as you can. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 198-202]

Telling children to try their best was also linked to the high expectations that teachers had for children, which resulted in teachers communicating these high expectations when preparing children and developing their skills and knowledge. This level of communication seemed to be aimed at the whole class, but also directly communicated to individual children.

P: I might be in terms of I don’t want to see that work because that’s not your best, or yes there’s some threat involved in that but not related to the SATs.
I: That’s just normal classroom practice.
P: Hopefully yes. [Participant 5, Appendix 6, Yr 2, Lines 293-296]

P: I’ll say you know what, you could do so much better than this you know, let’s go for the best result we can. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Yr 6, Line 157]

P: In my classroom there’s no reason why anybody in here can’t get a level 5, some of them won’t so to be fair three quarters of them did this year, so I just have that high expectation for everybody. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Yr 6, Lines 220-221]

The interviews also suggested that teachers were using a number of language statements that were aimed at developing children’s self-belief and confidence. This type of communication included praise and encouragement, as well as statements that gave children the confidence
they could do a particular task/test. These statements were used for general preparation in class and also prior to important tests.

P: And there’s that praise of well look you’ve got the first three right it’s just this fourth one, right let’s have a look at it, and I think it’s, it’s building it all the time and you know it’s slowly drip feeding in you know, you can do that little step that doesn’t mean you can’t do the whole thing you know, and I think it is hard because they do put quite a bit of pressure on themselves some of them you know, and it’s about trying to build that up in a better way I think.

I: So there was one aspect of the language that you’re using is to build their confidence and their belief that they can do it.

P: Yes. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 184-191]

P: Just encouraging them to do it again, just saying that’s brilliant how can we improve it even more. [Participant 1, Appendix 2, Yr 2, Lines 66-67]

I: The reason you’re doing that is to build their confidence?

P: Yes, yes, because I think sometimes that can be the biggest barrier to them because they think I can’t do it, some of them or some of them think they can do it and they don’t, they do it quite quickly and they rush and they don’t think about what they have learnt and like think oh I could use that for that, so it’s getting them to use their skills and yes think positively. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, Lines 98-102]

Another form of efficacious communication was related to skill and knowledge development. Targets and levels were used by teachers to highlight children’s current level of knowledge and skills, and to indicate areas for improvement. This generally occurred in class preparation, with the aim of supporting children to do better in tests. It seemed this communication was used to assist children in regulating their own learning and becoming independent, so they could demonstrate the knowledge in tests.

P: They’re aware of but not as explicitly as Year 6 where they look and mark their own work, they’re only aware of it in their writing, they might have a writing target and they’re not aware of levels of 2s and 1s and 3s, they’re aware of the next step in the learning but not in terms of a level because I’ve not found that useful, but some teachers swear by it, they do know the levels in the maths because we have these ‘I cans’ so they would know what was 2a, 2b, and what they need to achieve. [Participant 5, Appendix 6, Yr 2, Lines 132-136]

P: Well it’s there [targets] and also if they highlight, I just say let’s find it, let’s find it in your book, show me the evidence that you’ve got that you can do that, and they’ll go oh but I can, show me and that to me is, again it’s proving to me that they’ve not just highlighted it willy nilly anyway but also they can do it, also it’s a massive boost for them so, oh yes, I’ve not done that have I? But I could show you, so I don’t know, it’s just second nature really. [Participant 1, Appendix 2, Yr 2, Lines 74-78]

P: Check that it’s your best work, remember all your targets, have you done them, have you included them, because they have targets across the year but I do remind them even if they’ve achieved that target and they’re given a new one, they still need to make sure they’re using that in the current work. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, Lines 105-107]

Similarly, teachers were providing feedback to children in order to develop their knowledge and skills. Feedback was given for general classroom tasks and also when reviewing practice papers and mock tests the children completed. The specific information in these statements communicated to children how they could improve.
I: And you said whilst you are going through the year you would do some practice papers or mock tests, when after they’ve done it in say in exam type conditions, do you ever go back and communicate to them and say to them right this question this is how to answer it?

P: Yes, what we would do, if we do the test or whatever I do a few different ways, sometimes I mark it as a class.

I: Yes.

P: So I might have them all in, I’d go through the question on the board, right talk to your partner how did we answer this question, I think you do this, I think you know then I’ll kind of right let’s look at the mark scheme, so we always get the big mark scheme right, what does the paper say we’ve got to do and you know and so we, it gives them a chance to, it’s not just me saying right wrong right you know, so we always discuss each question or sometimes we might just do it in groups, so we might just take one group out to mark your paper and as a group we’ll discuss who got which bit right, I give them extra marks for working out and you know it’s like that just try and break it, other times I just mark them and then we give them back and we go through it in groups, but we always go through the answers with them. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 243-256]

As noted above, children were given opportunities to complete practice papers and questions, and Year 6 children practised the SATs in test like conditions to get them accustomed to the test experience. In addition to the development of knowledge through feedback, teachers also commented that they taught children specific exam skills and technique. This included skills such as moving on if they were stuck and showing their working out.

P: Yes, because they can bob their hand up anytime during, it could just be a little rub on their arm or their back, come on have a little go and have a think about it and if you’re really stuck move on, sometimes you just say pop a number down if it’s a maths one just have a go, if you’re not sure put down what you think and we can move on, and often the next, and sometimes then tell them as well that the next question they might find a bit easier. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, Lines 111-114]

4.2.1.3. Reassuring and Calming Messages - Theme 3

The thematic analysis identified a distinct form of communication that was being used by teachers, which could not be incorporated into the global theme of efficacious communication. Reassuring and calming messages categorised statements that had the purpose of reassuring and calming children about the tests that were approaching. However, it is possible there is a link between these statements and statements that are intended to develop children’s self-belief and confidence, as identified in Section 4.2.1.2. The decision was made to categorise reassuring and calming messages as a separate global theme. However, it should be noted that some of the reassuring and calming communication can also have a confidence building effect on children. For example, a statement such as ‘you can do it’ can develop a child’s confidence through reassurance about the task. Furthermore, communicating to children that they are able to do well in tests/tasks can also develop children’s confidence and self-belief. The reassuring and calming messages communicated by teachers including downplaying the importance of tests, reminding children about prior successes, and communicating to children that they could complete the test/task.

P: Some people might just need reassuring that they are capable of doing it and not to worry about it because some children will panic when especially the closer it comes to the tests, so sometimes it’s like putting your arms around the shoulder to reassure them that it’s not, they’ll be fine or that we’ve got faith in them, that they’ll do really well. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 117-120]
P: We try and stress they're not the be all and end all because we do them all through the year, and I’m quite forceful in that I'll say as long as you’ve made progress that is the main thing you know. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 66-67]

P: So I think reassuring and calming is something that we will lean towards more, if they do a practice test or do some questions and they don’t get it then we say it’s not the end of the world, and we can work on what you’ve got wrong and try and get the right answers. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 173-175]

P: You can still be going around saying brilliant remember what we’ve got to do next you know, not actually giving them the help but just that reassurance and that you know you can do it, come on we’ve done this before. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 211-212]

P: Remember you can do it, just remember what you did there, remember how you started and all the skills you had, so it’s getting them to kind of remember that they can do it and they’ve already acquired the skills to do it. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, Lines 95-97]

4.2.1.4. Variable Communication Related to Reminders and Importance of SATs/Tests - Theme 4

The thematic analysis found that communication related to important tests such as the SATs varied across Year groups. For example, SATs were openly communicated in Year 6, and children were aware of them and knew when they would be occurring. In Year 6, teachers also commented that they would give children reminders that the SATs were approaching, though teachers commented that this was infrequent, and reminders tended to be given nearer the time of the SATs.

P: I think they know when they are you know, I think like things like that half term holiday, right this is your last holiday we’ve got so many weeks, but I don’t remind them daily or I might just mention it once and then we you know.
I: Once a week?
P: Yes but I don’t, I try and not keep mentioning it, I think they know when they are and you know. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 282-286]

Teachers in Year 2 tended not to communicate to children the importance of national tests, and also did not routinely give reminders to children that these tests were approaching.

I: Do any children worry that’s it going to come up or.
P: No I don’t think so, I think the Christmas ones if the Year 1s have been with me they’ve forgotten, they’ve got the Christmas ones coming up, so they’re completely oblivious when they walk in and I never tell them what they’re going to do the next day. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, Lines 300-303]

However, there were Year 2 teachers that referred to these tests as SATs, whereas others used the term ‘tasks’ instead, thus suggesting variability in practice amongst Year 2 teachers.

I: So you actually communicate to them that it’s SATs that you will be doing?
P: Yes we’re talking about Year 2 and right from the beginning of Year 2, at the end of the year you’ll be doing your SATs and of course when they’re in a mixed class a lot of the Year 1s have seen the Year 2s go through it, so they’ve had to disappear to other classrooms or have another teacher while the Year 2s have done them, so they know something happens in May, and it’s important that they do the best. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Year 2, Lines 43-47].
Furthermore, teachers in Year 6 communicated to children the importance of tests such as SATs for the children's future e.g. secondary school, career and job prospects. This was more prominent in discussions with Year 6 teachers than Year 2 teachers, and often outcomes were communicated (see Section 4.2.1.1).

P: Basically I’m telling them high schools need to know what level they’re at and it will have an impact on what set you’re in, and if you don’t try hard in these then you might be in a set you shouldn’t be in and it might take you a long time to get into the set you should be in.

P: We say obviously as they are approaching high school this is basically the most important time of their education so far, and it’s almost like their first rung of the ladder in terms of their GCSEs, A levels, and so if they want to progress in education. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 101-103, 107-109]

4.2.1.5. Combination of Language Statements - Theme 5

The thematic analysis was able to identify that teachers’ statements in the classroom were not entirely composed of a single element. The analysis suggested that there were a number of instances where teachers were using a combination of statements that contained more than one element. In the extract below, the teacher talks about using confidence building language together with statements about how to improve knowledge.

P: I would say to my revision group in the afternoon that you are more than capable of getting the level 5 on the paper if you believe in yourself, but I wouldn’t say but currently you’re working on a 4b, so we do have the conversation of how to get to the next level but it’s not as benchmarked as it is on paper. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 129-131]

The same teacher also talks about how outcome based language is used together with a reassuring statement.

P: We need to embrace it and when high school come in and talk to me in July about moving onto high school that you know, they all want to know what level you got in your SATs, but I will also tell them what I will assess you at, so I said so if you have a bad day on the test day it’s not the end of the world, I’ll say that you’re definitely working at this level, but on the day he’s missed a page out or so, they’re not the end of the world for them. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 147-151]

Another example is the teacher communicating expectation followed by what the child needs to do to meet this expectation.

P: I think I do try and say look, you’re meant to be at this level, but we’ve got these three things to do, so what do you think we should do, right well I’ll do them then. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 309-310]

The examples provided indicate that this combinative use of language is directed at the whole class and specific children. In another interview, a teacher talks about how they would motivate a high attaining child if they were not applying themselves.

P: I’ll say you know what, you could do so much better than this you know, let’s go for the best result we can, so perhaps in that case I’d say well I’d like to see you doing really well in high school, can you step it up a notch as you were and can you apply yourself a little bit more readily to your work. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Yr 6, Lines 157-159]
Here, the teacher uses expectation communication together with the effort required in order to motivate the child. The emphasis is on the process that the child must complete, i.e. effort, rather than the development of knowledge. This absence may be due to the teacher feeling this is the communication that the child needs (see Section 4.2.1.7).

4.2.1.6. Time Dependent Language Use - Theme 6

This theme was the least prevalent of all the themes in the analysis, with only three instances coded across the data set of the eight interviews. However, this theme was regarded as highly significant for RQ2 that investigated how teacher statements were being used in the classroom. The three instances are detailed in the extracts below.

P: Making them ready without making it a stressful experience, and we reassure them of that from January onwards. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 21-22]

P: It’s very gradual throughout the year that we will slowly like increase the importance of it and yes, so like if children are being silly within a lesson and it’s coming closer to the SATs, we’ll say like do you realise how close we are? Do you realise the reason we are doing this? So making the children understand that the work that we are doing, whatever work we are doing now is for a very good reason, it’s obviously to help them as well, but as the year goes on we will slowly introduce parts of the SATs and if things don’t go right at the beginning then they’ve still got a long way to go and it’s not to panic type thing, but as things get closer and behaviour is an issue then that’s something we will stamp down on, so we obviously highlight the importance the closer we get to it. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 182-189]

P: We always say at the beginning of the year that if you try your very best and no one will ever say anything bad, so if you’ve got a level 4 because you’ve tried fantastically hard then that’s what you deserve and that’s fantastic, and if you get a level 2 but you’ve tried a 100% then that’s fantastic, so that’s something that we always say to the children at the beginning of Year 6, no matter what level you get at the end if we are talking about the SATs, if you’ve tried your very best then that’s all anyone will ever ask of you. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 194-199]

Despite the relatively low incidence of this theme, this theme is particularly relevant to how teachers use language in the classroom. At different time points of the year, as recognised in the extracts above, teachers are likely to adjust their language when prompting children to prepare for tests.

4.2.1.7. Tailoring Communication to Children’s Characteristics - Theme 7

In conducting the analysis, a theme emerged across the data set which related to how teachers were using language statements. From some of the extracts outlined above, there is an indication that some language is directed at the whole class, whereas other language is directed at specific children or specific groups of children. This theme further recognises teachers’ judicious use of language statements towards children. The analysis found that teachers were aware of how children can respond to tests differently, and what was needed to motivate them. In the extract below, the teacher recognises this variability, and that lower attaining children need their confidence building, as well as support to develop their knowledge.

P: Some are desperate to know what level they’ve got and they want to get the highest possible level and they are constantly asking what level did I get, others won’t even ask and they don’t even want to know what level because they are that worried about it, so yes there are times like that with the ones that are a lower level,
you just got to work on a 1 to 1 basis or small groups and show them they are capable if they are and see how far they can push, when they realise they are answering higher order questions, they get, it’s like fantastic and they can’t really believe it, so we used to try and motivate them to continue to push themselves to try and find that confidence within them really. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 225-231]

Similarly, another teacher recognises the need for different support and communication for particular children.

P: And I think it’s just coaxing them gently rather than panicking them, I think that and a lot of the competitive ones love the challenge of trying to you know to put a colon in a piece of writing or you know trying to push themselves really, where the others who are a bit nervous and more apprehensive they see that checklist as their guide and they will do that and quietly get on with that and move them onto the next one. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 160-163]

The analysis also suggested that attainment driven communication is earmarked for children who are capable of achieving higher levels.

P: And for the more able children you can say something like.
I: Yes.
P: If you do do really well that gives you a good start for your future job.
I: Yes
P: Get them to aim high for what they want to do. [Participant 8, Appendix 9, Yr 6, Lines 196-199]

Furthermore, teachers were aware that communication which stressed the importance of tests could negatively affect children with low confidence, and positively affect confident children.

P: Like I say I don’t want to affect those that don’t have the confidence, but I do think it would be for those that are confident and are good at it. [Participant 3, Appendix 4, Yr 2, Lines 161-162]

The thematic analysis also identified that the teacher relationship and knowing the children were crucial elements that providing a base from which certain forms of communication emerged.

P: And you know all the children, as a class teacher you know the children inside out what they’re capable of doing. [Participant 1, Appendix 2, Yr 2, Lines 142-143]

P: I think if you do pile on the pressure I think some of them will come, but then some at the same time do need pressurising and that’s the thing with knowing the children, you know who to push and who to just kind of let get on with what they can do. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 87-89]

4.2.1.8. Potential Effects of Teacher-Held Beliefs on Language Use - Theme 8

Across the analysis, it was evident that beliefs held by teachers may be important in determining whether they would use particular forms of language statements. This global theme encapsulated the various beliefs that could potentially influence the language teachers were using in the classroom. This stage of the analysis went beyond the surface description and can be considered a latent analysis. The constituent themes/codes encompassed within this theme were numerous (Figure 4.3), and as a whole they were classed as teacher-held beliefs. However, some of the codes were not prevalent across the data set and only appeared in one or two transcripts. Given that this theme was related to RQ3, which was concerned with why teachers may be using particular forms of language in the classroom, a decision was made to include all the suspected
influential factors. This was in line with the exploratory nature of the study, and some information related to these factors was further elicited in the questionnaire (Appendix 16).

In some interviews, teachers had beliefs that particular forms of language could worry or affect children negatively, e.g. when using language that was related to the importance of tests and consequences of failing tests.

P: And if you start putting that negative spin on it I think for some of them it can be quite detrimental, I think just trying to be positive about it and kind of a relaxed have a go, come on. [Participant 4, Appendix 5, Yr 6, Lines 345-346]

P: I don’t feel you can get the best results out of children by worrying them unnecessarily about it, so in terms of my own language I try as much as possible to not, I certainly don’t use threatening language. [Participant 6, Appendix 7, Yr 6, Lines 117-119]

There were also beliefs related to the age of children and the purposes of education, whereby teachers held beliefs that primary-age children should not be put under too much pressure and that education should be enjoyed.

P: They are getting older and they will be moving onto high school and they will be dealing with this on a much more regular basis, so that’s something they need to know and at the same time we need to make sure they are primary school children and they want to be happy and they want to be feeling comfortable as well, and trying their best is the most important thing. [Participant 2, Appendix 3, Yr 6, Lines 211-214]

Another interesting factor that emerged from the interviews was that primary school teachers seemed to have a lot of control over the children’s test preparations, and all test preparation occurred during classroom time. It is likely that this element of control is influential in teachers’ choice of language use.

P: I suppose this is where the difference between Key Stage 1 and GCSE is, all their preparation for SATs is done in class and it’s done in class with me or it’s done with TAs or better reading partners. [Participant 7, Appendix 8, Yr 2, Lines 65-67]

Other factors related to the value teachers ascribed to the tests, where teachers commented that they did not feel the tests were important for children nor were they high-stakes for them. Some teachers felt teacher assessments were more accurate and a single test could not provide this accuracy. Teachers also recognised that they were under pressure in terms of targets set by their headteacher, LA and government, though they suggested that this was not affecting their choice of language. The socio-economic status (SES) was also discussed by teachers, and they were able to recognise the SES status of children within their school. This awareness of their cohort of children could possibly be influential in teachers’ expectations for these children and consequentially the language they choose to use.

4.2.2. Quantitising Data

To provide further information about the nature of discussions taking place with teachers, the codes from the transcripts were converted to numerical data and tallied with the themes of the thematic analysis (see Section 3.6.1.2). This provided further information about the types of discussions that were prominent throughout the interviews, and gave information about the
content of teachers’ discussions. Figure 4.4 illustrates the percentage distribution of codes for each interview in reference to the four global themes for RQ1.

Figure 4.4. Percentage distribution of codes for particular themes - Teacher interviews (all transcripts).

Figure 4.5 combines the transcripts for the Year groups, e.g. all Year 2 transcripts and all Year 6 transcripts, in order to evaluate whether there are any general differences in the discussions that took place. Figure 4.6 provides the percentage distribution for all the transcripts combined. These charts indicate that discussions related to efficacious communication dominated the content of interviews (approximately 40-60%), and this was the case for all interviews. Visually comparing the Year 2 transcripts and Year 6 transcripts would suggest the content of discussions was similar, though in Year 6 there was more discussion about reminders/importance and consequential outcomes.

Figure 4.5. Percentage distribution of codes for particular themes - Teacher interviews (Year 2 and Year 6 transcripts combined).
4.3. Focus Groups with Children

The focus groups were analysed using a thematic analysis (see Section 3.6.2). Throughout the analysis, Year 2 and Year 6 differences were considered, and subsequently commented upon if deemed to be significant.

4.3.1. Thematic Analysis

When reviewing the data (Transcript 12-13), five distinct themes were identified that related to the research questions (Themes 1-5). The themes provided information to answer RQ1, ‘what types of language statements are teachers using to encourage children to prepare for important tests?’, and RQ4, ‘are children aware of the language being used by teachers?’. Figure 4.7 provides an overview of the thematic analysis. Only a selection of data extracts are used when presenting the analysis.
4.3.1.1. Awareness and Purpose of Tests/SATs - Theme 1

In terms of national tests, typically referred to as the SATs, children were generally aware of these tests. During the introduction of the focus groups, Year 6 children made it quite clear they knew what the SATs were and commented that they were preparing towards them. However, for Year 2 children they were aware that they did tests in the classroom, but generally were not aware that they would do summative national tests such as the SATs. In the extracts below, the Year 2 children discuss these important tests.

I: Okay, so you all do tests, alright and do you know at the end of the year you may be doing some important tests.
C: Yes (>1).
C: No.
C: Sometimes we do important.
C: Because it’s like tests to go into the juniors.
I: Yes.
C: Sometimes it’s like writing tests and numeracy tests.
I: Okay, there’s also something called the SATs, have you ever heard of the SATs.
C: Yes (>1).
C: No (>1).
C: I haven’t heard of.
I: Put your hand up if you’ve heard of the SATs, so [-----], [-----] and [-----] have, [-----] do you want to tell me what the SATs are.
C: Sometimes in Year 6, you get a like a big test and it is to go into the high school. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Lines 21-35]

This would suggest that children in Year 2 are not aware that they do national tests, and this is possibly linked to this not being communicated in the classroom. For Year 6 children, their teacher communicated to them that the SATs were approaching.

C: She tells us they’re coming up in May.
C: So she’s trying to get us ready for them. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 306-307]

With respect to the importance of tests, both groups of children were aware of their importance for the future, such as high school, college, university and life outcomes.

C: I think we’re doing these tests because we, when we’re in high school and we do bigger tests then you’ve got that question in you would know the answers straight away. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Lines 72-73]

I: Okay, okay, does Ms [-----] say stuff like why it’s important to do well in these tests.
C: Yes.
C: Yes to see what you can get to like in college and university.
C: And then see what set you are in high school.
C: You want to get a good education, work. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 47-51]

The transcripts would suggest that this is a general form of communication used in classrooms related to the purpose and value of tests. In the focus groups, the children were aware that the outcomes in these tests were linked to future outcomes. Interestingly, children in Year 2 identified another value of completing tests, and this was related to tests developing children’s knowledge and skills and identifying gaps in knowledge. These perceptions are likely to have arisen from the communication directed to them by their teacher.
C: Because that, then we know what we good at and they know what you can do and what you can’t do, and what we need to do more of, learn about more. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Lines 66-67]

C: I think we need to do these tests because then we know what we need to learn, our spellings, and what we don’t need to learn. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Lines 85-86]

4.3.1.2. General and Procedural Test Communication - Theme 2

This theme related to general and procedural instructional communication that teachers were using towards the children related to the tests. This included instructions such as not talking to any of the other children, not copying answers and not shouting out, which communicated how they were expected to behave during the tests. Other communication the children were aware of included instructions such as reading questions properly and checking their work and answers. Year 6 children also discussed how their teacher told them to focus and concentrate during practice test papers.

C: Focus and keep your head down and do it. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Line 24]

C: Try harder, keep your head down and try and get a level 5. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Line 31]

C: She says concentrate and as long you know you’ve tried your hardest it doesn’t matter what level you get. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Line 41]

4.3.1.3. Efficacious and Motivational Communication - Theme 3

This theme encapsulated communication directed towards children by teachers that was intended to have a motivational impact on the children, or communication that gave them the skills and knowledge to perform better in tests. Children in both focus groups were aware of a number of different statements communicated by their teacher that was related to this theme. For example, high expectations were communicated to the children, with expectation in Year 6 associated with the level they were expected to achieve at the end of the academic year.

C: And like keep your head down and like work hard and then hopefully you’ll become a level 5. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Line 17]

C: Took us out and said like because we’re reading the small like two pages and that’s it, and then like if you’ve done well you go onto the second like, because I was on 29, and then Ms said well let’s try level, let’s go on 30 and said you’re definitely a level 4 reader, but you can try your best and try and get a level 5 in reading. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 169-171]

This was aligned with children being aware that their teachers expected them to try their hardest and push themselves. The aim was to develop their knowledge and attain higher levels. Both groups of children were aware that they were expected to try their hardest, and if they tried their best their teacher would be satisfied.

C: She’s saying that a lot of the time like don’t give up on yourself, like if you’re doing the SATs papers and you’re just looking around.

C: Keep pushing, keep pushing yourself. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 258-260]

C: Well, she’ll only get cross if, well because we have a practice before the test and if you’ve been getting that all right then it comes to the test and you’ve got it all wrong, she’ll be cross because she’s been, so that means you’ve just not been trying your best because she knows you can do it. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Line 385-387]
C: She’ll say you could have tried your best.
I: What will she say [-----].
C: She’ll be a little bit upset.
I: A little bit upset okay.
C: Yes. That you haven’t got a level 4.
C: She says you’ll probably be disappointed in yourself if you know if you haven’t tried your hardest and got a level 4. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 385-389]

From both transcripts, it was apparent that children were doing tests on a regular basis. In Year 2, this seemed to be mainly formative tests to test their understanding, whereas in Year 6 children were doing practice papers for the SATs. Children discussed how their teacher would give them feedback on their work, which included instructions on how to improve to get a higher mark/level.

C: Yesterday, I had to get to a level 4a in literacy because I have to use commas to mark a clause.
C: That’s what I have to do.
I: So Ms is telling you what you need to do to get to that level 4.
C: Yes.
C: I could get to a level 4a, just for doing commas. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 428-432]

The focus groups also identified that children were explicitly being taught exam technique. The children discussed that teachers would tell them to move on if they found a question hard, and to read questions carefully as they could be confusing. Other communication mentioned working faster to complete all the questions, having thinking time, not rushing answers, guessing, checking answers and using fingers and dots techniques to count in mathematics.

C: If you don’t know one, if you’re not sure on it sometimes Ms [-----] says leave, leave it and come onto your next question. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Line 131-132]

C: You can get one mark and if it likes, there’s a writing question like seven lines and there’s two marks Ms said just write, if you don’t even know it just have a go and see if you can get like the two marks, the big one. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Line 184-185]

Children also identified that teachers would praise them if they did well when preparing for tests or after completing tests, with statements such as ‘excellent’, ‘well done’, ‘really good’, and ‘you’ve done well’.

4.3.1.4. Reassuring and Calming Messages - Theme 4

During the thematic analysis, another distinctive form of communication used by teachers towards children was apparent. This related to the use of reassuring and calming messages. Year 2 and Year 6 children were able to recognise this form of communication directed towards them. This included statements such as ‘don’t worry’, ‘take a deep breath’, ‘you’ll be fantastic’, and ‘you’ll do really well’. A few examples of the discussions are provided in the extracts below.

C: She says don’t worry, if you’re like really scared she can help you. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Line 302]

C: She says don’t worry and you’ll be fantastic and you’ll do really well. [Appendix 12, Yr 2, Line 310]

C: She tells us not to worry.
C: Because it’s not that hard. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 62-63]
I: What does Ms say about when you’re nervous, does she say anything before the exams or before the test or throughout the year, is Ms saying something to you.
C: She just says take a deep breath. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 78-80]

4.3.1.5. Outcome Based Communication - Theme 5

As presented in Section 4.2.1.1, Year 2 and Year 6 children were aware of the outcomes of doing well in tests in terms of a better life trajectory, though this seemed to be a general type of communication used by their teachers. However, there were examples of where outcome based communication was overtly indicated, e.g. in the extract below children are specifically informed of the effects of achieving certain marks.

C: Sometimes, she just says you don’t want to be put in the bottom, you don’t want to be put in the bottom set in high school.
I: Yes.
C: Because loads of people don’t care about what they are going to do in their lives, they’re just going to mess everything up.
C: Like they’ll be, say if we got like three marks in a 50 question test, just, Ms said well if you, if you get like really low you’ll be put in the.
C: The bottom set.
C: The bottom set where people just mess around.
I: Okay.
C: And don’t care and throw all the papers, and which will stop you getting a proper job.
I: Okay.
C: And like if you get a middle mark which is like a level 4 or 4a or a 4c, if you, if you get middle marks then you’ll probably be put in the middle or the high, top sets.
C: You get put in set 3. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 208-222]

Although it seems children are aware of outcome based communication, there seems to be another form of communication that contradicts the above statements, which highlights the importance of having tried your best, and takes the emphasis away from not doing well in tests.

I: Okay and what will Ms […] say if you didn’t do so well.
C: She’d just.
C: She will just say that you.
C: She’ll say as long as you know you’ve tried your hardest it doesn’t matter.
C: It don’t matter what grade you get. [Appendix 13, Yr 6, Lines 86-90]

Given the above extracts, it is likely that teachers are using a number of instructional messages to motivate children, which is dependent on what they feel will have the best effect on children at a given time.

4.4. Teacher Diaries

The information collated from the teacher diaries was subjected to a content analysis (see Section 3.6.3). The content analysis categorised the various diary entries. The percentage of statements relating to a particular category was also calculated through a quantitising process. The teacher diaries were completed to provide further information on RQ1, which related to the language statements teachers were using, and RQ2 that was concerned with how teachers were
using these statements. Appendix 25 provides the diary entries completed by teachers organised by the content analysis categories.

4.4.1. Content Analysis

When reviewing the data, the content analysis identified a total of eight categories that summarised the diary entries. Figure 4.8 provides an overview of the categories identified by the content analysis. Figure 4.9 indicates the percentage of statements that were present in the various categories in the Year 2 and Year 6 teacher diaries.

Figure 4.8. Categories derived from the content analysis of the teacher diaries.

Figure 4.9. Percentage of statements present in categories of the content analysis.
4.4.1.1. Summary of Categories

The content analysis identified a number of categories that summarised the content of the diary entries. As depicted in Figure 4.9, efficacious communication was extremely prevalent in the diary entries. This would also suggest that at the time the teachers were completing the diaries the majority of their communication had an efficacious element. This included statements which asked children to ‘show how well you can do’, ‘show how clever you are’, ‘show how fantastic you are’, and ‘try your best’. Communication related to knowledge development and feedback also featured heavily, with statements indicating to children how they could improve. This included language statements such as ‘in order to get a level 5 you need to include…’, and ‘have a look through your test and see which questions you did well at and which areas you need to improve’. The use of target cards to develop knowledge was also apparent in the diary entries. Other types of efficacious communication in the diary entries related to informational communication e.g. when the tests were starting, as well as communication about exam technique e.g. ‘read the questions carefully’ and ‘if you get stuck move on’. Diary entries related to confidence building were less evident than the other efficacious communication statements. Reassuring and calming messages were also noted in Year 2 and Year 6 diaries, and included statements such as ‘come on, you’re really good at this, just think back to how we did it on the board’ and ‘SATs are nothing to worry about’. The diary entries suggested that tests were communicated to children and reminders were given in both Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2, it seems national tests were disguised as ‘special work’, whereas in Year 6 ‘SATs’ use was more prominent. Finally, in Year 2, there were no diary entries that related to the purpose of tests and the consequence of performance in tests, whereas in Year 6 there was a single diary entry for each.

4.4.1.2. Individual vs. Whole Class Communication

The categorisation process identified that some forms of communication were directed at individual children, whereas other forms of communication were generally communicated to the whole class. The whole class communication included generalised statements such as ‘try your best’, ‘check your work’ and ‘check your target cards’. The communication directed at individual children was more specific or had a specific purpose. For example, the statement ‘think about your target, have you included it in your writing’ was referenced to a particular child about their target. Similarly, ‘we can give that target a tick and highlight it too, you’ve got it’, was specific to a particular child. This communication may have been targeted at this child to help him/her recognise how their work met the target and to support them in regulating their learning. This was followed by a form of affirmative praise that recognised the child’s success in the teacher mediated process. In all, this suggests that teachers were fine tuning their communication based on the needs of particular children, as well as using generalised forms of communication targeted at the whole class.
4.4.1.3. Combinative Nature of Statements

As the content analysis proceeded, it was evident that teachers were using various statements in combination. For example, the dual statement ‘you need to make sure this is your best work, have you used your phonics work in your spelling’ indicated to a child the teacher’s expectation, which is then followed by an efficacious form of communication that provides information on how make sure the work is of the best quality. Another example is ‘come on, you’re really good at this, just think back to how we did it on the board’. Here, the teacher is raising the child’s belief and giving the child confidence by alluding to a historical event where they may have previously succeeded. Both of these examples were targeted at individual children and describes how teachers’ communication is aligned with children’s needs (see Section 4.4.1.2). Another interesting statement communicated to the whole class was ‘some careless mistakes made by some people not checking their work properly or reading the questions carefully’. This statement had an efficacious component and was categorised as such, however this was framed through a negative directive, which first highlighted ‘careless mistakes’ followed by implying how it could be averted e.g. checking work or reading questions carefully. This statement is intriguing as the teacher chose to use a novel combination framed in a negative manner rather than the reverse. It is likely the teacher thought framing the statement in this particular way would have more of an impact. Another statement directed at the whole class which had a dual element included ‘read questions carefully and try your best’. This statement communicated an exam technique, e.g. read questions carefully, together with an efficacious element, e.g. try your best.

4.5. Teacher Questionnaire

The information obtained from the teacher questionnaires was subjected to a descriptive and content analysis (see Section 3.6.4). The questionnaire was developed to provide further information on RQ1 (the types of language statements teachers were using), RQ2 (the frequency in which they were using particular forms of statements and whether communication varied for children), and RQ3 (to further investigate important factors that could be influencing teachers’ choice of language). The responses from the questionnaire are provided as bar charts separated for Year 2 and Year 6 teachers, with further descriptive analysis of the data. The analysis is presented according to the distinct sections of the questionnaire (Appendix 17), e.g. Section A (what you say in the classroom), Section B (how frequently you are saying some language statements) and Section C (why you may be saying certain things in the classroom). In Sections A and B of the questionnaire, the responses for the individual items were combined into their respective domains (Appendix 16). Section D which included qualitative information related to additional comments made by participants is presented through a content analysis. Section E gathered biographical data about the respondents, which is outlined in Section 3.5.4.1.

4.5.1. Section A - What You Say in the Classroom

Use of Positive Consequential Statements

This domain incorporated statements that communicated the importance of tests for the children e.g. high school, career and how parents/teachers would be happy if they did well. The
responses from the questionnaire suggest that there is variability in teachers' use of positive consequential statements when preparing children for tests (Figure 4.10). In Year 6, 57% of respondents agreed to using these statements, whereas in Year 2 only 37.6% agreed. However, a significant proportion of respondents disagreed or provided a neutral response.

**Use of Positive Consequential Statements**

![Figure 4.10. Questionnaire responses for positive consequential statements domain.](image)

**Use of Negative Consequential Statements**

The teacher interviews identified that teachers were not only using outcome statements that emphasised positive outcomes, but were also framing these statements so that they highlighted the negative outcomes of poor performance in tests. In the questionnaire, two questions asked teachers whether they were communicating to children that if they did not do well in tests it would affect their future, and how not working hard would mean they would not do well in tests. The responses suggested 77.5% of Year 2 teachers disagreed with using these statements, with the disagreement figure 55.5% for Year 6 teachers (Figure 4.11). However, 18.8% of Year 6 teachers did agree to using these kinds of statements, with the figure 5% for Year 2 teachers.

**Use of Negative Consequential Statements**

![Figure 4.11. Questionnaire responses for negative consequential statements domain.](image)
Use of Efficacious Communication

The efficacious communication domain included four statements that asked teachers if they were using statements that: supported children to develop their knowledge for tests, gave feedback on their work; emphasised hard work and effort; and gave information to children about exam technique. The questionnaire responses indicated that 91.7% of Year 6 teachers and 70.7% of Year 2 teachers were using these forms of communication (Figure 4.12). The responses also indicated that 14.4% of Year 2 teachers disagreed with using these statements, though this may be due to teachers not talking about tests in this Year group (see Section 4.5.4).

![Use of Efficacious Communication](image)

Figure 4.12. Questionnaire responses for efficacious communication domain.

Use of Confidence Building Statements

Confidence building statements can be considered to be a form of efficacious communication, as their purpose is to develop children’s belief that they are able to develop the skills that are needed for the test content. Given that efficacious communication is a broad category, the decision was made to separate this domain in the questionnaire to further investigate this form of communication. The domain included statements such as reminding children of their prior successes, asking children to show off, praising children when they have done well, and reminding children that they are fully prepared and will do well in tests. Figure 4.13 illustrates that on the whole Year 2 and Year 6 teachers agreed to using these statements. In Year 6, 71.5% of respondents strongly agreed with these statements. Interestingly, 5% of respondents in Year 2 disagreed, though again this may be due to the absence of test-related communication, and teachers not feeling the need to build confidence for tests (see Section 4.5.4).

![Use of Confidence Building Statements](image)

Figure 4.13. Questionnaire responses for confidence building statements domain.
Use of Reassuring and Calming Messages

This domain included four questions that had the purpose of reassuring and calming children about the tests. Teachers were asked to rate the extent of their agreement to statements such as ‘I tell the children it’s not the end of the world if they don’t do well on tests’ and ‘I tell the children that the tests are nothing to be scared of’. The responses suggested that approximately 75-80% of respondents agreed to using these types of statements (Figure 4.14).

![Use of Reassuring and Calming Messages](image)

Figure 4.14. Questionnaire responses for reassuring and calming messages domain.

Communicating Test Importance

The communicating test importance domain only included a single item, which was ‘I tell the children that the tests they do are very important’. The responses varied for both Year 2 and Year 6 teachers. In Year 6, 45.8% of respondents agreed to using this statement, though 23.6% disagreed, thus indicating this type of communication varies in Year 6. In Year 2, 27.5% of respondents agreed with this statement, but 40% disagreed. Overall, the responses suggest that some teachers emphasise the importance of tests, whereas others do not (Figure 4.15).

![Communicating Test Importance](image)

Figure 4.15. Questionnaire responses to test importance item.
Communicating Reminders about Tests

The communicating reminders domain only included a single item, which was ‘the children are regularly reminded when tests are coming up’. In Year 2, 62.5% of respondents disagreed with using this statement, though 20% did agree. In Year 6, 75% of respondents agreed to reminding children about tests that were approaching (Figure 4.16). These responses therefore suggest that teachers in Year 6 classrooms are more likely to use reminders than Year 2 teachers.

![Communicating Reminders about Tests](image)

Figure 4.16. Questionnaire responses to test reminders item.

Targeted Communication for Particular Children

This domain was based on two statements that attempted to elicit information from teachers about whether they were using different forms of communication for particular children, as opposed to using the same forms of communication for all children. The responses for both Year 2 and Year 6 were extremely varied (Figure 4.17). This would suggest that some teachers are communicating the same messages to all children, whereas others reserve particular forms of communication for specific children.

![Targeted Communication for Particular Children](image)

Figure 4.17. Questionnaire responses for targeted communication domain.
4.5.2. Section B - How Frequently You Are Saying Some Language Statements

**Frequency of Test Importance Statements**

This item asked teachers to rate the frequency in which they communicated to children the importance of tests. Teachers in Year 6 made these statements more often compared to Year 2 teachers. However, 25% of Year 6 and 45% of Year 2 teachers rarely communicated these statements. Approximately 30-40% of respondents sometimes used these statements. The responses to this item highlight the variability in communication amongst teachers with respect to test importance (Figure 4.18).

![Frequency of Test Importance Statements](image)

**Figure 4.18.** Questionnaire responses for frequency of test importance statements.

**Frequency of Reminders**

This item related to the frequency in which teachers gave children regular reminders that the tests were approaching. In Year 6, 8.3% of teachers were always giving reminders, with 37.5% often giving reminders to children. Overall, the responses suggested that teachers in Year 6 were more likely to give reminders, as the questionnaire found 67.5% of Year 2 teachers rarely or never gave reminders to children about tests (Figure 4.19).

![Frequency of Reminders](image)

**Figure 4.19.** Questionnaire responses for frequency of test reminders.
**Frequency of Positive Consequential Statements**

This item related to the frequency in which teachers mentioned the consequences of doing well in tests e.g. better sets in high school, better future, teachers/parents will be proud, the child would be proud, etc. This type of communication was more frequent in Year 6 classrooms, with 38.9% of respondents communicating these statements often or always (Figure 4.20). The proportion of teachers that stated that they sometimes or rarely used these statements was similar for Year 2 and Year 6 teachers. A large proportion of teachers in Year 2 (27.5%) also responded by saying they never used these statements.

![Frequency of Positive Consequential Statements](image)

**Figure 4.20.** Questionnaire responses for frequency of positive consequential statements.

**Frequency of Negative Consequential Statements**

This item asked teachers to rate the frequency in which they used negative consequential statements, e.g. lower sets in high school, the child would be unhappy, teachers/parents would be unhappy, etc. A large proportion of Year 2 and Year 6 teachers responded that they never used these statements (Figure 4.21). However, these statements were used on rare occasions, and this was more likely in Year 6 classrooms.

![Frequency of Negative Consequential Statements](image)

**Figure 4.21.** Questionnaire responses for frequency of negative consequential statements.
Frequency of Efficacious Communication

This item was related to the frequency in which teachers were using statements that were related to helping children develop their knowledge and skills, such as showing the steps to get a particular level, feedback about past answers, exam technique, etc. The wording of the item was focused on efficacious communication related to tests. The responses showed that 97.2% of Year 6 teachers were always or often using these statements. Similarly, a large proportion of Year 2 teachers were also frequently using this type of communication (Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22. Questionnaire responses for frequency of efficacious communication statements.

In Year 2, 20% of respondents indicated that they sometimes used these statements, and 17.5% responded that they rarely or never used these statements. These responses may have been due to the lesser emphasis on national tests in Year 2 (see Section 4.5.4).

Frequency of Confidence Building Statements

This item was related to the frequency in which teachers were using confidence building statements in the classroom. The responses in the questionnaire suggested that teachers in primary schools were using these statements on a frequent basis (Figure 4.23).

Figure 4.23. Questionnaire responses for frequency of confidence building statements.
Frequency of Reassuring Messages

The final frequency item was related to reassuring messages, such as ‘don’t worry’ and ‘you’ll be fine’. Both Year 2 and Year 6 responses suggested that this form of communication was prominent in their classrooms (Figure 4.24). In Year 6, 54.2% of respondents said they always used this form of communication, and 36.1% said they often used this communication. In Year 2, a large proportion of teachers were always or often using these messages. However, 7.5% of teachers responded that they rarely used these messages, and 2.5% responded as never using these messages, though this may be due to them not having to reassure children due to the lesser profile of national tests in Year 2 (see Section 4.5.4).

![Frequency of Reassuring Messages](image1)

Figure 4.24. Questionnaire responses for frequency of reassuring messages.

4.5.3. Section C - Why You May Be Saying Certain Things in the Classroom

Teachers’ Perceptions of Control

The teacher interviews found that teachers in primary schools felt they had a significant level of control over children’s test preparations. The thematic analysis suggested control may be an influential factor in prompting teachers to use particular forms of communication. The questionnaire investigated this further by asking two questions to teachers that asked them about their perceived control over children’s preparations, and their ability to effectively prepare children. The responses suggested that Year 2 and Year 6 teachers generally felt they had sufficient control over children’s test preparations (Figure 4.25).

![Teachers’ Perceptions of Control](image2)

Figure 4.25. Questionnaire responses for teacher control domain.
Views of Primary School High-Stakes Tests as Important

This domain addressed teachers’ views of high-stakes tests as important. The items that comprised this domain included ‘the tests that children do, such as SATs, are very important’ and ‘teacher assessments are more important than the tests that children do’. The responses to the teacher assessment statement were reverse coded and combined with the test importance item. The results suggested that on the whole teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 did not view national tests as important, and valued teacher assessments over summative tests. Approximately 20% of respondents did provide a neutral response to these statements (Figure 4.26). It is plausible that these views of tests may be influencing teacher communication.

Views of High-Stakes Tests as Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.26. Questionnaire responses for test importance belief domain.

Threatening Communication Beliefs

This domain investigated whether teachers believed that using negative/threatening communication could be motivational for children’s test preparations. The responses suggested that teachers did not generally believe this kind of communication to have a positive impact (Figure 4.27). However, a small proportion of teachers did hold this belief. Approximately 25% of respondents held a neutral view related to beliefs of using these statements, which may indicate that in some situations they felt these statements could be beneficial.

Negative Communication Positive Impact Belief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.27. Questionnaire responses for negative communication belief domain.
**Efficacious Communication Beliefs**

This domain was focused on teachers’ efficacious communication beliefs, and whether teachers felt the children in their class knew how to prepare for tests, as well as the effort required to do well in the tests. The responses largely suggested that Year 2 and Year 6 teachers generally held the belief that children in their class knew how to prepare for tests and were aware of the effort required (Figure 4.28).

![Efficacious Communication Positive Impact Belief](image)

**Figure 4.28.** Questionnaire responses for efficacious communication belief domain.

**Primary Children as Dependent**

This domain attempted to investigate whether teachers felt primary-age children were dependent on adults. A large proportion of Year 2 and Year 6 teachers viewed primary children as dependent and felt they needed adults to support them (Figure 4.29). However, approximately 15% of respondents disagreed and felt children were independent and did not need adult support. It is possible that views such as these could be influencing the type of language teachers are using in the classroom.

![Primary Children as Dependent](image)

**Figure 4.29.** Questionnaire responses for primary children as dependent belief domain.
This final domain attempted to investigate teachers’ philosophical view of primary school education. The statements within this domain included ‘primary age children are very young and it is not right to pressure them’ and ‘primary school is about children having fun, learning and getting a well-rounded education’. The majority of respondents agreed with these statements (Figure 4.30), thus suggesting that teachers who responded in the questionnaire generally felt primary school was about children having fun and getting a well-rounded education, rather than children being pressurised.

Figure 4.30. Questionnaire responses for philosophical view domain.

4.5.4. Section D - Additional Information

This section invited comments from the participants completing the questionnaire. The participants were asked to provide thoughts about the questionnaire or indicate further information about language use in the classroom. Appendix 27 provides all the responses in their entirety. Only one response related to the questionnaire itself, which said the questionnaire covered all the relevant areas. The other comments related to teacher communication, testing, and their views. These responses were analysed using a content analysis (see Section 3.6.4). Table 4.2 provides an overview of the categories based on the qualitative responses by the Year 2 and Year 6 teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tests only important to schools, not children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests to show off, show understanding and identify knowledge gaps</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher does not value national tests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests narrow curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests pressure teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should not be judged on a level/disagreement with school league tables</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher assessment importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children not aware of tests/test language not used</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive statements, praise (for effort) and encouragement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against use of negative communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2. Content analysis of Section D of teacher questionnaire.

The additional information section of the questionnaire generated a wide range of comments from respondents. Some of the noteworthy comments are discussed here. A number of respondents commented that the tests, e.g. SATs, were only high-stakes for the school and not for the children. For example, they were used to judge school performance, and children moving onto high school were likely to be reassessed. This helps explain the teacher responses in Section 4.5.3 related to the value of high-stakes tests, where teacher responses on the whole suggested that teachers did not feel the tests were important. Teachers also commented that they communicated to children that the tests were a chance to show off their skills and understanding, as well as an opportunity for them to identify where they needed to develop their knowledge. Year 2 respondents also commented that they did not use the word SATs in their classroom, and children were not aware that they were doing SATs. They did however introduce them as quizzes or tasks, which may help explain why some Year 2 teachers were not using communication specifically about tests, e.g. test importance. Other comments related to how the emphasis on high-stakes tests narrowed the school curriculum and how they were pressuring children. Similarly, respondents also commented that tests can worry children and unnecessarily stress them. Finally, Year 6 teachers commented that their communication was based on children’s characteristics, which is exemplified in the response below. The response also alludes to how language may differ at different times of the academic year.

The advice/language used with each child may be different based on what is most likely to motivate them e.g. pleasing parents, competition with peers, success they’ve already experienced, etc. Also this might change throughout Year 6, when they become better prepared for the SATs. [Year 6 Teacher]

4.6. Summary

This chapter has provided an analysis of the findings obtained through the various data collection methods. Variations in analysis within particular methods have also been documented. The data within the methods was largely consistent, with variation occurring due to the different approaches employed by teachers. Subtle differences between Year 2 and Year 6 environments were also identified. The subsequent chapter represents the stage where the data from these
methods was integrated to answer the research questions of the study. This involved a cross-comparison of the analyses across the methods in order to generate meta-inferences.
5.1. Introduction

The research presented here aimed to explore the language teachers in primary school were using towards children when preparing children for important tests, such as the SATs. An additional aim of the study was to also determine whether children in primary school were aware of the key communicative messages that were directed at them by their teachers. In attempting to achieve these research aims, four research questions were devised, and a combination of four data collection methods were used to answer the research questions. The analysis in the preceding chapter identified the findings from each data collection method. This chapter represents the stage where the data from the various methods were integrated to answer the research questions, so as to allow meta-inferences. During this stage, the various analyses supplemented each other, with the end product allowing a critical examination of teacher communication in primary classrooms. The process of developing meta-inferences ensured a rich and comprehensive exploration of the data related to answering the research questions. This chapter begins by integrating the findings from the data collection methods for each research question, together with reference to the extant literature. Incorporated within this are references to any notable Year 2 and Year 6 differences identified in the study. Where appropriate, reference is also made to future research opportunities within these sections, as a result of the new knowledge gained through meta-inferences. This is followed by summarising the findings of this study and its implications for future research, which draws together the implications of the study’s findings. The chapter then discusses the implications for current EP practice, and the role of EPs in propagating research of this ilk. The chapter culminates by presenting the study’s limitations, which should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study.

5.2. RQ1 - What Types of Language Statements Are Teachers Using to Encourage Children to Prepare for Important Tests?

All four phases of the study provided information to answer RQ1. The data from the various stages were combined and triangulated to comprehensively identify the types of language statements teachers were using in the primary classroom for test preparation. Appendix 28 outlines the process involved when developing these meta-inferences. The integration of these data suggested that five broad forms of communication were being used in the classroom, outlined below.

- Informational and procedural test communication.
- Test value communication and communication of reminders.
- Outcome based statements.
- Efficacious communication.
- Reassuring and calming messages.
These five broad communication areas were identified in teacher interviews, teacher diaries and focus groups with children. The responses from the questionnaire also supported the use of these forms of communication in the classroom. These broad areas of communication are further discussed and referenced to the extant literature.

5.2.1. Informational and Procedural Test Communication

This communication related to general statements teachers were making in relation to test arrangements and the expected behaviour from children whilst completing tests. The purpose of this communication was to inform children of the tests e.g. the duration and necessary instructions, as well as communicating the behaviour expected in test conditions e.g. working silently, not copying other children’s work. This form of communication occurs regularly when teachers are communicating to children prior to important tests (Putwain & Symes, 2014). This informational communication was recognised to a greater extent in the focus groups with children than the other data collection methods, though this may have been due to the children in the focus groups viewing teacher communication about tests in narrower terms e.g. specifically at the time of testing, with the children having to be prompted to think about teacher communication at other times e.g. in preparation. Furthermore, some of the informational statements conveyed to children had a link with efficacious communication (see Section 5.2.4), which emphasised the need to demonstrate particular skills e.g. focus and concentrate.

5.2.2. Test Value Communication and Communication of Reminders

The phases of the study suggested that teachers were communicating to children the importance of tests. These included statements such as conveying the purpose of doing tests, which were two fold. The importance of tests was communicated as a formative evaluative function, where performance on the test was necessary to identify knowledge gaps, which then supported future knowledge acquisition. Secondly, the purpose of completing tests was linked to their importance for future aspirations and goals. Teachers communicated to children that the tests were important, and children were aware of the importance of these tests. Children in Year 6 were more aware of the importance of their SATs, and considered the effects of particular test outcomes (see Section 5.2.3), which would suggest teachers were making these sorts of references. Children in Year 2 made reference to the importance of tests for their formative evaluative function, which would suggest the communication of test importance may differ in Year 2 classrooms, with the emphasis firmly on the evaluative benefits. However, the responses from the questionnaire suggest that communication about the importance of tests varies between teachers, with some teachers communicating their importance and others refraining from doing so. In terms of the communication of reminders, approximately 70% of teachers in Year 6 that took part in the questionnaire were making these comments. The interviews with teachers also found that Year 6 teachers would remind children that the SATs were approaching, or sometimes use reminders to motivate children. The practice of communicating reminders in Year 2 was less evident, with only 20% of respondents of the teacher questionnaire agreeing that they used reminders. These Year 2 and Year 6 differences may be a related to a number of
factors, which may include the high-stakes nature of the tests (see Section 5.3.1) and/or the reality and view that children in Year 2 are younger and should not be pressurised (see Section 5.4). Furthermore, research has already illustrated that the emphasis on tests can be highly upsetting and anxiety provoking for some children (Connor, 2001, 2003; Hall et al., 2004). Future research needs to determine whether communicating the importance of tests and conveying reminders to primary-age children is linked to negative outcomes such as anxiety and worry, as the research would seem to indicate.

5.2.3. Outcome Based Statements

The analyses identified that consequential outcome based statements were another form of communication used by teachers in the classroom. This included teachers stating what effect the outcome would have for the child, and in rare occasions the effect on the teacher. The specific outcome that was communicated varied and included: tangible rewards; intrinsic reward related to personal achievement; effect on future (e.g. high school, career, life trajectory); and esteem effect (e.g. for the child or how others would feel). The use of these statements can be related to teachers intending to motivate children through a number of means. Self-determination theory (SDT) is applicable here as it provides a motivational framework that is possibly being exploited or further emboldened by the teachers (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In SDT, motivation can be said to be located within an internal or external dimension. Intrinsic motivation is characterised by mastery, interest and feelings of competence, whereas extrinsic motivation is regulated by external demands and reward contingencies. Research has demonstrated that teacher interaction can result in reduced intrinsic motivation (Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996) and increased extrinsic motivation (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005). Although not the focus of this study, these consequential statements being used by teachers may inadvertently affect and develop certain characteristics within children, and there is need for research to explore the longer term outcomes of using these forms of statements.

Moreover, the data suggested some teachers were framing these messages in a positive manner e.g. doing well in the test will result in being placed in better sets in high school, or in a negative manner e.g. not doing well in these tests will result in being placed in lower sets. In the focus groups, children in Year 6 were more aware of the negative outcomes associated with not doing well in the tests, though children commented that as long as they demonstrated maximum effort the outcome was not important, thus they viewed effort as taking precedence over outcome, which indicates that this view that has been internalised by the children is driven by their teacher’s communication. The teacher questionnaire found that the use of positive consequential statements was popular amongst Year 6 teachers (57%) and to a lesser extent for Year 2 teachers (37.6%). However, a significant proportion of teachers responded to not using these statements, which was more evident in Year 2 teachers. In relation to the use of negatively framed consequential statements, respondents on the whole disagreed with using these statements, though 18.8% of Year 6 respondents agreed to using these kinds of statements, with the figure 5% for Year 2 teachers. Approximately 20% of respondents registered a neutral response, neither agreeing or disagreeing to the use of negative consequential statements, which
may indicate they may be using these statements on an infrequent basis (see Section 5.3.1). These negative messages used by teachers can be characterised as ‘fear appeals’, which refers to persuasive language used in classrooms that attempts to manipulate children’s behaviour by stressing the negative and threatening future consequences of certain courses of action or behaviours (Putwain & Roberts, 2009), with the research evidence demonstrating that for some children these statements can negatively affect their test performance and raise their anxiety (Putwain & Best, 2011; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b). Furthermore, given that teachers are framing consequential statements in a positive manner, it is also worth investigating whether positively framed consequential statements are tantamount to negatively framed consequential statements, in that they are perceived by children in a similar manner and have the same effect.

5.2.4. Efficacious Communication

The data collection methods identified that teachers were using a number of statements that had the purpose of raising children’s belief and confidence, as well as giving them the skills and knowledge to help them perform better in tests. Some of the statements included motivational statements, effort oriented language and also praise-based language. Children in both Year 2 and Year 6 were aware of these statements and equally made reference to these in the focus groups. The data analyses found that teachers were communicating to children information that had the purpose of developing children’s knowledge and correcting their previous errors. This form of instruction can be viewed as feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Praise was also used by teachers, though it seemed this was praise mainly to reaffirm their success e.g. well done, thus having little informational value. Research has found this form of praise can have an unrealistic impact on children’s self-esteem (Humphrey, 2004), and also little impact on children’s achievement (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Throughout the analyses, it was also apparent that teachers were asking children to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in tests e.g. show off. This included comments such as ‘let’s show how clever you are’ and ‘let’s see how clever you are’. Studies have shown this kind of communication to be influential in moulding children’s notions of intelligence, where praising children as a person, e.g. clever, can result in them believing that intelligence is a fixed trait (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). However, this research has mainly explored the short term effects of praising children as a person and has not considered cultural variations. For example, it is plausible that in England person praise for young children is a regular occurrence, and the absence of this communication to children would imply they are not intelligent. Future research needs to evaluate the effects of this communication on children in English primary schools. In addition to this, teachers were also communicating effort based language advocating the need to work hard and try their best.

In the description above, feedback was used to develop children’s knowledge about test content. Targets and levels were also used to communicate to children how to improve and take ownership of their learning. This can be considered a technique to direct them towards becoming self-regulated learners (Zimmerman, 1990). In addition to this, teachers were teaching content to children and also giving them extra support through targeted work. Praise was used to build children’s belief and confidence, and effort based language was used to emphasise the
need to work hard. Other forms of efficacious communication included challenging children and communicating high expectations, which can be viewed as intrinsically motivating them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The analyses also suggested that teachers were using a number of language statements that were aimed at developing children’s self-belief and confidence. This included praise and encouragement, as well as statements that gave children the confidence they could do a particular task. Furthermore, teachers were also communicating to children the key skills needed for examinations, with comments such as tips to answer questions and what to do when stuck on a particular question. The analysis of the teacher communication diaries found that at the time of completion efficacious communication was the most popular form of communication used in the classroom. Similarly, the questionnaire found a large proportion of teachers agreeing to using efficacious communication.

The evidence provided here suggests that efficacious communication is an important category of communication used in classrooms when preparing children for important tests, and the communication itself comprises of many facets. This is in line with other research in the area that has indicated that teachers are using efficacy based statements in the classroom (Putwain & Roberts, 2012; Sprinkle et al., 2006). Furthermore, the messages being used in the classroom can be said to have differing purposes. In the health literature, Rimal and Real (2003) discuss that there are two important elements to efficacy, where self-efficacy relates to whether an individual believes they have the ability to do what is required, and response efficacy that relates to whether an individual believes the strategies/messages will be effective in delivering the outcomes. The broad use of efficacious communication in primary classrooms towards tests would indicate that the messages are attempting to increase individual self-efficacy and response efficacy. However, further study would be required to determine the specific impact of particular statements on children’s efficacy.

5.2.5. Reassuring and Calming Messages

The final form of teacher communication that was identified across the various data collection methods was the use of reassuring and calming messages. This form of communication was identified in Putwain and Roberts’ (2009) study that aimed to develop an instrument to measure teacher communication for GCSE students. However, in their study a decision was made not to include this component in their revised instrument based on the results of their pilot questionnaire. For primary school teachers, reassuring and calming messages seemed to be an important form of communication used in classrooms when preparing children for important tests. The children in the focus groups commented on teachers using these statements, and the analysis of the teacher diaries also found these statements being communicated to children. Reassuring and calming messages related to language that had the purpose of reassuring children that they would be okay in the tests, including statements such as ‘the tests are nothing to be scared of’ and ‘don’t panic’. The responses from the teacher questionnaire suggested that approximately 90-95% of respondents agreed to using these types of statements, which would indicate the majority of teachers were using these statements. It is possible that teachers who did not agree to using these statements probably did not feel the need to use them, and this may
be due to their classroom practice not overtly focusing on tests, hence creating an environment where reassurance is not needed.

5.3. RQ2 - How Are Teachers Using These Different Forms of Language Statements?

The teacher interviews, diaries and questionnaire were developed to answer RQ2. The data from these stages were combined and triangulated to provide information about how teachers were using language statements in primary classrooms. Appendix 28 outlines the process involved when developing these meta-inferences. The integration of these data identified a number of important areas, outlined below, which are further discussed.

- Frequency of communication and saliency.
- Combination of teacher messages.
- Variation of language dependent on time.
- Individual and whole class communication.

5.3.1. Frequency of Communication and Saliency

The various analyses found that teacher communication in the primary classroom towards tests could be classified into five broad areas, as discussed in Section 5.2. However, an important question was to identify how regularly these forms of communication were occurring, as some forms of communication may be infrequently used. The conversion of data from the teacher interviews (see Section 3.6.1.2) attempted to provide information about the saliency of topics discussed, and gave further information about the types of discussions that dominated the interview. This analysis found that on the whole teachers spent more time discussing efficacious communication in the interviews. It is likely that this may have been due to the vast range of communication that falls into this category. Furthermore, it is also plausible that in a one-to-one interview context the teachers wanted to discuss communication they felt best exemplified their supportive role as teachers, and this would be efficacious communication. Reassuring and calming messages was the next form of communication most discussed, followed by outcome based communication, and the least discussed was the use of reminders and importance statements. Interestingly, the patterns of discussion in the interviews were remarkably similar across all the transcripts, which would suggest efficacious and reassuring communication was the communication teachers were more content to discuss.

Based on this evidence, the questionnaire was designed to elicit further information about the frequency in which teachers were using these various statements. The analysis suggested efficacious and reassuring communication was the form of communication regularly used in Year 2 and Year 6 classrooms, according to the respondents of the questionnaire. In Year 6 classrooms, a higher percentage of respondents were regularly using importance (27.8%), reminders (45.8%) and positive consequential statements (38.9%). However, in Year 2 classrooms, the figures for the regular use of these statements was much lower (importance 10%, reminders 10%, positive consequential 15%), which suggested that in Year 2 classrooms communication about importance, reminders and positive consequences was less frequent. This difference is
possibly due to the nature of testing in Year 2, where children are generally not aware they are doing national tests. Furthermore, these national tests in Year 2 are not as high-stakes as Year 6 SATs as school performativity in Year 2 is not solely judged on the national tests, but rather on the overall teacher assessments. In Year 2, the national tests are used to support teachers’ evaluations of children’s levels.

The use of negatively framed consequential language was found to be infrequently used in Year 2 and Year 6. 77.5% of Year 2 teachers responded that they never used these statements, with 48.6% of Year 6 teachers also responding similarly. The remaining percentage of respondents agreed to using these statements on an infrequent basis. In Section 5.2.3, it was stated that 18.8% of Year 6 and 5% of Year 2 respondents agreed to using negative outcome statements in their classrooms, with approximately 20% registering a neutral response. Overall, these pieces of information would suggest that teachers in primary classrooms use ‘fear appeal’ type messages (Putwain & Roberts, 2009), though they are used on an infrequent basis.

5.3.2. Combination of Teacher Messages

The teacher interviews identified that teachers were sometimes using a combination of communicative messages incorporating a number of elements. The teacher diaries further supported this assertion, and many diary entries showed the combinative element of teacher communication. In discussion with children in the focus groups, some children alluded to the dual nature of teacher messages. Overall, these data suggested that teacher communication in primary classrooms does not solely include one form or type of communication, though there may be instances where this is the case. The analyses illustrated a number of examples of the combinative nature of teacher messages, some of which included efficacious communication with reassuring messages, and expectation communication with feedback. The majority of research that has attempted to look at the effects of communication on children’s test performance, e.g. the effect of fear appeals (Putwain & Best, 2011; Putwain & Symes, 2011a, 2011b) has not addressed the varying effect when combined with other forms of communication. Indeed, Sprinkle et al. (2006) found that combining particular messages changed the effect it had on students, fear appeals were more effective when combined with efficacy statements. The different forms of statements identified in Section 5.2 and the evidence here suggests that teacher messages can include more than one element. Given this evidence, it can be accepted that in typical primary classrooms teachers are using a vast array of communicative messages conceivably in different combinations. Therefore, research that aims to evaluate the effects of particular forms of communication on children should also consider how the impact of this language may change when combined with other messages, which would ensure that research is more ecologically valid and representative of the classroom.

5.3.3. Variation of Language Dependent on Time

During the thematic analysis of the teacher interviews, a theme regarded as highly significant was identified, though had a relatively low incidence. This theme indicated that teacher communication in the classroom is likely to vary depending on the time of year. For example, at
the beginning of the year teachers are building relationships with the children and communication will be geared towards establishing this relationship, whereas around May time as the summative tests are approaching teachers have already built relationships and will most likely be using communication that will ensure children perform to the best of their ability. This represents an insightful account of teacher communication, and research exploring the type and frequency of communication in classrooms needs to be mindful of this time dependent variation. A limitation of this study was that data were collected at specific time points, and quite possibly had the data been collected at different time points the content would have differed. For example, if teachers were interviewed around May time when the national tests were taking place, the teachers may have focused more on the importance of tests and giving children reminders. Previous research has suggested that as examinations are approaching teachers increasingly use reminders (Putwain, 2009). In this study, the limitation was overcome to a certain extent, as the interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and diaries all occurred at different time points throughout the year, thus allowing a broad analysis of teacher communication. Nevertheless, future research exploring teacher language in primary classrooms needs to explore how the type and frequency of communication changes across the academic year.

5.3.4. Individual and Whole Class Communication

The analyses also suggested that teacher communication varied in the class in terms of its audience. The data within teacher interviews, diaries and focus groups suggested that teachers were not only making general statements to the whole class, but also made specific statements to particular children. The data suggested that teachers were judicious in their use of language statements for particular children, and this was based on the relationship they had developed and the children’s characteristics. The teachers were using their knowledge of the children in their classroom to determine what they could say to each child, with the aim of using communication that would best support the child. Children in the focus groups also discussed the differing communication they received from their teachers. This variation in language use for particular children also suggests that teachers are aware that their communication can have different effects on particular children. Generally, the teacher interviews identified that teachers made different comments to high and low attaining children, where for lower attaining children the aim was to reassure them and build their confidence. This variability in communication for particular children was further addressed in the questionnaire. However, the domain intended to measure whether teachers were catering their communication for particular children produced extremely varied responses. This would suggest that some teachers are communicating the same messages to all children, whereas others reserve particular forms of communication to specific children. Furthermore, like the majority of domains of the questionnaire, the domain was only made up of two statements, and more statements in this domain would have provided clearer information on communication towards particular children. Interestingly, teachers' acute awareness of children's dispositions when targeted with particular forms of communication, i.e. being aware that children respond differently, is in line with research findings that have shown that children respond differently when posed with the same
communicative messages. For example, research with young people has found that they are more likely to be anxious about tests if they perceive teacher messages as threatening (Putwain & Symes, 2011b). Similarly, threatening communication has been found to be effective when students do not adopt a fear of failure (Putwain et al., 2009).

5.4. RQ3 - Why Are Teachers Using Particular Forms of Language Statements in the Classroom When Preparing Children for Important Tests?

This research question attempted to explore the underlying factors that were instigating teachers to use particular forms of communication. As identified in Section 5.3.4, teachers were making assumptions about children’s responses based on their relationship with the children, and then using this knowledge to determine what they would say to particular children. The teacher interviews identified a whole host of factors that may be influencing teacher communication. This included: beliefs about what communication teachers felt would be effective; the values teachers ascribed to tests; teachers’ child-centred nurturing philosophy; influence of SES; and their experience. Some of the underlying factors that were thought to be influential were further explored in the questionnaire. The aim was to identify potential factors for future investigation. Identifying the direct links between particular forms of language and the underlying factors was beyond the scope of this study. In the questionnaire, the responses indicated that a large proportion of teachers disagreed with viewing tests such as the SATs as high-stakes, and gave more prominence to teacher assessments. Other qualitative information from the interviews suggested that teachers felt the tests were only high-stakes for the school and not the children, as many high schools re-test children at the beginning of secondary school. However, some respondents provided a neutral response and a small proportion agreed to viewing tests as important. In hindsight, the importance statements in the questionnaire could have been refined to indicate importance for school and importance for children. It is likely that these views about the purpose and value of tests are influencing teacher communication in the classroom. Furthermore, the high-stakes nature of Year 6 SATs, more so than Year 2 SATs, may also explain the differences in the frequency of communication identified in Section 5.3.1. It is plausible that when tests are not as high-stakes teachers will use different forms of communication.

Other factors such as beliefs about the effects of particular communication may also be influencing teacher language. For example, in the questionnaire a large proportion of respondents agreed that efficacious communication has a positive impact, whereas a large proportion disagreed with the belief that negative/threatening communication can have a positive impact. This may explain why a large proportion of teachers were using efficacious communication, and few were using negative statements. In the responses of efficacious and negative communication beliefs, there was variation in beliefs amongst teachers, which suggests that teachers hold different views. This finding of variation amongst teacher beliefs is consistent with Putwain and Roberts’ (2012) study of secondary teachers. These variations in beliefs may explain the variation in teacher communication found in this study, though further research is required to establish links between teacher-held beliefs and consequent language use. Moreover,
the study by Putwain and Roberts (2012) only found a small correlation between teachers’ endorsement of negative fear type statements and their corresponding beliefs, with the authors suggesting other factors may override why teachers use these statements e.g. school ethos and teacher interpersonal style. The teacher interviews in this study indicate that teachers in some situations use fear type negative statements due to frustration and as a last resort to motivate children, and the evidence here suggests they use these statements even when they subscribe to the belief that these statements are not helpful.

Putwain and Roberts’ (2012) study investigating other factors affecting the language used by secondary school teachers found experience did not affect beliefs or language use, and teachers from ‘underperforming’ schools held a view that the children were less efficacious. These factors were not fully explored in this study, and future research needs to ascertain whether this holds true for primary school teachers. The questionnaire of this study also largely found that teachers viewed primary school as a fun learning environment, where the aim was to provide children with a well-rounded education and not to pressurise them. This finding may explain why the teachers were opposed to using threatening forms of communication (see Section 5.2.3). This finding is at odds with secondary school teachers, where the use of negative statements is more profound (Putwain & Roberts, 2009, 2012). Furthermore, in this study teacher control was posited to be an important psychological factor influencing communication. The questionnaire suggested primary school teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 felt they had a high degree of control over children’s preparations for important tests. This was expected given that the majority of children’s test preparations in primary schools take place in the classroom. The findings of teacher philosophy, teacher control, and the lower high-stakes nature of national tests in primary schools in this study may explain why teachers in primary school use threatening consequential communication less frequently than their secondary counterparts. Certainly, in secondary school the GCSE examinations are more high-stakes for the children, and the children are expected to be more independent. Teachers in secondary schools also have a limited amount of time with children, and children are expected to prepare for examinations outside the classroom. Further studies would need to explore the relationship of teacher control, dependency beliefs, teacher philosophy and high-stakes testing on teacher communication.

5.5. RQ4 - Are Children Aware of the Language Being Used by Teachers Related to Important Tests?

The focus groups with children identified that children are aware of the language that was being used by their teachers in preparation for tests, and were able to provide numerous examples of what their teachers were saying to them. This was equally applicable for Year 2 and Year 6 children, which suggests that children from a young age are alert to what teachers are communicating. The children in the focus groups identified all of the broad forms of communication identified in Section 5.2. The only absence was the use of negative/threatening communication. However, the sample only included two focus groups, and this absence may be due to their teachers rarely using this type of communication. Indeed, the results of this study would suggest that negative fear type communication is not endorsed by all teachers and rarely
used by some teachers. If the focus groups had included children from a number of different classes, it is likely the children would have commented on this type of communication. Given that children are acutely aware of what their teachers are saying, research needs to consider what impact language has on their relationship with their teachers. van Tartwijk et al. (1998) have demonstrated that teacher messages are important in children’s evaluations of their teacher and the interpersonal relationship that develops.

Furthermore, it can also be assumed that the language teachers are using can affect the outcomes of primary-age children. For example, Putwain and Best's (2011) study using primary school children found that negative forms of communication affected children’s test performance and increased their test anxiety. Although not the focus of this study, as the focus groups proceeded and the subsequent analysis, there was evidence to suggest that children were not only aware of the language used by their teachers, but they had also deliberated over the effects of test performance. Children commented on the effects of poor test performance for future life trajectory (e.g. being placed in lower sets, affecting career opportunities), as well as evaluation by others (e.g. parents, teachers). This suggests that children were not only alert to communication directed at them about a specific test or task, but also evaluated this communication in the broader context of life outcomes and personal worth. Furthermore, other communication was influential in supporting children to become self-regulated learners and developing their early metacognition skills. In a context where the emphasis is on children’s attainment, it is likely that communication about test performance will affect children’s psychological development, affecting areas such as self-esteem, self-concepts and metacognition. Further research into this area will help determine how language can affect primary-age children, and whether children’s individual characteristics may also be important factors in how they appraise this language (see Section 5.3.4).

5.6. Limitations

Even though this study provides a comprehensive account of teacher communication in the classroom that is directed towards children’s test preparations, the findings of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. Within critical realism, the purpose is to conduct research that reflects reality, though reality at any given time can only be imperfectly ascertained because of flawed intellectual mechanisms and voids in research methods (Archer et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 2008). Thus, research is influenced by our current knowledge and method, and as time progresses and as new developments occur, knowledge can fundamentally change or evolve. The research in this exploratory study has provided a comprehensive foundation of teacher language in the classrooms that is geared towards tests. However, this should be viewed as a subset of the knowledge that could be obtained given the limitations of the study. The limitations of this study have been noted in this chapter and in the methodology section (see Chapter 3). The main limitations of the study relate to the sample, the timing of research, and the 'pilot' nature of the questionnaire. For the teacher interviews, diaries and focus groups, schools were approached based on their ease of accessibility, i.e. the sample was a purposive opportunity sample. The headteachers for the schools ultimately made the decision whether
their school would participate. In the final phase, the questionnaire was distributed to a large number of schools, though they were only completed by teachers who elected to complete it. Overall, the sample from all the stages can be said to be a self-selecting sample. Furthermore, additional information about the schools that were involved in the research suggests the sample was skewed towards schools that were judged to be 'outstanding' or 'good' on Ofsted school evaluations. Therefore, the research was not able to obtain information from a large number of teachers and children that would represent the typical population. There is a chance that data from 'underperforming' schools would have produced different conclusions about language being used in classrooms due to the increased pressure and accountability. Future research needs to address this absence.

In terms of the methods utilised in this research, the teacher diaries and questionnaire could have elicited more valuable information. However, constraints such as time and not overburdening participants limited the scope of the methods. For example, the teacher diaries in this study were only completed for a one to two week period in the month of March. Teacher diaries that spanned across the academic year would have picked up further nuances of teacher communication such as variation across the academic year. A limitation of the teacher diaries was that they do not capture the specific form of communication that teachers were using, as they were reliant on the teacher recording their communication, which in some cases occurred at the end of the day or at the end of the lesson. This period between what was said and when it was recorded is likely to have resulted in teacher diaries not capturing the specific communication that was used. Continuous audio recordings of teacher classrooms could be implemented which would allow the specific communication to be recorded, and this method is likely to be more effective than observation methods. The questionnaire in this study was designed as an exploratory 'pilot' questionnaire. In attempting to address the varied areas of teacher communication, and to manage the length of the questionnaire to ensure a high completion rate, compromises were made on the number and breadth of questions. Future questionnaires could do with investigating fewer domains to provide more detailed information in relation to teacher communication.

5.7. Implications of Findings for Future Research

The study presented in this thesis is the first to provide a comprehensive account of teacher communication in primary classrooms that is focused towards children's test preparations. The majority of research prior to this study has focused on the secondary school population, specifically the period in which young people are undertaking their GCSEs. However, primary schools are also structured within a similar testing environment, where the focus is on children’s attainment and educational development. For these young children, they are likely to encounter stresses and pressures, albeit to a lesser extent given that the tests are not as high-stakes as GCSEs. Nevertheless, this research highlights the magnitude of teacher communication that is occurring in primary classrooms, which is specifically related to tests and test preparation in this early developmental phase of primary education. This teacher communication cannot be ignored
as it is likely to be critical in children’s early educational and psychological development, further substantiating the need for research in primary school contexts.

The research here identified that teachers are using various forms of instructional communication in the classroom to motivate children, and there is variability amongst teachers in the communication they use, as would be expected. Moreover, there are further subtle differences in language use due to the contextual differences between Year 2 and Year 6 environments. The research generally finds that teachers are using positive motivational communication in the classroom to support children’s preparations, though teachers are using negative threat type communication albeit to a lesser extent and infrequently. The research has also identified that communication in the classroom can include a number of elements, which represents the complexity in teacher instruction. Therefore, it is important for researchers to consider the impact and effect of these combined statements. It is also likely that communication depends on the time point of the year, with communication being adjusted as the tests are approaching. Importantly, it seems teachers are aware of the differential impact of particular forms on communication on children, and they are fine tuning their communication based on what they feel will have the optimum effect on children. This study has also explored a range of factors that may be influential in determining teachers’ choice of language use, though further research is needed to fully explore the relationship of these underlying factors. The findings of this study have documented the language occurring in primary classrooms towards preparations for important tests, the subsequent logical step would be determine the impact and effect particular forms of communication are having on children, and whether communication can affect children in a different manner. In line with this, it is also important to study how children in primary classrooms perceive the language from their teachers. It is possible that teachers communicating to children the importance of tests may be viewed by some children as motivational, whereas other children may find this distressing.

5.8. Implications for EP Practice

The research presented here was exploratory and did not intend to examine the impact and effect of particular forms of teacher communication. The findings of the study suggest that children are acutely aware of the language being used by their teachers. This information together with the plethora of accompanying literature that has demonstrated the impact of particular forms of communication highlights that adults need to be mindful of the language they use towards children. This not only relates to teachers, but also to EPs who work directly with children, as children can internalise the content of various forms of communication directed at them. For EPs, the importance of language in affecting people’s thought patterns and behaviour is not a novel idea. EPs working through consultative approaches use techniques such as reframing language to challenge and change perspectives of various stakeholders (Leadbetter, 2004; Stobie, Boyle, & Woolfson, 2005). Furthermore, this emphasis on language as a facilitator for change is commonly found in therapeutic approaches such as person-centred therapy (C. R. Rogers, 1951), solution focused therapy (Stobie et al., 2005) and cognitive behavioural therapy (Stallard, 2006). EP practice can also be viewed as being based on the fundamentals of discourse
analysis, where discourse and communication is viewed as constructing realities, which is then represented by the social world (R. Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). Certainly, EPs working within a social constructionist position will also be exploring conceptions of reality that have been formulated by language and society.

The research presented here further highlights the need for EPs to critically examine the use of language in all contexts given that people are highly alert to our discourse. In light of the findings of this research, EPs in consultations with adults and completing direct work with children need to be cautious and judicious in their use of language, bearing in mind that this communication can not only impact the immediate interaction, but also affect personal conceptions within children and adults. For example, communicating to a child the importance of doing well in tests has other broader implications, e.g. for values of worth, competence and self-esteem. Research has already shown the importance of communication in changing the mentality of children who have acquired a state of ‘learned helplessness’ (Diener & Dweck, 1980; Dweck, 1975). Similarly, discussions with teachers about viewing behaviour as communication can have the effect of changing teacher conceptions about a child’s behaviour. Another example is how language can be influential in whether adults make ‘within child’ or ‘environmental’ attributions. In all, the importance of language as a significant mediator cannot be denied. The findings of this study recognise the need to disseminate this information not only to EPs, but also to other school staff e.g. teachers and teaching assistants, to assist them in reflecting over their language use, and to support them in critically appraising their use of language. This role for EPs can easily be incorporated into consultations that occur with parents, teachers, teaching assistants and other professionals.

Another implication of this research relates to the broader role of EPs. Historically, EPs have been involved at the strategic and systemic level working with organisations to improve outcomes for all children (J. M. E. Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Farrell et al., 2006). Burden (1978) proposed more than 30 years ago for EPs to work at this level for the benefit of all children (Burden, 1978). However, this seems to be a notable absence in current EP practice, and EPs have become increasingly marginalised from broader developments in education, in particular SEN (J. M. E. Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Farrell et al., 2006). The research presented here was focused towards teacher communication directed at all children, not only those with SEN. This type of research reiterates the need for EPs to pursue research that has the potential to improve outcomes for all children. In addition to this broader decisive function of EPs, there is also a role for EPs to communicate the findings of this study and the extant literature to schools and organisations that work with children, through avenues such as training and conferences.


Fraser, B. J. (2001). Twenty thousand hours: Editor’s introduction. Learning Environments Research, 4, 1-5.


Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule

Opening

- Establish rapport/introduce/thank participant.
- Purpose of interview/teacher language when preparing children for tests/No right or wrong answer/need to reflect/interested in what you say to children/elicit examples good.
- Value of involvement/potential to identify effective use of language.
- Timings/discuss timing of interview.

Main Body

Background information

- Experience as teacher/history.
- Test information/what type of tests/what are the important tests/when are these tests/how much do you prepare for these tests/are there mock tests/how important are they/is importance of tests communicated to children/are children aware of these tests/what is the purpose of these tests.

Teacher language when preparing for tests

- What language do you use that you find the most persuasive in prompting children to prepare better for tests.
- What type of language statements are you using/what are you saying to the children when tests are coming up.
- Do you just give children the tests.
- How do you use these statements/how often do you say them.
- Do you inform/remind children of tests, their frequency/what do you say.
- Do you use reassuring messages/what kind/what do you say.
- Is the language focused on mastery of learning and personal achievement or is focused for an external outcome e.g. grade, reward/are tests communicated as methods to appraise one’s learning or as outcomes of learning.
- Does the language used communicate effort/effort allows better results/focused on ability expectations.
- Fear type appeals/consequences of action/are threat-based messages will be effective/what do you say.
- Efficacy type appeal/types of efficacy statements/how children can prepare better/where to get support/supportive messages.

Frequency of language (relate to specific language described)

- How frequent is this language used/daily/weekly/every 10mins/timing.
- How often are the different forms of language used.

Purpose and effects of language on children (relate to specific language described)

- What is the purpose of the language/why you use it/what prompts to you use it/knowledge of how children learn or what motivates them.
- What effect/impact does the language have or do you hope it to have.
- Which language statement best at motivating/why.
- Does the language cause anxiety/does it affect children differently.
- Are children getting stressed due to all talk about exams and their importance.
- Prior to exams are children told of their targets/expectations/what do you say.
Individual differences

- Do you use different language for different children/different messages for different children.
- What do you say to them/do you communicate to them targets.
- Is your language different dependent on the relationship with the child.
- Child’s self-efficacy/does that make difference.

Pressures

- Performativity/would you say your school is a high performing school/what pressures are there for you as a teacher to do well/where do these pressures come from/if children don’t do well are you accountable/do you have targets for certain percentage of levels.
- Would you say these pressures affect the language you use in the classroom/if so how/what type of language are you more likely to use.
- If pay was performance related and you had to improve children’s outcomes, would that change your approach.

Teacher efficacy

- Do you feel you can affect the outcomes of your children.
- Do you feel children can succeed or do better by putting more effort in.
- What kind of things do you say to children about this/do you communicate this particularly around exam time.
- Do you feel the language you use is effective in promoting the children’s outcomes in tests.

Other factors that affect language use

- Home environment/low SES/less efficacious children.
- School ethos/does the school influence the language you use/is there a school wide approach.

Teacher approach

- Similar approach in other areas e.g. behaviour management.
- Teacher philosophy/interpersonal style/how best to motivate children.
- Change in use of language as you have become more experienced/particularly for tests/was this because you have a better idea of how children learn.

Closing

- Summarise discussions.
- Thank.
- Any other views that we haven’t covered.
- Future involvement interest/diaries/focus groups.
- Debrief about research/questions about research.
Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

### Appendix 2 - Year 2 Teacher Interview (Transcript 1, Participant 1)

P = Participant (Teacher)  
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I:</th>
<th>It would be really good if I get a background about you in terms of your experience and what you have been doing? How long you've been teaching?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I have taught now in year 2 for the last three years, previously I've taught in year 1, I've taught in year 3 and year 4, so I've done a lot of breadth there really, being a year 3 teacher and getting the information from the year 2 teacher was quite interesting really because the level seem to dip slightly and we thought why is that and I think now, we're now on a level peg really because I think when you've experienced that you're more capable of doing a steadier pace really rather than oh yes they're really good at this and then giving them a really high grade, when it's going to be awful for the next teacher when they don't make any progress because you've highly done it so, and I've worked here since, I've worked here 21 years, so I've got some experience of working in a PRU, I went to a PRU for a year and that's about it really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay, so you've been here a long time and you've been a year 2 teacher for the last three years. Okay, in terms of assessment in the classroom in year 2, I've not been in a year 2 classroom for a long time, I was just wondering what kind of assessments do you do and what kind of information do the government require, are there some formalised tests or do you...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>There is the SATs, we do SATs in year 2, key stage 1 testing and they haven't change over the last quite a number of years, there's a 1999 paper and 1997 paper and you choose which one you want to do, but we've also, we've got our teacher assessments that we also do throughout the year anyway and we've all got our targets, agreed targets we have to meet so, well so...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay and the kind of information the government uses is that just the information from the SATs or is it combined with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>It's combined really because I send my teacher assessment to county but also the tracker that we put on the results from the SATs that goes, that's quite public because Ofsted are now putting it on the dashboard, so they'll show you how many level 2s they've got in that year group, percentage wise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So that's based on the SAT papers, solely on the papers, not the teacher assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay that's interesting, in terms of these SATs that you do, when do you do them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I do them in May, usually after the bank holiday in May and I do them in small groups, I take the children out of the classroom to a quieter room and I just say, they don't even know they're doing the SATs, I just say we're going to do a bit of writing or we going to do some number work and I'm going to give you all this apparatus and they don't know they are doing the SATs and I don't tell them that in the slightest no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So prior to that do you do practise type SATs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay so you just do your normal thing and then when the times comes to do SAT tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I just say come show me how much you've learnt this year I want you to blow me socks off, come on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>So it's all about encouraging them to do the best that they can do and they don't get the support to do it, they'll say but you're not helping me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So that's the only difference?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>The only difference is that I can't help them in the slightest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay so I'm just guessing throughout the year you probably won't be doing that much preparation work for these SATs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>No, not really because we've got other things to cover as well, I mean the ones we do, we do riddles and I tend to do a riddle just after Christmas, just to show them what a riddle is, so I might spend two weeks doing riddles just after Christmas and then that's because in the test they have a riddle to look at anyway and they can use the ideas of that because it's there anyway but it's all about them choosing something and I don't touch on what the topic is either, so we might do a riddle for a fire, like a fire engine or a vehicle rather than what it is for the SATs because it's an animal for the SATs, I just don't touch anything like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So in terms of preparation you don't do any preparation with respect to the SATs, you just do your normal classroom and when it comes to the SATs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Because I know what's in the SATs, so I know that throughout the year when I'm teaching I've covered, I've got to cover all of those things that are in it, we've got our own planning sheets and everything so we have to cover everything on it anyway, and for our literacy it's also story writing, its the other part of the SATs so we do that in the year as well, the only thing we wouldn't cover is this riddle, so that's why I just shoved it in after Christmas just to get them into what a riddles about really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So they have a bit of practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>When the children come into the classroom, obviously in year 2 they are at a very young age, do they have an awareness that I need to be doing SATS tests or do they...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>They know they've got targets because they have target cards and things, but when you give them a highlighter, and they just highlight everything and say yes I can do it all, so you know they're quite confident little children really, they're not fazed by anything and through the encouragement you give they always like build on that anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>What kind of encouragement do you give, what kind of things do you say to them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| P: | Sometimes it might be what were we doing the other week that you need to add that or oh I could add an exclamation mark to it, just simple things like that just remembering, retelling, for them to remember that we've done so much work on things that they can just put into their work, also, I don't know, just encouraging them to do it again, just saying that's brilliant how can we improve it even more, because even on the marking ladders, we've got that we do, it says at the bottom how could I improve it next time and they always put neater writing or put punctuation in, it's just things that I jog their memory with as well when I talk to them about the...
targets that you do have in year 2, they know them
targets, when you say to them, do you say things like you need to do this and this to get your target or is it just
there as an extra supplementary.
I: Well it’s there and also if they highlight, I just say let’s find it, let’s find it in your book, show me the
evidence that you’ve got that you can do that, and they’ll go oh but I can, show me and that to me is, again it’s
proving to me that they’ve not just highlighted it willy nilly anyway but also they can do it, also it’s a massive
boost for them so, oh yes, I’ve not done that have I? But I could show you, so I don’t know, it’s just second nature
really.
I: And after they’ve learnt something and they are revisiting it, and sometimes they can do the things, do you
say, I don’t know, make comments that are reassuring I think and things like that and what kind of an approach
do you have?
P: Well through my planning as well, when I’ve already done something and we’re going back throughout it
again, say the following term, if they’ve not grasped it then, I would sit with them anyway, but I would have
picked it up way before that if they’ve not grasped it and, and we would sit and do it at some point, one point maybe
just to look at it, so if somebody has gone into assembly and just say let’s have a look at this because you didn’t
really understand it, lets have a look at it together and see if you can work it out, I wouldn’t leave it too long
because I want them to understand, because when I do revisit it again, I didn’t want to start at the beginning, do
you know what I mean?
I: Yes.
P: So that’s the way I would do it.
I: So that gives me a good idea of how it is in the classroom, just to summarise the assessments that you do, the
formal ones the SATs, you just don’t, you don’t communicate to them that it’s the SATs.
P: No.
I: And they’re not really aware it is SATs?
P: No.
I: And I’m guessing they’re not really aware that it’s important?
P: I just tell them that I’m going to show this work to other teachers and I really want you to try your best.
I: Okay.
P: They’re going to read it, so to make it a bit important that way, they know they’ve got to try their hardest,
don’t know why, but they do always try, but I don’t, I’ve never said we’re going over there to do your SATs,
because they know that the year 6 do SATs, they know that, they don’t grasp that we do, a couple of bright ones
might go home and say we’ve done these tests, she made us do tests, but I don’t tell them, I just say there’s all
your things, you can use any of these things to do, if you were doing a maths one.
I: So the way you do it is more of a relaxed and more of a calmer way of doing it rather than say throughout the
year, saying oh these are questions that will come in the SATs, you don’t do or say things like that?
P: No.
I: In terms of when you said you’d tell them that you need to do really well in these tests or in this thing that we
are doing, so I’m right in thinking that you just say that just before you give it to them, but you wouldn’t say
before, or say next week we are going to do these things and I want you to do really well.
P: No, no.
I: So you just carry on with your normal teaching and you do this...
P: Because sometimes because they’re on a piece of paper as well, I say this isn’t in your book and I don’t want to
lose it and I want to make sure I’ve got all of your things that you want to show, because I’m going to show this
to other teachers and they’re going to be wowed by it, it’s just, I don’t know, just encouraging them to really,
really try and to think about all the things that we’ve gone through this year,
I: And it’s more of a child friendly approach?
P: Yes.
I: I think from what I’m getting, so throughout your main focus is so they’re enjoying their learning and then you
just learning different, different things and then after that you just give them the SATs and you tell them to try
the best.
P: I mean we put all of the skills into place and they just have to then do it, so but my teacher assessment is not
based on the results anyway, it’s usually some of it is, because a little girl in my class did really, really well in
her reading and she wasn’t expected to do that well and I’ve marked her as a teacher assessment not as well as
she did in her SATs so it didn’t, I didn’t want to, she’s done a massive jump already this year but it would have
been even further and I thought I want her to make some progress when she is in year 3 so for me she’s a solid 2b
even though she got a 2a in her SATs, but for me she’s a solid 2b.
I: Right.
P: So when she’s in year 3, she could get a 3c in her reading, which is still making the progress because she’s
made a massive jump this year from level 1 so.
I: So using your.
P: My judgement, my personal judgement towards her, so everything just clicked into place quite recently with
her and I thought I don’t want her to come out too high because 2b is all she needs to get at the end of the day
and she’s done amazingly to get there.
I: So am I right in thinking that the main type of language that you are using in the classroom is putting your best
effort in.
P: Yes.
I: And trying your hardest?
P: Yes it’s one of our class promises, we do a pinky promise at the beginning of the year and we say, what do we
want to do from our work, and they say, we want to try our best, so that’s part of our pinky promise that we try
our best.
I: So it’s trying your best and supporting the children to get there, or in order to go that next level up.
P: And you know all the children, as a class teacher you know the children inside out what they’re capable of
doing.
I: Yes, so throughout the year do you have informal type assessments?
P: Yes we do our assessment, every half term we look at them, then it’s every end of term we look at them
again, so just to see if there’s any steps made because we’ve got big sheets to fill in with progress on them, some
children who are Privats have their little steps to complete, so all of them make progress in some form or another
and they pass all that up to the next teacher as well so.
I: I'm thinking, so we've considered the type of language that you're using in the classroom and the most frequent
language is about putting the effort in and supporting the children on how to move up and probably saying things,
getting them to be a bit more independent and achieve whatever they want to do in a big write. I mean we do a big write every Friday, so they know when they get it, they get a sheet and they go oh we're
doing this big write, so when they got the sheet for SATs it wasn't, it was just, is this just a big write, yes, just
the same, just listen to what I've got to say first.
I: Yes.
P: We encourage them all the time, we are a very positive school when it comes down to behaviour tactics and
everything, so that's the way we work.
I: In terms of the effect that the, you know, your approach, your language that you are using, you feel that it's
effective in ensuring the children make progress?
P: Yes.
I: Do you feel that, I know that you've been teaching a long time, do you feel that you've changed your approach
a bit or.
P: Yes.
I: How do you feel you've changed?
P: I think in whatever year you go in it's totally different, when you work in key stage 1 they need you more,
they need the reassurance more, whereas when you're further up the school when I've taught year 3 and 4 they
just got on with it, and you just thought do you not want me to do anything?
P: Yes they're a bit more independent?
P: Yes they're totally independent further up the school and they need it so much in key stage 1 just to say yes
that's really good, okay are you having another go at that, that's really good, you know what I mean, they need it
more, whereas further up the school they don't, so I'll probably be doing totally different teaching when I'm in
key stage 2 to where I am now.
I: So it's a totally different approach?
P: Yes and them wanting you and children just being there, and Miss come on just sit with me for a minute, you
know they don't really want you in key stage 2 like that, they don't need that comfort zone really I suppose isn't
it?
I: Yes it's interesting, I'm just thinking in terms of children getting, because the way you do the SATs you just
give it to them, there's not that much of an emphasis on how important they are and you're just saying it's
important that you do really well, so I'm guessing children don't really feel anxious or nervous about that
experience.
P: No I mean I have a little girl in my class who went and had an operation and I had to do hers quite quickly over
a short space of time before she went in for a operation because she was going to be off for 6 weeks, and yes
we're going in that room again, and it's like okay come on, she was just so excited about doing it and having a
bit of time, where I've got a class of 30 know there was a little group there and they had all this space and
they had big tables for themselves and she was yes I'm going in that room.
I: So it's something different them?
P: Yes totally, I'm going to do more maths with her, you know and I was like whoa and we're going over there,
but she was like you know that's another extreme example, so we were doing it really quickly with her, I mean
she was doing quite a few in a day whereas I usually spread them out over 2 weeks you see, because she was
going for her operation so I was like, she was like yes mum I've just been again.
I: So some children respond?
P: And yes she isn't the brightest in my class she's like a level 1 child but the enthusiasm was still there to go off
and try her best.
I: Okay that's good and I'm guessing like you said different children respond differently?
P: Yes.
I: Do you ever find when it comes to these challenging type things do any children worry or are they all okay?
P: Last year I had a boy who was new to the class and he didn't like any form of writing whatsoever so he had to
do it on his own, he didn't even want to be in a small group, he just wanted the attention just with me and him
there which was fine, I just did him as a catch up, but he really struggled to conform to what we were doing
because he was new, he had only been in the school for about a week by the time we were doing them, and he
just wanted that reassurance I think that you know I've got you to myself and because he needed, come on carry
on that's really good what you doing so far, he needed that constantly so that he had a bit of a background anyway
but he needed that one to one which I didn't tell him any different to what I told the rest of them in the
group, but he just needed that yes keep going.
I: So it's a bit of reassurance?
P: All of the time, but he couldn't stand it if the other children wanted me, so he ended up doing it by himself
with me.
I: So he just needed someone near him just to...
P: Just to say yes you're doing fine, all the time, and you know he came out alright, he got a 2b and he'd
totally did not want to do it in front of loads of other children even though there was about 8 children there but
he just wanted you to himself.
I: Yes and that is how you do it, you take a small group of children, do them and they come out?
P: Yes and I make sure that whoever's in my classroom they're doing something fun so when they come back in
it's not anything stressy, there's no writing or anything else, they're doing something else, a fun topic on, I think
they did a electricity topic with the student teacher I had at the time so, I try and make sure I have a student
teacher when I'm doing that otherwise they get a supply to cover my class for 2 weeks to make sure my time is
spent with those children you see, I think it's important, I would dread my little boys going into year 2 and I just
think I would dread him to be in a whole room where everybody is doing their writing and I just think he's very
young one in his class and I just think it's awful.
I: Yes I can imagine it can be awful for a young child, I know in year 6...
P: They're ready.
I: And that's what they're doing.
P: And as soon as they go into high school it's going to be exams and it's a hall but I just can't do that to 6 and 7
year olds.
I: Well it's quite interesting the way you've approached it, it's very different, it's not that much of an emphasis
on SATs, it's more about just doing everything and yes this is something...
P: We've got to do it and do it as happily as we can.
I: Then I'll carry on with my normal classroom and obviously that is a different approach and for younger children it is probably a better approach in my opinion. I was just thinking in terms of, I know the levels that you get they publish it on the league tables and the website, do you feel there is a pressure for you to get children to a certain level?

P: Yes.

I: When you come into the classroom you think I don't know what the targets are for year 2, but certain percentage of children need to achieve this, do you feel there is a pressure on you?

P: Yes.

I: And do you feel that makes you do things differently in the classroom or do you say different things to children or?

P: No I wouldn't say I say different things to them, I've just got to think that to get that child to that level, what I've got to give them tools wise and skills wise, so I have to make sure that I've given them that throughout the year and to get a 2b and what a child's got to be achieving and what they've got to put into a piece of writing, for example I know what a 2b looks like so I know that when I differentiate my plans those children who are on the cusp of 2c/2b I know how I've got to get them to a 2b through me giving them the skills, there is a lot of pressure on it because if you do get a year of really good SATs then you get another you can get them that then, then next year it's a bit higher percentage so it's like you really shoot yourself in the foot if you do really well, but I have had some level 3 children this year and last year and the year before so you just, there is pressures but you can't if a child's, it's like I've got a lot of level 1 children as well, I can't drag them kicking and screaming to a 2b, they're not there, if they're not ready to do them then they're not ready to do it, but if they give me their best I can't ask for more than that, that's what they've given me so.

I: So it's more about emphasising the effort and getting them to do their best, and I'm guessing from the things that you are saying that you would never say to them things like if you don't do well at this then you won't get this grade like this is a consequence.

P: No, they won't get that anyway, I mean I gave out the reports on the Friday and the mum went what does this mean, 3, what does that mean, I said it says at the bottom of the letter and there's a leaflet inside and you could find out what the 3 meant, I said it's really, really good, well I got to read hadn't I, so I mean it doesn't mean anything to the parents, I've got a teenage boy who's got a tracker sheet and it's just all levels and that's all it is, that's what he's done this year, if I wasn't a teacher I wouldn't know what that meant.

I: So I'm guessing the parents don't really know what a level 2 or a level 3 or a level 1 or something along the lines of that, and they are not too fussed and they are not pressuring you?

P: No.

I: Oh I want my child to do better or something.

P: No, I mean I do have parents that say they really want challenging and I do challenge a lot of my children, and I challenge them for their level, so for maths I got a challenge box that they go into after they've completed whatever and it's always my top group who does that and they all level 3 questions in their anyway because I can challenge my other children in a different way so I know if they are achieving some of those questions that when they do a level 3 maths paper it's not going to totally phase them, because a lot of the level 3 paper there's no hundred square little cubes and there's no apparatus if they do a level 3 paper it's all about jotting things down so it's just encouraging them to do things like that.

I: Now would you like throughout the year, would you help them in getting used to that?

P: Yes.

I: Saying to them oh if a question comes like this you need to answer it by doing this?

P: But I do it as a whole class and say rather than use 100 squares today let's have a go at doing a little calculation, they call this a jotting they do it in year 6, we're only in year 2, you know what I mean.

I: Yes.

P: Just to show them that it's okay to do it like that because a lot of will go like 2 add 2 add 2 add and, and it's all about showing them but I do it as a whole class not...

I: So your approach is the same for every child in the class?

P: Yes.

I: And you wouldn't really change your approach for specific children?

P: Well it depends on their understanding of it because some of the children won't be able to do that so they, yes it's just individualised down, that's all, it depends on what they're doing but I would show the whole class the approach though first.

I: Okay.

P: So when they do get a question, they go I just do that you know, and when I did the level 3 paper, one boy, I said how have you worked that out and you've not filled any jottings, he goes I did it my head, so I go okay.

I: You have to show the working out to get marks.

P: Yes to get the marks, I did it in my head, should I write did it in my head, and he got it right but he lost a mark because he didn't show the working out, never mind.

I: Okay, just thinking about in terms of your approach when we've been talking about the kind of language that you use in the classroom it's more about emphasising effort and doing well and trying your best and these are the kind of things that you're saying to the children throughout the year, when something like the SATS do come you just give it to them and just say actually they are important, but it's just important so we know how well you are doing and then just get to do it.

P: Yes.

I: I: I was just thinking, in terms of other areas, not just learning, say like behaviour management or something, do you have a different approach there or do you say similar types of comments when managing children's behaviour?

P: It depends again on the child, I've got quite a challenging class anyway and again you know the children, so something like will work with some children and sometimes that won't work, so thumbs up to somebody will yes, but it depends on who it is and I don't know but we do the positive praise, good sitting, moving up the traffic light, I got like a gold star and a star of the day, and we're near a star and a star of the day, and we're near a gold star, well done keep it up so and it depends who it is because some children I'm different with again, even though they are on the traffic light, I'll say well done you're sitting nicely even though everybody else has been sitting nicely for a long time, he might struggle so I'll say you're sitting nicely, but other children are sitting there nicely, so it's different again do you know what I mean?

I: Yes, so you have your general approach but then for specific children you do.

P: You have to do different things and praise in them in ways that you think well I'm sitting nicely why I'm not
getting moved up, but he struggles to do that so it’s just depends on the child but again we do a positive
approach to everything and you’re praising somebody you’ll go thank you for sitting so nicely, and then they’ll
go, and then they’ll all do it, oh hello we’re all here okay.

I: I’m just thinking this approach that you have or is it influenced by the whole school, is it a kind of whole school
thing approach that comes in and that kind of influences what you do in the classroom?

P: Definitely yes, and also when you see other people dealing with some behaviour, you think yes because
sometimes you forget just standing close to somebody and going, and just knowing your presence is there that’s
enough for some children and sometimes you go I’m here you know and they go oh yes, I better get on then, it’s
different you forget sometimes oh yes I need a reminder I’ll do that but we all do it and we’re all trained to do
stuff like, and I’ve got my background of being in a PRU for a year as well that was very challenging and I learnt a
lot from that, massive learning curve that was when I went there for a year, massive, huge, and then I got a child
back from a PRU in my class now.

I: So that experience is helping you now, I’m just thinking in terms of how you feel in terms of children
progressing do you feel you have control over how much progress they make in the classroom, do you feel
sometimes some children because of outside factors despite everything you do they won’t make that progress
that’s because of things outside?

P: Yes there is that, but I think well I work very hard to get them where I want them to get to and even though
we’ll only have them for those 6 hours of the day and we work hard during them 6 hours there is sometimes
outside influences that might think no not going to do it, and I just think oh dear, with the likes of some of my
children who their background isn’t brilliant and they struggle with a lot of things, what if they can produce that
for me, and in that short space of time they’ve tried their best so that’s all I can ask for and I think those
influences outside can hinder and result in say your SATs could go bit oh we’ve not tried our best have we today,
well such a body this did this last night and my dog died or whatever, but for me it’s teacher assessment based
anyway and that SATs is just something we have to do.

I: Yes.

P: It can affect it but I don’t know think, I think it depends sometimes on the respect you’ve got with the children
as well whether they really want to try the best for you and it’s about the relationship that you have with the
children.

I: And I’m guessing you develop that relationship up when you do say to them this is something that is really
important and I want to see where you are and I want you to try really hard, I think if you’ve got that relationship
then that prompts them to work a bit harder to try their best.

P: I mean just looking through their work at the end of the session, I’ll do what we call a quality mark and I will
speak to the child about the comments that I’ve written and say what did you think about that and talk to them
about it and I just, they’ll go well yes should have put me speech marks in there shouldn’t I and oh yes I should
have spelt that properly shouldn’t I yes, so I just think that encouragement and talking to them throughout the
year anyway gets that relationship and what I expect of them and they know what I expect of them as well do
have spelt that properly shouldn’t I yes, so I just think that encouragement and talking to them throughout the
year anyway gets that relationship and what I expect of them and they know what I expect of them as well do
you know what I mean, it works both ways and I do have high expectations and I think they do from me saying go
on try your best that’s all I want you to do.

I: Yes, so the language that you are using throughout the year is try your best and you’re supporting them and
you’re being quite supportive and you’re building that relationship up and again they know that you’re expecting
them to try their best and push themselves and obviously not push themselves too much, just push themselves to
where they feel they can.

P: Yes.

I: And when the SATs come you just say to them you know yes try your best, they’ll do their best and you’re
happy with that and that’s done.

P: Yes.

I: And you don’t worry too much about the SATs and children doing well in the SATs and even if they don’t do
well you feel as if your teacher assessments are a bit more accurate because they are over the year whereas the
SATs is a single.

P: Yes just a single thing.

I: Yes so that you use that information to pass it on.

P: Because you know the year 6s I feel sorry for them, because it’s going back to the GCSEs as well which is the
exam and it’s all on the day and you can have an awful day.

I: Yes.

P: The day before or the night.

I: Or a bad night’s sleep or something.

P: Something major could have happened and it doesn’t matter because you just have to perform on that day
and its bit of a shame.

I: That’s good ok thank you very much.

[Concluding talk]
Appendix 3 - Year 6 Teacher Interview (Transcript 2, Participant 2)

P = Participant (Teacher)  
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[[Introductory talk]]

1. I: To begin, I want to ask you about your experience as a teacher, maybe just give me a bit of background about yourself, when you came into teaching, how long you have been teaching?

2. P: Yes, I’ve been teaching now for I think this is my seventh year, including my training year, I did the GTP graduate teacher programme, which my year of training was here, so I worked here full time as part of the course, previous to that I did, my background was sport, my degree was in sport and I worked with a lot of children doing sports coaching and one of my jobs after I’d come out of university was working in [----], as a young person’s development officer for a charity as part of that role I worked with a local community and went into primary schools and delivered like sports sessions and stuff like that, and that’s how I got my passion back for teaching, well how much I loved primary school teaching and saw that how much I loved it as a child myself and I was on a year to year contract, it was funded by children in need and was coming to the end of the funding for that contract, so I knew that potentially I might have to look elsewhere and going into the schools I loved it so much that I thought I would like to be a teacher myself, I always thought if I was to be a teacher I might be a PE teacher and use my sport but I realised how much I loved primary life, so I applied for that and got on here, I had [----] as my school.

3. I: Training school?

4. P: Yes, training school, but the GTP preferred somewhere with more experiences and this school was running quite a lot of those, so I came here and I worked in year 6 and went straight into year 6.

5. I: Oh right, so you went straight into year 6?

6. P: Yes, which was quite tricky at first, because coming to learn all the levels, like the level 4, level 5 work, at the beginning was quite tricky, not doing that work since I was at school myself, so it was straight in at the deep end really but got through it pretty quickly and really enjoyed, and that’s where I’ve remained in year 6, I had a couple years in 5, and the past three years have been in year 6.

7. I: Oh right, so a bit of a mixture, but mainly year 6.

8. P: Yes.

9. I: Okay, just in terms of tests in year 6 you probably have more than the other years or there’s more of an emphasis, just tell me so I know the kind type of tests you are doing, I’m not only talking about the national but even the general tests in the classroom that you may also do, you know normal end of unit tests and things like that, what do you do typically?

10. P: Well we do, there will be things like spelling tests, some timetable tests to get the children up to speed on the basics, at the end of each, every half term we assess the children either that’s through an assessed piece of writing where they will write completely independently without any help at all and then we will then level that up to see the progress and compare that to where they’ve been at the beginning of the year or where they came from in year 2, and in year 6 they will do quite a lot of past SATs, so we know what kind of level they are at and so we can find out who needs support in certain areas or needs boosting to get to certain level and for also for them to practice and understand what it’s going to be like when they do the key stage 2 tests.

11. I: What time do they actual SATs take place?

12. P: They happen in May, so we do a lot of practice before that.

13. I: Do you do practice throughout the year or is it around January, February time?

14. P: We will introduce them I’d say probably, the first test would probably be the first half term, first practice SAT that they will do just to, so they, every year 6 knows that when they come into year 6 the big thing is SATs.

15. I: Right.

16. P: They know it’s going to be happening and they’ve seen brothers and sisters and friends and stuff do it in the hall so they, it’s quite something that everyone’s excited and obviously nervous about it at the same time, so we will probably introduce a practice SAT round about October time near the first half term and it really starts to kick in in terms of the practice, well I’ve always done it from February half term onwards, so you’ve got like three months, a term and a half basically, where it’s pretty much literacy and numeracy focus towards the SATs.

17. I: Am I right in thinking there are SATs for literacy, for numeracy?

18. P: Yes.

19. I: And do they do for science anymore?

20. P: They do, it’s changed since I, it used to be when I first came that they, it was a literacy and a numeracy and the science, now the science was then taken out and just a sample of schools across the country now do science so it’s completely random if you do science, and if you do you’t do science it’s not, your score is then not published, it’s just basically for them to have a sample and see what level they’re at, the rest of science is done by teacher assessment, it used, the literacy has changed over the last year where the literacy was a reading SAT, which still remains, and then there was always a shorter piece of writing and a longer piece of writing and the spelling test, now this year it’s changed where the writing is now purely teacher assessment, so it’s just what we think they are over the course of the year and now they do a spelling and grammar punctuation test, which is just basically lots of, there are 50 questions I think where you might have to punctuate sentences or find out which word is the verb or the adjective and so on, so there’s no longer a writing test in year 6, it’s all teacher assessment.

21. I: And in terms of numeracy, do you just do the SATs, is it just the mental arithmetic?

22. P: Yes, when you’re yourself, there’s a calculator allowed and there is a calculator, which is just mental questions.

23. I: So that gives me a good update, I’ve been out of the classroom for so long, I don’t know what’s going on you see so as you were talking you said children as soon as they come into year 6 they’re aware of these tests taking place and they know they’re going to have to study, okay in terms of how children see these tests do they see them as something that, a particular grade they have to achieve or do they see it as something as a way of finding out where they are up to compared to their peers or.

24. P: It’s hard, children have different opinions, the more academic children are probably going to be more excited...
about the highest possible they can get, either a 3/4 or a 5, now we, the way I tell it to the children is that the
government, the way the school is judged on is level 4 or above and that’s what we are aiming for and we say
that the average grade that should be a level 4, which is what we are going to say, so we always put level 4 as a benchmark and then the level 5 is always a bonus for them, so the children will know that, some children
just want to get level 4, some children will obviously want to push and get 5, some children will think they will
never get level 4 and might not be a level 3, so we always put that as level 4 is the target and then we can move
up or down from that.
I: Okay then, do you say things to them that an expectation that you achieve level 4 or do you say to different
children your target is a level 5 or something?
P: Yes, so the children know their levels, and quite a lot of, there is a lot of assessment that goes on, sometimes
they have the current level in the book, so they know they’re a 3a or something like that, so they know what they
need to do to get a 4c, so they might even tick their own and the teacher will highlight, so then they know if
they got to include more commas in their work, it’s written in the front of the book and that’s like their target to
include more commas if they’re doing that they’re ticking boxes in the next level which is something that they are
aware of.
I: Yes so they’re aware of what they need to learn.
P: We never say that you should be a 4, we say we want you to be moving onto that, we say come on can you
push yourself to be a level 5, imagine how good it would be, and so we never say you’re definitely should be level
4, and we use the fact that the government saying that every child should reach a level 4, rather than you should
be a level 4.
I: Alright that comes neatly onto my next set of questions, when the time comes around or you know practice
mocks or the actual SATs, I was just wondering what type of things you would say to children in order to prompt
them to prepare, what kind of things do you say to them?
P: I promote the importance of it and just say how important it is, it’s always done in test conditions, so it’s
100% concentration, quiet and I always say just to try your best basically, the aim, if you get half marks usually
you’re on for a level 4, by saying half marks we try to take a bit of pressure of them because to get half marks
isn’t as bad as having to get higher marks, so we aim for basically to make it not as daunting as it might be for
the children.
I: You said you tell them how important it is, what do you say it’s important for, in order to do well?
P: It’s hard because, ultimately we’re judging on the marks rather than the children so we give the comparison
that, the next class I’ll be getting next year I’ll be looking at what the teacher has given them or the optional
SAT scores so I know, basically I’m telling them high schools need to know what level they’re at and it will have
an impact on what set you’re in and if you don’t try hard in these then you might be in a set you shouldn’t be in
and it might take you a long time to get into the set you should be in so, I use the future in the high school as
motivation to make sure they get the best possible mark they can.
I: Okay, and, so it’s mainly the importance of being placed in a better set in high school, do you ever mention
things like in order to get a good job or good career or things like that?
P: Yes, and we say obviously as they are approaching high school this is basically the most important time of their
education so far, and it’s almost like their first rung of the ladder in terms of their GCSEs, A levels and so if they
want to progress in education, and they will be facing a lot of assessments and tests as their time goes on in the
next few years, so we’re going to say this is almost like the first step before you start going to take a lot more tests.
I: Obviously children are children, in order to get them to prepare better e.g. revision or practice harder, what
kind of things are you saying in the classroom in order to prompt them to go onto do well in their tests or focus a
bit harder on them or work a bit harder on them, do you encourage them or do you?
P: I mean yes, I mean it’s such an important time, it’s massively important for the children, it’s massively
important for the school so we want the children to be doing well for themselves and for us as well so yes we
people might require sternly being told how important it is, some people might just need reassuring that they are
capable of doing it and not to worry about it because some children will panic when especially the closer it
comes to the tests, so sometimes it’s like putting your arms around the shoulder to reassure them that it’s not,they’ll be fine or that they’ll do really well.
I: Yes to build up a bit of confidence, to get them to see they can do well on these tests?
P: There’s always like, the weeks before or the day of the test we tell them usually by the end that we works
incredibly hard by the way and the previous work they have done is nothing that’s going to surprise them when
they go into the actual hall because they’ve done so much practice, they’ve worked so hard over the previous
months, they’ve covered every single area and the question might be like different to what we’ve done, but it
will be very similar at the same time so we basically reassuring them, they always do work really hard before the
tests, before the SATs and that there’s no reason for them to worry.
I: Okay, just looking at some of the things that you’re saying, you’re covering a lot of the things that I’d thought
about that you would say, in terms of a different type of approach that you might use which you mention was
about you’d say you’d help them in order for them to do well, when it comes to helping them, what would you
say to them in order to help them, would you, you said you do a lot of practice tests, in terms of how to answer
the questions, also helping them in terms of answering the questions, also where to get information from and where to seek support, are you using them kind of statements?
P: Yes well, we’ll break it down in different ways, there will be times where they will do a test purely on their
own and we’ll make it and we’ll give them feedback and we’ll give a score which is good in terms of the
standard of the test but it’s, it’s not actually helping them to answer each question so we might break it down,
break things down into small sections and take groups or do it as a class and do that guided writes so we might
answer questions together and just showcase the exam techniques and things like that to help them, yes so it is a
case of taking little chunks at a time because there is so many different skills and are different sometimes to
actual normal classroom.
I: And do you say things like if you say this and this or if you go through this section and do this section and then
you’ll do okay in the test or then you are on for a level 4 or a level 5 or a level 6 or a level 7?
P: Yes, well certainly in writing, if we are saying you are including this skill and this skill and you are on your way
to being a level 4 writer, but if you want to push yourself to be a level 5 writer then you need to be including
this, this and this, so yes we are telling the kind of things, we are going from what is deemed a level 4, we have
a piece of paper that will tell them what is a level 5, a level 5 writer needs to be including this and this, so yes
we’re relaying that to the children and telling them that’s what needs to be included, we have marking ladders
as well which will list the type of things that will need to be in, so we will say look at your marking ladder you
need to be using this and have you used this in your work and so on?
I: Yes, it’s almost communicated to them what to do in order for them to do well in the tests?
P: Yes, I mean there’s times where obviously they need to be independent but there’s also times where they
aren’t going to learn unless we are showing them the scaffolding of how things can be put into the work.
I: So it’s almost like getting the balance right and doing it independently or sometimes giving them the support
to do it, okay, you mentioned reassuring messages and things like that and telling them not to worry and things
like that, in terms of reminders of the tests coming up, do you constantly remind the children or are they aware
that we’ve got tests in May, or do you have to prompt them and remind them that the tests are coming up or
we’ve got a week left now, a month left.
P: Yes we do sometimes, like some of the children have worked out that there are so many school days left
because there’s a few holidays in between, so there’s the Easter holidays that it might sound something daft like
even though there’s like a couple of months, it might be something like 20 school days or something like that
which when you work it out that way, there’s not that long to go, so by doing that again it highlights the
importance and the time is ticking away towards the test, so yes we do have to give timescales, there’s not many
weeks to go or there’s not many school days to go.
I: Okay, right that’s really good, so I’m just trying to summarise the kind of things that you have said, you talk
about supporting the children telling them how to do things or do the practice papers in order to do better in
tests, and you talked about a different form of statement that you use where you are highlighting the importance
of the tests in order to get into a better place in high school and possibly their career, then you talked about
reassuring messages that you are using and some timing messages that we talked about that the SATs that are
coming up, I was just thinking in terms of how often you are using these different forms of statements, do you
favour or do you use more of one type or do you use them all equally?
P: I think because they’re only ten and eleven, it is they’re under a lot of pressure just to be in an exam hall to
take these tests, and a test itself even if it’s just a spelling test you’ve only got one chance when it comes to the
real thing so I think reassuring and calming is something that we will lean towards more, if they do a practice
test or do some questions and they don’t get it then we say it’s not the end of the world and we can work on
what you’ve got wrong and try and get the right answers, it’s a lot for them to deal with at such a young age so
we are more reassuring than any other and trying to motivate them and keep them interested and keep them
happy and hope not lose their confidence.
I: Okay, and in terms of throughout the year does your language change, so for example when it’s getting closer
to the test are you saying more things like it’s important that you do really well in the tests that are coming up
and possibly maybe I’m thinking at the beginning of the year you might be focusing more on how to do the
answers and then towards the time of test more reassuring messages, do you find that?
P: Yes, it’s very gradual throughout the year that we will slowly like increase the importance of it and yes, so
like if children are being silly within a lesson and it’s coming closer to the SATs, we’ll say like do you realise how
close we are? do you realise the reason we are doing this? So making the children understand that the work that
we are doing, whatever work we are doing now is for a very good reason, it’s obviously to help them as well, but
as the year goes on we will slowly introduce parts of the SATs and if things don’t go right at the beginning then
they’ve still got a long way to go and it’s not to panic type thing, but as things get closer and behaviour is an
issue then that’s something we will stamp down on, so we obviously highlight the importance the closer we get
to it?
I: Okay, the next area that I want to look at is the kind of effects that it has on children and I know that you’ve
mentioned it previously, in terms of the language that you use, what kind of language do you feel best motivates
the children, has the best effect in getting the message across that they need to do well in these tests, what
would you say from your experiences, what do you think works best? what kind of messages that you use?
P: I think it’s making a comparison like of what it would be like if they did well and what if they didn’t, we
always say at the beginning of the year that if you try your very best and no one will ever say anything bad, so if
you’ve got a level 4 because you’ve tried fantastically hard then that’s what you deserve and that’s fantastic,
and if you get a level 2 but you’ve tried a 100% then that’s fantastic, so that’s something that we always say to
the children at the beginning of year 6, no matter what level you get at the end if we are talking about the SATs,
if you’ve tried your very best then that’s all anyone we will constantly repeat throughout the year, so even if things aren’t going well for them and they find some things difficult or
they’re worried, they’re not going to get a certain level then we’ll keep relaying that message that if you’re
trying your hardest then you’ve done as much as you can, and obviously we’ll help them along the way but if the
children drop below that then we’ll tell them and say what do you, if you got your results on Friday, if you open
your piece of paper and it says a level something when really you’re capable of being a level higher then how are
you going to feel, how are your parents going to feel and we will say it only if we like the child is like not really
pulling the weight and could work a lot harder and have a lot more potential.
I: So you would only say something like just as a final push really and you’ve tried other things and they
haven’t seem to have got the message across that you need to do, well so maybe up the ante with respect to
that use of language, so you wouldn’t use that all the time and you said you use a lot of reassuring messages?
P: Because like I say it is daunting for the children and at the same time we’ve got to and it is important and
they are getting older and they will be moving onto school and they will be doing their GCSEs, there’s a fine balance
for example when it’s getting closer
I: So there’s a, it must be quite difficult, on the one hand you want them to enjoy the education and then getting
them prepared for what’s going to come next in high school with all the assessments and tests and the eventual
GCSEs, there’s a fine balance that you have to try and achieve?
P: So we only, we try and make it as fun as we can, we don’t just do test papers, sit down and do the tests, we
try and make the lesson fun as much as we possibly can and although it’s related we try and make it more fun
and perhaps like little challenges and games and things like that because they are young children at the end of
the day.
I: Okay fantastic, you previously said some children when you talk about tests and they get anxious and worried, I
was just thinking in terms of that kind of effect on children throughout the year, does it vary, is it only a few
children? Is it only a couple in a class? or is it a large number of children?
P: It does vary, some are desperate to know what level they’ve got and they want to get the highest possible
level and they are constantly asking what level did I get, others won’t even ask and they don’t even want to
know what level because they are that worried about it, so yes there are times like that with the ones that are
I: Okay previously you mentioned when you help children practise the test and showing like you said the ladder example that you gave, do you find that is really effective in pushing their grade up or giving them the confidence that I can do this.

P: It’s just that reminder, I mean especially in writing to be a level 4 or a level 5 you have to often include so many different things so if they have that checklist there it’s just as a safety net for them to use it and make sure they remind themselves to include it, but we don’t want them to really on that too much because it’s any kind of aid, if you’re relying on it too much when it’s taken away then sometimes they can’t do it, so we want to be like reminding them what they did last week and so on and remember what you were using in that previous piece of work and try and ask them to recall without having them to read that aid.

I: Okay, as we were talking you said some children respond differently and some children you have to say different things to them, so you gave the example about some children you might have to show them how, well explain to them how important it is or when they open their paper how disappointed someone will be, do you find when you’re in the classroom the general message that you give applies to all the children or do you go around and say different things to different children?

P: My overall message to the class will be going back to the trying your best message, but when you are working in individual groups then I don’t think we ever say you have to, we never say you have to be this or things like that, but we say we should be looking at getting, that’s what we should be doing.

I: Or you’re capable of getting a level 5?

P: Yes, so I never want to tell anyone what they should do because we’ve had children that we would expect to be level 5 and it’s a test and you might have a cold on the day or something might happen where they don’t get the questions for whatever reason, they might have felt the pressure I don’t know, but we never say you, I want you to be a, but we say we should be looking at or you should be a or you are capable of being a level 5 or a level 4 or so on.

I: Right okay, just going back have there been any instances say exam time some children become really anxious and become really stressed, in your experience have you experienced that?

P: Sometimes, I’ve never experienced where they’ve said I’m really worried about my SATs, sometimes behaviour, you can tell it’s a just bit of anxiety within children, in my experience I’ve never had anyone say I can’t do it, I’m really worried about the SATs, occasionally they might say in a group situation that I’m dead scared or am I’m dead worried about it or what if I don’t do well, it’s never come to where they’ve been really distressed saying I can’t do it or anything like that, but sometimes you can see the anxiety level and if they do say in that group that I’m going to do rubbish in my SATs then again you go back to all the positive things about the child and all the things they’ve done previously to prove they are capable of achieving what their potential is?

I: Okay, I’m going to move onto some other areas, again all the information that you’re giving me is really good and I think it’s very relevant to the kind of stuff that I’m looking at, so I can get an idea of what kind of things teaching are saying and what kind of effects it’s having on the children and that’s what I’m interested in, and I’m just thinking in terms of the pressures that you have, what kind of pressures do you have in order for the children to do well? Do you have parental pressure or do you have pressure say from the governors? I know there’s the pressures from national government for you to attain certain percentages of children say level 4, is that a pressure for you?

P: Well yes there is a lot of pressure, the first one is your government floor standards so getting that well it’s been 60%, it’s recently gone to 65% level 4 and above, so it has moved in the last couple of years, so that is your main pressure because historically this school has always fallen below or is usually very very close, we’ve always been waiting on a few marks so that is always a pressure because of the school and where we come from, the pressure from the parents isn’t massively high as say in more affluent areas.

I: So it’s more a disadvantaged area?

P: Yes, we’ve got a couple of parents that are worried that they’ve asked for extra help or can I have some test papers that I can take home and practise at home, which is great, which we always would help, I think last summer we had a parent when the girls coming out of year 5 saying can I have SAT papers that I can do over the summer, which we said there’s no need to because we’ll be doing plenty of work in year 6, which I mean it’s just a great that she wants her daughter to be doing really well and practising, but at the same time we wanted them to, so we have to find that balance as well, so there has been a couple of parents that have asked for help, but certainly not not from the school background that we have, the parents aren’t putting the pressure on.

I: So the main pressure is just the government benchmark really?

P: Yes and Ofsted as well and they look at our data and thankfully we have done well over the past with that, so that’s unfortunately is the biggest pressure on us.

I: Okay in terms of thinking about the amount of difference you can make in the classroom, given the other factors outside the school, how much do you feel that you can make a difference for these children or do you feel sometimes anyway some matter what I do they just improve themselves?

P: I think it’s just that reminder, I mean especially in writing to be a level 4 or a level 5 you have to often include so many different things so if they have that checklist there it’s just as a safety net for them to use it and make sure they remind themselves to include it, but we don’t want them to really on that too much because it’s any kind of aid, if you’re relying on it too much when it’s taken away then sometimes they can’t do it, so we want to be like reminding them what they did last week and so on and remember what you were using in that previous piece of work and try and ask them to recall without having them to read that aid.

I: That’s interesting.

P: It’s just that reminder, I mean especially in writing to be a level 4 or a level 5 you have to often include so many different things so if they have that checklist there it’s just as a safety net for them to use it and make sure they remind themselves to include it, but we don’t want them to really on that too much because it’s any kind of aid, if you’re relying on it too much when it’s taken away then sometimes they can’t do it, so we want to be like reminding them what they did last week and so on and remember what you were using in that previous piece of work and try and ask them to recall without having them to read that aid.

I: So the main pressure is just the government benchmark really?

P: Yes and Ofsted as well and they look at our data and thankfully we have done well over the past with that, so that’s unfortunately is the biggest pressure on us.
the SATs I won’t be making obviously like SAT comments, like we need to be working hard, we need to be thinking about our SATs, if we’re not working hard after the SATs, I won’t be talking about the exams, but I suppose naturally you are a bit more relaxed once the SATs are over and sometimes yes you wouldn’t obviously you wouldn’t be highlighting the importance of each individual lesson as you would be when you are before the SATs.

I: So there’s a difference in your approach once the SATs are over, you’re no longer highlighting the importance of each lesson and what are you focusing more on after the SATs, what kind of things?
P: I think it’s about, it’s quite hard, just basically to enjoy the rest of the time they’ve got left at school basically and to celebrate all the hard work they have done over the year, so there will be a lot more like project based work that we do which isn’t just the complete structured literacy lesson, we might combine the two and do different projects so we’re still doing the same level of work and we’re still working as hard as we’ve ever done, but perhaps we naturally just relax a bit more because the pressures of the exams have gone.

I: And you’re no longer using language in terms of the SATs, they’re coming up or how important they are.
P: Yes, it has changed in terms of the writing, so the teacher assessment is still throughout the year, when we are coming to our writing we are looking at them levels, we are still pushing ourselves to get the highest possible level we can for the year, my teacher assessment isn’t in till the very last, so in terms of writing we’re still talking that language, we are still talking about pushing ourselves to get as many writing skills as possible, but in numeracy for example no we won’t be saying let’s have a look at level 4 type questions, perhaps as much as we were before the SATs.

I: And I’m guessing you won’t be saying any reassuring messages about not to worry or you can do this or you can achieve this when the SATs are finished.
P: We’re still reassuring the children if they can’t do something, that you are more than capable of, but we won’t be saying or mentioning end of year consequences if we don’t get this now, but we still, it’s in May so we still got 2 and a bit months to go after the SATs, so we’re still got to be helping the children along and motivating them to answer questions and get through the work, so we are still going to be doing lessons where the children will find things difficult, so we are still reassuring them and still motivating them to answer the questions to get through the work.

I: And you won’t be talking about consequences that much after the SATs?
P: Well we focus more on life at high school in terms of general day to day life so the consequences will be like, if you don’t get your homework in at high school, then this is going to happen, if you doing this in a lesson we start talking about suspensions and detentions and stuff like that, after the SATs are finished in year 6 we are talking more about general day to day life at high school.

I: You’ve covered quite a number of areas, I was just thinking in terms of your approach when you said to me you know the kind of language that you are using is about reassuring, it’s about helping them get onto achieve a particular level or support them to get a level, and then highlighting the importance, do you think that your approach there, do you think it’s as a result of the whole school environment and the way the school is as a team or do you feel that’s just you and your style and that’s just how you do things.

P: I don’t know, I think as a school I think we have children that have historically come below the level that’s expected at schools, so at a primary school, so we’re always trying to play catch up so sometimes, there’s a lot of children that don’t have the confidence in themselves so reassurance is a good starting point, some of our children are also mentally high flying as well, so we’re actually motivating them to push as high as they can, I just think from a personal level that it’s quite a daunting year for them year 6, not just the SATs but the fact they are leaving and moving on and going from being the oldest to the youngest at the new school, so to motivate them is to basically keep reassuring them that they are capable of doing what they can.

I: Just going back to our earlier discussions, you said consequences and in terms of say consequences, would you say comment like if you don’t do well you won’t feel so good, you’ll feel like you’ve let yourself down and everyone else has done better, so do you use comments like that.

P: I don’t think I will say it as blunt as if you don’t do this people are going to be disappointed with you or anything like that, I will try and find out what they want basically, so I might ask them what do you want from your SATs and if they tell me that they want this level then I will say how will you feel if you don’t do well then, and maybe you’ll create your own motivation, for example, and probably want the words to come from them more than me saying you’re going to feel terrible or your parents are going to be really cross with you, so if they say that to me and then you’ll say what do you need to do, so I try and get them to give me the answers and give me what their next step needs to be.

I: You almost after that talking to them about what they need to do in order to avoid that possibility.

P: Yes, and if it’s using their words then that can be their own motivation as well.

I: Okay, you give them the kind of, they almost, they’ve created their own direction in a sense, I was just thinking this approach that we have, it’s almost what you do on an everyday basis and that’s probably your general approach as a teacher, would you say the kind of language that you’ve been using when you are preparing children for tests and getting them to learn, so would you say your approach is also similar to other areas for example managing a child’s behaviour or other things that go on in the classroom, would you say your approach is consistent or do you use different approaches for different things.

P: Certainly in year 6 I say it’s quite consistent, because it is preparation for high school so a lot of things, I use a lot of comparison that we said before that if you do this at high school this could possibly happen to you, so I would try to be consistent across behaviour, other lessons as well as the test lessons as well, and keep it overall, that’s my approach in year 6 and so I can, I want to try my best to prepare, the best I can be to be ready for the next level in education, so I will try to be as consistent as I can in everything.

I: So for example if a child is really having some behavioural outburst and things like that would you say the kind of comments that you make, would you tell them the consequences of their actions, if you carry on like that you could get excluded or things like that?

P: I certainly will go through our behaviour policy as well, we have a traffic lights system and potentially move to the traffic lights and if they went to the yellow traffic light or the red traffic light and what would happen to them as a consequence and I will also compare this to things in terms of potential detentions and so on, and a lot of the children have brothers and sisters and they will be able to tell me what happened to their brothers or sisters and I will be able to use that as a comparison as well.

I: I’m guessing that you will probably be giving them ways information how to avoid that and what they need to do avoid that say getting in trouble etc.

P: Yes, and what the right steps are and again using what we said about, and ask them what the right choice would be and what they perhaps need to do perhaps to make the right choice, so again looking for the answers...
from them rather than me telling them the answer all the time, see what they know and see if they've got that intelligence to be able to tell that will hopefully help me to help them to make the right choice.

I: So it's a similar approach that you use when they're learning and when they are preparing for tests and also when they're having behavioural difficulties.

P: Yes.

I: Okay, so in terms of the children you have, do you feel they need the information on how to do things and build their confidence that you can do it, whereas do you feel you need to say that to them, or do you feel if I didn't say that they would do it, or do you feel that if I didn't say that they wouldn't do it?

P: I think perhaps my higher level children will stand more of a chance if I didn't, but I think the children below level 4 then I think they just need that motivation and need that help and I would say the higher the ability of the child the more likely they are, they can do it individually.

I: So if there's a child who is quite high ability, in terms of communicating the importance of the test and getting them to prepare would you then be saying more things about the importance of the test, rather than telling them how to get a higher grade or level?

P: No, I don't think, we'd be pushing them to get the highest as they possibly can, I don't think we'd be, I think we'd be just saying how high can you push yourself, how far can you go, usually with the higher level children that is their motivation to be almost like be the best and achieve the best they can possibly, there's not many children that around the top end of the ability scale that don't want to push themselves as high as they can, so it's a case of how well can you do in these tests, how high can you push yourselves.

I: So it's not about the levels, it's more about them pushing themselves in their own learning.

P: Yes.

I: I'm I right in thinking stuff about the consequences of not doing well in these tests you don't use as much?

P: Yes I just feel they're under a lot of pressure as it is and I think it's not fair on them if you did that, it's more about seeing how far we can get you.

[Concluding talk]
Appendix 4 - Year 2 Teacher Interview (Transcript 3, Participant 3)

P = Participant (Teacher)
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]
1. I: I think we'll begin by me asking your experience as a teacher, you're in year 2 at the moment, and possibly
2. telling me about what years you've taught in and how long you've been teaching in year 2 just so I understand.
3. P: Yes that's fine, I've been teaching for 4 years now, the first year I did supply for the whole year, so I went
4. around lots of different schools and different settings and then the second year I was working in a school in [-----]
5. in a really challenging school in a year 3 class and then the following year I moved into the year 1 class and then I
6. came here in September in year 2.
7. I: Okay this September, so this has been your first year in year 2, okay there's also some SATs in year 2 and I
8. already know there is going to be a difference between what you do and what a year 6 teacher does, and I need
9. to know what that difference is?
11. I: So I am aware that there are some year 2 SATs that occur in your year, can you just tell me a bit more about
12. them as in what they are, when you do them and what do they involve?
13. P: Yes, the SAT papers are taken from previous ones, so for this year we're doing the papers from 2007 and 2009,
14. and we had the freedom to choose between which ones would appeal to the children, so like for the reading, I
15. think one of those had a dinosaurs theme so I chose that because that would obviously engage the boys, and that
16. was for the level 3 task, which was about dinosaurs, stones and bones, but the level 2 task for that year was
17. about a cat and a windmill, so I didn't choose that one because in the other year the level 2 test was about
18. crocodiles, so for the reading I could mix and match and then for the maths we just chose the 1 year and for the
19. writing, the difference between the year 6 and year 2 ones is that we do it in the classroom, it's a lot more
20. relaxed, I think they get a bigger introduction to it but their SATs isn't the be all and end all, so even if they're
21. not good at tests but they show themselves in general class work we can use teacher assessment to give the
22. overall grade that gets sent off, so it's not just relying on the SATs.
23. I: In terms of, I know in the year 6 apart from the writing, all the other areas the reading and the numeracy,
24. calculator, non-calculator they just use the data from the tests and they publish the information, and the writing
25. they use teacher assessments, I know the year 2 data is also published, are you saying that your teacher
26. assessments and the SATs are combined and then that’s published?
27. P: Yes.
28. I: Okay, and you, how many numeracy papers do you do?
29. P: They just do the one numeracy paper and it's the same for the reading, there's a level 2 and on that they can
30. get up to a level 2a which is the top of level 2, for those children who could be a level 3 there is a separate paper
31. for them, some of them do do more than 1, so some of them do do 2 reading tests and 2 numeracy tests.
32. I: Okay.
33. P: But for the writing they all just do the 1 or 2 pieces, there's a longer writing task and a shorter writing task.
34. I: Okay, and you said you just do them in the class, is it the May time that you do it in class?
35. P: Yes.
36. I: And do you do everyone in the class together?
37. P: Mostly, yes, for the reading some of them are spread out, for the maths some of them need readers, because
38. some of them, I've got 2 children who are really capable at maths but can't access the reading as well as the
39. others so their paper will be read to them, we spread those out so we don't distract anyone, I think there were 2
40. children who we took out of the class so that they could concentrate, but the majority of children sat in the
41. class, the tables were separated and they were sat at the ends of the tables, but it was still their classroom
42. setting.
43. I: And I know you have to do them in May, what do you say to the children because it's slightly different to every
44. day classroom practice because you're not allowed to help them, so what do you say to the children, do you just,
45. do they just come in 1 week and you say alright kids this is something that we need to do and the only difference
46. is that.
47. P: It's tricky because some of them especially those with brothers and sisters in year 6 where they've got a big
48. build up to their SATs, they know that they're going to do their SATs, but for some of them that would scare them
49. off a bit so I try not to make a big thing of it and I try not to use the word tests, I try and say it's a task.
50. I: It's a task, okay.
51. P: Rather than a test, because I think some of them think that a test you pass or fail, so I try to say it's a task,
52. but they know it's a test, but I think I just use the work task.
53. I: The language is important.
54. P: Yes, like you say for your research it is and I think it just relases them a bit, I do give them a bit of warning.
55. I: Yes.
56. P: But I try not to give them too much so they're not like thinking oh gosh I've got that thing next week or I've
57. got to do that but obviously, as you say, the same side of it they can't just come in and think oh the tables are
58. different.
59. I: Yes.
60. P: So I do say you'll be doing writing next week and this reading to show how good you are and what you've
61. learnt in year 1 and year 2, so I try to put it as a chance for them to show off what they've got, not to test what
62. they know and what they don't know.
63. I: Yes so the focus isn't on the grade, it's for them to do their best, and you're just reminding them just a week
64. before that we will be doing something next week some task, you said you like to use task instead of test, why do
65. you feel you use task? What difference does that make?
66. P: I think task is like an activity where they've all got a chance to do it, whereas a test they like especially the
67. ones who are less confidence or are low ability might think that I can do less, I can't do the same as everyone
68. else because it's rare in a class situation the children are all doing the same thing because of the differentiation
69. whereas like when they are doing the SATs they are all doing the same apart from the reading, some of mine
As a class, they were working on the SATs, which are an important part of the final year of primary school. The SATs are divided into three main areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. The reading test is designed to assess a child's comprehension skills, while the writing test focuses on their ability to produce coherent and well-organized prose. The mathematics test evaluates their understanding of mathematical concepts and problem-solving skills.

The SATs are used to determine the children's ability to progress to the next stage of their education. Parents and teachers play a significant role in preparing the children for the SATs. Parents are encouraged to practice their children's skills, such as reading and writing, outside of school to ensure they are ready for the test. Teachers use their skills and knowledge to help the children develop their abilities in these areas.

To help the children prepare for the SATs, teachers use a variety of methods, including practice tests, real-life scenarios, and games. They also use positive reinforcement, such as praise and encouragement, to motivate the children to do their best. The children are given feedback on their progress, and they are encouraged to set personal goals to improve their skills.

Parents are involved in the process as well. They are encouraged to practice their children's skills, such as reading and writing, outside of school to ensure they are ready for the test. They are also encouraged to support their children in their studies and to provide a positive and encouraging environment for learning.

Overall, the SATs are an important part of the final year of primary school. They provide valuable information about the children's abilities and help to guide their future education. The SATs are a joint effort of teachers, parents, and children to prepare for the final year of primary school.
remember writing, it was like a sum, it said how did you do it, show your working, so he drew a picture of himself but the number in his head, because that’s how he would say he’d do it but he needs to be able to write it in a different way than drawing.

I: That’s right, but obviously you wouldn’t get the mark for showing your working.

P: And that’s the child’s approach, thinking about it, it’s a sensible thing for them to do, show exactly how they did it.

I: So that’s your reason for probably practising a bit more so they get the marks, okay, in terms of saying to children the importance of the tests, early you mentioned you’re just saying you want them to try the best, apart from that do you not say anything with respect to the importance of tests, something like this test is really important and when you’re going into the next year your teacher will see that or it’s really important you do well in tests because then in the future you can get a good job or you can go to good school or I don’t know, that type of language, do you use that kind of language?

P: Not really, like I say I don’t want to affect those that don’t have the confidence but I do think it would be for those that are confident and are good at it, and it will probably push them but I think some of them get that from home anyway from the brothers or sisters and they do kind of get that prep talk and if I could separate them I probably would say that to some of them, but I always think about the others and don’t want them to panic or be stressed.

I: So in front of the whole classroom you wouldn’t make statements like that?

P: No.

I: But you have considered making them statements for maybe the one or two able ones?

P: I do make general statements like even as adults we get tested, we do driving tests, they are a fact of life we do get tested on things, but probably not from that point of view.

I: Okay, just in terms of the tests, do you get any children that worry or have a bit of pressure that’s it’s a test and I need to do well?

P: Yes I’ve had a couple that have, because they want to do well, like I’ve got one child who wants everything to be right and if he doesn’t think it’s right, he won’t put anything down because he thinks no I need to think of the right answer, and one of the girls did that and she couldn’t think of the answer and she couldn’t just put it down you know have a go because she knew she gone wasn’t right.

I: So she wouldn’t do it.

P: Yes, but generally I don’t think they have been worried and I think their parents, ones of the SEN children were more worried than the children because they knew what was coming, so a couple asked like the maths like he won’t be able to do it, will he do it, but it’s like no he’ll do a maths task, he won’t be doing a test with the others because it’s not at his level and it wouldn’t help him in anyway, and I don’t know whether that would be passed onto the other children slightly.

I: Okay, just another form of language which, you might even say to me that actually I don’t use that form of language, it’s a consequences of doing well, for example the positive consequences of doing or the negative consequences of doing well, do you use any of that language? I’ll see if I can give you an example, so a negative consequence would be something like oh in this test if you don’t get a level 2 then you know when you see your results you’ll see that you’ll be very disappointed or your parents will be very disappointed or I’ll be disappointed in you, or if you don’t do so well you know it will affect you in the future, do you use that kind of language?

P: No, I don’t think I even use it on the other side, like I don’t put the emphasis on the result, I put the emphasis on showing, just showing what they can do and what they can do is good for them you know, whereas the SAT results look at the national population and places them there, I tend to put the focus on where they are now compared to where they were at the start of the year and just showing what they can do, so I probably wouldn’t use any language like that.

I: And what about positive consequences like if you get this level 2 you’ll be really happy or your parents will be happy and I’ll be happy, or that’s very good for your future or you know getting a job in the future, do you ever say anything like that?

P: Probably not, probably I will be pleased but like I said I don’t try to touch on the actual result of it, it’s more giving it a go and showing what they can do.

I: You said you might say I will be pleased, is that something you very rarely say?

P: Yes probably, then it leads onto what if we don’t, what if we don’t do well then you’ll have to go I’ll be disappointed because you inevitably get down that route.

I: So I’m right thinking you might say that one or two times a year, and it would be aimed at those children who like would do well, because then they get, at the end of the year obviously like their results have gone out now, so their parents would reiterate that back like well done really pleased with it, and then so you’re saying that kind of language, although you use it very infrequently, you will only use for children who are say a bit more able?

P: Yes, so that because those that aren’t able if I was to say it and then they were to go home and their parents would contradict it, it might be a bit funny for them and they’ll think whose right.

I: Yes, so it’s, you would use it very selectively?

P: Yes.

I: And you feel it will have the best effect for children who want to push themselves and want to get the highest?

P: Yes.

I: And not for most children in the classroom?

P: Yes.

I: For the higher achievers, and that’s the only people you would use that kind of language for, so everything that you’re saying to the children is about I want you to show me the best you can do and give it your best short, do you ever say I think you can do better, there’s one which is saying emphasising the effort, there’s the other side saying you’re actually capable of doing much more, do you use that kind of language?

P: Yes definitely, but obviously only those that I know that can do better and I tend to refer to examples of when they’ve shown me that they can do better, so it is like in the book I can flick to the page and look this is what you normally give me and this is what I need to see.

I: Yes.

P: And this is what I expect.

I: Okay so that’s probably pushing them a bit more, so saying that yes you do need to put the effort in but I know you can achieve this, so getting them to push a bit more.

P: Yes.

I: Okay, that’s good and that covers the types of language that I was, the different kind of themes that I’d
thought about and wanted to ask you about, is there any other form of language that you use in the classroom
that we haven’t discussed that you feel is part of your everyday practice, something you say to the children
which you feel is really effective.

P: Trying to think, so we use and show off examples of their work and we do the 2 stars and I think that helps
them as well, so saying 2 things that are good about the work and what they could do to get better at it,
sometimes that’s from me but sometimes that’s from the peers, so they’re encouraging each other to say actually
you could do that or look he’s missed out that and coming from the children in the class is usually better than
from me because they think oh yes I should be doing that, whereas from me they might see it as like she’s picked
out that, whereas from the children oh yes.

I: So it’s a bit more, whereas if you say it’s coming from someone in authority whereas if they said it between
themselves it’s just.

P: If someone in their class can do it then they should be able to do it, whereas I’m an adult and I’ve had years of
practice and maybe it’s just an adult thing.

I: So yes if they did it in front of their peers it’s a more realistic expectation, whereas if you say it.

P: It doesn’t have that much meaning for them.

I: Yes.

P: Whereas if another child does it means a bit more.

I: Something that you mentioned, for different children you would say different things, so children who are at
the lower end in terms of their ability at this moment in time, so the children who are possibly performing a
little lower say I don’t know what your targets would be and what would be considered low, possibly a low level
2 or level 1, do you use different types of language for them children, I know you talked about the higher
achieving children.

P: Well the lower ones tend to have their own IEPs which have their own specific targets so they’ll get a bit more
teacher input time with like TAs giving them and they tend to move through their targets a bit quicker because
they are very specific.

I: Yes, small specific steps.

P: So they are measured a lot more often by an adult whereas if you gave that to the other children it would be
hard to keep up with it, but for those children, so I think they do get more praise and encouragement, so look
we’ve just got this bit to do.

I: And focusing on the next target which is probably a small step.

P: Yes, it tends to be encouragement like where they’ve come from, I do like show them from the first page of
the book from the year, to show them look this is where you were, one boy that couldn’t recognise numbers to
10 without counting from 1, whereas now he can recognise numbers up to 20 and write them, it is such a big
thing for him and making a big deal of it, look, look what you can do.

I: Highlighting the progress the child has made and using that information to help him make more progress.

P: Yes, because he would be one of the ones that wouldn’t have the confidence and obviously he didn’t do the
tests and his mum was one of the ones who was worried, but showing him what he has achieved is big, it’s big for
him, it doesn’t matter for the other children, it’s important he does make his progress.

I: Okay, when it comes to the actual SATs, they are not allowed any help, sometimes in the practice papers you
might not help them so they get used to the actual format, do you get some children who get really anxious or
stressed or worried?

P: Yes, some do, think they panic, if they are left alone and they might not know what to do but I think
throughout the test they do ease into it, especially like with the maths, actually yes I could do that and they give
it a go.

I: So it’s just an initial fear of sitting there being presented with a paper and it’s something new and that scares
them a bit, but once they started doing it they are actually okay.

P: Yes, I mean some of them quite like it to be honest they like being tested, they tend to be the more able
because they know they can do it.

I: And they want to see what grade they get.

P: Yes, sometimes it’s presented in a booklet which makes a difference to them because it’s something special,
they’re not doing it in the book or on a sheet of paper, it’s in this booklet just for them.

I: So it’s something new and different and a bit more grown up.

P: Yes.

I: I want to just talk about the targets the governments sets, I know that you use teacher assessment and the
SATs and the information is combined and then that’s given to whoever needs it, do you feel there is a pressure
on you? I’m not saying from the management here, from the head teacher or the deputy or whoever, because
they may be getting pressures from something above them, so it cascades all the way onto you, do you feel there
is a pressure on you in the classroom that I’ve got these targets, these baseline levels that I need to achieve and I
need to make sure the children get there and push the children get there, do you feel that’s a pressure in the
classroom?

P: Yes definitely, I mean you can’t avoid it, you want to do the best for the children anyway but yes you do have
the numbers.

I: Despite them pressures, do you feel the way you practice is still how you want to practice, it’s not dictated by
the pressure, do you feel like with the current baselines pressure there are, you teach in the classroom how you
want to teach?

P: Yes, I try to to mean there are pressures to teach to the test, it’s not useful for them in the long run anyway
and it’s just that end of year assessment and that can’t be the be all and end all, but they do need to be
prepared for it so that they’re ready for it, but I don’t think it changes my teaching that much because I try to
look at it from the point of view that I want them to do as well as they can and getting those is good for them,
but I mean I don’t think it takes away from the enjoyment because if they don’t enjoy it, they’re not going to do
well, they don’t want to learn, they don’t want to know it, so I don’t think it changes my teaching that much,
but it still is a pressure.

I: Okay, at the end of the year you probably reflect back and think how well has the year been, what’s important
for you, is it important that was a really good year, I built a really good relationship with the kids or that was a
very good year I had a very enjoyable lessons or do you look at what levels the children have got and you think that
was a very good year because 80% of my class got level so and so or is it a mixture of them things?

P: Yes, I think it’s a mixture, for me as a professional teacher it’s looking at the progress they’ve made and
obviously I do look at in line with national statistics like where they are but quite a lot of mine were under where
they expected to be, but for them, like the boy with the numbers, he’s, such a big progress he’s made, and for
myself as a teacher that is important but then I do think about how much I’ve enjoyed it, but I think it depends on the class as well, because if they were a challenging class you might think about that by the end of the year they were a lot better in terms of behaviour, social skills whereas and for them in life them assessments results weren’t that important, it was more about they needed to learn how to be with other people and that was the biggest skill for them whereas this year I’ve had an absolutely lovely class so they naturally do that, so I’ve not added to that or had to add to it as much, it has been more the progress, so I think this year consider more of the progress if that makes sense, I think it does depend on the class and what they like.

I: Yes, I kind of get where you’re coming from, in terms of the way you practise in the classroom, do you feel being in a school your kind of practice is similar to what the other, the school’s kind of ethos or philosophy is and emphasising the effort in children and building their confidence, do you feel that’s the kind of?

P: Yes, I think so, I think we all do it in different ways, I think that’s just our teaching style but I think we all do that, our focus is on them.

I: And do you feel within a classroom, what you do in the classroom by doing the stuff in the classroom and what you say to the children and how you help them, do you feel you can make a difference for the children even for the children who say probably don’t come from the best of home backgrounds, where the parents aren’t working with the children to do their homework?

P: I think they are the best ones because they are the ones who you have the most impact on whilst they are in school, we can’t do much for their home life but whilst they are in school we can have an impact on that and make a difference, I mean there are some children where like school is their life so like they're different here than they are at home, because here we have different expectations of them, different views of them and we do push that so yes I do think I can make a difference.

I: So thank you very much, one question that I wanted to ask before that I didn’t ask, you know when you said when you say to the children, they have their expectations in order to achieve their target they need to do this, this and that, do you feel you need to tell them how to do it, in order for them to do it?

P: Yes.

I: And if you didn’t give that information they wouldn’t then get that target?

P: Yes, it wouldn’t mean anything to them, I mean here we have the steps to success, so like the steps that get them to what we want them to, even if it’s just a task within a maths lesson, so like first you need to do this then you need to do this and then you need to do this, and check their, the steps to get there whereas like a literacy target if it was using like the although or because it would be modelled and look I’ve used them, and these were my two clauses and now they are put together and showing them, and they can go and do it on their own, so for the targets they tend to have been shown and guided through it and then they’re expected to do it independently following those set steps, so that’s the aim for them to do it independently.

[Concluding talk]
Appendix 5 - Year 6 Teacher Interview (Transcript 4, Participant 4)

P = Participant (Teacher)
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]

1: Before we begin it would be good to hear your experience as a teacher, how long you’ve been teaching, what years you’ve been teaching, how long you’ve been at this school and things like that.

P: Well I did a degree in physiology at university and then did a one year teacher training course in […] and I taught for a year up there with a year 6 class and then I joined here six years ago, so I’ve been in year 5 for five years and this is my first year 6 position and I’ve just completed one year in year 6 and then I’ll be staying in there next year as well, so last year was my first SAT year so to speak at this school.

I: In terms of SATs, can you explain when you do the SATs, when they do the practice and how do you do them, do you take children out of the classroom, put them in the examination hall or do you do it in the class?

P: They are held in a week in May, so we normally, we do start kind of looking at boosting groups straight away in September, looking at different focus groups that either me or a teaching assistant could be focusing on, the proper boosting shall we say starts after Christmas, so we’ve got a couple months that we start knuckling down, then February half term after that it’s pretty much in preparation mode, so we will do practice ones from September all the way through up to May just so the children know their progress and can monitor it a lot more closely, so they will be more familiar with the test because there’s nothing worse than going in and it being a completely abstract idea, so we do try and give them quite a few and especially because more teacher assessment focuses on, and we do like to have them practising and have that up to date really from September, we probably get eight or nine different practice ones in up until the May, alongside small boosting groups and various bits and pieces, so during the SATs week we do all go into the hall, and we all walk down and sit, they have a desk each and all the full class will sit in the hall and we’ll go through all the instructions and if there are any children who have readers, so we do have a few who may have it for emotional reasons or behavioural reasons or if their reading age is below the age of 9 we do tend to have a teaching assistant that will sit with them around school like maybe in the library so there will be one pair sitting here and some children might require breaks because of concentration levels, so it’s helpful if they are not in the main hall.

I: How long do the papers last?

P: The papers, the reading is about an hour, so the maths is 45 minutes, the grammar this time was 45 minutes, so some children might have a break after 20 minutes, they might split it in two halves, so they’re with a teaching assistant in a different part of the school that makes it easier for them as well, so I think this time we had about eight or nine who had readers, so we had teaching assistants with them and the rest of them all stayed in the hall with me.

I: Okay, and in terms of you know when you said you were doing the preparation tests from September, would you do them in the classroom?

P: They would all be in the classroom yes, we tend to do them in a class setting just because they more at ease, I think that’s the thing, we did do a few practice ones coming up maybe 2 or 3 months before we did one or two in the hall just as practice with the readers as well just so that the children get familiar, they all know the adults in school through coming up through with them, but I think it’s nice for them to have that familiarity if you like you know they have the chance to discuss, do you think you’ll need a break, do you think you’ll need this, they just have that opportunity so they probably did think 2 or 3 practice ones in the hall and spread out and the rest were all in the class situation.

I: And when you do the practice ones, do you do it like you would in test conditions?

P: Yes we do them all in test conditions, I think it’s very important, we kind of have a few goes, discuss how children were really struggling to concentrate and be quiet, and so we do try and build it lower down in school, so we do have optional SATs at the end of each year which children complete and it’s just basically getting slowly into that test situation, so they have obviously have the ones in year 2 and then year 3, 4 and 5, they all have got optional SATs that they will do every term so it’s just breaking them in gently, so when it comes to year 6 it’s not such a big shock that, they’ve actually had that exam experience.

I: So they’ve had the exam experience by the time they come into your class, are they aware that year 6 they still will be doing SATs.

P: Yes they’re very aware, I think having lots of brothers and sisters that tell them about it, it’s gets past.

I: Oh it gets past.

P: Yes so I think.

I: So it’s not communicated by yourself.

P: It is, they do know and we discuss and this morning I’ve had my new class this morning so you know, so what are you not really, so they might have said, so some are really looking forward to them so, they know they’re in year 6, they don’t really know in year 2 so much because the settings completely different but I think parents a lot more aware of them being in year 6.

I: Yes.

P: So the children don’t really need us to say it because they already know.

I: And in terms of the importance of the tests?

P: They are important because they do kind of identify what kind of level they are on, when they go to secondary school, secondary schools do look at that, sometimes they are reassessed in the year 7 but some schools don’t, they just go off the levels that they get from primary school, so in terms of, so you can say they are important to a certain extent. Do you communicate that to the children, do you say why this is important?

P: I think we do because we do start quite early in September, we try to get the children not to, they think they’re important, but I think they’ve got a sense of wanting to do well in them which is lovely, there are obviously a few exceptions who don’t really care, but the majority I think want to do well because they feel they are important, we try and stress they’re not the be all and end all because we do them all through the year and I’m quite forceful in that I’ll say as long as you’ve made progress that is the main thing you know, I think because we do them all throughout the year you know, I think for me I just really try and stress those who have improved on the previous scores, so if they’ve got 50 on one and 70 on another, and wow look at that and I do try and play...
I: Is that?
P: Yes.
I: Alright, that gives me a good background about your experiences as a teacher and the SATs itself and the preparation that you go through, just in terms of the intake of the school, I’m not that familiar with the area, so this area and the intake that you get within your school, do you say it’s quite a balanced intake in terms of you know deprivation or affluent families or would you say it’s mixed and would you say it’s quite high in socio economic status or what would be your impression?
P: We’ve got quite a mixed intake there’s not that many affluent families at all here, we’ve got quite a big council estate nearby so a lot of our intake is from there, but there is a lot from mixed kind of areas really, we’ve got some in private housing and some are rented, some in council houses so we’ve got quite a mix, not very many affluent families at all.
I: So it’s almost working class type?
P: Yes very much, a lot of families that are very mixed families in living with different parents and partners and different half brothers and sisters, there’s very few children that are from two point two families round here, it’s quite a low, but we do have a couple of middle not really middle class but compared to the others they probably will be.
I: Okay that’s just for me to understand the intake the school and then I know.
P: Which I think that is part of the problem in that you have this mix range of children in your class anyway and I think some of the families don’t see the importance of you know SATs, so we’ve had a few struggles with some children who say my mum says they’re not important anyway.
I: Yes.
P: You know and I think that’s hard at times.
I: So that’s a cultural thing.
P: Yes it is, you know they don’t matter anyway, you know they’ll retest at high schools, it’s what we’ve got you know so I think that has been a little bit of struggle sometimes especially for those children that need pushing, I think sometimes the parental pressure is too much, but then other times they don’t see the relevance of them so it’s not really there.
I: So I was going to address that point later but since as you’ve mentioned it we might as well explore it now, so in terms of when you’re teaching in the classroom in terms of having a belief that I can, what I do in the classroom will make a difference for these children and given that some children’s background you know say their home environment or the emphasis their family puts on teaching at home is not important, do you find that for some children even despite everything you do because of that external environment, which you have no control over the children won’t make the progress even after you put all the effort in.
P: I think yes, I think we try instil the fact that it’s for them at the end of the day and you know a particular child in my class has no real aspirations to do anything and is quite happy just not working you know I don’t need to go to school, I don’t, and he is one child that was behind and I’ve had to really push and push to try and get him where he should be because the parental is just not there and I think all you can try and do is really instil that self belief that it’s for you at the end of the day and it’s very hard when they’ve got a low self esteem, and for some children I do feel that however much that I address it is down to them and you know it’s such a big influence. I know we have them for quite a number of hours in a day but as soon as they leave they’re back into that mindset so things like homework things, like extracurricular that you would expect to be doing to help them, it’s not there so they’re not making as much progress as other children whose parents may be are keeping them in check, if they’re doing their homework keeping in check, if they’ve done what they’ve been asked to do, you know and actually giving them that opportunity, so I think to a certain extent there’s always one or two children who despite however much you try and raise their aspirations they’ll succumb unfortunately to what the parents are doing you know, and I think this child in particular was amazed that I’ve been to university you know, what do you mean can you just not, I said in order to get a teaching job you have to have got a degree and oh right that sounds like hard work, you know it’s just that mentality that is somewhat instilled unfortunately that they think everything just comes you know there’s no actual effort from them, I find that difficult.
I: Yes, but by communicating it’s important for yourself and for you to put the effort in.
P: Yes, I think it’s self confidence really which is why we focus more on the progress than the actual attainment because I do think that there is that natural competitiveness and there’s that comparing between two you know, what have you got and what have I got and it’s, I do try and instil that, it’s as long as you’ve made improvement that is what I’m looking for.
I: So that brings me nicely onto my next area which is the actual language that you’re using in the classroom, so I’m guessing the language that you’re using most of the time if not all the time in the classroom is yes you know you need to try your best and you know I want to see you make progress.
P: But that’s very much I think we’ve got a lot of children who lack confidence and I think they see the SATs as a panic station you know, what do I do, what, and I kind of say well it’s not just that 1 day, it’s the accumulation of all your work in year 6, we look at in every you know two and three weeks, we assess them and see where their next targets are and I think having those little steps for those children is really important so they might do writing, we’ll give them three targets for them to look at and they know if they do that they will get a better level and you know it’s not actually we’re there on that target, it’s whatever they can do and I think breaking it down.

I: Yes.

P: It’s really important you know, do we want you to make progress and this is how you can do it you know, I think a lot of them say I can’t do it you know, to actually giving them a few little pointers or steps to success that, we do a lot of checklists you know if you manage to do this and I know you can do that one then that makes you into that next level and I think it’s just coaxing them gently rather than panic building, I think that and a lot of the competitive ones love the challenge of trying to you know to put a colon in a piece of writing or you try trying to push themselves really, where the others who are a bit nervous and more apprehensive they see that checklist as their guide and they will do that and quietly get on with that and move them onto the next one, I think it’s staging it and giving them the explanation of what they need to do to make it better.

I: And I’m guessing by saying you can do this.

P: Yes.

I: And I know you can, so that’s building their confidence and then showing them right if you do this, this and this and this and the little steps that you were talking about and they can do that and they can see for themselves.

P: There’s a lot of things like the writing that we do in particular and I will do a shared piece with everybody first and I might do that in a group you know, so it’s not so much more onerous you know, I might do a particularly awful piece of writing you know and they actually having that confidence, no miss you need this in it, if you put that word in and actually getting them to think more you know and I think it’s putting the onus on them because they’ve got to be more independent but I think it’s just coaxing them slightly so we do a lot of guided groups a lot of, where we just work with four children, six children.

I: Yes.

P: I would work with 6 and my teaching assistant would work, and the others would have maybe a checklist to follow and we’ve started doing things in maths called steps to success, so if we’re doing things like that grid multiplication we’ll come up with 10 steps they’ll have to follow in order for them to get the answer at the end, so it’s not I can’t do good multiplication, it is I’m getting stuck on step 4, that’s the bit I can’t do you now, I think it’s about instilling that confidence of why can’t we do that let’s look back right we’ve got one, two, three right, four’s gone a bit wrong so that’s set us off right, let’s get 4 sorted and then we can you know, and I think that instils a lot of self confidence for them.

I: Yes.

P: And there’s that praise of well look you’ve got the first three right it’s just this fourth one right let’s have a look at it and I think it’s, it’s building it all the time and you know it’s slowly drip feeding in you know you can do that little step that doesn’t mean you can’t do the whole thing you know, and I think it’s hard because they do put quite a bit of pressure on themselves some of them you know and it’s about trying to build that up in a better way I think.

I: So there was one aspect of the language that you’re using is to build their confidence and their belief that they can do it.

P: Yes.

I: And then you’re showing how they can do it?

P: Yes.

I: And then trying to make them independent in doing it?

P: Yes.

I: So when the time does come for the exams they can do it themselves?

P: Yes.

I: There’s also another bit there where you’re almost reassuring them the children, and is that something you have to do a lot in the classroom, reassuring the children, so reassuring that you can do it?

P: Yes.

I: And reassuring them that don’t worry it’s only one test?

P: I think things, it’s been a lot better I think, I was worried about coming into year 6 having been a year 5 teacher, I was a bit apprehensive about it obviously because of the things they are for the school you know the data they hold for the school, but I think the onus shifting into teacher assessments has really meant that we could still enjoy year 6, I was worried that I was going to be test, test, test, test, test but I think a lot of it is teacher assessment, it is that daily work that is being levelled for like the writing they don’t do a final piece of writing now they do it in the classroom so we would literally take their literacy book, their topic book, their RE book and see what level are they at in all of them books, so I think in that instance you can be more reassurring and you can work, when it was in a test situation they were pretty much left to their own and that’s when the panic sets in, where if we could do, obviously all the work that we level is independent but you can still be going around saying brilliant remember what we’ve got to do next you know not actually giving them the help but just that reassurance and that you know you can do it come on we’ve done this before you know and I think that has been really useful and really helpful and it’s taken a lot of anxiety away for some of them, I know with the maths they do have that final test because we’ve done so many we’ve gone through it in groups you know and we have a laugh about who got the silliest question wrong and you know how on earth did you get that one wrong you know and then they go I don’t know what I did you know, and it’s that enjoying it more than anything more than piling on the pressure I think.

I: And making by saying you know how did we get that wrong making it almost it’s okay to get things wrong?

P: Well it is and I think you come to a point where you don’t want them to be so worried about it, that so we do, when we’ve done a test in the test conditions we might then go through it in groups of 6 and you know who got that one right, right 4 of us got that one right and why did we get that one wrong and a lot of it is peer assessment as well peer judgement you know, they love somebody else rather than their teacher coming in and saying I think you should have done that or that where it doesn’t make sense, they love if it’s their friends saying it and that’s absolutely fine and I think that confidence and that reassurance comes from their friends as well not just us, so you know if they’ve got a checklist they need to follow you know their friend’s marks against that checklist, they enjoy that because their friend’s saying look I’ve found that in yours and I’ve got you know, you’ve not done that, so we do a lot of that in forms of reassurance in a way of building up their confidence as
well, I think sometimes it’s too much on the teacher and you know, it’s the handing in work and its, but I think if
the friends marked it first they feel a bit.
I: Yes.
P: And if the friend asks them that I think you should change that work or add this bit then it’s a lot easier to
take.
I: To accept.
P: Yes, so I think that’s important for confidence as well.
I: Because it’s from someone who is equal.
P: Yes.
I: In terms of their authority, whereas you’re considered higher in status.
P: Well then, also we get work that other children have done, so I might get if I’m doing the same topic I might
get a child’s work from last year out, right what do we think of this you now and they’re very critical about
somebody else’s work and then they use that, I can do better than that you know and then that feeds back into
it’s trying to find little strategies to use that it’s not do this, do that, do that, do that you know, it’s kind of building
slowly all the time.
I: And you said whilst you are going through the year you would do some practice papers or mock tests, when
after they’ve done it in say in exam type condition, do you ever go back and communicate to them and say to
them right this question this is how to answer it?
P: Yes, what we would do, if we do the test or whatever I do a few different ways, sometimes I mark it as a
class.
I: Yes.
I: So I might have them all in, I’d go through the question on the board, right talk to your partner how did we
answer this question, I think you do this, I think you know then I’ll kind of right let’s look at the mark scheme so
we always get the big mark scheme right, what does the paper say we’ve got to do and you know and so we, it
gives them a chance to, it’s not just me saying right wrong right you know, so we always discuss each question or
sometimes we might just do it in groups, so we might just take one group out to mark your paper and as a group
we’ll discuss who got which bit right, I give them extra marks for working out and you know it’s like that just try
and break it, other times I just mark them and then we give them back and we go through it in groups, but we
generally always go through the answers with them and you know if it’s something like the reading test which they do
struggle with you know, let’s get the mark schemes out, what does it say that we got to do you know and I kind
of joke about, what does the examiner want us to do for this question you know, because I try and act that I
don’t know the answers to some of them you know, Miss do you not know it’s that, oh right, so things like the
reading I’ll get the mark scheme out, right it says for three marks we’ve got to do you know, so I think they like
that kind of discussion and I think it’s important rather than doing there’s you mark, next paper.
I: So you almost getting them to think and make progress in that way, you’re not directly telling them how to do
it you almost?
P: And I think it depends on the context and if we’re doing the math paper we might do it Monday, Tuesday,
we’ll spend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday going through it but I think that is more valuable than me trying to
teach something else, I mean they want to know what marks they’ve got because they want to know if they’ve
beat the last score you know and things like that and we’ve done things like highlighting bits that we need out of
the question, and on a lot of it is just discussion and going through it and trying to have a laugh with it more than
anything and if there’s a really hard oh it’s at the back of the paper it means it’s a level 5, what on earth are we
going to do, do I know how to do this you know so it’s...
I: So you’re taking the pressure off?
P: Yes, and I think it was something I hope worked this year, which it did, I think a lot, there weren’t many that
were worried about it or anything which was pleasing, but I think we just try and put it onto more you
know and just getting them to discuss and work with each other rather than me just directing all the time, I think
that’s the biggest bit.
I: Another type of language that you use in the classroom I want to ask you about, I know SATs they are in May
and you said throughout the year you’re doing practice papers from September all throughout until the May
actual papers, are you reminding the children that the SATs are coming up or we’re doing a mock paper next
week or maybe during the May time just a few weeks prior to May, are you saying right you need to keep working
hard because your SATs are coming, do you keep reminding them or do you just tend to leave it, leave it and
then say to them possibly the week before you know.
I: I think they know when they are you know, I think like things like that half term holiday right this is your last
holiday we’ve got so many weeks, but I don’t remind them daily or I might just mention it once and then we you
know.
I: Once a week?
P: Yes but I don’t, I try and not keep mentioning it, I think they know when they are and you know, and we send
timetables out to parents pretty much January when we actually know them so they don’t book holidays and
things, but they seem to enjoy the actual SATs, I think because they’ve been preparing for it they kind of know
it’s coming up.
I: Yes.
P: We hold a breakfast club for them during the week so it’s kind of a nice time for them all to get together and
have a breakfast and you know we read through the study guides, watch a few bite size DVDs, I think they
actually enjoy coming in early, it’s something that sets them apart and they see that as kind of being grown up,
but we don’t really keep reminding them, we might say right we’re going to do two more reading paper before so
you know, but we don’t keep lecturing it I think that’s the big thing.
I: Okay, something else that I wanted to ask you in terms of the language that you’re using, are you talking to
them about expectations, so for example you’ve got some children who are on level 5 and you know from your
assessments throughout the year that this child is capable of getting a level 5 but just needs to work a bit harder,
are you throughout the year, are you communicating expectations or do they know what’s expected of them, so
are you using language like you know I expect you to get a level 5 you know I expect you to get a level 5 like you
know I expect you to get a level 5 you know I expect you to get a level 5, I think that’s quite worrying.
P: I think I don’t do what the end target is, I might do what their immediate target is, so just short term little
goals, so with the three targets for literacy if we can do them then that will secure us that level you know, I just
think you’re just missing those and if you get that we’ll move onto the next, and I think they like feeling that
little success and then I’ll move them on, some I might move quicker.
I: Yes.
P: Because I’m pushing them more, others I might just let, just get them quite established before I move them
I: But I don’t try and labour it a lot you know, I might say look we’re a bit behind what do you think we should do,
right, so kind of put the onus on them and I think they do appreciate you talking to them a bit more like adults, I
think I do try and say look, you’re meant to this level but we’ve got these three things to do so what do you think
we should do right, well I’ll do them then.

I: Yes.

P: If I do them, will that mean I’m right so you think you could help me out because you’ve got to mark these you
know, and I think you can talk to them a bit more relaxed in that way and I think they do ultimately want to
please and ultimately want to get better.

I: Yes, so when you do say to them just to clarify this, when you do say to them I want you to be on this level this
year or I want you to be on this target.

P: Yes.

I: You immediately follow that up with this is what you do in order to get that.

P: Yes, I think there’s nothing worse than saying you should be at this level and then don’t tell them how to, so
we always give them the next steps you know, so if I’m marking I’ll put like next time I’d like you to do this and
you know, I particularly like that you’ve included these forms of punctuation, next time how about using a
comma, but I try and just give a next little target, because I think there’s nothing worse than saying you should
be a level 5 and not telling how they should do it, you know so we always, at the front of like the independent
writing big write book they do have a grid with levels 3, 4 and 5 on which we might you know, I might do a stupid
piece of writing and we’ll say right what level do you think I’m writing at today, you know and they quite quickly
become aware of whereabouts they are on that grid and the more intelligent ones amongst them will look, so
you’re saying if I do this, this and this and that’ll make me into that, yes, yes, is that it, you know so a lot of
them will take that on but it’s more short term goals than may be the end product.

I: Some children can do independently whereas.

P: Others the guided group sessions is where we would be doing it.

I: Okay, I’m going to ask you about another type of language sometimes in order to get someone to do something
we instil a bit, I don’t know if fear is the right word?

P: Yes.

I: So if I said to you in an everyday example if you park on them double yellow lines we’ll give you a £50 fine,
there’s a fear that if I do that I’ll be in trouble, so just delaying back to the classroom, do you ever say to
children that actually if you don’t do this or if you don’t achieve this level you know this will be the negative
consequence and possibly you may say when you get your marks you’ll be really unhappy or your parents will be
unhappy, or if you’re going to school your high school your teachers will see that, do you ever highlight that
negative consequence of not doing well?

P: I try and not.

I: Okay.

P: Do it because I think there’s nothing worse than not being where you should be at target wise then being told
that you’re even further behind that you thought you know and things, so I try and do as much as I can positively
because I think especially as this age they shouldn’t you know, they’ve got an awful lot to be thinking about and
we’re pushing them all the time and if you start putting that negative spin on it I think for some of them it can
be quite detrimental, I think just trying to be positive about it and kind of a relaxed have a go come on let’s
think I do know, some of them we do have to say look you should be this level and you’re not quite, what do you
think we should do about it you know and putting the onus back on them, rather than you’re not where you
should be, you’re going to be disappointed.

I: Yes.

P: What can we do about it you know, Mrs […]’s telling me you should be at this level, right what we going to
do because we need to show her you know and giving them that ownership and having them kind of come to that
decision rather than being negative I think.

I: So you talking to them about their expectations that you need to be here and if they’re not there then you’re
talking to them immediately after on how to get them there.

P: Yes.

I: Okay, you know the bit that I talked about negative consequences let’s just flip that and let’s talk about
positive consequences, do you ever say to children oh if you do really well in this paper or test or if you do really
well when you get your marks you’ll be really happy or your parents will be happy or when you go to your next
school your teachers will look at that and they’ll be really happy that you’ve done well, do you use again it’s a
consequence type of language but positively framed, do you use that kind of language?

P: I think we try and not do it on that front to pleasing parents or pleasing us I think we try and put it on them
you know their kind of consequence, so it’s for them at the end of the day and I think they because we try and
instil this kind of positive you know have a go progress all throughout the year, I think they want to do well for
them and I think they realise if they do well you know we might say something about the high school you know
because they say do they look at them you know, we might say wouldn’t it be great if you went it with those
marks you know good grief they’ll be looking at you thinking, or they might say a comment like will I be in the
top set because I’ve got that you know and I think trying to put it on them to say it rather than us to make a
judgement, I think you know they do that, if they get good SAT results then they’ll be in the top sets.

I: They know that.

P: They’re aware of that, they’re not.

I: And you don’t communicate that?

P: Yes, but I think we kind of put it on you know we want you to have the best start at high school you know,
please and I think we try and put it on the it’s for your sake and kind of just think how
you’d feel going into high school with those SATs you know if they had your name on a piece of paper.

I: Yes.

P: Wouldn’t you feel proud of those you know and trying to put it on them more than for us.

I: Yes, for their own personal gain.

P: And I think we try and say that because we do have all the transitions meeting with the secondary school you
know, wouldn’t it be great if you could go up with those ones you know and how pleased would be and you know
I think we try to not labour it but it is for them more than anybody else I think that’s what we try and instil in
them.

I: Yes.

P: You know there are positive things from parents you know so parents might say if you get this.

I: They will give a reward.
I: And you said you wouldn’t do it all the time.

P: Yes.

I: Just very rarely you might say to a child that these are very important for you.

P: Yes.

I: Can you just expand on that a bit more.

P: I try and not say that they’re important for the school I try and not really push that as much as I know from my kind of teacher point of view the importance of them, but I do say you know they are important for them because you know obviously this is what secondary schools are going to be looking at, they don’t see all your books, they don’t, and they know that and I said you are going to go with a piece of paper with your name on it and what I think you’re working at and what the test results are you know, so we do say they are important so you get the best start possible but I think that’s pretty much as much as I say, they’re important just for their kind of start at secondary school you know, let’s get a really good start with those levels, let’s show what we’re capable of so when you start there you’ve got the best possible start, because I think a lot them are apprehensive about starting, but you know if you’re going up with those and you know that’s the biggest help that you can give yourself to show off what you can do, I think that’s the way I kind of do it rather than they’re really important for the school you know, please do your best.

I: I think it’s important for the children to do their best so they.

P: And I think some of them, I kind of say it’s a way to show off what you can do you know, if you can do it show me it and I’ll give you credit for it you know and there have been times where I’ve marked something and I’ve said you’ve not done that, good grief you know I didn’t see that, so we make a big fuss about it and you know I think we do say they’re important but it’s for them and we might they know, I think especially a lot of them have got siblings who have taken them and are pretty aware.

I: Of their importance.

P: And yes and their start at secondary school, so I think that’s kind of coming a lot more recently but now it’s more the importance for them and to show off their progress that they’ve done, as opposed to importance for the school I think.

I: Yes okay, and just, I know you haven’t been in the year 6 for a long time.

P: Yes.

I: Do you feel the language that you’ve been using say this year has changed or do you feel since you began teaching you’ve probably adopted a similar style and then just refined it slightly and not made massive changes.

P: I think it’s very similar you know coming from year 5 and year 6 they are very similar but I do think you need to refine it a bit in the fact that there’s a lot of more reassurance and praise I think in year 6, I think it needs to be you know they aren’t and some of them are doing these tests and some of them might not have done as well as they thought they should have done and because we’re doing them on a much more regular basis I think the reassurance of it is a lot more than I’ve had in 5, because I think they do see the SATs in May as kind of their time you know, this is what we’ve got to do and it’s just that building up of confidence a lot more which isn’t really needed in the other year group you know, the kind of they’re set targets they are monitored and tracked and everything but I think in year 6 I’ve found that I’m trying to build up their confidence a lot more than I thought, I would just because I didn’t think that they would be that worried about them, some of them but others aren’t really bothered, so I’ve had to be quite a bit more challenging you know in the way that you know we think you are capable of doing this, what do you think right come on let’s go for it, and I think a lot more praise and encouragement is what I’ve been doing and I think we do a lot more guided groups, so I certainly have done a lot more because I’ve had more teaching assistants to do it with I’ve had you know, three groups of six have had that small group setting where they are offered praise and we go through tests and they are reassured, they are comforted, if they have done a question wrong and I think that’s been a big thing that I’ve never really thought about, just the reassurance language.

I: Okay, I’ll just give you an example of a child that you may come across in your classroom is someone whose very capable and has the capacity to do really well to possibly achieve a level 5 or even level 6 and you know that even without your help the child can do this, but may be a bit lax or doesn’t put that much effort into it, in that rare instance when you do get a child like that, do you have to use any different types of language in order to push that child to do better, sometimes a teacher can get frustrated knowing that I know this child can do it but for some reason he’s not doing it and I don’t need to teach him or her how to do it because they do know how to do it, it’s just that they’re just not putting the effort in.

P: Well I’ve had a few of those this year that just think they can do the bare minimum when you know you can do more and I think with children I’ve had to do a lot more peer work than me.

I: Right.

P: Because I find sometimes you are on that teacher mode, I think a lot of the checklists have been useful so it’s not directly language that you’re using, but I would like you in your piece of writing to do this and I know that they’re level 5 targets and I don’t know if you’ll be able to do them all but you know I might just kind of leave them hanging and then they’ll think right I’ll show her you know, and I think just giving them prompts rather than pressurising them and a lot of more peer work and competitiveness with them you know how many have you got on that checklist, well he’s got five over there, do you think you can get another one, it’s kind of coaxing them round I think a lot more than lecturing I think that’s the big thing.

I: That’s your approach?

P: So maybe a bit more provocative you know getting them ready to show me rather than leaving to coast and they do know that I won’t leave them to it and I will.

I: Come back and support them but you won’t put additional pressure on them.

P: No I do think they do naturally put it on themselves and I think if you kind of go on the front I don’t know if you can do this or not but you know they do have natural thing that right I’ll show her you know I think a lot.

I: A bit of a challenging.

P: And I have said I will push you all the way, you either coming with me or I’m dragging you by the heels but
you’re coming.

I: Just going back you said some people respond differently some children actually really like the tests and are really excited and some are a bit worried and a bit anxious, and I’m guessing you know from what you’ve been saying is that those that are worried and anxious you’re just reassuring them and trying to downplay the importance of the tests and you’re doing well throughout the year, just keep showing me, is that right?

P: Yes pretty much, I think there are always in a class you know such a range of children that I approach them in different ways but I think the anxious ones I think a lot of kind of the smaller groups have really worked, and I think that has really helped, I think it’s just that reassurance and it’s okay that you’ve got it wrong, we just want you to try and learn and know how to do it, just that confidence building.

I: Okay so taking away that fear of failure, okay thank you for that, obviously the performance of the children in the SATs and the teacher assessments they do get published and are available online for parents, and then the school league tables are produced with respect to that, does that put a lot of pressure on you or do you feel as if actually I know there are these certain baseline targets that I have to achieve, do you feel I do need to achieve and you let that go and you just carry on with your practice or are you constantly thinking about it that I need to be getting these children to a level 4 or getting these children to level 5?

P: I think I am a natural kind of worrier in most things anyway and with being in year 6 I do think I pile pressure and I think it does come from above you know, you are expected this why aren’t they on track and I think I take a lot of accountability for what they’ve got but whether they see that or not you know, I think maybe if I pushed them a bit more or maybe given them different targets or so I do think I, and management do put the pressure on year 6 teachers, we’ve got the baselines obviously government, but we’ve got county expectations so we need 85% or 87%, I think it was you know level 4 and above and luckily I got that but we, you know I think I do feel very responsible if we don’t get.

I: And do you feel you have to change the way the language that you use in the classroom because of some of the pressures or do you feel.

P: I try and not show it to the children there are certain children who are flagged up quite early that I know aren’t where they should be and you know I thought this current year 6 class I taught them in year 5 as well, so I’ve actually had them for two years so that was a kind of nice first year in year 6 but even way back in year 5 there were certain children that I knew that weren’t going to make, so I’ve put, I’ve made sure I’ve kind of covered my back if you like that I’ve put in enough intervention in for them, so I’ve done all that I possibly I can for that child and that it might just be that they progress quicker and have kind of slowed down or plateau in key stage 2 you know, all different ones do rocket up in year 6 when we start doing the boosting but I do feel very responsible for them, and I think at the end of the day they are my class and I am ultimately responsible for what grade they get, so I do probably put more pressure on myself and it is from above as well, like our head and especially her adviser and the.

I: The pressure from government?

P: Yes, so I do think think there is a lot of pressure but I think the teacher assessment is helping tremendously.

I: Is it teacher assessment only in writing, is there any other.

P: It’s writing at the minute, we do give teacher assessment marks for maths and speaking and listening and for reading and they’re not the ones that are published, it is just the SAT tests that are published, the writing ones are published but the teacher assessments aren’t at the moment but I think because you are in year 6 and it is important for school, I do think naturally there’s pressure there.

I: And if something doesn’t happen in year 5 then you’ve got a major challenge.

P: Yes so we do have tracking systems in place you know that are monitoring them all the way through school and they are flagged up, but if you’ve not been in year 6 I don’t think you realise the pressure of being in year 6.
Appendix 6 - Year 2 Teacher Interview (Transcript 5, Participant 5)

P = Participant (Teacher)
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]
1 I: I think we’ll begin with getting to know a bit more about you and your experience as a teacher, how long
2 you’ve been in the year 2 setting because I am aware that people do change and just your experiences and what
3 you’ve taught etc.
4 P: I’ve been a teacher for 25 years and I’ve taught in this school in year 2 for about 6 years.
5 I: Okay.
6 P: I’ve got other roles which makes it, I’m the deputy and SENCO in the school, so I’ve got other things on my
7 mind sometimes, and I’ve taught in a variety of areas [...] and [...] and [...] so this is about my fifth
8 school, and my experience is mainly in early years and with younger children that’s my favourite.
9 I: Like reception, year 1.
10 P: Yes, reception, year 1.
11 I: Okay, but you’ve been in year 2 for six years.
12 P: And I have been year 2 in other places as well for a while.
13 I: So you’re quite used to how the year 2 classroom operates, okay another thing I’d like to ask you about is, I am
14 aware that at the end of year 2 you do have to do some official type examinations, can you tell me a bit more
15 about that.
16 P: Well, I find it quite hard doing these SATs because it’s quite a pressure in terms of what the children have to
17 produce and the data is collected for Ofsted and its collected nationally for something called raise online and I
18 find it hard to push 6 and 7 year olds, and we actually do them in May so it’s not really well, it’s three quarter of
19 the year through or eight tenths, and yes I’m not sure what I think about them but I try to just get on with them
20 really and the children and parents, each new lot of parents that hasn’t got an older sibling gets a shock each
21 time because at the beginning of the year we say what the children are going to do during the year, so topics and
22 what sort of experiences, and they say well I thought the government said that you don’t do SATs anymore and I
23 say well I’m sorry we do.
24 I: Yes, okay and in terms of these SATs, now that you do have to do SATs, they’re very different to what you
25 would do in the classroom in terms of how they are presented because I’m right in thinking you’re not allowed
26 to help the children to do the SATs, you just give them the task and you just tell them to do it.
27 P: It’s not different, it’s different to some of the work but not different to others because of course if there’s
28 something happening and you know that your performance management is going to be judged on the results of
29 some of the those tests, you do prepare the children for those tests, so they have had similar type of work
30 presented to them.
31 I: Yes.
32 P: And one of the big things in year 2 is that they work independently those that are able, so a big push almost
33 from when they start to come in and try to do shorter tasks like a SAT’s comprehension, so the children get the
34 feel of not having to come and ask, and use the skills they’ve been taught to answer questions independently.
35 I: So you’re almost getting them prepared for the SATs, when you give them the SATs, how do you do it, I don’t
36 know how it takes place in year 2, do they be on individual tables or do you take a group out and they do the
37 SATs?
38 P: At this school because most of the children come from homes where they’re told about the SATs they know
39 what they are and they’re okay and the children do them on individual tables like the Victorians, but those
40 children who aren’t ready will do a task in another room but it’s given some credence, that’s not just go away
41 and play you know, that they feel they’re going to get a good outcome out of it, so they wouldn’t take part in
42 this individual table business.
43 I: But they would still do the SATs?
44 P: They would do some of the SATs they were able to do and they would do assessments, they couldn’t do some
45 of the tasks some of the children will be ready to do, okay, so they would have to be assessed at a lower level
46 which perhaps might be called the Pivats level or whatever level they were at, level 1, they would do certain
47 tasks to assess where they were at.
48 I: To assess where they were, okay I’m just trying to get my head round what you do in the classroom with
49 respect to SATs, you said something along the lines of the children are aware that SATs take place and possibly
50 through the parents communicating it to them, so you know when the children come into your class in year 2, are
51 they aware that they’ll be doing SATs or there is something called SATs to which they have to do.
52 P: Some of them are and some of them aren’t and I don’t kind of know because I don’t want to say the word to
53 them straight away, so I would say the language would be couched in terms of special work but this special work
54 business I often mention it after Christmas because I don’t want them worrying about it and some would but they
55 do know something is hard about year 2.
56 I: Yes, something different, so just after Christmas you might say to them that maybe in the next term or so or a
57 few weeks later we’re going to do SATs.
58 P: Yes.
59 I: Some special work?
60 P: Yes, I can’t even think how I do it that’s what’s the problem with us being here that sometimes you don’t
61 reflect on your practice and I’m not too sure how I would exactly do it, I think what we do is communicate to the
62 parents a couple of weeks before and then.
63 I: Yes and say let’s say, I don’t know what week in May, but the week in May, would you remind the children or
64 let them know that the SATs are coming or this special work is coming up, would you make any reference?
65 P: Yes and the head would on the newsletter.
66 I: Right.
67 P: And I would and it’s quite a big thing here, they’ll be asked to go to bed early, they’ll be asked to you know really
68 try to focus on the work that week.
69 I: Okay.
P: Well it's probably over a two week period to be fair for me.
I: Yes okay, that's really useful information because I'm understanding now what you do in the classroom in respect to SATs, I'm moving onto the main part of my research which is the language that you use in the classroom especially when you're preparing children for tests.

P: You better pass or I'll lose my job.
I: So what kind of things are you saying to the children in order for them to do better in these assessments or when you're doing the practice kind of work, what do you say to the children, I'm going to leave it quite open and I know I'm trying to get you to reflect on the spot.

P: It will be things like take your time, there's a set kind of language that most people use around tests, like in any test, take your time, read the questions carefully, if you're stuck just leave it and come back to it, I mean that's even at age 6 and 7 so that's quite a high level skill to leave something you're not sure off.

I: Yes.
P: Not sure what else I'd do, it's just a case of saying do your best and that's all that Mrs [-----] what's bothered about, it doesn't matter if it's a bit tricky as long as you try your best and that's what we're trying to say.

I: So language you're using is just emphasising is try your best and give it your best shot effort really?

P: Yes, effort sometimes I guess can be a good one, you might be a reading detective in the reading comprehension and trying to make say and it might be trying to trick you and you just be careful that you don't get tricked because we're really good at this, say like in the maths questions we will have read similar questions that are put in the format because the paper is a paper so they might jump from a multiplication to a graph to a money one and the children are confident in lessons when the topic is on money all week, may be bit thrown by the money and then a time question and then to a bar chart, so we try to say we try to practice within the lessons some exemplars and sometimes use the materials called test base in order to read questions and to think what they could be asking and give them the language that they use in the tests, they would have more of a chance, so sometimes language at home, so dads giving the children sums so we'd just make sure they're in the test, they know what the word total and multiply and what all the words mean so they could access the questions.

I: Yes.
P: But I can't think of what I exactly say to them, I praise all the time as they do it, wonderful, brilliant I can see you're all doing really well, even if I can see a page of wrong answers you know I'm really proud of you, that you've done your best and that sort of thing.

I: Yes, so almost your language is about effort and trying your best and being quite positive and praising, would you use language like the special tests that are coming up they are really important, or would you tend to downplay the importance or do you just not mention anything?

P: I think I kind of think I'm being subtle and I'm not because the children when they get to the test they think they know what they will get really well and they know all sorts of things about your body language and you don't even know that you're giving away so I'd say things like we need to show off we need to show how clever we are and that's what we can do and I don't see, I try to say that we're really good and we're going to show them and sometimes there's a carrot involved, we'll have to go on a trip or treat, we have ice creams which is kind of.

I: Do you say something like.

P: They don't get a sweet at the end of the test, it's like a combination at the end of that half term, there's some kind of reward, it's not like a dog with a chocolate.

I: So in terms of that kind of importance, it's let's show them what we can do?

P: Well I think those children that don't do the test they feel bad because they kind of know even if they're doing to do lovely work with a teaching assistant they want to do a test because they can see that they're cool the other kids that are doing the tests, so it keeps a divide that's there because they're allowed to do this test the clever ones and they the strugglers are put away in a room, and that's the bit that's hard because it's doesn't sit against your, but you can't make them sit there and do it, you can't if they're not ready, then you can't can you.

I: What do you say to them children.

P: What do I say to those children, I'll just say like I said before that they're going to be doing the special project and each year it's different like it's this year, I only had two that couldn't do it, the year before there was a bit of a gang that was doing less able, so they were doing whatever like their interests is you know their book of something, that they're interested in and I think this year there's these two and they're often boys I'm afraid, they're doing superb maths with the teaching assistant so it depends who they are and they're doing it and they're great at it and I have to go wow, not just quietly mark my tests, and see how much they, oh what have they done that's fantastic, and they say can I do the test tomorrow and I have to say, it is no I think you'll be doing blah blah blow it is difficult to manage and when we get to the level 3 and only a certain number of people can try the level 3 one and they know their level.

I: Am I right in thinking.

P: I don't mention the level and say to do this work with me sometimes or the teaching assistant, and say can I come can I come, it's a bit difficult.

I: Are the children in the class, are they aware of what level they're on and what level they should be achieving or aiming or is that something that doesn't happen in your classroom?

P: They're aware of but not as explicitly as Year 6 where they look and mark their own work, they're only aware of it in their writing, they might have a writing target and they're not aware of levels of 2s and 1s and 3s, they're aware of the next step in the learning but not in terms of a level because I've not found that useful, but some teachers swear by it, they do know the levels in the maths because we have these I cans so they would know what was stuck 2a, 2b, and what they need to achieve but I don't go over particularly that 2c is lower than the 2b and the 2a is the top, they go over wanting to know, what can I add coin up to 50 wayhey, and then what else can I do within the level that they're on and to achieve that and then they go, but we don't talk, some of the teachers here go in order to achieve level 3 you need to for the next piece of writing but I don't, I say in order to improve your work this is your target.

I: So your emphasis is more about a child developing their own knowledge and working at their own level and where they see it rather than kind of attaching that learning to levels.

P: Yes, but.

I: Which happens in later years say year 6?

P: Well yes and no because I would know what level they are working at every single child in the class because you have to and I would also know how to move them up in that level and that learning wouldn't particularly entirely be linked to their individual needs, it will be linked to what the national curriculum says they have to achieve that level, but what the clever bit about teaching is what people don't realise is helping them to do all
the other things they need to do to get to that next bit.

I: Yes.

P: I can’t think of an example.

I: I think I know what you mean.

P: I have a half of the level but a load of me is common sense, a load of me is just like teach a person.

I: Yes, so what I’m thinking, I don’t know correct me if I am wrong, is you’re doing teaching and you have an

awareness of levels etc. and what different skills amount to different levels but your focus is not on that, but then
when you’ve done all that they’re making the progress in terms of their levels.

P: Yes, the child is at the forefront because sometimes it’s a bit too much but that’s a personal thing you know,

if they’re kind of a poor spell and it might be almost impossible to get that aspect of the level because that might

be for life and just use things like spell check but it would be encouraging them to do the fabulous sentences

instead of these flipping spelling being in the way, yes, individual as well as the level.

I: So just going back to your language, so the language is more about effort and trying your best and you know

and just doing your learning.

P: Bit, a bit and a few test tactics like reading the question and checking your work, but they would be asked to

do that anyway in a normal piece.

I: Okay, so that’s a different type of language, it’s more about how to answer the questions and how to.

P: To do aspects, yes.

I: So that’s one aspect and that’s another aspect, do you do a lot of and I know you know throughout the whole

year, you’ll be doing like not formalised assessments you’ll be doing some form of assessment, do you feel you

have to use a lot reassuring language for some children and not to worry or maybe in the SATs when it comes to

the SATs, do you have to say a lot of reassuring type language statements, oh don’t worry about it just give it

your best shot, you know try your best, do you find you do that?

P: A little bit, I think what I strive to do every day is set an atmosphere in the classroom whereby there’s no

threat, the cleverer thing to do is have that atmosphere all the time where it’s not coming to school it’s not a

test, it’s hard to explain but there’s things you can do that you develop the relationship and they develop the

trust in you, that you that you think that you think if you think they can do it they think they can do it, and

that’s something, and some of that is language but some of that is just general how you behave and how if you’re

real because they know straight away know, if you go oh lovely oh that’s lovely and you couldn’t give a monkeys.

so if you actually genuinely have got them positive relationships and away from the people. Normally it’s a

reasonably it’s a mixed area here there’s quite a lot of money here from […] there’s a quite a affluent homes

and there’s also less affluent homes for a mixture anyway and they’re aspiring to be part of this

community but a lot of the children want to do the best and some of them they come with a remarkably positive

attitude so here I’m quite spoil with that.

I: Yes.

P: But some of them because of all the home aspirations then have that pressure on them so I suppose it swing in

roundabouts.

I: Yes.

P: They care too much the parents, caring in inverted commas really.

I: And that puts a bit of pressure on the children yes.

P: But my thing to say would be that it’s hey it’s happening, then it’s play time, then it’s just another day blah,

and these things happen and then in the afternoon guess what it’s art PE duh, duh, duh.

I: Yes, rather than signalling out this is different or something very important you just carry on and they just do

do it and they’ve had enough practice.

P: But in one way I am signalling because they’re in those lines that I said so that’s very different for them, but

some how the other they cope with it and I’m not too sure.

I: Yes.

P: How do you know, they know it’s a mixed area here there’s quite a affluent homes

and the tests are actually quite well printed out and quite attractive, and they like having their own special

booklet and so it’s not as horrendous as it first appears when you first see it.

I: Okay, in terms of the language you’re using, you have a philosophy of teaching which then creates an

environment and then you use that language to support that environment that you’ve created and as you’re

saying it’s quite a relaxing and enjoyable environment or worry free environment, and when they do come to do

something like this thing where they have to sit separately it’s okay for them and you don’t need to reassure

them that much. Okay, that’s really useful, I’m just thinking you said something like I don’t feel you know

teaching is the best when there’s threat, you said something along the lines of that, I can’t

remember the actual words.

P: You’ll have to rewind.

I: Yes, I’ll have to, with that are you trying to say you never make comments or use statements such as the

consequences of not doing well like the negative consequences you know if you don’t do well then I’ll be

disappointed in you, and if you don’t do well your parents won’t be happy so something along the lines of that,

that’s just a couple of examples, but I’m right in thinking that you don’t use that kind of language.

P: I’m not a very black and white person that’s just one thing I would be black and white on, I would never use

that language.

I: Yes.

P: And I’m a Mrs Flexible and Mrs but that’s, I would never use that language about parents or me.

I: Yes.

P: It wouldn’t help them at all.

I: And that’s your reason for not using it, because you don’t think that kind of language is effective.

P: No.

I: Okay, what about if it was something like positive consequences or something like oh if you did really well in

this task.

P: I don’t link it to their life in terms of like if you do get level 3 you’ll get ten GCSEs, I don’t link it to the life in

terms of you’ll be pilot or a dentist or. I just do it in terms of that showing off how clever you are and this is

another piece of work so there isn’t the emotion attached, there’s expectations in that they will do their best

and they will apply the skills that they’ve been taught in order, so there is this value in terms of they are asked

not to copy you know, and I am walking round making sure that they’re not, it’s their work but there isn’t that

emotional thing of that link, some of them bring the link in, oh that’s nice that they’re going to get a tenner or

something from the parents if they do well.
I: Like an external reward.

P: Yes, but I just kind of look a bit bored or blank or kind of don’t tell me anymore, oh right so now we are, so it wouldn’t, I wouldn’t acknowledge that really or if they carried on, because some come nearer, nearer, nearer.

I: I’ll be pleased if you do your best now sit down, so not sure what you asked now and waffled on that long.

I: Yes it was about the consequences or you know or almost getting children to engage in certain acts of behaviours for some greater reason whereas you’re emphasis is a bit different, it’s more about children learning their best.

P: I think like with year 6 you can say that they’ll be a good set in high school if you go with good grades, but for me for year 2 sorry it’s not, it doesn’t make as much sense to lead it to anything in particular other than showing what they know.

I: Yes, well that’s really so you said.

P: I can’t even remember though now, I’m feeling guilty that I don’t think, I don’t think I do then link it to year 3 teachers, I don’t because that wouldn’t mean that much to them either.

I: Yes so you’re just saying just try your best and that’s the end of it and it’s not, try your best and then this will happen or try your best and this will make you happy or you’ll feel happy yourself, it’s just try your best and you know that’s your expectation for them for their own learning really and not for anything else, not for say moving to a better set or future career.

P: yes, no I’ve forgotten all those things, yes.

I: Okay, I’m beginning to understand your approach and some of the language that you are using.

P: Yes, but the, it would, they would kind of know it would be a subtle thing because they would have been taught the skills, so this is the sort of question that we might be asked children in the SATs.

I: Yes.

P: And I think this is trying to trick us and I wonder if you can talk to your partner and think how to answer this question and how would you do it, oh well done so you know so they have been prepared they kind of do know that there is an importance on it, but the importance is on it for them to show what they know and that they are yes clever, and I don’t know if I link it to anything else, I don’t think I do.

I: So it’s quite implicit, it’s there, it’s very implicit you don’t feel the need to make them statements that you do, it’s almost, it’s your approach really.

P: And yes there would be outside conversations about why we come to school and why we learn and why we’re trying to improve but those wouldn’t be linked to the SATs, so we would have some kind of conversations about why you need to read.

I: Yes.

P: And what’s writing for but it wouldn’t be linked to the SATs.

I: Yes.

P: It’s a goal in itself.

I: And yes and I know I’m going away from the SATs, when you communicate to children why we come to school and the reasons for coming to school, what kind of things are you saying and what the purpose of schooling is.

P: I never really know, I let it come from them and then try to link it to reading and getting a job but it’s always a bit waffly because my experience of life is really because I’ve never left school and I’m still here.

I: Yes, so you’re still in school.

P: So my parents are like teachers so I would like to know more careers and that’s one of the things I do in certain topics that we do and bring people as much as possible, so that they can have role models. Where I used to work in […] worked with 4 years old and I asked and a lot of them wanted to be mums, the girls and that used to be great but do you know what I’m a mummy.

I: Yes.

P: And I’m a teacher and they used to think, but it’s trying to give aspirations in order to get you do it in order to get a job or some of them will have older ones helping the conversations, they go to university, their big brothers or sisters, so it would be to help them get the job that they want to get.

I: Yes.

P: And why I mean even in this school, there are children whose parents don’t work and have never worked so that would be an aim of mine to understand why and what would be good about working and part of the learning it helps get a job.

I: That’s the broader purpose but you would never make reference to that when they doing these SATs.

P: Yes get level 3 or else or you will never be a.

I: You’ll never be good at anything.

P: Yes.

I: So that’s good, I think we’ve covered most of that bit and another question that I was looking at was how frequently are you using this language and what I’ve found is that you’re actually, you have quite a specific approach about emphasising effort and you know getting them to do their best and I’m guessing that’s the kind of language you’re using every day, that would be something you would be saying that kind of language in terms of try your best and this is how to do these things and then learning type language or instruction type language is what you’re doing on a daily basis, yes?

P: Yes, yes.

I: Okay, and you’re not really using any threatening type language like you really need to do this in order to get this.

P: No not in the, I might be in terms of I don’t want to see that work because that’s not your best or yes there’s some threat involved in that but not related to the SATs.

I: That’s just normal classroom practice.

P: Hopefully yes.

I: Okay and you said you don’t really feel the need to use reassuring language that much particularly over the tests.

P: There are those one or two that cry or worry or nearly cry, but you think ahead of that, I always have, I ask if I can have sometimes I ask and sometimes I get extra staff and I’m ready to be near them and say go on that’s brilliant, talk them through because you can’t tell them the answers so but this year there wasn’t anybody like that but like I said every year it’s different and it’s individual, there’s one next year who will have a fit so I’ll be ready for that and so they are being reassured in terms of it’s just fun, we do about crocodiles and that’s in the comprehension one yes.

I: So you’re trying to communicate.

P: There’s one or two that you might not be able to do, but it’s doesn’t matter Mrs […] I only want you to do
I: So it’s quite child friendly language.

P: Yes, wow you worked really hard I think we can get a 5 minutes and go out and play or go on the trail.

I: So it’s more emphasising it’s a fun activity and it’s try your best.

P: Yes or a bit of like a fill in but then you’ll be fine.

I: Yes okay and some children you are aware they might get a bit worried so you put things in place in order to

ensure that so they don’t get worried in the actual examination, so that covers the bit about in individual

differences that I was going to talk to you about, you said some children respond differently but something else

that you were mentioning is about knowing the children and the relationship that you’ve built with them, so I’m

guessing as the longer you have the children you build relationships with them and you know what their triggers

and you know how to push them and do better, is that really important knowing your children and then you know

fine tuning your approach for particular children in order to get the best out of them or.

P: Yes, you know those that will go to the toilet like ten times if they can and it depends, so yes you’re hoping

they trust us that you’ve given them the work that’s right for them so yes it is relationship and it’s the

atmosphere you have within the group when it’s going on, and it’s really, really, really hard not to help them.

I: Usually.

P: Especially when they say can you just read that in comprehension and I can’t read that word and the look of

consternation on the face or it’s really hard to say to walk away because that’s the opposite of what you do

normally.

I: And is that the first that they receive something like that.

P: Probably.

I: And they look a bit stunned like what’s up with her.

P: And then it’s over and done with.

I: So we say well read the rest of the words and see if you can work out, what that one is but I can’t, I do say I

don’t know whether I should or not and can’t tell you with this special work.

I: But they don’t know why you’re doing this special work?

P: No not particularly.

I: That’s okay that’s important because you’re not you’re downplaying the importance of these examinations and

you know it’s just another it’s just a typical.

P: And you know if you think about it, it’s in the culture of testing because when they come in we still do the

PIDs in reception at four.

I: Yes.

P: So they have been tested from an early age and also with the phonics screening now in year 1, there’s that

going on and they’ve had in my, often in year 1 and year 2 they have a spelling test, mental math tests and

there’s kind of a culture of checking and testing.

I: Yes.

P: Implicit in what we do they know that they’re being checked and even in their reading if they find it hard

depends how it comes, but that’s like a test if you can read so many words and it’s a sentence so it’s not totally

brand new.

I: Yes, and I’m guessing and as you say they’re growing up in the year it’s a culture of this testing and

understanding where you are with respect to these tests, it’s something that becomes a bit more ingrained.

P: And we start independent writing very early, we call it a big write you might have heard of that in year 1 and

they’re encouraged to write independently even then, so in the, they write independently about a non-fiction

and a fiction piece but they’ve had a background of writing by themselves.

I: Yes.

P: So they’re used to it.

I: Okay that’s really good, something, the last bit of the interview that I wanted to ask and I know that the

assessments at the end of year 2 do get taken and passed onto Ofsted and it is published information that is

available publicly, does that put a pressure when there’s certain government statistics or certain levels of

achievement that you need to achieve and that’s what schools are judged by, does that put a pressure on you or

is it communicated as pressure on you or is that something you don’t really think about and you know yes that’s

there but you just carry on.

P: That data dashboard every school it’s on instantly so everybody kind of can see it and as part of performance

management systems they’re trying to make tighter you would be asked to have so many percentage of level

3, so many percentage at 2a in every subject, so you would be aware of it as soon as you walked in on the 1st of

September, and in order if those results went down you would might feel that you’d, I’ve been told that my SATs

might instigate Ofsted coming if it went so in one way, if you let it, it can spoil the year and it can spoil the

teaching of the children, but if you only think of them in terms of levels and SAT results but you try to override

that and you see that in terms of children and do your best and that’s my main philosophy to introduce that

learning is fun, and I’m quite loud and in the classroom, I mean not in here, to make it fun and override the

things like the SATs and the performance management.

I: Yes.

P: So it’s part of being in year 2, it’s reported to the school governors it’s discussed with your school advisor,

the school is now on that, oh heck it’s part of being old, that data dashboard that’s online.

I: Raise achievement.

P: That data dashboard every school it’s on instantly so everybody kind of can see it and as part of performance

management systems that they’re trying to make tighter you would be asked to have so many percentage of level

3, so many percentage at 2a in every subject, so you would be aware of it as soon as you walked in on the 1st of

September, and in order if those results went down you would might feel that you’d, I’ve been told that my SATs

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that and you see that in terms of children and do your best and that’s my main philosophy to introduce that

learning is fun, and I’m quite loud and in the classroom, I mean not in here, to make it fun and override the

things like the SATs and the performance management.

I: So I’m guessing at the moment even though these expectations exist of you in order for the percentage of

children that need to be at certain levels you’re still are okay in terms of your teaching and your teaching

philosophy that you teach in a way and you think at the moment that works and it makes children move on and

then when they do the assessments the formal ones and they score, the score it relates well and that’s why you

think your approach is okay and I’m okay and they’re achieving what they need to achieve, I’m just thinking if

they started raising the bar.

P: I think it’s you know I’m observed by the head and the advisors every half term there’s meetings so it’s kind of

I think but ratified by external people, because I couldn’t just have a jolly time in there and shut my door, those

days are gone.

I: There’s more accountability now.

P: So it’s at the back of my mind, the challenge is to keep teaching and making their learning fun in order to

achieve those to help achieve the goals that have been set.

I: And as you’ve just mentioned there’s the approach that you use, it has been successful and it is successful and
people have seen that to be successful, so that’s why you’re quite happy with your approach, and that’s when assessments do take place the results you do obtain kind of validates your approach, yes so it is effective what I’m doing and they validate that, I was just thinking in terms of if they were to raise the bar then you might. P: If they raise the bar I might just go under it and out the door. I: Yes. P: Because they can’t raise it any. [Concluding talk]
### Appendix 7 - Year 6 Teacher Interview (Transcript 6, Participant 6)

**P = Participant (Teacher)**  
**I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)**  

**Note:** Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I:</th>
<th>I think we’ll begin just by, so I can get an indication of what your experiences have been and how long you’ve been a teacher and how long you’ve been in year 6, that would be really good to hear.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Sure, I’ve been teaching about 20 years, I’ve taught all of over […] actually, I’ve been in my current post for about a year and a half.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>A year?</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>So quite recently.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>I have previously taught a year 6 class actually over in […] which is near [……], a similar demographic of school that possibly, a slightly more possibly, a working class background intake than we’ve got here, we’ve got a more professional background intake here so that’s my background.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay, am I right in assuming that the catchment area and the intake in this school would be children from a higher socio economic status.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>It’s a mixture actually, we have children from professional, whose parents are from professional backgrounds, but we also have children who come in whose parents perhaps you know aren’t a high socio economic status, perhaps more aspiration as it were.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay, so that’s really good, so you’ve been here for a year and half.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>Previously you said you’ve done a bit of year 6 but not that much.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Just one other year.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>So okay, this would be your second year here?</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>Okay fantastic, the next thing I want to talk about is SATs and I know a lot of this information because I ask it, again because some schools do it slightly differently and there are variations in terms of the SATs, can you just tell me a bit more about when you take them, what they involve, how long they take and what you do with respect to the SATs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes, they’re essentially a week along, it begins in the middle of May approximately, it’s a date that’s determined by the government so it depends on when they want us to do them nationally, all are done pretty much at the same time, there’s slight variations for example they might specify they want you to the complete the reading SAT in the morning but they will specify exactly which day, there might be one school that starts it at 9 o’clock and another starts at 10, there is some variation so essentially nationally all are on pretty much the same timetable for year 6, the children take a reading SAT, is this too much information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>No, no, it’s good information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>Which is essentially a comprehension exercise, they also do a spelling test and they do maths papers as well, they do paper A which is an entirely written calculation and paper B which is all to do with calculators and usually shape and space questions as well, they also do a mental arithmetic paper as well, just recently we’ve had a slight change to the SATs, children used to do a writing exam and they now don’t, that writing is assessed by myself and actually we assess it all the way through school anyway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So it’s continuous?</td>
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<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>So it’s something we you know are quite familiar with and just this year they’ve introduced the grammar and spelling and punctuation test in addition to the other tests, so that’s been new for everybody this year me included.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>So there’s been a couple of changes.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Yes it has.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>So in terms of these dates you say are around the May time, are children aware that they will be doing SATs?</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>Very much so in year 6, probably less so in year 2, certainly in year 6 we have to make sure first that they’re in school because a lot of parents choose to book holidays around that time of year and unfortunately in terms of our data if a child is not present on the day that’s a zero per cent for us, which isn’t actually good news for our data so naturally having the child in the building is quite important.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>And when children come into year 6, are they already aware that this is the year that I will be doing SATs?</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>I think so.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>Is that, that must be then communicated previously, how do they know it, is it because.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>I think they know that through word of mouth actually, I don’t think at a point a teacher actually sits them down and says oh it’s year 6 you’re going to be doing your SATs, I don’t think it’s that, I think they tend to see other year groups going through it and therefore they know it’s inevitable because a year 5 child they’re 10, they’re fairly self aware aren’t they?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>They’re fairly aware of what’s going on around them and I think they know it’s coming, I think parents are also quite keenly aware that it’s also coming up as well, but in terms of our approach in primary school they actually do a SAT exam at the end of every single year, the only difference is that the results are not published nationally.</td>
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<td>I:</td>
<td>And that’s a school thing?</td>
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<td>P:</td>
<td>And actually every school that I’ve worked in has done exactly the same thing and I’ve worked in several different primary schools and not with a year 6 class, I’ve also taught year 3 and year 4 and year 5 and it’s been the same thing, and we’ve done a QCA SATs at the end of every single year so the children are actually quite used to doing an exam, the key difference with year 6 is that of course it’s nationally published, it’s externally marked and it’s externally assessed so I suppose they’re aware of that but probably less so than parents and teachers.</td>
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| I: | Yes and parents will know that they do SATs and it’s in year 6, and parents won’t know that actually in every
year they will be doing similar sorts of assessment.

P: I think they’re probably aware because we do let parents know that we assess and when we send out their report at the end of the year, actually we do give parents some sort of indication of where the child has achieved in terms of levels, just really for their own piece of mind so they know how the child has progressed.

I: So they know the progression throughout the year. Okay, in terms of preparation for the SATs in May do you do practice papers or mock tests or mock exams really in the same environment and practice the actual, mainly pass papers and things like that?

P: Yes.

I: How often do you do that?

P: Well first and foremost I try and leave that and I try and downplay that as much as I possibly can, because I actually think that you don’t get good results from children by given them paper after paper after paper, so I’m a very practical teacher, my children are out all the time with me, we were out on the garden yard measuring things out, so I actually keep that to a minimum in terms of giving them practice questions, yes I do but it’s tends to happen may be a month or two before and we just look at maybe a few examples, because the way in which some questions are worded can be really tricky and can, actually some children can find it really intimidating, really frightening, I think answering SATs type questions because they do have a certain tone or language to them.

I: Very formal type.

P: Yes and I think it’s important to prepare them for that tone but equally I don’t think you’re going to make them move on academically by doing more questions, you are going to make them move on academically by actually carrying on the teaching and carrying on learning, so I try and make sure the learning process happens even after, where I will carry on with my guided reading sessions etc., because I think SATs are important in terms of the schools data but actually in terms of the child’s actual educational life it is far more important for them to leave year 6 having had a good rounded education as well as trying obviously to get the best result they can.

I: Yes, so, I’m just going back to the SATs, when you do give them the practice papers, do you communicate to them that these are some of the types of questions that would be coming when you’re doing your SATs.

P: Yes I also send some examples home so that the parents are aware of what the questions look like and the sorts of questions the children are going to be asked.

I: And I’m guessing throughout the year children have targets and they know what their targets are?

P: Yes.

I: And they’re continuously working on them targets so they have rough indication of what type of level they are hoping to achieve.

P: Yes.

I: Okay that’s fine now, I’m going to move onto the main focus of my study which is what language are you using in the classroom when preparing these children for these examinations or when preparing in order to move say accomplish a certain target or fulfil a target or go onto the next target, the key thing is the language that you use, just, I know it’s trying to get you to reflect on the spot, I am going to leave it open now because I do have some views myself about what I’ve read up and what I’ve observed and what other teachers have told me, but again I want to leave it open because that’s the purpose of this interview is to get the data from you guys and then look at that data and then create a pattern, rather than me think yes they do this and try and put that onto you, so in terms of preparing children what kind of language are you using just in the classroom?

P: I always just say so to them do your best at the end of the day it’s one exam and you might on the day not feel very well or you might you might be feeling a bit worried, but actually at the end of the day it is just one test and you know you’re still teacher assessed, I still know you really well as an individual and really don’t worry about it too much but prepare as much as we can, but ultimately it isn’t the end of the world I mean they’re important for the school but they’re not quite so important for children I think, I think if you’re not careful they can get really, really worried totally unnecessarily, so I try and down play it as much as I can because I don’t feel you can get the best results out of children by worrying them unnecessarily about it, so in terms of my own language I try as much as possible to not, I certainly don’t use threatening language, I certainly don’t issue any ultimatums or anything unpleasant like that, I just, my language is largely encouraging, praising and I’ve always get the best results out of your class if you’re really positive and I am really positive in the class.

I: So you’re using a lot of encouraging language a lot of positive language?

P: Yes.

I: So I’m guessing the aim is to then build confidence in the children and almost down play the significance of the SATs?

P: Yes.

I: And say nothing to worry about.

P: Exactly.

I: So I’m guessing that’s a bit more reassuring language, saying don’t worry about it you know we’re learning in the classroom you know as long as you’re doing well.

P: Exactly.

I: So that’s the kind of language that you’re using, okay that’s good and I’m guessing the children respond well to that.

P: Yes.

I: Okay, in terms of, you mentioned something about threatening language what did you mean by that?

P: I mean I would never, I’ve never say to a child oh you must do well in this because otherwise you’ll end up I don’t know in the wrong place in high school, I mean I have at other schools heard that kind of language used, and I just thing that’s counterproductive, so you wouldn’t hear me use that in my classroom, I just basically almost make a bit of a competition let’s see can you beat your last score, how are we going to and lots and lots of praise.

I: Yes.

P: There’s certainly no ultimatums.

I: So from there I’m trying to pick out, you wouldn’t say anything that would highlight the negative consequences of not doing so well.

P: No.

I: So you wouldn’t say oh if you don’t do well in this then in the high school you won’t be in a good class or
somethinig, or you won't and that's the first step of you know failing your career effectively, that's an extreme example.

P: The only thing I might veer towards that is, I've got a child whose genuinely underperforming because they're not actually applying themselves in which case I might say to them actually you're not actually doing as well as I thought you might be and I'm a little bit worried about you and I perhaps will have the conversation then, but actually using that sort of threatening ultimatum kind of language would actually just worry your low achievers, would just really, really worry them totally unnecessarily, whereas if I've got a high achiever for example I mean I've had some students this year who've come out with level 6s and I feel that they're not applying themselves, I'll say you know what you could do so much better than this you know, let's go for the best result we can, so perhaps in that case I'd say well I'd like to see you doing really well in high school, can you step it up a notch as you were and can you apply yourself a little bit more readily to your work, but I certainly wouldn't use that as a whole class because I think it would just worry those particularly that are a bit nervous about I think, it would actually just make them more nervous and children that are nervous don't perform well in anyway.

I: Okay, so there's a number of things there you have a general approach of just using encouraging language, reassuring language, just trying to build children's confidence, you said for the high achiever someone who may be underachieving you might prompt them to do a bit better, but again you're not highlighting the negative consequences you're saying you know you can do really well and I know you can and I think you can achieve this, so I think that's more about you communicating your expectations for them.

P: Yes.

I: And they respond well do that?

P: Yes they do.

I: And you find that's effective?

P: Well we have very, very good results this year so I'm assuming it is effective.

I: Let's just look at the other side where children say are not as academically able as the other children, I know you have your unified approach with your whole classroom, would you use a different form of language for children who maybe, say you have a level 3 or level 4 type child at the bottom scale of level 4.

P: Yes.

I: Would you be changing your language for them or is the general approach still effective for them?

P: I find the general approach is still quite effective for them, I might take them to one, particularly to notice if they have done something really well to just really make a point that they've done so well and this I'm so proud of you, you're really coming on, and I would certainly highlight, basically I'm always looking for the good in everybody if possible, and if you're actually trying to boost children's self esteem you get so much better out of them anyway you know, we've had a couple of girls that have struggled with maths this time and just the approach has just been really to be available if they want to come to talk to me about their work, whether that's sometimes, they don't have the confidence to talk in a whole class situation, so I just say just pop back and see me at lunch time for 5 or 10 minutes and we will just go over this again and it's not a problem and I know you can get it, we just perhaps need a little bit more practice.

I: Yes.

P: And I find that approach, I mean that approach has worked because they've all then gone onto get their level 4s.

I: So you do that nearly in every class that you have?

P: Yes.

I: It's your most frequent use of language, okay and this bit about where you are supporting and you are helping the children, what kind of things, I know one side was you know boosting their self esteem, boosting their confidence levels that you can do this and are you talking to them about how to achieve, say for example they've got a target and they're just performing just below the target, are you communicating to them okay in order to go to this next step we need to do this and this and let's practise this.

P: Yes very much so, I actually I think you'd probably pretty much if you were a fly on the wall classroom you would see it more probably with something like writing, where I do take them on a case by case basis individually and do sit them down and say you know what, this is a great piece of writing, I thought this was really good that your punctuation is in great, where we need to improve a little bit, if this was a piece of work I might be saying better structured paragraphs, which was and I'll sit down and write that with them, so that they can actually see me model that and I might expect to see punctuated speech and this is how we do that and again I write all that on the work as I'm verbally telling them, so that they're got that reminder at the next lesson and I do find that's pretty effective, I mean particularly this year's class have actually taken all that on board and then tried to apply it, now in terms of maths it is actually slightly more difficult because there's so many different aspects of maths but in the front of their maths they have a level description for each level and it's basically the description of the level that I'd like to get them to next, so they just self assess they just decide whether they've for example they're able to multiply two digit's numbers together, so when they have been confident with that they can tick that off, so they've got an idea of actually what they've got to achieve in terms of getting on to the next level.

I: Right okay.

P: But it's very much a discussion between me and them.

I: Okay, so just going back to where you talked about your high achievers those that end up getting level 6 and you said you would push, do you ever say things like that, so let's just say someone you know whose capable of getting a level 6 or even a level 5, but let's just say they're at one level below and you know the amount of work they do in the classroom, they can push themselves up and go, would you raise their expectations and say something along the line of so and so I expect you to get a level 5 or I know you can get a level 5, do you communicate that kind of language to the children?

P: I actually tell them all they can get a level 5.

I: Alright.

P: In my classroom there's no reason why anybody in here can't get a level 5, some of them won't so to be fair three quarters of those this year so I just have that high expectation for everybody. In terms of my level 6 pupils I do teach a slightly different curriculum particularly with maths, so they're more aware that we're aiming for level 6 with them because it is a separate class towards, what we end up doing is split the children into two groups, one group goes with my support assistant and actually just works on revising their key points and the other group I actually teach separate level 6 maths activities to them, so they know that's where we're aiming for but I just say to them with level 6 you know just have a go not everybody gets level 6 but what I find actually children that are of higher ability actually they're quite competitive they want to get there anyway, and they
need very little pushing from me, the children that I find do that occasionally do need that sort of well actually, do you think you could do a little bit more here and I'd love to see you get a 5 are those children that sort of on the cusp of the 4 and a 5 and actually I know they are capable of achieving a 5, I might have that discussion with them of actually, basically along the lines of you're so close here you may be need one or two more marks, let's see how we can get those and you know let's see do you want to come back at lunch time and talk about where we're going to next with this or that, really is the only time I'd have that we need to move on discussion because I don't tend to have to have that with the high achievers. So just a few children you'd be saying?
P: Yes and it's usually one to two a year it's certainly isn't the majority of children.
I: And as you said before you do a lot of modelling and you said you do some practice type questions or exam technique and how to answer the questions etc.
P: Yes.
I: I'm just thinking sometimes do you highlight may be use a language slightly negatively but not extreme negatively, so something like if you don't work I know you can get a level 5 but if you don't work hard enough you won't get this level 5 and you'll get a level, or do you ever say something like if you don't get a level 5 your parents might be disappointed in you or anything like that?
P: No, the only time perhaps is if a child is routinely not doing their homework, I don't set a lot of homework I set two pieces a week, so if I have a child that perhaps is routinely not handing in homework and isn't achieving then I might have to say you know you're not actually fulfilling your potential here and I'm quite disappointed and I do feel that you're more than capable of getting here, and you are having to do a fair bit of work yourself, that's the only time, but if a child's working at a normal speed and the normal output then I certainly wouldn't.
I: Only in the very rare instance you would make a comment like and you would probably in a year, you probably only make one or two comments like that.
P: Yes absolutely.
I: Okay, the other type of language that I want to ask you about is in terms of reminders that the SATS are coming up. I know you said that you don't put the practice papers until later in the year because you don't want to worry them, so I'm guessing may be at the beginning, that your SATS are coming up?
P: No, in fact the only way they know when the SATS is that we put it on the newsletter for the parents, I don't mention it, the week before we do we actually, because we do SATS in quite a formal environment in the assembly hall which is very, very different.
I: Individual desks?
P: Yes, I mean that's very, very different to a 10 and 11 year old child, you know it's.
I: It's something alien.
P: Yes and for that reason we do take them into the hall the week before but it's mainly just to practice getting used to sitting on your own desk and actually most children tell me that they've really enjoyed it because they've really enjoyed just having their own space and being able to think and not actually be disturbed, so it's quite interesting I found that quite odd at the first, I mean how can you enjoy being in but they actually genuinely do and they so oh I quite liked it.
I: You raised an important point, you said some children when you put them in these conditions they seem to really enjoy it and it's a bit of challenge that I want to do the best for myself and you said some children could get worried and you try to down play as much as you can, do you find when the SATS come and there are children that get worried particularly in the exam situation?
P: Yes there are, you've always got quite a few each year and you certainly and we had this one child this year when he, he's autistic spectrum when he sat his exam he just really didn't want to entertain it, he'd done fine in his practice, he's generally okay in class but he just decided that day that he was going to fail it and he wasn't even going to have a go and I just did actually take him to one side and said if you manage to do your test today and I just want you to have a really good go at it, don't worry about it, it's fine, but I said tell me what you can have a chocolate biscuit, because he just needed that and as it transpired he hasn't written a really good paper but I just wanted him to feel that he'd sat it with the rest of the children, we certainly have one or two children that will wobble and my approach depends on the child, but for example a couple of my girls were very worried going into the test so I just do give them a biscuit and drink before they go in, they know that at any point they can put their hand up and ask me something, obviously they can't ask me to help them on the questions and I do explain that to them, I say I can't help you answer the questions but in the case of maths I can read the question to you and I think just sometimes just hearing that reassuring voice and I always make sure I'm in the hall with them and not anybody else that’s with them, I mean obviously we have other adults because it's important that you have a few people in the hall but yes I try and be as much reassuring as I can, but I think ultimately there are some children who don't perform well in tests and it's really just to say to them well don't worry about it it's not the end of the world.
I: And do you think that worrying anxiety affects their performance?
P: Very much so yes so we try and keep as calm as we possibly calm and you know as I think actually making children anxious you're not going to get the best out of them anyway, and you only get the best out of the children when you're being positive.
I: And they're very relaxed.
P: Yes.
I: And calm.
P: Yes.
I: I was just thinking sometimes in the classroom you have got a lot of targets so children are aware of the targets and what they need to do in order to get their targets, on the one you've got children learning to targets and then on the other hand on the extreme scale you've got children learning for their own mastery reasons to want to be good at something, do you feel this emphasis on targets detracts away from that or do you try to mitigate that by saying things, push yourself you know regardless of the target, I don't know what you think.
P: That's a difficult question.
I: I know it's hard to almost rip the two apart.
P: It is, I do try and really go for a rounded education wherever I can with them possibly and certainly in the morning it's very much about their literacy and their maths lessons, in the afternoon I try and give them as much as possibly I can experience of the world, knowledge of chronology of time, I mean if you came in my classroom you would see that because for example I've got a lovely big room here, we've been doing the second world war and we've built a shelter, so yes I do probably emphasise targets for literacy and maths but actually in terms of an afternoon I'm still going to work towards good literacy and maths but perhaps doing it through a foundation
P: I think I experience that less
I: Yes.
P: I think that’s common.
I: Do you get a lot of parental pressure about particular children and wanting the best for their children, pushy data, I think it does have an effect on... 
P: Probably but I’m not necessarily aware of it.
I: You said that more pressure affects you, does it affect the kind of language that you would use with children?
P: It really depends, when I’ve got children misbehaving I sort of do this, another child I’d do this, for another child I’d do that, I’m guessing you know your children really well?
P: Yes really well.
I: And is this relationship key in determining what you can say to them?
P: Yes absolutely, one of the things we do with the children in September is we do residential, we choose to do it in September because actually being away with children you just get to know them so much better and they actually get to know me and therefore feel completely at home with me and we are really comfortable to have conversations with me, but it does let me see a side of them perhaps I might not have seen in the classroom, so I do know each individual child as a complete individual so they are with me all year, so I do know them really, really well.
I: And because you know them really the language that you use is more likely to have a better effect.
P: I think you need to build up the relationship.
I: Another thing you’ve been teaching a long time, do you feel, would you say you developed your main core of skills there and then since then you’ve just been doing one way of teaching, I know obviously refining it, I’m not saying every year you teach the same, you’ve gained something new and you refine it?
P: Absolutely.
I: But I’m just thinking in terms of the language that you use, has that changed dramatically or have you just made little subtle changes or?
P: You see I was very lucky actually because my mum was a teacher and only just retired this year but it is actually teaching supply and thoroughly enjoying it, I suppose I used her initially as a role model because I can remember being in her classroom from right being a teenager.
I: So your mum was your teacher.
P: She was really, really positive and then I’ve spent four years at [-----] and I, although they taught me quite well in terms of delivering lots of different subjects, in terms of actual classroom approach I think that’s very much something you have to find for yourself, and I think that’s really evident particularly in primary schools because I think you go in each member of staff’s classroom and you will find a completely different learning environment, because it’s your room, your class, you very much teach to your own strengths and your own person and in a lot of ways it’s important for the children to see that aspect of you because then I think they relate more to you as a human, and I always like to say to them I’m on a learning journey as well because I think my practice improves for every single year that I teach and I look back to how I was when I first started to teach and I think I didn’t really know what I was doing, I mean I had four years but.
I: Yes.
P: In some ways I still don’t feel I know what I’m doing, wow I’ve got so much to learn and there is still lots of practice to aspects that come up and it’s almost as so as a school primary school teacher you’re expected to know everything, and the difficulty with having a year 6 class is that you do teach to a level 5 and a level 6 ability level but actually my own training in science and PE might not be totally that of a high school teacher where you tend to specialise, so sometimes it can be a bit tricky.
I: I’m just thinking in terms of your approach, do you say that kind of an approach you have in the area that we’ve talked about today, do you think that kind of approach it’s an overarching approach for everything you do as a teacher, say for example managing a child’s behaviour would you have a similar type of approach?
P: Yes.
I: Let’s say a child was misbehaving would you be making similar comments about what you need to do rather than making some threatening type comments like if you don’t do this you’ll go and see Miss so and so?
P: It really depends, when I’ve got children misbehaving I sort of question what I’m doing, I’m actually challenging that child enough, actually most of the time if they’re misbehaving they’re usually really bright, that’s the first thing I do, then I think what can I do that this child can be really interested in and actually want to engage and not misbehave, because I do think 98% of times you can rule out bad behaviour by just having more stimulating learning environments or lessons, but if the child is continually persistently misbehaving then I will usually take the child out just separately, not in front of their peers, usually just that child thinks that it’s marvellous to be singled out in front of their peers or yes sometimes to play to the audience, and just say actually your behaviour is unacceptable today and there are consequences, what I want to see is this and this and then they’ve’ve had a verbal warning, we do have discipline policy where there is a traffic light system.
I: Something I want to talk about is pressure, you’re aware that there are government percentages.
P: Just slightly.
I: I was just thinking this emphasis on a certain number of children at level 4 and then looking at how many achieve 5, how many children level 6, then that data being published does that put a pressure on you as a teacher?
P: I think it very much puts the pressures on and it’s not a positive pressure either, I do think it actually makes my job an awful lot more difficult because I have to try and to wherever possibly leave that behind because when I enter that classroom I’ve got children in there, they’re not adults I can’t approach it in terms of adults and actually I go in their tense and worried then they pick up on that because they’re very intuitive, and especially since they know you so well, so while I’m aware of the pressure I think actually by keeping myself calm and not translating that to the children I’ll get the best out of them, but it’s difficult and it’s a constant battle to try and just think okay that’s what they want but actually what they want I will achieve, I do think if you put pressure on people it’s totally counterproductive, I’ve worked in schools where there was a lot of pressure and I’ve worked in schools such as this one where actually there’s a bit of pressure but it’s not applied quite so keenly and I do think ultimately you get the best out of your staff and the children.
I: You said that more pressure affects you, does it affect the kind of language that you would use with children?
P: Probably but I’m not necessarily aware of it.
I: Yes.
P: I mean I do think if you calm in your own classroom the children remain calm, I am aware that’s its counterproductive and if you do have a head teacher whose got you in the office every night and asking about data, I think it does have an effect on your language in front of children.
I: Do you get a lot of parental pressure about particular children and wanting the best for their children, pushy parents, do you get a lot of that?
P: I think that’s common.
I: Yes.
P: I think I experience that less so because I think I think I experienced that more when I started here, and I think
as parents have got to know me and got to see the results and I don’t mean just academic results, and I honestly think they come out more rounded individuals and I think as time has gone on that parental pressure has lessened that, I think it can still be there particularly for younger colleagues.

I: Yes.

P: I’m just thinking the approach you have, does it resonate all throughout the school and let’s say the whole school, what I’m getting at is the ethos and does that, can you see that the way you operate that’s nearly how every teacher is operating on the same principles.

I: It’s hard for me comment on that because I teach full time, I’m just in my classroom full time, the only time I get to see other colleagues teach is because I managed maths in school, I go and watch other teachers teach maths, which is of course is a very pressured situation, so it’s really hard to comment on peoples experiences because when they haven’t got me sitting at the back taking notes, I don’t know.

P: Last thing I wanted to ask, do you feel everything that I do makes the difference and if I didn’t do it there would be no difference, and then the other end is despite everything I do, it doesn’t matter what I do, it won’t make a difference, it depends on the child, I was just wondering your views on that.

P: Sometimes I think that if I’ve been working in a school where children are coming without any breakfast you know where parents aren’t really engaged at all, sometimes I feel like I haven’t made much of a difference, I think in a school like this one where actually children are generally well fed, reasonably clean, well looked after, I do think you make huge difference, but I think unfortunately for some children experiences their basic needs aren’t cared for, they just are not receptive and actually you spent so much time caring for those basic needs, that you then can’t really affect them educationally.

P: That detracts from your teaching.

[Concluding talk]
Appendix 8 - Year 2 Teacher Interview (Transcript 7, Participant 7)

P = Participant (Teacher)
I = Interviewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]
1  I: So you’re a year 2 teacher?
2  P: Yes.
3  I: Well you said mixed at the moment that’s fine, I think we’ll begin with just a bit about yourself, your experience, your history, so then we know what you have been doing with respect what year groups you’ve been teaching.
4  P: I’ve been teaching 21 years now, I’ve done some year 3 but mainly key stage 1 and the majority of my teaching in year 2.
5  I: Yes.
6  P: Been year 2 here for seven years, became the key stage leader then became the deputy.
10  I: Right.
11  P: So just had, yes straight year 2 classes or 1/2 classes, I’ve had a 2/3 class before in my previous school.
12  I: Yes.
13  P: So yes it’s just mainly been year 2.
14  I: Year 2, so you’re quite experienced.
15  P: Yes in year 2, yes.
16  I: That’s really good for me, the next thing that I’m going to talk about is, I am aware that in year 2 the government requires some kind of assessment data from schools can you tell me a bit more about that.
18  P: It’s mainly, well it’s all teacher assessment that’s reported to the local authority but backed up by the children having to do SATs papers from a previous year, and you can either choose from 2007 and 2009, but they do have to sit the reading and maths paper and spelling in pretty much exam type conditions you’d get in year 6 and GCSEs, they’re all separated, they shouldn’t be talking, we can’t give them any help and these should back up your teacher assessments within the class.
21  I: So they should correlate?
23  P: Yes they should do, yes.
24  I: And in terms of that information, I know some information is on websites or on league tables, do they use just the SATs information or are they using both and amalgamating them.
26  P: The authority don’t know anything about the information, it’s just the teacher assessments.
28  I: Okay, yes.
29  P: Because sometimes children score higher in the SATs, well you think they’re not at that level, it’s just luck of the questions on the paper and it isn’t a true reflection of them, sometimes nerves kick in so they don’t do quite so well but you’ve got a wealth of evidence in class that you can back that up and say actually no they are working at that slightly higher band.
31  I: Okay and in terms of these formal SATs papers that you do, when do you do them?
34  P: It’s used to be anytime in May, but I think it can be anytime towards the end of term, but we normally stick to May, we have our old papers which we do at Christmas and Easter to get the children used to it.
36  I: Okay.
37  P: And to be honest they see the tables split and they get all excited about it.
38  I: Okay.
39  P: Because they get their own pencil, they get their own rubber and they quite like the formality of it, one or two panic a little bit because it’s alien to them but generally once they’ve done the first one at Christmas they settle into it and they can’t wait, they just want to, when we’re doing PIPs, when we’re doing, they want to know because they just like, strange, they just like it.
41  I: So you actually communicate to them that it’s SATs that you will be doing?
44  P: Yes we’re talking about year 2 and right from the beginning of year 2, at the end of the year you’ll be doing your SATs and of course when they’re in a mixed class a lot of the year ones have seen the year twos go through it, so they’ve had to disappear to other classrooms or have another teacher while the year 2s have done them, so they know something happens in May, and it’s important that they do the best and consequently saying all year well we’re working towards this target, you’re here now but we need you to get to there, because that’s where you need to be at the end of the year for your sort of thing and just positive all the time and give them the information they need to be able to put into the work.
49  I: Do you communicate to them what is the purpose of doing these SATs or do you say to them the reason you need to do this, or is it just you say to them oh we’ll be doing some SATs.
51  P: We’ll be doing them I think because you just talk about them continually it’s probably to think about it, we never tell them why and really because we want you to do it there’s no other reason.
52  I: Yes.
56  P: It measures their performance, it’s important because I think you’re just talking about them all year because they just come to accept that at the end of year 2 that they will be doing some SATs.
58  I: Yes.
59  P: And year 6 we’ll be doing some SATs, I mean there’s other bits in between.
60  I: Yes.
61  P: So they’re used to it.
62  I: Okay what I’m interested is when you’re asking the children to prepare for these SATs or any assessments, what kind of things are you saying to them to encourage them to do their best, what kind of language do you, I know I’m asking you a hard task to reflect.
65  P: It’s not really because I suppose this is where the difference between key stage 1 and GCSE is, all their preparation for SATs is done in class and it’s done in class with me or it’s done with TAs or better reading partners which is a programme we’ve got in school.
68  I: Yes.
69  P: So they’re never asked to prepare, so we never ask go and revise at home, it’s all done in school with them, so
It's just, we do booster clubs after school for targeted children that maybe just need that little extra push sort of thing, it's just talking them through it so they're used to it and if it's a reading one going through the questions together for the sort of answers you'd put in, lots of positive and just saying well if when it actually comes to the day they're not sure have a go, and I do spend a lot of time saying at the end of the day if you're really stuck move on it's one mark, it's not worth it at the end of the day to get really upset, do your best and that's all that we've asked of you really but most of the preparation is in class and your whole of your year 2 is preparing you because it's one year long preparation, so every bit of work we do is to move them onto the next level and for them to reach as much progress and the potential they can do really.

And are they aware of the levels that they have to achieve and they know them as targets.

P: Yes, even the year 1s have got displays in class where we all after Easter and Christmas we'll go and stand around the board and we'll move people, things up, if they moved and they celebrate that, and they celebrate the people who maybe haven't moved this time but because they moved last time, and they realise that they can't move up a level up every single time because it's not realistic.

I: Yes.

P: And they can't wait to see what their level is and they know what their level is and what they got to do next.

I: Yes.

P: We've got marking ladders in place for writing so they can use that to put all the next steps with the writing all the time, so hopefully it becomes just part of the course of all the writing and that moves them onto the next level, so it just everything really in year 2.

I: Yes, the specific thing that I want to look at is, what are you actually saying to the children and that's what I'm trying to get out from this interview, so let's just say when you are preparing the children for the test you mention that you're telling them to try their best and you're also helping them how to get there, so if they have a target, you're almost giving them, that you would need to do this and this and this in order to get there, is that something you would be doing for all the children in the class?

P: Yes.

I: Yes, and would you say in terms of how frequently you do that, so say as an example on a daily basis or in every lesson.

P: It depends on the subject if it's writing it can be in every lesson that we'll need to talk about what we need to put in, and we come with the success criteria as a class and it's slightly differentiated because the higher ability know what they need to put in and the year ones wouldn't have a go at that and it's all explained, what it means, and if you want to have a go you have a go, so that's constantly reinforcing in writing everyday, maths is a bit different because you're dotting about different subjects.

I: Yes.

P: I think a lot of it's just certainly when it's come to the May SATs, you can say that well you've done two papers already there's nothing you can't do, there's nothing you're scared off, just take your time and have a good, and I often use one little boy from last year and he knows I use him I said he only did 12 questions out of the first part of his reading but he got ten marks right, so it's better to be slower and take your time then write ahead and make silly mistakes, so it's reinforce a lot of that with the SATs.

I: So I'm thinking the kind of language is more around helping them build their confidence.

P: Yes.

I: And also reassuring them would that be.

P: Yes because they can bob their hand up anytime during, it could just be a little rub on their arm or their back, come on have a little go and have a think about it and if you're really stuck move on sometimes you just say pop a number down if a maths one just have a go, if you're not sure put down what you think and we can move on, and often the next, and sometimes then tell them as well that the next question they might find a bit easier.

I: Yes.

P: Sometimes I know where the easier papers are because we've done it a few years now and you can say to them that this next one that's coming up is nice and easy sort of thing and you'll.

I: So taking almost the pressure away.

P: Yes.

I: From the children, you said earlier the children were quite happy to do the SATs when they get the SATs.

P: Yes they're very strange because they get very excited.

I: Yes, so you don't, in term of you've been practising a long time, so when you do administer these tests to children and it's slightly different to normal classroom practice, does it, you mention the positive effects of some children getting really excited, on the other hand is there any negative effects, do some people get anxious or worried or.

P: More so when we have the first try at Christmas, and there's usually one child that would, excuse me, get upset.

I: Yes.

P: But they've usually got upset before you've realised they're going to be upset because if I could spot it happening then you could get in there faster.

I: Yes and intervene.

P: Spend a lot of time bobbing over to them and seeing if they're okay and I've got another adult that I can put beside them because I know certain children that might need a little bit more reassurance just by having an adult even if they can't do anything for them, so placing adults close to them, just go well come on have a little go at this or.

I: Yes.

P: Keep going or have another little look at it sort of thing and the ones that catch you up usually keep nipping back to them and checking that they're alright, lots of rubbing the back and possibly giving them lots of praise and usually by the time the second time comes round they're settled into it, so it's a fear of the unknown that they just see the paper and start before they've seen the paper and they just don't know what to expect.

I: Yes.

P: Even though you've done bits in the classroom with them.

I: Yes.

P: But it's the whole package.

I: Something new and novel.

P: Of being split up and.

I: Yes.

P: No the majority of them are fine with it, and the other ones that we have then we know for next time who to
I: And do they know when they’re doing these SATs and they know these we’ll be marked and they’ll be given a
particular level.

P: Oh yes and they’re marked and they’re called over and do a little whisper there and there or sometimes, it’s
really good we’ll say and then we sort the boards out and move children on that need to move on and sometimes
oh we go oh you’re just so close, so they haven’t moved for a term and they go mm haven’t moved, but yes
you’re so close you’ve got one foot on here and you’ve got one foot on there if you just had such and such you’d
be there.

I: So you’re basically giving them the information what to do in order to get to the next step.

P: Yes.

I: Okay so that gives me an idea of the some of the language that you’re using, so a lot of reassuring messages for
some of the children to help them build their confidence and worry less about it and just try their best and put
the most effort in, and then you’ve got the other side where you’re almost giving them information on how to
get to where they need to get to, where they can get to.

P: Yes.

I: I’m just thinking in terms of other forms of language, is, do you ever say something along the lines of the
importance of the tests, how important they are for the children?

P: Yes we talk about that and say it’s really important for them to do their best, it’s for everyone to see, so we
often talk about children in the staff room and you know the teachers can’t believe how clever we are in here
and they don’t believe, and they think I’m telling fibs, sometimes if a child hasn’t been doing so well you go oh
me and you going to be stood in Mrs [-----] together explaining why we haven’t got there because and it’s
knowing my children.

I: Yes.

P: Because some children I could say that to because it’s water of a ducks back and they go oh right and I mean
they’ll try but others I won’t dream of saying that to because they’d be absolutely mortified and be mortified by
it.

I: Yes.

P: It’s knowing your children, and how the sort of things you can say to them, but we do stress that it’s really
important, it’s for them to show how clever they are and it’s their one chance in year 2 as a year 2 child to be
able to do that and it’s really important that they do the very best.

I: Do you make any comments about the, you said they are important and it’s very important to do well, do you
ever make comments like if you do really well in these SATs then you know in the future you can get a good job
or in the future you can do or if you go to high school you.

P: Yes it’s more to individual children that where they could give a little bit more and say well do you want to do
well and if you don’t do it, if you’re not doing the best now, it makes so much harder later on to do things, and
sometimes with parents explain sometimes why I’ve used my teacher assessment where they haven’t quite got to
where they should be.

I: Yes.

P: An example of a 2a or 2b child, they’re not quite, they’ve just scraped 2a, it’s often fair on the child to give
them a 2b because there’s a expectation to be a level 4 rather than a level 5 when they’re in year 6, so there’s a
big difference there, it’s thinking of the long term, and that child 99% of the time you can guarantee they’ll
get the 5 but just takes a bit of pressure of because if they’re not doing it’s usually down to they got a bit
nervous in the test.

I: Yes.

P: And that’s not going to change really for them they will get more confident but there’s always a chance for
them to be quite nervous, so we just think of the child long term and yes I do explain to some of them that’s it
really important that, and the reason like the stepping stones that if you do this then you can do that and then
you’ve got those two and then you can get your good job and then you can get your degree or you get a job
whatever sort of thing with them.

I: And you would only do that for some children.

P: Yes usually because I’m just too busy teaching.

I: I’m guessing that would be infrequently, it wouldn’t be quite frequently?

P: Oh you wouldn’t be, no, it’s as and when.

I: Just going back you said something along the lines for some children, or for one particular child you might say
oh after we’ve done this, if you don’t get this grade I’ll be you know, that kind of language, how often do you use
that?

P: Not very often at all, I think I’ve used it twice.

I: What prompts you to use it, it’s interesting.

P: Frustration.

I: Frustration.

P: Knowing that they can do it, knowing that’s there’s no point shouting and screaming at them because you
know they haven’t done the best, they’re the children that’ll admit they haven’t done the best.

I: Yes.

P: They’ve been a bit oh well I’ll chat at my table and it doesn’t really matter and you know you give them
absolutely everything you can do.

I: Yes.

P: And they’ve got the ability to do it and they just don’t.

I: They don’t.

P: So sometimes it’s just sheer frustration and don’t know and I think it’s marginally fairer than yelling at them
because we don’t yell, but what else can you do when you’ve done all the coaxing that you need to do this and
you need to do that and thinking hopefully just a, the worry of having for the pair of us, I’ll be in there with you
and I’ll have to explain and I do say to the children as well that we do have meeting about them and we do talk
about their results and if they’re not getting their results that they’re capable of I have to answer why because
I’m not doing my job properly, so it’s really important you do your best and you work your hardest because
people are looking at where you’re at and asking me.

I: Yes.

P: Because I have regular meetings with the school advisor wanting to know where they’re at and why they
haven’t moved on.

I: Yes. that’s something I do want to talk to you about.
I: It’s just out of sheer frustration and oh no, I’ve tried everything and I’ve tried my normal thing, what else can you do sometimes, you’ve tried everything, they sit with you and they can do it, it’s just.

P: No, not with these two, moving them to different tables was more effective.

I: We’ll move onto that, and in terms of the effects that it has on children, you did say you do some mock practice type tests around Christmas then Easter and then do the actual thing in May, do you give children a lot of reminders, I want you try really hard to explain to someone, do you feel that’s effective for children.

P: No, I don’t do that with them because I don’t know how they’re going to react at first and the last thing I want them doing is going home and panicking every night because the ones that get upset when they first see something in the reading of the question, so I just keep bobbing back to them and giving a little rub on the back and I can pat on sh... it one to one somewhere quietly but we’ve neve... that a bit more?

I: And I don’t know, it’s almost that kind of a statement, it’s almost highlighting the negative consequence you know if you did not do so well, so maybe your parents would be disappointed or I’ll be disappointed or I’ll have to explain to someone, do you feel that’s effective for children.

P: No, not with these two, moving them to different tables was more effective.

I: We’ll move onto that, and in terms of the effects that it has on children, you did say you do some mock practice type tests around Christmas then Easter and then do the actual thing in May, do you give children a lot of reminders, I want you try really hard to explain to someone, do you feel that’s effective for children.

P: No, it’s just, it’s either that or I’m going to be bold and pull my hair out.

I: Yes, with you having a year 1/2 class that would mean the majority of year 2 children would be in your year 1.

P: Yes.

I: So by the time they come to year 2.

P: I’ve had them for the second year.

I: They’re second year and you know them much better, it may be different if it was a sole year 2 class and you were just getting... they’re going to bright and they would get level 3s and in between times it hasn’t quite panned out and other children have come where the scores weren’t as good initially and actually they’ve taken off, and if you did not know your children then you wouldn’t know who you can push on and who you just have to spend a bit more time with, and because black and white data doesn’t tell you everything, it’s give you an idea it gives you a starting point, but.

P: But it’s just, it’s either that or I’m going to be bold and pull my hair out.

I: Yes, there’s another important point that you said you know your children really well, is that relationship really important in kind of evaluating or judging where they should be or where you can push them to be.

P: I don’t think you could do it otherwise.

I: Yes.

P: Because I know now where the limits are you know because you never know that, but I know roughly where they should be and where they can go to and what their difficulties are.

I: Yes.

P: No it’s just, it’s either that or I’m going to be bold and pull my hair out.

I: Yes, there’s another important point that you said you know your children really well, is that relationship really important in kind of evaluating or judging where they should be or where you can push them to be.

P: I don’t think you could do it otherwise.

I: Yes.

P: Because I’ve had plenty in the past where I’ve not had mixed classes.

I: Yes, another thing that I want to ask, you did say you do some mock practice type tests around Christmas then Easter and then do the actual thing in May, do you give children a lot of reminders, I want you try really hard to explain to someone, do you feel that’s effective for children.

P: No, no I don’t do that with them because I don’t know how they’re going to react at first and the last thing I want them doing is going home and panicking every night because the ones that get upset when they first see it will be the ones that are worrying.

I: Yes.

P: And at the end of the day it’s a tiny snapshot, we do the practice ones more to get them used to it rather than to, so it’s still my teacher assessment at the end of the day, so it’s more to get them used to it, so no certainly for Christmas and Easter they’ll come in on the morning and see the tables split and go oh what we doing today and I think that’s all they need, they don’t need the added pressure or to put that pressure onto themselves, some of them because there are some little worries.

I: We’ll move onto that, and in terms of the effects that it has on children, you said for some children it has positive effects and this kind of assessment thing and you said some children it worries them, can you expand on that a bit more?

P: The majority of them are absolutely fine it’s usually the quieter children and you could probably guess who they’re going to be before really, but they’ll sit down and look fine, write out their name on and they’re fine and then they do the first page and then they’re fine and it’s usually the reading one because we do that quite often first just to set them in, because it’s slightly easier and you can split into two bits, and by the time they’re on the second page you’ve realised that they’ve got tears rolling down the cheeks because they do it very quietly.

I: Yes.

P: Until somebody says such and such is crying.

I: Yes.

P: And they just froze, really don’t know, don’t know what more I can add to that for you really.

I: Does it affect their grade, do they perform less well?

P: Not if I can get there quick enough because then I literally go back for every page and every sum because every sum I tend to read the sums out because I say to them it’s not a reading test, it’s a maths test and I’d rather I read the sums out to you and you got the sums right than making a silly mistake because you misread something in the reading of the question, so I just keep bobbing back to them and giving a little rub on the back and I can put on shoulders on and say you’re doing really, really well, just settling them in to it, I’ve never had any that were that upset that if they were going to be that upset then I’d pull them out of the test and we’d do it one to one somewhere quietly but we’ve never had children that have got that upset.

I: So it’s like very mild anxiety almost, mild stress.

P: And it’s only one child usually.

I: Do any children worry that it going to come up or.

P: No I don’t think so, I think the Christmas ones if the year ones have been with me they’ve forgotten they’ve got the Christmas one coming up, so they’re completely oblivious when they walk in and I never tell them what they’re going to do the next day.

I: So you’re not reminding them.

P: So they might come in and the desks are split up and they might come in and they’re not.

I: So they don’t have that opportunity to think.
I: It’s coming up, whereas in year 6 the teacher may do that in order to allow them.

P: And they’ve got a set week in year 6 that they have to do it in May, whereas we’re very flexible and it depends on what’s happening in school as to when I get them done sort of thing.

I: Okay just going through, I think we’ve covered most of that, I was just thinking because you’ve been teaching a long time and you probably have developed a great deal of expertise, do you feel in terms of the language that you are using in the classroom in order for children to prepare better or to encourage them to do better, do you feel over time it’s changed or do you just feel you probably did a training year and you probably quite quickly realised the type of language that you should be using, the type of teacher you want to be, and since then you’ve just been kind of.

P: Probably not because when I first started teaching, I did year 3 for about three years and we didn’t use the optional SATs then and then I went into reception and there wasn’t the SATs they had PIPs when they first came in and there wasn’t the test so it wasn’t until I got to year 2 that I’d actually been teaching quite a while, but I don’t think I changed my expectations of myself for the children just because I’m in year 2, I’ve always wanted whatever class I’ve had to their absolutely best and I don’t think oh I’m in year 3 it’s not SATS I don’t have to bother that as much, but when I was in reception, year 1, I didn’t have to bother much because there was no SATs then or formal assessments, it’s always been the same I’ve always wanted the children to do the absolute best and make the most progress as they’re capable of regardless of whichever age I’ve been in.

I: Yes, so that’s the most important thing to you, it’s telling them to try their best and give their best shot.

P: At the end of the day education is the way out for them.

I: Yes.

P: If they want to move out of the area if they want to change the patterns of behaviour in the family, the only way out is their education.

I: In thinking the intake in this school comes from quite a low SES status area.

P: Lots of social problems and deprivation on the estate.

I: Yes, and just on that point do you feel as a teacher what you do in the classroom can make a difference for these children despite whatever may be going on outside in the home environment in the community etc. you know, I’m not sure do you feel you can make that difference or sometimes do you think actually despite everything that I do I just can’t make a difference.

P: No I think you can make a difference as long as you’ve got the children working with you, if you alienate the children no matter what you said or what you did, you’re not going to make any progress.

I: So that relationship is very important?

P: Yes.

I: And that as you said before that determines what you can say and whether it will have an effect on them and it’s judging that and only you can make that judgement.

P: Yes.

I: Based on your experience with the children, and in term of this kind of approach that you have about emphasising effort and trying your best and the relationship that you build with the children do you feel, is that something that just happens in your whole classroom or do you feel it’s a whole school thing?

P: It’s a whole school thing yes.

I: And so it’s almost like a whole school way of working.

P: Whole school ethos that we’ve got high standards and we want you do your best and keep saying to mine only your best is good enough really, and it doesn’t matter what your best is, it’s not as if I’m expecting you to be the neatest hand writer or be the top reader it’s what the best for you and you’re making progress.

I: Okay, just moving away from learning and actual tests and things like that I’m getting an overview of yourself as a teacher, I’m just thinking of your approach in other areas so for example when children are misbehaving or things like that, do you use a similar type approach with respect to behaviour management or other areas, say a child is misbehaving would you adopt a similar approach about what you need to do in order to you know come out of that situation and come back into the classroom.

P: Yes and it depends on the class, when you first get a class you spend a lot of time with positives and handing out lots of stickers for behaviour that you see so if they’re sitting quietly rather than going oh stop talking this and that and the other, you give the stickers out to the ones who are doing and the ones who are behaving at the table, giving stickers out for the table or to those individuals so the others can see the positives and then it depends on what they do and what the situation is, but again it’s knowing your children, some children you can just talk quietly, other children not shout or raising your voice but being a bit firmer with how you speak because some children are so rarely naughty that I speak to them like you and I speak and we just talk about the behaviour and that’s enough for them not to do it again, but for others you’d have to say come on it’s not good enough and go on to explain why that sort of thing and obviously if it carries on then sometimes saying we need to get mum and dad in to talk about it, so it depends on again your relationship with the children, so you know what works and if you came down really all the same, some would hate it because they were hardly ever naughty and are probably terrified, and others it’s water of a ducks back, that was nothing, that was nothing that, no it doesn’t depend, but we do try to be very positive with the behaviour.

I: And what I’m getting is that you would only highlight the negative consequences of certain actions of behaviour in the rare instances just to get the message across and that’s not something you would do routinely.

P: Normally just talk about how they would feel if someone had done that to them would they like it.

I: So more restorative kind of approach.

P: I mean I do use language like if you don’t do this, but it’s usually when it’s a child that’s displayed challenging behaviour on a regular basis but again it’s giving them the choices.

I: Yes.

P: That it’s your choice but if you come and do your work then you’ll keep your points for your behaviour chart or you keep your break time and if you don’t then such and such will happen, but I always usually say that you’re making that choice and if doesn’t go their way then we start the conversation that you chose to do such and such.

I: So you’re giving the option to avoid and then if they don’t take them options then this will happen and that’s a consequence that they’ve chose.

P: I always think firm but fair.

I: Yes and would you say that’s similar in terms of your approach to encouraging children to learn, would you say you have a firm and fair approach?

P: Yes, because they know I don’t like second best work and we talk, because they all try it on at different times
most of the time, now because it’s 28 degrees in class and it’s the last week of term, no but just talking to them and saying what you’ve done is alright but it’s not what you’re capable of, it’s not your best work and if you continue to do this then next time you’ll be doing that piece of work again for me.

I: Yes.

P: And again it’s a choice they’re making then.

I: And you’re just alerting them to the expectation that you have for them and what they can aspire to.

P: If we didn’t set the high standards for them everything will be mediocre, some of them would make progress some of them wouldn’t make progress, I don’t know how you can teach without having high standards.

I: Yes and I think I understand where you’re coming from, okay, something else was about your school advisor coming and looking at children’s progress at Key Stage 1/2, looking at the SAT results and things like that, how often does that happen.

P: It’s termly.

I: And I’m just thinking does that put a pressure on you as a teacher, when they are looking, because obviously you have no control over the intake that you have, like one year you might get a very good intake and I can imagine another year you might get an intake that’s distinctively different.

P: It does sometimes because you can be thinking well I’m doing booster clubs with them and I’m working with guided and doing absolute best with them and sometimes it’s really small steps to get there but what he says isn’t usually a shock because it’s what I already know anyway because they aren’t where they’re supposed to be at that particular moment in time and he does listen to the reasons, but at the end of the day he’s doing to me what I do to the children, you’ve got to have high standards for this school because he wants the school to do the best, puts a bit more pressure but no more than I do to myself because I want them to get.

I: Does that make you say work in a different way or teach in a different way when there’s a pressure to make the children do better.

P: Not particularly because the pressure is there already.

I: Already and I think the advisor is just making.

P: But not, it’s usually, it’s nothing I didn’t know I know that they’re not quite on track yet and they’ve still got a bit more progress to make, and my data’s reported to Ofsted, and Ofsted can pick up on it and if I’m failing here I can trigger Ofsted inspection so you’ve got that.

I: So it’s a similar pressure.

P: It’s just mine out of the league tables.

I: Yes, what do you think about schools being judged on league tables rather than your actual teaching practice and children’s happiness in school and seeing what they.

P: I don’t agree with it because you compare our children to my son he’s 16 now completely different experiences, his homework was done with him at home, he was read with regularly, he was taken on holiday he was taken on days out, you can’t compare the two and they both at very different starting points, and yet they’re measured on the same thing yet, if it was on progress that might be better, because it doesn’t.

I: The added on value bit.

P: Yes the value added on bit because that doesn’t, that takes into account the starting point then doesn’t it, whereas the SATs results and league tables don’t.

[Concluding talk]
P: Yes.
I: I’m right in thinking that you do SATs.
P: Yes.
I: Yes, and it’s around the May time that you will do the SATs.

[_introductory talk_]

1: If you just quickly tell me how long you’ve been teaching, how long you’ve been teaching in year six, so I just have a good background.

2: I graduated in 1992 so I’ve been teaching 21 years, so taught till 2008 at [……] and I taught 10 years in year two, then went in year three and then my final year did year 6, and I’ve been here five years and taught year six all the time I’ve been here.

3: So you’ve got a lot of experience with year six, I am aware in year six that you do SATs.

4: Yes.

5: I’m right in thinking that you do SATs.
P: Yes.

6: Am I right in thinking that you do the SATs with the children, they’re all on individual desks.

7: Yes, in the hall sat individually.

8: Okay that’s fine, and in terms of practice or mock SAT papers, do you do them throughout the year?

9: We do from January onwards, we, myself and the head and my teaching assistant, we do three afternoons a week, sort of SAT revision, where you do maths activities and reading activities, the spelling and grammar this year and the writing and it’s an intense group, so I have children who are working within level four, [……] had the level five children and my TA had the special needs, so in the afternoons we go out separately and we make it as relaxed as we can, we buy some study books to give them the format of the tests and we basically just take them through it and we look at old papers, we do SAT practice tests in test like conditions, but we make it as relaxed as we can for them, and I think the whole thing with them really is just keeping them, making them ready without making it a stressful experience and we reassure them of that from January onwards and actually they really enjoy the afternoons, [……] had a group of level six boys this year that we put in for the maths, they

10: Yes.

11: had six boys that she put in as well as working with the level five children, she did some extra work with them for the level sixes.

12: I: Okay, and in terms of when the children come into class in year six, or after the summer break they come into year six, are they aware that this is the year that they will be doing SATs.

13: Yes.

14: What do we do for the, in July of year six they make videos for the year five coming up and we do job

15: interviews for them to do the monitors and dinner time helpers things like that, so they realise when they get to year six they have, they’re allowed to sit on benches in the hall and that they, they get the freedom to go outside round the back where they’re not supervised, obviously we keep our eyes, we’re giving them the responsibility, but then obviously there is the SATs that they have to do, so that is why and you know we make it as really light hearted as we can and we’ll say this is an actual paper and this, when you were in year four this is what the year six were doing and they go is that it, and we try and really get them ready for it because we don’t want them to go in May and feel stressed.

16: I: Okay.

17: And this year they’ve had the best SAT results that they, we’ve ever had about, 75% of them got a level five, we got all our level six boys and only one child didn’t make a level four in the spelling and grammar.

18: I: Right.

19: P: Which was a new test for us sort of, they so obviously are being taught well through school that they understand all the terms, all the grammatical terms and things so.

20: I: Yes, so by the time they come into your classes in September, they’re already aware of the SATs taking place.

21: P: The old year six would have done them a little video to say what’s good about it year six and of course you’ve got your SATs but don’t worry about it because Mrs makes sure you’re well prepared, and you know if you ever come into my class and really get that, it’s got to be relaxed and mutual respect and I treat them how I would want to be treated by them and that really works, I don’t have any behavioural issues or any sort of, they want to do it for me it’s not because I’m dictating to them that they must do.

22: I: Okay.

23: P: I try and make it as interesting as I can for them, like do topics that are going to engage them, do writing that I know will stimulate their imagination and things you know, I don’t use old papers for the writing tests at all, you don’t do a test anymore for the writing, we do teacher assessments.

24: I: Teacher assessments, yes.

25: P: So.

26: I: Okay, the specific thing that I want to look at is what language are you using in the classroom, you know through the year when you are preparing for these SATs or when you’re getting children to meet their levels and targets.

27: P: Yes.

28: I: What is it that you’re actually saying to them throughout the year, you know to kind of push them or motivate them to do well in these tests.

29: P: Well I suppose it comes back to our tracking that we track them and we see people who aren’t fulfilling their potential and we put extra input for them to find out why, why they’ve gone blue on our trackers and in that they’re not making quite the right level of progress for them, but I think it’s just encouraging them and my TA is fantastic she’ll always, she’s not specifically timetabled in year six, she has a desk at the back, she’ll work with the group everyday but then if you know one child doesn’t understand the chunking division in maths or something else, then we’ll, you just spend half an hour with [……] or whoever and just go through this with him till he understands it, so she’s brilliant at that, she’s been at year six for a long time when I was here and [……] was in year six, so she’s fantastic at that and I think it’s giving them the confidence and self belief that they can do it for themselves, and I think sometimes we have the really high ability children and they go I’m trying to go and get my level six and then you go, and then you go and get your special needs and I’m going to try and get my
I: You need to try your best and give it your best shot.

P: Yes and just giving them, and just immersing them in the style and the types of things that they’re going to be asked, and you know we have a pee poster for reading for example, so they think that’s hilarious it’s got a picture of a little boy taking a pee, it’s like make your point, explain your point and then evidence it from the text, and that’s a bit of a mantra for them that for the three mark answers on the reading test, they have to make a point, they have to explain the point, and then they have to say because it says on page 7 duh duh duh duh, so that they’re showing that they understand the, like the inference and the deeper understanding to get that higher level.

I: So that’s more exam technique.

P: Yes teaching them the skills that they need and sort of embedding that within them, that they need to do that and we look at the marks down the side and say look at this it’s a two mark question so how many points does it want you to make you know, it’s just getting them really familiar with the style of questions and the style of paper because it’s not how you work all through school really.

I: It’s quite different.

P: Yes, yes, and we do guided reading every which is you know getting them to really explore the text and talk about it and get that next level rather than reading it, so to really understand what the author is trying to say and all that builds on for them, building up to their SatS.

I: So you use a lot of encouragement and trying to motivate them to give it their best shot.

P: Absolutely, definitely.

I: And then you’ve got this other side, where you’ve actually helping them you know see how to get their marks and how to do better.

P: Yes.

I: Just prior to that, let’s just say you’ve got a child whose level four and you want to push them to level five, what kind of things will you be saying to that child if you know that this child is capable of getting level five and at the moment you know he’s working at a level.

P: We will give them a specific target and we’ll look at anything that you’ve done and if it’s reading for example then if you’d just put this and this so next time we do this, we’ll look at that and make your target for next time and you know, we don’t really discuss levels with them, we don’t you know, some schools have you know I’m working on, I’m sub level four B, I don’t work like that with my class and I don’t talk about you know, I talk about them as individuals, not as what sub level they’re working at, but you know they know what they need to do to constantly improve and I had in my, I took the main body of the class which was the expected level fours from the key stage one, and three or four of them got their level fives and it was the children who they’ve no self belief really, and it was just that encouragement and look what you’ve got there and if you do that there and then you know, we’ll give them a reader in the test if we think they’re remotely anxious or stressed about their exams, so yes giving them individual targets to work on, setting appropriate homework for their level.

I: So they know how to get onto the next stage.

P: Yes that’s right, and making it small steps you know, not just saying now you’re this level and then we’re looking at you being at this level by the end, it is just keep building on it and you know all like making it fun, but not having any spare minutes in the day, like the maths game that you play making them really focused into what the whole class need to improve in their mental calculations, and you know like I do a mental maths test every Friday, but we wouldn’t do it as a test and then we spend all lesson looking at how they should have solved it and you know quick methods of doing.

I: You said something along the lines in your class you don’t in terms of the level, you’ve not got them specifically focused on the levels you know where they are.

P: They’re not, but we are incredibly focused on it, but the children aren’t.

I: So how do you communicate to them their expectations.

P: Well they know what they need to do to improve to get to the next stage for them, but we don’t say now you’re a four B, you need to be a four A, we don’t talk in terms of levels with them, although they are aware of that a four B is an average you know across the country, everybody is expected to get a four B, so if you get below you’re slightly below and if you get above that, and it’s you know they understand all that but we don’t, you see some schools that have displays up and I moved a sub level this week and whatever and you know we don’t agree with that here at all, we think that it needs to be personal to them and just what they need to do to get better for themselves, but not to get them to a 4a right.

I: So I’m right in thinking that you never say to children I expect you to be here or I think you know you’re more than capable of being here.

P: No, yes I would say to my revision group in the afternoon that you are more than capable of getting the level five on the paper if you believe in yourself, but I wouldn’t say but currently you’re working on a 4B, so we do have the conversation of how to get to the next level but it’s not as benchmarked as it is on paper.

I: Okay.

P: I don’t know if I’m making myself really clear there really, so they know how to push themselves on and they know you know.

I: It’s not based on levels.

P: The two children specifically who on our trackers, the potential they should have been was, it’s a four A, and we wanted them to get into the level fives and they both did but it was just that constant encouragement and looking at like knowing which on the papers were the level five questions and how to tick yourself into a level five, so they’re aware of it and they’re aware of what they’re aiming for, but we don’t label them.

I: And obviously the SatS are important and obviously for the school.

P: Yes.

I: You said the school are effectively judged by their results and that’s what a lot of governors, school advisors and national government, that’s what they’re looking at.

P: Yes.

I: What do you say to the children of the importance of these tests, what do you say to them, why are they important, do you tell them they’re important or do you just say this year we’ll be doing SatS.

P: I tell them they’re necessary and we have to do them and there’s no escaping it, we need to embrace it and when high school come in and talk to me in July about moving on to high school that you know, they all want to
I: Okay.

P: I think the SATs are coming up, do you give the children a lot of reminders, so around February time or even earlier are you saying to the children your SATs are coming up now or possibly after just before you break for Christmas you say to the children when you come in January we really need to push because the SATs are going to come up.

I: I'm just thinking, there's another type of language that you may or may not use or you may not feel is the best form of language to use, it's more about the consequences of doing well or the consequences of not doing well, so do you say to children if you do really well, so positive consequences would be if you do really well then it's a good start.

P: Yes.

I: And in the future you'll get a good job.

P: Yes, well it's doing well for them you know, if you've got a special needs child whose never going to get a level five you wouldn't say to them that if you get that you'll get a good job, you've got to make it appropriate to them, so it's that encouragement that you're fulfilling your potential for you and you are doing your best that you can do, and you know that will set your sets at high school and it will help, it's that confidence and self belief that you can do something which will help you throughout your life really, won't it.

I: And for the more able children you can say something like.

P: Yes.

I: If you do really well that makes you a good start for your future job.

P: Yes, get them to aim high for what they want to do and the ones, but there's been nobody this year sort of in the past if they not as motivated and they've no desire or drive, then you think well you have that talk with them, what do you want to be when you're older and then try and motivate them that way, and I want to work in a shop, well what do you want to do in a shop you know, get them to always aim high and always aim high for them.

I: Yes, another type of positive consequence language you can use is something like if you do really well, you said try to keep it more for your able children, if you do really well it shows how good you are.

P: Yes.

I: And the effort that you've, do you ever say something along the lines of if you do really well and you get really good marks or results or whatever this year your parents will be happy or I'll be happy.

P: Yes, keep the parents involved, make the parents proud, you make us proud and most important is make proud of yourselves really, do you know to work hard all year then to throw it all away by not doing your best on the day he's missed a page out or so, they're not the end of the world for them, so I say to them that they might be retested when you get to high school anyway really, I don't think the high schools pay much head to the SATs, do they.

P: CATs tests.

I: Yes, so that's what you're saying to them, so you're saying they're important that they do well but it's not be all and end all.

P: No, they do always work their socks off for the SATs, so we make sure they glean the rewards for the last half term, we do lots of sewing and baking, well they do baking all year actually, it's much more relaxed after the SATs you know, I've let them this year do a project of their own choice, so you still keeping on with the writing and maths, but it's led more by them then by us really.

I: Just going back to the importance question and I know, I understand what kind of response you gave, do you just do that or say that once or twice a year, or are you saying.

P: Well I think everything with the SATs has to be the same consistent message hasn't it, really to keep them, I don't know to keep them motivated really and.

I: So you're just every few weeks, you might just say to them again it's important we do well in these SATs.

P: Yes and throughout the school with the SEAL that we do and then we get them to manage their own behaviour and really be in charge of their own learning and behaviour for learning we're very strong on that in school.

I: Okay with respect to when the SATs are coming up, do you give the children a lot of reminders, so around February time or even earlier are you saying to the children your SATs are coming up now or possibly after just before you break for Christmas you say to the children when you come in January we really need to push because the SATs are going to come up.

P: Well from January we do do groups in the afternoon but you know we don't, we don't have a countdown or anything like that, just before two weeks before the SATs we have the weekend away, the adventure weekend away because they've worked hard up to them and then they get the big relax and then we have that final drive for two weeks and then we have the test and we always have a special week the week after the SATs which is like a you know, we've had a Spanish week and we had a geography week where the whole school gets involved with that, so yes we do, so it's not like doom and gloom and countdown and D-day.

I: It's not constant.

P: No, no, and obviously the weekend before we remind them to make sure they have breakfast, bring a water bottle, get an early night and you know you've done enough and don't do anything else just turn up, and you know we still have the afternoons where once they've done the first paper we'll revise for whatever the next day.

I: And the effort that you've, do you ever say something along the lines of if you do really well and you get really good marks or results or whatever this year your parents will be happy or I'll be happy.

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I: So you're just every few weeks, you might just say to them again it's important we do well in these SATs.

P: Yes and throughout the school with the SEAL that we do and then we get them to manage their own behaviour and really be in charge of their own learning and behaviour for learning we're very strong on that in school.

I: Okay.
P: I would take stress out of that kind of thing by saying, by talking about if you have a disaster on the day, it
isn’t the end of the world because they’re 11 years old aren’t they, they not going to have a nervous breakdown
over the fact that they ran out of time or they didn’t do they best because they fell ill or whatever you know, it’s
got to be more to it than that.
I: Yes, what about, children in the classroom you know they’re able and you know they can probably get a level
five or some could even get a level six you know sometimes you do feel like they don’t put enough effort in or
sometimes they’re branded as being a bit lazy, what do you say to them kind of children.
P: Well we’ve got quite rigorous tracking systems really so, which are set from the key stage one so you know
what level they should be at throughout school, so if they go blue in the tracker you know that they’re
underachieving for their potential and you think well sometimes you can think such and such has gone blue,
but I know that his dad just left you know or his mum just lost her job or whatever, so you can sort of think
that’s that, but then we would put in place like support for children who we thought were just coasting to try
and motivate and encourage them and bring them on you know, we’d work more intensively with that child.
I: Yes.
P: And again the slightest thing that they did reward them with the stickers, get a phone call home that he’s
done a fantastic piece of work today or you know try and get them to be proud and think, and it’s alright this
working hard actually.
I: Right, trying to motivate them.
P: Yes.
I: Okay, you said you’ve got a philosophy of teaching, do you feel, you’re a very experienced teacher, do you feel
throughout the years that’s because of all the experiences throughout the years or do you feel that after you
trained that was the type of teacher you are.
P: I’m a better teacher now than I was back then I think really but.
I: In terms of your philosophy has that changed.
P: Well it’s grown and developed I think, but it’s not really changed, my first school was a very, very challenging
school there were difficult children but you got nothing from them from shouting at them or dictating to them or
punishing them and you know that soon came to light for me but.
I: That doesn’t work.
P: That doesn’t work at all and you know I think the first thing the child has to know is that you like them and
you respect them and you want the best for them, and I think you know you have conversations one to one rather
than ball them out in front of the class and.
I: Yes.
P: And you know give them steps to succeed really.
I: So from the things you’ve said, the teacher student relationship is very important, it’s vital, that’s the most
important thing I think definitely.
P: And that determines what you can say to a child and what you can’t and the effect it’s going to have.
I: Yes, you are not going to get the best out of the child if you’re horrible to them you know if you don’t finish
that you’re not playing football, you’re not going to get the best out of anybody are you, if you make them work
dull just because you trying to get them through.
I: So that type of threatening.
P: Yes.
I: Threatening type language.
P: Yes you need to do that writing just because you need to do it, it’s got to be purposeful for them.
I: So you want them to be motivated within themselves.
P: Yes.
I: Not because of why we want it.
P: So if we’re doing letter writing we’ll make it relevant to them, rather than a letter that they’re never going to
write in their life.
I: Yes, something that interests them.
P: Making it like, like last year we did a, they were a different kettle of fish were last year’s class, they weren’t
quite, they were more on a level there were no real high flyers on a level but they weren’t as
sparky, and the best piece of work we did all year was we had a campaign to get rid of the dog poo in the area, if
it comes to something where dog poo switches you on more than anything else, but they wrote letters to the
council they ended up on the radio, they wrote letters to parents and to people in the community and it was
really, because it was something that was relevant to them, so that you know the level of involvement for them,
it was their area they lived here, they had to walk past it every day and then you teach them the features of how
to write a letter of complaint and then they make it applicable to them and then if they get one in the SATs,
they can apply the techniques and the way the layout of the letter.
I: In terms of the SATs, you are communicating to the class that they are important but they’re not the only
things that’s important.
P: No.
I: There are my assessments too which will.
P: Yes.
I: Are there still children who end up worrying about the about these tests.
P: Definitely yes, definitely there are children who don’t respond well in test situations and so to get round that
we make sure we have plenty of opportunities to do it, so our last assessment before the real live we would do it
in the hall as it.
I: As if it were the real thing.
P: Yes, it’s to get them used to sitting in a different environment and you know being all official with the pencils
and the rulers and everything just set out in their individual desks, whereas any assessments prior to that they
would be end to end in the classroom, so we get them used to it that way, then again it’s just the reassurance
and the coaxing and the once you see it you’ll realise it’s exactly what you’ve been doing all year and you’ll be
fine, and they always are, we’ve never had anybody whose had a total meltdown.
I: That was going to be my next question, when they do go into the final SATs and this is the, are there some
children who great really anxious?
P: Yes.
I: In terms of your philosophy has that changed.
P: No but I think we’re in the maths, where you can have a reader, if we thought there was going to be somebody like
that we would give them a reader and we’d get them to do it one to one with that reader, so it’s got, they’ve
just got that security there even with the reading where you’re not allowed to read it to them, obviously if we
felt it would help them to have somebody just sat with them.
I: So just a bit of reassurance.

P: Yes like a blanket almost, they just there, they can’t help you but they can just reassure you and you know and can do the brain breaks if they feel like, as long as they do it over 45 minutes, they can stop the clock and go somewhere where they aren’t going to encounter any of the other children and just clear their heads for five minutes.

I: The only area I haven’t covered so far, in terms of the pressures in order for you obtain a certain baseline of children or possibly in comparison with previous years.

P: Yes.

I: Do you feel that is a pressure on you in the classroom, you have to obtain and these results are published and people will be looking at them and yes basically ranks the school with other schools in the area.

P: I don’t think we put the pressure on the class teachers because the cohort are what they are, but obviously senior leaders in school, it is a pressure but we know our children very well here so you know like last year’s class we had for example, we only had 19 so obviously if they didn’t make the expected level that was a huge percentage but we knew our children well enough to be able to annotate that as to the whys and wherefores that didn’t happen just in case Ofsted came or you know, and every year group is quite different in its make up really, so we don’t put pressure on staff obviously we’ve got to, we do the tracking, we do termly data with them, but you know we do get them as geared up as we can do and we would expect them to do the best.

I: And in terms of the children that you have in the class, what’s the intake like, is this a deprived area, is it quite medium or is it mixed.

P: It’s a mix, it’s a mix, we’ve got the social housing at the bottom here where we get a lot of children from, but also like the estates around are growing, we get a lot of children from that area, so it’s a very mixed catchment and again cohorts, specific cohorts are very different, because next year’s new starters in reception are mainly from the very local area mainly from the social housing and around this immediate area, whereas this year’s current reception are mainly from [-----], we got a lot of those children last year but since they’ve extended we get more of our, but we’re oversubscribed at the minute.

[Concluding talk]
Appendix 10 - Focus Group Schedule

Opening

- Establish rapport/introduce myself/thank children/verbal assent.
- Warm up exercise/name cards/introductions.
- Purpose of focus group.
- Timings.

Main Body

Tests/SATs

- Test information/what type of tests/what are the important tests/when are these tests/how much do you prepare for these tests/are there mock tests/how important are they.
- Are tests important/why do we do tests.
- SATs/do they know what they are.

Teacher language when preparing for tests

- What do teachers say/probe/keep open ended.

Probe children on following

- Fear appeals, fail, people will be unhappy.
- Efficacy appeals, effort, work hard.
- Confidence, reassuring language, don’t worry, you can do it.
- Reminders, the tests are coming up.
- Future, career.
- Praise, rewards.
- How will you feel type comments.

How

- For above/individual/whole class/all the time/once or twice.

Test anxiety

- Tests as anxiety provoking/probe.
- Do children worry.
- Are children scared.

Closing

- Summarise/thank.
- Any other views that we haven’t covered.
- Debrief about research/questions about research.
Appendix 11 - Focus Group Inclusion Criteria

The focus group needs to have a good mixture of children with varying characteristics.

Please select children taking into account the following criteria:

- A mixture of attainment ability (e.g. high, medium, low ability children).
- A mixture of boys and girls.
- Inclusion of children who may be low in confidence.
- Inclusion of children who get anxious around test time (at least one).
- Variety of personalities (e.g. outgoing, timid, etc.).

Please do not select children with English as an additional language. It is okay to include children with special educational needs (SEN), as long as you feel they will be able to contribute in the discussions, though you may want to discuss with the researcher prior to their involvement.
Appendix 12 - Year 2 Focus Group (Transcript 9)

P = Participant (Teacher)
C = Focus Group Children

Note: Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity of individuals. Information relating to places, schools, etc. has also been anonymised.

[Introductory talk]

I: Okay, I’m going to tell you why I am here, okay, I’m going to different schools to talk with people like yourselves and other the children, and I’m asking them questions about school, but I’m asking them about a particular thing, which am going to tell you about, okay, what year are you in, tell me what year you are in.

C: Year 2 (>1).

I: Year 2 okay, so you’ve been in year 2 about, September, October, November, about three months you’ve been in year 2, okay.

C: Yes.

I: Okay and we have to do a lot of work in year 2 don’t we.

C: Yes.

I: A lot of writing and.

C: It’s not like reception.

I: Reception got a lot of free time.

C: On Tuesday Father Christmas will come then Wednesday morning you’ll see all the presents.

I: You’ll see all the presents okay, right, we’re going to have some rules okay, because I’m recording it if you all speak at once, when I’m playing it back I won’t know who’s saying what okay, so if someone’s talking we need to listen to them and then, when that person stops talking they can, someone else can talk, is that okay.

C: Yes.

I: Okay, I’m going to ask, you can put your hands up or you can leave your hands down okay, do you know in year 2, you’re all in year 2, do you do tests.

C: Yes (>1).

I: Okay, so you all do tests, alright and do you know at the end of the year you may be doing some important tests.

C: Yes (>1).

C: No.

C: Sometimes we do important.

C: Because it’s like tests to go into the juniors.

I: Yes.

C: Sometimes it’s like writing tests and numeracy tests.

I: Okay, there’s also something called the SATs, have you ever heard of the SATs.

C: Yes (>1).

C: No (>1).

C: I haven’t heard of.

I: Put your hand up if you’ve heard of the SATs, so [-----], [-----] and [-----] have, [-----] do you want to tell me what the SATs are.

C: Sometimes in year 6, you get a like a big test and it is to go into the high school.

I: Okay, right, is that is that what you think they are [-----].

C: Yes.

I: And [-----].

C: Yes.

I: The SATs are these tests as [-----] has said which you do and then you go to your big school and they can see what scores you’ve got okay, we also do some in year 2, but your teacher might not call them SATs, they might be called tasks okay, and you do them, and then again teachers can see how well you’ve done and what you good at and what you not so good at okay, right so mainly we’re going to talk about these tests that we do okay and what your teacher says about them, so I’m going to ask you some questions and I want the answers from you because I don’t know, that’s why I’ve come to talk with all of you, so you can give me all the answers, then I can go home and write it up okay.

C: Yes (>1).

I: Right, what was I going to say, first one okay when it comes to tests, what does your teacher say about the tests, right shall we start [-----].

C: Well she normally says don’t talk to anybody about the answers because then it won’t be their answers, it won’t be yours.

I: Okay, and next shall we go for [-----].

C: If you shout out it’s not nice because then people can’t hear what the teacher’s saying. I: Okay, so [-----] and [-----] are saying you can’t shout out and you can’t look at other people’s work you just need to be looking at yours, shall we go, we’ll go around the table, we’ll start with Isabel.

C: Yes, you can’t just tell people the answers.

I: Alright, so you’re not allowed to tell people the answers in tests, okay [-----].

C: You’re not allowed to just do this and don’t talk and just go like that and just look at somebody’s work.

I: You can’t look at someone’s work okay, and finally [-----].

C: You can’t copy people.

I: You can’t copy people, so in tests your teacher’s telling you that that you can’t copy and you have to do your own work, you can’t look at other people’s work, and you have to be quiet yes.

C: Yes (>1).

I: Okay, do you know why we do these tests, what does your teacher say, what, what is the reason for doing these tests, why do we need to do them, shall we start with [-----].

C: Because that, then we know what we good at and they know what you can do and what you can’t do, and what we need to do more of learn about more.

I: Okay, so your teacher’s saying we’re doing these tests, so they can find out what you can do and what you can’t
I: Okay [-----], what do you think.
C: I: Okay [-----], I think we’re doing these tests because we, when we’re in high school and we do bigger tests then you’ve got that question in you would know the answers straight away.
C: Yes.
I: Yes, what do you like to be called [-----] or Lottie.
C: Lottie.
I: You don’t think so.
C: No.
I: Okay, on [-----].
C: I call her Lottie because she’s my girlfriend.
I: I shorten it to Lottie.
C: I think we need to do these tests because then we know what we need to learn our spellings and what we don’t need to learn of our spellings.
I: Okay, so we’re doing these tests because your teacher needs to find out, your teacher’s called Ms [-----].
C: Yes (>1).
I: Yes, she needs to find out what you’re good at, what you can’t do, and what you need help with okay, does she say to you whether these tests are important, are they important.
C: No.
C: Not so much.
C: Sometimes I get worried because I don’t know what sorts of questions they are.
I: I think he’s writing his name again, that’s better see he’s got it like ours now, so [-----] you’re saying we’re doing these tests because then if we do the test in the future then you’ll be able to do them and you’ve learnt the stuff okay.
C: Her real name is not [-----], it’s Lottie.
C: No, my real name is a [-----], but I shorten it to Lottie.
I: Okay, what do you like to be called [-----] or Lottie.
C: [-----].
I: [-----].
C: I call her Lottie because she’s my girlfriend.
I: Okay, [-----].
C: I think we need to do these tests because then we know what we need to learn our spellings and what we don’t need to learn of our spellings.
I: Okay, so we’re doing these tests because your teacher needs to find out, your teacher’s called Ms [-----].
C: Yes (>1).
I: Yes, she needs to find out what you’re good at, what you can’t do, and what you need help with okay, does she say to you whether these tests are important, are they important.
C: No.
C: Not so much.
C: Yes.
C: Some of them are important, some of them are not much important.
C: Yes, both of them, I can’t speak today.
I: Go on [-----] take your time.
C: Some of them aren’t important and some of them are really important.
I: Right, so some are important and some aren’t, go on [-----].
C: Well we have tests and some are important because the teacher needs to know what you know and you don’t know but she might, and we have important tests because sometimes we get homework and we have spellings, and when we come back on a Friday we would have a test and, and then you would see if we are free learnt out words, spellings what we got.
I: Okay, go on [-----].
C: If, sometimes after we have had a spellings test last Friday, on this Friday we get to see what we’ve done wrong and like make sure that we can recognise everything and whether we can do any more things like divide.
I: Okay, so when you get things wrong then you can see what you’ve got wrong and then you can work on that,
I: Yes, is that what Ms [-----]’s saying to you, that’s why we’re doing these tests.
C: Yes.
I: To see how good you are, and then that things you not so good at we can start working on them okay, yes.
C: Yes.
I: Is there any other reasons as to why we do tests or why Ms [-----] says why these tests are important for us.
I: Okay, okay, I’m going to ask you some of the questions and you can agree with me and say yes Ms does say that or you can say no Ms doesn’t say that say that, okay.
C: My name is really, really, really.
I: Leave it and come onto the next one okay.
C: Sometimes I get worried because I don’t know what sorts of questions they are.
I: I think he’s writing his name again, that’s better see he’s got it like ours now, so [-----] you’re saying we’re doing these tests because then if we do the test in the future then you’ll be able to do them and you’ve learnt the stuff okay.
C: Her real name is not [-----], it’s Lottie.
C: No, my real name is a [-----], but I shorten it to Lottie.
I: Okay, what do you like to be called [-----] or Lottie.
C: Lottie.
I: You don’t think so.
C: No.
I: Okay, what about you [-----].
C: Sometimes I get worried because I don’t know what sorts of questions they are.
I: Okay.
C: Yes [-----].
C: Mines the same as [-----].
I: Same as [-----] okay.
C: I get sometimes scared because I don’t know whether I have, I don’t know whether I’ve got them right, when I want to get them right, and then if you don’t, if you don’t know one, if you’re not sure on it sometimes Ms [-----] says leave, leave it and come onto your next question.
I: Leave it and come onto the next one okay.
C: Mines the same as [-----].
I: What did [-----] say.
C: I forgot because it was so long time ago.
I: So long time ago.
C: Not a lot of time ago.
I: It was only about a minute ago.
C: It was a year.
I: No it wasn’t a year ago, yes.
C: It’s about a 1000 years, 366 days.
C: No it’s not.
C: It’s a 30 days.
C: No it’s not.
C: It is.
C: 100 days is a load of days.
I: Okay, I'm going on the next question, when we are doing these tests, let's say you've done the test.
C: Yes.
I: And you've done so well, so let's just say there's 20 marks and you only got 5 marks or 6 marks or maybe 10 marks.
C: I got 20 marks before.
I: And we're practising these tests, so what does Ms say to you when you've not done so well on these tests.
C: She just crosses them out.
C: And she says.
C: No she just says check that.
C: Next time try.
I: Shall we go with.
C: And next time try again.
I: Let's listen to [-----], what did you say.
C: Next time try again.
I: So if you don't do so well, your teacher will say to you try again okay.
C: Next time then you have try a bit better.
I: You have to try a bit better okay, and then [-----] what were you saying.
C: She says, sometimes she says check that one and then, and, and when you try again you can, if it's like a number test you can count on your fingers.
I: Yes, okay she's telling you how to do the answers next time.
C: Yes.
I: Okay.
C: That's when she says try again.
I: Try again okay, [-----].
C: She says sometimes just go and check that one, and to see, and then see whether you can, and see whether you can do any better on them.
I: Okay so she's saying how can you do it better yes and try again next time, have you got another one.
C: Sometimes when you do it well, she just says well done.
I: Saying well done.
C: She doesn't say that you've got them all right.
I: Oh right, so she just says well done.
C: She says well done, so you don't know whether they're right or wrong.
I: Okay [-----].
C: We go over them on the book, we've got like a smart board.
I: Smart board.
C: Smart board.
I: And we go over them and if people got them right and if people got them right, she says put your hand up if you got them all right, because she says if you've got it right.
I: Ollie why you scribbling.
C: Right give me the pencil, right go on, are we all listening to [-----].
I: If you're all really good I might have something nice for you at the end, but only if you're good.
C: We just put your hand up and if she says your name she just says, she just says what's the question and you read the question and then you answer it and then if you've got it right she's got some pens to go with it.
I: Yes.
C: And she writes the answers what they think it is.
I: What they think it is okay, so then you go through the answers.
C: Yes (>1).
I: But when you've done the tests.
I: When you've done the tests, and then okay how many times do you these tests, do you do them all the time, do you do them every day.
C: No (>1).
C: Not often.
C: Not every day.
C: We just do them like.
C: Every week, every week.
I: Okay so you don't.
C: Every so often.
I: Every so often, you're saying roughly every week.
C: We normally have it, when we're doing our spellings normally have one each Friday and, and sometimes we have these special ones where they're really important, and they're like sheets and they're a piece of paper and they have little questions then when you turn them over there's more.
I: Okay, so these are the special tests.
C: They're important.
I: Okay put your hand up if you done these extra special ones, okay so you've done some extra special ones, have you done any of the extra special ones [-----].
C: We've all done them [-----].
C: I haven't done one.
C: We've all done them.
C: I haven't.
C: We've done tests and we've done spellings.
C: Maybe [-----] was off on that day.
I: Okay in the special, when you do these tests, does your, does Ms [-----] help you with the answers.
C: No (>1).
I: Or do you have to do them by yourselves.
C: Sometimes.
C: Sometimes they.
I: One at a time, shall we go with [-----].
C: Sometimes you just put your hand up if you want to ask the, if you want Ms [----], to ask the question and when she, when she tells you it.

C: That was my answer.

C: You can.

I: It’s alright.

C: You can. if the answer was, if you were counting in fives on your numeracy when she would go like 5, 10, 15 and then if, and then there would be a space and you have to think which one it would be after 15 and she would just, and then she would just go to the other person whose put their hand up.

I: Okay right thank you very much, go on [-----].

C: Well if you, if you, I’ve forgot it again.

I: Alright, so if you do well in tests will Ms say to you, if you do well I’ll give you some points.

C: She gets, you get two points if being good, go on [-----].

I: We’ll come back to you, when it comes back to you put your hand up okay, go on [-----].

C: Well we have a loads of different questions and some of like little and some of them she says, some of them she says count in 2s from 1 and then she says count in 2s up to 15 and then she says the next number.

I: Okay [----].

C: Well if you’ve done it, if you counting 5s and if you counting 10s by accident, if you, if you cross it out then that’s means you’re concentrating.

C: That’s good so you’re looking at your work, so is that what Ms is saying to you.

C: Yes.

I: Check your work and check your answer.

C: Yes (->1).

I: So you all with that.

C: Yes (->1).

I: Okay, does Ms [----] say to you, this question here, this how to answer it or.

C: No (->1).

I: No.

C: She might, she might tell you where the answer is to put it and things.

I: Yes.

C: But she won’t tell you’re the answer.

I: She won’t tell you the answer, will she tell you how to get to the answer.

C: Yes (->1).

C: Yes she will, but she’ll, you have to do it in your head.

I: Yes.

C: And if you still get it wrong, she might help you a little more and then she might then if you have an idea then when she stops talking you can write that answer down and see if you’ve got it right.

I: Okay, yes [----], what were you saying, have you forgot, go on [-----].

C: Well, she’ll say the question twice and then if somebody shouted out she’ll say it again. I: Okay right, okay, when, before, before you do the tests does, does Ms [----] say anything like these tests are really important and if you do really well you’ll get something maybe, I don’t know, some points or does she say.

C: Two points to the rainbow.

C: She gets, you get two points if you good.

I: You get two points for being good, go on [-----].

C: Today, we were getting how much letters we had and I went 20 and I got it right so I got two team points.

I: Alright, so if you do well in tests will Ms say to you, if you do well I’ll give you some points.

C: Team points.

I: The other people in the class.

C: We’ve got other people not just like 2, 2, 1.

C: And we have the whole school.

C: Okay let’s talk about these tests again that you do, does Ms say something like don’t worry about these tests.

C: Yes she does, she says don’t worry, if you’re like really scared she can help you.

I: Yes.

C: And then.

I: Just let [----] finish and then I’ll come to you [----].
C: And then when she’s like, if she, when she helps you, when you’re really stuck and when you’re like a bit upset and then you put your hand up and she’ll help you, like if you’re on a laptop or something and he didn’t let you go on there, you like, you can like put your hand up and then she’ll sort it out.

I: Okay, go on [———].

C: She says don’t worry and you’ll be fantastic and you’ll do really well.

I: Right that’s what she’s saying to you that you’ll do really well.

C: Yes.

I: And you’ll be really good at it.

C: Yes.

I: Okay, what are you saying [———].

C: When we, first what happens is we get into the class, when the day, of the day of the task we go into class and we then we have a little play and we go to playtime and then we do the test and it’s a bit long and its, it’s about two minutes or three minutes and there’s about 20 questions and if you get 20 out of 20, and then, and then it’s then its lunch time and then you get to play and then, and then going class and then break time and then we come back in and then its Spanish and then we go back to and then we go.

C: We don’t do Spanish every day though.

C: No we just do it on Thursday.

C: We do it every other day.

I: Okay listen, listen, so these tests, okay so [———] told me that, she says to you that you’ll be really good at them, [———] are you listening, and then she’ll be fantastic at these tests.

C: Yes (>1).

I: Does she say that you can do the questions, does she say to you stuff like that, that you’ll be able to do them and we’ve done all the practice, yes [———].

C: She says, if you’ve really worried, if you’re really worried just, just says have a go and if you’ve done it right you’ll learn.

I: Okay, so just have a go and it doesn’t matter whether you get it right or wrong, okay.

C: Ms [———] says like if you stuck just go onto to the next question.

I: Right, so if you’re stuck leave that question out.

C: And then you can do it at the end.

I: Do it again at the end or try it again at the end, yes [———].

C: She helps you, and when you’re like stuck on a question you like can leave it out but she says, she says have a go or just have a guess or then and then if you’re really stuck put your hand up and I’ll help you a bit.

I: Okay, right I’m going to ask you about something else, before, before the tests does Ms [———] say stuff like try your best.

C: Yes she does.

C: Yes (>1).

C: She says try your best because you might get it wrong but she might say try your best.

I: Yes.

C: And just write your answer down but try your best and you might just miss like a number out and you might like go for if the answer is like 32 and you put 31 and you like so close but she just says try your best.

I: Try your best and it doesn’t matter if you get it wrong.

C: Yes.

I: But at least you’ve tried your best.

C: Because you learn from.

I: Yes, does she say that to you [———], try your best.

C: Yes, I normally get it wrong, its normally 100 and I put 29.

I: When you get it wrong what does Ms [———] say to you.

C: I don’t know.

C: She doesn’t say anything.

C: She might just say, you’ve done very well, but you’ve just done.

I: One at a time, she says don’t do that one again.

C: Yes don’t try that one again.

I: Don’t try that one again and move on to another one, yes.

C: Yes.

I: Yes, sit down, yes [———].

C: I did some and it was like hard, I asked her to guess and I guessed 101 and I got it right.

I: You got it right so sometimes if you guess, yes [———] so what are you saying.

C: She says like well done and you’ve just got one wrong and you can just go and try that one again or you don’t have to.

I: Okay, and let’s just say you find something really hard in the test and you can’t do it, what does miss say to you, shall we, yes [———].

C: She says, forgat.

I: Forgot, [———].

C: She says like just go onto the next question and then do that one last and see if you can do it and if you can just give it to me and I’ll check it.

I: Okay, yes [———].

C: Well if you like come onto a sum and it’s really hard and like, it said guess how many dots are here and then count the dots, you might get it wrong the first time and then when you count the dots and you might get it write the second time, but you’ve got to keep that number in your head before you forget, but if you forget you can count the dots again or if it’s like 10 or something you can count in 5s.

I: Okay, we’re onto the last bit, you’ve been really good, so come one let’s carry on, does Ms [———] say stuff like, if you don’t do well in this test, I won’t be happy with you or your parents will be very disappointed.

C: No (>1).

C: She doesn’t ever say that.

I: She doesn’t say that.

C: She just says if you ever get it wrong I won’t be, I’ll, you can try again and.

I: Try again, does Ms say

C: Just try again every time.

I: Okay, so [———] does, what do you think when.
C: Well, she'll only get cross if, well because we have a practice before the test and if you've been getting that all right then it comes to the test and you've got it all wrong, she'll be cross because she's been, so that means you've just not been trying your best because she knows you can do it because, when on the, the before the test, when we were practising you've got it all right and then you've got it wrong on the test, she'll be cross with you, you can do it but you haven't done it.

I: What will she say to you when you've done that.

C: She'll just say, I'm not really sure.

I: You're not doing saying so well, yes [------].

C: She'll just say not good enough if you like, like lots of questions wrong and just write stuff.

C: She'll just say you're not doing good enough.

I: You're not doing good enough.

C: Or she'll write rubbish.

C: No, not rubbish, she doesn't shout at you.

C: She says why did you do that, why did you do that you're not allowed.

I: She won't be shouting at you all the time.

C: If you've drawn pictures.

I: Yes if you've done something wrong and something really silly.

C: She'll draw a big massive cross face.

I: Yes.

C: Sometimes if you're just bored and you just guess an answer and you're not thinking she just takes you out the room and then just, and we have thinking time and you just get thinking time and then you might come back on and get like you might do that.

C: But nobody's ever done it.

I: [------] what do you want to say.

C: If you're doing, if you like.

I: Doing the tests.

C: If you're doing the tests and you've got all the answers wrong on purpose.

I: Yes.

C: She would actually put you on the verbal warning.

I: Right so she wants you to try your best.

C: Yes.

I: And if you're not going like that and you do that, like guessing the answer, she won't be happy with you because and then, she'll just spot you and then she'll say why you doing that and you might, so she might be a bit cross with you.

I: Yes, because you haven't tried your best, does she that to you [------].

C: She never said it to me before no.

I: What does she say to you.

C: She said don't work.

I: No, I'm sure she won't say that, shall we go and check she says that.

C: Yes.

I: Are going to tell me what she really says to you [------].

C: I don't know.

I: You don't know.

C: She never shouts at me.

I: She doesn't shout at you, what does she say to you, does she tell you to try hard.

C: Yes.

I: Yes and work hard.

C: She says to me excellent and I remember when I was doing that hat and she said it was really, really good.

I: It was really, really good, [------], yes.

C: Well some people in our class we have groups and we do different things because theres these, these easy ones, there's these easy book and hard book, and well there's red group, yellow group, green group and blue group, and blues the best and then it, it goes red, yellow, green, blue.

C: Blues the highest.

C: Blues the highest and the reds lowest, but it doesn't mean you're really rubbish.

C: It just means that we've got lots of work.

I: Okay, one more thing, yes [------]. Lottie, me; [------] and [------] are on the blue team, [------]'s on the green team.

C: Red.

I: Okay, right, we're on the last questions, you're doing really well okay, before these tests take place does Ms [------] say stuff like if you do really well I'll be really happy with you.

C: Yes (+1).

I: She puts us on the rainbow.

C: Yes.

I: She puts us on the rainbow if we be extra good.

C: She nearly put me on the rainbow.

C: I got on the rainbow for speaking clearly.

I: Okay, another one I'm going to ask you about these tests, does Ms [------] say they are very important for your future.

C: Yes (+1).

I: What does she say about your future.

C: I don't know what it is.

C: I forgot.

I: What does she say.

C: She says we do this tests because it's, it shows when you go to high school what grade, what grade you need to be because you, when you're in year 6 you just don't have to go year 7 you can go to year 8, it depends how good you are.

I: Okay, yes [------].

C: Well if you like good and extra work good and then she like then puts you on the rainbow exactly like if you like, if you like really thinking a lot, like really thinking, thinking, then she'll put you on the rainbow and then...
she gives you a certificate to take home.
I: Yes, but does she say that these tests are important for your future.
C: Yes.
C: She says, she does the test, so we can like learn more and spell more and write more because like some people do like the 6 the wrong way around.
I: Okay, okay.
C: And that’s how we learn numbers.
I: Yes, okay, yes [-----].
C: Well when you, when you’re sat at the table you have to be silent for the whole lesson when you’re doing the test.
I: When you’re doing the test, okay.
C: Because then you’ll like shout out.
I: Yes, because then people can’t concentrate.
C: And if you shout out the answer everyone will know it.
I: Let’s listen to [-----].
C: Well if someone shouts at the answer but it might be wrong and if somebody looks at the other person they might be wrong so then they’ll get it wrong and everybody looked at each others and somebody, and somebody started looking at one of them and they got it wrong then everybody copied each other and then not everybody would get it wrong.
I: Right okay, I’m going to go around the table, is there anything else you want me to tell about, tell me about these tests, [-----].
C: No.
I: [-----].
C: No.
I: [-----].
C: No.
I: [-----].
C: Yes.
I: What.
C: Well some of the tests are easy and some of them are hard.
I: Some of them are easy and some are hard, [-----].
C: Yes, I want to tell you.
I: What do you want me to, what do you want to tell me.
C: These are hard tests sometimes and sometimes when we make things they’re a bit hard but these tests are how we learn.
[Concluding talk]
**Appendix 13 - Year 6 Focus Group (Transcript 10)**

P = Participant (Teacher)

C = Focus Group Children

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**[Introductory talk]**

> I: I’m going to talk to you about SATs and I’m going to ask you some question about SATs, the questions that I want to ask is what, what’s your teacher called Ms [-----].

> C: Yes (>1).

> I: I want to ask you what Ms [-----] is saying to you about the SATs okay, right so, let me just check you know what the SATs are yes.

> C: Yes (>1).

> I: I’d be worried if you didn’t know what the SATs are, you know what the SATs are [-----].

> C: Yes.

> I: Excellent, okay, right, first question I’ll leave it open and then everyone can chip in, there’s no right or wrong answers okay, so you might say something but [-----] you might not agree or [-----] you might think something different or [-----] might think something different okay, so tell me what does your teacher say to you about SATs.

> C: Like it’s not difficult.

> I: Okay.

> C: Just think that’s it’s not hard.

> I: It’s not hard okay.

> C: And like keep your head down and like work hard and then hopefully you’ll become a level 5.

> C: Focus.

> I: By the end of year like.

> C: Okay.

> C: And we do like practice SATs and we did some last week and which we got, we’re getting told our grades and then we get and then it’s just to help us to do what, like it’s what to do in the in real SATs.

> I: And you said [-----] focus.

> C: Focus and keep your head down and do it.

> I: Okay [-----], do you, do you, what do you think Ms [-----] says to you about SATs.

> C: To speed up what I do because I get most of the questions right but I’ll leave a couple of the questions out because of the time.

> I: Right, so she’s telling you to work a bit faster, okay, Jess.

> C: Try harder.

> I: Yes.

> C: Try harder, keep your head down and try and get a level 5.

> I: Okay, so a couple of you are aiming for a level 5.

> C: And I’m aiming for a level 4.

> I: And is Ms [-----] telling you what you should be aiming for.

> C: Yes (>1).

> C: Ms [-----]’s like, Ms [-----] said to us if you get stuck on a question don’t take too long on to it just move on but then if you’ve got time at the end come back to it.

> C: Like two minutes on each question and then.

> C: And then if you miss something out come back to it at the end.

> I: Okay, what about you [-----], what’s Ms saying to you about the SATs, the same as what the others are saying.

> C: She says concentrate and as long you know you’ve tried your hardest it doesn’t matter what level you get.

> I: Okay, is that true it doesn’t matter what level you get as long as you try hardest.

> C: No.

> C: Because you can’t do more than that.

> C: Try your hardest.

> I: If you try your hardest well that’s it.

> C: Yes, okay, does Ms [-----] say stuff like why it’s important to do well in these tests.

> C: Yes.

> C: Yes to see what you can get to like in college and university.

> C: And then see what set you are in high school.

> C: You want to get a good education, work.

> I: G on [-----].

> C: Get a good education, get a good life.

> I: Okay, so it’s for your future, you were saying [-----].

> C: Like in high school you like get you’re A’s and B’s and your C’s and if you get like a really good you’ll go to a better university and not a bad university or a college.

> I: Okay and then after that you’ll get a better job.

> C: Yes (>1).

> I: Yes, is that right yes, okay, I’m just thinking about some of the other things that Ms [-----] might say to you about these tests before you take them, you said something that you know try your best, yes, does she tell you not to worry or, or stuff like that.

> C: She tells us not to worry.

> C: Because it’s not that hard.

> C: Because it’s not that hard, but when you come to your actual SATs you get like.

> C: Trick questions.

> C: Get like trick questions,

> I: Yes.

> C: And stuff you’ve already done but you forget what you’ve already done.

> I: Okay.

> C: Because you’re nervous.
C: And then because like they change the words and stuff like, what is the sum off.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Of 7 and 8.
I: What does Ms say about when you’re nervous, does she say anything before the exams or before the test or throughout the year is Ms saying something to you.
C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: So you get confused.
C: So you’re nervous.
I: Yes.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
C: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
I: What does Ms say about when you’re nervous, does she say anything before the exams or before the test or throughout the year is Ms saying something to you.
C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
C: So you get confused.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
C: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
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I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
C: So you get confused.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
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I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
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C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
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C: So you get confused.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
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C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
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I: What does Ms say about when you’re nervous, does she say anything before the exams or before the test or throughout the year is Ms saying something to you.
C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
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I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
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I: What does Ms say about when you’re nervous, does she say anything before the exams or before the test or throughout the year is Ms saying something to you.
C: She just says take a deep breath.
I: Take a deep breath, yes.
C: And get your head down and try your hardest that’s all you can do.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
C: So you get confused.
I: So you just work on that all the way through the year.
C: Like the addition.
I: Yes.
I: Yes, what about if you didn’t do so well.
C: Your parents would still be happy because you’ve tried your best haven’t you.
I: Yes.
C: They’ll still be proud of you but.
I: They would have said, but if you could have tried a bit harder and like.
C: You could have got your level that you were working to.
I: Because we’ve done, a big write last week which is like you have to at least write a full page of writing, we wrote a letter to santa.
C: A persuasive letter.
I: A persuasive letter then Ms went through it with individual people and my target is to get to level 5 in literacy, so if I, I need to get level 5 in literacy, and because when.
I: Does Ms do that a lot go through and say to you.
C: And say, and you highlight.
I: What levels you work off.
C: Like with us.
I: In reading, I think it was two days wasn’t it, when Ms Tattersal, when, two days
C: Yesterday.
I: Yes it was yesterday, yes it was yesterday and Ms Tattersal.
C: Took us out.
I: Took us out and said like because we’re reading the small like two pages and that’s it and then like if you’ve done well you go onto the second like because I was on 29 and then Ms said well let’s try level, let’s go on 30 and said you’re definitely a level 4 reader but you can try your best and try and get a level 5 in reading.
C: Like complicated words as well inside them, it’s only like a two page book, but they’re really complicated words.
I: Yes.
C: I’m at level 4 too, she said I was reading at level 4 and that.
I: You’re reading level 4, okay, yes, okay, so Ms is telling you how to do better, yes.
C: You can try your best.
I: Try your best.
C: And do everything like you’ve learnt throughout, throughout the year.
I: What about some of the harder questions so you can get a higher grade, what does Ms say about them.
C: You get more marks on the other harder questions like on one question if it’s like a timed question or something.
C: You get like.
I: You can get one mark and if it likes, there’s a writing question like seven lines and there’s two marks Miss said just write, if you don’t even know it just have a go and see if you can get like the two marks, the big one.
C: The working out ones, so if there’s a box that’s says that you need to work out that’s how you can get extra marks.
C: You’d probably get two because if you don’t look at the boxes besides you and it and you don’t focus on the boxes but you do need to focus on your writing but the boxes if you do look carefully it might say three or one or two marks.
I: Yes.
C: So you need to look out for them because you can do more, if you put more detail in it and then you will probably get them two or three marks.
I: And read questions carefully.
C: And then in the big boxes she says instead of writing a big paragraph do bullet points because it’s not asking you for full sentences.
I: Yes, so miss is telling how to answer the questions.
C: Yes.
I: Yes, I want to ask this one to you [-----], does Ms say anything like if you don’t do really well in these tests, these SATs that we are going to do, I won’t be happy with your or your parents won’t be happy.
C: No.
I: No she never, she never said that.
C: Never says anything like that.
I: No (>1).
I: Okay, does she say stuff like if you don’t well in these tests then in the future you might not do so well.
C: Yes (>1).
I: Sometimes.
C: Sometimes, she just says you don’t want to be put in the bottom, you don’t want to be put in the bottom set in high school.
I: Yes.
C: Because loads of people don’t care about what they are going to do in their lives, they’re just going to mess everything up.
I: Because they’ll be, say if we got like three marks in a 50 question test, just, Ms said well if you, if you get like really low you’ll be put in the.
C: The bottom set.
C: In reading, I think it was two days wasn’t it, when Ms Tattersal.
I: Okay.
C: Okay.
I: Okay.
C: And don’t care and throw all the papers and which will stop you getting a proper job.
I: Okay.
C: And like if you get a middle mark which is like a level 4 or 4a or a 4c, if you, if you get middle marks then you’ll probably be put in the middle or the high, top sets.
I: You get put in set 3.
C: You get put in set 3.
I: Right, so Ms is saying that if you doing really you’ll get put into better sets.
C: Yes (>1).
I: Okay, so do you guys worry about going to high school.
C: No.
I: Okay, so do you guys worry about going to high school.
C: No.
I: I’m looking forward to it.
C: I’m looking forward to it.
C: Yes I'm looking forward to it.  
C: Because I've been to high school.  
I: Just, just, what about you [...].  
C: Sort off.  
I: Sort off, what do you worry about.  
C: The strict teachers.  
I: It will be different because you'll have so many teachers different teachers and [...] you were saying yes.  
C: And like in every lesson you'll probably get like two pieces, three sheets of homework and then you probably have to bring in like the next day.  
C: The next day.  
C: Eight of them on one day.  
I: Because eight pieces of homework.  
C: Because you have like a lot of classes.  
C: Music, PE, geography.  
C: Science.  
I: Drama, but, the how big the school, how big the high schools are compared to our school it's easy to get lost.  
C: Like if you go down.  
C: You'll be the smallest won't you.  
C: Yes.  
I: You'll be the smallest won't you.  
C: Like if you go down to this corridor.  
I: Yes.  
C: We'll be like the dwarves.  
C: We're the oldest here.  
I: Yes.  
C: Then when we're going there, we're going to be like the little ones.  
I: The little ones yes  
C: Okay, I was just thinking throughout the year, you know so far from September to December, is Ms saying things like I know you can do really well in these tests.  
C: Yes (>1).  
C: She's saying that a lot of the time like don't give up on yourself, like if you're doing the SATs papers and you just looking around.  
C: Keep pushing, keep pushing yourself.  
I: Keep pushing, keep pushing yourself.  
C: Yes, like losing your concentration and then you just sit down like you're doing this question and then you don't get and you just go like that, you don't get it.  
C: And it's like sometimes where you write down but then your mind just goes blank and then you just write down any answer.  
C: If you don't understand you move on.  
C: Like when you don't read them properly because I had one the other week and it, it said that how many days altogether did Rosie have off and I, I put everyone have off, but then I didn't read it properly so, so it got marked wrong.  
I: Right.  
C: You could have got another mark if you read it properly.  
I: Yes, so Ms is telling you to read properly.  
C: Yes (>1).  
I: Yes, like read it really carefully, read it two times and then when you get it you just write down what you think, and if you get that mark you'll be proud of yourself.  
I: Okay.  
C: Don't rush it.  
I: Don't rush it, okay, [...], how often are you doing these practice tests, how many times have you done them so far.  
C: About five or six  
C: Once a month or something.  
C: Sometimes two weeks if.  
C: Every two weeks probably.  
C: Every two to four weeks we do like a selection or something.  
I: Every two to three weeks.  
C: Like we do mental maths and we do a practice SATs.  
I: We normally do a mental maths like every week which is just like.  
C: 20 questions.  
I: 20 questions where you have to like Ms reads them out and it's like what is the sum off 23 and 40 and then you just put at the top and then like I went into the shop with ten pound I bought two drinks for £2.50 how much change should I get and then you just write that down.  
C: Yes, so you practicing like because you have certain time answers, 5 seconds and then it has 10 seconds and then it has 15 and then that's the rest.  
I: Okay, I'm going to ask this one to you [...], is Ms saying things like you know when the SATs are going to come up, just she keep telling you that the SATs are going to come up.  
I: Yes (>1).  
C: Yes, she tells us they're coming up in May.  
I: So she's trying to get us ready for them.
C: And she’s trying to scare by Mr SATs man.
I: Who’s Mr SATs man.
C: The person that mark our SATs.
I: What’s Mr SATs man.
C: She says that he’s in a dungeon, marking them and he’s really evil.
C: And he tries to get catch us out.
C: Trick us like.
C: But I’m not looking forward to the SATs.
C: I’m looking forward to the SATs.
C: It’s on my birthday.
I: Is it hard work the SATs.
C: No (>1).
C: Not really.
C: You don’t worry about anything you just get on with it.
C: If you get worried.
C: If you get complicated questions like I’ll.
C: Like if you worry about something, you lose your concentration.
I: Yes, what did you say [-----].
C: All the complicated questions, I just try to focus on them and get, try and get as many marks as I can.
I: And not worry, so you just try your best worry yes.
C: If you worry you get all flustered and then you don’t do your best, the best as you can.
I: Is that what Ms is saying to you.
C: And then fail.
I: Yes okay.
C: I’m not very good at maths but my two strong points are literacy because I’m in the top group in literacy, I’m in the second group at maths.
C: So am I.
C: Yes me too.
C: And in the SATs paper on spelling and grammar that’s one of my strongest points.
C: Yes because.
C: I’m in that middle group in maths.
I: Yes.
C: And like I’m a level 3 because I’m not that good at maths but Ms said that I’m working towards a level 4.
C: A.
I: Does Ms say to you say that in your SATs you have to get a level 4 or you.
C: When you’re in year 6, you should be at the level thingy of level 4a or level 5.
I: Is that what Ms is saying to you.
C: At least a level 4c.
C: Because [-----]s a level 5.
C: 4b.
C: 4b in maths but Ms said that you’re working towards a level 5.
I: Okay.
C: And I’m level 4, a B in literacy and working to a level 5.
I: Yes.
C: I’m a 3c, I’m on way up.
I: So you’re working towards a 4, okay so Ms is saying to you that everyone is expected to get a 4.
C: Yes (>1).
C: 4 or 5.
I: Some of you can push yourselves and do a bit more better.
C: Yes.
I: Ms is saying that, yes.
C: That’s for me, that’s me.
I: Yes, that’s you, yes.
C: That I can my try my best and push myself but not that much push myself but.
I: Just a bit more.
C: Just a bit more so I get the answers.
I: So you like straight where you want to be, like.
C: Like a 4a.
I: Like if you wanted to be a level 4c, well if Ms wanted you to be a level 4c.
C: Yes.
I: You just try to impress.
C: She’ll push you a bit more if you’re like a level 3.
I: And then you just try to impress her and see your skills in maths and then you go to a level 4b.
I: Yes, yes.
C: You’ll still be proud of yourself when you do it.
I: Yes, is that right [-----], yes, as long as you try your best, yes, and Ms is telling you to work hard, yes, okay, that kind of covers all my questions that I wanted to ask, I’m just looking up to see if there’s anything else, yes does Ms say stuff like that, you know let’s just say you should be getting a level 4.
C: Yes (>1).
I: Yes, that’s the, that’s the.
C: That’s the minimum.
I: We should be doing that.
C: Because that’s like the.
I: Does she say that if you didn’t get that, I’ll be disappointed in you.
C: No.
C: No, she won’t say I’ll be disappointed.
C: She’ll say you could have tried your best.
I: What will she say [-----].
C: She'll be a little bit upset.
I: A little bit upset okay.
C: Yes. that you haven’t got a level 4.
C: She says you’ll probably be disappointed in yourself if you know if you haven’t tried your hardest and got a
level 4.
C: Got a level like 2, 3.
C: And you just like messed around in your SATs and.
I: Yes.
C: And you got your papers ripped up.
C: And then you have a no mark and then you’ll be like you’ve got a zero even because you won’t get a mark.
C: So you won’t get a mark yes, so she’s, so she wants you to work hard and try your best and she’ll be only
disappointed in you if you didn’t try your best.
I: Yes. Yes (+1).
C: Yes, is that right, yes, is there anything else you want to tell me about the SATs and I’ll go around and ask [-----]
do you want to tell me anything about the SATs what Ms is saying about the SATs that we haven’t talked
about, you have a think I’ll come back to you, [-----].
C: No.
I: [-----].
C: Try your best and get on with your work.
I: Yes, Ms is saying that to you all the time, okay what about you [-----].
C: No.
I: Yes.
C: Work hard.
I: Work hard.
C: Close your eyes for a minute.
C: Just think you’re in a white room and just a table and pencil.
C: Pencil, ruler.
C: Pencil.
C: Close your eyes for a minute.
C: Just think you’re in a white room with you.
C: Think about by yourself just and you’ve got to complete that.
C: Complete this one, and you’re done.
C: It’s over.
I: It’s over.
C: And once you’ve done it you just like.
I: I’ve just thought about one more question that I want you and then we’ve finished okay, I know everyone’s got
their individual targets, Ms is saying to [-----], [-----], you know and to you guys that your targets this, your
targets that, your targets that, throughout the year, you know from, in the last few months has Ms been telling
you how to get that target.
C: Yes.
I: How do you know that.
C: Yesterday, I had to get to a level 4a in literacy because I have to use commas to mark a clause.
C: That’s what I have to do.
I: So Ms is telling you what you need to do to get to that level 4.
C: Yes.
C: I could get to a level 4a, just for doing commas.
I: Is that right.
C: My strong points literacy though.
I: And does Ms tell you how to do better.
C: She tells me to add more punctuation in.
I: And stuff like that yes, is that also the same for you [-----], yes.
C: Mines like I should be working at a level 4, but I’m a level 3.
[Concluding talk]
Appendix 14 - Teacher Diaries and Instruction

Instructions:

I am interested in the language you are using when preparing children for the SATs/important tests.

Specifically I want to know:

- What language statements are you using. Please write actual statements e.g. these SATs/tests are very important for you.
- If you are using two or more different statements together, please write these e.g. these SATs/tests are important for your future and you can prepare by practising these questions.
- Please indicate whether statements are aimed at the whole class (code = WC) or individual children (code = IC).
- If you are using the same statements repeatedly please indicate this using a *.
Appendix 15 - Initial Questionnaire Draft

Biographical Data

This information is for classification purposes and will not be used to identify you in any way. It is to help us find out the type of teachers that responded to the questionnaire.

- Gender (male, female).
- Class Taught (Year 2, Year 6).
- Age (under 25, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+).
- Experience working as a teacher (0-2, 3-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+).
- What is your school’s Ofsted grade for the overall effectiveness of the school (outstanding, good, requires improvement/satisfactory, inadequate/special measures, don’t know).
- How would you rate the overall effectiveness of your school (above average, average, below average, don’t know).
- SES question.

Use of Language Statements

To what extent do you agree with the following statements; please select only one item for each response (strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree).

Outcome related Statements

- The children in my class are informed about the importance of doing well in SATs/tests for their future (e.g. high school, future career, etc.).
- The children in my class are told that unless they work hard they will not do well in their SATs/tests.
- I tell the children in my class that if they don’t do well in their SATs/tests it will affect their future (e.g. high school, future career, etc.).
- I ask children in my class what would happen if they did not get their expected level in the SATs/tests.
- I ask children in my class what would happen if they did they did get their expected level in the SATs/tests.
- I tell children in my class that they will feel really good if they got their expected level in the SATs/tests.
- I ask the children in my class how they would feel if they did not get their expected level in the SATs/tests.
- The tests will show how clever you are.
- I ask the children in my class how other people (e.g. the teacher, parents, etc.) would feel if they did not do well in their SATs/tests.
- The children in the class are told of the rewards for doing well in the SATs/tests.

Importance of SAT/tests and Reminders

- The children in my class are reminded that the SATs/tests are getter nearer.
- I tell the children in my class that the SATs/tests are very important.
- The children in the class are told that the SATs/tests are not far away.
- I don’t tell the children that they are doing their SATs/tests.
• The children in my class are fully aware of the SATs/tests.
• I regularly remind children of the importance of the SATs/tests.
• I tell children about the reasons of doing SATs/tests.
• I tell the children that we do SATs/tests to find out what they are good at and what they are not so good at.
• In the build up towards the SATs/tests, the children do a lot of practice SATs/tests and related questions.

Efficacious Related Communication & Confidence Building

• The children in my class are told they need to work hard in order for them to get their expected level.
• The children in my class receive extra support (e.g. one-to-one support, focused group work) to help them prepare for the SATs/tests.
• In preparation for the SATs/tests, I teach the children how to approach and answer test questions.
• I give the children in my class feedback about their work to help them prepare for the SATs/tests.
• In tests, I tell the children to show off their skills.
• The children are told in tests to show how clever they are.
• I praise children in my class when they have done well.
• Children in the class are given targets to help them prepare for SATs/tests.
• I say to children when they are doing the SATs/tests that they can do it.
• Prior to doing the SATs/tests, I remind the children that they are fully prepared and will do well.
• I remind children in my class of their previous successes to build their confidence.
• The children in my class are told to show off their skills in SATs/tests.
• The children in my class are told to show off what they’ve learnt in SATs/tests.
• I show the children how to answer specific questions.
• I talk to children about how far they’ve come in their learning.
• I complete practice SATs/tests with the children, so I can then talk to them about how to improve.
• The children are told to focus and concentrate in the SATs/tests.
• I teach the children exam technique, such as telling them to move onto the next question if they are stuck.
• The children in class are told what they need to do in order to get their expected level.
• I talk to children about how to get higher marks in SATs/tests, such as showing your working, read the question carefully etc.
• I talk to children in my class about the steps they need to do in order to get a particular level.
• Prior to tests, the children know what they have to include to get a particular mark for a given question.

Expectation & Challenge

• I communicate to children in the class the levels they are expected to get.
• The children in my class know what levels they should be getting.
• I challenge the children in my class to beat their previous scores.
• When we are doing tasks in the class, I motivate the children by saying who can achieve the highest score/do the most work.
• The children in my class are aware of the high expectations I have for them.
• If children in my class are not working hard, I will let them know.

Reassuring Messages

• I tell the children in my class that they don’t need to worry about the SATs/tests.
• The children in my class are told that the SATs/tests is only one test and information from teacher assessments can be used to see how well they are doing.
• The children in my class know that it does not matter what level they get, as long as they have given their best effort.
• I tell the children that are SATs/tests are nothing to be scared off and not different to anything we have already done in the class.
• The children in my class are told that the SATs/tests are not hard.
• I tell the children it is not end of the world if they don’t do well in the SATs/tests.
• The children in my class are told it does not matter what level they get.
• I tell the children in my class that not everyone will get a particular level.

Frequency - Descriptive/Enumerative

Time Dependent Statements

• Depending on the time of year the types of things I will say to the children about the SATS/tests will differ.
• As the SATs/tests get closer, I will remind the children more about the importance of SATs/tests.
• At the beginning of the year I am telling the children more about the importance of working hard.

Universal and Targeted Language

• When preparing the children for tests, I say the same types of things to all the children.
• What I say to children depends on the individual child.
• I tend to use more reassuring and confidence building language for children who are of lower ability.
• I tend to use more reassuring and confidence building language for children who are of higher ability.
• For higher ability children, I use language that will push them to get a better level in their SATs/tests.
• For lower ability children, I use language that will push them to get a better level in their SATs/tests.
• For children who are anxious, I will use more reassuring language to ease their worries.
• The relationship I have developed with the children is important in determining what I can say to specific children.

Frequency of Statements.

Please read the following questions and decide how frequently you use the type of statements generally in your classroom. (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never).

• Language statements that mention the consequences of doing well, e.g. better sets in high school, better future, child will feel better, teacher and parents will be proud.
• Language statements that mention the consequences of not doing so well, e.g. lower sets in high school, parent/teachers will be disappointed, child will be disappointed with their performance.
Language statements that are about building children’s confidence by encouraging them and giving them the self-belief that they can do well, e.g. you can do it, look how far you’ve come this year, highlighting their successes, etc.

Language statements that are related to helping the children develop their knowledge and skills so they are able to better answer questions and progress in their learning. This includes showing the children how they can move up a level and the skills/knowledge they need to develop, as well as giving them feedback about their previous work.

Language statements that focus on telling the children to try their best, work hard and show off their skills.

Reassuring and calming language statements to ease the children’s worries and anxieties, e.g. it’s only one test, it’s nothing you can’t do, don’t worry, you will be fine, etc.

Communicating to the children the importance of SATs/tests and giving them regular reminders that the SATs/tests are approaching.

Beliefs, etc.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements; please select only one item for each response (strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree).

Control/Teacher Efficacy

- I feel I have sufficient control over the children’s preparations for SATs/tests.
- I am able to prepare the children for the SATs/tests effectively in the classroom.
- My teaching is the key factor in ensuring the children make progress in the classroom.
- I am confident that I am able to motivate the children in my class to do well in their SATs/tests.

Fear Domain Beliefs

- Children can be motivated to work out of fear of not doing well in their SATs/tests.
- Messages from teachers, intended to be encouraging, may be interpreted by children as worrying or anxiety provoking.
- Some children’s fear of failure is so great that it prevents them from doing well in their SATs/tests.
- Children can be encouraged to do better by telling them the negative consequences of not working hard enough.
- Reminding children about the SATs/tests can worry them and affect their performance.

Efficacy Domain Beliefs

- Children in my class know the effort required to do well in their SATs/tests.
- Children in my class know how to prepare effectively for their SATs/tests.
- Children in my class understand the importance of doing well in the SATs/tests for their future.
- Children in my class know how to approach the SATs/tests (i.e. exam technique) to get good marks.

Value of SATs/tests

- The SATs/tests are very important for the children.
- The SATs/tests are very important to the school.
- Teacher assessments are more important than the SATs/tests.
- High schools do not care about the children’s SATs/tests results.
Dependency

- Primary school children are very dependent on the adults around them and need the adult support.
- When children are in secondary school, they need to be more independent and less dependent on adults.
- Primary age children need adults to build their confidence and self-belief.
- Primary age children need carefully supporting so they are able to develop the skills needed to do well in education.

Teaching Philosophy

- Primary school is about the children having fun and learning.
- You have to be very positive when working with primary age children.
- In all my interactions with children in class, I make sure that I am always very supportive and nurturing.
- Primary age children are very young and it is not right to put pressure on them.
Appendix 16 - Questionnaire Domains and Related Items

Section A - What Language (Domains & Items)

Consequential Statements

Positive

- The children are told about the importance of doing well in tests for their future (e.g. high school, career). Q1
- I tell the children that other people (e.g. teachers, parents) would be happy if they did well in their tests. Q2

Negative

- The children are told that unless they work hard they will not do well in their tests. Q3
- I tell the children that if they don’t do well in their tests it will affect their future (e.g. high school, career). Q4

Efficacy Related Statements

- In the classroom, I talk to children about the steps they need to do in order to get a particular level. Q5
- I give the children in my class feedback about their work to help them prepare for tests. Q6
- The children are told they need to work hard in order to get their expected levels. Q7
- In preparation for tests, I teach the children exam technique e.g. how to answer questions, moving on if they’re stuck, showing their working in mathematics, etc. Q8

Reassuring Messages

- I tell the children that it’s not the end of the world if they don’t do well in the tests. Q9
- I tell the children in my class that they don’t need to worry about the tests they have to do. Q10
- I tell the children the tests are nothing to be scared of. Q11
- The children are told it does not matter what level they get in tests, as long as they’ve tried their best. Q12

Confidence Building messages

- Prior to tests, children are reminded of their previous successes to build their confidence. Q13
- I praise children in my class when they have done well on a task. Q14
- I tell children to show off their skills in tests. Q15
- Before tests, I remind children they are fully prepared and will do well. Q16

Reminders

- The children are regularly reminded when tests are coming up. Q17

Importance

- I tell the children that the tests they do are very important. Q18

Individual vs Universal Language

- I use more attainment driven language for higher achieving children to push them to get a higher level. Q19
- When preparing children for tests, I say the same things to all children regardless of their ability. Q20
Section B - Frequency of Language

- Importance. Q21
- Positive consequential. Q22
- Negative consequential. Q23
- Confidence building. Q24
- Efficacy skill development. Q25
- Reassuring and calming. Q26
- Reminders. Q27

Section C - Why (Domains & Items)

Control

- I feel I have sufficient control over the children's preparations for important tests. Q28
- I am able to prepare the children effectively for important tests in the classroom. Q29

View of Tests

- The tests that children do, such as SATs, are very important. Q30
- Teacher assessments are more important than the tests that children do. Q31

Fear Domain Belief

- Messages from teachers, intending to be encouraging, can be interpreted by children as worrying. Q32
- Children can be encouraged to do better by telling them the negative consequences of not working hard. Q33

Efficacy Domain Belief

- Children in my class know how to prepare effectively for important tests to achieve their levels. Q34
- Children in my class know the effort required in order to well in important tests. Q35

Dependency

- When children are in secondary school, they need to be more independent and less dependent on adults. Q36
- Primary school children are very dependent on the adults around them and need adult support. Q37

Philosophy

- Primary age children are very young and it is not right to pressure them. Q38
- Primary school is about children having fun, learning and getting a well-rounded education. Q39
# TEACHER COMMUNICATION FOR TEST PREPARATION

This questionnaire seeks to find out information about your language use when preparing children for important tests (such as SATs). It is likely that as you go through the questionnaire, some of the questions will make you think about your practice, and this may take some time, as the questions address different aspects of language use.

All responses collected are anonymous and will be treated as confidential. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

## SECTION A – WHAT YOU SAY IN THE CLASSROOM

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements; please select only one item for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The children are told about the importance of doing well in tests for their future (e.g. high school, career).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are told it does not matter what level they get in tests, as long as they've tried their best.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When preparing children for tests, I say the same things to all children regardless of their ability.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell the children that other people (e.g. teachers, parents) would be happy if they did well in their tests.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The children are told they need to work hard in order to get their expected levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior to tests, children are reminded of their previous successes to build their confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use more attainment driven language for higher achieving children to push them to get a higher level.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give the children in my class feedback about their work to help them prepare for tests.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell the children the tests are nothing to be scared of.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are told that unless they work hard they will not do well in their tests.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In preparation for tests, I teach the children exam technique e.g. how to answer questions, moving on if they're stuck, showing their working in mathematics, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell the children that it's not the end of the world if they don't do well in the tests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell the children in my class that they don't need to worry about the tests they have to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I praise children in my class when they have done well on a task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell the children that if they don't do well in their tests it will affect their future (e.g. high school, career).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classroom, I talk to children about the steps they need to do in order to get a particular level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The children are regularly reminded when tests are coming up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell children to show off their skills in tests.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before tests, I remind children they are fully prepared and will do well.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell the children that the tests they do are very important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher expectations are more important than the text.</td>
<td>Teacher expectations are more important than the text.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to prepare the children mentally for important tests in the classroom.</td>
<td>I am able to prepare the children mentally for important tests in the classroom.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can be encouraged to do better by telling them the negative consequences of not working hard.</td>
<td>Children can be encouraged to do better by telling them the negative consequences of not working hard.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tests that children do, such as SATs, are very important.</td>
<td>The tests that children do, such as SATs, are very important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children in my class know the effort required in order to do well in important tests.</td>
<td>Children in my class know the effort required in order to do well in important tests.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many schools are reviewing their math, science, and foreign language programs to ensure they are more effective.</td>
<td>Many schools are reviewing their math, science, and foreign language programs to ensure they are more effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>School planning and the use of centralized or off-campus, online, and other kinds of schools.</td>
<td>School planning and the use of centralized or off-campus, online, and other kinds of schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel students controls over their own participation for important tests.</td>
<td>I feel students controls over their own participation for important tests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students agree and very good and it is not hard to pass these exams.</td>
<td>Students agree and very good and it is not hard to pass these exams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To make election you are asked in the following questions, please select one answer. For each statement, mark either “Agree” or “Disagree”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A – Why you are doing certain things in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are encouraging regular engagement with the text. The text is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the text isn’t working, you will work to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the text isn’t working, you will work to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are encouraging regular engagement with the text. The text is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are encouraging regular engagement with the text. The text is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the text isn’t working, you will work to change it.</td>
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<td>You are encouraging regular engagement with the text. The text is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are encouraging regular engagement with the text. The text is engaging.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication in children is important. Is communication always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never. How frequently are you using communication with children in your classroom.
Appendix 18 - Coding Manual (Teacher Interviews)

The following codes were derived from the literature and utilised in Stage 1 of the thematic analysis.

**Fear Appeals**

- Highlighting importance of exams.
- Esteem damaging effects of not doing well.
- The need to get high grades.
- The need to get a certain grade.
- You will fail if you don’t work hard/revise.
- If you don’t do well it will affect your future/career.

**Efficacy Appeals**

- Emphasise effort to improve grades.
- Offering additional support.
- Talk about general preparation.
- Esteem boosting effects of doing well.
- Feedback.
- Praise.

**Reassuring**

- Try your best, grade not important.
- Downplaying importance.
- Not career defining, specific.
Illustrative coding examples.
List of initial codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Transcript 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not communicated as SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Show off, show me how much you’ve learnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No practice of SATs e.g. mock test, just do them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy, practising just for riddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Everything else normal classroom practice, no specific practice of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy preparation riddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Preparatory learning (format), similar topics in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practising topic of SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children have misplaced confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Giving encouragement to build confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicating feedback/efficacy, what do you need to add</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Encouragement and feedback mixed together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>That’s brilliant how can we do it better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Preparation in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Becoming independent, show me evidence, relate to target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy support to develop learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Extra support efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mild fear, show this work to teachers, and want you try your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mild fear and try your best combination of statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SATs not communicated to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers are going to read so work hard, mild threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Minor fear show this to other teachers, communicating importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy encouraging and reminding about previous successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accuracy of questions, e.g. one test on a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SATs only some of data, less pressure for teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Try our best general class approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knowing children importance, affects language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Effort is most frequent type of language used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School ethos, we are a very positive school, link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Encourage children all the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children are dependent, younger children need more reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Praise in preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have another go, in preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Need comforting adult, reassuring presence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No effect on children, children not aware of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children find positive, novelty and attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enthusiasm to try best effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative child effect does happen (individual), need reassuring adult to calm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Transcript 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exam/test preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy practice papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy practice, format practice papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preparation in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peer knowledge of SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academically able like challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Expectation communication (average level 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children aware of their own expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy levels, what level expectation and how to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children aware of expectation through written targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Esteem consequence, how good it would be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You should be moving to 4, not you should be a 4 (expectation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SATs importance communicated, for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Try your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy half marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Half marks takes pressure off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Future impact, high school communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance for future communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SATs very important held by teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reiteration of belief, you can do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not to worry communicated, children panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassurance communication, non-verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassuring children (some)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You can do it, nothing hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassurance communication that everything is covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reason for SATs communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Massively important for school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Massively important for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassurance that capable of doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Saying we’ve got faith in then, build confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy/feedback, on how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marking ladders as efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Extra support, efficacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy communication, that do this skill then will make progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belief about making children independent, but also do scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sometimes reminders about SATs communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timescales SATs communicated, week/days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reminders, importance highlighted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belief that they are young, lot of pressure for children (empathic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Motivation and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassuring children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Motivation and reassurance to build confidence (children lack confident belief?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High use of reassuring and calming because of young view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Language varying at different time points of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Closer to exams more fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not end of world and then efficacy (after practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance increased as year progresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Consequence of SATs communicated, result effect on child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mild threat do you realise how close, realise why we are doing this, for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>some children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Link between teacher view of SATs and language, high importance personally and child, then more fear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Effects of doing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Effect of not doing so well</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Esteem effect, positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What parents would think, only for children not pulling weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mild threat for individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tried your best, then ok, grade don’t matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outcome driven talk, if child did well or didn’t, what would it look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance of effort, constantly repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tension about growing up and being children</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Have to communicate importance for future</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Give lower ability confidence by encourage</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teacher communication varies according to characteristic of child (see ADHD book about what makes effective teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Different effects of SATs on children, some excited, some worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lower ability, reassurance, confidence you can do it</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High ability, don’t need reassurance, threats if you not doing well</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy making independence in developing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reminding children of previous successes</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Trying your best, universal approach</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>You are capable of expectation</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Some children are anxious in group</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Some children want to get highest level</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some children don’t care about level</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Expectation, target approach communicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Highlighting their achievements, for worriers and anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No pressure from parents on teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pressure from government</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pressure exists</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Belief that can help children</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Celebrate child’s achievement and effort philosophy, regardless of level</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Less focused communication after</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>After it is going to be different, they’re going to high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Less focus on importance message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Less communication after SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Less efficacy after SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Continuation of reassurance and motivating statements after SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low confidence children need reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children don’t have confidence, reassurance of their strength and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes drive effort, pushing children to get the best. No talks of consequences after SATs. Esteem threat. Giving people ownership by saying what do you want and if you don’t get that how will you feel, individual. If child says parent won’t be happy (esteem threat), then how can we avoid. No use of statements like people will be disappointed with you. What do you want from your SATs and if you don’t get that (esteem threat), then efficacy combination.

Child-centred, making children take ownership of behaviour and learning. Children low ability need their confidence building (different for older children, is that view no longer held) - why? Low ability need motivation, high ability don’t need motivating. Parents will be unhappy with you, indirectly said, mild threat. Infrequent fear use.

Challenging higher ability, how well, how can you push yourselves? SATs done in the classroom. SATs in a relaxed environment. Reassuring views, not be all and end all. Teacher understands that language can worry. Little warning about task coming up. Show how good you are and what you’ve learnt. Task language used rather than SATs, not to worry children. Task language relaxed children. Tests can worry children. Very little reminder nearer the time. Show off current skills. Family communication about SATs. Some children know it through peers and siblings. Remind them of the skills they’ve learnt. You’ve done this before, that you can do it. Reminder what you’ve learnt. Show what you can do. Reminder of successful times. They think can’t do it mentality. Language being used to develop confidence and self-belief. Efficacy check work, do your best work, remember our targets. Efficacy exam technique, how to show working out. Importance statements only for confident learners. Importance not universally communicated, as low confident children will panic. Some children worry a lot. No result focused language. Rare use of I’ll be pleased, infrequent. Selective use of outcome focussed language combined with you’ve done this before.

Expectation language for those that are capable. Peer communication. Efficacy, encouraging independence, self-regulatory approach. Show off examples of work and relate to quality. Show how they can improve efficacy. Mixture of expectation and reference to previous quality work, only for capable children. Praise and encouragement for lower ability. Pressure exists, doesn’t affect teaching. Pressure at a conscious level does not affect language. Satisfaction gained from both results but also seeing children develop. Belief that can make difference for struggling children. Efficacy feedback modelling approach, to develop independence. Children need efficacy to make them become more independent.
Practice familiarisation reason

Reassurance presence, non-verbal

Communication from other brothers/sisters

Awareness of SATs in year 6

Varied enthusiasm for tests

Reasoning for importance given

Reassurance, downplaying they’re not the be and end all

As long as you’ve made progress

Natural competitiveness children make it important

Most want to do well, some don’t really care

Parental pressure communication

Importance communicated, for secondary school

Reassurance, important but not everything

Complex use of importance, some children need pressuring, some you don’t need to push

Pressuring to push some children

Communicated to children its SATs

Greater parental awareness and communication

Teacher feels SATs are important

Importance assumed by children

Stress effort important

Show me your improvement, keep showing me

A chance for you to show off

Show how much you’ve improved over the year

Relationship, know who to pressure

Mixed SES, working class, unemployed

Low SES, need more help view?

Parental communication, mum says it’s not important

No parental pressure on teacher

It’s for them, to push them (it’s for you - internal)

Instil self belief philosophy that for you and push

Importance of support outside school

Hard to shift ingrained attitudes, for some children, no matter how hard you try

Developing self confidence key goal

Parents downplay importance, have negative effect

Ultimately individual child, belief that communication can do only so much

For one or two children up to them to work hard

Competition between peers

Improvement is what I’m looking for

Perception that children lack confidence

Efficacy, how to do better, breaking

progress down

Some children like a challenge, push others that don’t

Efficacy use varies depending on child

More nervous more apprehensive

more support

Building confidence, developing independence, efficacy?

Instilling confidence to be self efficacious, confident

Highlighting success

Reassurance for children who lack confidence that test not everything

Combination efficacy, make progress and how

Building confidence aim

Efficacy how to

Efficacy to develop independence

Praise to build confidence in preparation

Teacher assessment increase, less reassurance e.g. in writing

Reassurance and praise while in non test conditions, reduces anxiety

Making learning enjoyable, and mistakes normal

Feedback with peers as well

Reassurance through efficacy can do it

How to improve

Importance of SATs worries teacher

Teacher assessment shift in dialogue, can be more reassuring when in test children panic

Make failure normal in preparation

Feedback over tests for communication

Reassurance builds confidence (preparation)

Saying brilliant, remember what we’ve got to do next

Children like challenge, they want to beat their old score

Children enjoy

Efficacy exam technique, how to answer

Mark scheme, feedback included, what does examiner want

Becoming independent, efficacious

Feedback and value of going through tests, important for progress

Reminders infrequent, children already know

Preparation study guides

Feeling grown up SATs

We’ve got so many weeks, right this your last holiday

Infrequent reminders

Communicating short target to achieve final

Expectation and feedback communication

Philosophical reason, children need to be told how to otherwise no need saying get this
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>No threat use, no negative consequences communicated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No threat, because they don’t need that belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You’re a bit behind, what shall we do</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You’re meant to be at this level, what shall we do</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Praise in feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children becoming more efficacious</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Positive belief, age of children belief</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Threat has negative effect belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You should be at this level, what should you do</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Expectation then how to</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It’s for them communication, for you</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have a go</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Positive relaxed have a go type communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Communicated that secondary school will see SATs</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It’d be great if you went with them marks, they’ll be looking at you thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Good SATs results you’ll be in top sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outcomes rarely communicated, but children aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>If you got that for secondary, if you got these marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Want you to have the best start</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wouldn’t you feel proud</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>How pleased will you be (esteem)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Parent reward consequence more than teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feel proud, child-centred communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Look where you started, look where you are now, self-belief, self-reward, internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Showing them and telling them how far they’ve came</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>It’s important for them</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Important for you</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Important to get best start possible in secondary schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Show off progress</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>More reassurance and praise in year 6</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Year 6 need to build confidence belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You’re capable</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Praise and encouragement (in preparation and before test)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Important best start possible</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Importance communicated through siblings</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some children nervous</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children worried, use reassurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reassure and comfort children in focussed group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I will push you all the way, for lazy high ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Challenge comment, I don’t know if you’ll be able to do it, higher ability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>(not pushing enough?)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Competitive comment against another child, higher ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reassurance, it’s okay you’ve got wrong for anxious, confidence building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anxious smaller group, more support</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pressure on teachers, no language effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aware of pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Covering back for children who don’t make cut</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Pressure exists</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Accountability? Days gone where you can shut door and chill</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Transcript 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Pressure to push children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hard to push children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shock to parents about SATs taking place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children are prepared, similar work in class</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Shift to independence year 2 belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High SES, children comfortable</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SATs done on individual table in year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children aware of, some not</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents are told about</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy exam technique</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Try your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Emphasise effort (in prep and test)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy, practice papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy technique, child friendly language, how to answers questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Your best shot</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reassurance not used until end</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Special work communicated in year 2 to stop worrying (belief)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language used in test, efficacy, prepare for test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy exam vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Praise throughout in preparation and test</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Proud that you’ve done your best</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We need to show off</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Show how clever you are</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Long term reward</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Going to do special project</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Praise develops confidence belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use of short next step targets for learning and preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carrot communicated</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Long term reward</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Use of reword/carrot, minimal use</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Demonstrate what we can do</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Encouraging children</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy and test tactics</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship importance for atmosphere</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>SATs not communicated, just a normal day</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Atmosphere key, language embedded</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>No consequence language used</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Year 2 and Year 6 differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Never use threat, doesn’t help, belief, link to philosophy of learning enjoyable and relaxing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children respond positively to paper</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Relating environment from which language forms in part</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Link to internal satisfaction, show how clever you are</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Expectation to do best</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I’ll be pleased if you do your best</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Too early to link to life outcomes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Importance to show how much you know to others</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Children being taught skills and topics, subtle about what will come in test</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>General talk about value of school but not linked to SATs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t want that work it’s not your best (general language use)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children worry, link to reassurance need</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reassurance presence</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Don’t need to use that much reassuring language</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you test, doesn’t matter if you can’t do one or two</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Importance of atmosphere in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children don’t know why they are doing special work</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Pressure doesn’t change approach, pressure ignored</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Aim to make learning fun</td>
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**Transcript 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>Belief not that important for children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teacher does not do many tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy communicated type of questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children may worry in tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do your best</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Only one exam reassurance</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Prepare as much</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Not end of the world</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Use of targets</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Worry does not help belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taking pressure of children, saying not that much emphasis on SATs</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No threat ultimatum type language used</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Encouraging positive praise language use</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Positive try your best language</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belief that won’t get best out of children by worrying them</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Competition language, beat your own score</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Praise language in preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No threat consequence, feels counterproductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belief that threat worries children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mild threat for underperforming children, those that are capable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Actually you’re not doing as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’m worried about you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Self-esteem, confidence affecting language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You could do so much better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Threatening language worries low achievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Browse through transcript and copy paste actual quotes, then categories with themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Threatening language worries low achievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Threat increasing nerves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’d like to see you do well in high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Might use threat for underperforming children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Underperforming, you can do so much better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Positive outcomes of SATs for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You know you can do much better, individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Want to see you do really well in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universal vs. Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nervous children don’t do well belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achievement praise, individual, to boost self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>This is amazing you’ve done so well and I’m so proud of you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Efficacy support, during break additional individual support, for those struggling
Efficacy individual support, specific feedback
Praise in preparation, highlighting positive in work, esteem/confidence
How to achieve higher mark
Efficacy modelling questions/answers
Feedback becoming independent
High expectations communicated to all
High ability children more competitive
Children on edge of level 4/5, expectation followed by how to
Have a go not everyone gets levels 6
Move on discussion for children on cusp
Normalising outcomes, not everyone gets 6
Communicate challenge for high ability
Communicate expectation for child not performing well/potential,
You’re not actually fulfilling your potential here
Express disappointment if child lazy
General language throughout the year, not related, e.g. homework, so SATs preparation
Children enjoy doing
Don’t worry language for anxious children
Don’t worry it’s not the end of the world
Don’t worry language for low ability children
SATs not communicated to children, only week before
Week before practice in halls
Some children worry
Some children relish challenge
Approach depends on child
Adult reassuring presence, non verbal
Downplaying reassurance not the end of the world
Development of relationships
Practice improves with experience, does it affect language
Approach similar in other areas
Knows children very well, affect language?
Mum was a teacher, so was role model for own philosophy
Still learning experience matters, more experience use more efficacy?
Pressure affects language use?
Not that much pressure
Pressure exists, teacher stays calm, perception
Belief that for some children hard to make difference

Efficacy support booster groups for individual children
Efficacy practice papers
Expectation language this is where you need to be at end of year
Variation in how SATs communicated, e.g. task, test, SATs not mentioned
Disparity in SATs and actual teacher assessed level
Nerves kick in
Do your best
Different reasons for not communicating SATs
Reminder about SATs but not told why
Have a go language
Efficacy of information of how to achieve certain level
Paper practice Christmas and Easter
Link between views of SATs and language
Not worth getting upset
Do your best
Efficacy technique if you are stuck move on
Efficacy do your best
Achieve potential view and belief
SATs preparation in class
Efficacy extra support
Difference between GCSEs and SATs is that all preparation is in class
Just need to do SATs no explanation as to why
Continuous talk of SATs
Need to get certain grade
Highlight importance and need to do best
No explanation why important
SATs communicated at the beginning of year
Excited by novelty component of SATs
Link between views of SATs and language, SATs as stressful, more child friendly language
Efficacy can be how to and also you can, personal self-efficacy
Celebrate progress
Focus on progress and level
Children enjoy progress monitoring in preparation
Try your best, universal approach, most frequently used
You can do it, you’ve done it before
Take your time
Building confidence language
Have a go in test (technique)
Move on if you’re stuck (technique)
Relieving pressure through communication (general)
Efficacy how to move up communicated through sheets
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Efficacy what needs to be put in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Exam technique, other child example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-verbal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Exam technique, easing stress, attempt next question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There’s nothing you can’t do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy take your time and don’t make silly mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children excited by SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children initially get upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have a little go/try, encouragement language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Praise in exam/prep?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Majority fine, individual issues when taking tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feedback/efficacy about children moving on, how to move on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reassurance presence of adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear of unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rubbing back support, non-verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Universal vs. individual language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear/efficacy use depends on individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Important to do best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Everyone going to see how clever you are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Variation of language for particular children e.g. threat only for some children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear, stood in office explaining why you’ve failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knowing your children, so know what language to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lower expectation to take pressure off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Highlight importance for future (individual), infrequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disappointed if don’t get level, infrequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use of fear through frustration, for capable child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mild fear, future will be harder, individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accessing of SATs, single day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Threat better than yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear dependent on expectation and potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children not that bothered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear better than yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear combined with best and hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear for individual children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fear not effective awareness, but still used, desperation, after having tried other tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher aware of expectations of children, determines language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knowing children, push, communicate different language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How failure affects both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Last resort use of fear, individual certain child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children not pushing, not motivated view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice mocks not communicated, to stop worrying relieve pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-verbal reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice tests not communicated because not to worry, pressure (belief that can cause worry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children cry in test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children freeze up in test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One child negative response to SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SATs coming up not communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Philosophy of doing best and making progress, affects language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship belief that can help make progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Expectations of children don’t change with experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Value of education leads to social mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Only your best is good enough (whole school ethos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Knowing children, treating like adults belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Managing children relationships important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive with behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Last resort fear if behaviour don’t change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Similarities in choice behaviour/learning, expectation of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Link between teacher-held beliefs about primary education affects language i.e. nurturing philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do your best work, high expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicating expectation, if doesn’t meet expectation, repeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High standards philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Little pressure from advisor to push teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pressure exists but does not affect language, or perceive to affect them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aware that results can trigger Ofsted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Differences in opportunities for children (SES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nothing for you to be scared off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stress importance, show clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Important to do best and show how clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Importance communicated, stepping stones for the future, degree, job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You’ve done alright but it’s not your best work, in preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcript 8

| 6 | Efficacy test like conditions |
| 6 | Peer communication of SATs |
| 6 | Efficacy preparation, format of test papers practiced |
| 6 | Practice tests |
| 6 | General reassurance from January onwards |
| 6 | Awareness of SATs through pupil communication |
Do you best and I'll be pleased

Peer communication of SATs in higher year

General mutual respect in the classroom

Children are tracked throughout primary

Encouragement language

Extra support feedback for children not making progress

Giving children confidence and self belief

Efficacy exam style questions how to answer

Efficacy teaching skills on how to answer

Teaching feedback for test preparation

Combination of messages, use in teacher diaries

Telling child of expectations

Efficacy feedback teaching

Efficacy how to improve feedback

There are children who have no self-belief, belief held, does this affect language use

Encouragement highlighting previous success, mixed with efficacy (to improve self-belief)

Awareness of national expectation communicated e.g. level 4

You are capable of grade, link with belief and how to

Constant encouragement in preparation

Encouragement and how to get level 5 combo

Teacher belief that not important to high school

Use of fear, high school want to know your, mixed with reassurance (not end of world, I’ll tell school you missed page etc)

SATs are necessary communicated, we have to do them

Not high stakes for children belief, children are retested in high school

Difference in teaching focus after SATs

Regular communication of importance

Not much reminders of coming up as preparation taking place

Preparation communication just before the SATs

Week before reminder about SATs

Positive consequence of doing well

Encouragement to do best mixed with consequence of sets in high school

Outcome language dependent on child, not for everyone e.g. special needs

Developing confidence and self-belief for children

Fear consequence of sets at high school fear

Mixture of statements theme

Ability wise statements only for

children who are able

Aim high for outcome e.g. future

Esteem threat, make me proud, make parents proud

Individual talk about future to encourage, mild threat

Emphasise the effort in preparation and not to waste this effort

Natural competitiveness across children

Consequence use make me proud

Make parents proud

Make yourself proud, esteem

Using positive encouragement

No negative consequence use

Reassurance that not so important if you have disaster on day

Intensive support to help child if they not making progress

Motivate and encourage children to move on if not making progress

Build relationships to get best outcomes

Experience develops approach, shouting and punishing doesn’t work

Teacher student relationship importance

Negative consequence/threats do not work belief, has to be for them

Give children steps to succeed

Children do get anxious

Anxious children mock test in hall, practice test conditions

Pressure exists but does not change approach

Reassurance you’ve prepared well you’ll be okay

You’ll be fine once you do it language for low confident children

Other Codes from Familiarisation

Teacher communication is not always spoken language

Difference in preparation for year 2/6, compared to GCSE

Target driven approach in primary schools

Preparation in class

Balance of language used

High usage of efficacy

Averse to threat

Children are young, need support, not adults, factor for language use

Focus on level, rather than grade

Does control affect language, primary school teachers have more control

All preparation takes place in class

Aim of language to develop independence

Universal language used, plus targeted language

Efficacy developing metacognition
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlights accomplishments to build confidence</th>
<th>Testing and feedback, summative, needed for effective learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Putting pressure on teacher (experimental manipulation)</td>
<td>Do teachers think are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More pressure affects language, does it? Affect teaching</td>
<td>SATs vs. teacher assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulatory independence aim</td>
<td>Teacher communication is not always spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children aren’t confident or independent</td>
<td>Fear is used as a last resort or after a number of strategies, relate to secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental communication importance</td>
<td>Motivating children, has the effect of improvement, efficacy or self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of statements used</td>
<td>Younger children need more reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal communication future study</td>
<td>Philosophy influences language, primary school teachers more nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All preparation takes place in class discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of failure affects children?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief values about how children learn, e.g. feedback needed, affect on language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 20 - Illustrative Example of Organising Codes into Themes (Teacher Interviews)
Appendix 21 - Themes and their Content (Teacher Interviews)

Illustrative example of theme organisation.

Final themes and their content.

RQ1 : What language statements used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 : What language statements used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequential Outcome Based Language Statements - Theme 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1 : What language statements used</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judicious Use of Negative Outcome Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequential Language Pertaining to Future Effect of performance on SATs/tests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esteem Effect of performance on SATs/tests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication of Reward for performance on SATs/tests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility for the student’s performance on SATs/tests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication of Reward for performance on SATs/tests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivational Language Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Encouraging Effort</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication to Develop Self-Confidence and Self-Belief</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Language Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback in Preparation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Exam Technique</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Communication Theme 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praise</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encouraging Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You Can Do It/Confidence Building Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targets Communicate Skill Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Teaching Exam Technique</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Language Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback in Preparation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downplaying Importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminders About Past Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of SATs/tests for future (Yr 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance not communicated (Yr 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation in SATs/tests Communication and reminders (Yr 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ2: How are statements used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination of Language Statements - Theme 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Dependent Language Use - Theme 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Differences in Response to SATs/tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Relationship in Determining Language Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation in Teacher Communication for Specific Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ3: Why use statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs Held by Teachers</th>
<th>Potential Effects of Teacher-Held Beliefs on Language Use - Theme 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-Centred Nurturing Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Affecting Language Used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 22 - Quantitising Teacher Interviews

Stage 1: Global themes were converted into codes.

| Consequential Outcome Based Language Statements | 1C |
| Efficacious Communication | 2E |
| Reassuring and Calming Messages | 3R |
| Variable Communication Related To Reminders and Importance of tests/SATs | 4I |

Stage 2: Associating transcript codes to the theme codes outlined above. Example provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Transcript 1 (Initial Codes)</th>
<th>Link to Thematic Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not communicated as SATs</td>
<td>4I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Show off, show me how much you’ve learnt</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do your best</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice format</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No practice of SATs e.g. mock test, just do them</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy, practising just for riddles</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Everything else normal classroom practice, no specific practice of SATs/tests</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Efficacy preparation riddles</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Preparatory learning (format), similar topics in class</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practising topic of SATs</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children have misplaced confidence</td>
<td>3R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Giving encouragement to build confidence</td>
<td>3R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicating feedback/efficacy, what do you need to add</td>
<td>2E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 3: This process occurred for the whole transcript for each transcript 1-8. Then the percentage distribution of thematic codes was computed. To demonstrate the process, the results for the above table are shown below.

| Consequential Outcome Based Language Statements | 1C | 0 (0%) |
| Efficacious Communication | 2E | 9 (75%) |
| Reassuring and Calming Messages | 3R | 2 (16.7%) |
| Variable Communication Related To Reminders and Importance of tests/SATs | 4I | 1 (8.3%) |
Appendix 23 - Coding Manual (Focus Groups)

The following codes were derived from the literature and utilised in Stage 1 of the thematic analysis.

Awareness, Importance and Reminders

- Highlighting importance of exams.
- Reminders.
- Awareness.

Consequential Language

- Esteem damaging effects of not doing well.
- The need to get high grades.
- The need to get a certain grade.
- You will fail if you don’t work hard/revise.
- If you don’t do well it will affect your future/career.
- Effect on high school.
- Teacher/parent disappointment.

Efficacy Appeals

- Emphasise effort to improve grades.
- Offering additional support.
- Talk about general preparation.
- Esteem boosting effects of doing well.
- Feedback.
- Praise.
- Exam technique.
- Effort, have a go.
- Motivational.

Reassuring and Calming

- Try your best, grade not important.
- Downplaying importance.
- Not career defining, specific.
- Reminders about success.
Appendix 24 - Themes and their Content (Focus Groups)

List of initial codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Transcript 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children know about SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Know about Year 6 SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children not really aware of Year 2 SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No reference to expectation and targets in focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You can't tell people the answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Don't talk to anybody about answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can't shout out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You can't copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tests give evaluation of your own knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tests to prepare us for high school content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tests help find out what we know and don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some tests are important some aren't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tests to identify what we need to work on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some children worry over tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leave it, go onto the next question when stuck (technique and reassurance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Check answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Next time try again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Try a bit better next time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How to do better e.g. count on fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Well done, when you've done well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice tests used as learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice tests every week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Children also do special tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Support within test if you can't read question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tips on how to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Check your work and your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Points reward for doing well in tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ms says don't worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Don't worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You'll be fantastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You'll do really well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have a go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have a guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If you're worried, just have a go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You'll learn by trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Try your best, doesn't matter if you get it wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You'll learn by trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Go onto next question if you find it hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Try again if not done so well in preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You're not doing good enough said if not trying hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Transcript 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Technique to answer question e.g. dots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No communication about disappointment from other if poor performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher will be unhappy if you've not tried your hardest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have thinking time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher never shouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Excellent, really good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher will be happy if you do well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Told that tests are important for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tests to develop learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SATs are not difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Think it's not that hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Work hard to get a level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Focus and keep head down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practice grade communicated informing preparation work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Speed up, exam technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Try harder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Keep your head down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Child aware of grade expectation, specifically told</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Move on, exam technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Concentrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance of trying hardest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Try your hardest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance for college and university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Importance for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SATs importance for career and life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not to worry, it's not hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Communicated that SATs can be tricky and confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Take a deep breath when nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Trying your best importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Concentrate in SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Focus in SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Procedural SATs communication, rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Skim and scan exam technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Difference in worry over SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>View that they will be fine in SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Esteem effect of doing well communicated (parent and self), outcome success statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Trying your best is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parents will be proud if you've tried your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aware that disappointment may question effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Level 5 target communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching supporting children and how to achieve level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How to improve communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Performance in relation to level communicated in preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Technique communicating, harder questions equal more marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have a go, technique communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No negative communication about failure, parents/teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Effects of how performance communicated e.g. lower sets, life outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How SATs outcomes affects future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Keep pushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>If you don't understand move on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Read it properly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Read carefully exam technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Don't rush it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practice tests taking place, preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Technique, mental maths, use fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SATs reminders given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Once child not looking forward to SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I'm working towards a level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Expectation of level 4/5 communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High expectation, working towards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Try my best and push myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No disappointment communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Try your best and I will be proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pretend you're in a white room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How to get higher mark communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final themes and their content.

**Awareness and Purpose of SATs/Tests - Theme 1**

- Tests as a learning tool.
- Clear awareness of SATs in Year 6/Little awareness of SATs in Year 2.
- Importance of tests for future life trajectory.

**General and Procedural Test Communication - Theme 2**

- Focus and Concentrate.
- Procedural communication about SATs/tests.

**Efficacious and Motivational Communication - Theme 3**

- Communication of exam technique.
- Communication to develop knowledge and skills in preparation for tests.
- Use of praise.
- High Expectation of children.
- Importance of trying hardest.

**Reassuring and Calming Messages - Theme 4**

- Communication that children will be okay in tests.
- Communicating not to worry.

**Outcome Based Communication - Theme 5**

- Positive effects of test outcome.
- Negative effects of test outcome.
- Absence of esteem, disappointment, threat-based communication.
### Appendix 25 - Content Analysis Categories and Diary Entries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Statements (IC = Individual, WC = Whole Class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Efficacious Communication - Show/Demonstrate Skill/Try Best** | 11.9% | In order to show how clever we are, we need to join letters (for level 3). COMBINATION/IC  
Just do your best. WC  
Try to have a go as it’s really good to try to work it out. IC  
You need to make sure this is your best work, have you used your phonics work in your spelling. COMBINATION/IC  
Let’s see how clever you are. IC |
| **Efficacious Communication - Knowledge Development, feedback.** | 42.9% | Think about your target, have you included it in your writing. IC  
In order to show how clever we are, we need to join letters (for level 3). COMBINATION/IC  
You need to listen about how to improve. IC  
Check your target cards before you begin your work. WC  
Remember to check every sentence and think is it my first idea or my best idea. WC  
Read your comments from yesterday’s work and look for any improvement marking. Think carefully how you will respond to this. WC  
Think what you need to do to improve to improve your level of work. WC  
Check the working wall to ensure you are following the steps to success. WC  
Once you have finished your work do your traffic to show how well you feel you have achieved the learning objective. WC  
Remember think it, say it, improve it, write it, check. WC  
You need to make sure this is your best work, have you used your phonics work in your spelling. COMBINATION/IC  
Come on, you’re really good at this, just think back to how we did it on the board. COMBINATION/IC  
In our practice test we found this tricky so we’re going to work on it together and learn a song to help us. WC  
Check your target cards at the front of your books. WC  
We can give that target a tick and highlight it too. You’ve got it. IC  
Let’s check what we already know. WC  
This leaflet is to find out whether you understand the work we have covered or not. WC |
| **Efficacious Communication - Informational, Exam Practice & Technique & Skill Development.** | 21.4% | We are going to practice for the work we will be doing in May. We will have a look at an old so we know what the questions look like. COMBINATION/WC  
Remember you can use the equipment and try to read the questions carefully and work the answers out yourself. If you are stuck let me know. Ms needs to know what you can do by yourself and then she knows how and where to help you. COMBINATION/WC  
Remember to check you have done each bit carefully. WC  
Come on, you’re really good at this, just think back to how we did it on the board. IC  
We are going to practise answering questions by writing down the answers because at the end of May we will be doing some reading tests to show how well we can read and understand what we have read. COMBINATION/WC  
Have another look, have you missed everything. IC  
Can you remember our steps to success. These will help you if you get stuck. WC  
You can do it, you just need to think carefully and check each bit. IC  
Check your work carefully. WC |
| **Efficacious Communication - Developing confidence** | 4.8% | You can all work out the answer, have a look at the operation, is it times or add? You have learnt lots of new skills, now we need to work out which is the best on for this sum. WC  
All of our skills will help you to write super stories. WC |
| **Communicating test/special work/task** | 9.5% | We have some special work in May. WC  
We are going to practice for the work we will be doing in May. We will have a look at an old so we know what the questions look like. COMBINATION/WC  
We need to check what you know. WC |
| **Reassuring and calming messages** | 9.5% | Come on, you’re really good at this, just think back to how we did it on the board. COMBINATION/IC  
All of our skills will help you to write super stories. IC  
When we look at this again I know you will be fine. IC  
I can’t help you but we can look at it together. IC |
| **Consequence of tests/SATs** | 0% | No statements. |

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219
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 6 Statements (IC = Individual, WC = Whole Class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Communication - Show/Demonstrate Skill/Try Best - 21.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at your score and you need to try to beat this target next time. IC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show how well you can do. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the questions carefully and just try your best. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only want to know what you know, not the person sitting next to you. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer the questions as best as you can. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are to show how fantastic you are. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATs test are nothing to worry about. You just need to try your best. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All you need to do is try your best. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Communication - Knowledge Development, feedback. - 21.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to get a level 5 we would need to include these features in our writing. IC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are going to do a practice SATs this morning so that I can give you your current mark and level and so that we can see which areas we still need to work on. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having marked your maths papers these are some of the questions which caused problems. See if we can answer them together. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a look through your test and see which questions you did well at and which areas you need to improve at. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen carefully if you found that challenging. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are only practice questions but they are still very important because they let me know what you know and what we need to work on. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can tick that target. Well done. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious Communication - Informational, Exam Practice &amp; Technique &amp; Skill Development. - 27%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are going to do a practice SATs this morning so that I can give you your current mark and level and so that we can see which areas we still need to work on. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some careless mistakes made by some people not checking their work properly or reading the questions carefully. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember to read the questions carefully. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you get stuck on a question move on and if you have time come back to it at the end. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check your work once you have finished. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good luck your time starts now. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have 45 minutes to complete this test so please try to complete as many questions as you can. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll give you regular updates how much time you have and how much time you have left. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the questions carefully and just try your best. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off you go. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacious communication - Developing confidence 5.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are to show how fantastic you are. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of your skills will help you. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating test/special work/task - 8.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come on # there are only a few weeks, let's be ready to learn. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember we only have a few weeks to go. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work that we've done so far is all to help with the SATs papers. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reassuring and calming messages 10.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come and ask for help if you're stuck. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don't get the mark that you would have liked, don't panic. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't panic, this is only a practice paper. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATs test are nothing to worry about. You just need to try your best. COMBINATION/WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of tests/SATs - 2.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are to show how fantastic you are. WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence of tests/SATs. - 2.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATs test are important because they let the teachers know what you can do before you get to high school. WC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 26 - Inter-Coder Procedure

After all the qualitative analyses were completed, each analysis was subjected to a post-hoc reliability and validity check. This process occurred for: 1) thematic analysis of teacher interviews; 2) thematic analysis of focus groups; 3) content analysis of teacher diaries; and 4) content analysis of questionnaire text responses. The inter-coder process involved another coder coding selected sections of the data. The coder was a colleague also completing the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. The coder had experience in using thematic and content analysis, as the coder’s thesis and previous research assignments had used these data analysis methods. The coder did not have any prior information about teacher communication related to important tests, though the coder was aware of the research on praise and feedback. The coder was sufficiently informed of the research questions and aims of the study. The coder was then provided with an extract of the data to code from the methods (1-4), and was told to code according to the research questions. The codes were then compared to the researcher’s codes. A discussion took place whether differences in codes were either differences in the content of the code, or differences in labelling. The aim of this process was to identify any codes that may have been missed by the researcher, and to also attain 100% agreement in identification of codes between the researcher and coder. After discussions for all the data extracts, the process did not identify any new codes. Differences in codes were due to differences in lexicon used to describe the data. The figure below provides an illustrative example of the inter-coder exercise. This picture depicts an extract of the teacher interviews which was coded by the coder, the research questions to code for were provided at the beginning of each exercise.
Some examples of differences in coding are provided: talking to children about potential shame (coder)/negative outcome, fear appeal (researcher); language about ownership over tests (coder)/child-centred communication (researcher); and provide comfort (coder)/reassurance (researcher). These codes though differently labelled refer to the same underlying concept.

The second stage involved providing the colleague with a list of themes (from the thematic analyses) and categories (from the content analyses). Statements/codes/sub-themes were provided to the coder (this included a small number of items that were randomly selected), with the task given to the colleague to organise these into the provided themes/categories. This process showed 100% agreements. Overall, this inter-coder process increased the reliability and validity of the findings.
Appendix 27 - Section D of Questionnaire - Responses

Year 2

I ensure that children understand that the tests are just a chance for them to show what they know and understand. Encouragement and positive learning statements, as well as providing children with the skills for independent learning, i.e. 'problem solving' helps boost confidence in areas where secure understanding was not present during summative and formative assessments. We treat SATs as a chance to 'show off' all that we know, rather than calling them tests. Furthermore, children are assessed in similar conditions during weekly literacy big write or comprehension sessions, as well as maths 'round up of the week' / 'assertive mentoring' assessments. This helps them to see assessment as normal and regular occurrence.

I am a current Year 2 teacher preparing to do SATs with my class. I wanted to comment as the questions made me feel you have fundamentally misunderstood the purpose and implementation of SATs at KS1. Children do not receive a level based on their SATs paper. SATs are intended as a way to help teacher assessment (so if I feel a child is a 2A, the SATs papers should help to confirm that). Also, at KS1 children do not know tests are happening. They know they are doing a reading etc. task with their teacher and that they should try their best but that is all. Anyone telling a KS1 child that the tests are happening, that they have to revise or do well to succeed later in life is going against the official guidance and doing the children in their class a disservice. At KS1 children have individual targets but are unaware whether they are working at a 1A or a 2A, as this fosters an atmosphere where the brightest look down on those not working at their level.

I come from an outstanding school with outstanding results, and I feel that that is achieved at KS1 by actively NOT pressuring the children in anyway, and teaching them effectively and to a high standard. Primary school is about helping children achieve the best they can by making them believe they can do anything if they put their mind to it, not by making them feel they aren't good enough if they don't meet your expectations. Can I suggest that a study into the specific subject language used at KS1 might be interesting? E.g. do teachers who model and use technical vocabulary a lot have pupils who perform better?

Year 2 children are still at a young age, so the answers are age appropriate.

In year 2 we tend not to call them tests or SATs to avoid any unnecessary pressure. Having said that, they still know that they need to 'perform', particularly higher ability children. There is much more time spent doing reading, writing and maths leading up to assessments for several months narrowing the curriculum significantly.

I make it clear to the children that the tests are for me to know what to teach them next, if they don't know something it is because I haven't taught it!

In year 2 I don't tend to use the word tests. We complete our special booklets and the children enjoy sharing what they have learnt.

I ensure the children know that this half term is 'Assessment Half Term' and that all their work during this term is important. They do a variety of activities/booklets and are oblivious as to when they are doing their 'actual' SATs. The children accept them as normal class work. I also never refer to them as 'tests'. As it's 'Assessment Half Term' the children know that at least one piece of work a day is an 'On Your Own' piece of work. Quite often the parents will ask when they're doing their test or SATs and seem very surprised when I tell them they're already completed. We are lucky in Year 2 as all the booklets are dated 2007 or 2009. The children therefore honestly don't realise they are the 'real' ones. In my school though we use almost no tests at all and rely on the tasks instead.

Teacher assessment is vital, More pressure on year 6 children to achieve, More stress on year 6 teacher to ensure children meet target levels.

The majority of children in my class are not aware that the SATs are tests, I try to incorporate them into the school timetable so that they do not feel threatened or under pressure. Most pressure comes from parents who think tests are very important.

Don't use the word SATs, rarely to tests anyway. Many parents asked at parent's evening what language was used in the classroom related to SATs.
The SATs are prepared for in a small way as my whole year - ALL work is assessed. This means that each piece of work has a challenge with targets. My language is the same for all of these occasions.

I teach both year 2 and year 6 and a number of my responses are very different to many of the questions. Yr 2 don’t need to know about the tests, we just put them in small groups with a relaxed atmosphere. Y 6 need to know as it helps them prepare due to the higher levels of maturity.

We don’t call them tests just a quiz, so teachers can see how we can help. Remind children to attempt everything just because it looks long doesn’t mean the questions will be difficult. We use attainment driven language for all children, not just high achievers.

A lot of the questions were related to the Y6 SATs rather than the Yr2. I do not discuss the tests or prepare them for the tests before hand but explain they are doing a quiz to show what they have learnt in KS1 and where they will need help/support in KS2.

I never mention the words test, SATs or exam. I encourage children to show me how clever they are and try their best. I can’t ask for more if they give me their best.

I try wherever possible to use positive praise and celebrate children’s individual strengths in order to make them feel valued. Children are encouraged to take control of their learning and I try to embed the key skills needed to succeed without over reliance on others. Children should not be judged by a level on a league table.

As a Yr2 teacher I don’t tell my class that they are doing tests. When I was teaching Yr6 I did - the children are old enough to understand more of what is going on. Yr6 prep for tests is very involved, you have to explain to the children. My general approach to tests is to tell the children that they are important for my (or other teachers) to find out what they know and, more importantly what they don’t know so that they can be taught the things they don’t yet know. Frankly, the tests are bollocks. They are only important to schools and not to the children at all. They are only important to schools because of the intense pressure put on schools due to the league tables nonsense. I should make clear that in general I think testing children is a good thing, I cannot emphasise how much I detest the way in which SATs tests are used.

I really don’t make a big deal out of the SATs test - we just do a ‘quiz’. All I ask of the children is that they have a go and try their best! I don’t discuss the tests when we are doing our work in class- we are learning to learn - not for tests!

I feel it better for us to motivate by telling children how to prepare than to de-motivate them by telling them the consequences. Besides tests don’t decide the Aptitude of a person.

Year 6

I feel that my opinion about the importance of SATs is different to that of my school. I find it frustrating that there is so much pressure on the children to perform well in tests and not for their own personal achievement, but to meet school targets and to satisfy Ofsted, particularly as all secondary schools assess the children in year 7 themselves and disregard the SATs level they achieve! I have known children who have suffered with anxiety disorders because of pressure to perform, and whilst I can tell children that they mustn’t worry and that ‘it’s just a test’, I know that behind them underachieving will be the head teacher wanting to know why these children have not made their unrealistic 5NCP targets and will throw around the phrase ‘performance related pay’ in pupil progress meetings. With a heavy heart, I am currently only teaching reading and maths in preparation for SATs next week under the instruction of the head teacher.

Sometimes it has been difficult to link answers to ensure uniformity.

I tell children that SATs are a measure of a school’s effectiveness, not of them. They know that, although they should strive to do well (in all things!), the test is of more importance to the school than them.

I also tell them that, while sets in upper schools may be set based on SATs results, any child in the wrong set would be quickly moved.
Verbal discussions are dependent upon the child, their ability and their circumstances. Whilst I say to children it is important that they do well in their tests I ensure that this is related to their ability e.g. a KS1 child who entered KS2 at level 1 would be expected to get a L3 in Y6 SATs - this is their expected level, whereas someone who got a L3 would be expected to get a L5.

I also teach year 2 but answered this in my role as a year 6 teacher. I feel my answers would have been different for year 2 as the children are made less aware of the SATs, their levels and the implications of doing well or badly.

I have answered questions with what actually happens, not what I'd like to happen e.g. a broad and balanced curriculum.

Whether we agree with testing or not, teachers have to work with the system they are in. I am against rigorous testing in primary school, as I have seen how it often doesn't reflect the true ability of children. It creates stress amongst young children that just isn't right. Year 6 is the last year of primary school, yet is spent doing past paper after past paper, with after school and lunch time booster sessions. However, this is the system, so we have to try and support and encourage children in the best way we can, even when we feel the tests are unnecessary and serve no real benefit to the children.

Primary school testing is for schools and league tables.

Y2 and Y6 teachers are put under immense pressure in order to get the best results! Often being mentioned in staff meetings as to the reason why Ofsted will or will not be dropping in. This pressure is passed on to the children and often any other subjects are thrown out of the window in the months leading up to SATs meaning children are not getting a rounded education.

Tests are important for the school not the child.

Different approaches are used with different ability/behaviour groups - but always to build confidence and focused approach.

We see our tests as a chance to show off what we can do, nothing worrying and not the end of the world.

‘Primary children’ is far too general a term. Every child has different needs, fears, strengths, and skills. I ensure all children know that if they apply themselves they will do well in life - even if they are not academic.

All has been covered in the questionnaire.

I think it's more important to focus on positive re-enforcement than any negative aspects as this can only panic the children and does not put them in the right frame of mind. It can knock their confidence.

The advice/language used with each child may be different based on what is most likely to motivate them e.g. pleasing parents, competition with peers, success they've already experienced, etc. Also this might change throughout year 6, when they become better prepared for the SATs. The children in my class enjoy knowing their levels and striving for the next jump. They celebrate each other's success, whether they are the most able or those with SEN. This must be fostered carefully throughout the year and school.

Letting them know we're all in it together and we're ready so let's get on and show off what we can do then look forward to fun stuff afterwards. Telling them I know we've done all the hard work and I know they're ready to show that off.

I am very up front with my children that the KS2 tests are intended to assess the school's performance. I try to put the tests into context to avoid negative impact on their self esteem. I point out that as they have no choice but to take the tests and as they're going to take other tests, which will become more 'high stakes' for them in the future, we may as well use the KS2 tests as the first step in developing test technique, i.e. Get something positive out of the experience for them. I ALWAYS praise children's efforts, attitude and progress rather than their level achievement. I refer to the levels as "just a number".
Appendix 28 - Data Integration/Meta-Inferences

Research Question 1 - Meta-Inferences

Teacher Interviews
Focus Groups
Teacher Diaries
Questionnaire

1. Consequential Outcome Based Language Statements
2. Efficacious Communication
3. Reassuring and Calming Messages
4. Variable Communication Related to Reminders and Importance of SATs/Tests

1. Consequence of SATs/Tests
2. Efficacious Communication
3. Reassuring and Calming Messages
4. Test Communication and Purpose of SATs/Tests

1-5. Various Questions/Content Analysis of Section D (Check to see if all covered)

Identified Five Broad Forms of Communication (see Section 5.2)

Research Question 2 - Meta-Inferences

Teacher Interviews
Teacher Diaries
Questionnaire

1. Combination of Language Statements
2. Time Dependent Language Use
3. Tailoring Communication to Children’s Characteristics
4. Saliency of Discussion in Teacher Interviews

1. Combinative Nature of Statements
2. Individual vs. Whole Class Communication
3. Targeted Communication for Particular Children/Section D
4. Frequency Questions

Identified Four Components of How Language Used (see Section 5.3)
Research Question 3 - Meta-Inferences

- Teacher Interviews
- Questionnaire

Potential Effects of Teacher-Held Beliefs and Language Use

Teacher Control Domain

Tests as Important Domain

Beliefs about Communication Domain

Philosophical View of Education

Dependency Views

Summarised in Section 5.4.