

Self-Regulation in the Reception Classroom

An exploration of how self-regulation develops, is supported, and understood
in the Reception Classroom.

By

Rebecca Bartram

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
May 2024

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increased focus in education on self-regulation and self-regulated learning in young children, leading to it being included in the revised 2021 statutory guidance for the foundation stage (DfE, 2021b). The reasoning for this stems from research and educational theory dating back to the 1960s up to the present day, that links good self-regulation with better success in life and academic outcomes. Much of the literature and research has been undertaken within the areas of cognitive psychology, and social and developmental psychology. It has focused on working memory, inhibition and shifting, known as executive functions in cognitive psychology, and metacognition and reflectivity in social and developmental psychology, which are understood to be necessary components for self-regulation.

This study comprises of two case studies and seeks to explore and further understand how self-regulation develops in young children, how it is supported in a classroom context, and understood by teachers working with the revised 2021 curriculum. A blend of interviews, observations, and questionnaires have been used together data exploring stakeholders' understanding of self-regulation within the context of a reception classroom. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2021, following two academic years of disruption and school closures due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. As such, the impact of this unprecedented disruption is also considered.

The findings suggest teachers are aware of the importance of emotional development for the acquisition of skills necessary for learning, but their understanding of the breadth of what self-regulation means has not been developed. Further support through training and continued professional development (CPD) will enable teachers to support children in targeted and meaningful ways. A school's culture and the relationships between staff and parents also have an impact on the children's experience while in the classroom. The pedagogy of early years teachers supports children to develop the necessary skills for self-regulation. However, this is not always recognised as distinctive and there is the possibility of missed opportunities for some children.

The study shows the breadth of other factors such as parents and home experiences that are critical to a child's development of self-regulation before they enter school. These important aspects can be used to understand why some children are, more or less, affected with regards to their ability to self-regulate and the impact that can be attributed to the disruption and school closures caused by Covid-19. Findings suggest the need for a greater understanding of the importance of parenting and child development on a societal level. Contributions identified can be used to inform future research and policy, utilising the pedagogical tools developed from this study into classroom practice to enhance support and provision for children in developing self-regulation skills.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have supported and made this research possible. Firstly, to my supervisors Professor Celia Greenway and Dr Nicola Smith, who continued to be interested and believe in the study, when undertaking it seemed impossible due to Covid-19. Their positive and constructive feedback throughout kept me moving forward to my goal.

Secondly to the stakeholders, namely the schools, staff and children, who welcomed me during very challenging times to undertake this study, giving me their time and their thoughts so openly and willingly. The access I was granted and the acceptance of the children in the classes gave this study the depth and description to explore my questions.

Additionally, I need to thank my friends who have proofread my study, Imogen and Vicky, thank you. Also team Greenway, Sarah, and Tim, for the endless online chats and writing sessions, which meant I have never felt alone.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their love, patience, and support that enabled me to see this research through to its completion, despite its delays. My husband Piers who has always believed in me, my children Seb and Ben, who no longer remember a time when I wasn't doing a PhD, and my Mum and Dad for supporting me financially enabling me to get to the end. I am very grateful to you all. I would not have got here without you.

This thesis has been professionally proofread for the conventions of language, spelling, and grammar by ABC proofreading.

Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
List of Figures	9
List of tables	11
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations.....	12
List of Appendices	14
Chapter One – Locating the study	15
1.1 Introduction	15
1.2 Aims	16
1.3 Rationale	16
1.4 Covid-19 - the unique landscape.....	17
1.5 Role of theory	18
1.6 Positionality.....	20
1.7 How the study was undertaken.....	20
1.8 Structure.....	21
Chapter Two – Literature review	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Historical context.....	24
2.3 Influencing factors on the current early years landscape	31
2.4 Self-regulation and emotional development.....	38
2.5 Current provision for social and emotional development in schools	56
2.6 Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and predicted impacts for children. 65	
2.7 Summary.....	69
Chapter Three – Methodology and Design.....	71
3.1 Introduction	71
3.2 Philosophical approach.....	72
3.3 Methodology	80

3.4 Case study	80
3.5 Role of the researcher/positionality	82
3.6 Access	84
3.7 Description of settings and research methods	84
3.8 Questionnaires	90
3.9 Interviews	92
3.10 Observations	93
3.11 Children's maps	95
3.12 Early Years Policy documents	97
3.13 Trustworthiness	97
3.14 Limitations of research design	99
3.15 Ethics	99
3.16 Data Analysis	103
3.17 Summary	108
Chapter Four – Findings	109
4.1 Introduction	109
4.2 Presentation of findings Case One	110
4.3 Case One: Theme One. Working together	110
4.4 Case One: Theme Two. Managing feelings	122
4.5 Case One: Theme Three. Delays	133
4.6 Case One: Theme Four. Routines	138
4.7 Presentation of findings Case Two	143
4.8 Case Two: Theme One. Working together	144
4.9 Case Two: Theme Two. Managing feelings	155
4.10 Case Two: Theme Three. Delays	164
4.11 Case Two: Theme Four. Routines	168
4.12 Summary	175
Chapter Five – Discussion of findings	179

5.1 Introduction	179
5.2 Working together.....	179
5.3 Managing feelings.....	194
5.4 Delays.....	206
5.5 Routines	222
5.6 What impact has Covid-19 and the lockdowns in England had on the 2021/22 cohort of Reception-aged children?	233
5.7 Summary	236
Chapter Six – Conclusion.....	240
6.1 Introduction	240
6.2 How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?	241
6.3 What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regards to self-regulation?	246
6.4-1 Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?	248
6.4-2 Self-regulation in current classroom context	248
6.4-3 Understanding of self-regulation in the sector	251
6.5 Impact of Covid-19.....	253
6.6 Reflection on the study and limitations	255
6.7 Contribution to knowledge – A model for responsive pedagogy and parenting	257
6.8 Implications for further research and policy	262
References	264
Appendix 1 – Information letter to parents	277
Appendix 2 – Questionnaires	278
2.1- Blank questionnaire.	278
2.2 - Sample of Completed questionnaire	289
Appendix 3 – Interview schedule	295
Appendix 4 – Interview transcription	296
Appendix 5 – Coding of observations.....	297

5.1 – Positive coding	297
5.2 – Negative coding.....	298
Appendix 6 – Interview coding example	299
Appendix 7 – Sample of observations transcription	300
Appendix 8 – Photo of field notes.....	301

List of Figures

Figure	Title	Page
1	Literature review mind map	24
2	Self-regulation literature review mind map	24
3	Adapted table of cognitive self-regulation and social-emotional regulation.	49-50
4	Conceptual diagram of relationship between SR, EC, ExC, EF, ESR	51
5	Diagram of how self-control exertion at time 1 leads to self-control failure at time 2.	53
6	Analysis process for case study 1	104 & 110
7	Analysis process for case study 2	104 & 143
8	Illustration of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development	108
9	Screen shot of case 1 school mission statement	111
10	Screen shot of case 1 school values	111
11	Researcher's map of whole case 1 classroom learning area	121
12	Case 1 example 1 of child's map of classroom	122
13	Case 1 example 2 of child's map of classroom	122
14	Word cloud of codes from case 2	144
15	Screen shot of headteacher's welcome case study 2	145
16	Screen shot of mission statement for case study 2	146
17	Researcher's map of case study 2 classroom	151
18	Case 2 child's map of classroom	156
19	Photo of case study 2 classroom	156
20	Photo of visual timetable and daily routine display, case study 2	171
21	Adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's ecology system for this study	192

22	Illustration of Bandura's social learning theory	225
23	Illustration of aspects of self-regulation that impact on a child	239
24	Illustration of the Responsive Parenting Pedagogy framework on child's development of self-regulation (RPP Model)	258
25	SEL developmental pyramid	60

List of tables

Table	Title	Page
1	Positions of childhood	78
2	Class routines	85-86
3	Data collection table	87-90
4	Table (3) total % of positive reports of changes in children's behaviours reported by parents in questionnaires	132
5	Case 1 daily routine	142
6	Case 2 daily routine	169-170
7	Comparison table of PSED ELG 2014 and 2021	215
8	Comparison table of % of emerging children in PSED 15/16 – 21/22	216
9	Comparison table of % of emerging children in Physical Development 15/16 – 21/22	217
10	Comparison table of % of emerging children in Communication and language 15/16 – 21/22	218
11	Daily routine to support self-regulation	260-261

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Bubbles	Groups formed during Covid-19 restrictions
CL	Communication and language
CPD	Continued professional development
CVC	Consonant-vowel-consonant words
DfE	Department for education
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EEF	Education endowment foundation
EF	Executive Function
ELG	Early Learning Goal
EY	Early years
EYFS	Early years foundation stage (0-5 years of age)
EYFSP	Early years foundation stage profile / end of year assessment
GLD	Good level of development
IA	Interoceptive accuracy
IS	Interoceptive sensitivity
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
Lockdown	Periods of school closures and restricted movement throughout England
MBI	Mindfulness based intervention
OC	Observation child
OHCP	Occupational health care plan
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction (test used during Covid-19)
PD	Physical development
SR	Self-regulation
SRL	Self-regulated learning
SEL	Social and emotional learning
PFA	Paediatric first aid

PSED	Personal social and emotional development
PE	Physical education
PTA/PTFA	Parent teacher association/parent teacher friends' association
RSHE	Relationship sex health education
SEN	Special educational needs
SLT	Senior leadership team
TA	Teaching assistant
Yr1/Yr2	Year 1 (5-6 years) / Year 2 (6-7 years)

List of Appendices

Appendix	Title
1	Information letter to parents
2	Questionnaires
2.1	Blank questionnaire
2.2	Sample of completed questionnaire
3	Interview schedule
4	Interview transcription
5	Coding of observation
5.1	Positive coding
5.2	Negative coding
6	Interview coding example
7	Sample of observation transcription
8	Photo of field notes

Chapter One – Locating the study

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter is an introduction to the study and outlines the aims, rationale, the role of theory, the positionality of the study and how the study was undertaken.

This study sets out to explore and understand self-regulation in the Reception classroom from the perspective of the stakeholders – who, in this study, include teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and parents. Using the literature (reviewed and discussed in greater depth in the second chapter), I examine how self-regulation is understood and why it impacts on future successes, academic achievement, and well-being (Zimmerman, 2008, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Mroz, 2019).

Aspects that are necessary for self-regulation have been identified and are referred to as executive functions, which are broken into working memory, inhibition and shifting – flexibility to move from one focus to another (Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Diamond, 2013, Roebbers, 2017). These are discussed in greater depth in section 2.4.

Additionally, the literature explores what is necessary to develop these executive functions and emotional development appears to be critical (Shanker, 2010, Sperduti *et al.*, 2017, Gagne *et al.*, 2021). To explore and understand self-regulation in the Reception class, it is therefore necessary to include emotional development within the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The current provision in schools for the development of personal, social and emotional development is included and reviewed in section 2.5 to aid understanding of the context this learning is situated within.

This study captures and explores the classroom reality for staff and children during the first year of the statutory implementation of the 2021 revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum framework (DFE, 2021e). This research takes place in the context of the return to school following school closures due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. It explores what impact curriculum changes to the Personal Social and Emotional Development (PSED) curriculum and Early Learning Goal (ELG) have had with regards to the pedagogical support

for children to achieve emotional development and self-regulation, and how schools are working with the new ELG, and the concept of self-regulation.

1.2 Aims

This study aims to explore self-regulation and emotional development in the classroom setting, over the course of the academic year 2021/22 in the context of children's return to school during the Covid-19 pandemic, following extended periods of school closures and isolation in the home.

To explore these aims this study will use the following research questions:

- How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?
- What are the perceptions of the different early years stakeholders with regards to self-regulation?
- Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

1.3 Rationale

Policy reform and political attention on the early years have increased dramatically over recent years (Nutbrown, 2005). An emphasis on assessing and reaching academically orientated goals has been championed (Ofsted, 2017, Trelford, 2018, Kay, 2022) at the possible expense of the prime areas of learning in the early years age phase, which include personal, social and emotional development (Osgood, 2006a, Osgood, 2010, Moss, 2014a, Roberts-Holmes, 2014, Moss, 2015). This study looks at the 'messy reality' of the Reception classroom and includes the perspective of the teachers working with children in schools to understand better how, and if, policy and the sector are supportive, and if teachers are being supported with the inclusion of self-regulation as a key area of development and interest.

The academic year 2021/22 was the first full year of schooling that did not experience school closures due to Covid-19. However, children's experiences in school continued to be affected by the ongoing pandemic. This provided a unique landscape for the study, because

socialisation and opportunities to develop self-regulation that would normally be available to children were suspended.

1.4 Covid-19 - the unique landscape

This study does not look to examine Covid-19. However, acknowledging the unique context it created is necessary, because the lived experiences of the children and teachers involved in the study were influenced by their experiences of Covid-19.

In March 2020, England experienced the impact of the global pandemic Covid-19 (Institute for government, 2022), resulting in a full country lockdown. Everyone, other than key workers, had to move immediately to working from home. Key workers were those whose roles were deemed essential for society and infrastructure and included NHS staff, emergency services staff, supermarket workers, teachers, and those in the media. During the lockdown, all social mixing was stopped, retail shops other than those deemed essential were closed, and schools closed to all but those considered vulnerable or who were the children of key workers. All children were sent home, except for key workers' children, and many parents were required to work from home while also home schooling their children. Schools had to very quickly move to online platforms for learning, which presented challenges in the digital readiness of schools (Bayrakdar and Guveli, 2023). Key workers' children and vulnerable children were still able to attend school settings, but what provision was available varied from school to school, depending on staffing and restrictions.

Following the full lockdown in March 2020, many vulnerable individuals and single-parent families in England become isolated. The English government guidance in September 2020 made it legal for support bubbles to be formed between households for childcare reasons, or where a household had only one individual (Department of Health and Social Care, 2020).

The term 'bubble' was adopted by schools and the restrictions of these consistent groups (bubbles) were not removed until 6 July 2021, as set out in the updated timeline of changes

on the government website for the Department for Education (DfE): “This guidance removes restrictions such as keeping children in consistent groups (bubbles)” (DfE, 2020 webpage).

From September 2020, schools in England reopened to all children, and the government priority at that time was to keep schools open. This period was particularly difficult to navigate, with the introduction of a tier system (where movement and rules were area specific) and a lockdown that did not include schools (Institute for government, 2022). To manage the continuing rise in infection numbers, classes of children were required to be kept in consistent groups ‘bubbles’ and not allowed to mix with children in other bubbles. Staff were also not allowed to mix between bubbles, causing staffing challenges for many schools. Additionally, if a case of Covid-19 was confirmed in a bubble, the whole bubble was sent home to isolate for 14 days. The constantly changing landscape created uncertainty for children and parents alike when moving between school and home learning.

A second full national lockdown, which included school closures, was put into place on 6 January 2021, at the start of term, owing to the increased number of Covid-19 cases in England following the Christmas period and the lifting of restrictions. Children returned to school on 8 March 2021, but their experiences in school continued to be challenging, with regulation changes and isolations within households and classes.

1.5 Role of theory

The growth in interest and perceived importance of self-regulation for academic success (EEF, 2018) has led to this term being introduced into the revised Statutory Early Learning Goals (DFE, 2021e). These ELGs assess a child’s progress and readiness for school at the end of the Reception year, and mark the end of the foundation stage of education.

On examination of the literature regarding self-regulation, it is defined as a set of skills applied by an individual to enable them to achieve a task or goal, either long term or short term (Rothbart and Jones, 1998, Bronson, 2000b, Zimmerman, 2008, Shanker, 2010, Moffitt *et al.*, 2011, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Whitebread and Basilio, 2012, Montroy *et al.*, 2016,

Roebers, 2017). Research findings (discussed in Chapter Two) suggest that the better developed an individual's mastery of these skills, known as executive functions, the more these skills will contribute both to better academic achievements and 'success' in the individual's post-education lives.

Education policy regarding self-regulation has been influenced by research in cognitive psychology, which breaks down self-regulation into executive functions, e.g. working memory; inhibition; shifting/flexibility (Pessoa, 2009, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012). Social developmental psychology divides self-regulation into metacognition and reflectivity (Dignath *et al.*, 2008, Zelazo, 2015, Roebers, 2017). However, many of the findings for studies on executive functions come from research utilising an experimental design undertaken in unfamiliar or laboratory-style settings rather than in a familiar classroom context. This study extends this knowledge to real-life contexts, during a particularly challenging period, which is its unique contribution to the field.

While the language used in cognitive psychology and social developmental psychology differs, many of the findings and the principles discussed are similar. The significance of the findings and outcomes attributed to self-regulation (Blair and Diamond, 2008, Zimmerman, 2008, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Vohs and Baumeister, 2017) explains why it has been taken up by policymakers with a view to achieving the best results in the global league tables of children's academic achievements. In turn, it is assumed this will transfer to industry and economy through higher-quality workforce, better productivity, and jobs. This appeals to the political agenda, which has been, and continues to be, a driving force behind educational policy (Dahlberg, 2007, Bradbury *et al.*, 2013, Moss, 2014a, Nutbrown, 2014).

This study utilises social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), with the ecology of human development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), to explore the findings from this study within the context of current literature on self-regulation, to understand how pedagogy and policy can best support children in the classroom to develop self-regulation. This is discussed in Chapter Five.

1.6 Positionality

In this study, I ensured I clearly identified as a researcher in the classroom, rather than a practitioner. Having been a classroom teacher, it was important that I separated myself from the operational, to create a distance that enabled me to be an observer in the classroom subjectively (Flick, 2018). As the researcher, I took the position of participant observer throughout the study. My position in the classroom during the observations of a participant researcher was appropriate, because children of the age being studied are used to being observed as part of normal classroom practice. This is discussed in greater depth in section 3.5. The study was conducted from the perspective of the teacher and used an interpretive lens with researcher observations, school documentation, and parental views from the case studies. It explores the lived reality of the classroom experience during the academic year 2021/22. Researcher positionality is discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter, in sections 3.5 and 3.7.

1.7 How the study was undertaken

The study is comprised of two in-depth case studies set in two distinctly different primary schools. These schools described further in Chapter Three, were identified as participants through questionnaires that were distributed via the University of Birmingham and University of Warwick schools' partnerships to approximately 160 schools. From these questionnaires, schools that were willing to work with me gave permission to be contacted to arrange further study. The follow-up and arranging of observational visits were complicated by the ongoing Covid-19 situation in England and individual schools' policy regarding visitors. Despite this, the two case studies involved were willing and able to work with me throughout the year.

Observational visits were arranged for four days during the first term. They started after the half-term point to allow children to settle into classes. These observations were of the whole class and the daily routines for each setting. During these first visits, interviews with teachers working in the classes were also undertaken. In the second term, having transcribed the observations and interviews, which were shared with the class teachers, I returned to both

schools to undertake two days of focused observations of two individual children from each of the class studied in the first term. Further interviews with teachers were conducted where possible during this time. In the last term, final whole-day observations were undertaken of the entire class, to give a comparison between the end of the year and the start. Chapter Three discusses this and details of the methodology used.

1.8 Structure

This first chapter has introduced how the study was undertaken, my positionality in the context of the role of theory, and the study's rationale and aims. Chapter Two, the literature review, is broken into the historical context of early years' education; the current landscape of the early years' sector; self-regulation and emotional development; current provision for social and emotional development; and recent research on the impacts and anticipated outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic. Policies pertaining to the early years are included and discussed throughout.

In Chapter Three, the philosophical approach used in this study is discussed in depth, along with the methodologies chosen to undertake the study. The case study design is discussed and each of the methods used are addressed individually. The role and position of the researcher are explored and discussed in detail, illustrating to the reader the consideration given to all aspects of the research methods and design of this study. Furthermore, how the data gathered was organised and analysed is outlined, and the trustworthiness and limitations of the design are discussed along ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the analysis outlined in Chapter Three, and is presented by case study using the four emergent themes. In Chapter Five, the findings presented in Chapter Four are then explored and discussed using the literature reviewed by theme against the questions this study asks: How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children? What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regards to self-regulation? Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-

regulation? What impact did Covid-19 and the lockdowns in England have on the 2020/21 cohort of Reception-aged children through analysis of pre-Covid assessment data?

Chapter Six concludes this thesis by discussing self-regulation in the current classroom context, what the understanding is of self-regulation in the sector, how the development of self-regulation is supported, and what impact can be attributed to Covid-19. This chapter finishes with reflections on the study, and the contributions to knowledge are made clear, including pedagogical tools that have been developed from the finding that can be used. It then concludes with suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will set the context within which the study is situated through examination of the literature. It is divided into sections beginning with the historical context of early years education in 2.2, followed by the current early years landscape in 2.3. Then, an examination of the research and current thinking about self-regulation and emotional development will be discussed in 2.4, with the current provision for social and emotional development examined in 2.5. Finally, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and the predicted impact on children will be discussed in section 2.6. Policy documents will be included and discussed throughout.

This study is exploratory. As such, the literature review was undertaken to explore and understand the phenomenon at the centre of the study, namely self-regulation in the classroom. It was necessary to start the literature review by understanding the historical context (2.2) in which the phenomenon is located “by tracing the history of the phenomenon by looking at the pre conditions which indicated to its development” (Hart, 2003 p.122). This is followed by section 2.3, which uses the literature to outline chronologically the recent changes that create the current context within which this study is located. Due to the unique context created by Covid-19, this is discussed separately in section 2.6. Figure (1) illustrates the design of these aspects of the literature review.

In sections 2.2 and 2.3, the literature review was undertaken by searching for key words ‘History of Education UK’, ‘Early Years Education’. Findings from these searches were reviewed and key themes identified and followed up with further key-word searches. Ideas of interest linked to the focus of this study expressed within the literature were followed through bibliography and searched for, generating further key-word searches, and broadening the review (Hart, 2003, Thomas, 2016). The literature reviewed was catalogued and filed by theme using Endnote and articles attached for further reference. Notes were made and organised by theme for use in writing up.

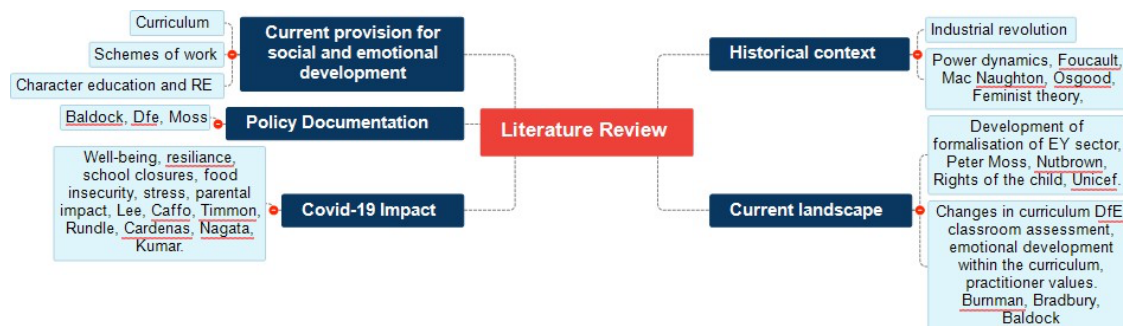


Figure (1) This figure illustrates the literature review design for all aspects other than self-regulation.

The review of the literature for self-regulation in section 2.4 was undertaken using the same strategies as above. However, while the chronology of the phenomenon is relevant, the literature for the area of self-regulation is too broad and diverse to manage purely by a chronological method. It was necessary to adopt a mapping approach to organise the information, as illustrated in Figure (2). First, the classification of the aspects key to understanding self-regulation were identified. These were then organised into sections and subsections, “without the use of classification, large amounts of information could not be processed in a way that is both systematic and progressive” (Hart, 2003 p.143).

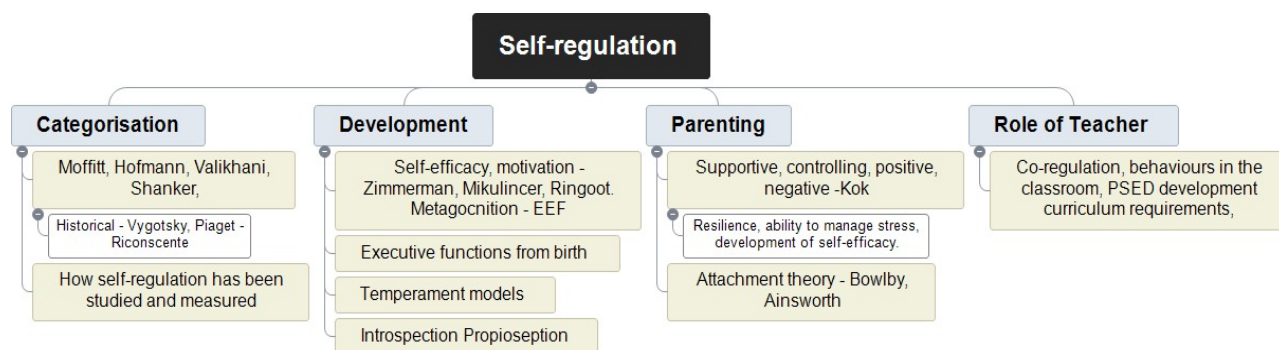


Figure (2) This figure illustrates the design of the review of self-regulation literature.

2.2 Historical context

This section reviews the literature connected to the historical context of the education system in the England, and which has created the educational systems and foundations of the landscape within which this study will be positioned.

Policy and governance in the early years sector have undergone dramatic changes in a relatively short period of time. Between 1988 and 2013, “there have been at least 25 major new policies (an average of one per year)” (Nutbrown, 2014 p.17). Developments and changes in theory regarding children’s development and learning have strongly influenced policy, and this will be discussed in greater depth in section 2.2. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the school systems in England were being developed and devised predominantly by religious organisations and benefactors who were either socially or politically motivated. Both had a shared belief that educating the youngest children would build a better society (Nutbrown, 2014).

Early years and childcare provision have always appeared to be intrinsically entwined with the history and positionality of women, and that has not significantly changed through time. Literature (Lowe, 2000, Nutbrown, 2014) consistently suggests that the nineteenth-century industrial revolution and subsequent urbanisation saw factory owners discovering that women/mothers to be reliable and motivated workers and, as such, they were keen for them to return to work after childbirth as quickly as possible. To support this, factory owners began to open nurseries.

Working-class women were either engaged in working in factories or caring for the children of those working in the factories, while also often taking in laundry or sewing to do at home. The idea of a childhood being at home with the mother and free from early labour became the privilege of the wealthy. The necessity for childcare became to be seen as a thing for the poor and underprivileged.

Lowe (2000) suggests that early settings for childcare appear to have been unpopular with many in England. During the Victorian era in England, schools began to emerge with the aim to teach children the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, in the shortest time possible. Children from poor families would usually leave school by the age of eight or nine to go into employment. The introduction in 1862 of payment by results for teachers led to children starting school younger in order to reach the desired levels by the age of seven (Pound,

2011). The legacy of this initiative is still evident in the system we have today, with a curriculum and measurable progress being introduced from birth for all children in any setting (Osgood, 2006b, Roberts-Holmes, 2014).

An early influential figure in infant schooling in England was Samuel Wilderspin (1792-1866) (Lowe, 2000, Pound, 2011). In his book *On the importance of educating the infant children of the poor* (1825) he states his beliefs (grounded in Christianity) of the moral obligation of the government to support infant schools (children aged five to eleven), and his understanding of what education can achieve and its importance. The quotation below is included in full, as it is significant in the discussion that emerges from the literature:

These first years of life are still more valuable with a view to the formation of the temper and moral character of the future man. No doubt can be entertained both of the susceptibility of right impressions which belongs to the earliest age, and of the unhappy permanence of those vicious or selfish, propensities, and of those peevish or violent tempers which are then too often contracted; and which, when suffered to expand, lead in after life to domestic misery, to profligacy, and to crime (Wilderspin 1825, p.43).

Wilderspin states in this assertion that the character of a child (in this case, from a poor background) will become fixed with negative attributes without the intervention of positive educational input. He also asserts the importance of the first years of a child's life for the development of temper and moral character, which are aspects that are discussed in the literature regarding self-regulation in section 2.4. This idea of fixed outcomes for children can be seen continuing in schooling today, where, in some cases, differentiation and ability grouping are seen as placing limits on what children can achieve (Bradbury, 2011, Moss, 2014a). It is also found in research into attachment theory, which is discussed in greater depth later in 2.4 (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989, Siegel, Valikhani *et al.*, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019), socio-economic background (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, Flouri, 2009, Blair, 2016) or hereditary genetic dispositions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, Wastell, 2017).

Contemporary research in these fields has reframed this thinking, and evidence now suggests that, what was previously thought of as fixed, is affected by multiple influences, such as environment, nurture, experiences and exposures (Cacioppo *et al.*, 2013, Claro *et al.*, 2016, Youdell, 2016, Dweck, 2017, Wastell, 2017).

Pedagogy employed during the Victorian era was predominantly rote learning, with class sizes of around 40 or more children, where the older children instructed the youngest (Lowe, 2000, Baker, 2020). Wilderspin (1792-1866) argues that, for young children, “their hours of play, which, at the age, must necessarily occupy by far the largest portion of their time” (p.44) is at odds with the predominate practice experienced by most children. He understood the importance for children to be outside and that, during the hours of school, half of that time should be spent outside in playgrounds with green spaces, trees, and flowerbeds. This philosophy is echoed in the later approaches of Montessori, Malaguzzi and Froebel and is one still held as important among many early years teachers in England (Pound, 2011). It is seen in the pedagogy of many Scandinavian and mainland European early education settings (James and James, 2008). It could be argued to have become an entrenched view held by early years professionals and supported by families. This is supported by the popularity of forest schools and outdoor nurseries, and settings with a play focus chosen by many families for their children before they begin in mainstream settings at four years of age. As Wood (2008) attests in her work, contemporary theories are echoing the philosophies from history:

Contemporary theories support the view that participation in activities promotes learning, and that learning changes the nature of participation. Thus the development *of* play, and children’s learning and development *in* play can best be understood in light of cultural context, tools, activities and practices which are created *by* children, and not just *for* children (Wood, 2008 p.7).

Victorian-style settings were regarded by government and those who held the greatest social power as a way of managing and improving the lives of the poor.

This attitude led to the government taking a lead role in education, including early years, day care, child protection, play work and support to mothers (Baldock *et al.*, 2013).

This relates to Foucault's work on normalisation (Maw, 1999), the establishment of systems of measurements, hierarchies and regulation that produces statistical norms, which can then be applied to define what or who is normal and what or who is abnormal, what is good and what is bad in terms of schools, settings and children's progress. These categories and judgements are then communicated to the consumer market (parents), which has led to "unreliable accounts of the comparative performance of schools" (Maw, 1999 p.3). What Wilderspin (1792-1866) suggested in his early assertions to government, is what Foucault later described as "dividing practice". That is to say, by applying a normative approach that groups children – in this case, by social class, or "the poor" – he introduces a discourse that asserts the nature of the curriculum needed for these children from families of this group (Ball, 1990).

Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of decorous, with the knowledge and the power it carries with it (Foucault 1971 p.19).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, settings were viewed as necessary for the less-able mothers. By the mid-twentieth century, they are viewed as the responsible choice for families (Moss, 2014a). Around 2010, settings in areas working with poorer working-class families started failing, as they needed to be self-funded and fees were unaffordable for the families they worked with.

It is in this landscape that, in 1870, the English government made education compulsory for children aged five years, in contrast to our European neighbours, who did not start children in school until the age of seven. England had already outlined a level of achievement that children should reach by seven, and many were still leaving school for employment at eight or nine years of age (Lowe, 2000). Private and preparatory schools continued to start children at the age of seven in England until the 1930s. This demonstrated a divided

system, which afforded favour to the wealthy with privilege and power, while preparing the poor for a life of work. Arguably, the system has not changed, as Peter Moss discusses in his paper 'Early childhood policy in England 1997-2013; anatomy of a missed opportunity' (Moss, 2014a). Children in England are still legally obliged to attend school from the beginning of the academic year in which they will become five, making the starting age of children in Reception year to be four to five years. However, they are not expected to leave at eight or nine, but remain in the system for a significantly longer period, currently 18 years of age.

Literature sources (Fox and Riconscente, 2008, Dodd-Nufrio, 2011, Moss, 2016, Watts, 2021) suggest that Froebel (1782-1852), like other progressive educationalist at this time, such as Vygotsky (1896-1934), Steiner (1861-1925), Montessori (1870-1952) and Malaguzzi (1920-1994), placed the child at the centre of learning and valued the importance of play in learning. Froebel believed that, as "man and nature were derived from the same source, God, they must be governed by the same laws" (Watts, 2021 p.1188). As such, the principles that underpin this educational thinking can be understood through eight features as explained by the Froebel trust, which still work today to champion his approach and philosophy. These principles are: unity and connectedness, autonomous learners, the value of childhood in its own right, relationships matter, creativity and the power of symbols, the importance of play, engaging with nature, knowledgeable and nurturing educators (Froebel Froebel Trust, 2022). Froebel believed that the environment in which children were taught was important and he created 'Kindergartens' (children's gardens). These were settings that were designed to be stimulating and challenging, where children could play freely within nature with access to a wide range of resources to support problem-solving and open-ended play, free from adult agendas. "This was extraordinarily progressive in an age when children were expected to behave as miniature adults" (Watts, 2021 p.1192).

An argument for Froebelian-principled kindergartens to be established in England was rejected and, instead, the Board of Education gave local authorities the power to refuse

under-fives admission to elementary schools (Pound, 2011). In 1918, the government gave local authorities funds to take over and run some of the free or low-cost kindergartens that had been established by either philanthropy or through subsidies from fee-paying settings. Labelling these as 'nursery education' proved more popular with the British public, possibly because there was an unconscious bias post World War One against the Germanic term 'kindergarten'. Government support for nursery education could be seen as supporting parents to access provision, to enable them to work, as is the case currently and was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the government selected Nursery and Reception classes as some of the first to return to school in the phased reopening of schools following the first lockdown in England.

However, the early years sector remains a fragmented system, with conflicted aims between practitioners, families and the government (Moss, 2014a). The seminal EPPE study (Sylva *et al.*, 2004) found that children, particularly the most vulnerable, benefited most from provision that was led by qualified staff. While funding has been made available to all families, it fails to adequately cover staff costs and continues to create great challenges for the early years sector (Moss, 2010, Moss, 2015).

Both the First and Second World Wars created a demand for the care and provision for children, as women were required to work in numbers not seen before. While funding was initially made available to support this, the economic situation post World War One meant that it was quickly withdrawn. The newly established Nursery Schools Association (NSA) called for government commitment to the early years, and the new Labour government of 1929 promised expansion of the provision. However, it was unable to deliver this due to the ongoing significant financial crisis in the country and then an election defeat. This further demonstrates that, from the government's perspective, provision for children was only of importance as an economic tool to create productive workers. This was echoed decades later, in the government's choice of nursery and Reception-age children to be the first to return to school following the Covid-19 school closures, implying that younger children put

greater demands on parents who were working from home. It does not indicate that the care, provision and benefit for children were viewed as important in their own right, which again illustrates the perceived tension between the early childhood education and care sector, and political agenda (Osgood, 2010).

2.3 Influencing factors on the current early years landscape

This section will situate the study in the current English early years landscape by tracing the introduction of centralised control of the sector by the government, the subsequent inspection and measure of provision, and the positive and challenging outcomes of this for practitioners and, by default, children. This section looks specifically at the period post war and the subsequent policies that have significantly influenced and been built on and developed to create the current early years landscape.

From 1945 onwards, there was a call from the Ministry of Education for investment in nursery schools to continue support for families in poverty or those experiencing difficulties. The economic climate in the UK after the Second World War meant that funds and resources were not available to make this possible. There was a belief that the welfare state, established 1906-1914, would eradicate poverty and so these services would only be required by a minority and, therefore, were not a priority. By the 1950-60s, the assumed eradication of poverty was challenged by social researchers such as Able-Smith and Townsend (1965). They proposed that early childhood services might “have an important part to play in solving the problem” (Baldock *et al.*, 2013 p.52). This placed early years back on the political agenda, and Baldock highlights in a more recent publication that the poverty situation has not changed significantly since 1965.

The Children and Young Persons Act (Government, 1963) was passed and Family Advice centres were set up by local authorities’ advice and assist service. At the same time Lady Plowden (who was Chairman for the Central Advisory Council for Education) was commissioned to set up a committee to review all aspects of primary school provision and explore the possibilities of a curriculum for nursery and primary schools in England.

The Plowden report accepted as its theoretical underpinning the cognitive development theory of Piaget: “there seems good reason to suppose that Piaget’s successive stages depend on progressive maturation” (Plowden, 1967 p.11), accepting that children developed through a series of developmental stages starting at birth. Piaget attributed ages to these stages and argued that “these stages must occur in a particular sequence, since each stage incorporates and restructures the previous one and refines the individual’s ability to perceive and understand” (Webb p.93). Using this framework, the Plowden report also supported the expansion of Nursery and early years provision:

Section 1236. We think of primary education as something that ought to start gradually without a sudden transition from whole time home to whole time school, from the day with mother to the day with teacher. This lies behind our recommendation for half time education in nursery groups for nearly all four year olds and for a good many three year olds. That is why we have advocated a slightly later start than now to school, and why we have suggested that it may sometimes be right for a mother to be with her child in the classroom until he has settled down. Were this to happen, it would be a symbol of the partnership between schools and parents that we hope will persist in different forms through the whole length of education (Plowden, 1967 p.461-462).

Lady Plowden’s report took four years to complete. The recommendations she made were not politically driven, but positioned within the research of the time and primary classrooms, which has been argued as a strength (Coe, 2001). What it suggests for the early years sector also reinforces Montessori’s educational philosophy, which centres around the idea that children learn best “by absorbing and interacting with different aspects of their environment, as opposed to being directly taught specific knowledge and skills” (Ackerman, 2019 p.2). The use of play as a pedagogy that enables children to explore and engage with resources in their own initiated way is evident in classrooms today and still positively endorsed in the statutory framework for the EYFS (DFE, 2021e). The report also looked

beyond the classroom, calling for differential allocation of resources, as used in social services, to be applied to education through positive discrimination for schools with children from more challenging backgrounds. This position is mirrored in the allocation of access to school during the Covid-19 closures, where places were made available to key-worker children and also children the school considered as vulnerable.

The report was criticised for not going further (Blackstone, 1967). It reinforced what was already at the centre of most schools, i.e. the child, and did not critically examine the underlying pedagogical assumption of practice being used. Instead, it drew on what was the accepted educational philosophy constructed from cognitive educational theory. The most significant structural recommendation made by the report was the implementation of part-time nursery education for all children aged 3 to 5, where parents desired it. This heralded the beginnings of what would become formal nursery education and the current day foundation stage. The age groups of Nursery and Reception education (3-5 years), before children transition into primary school, were divided into Infants (5-7 years) and Juniors (8-11 years).

What followed Plowden was the Education Act 1981 (Acts, 1981), the introduction of the National Curriculum and the Education Reform Act 1988 (Acts, 1988), followed by the Children Act 1989 (Acts, 1989). This “signalled a new era in the way in which schools were organised and teachers regulated” (Osgood, 2006b p.187). The impact on early years settings following the Children Act 1989 was that, while there were no statutory policies, there were guidelines for the inclusion of early years children into primary schools. These policies were designed for schools rather than early years settings, which operated in a variety of forms from day nurseries, childminders, day care centres and nursery schools.

Significant for this study, the Children Act 1989 (Acts, 1989) emphasised the importance of children’s well-being, which was achieved by consistent care and attention from a teacher or practitioner who knew the child and the child’s family well, namely a ‘key person’. The key person was a fundamental principle in the Birth to Three framework of 2002 and which then

became a statutory requirement, where every child had a named and known key person in the EYFS framework in 2008 (Elfer, 2012).

In 1990, the Rumbold Committee of Inquiry published their report that looked at the provision in England for three to four-year-olds. The report highlighted the breadth of provision available and being accessed by families. It called for greater attention to be given to the quality of provision that providers were offering to children. No official guidance was produced until 1996, when the School's Curriculum and Assessment Authority published desirable outcomes for children's learning at the entry point of compulsory education at aged 5. Three years following the election of the New Labour government (1997), the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage was published, and it placed the regulation of the sector with Ofsted as part of the government's National Childcare strategy (1998).

The Birth to Three document was published in 2004 following Every Child Matters in 2003 (Great Britain *et al.*, 2003). This placed early childhood education and care providers under centralised control and "like school teachers, early years practitioners now have to wrestle with the demands for accountability, attainment targets, a compulsory early years curriculum and standardised approaches to their practice" (Osgood, 2006b p.188). This position of accountability remains, and is important to this study with regards to how teachers navigate this accountability with the added needs of children following lockdowns and their experiences as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nutbrown asserts that this period of hugely active change was "something of an explosion of activity, a burgeoning of initiatives, interest, and resources. Thus, in the last 25 years alone, from 1988 to 2013, there have been at least 25 major new policies (an average of one per year) which, apart from their individual effects, have, as a whole, changed the shape and status of Early Childhood Education and Care almost beyond recognition" (Nutbrown, 2014 p.17). As a result, this created a sense of uncertainty within the sector.

The statutory implementation of an EYFS framework, combined Birth to Three with Every Child Matters to create an overarching guidance of the appropriate developmental stages for

children from birth to five, and was implemented in 2007. It outlined children's expected progress towards goals to be achieved at the end of the foundation stage, ensuring children's readiness to enter primary school.

The EYFS document can be viewed as a Foucault discourse using the ideas expressed in earlier literature (Foucault 1971, Ball, 1990, Maw, 1999), understanding the implementation of EYFS framework as a process of 'Normalisation'. This establishes a system that enables measurements, hierarchies and regulations that can then be used and applied to a population, to produce a statistical norm, which then defines what or who is normal and abnormal. The introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment, made statutory in 2021, can be understood in this context (Meechan, 2022). The non-statutory guidance EYFS framework document clearly states that the guidance set out within each section of learning and development offers:

examples of the types of activity and experiences that children might be involved in as they progress, and which practitioners could refer to when they are planning...

These sections are not intended to be exhaustive – different children will do different things at different times – and **they should not be used as checklists**. (DfE, 2007 p.11).

This is significant, because it moves away from the linear view of child development as suggested by Piaget and subsequently supported by Plowden. Instead, Williams suggests in her commentary on the DfES green paper Every Child Matters (Great Britain *et al.*, 2003) that this guidance heralded a change that can be seen as "pointing to the need to reframe the testing and target-centred culture of education towards broader values of education as supporting children to develop their emotional, physical, intellectual and creative capabilities" (Williams, 2004, p.417). The guidance called for continuous assessment, as well as the collection of evidence through observation and children's work to support final judgements.

In the revised 2012 Development Matters for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), guidance was streamlined, and the number of goals to be assessed reduced. Practitioners

found the 2007 EYFS curriculum onerous (DfE, 2007), and therefore a review was undertaken by Tickell resulting in the streamlined 2012 curriculum (DfE, 2012). In this 2012 document, printed at the bottom of every page is the statement: “Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development” (DfE, 2012).

I now consider the implications of these changes on the practitioners who have direct contact with the children. The introduction of policy reform for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector produced an increase in the funding made available for these services. Regulation of these services was also introduced through successive governments; first by New Labour, then the Conservatives followed by the coalition of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. The policy and regulation called for an increase in professionalism within the workforce that manifested in higher-qualified individuals working with children, supported by findings from the EPPI study (Sylva *et al.*, 2004). In principle, this could only be a good thing. However, despite the increase in investment, the wages for staff in the ECEC sector remained and remain low, devaluing the academic and professional qualification requirements demanded. Moss’s (2014a) examination of Early Childhood policy in England during this period points out that, while investment in children’s centres and public sector settings increased, so did the marketisation of the private sector. This reflected the growth in the demand for ECEC and the desire for greater choice from a consumer market. Rather than early years policy creating an integrated system of services for children with an improved workforce, Moss argues that the system remains as divided and confused as it ever was:

in 2014, despite everything, England still has a split system, unable to produce, embody and enact an interrogative concept that could include all children and families into a system with a holistic remit and broad purpose (Moss, 2014a p.354).

The literature suggests that, for ECEC, placing the child and the child's needs as central to practice, under a new framework that requires practitioners to be accountable and show attainment, has created conflict and confusion with identity and agency for the ECEC professional workforce. Research looking at the impact of professionalisation of the ECEC workforce (Osgood, 2010, Bradbury, 2011, Moss, 2014a), and the introduction of performance monitoring, highlights issues of identity, for example what it means to be a professional under the new guidance in comparison to the professional identity previously held.

In earlier work, Osgood argues that the ECEC workforce did not have "sufficient belief in themselves as 'professional' to challenge top-down policy implementation" (Osgood, 2006b p.189). Instead, she found evidence of 'passive resistance' (Osgood, 2004), where staff appear to "embody or perform a given policy intention, but they do not believe in it or feel able to resist it" (Osgood, 2006b p.189).

One aspect of this professional conflict that is of particular interest to this study is the space practitioners feel they have in their timetable to attend to children's emotional development and where the emotional aspects of professionalism fall within the accountability of teachers. Drawing on a large body of literature (Perry and VandeKamp, 2000, Osgood, 2006a, Osgood, 2006b, Ashiabi, 2007, Dahlberg, 2007, Moss, 2010, Osgood, 2010, Sheard *et al.*, 2012, Zinsser *et al.*, 2015, Garner *et al.*, 2019, Goldberg *et al.*, 2019, Gagne *et al.*, 2021), the assertion that "emotions are vital and essential to providing good quality provision to younger children" (Osgood, 2006a p.8) is made evident. This emotional quality in ECEC staff is critical to their relationships with young children, families and supporting other members of staff in a team. Demonstrating or modelling this emotionality positively to children is an important aspect of supporting and teaching emotional development and awareness to children.

Osgood argues that the government is fearful of the emotional labour undertaken by the ECEC workforce because of its overtly feminine nature. The nurturing aspect of early years

education is, while not exclusively a female trait, necessary to making young children feel secure, safe to make mistakes, try out new things, take risks and, as a result, learn.

However, I argue that this learning is not the quantifiable learning that the government is looking for through the curriculum, and that this creates a professional conflict. The learning supported by emotional development is intrinsic for learning about the self. Through taking risks, making mistakes, and testing the world, children learn to be self-assured, confident, raise their self-esteem, and develop self-reflection. They then become able to explore, experience, and understand their emotions and reactions, in order to develop empathy and, thus, develop tools necessary to become school ready and develop the foundations for healthy self-regulation.

2.4 Self-regulation and emotional development

This section will look at the literature surrounding self-regulation and emotional development, in order to gain an understanding through the literature of what these terms mean, how they might develop in young children, and give context to the change in focus within the statutory requirements for schools and particularly the early years, which will be discussed in section 2.5.

Self-regulation is cited as identifiable behaviour by Moffitt (2011) and further examined by Hofmann (2012). Hofmann, in examining self-regulation, looks at three executive functions: working memory, inhibition, and shifting. He places self-control as a small aspect within self-regulation that is concerned with overcoming impulsive desires or behaviours within inhibition. Poor self-regulation has been linked to undesirable outcomes for individuals such as “crime, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, drug additions, sexually transmitted diseases, educational failure, gambling, and domestic violence” (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018 p.4).

Research and enquiry into self-regulation is not a new phenomenon; seminal educational theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky discuss the ideas of self-regulation and metacognition in their work (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008, Fox and Riconscente, 2008). The ability to manage impulses and distractions in order to stay on task or achieve a goal is the definition of self-

regulation offered by Shanker (2010). This goal-orientated purpose for self-regulation appears to be widely accepted in the literature (Bronson, 2000a, Diamond, 2006, Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008, Shanker, 2010, Moffitt *et al.*, 2011, Kim, 2012, Whitebread and Basilio, 2012, Diamond, 2013, Persico *et al.*, 2015, Zinsler *et al.*, 2015, Montroy *et al.*, 2016).

In February 2018, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) undertook a review of the research into metacognition and self-regulation from an early years and primary perspective. By using metacognition as a lens to evaluate self-regulation, the review focuses on the executive learning functions as identified by Hofmann. The EEF defines self-regulation as an individual's ability to manage their motivation towards their learning. They highlight the benefit for children in learning and developing the ability to reflect on their learning. This is supported in Yee's study (2018) into the interactions between motivation and cognitive control and Dinsmore's paper on metacognition, self-regulation, and self-regulated learning (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008, Yee and Braver, 2018).

Motivation, therefore, becomes a critical attribute needed by children to develop these skills. Motivation has been intrinsically linked to self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2000, Zimmerman, 2008), how an individual feels about themselves as a person and as a learner, and what beliefs they hold about themselves. These additional elements that are necessary in the development of self-regulation and to understanding how to support it shows the EEF definition to be quite narrow.

Self-efficacy might also be referred to as self-concept or the "global perception of oneself and one's self-esteem" (Zimmerman, 2000 p.84). In research looking to measure concepts of self-esteem (Zimmerman, 2000, Zimmerman, 2002, Zimmerman, 2008, Yee and Braver, 2018), the focus has been found to be self-evaluative, asking questions such as, 'How good are you at maths?' Studies that have looked to measure self-efficacy "focus exclusively on task-specific performance expectations such as 'How certain are you that you can diagram this sentence?'" (Zimmerman, 2000 p.84). It is this subtle, but important, difference that makes self-efficacy so much more important in self-regulation and in motivation. In studies,

“self-efficacy beliefs display discriminant validity by independently predicting future academic achievement” (Zimmerman, 2000 p.85), which is the same assertion made with regard to self-regulation.

An important theory that can be used to understand how self-efficacy develops in children is attachment theory. “Attachment theory has been the main psychological theory explaining the emergence and development of self-regulation in children” (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018 p.4). Originally presented by Bowlby (1983), work on this theory was developed by Ainsworth (1989). Attachment theory focuses on a child’s attachment to their primary caregiver in the first years of life. Research into a child’s attachment beyond infancy has shown that it can impact children’s lives in terms of their development of cognitive, social and emotional skills.

Secure attachment is formed through the regular, reliable reactions and interactions with the caregiver to the child’s needs: comfort when crying, feeding, changing. Through the child’s routines of early life, this consistent and reliable care means “the infant begins to organise these expectations internally into what Bowlby (1982) has termed ‘working models’ of the physical environment, attachment figures, and himself or herself” (Ainsworth, 1989 p.710). In the development of self-esteem, this working model of the self is important. A child that develops an insecure attachment because the care they receive in these formative early days is inconsistent can develop a negative working model of themselves. This can then impact on the relationships they form in later life such as friendships and adult partners.

A securely attached child will have had modelled to them how to manage their emotions through co-regulation and experience of consistent support. Being comforted when upset, angry, or frustrated will have developed an understanding of these feelings and the skills to begin to emotionally regulate them independently. “The sense of attachment security (confidence that one is competent and lovable and that others will be responsive and supportive when needed) is a resilience resource in time of need and a building block of mental health and social adjustment” (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019 p.6).

As a child begins to develop cognitively and acquires mobility, they become goal orientated and the relationship between child and caregiver, when secure, enables the child's negotiations towards a goal to develop – and, with it, their confidence. This is then accepted into the child's working model of themselves in a positive way. The child, as they develop physically, will then have the security within themselves of knowing that, as they venture further from the primary caregiver, their caregiver will be there as a secure base to return to. This gives the child confidence to explore the world they find themselves in, including preschools, learning, new environments, children, and adults (Ainsworth, 1989).

In contrast, researchers (Ainsworth, 1989, Siegel, 2001, Valikhani *et al.*, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019) found that children who do not receive the necessary consistent or stable care can develop insecure attachments that are categorised as either anxious or avoidant. Attachment anxiety is where a child does not feel secure that someone will be available to them when they experience a need for love or support. Avoidant attachment is where a child develops a mistrust of others becoming overly self-reliant. The development of these working models of the self are adaptations to cope with the environment that a child finds themselves in to survive. However, these coping strategies can become problematic for a child when later relationships and support would be beneficial and important for well-being. This is summarised well by Mikulincer and Shaver, who assert “these insecure attachment strategies encourage repeated activation and suppression of negative emotions and continued reliance on distorted mental representations of self and others, which contribute to poor physical and mental health” (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019 p.6). This could be seen as barriers to developing the executive functions necessary for self-regulation through poor self-esteem, linked to lack of motivation.

A child's self-efficacy, their motivation, and belief in their ability to take on a challenge will be positively or negatively affected by their early attachments (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018). A child with a positive working model of the self will have a higher sense of self-efficacy. A child with an insecure attachment will develop a more negative working model of the self and will not

have developed the “inner resources needed for coping successfully with stressors. This impairment is particularly likely during prolonged, highly demanding stressful experiences that require active support-seeking and actual confrontation with a problem” (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019 p.6). It could be argued here that a prolonged and highly demanding environment, where active support seeking is required, is the start of full-time education at the age of four. The subsequent behaviours of a child regarding their ability to self-regulate their emotions then become apparent. “Children with self-regulation problems may also exhibit more aggressive behaviour towards their peers when faced with social challenges” (Ringoot *et al.*, 2021 p.5). The study ‘Language, Aggression, and Self-Regulation in Young People’ (Clark *et al.*, 2021) identifies the same negative outcomes for children displaying early childhood aggression. The authors, Clark *et al.*, focus on the impact of poor language skills as a barrier to children developing the regulation skills necessary to manage feelings of anger and frustration.

In relation to attachment, the role of parents is understood to be important in a child's development of self-regulation (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, Manian, 1998, Song, 2018, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022). In research looking specifically at the role of parenting young children in relation to self-regulation, it was found that supportive parenting had a positive impact and that the role of the parent was significant (Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022). “Maternal sensitivity and supportive discipline were concurrently related to immediate and prolonged delay of gratification/impulse control at age three. Moreover, maternal sensitivity was related to better working memory at aged four, but not to better sustained attention skills at aged four” (Kok, 2022 p.2431).

The type of parenting and discipline that children experience in the home environment, literature suggests, plays a significant role in the development of self-regulation (Manian, 1998, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022). We can understand the types of parenting shown to have an impact as “parental control and discipline, parental responsiveness and sensitivity and parental scaffolding or cognitive simulation” (Kok, 2022 p.2425). Where parental control

is negative and seen as hostile or power assertive, it is suggested that this is related to lower levels of self-regulation, whereas higher self-regulation is associated with positive parenting through limit setting, guidance and directiveness. This is an area of current research and discussion, and, as much of the research is quantitative in nature and undertaken in laboratory-style or unfamiliar settings, the subject of parenting and the emotionality involved in the development of self-regulation mean that the focus of studies is narrow and, as such, the conclusions inevitably require greater research. However, the findings are interesting because of the parallels of positive parenting and positive pedagogy, which will be explored through the classroom context of this study.

The impact of parenting is examined in greater depth in Kok's research (2022), which looks at stress reactivity in early childhood in relation to self-regulation development. It draws on previous studies that have identified that a child's temperament may make them more or less susceptible to the impact of parenting styles, by looking specifically at "the moderating role of infant cortisol stress reactivity in the association between observed parenting and experimentally assessed self-regulation in early childhood" (Kok, 2022 p.2425) using a population-based sample. In their study, Kok found no evidence that parenting affected a child's reactivity to stress; rather, the child's temperament made them more or less reactive to stress. And, while Kok hypothesises that, like other mammals, parenting could be considered a determinant of a child's stress reactivity, they found no evidence of this.

The reoccurring role of temperament regarding self-regulation is a theme in the literature that needs to be understood. Drawing on literature that has looked at temperament and self-regulation (Rothbart, 1985, Manian, 1998, Rothbart and Jones, 1998, Kim, 2012, Cruz, 2018, Liu, 2023), we can understand temperament as "biologically based individual differences in emotional and physiological reactivity and regulation" (Liu, 2023 p.59). A child's temperament can appear to moderate the effect of parenting styles (Kim, 2012). Therefore, a child with a high reactivity, or early negative emotions which can be categorised as a 'difficult temperament', will be more affected by both positive and negative parenting

styles, while a child with a less reactive temperament will be less affected by parenting styles (Kim, 2012). “More reactive – or sensitive – individuals are more vulnerable to the negative effects of contextual adversity... while less reactive individuals prove to be resilient in the face of the same negative experience” (Lionetti *et al.*, 2018 p.1).

In their study, Lionetti *et al.* (2018) explore these different temperaments or sensitivities using the popular metaphor ‘Dandelions and Orchids’, where “orchids represent those individuals who are generally more sensitive (i.e. they do exceptionally well in ideal conditions and exceptionally badly in poor ones) and dandelions, those who are generally less sensitive to environmental quality (i.e. they are resilient and can grow anywhere)” (Lionetti *et al.*, 2018 p.2). The study looked at high and low sensitivities and identified that about 31% of the population was made up of individuals with high sensitivities and only 29% with low, leaving about 40% of the population that they categorised as being of medium sensitivity. This middle group they name ‘tulips’, suggesting that “tulips are very common, but less fragile than orchids while more sensitive to climate than dandelions” (Lionetti *et al.*, 2018 p.8). So, while children with high sensitivity are more receptive to positive and negative environments, children with low sensitivity “may be more resilient in the face of adversity, they also appear to suffer the disadvantage of being more resilient to positive effects of intervention” (Lionetti *et al.*, 2018 p.9).

Behaviourally, the three groups differ, with orchids displaying “significantly higher levels of neuroticism and positive emotional reactivity while scoring lower in extraversion than the other groups. Dandelions, on the other hand, had higher levels of extraversion but lower scores of neuroticism and positive emotional reactivity” (Lionetti *et al.*, 2018 p.9).

We can understand from this that positive supportive parenting leads to secure attachment and this then supports all children, but especially those whose temperament is highly reactive. ‘Orchids’, without the early positive support, would be adversely affected in their development of self-regulation and the subsequent skills needed to regulate their highly reactive emotional temperament.

Children who enter school with poor self-regulation skills can be identified by teachers through behaviours such as low self-efficacy, difficulties making friends, aggression, quick to upset and struggle to calm down from an agitated state, while also possibly displaying introverted or extroverted temperaments. They might be avoidant to challenges and resistant to experiencing new things, or they might struggle to wait for a turn. We can understand these behaviours as aspects of self-regulation where “self-regulation is a process in which an individual adjusts their behaviour by controlling their thoughts, feelings, impulses, and performance in order to achieve their goals” (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018 p.4). Some aspects of self-regulation are not always clear from the definitions of self-regulation like the one given by Moffitt and Hofmann, drawing on executive functions when understanding how that would present in young children. Shanker (2012) offers a domain model for self-regulation, which is broken down into five aspects specifically for looking at young children:

- “1) Biological (e.g., how well the child regulates her arousal states)
- 2) Emotional (e.g., how well the child monitors and modifies her emotional responses)
- 3) Cognitive (e.g., how well the child can sustain and switch her attention; inhibit impulses; deal with frustration, delay, distractions, sequence her thoughts)
- 4) Social (e.g., the child’s mastery of rules of appropriate behaviour; how well the child can co-regulate and thereby develop pro-social attributes)
- 5) Reflective thinking skills” (Shanker, 2010 p.5).

These domains are more easily related to the classroom experience for young children. The role of the classroom teacher in the early years becomes critically important in supporting children to develop the skills of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2002, Merritt *et al.*, 2012, Peeters *et al.*, 2014, Zinsser *et al.*, 2015).

In the literature regarding teachers supporting self-regulation the term ‘self-regulated learning’ appears, Dinsmore (2008) unpicks the language and meanings of terms often used – metacognition, self-regulation and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL). Dinsmore

acknowledges the increased interest in metacognition and self-regulation with regard to positive social and academic outcomes has led to the use of the term self-regulated learning. They define self-regulation as an act that cannot occur without the interaction with another person or an environment, whereas metacognition “involves a type of *exogenous constructivism*” (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008 p.393) where learning occurs as a result of an individual’s engagement with the learning process. Dinsmore argues that “the development path of SRL is quite different from the trajectories of metacognition and self-regulation. Specifically while metacognition and SR develop in parallel with little observable cross-fertilization, most models of SRL incorporate aspects of both metacognition and self-regulation” (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008 p.394).

Peeters *et al.* (2014) argue that “teachers SRL knowledge is mostly tacit and remains unconscious” (p.1966), and that only through insight into their own SRL are they able to model effectively the skills for children, which we can understand from Dinsmore (2008) requires both metacognition and self-regulation. Children entering Reception are required to play cooperatively, listen for extended periods of time, sit in a whole-class group, take turns to speak and wait for an activity or toy they want. Merritt (2012) noted that “more teacher – child closeness in kindergarten related to declines in externalizing behaviours over time, suggesting the importance of positive early teacher - student relationships” and “classroom experiences that include positive and sensitive teacher – child interactions may be critical for children to learn positive social behaviours and self-regulatory skills” (2012 p.144). There is a clear similarity between positive parenting styles and the positive sensitive teaching. However, the emotional role of the early years teacher is difficult, as it is often at odds with required measurable curriculum outcomes (Osgood, 2010, Moss, 2014a). Peeters (2014) also notes that there is a potential problem that can occur when there is a difference between a teacher’s objective and a school objective, and advocates a whole-school approach for self-regulated learning, to avoid teachers becoming scheme deliverers unable to respond intuitively to the needs of their children. The literature reviewed (Merritt *et al.*, 2012, Peeters *et al.*, 2014, Persico *et al.*, 2015, Zinsser *et al.*, 2015) suggests that a

teacher's own ability to self-regulate their learning and practice is necessary to effectively support and model these skills to children. This self-regulated practice is gained through experience, suggesting that the more experience a teacher has the more able they are to reflect, review and adapt their practice to support the different children and classes they teach. If we understand SRL as a blend of self-regulation and metacognition (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008), what these studies do not address is the teacher's own ability to personally self-regulate and the support children need in this area in order to be able to become SRLs. By studying SRL, children miss the opportunity to discuss and isolate the self-regulation aspect of SRL from the learning/metacognition aspect.

These studies on self-regulated learning require children to use the executive functions (Moffitt *et al.*, 2011, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Diamond, 2013) discussed earlier. The age of the children engaged in these studies is above that of the children this study will look at. There is an acknowledgement that children are born with the biological ability to self-regulate and that this is affected or supported through early childhood experiences (Kim, 2012, Lionetti *et al.*, 2018, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022, Liu, 2023). In an early years classroom setting, teachers will need to support some children in the development of emotional self-regulation so that they develop the skills to enable them to become self-regulated learners with the ability to access and use executive functions (Perry, 2019).

Continuing the examination of literature linked to self-regulation, Bronson (2000a) argues that "young children cannot separate their feelings, actions, and thoughts as older children and adults learn to do" (p.35). Diamond (2006, 2013) argues that basic executive functions (working memory, focused attention and inhibition control) are developed during preschool-aged children (three-five years) enabling children to begin to become adaptable and use some cognitive flexibility, which is necessary to develop the higher order skills such as reasoning, planning and problem-solving as described in self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002, Perry, 2019). Bronson's early work suggests that, at the preschool/kindergarten age, children can be supported in their development of self-

regulation by adults “giving children age and skill appropriate responsibilities, allowing choices among appropriate social and cognitive activities, and encouraging independent learning and problem solving” (Bronson, 2000a p.36).

Bronson also argues that, at the kindergarten age, children are beginning to “internalise the values and the standards of behaviour and achievement of those around them” (Bronson, 2000a p.36) and that, when children reach primary school age, they have a greater awareness making them “vulnerable to external events and judgments that threaten their feelings of competence and control. They are beginning to compare themselves to others and to use internal standards for judging their behaviour and achievements” (p.36). While Bronson’s work looks at the American education system, children in England experience what is categorised for primary aged children in the US in the Reception year. Bronson goes on to state that “the challenges posed by formal schooling can lower children’s perceived control and willingness to try if there is an overemphasis on competition or external standards that they cannot reach” (Bronson, 2000a p.36). This statement echoes the philosophical stance taken by early childhood theorists, who placed emphasis on children learning through play and exploration in stimulating and challenging environments (Wood, 2008, Nutbrown, 2014, Watts, 2021, Trust, 2022), and warn against formalising education too early with testing and expected standards that could be detrimental to children’s development for self-regulation (Maw, 1999, Moss, 2010, Bradbury, 2011, Moss, 2014a).

Literature focusing specifically on the development of self-regulation (Diamond, 2006, Diamond, 2013, Montroy *et al.*, 2016) has looked at what aspects of self-regulation emerge in children at different ages, specifically in early childhood between the ages of three and seven. Montroy (2016) notes that, during this period, “children typically progress from reactive or coregulated behaviour to more advanced, cognitive – behavioural forms of self-regulation” (p.1744), which supports Diamond’s (2006) earlier work that reported “marked improvements in inhibition and cognitive flexibility, especially the flexibility to change perspectives” (p.77) linked to social cognition, theory of mind and empathy. These studies

have looked at children's self-regulation through age-appropriate tests and tasks for different executive functions to produce quantitative data, which is understood against other factors such as temperament models and mothers' education, gender, and language. Findings from Diamond (2006) and in Montroy's (2016) later study both identified that children showed rapid development between the ages of three and five, supporting the importance of the Reception year (4-5 years) for the development of self-regulation and the decision to undertake this study with this age phase. However, three to four-year-olds could "correctly state the instruction, but they cannot inhibit responding to the no-go stimulus. Not until four and a half years of age can they begin to curb errors of commission to the no-go stimulus" (Diamond, 2006 p.83), Montroy's findings suggest that behavioural self-regulation "develop(s) in a nonlinear fashion" (2016 p.1755).

Whitebread's studies, unlike those of others already referred to, adopted in the methodology "observational studies of children in the naturalistic contexts of their preschool classrooms, mostly engaged in playful, self-initiated individual and small group collaborative activities" (Whitebread and Basilio, 2012 p.20). Building on the work of Bronson (2000b), Whitebread separates the development of self-regulation into cognitive self-regulation (executive functions) and socio-emotional regulation, producing developmental stages that can be observed.

Whitebread suggests that cognitive self-regulation could be identified by the behaviours shown in the first row of the table (Figure 3) below, which has been adapted from Whitebread and Basilio (2012 p.18 & 21), while social-emotional regulation could be identified by the behaviours that are identified by the second row. These identified behaviours have been used to support observations made during the data collection for this study, which are discussed in greater detail in section 3.10.

Cognitive self-regulation behaviours 3-6 years of age	- Can engage in a wider range of cognitive activities. - More able to carry out multi-step activities.

	- More able to control attention and resist distraction. - Can learn to use more advanced problem-solving strategies. - More able to choose tasks appropriate for own level of skill.
Socio-emotional regulation behaviours, 3-6 years of age	- More capable of controlling emotions, abiding by rules, and refraining from forbidden behaviours. - More capable of using language to regulate own behaviour and influence others. - More interest in peers and peer acceptance, so more apt to regulate self in relation to peers. - Can learn more effective interaction strategies. - Can engage in dramatic play with roles and rules. - Begins to talk about mental states of self and others. - Better understanding how others may feel. - Can engage deliberate helping, sharing, and comforting behaviours. - Internalising standards of behaviour. - Developing more stable prosocial (or antisocial) attitudes and behaviours.

Figure (3)

The connection between self-regulation and emotional regulation is supported in the literature when considering the development in young children (Pessoa, 2009, Whitebread and Basilio, 2012, Gagne *et al.*, 2021). Emotional regulation can be understood as emotion related self-regulation “it implies regulation *of* emotions rather than regulation *by* emotions” (Gagne *et al.*, 2021 p.1). Furthermore, it can be divided into intrinsic emotional regulation, where emotions are regulated by the individual, and extrinsic emotional regulation where emotions are regulated by someone else such as a parent carer through co-regulation.

Emotional regulation refers to the effortful control that is required to inhibit and persevere towards a goal, sometimes referred to as self-control. This enables an individual to “override thoughts and emotions, thus enabling behaviour to vary adaptively from moment to moment” (Inzlicht *et al.*, 2014 p.127). Gagne provides a conceptual diagram to illustrate the “relationship between self-regulation, effortful control, executive functions and emotion-related self-regulation” (Gagne *et al.*, 2021 p.2). In this diagram (Figure 4), Gagne places the emotional aspect of self-regulation at the centre, which supports the wider literature explored here that suggests that, without emotional development, the other aspects necessary for self-regulation will be affected.

Tree Diagram of Self-regulation and Emotion-related Self-regulation

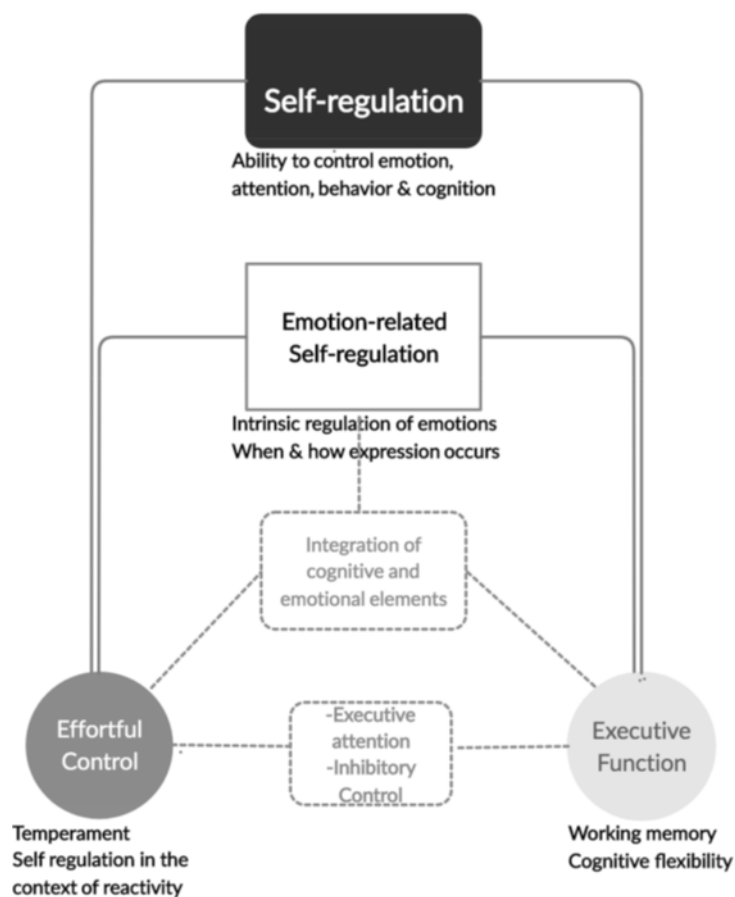


Figure (4) Conceptual diagram of relationship between Self-regulation, Effortful Control, Executive Control, Executive Function and Emotion-related Self-Regulation (reproduced from Gagne *et al.*, 2021 p.2).

The delayed gratification aspect of self-regulation was researched by Mischel (1989) and revisited by Watts (2018) using the marshmallow test. Mischel argued that, in children aged four who attempted this future-orientated self-control, findings “significantly predict patterns of competence and coping assessed more than a decade later” (Mischel *et al.*, 1989 p.933). However, in Watts’ later study, where other variables such as temperament and home life were included in the analysis, they found that self-control in the form of delayed gratification was not a single indicator and that other factors had an impact on results. They argue that delayed gratification can be seen as part of an umbrella of skills for self-control, which includes impulse control and can be included as emotional regulation within self-regulation. Inzlicht’s study looking specifically at self-control suggests that “apparent regulatory failures reflect the motivated switching of task priorities as people strive to strike an optimal balance between engaging cognitive labour to pursue ‘have to’ goals versus preferring cognitive leisure in the pursuit of ‘want to’ goals” (Inzlicht *et al.*, 2014 p.127). This work links the goal-orientated nature needed in self-regulation and the motivational requirements on an intrinsic level for the individual. Inzlicht offered the model (Figure 5) shown below to illustrate how these different aspects interact with regard to self-control. I have included this, because it is helpful to understand the interrelated nature of these skills and the inclusion of the emotional aspect as having an independent impact on other elements, and supports the later work of Gagne’s (2021) conceptual diagram shown in Figure 4.

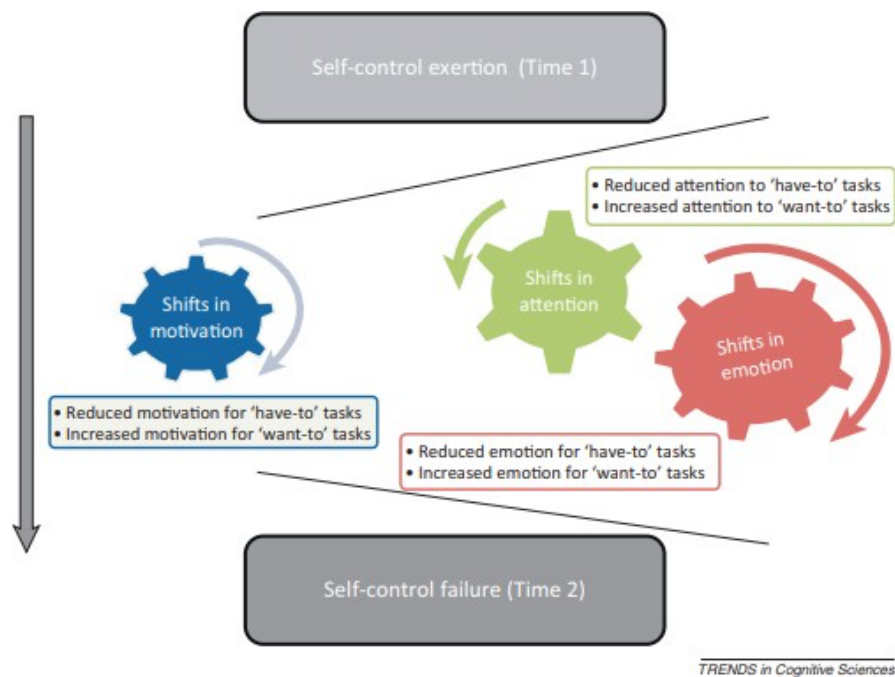


Figure (5) How self-control exertion at Time 1 leads to self-control failure at Time 2 (reproduced from Inzlicht *et al.*, 2014 p.130).

An aspect of emotional development that can be connected to the development self-regulation is interoception, sometimes described as the eighth sensory sense (Mahler, 2017, Zamariola, 2019, Zaporozhets, 2020, Schuette, 2021, Luedders Jones, 2022). Unlike the other senses, interoception is the sense that enables individuals to notice what is happening inside their bodies such as our “body states including hunger, thirst, needing to go to the bathroom, pain, sexual arousal, itch, tickle, temperature (e.g., hot/cold), nausea, headache, illness, muscle tension” and our emotional states such as “our moods or emotional conditions of the body. Emotional states include anger, embarrassment, happiness, anxiety, excitement, sadness, fear” (Mahler, 2017 p.7). The process of interoception is bidirectional, “the body sends messages to the brain and the brain sends messages to the body” (Luedders Jones, 2022 p.47-48). In studies, interoception is divided into interoceptive accuracy and interoceptive sensibility, and an individual’s awareness “of these internal signals is important for maintaining homeostasis and guiding self-regulatory behaviour” (Schuette, 2021 p.1894). Increased awareness of these signals has been linked to increased ability to emotionally regulate.

Interoceptive accuracy (IA) is tested by individuals' ability to accurately count their own heartbeat, whereas interoceptive sensitivity (IS) requires individuals to notice what is happening in their body or listening to their body. In tests, Schuette (2021) found IA did not have an impact on emotional regulation and coping strategies; however, their findings "support the existence of a positive relationship between IS (noticing) and emotion identification in non-clinical populations" (2021 p.1902). An improved awareness of the sensations in the body enabled individuals to have a greater opportunity for emotional awareness and, as such, the ability to regulate them. This contradicts the earlier findings of Zamariola's (2019) study, which looked at individuals' ability to cope with stress in negative experiences using ostracism as a test, where results concluded that IA or IS did not impact the negative affect of the test, and as such "no support was found to the view that better interoceptive abilities help to regulate negative emotions" (2019 p.1636). However, that does not mean that, in effortful control, interoception does not need to develop.

Luedders Jones (2022) argues that there is little research to date looking at interoception in young children. However, if we accept that interoceptive signals are bidirectional as suggested by Mahler (2017) and are originated within the body, then individuals including young children experience moment-to-moment physiological representations and these representations may be both conscious and preconscious. Luedders Jones (2022) argues that "there is a process of discriminating and identifying sensations, then clustering sensation into feeling words that enable people to control their actions" (2022 p.48). It is this effortful control that underpins the use of executive functions for self-regulation.

The literature reviewed in this section shows the interconnected nature of the development of self-regulation between the individual and their environment. Environment is being understood as home experiences, parenting, and attachment, as discussed previously. Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Bronfenbrenner, 2005) gives a framework to understand these interconnections. He places the child/individual at the centre of expanding concentric rings, which he calls the microsystem,

the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. These are then placed on to the chronosystem, which he added later to give an understanding to the time or event, the individual experiences. These will be portrayed and discussed in greater detail in section 3.16 in relation to this study.

In addition to Bronfenbrenner's framework, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, Bandura, 1986) provides a theoretical approach that is useful in understanding children's development within the interconnected aspects of self-regulation. Bandura argues that "behaviour has been extensively analysed in terms of the stimulus conditions that evoke it and the reinforcing conditions that evoke it and the reinforcing conditions that maintain it", thus "response patterns that are generally attributed to inner causes can be induced, eliminated, and reinstated by varying external influences" (Bandura, 1977 p.5). Bandura argues that the idea that behaviour can be externally regulated "implies a one-way control process which reduces individuals to passive respondents to the vagaries of whatever influences impinge upon them" (Bandura, 1977 p.6).

Behaviour theory is concerned with behaviour that is generalisable and specific, suggesting the necessity to understand an individual's beliefs that led to consistent behaviours and exploring the situation and environment that could cause different behaviours, arguing that "behaviour results from the interactions of persons and situation, rather than from either factor alone" (Bandura, 1977 p.9). The importance of these interactions and the impact that they have on an individual's behaviour can be used in conjunction with Bronfenbrenner's system, which illustrates and explores these interactions.

The motivational function in behavioural theory is one of the critical elements discussed in the origins of behaviour. Bandura argues that "past experiences create expectations that certain actions will bring valued benefits, that others will have no appreciable effect, and that still others will avert future trouble" (Bandura, 1977 p.18). This cognitive and reflective ability is understood within the executive functions of self-regulation (Hofmann *et al.*, 2012) as an individual's ability to manage distractions and impulses to achieve a goal or stay on a task

(Shanker, 2010). This makes it a pertinent theory to use in exploring children's development of self-regulation, together with previously discussed motivation or goal orientation also playing a critical role (Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008, EEF, 2018, Yee and Braver, 2018).

Another aspect of behaviour theory is learning through modelling, where behaviour is learnt through observing others in order to inform an individual's understanding of how to behave, thus learning by example. The concept of modelling connects strongly with attachment theory and the development of co-regulation, which is learning with the support of a consistent caregiver modelling how to experience and master emotions. A secure attachment as discussed above is formed through consistent care, and the ability to regulate emotions is then supported by being modelled by the child's carer through co-regulation (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019). Bandura's social learning theory, together with Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development, will be used in the analysis and discussion of this study's findings in Chapter Five.

2.5 Current provision for social and emotional development in schools

This section will look at the literature on the provision for social and emotional education in schools. Links between social and emotional learning (SEL) and self-regulation make this an important inclusion in the review of literature. In England, two curricula are used in the primary age phase, the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (DfE, 2021e). The EYFS places PSED as a prime area for development for children up to the age of five and outlines specific areas for development to be assessed. It gives guidance regarding these aspects that are discussed in greater detail later in this section. Unlike other subjects that are assessed nationally, such as English and mathematics, the National Curriculum does include statutory content for schools to incorporate for personal and social development. Rather, it states: "2.5 All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice. Schools are also free to include other subjects or topics of their choice in planning and designing their own programme of education" (DfE, 2013 p.5).

This lack of statutory content or assessment can lead to children receiving variable input in this area and a danger of it being superseded in the timetable for the assessed statutory subjects. Schools address this aspect of children's learning and development in different ways using a variety of schemes produced and sold to schools. More comprehensive guidance is provided by the DfE for citizenship in the primary age phase (DfE, 2015), but this does not become statutory until secondary school.

The primary guidance suggests that children should develop as "individuals and as members of their communities, building on their own experiences and on the early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development" (DfE, 2013 p.1). Guidance outlines how children should be taught about right and wrong, fair and unfair, take part in discussions and debate, begin to understand their choices and their responsibilities to others, and that they are part of a larger whole, group and community. These aims have a moral underpinning and look to educate children to become healthy participants in the wider society.

Schemes such as Jigsaw, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Kagan, Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) (Co-operative, 2008-2023, Jigsaw, 2013-2023, Barnardos, 2023, Community, 2023, Kagan, 2023), to name a few, have been adopted by primary schools to support children to develop social and emotional learning skills. The 2019 and revised 2023 Ofsted inspection handbook for schools (Ofsted, 2023) includes in its framework for the evaluation of personal development section 293, that the judgement made for this area will focus on evidence of how a school:

- "ensures that curriculum subjects such as citizenship, RE and other areas such as personal, social, health and economic education, and relationships and sex education, contribute to pupils' personal development – including by considering the provision, quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities offered by the school
- develops pupils' characters, which we define as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs pupils' motivation and guides their conduct so

that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity, and cooperate consistently well with others. This gives pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society” (Ofsted, 2023).

The inclusion of ‘character’, Metcalfe and Moulin-Stozek (2021) suggest, demonstrates renewed attention to character education. They acknowledge the historical link between religious education and the education of morality and character. Defining character and character education (Johnson *et al.*, 2022) suggests:

“Character has to do with the extent to which a person consistently thinks and acts in ways that are considered prosocial. Behaviours and attitudes thought to be indicative of character are typically ones that contribute to the functioning of a social community, or at least are considered socially desirable. This allows for a very broad array of behaviours to be treated as indicators of character, including intellectual virtues (like curiosity), performance virtues (like perseverance), and self-regulatory functioning” (p.88).

Religious education (RE) is a statutory requirement for primary schools (children aged 5-11), but is not included in the National Curriculum content. Rather, it states that:

“2.1 Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life” (DfE, 2013 p.5).

RE has been taught in state-maintained schools since they were first introduced in 1870, when it was known as religious instruction. However, following the Education Act of 1944 in England it became religious education, and the content taught shifted from “Christian confessionalism that promoted the moral standards of un-denominational Christianity” Metcalfe (2021 p350) to a multi-faith approach that was then included in the Education

Reform Act 1988. The moral conduct underpinning all faiths studied by children gives them comparable systems, with the aim to provide a positive stimulus for children to develop their understanding of morality. This is particularly pertinent to this study, as one of the participating schools is a faith school (see Chapter Three).

Whether social, emotional and morality are taught through RE or PSHE schemes of work, the literature (Elias *et al.*, 2007, Sheard *et al.*, 2012, Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2015, McClelland *et al.*, 2017, Bailey *et al.*, 2019, Goldberg *et al.*, 2019, Johnson *et al.*, 2022, Bazzano *et al.*, 2023) suggests a positive impact on children, and where the values are mirrored in the ethos of the school, they have the greatest effect. RE teachers from Metcalfe's study (2021) suggest that morality can be taught in all subjects across the curriculum and not limited to one, echoing the importance of the whole-school approach argued by Goldberg (2019):

...research indicates that interventions yield most successful outcomes when they are integrated in to daily practice and school culture, seek to engage all staff, reinforce skills outside of the classroom such as hallways and playgrounds support parental engagement, and coordinate work with outside agencies (Goldberg *et al.*, 2019 p.756).

A criticism of the scheme-based approach to teaching SEL is the one-size-fits-all approach, which does not adequately reflect the needs of all the children in a class. The prescriptive nature of scheme work can leave teachers unsure about adapting the content, "as adaptations or deviations from the script are seen as threats to the program fidelity" (Bailey *et al.*, 2019 p.54).

The skills of social and emotional learning can be broken into three components (McClelland *et al.*, 2017):

1. Emotional processes: this skill included "emotional knowledge (the ability to recognise and label emotions accurately), emotion regulation (managing emotions and controlling how and when we express them), perspective taking, and empathy" (p.34).

2. Social/interpersonal: this skill is necessary for positive and effective interactions with others and includes “recognising and understanding social cues, effectively interpreting others’ behaviours, and having positive interactions with others” (p.34).

3. Cognitive regulation: this skill incorporates the executive functions of working memory and inhibitory control and is necessary for children to “focus and switch from one task to another, listen to and remember instructions, and inhibit impulses” (p.34).

In reimagining SEL, Bailey (2019) suggests a developmental pyramid that can be used by teachers as a framework to support children (see Figure 24).

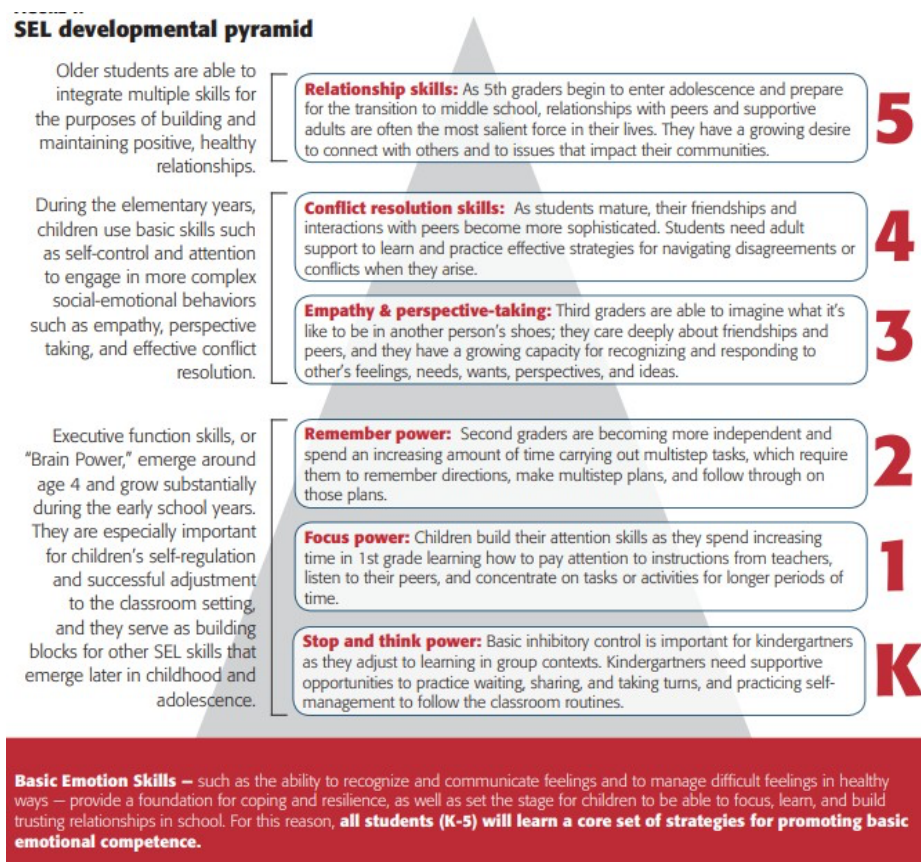


Figure (25) Developmental pyramid reproduced from (Bailey *et al.*, 2019 p.55).

This framework uses the class names used in the USA, where K refers to kindergarten and relates to children aged five to six, reflecting the first year of compulsory schooling. Before kindergarten, children attend nursery and preschools. In England, children start compulsory schooling in the Reception year aged four to five, so K in this framework would be Year 1 in

England. The framework (Figure 24) suggests that teachers can use this across the curriculum, giving children opportunities to develop their skills in an ongoing context, thus negating the possible limitations that a scheme that is taught in discrete lessons may create.

Addressing SEL as ongoing skill development supports the findings that “providing continuous and consistent opportunities to practise these skills during everyday classroom situations” (Goldberg *et al.*, 2019 p.756) is beneficial. This mirrors the literature looking at self-regulation development in the classroom (Perry and VandeKamp, 2000, Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022), where findings showed that children were more motivated to take responsibility for their own self-regulation when working independently at tasks, for example “children were significantly more likely to show evidence of self-regulation and metacognition in the absence of an adult’s presence (involvement)” (Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022 p.864).

Another intervention to emerge from the literature on SEL is mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2015, Dunning *et al.*, 2019, Saunders and Kober, 2020, Ruiz-Íñiguez *et al.*, 2020, Bazzano *et al.*, 2023) in relation to the development of social and emotional skills.

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention and developing the ability to be present in the moment and aware without judgement of what is happening, being experienced or felt (Ruiz-Íñiguez *et al.*, 2020), and is rooted in Buddhist philosophy and practice (Dunning *et al.*, 2019).

Mindfulness is developed through meditation that usually focuses on the breath, and is sometimes combined with yoga for children. It has been linked to supporting social and emotional development, reducing anxiety, helping cope with stress in adults and children and the development of executive functions, as becoming mindful requires cognitive control (Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2015). Findings from Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBI) have found significant improvement for participants in executive functions, anxiety/stress, social behaviours, depression, and attention (Dunning *et al.*, 2019). While the literature acknowledges this is a relatively new intervention, and that more research into the

effectiveness is needed, the growing number of papers looking at MBI indicates that interest in the effectiveness of this intervention for children is increasing (Saunders and Kober, 2020). The large MY Resilience In Adolescence (MYRIAD) study (Ford *et al.*, 2021) looked specifically at secondary school children (11-14 years) at 85 schools in the UK. Findings echo the suggestion discussed earlier that environmental factors have a critical impact. While the findings are of children significantly older than those in this study, it concludes that “schools in urban locations, with a higher percentage of free school meals and of White British, were associated with poorer pupil mental health. A more positive school climate was associated with better mental health” (Ford *et al.*, 2021 p.1467). This study was undertaken before the global Covid-19 pandemic, although published after, and the authors comment that their findings, which indicate the importance and impact of the school experience in influencing mental health and well-being, is “particularly worrying” (p.1467) in the light of what children have experienced during the global pandemic.

In the 2014, EYFS statutory requirements were that all settings in the England had to provide children with a curriculum that worked towards end point goals divided into seven areas of learning, three of which were considered as prime areas: Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal Social and Emotional Development (PSED). The other four aspects of learning were divided into the following: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design (DfE, 2014). Critical to this study is the aspect of Personal Social and Emotional Development.

In the 2014 DfE EYFS document, PSED is explained as “helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities” (DfE, 2014 p.8 p.8). This aspect is then divided for assessment purposes into three specific goals:

“Self-confidence and self-awareness: children are confident to try new activities and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak

in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help.

Managing feelings and behaviour: children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class and understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations and take changes of routine in their stride.

Making relationships: children play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children." (DfE, 2014 p.11).

In the revised 2021 EYFS statutory requirements document (DfE, 2021e), which will be used by classes in this study, shape, space and measure has been removed from the mathematical section, with greater focus and clarity within literacy for comprehension, word reading and writing as separate sections, and the introduction of self-regulation within PSED. The introduction of PSED has changed and adds a greater explanation and emphasis on the importance of this aspect of development, echoing much of the research reviewed. This includes the importance of attachment, supportive relationships and developing an understanding of their feelings:

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and

guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate, and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life (DfE, 2021b p.8-9).

The introduction of adult modelling and guidance, while not new to early years practice, is new to this aspect of development and requires the adult to have good self-regulation personally, and a working understanding of what is required to develop, in order to model it (Peeters *et al.*, 2014) utilising social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Like the previous 2014 EYFS document, this aspect is then divided into three early learning goals (ELG), namely self-regulation, managing self and building relationships:

ELG: Self-Regulation - Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate;
- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

ELG: Managing Self - Children at the expected level of development will:

- Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge;
- Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly;
- Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

ELG: Building Relationships - Children at the expected level of development will:

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others;

- Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers;
- Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs (DfE, 2021b p.12).

All these aspects can be understood from the literature reviewed as developmental aspects of self-regulation. Spread between the aspects of PSED is the need for children to form positive attachment, which links to attachment theory previously discussed, and be confident to try new challenges, which links to self-esteem and which has been discussed as being linked to the development of self-regulation within executive functions, as is the ability to set own goals. The literature previously discussed has illustrated the goal-orientated nature of self-regulated behaviour, as well as demonstrating the ability to wait for a turn and manage impulses. These ELGs incorporate the emotional aspect, goal-directed behaviour and focus, which echoes Shanker's model (Shanker, 2010) and the literature that demonstrates that self-regulation development is greater than the executive functions alone and requires emotional development as a foundation.

The next section will look specifically at the literature at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and the anticipated impacts this novel phenomenon could have.

2.6 Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and predicted impacts for children.

In this section, I will outline the events and impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the education system in England and explore the research predicting what impacts this could have on children.

On 20 March 2020, all schools in England were closed, children were sent home, and the country went into lockdown because of the Covid-19 global pandemic. For many children, schools remained closed to them until the start of the new academic year in September 2020. This six-month break from educational institutions represents a unique situation and opportunity to understand how this situation impacted children and schools.

The government announced a partial easing of the lockdown in June 2020, with the planned return to school for children in nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 (government, 2022). It is not entirely clear why these ages were selected. There appeared to be a belief that working from home with very young children was particularly challenging and so, economically, it was helpful to get these children back into school, and to support the Year 6 children emotionally with their transition to secondary school. Attendance was not compulsory and, in the early years, learning, development, and the foundation stage profile assessment requirements were suspended until 23 September 2020 (DfE, 2020).

During lockdown, schools were required to open to provide care for children of key workers, so throughout the whole period of lockdown some children were still attending school. However, provision during this time was varied, depending on what schools could provide educationally.

In January 2021, after a term of disrupted attendance due to classes having to be sent home to isolate if Covid-19 cases were confirmed within the class, and individual children also having to isolate for 14 days if they had been in contact with a positive Covid-19 case, the government closed all schools in England again for a further lockdown of three months from January to March 2021. The quality of home schooling, resources and online contact that was available to children during this period varied from school to school, so every child's experience of this time will have been very different (Pensiero, 2021). This will be shown in the findings in Chapter Four and discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

Initial research (Benner and Mistry, 2020, Caffo *et al.*, 2020, Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Clark *et al.*, 2020, Donagh, 2020, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Kilham, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Lee, 2020, Murray, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020, Browne, 2021, Luo, 2021, Mantovani *et al.*, 2021, Timmons *et al.*, 2021) to emerge internationally discussing the possible affects that the global lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic might have had on children is speculative, because there has not been time to fully explore this. However, some common themes emerged, which I have drawn on in my study. While the

studies that I have reviewed have their own specific focus, they all have a relevance to most children in most situations.

With all the schools closed, one immediate concern for many children became food insecurity. Families who relied on free school meals and were known to struggle over the summer holidays, and the uncertainty and unknown length of the lockdowns, meant that for some children food insecurity was certainly experienced in conjunction with food shortages in UK supermarkets due to supply chain disruptions (Hutton, 2021, Partington, 2021). Food insecurity has been linked to obesity; for low-income families, the adverse impact is not only limited to nutrition but it also affects education, mental health and the safety of vulnerable children (Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020). Work done to address these issues for children during Covid-19 included schools providing food packages (DfE, 2021d), food banks and the instigation of supermarket vouchers, all set up and actioned in a short space of time (trust, 2020).

During lockdown, there was an inevitable increase in the time children spent on screens, either for entertainment, communications, or home schooling (Nagata *et al.*, 2020). Increased screen time has been linked to levels of obesity and to anxiety and inattention in children (Nagata *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020). Increased screen time also impacts parents, their levels of anxiety, stress and mental health.

“Heightened anxiety and stress on families due to Covid-19 may lead to an exacerbation of mental health problems in children” (Kumar *et al.*, 2020 p.165). The literature suggests that links have been identified between the levels of stress reported by parents and parents’ reports of children’s challenging behaviour or emotional behaviour (Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020). The emotional behaviours or challenging behaviours identified in the studied reviews include difficulty concentrating, boredom, irritability, frustration, anger, restlessness, and nervousness (Caffo *et al.*, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020). It is acknowledged that the knowledge and understanding about how children respond to adverse circumstances and trauma are limited,

but there is little known about how a pandemic could impact on them (Jiao *et al.*, 2020).

Caffo suggests that there is a need to understand the complexity of the impact on children with regard to mental health and social well-being, and that this should be achieved through developing continuous research as a priority (Caffo *et al.*, 2020).

As well as considering the backdrop of the pandemic, it is important to revisit the policy documents mentioned in section 2.3 and to provide a contemporary policy context for this study. Some of the key policy documents that have shaped children's education have been previously mentioned in section 2.3, for example the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Education Act 1981 and the National Curriculum and Education Reform Act 1988, followed by the Childcare Act 1989. These acts laid the foundations and have shaped the educational system and the experiences that children have in schools and settings today.

This study is situated in the context of the new statutory requirements for the early years that was piloted in England in 2018/19, reviewed and made statutory to all settings in September 2021. During this period, the government made numerous changes to requirements to reflect the disruptions due to the Covid-19 lockdowns and the subsequent closures of schools.

The first lockdown in England started in March 2020 and, on 24 April that year, the DfE added guidance that temporarily disapplied and modified certain elements of the EYFS. At this time, all children were at home and schools were closed to all except key-worker children. The guidance was updated again in June 2020 to reflect the wider opening of early years settings in England from 1 June 2020 (DfE, 2021b). The disaplications could only be used "where a provider is prevented from complying with the requirements of the EYFS due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions or requirements which have been imposed by regulations or a direction" (DfE, 2021c section 2.2).

The conditions needed to apply this were government restrictions or requirements being in place, such as lockdowns, which the provider felt meant they were unable to deliver the EYFS as required by the statutory requirements. This did not apply when cases of Covid-19

occurred in classes, but could be used if the number of staff having to isolate was significant such as to prevent the delivery of the curriculum.

On 25 September 2020, the transitional period that had been granted to support settings to get Paediatric First Aid (PFA) training up to date was removed. Extensions on existing PFA certificates that had been granted ended on 25 November 2020.

The disapplication could still be used and was added to the Ofsted early years inspection handbook for clarity of what could be used and when in June 2021. This followed the second national lockdown in January 2021 and the resumption of inspections in May 2021. At the end of the academic year 2020/21, the government guidance 'Action for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic' (DfE, 2021a) was that education and childcare settings were no longer expected to undertake contact tracing, and the guidance given no longer recommended that groups be kept apart as much as possible. However, it did still state that contingency plans had to be in place and that it might become necessary to reintroduce keeping groups apart for temporary periods (DfE, 2021a). This was still evident and active during the data collection for this study.

Between July 2021 and the full withdrawal of guidance on 1 April 2022, there were several changes in relation to vaccinations, self-isolations and testing, which meant that practitioners were needing to keep up to date with frequently changing requirements.

Amongst this fluctuating and changing landscape of government guidance and requirements pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic, the new statutory requirements for the EYFS came into force, starting in September 2021.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature that gives a historical context to the study within the early years sector and the literature that sets the current landscape for early years in England. I have reviewed the literature regarding self-regulation and emotional development, and the current provision for social and emotional development in schools.

Also, I have reviewed research to date on the predicted impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's education and the key policies that are relevant to the study. The next chapter provides a detailed explanation of this research design and methodology.

Chapter Three – Methodology and Design

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the philosophical approach and methods chosen to explore self-regulation and emotional development in the Reception classroom. To achieve this, the study was broken into three subsections: the child, stakeholders, and the sector.

The questions that were asked in each of these subsections look to study the ‘seen and unseen’ of each aspect of the study. The seen being what we can observe and the unseen being an analysis of the possible effect experienced by the child through the environments of the classroom and the interactions within this context.

1. The child

- How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?

2. Stakeholders

- What are the perceptions of the different Early Years stakeholders regarding self-regulation?

3. Sector

- Does Early Years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

In the research design, I explain why the methods were chosen to answer the questions and how they were undertaken. I discuss the limitations associated with different methods and justify my choices, explaining how the three sections intersect, influence, and inform each other. The following is a breakdown of how I answered the research questions and how the philosophical position, research design, and systematic analysis were guided by this approach.

- First, critical analysis of early years policy and teaching looked at whether early years policy and pedagogy supports the development of self-regulation.
- Second, the stakeholders and adults working with the children in the Reception classroom being studied were interviewed to share their understandings of self-regulation and the different abilities that the children in the class have of these skills.

This explored the perceptions that different early years stakeholders hold regarding self-regulation.

- Thirdly, this study asks how self-regulation affects Reception-aged children. To understand this from the child's lived experience in the classroom, detailed observations were made alongside children's maps of their classroom environment.

The questions for this study do not look to test the hypothesis in a quantitative way. Rather, they explore the phenomenon of 'self-regulation' in greater depth, whilst learning about a relatively new framing of this in the context of early years education, which requires a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014, Flick, 2018).

To explore these questions, the study needed to be situated in the context of the classroom and involve as many participants in this environment as possible. What takes place in the classroom then becomes the case as discussed in greater depth in section 3.4. However, a running narrative of the day-to-day life of the classroom does not constitute a case study; the analysis of children's experiences of self-regulation within the classroom context is an analytical frame, which is to be studied with the classroom. Using Thomas's (2016) guidance, case study research requires two parts: a subject and an analytical frame. In this study, the subject is the Reception classroom, and the case to be studied is an analysis of children's experience of self-regulation.

In a case study, a single subject is researched from multiple perspectives. This project explored the experience and understanding of self-regulation with three subgroups: the stakeholders, the sector and policy, and the child. The choice of using the case study in the research design is discussed in greater depth in section 3.4.

3.2 Philosophical approach

When we make laws which compel our children to go to school we assume collectively an awesome responsibility. For a period of some ten years, with minor

variations from country to country, the children are conscripts; and their youth does nothing to alter the seriousness of this fact (Donaldson, 1987 p.13).

Ontologically, this research is interpretivist and will be transformative through a feminist theory perspective, by exploring, identifying, and critically analysing dominant social patterns and oppressive social structures that could affect the experience of self-regulation in the classroom for girls and boys. Research with this type of goal has been linked to non-participatory, non-interventionist positionality (Stevenson, 2004) because it allows the research a supposed objective perspective. On the other hand, participatory, interventionist positions are used in research with the goal of change for stakeholders, such as action research.

The collaborative nature of this case study, with classroom adults and the participatory position of the researcher, may result in a change to pedagogy and thinking during the data collection due to dialogue between myself and adults in the class with regard to observations on child and practices. This is not the intended outcome for this study, unlike action research, which utilises this process, as this is a case study design.

To position this study philosophically and within the theoretical landscape, I will draw on contemporary literature addressing the concepts that will be studied – the child, childhood, and the education system.

This study utilises the triangulation of methods in the case study, using traditional ethnographic qualitative methods to generate a discourse from the child in the classroom, which could be contra to the existing discourses on education, childhood, and the child in a transformative way.

The role of the researcher in this context is reframed as one who recognises inequalities and injustices in society and strives to challenge the status quo, who is a bit of a provocateur with overtones of humility, and who possesses a shared sense of responsibility (Mertens, 2016 p.212).

Transformative approaches can be understood as research that examines issues of power on marginalised individuals (Creswell, 2014). It has also been described and discussed as research that endeavours to produce new outcomes, that then build incrementally on existing or previous studies by developing or using methodologies in new ways and disrupts existing paradigms (Johnston and Hauser, 2008). As a result, transformative research has the potential to change how the subject being studied is viewed.

It has been argued (Johnston and Hauser, 2008, Trevors *et al.*, 2012, Mertens, 2016) that whether a piece of research is transformative cannot be known until it is finished and the findings analysed. The nature of this type of research can be met with resistance because it does not follow established and ratified methodologies. The steps taken in this study have not been done before in similar research and, as such, have not been validated through previously accepted studies (Johnston and Hauser, 2008, Trevors *et al.*, 2012).

Deciding if a piece of research is, in fact, transformative in the sciences has been discussed as challenging in the literature (Creswell, 2014). This is because new findings are questioned and, once presented, they need to be proven or disproven through further studies before they can be accepted. However, the nature of the design of scientific research could make this subsequent enquiry easier than in social science because of the positivistic nature of science research. Social science research often uses a constructivist or interpretivist position; studies explore human behaviours which, by their nature, are individual, unpredictable, and subject to change. This makes ratification and retesting in a scientific context more challenging to the academic establishment.

I acknowledge the challenge of undertaking and designing a research project that claims from the outset to be transformative. Through observations of the perspective and lived experience of the child in the classroom, I argue that this study should be considered transformative. Observations of children's self-regulation and emotional development in the classroom context, alongside the teacher's perspectives and their lived experiences of teaching in the year 2021/22, during the return to school following the Covid-19 disruption,

create a unique opportunity to develop understanding of self-regulation in children of Reception age. The findings from this study will have the potential to change the pedagogical approaches used to support children and deepen the understanding of self-regulation development. This will provide an understanding of how the classroom environment, school culture and policy impact children's emotional and self-regulation development at this point in time. I suggest that this is transformative in its approach and design. Findings could be used in dialogue to change the approaches used in the classroom on a political level, which could change the experience of children in the foundation stage in England. This philosophical stance is a "transformative world view" (Creswell, 2014 p.9).

Reflecting on my philosophical stance, this research uses feminist theory. Traditionally, Feminism was concerned with women's rights, but now it is a way of thinking and working that is concerned with marginalised groups. There are too many to list, but these groups are broad and inclusive, but often come back to gender as a key remit. All these groups are seen as marginalised by the patriarchy, and this can be understood as the power system that enforces or controls. Foucault argues that the education system, by its nature, is a system that operates as a political system to maintain or modify using knowledge and power. His work examines the dynamics of power (Ball, 1990, Foucault, 1991) – knowledge, power and institutions, the space, and relationships between the individual and the social structures or institution. That knowledge is used as a mechanism for control, and can be seen in the ideologies of the early educational institutions created to save the poor from lives of immorality and sin, as discussed in section 2.2, and in the current context how the political agenda seeks to restore children academically following the disruptions caused by Covid-19.

Foucault argues that power, which is intrinsically linked to knowledge, is fundamental in shaping relationships, both personal and professional (Ball, 1990, Foucault, 1991).

Feminism is concerned with the 'being' in a context and how that 'being' is marginalised.

This study is not primarily concerned with gender and identifying structures and frameworks

that use language as central to understanding culture (Burman and Stacey, 2010). Instead, it identifies with Material Feminism, which is concerned with “a more direct encounter with the world that breaks down distinctions between human and non-human, nature and culture, the technological and the organic” (Burman and Stacey, 2010 p.233). Material Feminism demands that how the material is viewed is reframed, reconsidering the environmental politics of situations; it sees the environment not as a distant place, but located “within homes, schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods” (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008 p. 9). By re-centring the environmental politics, we can reveal the “disproportionate toxic load” (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008 p.9) carried by marginalised groups such as indigenous people, people of lower class and, I suggest, young children in the early years sector.

The focus is on exploring if children can self-regulate in the context of the classroom. The being in this study is the child and their opportunity to self-regulate in the classroom, where the classroom context is the layout, structures, daily routines, other children and interactions, a setting controlled and managed by adults who are both seen and unseen to the child. Seen are the adults that are present in the children’s day-to-day lives, and unseen are the policies and senior leadership in school who dictate the school’s culture and systems within which the children’s class is situated.

Self-regulatory skills are founded in emotional development and the emotionality of early years is an aspect of the curriculum, positioned as a prime area and, therefore, one of the three most important aspects for learning. However, as an aspect to assess it is more challenging, it is less measurable and, therefore, problematic in a measurement-based education system. The early years workforce has traditionally been, and continues to be, dominated by women; there has been previous feminist work that has addressed the emotionality of the early years workers and identified the conflicts practitioners experience between performance and the pressure to produce measurable progress in the children under their care (Osgood, 2006a, Osgood, 2006b, Osgood, 2010, Carter and Nutbrown, 2016). I suggest that there is an inseparable link between the importance of the nurturing

disposition that is often attributed to women, that is held as a core belief by early years practitioners and teachers, and a workforce dominated by women, while governed and dictated by a patriarchal system that self serves to protect itself.

Using feminist theory, the three aspects that this classroom study will investigate to answer its questions are:

- 'The child' – they are the participants of the classroom context, the focus of education systems, research, and early childhood theory; and, though central, are in a position of being dominated, by both the seen and unseen and so marginalised and arguably powerless by age.
- 'The stakeholders' – these are the workforce who hold the identified position of conflict, where they have a statutory requirement to produce measurable progress and be held accountable; they are generally found to feel conflict that what they are needing to do goes against their nurturing instincts and beliefs about what is best emotionally for some of the children they have responsibility for.
- 'The sector' – this is the government and curriculum that sets a statutory framework that all schools, setting and the children within must follow, and be tested on for success against a normalised statistical measure. In this study, I view the sector as the patriarchal system.

Education has historically been thought of as a platform to provide social mobility and moral instruction (Barry *et al.*, 1996, Burman and Stacey, 2010). The focus in the early years (Birth-5 years in England) on 'school readiness', a state which sees children as ready for school at the end of the foundation years (age 5) is potentially problematic. Knowledge is accumulated at a faster rate than can be gathered, centralised, and controlled, which arguably renders the knowledge compiled in a curriculum outdated by the time it is organised, trialled and ready to implement.

Equally problematic is the notion of 'school ready', as this is an undefined concept that can mean different things in different schools, cultures, and families (Kay, 2022). The measure of

if a child is ready for school is currently undertaken by the end of foundation stage assessment in all areas and aspects of learning, using the teacher's assessment, collected from observations of the child, and collected evidence of their work. This assessment is individual to each child, while simultaneously general.

To place the child and the child's experience in this study, I must discuss how the child and childhood are viewed. I will do this using three positions suggested by feminist research MacNaughton *et al.* (2007).

First	The child is the possession of the adult. This position assumes that the child is dependent on adults biologically and is too immature to participate in decisions about their lives. In this adult-child relationship, the power and responsibility are with the adult.
Second	The child is subject to the adult. In this relationship, the child is innocent and needs adult protection, therefore the adult in a professional capacity must develop policies and practice that enable the child to develop into a mature adult. This position places the child as being in a state of 'becoming' (Uprichard, 2008). The emphasis here is that during the period of childhood the child is in the process of becoming an adult. This assumes that the adult knows what the child needs to become an adult and is in the position of power to ensure the child makes this transition from childhood to adulthood.
Third	The child is a participant. Therefore, the child is involved in decision-making about factors that affect their lives when the adult regards them as competent. The child in this model is consulted; however, adults reserve the right of decision-making power.

Table (1) positions of the child in childhood (adapted from MacNaughton, 2007).

In this final third position suggested by MacNaughton (2007), the child is considered as a 'being and becoming' (Uprichard, 2008). The child here is acknowledged as understanding that they are a child and are being a child in their childhood; also, that the child understands

that they will become an adult and that their understanding of this 'becoming' suggests "we take childhood to be a set of coordinates that mark out capacities to affect and be affected, to experience, to do, to change, then childhood states and the affects produced by the bodies of children are continually being folded into our experiences of the everyday" (Hickey-Moody, 2012 p.284). In this sense, the state of becoming is not bound by developmental stages or by age, as suggested by earlier educational theorist Piaget (1896-1980); rather, individuals are always in the process of becoming, or 'growing sideways' (Malewski, 2021), suggesting a new model for understanding childhood and adulthood that challenges rule-governed development. Focusing attention on 'affect' as a force, feeling or atmosphere created in the encounters experienced, in the analysis of the findings, provides an opportunity to look for new possibilities in our understanding of children's experiences and our (as the adults) impact.

This study will use the third view of the child and, in the analysis of interviews with teachers, look to find out how those adults in power involve children in decision-making and factors that affect their lived experience in the classroom. In analysing the observational field notes, I will explore opportunities that children have in the classroom to be participants in the daily routines that shape their day. Analysis of the policy documents will show how children are positioned within the context of the sector.

Education and the school system can be seen as a product of the developing world's need to prepare children for adulthood, provide care for children and enable parents (particularly women) to return to work.

Education has been seen at different times and in different ways as the process by which a society transmits its accumulated knowledge and its basic values, as the evolution of permanent institutions to act as guardians of that knowledge and those values, and as a fundamental instrument of the state or the ruling social groups to ensure social stability or compliance (Sliver, H. cited in Lowe, 2000 p.211).

3.3 Methodology

In this section, I will discuss the methods chosen in this research design.

This study comprised of two in-depth case studies undertaken in different schools. The data was collected through interviews, observations, examination of school policies, maps created by the children of their classroom, and parent questionnaires. I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each method used separately in the following sections.

3.4 Case study

Case study as a research design has been criticised for its lack of breadth in the case of single case studies (Bassey, 1999) and, because of this perceived weakness in design, that findings are non-generalisable. Large, randomised control studies produce generalised one-size-fits-all findings. In a classroom of 30 individuals, the data produced cannot and will not produce generalisable findings. However, the findings produced when regarded using a 'critical realist' lens suggest that there will be elements of real truth within the many individual truths that this study will produce in its findings. Before greater understanding can be found, those truths need exploring through deep context and lived experiences in the classroom that the case study design enables.

The goal of this study was not to create or find definitive results that could be applied in a generalised way, and therefore this weakness was not applicable (Williams, 2000). Rather, the goal for this study was to understand and explore in greater depth, from multiple perspectives within a classroom context, what self-regulation means and looks like for the child in the school setting. As well as this, the goal was that any findings become part of a broader discourse concerning early years education, well-being and emotional development of children, girls and boys in our early years settings and classrooms (MacNaughton *et al.*, 2001, Greene and Hogan, 2005).

Case study as a design for research in educational settings has been traditionally used, because the school or the class comfortably fits in the case study design, and the qualitative

methods suit the exploratory nature of understanding individual settings or aspects of practice. Educational settings can be understood as a field for research. Field research implies an immersion within the field being studied in order to be close to the “particularity and complexity and the real-life circumstances within which the research occurs” (Thomas, 2016 p.10).

The selection of the case study design for the research was influenced by my personal experiences. Having been a classroom teacher, I had experience of observation; I was comfortable with this as a method, and the children are used to being observed as this is standard practice in the early years (MacNaughton *et al.*, 2001), so the children would be comfortable with this method. I also had experience of interviews from previous research. Philosophically, I believe that whilst individuals’ narratives have subjective positions, within those narratives there is a truth that can be found using triangulation of methods.

It could be argued that to study the development of self-regulation of children in the case settings, the research design needed to account and include children’s home lives and the wider context that surrounds them. I argue that the purpose and goal for this study was to look at and explore the child’s experience in the classroom.

As a classroom teacher, it is not possible to change, or have an impact on, a child’s home life. However, the quality of the relationships between school and home will be discussed. Where a positive impact can be made for an individual child, is the time when that child is in the classroom. For that reason, this study chose to only investigate the time during the school day. Parents’ views were sought through questionnaires and included in the analysis.

Issues of generalisability in case study design have been argued and discussed at length (Simons, 1980, Stevenson, 2004, Creswell, 2014, Thomas, 2016, Flick, 2018). This research philosophically looks to be emancipatory from the feminist theory perspective and transformative in approach and design. It explores if children in Reception are a marginalised group due to their age within the education system. It also looks at whether that

system, which children have no choice other than to be a part of by law (home-schooled children aside), inadvertently disadvantages children in the long term, because they are not experiencing self-regulation in ways that enable them to develop the skills that are argued to enable them to be successful academically and professionally in later life. Findings from these case studies do not look to be generalisable; they are relatable, producing rich data, understandings that will become part of a dialogue about the education system in the early years post Covid-19 and pedagogic practices in Reception within the curriculum framework in England.

3.5 Role of the researcher/positionality

The role the researcher takes in the research, as participant or non-participant, is a consideration for the case study. It considers the familiarity or strangeness the researcher holds to the context being studied (Flick, 2018). Having been a Reception class teacher, I have a familiarity with the setting in which the study was positioned; however, I entered the field of study with a sense of strangeness to enable me to observe with an objective perspective. The familiarity I brought created a greater connection with the staff because I was familiar with their situations. This assisted me with access and the participants' willingness to engage with me.

Children of Reception age (four to five years) see any adult in the room as available to them. They would be accustomed to adults in the classroom being part of their environment and so would engage with them and ask for help from that person (MacNaughton *et al.*, 2001). My position in the classroom could not realistically be one of an objective non-participant observer. As I also have experience of being a Reception classroom teacher, I would be uncomfortable turning children away and I argue that behaving in this way would be detrimental to the study. I therefore would not turn children away if they came to me.

As a participant in the children's environment, I was more able to access the children's lived experience than as a non-participant. At the same time, I was a stranger in the classroom, with a professional familiarity to the setting in which the study is based (Flick, 2018).

I needed to gain children's trust and acceptance into their space for them to behave as naturally as possible. Conversely, as a stranger, some children might have been more inclined to be honest and share thoughts they would not otherwise feel secure to share with their more familiar adults (teachers and teaching assistants, or TAs). From a researcher perspective, this could be an advantage; however, an awareness of the ethical and safeguarding issues around this needed to be addressed and will be discussed in section 3.15.

Having been a Reception classroom teacher and an early years teacher educator, the motivation behind this research was my personal desire to learn, and understand, self-regulation. Flyvbjerg (2006 p.236) makes the case that where research is a learning process, "the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when a researcher places themselves within the context being studied. Only in this way can researchers understand the viewpoints and behaviour, which characterise social actors." From this position, the researcher has a privileged view of the unfolding reality of the case being studied, producing a depth of observation and data that is particular to case study and ethnographic design, leading to an understanding that is not possible in studies that involve larger samples and statistical analysis.

To access and engage in this process, the researcher ideally comes with an understanding of the context and subject to be investigated:

It is right to say that the conditions of generating description of social activity is being able in principle to participate in it, it involves "mutual knowledge" shared by observer and participant whose action constitutes and reconstitutes the social world (Giddens, 1982 p.15).

This is argued as both a positive and a negative, as previous experience means that the researcher has a subjective understanding of the subject created from their previous experiences, which can act as a bias. This perceived bias is a criticism of the case study design, particularly a single case study. To counter this bias, research can be designed with

the intention to falsify previously held beliefs. This ensures that subjective bias held by the research is acknowledged and mitigated in the analysis and design of the research.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the researcher “conducting the case study often ends up casting off preconceived notions and theories” (p.236). Whilst a preconceived or subjective opinion will be held by the researcher on entering the field being studied, with the intrinsic motivation of learning about something that is known to them, through the immersion and participation of the study, previous beliefs will be challenged and changed.

3.6 Access

Gaining access to schools at the time of this study was made more challenging by the ongoing impact and disruptions caused by Covid-19. I was able to reach out to a large network of schools (#160) through my connections with the professional partnerships at both the University of Warwick and the University of Birmingham. However, only a small number of schools were in a position to engage with my study. Of the three that were happy for me to arrange visits, due to Covid only two of these were able to accommodate me.

During the data-collection period, access continued to be challenging, with schools having to cancel my visit due to the numbers of positive Covid cases in the area or the school, classes being bubbled (‘bubbled’ being a term used at the time of Covid-19 to describe a group, in this case classes, which would not mix with other groups or ‘bubbles’ to limit contact and the potential spread of the virus), staff being away isolating, or having to cancel myself due to positive Covid cases in my own household. Throughout the data collection, it was necessary to be extremely sensitive to the concerns of the schools and understanding of the different rules and requirements made regarding Covid-19 by each school.

3.7 Description of settings and research methods

Two primary schools were used in this study to create two in-depth case studies. The first school (Case One) was a single-form entry state-maintained Catholic school. Most of the pupils were White British and the number of children eligible for free school meals was below the national average. The number of children supported for special educational needs at the

time of the last full Ofsted report in 2013 was in line with the national average.

The second school (Case Two) was a three-form entry state-maintained primary school, making it larger than the national average primary school. Most of the pupils were White British and there was a below-average number of children eligible for free school meals recorded in the last full Ofsted report, also in 2013. There were a higher-than-average number of children supported for special educational needs and, as a result, the school had established a small centre to support autistic children.

Both schools were selected through the questionnaire process, which I will discuss in section 3.8 below on questionnaires. By using this process, it eliminated any bias in choosing by the researcher. Neither of the schools were known to the researcher and they are not in areas that the researcher had worked in previously.

The similarities of the schools, both being predominantly White British and situated in areas of relatively low social deprivation, meant that between the studies there were some comparisons that could be made between the cohorts observed. However, one being a small Catholic school and one being a large non-denomination school produced interesting differences that are discussed in the findings. Both classes in the study were Reception and were required to meet the statutory requirements of the EYFS; however, their days differ. The daily routine in Case One was more flexible and changeable; every day that I was there was different. However, I have captured the basic routines in Table (2) below, whereas in Case Two every day followed the same pattern with little deviation.

Case 1 HC		Case 2 GM	
8.35 – 8.55	Children arrive	8.30 – 8.55	Children arrive
8.50	Registration and morning routine	9.00	Registration and morning routine
9.00	Morning prayer, Assembly, or phonics	9.15	Phonics

9.30 - 9.50	Learning time in the continuous provision, inside and out, children choose.	9.30	Snack, children wash hands and line up to get piece of fruit and drink
	Teachers call children to work in groups or 1-1		
10.30	Stop for snack, children wash hands, then get own snack or fruit from tray, then outside to playground	9.50	Children divided into inside and outside classrooms
10.50	Children back into classroom and return to self-chosen activities	10.45	Tidy-up time
11.25	Tidy-up time	11.00	Kinetic letters
11.30	Line up for lunch and say prayer, walk through to dinner hall, when finished go to outside play area	11.15	Get ready for lunch, walk down to dinner hall, eat, then outside play in playground
12.45	Children back into class and onto carpet for meditation/reflection time	12.30	Children come in and register
12.55	Children dismissed for learning time in the continuous provision with new challenges introduced for the afternoon. Children called to work in group or 1-1	12.45	Maths
2.30	Children directed to tidy up jobs outside and inside	1.15	Play time in outside playground
2.45	Children on carpet with bags and coats for handouts and story, if time	1.45	Back inside, Children swap inside outside classrooms
2.55	Children line up with kids' club children at end of line	2.15	Tidy-up time
3.05	Children go out to meet parents	2.30	All children on carpet with coats and bags for final handouts and story, if time
		2.45	Children line up to go out to meet parents

Table (2) Class routines

Having gained consent from both schools' headteachers, the class teachers involved informed the parents of the class I would be working with about my project and asked for consent to include their children anonymously. I arranged four full day visits, during which I

observed continuously the whole class from the moment the children entered the room in the morning to the time they left to meet their parents/carers, with only a short break for lunch (see appendix 7).

During these visits, I also interviewed class teachers in the Reception classes I was observing in both schools, and a parallel Reception class teacher in Case Two school, as well as a Year 1 and 2 teacher in Case One school. Informal conversations with the TAs in the classrooms were recorded in my field notes.

During my first visit to both schools, children were invited to make me a map of their classroom to help me find my way round, but also to show me what in their environment mattered most to them. These will be discussed in greater detail later in section 3.11.

Following my initial four days of observational visits, I arranged to return to observe two children per school (one boy and one girl) in depth throughout the entire day. These children were selected in collaboration with the class teacher. Neither child was suspected, diagnosed, or being referred for SEND, and in the class teacher's opinion reflected a child they considered to have good self-regulation and one that they felt had less developed self-regulation. In the final term, I returned to do a final whole-class observation.

The data collected can be seen in the table below.

Method	Part c pants	Descr pt on	Ana ys s/themes
Teacher quest onna res	D str buted to 160 schoo s and made ava ab e on soc a med a to w den reach. 27 responses, of 27 most not	In t a data co ect on and too to f nd case study schoo s. Of the part c pants, 6 gave perm ss on for me to contact them. From those 6, I was ab e to arrange v s ts w th 3. Due to Cov d m tat ons, one of those had to w thdraw.	The t me that the quest onna re was sent out co nc ded w th ntense act v ty n schoo s post nat ona ockdown. Quest onna re. Sent out at the end of summer term 2021, when

	complete but usable data.	Questionnaire was distributed via the Warwick University partnership schools network and the University of Birmingham partnership schools network.	teachers were very busy with end of year reports for children whose year had been disrupted by Covid school closures. Understandably, my questionnaire was not a priority for the intended participants.
Children's Maps	Class activity for children on first observation day. 10 maps. 5 per school.	Invited children to make me a map of the classroom on my first day to help orientate me with the learning environment. A sample of these maps have been kept from each school.	Look for reoccurring themes in the children's pictures, what stands out as important to them in the classroom. Cross reference with class teacher interviews.
Classroom maps and photos		I have mapped and photographed the classrooms in both case schools.	Look at the differences and similarities in the settings, how the layout of the classrooms could be impacting children's opportunities to develop self-regulation and emotional development.
Interviews	3 x Reception teachers each with 4 years + experience in EY. 1 x year 1 teacher 1 x year 2 teacher	Semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed, then organised by question.	Look for emergent themes across interviews by questions. Identify other emergent themes when data combined.

	Comments recorded from TAs during observations.		
Observations	10 who e-c ass days, 4 who e-day and v dua ch dren.	In Nov/Dec 2021, I undertook 4 who e-day, who e-c ass observations in each school. In March, I undertook who e-day observations of 2 children in each case school. In May, I undertook one who e-day observation of the who e c ass in each case school.	Code positive and negative themes by case. Use constant comparison method to code for emergent themes. Compare who e-c ass observations from the first term with last term for behaviour changes and daily routine changes. Look at individual children observations for self-regulation behaviours and cross reference with who e-c ass observations from start and end of year. Extract TA conversations from field notes and code with themes.
School policies	Behaviour policy	In one case school, the behaviour policy is the only document that addresses children's emotional states. In the other, there is a specific policy for mental health and wellbeing that specifically addresses emotional development and self-regulation.	
School websites		Looked through both case school websites, to see what values they	Look for evidence of the school valuing emotional

		present to parents and show as important information to share regarding the school culture.	development, monitoring self-regulation.
School data	HC & GM	School data collected for the Reception end of years 18/19, 19/20, 20/21. For three aspects of PSED and three aspects of CL, a school We comm results from 19/20 and 21/22.	Look more broadly at data available with regard to CL post Covid and links between CL development and self-regulation.
Parent questionnaire	11 responses Questionnaire distributed by case 1 to a Reception and KS1 parents (#90) using usual parent communications channels.	This questionnaire was designed to gather data of the children's home experiences during the lockdowns. The questionnaire has been shared with Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 parents, and there have been responses from all age groups.	Not enough responses to give any generalisable conclusions. However, this data can be used alongside analysis of teacher interviews and government policy and messages regarding families and the impact of the Covid school closures on families.

Table (3) Data Collection Table.

The following sections discuss each method used in greater detail and discusses the strengths and limitations of each.

3.8 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were chosen as a method, at the start of the study, to engage with a broad range of schools to gather feelings from Reception teachers at the time of children returning to school after the second school closures in 2021. This information would then be used to inform or reveal any areas that the observational and school visit data collection could explore further. The questionnaires also served to find schools that would participate in greater depth with the study (Patten, 2014).

I utilised the Warwick University school partnerships and the University of Birmingham

schools partnership (approx 160) along with social media, specifically Twitter, to distribute the questionnaires in order to target a greater number of participants across the sector. The timing of the questionnaires was poor, being at the end of the summer term 2021, because teachers were dealing with reports, the return to school post Covid-19 and catch-up programmes for children following the second school closures.

To gather the data I was looking for, the questionnaire comprised questions that asked for personal experiences and which could not easily be framed as yes/no questions. On reflection, there were too many questions that asked the participants to add their own words, which is known to lead to 'questionnaire fatigue' (Lambert, 2019 Chapter 1. Bartram, B) and it is possible that this also had an impact on the response rate.

A second questionnaire was designed to gather parents' experiences of home schooling their children during school closures and their own personal experiences of being in lockdown, and the level of support they had from school and at home (see appendix 1.1). The cohorts in both cases had very low numbers of children with EAL as was indicated in the Ofsted reports, and both cases had low numbers of children entitled to free school meals. This suggested that using the school's usual method of communicating with parents via email and text would be an effective method of distribution taking into account home language, technology and literacy comfort. Findings from this questionnaire will be discussed within the emergent themes within the case study (Robson, 2002).

Two questionnaire software were explored, namely Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey. Trial questionnaires were created using both software and published on social media to explore which would be best for processing and analysing the results. From these tests, Qualtrics was chosen because it enabled a greater depth of exploration of the data collected and it was also licensed by the University of Birmingham.

Questionnaires as a method are effective for gathering information from a large range of people; every participant is answering the same questions and, therefore, the data collected can be viewed qualitatively (Robson, 2002, Cohen, 2008). Because the questionnaires are

self-administered and anonymous, it removes interviewer bias or response effects such as the respondent's reaction to the interviewer, or the need to please or say the right thing. The eliciting of socially desirable responses is a disadvantage of the questionnaires as a method, as is the snapshot that the information gathered will provide (Patten, 2014, Bernard, 2018). Questionnaires do not produce the depth of information that other methods such as interviews and observations allow. In this study, a snapshot is of the feelings of stakeholders working in the early years education sector and parents' experiences. I argue that it was a legitimate choice to use questionnaires and the data gathered is integral to accessing the feelings from 'the sector', being teachers and practitioners, at the start of the study and parents, both considered in this study as 'stakeholders' (see appendix 1.2).

3.9 Interviews

A blend of expert and semi-structured interview format was used to interview the adults working in the classes being observed, and staff in Years 1 and 2 in Case One only (Robson, 2002, Bernard, 2018, Flick, 2018). The beliefs that these adults held about the emotional development of the individual children in the classes, and any judgements the adults might have about their backgrounds that might contribute to these beliefs were needed to understand and analyse the observational data collected.

These interviews were conducted face to face and undertaken during the school day to lessen the impact on teachers' time. This meant that the teachers were immersed within the school day at the time of recording, making the views shared more current and relevant.

- Semi-structured interview – To understand the teachers' own beliefs and understanding of emotional development, as well as how these manifest, develop, are supported, or hindered in classrooms and children's lives. Where has this understanding come from, what training have the teachers received? What importance do teachers place on emotional development/self-regulation with regard to children's overall outcomes and what do they do in their classrooms? (Robson, 2002).

- Expert interview – This was chosen because the teacher/practitioner is the expert with regard to the children in their class and has the expert position of knowing and understanding the children’s level of development. This aspect of the interview is to understand the teachers’ subjective positioning in the context of the class and the children in it. Also, to identify teachers’ subjective interpretation of the emotional development of the children in the class, and the context that informs their beliefs about the children’s emotional developments. It seeks to understand what experiences and events have informed their opinions (Flick, 2018).

The interviews were designed with a semi-structured schedule (see appendix 2) so that the same questions/areas of enquiry are asked to all, but allowed a flow of conversation and the flexibility to respond and pursue directions that the conversation took with more freedom.

This style of interviewing is described by Rubin and Rubin (2012) as ‘responsive interviewing’ and the relationship and attitude of the researcher is important for its success. The flexible and responsive nature of this style of interviewing created a platform for the “experience and knowledge of each interviewee” (Rubin, 2012 p.37).

Interviews as a method was chosen to explore ‘the stakeholders’, specifically the teachers, working with the children and to explore their understanding of self-regulation, support from the sector and any conflicts or support they have encountered. The use of the interview aimed to “reveal existing knowledge in a way that can be expressed in the form of answers and so become accessible to interpretation” (Flick, 2018 p.231). A suggested, limitation to interviews as a method is the interpretation of the data it produces; however, the method of analysis chosen for this study, the constant comparison method, which is discussed in the analysis section 3.16, will negate this.

3.10 Observations

Observational data formed a large amount of the data collected from this study. In each case study setting, there were five full days of observations made. As discussed in section 3.7, on the ‘role of the researcher and positionality’, I was a participant observer in the

classes and the observations were of the children's lived experiences in the class, the interactions between stakeholders (adults in the classroom) and the children, relationships, and interactions between children, and how children manage emotionally the day-to-day conflicts, changes and problems of the classroom environment and school setting.

Jorgensen (1989) identifies and lists seven features of participant observation:

- “1. A special interest in human meaning and interaction as viewed from the perspective of people who are insiders or members of particular situations and settings.
 2. Location in the here and now of everyday life situations and settings as the foundation of enquire and method.
 3. A form of theory and theorizing stressing interpretation and understanding of human existence.
 4. A logic and process of enquiry that is open-ended, flexible, opportunistic, and requires constant redefinition of what is problematic, based on facts gathered in concrete settings of human existence.
 5. An in-depth, qualitative, case study approach and design.
 6. The performance of a participant role or roles that involve establishing and maintaining relationships with natives in the field.
 7. The use of direct observation along with other methods of gathering information.”
- (Jorgensen, 1989 p.13-14).

The observations for each case consisted of five unstructured descriptive observations of the whole school day and two focused observations of individual children through the whole school day, also using an unstructured format but looking for the behaviours identified by Whitebread and Basilio (2012), as shown in Figure (3). The descriptive observations span the academic year so that developmental changes in the children could be observed, and the development and change of the daily routines could be documented. The choice to use

an unstructured format, rather than time sampling or any other form of observation, was made because the unstructured format is suggested (Robson, 2002, Creswell, 2014, Flick, 2018) as the best method when you are immersed in a situation as a participant observer looking to understand what is happening in that lived moment.

I included my observation times, to keep track of the day and transition points as they occurred (see appendix 7). Notes on conversations with children were included, as were casual conversations with teachers and TAs. “The term ‘participant observation’ is a little confusing since it connotes much more than simply observation. It entails taking to people, watching, reading documents, keeping notes and anything else that enables you to understand a situation” (Thomas, 2016 p.229), which this study looked to achieve.

A limitation of observation as a method is that it can only capture what was seen, and what was being studied might not occur during an observation period (Flick, 2018). Also, there is the narrowness of the observer’s gaze or ‘inattentional blindness’ (Wood and Simons, 2019), as it is not possible to see everything everywhere in a setting. Behaviours might not be as authentic at the start, because of the strangeness of the observer in the environment. By visiting over the course of a year and on multiple visits, the children being observed became more familiar with me and negated any altered behaviour due to unfamiliarity. The number of visits increased the chances of observing children’s emotional behaviours and opportunities to self-regulate. Through ongoing conversations with adults in the room during the day, I could understand and record anything that I have not seen but has caused an effect that was observed, thus mitigating the issue of the narrowness of the observer’s gaze.

3.11 Children’s maps

The choice to use maps made by the children of the classroom as a method for this study aims to add to the data children’s feelings about the classroom environment. This draws on the Reggio approach and philosophy, which places the environment as a third teacher (Strong-Wilson, 2007), and also sees children’s drawings as a valid expression of their feelings and understanding. Robert-Holmes (2017) draws on the example given by Moss

(2014b) of a documentation produced by children in a year-long project on crows, where the children's learning is clear from their drawings:

The children's drawing look almost like a film, which frame by frame, depicts how their curiosity shapes an ever more powerful relationship with the birds (Moss, 2014b p.149).

Graphic language in the Reggio approach is understood as one of the hundred languages of children. Katz, writing in 'The Hundred Languages of Children' (Edwards *et al.*, 1998), notes that "children approach the task of representing what they are studying through drawing purposefully and assiduously, because they have a lot of experience using their drawings. They are accustomed to *using* their own field drawings as bases for discussion, argument, and further work" (Edwards *et al.*, 1998 p.34).

This method was introduced to the children on my first visit, as part of the activities available for children to choose from in the continuous provision as a way of helping me to find my way around, and as a vehicle for me to get to know the children and them me. The activity was set up with blank sheets of paper and a full selection of coloured pens that the children could choose from. Research suggests that how children depict things in their drawing can tell us about how they feel about that thing through their choice of colours and the size of the objects they draw (Zentner, 2001, Burkitt *et al.*, 2003, Burkitt *et al.*, 2009). For example, "an increase in size was found to occur when topics were characterised as 'nice'" (Burkitt *et al.*, 2009 p.74). Also, darker colours such as brown and black were found to be used with negative associations for children, while red, pink and green were found to be used most frequently for nice or happy associations (Burkitt *et al.*, 2009).

Exploring children's geography of the classroom environment through their mapping illustrated where, within the spaces available to them, they liked to go and why (Kraftl, 2013). The colours children choose to use indicated how they felt about different areas of the classroom, and this was looked at against the observational data.

Because the maps were offered to the children as a self-chosen activity, not all the children took part. Only the maps of children with parental consent to take part in the study, and with their assent for me to have the map, were kept and used in the analysis. The maps of those children who chose to take part but didn't have parental consent, or whose parents did not assent to me using their children's drawing, have not been included. As a result, the maps used in this study (Figure 12,13 and 18) will provide a small snapshot of the children's feelings about their environment. Findings from these drawings are discussed alongside the emergent themes for each case in Chapter Four.

3.12 Early Years Policy documents

Prior (2003, p.201 in Cohen *et al*, 2008), when considering the usefulness of documents, cites the analogy of the "inert opera libretto", which cannot be read alone, but needs its supporting context. Policy documents have been examined to understand the position of 'the sector' in the study. These include school Ofsted reports, school policy documents available on the school's website, the National Curriculum, and government policy on EY Covid changes. These documents provide the framework that all schools are required to operate within and the individual school's position regarding emotional development and self-regulation of the children in their care. These have been read and examined for points that specifically relate to the emotional development and self-regulation of children in the Reception year or early years.

3.13 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research against the scientific rigors of quantitative research can be seen to be lacking (Noble and Smith, 2015). It is not the aim in qualitative research to produce large amounts of statistical data that can be made generalisable to the population because of the nature and subjects studied in a qualitative way. "Validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research; nor is it a companion to reliability (examining stability) or generalisability (the external validity) of applying results to new settings, people or samples" (Creswell, 2014 p.201). The findings

from this study will be relatable to settings across England working under the same statutory framework that shapes the experiences in the classroom for all settings.

Reliability can be understood in qualitative research as “the soundness of the research, particularly in relation to the appropriate methods chosen and the ways in which those methods were applied and implemented” (Rose and Johnson, 2020 p.435). In this study, multiple methods have been used, questionnaires, observations, interviews, examination of policy and children’s view of the classroom in triangulation of methods in case study design using two different schools.

Validity is a term used in quantitative research and is required to demonstrate the accuracy of findings. As noted by Bernard (2018), “valid measurement makes valid data, but validity itself depends on the collective opinion of researchers” (p.47). In qualitative research, measures, like those used in quantitative research, are not employed, and validity can be understood as “the degree to which an analysis aligns with reality” (Rose and Johnson, 2020 p.436). The alternative to validity is trustworthiness, which, in qualitative research, can be understood as research that “successfully illuminates the ethic of respect for truth in case study research” (Bassey, 1999 p.75).

Transcripts of the interviews have been shared with interviewees to ensure accuracy of what was recorded before being used for analysis (see appendix 3). The prolonged engagement to gather the observations spanning an academic year has provided a greater depth of understanding about the classes and staff, producing rich descriptive texts that will be relatable to readers from other educational settings. The rigor of the data collection, design of this study, and the systematic analysis of the data ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

The findings produced in this study do not look to be generalisable, but they will be transferable. Because all schools in England work with the same government guidance and statutory requirements, and all schools have been through the Covid-19 closures, there will be relatable outcomes for other settings from this study. The data produced in the study has

been triangulated to find themes within the data, which are presented in Chapter Four and discussed further in Chapter Five.

3.14 Limitations of research design

This study is limited in its design because it only involves two classes in two schools. However, it produced rich data and thick description; it does not aim to and will not produce findings that are statistically significant against a population. Limitations of the case study design have been discussed in section 3.4 and are mitigated by the aims of this study, which is to capture in depth a specific and significant moment in time, the messy reality of the Reception classroom on the return to full-time schooling following unprecedented school closures across England and the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of this will not be fully understood for some time and further research will be needed. This study aims to be a part of that wider understanding.

For findings to have an impact, they need to be relatable and communicated in a way that makes them accessible. The rich descriptive nature of a case study with the addition of clear analysis make it possible for the reader to relate through their own knowledge of the situation being studied (Stake, in Simons, 1980), and therefore transferable to the context of the reader (Stevenson, 2004). Exploring common themes and beliefs in a broader context of early years classrooms looks to make findings relatable to the wider sector.

3.15 Ethics

As a participant in the classroom, it requires the researcher to be involved, “joining with others means getting to know the members of scenes of actions – the *dramatis personae* – getting to know their values, their reasons for action, and their ways of acting” (Schostak, 2010 p.444). This position, as discussed in section 3.5, is why participant observer was chosen because it is from this position the data gathered would have greater relevance to the study. However, this does pose ethical considerations; as I have previous experience as a class teacher, staff participants will “recognise and trust the researcher and as a valid part

of the scene able to apply the ethics of the participants – that is, what is right, good, fair in their eyes” (p.444) because we have a shared experience as class teachers. From a child’s perspective, they will be used to having adults in their environment and trust that the adult will behave with their best interests in mind. There was, however, a requirement to ensure that the ethical principles of research were followed and that the research was conducted in a way that was agreed with the participants and that they understood their rights within the study. The study was granted institutional ethical approval (**ERN 19-0796**) and uses BERA principles (BERA, 2018).

The study was introduced to parents by the school using an information letter (see appendix 1) prepared by the researcher. Times to meet the researcher to ask questions and discuss the project were included in the information letter, and parents were reminded by class teachers. These appointment times were before school, after dropping off and after school to make it available to as many parents as possible. Further information and written consent forms were distributed by the school to all parents and all staff in the classroom and wider school taking part. All children were asked for verbal assent to take part daily. It was made clear that they had the right to not participate at any time irrespective of their parents’ consent. Only children whose parents had given consent had their data collected. The aim of this was to build trust, as “without trust, no access to the world of the members would be granted, thus no research into their life-world is possible” (Schostak, 2010 p.445).

All participants had the right to withdraw throughout the fieldwork and this right was included in the information provided to participants. Moreover, withdrawal would be possible until the end of the analysis period (March 2023), after which time data would be embedded in analysis and findings. Participants were reassured of the anonymity and confidentiality of data in all reporting. All participants were ascribed a unique identifier at the start of the study. This enabled all data collected throughout the study to be confidential. The data was stored on a password-protected university secure server. The key to the unique identifiers was also stored separately on a secure university server. The names of the schools have

been changed and given initials and were not recorded anywhere in the data collection.

This research with children (aged four to five) raises ethical issues that were addressed in the following ways:

- The research adheres to the codes of ethics of the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2018);
- All methods and procedures being used in the study are proven and so the study can be confident that the ethical conduct will be of the highest standard and risk assessment will be satisfactory;
- This project seeks to ensure the best experience for all participants children and adults. In terms of their sense of ownership and control in the research process and in terms of the selection of the best methods to ensure the research is minimally disruptive, this also enables me to “demonstrate a commitment to the reality of those being observed, however they define this reality as being true, natural, or right” (Schostak, 2010 p.445);
- Time has been planned into the project to enable children to become familiar with the researcher;
- Methods that children or adults might find distressing or discomforting have not be used;
- The study was undertaken as a partnership with the school, class, children, and parents;
- This relationship was formed through open information sharing before the study.

A secure database record of consents for each child was maintained on the University of Birmingham secure server. The children are aged four to five. However, following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), (Article 12), this study looked to “assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (UN, 1989 pg.5). To ensure that the

project is inclusive, and no child feels excluded, all children were given the opportunity to take part; however, children without parental consent or safeguarding requirements and were included in observation were not used in the analysis. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study in whole or in part.

Children might feel more comfortable to share information with an individual in their classroom who is not familiar to them, such as a participant researcher. It is important to consider ethically the issues of power that the adult in the researcher position holds in context of undertaking research with children. Power is linked closely with status and adults are seen by children as holding authority over them; therefore, children may find it difficult to disagree, or express ideas that they feel might be unacceptable or wrong (Greene and Hogan, 2005). Not considering these issues can lead to poor-quality data. The continuous ongoing assent to take part is important when working with young children, as a child might have consented to taking part one day but might change their mind on another day.

Respecting the child's right to not participate, means the research process with children's participation needs to be continuously negotiated (Roberts-Holmes, 2018). In this study, taking the position of participant observer, I was not directly interviewing children for their feelings or opinions; therefore, the information they shared was only what they wanted to share, so the child was in a position of power and would only engage with me, as an adult in their environment, when they choose to do so.

Only information relevant to the study shared by children who had assented to be part of the research and with parental consent had their experiences recorded and used. Any information shared by a child that presented a safeguarding concern, but interesting to the study, was recorded and shared with the safeguarding officer in the school, in line with school policy and procedure. It was anticipated that information that raises concerns would not be ethically or morally correct to include and, as such, would be removed, but its removal might be discussed in further analysis at a later point.

At the end of the fieldwork and analysis, a revisit to schools was planned to share findings in

a way chosen by them, for example a staff meeting, phase meeting or informally. This was an opportunity to discuss and explore what the school can learn or might change through the process of taking part in the study and from the findings.

3.16 Data Analysis

The data gathered was analysed using the constant comparison method, which focuses on comparing elements of data with each other. This study compared emergent themes within each case, between different data sets and across each case. The constant comparison method is designed to manage qualitative data, which this study produced, rather than quantitative data. This study applied an interpretive approach to understand the messy reality and lived experience of the classroom in the year following school closures due the Covid-19 pandemic, and how these experiences have impacted on Reception-aged children's emotional and self-regulation development. All the data collected from observations, field notes and interviews were qualitative. A process was needed that systematically organises and breaks this volume of written work into codes, which can then be studied to allow emergent themes within to be discovered.

The constant comparison method is not designed to test a hypothesis; rather, the coding and discovery of emergent themes in the data allow theory to be suggested, which is congruent with the aims of this study as a piece of interpretive and transformative research. To test any theory generated through this process, further research of a quantitative nature would be needed and analysed using a more scientific approach. Glaser (1965) suggests that the constant comparison method consists of four stages: "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (Glaser, 1965 p.439).

This method was chosen because it allowed me to organise and systematically process the large quantities of data that the cases produced. Each case was analysed as shown (Figure 6 & 7).

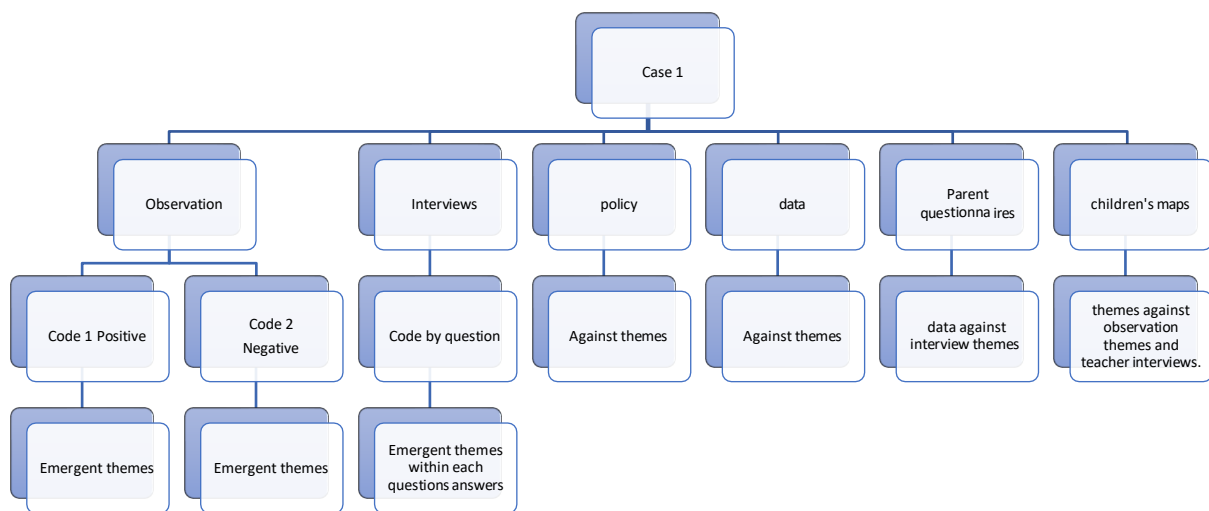


Figure (6)

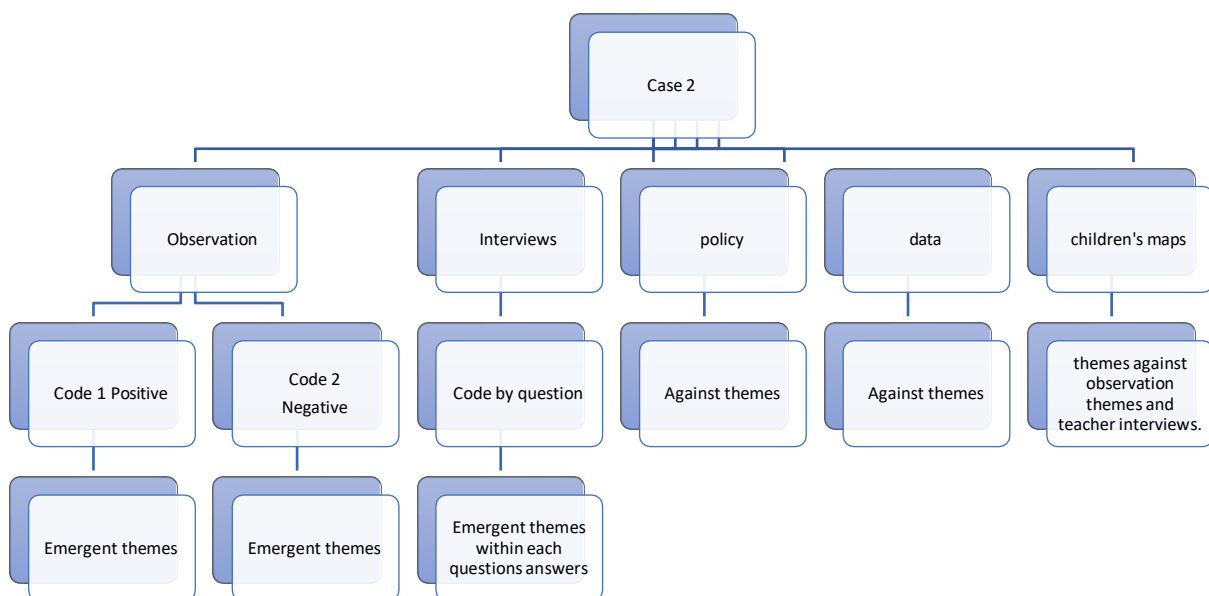


Figure (7)

All data collected using the constant comparison method was gone through in depth and in detail repetitively, comparing elements against each other (Thomas, 2016). In the first instance, the data collected in observational field notes was transcribed for me to become deeply familiar with the data collected (see appendix 6). The observational notes, once transcribed, were then coded into positive and negative statements (see appendix 4).

Once the data was organised this way, each code was re-examined to look for any emerging themes in the positive and negative coded data. These emergent themes then formed the

basis of the analysis and represent from the interpretive approach the “meanings that are being construed by the participants (including *myself*) in the situation” (Thomas, 2016 p.245 italics changed by me).

Thoughts and emerging theories that occur during this process were written as memos and recorded alongside the text, as suggested by Glaser (1965). These were then collected and re-examined against the data to begin the process of delimiting the data and emerging theories. The same process was applied to the interview data. Interviews were first transcribed to become deeply familiar with the data (see appendix 3), then organised by question (see appendix 5). Each question’s answers were then re-examined for emergent themes within and thoughts and theories occurring during the process were recorded alongside the text (see appendix 4).

Findings from policies, school data, children’s maps and, in Case One, parent questionnaires, have been presented against the emergent themes in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five the findings are discussed by theme against the literature. Bronfenbrenner’s theory of the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1967, Bronfenbrenner, 1974, Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Bronfenbrenner, 1986, Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and Bandura’s social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, Bandura, 1986) are used to discuss and understand the interconnected nature of self-regulation development and the environment and relationships that influence this. Bronfenbrenner’s and Bandura’s theories were applicable to this analysis because, while the study is positioned in the classroom context, to understand and explore the development perceptions of self-regulation, the study includes: teacher perspectives that go beyond the classes; school policy; policy documents and curriculum set by the government; and, in Case One, views from parents.

The interactions of these external factors can be understood using what Bandura (1986) explains as “model of triadic reciprocity in which behaviour, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinates of each other” (Bandura, 1986 p.18). The relationship between these factors is further illustrated and

explained within the systems that Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes in his ecology, where the child/individual is placed at the centre and surrounding them is a microsystem which included those people and institutions that have direct contact and critical influence, such as parents and schools.

Surrounding the microsystem is the mesosystem, which accounts for the communications and interactions across the relationships formed within the microsystem. “The difference lies in the nature of the inter-connections involved. At the microsystem level... the role transactions, and the molar activities all occur within one setting, whereas in the mesosystem these processes take place across setting boundaries” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p.209). The parent child interactions from birth are understood to be crucial to the development of the skills for socialisation, communication and interaction, and the family environment lays the foundations for this (Coşkun *et al.*, 2023). In this study, the relationships between teacher and child, and child and child, constitute the microsystem, while the relationships and communications between school and home, teacher and parents constitute the mesosystem.

Surrounding the mesosystem, Bronfenbrenner places the exosystem, “An exosystem has been defined as consisting of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in that setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p.237). This system includes friends of the family, neighbours, and mass media. For this study, I place government policy in this system because, while it does not directly involve the child in the centre as an active participant, the effects of policy will impact their school and, as such, their experience in school. All these systems are then placed within the macrosystem which considers the culture that the micro, meso and exosystems are located. Bronfenbrenner argues that while an individual’s culture or sub-culture will be different, they will also be “relatively homogeneous internally in the following respects: the types of setting they contain, the kinds of setting that persons enter at successive stages of their lives, the content and organisations of molar activities, roles, and

relations found within each type of setting, and the extent and nature of connections existing between settings entered into or affecting the life of the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p.258).

This study’s context was a period of time where children returned to school following school closures due to Covid-19. As such, attitudes and culture had been affected and continued to be affected during the data collection, with regard to policy change, the relaxing of rules regarding contact and testing for Covid-19.

The final system and fifth ring that Bronfenbrenner (1979) adds is the chronosystem. This represents time, and places the other systems in a moment in time or a development event. For this study, the experience of the global pandemic is the socio-cultural condition that this study was placed within.

Bronfenbrenner’s framework supports the analysis to make the connections between the experiences of the children during the Covid-19 lockdown periods, through contact and connection with school. The global pandemic meant that families had to adapt their behaviours and routines very suddenly, leading to changes in attitudes and ability to engage in their own cultural norms. These, in turn, affected the exosystem and the microsystems, which then have impacted on the developing child in the centre.

Bandura’s theories on observation learning and the impact this has on a child have been used to explore and discuss findings further in Chapter Five. The diagram below (Figure 8) illustrates Bronfenbrenner’s framework.

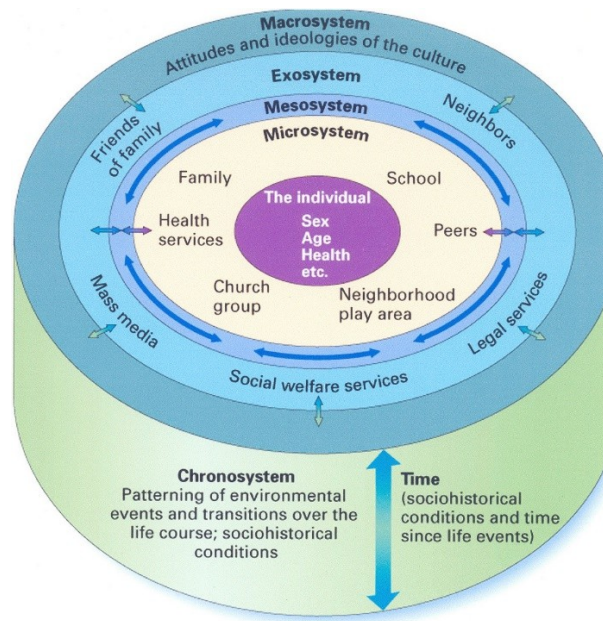


Figure (8) Reproduced from (Dashevsky, 2021)

3.17 Summary

This chapter has discussed the choice of triangulation methods and the chosen case study design for this study. The philosophical positioning of the study has been discussed to justify the methods and the analysis used to understand and process the data produced in the study. The chosen position taken has been explained against my personal interests and experience that form the background to the study, and the ethical considerations for the study have been explained and considered.

Having considered all the positives, negatives and limitations of the methods, design, and chosen analysis in the next chapter, I will discuss the emergent themes that have been discovered through the analysis processes discussed in 3.16.

Chapter Four – Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings from the two case studies: (i) exploring the lived experiences of children and ii) the perspective of the teachers working with children regarding their self-regulation and emotional development. To answer these questions, the study asks:

- How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?
- What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regard to self-regulation?
- Does early years' policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

The data collected has been analysed by case using the constant comparison method as discussed in section 3.16 (Thomas, 2016) and, as such, will be presented here case by case. Using the themes that emerged through the analysis of the data, each theme will be presented for each case study. Discussion of the findings across the cases will be written in Chapter Five by theme against the research questions stated above and literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Within each theme, the data will be presented where relevant from interviews, observations, parent views (Case One only), school data and children's maps. In the presentation of the findings, all children referred to from the data are described by a letter; all names have been removed and the children anonymised. I have also chosen to write about the children as gender neutral to anonymise them further and remove any gender bias from the reader.

4.2 Presentation of findings Case One

Data from Case One was analysed as shown in Figure 6 -

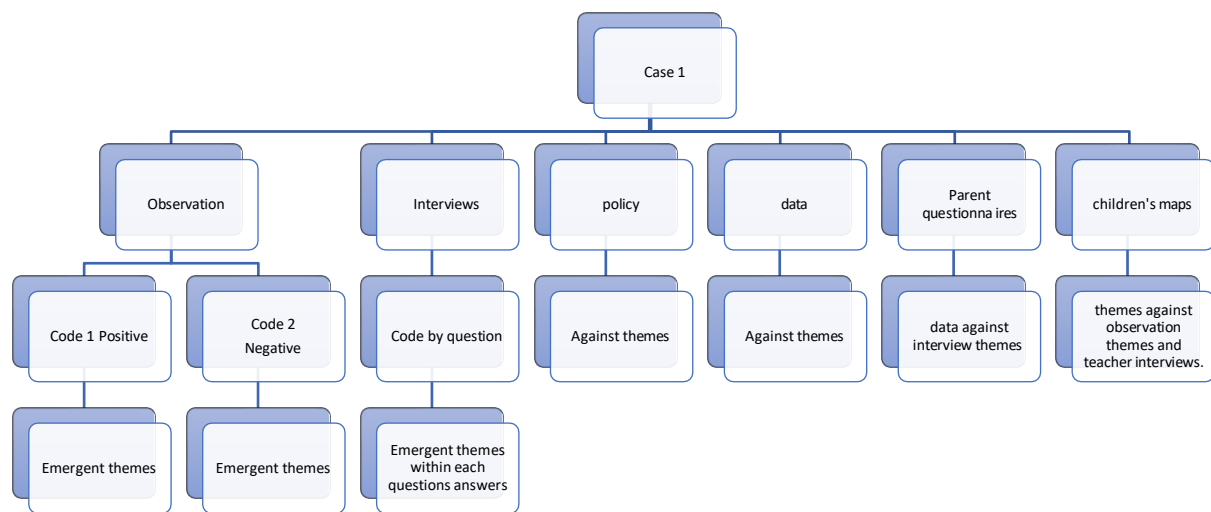


Figure (6)

The emergent themes from code 1 positive, code 2 negative and code by question can be collected into four key themes that will be addressed: 4.3 - working together; 4.4 - managing feelings; 4.5 – delays; and 4.6 – routines. Alongside the interview data and observations of classroom practice, detailed individual child observations, the schools' policy documents, children's maps, and parental questionnaires have been considered in the analysis. The order the themes are presented represents the order the themes emerged from the analysis to me through the observations of children and interview data. Each theme is representative of aspects of self-regulation observable and identified through the data.

4.3 Case One: Theme One. Working together

The first theme to emerge from the data was 'working together'. This can be understood as sharing, collaborating, and joining in. This is a theme that is evident in the school's policies, which are available on the school's website. As a church school, they identify as being part of the church community. The school's mission statement states that children are taught to treat each other with respect and to support each other in their learning (see Figures 9 & 10). It was also evident in the wider school participation in this study with Year 1 and 2 teachers,

who were happy to be interviewed and involved.

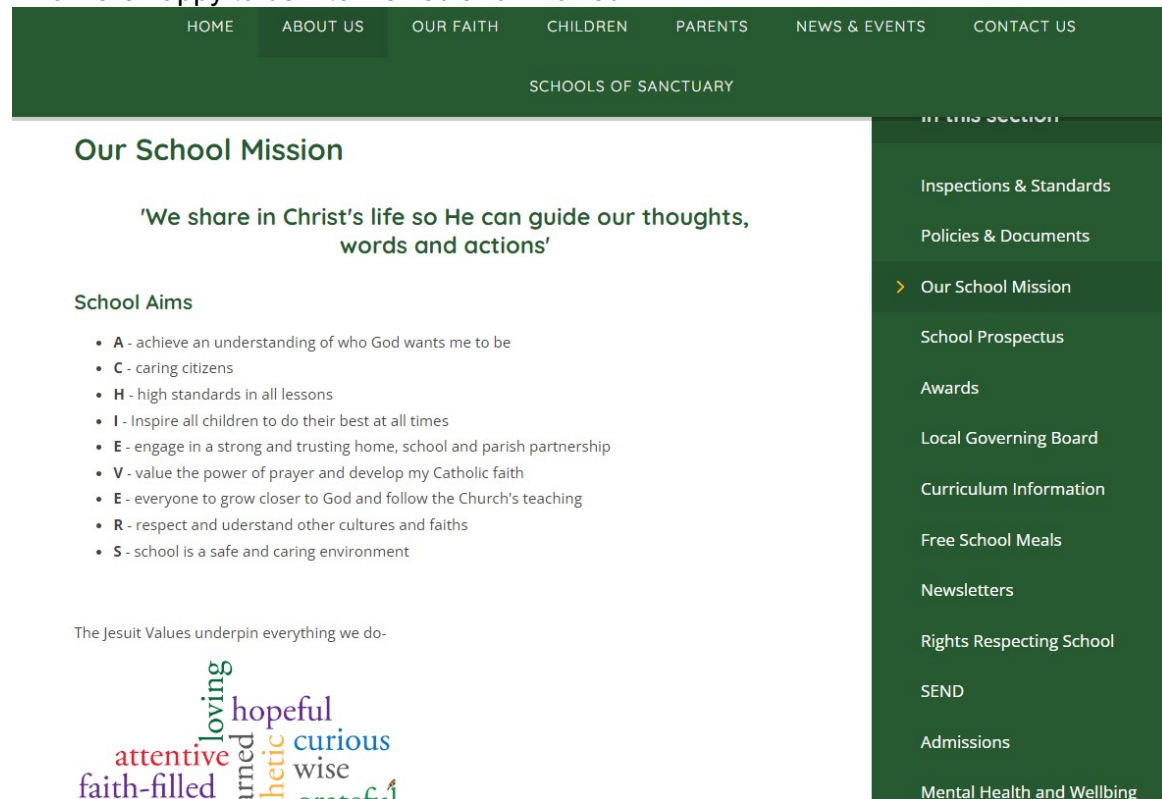


Figure (9) Screenshot of Case One website school mission statement.

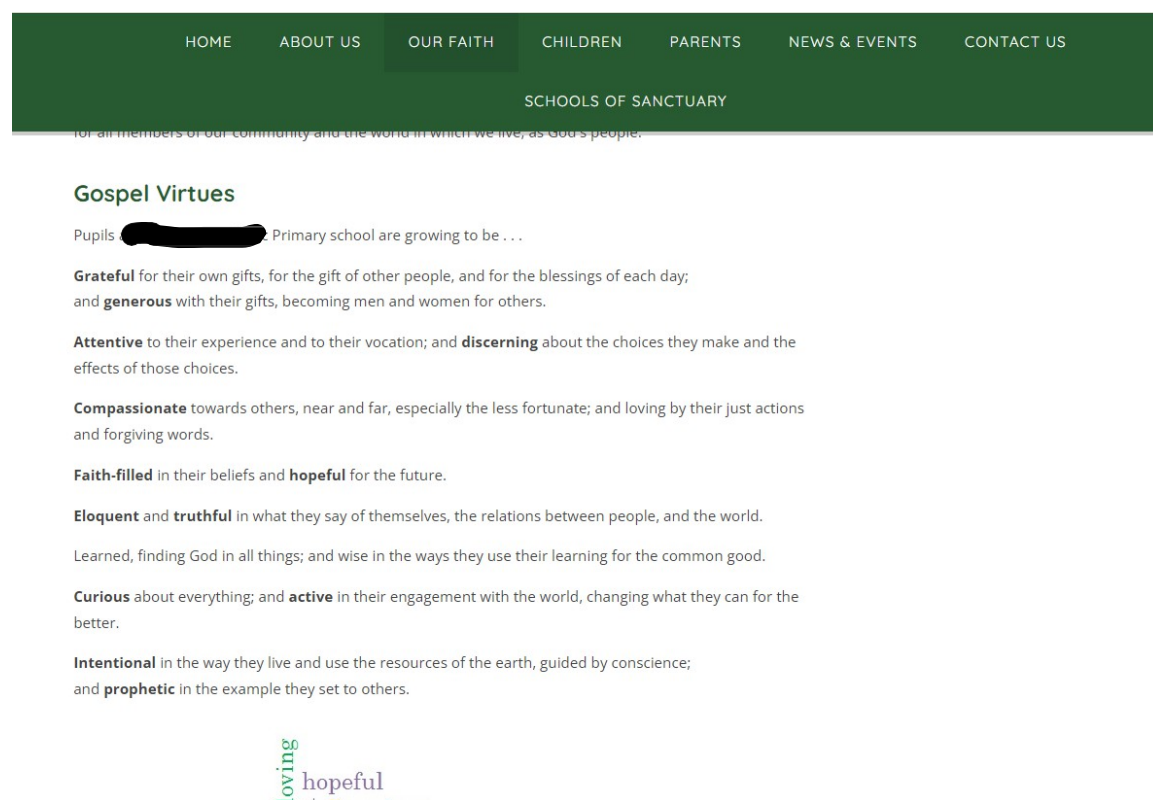


Figure (10) screenshot of Case One website school values.

The school comes together regularly throughout the week for communal worship, either in person or online, with other schools in its Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The staff members appear to work together closely as a team beyond their individual classes. As a single form entry school, this builds a whole-school staff team ethos, which I observed during the staff Christmas lunch. All the staff brought in food to share at lunchtime and came together to eat and exchange gifts over the lunch break. This included the headteacher, school office staff, and teaching assistants. Staff come together every morning before the children arrive to discuss the day and to share a reading from the gospel. Working closely together as a staff team, this was highlighted by the Reception teacher in their interview:

We work quite closely, we've adopted a scheme as a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) where we all have a member of staff we coach. We don't do real formal lesson observations, you're just having that meeting with your coach, where you look at what, what do you feel you need to work on and we support through there and then as SLT, we do that for each other (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

The Reception teacher noted that, in their class, a lot of children found it a struggle to do what someone else was telling them to do. They found the idea of conforming to the rules at school difficult because they were not used to this. Having had a disrupted nursery and preschool period, and for those who had not attended a setting before starting, this was more so. The teacher noted that the children's social skills were not where they would have been in previous years, and so interacting with each other to share resources caused challenges that needed adult support,

The "it's mine", "I want that", "I'm going to take that" behaviour needed a lot of support (Reception teacher, Case One interview).

These challenges were echoed by the Year 1 and 2 teachers interviewed, who both also noted that children lacked the emotional skills to cope with friendships and struggled to interact with each other.

However, the teacher in Reception noted that some children, particularly those with older siblings, tended to display better social skills such as (H), who has an older brother and:

...gets on well with others, working with others, quite happily gets on well with doing that social element” (Reception teacher Case One interview).

Equally, (E), who is an only child they noted will quite happily get on with everyone.

In the observations, this theme is evident throughout the coding in both the positive and negative codes (see appendix 8). There are examples of children struggling to join in and collaborate from my first observations in the class, such as children playing alone or alongside others rather than with them. For example, in my observation on day 4, (E) and other children join (Co) in the post office role play area. However, (Co) continued to play and do their own thing, while playing alongside the others. Additionally, in another example:

In whole group activities children were observed behaving like they are taking part but not all children sing but only (R) stands and does the actions for the first song. (P) stands does not join in (Case One observations, day two p.3).

Problems with sharing/working together are supported by staff and, as another adult in the room, children would also come to me. On my third day observing, (D) came to me because (Re) was not sharing. When I asked (Re) why (D) might say that, (Re) said that they were sharing, demonstrating a possible lack of understanding about what sharing involves. I asked (D) what they wanted to play with, and they pointed to the beds (in the small world play area) that (Re) was holding. I asked (Re) if there was another bed in the house that (D) could play with, as (Re) had two beds. They said yes, the big bed. When I asked (D) if that was ok, they nodded and (Re) went to get the bed for them and they both moved in together and continued to play. This example demonstrates how both children are inexperienced at understanding how to communicate their needs in (D)’s case, and an empathy from (Re) that they had two of the resource and (D) did not have any, but lacked the problem-solving ability to see the other bed available that they could use.

Part of the classroom experience is sharing resources, and this does provide a platform that problematises children's experience and creates opportunities to develop the skills necessary. During a big drawing session on the carpet, I observed three children working together. (F) has got some marker pens, (A) and (N) want to use some, but (F) won't share. As I come over to support them, (F) goes to hide the pens from me. This hiding behaviour from (F) was also observed in another observation, when a child (A) came to me for help because (F) and (N) kept running away from them, so they were on their own. (A) understood that (F) and (N) were being unkind. When I went out to talk to them, (N) was able to articulate that they wanted to play with someone else. (F), however, hid from me in the construction area. When I asked (F) to come out, they said they could still hear me and stayed hidden. When asked how running away might make (A) feel, (N) was quick to say that they would feel sad. (F) did not reply.

Another interesting observation was children who appear to struggle to engage with other children, but who seek out adults rather than children. For example, one child (Ri), I observed several times struggling to play and engage with other children. On the fourth observation day, I observed them wandering in the room appearing to be looking for something to engage with before coming to me to show me a blue star sequin they had found. They then went over to the pompom activity (fine motor and maths activity), which they engaged with, but kept engaging with me, telling me every time they rolled the dice what number they had rolled. This was quite common behaviour from this child who, while they had a sibling, had not attended any kind of setting before starting in Reception and so appeared more comfortable with adults than their peers.

On another occasion, I observed a child (L), who had appeared well socialised and happy to play and work with others, struggling at a jigsaw activity that had been set out on the carpet for children to work with in groups. I had been supporting two children with the jigsaw that they were finding quite challenging. (L), who was a very able child, was finding it equally challenging not being able to tell the others what to do. When it came to (L)'s group's turn to

have a go at the jigsaw, they became upset and tearful. When I asked what was wrong, they explained that one of the other children had said 'no' to working together. The teacher then suggested that the children put the picture they were working to create in a place where they could all see it. (L) was observed saying:

(R) you are spoiling it!" (R was not touching anything as I watched) "we are working together, if you take a piece, you are spoiling it! (Case One, day four, p.3).

In this instance, (L) appears to want to do this activity on their own and not to work with others, and was struggling to collaborate with children who were not able to complete the task under (L)'s instruction.

While the examples shared have been from the negative coding, there were also many examples from the positive code of children working together successfully. As part of the morning routine, children would get a book while others were coming in at the start of the day. During this time, children were often observed looking at a book together and enjoying talking about the story or the pictures, chatting happily in small groups of two or three. At tidy-up time in the morning, in the book area I observed the girls helping the boys put all the books away. The boys, rather than reading the books, had got them all out and laid them out over the floor as a second carpet, but the girls without being asked happily helped in the task of putting everything away.

This independent collaboration and cooperation were a strong feature in the daily classroom ethos. In my second day's observations, I made of note of what was happening in the room while the children were engaged in their independent learning time:

Children are over two tables designing Christmas presents, the teacher is continuing one to one phonics assessments on the carpet, three children are in the book area, two children are in the role play post office and four children are outside with the TA (Case One, p.2).

In this observation, the children have self-chosen the groups they are working in and are all working together or alongside each other, sharing resources harmoniously. On the table, where the children are designing Christmas presents, I observed the children chatting together. Many were talking on the smaller table about how they had met the 'real santa', while, on the larger table, the talk was about kissing, until (L) falls off their chair, and then the conversation turns to accidents that they or others have had. The children in these examples did not have an adult with them, but were working independently and alone, managing themselves as a group.

On another occasion, I observed three children who would usually play alone or alongside others, playing together at the nativity scene. All three children were banging the wooden pieces from the nativity onto the tabletop, laughing together, making some squeaking noises and some singing, I could pick up a few words, but mostly the children were making sounds with the odd 'hello'. Most of the detectable language came from one child (C), who was identified as possibly having autism and was observed as having more challenging behaviours in the class. The other two children's language was not as developed, and this was possibly why they struggle to collaborate with others. However, in this instance, they found a way of communicating and playing together that did not require the conformity of standard communication and they were having a wonderful time together.

I observed on more than one occasion situations where a child would come to me for support with a problem regarding sharing or working together in some way. Often, by the time the child had finished explaining the problem to me, the others in the group had resolved the issue independently. In my field notes, I observed on day five:

Two different children come to me with problems around sharing, one with the building material, there are just not enough construction pieces to go round, while they are telling me, other children in the group have solved the problem (Case One, day five, p.4).

These examples are from whole-class observations and the positive and negative evidence of working together are evident. When analysing the focused child observations, the ability to manage the challenges of working together is clearer because the observations are focused on an individual child and, as such, provide greater depth and detail of the aspects of this theme.

In the first child focus observations, the child observed (OC1) appeared in whole-class observations to demonstrate a good development of self-regulation, as discussed and confirmed by the class teacher. At the start of the day, the observations of the child appeared to confirm the teacher's assessment, with the child starting the day audibly joining in with the morning prayer and the actions for the sign of the cross. During the whole-class morning carpet, after the registration and morning routine, the child was attentive and very keen to join in, putting up their hand to offer ideas and answers; however, when they were not chosen, I noted they would rub their fingers over their lips. This behaviour was repeated every time they were not chosen to answer, but they continued to engage and put up their hand to join in.

Following the whole-class time, the children are dismissed into the learning environment to choose what they want to work on. The observation child (OC1) follows a group of children into the art area. There is not an activity set up, and children are free to choose what they want to do. OC1 is drawing with a pencil and the children opposite them are chatting:

OC1 then stands up and says "You should read the lion the witch and the wardrobe" "even better the lion, on a journey to see the lion in the seventh chapter", they then sit back down and return to their drawing. I notice that their right leg taps lightly and they put their left hand up to stroke their hair. They then say "put your hands up if you know the book the lion the witch and the wardrobe", one child at the table answers yes but the OC1 is distracted by another child coming to join the table, OC1 tell them there aren't any more chairs at the table. They then become distracted by the work the other children are doing (OC1 observation).

It's St Patrick's day and some of the children are drawing flags. One of the children is drawing the flag of England. OC1 is telling another child about the English flag and a different child disagrees. They say it is Scottish, they know this because their dad has one. OC1 tells them that their dad has the wrong flag. OC1 then asks the table to put their hands up again if they support Newcastle in the rugby. This asking the group to put their hands up appears to be OC1's strategy for joining into the larger group. However, rather than being a part of it, they are inadvertently mimicking the teacher's behaviour and leading or controlling it, which leads to the other children ignoring them.

OC1 having moved away from the art area, following another child who has left to talk to the teacher about what they have done, I observed:

10.32 – OC1 goes back to art table and is talking about the lion the witch and the wardrobe, no one is listening, they go to the writing table to look, nobody is there, they go back to the art table but don't sit down, moves off and wanders over to the tough spot, looks but doesn't join in, goes back to the table with the teacher where E is, then follows E back to the art table. E has a book on flags and is copying a flag. OC1 talks to them about being at chapter eight, E is not really listening. OC1 moves off, calling the name of another child who has gone to play at the tough spot, OC1 stands by the activity, there are already four children at it so he can't join in.

OC1 is an able and articulate child who appears to have the social skill necessary to join in. However, this example demonstrates that, in fact, they are not being successful.

Break time offers a different environment for the children, where they are free to play and participate in different ways in a larger space. Following the teacher calling the children together and the routine of anti-bacteria gel for hands, the children are dismissed to go out onto the playground with a snack:

OC1 gets a carrot from the tray by the door and goes outside, goes to the traffic cone, and stands on the rim, walks around the outside of it alone, another child joins

them and then moves off, then another child joins them and then also moves off, OC1 doesn't talk to either. OC1 moves off and lies their body onto a group of children lying on the ground, they continue to roll around, an adult goes over to stop the children, OC1 moves off and sits alone, then runs over to the other side of the playground, then comes back to the edge by the earth, walks slightly on tip toes, picks up some bits from the earth, runs off with other boys following them.

OC1 appears to want to join in with these groups, and lying on top of the other children appears to be a way of non-verbally, but physically, joining in. This physical positioning behaviour was also observed at lunch play, when OC1 went to join in the construction play with a group and stepped over the group's construction, before going and getting more resources, which they then positioned next to the group's work, but not actually joining it to their work.

In further observations of OC1, it becomes evident that, in structured and directed group activities, whole carpet, tidy-up times, they can join in and are keen to participate. However, in unguided child-led activities, they struggle to participate successfully. In observations of the second focus child (OC2), a child who in whole-class observations didn't seem to be noticeable, was selected. This child's ability to work with others and join in appeared to be easier and they seemed very relaxed in the classroom environment. For example, at the start of the day, children were asked to get books to read while the children arrived for the start of the day. OC2 had finished their book and gone to swap it for another. On returning to the carpet, their original space had been taken by another child. They stood for a second, then sat down in another available space and talked to the child next to them, turning the pages of the book, laughing together. At break times and during free play or chosen learning times, OC2 worked with groups of children, often appearing to be the leader of the group but demonstrating a comfortableness with taking turns and negotiating rules with the others:

OC2 has stood up and says something to the group (during outside break time), then they and another child race around the track, repeat, changing the size of the track

each time till they are only running around the bin, every time they get back, both cheer. OC2 and other child are discussing the rules, OC2 runs off, other child follows. They repeat, both sit down with group, then get up and run width of playground racing. OC2 looks to side to check other child, they then sit down together for a brief rest and then run to the far side and stop by the shed, talking.

During self-chosen learning time in the outdoor classroom area, OC2 works with and is engaged with children, negotiating the rules of play easily:

OC2 comes out to the mud kitchen, (I) is with them, OC2 is using a spatula to fill a bowl with sand/mud mix from a container. When OC2 has what they want, they bring it over to (I) in the kitchen, shows them, then pours from their bowl into (I)'s ladle. OC2 then returns to container, another child is in the way, OC2 speaks to them, and they appear to decide how to all play together, the three of them squat around a soft circular stool and together sweep the mixture off and into the bowl. OC2 gets up, gets more sand, "I got more flour" comes back "I got sugar" OC2 and other child are taking it in turns adding ingredients. I shouts, "let's make a campfire". "I've got salt" says OC2. OC2 and other child go back to getting ingredients.

In these observations, OC2 is vocal and engaged, joining, collaborating, and working together with others. However, in observations of OC2's engagement during whole class, while still involved, they are more reluctant, less forthcoming, and less confident. They are compliant in all the whole class requirements, sitting as requested, following all the rules for whole class times, and following the actions for prayers and songs. However, while they are clearly listening and paying attention, they do not put their hand up to offer their thoughts or ideas. However, during lunch, they put up their hand to speak to the lunch supervisors, one of whom is OC2's mum, which could indicate that they are more anxious or less confident to express themselves in larger, more formal situations with adults they perceive to have authority such as the class teacher or TA.

Figure (11) Map of classroom by researcher

REBECCA BARTRAM (PHD EDUCATION - PT)

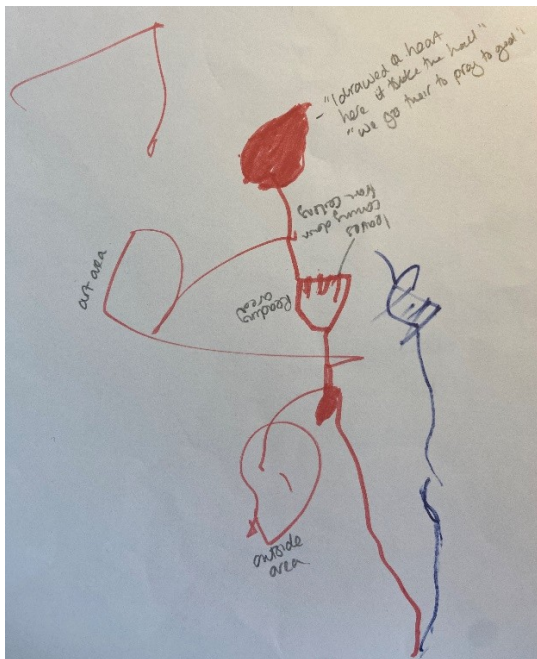


Figure (12)

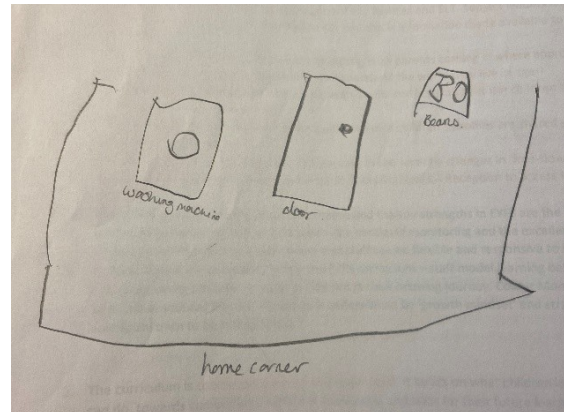


Figure (13)

These areas are spaces that children in the routine of the class can go to of their own choice and engage with, either alone or in groups of their own making. This appears to evidence the classroom value and school value of being part of a whole community, both class, school, and the church. This is also reflected in responses from the parent questionnaire, when asked about the level of support parents felt they had from school during both the lockdowns. In lockdown one, 68% of respondents reported they felt the support was neither too much nor too little. This result increased to 81% for lockdown two, reflecting a positive relationship with parents working together with school during the lockdown periods, and the improved provision by the school in lockdown two.

4.4 Case One: Theme Two. Managing feelings

The second theme I am presenting is about managing feelings. This can be understood as how children are able to cope with frustrations in the classroom environment, upsets, excitement, and disappointments that occur as part of the daily routines of classroom life and encapsulated staff's understanding of self-regulation. When teachers interviewed in the Case One study school were asked what they understood self-regulation to be, the Reception teacher said it was children's ability to:

...regulate their own emotions to be able to, you know, if they're feeling angry, those strategies for how they are going to cope with, with that anger and bring themselves back down to zero (Reception teacher).

In Year 1, the teacher described it as:

...how children regulate their emotions, how they can sort of control their feelings (Year 1 teacher).

And in Year 2 the teacher said:

...how they cope in a certain situation, how they deal with their emotions, so I suppose, ummm, if there's a certain scenario and they react to it, how do they then calm themselves down (Year 2 teacher).

These definitions and understandings of what self-regulation means, managing feeling, controlling feelings, and having strategies to calm down from feeling angry are what teachers understand self-regulation to be. There is an acknowledgement that the classroom and school environment is a trigger or cause for children to experience feelings and emotions that they then need to be able to subsequently manage or control.

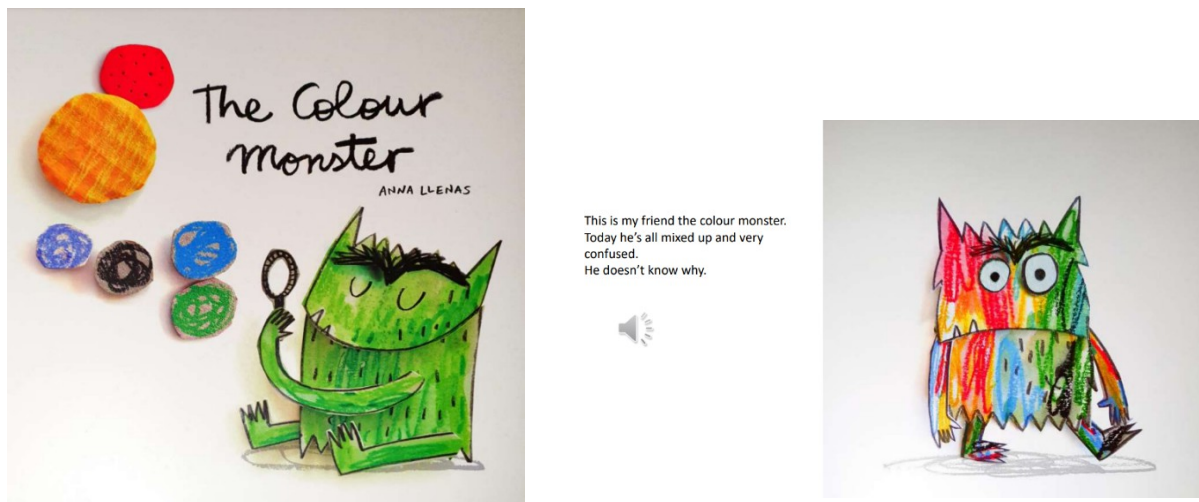
Exploring how teachers supported children to develop these strategies and skills in the classroom, either through provision or specific activities/input, the teacher in Reception highlighted the importance at the start of the year to just being with the children, getting to know them and understanding where they were with their behaviour, then modelling the rules to the children. By making time to be with the children, they had the opportunity to:

Catching the children when they are doing it. So, we've had a couple of children who've had a few arguments over, um, the fancy dress costumes, and when they've sorted it out themselves, we've kind of celebrated that (Reception teacher).

It is these positive interactions and modelling that teachers felt had the greatest impact because they are in the moment. In Reception, they also utilised the colour monster book to

encourage children and give them the language to talk about their emotions, and creating quieter spaces in the classroom, like the book area, that children can go to when they need to calm themselves.

In Year 1, the teacher also talked about using the colour monster book (Llenas, 2012) at the start of the year.



Images reproduced from (Eyton Primary, 2021)

The teachers commented that, for their class, it had:

...been our biggest one about how to control feelings and emotions and give a name to the feelings as well because I think they struggle to say, they can't say how they feel (Year 1 teacher).

In Year 2, the teacher found that even in the second term:

...some children can self-regulate, calm themselves down, they can go through the process of it all in their own minds and come out the other end and they are absolutely fine... Other children find it really difficult and completely shut down if they do face a challenge or they don't know what to do, or they're really really struggling, that's it, they just, they're in tears basically (Year 2 teacher).

When discussing the children in their class, the Year 2 teacher chose to highlight those children who were high ability, so academically did not appear to have been impacted by the school closers. However, emotionally, they were:

...just easily triggered by things, we've got quite a few who are very anxious, hate getting things wrong, just worry about being told off, worry about the work that, er, I think they just want to make sure they are doing a really good job, we've got a few that are just very emotional and just little things will set them off, for example, listening to a song in hymn practice sets some of them off. We've watched certain clips on the boards and it's been a little bit sad and that's set them off and they're just very emotional that side, because I suppose those children have got a very good understanding, they are very aware of what's going on, I think they take it all in (Year 2 interview, Case One).

The interviews with the Year 1 and Year 2 teachers are particularly interesting because they provide evidence that, beyond Reception, children in the two years above are struggling with their ability to self-regulate or manage their feelings; they become easily upset and struggle to self-calm. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers referred to the school's use of the characteristics of effective learning, which are used throughout the school. These characteristics stem from early years practice and they have characters the children can look to and emulate, such as 'have a go hero' or 'keep it up captain'. Also, as a faith school, Relationships, Sex, Health Education (RSHE) is embedded throughout, and teachers noted that this part of the curriculum enabled them to have the time to focus on feelings and emotions through their religious teaching, such as:

...how Jesus teaches us to sort of be kind, why do we be kind, how, what do we do if we feel angry, what do we do if we feel sad, things like that, so it teaches it in a faith aspect (Year 1 teacher).

The Reception teacher referred to the school values that, as a school, they promote, namely 'love, respect, truth, justice, and forgiveness' and which also feed into every aspect of school

life. This is further supported by a separate mental health and well-being policy that is available from the school's website. This policy uses the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 1989). In this policy, it gives a definition for mental health, which supports the interviewed teachers' views of how they have worked to support children and feel supported by the school to do so. The policy states:

Mental health is “the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of wellbeing and an underlying belief in our and others dignity and worth. It is influenced by our experience and our genetic inheritance (World Health Organisation).

Mental health is how we feel, how we think and how we behave. It is about:

- Being able to form and maintain relationships with others
- Being adaptable to change and other people's expectations
- Being able to have fun
- Being able to cope and manage different emotions
- Being able to develop a sense of right and wrong
- Being able to develop the resilience to manage ordinary setbacks

In child-friendly language:

- We all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- We all have small feelings every day. These sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long (Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2021, Case One study school).

This policy was published in 2021 and clearly reflects the schools' understanding of the needs of their children at that point in time, returning to school following the lockdowns and

disruptions of 2020 and 2021, children needing to be supported with managing their feelings and developing the social skills that they have not been able to practise and develop during the lockdowns, and prolonged periods of isolation. The aim to teach children social and emotional skills beyond the early years, where is it a stipulation of the curriculum, stands out and openly addresses mental health needs through promoting and encouraging open discussion, and creates a positive and open culture in the school to understanding the issues surrounding mental health and well-being.

When asked to talk about the self-regulation abilities of children in their class, the Reception teacher highlighted one child who struggled when someone took something, or if they didn't get their way they would go straight to tears very quickly. The teacher then went on to talk about the class:

...there's a lot of personalities in that class, who do rub each other the wrong way and then they can be best friends the next minute, but they are quite dominating, they like being top dog some of them, but then some of them when they are acting as top dog, really it's, it's masking how they are actually feeling (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

They go on to illustrate this further:

(F) is someone who definitely comes across as the, I'm going to be the top dog, I know this, I'm going to do that, bit of a cheeky attitude, but when you get behind that, there's a definite vulnerability there, it is a cover for how they are, how they are actually feeling, so if the attention comes on to them for something like, something positive, they don't like it. We were doing some music and we were clapping out the syllables for people's names, we called out a few names to see if they could do that and no one could apart from them, but they didn't think I was listening, so they did it, and said to N who was next to them. We all stopped and said, that's brilliant, can you show, and then immediately shut down, hid behind someone else, and they don't mind that negative attention times (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

With both examples, the teachers also added that these children had additional challenges for them at home, either with parents who were working long hours or behaviourally challenging older siblings.

In observations of children managing their feelings, becoming easily and quickly upset was seen, as was some aggressive behaviour towards other children. For example, in a whole class religious reflection session, the children were asked to think of people they love and who love them. One child became very tearful on the carpet; they did not seek support, but was seen by the TA and taken to one side. The child didn't think they had anyone they could say and needed the TA to help them to think about their family at home, to enable them to be able to list people that loved them and that they loved.

In another instance, during working together, the group of children were not following the instructions and directions of one child. This child then equally became very quickly tearful as they didn't know how to manage the situation, and the frustration of others not doing as they were telling them. This was another instance where an adult needed to support the child to understand the rules around working together, to help them calm and approach the activity differently.

One child in the class was awaiting a formal diagnosis of autism and their behaviours and reactions were more profound. Where other children as detailed above were quick to become tearful and upset, with support they were able to calm quickly and move on. The child with suspected autism's emotional reactions were noticeably greater. On one day the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) were running a movie night after school, many of the children were attending and would transition from the end of day carpet into the hall. This change in routine that (C) was not expecting quickly escalated into a full tantrum of tears that were inconsolable, even with the support of the TA and other children in the class assuring them that it would be 'really fun'. The teacher reassured the child that they didn't have to attend if they didn't want and that their parent had been called to collect them. The child continued to cry loudly for an extended period. This loud and excessive crying was also

observed from this child when the teacher left the room to do a one-to-one phonic assessment. The child wanted to go too and was told no. This triggered another outburst of crying and distress for the child until the teacher came back and took them out. Children with suspected learning disabilities, such as autism, displayed more extreme emotional behaviour and difficulty managing their feelings, and difficulties self-regulating is associated with the diagnosis.

When support is needed for children to resolve their upsets and disputes, I observed positive reactions from the children, and the support they received from adults could be observed being used independently by the children. An example of this was at the small world table, where a group of children were playing. One child is crying and the other children are not taking any notice of their upset. The teacher goes over to see what's wrong. The teacher takes the children away from the activity to talk to them. Each child is listened to and they are then asked how their behaviour might be making the upset child feel. The children acknowledge that their behaviour is making the child feel sad and they resolve to share and play together. All the children then go back to the small world and play together without further upset.

On another occasion, a child comes out of the book area to me upset because another child has thrown the elephant at them. While the incident is being explained to me, the child that has thrown the elephant has followed them out and says they are sorry. The first child accepts this apology and they both move off together without the need of any support. They demonstrate their understanding of the rules and how to resolve an upset, leaving it behind and moving on.

One child in the class was a selective mute; they would not talk to the adults in the room, but was observed talking quietly to the children. Selective mutism is understood as a fear (phobia) of talking to certain people. The cause is not always understood, but it is known to be linked to anxiety. During my time in the class, this child approached me with their hairband:

I ask them if they wanted to hang it up or put it on, they say quietly “put it on”, the other children with them tell me that they have a small voice inside with grownups, but “they always talks to me, and outside they have a bigger voice”. I say that I feel very lucky that they have used their voice with me, I say that some people might think they don’t talk but we know they can, but doesn’t use their voice all the time, the child with them says “they are a bit shy” (observation, case one).

This observation shows the mute child managing their feelings of anxiety and overcoming their feeling about speaking. It also shows the empathy that the other children have in the class towards each other; there is an acceptance and kindness towards each other and how they are as individuals. This is also seen in how the children accept and accommodate the child with suspected autism, whose behaviour can be over the top and seem extreme; however, as they move from activity to activity, I observed the children accepting and welcoming the child with autism into their groups for as long as they chose to stay.

Subtle behaviours observed can be linked to managing feelings also, like hiding from adults when they are intervening or supporting children to resolve disputes or work through problems in the play. One child in the class hid in the construction when their behaviour with another child, running away from them, had caused the upset. This child also hid the pens they were not sharing when the child who wanted to use the pens had asked an adult to help. In the focused observations of OC1, they were observed rubbing their lips when they didn’t get chosen to speak in whole class situations. This was a repeated behaviour that they displayed that occurred when they didn’t get chosen, despite putting their hand up and during the class’s meditation after lunch play.

The meditation part of the children’s routine was interesting to observe. The children come in from their lunch play time and go straight into the meditation. It acts as a point in the day for children to down regulate from play and reflect on the day’s religious teaching. Closer observations of OC1 and OC2 during this time showed OC1:

joining in half-heartedly, brushing their prayer hand fingertips under their chin, shaking their head, the chimes sound and they close their eyes, sitting crossed legged, their thumb rubs the palm of their hand. The teacher guides the children to think about all the things they have to thank Jesus for (focus observation, Case Study One, OC1).

OC2's behaviour was observed on coming to the carpet. They have positioned themselves next to the TA's legs, who is leading the meditation:

OC2 is looking at the bags when the song starts, they put their hands into prayer and join in the song, the chimes sound for the start of silence. OC2 rubs their hands over their eyes, rests their chin on their hands and rubs their face then puts hands back in lap, looks like they are staring into middle distance, yawns, then closes eyes and brings prayer hands up. Opens eyes again, then has another go at closing them, opens them and looks at the candle in the centre of the circle, then looks over at the word wall, seems to mouth the words on the red wall or the sounds. The music comes back on, they join in with the song (focus observation, Case Study One, OC2).

These small behaviours show how both children are working to find a place of calm following a very active period of unstructured play, with different levels of success. OC1 appears to use the sensation of their fingers on their lips as a calming strategy, whereas OC2 appears to fail to find a calm internal place and so distracts themselves with the word wall but manages to comply with the requirement to be still and silent for the necessary amount of time.

In the interview with the Year 1 teacher, they stated that their class started the year emotionally a lot more immature than previous cohorts and that, for the teacher, the biggest thing has been:

...just the emotional side of things has been difficult and most conversations with parents have been about emotional elements, not sort of academic, it's been parents ringing, saying, what do you know about (the child), they won't stop crying, they are coming home, they are really emotional, we've had lots of parents saying they're (children are) quite angry at home and things like that and it's children you wouldn't expect as well, so the children in class you sort of think well, that's very different from the child I've seen here (Case Study One, Year 1 teacher interview).

This is mirrored in parent questionnaires. Parents across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 were asked about changes in their child's behaviour during the lockdown periods and since returning to school.

Behaviours parents asked to consider regarding their children.	During lockdown periods Total % of agree and strongly agree.	Since returning to school Total % of agree and strongly agree.
Restlessness	70%	44%
Boredom	53%	30%
Difficulty concentrating	86%	26%
Irritability	56%	32%
Frustration	75%	30%
Nervousness	30%	24%
Poor sleep	7%	7%
Quick to anger	46%	45%
Quick to cry	56%	49%

Table (4) total % of positive reports of changes in children's behaviours reported by parents in questionnaires total responses 11 out of possible 90.

The questionnaires were sent to parents at the end of the academic year. Therefore, since returning to school, the data reflects the positive impact that being in school has had on the children's ability to manage their feelings, reflected in their behaviour over the year.

4.5 Case One: Theme Three. Delays

The theme of delays came through strongly in the interviews with teachers in the context of academic, emotional, physical development, and particularly speech and language development. The Reception teacher in their interview identified that children's social skills were lacking when they started in September. Children struggled when interacting with each other. The teacher felt it was noticeable that, having gone from not interacting with others, the children were then in a group of 30 and that was a struggle, which was observed particularly in sharing resources as seen in working together section 4.3. Alongside their social skills, children's communication skills were also delayed. The teacher's initial testing of the children:

70% of the class did not meet an age-related expectation for communication
(Reception teacher interview, Case One).

This was a huge increase from the 30% the teacher recorded two years previously, prior to Covid-19. As a whole school, they found that children's maths and reading scores had really improved and the end-of-year data was higher than two years before the lockdowns.

However, writing had dipped. The teacher reflected that:

I think maths, there is a right or wrong answer, and we found it was the little things that you'd pick up on as a teacher, but as parents you might not, you know it was like your punctuation, it was the size of the letters, we really saw that those basics had slipped (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

Particularly in Reception, the teacher noted that because the children had not had consistent time in nursery, many children could not write their names, or even recognise the first letters of their names, and were reluctant to even make a mark that would represent their name.

While there were a few children who could recognise some sounds in terms of phonics, "the vast majority couldn't". The teacher recalled a particular child who:

...when I asked them to write their name, they told me they couldn't do it because they'd left it at home (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

The physical development of children in Reception was also identified by the teacher as being an area where there was significant delay for the children. Children lacked the basic skills such as putting on a coat or getting dressed. The teacher commented that they had never in their four years of teaching had children with these levels of needs. They acknowledged that there are always some children who need help, but nothing like this:

They physically didn't know what to do, they weren't even struggling to remove the clothes, it was a case that they actually didn't know how to take a jumper off (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

I observed this on my first day in the class. The children were going out to plant trees, and so needed to change into clothes that had been brought in for tree planting after the lunch play time.

12.45 – Children come back in; teacher has placed chairs in spaces throughout the classroom. Children come into the carpet, keeping their coats on. From the carpet children are dismissed by groups to areas and to individual chairs, T then gives 1 step at a time instructions to the children to change from uniform to clothes brought in from home for tree planting.

1. put coat on back of chair.

2. take off shoes, put tie in shoes.

Children need support with this, and most children could not do the buttons on their shirts, so came to queue up for help on the carpet from myself and the teacher. This process takes 30 mins. At 1.15 children have wellies on, are on the carpet and ready to go out (Case One, day one, whole class observation).

Delays were also identified in the interviews with Year 1 and Year 2 teachers. In Year 1, the teacher noted that when the children first started, they were not ready or able to sit at desks, and so for the first half of term they set up a free-flow classroom like Reception. This had never been done before, because the children were not able to focus for extended periods of time. This provision was gradually pulled back and, at the time of the interview (just before Christmas, at the end of the first term), there was only one station left in the room for those children who were still struggling. They highlighted that there are children in the class:

Who still can't touch count to 10 and these are children who are not SEN, these are just children who have missed that much learning, children who can't blend CVC words, who again are not SEND (Year 1 interview, Case One).

The teacher also noted that all children's phonetic development was delayed and behind the expected level. In a meeting with the school's phonic provider, they had said on a recent visit that this was the national picture, and was a situation that was supported by other teachers:

Talking to other year one teachers who've been seven, eight years in year one, they've said this a different year all together this year (interview with Year 1 teacher, Case One).

In Year 2, the teacher said they noticed straight away that the children needed additional support. For some children, just getting them into school was a challenge and that there were some children in the class who were using transitional objects to help them. The teacher also noted that the children need support to build up their resilience and independence, because that was lacking when they started in September regarding:

...friendships, not being able to cope with interacting with others, they would have a falling out, they wouldn't know how to deal with the situation and how to overcome it themselves, they needed a lot of support with that, with their work, they lacked independence they wanted everything done for them and even getting dressed for PE (Year 2 interview, Case One).

The Year 2 teacher also noted that, while the children made progress when they were in school, the lack of consistency continued to impact children. Where there had been disruptions and children had been away from school again for a week, it was noticeable on their return that they had taken a step back with regard to motivation and resilience. The teacher also highlighted the delays in the children, stating:

We noticed it more with the lower ability children, so, some of them when they came into year two in September they were probably still working at an early years level. We've noticed as well that with the lower ability children it's their speech and language that's holding them back. The Reception teacher did a WellComm assessment and a few of them were coming out really really low on that, I think our middle ability children are definitely lower than where they should be, we've got more children that are predicted to be working towards age-related expectations this year, our greater depth in this class are really gifted and talented they just have that natural ability, so I think with those children, lockdown hasn't particularly affected them academically, but emotionally it has affected them (Year 2 teacher interview, Case One).

Interestingly, in the end-of-year data for the Reception class from the pre-Covid, Covid and post-Covid years, while there was a dip in children's results during the disruptions of 2019/20, it was not significant and the cohort of 2020/21 have almost reached the levels from before. The data for Case 1 is displayed here:

2018-2019	Self Conf	Man Feel Beh	Relationships
1 (emerging)	13%	7%	7%
2 (expected)	87%	86%	90%
3 (exceeding)	0	7%	3%

2019-2020	Self Conf	Man Feel Beh	Relationships
1 (emerging)	27%	27%	27%
2 (expected)	73%	73%	73%
3 (exceeding)	0	0	0

2020-2021	Self Conf	Man Feel Beh	Relationships
1 (emerging)	3%	13%	13%
2 (expected)	97%	80%	87%
3 (exceeding)	0	7%	0

The Year 2 teacher suggested that parental involvement had a big impact, and reflected on what parents had shared with them at parent meetings the previous evening:

A lot of them said, you know, we just didn't have the time to go through things with them, some parents were great and did a lot of work with their child, but others, they were trying to do their full-time job as well as home schooling their children, and I suppose a lot of parents don't have the experience that we do, or the understanding of certain methods of how to teach their child (Year 2 interview, Case One).

The impact that parent involvement had on children was also identified by the Year 1 teacher also, who commented that:

We could see exactly which children were engaging in home learning and which children weren't and any that we had to bring in because we noticed they weren't, and you can identify them a mile off, when I ask the Reception teacher 'What were they like during home learning?' no, had not work, had to chase them, parents didn't bring them, didn't want them in, we saw nothing, they're the children that have struggled the most this year (Year 1 interview, Case One).

The teacher reflected in their interview the struggles that parents had with home schooling, because both parents were working full time and some had four or five children in two or three different schools, all needing to access online learning. For instance, for a single-parent family who had moved in with grandparents, who were not computer literate, home schooling could only be done with mum who was working full time. As a school, the teachers all talked about the ongoing support they offered and the weekly phone calls they made to families, where parents would say they just physically couldn't do it, and the teachers all acknowledged that parents were not equipped or had the resources to teach like they do in school.

In the parent questionnaires, 89% of the questionnaires were answered by mothers, 68% of the parents reported either working full time or part time during the first lockdown, and 94% reported that the additional adult living with them during the lockdown was working full time. When asked if they had additional support with home schooling 81% said no, they were either on their own or both adults were working full time. However, 81% felt that the support from the school was neither too much nor too little, which indicates that, for the families, the practicality of supporting their children while fulfilling the requirements of their work was a very challenging situation to be in. Parents acknowledged in their comments that some of the biggest struggles during the lockdowns were supporting their children while working, for example keeping their children on task, or trying to complete schoolwork whilst still working. They stated that this had impacted their children, noting that they were aware that their child had missed out on a lot of things as it would have been their first two years in school, that their children had spent more time on screens than they would have wanted, that their child had become clingy and nervous, children were less resilient and struggling with social situations, and finding group work a challenge. These comments feed into and link with the next theme to be presented, which focuses on routines.

4.6 Case One: Theme Four. Routines

This theme arguably underpins all the other themes presented. Routines are understood as giving children a sense of security, within which they can explore and develop. They are an important part of school life and the classroom day because they require children to conform to expectations for behaviours during transitions and during learning. Case One as a school had a supportive and flexible approach to class routines, enabling teachers to respond to the children in their class as they believe appropriate; this was supported by the senior leadership team. Also, included within the school routines are forest school and time for developing mental health and well-being. This was something that all the teachers interviewed commented on.

The Reception teacher commented that, during the lockdowns, while the school was open

for key-worker children they also invited and actively encouraged families with children they considered vulnerable to attend, because they were aware that those children were not being supported at home:

We encouraged those to get in, as long as we didn't have too many we'd look at where we could. I think that the ones that we had in really enjoyed it, and they enjoyed being in because, they were still in, they still had a routine, it was a bit more fun, it was more 1-1 because there were three of us (Reception interview, Case One).

The positive impact of being in school during the lockdowns was echoed by the Year 1 teacher, who reflected that, for two of their autistic children, the routine of being in school and being in a small group saw the children thrive. However, when the schools reopened and the class was back to 30 children, the two children went backwards slightly and were struggling in the larger environment. Changes in routine can be very stressful for individuals with autism, as was observed in Reception with the child suspected of having autism, when the end-of-day routine was changed because there was a movie night for the children directly after school, organised by the PTFA. This change triggered a very emotional reaction, and the child became very distressed.

Routines in school reflect the expectations on children while they are in the classroom. In Year 1 and 2 these more formal approaches include sitting at desks and moving between subjects over the course of a morning and day. The Year 1 teacher remembered the first transition day with their class in their interview:

The first transition day, it was just like, no, they can't sit, they can't do it on their own, no way, but like, the difference from now, because they've had a whole term uninterrupted, that been, they've made massive progress (Year 1 interview, Case One).

In response to this observation of the children's ability, the teacher had the freedom to adopt a free-flow approach in the class that had been gradually withdrawn. This slow introduction

to a more formal routine for that class had supported the children positively and the teacher could see that the period of uninterrupted time in school had clearly helped that.

As part of all the children's school experience, they routinely access forest school. The Year 1 teacher commented that this had been enormously supportive for the children, particularly those that they described as not being able, or struggling with self-regulating:

They are different children when you take them into that forest (Year 1 teacher, Case One).

In Year 2, the teacher discussed routine with regard to disruption, inconsistency, and disjointed experiences the children have had. They reflected that their Year 2 class:

...have missed those foundation skills they should have had when they were in early years, a lot of the social and emotional side of things they should have experienced in early years they haven't had, obviously it was very disjointed when they went into Year 1, when they were back in as well there were children then that had to go off to isolate because they had been in close contact with others and even though they had a term in school, again it was still disrupted, if there was obviously a little outbreak then the bubble would close, I think the lack of consistency, that they have missed those foundation skills, because we are just constantly trying to fill the gaps now (Year 2 interview, Case One).

The lack of consistency had, in the teacher's opinion, impacted children's motivation, independence, and resilience and that, while disruptions continued, they noticed an impact on children's return. At the start of the year, it was noticeable that the children's ability to pay attention and sit for a prolonged period was not as developed as it needed to be for Year 2 children. As a result, the teacher would chunk up the learning and give the children brain breaks:

I think, again it's their concentration, I think was lacking because they just weren't used to sitting for long periods of time. At home there were lots of distractions going

on, so they were just used to working for a short amount of time and then going off to play and do whatever they wanted, so that took a while. They were excited to come back but that has dipped, their presentation as well, I think they just lacked a bit of motivation. The way that they sat at the tables, just from their body language, facial expression, they just weren't bothered (Year 2 interview, Case One).

With regard to one child in their class, losing all their out-of-school clubs and sports, which were an important element in their personal routines and were all cancelled, had left them withdrawn. For many children having lost all these activities, they then didn't want to do anything and had become 'quite lazy':

I think we found that with quite a few children that they were very withdrawn, and it's taken a while for them to get back into the swing of things, into real life as such, and I think of them have struggled with the fast pace (Year 2 interview, Case One).

The teacher said, "We are having to train the children back up to speed again to move from one thing to the next, to the next they just weren't used to it and they just couldn't cope with it all." They reflected that it has taken time to ease back into the routine, but now, "I think we are all just exhausted because you forget how much you have to fit into a day" (Year 2 teacher interview).

In my observations of the children, other than the child with suspected autism, I did not observe any children struggling with the changes in the daily routines. The class had a timetable/routine as shown below.

Case 1 daily routine	
8.35– 8.55	Children arrive
8.50	Registration and morning routine
9am	Morning prayer, Assembly, or phonics
9.30–9.50	Learning time in the continuous provision, inside and out, children choose. T call children to work in groups or 1-1
10.30	Stop for snack, children wash hands then get own snack or fruit from tray, then outside to playground
10.50	Children back into classroom and return to self-chosen activities
11.25	Tidy-up time
11.30	Line up for lunch and say prayer, walk through to dinner hall, when finished outside play area
12.45	Children back into class and onto carpet for meditation/reflection time
12.55	Children dismissed for learning time in the continuous provision with new challenges introduced for the afternoon Children called to work in group or 1-1
2.30	Children directed to tidy up jobs outside and inside
2.45	Children on carpet with bags and coats for handouts and story if time
2.55	Children line up with kids' club children at end of line
3.05	Children go out to meet parents

Table (5) Case One daily routine

However, every day that I observed was always slightly different. The class teacher often needed to be out of class and other staff would cover, so possibly the children had become accustomed and able to manage this, becoming more flexible and comfortable with change.

In the comments from parents regarding how the experiences of lockdown have impacted their children, one parent reported, “No, as tried to keep a routine every day like a school day,” while another said, “At the beginning yes, very clingy and nervous, but I do feel like it is quickly forgotten once they are back into normal routine.” A part of that normal routine would undoubtedly include attending school.

4.7 Presentation of findings Case Two

Data from Case Two was analysed as detailed below.

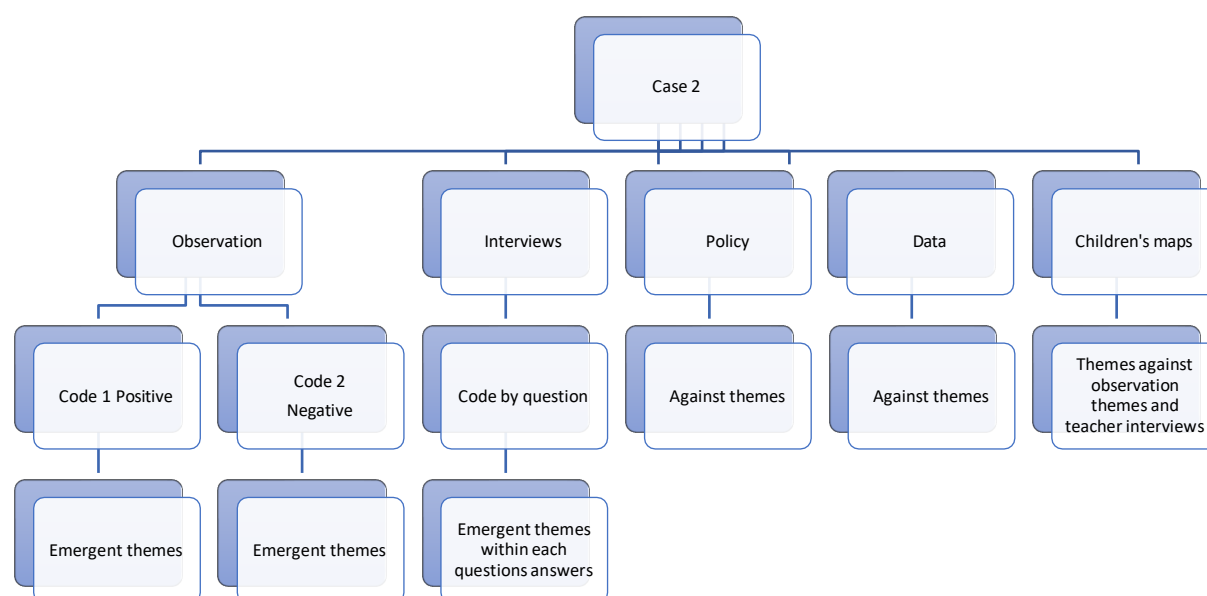


Figure (7)

This data does not include parents’ views, as the school was unwilling to send out the questionnaire to parents because of some difficulties with Year 1 parents. This is discussed in greater depth in section 5.2. Also, while the children made maps of their environment, I was only able to take one of those away from school. Therefore, the field notes I have regarding the others, along with the map available to me, have been included in the presentation of the findings. It was also not possible in Case Two to interview teachers from Year 1 and 2 as they were unwilling to take part in the study. However, as a three-form entry

On the school's website, their mission statement is "Together we care, together we succeed", setting out the school's aim and value placed on working together. Along with high expectations of children, the headteacher states that the school aims to develop in children a sense of belonging alongside high levels of self-esteem and confidence, developing a passion for learning through a rich curriculum both inside and outside the classroom.

Headteachers Welcome

As Headteacher, I hope that our website will give you some idea of what our school is like. However, I hope you will come to visit us in person to see our wonderful school in action.

■■■■■ strives to provide the best possible education for your child. An education where each child feels valued, cared for and motivated to achieve their very best. We have high expectations and we aim to develop in our children a real sense of belonging along with high levels of self esteem and confidence. Whilst recognising that our pupils need to be equipped with key skills in English and Maths, we strongly feel that they also need to develop a real passion for learning and we try to enhance this learning through a whole range of experiences both within and outside the classroom environment through an exciting and vibrant curriculum.

We work in partnership. Governors, staff, parents and children all help to make this happen. By working together, we move forward and create a nurturing environment and opportunities for all our children to succeed.



Ours is a happy, secure, purposeful environment. Why not visit the school? We are an open, friendly school and parents and visitors are always welcomed. I look forward to meeting you.

■■■■■

Figure (15) Screenshot from Case Two website, headteacher's welcome.

Mission Statement

Together we care, Together we succeed is more than just a motto at [REDACTED] Primary.
It drives exciting lessons and interactions that enrich the lives of pupils.



Figure (16) Screenshot from Case Two website, mission statement.

The school, as previously mentioned, is a three-form entry, meaning there are three Reception classes. Arriving at the school on the first day, the close teamwork between the three Reception teachers was evident. Before the children arrive, the teachers move freely in and out of each other's classes, sharing resources and discussing the day's planning, the responsibility for which they share between them. This close working together means that all the children in the three classes receive the same input and move through the curriculum at the same pace. In an interview, teacher one commented on the supportiveness of the Reception teaching team when it came to their understanding and ability to support children with the new self-regulation aspect of the curriculum:

I don't feel too, well, not very confident about it, I feel ok, yeh, and I think the good thing is we work very well as a team and um, it's helping each other isn't it, that's really helpful. Working together with that. We have got a really good team, and we are really supportive (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

While the teachers identified their working team as a strength, the relationships and inclusion with the rest of the school did not appear to be as strong. When asked about any training the

teachers had received for self-regulation, teacher one reported that they, in the early years, had not. However, the upper school had received training:

It's sort of, they call it mental health, and it's all of that sort of stuff and managing feelings and behaviour, but we haven't (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

The feeling from the teachers with regard to the transition to Year 1 was that the Year 1 teachers were only interested in the children's maths and English abilities, rather than the whole child:

This child might look fantastic, brilliant at maths, brilliant in literacy, but actually comes in every single day and cries, finds it really difficult to share, finds it really difficult to behave in certain situation, that when they come to year one... this will affect the, but they didn't, it was very much well, we just need the literacy scores and we just need the maths (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

In the Case Two study, the implementation of Covid-19 measures on the return to school had not been well received or supported, particularly by Year 1 parents, who had expressed their discontent. As a result, the request to send out the parent questionnaires to EY and KS1 parents to explore their experiences of home schooling and their children during the lockdowns was declined, because the headteacher was reluctant to give them any kind of platform for further complaint, describing them as difficult Year 1 parents.

Working together with parents appeared to be more problematic than in Case One, exemplified by the refusal to send out parent questionnaires as explained. In the Reception classes, the relationships with parents in one class seemed better than in another. In the interviews, when reflecting on this, both teachers found that not being able to do home visits and have parents in as part of the transition into Reception had impacted on the relationships between parents and school. Teacher one had found that a number of their parents had not signed up to the online learning platform, where parents can upload what

their children are doing at home and the teacher can share what is happening in school. In their parent conferences, which were done by phone rather than face to face, “lots of parents didn’t pick up” (Teacher one, Case Two).

Teacher 1’s class also struggled with a number of children’s attendance and lateness. The teacher commented that, where parents are working with the school and supporting their children at home, those children:

Are doing brilliantly, they are the ones that get the experiences at home and mum sits with them and dad sits with them and really shows them, its anything, it’s just even going out and having a walk, there’s a lot of children in here that just don’t do that (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

In contrast, the teacher talked about another child in their class:

I mean this little one here, they come in at 10 o’clock every single day, they get collected at 3 o’clock when it should be quarter to, they miss all their phonics lessons, um, tries so hard at everything they do, but it’s not worked on at home, and they just sort of, in this sort of, I’ll get through school, but I think as they go up, it will be quite difficult for them (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

Teacher Two, however, found that they never had a class with such good parent engagement. All their parents had signed up to the online platform and described a project the children had undertaken, to make a shoe box about them at the start of the year. In previous years, there were always children who would not bring something in. However, this year, all the children in their class had completed the activity with their parents and brought their boxes in on time:

We always do this, we get them to do a memory box, they have to decorate the box, we want specific pictures and then over the first few weeks we get different things out and discuss them, you know, all about me, like, first day, I have all my children bring

them in, which is unheard of sort of thing, so parental support in my class is, er, really good (Reception class teacher two, Case Two).

In the classroom observations, I observed the children in the outside and inside classrooms. On my first day, I was struck by how well the children collaborated and cooperated with each other. Not just in their own class, but also when they were outside in the learning area, where all three classes mix. Where there were any issues, the children were happy to resolve things with support. Talking to class teacher one (whose class my observations were based in) about this, they attributed it to the focused time that all the classes had spent in the first three weeks of the year with the children. This had been adopted for the children in the year previously on returning after the first lockdown, and it had worked well, so the teachers had decided to do the same this year. Teacher one commented that the impact of this practice had been commented on by the deputy headteacher with regard to how well the children had settled:

Our transition in September is three weeks, and we don't teach for three weeks initially, purely because we are focusing on the PSED and that self-regulation, even, I mean it sounds silly but, I obviously do a maths and a literacy task every week, but then, what we did initially in the first three weeks would be, being with the children, sitting down, ah, let's try this, any sharing issues that happened, right, why don't we try this, and it was that modelling that some of these children had never had (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

This period of time supporting the children at the start of the year was discussed by Reception teacher two, who highlighted the importance of the rules and expectations in the classes and the behaviour policy that is used throughout the school, as well as the school values, which were not obvious from the school's mission statement or home web page. However, I was able to find them using a word search of the school website and they were 'Perseverance, Creativity and Collaboration'. Teacher two identified that children needed to

be taught how to use the class systems, such as the counters, and this was done during the time at the start of the year when:

It's no good having counters set up if they are not being taught how to use them
(Reception teacher two, interview, Case Two).

The children use counters to register themselves in an area of the classroom where only a limited number of children are able to be at any one time, such as the home corner. This problematises the classroom environment for the children and creates opportunities to develop the skill to compromise and negotiate.

It sets those boundaries and limits, but it also, it's, those opportunities where if four children have been in a long time and somebody else wants to go in they got... You'll often have those children say, well I've been in a long time, or I want a turn and it's just giving them chain to think, well, why don't we talk to the other children, 'who do you think has been in a long time, who do you think would swap with, shall we suggest they have another couple of minutes and then come out?' so giving, trying to support them to come up with compromises or solutions, and the same with sharing and wanting a toy (Reception teacher two interview, Case Two).

The diagram below shows the layout of the room.

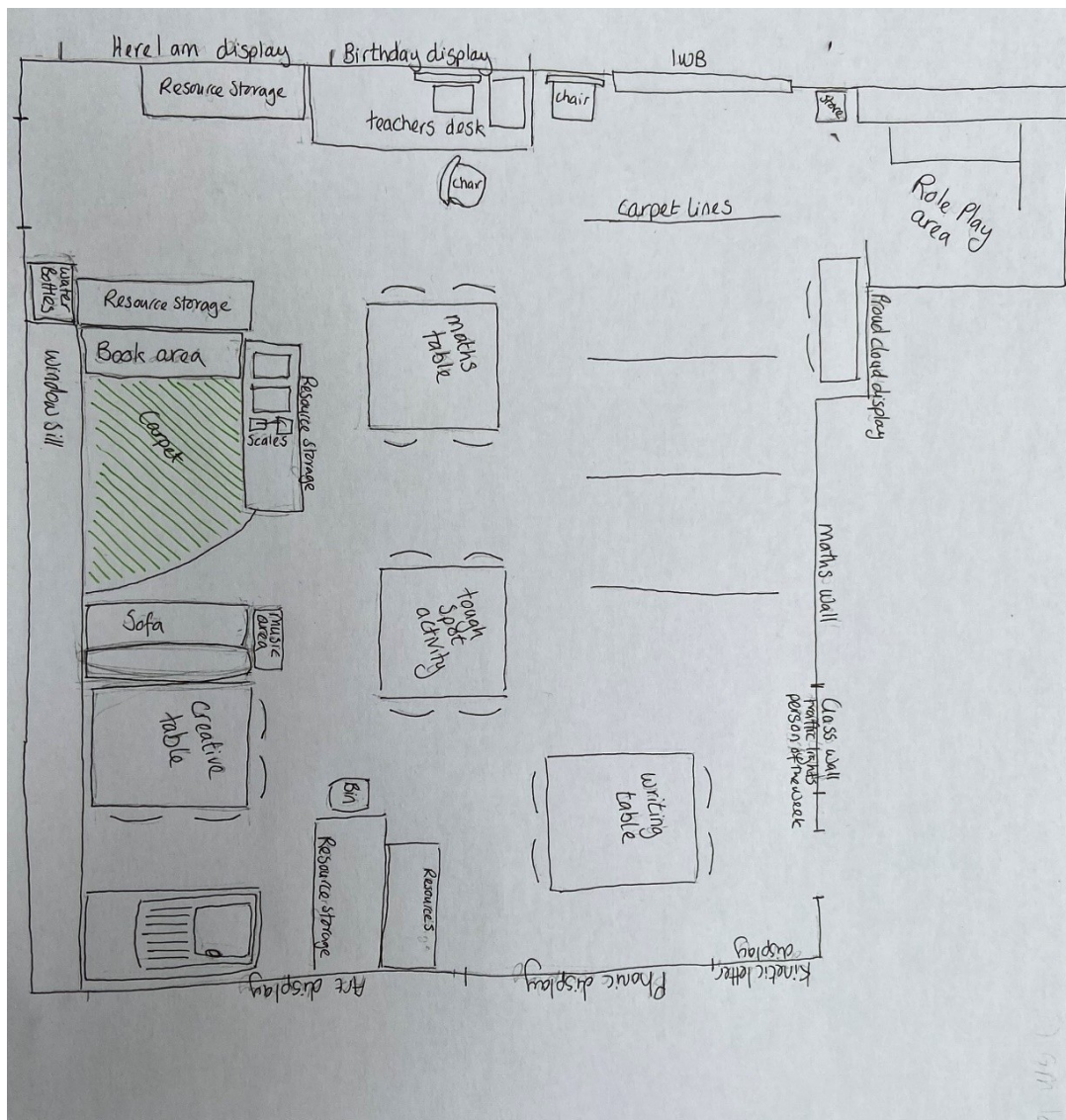


Figure (17) Classroom layout map Case Two, made by the researcher.

In my observations of the classroom environment, I observed children working together, collaborating, and supporting each other. In the outside area, a large group of children from different classes worked together to fill the openings in the reading shelter with small blocks, skittles, and other resources available to them. This self-initiated activity is intended to 'keep out the rain'. The leader in this project is (I). While they direct the children, others are rolling a dice inside the shelter. More children come to join, and (I) gets frustrated and says, "It's too squishy!" and tells children to get out. A teacher quickly moves in to support, by explaining that the shelter is the school's and for everyone. (I) is not happy with that, they explain they only want who they have invited, and they start to physically try to remove the unwelcome

children from the shelter. The teacher supporting calmly asks (I) to use kind hands and reiterates that the shed is for everyone. While they have been talking, the teacher points out that some children have chosen to leave and so it was no longer 'squishy'. At this, (I) seems calmed and happy to let the children remain, even though they had previously wanted to leave.

This observation illustrates how many of the children are working collaboratively together, but that one child (I) still needs support when things are not quite how they want them to be. Therefore, the compromise, flexibility and negotiation skills needed to successfully work together for this child are still developing. The other children around this exchange continue to build and play uninterrupted. This play continues until the bell is rung for tidy-up time; the children then knock all the resource out of the gaps and work together to put them all away with minimal direction from an adult.

Inside, at the writing table, I observed a group of children colouring. One child commented, "I'm doing my best." This child has a poor pencil grip, but is making a real effort. One of the other children offer to help them and show them how to tripod grip. The child accepts the support, wanting to do well.

One of the children in the class is observed often playing alone or alongside others. On day two of observing in the classroom, this child (A) comes to me to talk about the cars they are playing with. Their speech is very unclear. They move on to play on their own. The teacher tells me that the child's speech has improved. When (A) first started, they used to engage with children by pushing and hitting; the teacher suggests the child's language is a barrier to playing with others, so they tend to play alongside.

One particularly interesting outcome from the observation data for Case Two was the contrast in the observed behaviours from the children in the first four visits and the fifth final visit. The class teacher had gone on maternity leave when I returned for my final visit and there was an increase in observed negative behaviours in the class, particularly with joining

in at whole class time, not following the rules and not showing kindness and support to each other. This change will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

In the two focused observations of children in the class, child one (OC1) at the start of the day enthusiastically invites two other children to come and join them on the carpet to share their book. The day of the observation starts with some yoga, OC1 follows what is on the Interactive White Board (IWB) and, when they are instructed to stand on one leg and balance, they comment that “I can’t do it”, but has a go, joining in and watching what the other children are doing. The class move on to their daily phonics, and OC1’s body language appears to indicate that they are either unsure or not hugely interested, as depicted in the excerpt below. However, they do not disrupt:

OC1 shuffles forward but appears a little uncertain if they are doing the right thing. Teacher runs through sounds and rhymes, OC1 has their hand in front of their face, playing with their lips, not really joining in with saying sounds and rhymes. Yawns again. Teacher introduces new sounds and OC1 takes their hand away from their mouth and joins in with the recall and repeat, keeps yawning, puts hands back in mouth, looks down their line at the other children. Children need to put their hands on their head when the new sound card is shown, children are joining in but OC1 doesn’t put their hands on head (Observation focus child one, Case Two).

Later, having been selected to go to the outside classroom in the morning, OC1 and a friend are playing football. They then move on to running around the cabin at the end of the area with a group creating an obstacle course. I observe them stopping to discuss something and then all five of them move to the other side of the area, where they stop again for further discussion. One of the children in the group sees a free ball and gets it. All the children then return to the area by the cabin and organise a game of football, where a goal can be scored by throwing the ball at the corner and dodging their friends. The game is stopped by an adult, but the observation demonstrated the group of children’s independence and skills at working together, negotiating the rules, and creating a game.

Throughout the day, OC1 plays with groups of children outside in the morning and inside in the afternoon. Their motivation to work together from the observations is greater at the child-initiated activities rather than the teacher-led whole-class times. However, while they might not be as engaged in adult-led times, they are not seen behaving in a disruptive way.

Observation of child two (OC2) during whole-class time also appears to be very social and keen to join in. In the morning phonics session on the day of the observation, OC2 shuffles forwards when asked by the teacher to begin the session:

Teacher shuffles the cards and asks children on their own to read out words, OC2 looks round at children who are chosen, their hands are in their lap, squints eyes, turns head so her right eye is forward. Teacher holds up words to read. "I will meet my daddy," says OC2 when chosen to put words into a sentence. The class read through the rest of the words, teacher moves on to longer words, OC2's attention is on the teacher, making an effort to join in. Teacher sounds out words l-o-a-d children blend, OC2 playing attention and mouthing sounds with the teacher then blending (Focused observation child two, Case Two).

After the whole-class session, the teacher divides the class for outside and inside. OC2 is selected to be inside first and, once dismissed from the carpet, goes with another child (R) to the table with the Easter egg hunt resources. OC2 and (R) go round the room hiding eggs, taking turns to find each other's hidden eggs. This activity continues throughout the morning, with other children coming and joining the game and then moving on. OC2 works with all the children who join in, explaining the rules. Even when called away by the teacher to do a focused piece of work, they return to the egg hunt when free.

In the afternoon whole-class maths session, OC2 is asked to swap places in the circle to sit next to a different child to the one they have positioned themselves with. They move happily and complete the activity that they are asked to do. However, when the teacher asks them to talk to their partner, OC2 does not talk to the child they have been put with. This suggests that, while OC2 appears to work happily with most children in the class, the children that

they have been observed working with are their chosen playmates, and when required to work with someone outside of that group they are less willing to do so.

4.9 Case Two: Theme Two. Managing feelings

This theme, managing feelings, emerged when both the Reception teachers were asked to talk about what they understood by the term self-regulation. Reception teacher 1 stated:

It's very much about, sort of how they control their behaviour, their feelings
(Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

And Reception teacher two said:

Well I would say in a nutshell, it's about them managing their feelings in different situations, so it could be following the rules inside the classroom and the rules outside the classroom and knowing what their boundaries are and the expectations of them, or it could be about if there are conflicts with other children thinking about how to resolve it or showing sympathy in appropriate situations, when it's a good time to have a joke and when it's not, that kind of, adjusting their emotions and their behaviour (Reception teacher two interview, Case Two).

The emphasis on classroom rules was particularly evidenced in Case Two. The school does not have a well-being policy, but within the behaviour policy it states:

Children are encouraged to become self-disciplined, to be responsible for their own actions, in order to develop their confidence and independence (Behaviour policy, Case Two).

The policy states that, along with other points, it will “promote/develop in pupils an empathy and respect for self and other”. The school has a clear focus on good behaviour and rewards. The use of public praise and rewards is used as a model to other children, and the impact, importance, and value that the children place on this system can be seen in their maps of the classroom, which all included the school's traffic light behaviour management

system. Children start the day on green; they then progress up through silver to gold for good/positive behaviour, and can also be moved down to amber and red for negative behaviour. In the example below, the traffic lights have been positioned in the centre of the map, making them the centre of the attention in the child's mind.

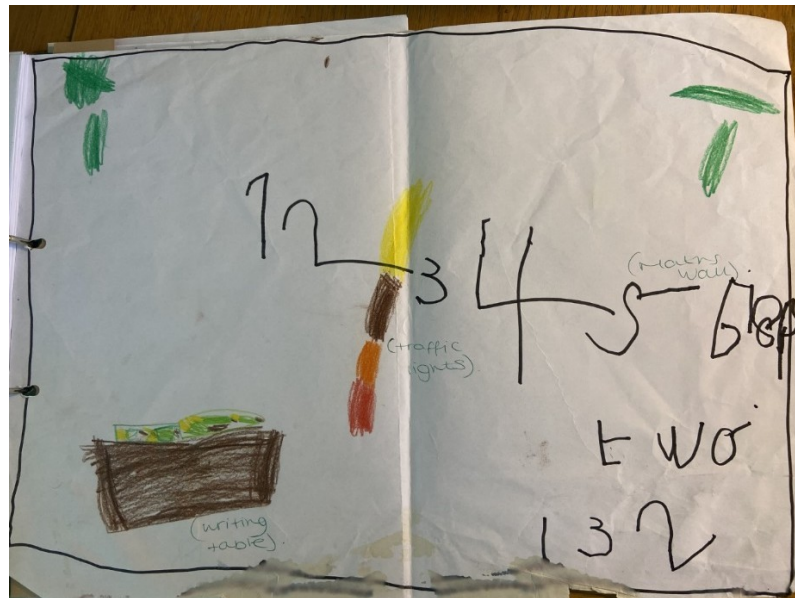


Figure (18)

In the photo of the display below, the traffic lights are a large part of the display positioned by the door (Figure 19).



Figure (19) Image of classroom display Case Two.

In order to support children develop their emotional language and understanding of their feelings, Reception teacher one talked about the start of the year, when the classes began the day with a welcome circle and played circle games for 15-20 mins each day. There was a focus on discussing feelings, using a dice with six different emotions on it that the children would use as a tool to explore the different feelings. Dice also featured in many of the children's maps, indicating that this period of settling time was significant and important to the children as well.

The teacher explained that this was not something that had been done before and was only introduced when children returned to school after the Covid disruptions. As a team, they decided to do it again with this cohort "because I think sometimes with the little ones, they don't know their own feelings". They commented that:

We found that it's better to talk about it now, if that makes sense, rather them, sort of hiding it, because, I think a lot of the time, well we won't bring it up, because they might not understand, they're only four, but actually there is a lot and this year we've really noticed it (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

In addition to this focused circle time in the morning, teacher one talked about the importance in the first three weeks of the term being free from teaching and spending time being with the children, supporting them with:

Any sharing issues that happened, right, why don't we try this, and it was that modelling that some of the children had never had and I think doing that really helps some of these, like I said, some of these have come a long way (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

This was echoed by Reception teacher two, who also talked about the benefit at the start of the year to not being tied to more formal teaching and learning tasks:

At the beginning of the year, we were just free to be with the child and to look out for conflicts and things and teaching, just giving time to teaching them those routines. It's

all getting to know the children, observing how they behave, so we know where they are and we know, you know, modelling the rules, that kind of thing (Reception teacher two interview, Case Two).

When exploring the abilities of children in the classes, to self-regulate from the teachers' perspectives, teacher one said that, while there are usually tears at the start of the year, this year 2021/22 they found there were a lot more tears. At the start of the year also, "that spitefulness that sort of thing, we've had quite a lot of that across the Reception initially". They also described having more children with 'autistic style needs'. When asked to explain what they meant by that, the teacher highlighted children with particular difficulties with sharing or needing to have things their way. Also, there were particular children with more significant delays with speech and writing, which they have observed before in children that they had taught who have come to Reception with Occupational Health Care Plans (OHCP).

I've found this year, we got those little behaviours, that you go ummmmmm need to monitor that, need to watch that. We didn't have that last year. It's the spitefulness, but that's their age... with (I) lots of, very particular, he's very particular with things, so, like with the poppies today (children had made poppies for Remembrance Day that were handed out for a class photo to share with parents), if they have got something in their head and its doesn't go their way, then they get quite upset. I mean, that was amazing how they reacted to that, before that would have been a meltdown (Teacher one interview, Case Two).

Teacher two talked about a child in their class who had 'shy tendencies' and the parents had said it might take them time to settle. The teacher reflected that while not being able to socialise in the lead up to starting school would not have been supportive for the child, they might have been that way anyhow. This child, they said, had taken time to settle and was overly reliant on one of the other children in the class; that mean that, when the class was split daily for inside and outside using lolly sticks, if they were separated, the child would

become upset and needed support to mix with others. However, teacher two reflected that this was an opportunity that the child needed.

Another child who teacher two talked about had not attended any settings before starting school, because their parents had been working abroad. They described this child as being very bright:

They are SO clever, but, er, so it didn't take them long, I mean, I remember the sharing in the first week was a bit of an issue, and I was like, you can just tell that he hasn't been anywhere before, even just those things like, time to come and sit on the carpet now, was a bit alien to them, and not just shouting out, sharing, "That's mine, I had that!" I did notice it, but it was only, whether it's because they're a really bright child so they've been able to adapt really quickly (Teacher two interview, Case Two).

While teacher 1 in interview did not highlight particular needs, during the classroom observations they shared their insights about the class during the routines of the day, which were recorded in field notes. In the class, there was a particular child who struggled more than the others with managing their feelings. This child was suspected of having some more complex needs, but at the time there was no formal diagnosis and the teacher, knowing the family, was aware of challenging circumstances at home with an older sibling who had very challenging behaviour. On the first day of observing, a supply TA was working with the class. The child would not respond to the supply TA when asked to sit in their carpet space; instead, they lay face down on the floor until the teacher spoke to them. The teacher commented that it had taken them and their regular TA:

A long time to get (P) to understand the expectations but with new people they will 'try it on', its draining (Class observation day one, Case Two, p.1).

At snack time, all the children are dismissed to go to the toilet and wash their hands, (P) waits until all the children have gone before going. The teacher explained that previously the child would have a "meltdown" because there were too many people in the toilet, so now

they wait and go at the end. On another occasion, after the children had come in from the outside area, (P) does not. The TA explains to the teacher that the child is:

In the shed in a sulk because they were asked to get off the bike, they had had longer than the other children, they got angry and said to the TA 'I'm going to squeeze your heart! (Class observation day two, Case Two, p.2).

In another observation, also involving the bikes outside, (P) has again been told to let someone else have a turn; they have had a long turn and now it is explained they have to let other children have a go. The adult has taken the helmet off (P)'s head, and they become very upset and angry. They do not get off the bike, but stop riding it. (P) is left to calm down, with the adults not engaging with their temper. (P) is then removed from the bike and they start to scream, then throw a plastic box. "I am never coming back to this school ever," they scream again. The behaviour is ignored, and they begin to calm down, moving off to explore the ice that has formed in the tough spot.

The observations of (P) in the class demonstrate the extreme and sudden outbursts this child has when triggered by having to conform, or follow instructions that do not align with their wishes or personal goals. These behaviours are obvious to see and demonstrate the child's difficulties with managing their feelings. However, when left, they do manage to self-calm and will listen to their teacher if no other adults are working with the class.

Less obvious behaviours were observed where children are managing their feelings in quite a different way. During tidy-up time inside, (E) bumps their head on the underside of the table. They are clearly upset and are crying, but doing their best to be brave and strong emotionally. The teacher offers (E) an ice pack, but they decline. It is suggested they might like to get a drink, but no, (E) just wants to finish tidying up:

(E) brings tray of blocks over to cabinet, tells me they've put that way, their hands are deep in their pockets, they are being brave (Class observation day two, Case Two, p.4).

On another occasion, the teacher tells (E) to move down on the traffic lights to amber because they keep turning round on the carpet to talk to their friend:

(E) gets up to move themselves down, they look shell shocked and devastated but stay calm, their hands pushed deep in their pockets, they look like they might cry but don't (Class observation day four, Case Two, p.3).

This was the first time I saw a child being moved down on the behaviour traffic lights and it appears to be significant for the children. They take it very seriously. The digging of hands deep into pockets shows how (E) is managing their feelings, but in a suppressive way, like they are burying them deep in those pockets, hiding them, and not letting them show.

In the focus observation of child one (OC1) at the start of the whole-class maths session, the children have come in from lunch play and go straight to the carpet of whole-class input. OC1 joins in to begin with, but then sits staring into the middle distance with their hand in their mouth biting nails. Their gaze moves from the IWB showing a number blocks episode, the teacher and the TA. When finished, the teacher asks the class a question and OC1 puts up their hand to answer. They get the answer wrong and are encouraged to have another go, buries their hands in their lap and sits quietly before saying the correct answer.

At the start of this session, OC1 appears to be slightly distracted as they transition from the active outside lunch break play to the carpet, and this could be understood from the nail biting and unfocused gaze. When they get their first answer wrong in reply to the teacher's question, they manage their feelings again by burying their hands in their lap before finding the correct answer.

Later in the afternoon, OC1 is observed working at the construction during the inside learning time. They are invited to join friends with the soft toys, but choose to stay with the construction. When they have completed their work, they take it to the teacher. "This is for you," they say, and as they move away, again they bury their hands into their pockets. A little later, the teacher calls OC1 over to read with them:

OC1 comes over to do reading, sits with their legs crossed under the chair, rocking forward on the chair, the teacher gets them to pull the chair in, then they rock back, the teacher stops them, OC1 leans on their right arm with hand in a fist to their ear. They read, goes quickly. The teacher tells me when I comment they read quickly that they have read that book twice before, but the teacher is pleased and tells OC1 to move up the traffic lights (Focus observation child one, Case Two).

The body language of OC1 appears to show their desire to please the teacher, and they are managing their feelings of possible nervousness or anxiety about not pleasing them or failing at the task asked. Praise and acknowledgement appear to be important to OC1.

Observing focus child two (OC2), during the inside free play time, while the teacher is talking the children through the activities in the room to work through, OC2 is holding on to the table leg of the activity that they want to do. As soon as the children are dismissed, they and another child go straight to the activity, which is an Easter egg hunt. OC2 and their friend move around the room hiding the eggs. Another child comes to join them:

You are spoiling it” OC2 says in a frustrated voice, the new child helps OC2’s friend find the eggs anyhow. OC2 says there is one more egg, the golden egg, “I’ll show you” says OC2, the other child says no, that will spoil it, “ok, its somewhere there” says OC2 pointing to a place in the book area “you’re getting hotter, getting hotter, getting colder. Oh, I think you’ve already got it, I can’t see it (Focus observation child two, Case Two).

Here, OC2 becomes quickly frustrated by another child joining the play but manages this feeling to accommodate them, having expressed their feelings, and they continue to play together.

A little later on during the same game, another child comes to join. They are told they will need to ask. Having asked one of the children playing and been told yes, they join in. OC2

accepts the child into the game. However, when the eggs have all been found and they begin to set up again OC2 says:

You can't come yet, I haven't finished. No, they can't come till, I've not finished, you're not playing with us," to the child who has joined, OC2 stamps their foot, clearly frustrated that other children have tipped out the Lego and found the egg they have just hidden and are calling to the other child that they have found the egg (Focus observation child two, Case Two).

This frustration and slightly controlling behaviour OC2 demonstrates when having to accommodate others is shown through their tone of voice and body language, stamping their foot. However, having expressed themselves, they are able to move on with the play and continue without escalation, demonstrating their ability to manage their feelings and regulate them within the classroom.

Particularly interesting in the observations of the class were on the fifth day, when the class teacher had been replaced by a long-term supply. On this day, children were observed not managing their feelings to comply with the class expectations; for example, in the morning when the children were asked to complete a writing task, while others arrived for the day. A group who did not seem very keen on the activity were being quite silly and were repeatedly asked to stop and get on with the task. During whole-class teaching, children were calling out rather than putting up their hands as they had done with the class teacher. I observed low levels of disruption during whole-class sessions from children who had previously been seen to be distracted, but not disruptive. During this day, I observed children being moved down the traffic lights and two children were moved to red on this day for hitting, and for lying, behaviours that the class teacher had described at the start of the year, but that were no longer a feature in the day-to-day behaviour of the class. They were not observed during the first four days of observations in term one or the focused observations in term two. The impact that the new teacher in the final third term appears to have had on the children's motivation to comply with the expectations that the previous teacher had established seems

to have been disrupted. While the children demonstrated their ability to do this previously, they were not apparently inclined to transfer this to the new teacher.

4.10 Case Two: Theme Three. Delays

The theme delays emerged from the interviews with the teachers. They noted emotional, academic, and a readiness for starting school. Teacher one commented with regards to the previous cohort 2020/21 at the end of the year:

We found that all that speech, all that PSED, that crying, the behaviour, was holding a lot of the children back, so they couldn't get GLD (good level of development in the end of foundation stage profile) because they had to get that area (PSED) and there was a good handful of them, and I think as the years have gone on, I personally think that has got worse, I think with the whole situation (Covid-19) (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

In addition to this, teacher one noted that, at the start of the year, children's school readiness was not great:

It was silly things like toileting, I would say across the other classes it was toileting was a huge thing, you would think they (parents) would sort of get them ready and prepared for school knowing that they can't wear nappies when they come to school but there was good handful of them that were, and everyday have an accident and you've still got it now and we are into November. There was a lot, I've found, more so, I mean they always have tears, but this year I found there was a few more tears (Teacher one interview, Case Two).

The teacher also commented that there were a number of children who had transitioned from the school nursery, where they had been assessed as making expected progress by the setting but weren't. The teacher reflected that this could be because the children had missed so much of their time in setting due to the closures, that the teachers there were not really aware of the children's abilities. This disruption had meant that, for some children,

certain delays or behaviours had not been picked up or flagged for further investigation, such as (A)'s speech, which was significantly delayed, and some of the other children that the teacher described as having 'autistic-like' behaviours that needed to be monitored and investigated further. Another aspect of the children's development that teacher one identified as delayed was the children's physical development. They commented that this was something that the children "find really difficult" and this was impacting on their ability to write, but also noted that finding time in the timetable to address this was challenging, along with staffing and access to the hall for PE. It was difficult to support the children as they would ideally like.

The physical development was also brought up by teacher two, who noted:

I think we are limited with PE, it's very, I feel like it's very limited at the moment because of our school rules for Covid, um, because it's out, everyone is doing it outdoors, I know some schools have moved to different things but we still, here are, our hall that we would normally have used for PE prior to this is now set up for Oscar club (after school club) (Reception teacher two, Case Two).

In addition to this, teacher two acknowledged that:

You know some parents will just get them dressed in the morning, and PE was definitely their opportunity to learn, buttons and things and definitely and see some of them change and they all come in their PE kits now so we don't know, other than coats that's kind of the only dressing we do. I think PE and physical development perhaps is limited a bit (Teacher two interview, Case Two).

In the field notes and classroom observations of children and conversations with the teacher one, I noted a comment, that the teacher had noticed a decline in speech and language and that the children's physical development, which was low before, was much worse, especially for writing. When observing the children getting ready to go outside, it was clear how many

of them struggled to do up their coats, managing zips and, for some, even knowing how to put their coats on.

One of the children whose speech is particularly delayed was talking to me about the cars they were playing with, and it was very unclear what they were saying. The teacher told me after, that this child's speech had improved since the start of the year, but that the difficulty they had communicating had resulted in them hitting and pushing other children. Their speech still was a barrier to the child's ability to play with others. In addition to this, the teacher commented that the language delays for the children mean that the children could not say the sounds in phonics or appear to hear them, and so could not use them in their work. The teacher stated that the children this year were much further behind than in previous years, not all the children but more than usual.

On day four of the classroom observations, the TA was sitting at the carpet working on initial sounds with a small group of children. Their carpet spaces had been moved, so they sat at the end of the line, making it easier for the TA to access them. The TA commented:

Some of these children have not yet got initial sounds, they almost need to track back to nursery provision for them (Class observation, day four, p.2).

An important aspect linked to children's progress identified by the class teacher was the children's parents. The teacher commented that attendance in their class was particularly poor, as was parental engagement, with a significant number of their class's parents not signing up to the learning platform or parent meetings:

I had parents evening, seven parents that didn't sign up, and you think, they've just started in reception, if it was my child, I'd want to know everything about them, how are they getting on, are they happy, might not be sort of in terms of where they should be in levels or ability as long as they were happy, you know, is there anything I can do, what do you think I could do, whereas, yeh... a lot of them in here have...

And that's a huge thing and I find that really difficult (Interview class teacher one, Case Two).

Particular children were always late and therefore always missed the morning phonics input. This was having a significant impact on that child's ability to catch up and make the same progress as the other children.

On my fourth day in the class, the teacher had identified 11 children out of their class of 23 whose attendance was problematic. In addition, a child who had been absent for a seven-week holiday had returned and both the teacher and TA were concerned about their speech. It was not possible to understand what the child was saying and the child was struggling to follow and join in with the whole class in sessions.

Interestingly, the school's end-of-year data for PSED does not indicate that there were any delays in the children's progress. In fact, when compared with pre-Covid results, the children had improved across the board. Data from Case study 2 displayed below.

2018-2019	Self Conf	Man Feel Beh	Relationships
1 (emerging)	19%	21%	18%
2 (expected)	71%	67%	74%
3 (exceeding)	13%	12%	8%

2019-2020	Overall PSED
1	26%
2	65%
3	9%

2021-2022	Self-regulation	Managing self	Relationships
1 (emerging)	9%	12%	5%
2 (expected)	91%	88%	96%

In 2021/22, the exceeding category has been removed from the assessment criteria. However, if the expected and exceeding categories from the previous years are combined, the totals for those years are below the results of the year post Covid 2021/22, indicating that the children are doing better in these areas than before Covid-19. This could be due to

the change in the settling in routine, which now allows significant time at the start of the year for teachers to be with the children and the addition of a specific focus on developing children's language and understanding their feelings during the first weeks in circle time, when the class is not teaching to timetable. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five as a key finding.

4.11 Case Two: Theme Four. Routines

The theme of routine came through strongly in Case Two. The whole school's emphasis on behaviour meant that routines and rules were an important part of the children's classroom experiences, also the class had a very structured and fixed routine to their day, which was reinforced and followed. On the third day of observing in the class, I am asked if I can help open the door to the cooker in the home corner – the knob has come off and the magnet is holding the door closed. There are four children in the home corner, and one tells me I can't come in because there will be too many. We agree that, because I am not staying to play, it will be ok. This demonstrated the children's strong awareness of the rules and the need to keep to them.

Other than the first three weeks of the year, when the teachers worked off timetable to get to know the children, settle them into the settings and develop their language of emotion, both the teachers commented that, at the time of interview and observations, that the days were full of teaching and tasks and there was very little room to fit in anything outside of these requirements. Teacher one commented:

I mean if I ever took that routine away it would throw a lot, I would say over half of them, because it would be, well, what's coming next, what are we doing. I've always, routine and structure. Very much, I mean, I know (I) will always say to me, what's next, we've only got three things left. But what, what have we got next, and it's sort of, he has to know in his head, right, this is now, this is next, he has to know that, and (P) is very much the same as well. It's knowing their routine, the structure (Teacher one interview, Case Two).

We reflected together if this need to know what was happening and the security the children took from the routine was a consequence of the disruptions the children had previously experienced with regard to being in school, not being in school, seeing family and friends, not being able to see family and friends, what was allowed and what we could or could not do, and the children's experience of constantly changing boundaries.

In terms of the biggest impact that the disruptions had had on the children in teacher one's professional opinion, they cited routine:

I would say routine, um, when I spoke to, I'm going to go back to last year, but again it was part of the pandemic, er, routine, but again it, very much that sort of family unit and who they could spend time with, so many parents I spoke to, at the time we only did phone calls, ummmm, said that they found it really really hard (Teacher one interview, Case Two).

Teacher 2 reflected on the benefit of the first few weeks of term when:

We were just free to be with the children and to look out for conflicts and things and teaching, just giving time to teaching them those routines (Teacher two interview, Case Two).

On all five of my observation days, the class followed the routine below. It is a very structured day and I observed very little deviation during my time in the class.

Case Two daily routine	
8.30– 8.55	Children arrive
9am	Registration and morning routine
9.15	Phonics
9.30	Snack, children wash hands and line up to get piece of fruit and drink
9.50	Children divided into inside and outside classrooms
10.45	Tidy-up time

11am	Kinetic letters
11.15	Get ready for lunch, walk down to dinner hall, eat, then outside play in playground
12.30	Children come in and register
12.45	Maths
1.15	Play time in outside playground
1.45	Back inside, children swap inside outside classrooms
2.15	Tidy-up time
2.30	All children on carpet with coats and bags for final hand outs and story if time
2.45	Children line up to go out to meet parents

Table (6) Case two daily routine

This fixed routine, teacher one said, was critical to the children and cited those who found a change in the routine challenging. It also meant that children who were routinely late to school always missed the same thing, phonics, which was proving detrimental to those children's progress. While the routine for the children did not change day to day, the teacher took the children through a visual timetable every morning as part of their morning routine.

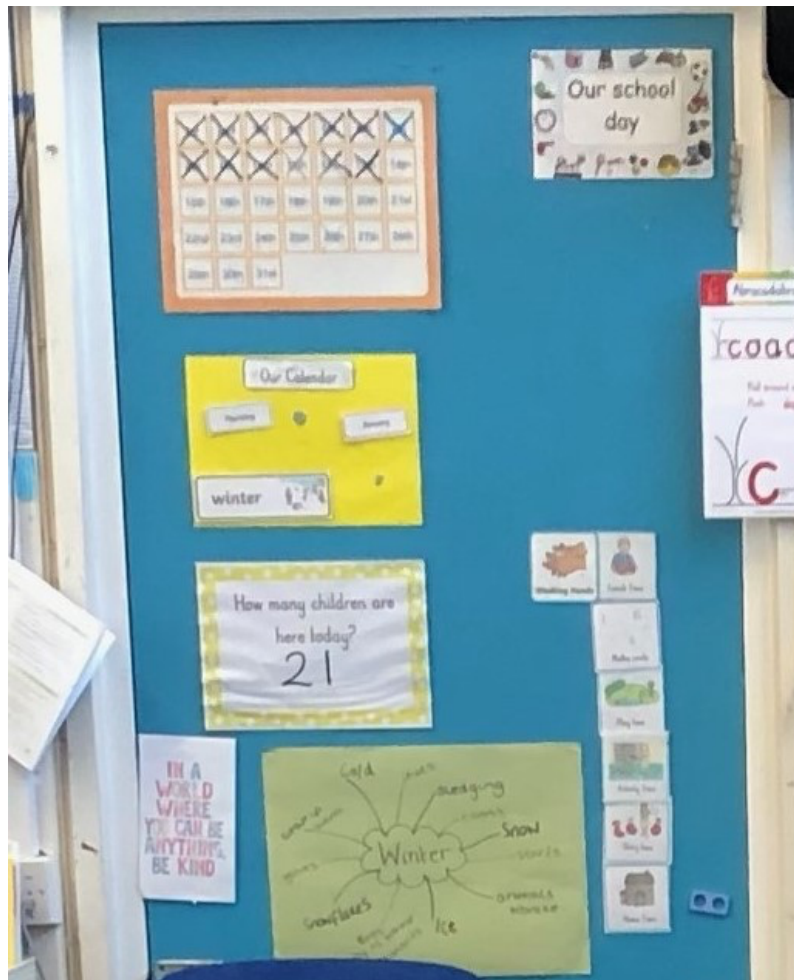


Figure (20) Photo from Case Two of visual timetable and daily routine display.

On day three of my whole-class observations, Year 1 were doing their Christmas performance for the parents in the outside area and so there was no outside classroom that afternoon. Instead, following the maths session, all the children were told to get their coats on because they were going to have outside play in the playground. One child (R) says to me:

This is new, we've never done this before (she looks excited).

In contrast, after the teacher has told the children who have their coats on that they can go out:

(P) asks the teacher if they are going to take down the visual timetable. The teacher says yes later and asks (P) to put their models on top of the Lego box, (P) becomes

upset, they don't want to. Teacher tells them if they don't, then they (the teacher) will, that's the rule at the end of the day. Once the children are back in and getting ready for the end of the day, the TA is giving out Christmas card wallets. (P) starting to get upset again at the change of routine, coming in because they hadn't been to the outside classroom, they manage to calm themselves down. (P) asks me not to talk to them and take the advice given to them to go to the quite area and have some quite time (Classroom observation day three, Case Two, p.4).

The change in the daily routine for (P) was more challenging, but they are able to manage their feelings with the support and guidance of the familiar adults and return to the end-of-day routines and class rules.

On the day of my focused observations for OC2, the school had been closed to outside visitors for a week due to an increase of cases of Covid with children and staff. As a result, the teacher explained to me that they had split one of the three classes between the other two while one of the teachers was isolating. The day of the visit was the first day the class was back to normal. The teacher explained that this had upset the dynamics of the class. It had been a difficult mix, usually a small class of 23, so having 31 was very different for the children. One child (J) arrived at 8.50am and commented to me "finally it's back to normal" as they found their name card to self-register; they seemed happy and relieved.

When I returned for my fifth visit and whole-class observation at the end of the year, the class teacher had been replaced by a long-term supply. While the children's daily routine had not changed structurally, and how the supply teacher managed the class and the children was different, this had an impact on what was observed in the children generally, but particularly (P). On my arrival, I chatted to the TA, who was setting up before the teacher arrived at 8.30am. They told me that (P) had been struggling, they had been off before the Easter holidays with chicken pox and sickness and so had missed the transition and preparation for the supply teacher taking over.

At 8.35am the children started to arrive and followed the class routine of self-registering with their name cards and placing their dot on the number grid. They are then told to get a clip board and pencil to do a writing task, describing the pictures of cats at the top of the sheet. A group of children who are not particularly keen on the task are being silly on the carpet.

There is a less-structured and organised feel to the morning. Because of the nature in which the children arrive, the supply teacher is repeating the instructions for the activity as children come in, while also doing the hot dinner or packed lunch register. At 9am, the children are asked to put the activity away and the TA tells me that (P) has arrived, but has not come into the class. They are in the learning area outside the classroom, where there has been screaming and shouting to announce their arrival. The TA leaves the class to work with (P) using Lego to calm them, and at 9.17am the TA is able to bring them in. (P) does their name card and dot, then sits at a table at the back of the class with the TA, who encourages them to write their name and listen to the phonics session and join in. (P) asks for ear defenders, which they put on, then when asked to write tells the TA, "I can't hear you." The TA uses lots of praise to encourage (P) and they have been given a separate reward chart to track their successes. Every small success, doing what they are asked, is celebrated with another character being added to their individual chart and moving up the traffic lights. When another child in the class notices that (P) is on gold, they ask how they have got there. The TA explains that (P) has done their work and the child asks them for a high five, which (P) gives. (P) stays on their own at the table while the other children have a snack.

The routine of dividing the class with lolly sticks for the outside classroom or inside is done for the class but has been adjusted for (P), giving them the choice. During the free learning time, (P) joins the other children, who have chosen to get the Lego out. (P) is told that they will have to share and they agree that this will be ok. However, later that morning, it becomes clear that (P) has taken all the Lego people from the box and put them in their own Lego resource box, which they have removed to the learning area outside the classroom where they have gone at tidy-up time. The TA speculates that (P) does not like tidying up and that might be why they have removed themselves from the class again.

After lunch, the supply teacher is doing the register and the TA tells (P) that they are going to be doing maths. The TA has made an order board for them, which clearly shows first/then:

The teacher tells P it's register and they need to say 'Yes Mrs P', (P) says 'No Mrs P' stands up and storms out of the classroom closing the door behind them. After talking to the TA the supply teacher goes out to talk to (P) and see if they will come in, they are refusing, the supply teacher asks them if they have a cuboid in their hand? (P) throws the shape at them. The supply teacher comes back into the class and the TA goes back out. The TA comes in and says that (P) will apologise but they are currently under the table outside, shortly after (P) comes back into the class completely calm and happy, they are kneeling at the table with their tray of kinetic sand positioned next to the teacher but with their back to them. (P) turns round to the teacher, 'Mrs P, I'm going to cheese touch you' then turns back to his tray. They are making a cake out of the sand, they turn to the teacher and give them the tray, it appears like an apology, (P) then says 'don't break it in the night' then walks to the door, goes out, comes back, says they need to go to the toilet. The TA goes out to them (Class observation day five, p.4).

The TA describes (P) as being in a state of crisis, they are not managing the change in the routine of having a new teacher. While (P) appears to be able to play alongside and with other children, they are struggling to cope with the new adult in their class, the supply teacher. During the day and at transitions such as the start of the day, tidying up, lunch, going out for play, they are not coping. At lunch time, when all the other children had walked down to the dinner hall:

I come back up to the classroom, (P) is having an episode and is lying in the library area in the main entrance to the school with the TA watching on and another member of staff is sitting on the floor with them (Classroom observation day five, p.3).

At the end of the day all the children go out to be collected in the playground. (P) is sitting up by the office with the TA, mum comes to pick them up from the office entrance. The change

in behaviour observed in (P) is dramatic and, while other factors in the child's life had been attributed to some of their previously more challenging behaviours, the change in the routine for this child had a huge impact on them. Where previously (P) had demonstrated being able to regulate their feelings and comply or conform to the expectations of the class routine and rules, they are now either not willing or able to do so.

4.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings as they emerged from the data separately for both case studies, working together, managing feelings, delays, and routines. The themes, while apparent in both cases, were sometimes stronger in one case study than the other, for example routine was a much stronger theme in Case Two than Case One. I will summarise each theme here with the similarities and differences between cases within each theme.

Working together, this was the first theme to emerge from the analysis in Case One. There was a strong and collaborate staff body and an imbedded culture of working together and coming together as a whole school. The Reception and Year 1 rooms are next door to each other, and the classes have a close working relationship, mixing the children for phonics input later in the year. The relationship between the school and parents is also strong and positive, strengthening the community of the school, which is underpinned by its religious values. These values are clear in the day-to-day running of the school, through its regular engagement with the other schools in the multi-academy trust and in its online information through the school's website. In contrast, Case Two, which is a much larger school, finds the Reception classes somewhat isolated from the rest of the school, although situated in the same building. The team is not included in whole-school training and at no point during my visits did I observe staff other than the Reception team coming together, except for lunch, where the staff from Reception and Year 1 shared the hall space but sat at opposite ends of tables, still adhering to social distancing conventions despite them being removed. The Reception teachers did not report a close working relationship with Year 1. In fact, they felt that the information that they had about the child as a whole and their emotional

development was disregarded largely over the children's levels at maths and English during the transition. The Reception teachers work collaboratively and closely and are left to get on with what they do. The relationships with parents are not strong throughout. In the class, I observed that the teacher found the lack of engagement from parents particularly difficult. The challenging relationship that the school has with its parents was also the reason cited for why the head was unwilling to send out the parent questionnaires for this study. The importance and issues regarding the relationships with parents will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

In both cases, children were reported to have struggled at the start of the year with sharing resources, and in Case One this was also reported for Years 1 and 2, where children also found friendships and interactions with peers more challenging than in previous years. In observations, children show confidence to seek out help and support from adults who they understood would help them to solve issues with sharing. Other than those children with suspected additional needs, or those awaiting formal diagnoses, this was generally the same in both cases. There were, however, on closer observation, challenges that children found when working with others and these will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

The second theme addressed in the findings was managing feelings. Teachers were asked in both cases what they understood by the term self-regulation. In Case One, teachers used the words regulate, control and cope to explain the process that children needed to engage with, to manage their emotions and feelings, in situations that arise in the classroom and day to day. In Case Two, the teachers used the words control and manage to describe the process and linked this to behaviour and boundaries, not mentioning emotions. The behaviour system in Case Two is a very dominant part of the day-to-day running of the classes and is a whole-school approach. This is an interesting difference between the cases and will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

Children were observed managing their feelings in different ways, with varying degrees of success. In some instances, adults were needed to support children when they had become

frustrated and were not managing that feeling. In Case Two, OC1 is observed burying their feelings rather than showing them and, in both cases, on closer observation children's subtle body language displayed the feelings they were having at different times of the day and class routine that they were managing. Particularly interesting in the findings was the change in the ability or desire of the children in Case Two to manage their feelings and conform to the class behaviour requirements in the final term, when the regular teacher had been replaced by a long-term supply. This significant change will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

The third theme was delay. In both cases, classes reported a significant number of children with speech and language delay. Phonics ability was also affected, and children's social skills were not where they would be expected at the start of the year in both cases. In Case One, children struggled to interact with each other to begin with and, in Case Two, the teacher identified children with speech and social skill development delays as having 'autistic-like' behaviours. Both cases also reported children cried more at the start of the year and needed greater support to settle. Children's physical development was also identified in both cases. In Case One, the teacher's focus was on children developing the ability to change for themselves; when children started school, they not only struggled to take off a jumper, but some did also not appear to know how or where to begin. In Case Two, the teacher's focus was on the children's physical development because the delay was impacting their ability to write. While the identified areas of delay in both cases are the same, the focus of the impact and the actions taken to support children are very different and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

The final theme to emerge from the data was routine. Both cases had a class routine that were followed, in Case One with more flexibility than in Case Two. The classes' routines provide the children with the opportunities to develop, learn and grow during their time at school and form an important part of the child's experience. The importance of routine was highlighted by teachers in both cases. The teacher in Case One identified the benefit for

those children who were able to attend school during the lockdown periods of being able to have a routine of sorts. Parents from Case One also noted that one of the challenges for them was the lack of routine, or trying to create a routine, at home while also working, and how their children had responded positively to being back in school and returning to their routines.

In Case Two, the teacher also noted that the lack of routines that the children had experienced had been challenging for both children and parents over the lockdown periods. Both cases had adapted their settling routines for the children at the start of the year to allow for more time to be with the children, which was supported by the new curriculum framework. During this settling-in period, the classes put greater emphasis and effort into working with the children to develop sharing and socialising, and also developing the language of their emotions and feelings. This was something that both cases felt strongly that the children needed.

In Case Two, the teachers saw this as a period when they were not having to teach, which was an interesting position that will be explored further in the next chapter. The rules and routines in Case Two came through very strongly in the observations of the children, their awareness of the rules and the impact that changes in the daily routine had on them, and it was something that the class teacher was also very aware of. The negative impact of the change of teacher for the class in Case Two in the final term will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Five – Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss in greater depth the findings from the data, against the research questions that this study asks.

- How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?
- What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regard to self-regulation?
- Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

Each theme will be discussed with the literature and will follow the order used in the findings, which represents the order that the themes emerged from the data – working together; managing feelings; delays; and routines. This chapter will also look at what impact can be attributed to Covid-19 and the lockdowns in England on the 2021/22 cohort of Reception children, and this is discussed with the findings from the study and the literature available. Finally, in the summary, the interconnections and interrelations of the themes will be drawn together to illustrate that, while each theme is discussed separately, they must be understood together in the context of understanding self-regulation.

5.2 Working together

Motivation is necessary for an individual to self-regulate (EEF, 2018) and motivation is linked to goals. Goals will be personal to the individual; therefore, if working with others is a goal that gives the individual a good feeling, they will be more inclined to try to achieve this as a goal. We can therefore use observations of children's ability to work together as one indicator of their ability to self-regulate. This working together can be understood as sharing, collaborating, and joining in with a group.

Bronson (2000a) argues that between the ages of 3 and 5 years, children are developing the basic executive functions (working memory, focused attention and inhibition control) which, in turn, is enabling them to begin to become more adaptable and use some cognitive

flexibility. This is particularly relevant in the context of the young children that this study looks at in the classroom setting. Working together with others, sharing, and collaborating, require children to be able to compromise. Whitebread and Basilio (2012) identify these behaviours as socio-emotional regulation behaviours that develop in children between the ages of 3 and 6 (Figure 3) such as learning more effective interaction strategies; abiding by rules; engage with helping; sharing and comforting. These behaviours are mirrored in the ELG expectations for self-regulation as discussed in section 2.5 (DFE, 2021e).

Cognitive flexibility is critical, as the child needs to be able to accommodate another's position and ideas, take these into account and adapt their own ideas to find a working middle ground. Bronson (2000a) suggests that is supported and developed in the classroom through teachers "giving children age and skill appropriate responsibilities, allowing choices among appropriate social and cognitive activities, and encouraging independent learning and problem solving" (p.36). This is exemplified in observations from Case One.

In case study one, children were able to choose freely from activities in both the inside and outdoor learning areas. They were free to choose who they worked/played with, and they were encouraged to have a go at all the different activities available. They were rewarded for their effort and work with different-coloured lolly sticks that represented the different curriculum areas that they had engaged with. This system recognised that all the areas of the curriculum can be accessed through different activities, and children that collect the complete rainbow of lolly sticks at the end of the week are able to choose a prize from the celebration tin, thus providing a motivation. Children who get a prize are celebrated by all the other children at whole-class carpet time:

2.45pm – Teacher gets their list; these are the children who got all five colours last week (lolly sticks). Children whose names are called get to go to the front and choose something from the tin, pens, rubbers etc (whole-class observation, day five, Case One).

In Case Two, stickers are used daily to celebrate and reward children who have moved up the traffic lights to gold for their behaviour and achievements. When a child is told to move themselves up the reason is made explicit, for example good reading with the teacher, being kind to others, helping other children, joining in well with whole-class learning. As in Case One, all the children celebrate each other's successes and enjoy giving those receiving stickers high fives and saying well done. In Case Two, this is part of the children's daily routine and, therefore, it is very much at the front of the children's awareness. Whereas, in Case One, the celebration tin appears to be used less regularly from my observations. In Case One, a few children were interested in getting lolly sticks. Children who were observed taking their work to the teacher to see, clearly had the aim of being awarded a lolly stick, whereas others were not, suggesting that those children interested in lolly sticks were demonstrating their internal motivation to achieve. In Case Two, however, all the children are very aware of the traffic lights and were keen to tell and share when they had done something that could move them up, suggesting that the traffic lights and stickers were an extrinsic motivation for children.

The pedagogy of these practices does not specifically develop the executive functions of self-regulation; however, they do work to motivate the children to conform with the systems using rewards. Zimmerman (2000, 2008) suggests that for motivation to be effective for self-regulation, it needs to be intrinsic rather than extrinsic, and that intrinsic motivation is linked to the individual's view of themselves as learners, their self-efficacy, rather than self-esteem. Self-esteem is being measured through self-evaluation assessment rather than individuals' expectations of their ability to undertake tasks, which measure self-efficacy.

Equally, these systems reinforce a model of an expected standard of behaviour for children, which Bandura (1986) describes as the acquisition of standards through modelling. The traffic light system offers children rewards for adhering to the high standards expected in the class culture, and because of this modelling children adopt these behaviours. Bandura reports that "in experimental analysis of this process, children observe models performing a

task in which the models adhere to either high or low performance standards for self-reward. The findings show that children tend to adopt evaluative standards modelled by others, they judge their own performance relative to those standards and they reward themselves accordingly” (Bandura, 1986 p.341). In Case Two, this conditioning could be observed in the children’s enthusiasm to share with the teacher and other adults when they had done something that they believed would be fulfilling the high-performance standard modelled and be rewarded.

Teachers in both cases talked about the importance of modelling with children to support them with sharing, learning the behaviours of the classroom, and the rules necessary to all work together. Bandura states that “most human behaviour is learned by observation through modelling” (Bandura, 1986 p.47). Further, Roberts (2011) discusses a theory for companionable learning that draws on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecology of human development. Robert’s theory looks at the development of well-being from birth to the age of 3 and is made up of four main constructs: physical well-being, communication, belonging and boundaries, and agency. Roberts argues that all these constructs, while individual, “in real life they are inextricably integrated” (Roberts, 2011 p.200). The interrelation of these aspects overlaps and intersects with Bronfenbrenner’s systems for understanding development, where the interconnection of the nested systems surrounding a child work together to support the development of the child in the centre.

Roberts’ theory for companionable learning builds on much of the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The subject of communication and language, for example, is supported by literature discussed on building relationships in section 2.4 (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019), belonging and boundaries builds on the research and literature discussed on self-efficacy, attachment and routines in section 2.4 (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989, Carter and Nutbrown, 2016, Valikhani *et al.*, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019, Zimmerman, 2000, Lavasani *et al.*, 2011). The importance of physical well-being is recognised as a prime area in the curriculum for early years (DfE, 2021b) and discussed as an area impacted by Covid

in section 2.6 (Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020). Finally, the aspect of agency mirrors the discussed impacts of secure attachment and how this affects the developing child in section 2.4 (Zimmerman, 2000, Kraftl, 2013, Valikhani *et al.*, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).

The aspects of belonging and boundaries are associated with “expectations, routines and responsibilities that are inevitable *consequences* of belonging” (Roberts, 2011 p.200). The development of this sense of belonging and boundaries can be used to understand the time teachers in both cases described at the start of the year, that was dedicated to being with the children as part of the settling in process, where the rules and routines of the class were established. This will be discussed in greater depth in the theme around routines in section 5.5, but is also applicable to this theme, working together.

Teachers from both study cases acknowledged that the new curriculum (DFE, 2021e) gave them the freedom from assessment and data collection to spend more time with the children, working with them and getting to know them, being available to support them when instances and situations arose as part of the day. It is interesting that, in Case Two, the teachers saw this as a time when they did not have to teach. This indicates that, while the teachers interviewed in Case Two saw the importance of self-regulation, they did not associate the time spent at the start of the year as critical teaching time to develop these particular skills, or that the modelling they had focused on was a pedagogical approach.

In Case Two, the three Reception teachers worked closely together, sharing the planning and resourcing for the classes between them as a team, but beyond the early years there was little connection or collaboration with the rest of the school. The Reception teachers’ attitude towards the Year 1 teachers was negative regarding the transition of the children from Reception to Year 1. They felt that what they believed to be important information about a child was disregarded and unwelcome in handovers. Rather, the Year 1 teachers were only interested in the levels for Mathematics and English. This attitude illustrates the tension

in the transition and change in ethos from EYFS to KS1 corresponding to the discussion in the literature (Trelford, 2018, Mroz, 2019, Kay, 2022).

In contrast, Case One had a strong whole-class team. The Year 1 and Reception teachers worked closely together throughout the year, which supported the Year 1 teacher with children throughout the transition. Additionally, the Reception and Year 1 classes mixed children towards the end of the year to support all the children in their different levels of phonics.

As a single-form entry school, it could be argued that this is easier than in a larger school, such as Case Two, but the team ethos went beyond the Year 1 and Reception transition. These relationships with other classes and between teachers are important because they model to the children that the whole school is working together and show them explicitly that they, and their class, are part of a larger whole. This is further supported by the Reception class's inclusion and attendance at whole-school assemblies and worship, which was not a feature in the ethos of Case Two.

All the staff in Case One met together in the staff room at the start of the day for notices and to share a gospel reading and prayer. At Christmas, all the staff came together for a bring-and-share meal in the staffroom, which included office staff, TAs and the headteacher. This was done during the children's lunch, so that it could be as inclusive as possible. In contrast to this closeness, in Case Two, the staff took their lunch in the hall that was set up permanently for the wraparound before and after-school club with dinner tables. Staff sat two to a table, at opposite sides and ends. When asked about the seating, because I had not wanted to take a seat incorrectly, they told me they had just got used to sitting like this since Covid and now it seemed normal; and that, in staff meetings, when they all had to be close together, it felt strange.

Modelling behaviour to the children was cited by teachers as a critical way to support them in developing the desired behaviours and skills teachers wanted children to have:

I think we try to do a lot through modelling, so we will try and model that a lot to the children, um, catching the children when they are doing it. So, we've had a couple of the children who've had a few argument over, um, the fancy dress costumes, and when they've sorted it out themselves we've kind of celebrated that in front of all the other children, to kinda show, right, this is how, you know, we're happy, look at how they've done that (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

This example of modelling and celebrating the independence of sorting out a problem encourages children to do this, motivating them to emulate what is celebrated with emphasis on independence, which stimulates intrinsic drive. This method is supported in Bandura's social learning theory, which argues "much social learning is fostered by observing the actual performances of others and the consequences for them" (Bandura, 1986 p.47). How the teachers behave with the children and together will be observed by the children and learnt. Where the children are seeing staff working together as a team, this shows them what this looks like, and it can be argued that will then subsequently be observed in the children's behaviours in the classroom, supporting Bandura's theory. This is not a focus in the literature on self-regulation, although Bronson (2000a) discusses the importance of social learning theory with early years children and the importance of good role models for children to enable them to internalise appropriate behaviours. The use of modelling as a pedagogy, that is acknowledged by teachers as important, can be understood as even more important in the context this study was situated in, following children's Covid-19 experiences.

In Cases One and Two, observations confirmed that children were generally working well together, and the relationships between the TA and the teacher in both cases were good. However, in Case One, some tension was observed from the TA regarding the amount of time the class teacher needed to be out of the class to fulfil their other responsibilities, leaving them in charge. This, the TA felt, was unfair on them and the children in the class. In my field notes, a conversation with the TA was noted on day five following an incident where

a Reception child's glasses had got broken during lunch play and the teacher had needed to be out of class to deal with:

1.25 – Every time it happens the class teacher is out of class; she does not feel it's fair on the children in reception. The teacher is head of key stage so is out of class often. The school is short of money, there has been lots of talk about budgets. The teacher was out this morning to meet over budgets, this year some of the excess PE budget has been spent on funding dinner staff. TA says she has interventions coming out of her ears but when the teacher is out, they can't be done. She feels like a part time teacher but isn't paid to do that (Case One, observation, day five).

The above observation mirrors the pressures felt in schools as a result of the influx of initiatives, and supports the arguments made by Nutbrown (2021). Nutbrown argues that the recruitment and retention issues within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sector is caused by the high levels of qualifications required, the pressures and responsibilities demanded, together with low pay. Leading to "a lack of coherence and clarity has resulted in many educators feeling dispirited and undervalued. The lack of an agreed nomenclature, and the many different roles, varied expectations, and inequality in pay and working conditions adds to the confusion" (Nutbrown, 2021 p.237).

These tensions can be understood as being a product of working within the system created by government regarding budgets and curriculum, and the subsequent pressures that this then creates within schools. Nutbrown (2005, 2014) describes a proliferation of policy and initiatives in the early years education sector from 1988 to 2013, which is further supported by the education policy institute (Akhal, 2019).

In Case Two, when the teacher was replaced with a supply teacher, the relationship between the TA and the teacher was not as strong. The supply teacher was not able to arrive before 8.30am, so the TA was setting up the class alone and there was little time for them to talk about the day ahead and prepare together. The relationship between them was not as established; this could be a factor in the breakdown of the behaviour observed in the

children generally and especially with child (P), for whom the change of teacher was causing major disruption.

This study's findings showed working together that went beyond the classroom, and was evident in the school's culture within the staff and with parents, had a positive impact. The role of parents in children's development is well understood and discussed in the literature in section 2.4 (Nutbrown, 2005, Athey, 2007, Wood, 2008, Nutbrown, 2014), so the connections and relationships a school has between home and school can be understood to be important. Research exemplifies the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education and suggests parents willing engagement (Athey, 2007, Wood, 2008, Nutbrown, 2014). However, the later writing by Wood and Nutbrown more accurately reflects the current situation in schools, where schools need to actively work to engage and involve parents and that schools might not be aligned to individual families' values. This appears to be even more relevant in the aftermath of school closures, as subsequently reported in the national press (Adams, 2023).

Athey (2007) highlights parents' willingness to be involved. Also, our understanding of the importance of involving parents dates back to Plowden in the 1960s and subsequently the Rumbold report, which championed parental involvement (Nutbrown, 2014), leading to it being included in policy documentation "when parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the children's development and learning. Therefore, each setting should seek to develop an effective partnership with parents" (QCA, 200:9 cited in Nutbrown, 2014).

In Case One, the relationship with parents appeared to be good. While the teachers acknowledged that there were some harder-to-reach families, throughout lockdown they had tried to connect with them and had children into school that they knew would benefit from being there, even if the children were not from key-worker families:

One particular family, parents didn't want them in... I produced a video every morning that was emailed out to the children that was me talking, this is what you're

doing today, did a phonics lesson with them, this is what you're doing and then they had a PowerPoint with an hour's worth of work which was, which was watch, click on a YouTube link to watch a read write inc phonics lesson, read a story, here was like one writing activity and one maths and that was it, and there was a bit of understanding the world and things to do across the week, but it was an hours' worth of learning across the day... so for one child I had to do that for everyone, but we made personalised videos just for them, every day, that was emailed directly to parents, was never watched, ever (laughs), but we just had to do it, or we dropped the resources off, printed everything, we, nothing was done (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

This level of effort to work with and engagement with families during the lockdown demonstrates Case One's commitment to working with parents and families. In the context of the global pandemic and the closure of schools leading to families home schooling children while working, we can understand the importance for many families of the contact and connections kept by schools. However, the role of parents, contrary to the early writing by Athey (2007), who are willing to be involved and engaged in their children's learning was, for many families, challenging as many were needing to work remotely with their children at home, and the age of the children in this study (3-4 years of age during the lockdown periods) would require one-to-one support to access and engage with resources shared by schools.

Parents reported feeling more stressed during the lockdown periods in Case One and this will have had an effect on children (Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020) and can be attributed to Covid-19 experiences. In Wood's (2008) research into parental ethnographies, it was found that "most parents were conscious of some of their beliefs and could discuss the ways they attempted to implement them with their children. Other beliefs by contrast were aspects of 'taken-for-granted' knowledge that had been acquired unconsciously, and were more difficult for respondents to articulate" (Wood, 2008 p.72). What Wood (2008) discusses as beliefs

and the pressures of family life could be understood as transmitted to children, as the taken-for-granted knowledge transferred to children unconsciously during their time together in isolation.

The role of the parent in children's development of self-regulation is understood as primary (Wilson, 2017, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021) along with styles of parenting (Manian, 1998, Song, 2018, Kok, 2022). Therefore, the importance of working with parents in the post-Covid landscape is, arguably, more important than previously. Parents are seen as children's first and most enduring educators, as "research has yielded much new evidence about the basic skill of thought and language which children already possess when they come to school" (Donaldson, 1987 p.15-16). Furthermore, working with parents gives teachers valuable information about the child from a different context to school (Keenan, 2016). Roberts (2011) highlights the importance of the age group birth to 3 years of all interactions with the world a child experiences for the development of well-being. These include families, communities, and societies as well as a child's physical environment, their home, and local environment, which also includes the family's income. This assertion is further supported by the 2023 study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Cattan, 2023). All these interactions and children's experiences of these environments had been affected by Covid-19 and the lockdowns in England, which prevented social interactions beyond the home, created financial stress for many families and significantly limited children's opportunities to engage with their local environment, thus disrupting the mesosystem in the model of ecological development discussed in section 2.4 (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In Case Two, the teacher found the lack of engagement from a number of parents particularly difficult. They reflected in their interview on the opportunities to engage parents that had not been possible due to Covid-19 restrictions, such as home visits, open days, and welcome sessions where parents would have been invited into school. This was the same for both case studies, as the restrictions imposed due to Covid were the same for everyone.

However, during the school closures, the teacher in Case Two described the provision that was provided for parent and children for home schooling:

At the time we only did phone calls, ummm, (parents) said that they found it really really hard, because for one, they couldn't see me, we never did teaching through via zoom or anything like that, we were very much, we had a remote plan on line... we sent the occasional story and we have a program called Evidence Me, where we can upload videos, they can upload to us, but not seeing us they found really really difficult (Reception teacher interview, Case Two).

The provision described by Case Two is far less personal and individual for the families and children than in Case One. This indicates the value placed by the school on supporting and connecting with families, parents, and children during that time. This ethos was further reinforced by the head's reluctance in Case Two to send out the parent questionnaires for the study, because they did not want to give a platform to Year 1 parents who were perceived as difficult and had expressed their unhappiness with the school's approach regarding Covid-19 regulations on the return to school.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there appears to have been a blurring between home and school. This is due to the periods of home educating caused by school closures over lockdowns in England, and has led to a change in the attitudes and respect in relationships between homes and schools, with children and parents. This is exemplified in the examples given from the two cases above. In Case One, strong links were maintained and the school appears to have made a great effort to support and work with children and families. In Case Two, there did not appear to be the same effort or consideration given to families' and children's needs.

The teacher in Case Two also reported children's attendance as a problem within the class. This mirrors findings reported in the national press (Adams, 2023), which states a 50% increase in absences since the pandemic, and cites children's anxieties about leaving their home environment and parents being more cautious about sending their children to school

with minor ailments. In Adams' (2023) article, it cites Essex council as saying "public health advice issued during the pandemic had 'reconditioned' attitudes in favour of keeping children off. Some parents/families, who valued good school attendance prior to Covid, may now allow their children to remain at home with minor ailments which they would previously have considered invalid" (Adams, 2023). The increase in persistent absences and school refusing (children refusing to go to school) has led to the government in England publishing new plans to expand attendance hubs to support up to 600 primary, secondary and other providers in England (DfE, 2023). This further supports this study's findings of the importance of the working relationship and partnership between school and home.

Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development discussed in section 2.5, which explains human development as a series of nested systems that are described as "interrelated ecological levels" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005 p.xiii p.xiii). Figure (21) illustrates this nested system adapted for this study to show the interplay and effect the elements discussed have on each other and with the developing child at the centre.

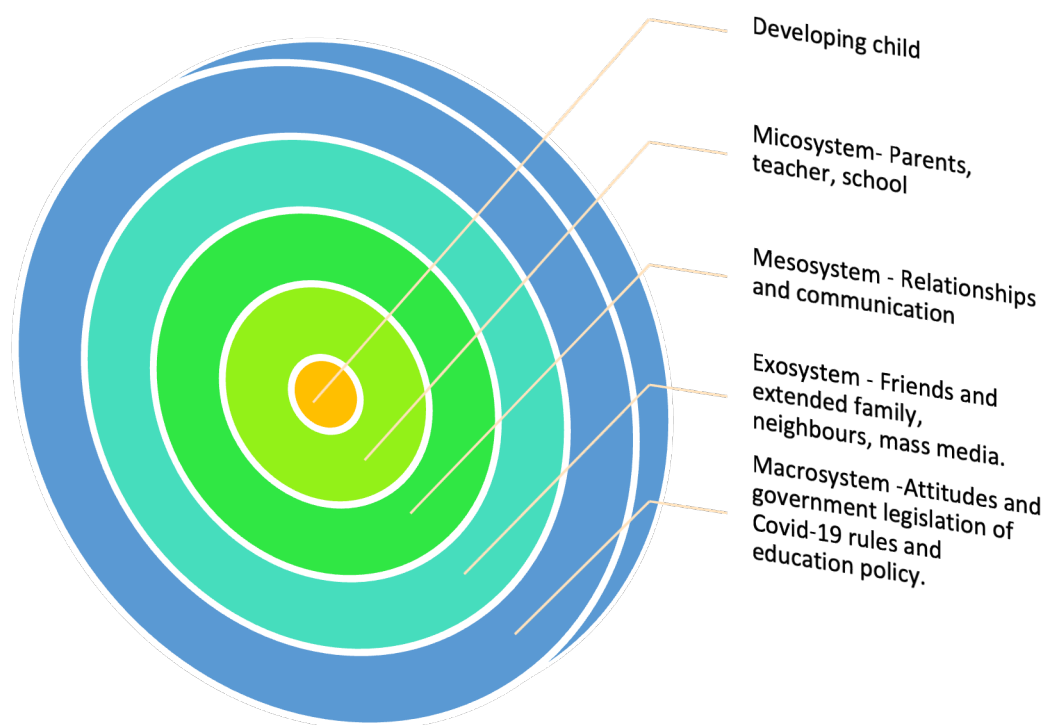


Figure (21) Adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's ecology system for this study.

Bronfenbrenner's theory also includes the chronosystem which places the theory in moments of time, events, and transitions. Moving on from Bronfenbrenner's vision of ecology in this study, we apply the period of school closures and the lived experience attributed to the global Covid-19 pandemic as a sociohistorical condition. When we apply the period of Covid-19 to the model as the chronosystem and we place the child at the centre, place around them in the microsystem, place those who will be of greatest importance to the child, such as family and school, their friendships, and activities, all of which were impacted during the global pandemic, it illustrates the breadth and interconnection of these different elements impacting on the child. Surrounding the microsystem is the mesosystem, which concerns the connections within the microsystem, such as links between home and school, which have been discussed.

The mesosystem is significant to this study and is exemplified in this revised framework Figure (21), which makes clear the importance, impact, and effect of the working relationships, between children, teachers, and parents, as demonstrated in the findings from this study. Bandura's social learning theory highlights the importance of observational learning. This can add further understanding to the important impact of the behaviour and relationships that children will have observed during the pandemic and what behavioural and social learning they will have formed as a result. Bandura argues that:

Observers can acquire cognitive skills and new patterns of behaviour by observing the performance of others. The learning may take varied forms, including new behaviour patterns, judgmental standards, cognitive competencies, and generative rules for creating behaviours. Observational learning is shown most clearly when models exhibit novel patterns of thought or behaviour which observers did not already possess but which, following observation, they can produce in similar form (Bandura, 1986 p.49).

The changes in how society had to behave during the Covid-19 lockdowns and the feelings and attitudes families will have had during that time, as discussed previously (Adams, 2023, DfE, 2023) with regards to school, can be seen reflected in the current school attendance and persistent absences now being reported in the national press and the subsequent government response (Adams, 2023, DfE, 2023, Parliament, 2023). This mirrors this study's findings from teachers' interviews, particularly in Case Two, where working relationships between the school and parents were not as strong as in Case One. It would be reasonable to expect that a developing child will have observed and internalised these changes in behaviours and attitudes from their parents into their own understanding and behaviours towards school and others outside their immediate family.

The revised Bronfenbrenner framework (Figure 21) resulted from the findings of this study and can also help us to understand the interrelated influences that have impacted on people's culture. Not being able to socialise, see friends, meet people at work, will have

impacted aspects of the child in the centre's experience and development emotionally for good self-regulation. For some families, there was anxiety about sending their children into school when the opportunity became available or was made available. In the parent questionnaires, 10% reported that they had chosen not to send their children into school, which mirrors the findings reported in current statistics (Adams, 2023), indicating that school absence has become normalised. In these instances, the individual family's position (micro) to not send their children into school can be understood as being created by the culture surrounding Covid-19 (macro) and keeping safe for themselves and their families (exo), in turn impact the engagement and relationships (meso) with school (micro).

5.3 Managing feelings

How parents managed their feelings will have the greatest impact on children learning to manage their feelings (Wilson, 2017, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021). Some 76% parents who responded to the questionnaire in case study one reported that they had felt more stressed during the lockdown period. 89% of the questionnaires were completed by mothers and 68% of those respondents were working during the lockdown, either from home or as key workers. Overall, 94% had additional adults in their families who were working full time during the lockdowns, suggesting that the early years historical perspective that portrays childcare and working with children as a female role in the literature (Helleiner and Justice, 1999, Osgood, 2006b, Osgood, 2010) is still unchanged, with only 37% of the mothers who responded reported not being in paid work.

These figures describe the family dynamics for a number of children where one or both parents were working full-time while schools were closed. We can understand why, during that time, parents experienced greater levels of stress. This will be further discussed in the concluding chapter and recommendations from the analysis of this study's findings will be made. Also clear are the challenges that working, and home schooling presented for families to be available to their children as primary caregivers to support them emotionally in a calm consistent way, when caregivers themselves were under so much pressure. In this instance,

the outer systems of the Bronfenbrenner model, namely government, culture, workplaces, were exerting pressure on families during Covid-19, which the revised model in Figure (21) shows will have impacted on the child in the centre.

Roberts (2011) argues that “the separation of belonging and boundaries – in families, communities and societies – has made a negative impact in relation to fragmenting family life, the rise in behavioural problems in schools and youth offending” (p.200). Roberts’ findings from research presented in 2011 pre-Covid-19 herald that change, and suggest that children in this study will have been further impacted, and therefore could be expected to display greater behavioural problems in schools. Findings in this study support this, with teachers reporting greater numbers of children struggling with their emotional behaviour and ability to self-regulate when returning to school.

How the children can manage their feelings or control them was cited by teachers interviewed as the principal aspect of self-regulation. Teachers’ understanding of what it means to self-regulate was explained when interviewed. Teachers working in Reception classrooms responded:

Regulate their own emotions to be able to, you know, if they’re feeling angry, those strategies for how they are going to cope with, with that anger and bring themselves back down to zero (Reception teacher, Case One).

It’s very much about, sort of how they control their behaviour, their feelings (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

Well I would say in a nutshell, it’s about them managing their feelings in different situations, so it could be following the rules inside the classroom and the rules outside the classroom and knowing what their boundaries are and the expectations of them, or it could be about if there are conflicts with other children thinking about how to resolve it or showing sympathy in appropriate situations, when it’s a good time

to have a joke and when it's not, that kind of, adjusting their emotions and their behaviour (Reception teacher two interview, Case Two).

What is significant here is that much of the literature defining self-regulation (Moffitt *et al.*, 2011, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012) does not discuss feelings. Seminal writing focuses on the executive functions that can be identified as behaviours, working memory, inhibition, and shifting. The link between these executive functions and successful future outcomes has been linked with an individual's ability to overcome impulsive behaviour, which can be understood within inhibition in the executive functions model (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018).

While feelings and emotions are not included, further research and literature have attributed the development of motivation as key to the successful application of these functions, particularly a child's sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2000, Zimmerman, 2002, Zimmerman, 2008) and their attachment in infancy to their primary caregiver (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018). The emotional aspect here is undeniable and I argue that a child's emotional development is a fundamental foundation to their ability to develop the necessary skills for successful self-regulation and all the aforementioned aspects. Data from this study and the breadth of literature reviewed clearly make the argument that, without secure emotional development in the form of self-esteem, sense of self-worth and subsequent confidence, a child will be disadvantaged in developing the skills necessary to self-regulate successfully. From my findings, an individual's ability to recognise, understand and manage their emotional reactions needs to be included and considered in further research and studies of self-regulation and clearly adopted into the executive function framework. This will be detailed in greater depth in Chapter Six.

Shanker's work (2010) defines self-regulation as the ability to manage impulse and distractions to stay on task or achieve a goal. They propose a five-domain framework for understanding self-regulation in young children, which includes as number two "emotional (e.g., how well the child monitors and modifies her emotional responses)" (p.5), suggesting that the emotional framework is expanding and being adopted into self-regulatory

understanding, but reserved in its context for young children rather than being applicable to self-regulation for all. The evidence from this study and literature (Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Wilson, 2017) supports that a parent's ability to self-regulate will have the greatest impact on a child's development of self-regulation. This is significant to my argument that, without good emotional development and intelligence, good self-regulation will be affected, suggesting that the aspect of emotional development is applicable to all, not just young children.

Literature that explores self-regulation in younger children (Bronson, 2000a, Bronson, 2000b, Osgood, 2006b, Osgood, 2010, Shanker, 2010, Montroy *et al.*, 2016) supports the importance of emotional development. Bronson (2000b) argues that a child's ability to control their arousal state (Shanker's first aspect in the five domain framework) and the expression of their emotions is an important element of working self-regulation. Shanker suggests that a child's arousal state is biological and can be understood by how well a child regulates these states. Bronson (2000b) links emotional and behavioural control with cognitive and social development in young children, arguing that "emotional responses can also be generated by our cognitive interpretations of the meaning of events" (p.59).

For example, the appearance of a face in a window can produce joy, fear, anger, or a range of other emotions, depending on the individual's cognitive assessment of the context and meaning of the appearance (Bronson, 2000b, p.59).

Bronson draws on Piaget (1962) and Sroufe (1995), who both support the idea that the emotional response and cognitive assessment are aspects of the same process: "there is no such thing as a purely cognitive or purely affective state, since both are involved in all activities of the mind and each influences the other" (Bronson 2000b, p.29). This is exemplified in the early discussion on the shift in attitude and mindset within relationships between parents, children, and schools, revealed in school absences in this study's findings, which mirror a national issue. School closures have changed children's feelings and expectations regarding school; children appear to have normalised being at home and so any stigma that may have existed about not being at school has changed, for children and

parents. This is an element that occurs in the theme delays and will be discussed further in section 5.4.

The role of parents in the development of the emotional aspect of self-regulation is understood as primary (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989, Jonathan and Daniel, 2012, Kim, 2012, Wilson, 2017, Gross, 2019, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019, Perry, 2019, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021), starting with the attachment a child makes with their primary caregiver as either secure or insecure. This attachment, the literature argues, will influence and impact the child's sense of self, either as positive or negative. The literature also highlights parenting styles as an important aspect for positive child development, as discussed in section 2.4.

Where parenting is supportive, responsive, positive, and sensitive to a child's needs, this is associated with higher levels of self-regulation in children (Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022). This positive parenting includes limit setting, guidance and directiveness as observed as positive pedagogy in both case studies. Secure attachment equally requires the parent to be sensitive and consistently responsive to a child's needs, modelling to them and supporting them through co-regulation. Where a child's emotional state is acknowledged and with support, they are shown how to calm and soothe themselves, to down-regulate from a highly aroused position. This can be further understood within the observational learning effects of social learning theory (Bandura, 1986).

Bronson (2000b) suggests that a child's self-regulation is strongly linked to their social environment and that, for a child to move from 'other control' with a parent's support to 'self-control', they need to be supported and guided by their caregiver and the culture they are being brought up within. This occurs "through reciprocal interaction with others the child develops a beginning awareness of the self as a separate individual. As she internalizes social values and is more able to control herself, she becomes able to engage in a more 'responsive partnership' (Sroufe, 1995 p.151) and gradually acquires the capacity to function independently" (Bronson, 2000b p.60-61). This reciprocal interaction requires a child's caregiver or parent to be available, informed, and in a position to give the child time to

engage in this emotional reciprocity. The significant aspect for this study is 'informed'. Parents/caregivers need to be informed about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and the importance of what they are doing for their child's development. The culture around them needs to be supportive of this process and the time needed for a parent/caregiver to be available to do this. For society to become successful at supporting children in their emotional development, better information needs to be available to parents and caregivers, teachers, and schools, to achieve self-regulation. This study found that none of the teachers interviewed had received support, training or CPD for self-regulation, despite its addition to the statutory requirements. Further discussion and recommendations from this study's findings will be made in Chapter Six.

The emotional state of the parent and their ability to self-regulate, the literature shows, will influence the emotional development of the child (Wilson, 2017), as will the emotional state and ability to self-regulate of the teacher (Zinsser *et al.*, 2015). Findings from interviews with teachers demonstrate a lack of understanding of self-regulation, managing feelings and the significance of the adult to the child within their care with regards to this. This will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Using Bronfenbrenner's model, parents and a child's teacher are placed in the same close sphere to the child in the centre. Using Bandura's observational learning within social learning theory, we can argue that, while a teacher cannot replace parent input, what happens in the classroom can be supportive to a child developing these skills for self-regulation through positive and consistent modelling. The parallel here will be further discussed in the final chapter, where working models developed from these findings are presented.

Bandura (1986) suggests another important function of modelling is that it can influence behaviour, either to weaken or strengthen what may have been previously learnt. Therefore, the consistency of the teacher, the class routines and the rules of their classroom create an environment that is both safe and supportive for the child in which to develop. As with positive parenting, positive early years pedagogy should equally include limit setting,

guidance and directiveness. The relationship formed between class teacher and child when emotionally supportive can enable the child to form a secure attachment with that adult and support them to develop a positive sense of themselves. The behaviour from (P) in Case Two, when the teacher was replaced by long-term supply, supported the importance of this relationship for children whose temperament makes them more susceptible to the environment they are in. The removal of the adult that (P) had become securely attached to left them in what the TA described as a state of crisis.

In the parent questionnaire from Case One, parents were asked to report to what extent they agreed or disagreed with changes they had noticed in their child's behaviour during lockdown periods using a five-point Likert scale (see appendix 1.2). The behaviours parents were asked to use were informed from those that the literature suggested children may exhibit as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Caffo *et al.*, 2020, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020). In a separate question, parents were asked again using the same five-point Likert scale to consider changes in their children's behaviours since returning to school. The results reported by parents are shown in table 4 (p.132 in this thesis). These findings support the suggestion that, during lockdown, children were affected while isolating at home with their families and this is being reflected in their behaviours, as identified as changes by their parents. These findings do not tell us what particularly will have been the greatest impact. However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that "children whose families experiences at least one change (in labour market experience) saw, on average, their socio-emotional development worsen by about 9% of a standard deviation more than those whose families remained consistently employed or unemployed throughout" (Cattan, 2023 p.4). This study acknowledges that while the government introduced policies to protect workers from the impact of closures due to the national lockdown, such as the furlough scheme, "many families had some financial losses during the first year of the pandemic, and/or faced high levels of uncertainty" (p.3). The experience of these uncertain factors lived by all families is confirmed through the number of parents who reported feeling more stressed than normal during the periods of lockdown.

Using a five- point Likert scale, 76% reported positively that, yes, they had felt more stressed. This clearly supports the argument that children are directly affected by the emotional states of their parents.

In the reported changes in behaviour from parents since their children had returned to school, the total of positive, agree/strongly agree totals for each behaviour have reduced overall apart from the last two, namely quick to anger and quick to cry. This suggests that, once back in school and socialising, and being consistently supported socially and emotionally, many of the behaviours that were noted at home reduced.

The emotionality of early years pedagogy that supports children in the classroom in a similar way to a parent, through emotional responsiveness, and support through co-regulation, has been discussed. This emotionality has been attributed to why the early years workforce is predominantly women, who are believed by society to be the more nurturing and caring of the genders (Osgood, 2006b, Moss, 2010, Osgood, 2010, Moss, 2014a). This is mirrored in the response rate from mothers, in the parent questionnaires, as 89% of respondents were mothers, suggesting that women are still shouldering the caring and nurturing responsibilities in the home. During lockdown, the questionnaire data suggests that mothers were managing work and home school even when they had a partner who was also working from home.

If we remove gender from this and understand it from a material feminist perspective, which requires us to reframe the material, in this instance early years teachers, and reconsider the environmental politics of the situation, looking at the environment as located “within homes, schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods” (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008 p.9), this allows us to align these material aspects with Bronfenbrenner’s framework, where the individual is being affected by the systems that surround them. We can then use this to understand that the development of emotional regulation for self-regulation of the child in the centre will be supported and affected by the systems closest to them, which includes parents and teachers, which the literature supports.

However, the pedagogy of emotion is still not clear for teachers. In this study, particularly in

Case Two, the school culture appears to have greater emphasis and focus on progress in subjects such as Mathematics and English at the end of the year. Personal, social, and emotional development, which, while a prime area of development in the curriculum, does not appear to be valued beyond the early years' classes. Comments from one of the Reception class teachers in Case Two, quoted in section 4.8, illustrate the tensions they felt between what they believed to be of importance during transition meetings with Year 1, such as the whole child and their emotional resilience and development, against the focus of those working outside the early years for maths and literacy levels and ability.

The emotional attachment aspect of staffing in the early years is further illustrated by implementation of 'Key Workers' for children in early years settings, as discussed in section 2.3. This has supported children and families by creating a named adult that is specific to a child and therefore responsible for communicating with parents and supporting the child (Elfer, 2012). It is a statutory requirement for every child in an early years setting to have a named key worker. In preschools and nurseries, this system can work extremely well, enabling a child to form a secure bond with their adult, who can support them emotionally to understand and regulate their feelings while in the setting. Once a child enters full-time education in the Reception year, the ratio requirements of staff to children mean that the class teacher is the key worker for all the children in that class. This does not then afford a child a relationship with that adult that goes further than that of class teacher, who they share with 30 other child in the class and, as such, limits the amount of time they get with the teacher one-to-one.

The statutory requirement in the early years for self-regulation requires children to be able to:

- "Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others and regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate;

- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions” (DFE, 2021e p.12).

Regulating their behaviour accordingly, would mean a child’s ability to calm themselves from a state of excitement, arousal or distress, as well as be able to upregulate/motivate themselves from a lethargic state in order to engage in activities or learning as appropriate, or understanding where empathy is appropriate in certain situations. This moves beyond the core literature definitions of self-regulation.

Children understanding their feelings, I argue, is not the same as controlling or managing them. Managing or controlling feelings could lead to suppressing them, because the child believes those feelings are wrong, which could stem from an insecure attachment and adaptive behaviours, where the child has learnt that expressing certain feelings or emotions elicits an unwelcome response. In turn, children disengaging from those feelings and not acknowledging them to themselves could lead to the development of the interoceptive centre of the brain, the insula, being affected (Mahler, 2017). Mahler argues that “interoception provides us with a basic sense of self and ownership of our own body” (Mahler, 2017 p.31) and goes on to link interoception to the development of self-reflection, which we can argue is an awareness of our affective or emotional state.

In an observation in Case Two, as quoted in section 4.9, (E) was observed pushing their hands deep into their pockets when they were upset to suppress their feelings when they had bumped their head. (E) turns down the offer of anything to help, but instead is keen to let me know that they have finished their tidy-up job, and their body language suggests they are being brave and strong.

In this observation, (E) appears to be controlling/managing their feelings according to what they believe to be correct. Applying Bandura’s theory of social learning theory (1977, 1986) to analyse (E)’s behaviour, Bandura argues that, in order to understand an individual’s behaviour, it is necessary to understand an individual’s beliefs. These beliefs are informed

within the motivational function of the theory where it is argued that the outcomes from past experiences have led to either positive or negative outcomes. This will inform further behaviour, together with observational learning. A child will internalise what they observe as how to behave. Using social learning theory, this observation can be understood in two ways: either (E) has a highly developed ability to regulate their feelings, or (E) is controlling their feelings in a way that could be attributed to a more damaging sense of self that could be attributed to beliefs informed from home, where there have been negative reactions to being upset and crying, which could also suggest an insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).

Without greater knowledge and information about the wider context of (E)'s life, it is not possible to say for certain either way. However, this example does support the argument that, to support children effectively, teachers need to have a greater understanding of the breadth of aspects that can impact and influence a child's emotional development towards self-regulation. This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

In other observations of (E), they demonstrate empathy and care towards others and are keen to help adults and children and congratulate others for their celebrated successes. These behaviours are the ones celebrated by the class teacher and rewarded, so that children are motivated to conform to receive praise and move up the traffic lights to achieve gold status by the end of the day and a sticker to take home. However, (E)'s behaviour was observed to have changed with the supply teacher who took over the class in the final term. They were observed creating low-level disruption on the carpet, not doing as asked, calling out and being moved down the traffic lights. This suggests that the motivation to comply was not intrinsic (Rogoff, 2003, Paradise and Rogoff, 2009); rather, it related to their desire to please their teacher.

Rogoff's observations of Navajo children finds "motivation appears to be based on an implicit understanding of the purpose, relevance and value, to themselves as well as to their community, of what is being learned" (Paradise and Rogoff, 2009 p.112). The children in

Case Two appear to have been motivated by their teacher; however, they were not motivated or inclined to transfer this to the new adult, who had assumed that position. It could also be argued that the children in Case Two had securely attached with their teacher who had been with them from the start of the year to support them to settle, and they did not have the same attachment with the new teacher, and this manifested in a deterioration of behaviour with an increase of disrespect and low-level disruption at whole-class times.

In both case studies, teachers described children who continued to struggle with the emotional aspect of self-regulation:

“We are getting lots of children that are getting more upset, who, who, go to tears very quickly, they are struggling at times with that social element and interacting with other, having to share some resources” (Reception teacher, Case One).

“...been our biggest one about how to control feelings and emotions and give a name to the feelings as well because I think they struggle to say, they can’t say how the feel” (Year 1 teacher, Case One).

“Some children can self-regulate, calm themselves down, they can go through the process of it all in their own minds and come out the other end and they are absolutely fine... Other children find it really difficult and completely shut down if they do face a challenge or they don’t know what to do, or they’re really really struggling, that’s it, they just, they’re in tears basically” (Year 2 teacher, Case One).

“There was a lot, I’ve found, more so, I mean they always have tears, but this year I found there were a few more tears” ... “across the room, it’s that non-sharing, that spitefulness that sort of thing, we’ve had quite a lot of that across the reception initially” (Reception teacher one, Case Two).

In both case studies, additional provision needed to be put in place to support all children, Case One used the colour monster book (Llenas, 2012) throughout the school and utilised the beginning of the year to focus on the children’s ability to understand their feelings, and to

model and support children to understand the behaviour expectations of working together as a class. In Case Two, for the first three to four weeks of the year, the teachers described not having to teach so they could focus on circle games that were designed to develop children's language of emotions, and to support children to settle and understand the rules and behaviour expectations of the class and school.

“At the beginning of the year, we were just free to be with the child and to look out for conflicts and things and teaching, just giving time to teaching them those routines. It's all getting to know the children, observing how they behave, so we know where they are and we know, you know, modelling the rules that kind of thing” (Reception teacher two interview, Case Two).

In both case studies, teachers described the children as not being as emotionally developed as previous years, or delayed in their development. Understanding families' experiences during the lockdown periods helps us to understand the teachers' observations and comments with regards to the children's readiness for school, behaviours, and challenges when they returned. To be able to fully support a child in a class, the teacher must have a good working relationship with the child's family and an understanding of that child's lived experience at home in order to be able to support a child in the most effective way (Fitzgerald, 2004, Athey, 2007, Gross, 2019). It is clear, then, that theme one (working together) and theme two (managing feelings) are intrinsically linked with regard to supporting a child's self-regulation, and both Bandura's social learning theory and Bronfenbrenner's development framework illustrate the interrelated nature of the systems that impact and affect the child.

5.4 Delays

The theme 'delays' emerged from the data with teachers highlighting specifically speech and language and phonic ability. This was anticipated in literature (Charney *et al.*, 2021) and mirrors the national statistics reported in press “data from 50,000 pupils and a survey of schools across England have shown an increased number of four- and five-year-olds

needing help with language” (Jeffreys, 2021) and from the government (RCSLT, 2020, Dowd, 2022). A more recent report published in September 2023 by Speech and Language UK has found the number of children across primary and secondary-age phases who are behind the expected level has risen from 1.7 million in 2022 to 1.9 million in 2023 (Speech and Language UK, 2023). Teachers also reported children’s social skills as not being where they would have been expected in previous years. This has been discussed separately in ‘managing feelings’ in section 5.3. This study suggests that themes identified are intrinsically linked and, while they can be discussed separately, they can only be understood together. The findings from this study mirror national statistics, which is significant. While this study does not look to be generalisable, the findings indicate that the snapshot of the lived reality captured in this study will be relatable to other settings and cohorts of children. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

In both case studies, class teachers reported that children’s speech and language was delayed for a significant number of children. In Case One, the teacher’s initial baseline at the start of the year found that 70% of the children were not meeting the age-related expectation, which was a significant increase on the 30% from the previous years prior to Covid-19. In Case Two, the teacher also noted that they had seen a decline in children’s speech and language, which was particularly noticeable with regard to their phonic ability. They commented that this delay meant that children could not say the sounds and did not appear to hear them, so could not use them in their work. Therefore, some of children in this study were much further behind than children in previous years.

Clark (2021) makes links between poor language skills, aggression and self-regulation, arguing that “physical aggression and language typically assume opposing development trajectories, with aggressive behaviour following a sharp negative slope, and language a sharp positive one” (Clark *et al.*, 2021 p.136). Linking language development delay to the Covid-19 pandemic, Charney (2021) points to the use of masks being understood to hinder speech signals and, as such, could significantly affect children with an undiagnosed hearing

disorder and generally influence the development of speech in young children. This suggests that as a child develops language, they are more able to regulate their aggressive feelings by communication, which in turn enables them to understand and regulate these feelings as part of their self-regulation development trajectory.

Clark (2021) cites Vygotsky (1962), who argues that “language is the key to self-regulatory development because it serves to organize psychological functions (i.e. attention, perception, and memory), and enables higher coordinated processes (i.e. planning and impulse control)” (Clark *et al.*, 2021 p.136). In Clark’s (2021) study, it is suggested that children with language delays are shown to have greater difficulty with their emotional regulation and social skills. This indicates that while delays with speech and language and social skills can be discussed separately, they are intrinsically linked. This further supports the importance of the meso aspect of the adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s system for this study: the communication, relationships, and interactions between the influencing and crucial stakeholders in a child’s development – in this study, the parents, school, teachers and supporting families.

Children’s social skills were identified by teachers in both cases as being delayed, and this was an aspect that needed to be focused on and supported at the start of the year. The class teacher in Case Two described children at the start of the year struggling to share resources and behaving in a “spiteful” way towards each other. They also highlighted a child in their class (A) who they described as having severe speech delay, “(A) really struggled with their speech, so the way they communicated was pushing and that, that’s the only way they could speak, erm and communicate” (Reception teacher interview, Case Two) mirroring what the literature describes (Charney *et al.*, 2021, Clark *et al.*, 2021).

In the classroom observations, (A) often played alone or alongside others, suggesting that their language skill and development was still a barrier to them forming friendships and engaging in companionable learning (Roberts, 2011). Roberts argues that a child’s sense of belonging is dependent on their sense of self within their relationships and community, and

this is supported by research (Rogoff, 2003, Paradise and Rogoff, 2009) earlier observations of children learning in indigenous communities and their sense of belonging and motivation to be a part of their communities.

Using (A) as an example from Case Two, the teacher commented on how much progress (A) had made since the start of the year; and, while (A) still tended to play alone or alongside others, they were observed playing with the same children regularly and they were willing to have a go at communicating. The culture in the class was supportive and (A) clearly felt safe and supported by the other children. I did not observe (A) using aggressive behaviour until my final observation visit, when the class teacher had been replaced by a supply teacher. On this day, (A) had been hitting children and being mean during the afternoon play in the outside playground and was moved down to red on the traffic lights. This apparent deterioration of (A)'s behaviour can be seen as a consequence of the significant change in classroom dynamics following the replacement of the teacher.

The child's sense of self developed through secure attachments and positive parenting (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989, Song, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022) can be further supported in the classroom through positive pedagogy and the safe and consistent routines and boundaries that school provides (Merritt *et al.*, 2012, Peeters *et al.*, 2014, Persico *et al.*, 2015, Zinsser *et al.*, 2015, Garner *et al.*, 2019). The findings in this study reinforce the historical and contemporary views of attachment and its importance in children's secure development of the skills necessary for self-regulation.

The original teacher in Case Two had created a calm and very ordered routine, which the children responded to positively; the replacement teacher, however, was less organised themselves and with the children. This had the effect of creating a less-secure structure that was clearly disrupting a few of the children, including (A). This was a critical change of a significant stakeholder in (A)'s microsystem, as illustrated in Figure (21), that directly surrounds him. The less-organised approach to communicating and managing the class further illustrates the importance of the mesosystem and the relationships and

communication element in this system for the child.

On this final visit, the TA in conversation shared with me that (A) had been identified during the Reception screening for their hearing. This delay in picking up (A)'s hearing diagnosis can be attributed to the significant disruptions to services caused by Covid-19. For a child with such profound speech delay, it would be expected that this would have been picked up or flagged in a two-year check, or during their time in preschool or nursery. Because of the closures of settings and school nurseries between 2020 and 2021, there was a delay in children getting the diagnosis and support. Literature exploring the impact on services for children (Neece *et al.*, 2020, Schiariti, 2020, Shah and Absoud, 2021, Zhang *et al.*, 2022) highlights the long-term implications for children with reduced access to support and diagnosis, as well as the negative implications of the periods of isolation from the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 on children's social and emotional development.

This is further supported by observations from Case One, where a child in the class was waiting for a diagnosis of autism. The child's particular behaviour and emotional needs had been flagged while the children were briefly able to attend the school's nursery. However, as the teacher explained in interview:

R – There's further exploration to be done there.

T – Definitely. But unfortunately, Covid has prevented, we are about a year behind.

R – Yeh, So you think they would have been picked up in the nursery.

T – Errr, yes, they, they were picked up in nursery.

R – But it hasn't progressed.

T – But... because they then weren't in nursery and a paediatrician couldn't go in, to fully observe, you know we couldn't get, we could get those services in to actually observe, it was all done through a phone call with mum, it got pushed to one side.

R – Is mum on board?

T – She is getting on board now, but, but I think that's because she has seen them

with other children, and we had, we had a very frank conversation very early on that”
(Reception teacher interview, Case One).

Shah (2021) suggests that, in the UK, “waiting lists for an assessment for autism are one of the longest among any specialty/condition in the country. It is estimated that 128,000 children and young people with suspected autism are facing even longer delays for diagnostic assessment, as a result of the pandemic” (p.1). These delays mean that the opportunity of early support for families and parents, or intervention and support in school, is being missed. The impact of this can be placed in the mesosystem with services working to support families and children in the microsystem surrounding the child, unable to work effectively within the meso to affect positive support. In a press release by the English government on a report from Ofsted looking specifically at children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) affected by Covid-19, it states that, “The report recognises that children and families’ experiences are in part determined by the quality of their relationships with practitioners and the strength of partnership working in a local area” (Ofsted, 2021). This report highlights the link between the themes identified in this study’s data being discussed, for example working together, delays, and the importance of understanding them together rather than as separate entities.

Without additional support that comes from a formal diagnosis, teachers are using their own experience and knowledge to support children as best they can. In Case Two, the teacher described some children at the start of the year as having ‘autistic-like behaviours’. Case Two has a specific autism unit attached to the school and the teacher has experience of autistic children. This statement was explored further in the interview to understand what they meant:

H – It’s the spitefulness I suppose, but that’s their age, Ummm, I’m trying to think with (l) err, lot of, very particular, they are very particular with things. So, like you saw with the poppy today, if they’ve got something in their head and it doesn’t go their way,

then they get quite upset, I mean that was amazing how they reacted to that, before that would have been a meltdown..., I mean if I ever took that routine away it would throw a lot, I would say over half of them because it would be, well, what's coming next, what are we doing (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

This study is not looking specifically at autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), which is defined as “a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave” (nimh, 2023). The behaviours described by teachers, while attributable to an autism diagnosis, can also be understood as delayed self-regulation. Links between executive dysfunction and autism have been suggested (Hill, 2004, ARI, 2023) and “the link between EF and ASD suggests impairment in various EFs across the life span – where some impaired EFs reduce with age others persist” (ARI 2023). The causes of autism are not fully understood, but current understanding “suggests that a person’s genes can act together with aspects of their environment to affect development in ways that lead to ASD” (NIMH, 2023). This connection between a possible genetic disposition for ASD and the impact of the environment that children have experienced at home suggests that the rise in reported cases of SEN and autism could be as a direct result of the early childhood experiences children have had. These experiences could have been exacerbated during the pandemic at home, resulting in delayed or impaired EF development which is manifesting as ‘autism like behaviours’.

In interview with the Year 1 teacher in Case One, they had three children in the class on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and a further three under assessment during the regular check-in that they had with the educational psychologist. The teacher commented that:

Their biggest feedback, that they need more support with emotional regulation, self-regulation, um, and I spoke to her afterwards and she gave us some resources and what have you and she said that that’s actually one of the biggest things coming out now with children with sort of AC, autism, any sort of form of diagnosis, self-regulation, that they are really struggling with it because they’ve not had the school

environment to be able to do that (Year 1 teacher interview, Case One).

The executive functions for self-regulation (Hofmann *et al.*, 2012) involve working memory; inhibition; and shifting. The ability to overcome impulsive behaviour, which can be understood within inhibition in the executive functions model (Moffitt *et al.*, 2011), is strengthened or weakened through modelled behaviour (Bandura, 1986), reinforcing the importance of the adapted system of ecology from Bronfenbrenner used in this study (Figure 21). The ability to manage this impulsive behaviour in young children can be observed in their ability to wait to take turns, conform to the rules of the classroom when they are at odds with the individual's wants or personal goals, as well as managing changes in routine, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section 5.5.

I am not making an argument that children awaiting a diagnosis do not have autism or would benefit from another neurodiverse diagnosis. However, I suggest that some of the behaviours that could be observed and used to call for assessment towards a diagnosis of some sort may, in fact, be due to a delay in emotional and self-regulation development, and that good support for SR development will be beneficial to all children. This supports the argument that greater training, understanding and information on self-regulation, what impacts it and how it can be effectively supported is a necessary requirement for teachers and parents. Evidence in this study suggests that the current support children are receiving in the Reception year has been effective, and school data shows the progress most children made in PSED development once they returned to school. However, much of that support was seen by teachers as settling and part of their regular practice, and not specifically as pedagogy for self-regulation. School data for Case Two (below) shows that, across the three classes, 91% of children were making expected progress. 'Expected' progress is the level set by government for age-related development in an area, and 'emerging' indicates below or working towards that level.

2021-2022	Self-regulation	Managing self	Relationships
1 (emerging)	9%	12%	5%
2 (expected)	91%	88%	96%

These results mirror the national early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) data for 2021/22, where 17% of children were found to be emerging and 83% were at the expected level (DfE, 2022a). These positive end-of-year results in Case Two could be attributed to the extra time and focus given at the start of the year through supporting and modelling with the children, in order to develop an understanding of their feelings and the ability and language needed to express them; building class routines and developing a safe and positive learning environment.

The DfE are clear that the results for 2021/22 are not comparable to previous years due to the change in curriculum, which became statutory in all schools in September 2021. Looking at the national statistics for the EYFSP in greater depth, comparing the previous early learning goals (DfE, 2014) with the current ones (DfE, 2021e), they are different; for teachers, however, what they are assessing and observing in children they reported to be fairly similar.

From a statistical analytic perspective, the results cannot be compared; however, from the interpretive perspective used in this study, we can look at the two together. As Table (7) shows, we can see that while the wording and emphasis has shifted, possibly due to the lack of training and understanding of staff undertaking the assessments, what is being assessed will not have altered significantly.

PSED ELG (EYFS 2014)	PSED ELG (EYFS 2021)
<u>Managing feelings and behaviour:</u> - Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. - They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow the rules. - They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.	<u>ELG: Self-Regulation:</u> - Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly; - Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate; - Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.
<u>Self-confidence and self-awareness:</u> - Children are confident to try new activities and say why they like some activities more than others. - They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. - They say when they do or don't need help.	<u>ELG: Managing Self:</u> - Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge; - Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly; - Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.
<u>Making relationships:</u> - Children play co-operatively, taking turns with others. - They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. - They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.	<u>ELG: Building Relationships:</u> - Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others; - Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers; - Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

2018/19 EYFSP – results overall for PSED (DfE, 2019)		2021/22 EYFSP – results overall for PSED (DfE, 2022a)	
Emerging	Expected	Emerging	Expected
15.2%	84.8%	17%	83%

Table (7) Comparison table of PSED ELG 2014 & 2021

The overall percentages published translate to 15.2% of 638,995 children = 97,127 children in 2018/19 emerging to the expected level. 17% of 622,583 children = 105,839 children in 2021/22 emerging to the expected level (DfE, 2019, DfE, 2022a). This shows an increase across the population of 8,712 children emerging to the expected level.

The term 'emerging' is used for a band of children that have not achieved the curriculum standard of development or achievement for their age. The term 'expected' is used for children who are meeting those levels, and 'previously exceeding' was included to describe children working above the curriculum standard. The exceeding level was removed in the 2022 statutory assessment. Looking at the percentage of children emerging in the aspects of PSED from 2015 to 2022 (Table 8) using data from the DfE (DfE, 2019, DfE, 2022a), the results indicate that there is a very slight increase in children not reaching the expected level year on year up until the years were cancelled due to Covid. Then, in the aspect that has become self-regulation, there is a significant increase, unlike the other two aspects that are more familiar to the teacher. This strongly suggests that teachers are either unsure about what they are assessing in this respect, or that the aspects of this goal, which are outlined in Table (7), have been impacted or delayed due to Covid-19 disruptions and experiences.

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 & 20/21	2021 curr cu um	21/22
	emerg ng	emerg ng	emerg ng	emerg ng			emerg ng
Se f- conf dence and se f- awareness	10.8%	10.9%	11.1%	11.5%	Cance ed due to Cov d	Se f- regu at on	14.9%
Manag ng fee ngs and behav our	12.1%	12%	12.1%	12.7%		Manag ng se f	12.9%
Mak ng re at onsh ps	10.5%	10.3%	10.3%	10.8%		Bu d ng re at onsh ps	11.4%

Table (8)

Children's physical development was another area that both cases highlighted as delayed. This is interesting because, alongside communication and language, personal social and emotional development, physical development is the third prime area of the early years curriculum, as discussed in section 2.5, and understood as essential to access learning in all other areas. This study's findings regarding physical development delay from both cases contradicts the national statistics from the EYFSP 2021/22, which found physical development to have the highest percentage of children reaching the expected level of 85% (DfE, 2022a).

Table (9) shows the national percentages for physical development from 2015-2022

Physical	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 & 20/21	2021 curriculum	21/22
	emerging	emerging	emerging	emerging			emerging
Moving and handling	10.2%	10.4%	10.5%	10.8%	Cancelled due to Covid	Gross motor	7.9%
Health and self care	8.5%	8.7%	8.8%	9.1%		Fine motor	14.2%

Table (9)

In this ELG, the criteria have changed more significantly and so the data is not as comparable. Health and self-care have been included into PSED and moving and handling divided into gross and fine motor skills. Combining the gross and fine motor data percentages indicates that there has been a significant rise in children not meeting expected targets and, developmentally, fine motor skills are directly linked to gross motor development. The evidence from the case studies suggest that teachers did not feel that children had the same access to gross motor development opportunities such as PE equipment, which would affect their physical development in school and mirror the national findings.

Similarly, in Communication and Language, Table (10) showing in the national data there is a marked increase in children emerging in the specific aspects post Covid, and while understanding has been combined with listening and attention in the 2021 curriculum, I argue that it clearly indicates an impact and mirrors the findings from teachers in this study.

Communication and language	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 & 20/21	2021 curriculum	21/22
	emerging	emerging	emerging	emerging			emerging
Listening and attention	13.7%	13.8%	13.7%	14.1%	Cancelled due to Covid	Listening, attention and understanding	17.8%
Understanding	14.1%	14.1%	14%	14.3%			
Speaking	14.9%	14.6%	14.4%	14.6%		Speaking	17.4%

Table (10)

These prime areas are considered critical for children to access learning, already discussed are teachers' identification of communication and language delay and children's social and emotional development that emerged within the theme of managing feelings (4.4 and 4.9).

The identification of the third prime area, physical development, by teachers in both cases as an area of delay could be evidence that many children have experienced delay in all three prime areas. Therefore, it could be argued that academic delay would be anticipated if we accept that a child needs to be at the expected level in their prime areas of development in order to successfully access learning in the other areas of the curriculum. This can be used to understand the EYFSP national statistics findings for the area of literacy, which had the lowest percentage, being 68% of children reaching expected level (DfE, 2022a).

The physical delay was noted in Case One by the teacher particularly regarding children's ability to dress and change for PE. The teacher in interview commented that while children often struggle with aspects of changing, in this cohort there were children who didn't appear to know how to begin to change themselves. They commented that alongside the language:

This year it was the case that children who, that wasn't even a struggle, they physically didn't know what to do, that they weren't even struggling to move the clothes, it was the case that they actually didn't know how to take a jumper off (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

To address this need in Case One, children did not come to school in their PE kit, which was a policy that many schools adopted following Covid-19 and the return to school. I observed the children changing on day one to go out into the school grounds to plant trees. The

children needed to change into clothes that could get dirty that they had brought in from home.

12.45 –Teacher has placed chairs in spaces throughout the classroom. Children come into the carpet keeping their coats on (today we are going out to plant trees). From the carpet children are dismissed in groups to areas and chairs, the teacher then gives one step at a time instructions...

1. Put coat on back of chair,
2. Take-off shoes, put tie in shoes,

...most children could not do the buttons on their shirts so come to queue up for help on the carpet from myself and the teacher. This process takes 30 mins. At 1.15 children have wellies on, are on the carpet ready to go out (day one observation, Case One).

In Case Two, physical development was also identified, but in the context of children struggling to write and lacking the core strength necessary to sit well. Teachers did note that a number of children struggled to put on coats, and they were supported and encouraged to do this independently. Teachers in Case Two felt that children were not getting the PE input they would have got previously because everything had to be done outside, as the hall was being used as a dedicated space for the before and after-school club. These observations demonstrate the different access children had to develop physically and, as such, could suggest that the reported data in the EYFSP is limited in its accuracy due to continued limitations for children to access PE lessons and equipment.

The different approaches in the two case study schools are indicative of the schools' cultures. In Case One, there is an emphasis on the whole child throughout, and in Case Two there is a stronger emphasis on achievement. In Case One, a need was identified, namely physical development, and was being addressed directly. The teacher had invested heavily in equipment in the outside environment to support gross motor development and had chosen to make the children change in school to ensure they developed these basic skills.

In Case Two, the teachers appeared to be more resigned and helpless to the situation. While they identified that children needed greater core strength and gross motor development, they did not appear to have the authority or agency to make the necessary adjustment to address these needs. Those needs were identified by teachers because they were impacting children's ability to write, which is an outcome for learning rather than a prime area of development.

Children's delays with physical development can be understood and attributed to Covid-19 experiences. Families were not able to go out and so children did not get the opportunities to access parks and play facilities that they would usually have used. Literature (Nagata *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020, Timmons *et al.*, 2021) examines the impact of Covid-19 with regard to increased screen time, lack of physical development opportunities and children's health and weight. It is suggested that a possible impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns will be increased children's screen time, because home school learning was undertaken via online platforms. Accessing these will have meant children will have spent more time being more sedentary, which leads to a decrease in physical health and, in young children, a decrease in physical development (Nagata *et al.*, 2020). Rundle (2020) discusses the link between the more sedentary experience children had during lockdown to increased snacking linked to increased screen time and unhealthy weight gain. They identify the need for a recovery programme in schools post Covid-19 to address children's physical and health needs. The literature supports the findings from this study with regard to children's delay in physical development, and the evidence collected demonstrates that there were distinct differences by case in the access to spaces and resources to support children. This highlights the contradiction found between the literature, data collected in this study, and the end-of-year EYFSP national statistics (DfE, 2022a).

The literature (Nagata *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020, Timmons *et al.*, 2021) all argue that the role of the parent is necessary to moderate and mitigate the negative impacts of increased screen time, sedentary activity and limited social interactions. Screen time and

online interactions could be used to increase physical activity and engage socially with others when face-to-face interactions were prohibited, but this needed to be supported and monitored by parents for young children. As with increased desire for snacking, children require parents to provide and model healthy choices. Once again, the role of parents becomes central to the child's experience and the relationship between the developing child and the parent, using Bronfenbrenner's (1996) ecology revised for this study (Figure 21), can be used to understand this. How engaged a parent can be with the developing child is an important aspect in shaping how the child understands the world and makes sense of what they are experiencing, and what the child observes from the parent will inform their learning of behaviours expected from them (Bandura, 1986), thus reinforcing the importance of the working together mesosystem presented in Figure (21).

The importance of parental engagement has been discussed in greater depth in 'working together', section 5.2. When discussing children's delays within the cohorts of this study, the Case Two teacher highlighted children whose attendance was causing them to serially miss whole-class input because they were always late.

I mean this little one here, they come in at 10 o'clock every single day, they get collected at 3 o'clock, when it should be quarter too, they miss all their phonics lessons, um, tries so hard at everything they do, but it's not worked on at home, and yeh, they just sort of in this sort of, I'll get through, I'll get through school, but I think as it goes up it will be quite difficult for them (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

Here, the issue of attendance, previously discussed in section 5.2, where parents are not working with the school and not getting their children in on time, those children are missing aspects of the curriculum and thus creating delays for the child. This highlights the importance of the relationships between those closest to the children and the impact and interrelation of them, and mirrors the attendance issues reported in the national press and by

the English government (Adams, 2023, DfE, 2023, Parliament, 2023) with regards to family attitudes towards attendance and schooling.

5.5 Routines

The final theme from the data to be discussed is routines. This theme emerged in both cases through interviews with teachers, observations, and in parent questionnaires from Case One. The importance of routine can be understood from a child development perspective with regard to the development of self-regulation, by seeing the routine a child has, as secure boundaries and rules within which the child is able to safely explore (Bronson, 2000a, Roberts, 2011). Bowlby (1983) explains that a secure attachment is formed with a child's primary caregiver through regular and reliable reactions to their needs and through a child's routines in early life. This consistent and reliable care enables a child to develop a positive working model of themselves within their physical environment.

Ainsworth (1989) develops Bowlby's theory further, arguing that with this secure attachment the developing child will have the security within themselves to pursue their own goals and interests, and feel confident to explore the world they find themselves in, such as home and school, knowing they have a secure base to return to. Mikulincer (2019) argues that this sense of attachment security is a key resilience resource that forms a critical building block in developing good mental health and the ability to socially adjust, which is a critical skill in developing the social skills necessary for the classroom. This is further developed by Roberts' (2011) companionable learning theory within boundaries and belonging, as discussed in section 5.2.

The attachment model (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989) focuses on the reciprocal relationship between child and parent, and (Valikhani *et al.*, 2018, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019) links this secure sense of self to social and self-regulation development. The literature (Wilson, 2017, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022) explore the impact of the parents' ability to self-regulate the importance of positive parenting, and the impact of stress experienced by parents attributed to Covid-19 on a child's development of

self-regulation. This literature illustrates that there are a number of different factors that have an impact on the developing child and further supports the importance of working together within the mesosystem, proposed in Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological development and adapted for this study in Figure (21).

The home environment creates the foundation building blocks for a child's development before they start school and will continue to have an impact on a child's experience. These factors are critical for a child's positive development, and the security of routine is a key element to this development (Carter and Nutbrown, 2016). Drawing on Corsaro (1988), Carter and Nutbrown (2016) suggest that routines allow "children to convert the unfamiliar into the familiar. Thus, children were 'attempting to transform confusions and ambiguities from the adult world into the familiar and shared routines of their peer culture' (Corsaro 1988, 13)" (Carter and Nutbrown, 2016 p.397).

The consistency of staff and routine at school give the child the continuity and security to continue developing the same aspects as they would have at home, with the addition of new challenges from the change in environment and socialisation with other children. Valikhani (2018) discusses the behaviours that children with low self-efficacy might exhibit, such as difficulty with friendships, struggling to share, resistant to new challenges, aggression, and a quickness to become upset and struggle to calm down.

These behaviours can be understood using Shanker's (2012) domain model for understanding self-regulation in young children (Biological, Emotional, Cognitive, Social, and Reflective) and were identified by teachers in both cases with children at the start of the academic year as not being as developed in this cohort as in previous years. This observation by class teachers led to the adaption of the daily routine in the classes at the start of the year to accommodate greater time to develop these skills. These routine adaptations were specifically developing children's ability to self-regulate, although this was not identified by teachers in this context. The new curriculum framework (DfE, 2021b) facilitated this by giving early years teachers more professional authority to work with

children as appropriate, removing the emphasis and requirement to collect assessment data and evidence of learning towards the final EYFSP assessment. The Reception teachers interviewed all considered PSED to be of great importance for children's ability to engage successfully in learning. However, it is arguably one of the harder aspects of the curriculum to evidence, which has been problematic in the past (Sumsion, 2002, Taguchi, 2007, Bradbury, 2011, Roberts-Holmes, 2014) due to the emotional aspect of children's development within PSED.

In both cases, the teachers spent a significant amount of time at the start of the year, modelling and working with the children on developing the class routines, rules, and behaviour expectations. The practice described by the teachers mirrors Bandura's social learning theory and supports its emphasis on the effectiveness and the impact on learning that modelling has and the power of observation for learning made by children. Roberts' (2011) framework for companionable learning suggests communication, belonging and boundaries and agency as the three critical components. In the context of the classroom, daily routines, and the consistency a child experiences within that, this supports them to develop a sense of belonging and boundaries, giving them the security to develop their own agency. The practice and pedagogy described by Reception teachers in interview can be argued as doing this, building pedagogical practice directly onto previous theories, attachment, social learning and the ecology of development (Bandura, 1977, Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Bowlby, 1983).

In interview, teachers discussed the pedagogy they used to support children at the start of the year to illustrate this point:

We've used the um, colour monster book, um, as part, one of our early texts when they first came in, to talk about our emotions, and we had a bit of a display, but to be honest, it's more like wall paper, it's not fully used properly, um, but I think a lot of it is, us through modelling, or just our interactions with the children, whenever we can see that a child is about to say, blow their top or get upset, it's, you know, we're going

in there to see what we can do and how to support them (Reception teacher interview, Case One).

Our transition in September is three weeks and we don't teach for three weeks initially, purely because we are focusing on that PSED and that self-regulation, even, I mean it sounds silly but, I obviously do a maths and a literacy task every week, but then, what we did initially in the first three weeks would be being with the children, sitting down, ah, let's try this, any sharing issues that happened, right, why don't we try this, and it was that modelling that some of these children had never had (Reception teacher one interview, Case Two).

The literature (Ainsworth, 1989, Roberts, 2011, Kok, 2022) supports the argument that routines are a necessary aspect for children in developing self-regulation, and so the pedagogy of establishing these routines, rules and boundaries at school is directly supporting children's development (Roberts, 2011, Carter and Nutbrown, 2016). The consistent use of routine and rules, together with supportive positive pedagogy and modelled behaviours, creates a platform for children to develop their self-efficacy, confidence, and curiosity within.

Bandura (1977), in discussing corrective learning experiences, suggests that explanations work to change cognitive understanding. He states that the opportunity to consistently practice and achieve positive outcomes creates meaningful change not only to behaviour but also to an individual's self-efficacy, which, he argues, underpins a person's belief that they can achieve an outcome. Figure (22) from social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) illustrates this process.

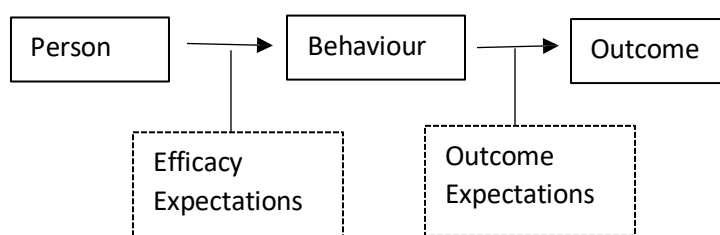


Figure (22) (Adapted from Bandura, 1977 p.79)

The teachers interviewed did not explicitly identify routines as an aspect of their practice that supported self-regulation. Rather, when asked what provision they had put in place specifically for self-regulation, they focused on developing children's understanding and language of their emotions, supporting children in the social aspects of class life, such as sharing and developing the ability to take part in whole-class activities with sustained attention. All the aspects identified by the teachers are important to supporting children's self-regulation, but it is interesting that teacher one in Case Two described this settling period as a time when they 'don't teach', suggesting that they consider teaching to be done for specific curriculum areas only. It is perhaps the incidental nature of teaching the skills of self-regulation that teachers see as supporting children rather than teaching. This supports the argument I make that teachers need a greater understanding of self-regulation, the different aspects that it involves, and the many factors that can influence it so that the support given is purposeful and targeted rather than incidental. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

All the teachers interviewed cited routines and the disruption of them as having impacted children. The Reception teachers in both cases noted that those children who had been able to continue to attend school during the lockdowns had benefited from continuing to have some sort of routine. In Case One, the school actively encouraged children from families where they felt the children would benefit from being in school to attend, where logistically possible, rather than just accepting those children whose parents qualified as key workers. The Year 1 teacher discussed the need to adapt their routine at the start of the year, when all the children returned to school, to a more 'early years approach', with limited whole class and continuous provision, because the children were not ready or able to manage the formality of the previous Key Stage 1 routine.

The Year 2 teacher in Case One attributed the lack of consistency that children had experienced throughout the pandemic as impacting the children in their class's motivation, independence and resilience, and had adapted their routine to develop these skills for

children, by breaking up longer teaching sessions with brain breaks. This observation supports the literature on suspected impacts on children due to the pandemic (Caffo *et al.*, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020).

In Case Two, the Reception teacher placed the class routine as highly important for the children. Interestingly, there is a lack of literature on the importance of routines in the classroom, and what is available has an SEN focus. Routines appear to be axiomatic of early years practice. In interview, the Case Two Reception teacher cited routine as having the biggest impact on children during the Covid-19 disruption:

I mean if I ever took that routine away it would throw a lot, I would say over half of them, because it would be, well, what's coming next, what are we doing. I've always, routine and structure (Teacher One interview, Case Two).

Both the classes observed had visual timetables for the day (Figure 20). During the time I spent with Case Two for observations, seven whole days in each setting over the course of the academic year, I did not see the routine for the children change significantly. Case Two also had quite strict classroom rules, where only a certain number of children were allowed at a table or in an area at any time, and the children registered themselves into these areas or tables using counters. The class was divided daily by the teacher, using lolly sticks for those who would go to the outside classroom in the morning and those who would be inside. Both the Reception teachers in Case Two talked about the time they had taken and spent with the children, establishing these rules and routines with the children. At the time my observations started (November 2021), the children appeared very settled and comfortable with this way of working. By limiting the number of children able to access an area or table, the teachers had problematised the classroom for the children. This creates opportunities for children to negotiate, cooperate and compromise. In observations, while some children still needed support at times, there was evidence of children working things out independently. Dahlberg (2007) proposes that the early years classroom should not be a substitute for home, nor should the teacher be a substitute parent; rather, they suggest a construct which

they refer to as ‘the early childhood institute’. This is a place where young children “are seen able to manage, and indeed to desire and thrive on, relationships with small groups of other children and adults, without risking either their own well-being or their relationship with their parents” (Dahlberg, 2007 p.81). Additionally, Dahlberg suggests that what the child experiences from being in the environment which is not home, but something different while still complementary, is beneficial. Both the classrooms in Case One and Two have environments that mirror this idea, which in turn is built on and discussed by Elfer (2012) in section 5.3 with regards to the importance of the key worker and relationships they create with the child and family.

Another aspect of routine that is significant is class rules. These were an important part of the routine for the children in Case Two, and the importance of routine was made clear to me in one observation:

I am asked if I can help open the door to the cooker in the home corner, the knob has come off and the magnet is holding the door closed. There are 4 children in the home corner, and one tells me I can’t come in because there will be too many
(Observation Case Two, day three p.4).

My initial observations suggested that the security the children in Case Two had from the class routine, the consistent and experienced teacher and TA, the strict rules for behaviour that problematised the environment, and access to activities was fundamental to the progress the children had made emotionally and socially towards self-regulation, since the start of the year. Except for one child, who was being considered for additional needs including autism, most children in the class behaved in a calm, kind, and considerate way with each other, independently resolving many of the issues that arose and confidently seeking help when they needed it. While this consistent focus on rules and behaviour appears to have been supportive to the children, the attitudes and pedagogies can be seen to demonstrate a philosophical position by the teachers and school that places the power and control with the adults, and places the children as the recipients of learning as “a gift

bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable on those they consider know nothing” (Freire, 1971 p.45). This held belief is discussed by (Dahlberg, 2007), who suggests that “the narrative further speaks of education as a linear process that ‘transforms children who are, by definition dependent upon adults, into independent beings, free citizens (readings, 1996: 158)’” (Dahlberg, 2007 p.53). Arguably, the EYFS encapsulates this holistic process, while as a document it clearly states that children’s progress and development are not linear as all aspects of development are interconnected.

Using this suggestion and the three positions of the child and childhood as discussed in section 3.2 proposed by MacNaughton *et al.* (2007), the children in Case Two are in a setting that uses the second view, where the child is subject to the adult, placing the child in a state of ‘becoming’ (Uprichard, 2008) in the process of becoming an adult. This then assumes that the adult knows what the child needs and is in the position of power to ensure the child makes this transition from childhood to adulthood.

The routine in Case Two, while problematising the children’s experiences, also removes some of their autonomy. For example, the teacher divides the class using lolly sticks every day. The children do not have a voice in this process, and this will dictate who they will be with for the morning and afternoon sessions of inside and outside classroom time for that day.

This positioning in Case Two is significant because it illustrates and explains the attitude of the headteacher towards the parents of the Year 1 classes, of the staff towards colleagues and the children, the working relationships within the school and with parents. It also illustrates the value placed on the emotional aspects of the children’s development held by staff further up the school. It indicates that the view is part of the culture of the wider school institution.

In contrast, in Case One school, the class routine/timetable was more flexible and there were variations and changes on every visit for observation. The children appeared to need some more support with resolving problems from sharing, but had also made good progress

from the start of the year. Case One only had restrictions on the number of children able to access certain activities, like the small world, where the children put on a coloured PE band while they were playing, which they took off or swapped with another child. The children were free to choose who they played with and whether they went to the outside area or inside during learning time. The adults joined the children at their chosen activities, scaffolding, supporting, and extending them through these interactions. This suggests that Case One positioned the child in MacNaughton *et al.*'s (2007) third view, where the child is seen as a participant and involved in decision-making with regard to factors that affect their lives. This places the child in a position where they are consulted but the adults still retain the right of decision-making power, which mirrors the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the nursery approaches of Reggio and Highscope philosophies. Further evidence of the working relationships between staff, children and families supports that this position encourages more positive relationships between all stakeholders and, because of these relationships, the development of the child as exemplified in the adapted Bronfenbrenner system of development.

A significant observation between the two cases regarding routine came when the class teacher in Case Two was replaced in the summer term by a supply teacher. The observation of the class with the supply teacher showed significant changes in the children's behaviours. The supply teacher was not an experienced early years teacher, and their approach with the class was not as well organised and clear with the children as their previous teacher had been. The working relationship between the supply teacher and the TA was not as strong. The teacher was unable to arrive at school until 8.30 am, which was only minutes before the children started to arrive, leaving the TA to set up and get ready for the day's learning, producing a strain on their working relationship, which was not well developed. This mirrors the challenges with roles, qualifications and pay as discussed by (Nutbrown, 2021) regarding the early years workforce further discussed in section 2.3 (Osgood, 2010, Bradbury, 2011, Moss, 2014a).

Children's behaviour had deteriorated in Case Two with the supply teacher and there was a much greater amount of low-level disruption from children during whole-class teaching, for example calling out, getting up to talk to the teacher, not listening, and talking. I observed children being moved down the behaviour traffic lights, which I had not seen on any of the previous visits, and some children had regressed back to behaviours they had exhibited at the start of the year, such as (A) who was moved down to red on the traffic lights for hitting and being unkind. The child most affected was (P), who was described by the TA as being in a state of crisis. (P) was not joining in with the whole class and being brought in and collected via the main school entrance. The TA was working one-to-one with (P) for most of the whole-class teaching time, either outside the classroom because they would not come in, or on a separate table.

While the daily routine for the children in Case Two was the same, the change in teacher had unsettled the children and their behaviour could be seen as a reaction to the sense of insecurity they felt with this new adult. The literature previously discussed in section 5.3 makes clear links between consistent routines and support for children in their emotional development towards self-regulation. Hofmann (2012) describes three executive functions for self-regulation: working memory, inhibition, and shifting. They discuss shifting as an individual's ability to task shift, which they link to goal orientation or pursuit. This suggests that an individual with high task-shifting ability will be able to leave a line of enquiry that is not producing the outcomes desired and explore an alternative method. This is affected by whether the outcome is driven by motivation or goal. Hofmann describes this as a "cognitive control 'dilemma' which holds that self-regulating organisms have to solve trade-offs between the rigid pursuit of a focal goal or task set ('rigidity') and the possibility of being open to alternative courses of actions ('flexibility')" (Hofmann *et al.*, 2012 p.177). Diamond (2013) divides the core executive functions into "inhibition [response inhibition] (self-control – resisting temptations and resisting acting impulsively) and interference control (selective attention and cognitive inhibition), working memory, and cognitive flexibility (including creatively thinking 'outside the box', seeing anything from different perspectives, and quickly

and flexibly adapting to changed circumstances)” (p.135). We can connect shifting and cognitive flexibility to understand the deterioration of behaviour in Case Two following the change in teacher.

The traffic light behaviour system used in Case Two was found to be an important part of the children’s experience of the classroom. It featured in all the maps the children made and was used consistently throughout the day, every day, with children being given award stickers before home time for those who had moved up to gold. This system can be seen as extrinsic motivation for the children to behave in the ways that are desired by the school and the teacher. However, these goals are not the children’s own, and children are not all intrinsically motivated to achieve this goal. The children’s secure attachment with their previous teacher appears to have made them want to please them and so they were motivated to behave and be rewarded by the teacher. However, the findings show this did not shift to the new teacher.

The initial findings seemed to suggest that the more ridged, formal and problematised approach in Case Two was supporting the children’s development in self-regulation more effectively than the more flexible and fluid approach in Case One. However, the final observations indicated that the rigidity of Case Two did not prepare the children for managing the significant change in the routine (the introduction of a new teacher). As such, the observations suggest that the children were struggling to adapt and work within the same framework with the new teacher. However, in Case One, the observations of the children suggest that they had become more confident and comfortable in adapting and accommodating the changes in adults and routine, necessitated by the teachers’ frequent need to be out of class and the change in cover of adults the children routinely worked with. Evidence examined and discussed from this study supports the importance of routine for children in developing self-regulation through the security and consistency that routine offers. However, the opportunity of developing the executive function of shifting and becoming flexible in approach, the data suggests, is further supported by the challenge of changes to routine for children.

The more flexible classroom approach, together with the belief that the child is a participant, and is consulted, together with the autonomy as suggested in the third model of the child in childhood (MacNaughton *et al.*, 2007), and as suggested by the data, successfully supports the development of shifting/flexibility. This differs from the second model of the child, where the child is 'becoming' (Uprichard, 2008) which places the power and knowledge with the adults, suggesting a system that is a linear journey through education that transforms the child to that of adult (Dahlberg, 2007). Evidence from the two cases studies discussed here suggests that the routines and culture of the schools influence the classroom experience that children have between the second and third models discussed above, while being supported by the holistic approach the EYFS curriculum suggests.

5.6 What impact has Covid-19 and the lockdowns in England had on the 2021/22 cohort of Reception-aged children?

This study is concerned with exploring self-regulation in the Reception-age phase (4-5 years) in England through using two in-depth case studies. It is positioned from the perspective of the teacher, but includes all stakeholders. Observations of the children have been used to understand their experiences in the classroom context. It would not be possible to undertake this study without considering the unique and attributable impact that the Covid-19 lockdowns and disruptions might have had on these cohorts of children.

All the teachers interviewed across both the case studies noted the same areas that they attributed to having been affected by Covid-19. Observations from teachers' perspectives were significant within the themes that emerged from the data such as speech and language, social skills, emotional development, and resilience. These manifested in the classroom through noticeably poor language skills, with many more children being challenging to understand when they spoke, and delay in their phonics ability, which was being addressed by focused phonic catch-up programmes. Teachers reported that children needed greater support settling back into the school routine, and adjustments were made in both cases at the start of the year to accommodate children settling in, both emotionally and

socially, into the requirements of the classroom environment and routine. These aspects have been discussed within the themes above – working together, managing feelings, delays, and routines.

In both cases, particular children, whose behaviour suggested there were additional needs, had been significantly delayed in being diagnosed due to the disruptions and the increase of referrals to the services that support schools (Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Lee, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020, Schiariti, 2020, Shah and Absoud, 2021).

Literature published towards the end of the Covid-19 disruptions (Benner and Mistry, 2020, Caffo *et al.*, 2020, Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Clark *et al.*, 2020, Donagh, 2020, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Kilham, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Lee, 2020, Murray, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020, Browne, 2021, Luo, 2021, Mantovani *et al.*, 2021, Timmons *et al.*, 2021) suggested possible impacts that could be anticipated in children as a result of the lockdowns and extended period of isolation and uncertainty.

One area considered (Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Rundle *et al.*, 2020) was food insecurity, which was linked to poor nutrition, leading to poor mental health and weight gain. This, when considered with the increase of screen time (Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Nagata *et al.*, 2020) that home schooling necessitated, suggested an increase in anxiety and stress, exacerbated by limited access to outdoor spaces for physical health and well-being. The theme emerging from this study of a delay in children's physical development regarding their ability to manage their own dressing, such as putting on coats, doing up buttons and changing for PE, as well as the core strength needed for gross and fine motor tasks such as writing, suggests that the lockdown periods in the England did impact children's development in these areas.

Another area highlighted in the literature regarding possible impacts was children's emotional behaviour (Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Kumar *et al.*, 2020, Neece *et al.*, 2020). These studies linked the stress levels of parents with challenging behaviour in children such as difficulty concentrating, boredom, irritability, frustration, anger, restlessness, and nervousness. These behaviours were independently identified by teachers interviewed and

have been discussed in the themes, mirroring the anticipated impacts from the literature. In the questionnaire to parents from Case One, they reported feeling more stressed during the lockdowns, managing work and home schooling. When asked about their child's behaviours using the behaviours identified from the literature, they reported these behaviours to be higher during the lockdowns but reduced once children had returned to school, these findings are shown in table 4 (p.132 this thesis).

This data indicates that behaviours identified by the literature correlate with the experiences from parents, and confirms that, once children were able to return to school and a more stable routine, there was a positive impact and these behaviours reduced. Significant difficulty concentrating was reported, particularly by Year 1 and 2 teachers in Case One, who had adjusted their approach to teaching and routine to support children in this area. The findings from this study mirror those reported by the Institute of Fiscal Studies, who found, "Nearly half of parents reported that their child had more social-emotional difficulties in February 2021 than a year earlier, while around one in six reported fewer changes. Parents of girls and younger children, and those who were furloughed, were more likely to report worsening in their children's socio-emotional skills" (Cattan, 2023 p.3-4).

Significant in the findings from this study are the emotional behaviours such as quick to anger, quick to cry and nervousness. While the findings show a slight reduction, behaviours did not improve to the same extent on the return to school, which could indicate a longer-term impact on some children's emotional development, which could affect their development of self-regulation.

Applying Bronfenbrenner's framework and considering the systems surrounding a child that impact the development of their sense of self, security, self-efficacy, and emotional development, the impact of parent stress, loss of routine, connection with school, families, communities, and friends can be understood to have contributed to an attributable effect of socio-cultural time frame that was Covid-19. I argue that, for some children, there will have been an impact on their emotional development. Not all children however, have been

affected in the same way, and this can be explained by understanding the important role of parents, connections with schools within the mesosystem and the temperament models of the child (Rothbart M.K., 1985, Manian, 1998, Rothbart and Jones, 1998, Kim, 2012, Cruz, 2018, Liu, 2023).

Using the popular metaphor 'Dandelions and Orchids' as discussed in section 2.4, children who can be classed as 'Dandelions' and are generally less affected or sensitive to their environment will have been less affected. However, those children with a higher sensitivity or reactivity to their environment, classed as 'Orchids', will have been more affected. Lionetti *et al.* (2018) identified that about 31% of the population can be categorised as having high sensitivity, and 29% as having low sensitivity, leaving 40% of the population in the middle, which they categorised as 'Tulips', a metaphor to describe that they 'continue to flower'. A further study looking specifically at the emotional behaviours of this cohort, using a temperament model with sample size large enough to make the findings statistically generalisable to population, would be needed to explore this further.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, each theme has been discussed and analysed in depth separately to address and accommodate the details and aspects within them. However, while they can be discussed separately, the themes are intrinsically linked and, in this summary, I will draw the key aspects of each theme together and highlight the interrelated aspects.

The themes have been discussed in the order they emerged from the data starting with working together, followed by managing feelings, delays and, finally, routines. This study looks to explore and understand self-regulation and the different perceptions of this from stakeholders and in policy and pedagogy.

Through the analysis of the theme working together at the start of the academic year 2021/22 following the Covid-19 disruptions, teachers noted that children's ability to share was an area that they had needed to focus on. This observation intersects with delay, as it indicates that the children had not developed the social skills necessary to work

collaboratively that would usually have been supported in nursery and preschool settings, which were unavailable to this cohort of children for prolonged periods that can be attributed to the Covid-19 disruptions.

The ability to share and play collaboratively requires children to have developed a secure sense of self and understanding of themselves in a broader context. This aspect emerged in the theme managing feelings, where teachers identified children in classes struggling to control their feelings, being able to identify their feelings, be quick to anger or upset and finding it hard to calm themselves. These behaviours, teachers reported, occurred when children faced issues over sharing, having to conform to the routines of the classroom rules, or take on challenges that they were less confident with.

The ability to manage feelings is developed within emotional development for self-regulation and is supported through parenting styles, positive teaching pedagogy in the classroom and working with families, linking managing feelings to working together, delays and routines.

The theme of delays has been addressed separately in the findings and analysis, because it emerged in the data through the teacher's identification of the specific academic delays in children, such as speech and language, phonics, physical development and writing ability, and these findings have been shown to mirror the national statistics. The aspects that have emerged in working together and managing feelings also represent delays in children's development, and these can be categorised using the early years curriculum framework within the three prime areas: (i) personal, social, and emotional development, (ii) language and communication, and (iii) physical development. These areas are considered prime because they underpin the necessary development needed for a child to access learning in all the other areas of the curriculum. As such, it can be argued that children who experience a delay in their self-regulation development can be identified through delays in the first two themes.

The final theme to be discussed is routines. This theme was identified by teachers as important in supporting children in the classroom to manage their emotions, cope with the

complexities of the day, and create a secure environment for them to develop within. The lack of routine caused by the Covid-19 disruptions was cited by both teachers and parents as having had a negative impact on the children. The data supported that many of the challenging behaviours identified were possibly because of the disruptions as suggested in the literature discussed. These behaviours improved when children returned to school and the daily routines that this provided for both children and families. Routines emerge as an important aspect in supporting children with managing their feelings and developing the emotional resilience and skills necessary for a secure self-efficacy and sense of self needed to thrive in the classroom environment. Routines at home and in school support the need for a good working relationship between parents and teachers to provide children with the consistency they need to feel safe and secure in both places.

These wider connections between school, home and other agencies are necessary and impact the child that they surround. Delays in diagnosis of children whose behaviour demonstrates the possibilities of other needs has put further pressure on teachers to provide additional support alongside supporting the other children in their classes. Relationships with parents become important. Without the support and a good working relationship with parents, teachers cannot pursue additional support for children. Equally, where a child is always late for school, that child will miss learning, creating greater delays in the child's learning as reported by the class teacher in Case Two, where they reported parent engagement as particularly low.

In all themes, teachers discussed the use of modelling as a pedagogical approach to supporting children. This is a critical aspect of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, where learning through modelled behaviour improves children's self-efficacy and motivation, both important in the development of emotional regulation necessary for self-regulation. This, in turn, supports children to manage their feelings to form good relationships with others and access and progress with their learning, catching up after any delays that the developing child might enter a setting with. The use of class routines creates a stable,

consistent, and reliable environment that children can feel secure within, further supporting their confidence to explore their interests and learning. Where there is flexibility in those routines, the opportunity for children to develop shifting, flexibility, and the ability to manage change is created. However, consistency of the adults within the routine, the data from this study suggests, is important.

The interconnected nature of the themes presented has been summarised in Figure (23), illustrating the different aspects that all have an impact on a child's development of self-regulation as discussed.

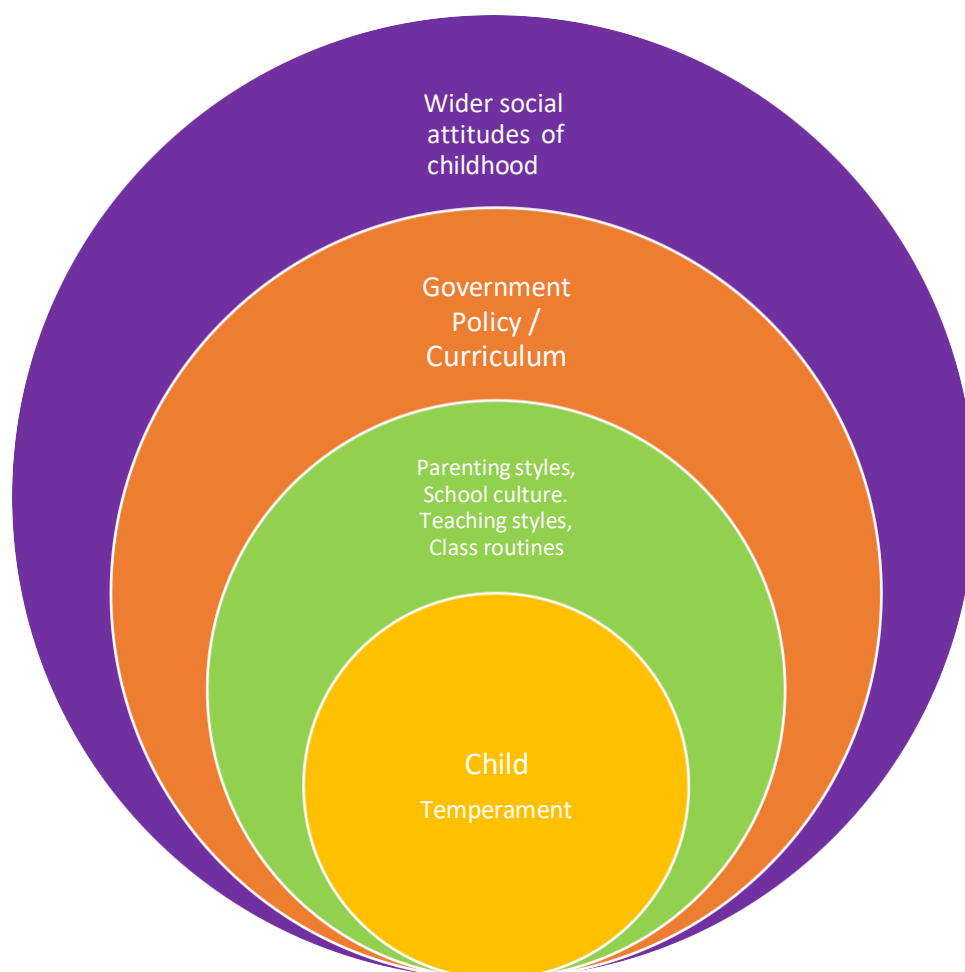


Figure (23) Illustration of the interconnected aspects that impact a child's development of self-regulation.

In Chapter Six, the questions this study asks will be addressed and discussed using the findings analysed, discussed, and explored here.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore and understand in greater depth self-regulation in the Reception classroom. It looks at how this develops and is supported through pedagogy using the revised 2021 EYFS curriculum (DFE, 2021e). This has been met through answering the three questions set out in section 1.3, the case study research design discussed in section 3.4 and the methodological approaches – questionnaires, interviews, observations, and examination of early years policy. The data generated was analysed using the constant comparison method to produce findings that have been presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

In this final chapter, I will reflect upon the findings of Chapter Four, as discussed in Chapter Five, and relate them to the research questions of this study. I will also draw on my experience of undertaking this study and refer to the literature used in the previous chapters. I will articulate the study's contribution to knowledge, and how the findings could develop policy and practice in the EYFS. I will present each question separately with the conclusions drawn from the analysis and findings.

6.2 - How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?

6.3 - What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regards to self-regulation?

6.4 -1 - Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

These three questions are set out in section 1.3. I looked to explore and further understand self-regulation in the Reception classroom from the position of the class teachers in the context of returning to school following school closures and disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Next, I discuss self-regulation in the classroom in greater depth, in sections 6.4-2 and 6.4-3, and the understanding of self-regulation in the sector 6.4-3. This enables me to fully explore the aspects of question 6.4-1.

The findings and conclusions of this study did not aim to be generalisable against the population. However, the findings do aim to be relatable to the wider sector as they are taken from the classroom; and the structures that the classroom operates are within the statutory framework set by the government and, as such, many aspects will be the same in all settings.

At the time this study, the participating children were the first cohort of Reception children to have an experience of full-time education following two years of disrupted schooling and socialising because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which presents a unique research opportunity. While every child will have had different experiences of the lockdowns in England, findings from this study will be representative of the experiences of other schools and settings of welcoming and supporting children back into full-time education. Because of the unique situation that Covid-19 presents in this study, discussion and reflections of this will be discussed separately in section 6.5.

This conclusion culminates in section 6.6, with reflection and discussion of the study in relation to the methods and methodology used and its limitations. In 6.7, the contributions to knowledge that this study has produced will be presented with models generated from the findings that can be used with parents, teachers, and government, to understand and support the development of self-regulation for children, followed by suggestions for further research needed in 6.8.

6.2 How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children?

The findings from this study show that children in Reception (4-5 years) display different levels of self-regulation. The literature examined explains why this would be expected given the number of variables outside of the classroom and elements that can affect the development of self-regulation before a child is of statutory school age, supporting the non-linear process of development suggested by Montroy (2016). The behaviours identified in this study that have been attributed to self-regulation by teachers include: sharing, ability to settle into school, adapting to the routines of the classroom day, coping with change and

challenge, independence and managing feelings. Teachers highlighted that most children had struggled with these aspects on the return to school following the Covid-19 disruptions, indicating that time out of school in familial isolation had negatively impacted their development emotionally and socially.

Observations from the case studies confirm that Reception-aged children have different levels of self-regulation. It affects them in the context of the classroom in how they can cope with the challenges that working as part of a group of 30 children present, including collaborating and being independent. Following the lockdowns in England due to Covid-19, the findings from this study suggest that in England, at the start of the academic year 2021, Reception children, who had previously had two years of disrupted preschool experience and nursery experience, had been affected to varying degrees regarding their self-regulation. The factors that had influenced this, as the literature suggests, are broad, for example parenting styles, attachment from birth, and the child's temperament. However, unique to this study are the lockdowns, home schooling, anxiety, and stress that all families experienced, which can be seen to have affected children's self-regulation. These experiences could be understood as contributing to the rise of reported cases of anxiety and depression in children (Wang *et al.*, 2022, Adams, 2023).

Findings from the study revealed that strong relationships between parent, teachers and others are key to supporting the development of self-regulation. Each case study school had very different relationships with families and between staff within the school. These relationships are reflective in the findings. Where relationships were strong, children observed at the end of the year appeared more confident and ready to transition to Year 1. This was supported through close ongoing relationships between Reception and Year 1 throughout the year. Equally, where children were struggling, parents were working closely with the school to support them.

Where relationships were less strong, Reception teachers expressed frustration and concern about children transitioning due to a lack of understanding or concern from Year 1 teachers

with regard to the whole child. Attendance issues contributed to learning delays and indicated a lack of support from families with the school and the education system, and represents how parents regard and value school for their children. These findings mirror reports in the national press as discussed previously (Adams, 2023, DfE, 2023) and contradict previous literature that suggests parents' willingness and desire to be involved and engaged in their children's education (Fitzgerald, 2004, Athey, 2007, Barr, 2014, Gross, 2019). These findings appear to be causally linked to a change in attitudes following long periods of home schooling and could reflect the level of support and engagement families received from school during this time, so can be considered as being impacted by Covid-19 experiences and which, in turn, will influence children's self-regulation development.

Following an extensive review of the literature regarding self-regulation, how it is understood, developed, and the wider factors that contribute to its development, the critical elements necessary to achieve self-regulation can be understood through executive functions – working memory, inhibition and shifting (Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Diamond, 2013). When this is applied in the context of education, these executive functions are the foundational skills necessary for metacognition and self-regulated learning (Roebers, 2017). The link between self-regulation and metacognition is recognised in the literature (Zimmerman, 2002, EEF, 2018), leading to its inclusion in the revised early years framework (DfE, 2021b) made statutory in England in September 2021. What is referred to as self-regulation can be confused with self-regulated learning, and, while there are common elements in both, there is a significant difference that becomes more critical from an early years perspective, namely the emotional development necessary for self-regulation, which is foundational to achieve self-regulated learning.

Understanding how self-regulation develops and what supports and affects this development is critical to answering the question – How does self-regulation affect Reception-aged children? The literature identifies that, in addition to the skills necessary such as “goal setting, time management, learning strategies, self-evaluation, self-attributions, seeking help

or information, and important self-motivational beliefs” (Zimmerman, 2002 p.64), self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation must be developed. Without self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, the development of self-regulation will be affected. Therefore, understanding how these develop in children becomes important to understanding self-regulation in Reception-aged children.

Further exploration of the literature makes clear links between the development of self-efficacy and a child’s attachment in their earliest years (Bowlby, 1983, Ainsworth, 1989) and self-efficacy is further linked to motivation (Zimmerman, 2000, Lavasani *et al.*, 2011, Yee and Braver, 2018). Underpinning all these aspects and linking them together is emotional development and regulation (Rothbart and Jones, 1998, Boler, 1999, Pessoa, 2009, Shanker, 2010, Sperduti *et al.*, 2017, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019, Zaporozhets, 2020), which will develop and be supported from birth by a child’s parents or carers before they start school. Literature examined on the impact and importance of parenting styles and parents’ own ability to self-regulate (Manian, 1998, Wilson, 2017, Cruz, 2018, Song, 2018, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Kok, 2022) demonstrates how important early home life and care are to the development of self-regulation in children.

Bronson (2000a, 2000b) writes specifically about self-regulation development in young children, including Reception-aged children. Building on Bronson’s work, Whitebread and Basilio (2012) identified behaviours that could be observed in children to support understanding of what cognitive self-regulation and socio-emotional regulation would look like in children aged three to six years (see Figure 3). Literature looking specifically at the early development of executive functions (Diamond, 2006) identified that children’s ability to curb their impulsive behaviour in tests did not appear to develop until four and a half years of age. Montroy’s (2016) further research into the development of self-regulation supports Diamond and suggests that the development of self-regulation skills is a non-linear process.

The current EYFS statutory framework now includes self-regulation as an assessment aspect necessary for achieving the ELG in PSED and necessary to meet the GLD at the end of the foundation stage. The statements children are assessed against reflect the literature

with regard to self-regulation. “Children at the expected level of development will: - show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly; - set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate; - give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions” (DfE, 2021b p.12). The executive functions necessary to achieve these would be:

- Working memory: to follow instructions that have several ideas or actions involved.
- Inhibition: to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses.
- Shifting: to give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity.

Interestingly, the ability of children to show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others (empathy) and to begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly is not supported in much of the literature focused on self-regulation using the executive functions model, or when researched from the perspective of metacognition and self-regulated learning proposed by behavioural psychology, a significant influencer in educational policy.

The emotional aspect as previously discussed is critical in the development of a secure sense of self, and the positive self-efficacy necessary for self-regulation. However, it is not universally defined within the literature as a part of self-regulation. Here, the ELG appears to be adapting self-regulation as understood in the literature, to be the regulation of the self, while encompassing the executive functions necessary for the development of self-regulation, which could be seen as a confused hybrid of concepts.

What deeper examination of the literature has shown is that emotional development underpins, and is critical for, the development of self-regulation (Boler, 1999, Pessoa, 2009, Supplee *et al.*, 2009, Garner *et al.*, 2019, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019, Zaporozhets, 2020). Using Bronfenbrenner’s system of ecology for human development adapted and applied to the unique context of this study (Figure 21), the importance of family and the culture that a

child is engaged with is clear. Equally, the environment of the classroom, teacher, and school is emphasised by how important the relationships are between these different aspects of the child's experience to support the development of self-regulation. This study finds that Bronfenbrenner's original concept works when adapted to the unique criteria in this context.

The adapted Bronfenbrenner framework can be used as a tool for schools and teachers to audit and assess their practice, for engaging parents, and highlights the importance of all the relationships that surround a child supporting a child-centred approach.

6.3 What are the perceptions of the different early years' stakeholders with regards to self-regulation?

The early years stakeholders in this study include all the adults working with the children in the classroom, teachers, and TAs. The review of the literature clearly supports that the ability to self-regulate for teachers is as important as it is for parents to support the development in children (Merritt *et al.*, 2012, Peeters *et al.*, 2014, Persico *et al.*, 2015, Zinsser *et al.*, 2015, Garner *et al.*, 2019).

The evidence collected in this study through interviews with teachers and conversations with TAs and teachers during observations, recorded as field notes, highlighted that adults viewed self-regulation as important and central to children's ability to learn. However, they were not clear on the scope of what influences and impacts this development. Equally, they did not appear to be clear about what the term self-regulation really meant. None of the staff in the study had received any training or Continued Professional Development (CPD) to support them deliver this new statutory aspect of the curriculum, suggesting that this new initiative had been introduced before appropriate support for practitioners was in place.

The findings show a clear understanding from staff of the importance of emotional development, and that this was necessary to support the desired behaviours for self-regulation. However, a subtle but important distinction emerged in the findings in staff's

definition of self-regulation, which they defined as managing/controlling feelings rather than understanding them as the curriculum framework requires. Teachers indicated that the new framework with the addition of self-regulation gave more emphasis to the personal, social and emotional development, but did not indicate that there was any real change in what children were required to do to achieve this. This was more evident in Case Two, where the school culture is more behaviour led and, as such, managing and controlling feelings to conform to the behaviour required for school underpinned the support and input from the staff. In Case One, however, the religious curriculum input gave children opportunities to reflect and understand different feelings through regular timetabled meditation/reflection sessions. The strong faith aspect of the Case One study underpinned the values, relationships, and teaching as part of the whole-school ethos. This mirrored the literature findings in section 2.4, where SEL was found to be supported when the opportunity to reflect and practice was executed as a whole-school approach. SEL skills were a part of the whole-school ethos in Case One and children were given regular opportunities in addition to the daily meditation to engage with using these skills throughout the day.

Another interesting finding to come from this study was in Case Two, where the teachers in interview reported that training had been held for self-regulation with the rest of the school but not for the early years staff. This indicates that the school considered that the emotional aspect of the early years foundation stage already had this area covered, whereas the rest of the school would benefit from a greater understanding. In Case One, the class teacher had attended training in preparation for this new aspect of the curriculum, but reported that they did not feel that they had learnt anything new, indicating a lack of understanding regarding self-regulation and its development in the wider sector responsible for disseminating support and CPD, and supporting the suggesting that this new aspect had been introduced into the curriculum before sufficient wider support was in place.

6.4-1 Does early years policy and pedagogy support the development of self-regulation?

Examination of the 2021 early years framework and statutory requirements (DFE, 2021e) with government policy during Covid-19 shows support for the development of self-regulation. During lockdowns and school closures, some statutory requirements were suspended, and staff were able to support children emotionally as they saw necessary (DfE, 2021a, DfE, 2021c, DfE, 2022b). Equally, the revised EY framework removes much of the need for assessment and paperwork, which, in the findings from this study, teachers found to be supportive, enabling them to spend more time being with the children and responding to their needs, particularly at the start of the year.

While policy now enables teachers to spend more time with the children, freeing them from the arduous emphasis on assessment, record-keeping and evidencing, the lack of understanding about the development of self-regulation, and the skills this involves, are not clear in the statutory requirement; as such, the lack of training and guidance means that, while teachers are supporting children, they are not doing this purposefully. Rather, this support is being done as part of early years pedagogy that practitioners have always held as central to their practice, and can be understood as the emotional pedagogy of the early years. The statutory requirements for self-regulation in the early years does address the executive functions required for self-regulation in an early years context. However, the lack of professional understanding and training could lead to errors in assessment of these skills and children being encouraged to behave in ways that are not grounded in solid emotional foundations. How this deficiency can be overcome will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

6.4-2 Self-regulation in current classroom context

Findings from this study strongly suggest that self-regulation is being supported in the classroom through the same strategies implemented under the previous framework for PSED, implying that staff were doing what they always did, but just a bit more of it at the

start of the year during the settling period. While many of these strategies work well, a lack of understanding could lead to missed opportunities for supporting children fully. Effective implementation of purposeful pedagogy for self-regulation is key to ensuring children's progress. Equally, where the aim is to get children to control their feelings rather than understand them, it could in fact have a negative effect longer term on that child's self-regulation, with children learning to suppress feelings rather than explore, understand, and articulate them.

In interviews, teachers in both cases were unclear in their responses regarding particular provision they planned or implemented to support self-regulation. However, through observations, the practices of the classroom that supported children were clearer. The problematising of the environment, through limiting the number of children able to access certain activities required children to engage in negotiation, wait their turn and compromise on their own goals. The need to share resources, a part of everyday life in the classroom, was another way that children developed the skills necessary for self-regulation, as they were supported by adults to reflect and understand the feelings of others. Additionally, conforming to the daily routine and the requirement to stop what they were doing when asked to take part in something that might not be aligned to their personal goals was another important aspect for self-regulation.

The end-of-year data for both case studies indicates that while teachers reported children had not been at the levels usually expected for Reception when they had started in September, the consistency of being in school, and the routines of the classroom, showed that all children had made significant progress over the year. This was echoed by responses from parents in the Case One study, regarding challenging behaviours that they had observed and experienced with their children during the lockdowns, that had reduced once children returned to school.

At the midpoint of the data collection, my personal perceptions of the benefits of children having greater independence and free choice in the classroom were challenged by the data

collected in Case Two, where a more disciplined and rigorous routine was followed in comparison to the more flexible and free-choice approach observed in Case One. The children in Case Two appeared at this midpoint to be better settled and developed emotionally. However, the change in the Case Two class when their regular teacher was replaced by a long-term supply teacher was significant. This indicated that while the children could, and wanted to, please and comply with their teacher, they did not have the motivation intrinsically to continue to make this effort for the supply teacher. This change for the children in their routine proved to be a significant challenge for some children in the class. It also indicates the disruption of the secure attachment the children had formed with their class teacher, which was disrupted when they left.

In comparison, the Case One class teacher was regularly out of class, so the children over the course of the year had worked with a variety of other adults and adapted to them easily, maintaining the same respectful behaviour with everyone. This finding indicates that, for children to develop the ability to be flexible and acquire the executive function of shifting, a more fluid and flexible approach to routine could be more beneficial than a more rigid one. This is a clear finding and contribution to knowledge that this study makes.

A second key difference between the two case study settings was the regular opportunity to reflect, as the classroom observations took place throughout the year on a variety of days to see as much of the classroom weekly routine as possible. In Case One, during the week children regularly came in from lunch play and took part in a silent meditation, where they were encouraged to reflect on the religious thought or lesson of the day. This practice, while intended as part of the faith curriculum, also served as an opportunity for the children to practise self-calming, de-escalating their arousal state following a period of unstructured outside free play. This meditative opportunity created a chance for the children to tune into themselves and have time to be aware of their feelings and engage in reflection, developing their interoception, which, as discussed in the literature in section 2.4, supports the development of self-regulation (Mahler, 2017, Zamariola, 2019, Schuette, 2021, Luedders

Jones, 2022). The implications of this will be discussed further in the final part of this chapter.

6.4-3 Understanding of self-regulation in the sector

Self-regulation has been adopted into the policy that governs the sector as a statutory requirement in the early years curriculum. This has been guided by literature from cognitive developmental psychology and studies that have focused on SRL, which incorporates metacognitive ability as a critical aspect (Whitebread and Basilio, 2012, Mroz, 2019, Perry and VandeKamp, 2000, Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022) for achieving the positive results academically and in later life that self-regulation is shown to produce. Studies that have specifically addressed the early years (children aged 3-6 years) are more limited, however, studies do acknowledge the importance of emotional development for children to enable them to develop self-regulation (Perry, 2019, Zachariou and Whitebread, 2019, Bronson, 2000b, Bronson, 2000a, Perry and VandeKamp, 2000, Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022).

Observations and findings from this study have highlighted the conflict within the sector that teachers and schools are experiencing between supporting children emotionally and achieving the academic levels required for transition to Year 1. This highlights the importance of the EYFS as a phase in its own right, as opposed to the perceived agenda of it being a vehicle for getting children 'school ready'. Further, this illustrates the challenges within the early years sector following 'Bold Beginnings' (Ofsted, 2017), which the early years sector felt placed emphasis on the Reception year to get children ready for Year 1 with a focus on teaching reading, writing and mathematics and progress that can be measured against baseline assessment at the end of the primary year. It has been argued in the literature (Trelford, 2018, Mroz, 2019, Kay, 2022) that the revised curriculum (DfE, 2021b) reflects this academic emphasis and disregards the importance for children to have time to develop their own problem-solving skills and independence through play. This study mirrors findings (Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022) that children's self-regulation is supported best when they have the opportunity to pursue their own goals in their chosen activities

independently. Looking specifically at the classroom context and the role of the adult in relation to self-regulation (Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022), it is through opportunities to be independent that children have the chance and motivation to engage with self-regulation, rather than in adult-supported and adult-led activities, where children were found to exercise less self-regulation. Findings from this study found that children in Case One, where they were given greater freedom and independence in the classroom and experienced more flexibility in their routines, displayed greater resilience and regulatory skills than in Case Two, where children experienced more formal and adult-directed activities and rigid routine with strong emphasis on behaviour.

The lack of professional development and training for teachers in school from CPD and in initial teacher training, highlighted in the findings from this study, indicates that there is a lack of understanding regarding self-regulation and how to best support it in schools and classrooms, particularly in the early years. Also, the wider sector appears unaware of this gap in knowledge and was not providing effective training and support at the point at which it was needed, ideally before self-regulation became a statutory requirement or at the time of this study. Where a school has an ethos that is child centred and places value on well-being, such as Case One, this lack of explicit understanding and training is not as impactful. However, where the ethos is one of academic achievement and control, as in Case Two, a tension emerges in the data that mirrors the discord across the sector following Bold Beginnings (Ofsted, 2017), with emphasis on the academic in the Reception year (Kay, 2022).

Understanding emotional development and the breadth of factors that can impact a child needs to be mandatory in all initial teacher training, to equip teachers with the knowledge to support the children and families they will work with. The recent Commons select committee report on the early years workforce supports this assertion and suggests that there is some movement in this direction. The report identifies the positive impact that high-quality ECEC has and the greater need for this following Covid-19:

...evidence showed that access to quality ECEC is of increased importance following the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted socialisation and education for many children during their crucial early years. Childcare providers have reported seeing high number of children arriving in formal settings with much higher needs or developmental delays, particularly in language and communication skills (Committee, 2023 p.43).

The teaching profession needs the support and reassurance from government that it will be prioritising emotional development, which is essential to achieve the academic successes strived for through the introduction of self-regulation into the early years 2021 curriculum (DFE, 2021e). This should be positively acknowledged by the schools' regulatory body Ofsted to reflect its importance. It is a finding from this study that it is equally important to acknowledge that the development of self-regulation does not finish for children aged five at the end of the Reception year. Therefore, routines and a curriculum that continue to support children with self-regulation need to be central to schools' culture throughout all the age phases.

6.5 Impact of Covid-19

In this section, I discuss the impacts of Covid-19. While it has been included in the discussions with regards to the questions asked in this study, the unique situation that the Covid-19 global pandemic created justifies addressing it separately.

The most recent agenda for early years at the time of writing, 'Bold Beginnings', with its intentions of the Reception year to prepare children for KS1 (Trelford, 2018), can be seen as more contentious than when first published, viewed in the post Covid-19 landscape.

Evidence from this study strongly suggests that many children returning to school in September 2021 were not emotionally ready to regulate themselves for the formalities of KS1, as reported by Year 1 and 2 teachers in interviews in this study. There is a danger that, by teaching these children to conform and control their feelings to become classroom compliant, they will miss the critical opportunity to develop strong self-regulation foundations.

This study shows that self-regulation can be supported through positive and supportive teaching, mirroring the impact of positive and supportive parenting, in creating opportunities for children to develop the independence to pursue their own goals and feel secure to explore and understand their feelings as they arise in all age phases.

For the 2021-22 cohort studied, it is not possible to say specifically what impact can be ascribed solely to Covid-19. However, the periods of time spent isolated from extended family and friends, the data clearly shows, had an initial impact on children's ability to work together, manage friendships and cope with and communicate the feelings they experience. Every child's experience of the lockdowns and school closures will have differed and, as such, the impacts on the children will also have been individual and different. Levels of stress and emotional upheaval will have been different for each family, depending on their circumstances, and the temperament of the child will also influence how much or little that has impacted. The assertion that stress experienced in the home has impacted children's emotional development is supported by the Institute for Fiscal Studies' findings, which looked at the impact of parents' experiences of the labour market during the pandemic on children's socio-emotional development (Cattan, 2023). Findings showed that where a family experienced a change in employment, children were almost 20% of a standard deviation lower in socio-emotional skills than those whose parents' employment status had remained unchanged throughout.

Across both the study cases, there were reported delays in children's communication skills, emotional development, and their physical development. End-of-year school data shows that, for many of the children, this appears to have been addressed and children have 'caught up' once back in the classroom and the routines of school. However, the emotional resilience of the children who have been more affected might not be known for some time, and this legacy will need to be studied over time through longitudinal studies of children whose education has been disrupted by this global phenomenon. Findings of a continued rise in the number of children with delays to their speech and language post Covid suggest

that more support is needed for children to catch up and continue to make the expected progress developing these critical skills (Speech and Language UK, 2023).

The end of foundation year data from the DfE (DfE, 2022a) stipulates that it is not comparable with previous years' results due to the change in curriculum. However, when viewed qualitatively, the data clearly indicates an impact from Covid-19 experiences. These national published results when viewed against the findings from this study regarding delays identified by teachers' understanding of self-regulation, and access to facilities for PE, suggest possible inaccuracies in the assessment data submitted by schools.

While the cohorts used in this study represent children whose experiences before starting full-time education have been directly affected by Covid-19, the rise in SEN, emotional, and behavioural needs prior to Covid-19 indicate that society is not supporting children effectively towards developing good self-regulation and, therefore, responsibility for the development of self-regulation cannot be placed entirely on teachers and schools, but needs to be addressed beyond the classroom, in families, teacher education and government policy. This is supported by recent findings by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Cattan, 2023), whose findings exemplify the impact of the exo and microsystems in Bronfenbrenner's (1996) ecology on a child's development through focusing on parents' economic experiences during Covid-19 and the impact on children's socio-emotional development.

6.6 Reflection on the study and limitations

Reflecting on the findings from this study, while it was not an aim to explore the impact of Covid-19, there is clear evidence of an impact on the emotional and social development of children in Reception and KS1 (4-7 years) in the year 2012/22. The unique context of this study has made the examination of self-regulation clearer, as the delays evident from Covid-19 can be linked to delays in the development of secure self-regulation. Children in Reception have benefited from the time and input the EY curriculum has provided, giving them opportunities to catch up in these delayed areas. The impact on children in Years 1 and 2 could be longer lasting, because the current curriculum for KS1 does not allow

opportunities for those children to develop their foundation skills through play and independently pursuing personal goals.

Parents are possibly unaware of the critical role they play in their child's development of self-regulation and what is required from them, to support their child in the acquisition of these skills. The family unit could be better supported by government, to financially enable them to have time and the option of a realistic choice, to be more available to their children during their earliest years. Findings from the parent questionnaires in this study indicate that childcare still falls mainly on mothers, and that more mothers are working and juggling their own desires to continue their careers and raise healthy happy children. This finding leads to the reflection that, to support children's self-regulation, the ecology that surrounds a child and their family, which is the wider society and government, need to re-think and consider the best way to support the well-being of families and their children. There needs to be an understanding that while self-regulation can be supported and developed in the classroom, the foundations for self-regulation are formed during the earlier years of infancy, in the family, and the relationships that surround the child.

A perceived limitation of this study's findings is that they are limited to two case studies and are, therefore, not generalisable to the population. Rather, this study aimed to be transformative and produce findings that were relatable. This thesis aimed to explore and deepen the understanding of self-regulation in Reception-aged children in the context of the classroom during the unique circumstances the Covid-19 pandemic created, exploring the issues of power on marginalised individuals – in this study, the children (Creswell, 2014). The data collected was triangulated and analysed using the constant comparison method (Thomas, 2016), and an interpretive approach was used to make sense of the 'messy reality' of this moment in time. The study cannot be replicated because the context is not replicable, which can be seen as a limitation of the research design. However, the study and subsequent findings are set in a context that will echo and be representative of other schools and settings and, as such, while findings might not be generalisable, they are relatable;

therefore the discussion and findings should be used as part of a discourse regarding how the sector looks to support children in schools with their development of self-regulation. The methodology utilised in this study is replicable and would generate findings that could be looked at for similarities and differences to measure initiatives and improvements suggested from these findings, if adopted.

6.7 Contribution to knowledge – A model for responsive pedagogy and parenting

First, this study has built on the findings from literature that look to define and understand self-regulation with a specific focus on the early years and the Reception year (four to five years old) (Rothbart and Jones, 1998, Bronson, 2000a, Bronson, 2000b, Perry and VandeKamp, 2000, Zimmerman, 2002, Dignath *et al.*, 2008, Dinsmore *et al.*, 2008, Shanker, 2010, Hofmann *et al.*, 2012, Whitebread and Basilio, 2012, Diamond, 2013, Peeters *et al.*, 2014, Blair, 2016, Montroy *et al.*, 2016, McCoy, 2019, Perry, 2019, Ringoot *et al.*, 2021, Zachariou and Whitebread, 2022). The literature and findings identified the many variables that affect a child's self-regulation before starting statutory schooling at aged four. In the classroom context, these variables have been used to develop the responsive pedagogy and parenting model (RPP) as illustrated in Figure (24).

This model is designed as a quadrant that bullet points the main aspects of the different parenting and pedagogical styles that a child may experience and how that impact could present itself regarding a child's self-regulatory ability. The parenting aspects are drawn from reviewing the literature and the pedagogy has been developed from this study's findings. It is designed so that it can be used as part of professional CPD with teachers and in working with parents to help them understand why a positive approach is so important to a child's secure development emotionally to achieve self-regulation.

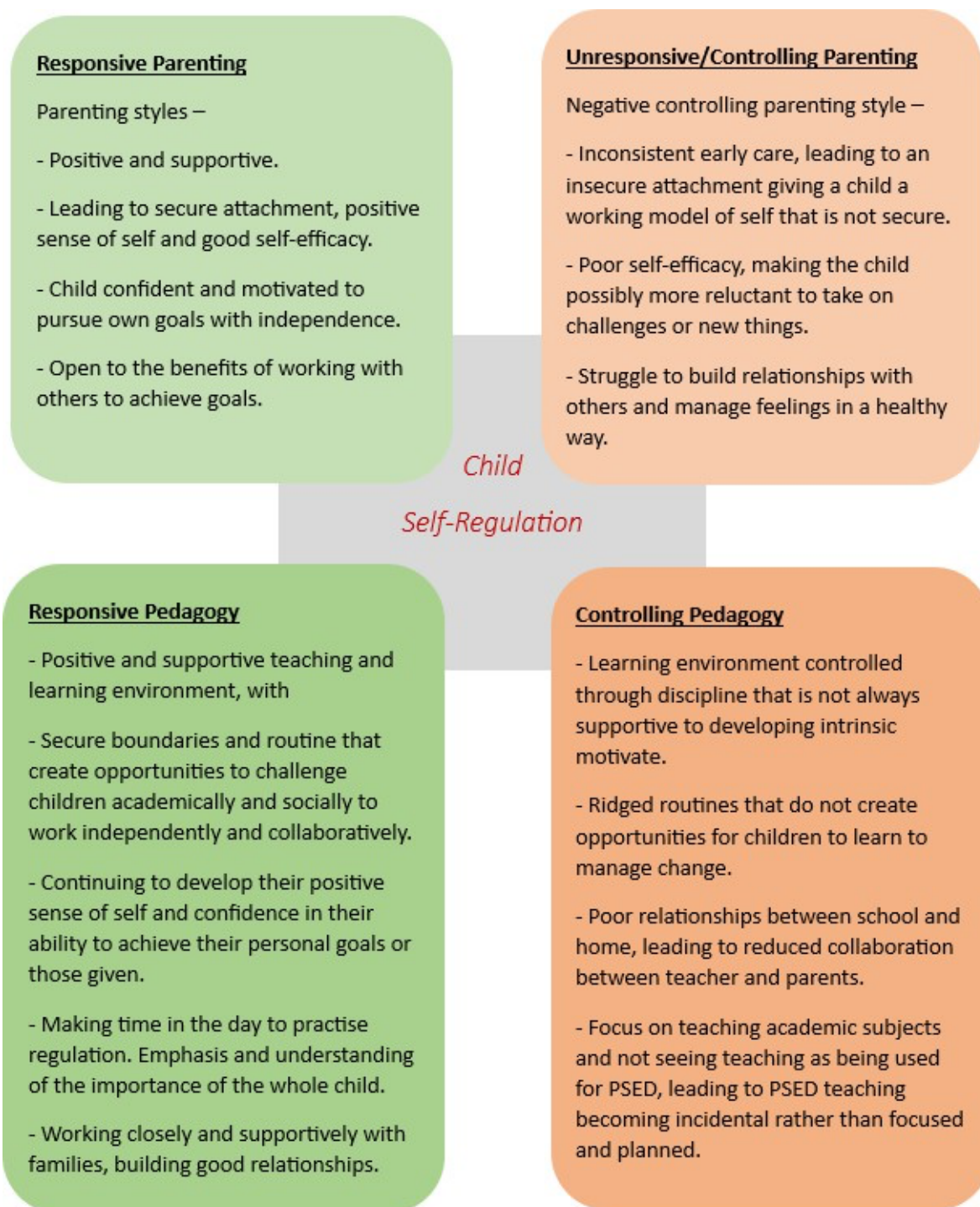


Figure (24) Illustration of the Responsive Parenting Pedagogy framework on child's development of self-regulation (RPP Model).

The focused reflections and findings this study produced can be used to support dialogue within the sector with teachers, schools, and policymakers as to how best to support children develop self-regulation in the classrooms and how the classroom experience can be used as a tool for this through routines and pedagogy.

These findings, have been presented to the wider postgraduate research community at the University of Birmingham 22nd School of education PGR conference 'Intent, Implementation, Impact – What Really Matters in Education?' and a conference paper from this published. Further the abstract of this research has been accepted for presentation at the European Early Childhood Research Association (EECERA) conference in September 2024 and a subsequent paper will look to be published in the EECERA peer reviewed journal. Additionally, the opportunity to share this research was taken during a 6 month PhD secondment with the Department for Education within the research and analytics department. Further opportunities to publish and present will be pursued both nationally and internationally to ensure that these findings will become an important contribution to understanding how to support children in SEL and self-regulation.

Applying the theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner (1996, 2005) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977, 1986), this study has been able to show the importance of the relationships between all stakeholders for children's emotional development and self-regulation and how the many different variables that impact a child are interrelated, and, as such, need to be considered as a whole. The illustration in Figure (24) draws together factors both positive and responsive, and unresponsive or controlling, that can impact a child's self-regulation development and can be used to assess and understand how to support the individual child, which is a clear contribution to knowledge.

As Donaldson (1987) states, "When we make laws which compel our children to go to school we assume collectively an awesome responsibility. For a period of some ten years, with minor variations from country to country, the children are conscripts; and their youth does nothing to alter the seriousness of this fact" (p.13). The material feminist position used in this study puts the child as the marginalised group, while the transformative approach looks to examine the issues of power on that group. The findings from this study show that the culture of the school can impact a child's experiences, regarding their opportunities to develop an understanding of their feelings, ability to self-regulate, to become independent

self-regulated learners. Supporting self-regulation is further supported through the relationships that schools have with families, the ethos of the school, the relationships between staff across the whole school, and the emphasis and value a school culture places on well-being and emotional development.

From the findings of this study, it is possible to create a suggested daily routine for a Reception class that builds in opportunities to develop the executive functions, to adapt and shift, and gives time to develop independence, reflection, and to practice self-calming and interoception. This would need to be flexible to enable children to practice becoming comfortable and secure with change and developing adaptability. In Table (11), highlighted are the additional elements for self-regulation that could be incorporated at times that would best suit individual schools and classes. While the aspects highlighted might be found in many schools' routines, understanding them as pedagogical aspects that support SR would mean they were undertaken purposefully with that intention.

<u>Daily routine to support self-regulation.</u>	
8.35-8.55	Children arrive, self-register including how they are feeling.
8.50	Registration and morning routine.
9am	Thought for the day, virtue or moral question introduced with class discussion. Assembly or whole class teaching time maths/phonics.
9.30-50	Learning time in the continuous provision, inside and out, children choose. T call children to work in groups or 1-1.
10.30	Stop for snack, children wash hands then get own snack or fruit from tray, then outside to playground.
10.50	Children back into classroom and return to self-chosen activities, teacher working with children at chosen activities or 1-1.
11.25	Tidy-up time, where children are encouraged to work independently.
11.30	Line up for lunch, walk through to dinner hall, when finished outside play area.

12.45	Children return to class and onto carpet for meditation/reflection time with focus on the day's thought, virtue or moral.
12.55	Whole class teaching time maths, phonics, topic. Children dismissed for learning time in the continuous provision, with new challenges introduced for the afternoon. Children called to work in group or 1-1.
2.30	Children directed to tidy up jobs outside and inside.
2.40	Children on carpet with bags and coats for handouts, celebrate successes of the day from children and teacher, and end-of-day story.
3.00	Children line up.
3.10	Children go out to meet parents with teacher.

Table (11) Daily routine to support self-regulation.

The third contribution the findings from this study produce, while not an initial aim, is evidence of impact that can be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic as called for in the literature (Benner and Mistry, 2020, Cardenas *et al.*, 2020, Clark *et al.*, 2020, Hiraoka and Tomoda, 2020, Jiao *et al.*, 2020, Kilham, 2020, Browne, 2021, Lee, 2020, Charney *et al.*, 2021, Dashevsky, 2021, Luo, 2021, Quenzer-Alfred *et al.*, 2021, Timmons *et al.*, 2021, Wang *et al.*, 2022). This is done through capturing the lived reality of the children in the classroom returning to full-time education after an unprecedented period of school closures and isolation.

While the focus of the study is Reception-aged children, this data produces evidence of impact in Years 1 and 2 where adaptations were needed and made to support children emotionally and with their self-regulation, which have been contrary to the requirements of the curriculum and created tensions for staff, between meeting the needs of the children and the academic progress required by the regulatory sector.

These findings suggest that while the impact for children in the Reception year can be largely mitigated through the opportunities that the early years curriculum affords, further up the school the impact of Covid-19 could be longer lasting, giving rise to the need for greater

training for practitioners in self-regulation, factors that affect it, and how to support self-regulation in the classroom and through regular opportunities to practice (as suggested in Table 11), as well as strong relationships within school and between school and homes.

Additionally, findings from this study suggest that clearer guidance is needed in the DfE development matters guidance for early years practitioners that makes clear the critical difference between the regulation of the self (to control feelings and behaviours) and self-regulation (understanding, noticing, and managing feelings and behaviours to regulate and develop executive functions).

Greater information and support is needed for parents on what positive and supportive parenting entails, together with governmental support for both parents to have a real choice to be at home and, therefore, available to their children during the time before statutory education aged four. Finally, revisions to childcare and preschool provision for children before they are the age for statutory education at four years is needed, so that it adequately supports the critical early stages of social and emotional learning that underpin self-regulatory development. Finally, government needs to raise the importance of this phase in children's development through pay, working conditions, and training to be of equal professional status to the rest of the teaching profession.

6.8 Implications for further research and policy

This research employed the triangulation of methods from two in-depth case studies. As such, the findings are narrow and represent a small-scale study located in the Midlands area in England. While the findings are relatable to other settings across England, they are not statistically significant or generalisable. Therefore, further research utilising a larger number of settings and producing statistically significant data would be needed to quantify the findings from this study. Additionally, longitudinal research following the cohorts whose early years education was disrupted, namely Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 (2021/22), would produce evidence of longer-term impact.

To understand in more depth the impact of family on a child's self-regulation, research that

goes beyond the classroom would generate greater understanding of the impact and importance of these relationships. Bronfenbrenner's ecology framework (1986, 1996, 2005), as adapted for this study in Figure (21), can be used to test and deepen our understanding of the impact of these relationships.

This study identifies a gap in literature regarding the importance and the impact of routines on children without SEN in the classroom context. Therefore, it is a recommendation of this study that further research into this area would be beneficial, particularly in understanding how this supports children with self-regulation.

Finally, policy revision that acknowledges and places value on aspects of early years practice, that support children's social and emotional development, is needed. These changes need to go beyond the foundation stage into the primary-age phase, through the continued focus on social and emotional development using direct teaching and a whole-school approach of character and moral education. An understanding of social, emotional development and self-regulation should be included in initial teacher training (ITT) as mandatory for primary and secondary-age phases. Guidance on this content should be undertaken in consultation with early years professionals, whose experience of working with children and utilising emotional pedagogy has been historically overlooked and represents a hitherto untapped wealth of knowledge that is invaluable in understanding and supporting all children.

References

- ACKERMAN, D. J. 2019. The Montessori Preschool Landscape in the United States: History, Programmatic Inputs, Availability, and Effects. 2019, 1-20.
- ACTS, U. P. G. 1981. *Education act 1981* [Online]. Available: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/60/enacted> [Accessed].
- ACTS, U. P. G. 1988. *Education Reform Act* [Online]. Available: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/contents> [Accessed].
- ACTS, U. P. G. 1989. *Children Act* [Online]. Available: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/contents> [Accessed].
- ADAMS, R. 2023. Rise in school absences since covid driven by anxiety and lack of support, says English councils *The Guardian*, 23/4/2023.
- AINSWORTH, M. S. 1989. Attachment beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, - 44, 709 - 716.
- AKHAL, A. 2019. *The impact of recent government policies on early years provision* [Online]. Available: <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Early-years-take-up -EPI.pdf> [Accessed 5/6/23 2023].
- ALAIMO, S. & HEKMAN, S. J. 2008. *Material feminisms* / edited by Stacy Alaimo & Susan Hekman. Bloomington, Ind.: Bloomington, Ind. : Indiana University Press.
- ARI. 2023. *Executive Function and Autism* [Online]. CA: Autism Research Institute. Available: https://autism.org/executive-function-autism/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwzdOIBhCNARIsAPMwjbyP2zNKAIRrRxNXwWc65Zvk27YWvN_vtLnWHXLup_XJsQd0dU1u9rQaAogDEALw_wcB [Accessed].
- ASHIABI, G. 2007. Play in the Preschool Classroom: Its Socioemotional Significance and the Teacher's Role in Play. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35, 199-207.
- ATHEY, C. 2007. *Extending thought in young children : a parent-teacher partnership* / Chris Athey, Thousand Oaks, Calif. : PCP/Sage Publications, 2007.
- BAILEY, R., STICKLE, L., BRION-MEISELS, G. & JONES, S. M. 2019. Re-imagining social-emotional learning: Findings from a strategy-based approach. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100, 53-58.
- BAKER, M. J. T. G. 2020. Why is primary schooling still based on Victorian policies.
- BALDOCK, P., FITZGERALD, D. & KAY, J. 2013. *Understanding early years policy*, Sage.
- BALL, S. 1990. *Foucault and education : disciplines and knowledge* / edited by Stephen J. Ball. London: London : Routledge.
- BANDURA, A. 1977. *Social learning theory* / Albert Bandura. Englewood Cliffs
London: Englewood Cliffs
London : Prentice-Hall.
- BANDURA, A. 1986. *Social foundations of thought and action : a social cognitive theory* / Albert Bandura. Harlow, England : Pearson, 1986.
- BARNARDOS. 2023. *PATHS program for schools* [Online]. UK: Barnardos. Available: <https://www.pathseducation.co.uk/what-is-paths/paths-curriculum/> [Accessed].
- BARR, J. 2014. "It all comes down to the leadership": The role of the school principal in fostering parent-school engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42, 491-506.
- BARRY, A., OSBORNE, T. & ROSE, N. 1996. *Foucault and political reason : liberalism, neo-liberalism, and rationalities of government* / edited by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose. London: London : UCL Press.
- BASSEY, M. 1999. *Case Study Research In Educational Settings*, Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes: McGraw-Hill Education.
- BAYRAKDAR, S. & GUVELI, A. 2023. *Inequalities in Home Learning and Schools' Remote Teaching Provision during the COVID-19 School Closure in the UK*, *Sociology*. 2023 Aug;57(4):767-88. doi: 10.1177/00380385221122444. Epub 2022 Oct 28.

- BAZZANO, A. N., SUN, Y., ZU, Y., FLECKMAN, J. M., BLACKSON, E. A., PATEL, T., SHORTY-BELISLE, A., LIEDERMAN, K. H. & ROI, C. 2023. Yoga and Mindfulness for Social-Emotional Development and Resilience in 3–5 Year-Old Children: Non-Randomized, Controlled Intervention. *Psychol Res Behav Manag*, 16, 109-118.
- BENNER, A. D. & MISTRY, R. S. 2020. Child Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic Through a Life Course Theory Lens. *Child development perspectives*, 14, 236-243.
- BERA 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* UK, British Educational Research Association.
- BERNARD, H. R. 2018. Research methods in anthropology : qualitative and quantitative approaches / H. Russell Bernard. Sixth edition. ed.: Lanham, Maryland : Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- BLACKSTONE, T. 1967. The Plowden Report. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 18, 291-302.
- BLAIR, C. 2016. School Readiness and Self-Regulation: A Developmental Psychobiological Approach. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 66, 711-749.
- BLAIR, C. & DIAMOND, A. 2008. Biological processes in prevention and intervention: the promotion of self-regulation as a means of preventing school failure. *Development and psychopathology*, 20, 899-911.
- BOLER, M. 1999. *Feeling power : emotions and education / Megan Boler*, New York : Routledge, 1999.
- BOWLBY, J. 1983. *Attachment*, New York, Basic Books
- BRADBURY, A. 2011. Rethinking assessment and inequality: the production of disparities in attainment in early years education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 26, 655-676.
- BRADBURY, A., MCGIMPSEY, I. & SANTORI, D. 2013. Revising rationality: the use of 'Nudge' approaches in neoliberal education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28, 247-267.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 1967. The Psychological Costs of Quality and Equality in Education. *Child Development*, 38, 909-925.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 1974. Developmental Research, Public Policy, and the Ecology of Childhood. *Child Development*, 45, 1-5.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 1979. The ecology of human development : experiments by nature and design / (by) Urie Bronfenbrenner. Cambridge, Mass. London : Harvard University Press.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 1986. Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723-742.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 1996. *The ecology of human development : experiments by nature and design / Urie Bronfenbrenner*, Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1996.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U. 2005. *Making human beings human : bioecological perspectives on human development / edited by Urie Bronfenbrenner*, Thousand Oaks, Calif. London : Sage.
- BRONSON, M. B. 2000a. Recognizing and Supporting the Development of Self-Regulation in Young Children. *Young Children*, 55, 32-37.
- BRONSON, M. B. 2000b. *Self-regulation in early childhood: Nature and nurture*.
- BROWNE, D. T. 2021. Children's Mental Health Problems During the Initial Emergence of COVID-19. *Canadian Psychology*, 62, 65-73.
- BURKITT, E., BARRETT, M. & DAVIS, A. 2003. Children's colour choices for completing drawings of affectively characterised topics. 44, 445-455.
- BURKITT, E., BARRETT, M. & DAVIS, A. 2009. Effects of different emotion terms on the size and colour of children's drawings. *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 14, 74-84.
- BURMAN, E. & STACEY, J. 2010. The child and childhood in feminist theory. *Feminist Theory*, 227-240.

- CACIOPPO, J. T., CACIOPPO, S. & COLE, S. W. 2013. Social neuroscience and social genomics: The emergence of multi-level integrative analyses. *International Journal of Psychological Research*, 6, 1-6.
- CAFFO, E., SCANDROGLIO, F. & ASTA, L. 2020. Debate: COVID-19 and psychological well-being of children and adolescents in Italy. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 25, 167-168.
- CARDENAS, M. C., BUSTOS, S. S. & CHAKRABORTY, R. 2020. A 'parallel pandemic': The psychosocial burden of COVID-19 in children and adolescents. *Acta Paediatrica*, n/a.
- CARE, D. O. H. A. S. 2020. *Making a support bubble with another household* [Online]. UK: UK Government Available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household#:~:text=Once%20you're%20in%20a,if%20you%20are%20in%20one>. [Accessed 10/2/23 2023].
- CARTER, C. & NUTBROWN, C. 2016. A Pedagogy of Friendship: young children's friendships and how schools can support them. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 24, 395-413.
- CATTAN, S. F., C. KRUTIKOVA, S. MCKENDRICK, A. SEVILLA, A. 2023. *How did parents' experiences in the labour market shape children's social and emotional development during the pandemic?* [Online]. UK: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Available: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/how-did-parents-experiences-labour-market-shape-childrens-social-and-emotional> [Accessed 2023].
- CHARNEY, S. A., CAMARATA, S. M. & CHERN, A. 2021. Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Communication and Language Skills in Children. 165, 1-2.
- CLARK, H., COLL-SECK, A. M., BANERJEE, A., PETERSON, S., DALGLISH, S. L., AMERATUNGA, S., BALABANOVA, D., BHUTTA, Z. A., BORRAZZO, J., CLAESON, M., DOHERTY, T., EL-JARDALI, F., GEORGE, A. S., GICHAGA, A., GRAM, L., HIPGRAVE, D. B., KWAMIE, A., MENG, Q., MERCER, R., NARAIN, S., NSUNGWA-SABIITI, J., OLUMIDE, A. O., OSRIN, D., POWELL-JACKSON, T., RASANATHAN, K., RASUL, I., REID, P., REQUEJO, J., ROHDE, S. S., ROLLINS, N., ROMEDENNE, M., SINGH SACHDEV, H., SALEH, R., SHAWAR, Y. R., SHIFFMAN, J., SIMON, J., SLY, P. D., STENBERG, K., TOMLINSON, M., VED, R. R. & COSTELLO, A. 2020. After COVID-19, a future for the world's children? *Lancet*, 396, 298-300.
- CLARK, R., MENNA, R., MCANDREW, A. J. & JOHNSON, E. M. 2021. Language, Aggression, and Self-Regulation in Young Children. *Journal of emotional and behavioral disorders*, 29, 135-147.
- CLARO, S., PAUNESKU, D. & DWECK, C. S. 2016. Growth mindset tempers the effects of poverty on academic achievement. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*, 113, 8664-8668.
- CO-OPERATIVE, P. C. 2008-2023. *P4C* [Online]. UK. Available: <https://p4c.com/contact-us/> [Accessed].
- COE, J. 2001. The Plowden Report. *Education 3-13*, 29, 56-57.
- COHEN, L. M., L; MORRISON, K; 2008. *Research Methods in Education*, UK, Routledge.
- COMMITTEE, E. 2023. Support for childcare and early years. In: REPORT, H. O. C. C. (ed.). UK: UK Parliament.
- COMMUNITY, S. 2023. *SEAL* [Online]. UK. Available: <https://sealcommunity.org/> [Accessed].
- COŞKUN, K., ÇIKRIKÇI, O., LIEBOVICH, B. & KARA, C. 2023. Parent-child interaction in academic experiences: Scale development and validation. *Current psychology (New Brunswick, N.J.)*, 42, 2268-2278.
- CRESWELL, J. W. 2014. *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*.
- CRUZ, O. 2018. Does Temperament Moderate the Relation between Preschool Parenting and School-Age Self-Regulation? Contrasting Diathesis-Stress and Differential Susceptibility Models. *Parenting: Science & Practice*, 18, 126-141.
- DAHLBERG, G. M., P; PENCE, A 2007. *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, languages of evaluation*, UK, Routledge.
- DASHEVSKY, A. 2021. *The COVID-19 Pandemic: What has been difficult for children and how they are adapting* [Online]. Growing Minds Blog. Available: <http://growingmindspsych.com/blog/2021/04/12/the-covid-19-pandemic-what-has-been-difficult-for-children-and-how-they-are-adapting-to-change/> [Accessed 26 April 2023].

- DFE 2007. The Early Years Foundation Stage *In: SKILLS*, D. F. E. A. (ed.). Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- DFE 2012. Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). *In: EDUCATION*, D. F. (ed.). London: Department for Education.
- DFE. 2013. *National Curriculum : Primary Curriculum* [Online]. UK: Gov UK. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum> [Accessed 2023].
- DFE 2014. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage *In: DFE* (ed.). UK: UK Government.
- DFE. 2015. *Citizenship programmes of study : key stages 1 and 2* [Online]. UK: Gov UK. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-programmes-of-study-for-key-stages-1-and-2> [Accessed 2023].
- DFE 2019. Early years foundation stage profile results: 2018 to 2019. *In: EDUCATION*, D. F. (ed.). UK: Gov.uk.
- DFE. 2020. *Action for schools during the coronavirus outbreak* [Online]. UK: UK Government. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#full-publication-update-history> [Accessed 10/02/23].
- DFE. 2021a. *Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID19 pandemic* [Online]. UK Government. Available: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210817165906/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/actions-for-early-years-and-childcare-providers-during-the-covid-19-pandemic> [Accessed March 2023].
- DFE. 2021b. *Early Years Foundation Stage Framework* [Online]. UK: UK Government Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> [Accessed 6/3/23 2023].
- DFE. 2021c. *Early years foundations stage: coronavirus disapplications* [Online]. UK: UK Government Available: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210817164825/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications> [Accessed March 2023].
- DFE. 2021d. *Providing school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak* [Online]. UK: Gov.uk. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools> [Accessed].
- DFE 2021e. Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. *In: EDUCATION*, D. F. (ed.). UK: crown publications.
- DFE. 2022a. *Early years foundation stage profile results: 2021 to 2022* [Online]. National Statistics. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2021-to-2022> [Accessed 9.6.23 2023].
- DFE 2022b. *Schools Covid-19 operational guidance* *In: EDUCATION*, D. F. (ed.). UK: UK Government.
- DFE. 2023. *Government to tackle post pandemic absence rates with new support* [Online]. UK: Gov.uk. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-tackle-post-pandemic-absence-rates-with-new-support> [Accessed 5/6/23 2023].
- DIAMOND, A. 2006. *The Early Development*.
- DIAMOND, A. 2013. Executive Functions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 135-168.
- DIGNATH, C., BUETTNER, G. & LANGFELDT, H.-P. 2008. How can primary school students learn self-regulated learning strategies most effectively?: A meta-analysis on self-regulation training programmes. *Educational Research Review*, 3, 101-129.
- DINSMORE, D., ALEXANDER, P. & LOUGHLIN, S. 2008. Focusing the Conceptual Lens on Metacognition, Self-regulation, and Self-regulated Learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 391-409.

- DODD-NUFRIO, A. 2011. Reggio Emilia, Maria Montessori, and John Dewey: Dispelling Teachers' Misconceptions and Understanding Theoretical Foundations. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39, 235-237.
- DONAGH, B. 2020. From Unnoticed to Invisible: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse. *Child abuse review (Chichester, England : 1992)*.
- DONALDSON, M. 1987. Children's minds / Margaret Donaldson. London: London : Fontana Press.
- DOWD, L. 2022. School-age children struggling with talking and understanding words following pandemic, survey finds. *Sky News*.
- DUNNING, D. L., GRIFFITHS, K., KUYKEN, W., CRANE, C., FOULKES, L., PARKER, J. & DALGLEISH, T. 2019. Research Review: The effects of mindfulness-based interventions on cognition and mental health in children and adolescents – a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*, 60, 244-258.
- DWECK, C. S. 2017. Mindset / Dr Carol S. Dweck. Updated edition. ed.: London : Robinson, an imprint of Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2017.
- EDWARDS, C. P., FORMAN, G. E. & GANDINI, L. 1998. The hundred languages of children : the Reggio Emilia approach - advanced reflections / edited by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini and George Forman. 2nd ed. ed. Greenwich, Conn. London : Ablex.
- EEF, E. E. F. 2018. *Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning* [Online]. UK: EEF. Available: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition> [Accessed March 2023 2018].
- ELFER, P. 2012. *Key persons in the early years [electronic resource] : building relationships for quality provision in early years settings and primary schools / by Peter Elfer, Elinor Goldschmied, and Dorothy Y. Selleck*, Oxon [England], Oxon England : Routledge.
- ELIAS, M. J., PARKER, S. J., KASH, V. M. & DUNKEBLAU, E. 2007. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CHARACTER AND MORAL EDUCATION IN CHILDREN: Synergy or Fundamental Divergence in Our Schools? *Journal of Character Education*, 5, 167-181.
- FITZGERALD, D. 2004. *Parent partnership in the early years / Damien Fitzgerald*, London
- FLICK, U. 2018. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, London UK, Sage.
- FLOURI, E. 2009. Modeling risks: effects of area deprivation, family socio-economic disadvantage and adverse life events on young children's psychopathology. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 45, 611-620.
- FLYVBJERG, B. 2006. Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 219-245.
- FORD, T., DEGLI ESPOSTI, M., CRANE, C., TAYLOR, L., MONTERO-MARÍN, J., BLAKEMORE, S.-J., BOWES, L., BYFORD, S., DALGLEISH, T., GREENBERG, M. T., NUTHALL, E., PHILLIPS, A., RAJA, A., UKOUMUNNE, O. C., VINER, R. M., WILLIAMS, J. M. G., ALLWOOD, M., AUKLAND, L., CASEY, T., DE WILDE, K., FARLEY, E.-R., KAPPELMANN, N., LORD, L., MEDLICOTT, E., PALMER, L., PETIT, A., PRYOR-NITSCH, I., RADLEY, L., WARRINER, L., SONLEY, A., AHMED, S., BALL, S., BENNETT, M., DALRYMPLE, N., DUNNING, D., FLETCHER, K., FOULKES, L., GANGULI, P., GRIFFIN, C., GRIFFITHS, K., KOMNINIDOU, K., KNIGHT, R., LAWS, S., LEUNG, J., PARKER, J., PI-SUNYER, B. P., SAKHARDANDE, J. A., SHACKLEFORD, J., TUDOR, K., VAINRE, M., WAINMAN, B. & KUYKEN, W. 2021. The Role of Schools in Early Adolescents' Mental Health: Findings From the MYRIAD Study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 60, 1467-1478.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1971. Orders of discourse. *Information sur les sciences sociales*, 10, 7-30.
- FOUCAULT, M. 1991. Discipline and punish : the birth of the prison / Michel Foucault

- translated from the French by Alan Sheridan. In: SHERIDAN, A. (ed.). London : Penguin, 1991.
- FOX, E. & RICONSCENTE, M. 2008. Metacognition and Self-Regulation in James, Piaget, and Vygotsky. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 373-389.
- FREIRE, P. 1917. Pedagogy of the oppressed / Paulo Freire
- translated (from the Portuguese) by Myra Bergman Ramos. In: RAMOS, M. B. (ed.). UK: Penguin Classics.
- GAGNE, J. R., LIEW, J. & NWADINOB, O. K. 2021. How does the broader construct of self-regulation relate to emotion regulation in young children? *Developmental review*, 60, 100965.
- GARNER, P. W., BOLT, E. & ROTH, A. N. 2019. Emotion-Focused Curricula Models and Expressions of and Talk About Emotions Between Teachers and Young Children. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 33, 180-193.
- GIDDENS, A. 1982. *Profiles and critiques in social theory* / Anthony Giddens
- chapter 2 contributed by Fred Dallmayr, Basingstoke, Basingstoke : Macmillan.
- GLASER, B. G. 1965. The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis. *Social Problems*, 12, 436-445.
- GOLDBERG, J. M., SKLAD, M., ELFRINK, T. R., SCHREURS, K. M. G., BOHLMMEIJER, E. T. & CLARKE, A. M. 2019. Effectiveness of interventions adopting a whole school approach to enhancing social and emotional development: a meta-analysis. *European journal of psychology of education*, 34, 755-782.
- GOVERNMENT, I. F. 2022. *Timeline of UK government coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions* [Online]. UK. Available: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/timeline-coronavirus-lockdown-december-2021.pdf> [Accessed].
- GOVERNMENT, U. 1963. Children and Young Persons Act 1963. In: LEGISLATION (ed.). UK.
- GREAT BRITAIN, T., ENGLAND & WALES, T. 2003. Every child matters / presented to parliament by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by command of Her Majesty, September 2003. Norwich: Norwich : TSO.
- GREENE, S. & HOGAN, D. 2005. Researching children's experiences : methods and approaches / edited by Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan. London: London : Sage.
- GROSS, D. 2019. What is Parent Engagement in Early Learning? Depends Who You Ask. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 29, 747-761.
- HART, C. 2003. *Doing a Literature Review, Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination* Sage.
- HELLEINER, J. J. A. C. S. I. G., CULTURE & JUSTICE, S. 1999. Toward a feminist anthropology of childhood. 24, 27-38.
- HICKEY-MOODY, A. C. 2012. Deleuze's children. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45, 272-286.
- HILL, E. L. 2004. Executive dysfunction in autism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 8, 26-32.
- HIRAOKA, D. & TOMODA, A. 2020. Relationship between parenting stress and school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 74, 497-498.
- HOFMANN, W., SCHMEICHEL, B. J. & BADDELEY, A. D. 2012. Executive functions and self-regulation. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 16, 174-180.
- HUTTON, G. P., ANDREW. 2021. UK Supply chain problems. House of Commons Library: UK Parliament.
- INZLICHT, M., SCHMEICHEL, B. J. & MACRAE, C. N. 2014. Why self-control seems (but may not be) limited. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18, 127-133.
- JAMES, A. & JAMES, A. 2008. European Childhoods: Cultures, Politics and Childhoods in Europe: Cultures, Politics and Childhoods in the European Union. Basingstoke, England.
- JEFFREYS, B. 2021. *Lockdowns hurt child speech and language skills - report* [Online]. BBC. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-56889035> [Accessed 2023].
- JIAO, W. Y., WANG, L. N., LIU, J., FANG, S. F., JIAO, F. Y., PETTOELLO-MANTOVANI, M. & SOMEKH, E. 2020. Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children during the COVID-19 Epidemic. *J Pediatr*, 221, 264-266.e1.

- JIGSAW. 2013-2023. *Jigsaw PSED* [Online]. UK. Available: https://jigsawpshe.com/home?utm_campaign=Sample+Material&utm_source=ppc&utm_medium=Google+Ads&utm_term=Jigsaw+PSHE&utm_content=Website+Traffic&gclid=CjwKCAjw-eKpBhAbEiwAqFL0mvWW5ZrE1QOhm8r667UY0yEGMj8--WURJX-5Xa1jIMJC7ta6v9lyOxoC1JYQAvD_BwE [Accessed].
- JOHNSON, K., BROWN, M., MCGRATH, R. E., BERKOWITZ, M. W. & BIER, M. 2022. A META-ANALYSIS OF THE WHAT WORKS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION RESEARCH. *Journal of Character Education*, 18, 87-112.
- JOHNSTON, S. C. & HAUSER, S. L. 2008. Transformative research. *Annals of Neurology*, 63, A11-A13.
- JONATHAN, B. & DANIEL, H. 2012. Brain-Based Parenting. *Psychotherapy Networker*, 36.
- JORGENSEN, D. L. 1989. Participant observation : a methodology for human studies / Danny L. Jorgensen. Newbury Park, Calif. London: Newbury Park, Calif. London : Sage.
- KAGAN. 2023. *Kagan* [Online]. Kagan publishing Available: <https://www.kaganonline.com/> [Accessed].
- KAY, L. 2022. 'What works' and for whom? Bold Beginnings and the construction of the school ready child. *Journal of early childhood research : ECR*, 20, 172-184.
- KEENAN, T. 2016. *An introduction to child development*, Los Angeles : SAGE, 2016.
- KILHAM, H. A. 2020. COVID-19 apocalypse for children: Predictable, preventable? *Journal of paediatrics and child health*, 56, 1311-1312.
- KIM, S. 2012. Child temperament moderates effects of parent-child mutuality on self-regulation: a relationship-based path for emotionally negative infants. *Child Development*, 83, 1275-1290.
- KOK, R. 2022. The Role of Supportive Parenting and Stress Reactivity in the Development of Self-Regulation in Early Childhood. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 31, 2424-2436.
- KRAFTL, P. 2013. Beyond 'voice', beyond 'agency', beyond 'politics'? Hybrid childhoods and some critical reflections on children's emotional geographies. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 9.
- KUMAR, A., NAYAR, K. R. & BHAT, L. D. 2020. Debate: COVID-19 and children in India. *Child and adolescent mental health*, 25, 165-166.
- LAMBERT, M. 2019. *Practical Research Methods in Education*, Taylor and Francis.
- LAVASANI, M. G., MIRHOSSEINI, F. S., HEJAZI, E. & DAVOODI, M. 2011. The Effect of Self-regulation Learning Strategies Training on the Academic Motivation and Self-efficacy. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 627-632.
- LEE, J. 2020. Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4, 421-undefined.
- LIONETTI, F., ARON, A., ARON, E. N., BURNS, G. L., JAGIELLOWICZ, J. & PLUESS, M. 2018. Dandelions, tulips and orchids: evidence for the existence of low-sensitive, medium-sensitive and high-sensitive individuals. *Translational Psychiatry*, 8, 24.
- LIU, C. 2023. Genetic and environmental influences on temperament development across the preschool period. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 64, 59-71.
- LLENAS, A. 2012. *The Colour Monster*, Templar Publishing.
- LOWE, R. 2000. *History of education : major themes / edited by Roy Lowe. Vol.1, Debates in the history of education*, London New York, London New York : Routledge.
- LUEDDERS JONES, J. 2022. Interoceptive Awareness in Early Childhood: Connecting Bodily Sensations to Emotions. *Zero to Three*, 43, 47-53.

- LUO, W. 2021. Young chinese children's remote peer interactions and social competence development during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 1-18.
- MACNAUGHTON, G., HUGHES, P. & SMITH, K. 2007. Young Children's Rights and Public Policy: Practices and Possibilities for Citizenship in the Early Years. *Children & Society*, 21, 458-469.
- MACNAUGHTON, G., ROLFE, S. A. & SIRAJ-BLATCHFORD, I. 2001. *Doing early childhood research : international perspectives on theory and practice / Glenda Mac Naughton, Sharne A. Rolfe, Iram Siraj-Blatchford*, Buckingham, Buckingham : Open University Press.
- MAHLER, K. 2017. *Interoception the eighth sensory system*, Kansas, AAPC publishing.
- MALEWSKI, A. 2021. *Growing Sideways in Twenty-first Century British Culture*: Amsterdam – John Benjamins Publishing Company
- MANIAN, N. 1998. Temperament, Recalled Parenting Styles, and Self-Regulation: Testing the Developmental Postulates of Self-Discrepancy Theory. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 75, 1321-1333.
- MANTOVANI, S., BOVE, C., FERRI, P., MANZONI, P., CESA BIANCHI, A. & PICCA, M. 2021. Children 'under lockdown': voices, experiences, and resources during and after the COVID-19 emergency. Insights from a survey with children and families in the Lombardy region of Italy. *European early childhood education research journal*, 29, 35-50.
- MAW, J. 1999. League tables and the press -value added? *Curriculum journal (London, England)*, 10, 3-10.
- MCCLELLAND, M. M., TOMINEY, S. L., SCHMITT, S. A. & DUNCAN, R. 2017. SEL Interventions in Early Childhood. *Future of Children*, 27, 33-47.
- MCCOY, D. C. 2019. Measuring Young Children's Executive Function and Self-Regulation in Classrooms and Other Real-World Settings. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, 22, 63-75.
- MEECHAN, D., WHATMORE, T, WILLIAMS-BROWN, Z & HALFHEAD, S 2022. Why are we tracking Reception-aged children? Teachers' and key stakeholders' perspectives on the reintroduction of national Reception Baseline Assessment'. *Educational Futures*, 13, no. 2, 00.113-139.
- MERRITT, E. G., WANLESS, S. B., RIMM-KAUFMAN, S. E., CAMERON, C. & PEUGH, J. L. 2012. The Contribution of Teachers' Emotional Support to Children's Social Behaviors and Self-Regulatory Skills in First Grade. *School psychology review*, 41, 141-159.
- MERTENS, D. 2016. Transformative Paradigm. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1, 212-225.
- METCALFE, J. & MOULIN-STOŽEK, D. 2021. Religious education teachers' perspectives on character education. *British journal of religious education*, 43, 349-360.
- MIKULINCER, M. & SHAVER, P. R. 2019. Attachment orientations and emotion regulation. *Current opinion in psychology*, 25, 6-10.
- MISCHEL, W., SHODA, Y. & RODRIGUEZ, M. L. 1989. Delay of Gratification in Children. *Science*, 244, 933-938.
- MOFFITT, T. E., ARSENEAULT, L., BELSKY, D., DICKSON, N., HANCOX, R. J., HARRINGTON, H., HOUTS, R., POULTON, R., ROBERTS, B. W., ROSS, S., SEARS, M. R., THOMSON, W. M. & CASPI, A. 2011. A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 108, 2693.
- MONTROY, J. J., BOWLES, R. P., SKIBBE, L. E., MCCLELLAND, M. M. & MORRISON, F. J. 2016. The Development of Self-Regulation Across Early Childhood. *Developmental Psychology*, 52, 1744-1762.
- MOSS, P. 2010. We Cannot Continue as We Are: the educator in an education for survival. *Contemporary Issues In Early Childhood*, 11, 8-19.
- MOSS, P. 2014a. Early childhood policy in England 1997–2013: anatomy of a missed opportunity. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22, 1-13.
- MOSS, P. 2014b. *Transormative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality.*, Routledge.

- MOSS, P. 2015. For a New Public Early Childhood Education. *FORUM*, 57, 209-212.
- MOSS, P. 2016. Loris Malaguzzi and the schools of Reggio Emilia: Provocation and hope for a renewed public education. *Improving Schools*, 19, 167-176.
- MROZ, A. 2019. Why we mustn't ignore self-regulation. *The Times Educational Supplement*.
- MURRAY, J. 2020. In a Time of COVID-19 and Beyond, the World needs Early Childhood Educators. *International journal of early years education*, 28, 299-302.
- NAGATA, J. M., ABDEL MAGID, H. S. & PETTEE GABRIEL, K. 2020. Screen Time for Children and Adolescents During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. *Obesity*, 28, 1582-1583.
- NEECE, C., MCINTYRE, L. L. & FENNING, R. 2020. Examining the impact of COVID-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of intellectual disability research*, 64, 739-749.
- NIMH. 2023. *Autism Spectrum Disorder* [Online]. National Institute of Mental Health. Available: https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd#part_2283 [Accessed].
- NOBLE, H. & SMITH, J. 2015. Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evid Based Nurs*, 18, 34-35.
- NUTBROWN, C. 2005. *Early literacy work with families : policy, practice and research / Cathy Nutbrown, Peter Hannon and Anne Morgan*, London
Thousand Oaks, Calif. : SAGE Publications, 2005.
- NUTBROWN, C. 2014. *Early childhood education : history, philosophy and experience*, Los Angeles : SAGE, 2014.
- NUTBROWN, C. 2021. Early childhood educators' qualifications: a framework for change. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 29, 236-249.
- OFSTED 2017. *Bold Beginnings In: DFE (ed.)*. UK: HMCI.
- OFSTED 2021. Children and young people with SEND disproportionately affected by pandemic. UK: Gov.uk.
- OFSTED. 2023. *School inspection handbook* [Online]. UK: Gov UK. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif#full-publication-update-history> [Accessed 2023].
- OSGOOD, J. 2004. Time to Get Down to Business?: The Responses of Early Years Practitioners to Entrepreneurial Approaches to Professionalism. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2, 5-24.
- OSGOOD, J. 2006a. Deconstructing Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: resisting the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues In Early Childhood*, 7, 5-14.
- OSGOOD, J. 2006b. Professionalism and performativity: the feminist challenge facing early years practitioners. *Early Years*, 26, 187-199.
- OSGOOD, J. 2010. Reconstructing professionalism in ECEC: the case for the 'critically reflective emotional professional'. *Early Years*, 30, 119-133.
- PARADISE, R. & ROGOFF, B. 2009. Side by Side: Learning by Observing and Pitching In. 37, 102-138.
- PARLIAMENT, U. 2023. *MPs launce new inquiry into persisten absence and support for disadvantaged pupils* [Online]. UK: UK parliament. Available: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/203/education-committee/news/175361/mps-launch-new-inquiry-into-persistent-absence-and-support-for-disadvantaged-pupils/> [Accessed 2023].
- PARTINGTON, R. 2021. *From coffee to microchips - how the supply chain crisis is disrupting UK plc* [Online]. UK: The Guardian. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/sep/10/from-coffee-to-microchips-how-the-supply-chain-crisis-is-disrupting-uk-plc> [Accessed].
- PATTEN, M. L. 2014. *Questionnaire research : a practical guide / Mildred L. Patten*. Fourth edition. ed.: Glendale, CA : Pyrczak Publishing, 2014.
- PEETERS, J., DE BACKER, F., REINA, V. R., KINDEKENS, A., BUFFEL, T. & LOMBAERTS, K. 2014. The Role of Teachers' Self-regulatory Capacities in the Implementation of Self-regulated Learning Practices. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 1963-1970.

- PENSIERO, N. K., ANTHONY. BOKHOVE, CHRISTIAN 2021. Learning inequalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. A longitudinal analysis using the UK Understanding Society 2020 and 2021 data. University of Southampton.
- PERRY, N. E. 2019. Recognizing early childhood as a critical time for developing and supporting self-regulation. *Metacognition and learning*, 14, 327-334.
- PERRY, N. E. & VANDEKAMP, K. J. O. 2000. Creating classroom contexts that support young children's development of self-regulated learning. *International journal of educational research*, 33, 821-843.
- PERSICO, D., MILLIGAN, C. & LITTLEJOHN, A. 2015. The Interplay Between Self-Regulated Professional Learning and Teachers' Work-Practice. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 2481-2486.
- PESSOA, L. 2009. How do emotion and motivation direct executive control? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13, 160-166.
- PLOWDEN, B. H. P. 1967. Children and their primary schools : a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Vol.1, The report. London: Central Advisory Council for Education, QCentral Advisory Council for Education London : HMSO.
- POUND, L. 2011. *Influencing Early Childhood Education: Key Figures, Philosophies And Ideas: Key themes, philosophies and theories*, McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- PRIMARY, E. 2021. *The colour monster* [Online]. Templar publishing. Available: <https://eytonprimary.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Colour-Monster-Book.pdf> [Accessed March 2023 2023].
- QUENZER-ALFRED, C., SCHNEIDER, L., SOYKA, V., HARBRECHT, M., BLUME, V. & MAYS, D. 2021. No nursery 'til school - the transition to primary school without institutional transition support due to the COVID-19 shutdown in Germany. *European journal of special needs education*, 36, 127-141.
- RCSLT. 2020. *The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services Evidence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)* [Online]. UK: UK Parliament Available: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/5852/pdf/> [Accessed 8/6/2023 2023].
- RINGOOT, A., JANSEN, P., KOK, R., VAN IJZENDOORN, M., VERLINDEN, M., VERHULST, F., BAKERMANS-KRANENBURG, M. J. & TIEMEIER, H. 2021. Parenting, young children's behavioral self-regulation and the quality of their peer relationships. *Social development (Oxford, England)*, 31, 715-732.
- ROBERTS-HOLMES, G. 2014. The 'datafication' of early years pedagogy: 'if the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there's bad teaching, there is bad data'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30, 1-13.
- ROBERTS-HOLMES, G. 2017. Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia and Democratic Alternatives to Early Childhood Education Assessment. *FORUM*, 59, 159-168.
- ROBERTS-HOLMES, G. 2018. *Doing Your Early Years Research Project: A Step by Step Guide*, SAGE Publications.
- ROBERTS, R. 2011. Companionable learning: a mechanism for holistic well-being development from birth. *European early childhood education research journal*, 19, 195-205.
- ROBSON, C. 2002. *Real World Research*, Blackwell.
- ROEBERS, C. M. 2017. Executive function and metacognition: Towards a unifying framework of cognitive self-regulation. *Developmental Review*, 45, 31-51.
- ROGOFF, B. 2003. *The cultural nature of human development / Barbara Rogoff*, Oxford UK a New York : Oxford University Press, 2003.
- ROSE, J. & JOHNSON, C. W. 2020. Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of leisure research*, 51, 432-451.

- ROTHBART M.K., P. M. I. 1985. Temperament and the Development of Self-Regulation. In: HARTLAGE L.C., T. C. F. E. (ed.) *The Neuropsychology of Individual Differences. Perspectives on Individual Differences*. Boston, MA.: Springer.
- ROTHBART, M. K. & JONES, L. B. 1998. Temperament, Self-Regulation, and Education. *School psychology review*, 27, 479-491.
- RUBIN, H. J. 2012. Qualitative interviewing : the art of hearing data / Herbert J. Rubin, Irene S. Rubin. In: RUBIN, I. (ed.) 3rd ed. ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Thousand Oaks, Calif. : SAGE.
- RUIZ-ÍÑIGUEZ, R., SANTED GERMÁN, M. Á., BURGOS-JULIÁN, F. A., DÍAZ-SILVEIRA, C. & CARRALERO MONTERO, A. 2020. Effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions on anxiety for children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Early Interv Psychiatry*, 14, 263-274.
- RUNDLE, A. G., PARK, Y., HERBSTMAN, J. B., KINSEY, E. W. & WANG, Y. C. 2020. COVID-19–Related School Closings and Risk of Weight Gain Among Children. *Obesity (Silver Spring)*, 28, 1008-1009.
- SAUNDERS, D. & KOBER, H. 2020. Mindfulness-Based Intervention Development for Children and Adolescents. *Mindfulness (N Y)*, 11, 1868-1883.
- SCHIARITI, V. 2020. The human rights of children with disabilities during health emergencies: the challenge of COVID-19. *Dev Med Child Neurol*, 62, 661-661.
- SCHONERT-REICHL, K. A., OBERLE, E., LAWLOR, M. S., ABBOTT, D., THOMSON, K., OBERLANDER, T. F. & DIAMOND, A. 2015. Enhancing Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development Through a Simple-to-Administer Mindfulness-Based School Program for Elementary School Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Dev Psychol*, 51, 52-66.
- SCHOSTAK, J. 2010. Participant Observation.
- SCHUETTE, S. A. 2021. Do interoceptive accuracy and interoceptive sensibility predict emotion regulation? *Psychological Research*, 85, 1894-1909.
- SHAH, R. & ABSOUD, M. 2021. The failure of provision for neurodiverse children during the covid-19 pandemic. *BMJ*, 375, n2711.
- SHANKER, S. 2010. Self-Regulation: Calm, Alert, and Learning. *Education Canada*, 50, 4-7.
- SHEARD, M. K., ROSS, S. & CHEUNG, A. 2012. Educational effectiveness of an intervention programme for social-emotional learning. *International journal of multiple research approaches*, 6, 264-284.
- SIEGEL, D. J. 2001. Toward an interpersonal neurobiology of the developing mind: Attachment relationships, "mindsight," and neural integration. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22, 67-94.
- SIMONS, H. 1980. *Towards a science of the singular : essays about case study in educational research and evaluation / edited by Helen Simons*, Norwich, Norwich : Centre for Applied Research in Education University of East Anglia.
- SONG, J.-H. 2018. Positive Parenting Moderates the Association between Temperament and Self-Regulation in Low-Income Toddlers. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 27, 2354-2365.
- SPERDUTI, M., MAKOWSKI, D., ARCANGELI, M., WANTZEN, P., ZALLA, T., LEMAIRE, S., DOKIC, J., PELLETIER, J. & PIOLINO, P. 2017. The distinctive role of executive functions in implicit emotion regulation. *Acta Psychologica*, 173, 13-20.
- STEVENSON, R. B. 2004. Constructing knowledge of educational practices from case studies. *Environmental Education Research*, 10, 39-52.
- STRONG-WILSON, T. 2007. Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment As Third Teacher. *Theory Into Practice*, 46, 40-48.
- SUMSION, J. 2002. Becoming, being and unbecoming an early childhood educator: a phenomenological case study of teacher attrition. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 869-885.
- SUPPLEE, L. H., SKUBAN, E. M., SHAW, D. S. & PROUT, J. 2009. Emotion regulation strategies and later externalizing behavior among European American and African American children. *Dev Psychopathol*, 21, 393-415.

- SYLVA, K., MELHUISE, E., SAMMONS, P., SIRAJ-BLATCHFORD, I. & TAGGART, B. 2004. The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Findings from pre-school to end of key stage 1.
- TAGUCHI, H. L. 2007. Deconstructing and Transgressing the Theory—Practice dichotomy in early childhood education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 39, 275-290.
- THOMAS, G. 2016. How to do your case study / Gary Thomas. 2nd edition. ed.: Los Angeles London : SAGE, 2016.
- TIMMONS, K., COOPER, A., BOZEK, E. & BRAUND, H. 2021. The Impacts of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Education: Capturing the Unique Challenges Associated with Remote Teaching and Learning in K-2. *Early Child Educ J*, 1-15.
- TRELFORD, H. 2018. Bold Beginnings: what is at stake? *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education*, 60, 345-354.
- TREVORS, J., POLLACK, G., SAIER, M. & MASSON, L. 2012. Transformative research: definitions, approaches and consequences. *Theory in Biosciences*, 131, 117-123.
- TRUST, F. 2022. *Froebelian Principles* [Online]. Available: <https://www.froebel.org.uk/about-us/froebelian-principles> [Accessed 2022].
- TRUST, T. T. 2020. Summary findings on the impact of the covid-19 crisis on food banks. *APRIL-Data-briefing*.
- UK, S. A. L. 2023. *Listening to unheard children* [Online]. UK: Speech and Language UK. Available: <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/4703/listening-to-unheard-children-report-final.pdf> [Accessed 2023].
- UN 1989. Convention on the rights of the child. In: NATIONS, U. (ed.) *Treaty number 27531*. Unicef.
- UNICEF 1989. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- UPRICHARD, E. 2008. 'Children as beings and becomings: children childhood and temporality'. *Children & society*, 22, 303.
- VALIKHANI, A., ABBASI, Z., RADMAN, E., GOODARZI, M. A. & MOUSTAFA, A. A. 2018. Insecure Attachment and Subclinical Depression, Anxiety, and Stress: A Three-Dimensional Model of Personality Self-Regulation As a Mediator. *The Journal of Psychology*, 1-25.
- VOHS, K. D. & BAUMEISTER, R. F. 2017. *Handbook of Self-regulation : Research, Theory, and Applications*.
- WANG, S., CHEN, L., RAN, H., CHE, Y., FANG, D., SUN, H., PENG, J., LIANG, X. & XIAO, Y. 2022. Depression and anxiety among children and adolescents pre and post COVID-19: A comparative meta-analysis. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 13, 917552-917552.
- WASTELL, D. 2017. Blinded by science : the social implications of epigenetics and neuroscience / David Wastell and Sue White. In: WHITE, S. (ed.). Bristol : Policy Press.
- WATTS, M. 2021. Friedrich Froebel: interpolation, extrapolation. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191, 1186-1195.
- WATTS, T. W., DUNCAN, G. J. & QUAN, H. 2018. Revisiting the Marshmallow Test: A Conceptual Replication Investigating Links Between Early Delay of Gratification and Later Outcomes. *Psychological Science*, 29, 1159-1177.
- WEBB, P. K. 1980. Piaget: Implications for Teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 19, 93-98.
- WHITEBREAD, D. & BASILIO, M. 2012. The emergence and early development of self-regulation in young children. *Profesorado*, 16, 15-33.
- WILDERSPIN, S. 1825. *Infant Education Or Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor, from the Age of Eighteen Months to Seven Years, with an Account of the Spitalfields' Infant School*, W. Simpkin & R. Marshall.
- WILLIAMS, F. 2004. What Matters is who Works: Why Every Child Matters to New Labour. Commentary on the DfES Green Paper Every Child Matters. *Critical social policy*, 24, 406-427.
- WILLIAMS, M. 2000. Interpretivism and Generalisation. *Sociology*, 34, 209-224.
- WILSON, D. M. 2017. Parents' Executive Functioning and Involvement in Their Child's Education: An Integrated Literature Review. *Journal of School Health*, 88, 322-330.

- WOOD, E. 2008. *Early Childhood Education*, UK, Routledge.
- WOOD, K. & SIMONS, D. J. 2019. Processing without noticing in inattention blindness: A replication of Moore and Egeth (1997) and Mack and Rock (1998). *Atten Percept Psychophys*, 81, 1-11.
- YEE, D. M. & BRAVER, T. S. 2018. Interactions of motivation and cognitive control. *Curr Opin Behav Sci*, 19, 83-90.
- YOUDELL, D. 2016. New biological sciences, sociology and education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37, 788-800.
- ZACHARIOU, A. & WHITEBREAD, D. 2019. Developmental differences in young children's self-regulation. *Journal of applied developmental psychology*, 62, 282-293.
- ZACHARIOU, A. & WHITEBREAD, D. 2022. The relation between early self-regulation and classroom context: The role of adult presence, the task's source of initiation, and social context. *British journal of educational psychology*, 92, 861-880.
- ZAMARIOLA, G. 2019. Does it help to feel your body? Evidence is inconclusive that interoceptive accuracy and sensibility help cope with negative experiences. *Cognition & Emotion*, 33, 1627-1639.
- ZAPOROZHETS, A. V. 2020. Development of Emotions in Children. *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 57, 67-92.
- ZELAZO, P. D. 2015. Executive function: Reflection, iterative reprocessing, complexity, and the developing brain. *Developmental Review*, 38, 55-68.
- ZENTNER, M. R. 2001. Preferences for colours and colour--emotion combinations in early childhood. 4, 389-398.
- ZHANG, S., HAO, Y., FENG, Y. & LEE, N. Y. 2022. COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Children with Developmental Disabilities: Service Disruption, Transition to Telehealth, and Child Wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* [Online], 19.
- ZIMMERMAN, B. J. 2000. Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 82-91.
- ZIMMERMAN, B. J. 2002. Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41, 64-71.
- ZIMMERMAN, B. J. 2008. Investigating Self-Regulation and Motivation: Historical Background, Methodological Developments, and Future Prospects. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45, 166-183.
- ZINSSER, K. M., DENHAM, S. A., CURBY, T. W. & SHEWARK, E. A. 2015. "Practice What You Preach": Teachers' Perceptions of Emotional Competence and Emotionally Supportive Classroom Practices. *Early education and development*, 26, 899-919.

Appendix 1 – Information letter to parents

Dear Parents

I would like to introduce myself; my name is Rebecca and I previously led teacher training at the University of Warwick for Early Years I also bring with me experience both professionally and practically of working as a reception class teacher. I am now studying for a PhD at the University of Birmingham.

I will be spending 4 Thursdays in class with the children observing their play and routines in the classroom, talking to them about their time in school and talking with the teachers and staff in class. To help me with my observations I might ask children if they are happy for me to audio record them. I will not record or participate with any child that is not happy for me to do so.

My study is looking at Self-Regulation and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Reception aged children in UK classrooms. Part of Self-Regulation is children's emotional development and has recently been added to the Early Years curriculum.

The school and any children taking part will be anonymised so they will not be identifiable.

No child will be included in the study without full parental consent and the child's own ongoing assent to take part.

I am very aware that some parents may feel unsure and so I am very happy to answer any questions parents may have on Tuesday 11th January at the school drop off, or after school on the 11th or by email at _____

Further information about consent and rights are in the information pack.

Many thanks

Rebecca

Appendix 2 – Questionnaires

2.1- Blank questionnaire.

Parent views

Start of Block: Block 1

Q1

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, it should not take longer than 5 minutes.

I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham researching the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the disruptions to education to children in the Foundation Stage. I have had the privilege of visiting your child's school and observing, but I am very interested to learn about your experience of the disruption to education in the pandemic.

Every response is anonymous and you will not be identifiable so any information you share will be confidential. The data gathered from this survey will be used to get a picture of parents experiences and thoughts. I would be very grateful for you honest participation.

If you have any questions or would like to contact me please email me at rcb813@student.bham.ac.uk

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q2 How would you describe yourself

- ☐ Mother (1)
 - ☐ Father (2)
 - ☐ grandparent/carer (3)
-

Q3 How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18 (1)
- ☐ 18-24 years old (2)
- ☐ 25-34 years old (3)
- ☐ 35-44 years old (4)
- ☐ 45-54 years old (5)
- ☐ 55-64 years old (6)
- ☐ 65+ years old (7)



Q4 How many children under 18 live with you?

Q5 What year group is your child in now?

- ☐ Reception (1)
- ☐ Year 1 (2)
- ☐ Year 2 (3)

Q6 What best describes your employment status during lockdown 1 (March 2020)?

- ☐ Working full-time (1)
 - ☐ Working part-time (2)
 - ☐ Unemployed and looking for work (3)
 - ☐ Furloughed (4)
 - ☐ A homemaker or stay-at-home parent (5)
 - ☐ Student (6)
 - ☐ Retired (7)
 - ☐ Other (8)
-

Q7 What best describes your employment status during lockdown 2 (January 2021)?

- ☐ Working full-time (1)
 - ☐ Working part-time (2)
 - ☐ Unemployed and looking for work (3)
 - ☐ Furloughed (4)
 - ☐ A homemaker or stay-at-home parent (5)
 - ☐ Student (6)
 - ☐ Retired (7)
 - ☐ Other (8)
-

Q8 What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Married (1)
- ☐ Living with a partner (2)
- ☐ Widowed (3)
- ☐ Divorced/Separated (4)
- ☐ Never been married (5)



Q9 During both lockdowns, what other adults were living with you?

Q10 What best describes the employment status of any additional adult living with you during lockdown?

- ☐ working full-time (1)
- ☐ working part-time (2)
- ☐ unemployed looking for work (3)
- ☐ Furloughed (4)
- ☐ Home maker, stay home parent (5)
- ☐ student (6)
- ☐ retired (7)
- ☐ other (8)
- ☐ none of the above I was living alone (9)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Working arrangements during lockdown

Q11 What were your working arrangements during lockdown?

- ☐ I worked from home. (1)
 - ☐ I was a key worker and continued to go into my place of work. (2)
 - ☐ I was furloughed (3)
 - ☐ I was not working (4)
-

Q12 When the schools closed for Lockdown 1 (March 2020)

- ☐ My child continued to attend school (1)
 - ☐ My child could have attended school, but I chose to keep them at home (2)
 - ☐ My child was at home (3)
-

Q13 In July 2020 towards the end of Lockdown 1 did you have the opportunity to send your child back into school?

- ☐ Yes, and my child returned to school (1)
- ☐ Yes, but I chose not to send them, (if this was the case could you say why) (2)

- ☐ No that was not available for my child (3)

End of Block: Working arrangements during lockdown

Start of Block: Home schooling

Q14 Everyone's experience of home schooling was different. How did you find the support from the school in Lockdown 1 (March 2020)?

- ☐ Far too little (1)
 - ☐ Slightly too little (2)
 - ☐ Neither too much nor too little (3)
 - ☐ Slightly too much (4)
 - ☐ Far too much (5)
-

Q15 How did you find the support from the school in Lockdown 2 (January 2021)?

- ☐ Far too little (1)
 - ☐ slightly too little (2)
 - ☐ Neither too much nor too little (3)
 - ☐ Slightly too much (6)
 - ☐ Far to much (7)
-

Q16 Was your experience of homeschooling impacted by your work commitments?

- ☐ Definitely not (1)
 - ☐ Probably not (2)
 - ☐ Might or might not (3)
 - ☐ Probably yes (4)
 - ☐ Definitely yes (5)
-

Q17 Did you have additional support with homeschooling?

- ☐ Yes (please state what support you had) (1)

- ☐ No, My partner and I were working full time (2)
- ☐ No I was on my own (3)

End of Block: Home schooling

Start of Block: Support

Q18 Did you have any support during the lockdowns?

- ☐ Yes my partner (1)
 - ☐ Yes my parents (2)
 - ☐ Yes my network of friends (3)
 - ☐ Yes, school was there for me (4)
 - ☐ yes other please say (5) _____
 - ☐ No I felt very alone (6)
-

Q19 Where you able to access the homeschooling resources online?

- ☐ Always (1)
 - ☐ Most of the time (2)
 - ☐ About half the time (3)
 - ☐ Sometimes (4)
 - ☐ Never (what was the barrier?) (5)

-

Q20 Did you notice any behaviour changes in your child **during** the lockdown time?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
restlessness (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boredom (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
difficulty concentrating (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
irritability (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
frustration (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
nervousness (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
poor sleep (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to anger (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to cry (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q21 Have you notice any behaviour changes in your child since the return to school this year?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
restlessness (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boredom (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
difficulty concentrating (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
irritability (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
frustration (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
nervousness (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
poor sleep (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to anger (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to cry (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: Support

Start of Block: Challenges and outcomes

Q22 What was your biggest challenge during the lockdown 1 & 2?

Q23 Do you think the experiences have impacted your child in any way?

Q24 During the lockdown periods did you find yourself experiencing more stress than normal?

- ☐ Definitely not (1)
- ☐ Probably not (2)
- ☐ Might or might not (3)
- ☐ Probably yes (4)
- ☐ Definitely yes (5)

End of Block: Challenges and outcomes

2.2 - Sample of Completed questionnaire.

Q1.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, it should not take longer than 5 minutes.

I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham researching the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the disruptions to education to children in the Foundation Stage. I have had the privilege of visiting your child's school and observing, but I am very interested to learn about your experience of the disruption to education in the pandemic.

Every response is anonymous and you will not be identifiable so any information you share will be confidential. The data gathered from this survey will be used to get a picture of parents experiences and thoughts. I would be very grateful for you honest participation.

If you have any questions or would like to contact me please email me at rcb813@student.bham.ac.uk

Q2. How would you describe yourself

- ☒ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ grandparent/carers

Q3. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24 years old
- ☐ 25-34 years old
- ☒ 35-44 years old
- ☐ 45-54 years old
- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65+ years old

Q4. How many children under 18 live with you?

2

Q5. What year group is your child in now?

- ☒ Reception
- ☐ Year 1
- ☐ Year 2

Q6. What best describes your employment status during lockdown 1 (March 2020)?

- ☐ Working full-time
- ☐ Working part-time
- ☐ Unemployed and looking for work
- ☒ Furloughed
- ☐ A homemaker or stay-at-home parent
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

Q7. What best describes your employment status during lockdown 2 (January 2021)?

- ☐ Working full-time
- ☒ Working part-time
- ☐ Unemployed and looking for work
- ☐ Furloughed
- ☐ A homemaker or stay-at-home parent
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

Q8. What is your current marital status?

- ☒ Married
- ☐ Living with a partner
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced/Separated
- ☐ Never been married

Q9. During both lockdowns, what other adults were living with you?

1

Q10. What best describes the employment status of any additional adult living with you during lockdown?

- ☒ working full-time
- ☐ working part-time
- ☐ unemployed looking for work
- ☐ Furloughed
- ☐ Home maker, stay home parent
- ☐ student
- ☐ retired
- ☐ other
- ☐ none of the above I was living alone

Q11. What were your working arrangements during lockdown?

- ☐ I worked from home.
- ☐ I was a key worker and continued to go into my place of work.
- ☒ I was furloughed
- ☐ I was not working

Q12. When the schools closed for Lockdown 1 (March 2020)

- ☐ My child continued to attend school
- ☐ My child could have attended school, but I chose to keep them at home
- ☒ My child was at home

Q13. In July 2020 towards the end of Lockdown 1 did you have the opportunity to send your child back into school?

- ☒ Yes, and my child returned to school
- ☐ Yes, but I chose not to send them, (if this was the case could you say why)
- ☐ No that was not available for my child

Q14. Everyone's experience of home schooling was different. How did you find the support from the school in Lockdown 1 (March 2020)?

- ☐ Far too little
- ☒ Slightly too little

- ☐ Neither too much nor too little
- ☐ Slightly too much
- ☐ Far too much

Q15. How did you find the support from the school in Lockdown 2 (January 2021)?

- ☐ Far too little
- ☐ slightly too little
- ☒ Neither too much nor too little
- ☐ Slightly too much
- ☐ Far to much

Q16. Was your experience of homeschooling impacted by your work commitments?

- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Might or might not
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☒ Definitely yes

Q17. Did you have additional support with homeschooling?

- ☐ Yes (please state what support you had)
- ☒ No, My partner and I were working full time
- ☐ No I was on my own

Q18. Did you have any support during the lockdowns?

- ☒ Yes my partner
- ☐ Yes my parents
- ☐ Yes my network of friends
- ☐ Yes, school was there for me
- ☐ yes other please say
- ☐ No I felt very alone

Q19. Where you able to access the homeschooling resources online?

- ☒ Always
☐ Most of the time
☐ About half the time
☐ Sometimes
☐ Never (what was the barrier?)

Q20. Did you notice any behaviour changes in your child **during** the lockdown time?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
restlessness	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
boredom	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
difficulty concentrating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
irritability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
frustration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
nervousness	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
poor sleep	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to anger	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
quick to cry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

Q21. Have you notice any behaviour changes in your child since the return to school this year?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
restlessness	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
boredom	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
difficulty concentrating	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
irritability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
frustration	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
nervousness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
poor sleep	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
quick to anger	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
quick to cry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

Q22. What was your biggest challenge during the lockdown 1 & 2?

Partner's mental health problems which spiralled and needed intervention; money worries and my impending redundancy

Q23. Do you think the experiences have impacted your child in any way?

eldest child now Y2 growing anxiety levels, she's now very anxious and hyper vigilant

Q24. During the lockdown periods did you find yourself experiencing more stress than normal?

- ☐ Definitely not
 - ☐ Probably not
 - ☐ Might or might not
 - ☐ Probably yes
 - ☒ Definitely yes
-

Appendix 3 – Interview schedule

Interview Questions

- *Thank you for taking part in this interview, are you happy for me to record our conversation*

- *What we talk about will be used as part of my PhD study, what you tell me will be kept anonymous in any future publications and you can withdraw from this interview and the study at any time. Are you happy to carry on? _____*
- *Interviewee details – own education, length of employment, time teaching in the foundation stage.*
- *Introduction: my study is looking at self-regulation and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on Reception aged children in the UK classroom.*
- *Can you tell me what you understand about the term self-regulation?*
- *How is this enacted in the classroom? By children? By Staff?*
- *What provision, (specific activities) have you incorporated into the daily life and planning to develop Self-regulation?*
- *How important would you rate Self-regulation? Has that changed in anyway because of the disruptions children have experienced due to C-19?*
- *How have you had any support of training in how to plan for and assess self-regulation?*
- *How ‘well prepared’ for school do you think the pupils were when they were admitted this year?*
- *In your professional opinion what changes have you observed in children this year and last that you believe are due to the disruptions? (What does this look like to you)*
- *What particularly do you think had the biggest impact? (Parental stress, anxiety, fear, greater input from parents, lack of input from parents, increased screen time, disruption of routine and support network)*
- *Are there limitations or barriers to supporting children that you experience as the adult in the room? (What are they?)*
- *Can you talk me through the class tell me a little about the children and their ability to self-regulate? What do you believe support or limits these children?*
- *Do you think any external factors could have contributed to any of the children’s emotional development and self-regulation?*
- *How are you finding the new Curriculum? How well does it support children’s emotional development etc?*

If you could have your ideal timetable and curriculum what would your Reception class look like?

Appendix 4 – Interview transcription

R – Not a true picture of what's actually going to come.

H- No

R – That's really interesting, really interesting. Um. So in the classroom now, In terms with the new curriculum, how, well, just generally really, how do you plan for in those classroom those opportunities for self- regulation?

H – What we sort of do is we always start our day with the welcome circle and that's a big part where we talk about what we are doing in the day, that sort of thing. Initially, not so much now, we sort of tend to do it throughout different activities indoor and outdoor, but when we started in September it was very much the circle games were so important, we'd spend about 15-20 mins, we don't have the time now due to the lessons, but 15-20 minutes where we would have sort of circle, were we'd discuss feelings and that was a big thing that we hadn't done previously because I think sometimes with the little ones (7.34) they don't know their own feelings so to just talk about, well, we had sort of a dice with 6 different erm, emotions on, rolled the dice, erm and they sort of talked about how they felt and what makes them happy, what makes them sad, and, we found that its, ees, better to talk about it now, if that makes sense, urm, rather than, sort of hiding behind it, because I think a lot of the time, well we won't bring it up, because they might not understand, they're only 4, but actually there is a lot and this year we've really noticed.

R – So you did that sort of in that September?

H – It was September, umm, and probably the majority of October as well,

R - Really So, you've only really recently

H – I'd say probably after the first half term, which has literally been what 3 weeks,

R – So half a term of real focus on that,

H – Yeh, real focus on that and we also do welcome circle, it would have been the same at story time, but then what we tended to do, I mean our transition in September is three weeks and we don't teach for three weeks initially, purely because we are focusing on that PSED and that Self-regulation, even, I mean it sounds silly but, I obviously do a maths and a literacy task every week, but then, what we did initially in the first three weeks would be being with the children, sitting down, ah let's try this, any sharing issues that happened, right, why don't we try this, and it was that modelling that some of these children had never had, and I think doing that really helps some of these, like a said, some of these have come a long way.

R – Um, Yeh, I mean, just observing them outside and inside today I was really struck by how collaborate and how cooperative the children are, not just in this class, but when they are outside and they are three classes together, there is not kind of issue, u..... you have your moments, but, they they're happy to resolve that.

H – oh very much so

Appendix 5 – Coding of observations

5.1 – Positive coding

Case 1 Obs 2	Teacher online explains today's service is all about love, asks children for 2 mins to talk to the person next to them about people we love and how do we show them. TA and T support, T enters children's ideas in to the chat. Pg1	Sharing ideas. Supporting children.
	– Service ends, children have 5 mins till whole school assembly online. T gets children up to do some more dancing led on the IWB. When songs finished T leads children in a 'do this' (do it) @do that@ (don't do it) game, while waiting for next zoom to start. pg2	Following instructions. Listening skills.
	Children put hands together for reading from Luke 3 1-6 gospel. HT explains reading is about standing tall and having confidence in our faith in Jesus, not to cower pg2	Building confidence .
	HT then reads children a story 'Emily and the chocolates' Children asked to talk to partner, why was mum upset even though Emily had told the truth (about eating all the chocolates) HT calls children from different classes to come forward on zoom to answer questions. HT leads children in reflecting on how our actions have an impact on others and our relationship with god. pg2	Reflection on own behaviours. Morals .
	children are over two tables designing Christmas presents, T is continuing 1-1 phonic assessment on the carpet, 3 children are in the book area, 2 children in the role play post office and 4 children are outside with TA. Pg2	Working together. Being independent.
	Children designing presents are chatting together, many have met 'real santa' on the smaller table. On the larger table they are talking about kissing, then L falls off his chair and the conversation turns to accidents they or others have had. Pg2	Sharing experiences. Communicating.
	P has been playing with other girl running up and down when T says who is listening. P appears to have a go at joining in. Other children are engaging with her. Pg2	Having a go.
	T places Advent wreath on fabric and lights 2 tea light candles. Puts on music and children are left to look at candles and reflect with hands in prayer position. Then a song starts and the children sing along to hymn about opening hearts to love. Song ends with sounds that everyone joins in with ma, ra, la fa. T supports children reminding them what they are reflecting on while looking at candles or keeping their eyes closed. There are then 3 chimes and music starts again with hymn and children join in. C struggling to sit and stay quite. T finishes with leading children in prayer of thanks. pg3	Meditation, Mindfulness. Self-reflection. Time to calm.
	T talks to children about the afternoon, we have some time for learning before tidy up and changing for the performance. Children are dismissed from carpet in groups, 4 boys have chosen to go to dice and Christmas bauble activity. Also 3 children have chosen to go to small world, both of these activities were not populated this morning. The boy completes the activity and goes to show T to get lollipop stick (red for maths) pg3	Giving children structure. Working together. Being inclusive.

5.2 – Negative coding

	T and I talk about language delays, if children can't say sounds or hear them, they can't use them. T comments how much further behind this year the children are than in previous years, not all but more than usual. Pg2	Greater number of children with language delay.
	We chat about how skills develop through need, learning to an intrinsic motivation to acquire skills like dressing, talking. Pg2	Possible lack of need for children to learn basic skills
	J comes to activity, can say first 2 sounds not hearing final sound. Support to do 1, bin, gets to b I asks to finish. Pg2	Lack of perseverance Giving up
	A comes from IWB to cars, I join him, he is talking to me about the cars but his speech is unclear. Plays on his own, T explains speech as got better, when he first started used to engage with children pushing and hitting, his speech is a barrier to playing with others so tends to play alongside others. pg2	Unclear speech Barrier to playing with others. Poor behaviour
	P has not come in, TA explains that he is in the shed in a sulk because he was asked to get off the bike, he had had longer than other children, got angry said to TA "I'm going to squeeze your heart" pg2	Anger Not getting own way Having to share Not joining in.
	child is in other R class, this child's behaviour can cause harm or hurts others. School is working with mum but this appears to be not going well as mum is not accepting their child is causing any problem or has any difficulty that needs support. T chats about how at home this child is able to do what they want all day every day, now in school they have to do other things and there are daily changes. Child only joins in when IWB is in use. pg3	Harmful behaviour to others Lack of support from home Struggling to move from home life to school routines Only interested in screen based activities.
	P wants a go, Q explains taking turns, P still not joining in , lying on the floor. Pg3	Difficulty to share and take turns.
	CH comes to join in, I says "no I just want to make numberblocks family" CH puts locks onto I's, I says "NO" pg3	Not respecting others work Not listening to others
	E bumps his head under table tidying up. Clearly upset, crying, behaving very strong, T offers ice pack, doesn't want it, suggests getting a drink, no, wants to finish tidying up. Brings tray of blacks over to cabinet, tells me he's has put that away, his hands are deep in his pockets, he is being brave, pg4	Hiding feelings Being brave and strong
	P is now head on desk not wanted to go get his coat. Pg4	Not doing as asked
	I gets very tearful, he doesn't want to go to after school club, T speaks to him to make him feel better, still upset, pg4	tearful
	TA comes in, P had gone off for a walk, he was down by Yr1. pg4	Breaking class rules

Appendix 6 – Interview coding example

Q6 *How have you had any support of training in how to plan for and assess self-regulation?*

H – No

R – No you haven't

H – No, we've had, sort of ummmm, upper school its sort of they call it mental health, and its all of that sort of stuff and managing feelings and behaviour but we haven't.

R – So in terms of it kinda coming into the curriculum with such Its got its own section, you know, do you feel that you've, you know you've been prepared, or your, is there support? Have you found that the documentation around it means that you understand it to a level that you feel confident that you know what it is and how to assess and plan for it?

H – Yes, I do feel quite confident, I would, it would be brilliant to get some training, I know a few years ago we did an early years project and they sectioned every section and gave us all the training that we needed, and now that its changed it would be really useful, umm, but I do think, that we have always sort of done it, not so much in depth, but, I don't feel to, well, not very confident about it, I feel Ok, Yeh and I think the good thing is

HGM we work very well as a team and um, its helping each other isn't it, um, and that's, that's

R really helpful. Working together with that.

GM2

R T – I did one..... eh

HCR R – How was it

T – I'm not going to lie, I didn't get a lot from it if I'm perfectly honest

R – Ok, that's

T – If I'm perfectly honest, there wasn't really much more than what we were doing, I didn't come away from it thinking, Oh, I need to do this, I need to do that.

R – So did it just kind of reinforce the things that you were already doing

T – Yeh..... reinforce a few bits or, you know it was more just like little things that we might do with certain children, some of the bits in year 1, just kinda how your supporting them, there wasn't really. I didn't take a lot out of it to feel all we should be doing this, we should be doing that

R – Fair enough

T – Unfortunately

T – Yeh, so actually we had a inset on self-regulation not long ago because one of our governors, he's working in this as well, um, he works for teach first or teach, one of those sort of

HC1 R – Schools direct, that was the word I couldn't think of before

T – Yeh, he works for one of those two anyway, um and that's his big thing, metacognition and self-regulation,

Appendix 7 – Sample of observations transcription

10.35. Children on carpet T explains we are having our snack on the carpet then we will have out outside play with the others have gone in, usually the children would go out at the same time as Yr1. Children have snack and watch episode of Peter Rabbit.

10.50. Children get coats and get ready to go out, putting water and snacks away.

Come in from play at 11.10, hang up coats and go to wash hands int groups.

11.15. Children line up for lunch early to keep classes apart. It is Christmas lunch and the tables have been set up with crackers for the children, T explains that we pull our crackers with the person next to us, not opposite, he demonstrates this with two children from the line that he asks to come and stand on either side of him. Children walk into the hall and get their dinners, I help children with cutting up their food, reading the jokes and putting on party hats. At 11.45 most children have finished, and T brings back to the classroom, the children sit in their carpet spaces. Children have hats and it's from crackers with them. T puts on Peter Rabbit, there are 15 children on the carpet, others join them as they finish.

11.50, lunch supervisor arrives, T explains the division of the playground, (cones with a rope) and that R is now a bubble and needs to stay on their side of the rope. Once Peter Rabbit is finished, they can go our but need to stay separate.

12.45. Children come in from outside to carpet having hung up their coats. T dismisses to activities and TA and helper take over; TA continues to do some phonic assessments with those that haven't yet done it. T is on PPA but has booked a PCR test but has kindly allowed time for me to interview him first. We leave classroom to do interview.

1.50. When I come back into class, all children are busy, TA is sitting at writing table with children, chatting with children while keeping an eye on the room. The helper is in the outside area. C, Co and Eu are playing with the nativity scene together, all three of these children I have observed as being less good at socialising and playing with others, but they are all laying together, banging the. Wooden pieces, laughing and squeaking, some singing, and I can pick up a few words, mostly sounds with the odd hello. C using the most language.

2pm. Ta speaks to helper, they are going to let the children have a break, TA stops the children, asks them to get their coats and come to the carpet. They then go to the outside playground.

2.20 Children are peeling ranges with me, inside at the bin, because the outside bin is in part of the playground, they can't use. Ph is with a group of children, she gives me her hairband, I ask if she wants to hang it up or put it on, she says quietly "put it on", Other children tell me that she has a small voice inside with grownups, but "she always talks to me, and outside she has a bigger voice." I say I feel very lucky the Ph has used her voice with me, I say that some people might think she doesn't talk but we know she can, but doesn't use her voice all the time, child says "she is a bit shy".

* there is a support and understand of how Ph is from this other child and the other children. They accept her and don't see her nonverbal as odd or a barrier.

Appendix 8 – Photo of field notes

1:45 ① calls Chad to him, laughs to me, "I might have to do some actual teaching now," it's duly taken to quarters to do just that out. left Staffroom at 12:30 to deal with incident he goes outside with iPad and Chad.

1:50 Chad who came to me earlier with means Construction question has come back having solved his problem. he shows me he has made a speed camera. I ask if he has ever seen one he says yes, on your tube, I ask him what he wants to do when he grows up he says a police man. he sends it has stopped raining and its bus is out "maybe there will be a rainstorm" he goes to check, comes back in and says to Chad to me further about speed camera's.

2pm ① lines up Chad outside for playtime, someone from the office has been in and he has said he will be up shortly.

2:15 ① joins TA & I outside and blows whistle to line Chad, up. Chad? Come back in, instructed to carry on with their learning.

On arriving in Ph has gone back to sitting on TA chair alone, Luke comes to carpet to play with animals. Most other Chad, have returned to before break activities.

1:45 ① has joined Ph on the chair.

2:20 TA & I, TA are chatting by class computer ① is outside with majority of Chad; TA's talking about doing their classes alone. ① was talking outside about fine tomorrow he will be out to do student observations. TA's look fed up. ~~There is a~~ TA has meeting tomorrow with Lady from BTA speech program. but doesn't know what to do as there is no one to cover. If she doesn't have the meeting school will lose the money. ① she says she's not my problem "I'm feeling really fed up today." She goes off to creative area.

2:25 ① comes in from outside. Luke asks about his homework book & T goes to look for it, he finds it, Luke has done the home work and handed it in, they talk about it. Then ① goes over to creative area and talks with TA.

2:30 Luke has made the observation and come to ① "All ants have 6 legs, shows teacher selection of mini beasts. ① asks which one is an ant, only one is ant, ① explains all insects have 6 legs. ① sits with Luke and talks about different insects. together they go to look for a grasshopper. Phredige has gone outside and is playing with two others.