VOLUME ONE

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION OF DEAF STUDENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

Within the field of deaf education research, there is a lack of research that has explored the primary-to-secondary school transition. This thesis comprises a case study involving three deaf pupils undertaking the transfer from a specialist Deaf Resource Provision into differing secondary schools, utilising the bioecological model of human development and associated Process-Person-Context-Time framework. Questionnaire data was collected from the pupils and their parents to explore their pre- and post-transfer views and to illuminate pupil transition experiences. This was analysed alongside pupil wellbeing data, staff questionnaire data and documents relevant to the setting and wider policy. The aim of this multi-perspective case study was to identify personal and contextual influences upon pupil experiences of transition. Using reflexive thematic analysis, multiple themes were identified that were indicative of positive transition experiences, shaped by several potentially contributory factors. These included factors related to proximal processes (e.g. pupil relationships), person (e.g. pupil attitudes towards transition), context (e.g. home-school mesosystems, macrosystemic policy) and time. Themes pertaining to time considered impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic such as restricted school access and increased technology usage. From this, a number of practice principles are suggested which may help to facilitate positive primary-to-secondary school transitions for deaf pupils.

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Abbreviations

AC	Academic Competence
ASN	Additional Support Needs
BSL	British Sign Language
CI	Cochlear Implants
CSW	Communication Support Worker
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
DRP	Deaf Resource Provision
DRPH	Deaf Resource Provision Head
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
IEP	Individual Education Plan
HLTA	Higher-Level Teaching Assistant
LA	Local Authority
MHF	Mental Health Functioning
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SCWBS	Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator
SENCO-Asst	Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator Assistant
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SENDCOP	Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice

SES	Socioeconomic Status
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
ToD	Teacher of the Deaf

1 Introduction

This paper is the first volume of a two-part thesis, completed as part of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. It describes a small-scale case study using Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development, specifically the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), to explore primary-to-secondary school transition from the perspectives of pupils who are deaf, their parents and teachers, and identify factors influencing transition experiences.

The idea of a visual language has always interested me. A family member who worked with deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals encouraged me to undertake British Sign Language (BSL) Level 1. I began employment as a Community Support Worker which introduced me to the Deaf community. I completed my master's dissertation involving an evaluation of person-centred tools utilised within the deaf service.

One parent invited me to attend their child's specialist deaf school, enhancing my interest in deaf education. When I started professional training, I sought opportunities to work alongside deaf children in various educational settings. These experiences shaped my choice of thesis area in deaf education. From my practice and an initial literature review, it was apparent that school transitions of deaf children were under-researched with most studies focusing on post-school transitions. I therefore chose this topic to enhance my own understanding and identify recommendations to improve the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) and other professionals.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was chosen as the study framework due to the joint emphasis on the developing child and the systems around them, permitting consideration of the multiple, interacting variables within and between systems, that influence development. It reflects the holistic approach to supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), advocated for in practice guidance such as the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education (DfE) and

Department of Health (DoH 2015). The PPCT model structured the literature review and analysis (for themes relating to the second research question) and influenced research methodology (Chapter 4).

Transition is an ongoing process, and it was originally intended that data would also be collected at the end of Year 7, but this was not possible due to the research context (s.4.2.1). Consequently, this paper examines one stage of transition comprising the actual transfer between schools, as opposed to a longitudinal examination of the ongoing process adaptation to secondary school. A chapter summary is provided below.

Table 1 – Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 - Introduction	This chapter provides a brief introduction to the study and a chapter summary.
Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework and Background	Chapter 2 outlines Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model. It discusses the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model, with illustrative examples relating to deafness, outlining the background to the study.
Chapter 3 - Literature Review	Chapter 3 summarises the evidence base regarding school transition, and reviews international literature relating to the transitions of deaf children. It is structured according to the PPCT model, with discussion of how these factors influence the perceptions, experiences and outcomes of transitions, and the rationale for the study.
Chapter 4 – Methodology	Chapter 4 describes the methodology used for this study. It discusses the research design and ethical considerations, and provides detailed information about the participants, data collection and analysis.
Chapter 5 – Findings	Chapter 5 presents research findings and accompanying data structured according to the research questions, under the headings Process-Person-Context-Time, and with critical reference to existing literature.
Chapter 6 – Discussion and conclusions	Chapter 6 discusses the findings, implications for practice, strengths and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. It reflects on the applicability of the bioecological model to deaf children's transitions. It ends with a summary of key points.

2. Theoretical Framework and Background

This chapter provides an overview of deafness and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development. It outlines the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model, with illustrative examples from deaf research.

2.1 Deafness

Hearing loss affects at least 50,000 children (RNID, 2021). 1-2 babies in 1000 are born with permanent hearing loss (NHS, 2021). The most common type is sensorineural, caused by permanent inner ear or nerve damage. Conductive hearing loss relates to the middle or outer ear and may be temporary. A hearing test measures the quietest sounds heard at different pitches and frequencies (Hz). Hearing threshold is measured in decibels (dB), categorised as below (Figure 1).

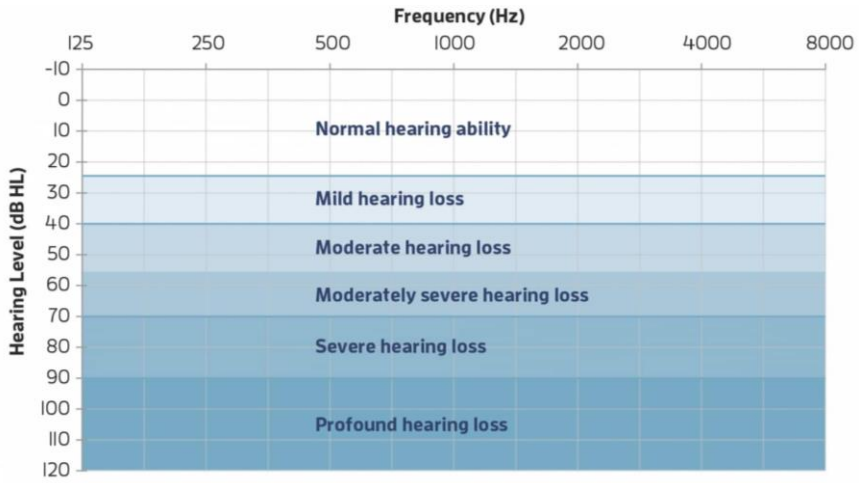


Figure 1 – Audiogram (Healthyhearing.com)

'Hearing loss,' 'hearing impairment' and 'deafness' refer to a total or partial inability to hear sounds (British Deaf Association, 2017). Distinction is made between 'deaf' – i.e., individuals "…impaired in their ability to hear" (Tucker, 1998: p.6) – and 'Deaf', generally referencing the Deaf community and

sign language usage (Cooper, 2007). Individuals are acculturated, rather than born into, the Deaf world (Nunes, 2001). Consequently, not all deaf individuals identify as Deaf.

The experience of deafness, and potential barriers, is contextual – dependent on individual (e.g., age of identification, hearing threshold, communication skills), home / school contextual (e.g., language exposure, parental involvement) and societal or community factors (e.g., socioeconomic factors, early intervention) (Cooper, 2007; Alasim and Paul, 2018).

Ecological approaches reflect the diversity of the deaf population, assisting in identifying multiple pathways, and risk / protective factors, specific to individuals' ecological systems (Luft, 2011). Therefore, bioecological theory provides a useful framework for deaf research.

Throughout this paper, 'deaf' refers to all degrees of hearing loss, unless otherwise specified. This terminology is accepted by organisations and institutions in the field of deaf research (E.G., NDCS).

2.2. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

Bioecological theory was developed in the 1970's, advocating for a greater influence of context upon development, in response to prevalent laboratory-based research (Jaeger, 2016). In 1977, Bronfenbrenner proposed the concept of ecological systems, comprising four interrelated contexts termed micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems (s.2.2.1.3). The bioecological model of human development was then introduced (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), re-emphasising the individual as an active agent in their environment. It defines development as:

> *"...the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups. This phenomenon extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future."* (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.793).

Individuals interact with their environments, and interactions within and between systems drive realisation of human potential (ibid. p.799). The addition of the chronosystem encapsulated change over time. Evolving from a context-focused conceptualisation, towards greater prominence upon the developing individual, the most recent iteration emphasises proximal processes (see Jaeger, 2016; Eriksson, Ghazinour and Hammarström, 2018; Merçon-Vargas et al, 2020).

Proximal processes are the primary mechanisms driving human development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Individual, contextual and time factors exert a moderating effect, represented by the Process-Person-Context-Time model.

Bioecological theory (and its corresponding PPCT model) is prevalent within the field of educational psychology, represented within many practice frameworks (Kelly, 2017).

Variable experiences of deafness, influenced by home, school and community environments, and others' reactions, activities and beliefs (Luft, 2011), justifies application of the PPCT model, which provides the theoretical framework and research design for this study.

2.2.1. Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT)

Process, Person, Context and Time constitute "…the four defining properties of the bioecological model" (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p.794).

2.2.1.1. Process

Proximal processes have distinctive properties (Figure 2) differentiating them from other theoretical definitions of processes (Merçon-Vargas, 2020).

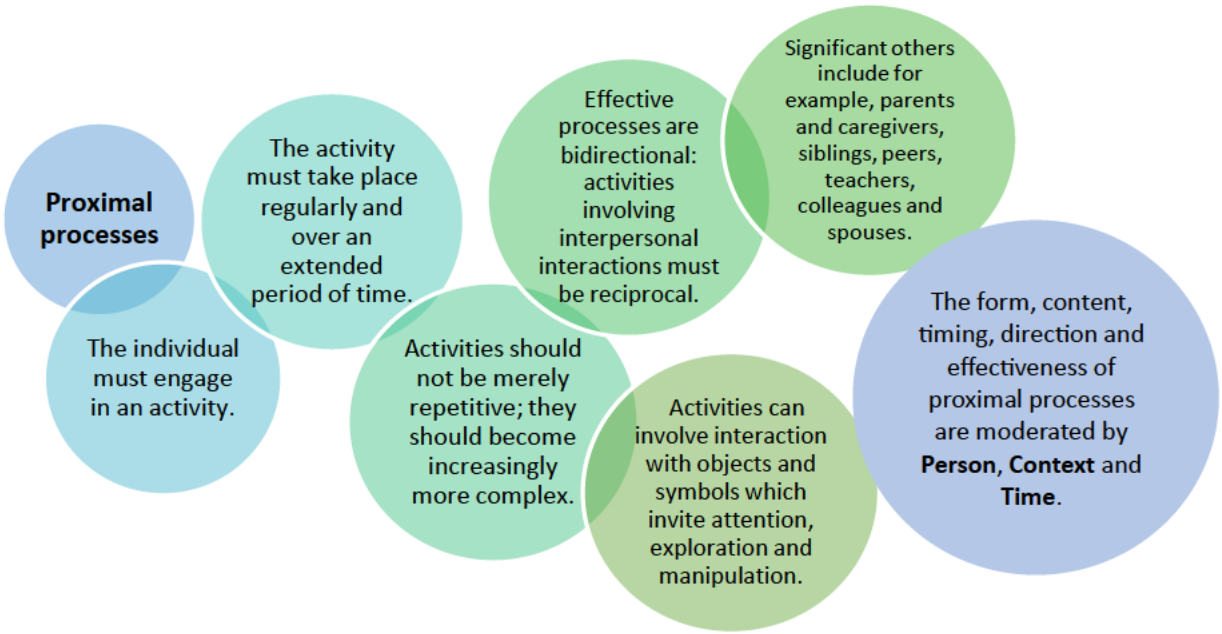


Figure 2 – Properties of proximal processes

Drawing upon attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973), processes occurring during the formative years significantly influence development. Through interactions with primary caregivers, children form internalised working models, which shape subsequent interactions and attachments (Figure 3).

Key Quote

"...to develop—intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally—a child requires, for all of these, the same thing: participation in progressively more complex activities, on a regular basis over an extended period of time in the child's life, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual emotional attachment, and who are committed to the child's wellbeing and development, preferably for life (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; also see Lerner, 2004b). The establishment of a strong mutual emotional attachment leads to internalization of the parent's activities and expressed feelings of affection. Such mutual ties motivate the child's interest and engagement in related activities in the immediate physical, social, and—in due course—symbolic environment that invite exploration, manipulation, elaboration, and imagination."

Figure 3: Key Quote (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.823)

Attachment theory has been applied to the context of learning-based interactions. For example, Geddes (2006) draws upon attachment theory to elucidate links between the learner, the teacher and the task which influence individual engagement in learning, and how schools can provide a 'secure base' for pupils.

Extensive research has shown that attachment styles influence self-concept, relationship development and stress management, which may affect how children manage life events such as transition (O'Toole, 2016). Recent literature also suggests that supporting learners to form positive attachments with school staff can facilitate transition (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

Deafness is associated with a greater likelihood of abuse and neglect (Berry, 2017). Parental mistreatment actualises the potential for maladaptive behaviours that disrupt proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), hindering development. Deaf children may be at greater risk of insecure attachments, although evidence is inconsistent (Weisel and Kamara, 2005).

Effective interpersonal proximal processes are reciprocal. Around 95% of deaf children have hearing parents (Convertino et al, 2009; Mitchell and Karchmer, 2004) constraining early exposure to shared language. Delayed language development means deaf children often start school with less vocabulary than hearing peers (Marschark and Knoors, 2012). Hearing threshold, identification / implantation age, and hearing aid usage moderate this (van der Straaten et al, 2021).

Language delays are a communication barrier impeding understanding of one's needs, relationships, achievement, resilience and long-term outcomes regarding transition into adulthood i.e., graduation, employment and independent living (Luft, 2011). Language delays also affect self-regulation and social skill development (Batten, Oakes and Alexander, 2014).

Positive social interactions and peer relationships are conducive to wellbeing (e.g., self-esteem, emotional regulation) and attainment outcomes in deaf children (ibid.). Deaf children may struggle to initiate and maintain interactions due to poor language and speech intelligibility (Xie, Potměšil &

Peters, 2014). Further analysis indicated positive effects of personal (e.g., implantation), contextual (e.g., quiet or one-to-one conditions) and time factors (see s.2.2.1.4).

Without regular proximal processes, development may slow or regress (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Co-enrolment (i.e., education alongside hearing peers), communication and social skills programmes are therefore beneficial (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014).

Early language exposure underpins variability in cognitive and linguistic functioning, learning strategies and information organisation (Marschark and Wauters, 2008). Visual perception, memory and problem-solving differences (Marschark and Hauser, 2008), could also disrupt task-based proximal processes.

Outcomes are not solely attributable to deafness; rather interconnecting factors such as individual skills, and cultural or family contexts, produce variable developmental trajectories (Lederberg, Schick and Spencer, 2012). Consequently, Person, Context and Time factors moderate the developmental effects of proximal processes.

2.2.1.2. Person

Individuals actively change their environments via *resource* and *dispositional* characteristics, or passively via *demand* characteristics and responses to such (Tudge et al, 2009), discussed further in the following three subsections. Person characteristics are often conceptualised as outcomes or dependent variables. The bioecological model acknowledges a role in producing development by influencing proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

i. Resources

Resource characteristics are "…biopsychological liabilities and assets" influencing capacity to engage in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p.812). Disabilities and illness have limiting or disruptive effects, in contrast to facilitative assets including ability, knowledge and skills.

Although evidence indicates association between hearing loss and poorer outcomes, deafness is not itself a risk factor; rather, interplay between deafness and contextual factors may increase the likelihood of disadvantageous effects (Young, Green and Rogers, 2008).

Early communication deprivation and developmental delay are related to mental health needs in severe-to-profoundly deaf children (Hindley, 2005). Research indicates deaf children have increased risk of emotional and behavioural disorders, peer difficulties (Stevenson et al, 2015), and depression compared to typically hearing peers, moderated by age of identification, school type and additional needs (Theunissen et al, 2014).

Around one-quarter of deaf children in England have additional needs; roughly 16% have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with deafness as a primary need, and higher proportions access SEN support (CRIDE, 2023). EP involvement may be requested where a child is making less than expected progress; in addition, psychological advice and information from an EP is required as part of the EHC assessment process (DoH and DfE, 2015).

Evidence indicates that mild hearing loss is negatively associated with achievement (Marschark et al, 2015); however, deaf pupils not receiving services or with alternative primary needs were excluded, potentially skewing results.

Language skills correlate with achievement (ibid.), representing a developmental asset vital for social interactions (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014; Eichengreen et al, 2021). Lower hearing thresholds are linked with poorer language skills (Tomblin et al, 2015). In one study, deaf children reported more depressive symptoms than hearing children; hearing threshold effects were not apparent, however

spoken communication ability and mainstream attendance were linked to fewer symptoms (Theunissen et al, 2011).

Although deafness is not a learning disability, academic performance is often below individual potential, and that of hearing peers (Qi and Mitchell, 2012; O'Neill, Arendt and Marschark, 2014). Deaf pupils achieve average grade 4 with 35.1% achieving English / Maths grade 5 or above, compared to average grade 5 and 55.8% for hearing pupils (NDCS, 2021). Deaf young adults are less likely to attend college (Convertino et al, 2009), and are more likely to not be in education, employment or training (O'Neill, Arendt and Marschark, 2014).

However, studies citing an attainment gap often have biased samples, fail to consider broader achievement or confounding variables (Marschark et al, 2015), utilise hearing cohort comparisons, rather than deaf developmental patterns (Caemmerer, Cawthon and Bond, 2016) or lack pertinent information (e.g., hearing threshold, communicative competence) (van der Straaten et al, 2021).

ii. Dispositions

Dispositions – or forces – concern socioemotional and cognitive characteristics such as temperament and motivation. Posited as the most influential characteristic, they are developmentally *generative* – e.g., curiosity, engagement – or *disruptive* (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), ranging from impulsiveness and dysregulation to apathy and avoidance.

Individual dispositions underpin interactions with one's world, influencing others' responses, and shaping dispositional development over the life course (O'Toole, 2016). Research examining deafness and dispositional traits is lacking, with older papers reflecting a disability view (Dammeyer, Marschark and Zettler, 2018), i.e. the medical model of disability and perceptions of 'deafness' as primarily a functional impairment of hearing necessitating correction, in contrast to the social model

and broader notions of 'Deafness' whereby disabling barriers are socially constructed, rather than arising from an impairment itself (Kermit, 2009).

Deaf young adults have reported lower self-esteem compared to hearing peers (Weisel and Kamara, 2005), and identified dispositions including embracing challenge and humour as protective for wellbeing, alongside spoken communication skills (Eichengreen et al 2021).

Lytle et al (2011) proposed that three domains underpin resilience in deaf adolescents– communication, literacy, and identity / sense of self – augmented by supportive environments (i.e., Context) and meaningful interactions, particularly with other deaf youth, (i.e., Process), which shape self-esteem.

iii. Demand

Demand characteristics "…invite or discourage [social] reactions…" that disrupt or foster psychological growth (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p.812). Personal stimulus factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and physical appearance can stimulate resource characteristics, and shape preconceptions that influence interactions (Tudge et al, 2009).

Deaf females have more positive peer interactions, demonstrating higher social competencies and prosocial behaviours than deaf males (Batten, Oakes and Alexander, 2014). This could explain findings that mainstream deaf boys were less accepted than hearing peers i.e., gender moderated peer acceptance (Wolters et al, 2011). Deaf mainstream pupils were less popular than both hearing peers and deaf specialist peers, speculatively linked to less developed communicative skills, and moderating effects of hearing threshold and context.

Hearing aids and CIs assist proximal processes. Deaf students reported feelings of exclusion linked to the appearance of assistive technologies (Terlektsi et al, 2020). For others, minimising the appearance of deafness was important for wellbeing and self-confidence (Eichengreen et al, 2021).

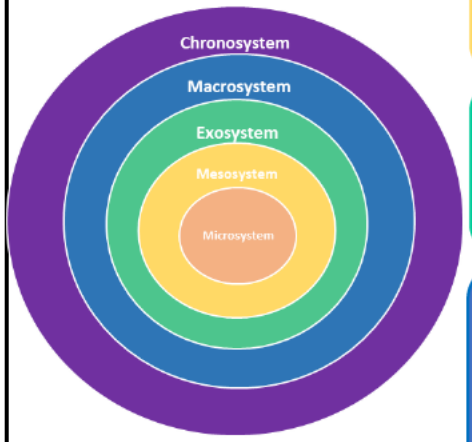
Time moderated this, with increasing acceptance of deafness from adolescence onwards. Regarding achievement, interpreters may make needs more visibly apparent, while milder hearing loss is overlooked (Antia et al, 2009).

Demographic factors specify one's position and role in the social environment (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Diversity, culture, socioeconomic status (SES) and family structure are thus important to the bioecological model (O'Toole, 2016). Frequent proximal processes actualise innate potential, improving functional competence (i.e., intellectual, physical or socioemotional skills) or decreasing dysfunction (i.e., dysregulation), moderated by context effects (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

2.2.1.3. Context

Context comprises five systems (Figure 4). Actualisation of competency-based potential is enhanced in stable and predictable environments (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Proximal processes assuage dysfunctional genetic potentials, with enhanced effects in unstable or disadvantaged environments.

Signed / spoken language access, poorly structured or inaccessible environments, and resource / Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) shortages likely contribute to deaf children's underachievement (Marschark et al, 2015). Accordingly, environmental features can bolster or hinder proximal processes.



Microsystem:

- "*...a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit, engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment.*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: p.1645)

Mesosystem:

- "*...comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace). In other words, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems.*" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: p.80)

Exosystem:

- "*...comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain that person (e.g. for a child, the relation between the home and the parent workplace; for a parent, the relation between the school and the neighbourhood peer group.*" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: p.80-1)

Macrosystem

- "*...the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems. The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture.*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: p.1645)

Chronosystem

- "*A chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g. changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hectiness and ability in everyday life.*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: p.1646)

Figure 4 - Context in the bioecological model

i. Microsystem

This is the immediate environment (e.g., home, school, community) wherein the developing child is an active member (Luft, 2011). Supportive family relationships positively influence academic engagement, participation and outcomes (ibid.). Although parent-child interactions have been considered environmental, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) clearly differentiate environment from processes.

High quality environments increase the power of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Language-rich (home and school) environments are essential for deaf children's development (Lederberg, Schick and Spencer, 2012). Hearing threshold, sign language use and additional needs influence placement decisions (van der Straaten et, 2021). Over three-quarters of UK deaf children attend mainstream schools. The remainder attend mainstream resource provisions (6%), deaf (2%) or other specialist settings (14%), or are home schooled (1%) (CRIDE, 2021).

Marschark et al (2015) found that attending mainstream settings or resource provisions positively predicted achievement. However, hearing threshold and communication differences – which influence placement choices - explained most variation. Pedagogical, instructional and contextual setting differences were not considered; yet knowing how to teach deaf learners is arguably more important than where (Marschark and Knoors (2012). Furthermore, higher achievement could be an antecedent or consequence of mainstream attendance (Antia et al, 2009).

Educators can facilitate proximal processes by structuring fully resourced, sufficiently challenging and supportive learning environments, with regular interaction and independent learning opportunities (Jaeger, 2016). Factors including early intervention, high expectations and high-quality instruction also influence outcomes (Alasim and Paul, 2018).

Friendships with deaf and hearing peers enhance wellbeing and resilience (Eichengreen et al, 2021). Community microsystems allow deaf youth to affiliate with the Deaf community, and

others, in 'fourth environment' contexts i.e., away from home, school and adult oversight (Lytle et al, 2011). Significant others' characteristics are incorporated into the child's microsystem, influencing proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). For example, higher teacher expectations are linked to increased achievement (Marschark et al, 2015) and resilience in deaf adolescents (Lytle et al, 2011).

The experience of a process differs according to the microsystem where it occurs, and the conceptual intersections of microsystems i.e., the mesosystem (Jaeger, 2016).

ii. Mesosystem

Mesosystems exist "…at the overlap between two or more microsystems" (Jaeger, 2016: p.165). It involves links between settings supporting the developing child, for example, parent-school relationships (Luft, 2011). Parental participation correlates with academic outcomes (Antia et al, 2009) whilst parental support bolsters wellbeing in deaf adolescents, by enabling familial acceptance and inclusion, and advocating for rights (Eichengreen et al, 2021).

ToDs support deaf learners and help to train and empower teaching staff; however, high caseloads limit individualised support (Berry, 2017). ToDs work in homes, schools and other settings, thus helping to strengthen mesosystemic links, for example, through ensuring support and provision continuity.

School systems must collaborate to provide individualised and flexible support for deaf children, and changes at the community / organisational level drive change within other systems (Lytle et al, 2011).

iii. Exosystem

Exosystems exert influence upon settings containing the developing child, for example, employment, public agencies (Eriksson et al, 2018); and parental social networks (Luft, 2011).

Changes in economic climate may generate funding cuts restricting specialised school programmes or public services (ibid.). Reported cuts of £4 million from deaf children's support (NDCS, 2018), likely impacted ToD, Teaching Assistant (TA) and Communication Support Worker (CSW) roles, plus public services and organisations such as Deaf Clubs and parent / sibling social networks. Variable Local Authority (LA) provision produces differential microsystemic experiences and outcomes.

Initial teaching training constitutes another exosystem. 86% of UK teachers felt they received inadequate deaf education training (NDCS, 2022). Low incidence of deafness contributes to lacking deaf awareness (Marschark and Knoors, 2012). Communication is Key (Ofsted, 2012) outlines good practice in supporting deaf children, highlighting early diagnosis, timely support and joint working. This illustrates how actions in one exosystem (Ofsted) influence microsystemic (school) change through macrosystemic policy. Joint service delivery is also emphasised within SEND guidance, with explicit reference to the role of specialist staff such as EPs in training the wider workforce in identifying and supporting individual needs, and in the requirement for EPs to liaise with parents, teachers, SENCOs and other professionals to meet the needs of learners making less than expected progress (DfE and DoH, 2015).

iv. Macrosystem

This includes formal laws, policies and regulations, and informal norms, values, and behavioural patterns (e.g., discrimination) (Jaeger, 2016).

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits disability-related discrimination, imposing an organisational duty to make reasonable adjustments (e.g. visual aids, deaf awareness training). Education settings and LAs (i.e., exosystems) must provide auxiliary aids e.g., radio aids, soundfield systems, note-takers and interpreters. Macrosystemic legislation therefore directly impacts individual microsystems, and indirectly via deaf awareness and acceptance influencing interactions and experiences. Affirmative community experiences enhance wellbeing (Eichengreen et al 2021).

National and local policies reflect the time of their creation, and shape microsystemic proximal processes (Jaeger, 2016). The 1978 Warnock report recommendation that all pupils with SEND access mainstream education, alongside concerns about deaf specialist attainment, led to implementation of the Education Act 1981 (Gregory, 2017), and the closure of many deaf schools.

The NHS New-born Hearing Screening Programme facilitates earlier identification and intervention, reducing language delays (Higgins and Lieberman, 2016). Research shows that the earlier hearing aids are fitted, the greater children's language achievement (Tomblin et al, 2015), facilitating proximal processes.

It has been suggested that current political values and legislative frameworks espouse key tenets of bioecological theory, in moving away from an emphasis upon the child, towards improved understanding of how development is influenced by complex and dynamic interactions between the individual and their environments (Kelly, 2017).

Each system has independent and interactional effects upon development (Jaeger, 2016). Diverse cultural norms, values and expectations permeate each system, hence '…no one single ecological level can be targeted…' (Luft, 2011: p.326), necessitating consideration of strengths and challenges within individual's specific systems. This is pertinent as cultural foundations shape perceptions of deafness, identity and belonging.

v. Chronosystem

This refers to changes in individual characteristics and environments over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It includes normative (e.g., school entry, graduation, marriage) and non-normative life events and transitions (e.g., divorce, moving home, wars), aligning closely with aspects of Time.

2.2.1.4 Time

The bioecological model positions time at three levels (Figure 5), drawing upon Elder's (1998) principles of life-course theory:

- Individual life course is shaped by the historical time, place and events experienced
- Timing in one's life of key transitions or events determines their developmental impact
- Individual lives are linked through relationships, and social and historical influences

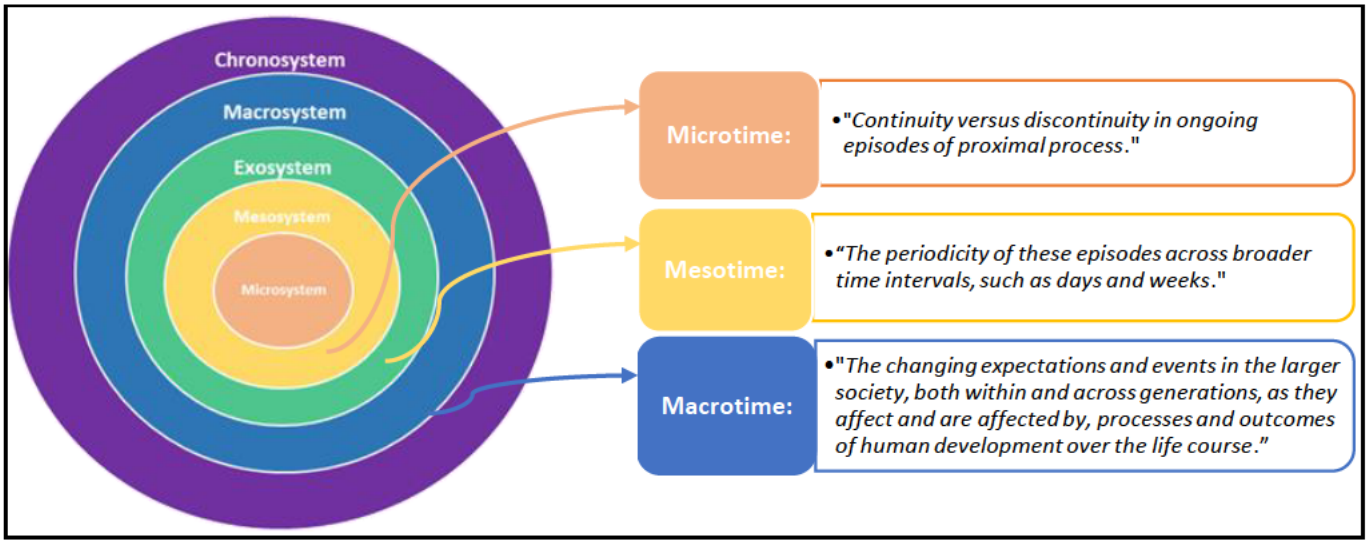


Figure 5 - Time in the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p.796).

Changes over time to PPCT elements are both products and producers of historical change (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Context-Time interactions offer opportunities for growth or restrict development by disrupting life course transitions and learning experiences (*ibid.*).

As hearing peers' language and cognition skills progress, deaf adolescents may experience difficulty with formal operations tasks (e.g., complex reasoning, abstraction). Hence, risks attributed to linguistic delay may increase with age (Luft, 2011). Nevertheless, early screening, intervention, and assistive technology have improved outcomes (Lederberg, Schick and Spencer, 2012).

Developmental gaps may reduce over time, with evidence that some deaf children develop commensurate communication (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014), maths and language skills (van der Straaten et al, 2021) at secondary level. Convertino et al (2009) attributed this to diminishing effects of communication and audiological variables (e.g., CIs), due to cognitive development as children mature and engage in more social interactions. They noted that earlier studies identifying an achievement gap included younger age ranges – indicating the effect of research timing in the life course.

In another study, an observed attainment dip was hypothesised to be linked to the timing of the study, occurring during school transition, amongst other interrelated individual, home and school level factors:

Key Quote

"It is clear that many variables are related to student academic achievement. Disaggregating the influence of these variables is difficult because they are often related in complex ways. Also, the variables are likely [p297] to be correlated to each other. For example, degree of hearing loss is likely to be related to receptive and expressive oral communication skills, which in turn may be related to classroom communication and participation. Family involvement is likely to be related to family resources and parental expectations for their child, which may also influence the child's communication skills and academic success."

Figure 6: Antia, Jones, Reed and Kreimeyer, 2009: p.296-7

Macrotime concerns broader societal changes. Unstable or unpredictable environments undermine relationships and activities necessary for development, and chaos may be the unintended consequence of policy (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Low employment rates of deaf young adults in one study were attributed to survey completion during recession, and budget cuts impeding services (O'Neill, Arendt and Marschark, 2014).

Positive societal changes have helped reduce social marginalisation (Luft, 2011). One major change is shifting perceptions of deafness. Comparisons have been drawn between the medical model of disability and perceptions of 'deafness' as a functional impairment, and between the social model and notions of 'Deafness' whereby disabling barriers are socially constructed (Oliver, 2006; Kermit, 2009). The social view is reflected in the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustment requirements, and educational inclusion practices, emphasising environmental rather than individual factors (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014).

Whether this binary distinction represents the range of deaf experiences is debatable; concepts pertaining to a Deaf World, culture and community are themselves contested (Scully, 2013). Hearing 'loss' and 'impairment' or disability descriptors are disputed, with suggestions that the Deaf world – incorporating shared language, networks, customs, values, art and history - is more accurately characterised as a cultural or ethnic minority (Lane, 2005), or lingual minority, following recognition of BSL as a formal language in 2003 (Kermit, 2009).

2.3. Summary

Deaf experiences and outcomes are highly variable, moderated by PPCT factors. Heterogeneity amongst deaf learners means blanket approaches are inappropriate, in failing to consider differences in individual aetiology, language environments, parent-child interactions and pedagogical / instructional approaches (Marschark and Knoors, 2012). Insufficient understanding

of these differences may produce inconsistent or unreliable research findings (Alasim and Paul, 2018).

This aligns with current SEND guidance which advocates the need for holistic assessment and support tailored to individual needs (DoH and DfE, 2015), shaping the activities of EPs and other professionals who may work alongside deaf children. Typical activities of EPs can include consultation (for example, with learners, parents, teachers and other professionals), assessment and intervention, in addition to providing training and conducting research (Farrell et al, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002).

The PPCT model is well-suited to deaf research by supporting consideration of how multiple interacting factors, including normative life transitions, impact development. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) state that:

> *The specific profile of the bioecological model of human development is its interdisciplinary and integrative focus on the age periods of childhood and adolescence and its explicit interest in applications to policies and programs pertinent to enhancing youth and family development*." (p. 794)

Primary-to-secondary school transition literature suggests that this normative transition could have long-lasting impacts. However, deaf research often emphasises primary or post-graduation outcomes – including transition into adulthood – with less research examining secondary education (van der Straaten et al, 2021).

Chapter 3 summarises the primary-to-secondary school transition evidence base, before reviewing studies relating to the school transitions of deaf children.

3. Literature Review

Primary-to-secondary school transition is arguably one of the most difficult educational transitions (Zeedyk et al, 2003). The preceding chapter provided an outline of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory and PPCT model as a background to this research. This chapter summarises the current evidence base and policy relating to primary-to-secondary school transition. It then reviews evidence relating to primary-to-secondary school transitions of deaf pupils, structured under Process-Person-Context-Time headings, to establish the study rationale.

3.1 School transition

Transition refers to the move between educational settings, stages, services, or employment. UK pupils generally transition into secondary school following Year 6, aged 11-12. Three-stage education systems (e.g., USA) have a comparable middle school transition, coinciding with transition into adolescence. Puberty entails biological, physical and social changes which influence development of, for example, relationships, self-image, emotional regulation, and cognitive capacities (Curtis, 2015).

Primary-to-secondary school transition is a significant challenge for all parties (Coffey, 2013), encompassing environmental, pedagogical, and social changes, alongside expectations for increased independence and responsibilities (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Thus, transition is conceptualised in research as 'change,' a normative 'life event,' and / or – less frequently – a risk factor (Jindal-Snape et al, 2021).

Transition may be perceived as a one-off or ongoing event (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019). It generally entails an extended process of change, encompassing phases preceding and following transfer. The focus of this research is the transfer itself from primary to secondary school.

3.1.1 Pupil experiences

Prominent research themes include relationships (i.e., proximal processes) and environment (i.e., context). *Relationships* are vital to positive experiences and successful transitions (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Reconfiguration and formation of relationships are key pupil and parent concerns (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Positive pupil relationships help mitigate emotional stress and transition challenges (Coffey, 2013; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Peer and teacher relationship difficulties are associated with negative experiences (Evangelou et al, 2008).

Pupil-parent relationships can mediate stress caused by transition between school microsystems (O'Toole, 2016). Research suggests that parenting style influences pupils' pre-transfer concerns, depression and self-esteem (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010), moderating transition experiences. Pupils with positive parent relationships reported more positive school views and felt less isolated (Smyth et al, 2004). Pupils from one-parent, or low SES backgrounds, can experience poorer transitions (Topping 2011; Gilbert et al, 2021), possibly because limited parental and resource availability constrains proximal processes. There is evidence that older siblings facilitate transitions (Smyth et al, 2004; Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Positive effects may occur because siblings connect home and school microsystems (O'Toole, 2016). Similarly, moving with familiar peers is linked with successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008).

Transition involves losing, forming, maintaining and restructuring friendships (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Positive friendships provide support (Ashton, 2008); whilst poor social networks and bullying increase the risk of negative transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008; West, Sweeting and Young, 2010; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Negative peer relationships can undermine positive pupil-teacher relationships and classroom environments, hindering development (Jaeger, 2016). Pupils with SEND were found to express more friendship concerns, and were more likely to be bullied, than peers (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013; Foley, Foley and

Curtin, 2016). For their parents and carers, peer relationship (alongside provision and teacher) concerns often surpass academic concerns; accordingly, social support may be a prerequisite to post-transfer adjustment (Barnes-Homes et al, 2013).

Transition necessitates adaption to pedagogical and behavioural management styles of multiple teachers (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Changing expectations and increasingly authoritarian disciplinary approaches may cause post-transfer difficulties (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; 0'Toole, 2016), while positive teacher relationships were found to reduce the likelihood of negative experiences (McCoy, Shevlin and Rose, 2020).

Stakeholder involvement is indicative of successful transitions; therefore, systems must facilitate stakeholder links (Sutherland et al, 2010). For pupils with SEND, multi-agency and family collaboration is crucial (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016), and liaison between school staff, families and external professionals – which may include EPs - is required as part of EHC assessment and future-planning processes (DoH and DfE, 2015). However, parents and carers may be hesitant to contact settings due to bureaucracy and stigmatisation concerns (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Contextual differences between primary and secondary settings influence transition experiences; however, personal characteristics may have greater effects (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010; Vaz et al, 2014). Physical, academic and psychological changes to school microsystems (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020), generate conflicting emotions of excitement – enhancing experiences – and anxiety (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020; Table 2).

Certain person characteristics (e.g., mental health needs, lower ability) are associated with greater pre-transfer concerns (Rice et al, 2021), and increased likelihood of poorer transitions (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Conversely, positive expectations are associated with success (Evangelou et al, 2008; Gilbert et al, 2021). Concerns about provision, timetables and getting lost

are common amongst pupils with SEND – for whom environmental adaptation may take longer (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016).

Table 2: Aspects of transition that excite or concern pupils (Zeedyk et al, 2003; Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan, 2012; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019)

Aspects pupils generally look forward to	Aspects pupils are concerned about
• New friends • New subjects • Better resources • New opportunities • Independence • Greater responsibility • Moving classrooms	• Losing friends • Bullying • Losing adult support • Stricter teachers • Increased / harder work • Homework • Tests and assessment • New routines and timetables • Increased size and getting lost • Pupil numbers

Context effects upon post-transfer adjustment are inconclusive, due to limited research conducted in different contexts, and contradictory findings (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Environmental and pedagogical continuity is beneficial (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020), minimising the 'jolt in school climate' pupils may experience (Downes, 2007, cited in O'Toole, 2016), and reflecting the need for stability, predictability and consistency within systems.

Pupils have reported difficulties managing school size, timetables and work volume (West, Sweeting and Young (2010). Further analysis established no significant link between transition experiences and primary / secondary school variables. Similarly, McLellan and Galton's (2015) wellbeing study found no significant school-related effects.

One study examining academic competence (AC) and mental health functioning (MHF) over transition found no association with secondary school contextual factors (i.e., size, sector, SES) (Vaz et al, 2014). However, primary school organisation predicted post-transfer adjustment; accordingly, it concluded that primary schools bear greater responsibility to meet pupils transition needs.

3.1.2 Policy

Home and school microsystems are influenced by exosystems including school boards, healthcare and parent workplaces, nested within wider macrosystems i.e., class and culture (Jaeger, 2016). Macrosystemic laws and policies influence transitions, e.g., needs identification and resource allocation (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Ofsted evaluates schools on personal development provision, including: "…supporting readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so pupils [can]…transition successfully" (Ofsted, 2021, pp.244). Whilst it discusses transitions into Pupil Referral Units or Alternative Provision (pp.363), general guidance is omitted. Accordingly, transition practices vary across schools and LAs (Ashton, 2008; Evangelou et al, 2008); however, impacts upon experiences and outcomes are unknown (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

3.1.2.1 SEND

Within the SEND Code Of Practice (SENDCOP; DfE and DoH, 2015), specified elements of transition planning regarding further education or training (sections 8.9; 8.21) are notably absent for school-to-school transitions; however, some guidance is provided (Table 3).

Earlier studies found insufficient evidence that pupils with SEND experienced less successful transitions but acknowledged that aspects could invoke greater challenges (Evangelou et al, 2008; Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013). For example, socioemotional needs affect relationships, while sensory and mobility needs could hinder environmental navigation (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). That review identified an increased risk of poor transitions, corroborated by findings that pupils with a disability at age 9 were more likely to experience poor transitions, after controlling for individual variables (McCoy, Shevlin and Rose, 2020). Findings that pupils with disabilities had lower AC and MHF scores over transition, compared to peers (Vaz et al, 2014) could explain this.

However, both studies omitted special schools, potentially skewing results, and combined types of needs – reflecting assumptions regarding homogeneity of SEND (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Presence of SEND may enhance the power of particular stressors, (e.g., workload); individual lived experiences are relevant to stressor development and management, shaping readiness to transition and experiences (ibid.; Maras and Aveling, 2006).

Table 3: Relevant SENDCOP transition guidance (DfE and DoH, 2015)

pp.6.57	• "SEN support should include planning and preparation for the transitions between phases of education and preparation for adult life (…). To support transition, the school should share information with the school, college or other setting the child or young person is moving to. Schools should agree with parents and pupils the information to be shared as part of this planning process.
pp.6.42	• The outcomes considered should include those needed to make successful transitions between phases of education and to prepare for adult life. Schools should engage with secondary schools or FE providers as necessary to help plan for these transitions.
pp.6.90	• The key responsibilities of the SENCO may include: […] liaising with potential next providers of education to ensure a pupil and their parents are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned.
pp.9.61	• EHC plans should be forward looking – for example, anticipating, planning and commissioning for important transition points in a child or young person's life, including planning and preparing for their transition to adult life.
pp.9.66	• An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention.
pp. 9.68	• Outcomes will usually set out what needs to be achieved by the end of a phase or stage of education in order to enable the child or young person to progress successfully to the next phase or stage.
pp. 9.179	• An EHC plan must be reviewed and amended in sufficient time prior to a child or young person moving between key phases of education, to allow for planning for and, where necessary, commissioning of support and provision at the new institution. • The review and any amendments must be completed by 15 February in the calendar year of the transfer at the latest for transfers into or between schools. The key transfers are: [...] primary school to middle / secondary school.

3.1.3 Evaluation

Studies utilise various criteria to evaluate transitions, often within academic, social and wellbeing domains. Three example papers explicitly stated broad transition evaluation criteria which are shown below (Table 4). These papers were selected as key examples on the basis that two involved large-scale, longitudinal research commissioned by the Department for Children, School and Families (Evangelou et al, 2008) and the Nuffield Foundation respectively (Rice et al, 2015), and one comprised a recent, comprehensive literature review (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). EHCP outcomes may also underpin evaluation. Observed and reported pupil experiences (along with relevant data e.g., attendance, attainment) provide evidence for key indicators.

The research consensus is that most pupils quickly adjust to new secondary settings (Evangelou et al, 2008; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019). Pre-transfer concerns generally dissipate within the first term, or year (Zeedyk et al, 2003; West, Sweeting and Young, 2010; Rice et al, 2015), although some experience difficulties beyond this (Topping, 2011). Many pupils report that transfer and associated concerns (e.g., teachers, finding way around) were better than expected (Chedzoy and Burdon, 2005; Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019), with the majority experiencing ease making friends, and scoring highly in engagement (Gilbert et al, 2021).

Table 4: Transition Success Criteria .

Evangelou et al (2008)	**Rice et al (2015)**	**Evans, Boriello and Field (2018)**
5 aspects of successful transition: • Developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence • Having settled so well in school life that they cause no concerns to their parents / carers	Indicators of a successful transition: • Academic and behavioural involvement in school (e.g. attendance, attainment, behaviour)	Successful transitions comprise: • Academic attainment • Emotional wellbeing • Social integration Influenced by: • Contextual constructs ○ Environment-linked: pre-transition academic attainment, emotional health, home environment, life events ○ Individual-linked: gender / sex, SES, SEN, ethnicity, biological change and subject area

• Showing an increasing interest in school and schoolwork • Getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease • Experiencing curriculum continuity	• Feeling a sense of belonging (liking school, low loneliness)	• Environment-level constructs ○ School environment: teacher expectations, student autonomy, academic goal orientation, school / class size, quantity of teachers ○ Home environment: parenting style, academic support, social support, sibling dynamics • Individual-level constructs ○ Social schema: teacher relationships, peer relationships, social support, affect to school ○ Learning schema: engagement, interest, perceived control ○ Academic self-concept: academic self-efficacy, motivation, academic competence beliefs

3.1.3.1 Outcomes

Research indicates transition and academic outcomes are negatively associated, evidenced by declining post-transition grades, moderated by individual differences (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Evidence concerning transition and psychological outcomes is inconsistent (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018).

A study tracking wellbeing in 1110 English pupils found significant decreases between Year 7 Autumn and Summer terms, but not in the immediate post-transfer period (McLellan and Galton, 2015). They concluded that declining wellbeing during Year 7 was a common phenomenon unlinked to the transfer itself, nor to changing contexts. Anxious pupils are more likely to have pre-transfer concerns and experience poor transitions – factors predicting later anxiety and depression (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010), while socioemotional needs can impede adjustment (Rice et al, 2015), indicating a multi-directional relationship. However, few longitudinal studies, differing methodologies, and limited understanding of the synergistic effects of personal characteristics restrict conclusions regarding causality or longer-term impacts (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

3.2 School transition – Deaf Children

Deaf children may experience greater transition difficulties (Curle et al, 2017). Deafness affects communication and social development (Chapter 2), and incidental learning, potentially restricting independent living skills (Garay, 2003), ability to make informed transition choices, and post-transition adjustment (O'Brien, 2015; Luckner, 2002). Within school transition research, experiences of deaf learners are often omitted or combined with other disabilities. This section will review evidence pertaining to the primary-to-secondary school transitions of deaf pupils.

3.2.1 Search strategy

A comprehensive search was completed to locate the broadest range of relevant literature (Figure 7), to shape the study focus and the research questions presented at the end of this chapter. Given the small number of relevant studies, expanded search parameters included all levels of deafness, ages 9–15 to account for international literature, and assorted methodologies. Grey literature was included to minimise publication bias risks and expand the number of relevant papers.

3.2.2 Summary of search results

Deaf literature generally referenced post-secondary transition (e.g., O'Brien, 2015). One paper considered family support for parents of deaf adolescents, briefly referencing transition (Jamieson, Zaidman-Zait and Poon, 2011). A selection explored transition into school utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory including Early Years (EY) administrators (Curle et al, 2016), teacher and parent perspectives (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019) and stakeholder communication (Curle et al, 2017).

1. Scoping Search

A broad scoping search was conducted regarding the initial research questions: What does the literature tell us about the primary-to-secondary school transitions of deaf students?

Multiple reviews about primary-to-secondary school transition were located (e.g., West et al, 2010; Topping, 2011; Evans, Borriello and Field, 2018; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Mumford and Birchwood, 2021). One briefly referenced a single study involving deaf students (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

One review regarding transitions of students with SEND was located which did not include any reference to hearing loss (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013). Four empirical papers were located regarding the transitions of students with SEND, which included deaf students within the sample but did not discuss specific findings (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013; Vaz et al, 2014; Scanlon et al, 2016; McCoy, Shevlin and Rose, 2020). One thesis was located which applied the bioecological model to transition (O'Toole, 2016).

2. Planning

Relevant search terms were operationalised to include variations and combined for database searches. This included the terms "deaf" and associated terms (hearing impairment, hearing loss, hard of hearing) in combination with "school / education" and "transition / transfer / mov* / change."

3. Structured search

Multiple keyword searches were conducted of the electronic databases: EBSCOHOST and Ovid (Psychinfo, PsychArticles, MEDLINE, ERIC), and Google Scholar to identify published and unpublished work.

An ancestral search was completed by searching references cited in relevant papers located via the database and Google Scholar searches, and searching for additional studies citing located papers. A hand search of relevant journal (e.g., The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education) was also completed.

In line with Siddaway, Wood and Hedges (2019) published and unpublished papers, and grey literature such as policy papers were reviewed to mitigate the risk of publication bias.

Inclusion criteria:

Primary research on primary-to-secondary (or age / stage equivalent) school transitions of deaf students:
Participants – deaf students aged 9-15, all hearing thresholds; parents; teachers; other professionals
Timeframe – 1999 onwards.

4. Screening

Retrieved papers were initially screened by reviewing the relevance of the title to the inclusion criteria. Duplicate articles were removed (1). Abstracts for the remaining papers were read and screened according to inclusion criteria. Duplicate articles were removed (2).

Remaining papers were read in full and screened according to inclusion criteria (3). Relevant studies from the ancestral search were similarly screened.

Study findings relevant to the research question were synthesised, and thematically mapped according to PPCT headings

Initial screen (1)	Abstract screen (2)	Full-text screen (3)	Ancestral search	Total:
EBSCO: 427 Ovid: 298 Scholar: 807	20	6	1	5

Figure 7: Search Process

Five empirical studies met the inclusion criteria (Table 5). Details regarding aims, methodologies and findings are in Appendix 1. Most (except Wolters et al, 2012) utilise small samples (partly due to limited population) and acknowledge that findings are non-generalisable. However, recurrent themes across papers arguably supports transferability (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Themes are presented in narrative format according to Process-Person-Context-Time headings, with reference to broader transition literature, including papers discussed in the preceding sections.

Table 5: Key Study Summary Table

Study	Overview
Tropea (2010)	Utilised post-transition student (n=6) and parent (n=3) focus groups to explore their perceptions of transition into a mainstream high school (13-14 years) in the USA including concerns, positive and negative experiences, participation and suggested improvements. A key drawback was an emphasis on factors influencing inclusion rather transition. Although limited by a small sample, the reliability of findings was strengthened by inclusion of student and parent perspectives.
Rugg and Donne (2011)	Utilised parental interviews (n=12) and teacher surveys (n=7) to explore their perceptions of the transition process, student preparedness and programme effectiveness, during transition from a specialist to mainstream setting in the USA. The study was included due to the UK-relevant average timing of transition between fifth and sixth grade (10-12 years), and consideration of parent and teacher perspectives.
Wolters et al (2012)	Investigated the impact of acceptance, popularity and student-teacher relationship upon wellbeing, and interactions between these factors, during the transition into junior high school (12-13 years) in the Netherlands. It comprised two studies - the first included 759 Grade 6 and 840 Grade 7 deaf and hearing students, the second included a subset of 39 hearing and 59 deaf students. Quantitative data including peer sociometric nominations, student questionnaires, wellbeing and demographic data was statistically analysed. Although the study did not consider the impact of individual differences on these interactions, it utilised a comparatively large sample and collected longitudinal data.
Mulat, Lehtomäki and Savolainen (2019)	Explored academic achievement and self-concept during the fifth-grade transition between specialist and mainstream settings in Ethiopia, and high drop-out rates. It collected pre-transition (n=103) and post-transition (n=72) student questionnaire and attainment data. Despite contextual differences, similarities with regards to average transition age (12-15 years), moving between settings, and the change from a single teacher to diverse subject teachers, justified inclusion of this paper.
Taylor-Baptie (2021)	Investigated student (n=4) perceptions of the transition between mainstream primary and secondary settings (11-12 years) in the UK using student interviews and an Ideal School activity. A key limitation was the retrospective student accounts; however, they did provide rich description of students' views about transition effects and support mechanisms, within a clearly explicated theoretical framework.

3.2.2.1 Process

Proximal processes are "…the primary engines of development," (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.798), encompassing relationship-focused and task-focused interactions. This is described in the first of two propositions outlining the defining features of the bioecological model (Figure 8).

Proposition I
"Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal process are found in feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, problem solving, caring for others in distress, making plans, performing complex tasks, and acquiring new knowledge and know-how."

Figure 8: Proximal Processes Key Proposition 1 (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.797)

i. Relationships

In line with existing research (s.3.1.1), deaf pupils look forward to meeting new people; parents / carers, peers and teachers help them adjust to new environments and academic demands, make friends and manage hearing-related needs (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Changes to established relationships and social hierarchies prompt feelings of loss (Taylor-Baptie, 2021) – shared by many pupils (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020) and parents / carers of children with SEND (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013). Communication barriers can hinder relationship formation (Wolters et al, 2012; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), limiting interpersonal interactions.

Pupil-parent relationships: Limited parental engagement and understanding of school systems impede transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008); thus, promoting parental involvement is helpful (Zeedyk et al, 2003). O'Toole (2016) applied the bioecological framework to examine parental

involvement, finding beneficial effects including stronger microsystem linkages, but few studies that examined families' transition experiences.

This was evident in the key studies. Only Tropea (2010) and Rugg and Donne (2011) involved parent participants. None discussed pupil-parent relationships or older siblings. In line with existing evidence (e.g., Mumford and Birchwood, 2020), pupils highlighted benefits of parent-teacher liaison and parental support during transitions (Tropea, 2010; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), including:

- Practical and emotional support
- obtaining information about options / support in advance
- advocating for their child
- ensuring optimal home conditions (i.e., food, sleep, and routine)
- assisting secondary school organisation and travel.

Peer relationships: Common pupil concerns related to making new friends and bullying (Tropea, 2010; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), whereas parents and carers worried about peer groups and risky behaviours (Tropea, 2010). Despite missing primary school friends, pupils reported quickly forming new friendships (Taylor-Baptie, 2021), corroborating existing research (Ashton, 2008; Rice et al, 2015; Gilbert et al, 2021).

Larger secondary settings increase friendship opportunities (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Pupils are often the only deaf child in their class (Antia et al, 2009). Specialist transfer increases deaf peer connections but may lessen the likelihood of moving with familiar peers. In Wolters et al (2012), 98% of the Grade 6 sample were the only deaf child, compared with 90% in Grade 7. Access to deaf peers reduces isolation and provides reassurance, enhancing wellbeing (Taylor-Baptie, 2021) while frequent proximal processes aid development.

More opportunities for self-comparisons with hearing peers contribute to parental transition concerns (Jamieson, Zaidman-Zait and Poon, 2011). In Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019), the wider learner pool for self-comparisons was one suggested reason for declining academic self-concept of deaf pupils integrated into classes with hearing peers, compared to stable scores for hearing pupils, and small increases for deaf pupils remaining in specialist settings. This corresponds with Vaz et al's (2014) reasoning for lower post-transfer AC scores for pupils moving settings compared to those who did not.

Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019) further speculated that increased socialisation opportunities could explain deaf pupils' post-transfer increases in peer relations self-concept scores; an alternative explanation being the growing importance of peer relationships during adolescence (Wolters et al, 2012). Pupils positively viewed pre- and post-transfer friendships with hearing and deaf peers (Tropea, 2010), providing support to navigate new surroundings and social situations (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). The author interpreted pupil suggestions of friendship support to assist transitioning pupils as an indication that they found friendships useful. It could imply that some experienced challenges, in line with findings that deaf children can experience peer interaction difficulties (s.2.2.1.1). Espoused benefits of peer mentoring schemes whereby older students share transition experiences, informing and reassuring newcomers, corroborated earlier findings that this can ease transitions (Zeedyk et al, 2003; Smyth et al, 2004; Topping, 2011).

Peer acceptance positively correlates with wellbeing in deaf children, regardless of setting (Wolters et al, 2012). In this study, acceptance for deaf boys remained stable over transition, but declined for deaf girls, alongside lower wellbeing scores for deaf girls attending mainstream settings. Declines were attributed to communication difficulties with unfamiliar peers – also raised in Taylor-Baptie (2021) – obstructing friendship formation, connectedness and consequently well-being. Overall, deaf mainstream pupils were less popular and accepted than hearing classmates, and deaf specialist peers. Transition therefore affects relationships, with

changes observed in peer acceptance, popularity (which declined for all learners) and pupil-teacher relationship ratings, moderated by hearing, gender, and educational context. Peer acceptance is linked to belongingness – important to wellbeing and successful transitions (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

Pupil-teacher relationships: Pupils with SEND may take longer to adjust to new teachers (Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016), potentially linked to loss of familiar relationships, particularly if ongoing support increased reliance on primary school staff (Bailey and Baines, 2012). However, some deaf pupils welcome the opportunity '…to get rid of annoying teachers' (Tropea, 2010: p.49).

In Wolters et al (2012), quantitative analysis indicated that pre-transfer, pupil-teacher relationships best predicted pupil wellbeing. Post-transfer, context moderated this, with predictive effects for deaf pupils attending specialist settings, but not mainstream deaf pupils – who, interestingly, reported better pupil-teacher relationships compared to specialist settings. The authors attributed this to contextual or teacher factors, noting that poor specialist relationships cohered with existing research. Time and gender interactions further influenced mainstream pupil-teacher relationships, with ratings remaining stable for girls, and increasing for boys.

Pupils in Taylor-Baptie (2021) spoke positively about teachers, and the benefits of transition support from a familiar key adult – affirming existing recommendations (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013). Alongside form tutors and Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCOs), ToDs connect pupils, parents /carers and teachers, acting as a pupil advocate during transitions (Tropea, 2010). Parents emphasised their role in facilitating primary-to-secondary transitions (ibid.) and school entry (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019), employing knowledge of deaf education to support inclusion (Curle et al, 2017), consistency and continuity (Table 6).

Table 6: Role of ToDs

Role of ToDs during transition
• Sharing information • Advising staff about assistive devices and best practice • Frequent secondary visits, familiar contact to reassure pupils, helping them settle and manage changes • Monitoring support • Ensuring environments are acoustically supportive; and • Assisting development of home-school partnership to encourage communication and stakeholder participation (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

Stakeholder relationships: Research consistently emphasises strong parent, teacher and professional relationships for transition success (Coffey, 2013; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Low incidence of deafness effectuates limited transition services and expertise, impeding planning (Luft, 2015). Parents require support from deaf-aware professionals regarding their child's hearing (and other) needs; however, transition support is limited (Jamieson, Zaidman-Zait and Poon, 2011). Strong inter-agency links and multi-level stakeholder collaboration are cost-effective ways to maximise access to specialised resources and services across systems to meet deaf learners' diverse needs (Luft, 2011).

Deaf pupils highlighted learning benefits of ToD and class teacher liaison; parents and carers emphasised the need for professional collaboration, describing how positive staff relationships facilitated frequent discussions and smoother transitions (Tropea, 2010). Despite some barriers, including failure to respond or insufficient knowledge, parents and carers valued staff input.

Parents in Rugg and Donne (2011) listed supportive staff, including transition coordinators, as an effective aspect of the transition process. Transition coordinators connect stakeholders, and microsystems, facilitating transitions by sharing information, managing parental concerns and expectations, arranging school visits, and supporting pupil adjustment (Coffey, 2013; O'Toole, 2016).

Although not highlighted within the located articles, EPs may engage in similar activities across home, school and community systems, making a distinctive contribution to multi-agency work through individual assessment, intervention, training and consultancy, in addition to the management of multi-agency teams (Farrell et al, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002), thus facilitating transition processes. In working with pupils, parents and staff, EPs can facilitate the development of new relationships, and the inclusion of stakeholder views during transitions (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020).

School collaboration and information sharing were identified as advantageous for support and curricular continuity (Taylor-Baptie, 2021) – shown to ease transitions (Zeedyk et al, 2003). Home-school and inter-school communication facilitate consistent, collaborative transition support, whereas poor communication can impede new relationships (Curle et al, 2016; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020), support and curriculum continuity (Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016; Smyth et al, 2004).

ii. Transition Process

Transition practices can be low-intensity (e.g., generic information, open days) and high-intensity (e.g., face-to-face meetings, home visits) (Curle et al, 2016; Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019). High-intensity, collaborative approaches – although less common – better facilitate stakeholder proximal processes, strengthening relationships and setting links, enhancing transition experiences.

Within the key studies, the transition process (from specialist to mainstream), was a theme in Rugg and Donne (2011), with regards to process initiation and length, and effective practices including multi-agency meetings, parental workshops and partial mainstreaming. Although parents viewed the process positively, the paper did not comment on how process factors shaped pupils' experiences.

Research has identified multiple effective practices to prepare pupils for transition (Table 7). Unpreparedness has been linked to poorer transitions (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Deaf pupils reportedly felt insufficient preparation was a transition barrier, causing expectational anxiety (Tropea, 2010). Pre-transfer visits ameliorated this, corroborating research suggesting that pupils perceive visits as particularly helpful (Sutherland et al, 2010).

Table 7: Effective transition practices.

Fffective transition practices
• Pre-transfer discussions (e.g. Rice et al, 2015; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019; Mumford and Birchwood, 2020) • Pre-transfer visits to new settings (e.g. Zeedyk et al, 2003; Maras and Aveling, 2006; Rice et al, 2015; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019) • Secondary pupils and teachers visiting primary settings (Zeedyk et al, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019) • Opportunities to meet peers, ask questions and get practical advice (Zeedyk et al, 2003; Evangelou et al, 2008; Coffey, 2013 • Primary-secondary school information sharing (e.g. Zeedyk et al, 2003; Evangelou et al, 2008; Coffey, 2013) • Use of bridging materials / projects (work started in primary and completed in secondary school) (e.g. Evangelou, 2008; Rice et al, 2015) • Phased year group entry (Galton and McLellan, 2018)

Pre-transfer secondary school contact may reduce pupils' negative feelings about transition and facilitate clearer expectations (Smyth et al, 2004), while meeting staff can foster a sense of safety and belonging (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Pre-transfer contact should avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes which can heighten concerns (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013). However, management of expectations is crucial (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020); especially for pupils with SEND – for example, regarding changing provision – to minimise potential disappointment or anxiety (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020).

Preparatory interventions might include **cognitive** (e.g., discussions, school information), **behavioural** (e.g., visits, increasing responsibilities / homework, teaching skills) and **SEN** strategies (e.g., review meetings, school liaison, training) (Rice et al, 2015). That study found that

certain transition interventions (e.g., bridging units) reduced anxiety for pupils without SEND; yet increased it for pupils with SEND.

Tailored transition support, providing insight into new settings, is therefore beneficial (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Pupils with needs – including those created by transition (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019) – may benefit from extended support to manage persisting concerns, and facilitate adjustment (McLellan and Galton, 2015; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016). Research suggests that effective transitions for deaf learners are underpinned by formal planning (Cawthon et al, 2016). Individualised plans facilitate curriculum and support continuity (Evangelou et al, 2008; Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013), positively influencing transitions.

Deaf pupils reiterated existing research when retrospectively discussing supportive aspects of the transition process, recalling:

- Individualised preparatory support
- practical /emotional support and information from teachers
- pre-transfer visits, meeting staff
- well-prepared secondary school
- being eased into secondary school / starting earlier than other year groups
- introductory activities (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

Wolters et al (2012) proposed that interacting effects of hearing, gender and context upon wellbeing necessitated consideration of these factors for effective transition interventions. Pre-transfer, deaf pupils had lower wellbeing scores than hearing peers, for most of whom wellbeing remained stable over transition. Mainstream deaf boys exhibited increased wellbeing whereas it decreased for girls, with converse effects for pupils in specialist settings. This reaffirms the need for individualised support which considers the interplay between personal characteristics and multi-level contexts, aligning with the second proposition of the bioecological model relating to

impacts upon proximal processes (Figure 9). These factors, including personal characteristics, environmental contexts and changes over time, are explored in the following subsections.

Proposition II

"The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, the environment—both immediate and more remote— in which the processes are taking place, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived."

Figure 9: Proximal Processes Key Proposition 2 (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.797)

3.2.2.2 Person

A large-scale English study found that no one group was at risk of poor transition, instead interacting risk and protective variables shape transition success (Rice et al, 2015). Additional Support Needs (ASN), including English as an Additional Language (EAL), reduce the likelihood of positive transition (Gilbert et al, 2021); whereas emotional regulation and resilience facilitate smoother transitions (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Transition may also stimulate developmental biological changes i.e., stress adaptation (Serbin, Stack and Kingdon, 2013), suggesting bi-directional effects.

i. Resources

Resource characteristics include ability and skills (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). There is evidence that pre-transfer ability predicts adaptation (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Lower academic ability correlates with greater pre-transfer concerns (s.3.2.2.2.ii) and less successful academic transitions (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Post-transfer achievement can represent a transition outcome, as in Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019) or success indicator, as in Rugg and Donne (2011).

Deafness can hinder skill development and has been associated with poorer mental health (s.2.2.1.2). Skill deficits were one explanation for significantly lower pre- and post-transfer MHF scores in students with disabilities compared to peers (Vaz et al, 2014). Communication, social and pragmatic skills were found to predict deaf pupils' acceptance and popularity (Wolters et al, 2012). Transition studies highlight similar developmentally generative skills for successful transitions, including organisational and coping skills (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Vaz et al, 2014).

In one, primary school pupils highlighted academic ability, whereas secondary pupils named time management, behaviour and social skills (Zeedyk et al, 2003), demonstrating changing views over time. Adult respondents discussed confidence, and only teachers mentioned adaptability – both shown to facilitate transitions (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). In another, teachers emphasised attainment-related needs and interventions, whereas children and parents / carers prioritised socio-emotional aspects (Topping, 2011), demonstrating the value of multi-perspective research.

Social, organisational and self-advocacy skills help deaf pupils manage increased transition demands (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Poor organisational skills can contribute to stress, and obstruct post-transfer adaptation (O'Toole, 2016). Self-advocacy skills empower deaf students to enforce their rights (Garay, 2003; Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019). Parental advocacy skills and knowledge of rights, systems and services also facilitate smooth transitions (ibid.).

Transition-planning processes stimulate self-advocacy skills (Luft, 2011) therefore, students should be taught how to participate (Garay, 2003). Early participation stimulates skills that support later decision-making (Bowe, 2011), and student contributions may help improve transition practices (Ashton, 2008). However, deaf pupils may be unaware of their entitlement to participate (Tropea, 2010), with reports of limited planning involvement, despite valuing opportunities (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). This corroborates reported professional views of transition plans as useful, but often omitting deaf students' views (O'Brien, 2015).

Nevertheless, the value of self-advocacy skills was apparent in the key studies. Parental and self-advocacy were key support-related themes in Tropea (2010), and self-advocacy education formed part of the transition programme in Rugg and Donne (2011). Furthermore, Taylor-Baptie (2021) recommended that pupils develop self-advocacy skills to assist in expressing views about desired support, minimising potential frustrations and consequently enhancing wellbeing.

ii. Dispositions

Research suggests deaf children may have lower self-esteem (s.2.2.1.2.ii), a dispositional trait shown to mediate transition experiences (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Self-efficacy is another protective trait (Bailey and Baines, 2012) whereas attention or behavioural needs enhance risks (Serbin, Stack and Kingdon, 2013).

Directive belief systems "…about oneself as an active agent…" interact with contextual features to shape development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.810). Strong international evidence indicates that beliefs and expectations influence transition experiences. In one study, pupils with positive (i.e., developmentally generative) expectations were 3x more likely to report positive experiences (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014), whilst primary school pupils who anticipated transition problems (i.e., developmentally disruptive beliefs) were more likely to experience them (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019).

Perceptions of transition as a challenge or threat may influence emotional responses, as pupils perceiving transition as a challenge tend to have better outcomes (Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan, 2012). Positive attitudes were also identified by parents of deaf children as facilitating smoother school entry (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019).

Deaf pupils reportedly share similar peer and school concerns to hearing peers (s.3.1.1), along with deafness-related concerns, i.e., support continuity (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Parents reported

more concerns (about peers, academic support and socioemotional upheaval) than their children, whose concerns about (loss of) relationships and new environments quickly subsided (Tropea, 2010).

There was evidence that information shared counterproductively influenced pupils' transition attitudes. In Taylor-Baptie (2021) one participant described feeling nervous about secondary school, partly due to information about secondary expectations being used for behavioural management in primary school, corroborating earlier research (Chedzoy and Burdon, 2005). Another felt 'really sick' (Tropea, 2010: p.49) following advice that they would 'struggle' more in secondary school than hearing peers, whilst others felt that teachers should be more positive about the process. Transition experiences can also influence dispositions; for example, changes were observed in pupils' post-transfer peer and academic self-concept ratings (Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen, 2019).

iii. Demands

Demand characteristics, for example, gender, ethnicity and appearance, invite or discourage responses (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Differential puberty onset ages could affect transition experiences. Girls experience greater stress and anxiety (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018) and are more likely to report feeling nervous or isolated (Smyth et al, 2004); whereas boys were found to be more likely to report positive experiences (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014). However, large-scale research concluded that gender was not significantly related to transition experiences (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Gender interactions were found to influence wellbeing during transition (Wolters et al, 2012). While popularity predicted post-transfer wellbeing for deaf boys, both popularity and acceptance predicted wellbeing for deaf girls, indicating the importance of peer relationships.

Pupils from ethnic minorities were found to be more likely to express negative transition views, and report feeling isolated; teacher respondents reported negative effects of differential home-school languages upon academic progress and social integration (Smyth et al, 2004). EAL is a risk factor (Gilbert et al, 2021), with non-EAL pupils rated as better adjusted by teachers (Bailey and Baines, 2012) – pertinent for deaf learners whose home language is BSL. Sign language inaccessibility was posited as a reason for high post-transfer drop-out rates in Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019). Notwithstanding a vastly different context, desire for more consistent sign language use was expressed by pupils in Taylor-Baptie (2021).

Limited linguistic or cultural capital (e.g., knowledge of educational systems) obstructs parental transition involvement (O'Toole, 2016). Therefore, deaf transition planning processes must be comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and promote home-school partnership (Garay, 2003; O'Toole, 2016), as reflected in current diversity and inclusion policies (s.3.2.2.4).

Characteristics of significant others influence microsystemic proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), and consequently, transition experiences. Parents identified deaf knowledge, collaboration, teaching and communication skills as important for teachers and transition professionals (Tropea, 2010), while deaf pupils highlighted various teacher characteristics (Figure 10).

In Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019), teachers' inadequate sign skills exacerbated contextual discontinuities, strengthening recommendations that teachers possess skills facilitative of pupil interactions and participation (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

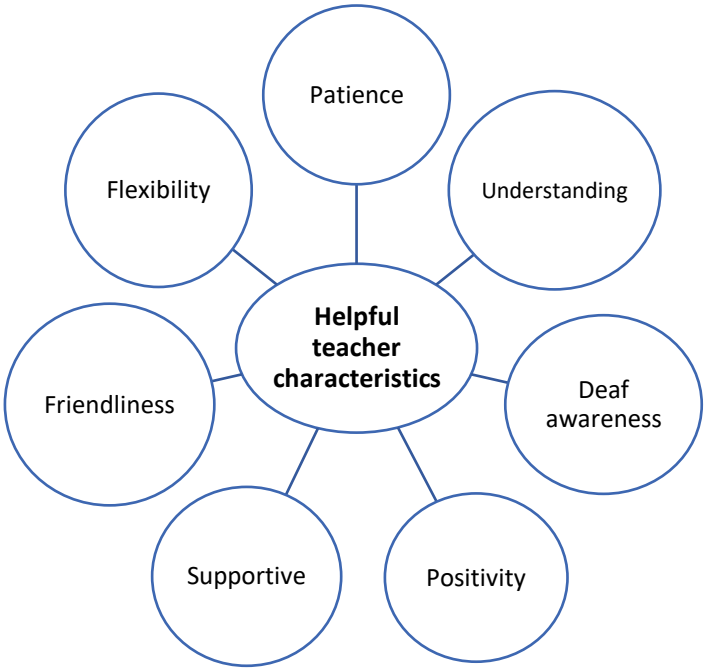


Figure 10: Helpful teacher characteristics (Tropea, 2010; Taylor-Baptie, 2021)

3.2.2.3 Context

Absence of the "…environmental conditions and experiences required for the realization of human potentials" impedes development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p.799). Effective operation of systems requires stability, consistency and predictability (ibid. p.820).

i. Microsystem

The primary ecosystem for deaf adolescents is the home (Luft, 2011). Socioemotional and material resources affect parental transition involvement (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019); however, no key studies investigated home contexts.

Regarding school microsystems, pupils highlighted multiple contextual secondary school differences (Figure 11), corresponding with existing research (e.g., Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Transition is "…characterised by new opportunities and increased responsibility" (Taylor-Baptie, 2021: 124), alongside greater independence, contributing to anxiety and heightened demand for self-organisation and adaptability.

Pupils may struggle to adjust to new teaching styles (Taylor-Baptie, 2021), particularly with multiple teachers. In Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019), achievement was stable for deaf pupils remaining in specialist settings (although lower overall) but decreased for both deaf and – to a lesser degree – hearing pupils who changed settings, speculatively linked to contextual differences. The change from a single to multiple subject teachers led to reduced sign language access and differing instructional languages. However, findings that popularity increased for all pupils cannot be explained by contextual differences alone; although not explored, personal and proximal process factors likely had an impact.

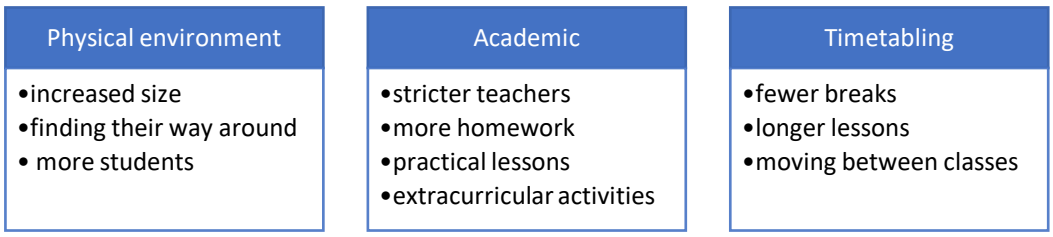


Figure11: School microsystem differences (Taylor-Baptie, 2021)

Curriculum discontinuity contributes to negative transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020), and support continuity – facilitative of SEND transitions – is a common parental concern (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; O'Toole, 2016). Discontinuities can impede new relationships, and amplify stakeholder tensions and adjustment difficulties, thus collaboration is important to manage expectations and ensure provision implementation (Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bagnall, Fox and Skipper, 2021). Within the key studies, parental views of support were overall positive (Tropea, 2010), and pupils felt support was better prepared and implemented in secondary school (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

Provision availability affects setting choice – a key decision pupils and parents and carers must negotiate (Tropea, 2010). Availability restricted options for some, whereas for others – corresponding with Smyth et al (2004) – school choice was determined by peer attendance.

Moving without familiar peers can heighten anxiety (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). In that study, setting choices were determined by local school availability and parental considerations – including their hearing status and deaf community participation – rather than child's hearing status.

Gender may influence educational placement, with one Dutch review finding that females – deaf and hearing – were more likely to attend mainstream settings (van der Straaten et al, 2021). Choosing between mainstream and specialist settings can challenge parents and carers; specialist-mainstream transitions may be perceived as higher risk given potential wellbeing impacts (Bagnall, Fox and Skipper, 2021). Few deaf specialist settings could mean they are further away. Parents of deaf pupils in Tropea (2010) expressed concerns about selecting non-local schools, and transport availability / timeliness. Independent bus travel is a common pupil concern (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014), exemplifying one challenge associated with moving from a local primary school to a distant secondary (Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016).

Research has identified possible advantages and drawbacks associated with different settings (Figure 12), with some drawbacks ameliorated by inclusive policies (s.3.2.2.3.iv).

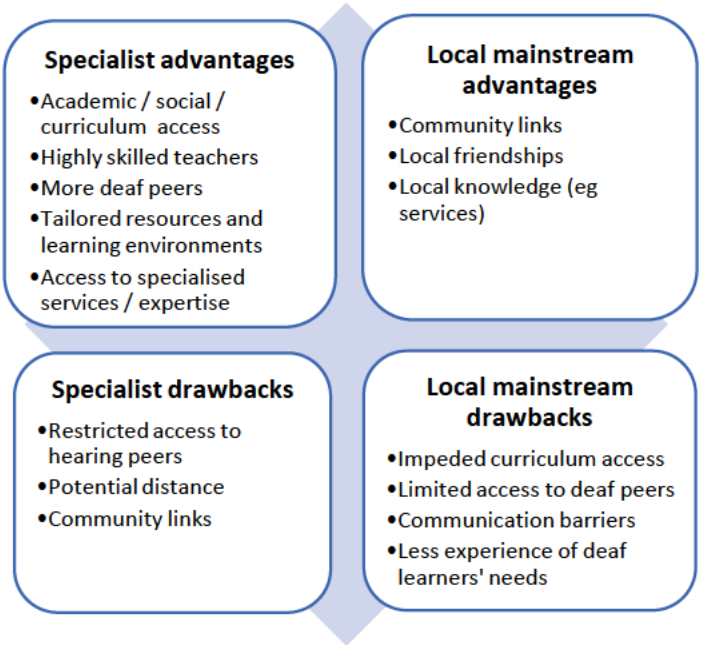


Figure 12: Potential advantages and drawbacks of mainstream and specialist settings (Byrne, 2011; Luft, 2011)

ii. Mesosystem

This is "…the linkages and processes taking place between two or more [microsystems]" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p.80). Maintenance of common system elements (e.g., peers, curriculum) creates stronger linkages, thus easing transitions (O'Toole, 2016). Roles such as transition coordinators, and school organisational structures facilitate or hinder home-school mesosystemic links, for example, multiple teachers can impede relationship formation (O'Toole, 2016). EPs work within multiple systems surrounding the child and are therefore well-placed to support the development and maintenance of linkages between systems and agencies (Farrell et al, 2006).

As discussed, (s.3.2.2.1.i) ToDs also work within home and school microsystems, strengthening mesosystemic stakeholder links, fulfilling both educator and mediator roles (Tropea, 2010). Although pupil and parent views were generally positive, high caseloads often constrained the quality, intensity and / or duration of ToD support. Parents described limited availability based on services the school board could provide, rather than pupil need, demonstrating exosystemic influences, e.g., funding and service availability, upon transition experiences.

Partial mainstreaming – attending secondary school one day a week during the final pre-transfer term – was perceived as extremely beneficial by parents in Rugg and Donne (2011), supporting pupils to become comfortable and familiar with new environments, peers and equipment, increased noise and group sizes. It aimed to put pupils at ease, thus reducing anxieties and enabling focus on academic aspects post-transfer.

School-community links are another mesosystem (O'Toole, 2016). Parents obtain support and information from other parents and carers of deaf children, face-to-face or online (Curle et al 2017). Community word-of-mouth has been found to influence school selection (O'Toole, 2016). However, parents reported few opportunities to meet other deaf families following school entry (Jamieson, Zaidman-Zait and Poon (2011). One suggested improvement to the transition process

in Rugg and Donne (2011) was more parental community involvement – especially where children attend non-local schools.

iii. Exosystem

The exosystem comprises "…linkages and processes…between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p.80), for example, teacher training programmes (s.2.2.1.3). Teachers have reported insufficient pre-qualification training regarding transition and how to support needs (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016). This, combined with insufficient deaf education training, obstructs successful transitions (O'Brien, 2015), due to:

- Inadequate transition services (Luft, 2011)
- effects on stakeholder relationships e.g., placement disputes (Curle et al, 2016)
- limited support and learning access (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019).

Pre-service deaf education training and professional development help enhance professional competencies (Cawthon et al, 2016). Training programmes should also create opportunities for primary-secondary school liaison to facilitate pedagogical / curricular continuity (Jindal-Snape et al, 2019). EPs often engage in the development and delivery of training to school staff and other professionals (Farrell et al, 2006), and can therefore facilitate competency development and improved transition processes.

Primary-secondary school links can represent exosystems (e.g., before pupils enter new microsystems). Pre-transfer familiarisation opportunities for parents / carers and students – including information packs and visits – facilitate deaf learners' transitions (Zaidman-Zait et al 2019). Within the key studies, visits were perceived as beneficial, helping 'demystify' the transition process (Tropea, 2010: p.62). Knowing what to expect alleviated pupil concerns about

finding their way to lessons punctually – reaffirming Maras and Aveling's (2006) findings – whilst meeting new peers and teachers beforehand facilitated relationship formation (Taylor-Baptie, 2021), thus easing transitions. That author noted that familiarisation and orientation activities are helpful, as deaf pupils may be less likely to attend to environmental factors than peers, instead concentrating on e.g., conversations.

Exosystemic funding decisions impact available options, specialists, and services. Taylor-Baptie (2021) discussed variable transition support levels across settings, aligning with findings that different schools, trusts and LAs adopt varied practices (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Joint commissioning arrangements utilising local resources are recommended to provide integrated support and improve transition planning for pupils with SEND (DfE and DoH, 2015: section 3.7). Funding arrangements therefore influence the quality and quantity of transition support.

iv. Macrosystem

This is *"…the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture […] a societal blueprint…" (*Bronfenbrenner, 1994: p.1645*),* including beliefs and customs.

In Ethiopia, 96% of learners with disabilities reportedly receive no education (Mulat, Lehtomäki, and Savolainen, 2019). Traditional practices used in attempts to cure deafness can cause further damage, demonstrating how macrosystemic beliefs directly impact the developing child. Inadequate early screening prevents early identification and intervention, and delayed school entry (9-15 years) further hinders development. Delays constrain preparation time, hindering implementation of accommodations, leading to poorer transitions (Curle et al, 2016).

The Equality Act (2010) stipulates that schools must provide accessible lessons, requiring sign language interpreters and other support, where specified as necessary adjustments. For deaf Ethiopian students, sign language / interpreter inaccessibility, inadequate deaf awareness and large class sizes limited participation, producing educational integration rather than genuine inclusion, and potentially contributing to drop-out (Mulat, Lehtomäki, and Savolainen 2019). Parents in Tropea (2010) noted contextual differences pertaining to inclusion, with more segregated practices in secondary school, demonstrating systemic impacts upon transition experiences.

Ethiopian class sizes (60-80) contrasted with Dutch classrooms, where mainstream classes averaged around 20 pupils, and specialist classes 11 (Grade 6) and 7 (Grade 7) (Wolters et al, 2012). Smaller class sizes create more opportunities for complex proximal processes. Transition often involves moving from smaller to larger settings (Evangelou et al, 2008), linked with a non-significant increase in the likelihood of negative transition (Gilbert et al, 2021). In that study, pupils moving between large settings were more likely to have positive transitions than those moving between small settings; further research exploring interrelations between school factors and experiences was recommended.

Perceptions of deafness as a disability have changed over time (s.2.2.1.4). Professionals in one (postsecondary) transition study felt that umbrella SEND labels were inappropriate given deaf learners' unique needs and experiences, and alienated students from transition planning processes (O'Brien, 2015). Where polices do not consider individual, contextual and societal factors, they may not be followed. Professionals acknowledged ignoring or adapting policy deemed inappropriate. Despite generating more tailored transition support, inconsistent policy application could affect service coordination.

3.2.2.4 Time

Developmental outcomes at Time 1 influence outcomes at Time 2 through effects on proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.812). Poorer transitions were shown to predict higher depression and lower attainment at ages 15 and 18-19; furthermore, prior wellbeing and attainment influenced post-transition wellbeing and attainment (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). The cumulative nature of transitions means unsuccessful school transitions could delay or compromise transition into adulthood (O'Brien, 2015).

Two of the five key studies collected pre- and post-transfer data illustrating changes over time (Wolters et al, 2012; Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen, 2019). The former found that time moderated pupil-teacher relationships – demonstrated by improved pupil ratings – and the predictive effects of relationships upon wellbeing. In the latter, academic self-concept decreased for deaf mainstream pupils post-transfer, while peer relations self-concept improved for all pupils, moderated by contextual factors. These findings strengthen calls for longitudinal research exploring transition impacts and adaptation over time (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

Transition is a normative life event, coinciding with adolescence. Hormonal changes affect self-esteem, behaviour and relationships; deafness and communication barriers may impede understanding of these changes, affecting long-term development (Luft, 2011). Peer relationships are progressively important, and transition disrupts these networks (Topping, 2011). The changing nature of adolescent interactions (e.g., groups, noisy environments) can exacerbate social difficulties for mainstream deaf pupils (Rieffe et al, 2018).

Although age is not significantly linked to transition experiences (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010), timing in the life course may determine readiness to transition – a key theme in Rugg and Donne (2011), therein related to academic progress. Other pupils described feeling ready to move on, having outgrown primary school (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

This relates to the timing of transition processes. One key study discussed process initiation and length, dependent on individual needs and strengths (Rugg and Donne, 2011). Late initiation constrains preparation time (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Pupils who feel well-prepared are less likely to anticipate and experience transition problems (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019). However, initiating processes too early could overwhelm pupils; hence, balance is needed to ensure sufficient time for gradual preparation and secondary school exposure, whilst meeting pupil and cohort needs (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020).

For pupils with EHCPs, external timescales direct transition planning processes, including school selection (s.3.1.2.1), helpful to ensuring support is implemented upon transfer – associated with parental satisfaction (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Sociohistorical contexts influence transition experiences and outcomes. For example, wider school intake areas constrain pre-transfer liaison, and induction policies increasingly emphasise behavioural expectations (McLellan and Galton, 2015). Numbers transitioning during a specific year could strain services (Luft, 2011) – as in Bagnall, Fox and Skipper's (2021) study wherein more enhanced (specialist-mainstream) transitions stretched staff, reducing 1:1 preparation time. Funding impacts information sharing, coordination and resource availability, contributing to stakeholder stress, disenfranchisement and provision concerns (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Norms concerning parental involvement in education have changed over time, with more active decision-making and advocacy roles (O'Toole, 2016). The SENDCOP (DfE and DoH 2015) requires consideration of child and parent views in addition to multi-agency, collaborative approaches, which facilitate stakeholder proximal processes and mesosystemic links. One UK-based key study referenced this guidance when reiterating the importance of child's voice (Taylor-Baptie, 2021); however, policy impacts upon deaf primary-to-secondary transitions are underexplored.

Existing policy aligns with research recommendations for timely, coordinated transition support (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013). Smooth processes promoting parental choice underpin successful

transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008). Although guidance emphasises school choice, this depends on context-time factors including demand for places and admissions criteria (Sutherland et al, 2010).

Finally, transition research timing is important. Pupils may experience a 'honeymoon' period whereby initially positive school views become negative (Hargreaves, 1984). Post-transfer data showing that school concerns were more common than peer concerns was partly attributed to data collection during Year 8 when peer concerns had resolved, whereas increasing work challenge fuelled school concerns (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). In Vaz et al's (2014) study, improved post-transfer AC scores for pupils with disabilities were speculatively linked to the 6-month data collection timeframe, before ability groupings were apparent.

As research evidence shapes practice, changing arrangements may effectuate more positive transition experiences; hence, some studies only have historical value (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Many UK SEND transition studies are pre-SENDCOP (Taylor-Baptie, 2021), and three out of five key studies are over ten years old. Educational and technological advancements will likely moderate transition experiences. Technology facilitates connections between geographically dispersed deaf youth (Lytle et al, 2011), and investigation of whether electronically mediated interactions constitute proximal processes is necessary (Mercon-Vargas et al, 2020). However, internet and digital device usage during transition is under-researched (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018).

3.3 Summary

The preceding sections discussed multiple, interacting PPCT-related effects upon transition experiences. Pupils undertake transition from different starting points, influenced by previous experiences, perceptions, and risk / protective factors – underpinning future interactions and ecosystem adaption (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Transition presents opportunities for

developmental growth and challenges; individual or environmental factors can be protective, or undermine pupils' capacity to adjust, thus compromising transitions (Serbin, Stack and Kingdon, 2013).

Existing transition research often utilises quantitative methods to investigate academic outcomes with less emphasis on pupils' lived experiences, or positive transition impacts (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Key studies utilised qualitative and quantitative data (Table 5). Four out of five (excepting Rugg and Donne, 2011) collected data from pupils; only two reported pupil experiences. In Tropea (2010) pupils described high levels of inclusion, indicative of post-transfer adjustment. In Taylor-Baptie (2021), pupil anxieties quickly reduced, and overall views were positive. These findings correspond with general research suggesting that transition is unlikely to be overly challenging for most pupils (Chedzoy and Burdon, 2005; s.3.1.3), in contrast to recent SEND findings (s.3.1.2.1).

Whilst there is good evidence that positive expectations contribute to positive transition experiences within general transition research (Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan, 2012; Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014; Gilbert et al, 2021), investigation of this was absent within the key studies.

The relationship between transition and wellbeing is unclear (s.3.1.3.1). Although Taylor-Baptie (2021) included a research question about significant impacting factors, it did not include any wellbeing measure, and many factors were inferential rather than directly stated by pupils. However, findings relating to attachments (e.g., peer relationships, connectedness, loss) cohered with those from Wolters et al (2012), which demonstrated the interrelated nature of transition and pupil-peer / teacher relationships, moderated by hearing status, gender and context.

Many key studies had small samples, a common critique of SEND transition studies which, alongside limited longitudinal research, permits only cautious conclusions (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013). Generalisability is further restricted by differing research designs, methodologies,

participant ages and geographical contexts - factors exacerbating inconsistencies in the general evidence base (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Findings may also vary according to constructs or measures used (Vaz et al, 2014).

Although Tropea (2010) and Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019) were ostensibly about transition, both papers discussed inclusion in greater depth. Consequently, exploration of potential effects of relevant PPCT variables was lacking. No key study clearly evaluated the success of transitions, nor associated factors. However, contributors to positive parent views of the transition process in Rugg and Donne (2011), and to pupil wellbeing (Wolters et al, 2012; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), likely positively influenced pupils' transition experiences. These factors - commensurate with consistent findings from transition studies utilising various methodologies and samples (as discussed above in sections 3.1 and 3.2) – are summarised below (Table 8).

Table 8: Positive influences on pupil transition experiences

Positive influences on pupil transition experiences
• Positive pupil relationships (e.g. Tropea, 2010; Coffey, 2013; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Taylor-Baptie, 2021) • Stakeholder communication and collaboration (e.g. Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Coffey, 2013; Rugg and Donne, 2011; Coffey, 2013; O'Toole, 2016; Taylor-Baptie, 2021) • Transition-related skills (e.g. Tropea, 2010; Rugg and Donne, 2011; Wolters et al, 2012; O'Toole, 2016; Taylor-Baptie, 2021) • Contextual (support) continuity (e.g. Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen (2019); Mumford and Birchwood, 2020; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020)

Relationships i.e., proximal processes appear to have the greatest impact, moderated by Person, Context, and Time factors, corresponding with the PPCT model. Although key study findings align

with those from large-scale, or international research, gaps remain in the deaf primary-to-secondary school transitions evidence base, with more research recommended (Batten, Oakes and Alexander, 2014; Edmondson and Howe, 2019).

Evidence suggests primary school context affects pupil AC and MHF (Vaz et al, 2014). Four key studies (excepting Taylor-Baptie, 2021) included deaf specialist settings or resource provisions, reflecting primarily upon microsystemic differences. However, exploration of different contexts and experiential effects is limited (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; s.3.1.1), particularly regarding primary school / pre-transfer processes, broader ecosystems (e.g., macrosystem) or contemporary policy. For example, EHCP entitlement could positively impact experiences by directing communication and planning processes.

Multi-perspective exploration of transition experiences, facilitating holistic examination of potential systemic influencers constitutes another research gap. For example, Wolters et al (2012) focused on pupil wellbeing and relationships, rather than holistic experiences, barriers and facilitators (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Despite advantages of multi-perspective research (e.g., Zeedyk et al, 2003), and the espoused need to understand transitions from all stakeholder perspectives to ensure effective interventions (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Curle et al, 2016; Bagnall, Fox and Skipper, 2021), only two key studies (Tropea, 2010; Rugg and Donne, 2011) collected data from multiple stakeholders, the latter not including pupils.

Ecological approaches require consideration of how far deaf transition practices meet both pupils and parents' / carers' needs (Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019). In accordance with the PPCT model, multifaceted individual, family and contextual factors shape deaf pupils' wellbeing and achievement (Marschark et al, 2015), and pupils' transition experiences (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018; Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). No study has explored all the multi-dimensional ecosystemic factors that mediate transitions, hindering understanding of interactions and effects (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

The bioecological model aims to support development of effective, evidence-based social policies and programs (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Current national policies provide limited transition guidance (s.3.1.2). Deaf learners' heterogeneous needs and past experiences (s.2.3) shape transition readiness, and subsequent experiences; hence, holistic and personalised approaches are required, necessitating further research pertaining to specific needs (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020).

Exploratory research into deaf pupils' transition experiences will aid identification of possible impacting (PPCT) factors, facilitating future investigation of specific variable effects. It will help to illuminate best practice, thus informing policy, and key areas for targeted pupil support and intervention. This will help to inform professionals who work alongside deaf learners, such as teachers and EPs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to expand the evidence base regarding primary-to-secondary school transitions of deaf pupils, and to answer the following research questions:

> Research Question 1. How do deaf children attending a deaf resource provision experience the primary to secondary school transition?
>
> Research Question 2. What factors influence the experience of transition for deaf children?

4. Methodology

The preceding chapter reviewed the current evidence base for primary-to-secondary school transitions, and evidence pertaining to deaf pupils, to establish the rationale for this research. This chapter provides an overview of the study research design, outlining aims, philosophical paradigm (including research positionality), design frame and ethical considerations. Research context and participants are described. It then summarises the research methods, data collection and analysis procedures, before reflecting upon validity and methodological limitations. The influence of the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model upon research choices is discussed throughout.

4.1 Research Design

Research design helps structure the research process through explicitly identified aims and objectives, and an operationalised research question, which underpin data collection and analysis choices (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018).

The literature review identified gaps in the evidence base pertaining to deaf primary-to-secondary school transition. Consequently, this research aims to explore this transition from the perspectives of deaf pupils, their parents and teachers, to answer the following exploratory research questions:

1. How do deaf children attending a deaf resource provision experience the primary to secondary school transition?
2. What factors influence the experience of transition for deaf children?

4.1.1 Conceptual framework

The bioecological theory of human development and corresponding PPCT model have been described as a "…theoretical, conceptual and analytical frame…" (Lundqvist and Sandström, 2019,

p.194). The ensuant research design is claimed to represent science in discovery mode, whereby its aim is to develop new hypotheses to generate scientific knowledge through subsequent empirical testing – as opposed to verification mode which aims to confirm knowledge via replication and statistical testing (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). This research design corresponds with the objective of exploratory research to illuminate an unknown phenomenon.

Scientific verification has historically been achieved through quantitative methods, associated with positivist epistemology. Positivism relates to realism, which assumes the ontological position that there is an objective and knowable reality, in contrast to relativism which advocates a pluralistic view of realities constructed through human actions (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This is associated with interpretivist epistemology which suggests that knowledge is socially constructed, and so often investigated through qualitative methods. Demarcation between quantitative and qualitative approaches is unhelpful; rather, they are complementary (Thomas, 2017).

Bronfenbrenner's critique of the applicability of laboratory-based experiments to understanding human development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), clearly opposes strictly positivist approaches. O'Toole (2016) proposes that whilst earlier context-focused model iterations accorded with interpretivism, later emphasis upon proximal processes and moderating effects of individual characteristics including disability, gender and race, invoke issues of social justice and power thus reflecting a critical paradigm. Alternatively, the contention that development results from proximal processes influenced by synergistic relations between the individual and their environment, has led some to situate the model within a contextualist paradigm (Tudge et al, 2016). Contextualism adopts the epistemological position that what we can claim to 'know' depends upon the context in which the claim is made (Pynn, 2014).

The bioecological model is not affiliated with any particular philosophical paradigm; it explicitly acknowledges that development is equally influenced by objective (e.g., immediate environment properties) and subjective (e.g., how those properties are experienced, influenced by feelings and

beliefs about oneself, others and / or activities) elements (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006: p796-7). Proximal processes drive development, with moderating effects of Person, Context and Time interactions. Contextualism is concerned with the 'person-in-context' (Braun and Clarke, 2021), corresponding with the PPCT model.

The small-scale nature of this study, high heterogeneity of the deaf population, and individualised experience of deafness mean that any claims to knowledge regarding the primary-to-secondary transition process for deaf pupils (and other stakeholders) will inherently be contextually situated, with regards to individual contexts and broader ecosystems. These considerations underpin design frame selection.

Although Bronfenbrenner did not provide explicit guidelines, guidance can be found in his writings. An overview is provided for reference (Appendix 2).

4.1.2 Design Frame

Common design frames in small-scale studies include action or comparative research, evaluation, and experiments (Thomas, 2021). Due to the exploratory nature of this study, case study was selected as the most appropriate. Case studies are frequently used in deaf education research to generate in-depth understanding of selected cases within a real-world context, often utilising multi-modal and strengths-based approaches not intended to provide causal explanations (Enns, 2017).

Case studies are defined as "…analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other phenomena which are studied holistically by one or more methods to illuminate and explicate some analytical theme," (Thomas, 2021, p.24). With reference to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and its underpinnings in ecological psychology and systems theory, Thomas (2021) notes that case study – encompassing the collection of broad

evidence to create a three-dimensional view of a phenomenon to answer questions pertaining to *how* and *why* – is particularly suited to psychological theories emphasising holism over reductionism.

The phenomenon under study is the primary-to-secondary school transition of deaf children, to understand *how* they experience this transition, and *why* that might be i.e. factors influencing those experiences. Hence, case study is an appropriate design frame.

Drawing upon Thomas' (2021) typology of case studies, this research is summarised below (Table 9). As the existing evidence base pertaining to deaf primary-to-secondary school transitions was found to be limited, the purpose of this case study is *exploratory*, in order to *illustrate* the phenomenon. It investigates changes over time (pre- and post-transfer), thus constituting a *diachronic* case study.

Table 9: Case Study Typologies (Thomas, 2021)

Category	**Options**		**Criteria applicable to this case study**
Subject	Outlier Key Local		Combination of *local knowledge* case (i.e. something you want to find out more about based on personal experience of it) and an outlier case (i.e. interesting due to difference from the norm).
Purpose	Intrinsic Instrumental Evaluative Explanatory Exploratory		*Exploratory* purpose to find out more about little-known phenomenon.
Approach	Testing a theory Building a theory Drawing a picture (illustrative, demonstrative) Explanatory Exploratory		Uses an *illustrative* approach to illuminate the phenomenon of primary-to-secondary school transition for deaf students.
Process	Single	Retrospective Snapshot Diachronic	*Diachronic* study intended to show changes over time
	Multiple	Nested Parallel Sequential	*Nested* case study comparing subunits within a larger unit (see Figure 14)

Thomas notes that case studies are distinguishable not by the methods used, but by the boundaries that demarcate the case (ibid, p.19). The boundaries of this 'case' changed over time. The first boundary was the selection of a single DRP to facilitate participant selection, in-depth analysis of the transition experiences and multi-level processes occurring therein, and manageability of data collection activities.

Consideration was given to whether each pupil within the DRP should be presented as an individual case, in line with a multiple comparative analysis process, to ensure representation of individual child voices and experiences. However, a nested case study – which involves "...contrasting the units *as part of the wider case*" (Thomas, 2021, p.192) – had greater congruence with both the theoretical framework (and contextualist paradigm) and the research questions as it permitted analysis of individual pupil experiences, as subunits within the context of the DRP, in addition to analysis of the broader contextual factors potentially impacting those experiences. This was affirmed following data analysis, which illuminated a high degree of overlap in pupil responses (thus negating the necessity for individual reporting due to excessive repetition), and multiple contextual factors within different ecosystems that were common to all participants, for example, the Covid-19 pandemic and specific DRP processes.

In summary, this study comprises an exploratory, nested, case study of a specific deaf resource provision, to explore holistically the process of primary-to-secondary transition from the perspectives of deaf pupils, and other closely involved stakeholders (pupils' parents and teachers), and to identify factors influencing transitions, within a bioecological PPCT framework.

4.2 Sample

4.2.1 Research context

Participants were drawn from a single specialist deaf research provision (DRP) attached to a mainstream primary school in a West Midlands Local Authority (LA). A single school setting was selected to aid analysis of the influence of a specific educational context, and identification of school-based microsystemic transition practices, distinct from those within the home microsystem. A DRP was chosen to ensure inclusion of pupils with severe-profound thresholds, as this cohort was found to be particularly under-represented within transition research, and may have different needs, support and experiences compared to pupils with mild to moderate thresholds (Archbold et al, 2015). Furthermore, the single-setting focus facilitated the non-stigmatizing identification of participants, minimising potential practical and ethical challenges in identifying participants from across the LA, relating to deafness being a low-incidence disability.

A resource provision comprises a base attached to a mainstream school, with specialist facilities catering for specific SEND, as designated by the LA. Admittance generally requires an EHCP, and places are specifically funded (£6000/£10000 per place) (DfE, 2020). Quality standards developed specifically for deaf resource provisions list purposes including the provision of specialist support to support educational progress and participation, reduce attainment gaps, provide access to deaf peers and to support deaf Children and Young People (CYP) to "...move successfully on to a new school, further education or work" (NDCS, 2020, p.4).

The original primary setting (within the same LA as the training placement) withdrew due to staffing issues. An alternative setting (outside of the placement LA) was identified by a research supervisor who had a working relationship with the DRP Head. The DRP caters for around fifteen pupils aged 3 – 11 years who have severe-profound hearing loss with subsequent language delay which necessitates an EHCP. A flexible child-centred Language and Communication policy incorporates spoken English and BSL. Children are taught in the base and mainstream classrooms,

dependent on preferences and abilities, with additional individual, small group or in-class support as necessary. Each child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP). It is one of two primary DRPs in the LA, in addition to three secondary DRPs, one specialist primary and one specialist secondary school.

The mainstream school is part of an Academy Trust, facilitating inter-school links. The numbers of disadvantaged pupils or with EAL are higher than national averages. All pupils access BSL Introductory lessons; DRP pupils undertake BSL Level 1 qualification and weekly sessions regarding Deaf Identity / Pride. Deaf Awareness is promoted throughout the school.

The post-transfer stage involved two secondary schools in the same LA – one deaf specialist and one mainstream. Please see Table 10 for an overview of primary (DRP) and secondary school information. All three settings reported the involvement of external agencies including local EP Services; the placement EP service did not regularly undertake work in those settings.

4.2.2 Participants

Participants included:

- Three pupils
- Three parents (mothers) of pupils
- Three primary school staff

A non-probability convenience sample was used to identify pupils meeting the below criteria (Figure 13).

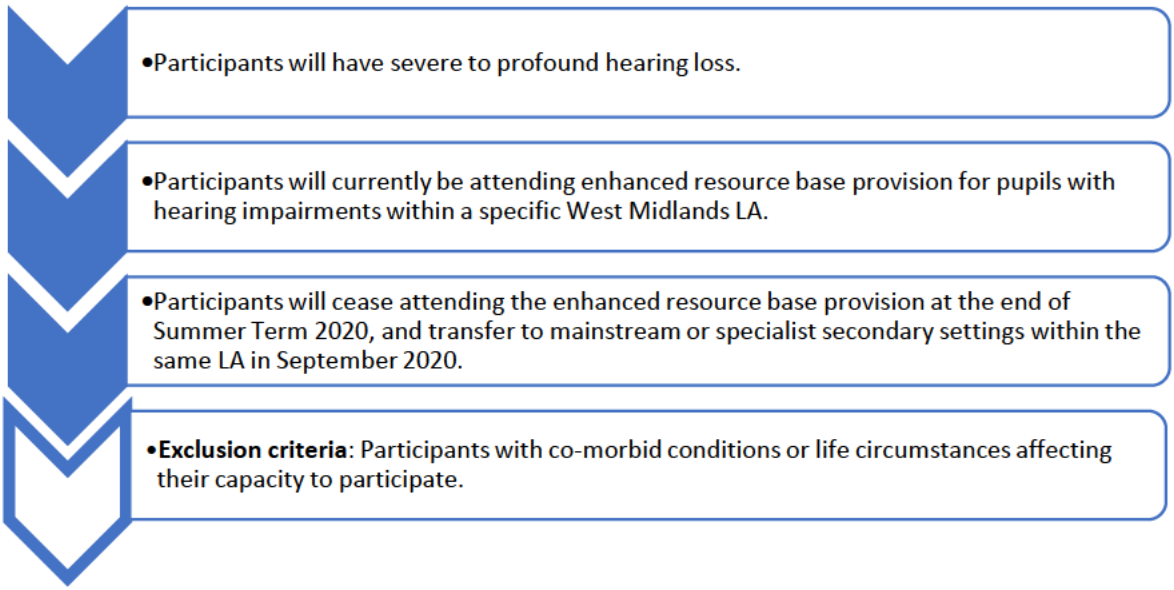


Figure 13: Participant Eligibility Criteria

The final criterion intended to ensure an account of the transition process reported at the time of transition, rather than retrospectively. All three Year 6 pupils attending that DRP provided consent to participate in the research. A summary of pupil information is provided in Table 11.

Parent and staff perspectives were sought to supplement pupil information, and ensure representation of home and school microsystems, facilitating identification of system linkages. Inclusion of different perspectives in transition research helps to improve understanding and strengthen data (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

Staff participants were all female; two were primarily situated in the DRP (Head / Lead ToD, and Higher-Level teaching Assistant), and one within the mainstream provision (SENCO) (Table 12).

Table 10 – Overview of Setting Information

	Primary School and DRP	**Secondary School 1**	**Secondary School 2**
Type	Mainstream with resource provision (Community school)	Specialist (Foundation special school)	Mainstream (Free school)
Academy Trust	Multi	Single	Single
Number of students	450+ DRP <20	<75	1100+
Age range	3-11	11-19	11-19
Admissions	EHCP; Looked After Children	EHCP with Deafness as primary need	Non-selective
Recent Ofsted rating	Good - DRP: Excellent	Good	Good
Free School Meals	52%	51%	28%
Relevant multi-agency involvement	Educational Psychology Service Speech and Language Therapists Communication and Autism Team Sensory Support Service Hearing Support Pupil Support Service	Educational Psychology Service Speech and Language Therapists Communication and Autism Team Sensory Support Service Audiological Service (Deaf) Mental Health Service Occupational Therapy	Educational Psychology Service Speech and Language Therapists Communication and Autism Team Sensory Support Team Pupil Support Service Mental Health Service Occupational Therapy
Relevant Deaf provision	ToDs Specialist teaching assistants / Learning Support Assistants BSL Deaf Instructors and Interpreters Educational audiologists Regular access to deaf role models.	All staff have BSL Level 2 + All teachers undertake ToD qualification Learning Coaches Targeted intervention assistants	N / A
Key facilities	Classrooms named after Deaf role models Outdoor learning areas Student-designed common room. Various sports and extra-curricular options Sound field systems (improves sound environment) Babble guards (noise indicator) in all rooms Radio aids.	Audiology suite Wellbeing room Sound treated classrooms Radio aids	Individual Learning Department Therapy Room Breakout spaces Various sports and extracurricular options
Home-school partnership	*[DRP prospectus]* Annual Review meetings and reports Workshops Coffee mornings Home visits Assemblies Home-school communication log Equipment maintenance sessions Termly paediatric clinic	*[SEND Information Report]* Annual Review meetings and reports Parent workshops and training Coffee mornings Information exchange by telephone, email, SMS Parent/Carer and teacher meetings Parental Representation on Governing Body In/formal parent consultation on school changes Transition meetings	[*Home-School Agreement / SEND Care and Inclusion policy]* Annual Review meetings and reports Annual parents evening Regular progress reports Information exchanges by telephone, email, SMS, letter and student planner Class Charts (achievement, behaviour concerns)

Table 11: Overview of Pupil Information

Name	Hearing loss	Age of identification	CI / HA	Preferred language	Additional needs / diagnoses	Family HI	Secondary	Additional info
Bilal - Male	Severe-profound	Birth	CI, HA in one ear	British Sign Language	N/A	Elder brother (attends same secondary)	Specialist	Parental first language – Bengali
Emma - Female	Profound	2 years	CI, no HA	English	No	No	Mainstream	NA
Kashif - Male	Severe-profound	6 months	CI, no HA	English	No	No	Mainstream	Sisters at another secondary school

Table 12: Overview of Staff roles

Role	Summary
SENCO Assistant	Level of involvement dependent on whether student attends mainstream or Deaf Learning Base. Typical mainstream duties include accompanying the child on visits to the new setting, preparing paperwork for review, ensuring assessments are up to date, [and] liaising with parents etc Typical DLB duties include more administrative tasks such as booking meetings, arrange handover of paperwork, booking outside agencies in to assess children in preparation for annual reviews etc
Higher Level Teaching Assistant	Typical duties include leading SMILE Therapy sessions, answering questions about secondary school, signposting parents to secondary provision and encouraging contact and visits by parents through phone calls, face to face contact and communication logbooks. Sharing enthusiasm and excitement about the transition process with the pupils to help put the pupils at ease and start to think about the impending transition.'
Lead Teacher of the Deaf	Typical duties include supporting parents and students through the transition to secondary school; plan and deliver sessions, arrange meetings with parents and liaise with a range of agencies; attend transition meetings with parents and pupils and deliver EHCP reviews.

4.3 Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Birmingham's Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Appendix 3). Research was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's (2018) guidelines, which emphasise four key principles for ethically sound research (Table 13).

Table 13: BPS Research Guidelines

Principle	**Overview of responsibilities**
Respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals, groups and communities	Respect for individual and cultural differences (including mode of communication), autonomy and privacy. Notify participants of right to informed consent and withdrawal. Adhere to data protection and confidentiality principles.
Scientific integrity	Ensure high quality and robust research that contributes to the development of knowledge and understanding. Consider risks of harm and how to address these. Ensure clear and transparent research aims.
Social responsibility	Promote research outcomes that support and respect individual integrity, and contribute to common good. Work in partnership with others. Self-reflection and awareness of own responsibilities.
Maximising benefit and minimising harm	Consider how individuals, group and communities might be affected by research. Avoid (or take steps to minimise) risks to wellbeing, mental health, values, privacy and dignity. Be sensitive to power imbalance.

4.3.1 Ethical approval and consent

During Summer Term 2020, an informational invitation letter and consent form were sent to the DRP Head (Appendix 4) to request involvement. Separate information letters and consent forms were sent by the Head to DRP pupils (Appendix 5) and their parents (Appendix 6), incorporating sections regarding preferred mode of communication (English, BSL, Other), and interpreter requirements.

Parent letters outlined the study purpose, data collection timelines and processes, rights to informed voluntary consent and withdrawal, data management procedures, anonymity, safeguarding

processes, and contact details. To aid legibility, a clear visual timeline listed key dates for document completion and return, and for participant withdrawal prior to data analysis commencing. This information was simplified for pupil letters and consent forms, produced in Easy Read format. Consent forms were returned to the Head, who forwarded them to my email.

An amended Application for Ethical Review was submitted to include the collection of staff data. This decision was taken to mitigate against the impact of school closures due to Covid-19, preventing setting attendance and limiting field data from the school context. Staff data was intended to enrich pupil and parent data, providing a fuller account of the school context and transition processes, as a potentially more accessible population than pupils or parents and carers.

The bioecological model posits that instability and disorganisation within the child's systems can hinder psychological growth (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The pandemic caused instability within home, school and community contexts. Thus, staff data also aimed to investigate how the pandemic affected transition processes. Following ethical approval, information letters and consent forms were sent to the Head of the DRP to disseminate amongst staff (Appendix 7) and returned via email.

Once pupil and parent consent were given, information and consent letters were sent to relevant secondary Headteachers to request their post-transfer involvement so pupil interviews could take place within school (Appendix 8). The two secondary Headteachers confirmed consent and forwarded post-transfer questionnaires to parents and pupils in September 2020 after confirmation they were happy to continue. Pupil and parental consent were implicitly reaffirmed following initiation of the post-transfer stage of data collection through the return of questionnaires. Implicit consent can be appropriate in studies with a low risk of participant harm (Thomas, 2021).

Pupil interview arrangements were made via email. Remote interviews were scheduled for during schooltime. Interview links were sent to staff email addresses. One interview was rearranged due to whole-class isolation measures. The Headteacher confirmed that the parent was happy to provide

their email address so the pupil could complete the remote interview at home. Information regarding the study purpose, informed consent and the right to participate, withhold or withdraw consent was reiterated before interviews in Autumn Term 2020. All pupils confirmed they understood and were willing to continue. Following interviews, pupils were thanked for participating and given an oral summary of the debriefing sheet provided to them (Appendix 9) and the opportunity to ask questions.

4.3.2 Confidentiality and data management

The nature of the research and small sample meant anonymity was not possible as data could be traced to participants, and staff data included job descriptions. Instead, confidentiality measures were implemented.

Pupil participants were assigned an ID number, and their parents a linked ID number. Pupil interviews were transcribed and only the transcripts were stored electronically. To ensure accurate representation of their responses, transcripts were hand-annotated with information pertaining to facial expressions, body language and non-verbal communication, from interview video recordings. Paper documents were stored in a lockable filing cabinet.

Identifying data was removed from electronic copies of participant questionnaires and pupil interview transcripts. Anonymised pupil data, and linked parent data was stored in an electronic encrypted file labelled with ID numbers. Staff data was stored in a separate encrypted folder, on a password-protected computer only accessible by the researcher.

Pupils were assigned a pseudonym for data reporting. Individual participant themes were not reported to reduce the possibility of identification. Following write-up, data were transferred to the University of Birmingham BEAR data storage facility for the required 10-year period.

4.3.3 Risks and responsibilities

I worked within boundaries commensurate with my TEP role. This role included working alongside CYP in different settings, necessitating a valid Disclosure and Barring Service check, whilst adhering to safeguarding procedures and anti-oppressive practice principles. I was supported by two supervisors with extensive knowledge of child development, education and deafness, relating to professional practice and research publications. This helped to ensure ethically sound research conduct.

The research design and methods meant risks of participant harm was minimal (e.g., no deception, misrepresentation, illegality, or activities likely to cause embarrassment, distress or physical harm). A potential risk stemming from questions that might encourage pupils to reflect on negative aspects of transition was considered. This was offset through the inclusion of positively oriented questions about transition experiences, and the presence of parents or familiar staff immediately following interviews to provide emotional support if necessary.

4.3.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity involves critical reflection upon research practice, process and the active role of the researcher in knowledge production (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Factors shaping the research process and methodological choices, including a setting change and the Covid-19 pandemic, were briefly discussed in Chapter 1 (see also s.4.7). A reflexive diary was kept throughout the process, from which an account of the analysis process and key analytic decisions is provided (Appendix 19).

Research with marginalised populations necessitates reflection upon one's own positionality (Braun and Clarke, 2021). I was conscious that as a hearing person, I was an outsider to the group I wished to conduct research with. It has been suggested that researchers do not necessarily need to be group members; otherwise, evidence bases will be fragmented as no one group is homogeneous (Cooper, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to consider how my positionality (including experiences, beliefs and assumptions) influenced research choices.

I believe that context is important – my practice has taught me that an idea may sound promising but is practicably unworkable due to individual or systemic factors. Lived experience is essential to understanding the actual effects of ideas upon individual lives, and to illuminating potential blockages or facilitators in implementation. This requires holistic and contextualised understanding, supported by a pragmatic and methodical approach to data gathering and analysis. My research choices reflect these values, aiming to combine exploration of individual experiences of transition with consideration of broader potential influences, through application of the bioecological model and PPCT framework.

My experience of primary-to-secondary transition was affected by insufficient transition support, moving from a religious primary to an out-of-area secular school without any familiar peers, and a vastly different pedagogy and school ethos. This experience – and others – were shaped by my position as the only mixed English and Black African female in my class. This has given me some understanding of being positioned as 'other,' (Braun and Clarke, 2021) and influenced my desire to ensure that individual experiences and child's voice are faithfully represented in my practice and research.

My position as a TEP (and associated academic requirements) meant that my research choices and interpretation were influenced by knowledge garnered from practice and the existing evidence base. This also influenced how I think about research, in terms of seeking findings that represent clear outcomes or contribute to recommendations that can be practically applied, and a desire to ensure that research findings are accessible and useful. This underpins selection of the bioecological model which examines holistic factors before applying findings to help develop policy or interventions to support development. Additionally, it corresponds with the systematic approach to data collection and analysis advocated by Braun and Clarke (2021).

Research choices were shaped by the need to manage a health condition, diagnosed shortly before study commencement. For example, early supervision discussions considered inclusion of multiple

settings, or hearing pupils, but there were concerns this could be difficult to manage alongside health and placement demands.

4.4 Data gathering and materials

This study used mixed methods - questionnaires, the Stirling Wellbeing Children's Scale, interviews and documents to generate broad data and illuminate proximal processes influencing transition experiences, drawing on the perspectives of the individual child – and significant others – involved in those interactions. Triangulation - encompassing the use of various methods and data sources to explore a subject from different viewpoints - is commonly used in case study research designs (Thomas, 2021). Triangulating different data sources and perspectives increases the richness in understanding of the study object (Braun and Clarke, 2021); similar methods have been utilised in deaf transition research to explore stakeholder perceptions (e.g., Rugg and Donne, 2011). Research methods, instruments and data gathering processes are discussed below.

4.4.1 Questionnaires

Pupils and parents each completed one pre-transfer questionnaire in June 2020 and one post-transfer in November 2020, aiding comparison of pre- and post-transfer views. Questionnaires comprise structured questions used to gather information, attitudes or opinions on particular subjects (Thomas, 2017) – in this case, participants' views about transition.

Questionnaires included questions and statements about transition, which all participants rated along a five-point Likert scale - selected due to suitability for examining attitudes and beliefs (Thomas, 2017). Below each statement was additional comments space. Ratings and accompanying questions aimed to support participants in moving from general thoughts about the process to indicating specific moderating influences. Topics included aspects they were looking forward to or

concerned about, and other areas from transition literature (e.g. Sirsch, 2003; Zeedyk et al, 2003; Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan, 2012). Positive and negative aspects of transition were included – along with multi-perspective data - in alignment with recommendations for transition research (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). To aid understanding and completion, questionnaire items avoided jargon, were worded to encourage participant responses, and required few cognitive steps or prior information to answer (Fowler and Cosenze, 2009).

Pupil questionnaires included multiple-choice and incomplete sentences. They aimed to explore pre- and post-transfer attitudes towards school, and examine any interconnections between pre-transfer expectations and post-transfer experiences. Pre-transfer questionnaire topics included feelings about primary school and perceptions about secondary (Appendix 10). Post-transfer topics included likes and dislikes about secondary schooling (Appendix 11). Pupils completed questionnaires at home or in school with adult support where preferred.

Parent questionnaires also included demographic questions. Pre-transfer topics covered their child's deafness and perceptions of the transition process (Appendix 12). Following transition, parents were asked about the least and most positive, or helpful, aspects of the process to illuminate potential impacts on their child's experience (Appendix 13).

Post-transfer parent questionnaires were completed via telephone with the researcher due to technical difficulties accessing online copies forwarded from the school. Secondary school staff confirmed with parents that they were happy to be contacted via telephone for this purpose.

Pre-transfer staff data was intended to be gathered via focus group (Appendix 14), but this was prevented by high workloads and sickness limiting staff availability. The DRP Head and staff agreed that they would be happy to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 15). This incorporated intended focus group themes, including aspects of the transition process, stakeholder participation, preparation and support. Staff were asked to give ratings based on that year and previous years to

illuminate potential effects of the pandemic upon the transition process. Staff completed one questionnaire each in October 2020.

Questionnaires aimed to gather descriptive data about participants' expectations, perceptions and subsequent experiences of transition; they were not intended to elicit reliable measures of concepts therein. Questionnaires further functioned as a pre-interview prompt for pupils by supporting reflection about the transition process.

4.4.2 Semi-structured pupil interview

Completed pre- and post-transfer questionnaires were reviewed, and key points noted for further exploration during semi-structured pupil interviews – included to provide rich, in-depth accounts of transition experiences, and to represent the child's / Deaf voice, in line with the bioecological model's position that children are active agents in their environment (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were utilised because they facilitate investigation of specific issues (i.e., pupils experience of transition), with flexibility to explore significant or unanticipated responses (Thomas, 2017). They have been similarly utilised in small-scale research exploring deaf pupils' experiences (e.g., Edmondson and Howe, 2019).

A non-directive interview schedule was developed with open-ended questions covering six topics to examine pupils' lived experience of transition and attitudes towards school: General school; Moving school; Staff and support; Friendship; Lessons; and Comparison of primary and secondary (Appendix 16), based on common themes in relevant literature (s.4.4.1).

Visual communication aids were created but were not required by any pupil (Appendix 17). Three interviews were conducted during the first Year 7 term in Autumn 2020. Due to Covid-19 arrangements, all interviews were remote. This was judged to be suitable as pupils had accessed online learning since school closures in March 2020. Furthermore, online data collection facilitates sustained engagement, participation, quality and trustworthiness (Sharpe and Benfield, 2012).

During interviews, pupils were in private rooms (two at school, one at home), with few distractions. I was in a private home office and verified my identity at the outset. No visual or audio information was accessible to any other individuals. Rapport-building, active listening and gentle probing techniques were used to assist participants to feel at ease. Pupils were debriefed afterwards (Appendix 9).

With parental and pupil consent, interviews were video recorded using the laptop, then transcribed by myself. This was agreed to be appropriate as two interviewees responded in oral English. One answered in BSL with interpretation provided by a familiar Communication Support Worker (CSW). I am undertaking BSL Level 3 and have worked alongside deaf BSL users. This assisted when reviewing their video to ensure alignment between signed responses and the CSW's interpretation, prior to transcription.

A backup audio recording, and anonymised written notes, were made. Recordings and transcriptions were stored electronically in an encrypted folder. Recordings were deleted once transcribed to ensure confidentiality (s.4.3.2).

4.4.3 Stirling Children's Well-being Scale (SCWBS)

Pupils were asked to complete the SCWBS alongside pre- and post-transfer questionnaires (Appendix 18), completed at home or in school with adult support where preferred. The SCWBS measures emotional and psychological wellbeing in children aged 8-15 years (Liddle and Carter, 2015), recommended for use in mental health and wellbeing screening (Waite and Atkinson, 2021). It was selected as an outcome measure to illuminate the possible relationship between transition and wellbeing (see Chapter 3) with regards to individual pupils. It also functions as a measure of Person characteristics, and provides quantitative data to supplement participants' subjective accounts, thus strengthening the validity of interpretations of those descriptive accounts.

4.4.4 Other data

Case studies permit integration of various quantitative and qualitative data sources such as documents, archives, interviews, artefacts and observations, with each source contributing towards a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Documents were intended to provide information about the school context and transition-planning processes, and included:

- DRP Prospectus;
- DRP / school policies; and
- Sample transition lesson plans

Data was obtained from the school website and emailed by the DRP Head. Observations of transition meetings and associated activities were obstructed by the pandemic. Information about secondary settings was available on school websites.

4.5 Data Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) approach was adopted, which involves systematically analysing and interpreting data patterns to develop themes (Braun and Clarke, 2021), a full overview of which is provided in Appendix 19. One core tenet is the claim that knowledge is subjective and situated (ibid, p.9). This aligns with the overarching PPCT framework in facilitating holistic, in-depth examination of data to identify key PPCT factors – and possible interactions – that can influence transition experiences.

RTA is flexible with regards to data and datasets, and therefore accommodates the diverse data collection methods inherent in case study design, and the PPCT framework. It permits inductive and deductive theme development, important when considering individual lived experience, and how this is informed by existing transition research. Its theoretical flexibility accords with the

philosophical ambiguity of the bioecological model. Use of RTA can also inform policy development (Braun and Clarke, 2021), a key objective of the bioecological model.

RTA acknowledges the researcher's active role in constructing knowledge, and hence, the need for awareness of underlying theoretical assumptions that inform research, shown in Table 14. Researcher subjectivity is to be valued, rather than controlled (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

As discussed, (s.4.1.2) the research design frame involves a nested case study of a DRP, and subunits within that case, comprised of three individual student subunits, the school staff and relevant artefacts (Figure 14). As parental data was intended to supplement student data, parents were linked to individual student subunits. Staff data was not student-linked, but was derived from questionnaires; therefore, staff were designated as a separate subunit. Considering subunits embedded within the larger case allows for data analysis within, between and across subunits (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Within-subunit analysis ensures consideration of individual voice and transition experience. Analysis between and across subunits allows for comparisons, and highlights areas of similarity or difference in stakeholder's perspectives and experiences of the transition process. This holistic analytical approach will help to identify influences upon the transition process and interactions between these, in line with the PPCT model.

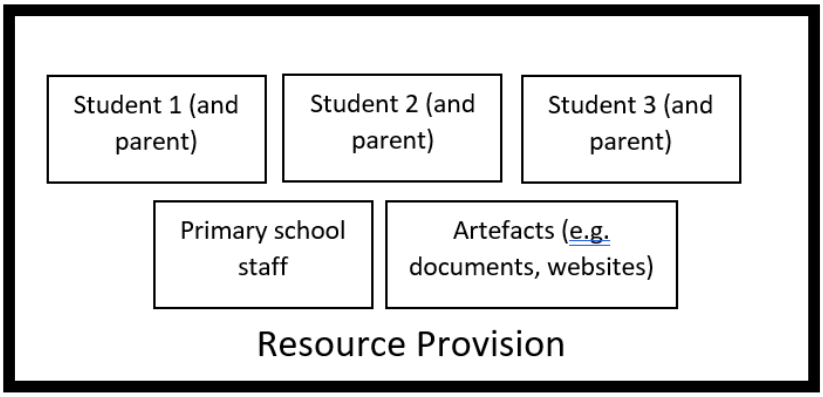


Figure 14: Case study: subunits of analysis

Table 14: Variations of Thematic Analysis and analytic choices (Braun and Clarke, 2021, p.9)

RTA Variation	**Options**	**Brief definition**	**Analysis choice**
Orientation to data	Inductive	Analysis, coding and themes driven by data content	Inductive coding with initial theme identification based on data content. Initial themes were then refined and deductively organised according to transition literature and PPCT model to answer research questions.
	Deductive	Analysis, coding and themes shaped through existing theoretical constructs	
Focus of meaning	Semantic	Exploring meaning at surface or explicit level	Primarily semantic coding as brevity of questionnaire responses did not cohere with latent coding; latent coding was used where data appeared to be influenced by hidden meanings or assumptions. Interview data was also coded semantically to ensure fidelity to the participants' own words, as an 'outsider' to the group.
	Latent	Exploring meaning at underlying or implicit level	
Qualitative framework	Experiential	Exploring individual perspectives and understandings	Experiential as exploring participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences in relation to the phenomenon of transition.
	Critical	Exploring meaning around topic or issue	
Theoretical framework	Realist, essentialist	Analysis emphasises truth and reality, evident within dataset	Constructionist as knowledge is culturally and historically situated, in alignment with bioecological theory and PPCT model.
	Relativist, constructionist	Analysis unpacks realities expressed within dataset	

4.5.1. Overview of analysis process

The analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) RTA guidelines; analytical choices are discussed in Table 14 above and a full account with accompanying images and reflections upon the process is provided in Appendix 19. The first phase of the analysis involved *familiarisation with the dataset.* Interview data was manually transcribed and then all data sources (including interview transcripts, questionnaires, scored SCWBSs and documentary data e.g. school policies) were combined. The triangulation of different data sources facilitates verification and corroboration, thus strengthening analysis and subsequent conclusions drawn (Thomas, 2017). Data was read through with initial notes made pertaining to potential patterns or areas of interest. Data was then reread multiple times, in different orders and groupings, and key quotes and reflections were noted.

The second phase involved *data coding*. The dataset was systematically reviewed, and brief descriptive or interpretative labels were added to data items that were interesting, relevant or meaningful to the research questions. In line with RTA's acceptance of researcher subjectivity, multiple coders were not utilised (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Instead, code labels were refined through successive rounds of coding, which helped to ensure analytic rigour. Superficial or narrow code labels were expanded (for example 'not feeling ready to transition' was changed to 'readiness for transition'), and overly broad code labels were refined to add meaning. For example, 'communication' was divided into 'communication pathways', 'communication viewed as helpful', 'parents wanting more communication', 'school-parent communication' and 'school-school communication.' Code labels were then collated with relevant data items and reviewed against the data to examine how far they were representative of the dataset.

During the third phase – *generate initial themes* – clusters of code labels with shared patterns of meaning were developed into candidate themes. For example, the labels 'concerns about new friends', 'excitement about making new friends', 'feeling included' and 'parental views about friendships' were developed into a candidate theme 'Importance of peer relationships during

transition.' These were compared to the research questions, with visual mapping activities used to help identify connections and convergences between candidate themes. Themes that were deemed to be overly deductive (i.e. influenced by transition literature rather than inductively flowing from the data) were discarded, along with codes that lacked rich data or meaning. For example, 'transition as change' was removed because it was more influenced by literature relating to conceptualisations of transition. The code label 'maths anxiety' was removed as it lacked rich data.

During the fourth phase – *develop and review themes* – candidate themes were reviewed against relevant data items and the total dataset to assess whether they were meaningful, relevant to the research questions and informative in relation to the dataset, research questions or wider context. Themes that did not meet these criteria were discarded, as were those lacking a central organising concept or clear boundaries. For example, 'the newness of secondary school' was discarded as it provided a topic summary rather than a meaningful theme. Themes were divided according to research questions, and subthemes added where necessary to maintain theme boundaries or highlight particularly salient aspects. For example, 'the impact of Covid-19 on transitions' was divided into 'benefits of Covid-19 on transition processes' and 'drawbacks of Covid-19.'

The fifth phase involved *refining, defining and naming themes*. Short theme summaries were devised to check themes were consistent and coherent, and theme names assigned.

The final phase of *analysis write-up* involved moving between phases 3-6 to further refine themes. Illustrative data extracts were reviewed to check for balance, clarity and repetition. Themes relevant to the first research question (pupils' experiences) were compared to existing transition literature and criteria relating to positive and negative experiences (s.3.1.3). Themes relevant to the second research question were structured according to the PPCT framework, with further refinement of theme names to align with the model (for example, 'pre-transition visits are important' became 'exosystem: benefits of pre-transfer visits'). Final themes were presented in a combined analysis and

discussion chapter, with separate sections for each research questions, and with reference to broader literature and contexts.

4.6 Validity

The exploratory nature of this research and use of a case study design frame mean that findings are not intended to be generalisable. Case studies can provide useful information specific to the individual and their circumstances (Enns, 2017). They emphasise the singleness of the subject under study; with quality dependent on, for example, selection of an appropriate case and analysis method, and contextual descriptions (Thomas, 2021).

Heterogeneity within the deaf population - influenced by Person, Context and Time factors such as hearing threshold, additional needs and child's surroundings – impede the development of generalisable conclusions (Swanwick and Marschark, 2010). Hence, focus on the individual experience is appropriate, and necessitated by the small population size of deaf Year 6 pupils. Inclusion of different data sources and perspectives assists triangulation, strengthening findings (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Thomas, 2017).

The bioecological model adopts a non-traditional assessment of validity and reliability based on cross-validation of results during successive stages of analysis, and as against findings from other studies of associated phenomena (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.803). Accordingly, findings will be discussed with reference to existing primary-to-secondary transition literature. The model also emphasises research application to inform policy and interventions. Hence, rich contextual description relating to participants, settings and the research circumstances – in addition to description of the data analysis process - is important for transferability (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

4.7 Methodological Limitations

Methodological choices were constrained by the research context. The withdrawal of the original primary school setting and subsequent Covid-19 pandemic compromised implementation of the previously planned data collection procedures. The setting change and resultant shortening of the research timeframe led to a refocusing of the study purpose as an examination of the transfer stage of the transition process, as opposed to the longer-term transition process incorporating data collection at the end of Year 7. Research questions were unchanged.

The original setting was in the placement LA area, so I had a pre-existing relationship with – and research support from - the lead EP. The move to an out-of-area setting removed this source of support. The potential pupil sample reduced from five to three. Familiarity with the initial setting assisted in developing relationships with staff, and broad knowledge of the DRP pupils and context. The reduced timeframe, followed by the pandemic prevented replication of this in the new setting. The absence of face-to-face contact and incidental discussions with staff due to school closures and restricted school access hindered the building of relationships, field observations, and opportunities to gain general knowledge about that cohort, in turn impacting data collection and interviews. Access to pupil documents (including EHCPs, transition plans and attainment data) was hindered due to concerns about sharing confidential SEND Information over potentially insecure external networks; and ongoing shielding due to health needs prevented collection in person. Pupil interviews had to be conducted remotely within reduced timeframes (20-25 minutes rather than 45) due to factors including scheduled online learning and staff availability.

The pandemic limited staff availability, affecting the speed of information exchange and necessitating data collection via individual questionnaires rather than focus groups. Given the withdrawal of the first setting due to staffing levels, a careful balance was required with regards to informational requests and creating additional staff pressures. Hence, the decision was made to forego attainment data, on the basis that wellbeing data provided an outcome measure; furthermore, attainment data

was less relevant to the transfer stage of the transition process, and was impacted by learning disruptions.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has provided information relating to the conceptual framework (bioecological model of human development and PPCT model), research design frame (case study) and analysis method (RTA) for this study. Details pertaining to research context, participants and data collection have been outlined. Ethical considerations and questions of research validity have been discussed. Combined analysis and discussion are presented in Chapter 5.

5. Analysis and discussion

Findings are organised in accordance with the two research questions. The first section presents findings relevant to pupils' self-reported transition experiences. The second presents themes relating to factors influencing these experiences, structured according to Process-Person-Context-Time headings.

Themes are reported across participant groups (pupils, parents and teachers), with reference to artefact data such as school policies, existing literature and policy pertaining to primary-to-secondary school transition, and bioecological theory. A participant data guide is provided (Table 15).

Table 15: Participant data guide

Participant	**Data source**	**Appendix**
Pupils	Pre-transfer questionnaire	20
	Pre- and post-transfer questionnaire: multiple-choice	21a
	Pre- and post-transfer questionnaire: school ratings	21b
	Post-transfer questionnaire	22
	(Remote) Interview data	23
Parents	Pre-transfer questionnaire	24
	Pre- and post-transfer questionnaire: transition views	25
	Post-transfer (telephone) questionnaire	26
Staff	Questionnaires	27
Please note: Italicised information represents written responses; '*quoted*' information was obtained from oral accounts offered within pupil interviews or parents post-transfer (telephone-based) questionnaires.		

5.1. Research Question 1: How do deaf children experience the primary to secondary school transition?

Before examining influential factors, the nature of pupils' transition experiences must be considered. Pupils' self-reported experiences, supplemented by parent and staff questionnaire data, are discussed with reference to criteria identified within transition literature as indicative of positive / successful or negative transitions (s.3.1.3).

Figure 15 provides a thematic summary.

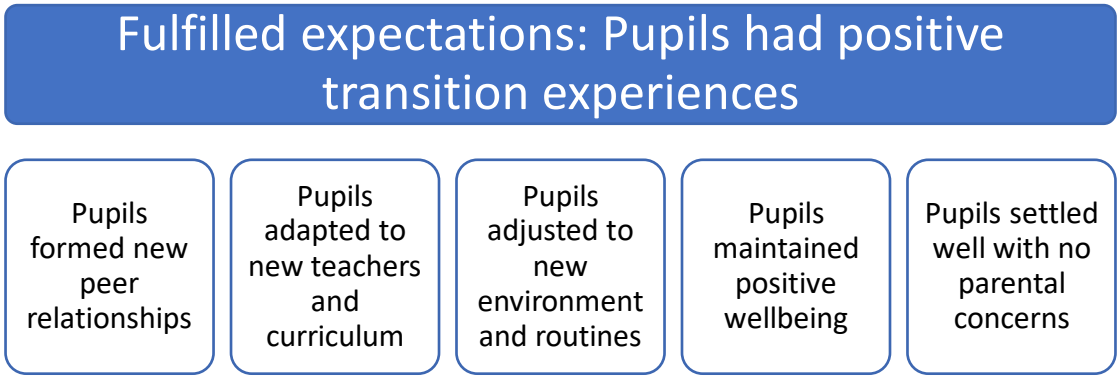


Figure 15: Thematic summary - pupil experiences

5.1.1. Pupils formed new peer relationships.

Peer relationships are associated with positive (e.g., more / positive friendships) or negative (e.g., worries about making / losing friends, bullying) transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Pre-transfer pupil questionnaires show no reported concerns about making new friends, whereas all staff reported this as a pupil concern. Emma and Kashif rated *making new friends* amongst the top three things they were looking forward to about secondary school.

Staff identified bullying as a common pupil and parental concern. Although not mentioned by parents, Bilal and Kashif ranked bullies as their primary concern. Review findings indicate an increased likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEND (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013). However, none selected this as a secondary school dislike, nor referenced it during interviews, and no parents raised concerns.

Emma confirmed that she missed primary school friends but remained in touch with '…*close ones*.' Bilal did not miss anything about primary school. Kashif – who reported '*more'* friends in secondary – missed '…*the people*,' but mainly '…*playing sports*,'– restricted due to Covid-19 measures (s.5.2.4: TIME). Therefore, it appears bullying or loss of friends - contributors to negative transition experiences – had not occurred.

On post-transfer questionnaires, no pupil selected that it was: …*hard to make friends.* All reported enjoying *making new friends*, who were described positively. Emma and Kashif ranked this as their top factor, with Kashif's mother commenting: '…*he said it is okay with regards to making new friends*….' Notably, all pupils had received pre-transfer interventions to support communication and social skills (s.5.2.1.2: PROCESS), suggested as beneficial for deaf children (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014), and facilitative of post-transfer adjustment (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Bilal and Kashif's ratings for: *I have at least one close friend in school* increased. Bilal's rating of feeling included increased, signalling greater belongingness compared to primary school – a factor linked to wellbeing during transitions (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). For Emma, assessment of her school was linked to ease forming friendships:

> 'I *really enjoy it…I've made new friends there really easily, erm, there's no problems*.'

Although Emma's mother alluded to '*friendship incidents*', Emma did not. She described positive friendships with peers that she liked and could talk to:

> *'…It's like the same [as primary], maybe my newer friends are better.'*

Overall, views regarding secondary peers were positive. In line with existing studies (e.g., Taylor-Baptie, 2021; Gilbert et al, 2021), all pupils reported feeling included and forming new peer relationships, indicative of successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008) and positively influencing their transition experiences.

5.1.2. Pupils adapted to new teachers and curriculum

Pre-transfer, pupils looked forward to *new teachers* and *adult support*. However, Emma selected *new teachers* as a top-rated concern. Post-transfer, *new staff* (Bilal) and *teachers* (Kashif) were top-rated

likes. All pupils strongly agreed that they liked their secondary school teachers – a positive shift from Emma and Bilal's pre-transfer expectations.

Bilal's rating for: *I have at least one adult I can talk to…,* increased from neutral to strongly agree, aligning with Emma and Kashif, and potentially linked to improved communication. During interview, Bilal expressed preference for secondary teachers, agreeing this was due to 'better signing, communicating' – corroborated by his post-transfer questionnaire response regarding new teachers: *good, clear signing and help.* Evidence suggests that disjuncture between preferred and school languages can cause communication barriers, and predict adjustment difficulties (O'Toole, 2016). Bilal communicated using BSL, hence moving to a deaf specialist setting likely facilitated his adjustment. His CSW noted:

> *'…even though they're a special school, we do follow a standard secondary model where he has different teachers for different subjects*.'

Similarly to Taylor-Baptie (2021), wherein pupil feedback described secondary school teachers as more informed, Emma expressed preference for secondary school lessons with '…*lots of different teachers'*:

> *'I think it's better because…the teacher is specialised on that subject, so they know more […] So they can actually say more things…whereas in primary it's just one teacher*.'

Kashif stated he would change '*nothing'* about his new teachers, expressing preference for them because they '…*teach [different] lessons and make it easy*.'

Pupil-teacher relationships can enhance (e.g., positive relationships) or compromise (e.g., changing expectations, pedagogy) transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Transition research highlights challenges associated with transition to multiple teachers (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020); however, pupil responses indicate preference for, and adjustment to, this structure. Covid-19

measures requiring pupils to remain in one classroom (s.5.2.4.1: TIME) may have mediated this, for example, pupils may have appreciated teacher variety more than when moving around.

Post-transfer, pupils reported enjoying *new subjects* and *skills,* listed within their three most-liked aspects. This indicates continued curriculum interest, shown to be associated with successful transitions and avoidance of the commonly reported 'attainment dip' (Evangelou et al, 2008). Bilal described lessons as: *Good interesting, good learning.* Although Kashif preferred '*new schoo*l' lessons, his suggested changes were learning-oriented:

> '*Make it a bit easier for the children who is…finding it hard* […] *like the teacher, erm, when they explain.'*

This could imply he was finding new lessons difficult, perhaps due to delayed radio aids which '*…took 3-4 weeks'* (Kashif's mother), or microsystem changes. Curricular and pedagogic primary-secondary school discontinuities may contribute to difficulties adjusting and negative experiences (Evangelou et al, 2008; O'Toole). However, Kashif strongly agreed that he liked secondary school lessons, listing *…fun lessons* as one of the best things.

Pupils were generally positive about secondary school teachers and learning, with none expressing negative views about either; thus, I judged this aspect of their experience to be positive.

5.1.3. Pupils adjusted to new environment and routines

Environmental aspects (e.g., increased size, noise) can negatively affect transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Although Kashif's mother worried about him '*…getting used to new surroundings*,' only Bilal reported a minor (and possibly insignificant) environmental irritant, implying that other environmental characteristics were satisfactory:

> *'Toilet…when I try to wash my hands, it's too close to the sink*.'

Bilal's new school – which he described as *'…a little bigger'* than primary – had one-sixth the number of pupils as his primary school. Emma and Kashif moved to the same mainstream setting, with 2.5x more pupils. Kashif highlighted differences including '*new classes'* and '*different lessons.'* Emma commented:

> *'More, erm…right so, there's forms…erm, the uniforms different…different amount of kids in the school […] subjects…and the teachers.'*

Emma and Kashif's post-transfer ratings of feeling safe in school declined slightly, suggesting they felt less safe compared to primary school. Differences between the mainstream and DRP environments may have affected scores. One study found an increased risk of negative transition for pupils moving from smaller to larger settings (Gilbert et al, 2021), whilst in another, deaf pupil's post-transfer decline in academic self-concept was attributed to contextual discontinuities (Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen, 2019). Review evidence suggests that pupils benefit from environmental continuity (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Moving between the DRP and deaf specialist setting could have minimised contextual differences, enhancing Bilal's experience.

Difficulties navigating new environments are associated with negative transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). However, reported pre-transfer concerns about getting lost were unsubstantiated, as Covid-19 measures reduced navigational demands (s.5.2.4.1: TIME). Overall, pupil ratings were positive – indicative of environmental adaptation (Coffey, 2013) – and none discussed feeling unsafe, suggesting no significant impact on their experiences.

Adjusting to new routines is associated with successful transition (Evangelou et al, 2008). Participants discussed adjustment to new timetables and travel arrangements (Figure 16). Post-transfer, only Kashif referenced timetables as a potential negative, relating to suggested changes: *Longer playtime. It would be short school days like to 3pm.* He explained that the shorter primary school day was '*better'* (Figure 16). Kashif's mother identified this as the least positive aspect of his transfer. Longer hours were found to be a stressor which can undermine post-transfer adjustment (Maras and

Aveling, 2006). '*He got used to that,*' indicates that despite initial difficulties, Kashif adapted to the lengthened day. Additionally, all pupils selected *new timetables* as something they liked post-transfer, signalling adjustment to this change.

Key Quotes: Pupil adaptation to new routines

Kashif

'…now it is 9 o'clock until 4 o'clock…I want it until like 3 o'clock […] because, erm, at 4 o'clock, er, everybody be's tired…when we do the…last 2 lessons.'

Kashif's mother

'The first week he said the day was a bit longer, because it's until 4. There are staggered timings so they start at 9.15, but he has got used to that.'

Emma's mother

'She was a bit worried about travelling and getting lost; I took her the first day to school on one bus – it takes two – and by the second day she was happy to do it herself.'

Figure 16: Key quotes - Pupil adaption to new routines

Increased travel distances to secondary school are another stressor that can compromise transition experiences (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Staff highlighted transport as a common pupil and parent concern. Bilal continued to receive LA transport, due to his school's distance. Kashif's mother noted concerns about him '*…using the bus,*' but no post-transfer difficulties were reported. Emma's mother's comments indicate Emma quickly adapted (Figure 16). Therefore, transport difficulties do not appear to have negatively impacted pupil experiences. Pupils reportedly adjusted well to new environments and routines, with Covid-19 measures mitigating possible negative experiences (s.5.2.4.1: TIME).

5.1.4. Pupils maintained positive wellbeing

The Stirling Wellbeing Scale was used to assess whether - and if so, in what ways – the transfer affected individual pupil wellbeing, by providing a pre- and post-transfer measure of wellbeing as a complementary measure to strengthen the validity of the interpretation of pupils' subjective

descriptive accounts. Alongside social and academic domains, emotional health is indicative of successful transition (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Transition may compromise pupil wellbeing (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Wolters et al (2012) found that deaf boys attending mainstream settings reported increased wellbeing post-transfer, whereas girls' scores decreased, with opposite effects in specialist settings; thus, transition effects are moderated by hearing threshold, gender and context.

Self-rated wellbeing scores were measured before and after transfer, with pupil scores increasing post-transfer (Figure 17). No moderating effects of gender or context were apparent.

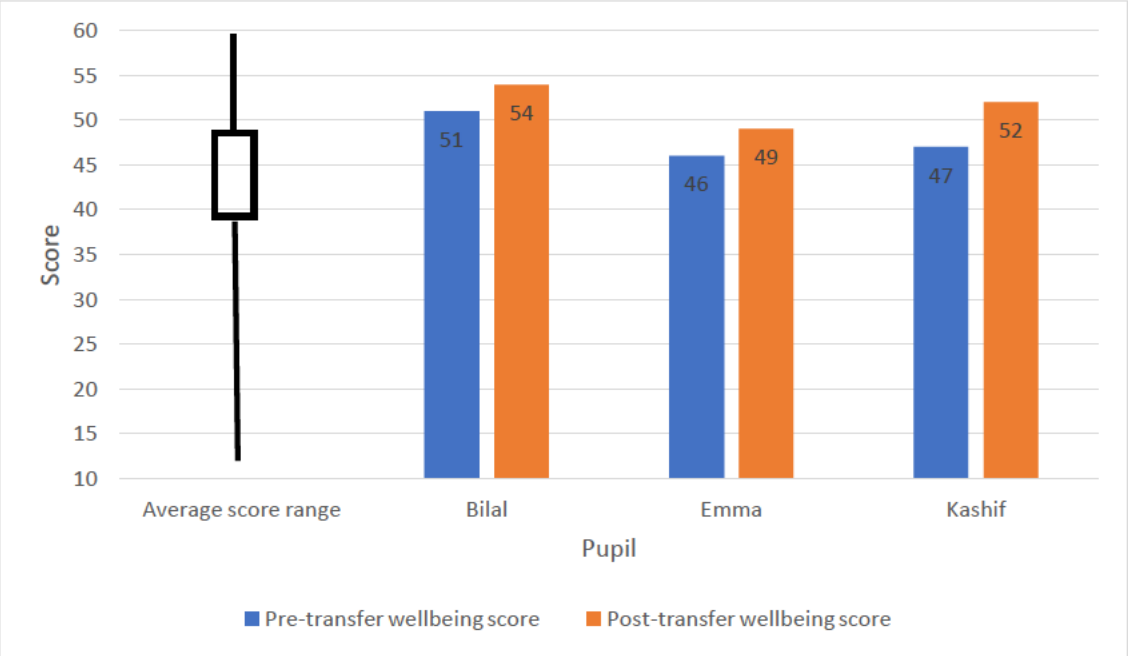


Figure 17: Pupil pre- and post-transfer wellbeing scores

Non-transfer factors likely contributed to increased scores. For example, teacher and peer relationships are predictive of deaf pupils' wellbeing over transition (Wolters et al, 2012); hence positive pre-transfer relationships potentially influenced post-transfer scores (s.5.2.1.1: PROCESS). In one study, pupil wellbeing declined during Year 7, rather than the immediate post-transfer period (McLellan and Galton, 2015); hence, the short-term data collection timeframe may have affected these scores. Bilal's post-transfer results scored highly for social desirability bias, possibly linked to his

CSWs presence during completion. However, questionnaire and interview data does not indicate any deterioration in pupils' wellbeing over the transfer period.

Within the bioecological model, wellbeing functions as an outcome measure and personal characteristic. Research suggests that pre-transfer wellbeing is predictive of later wellbeing (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Here, pre-transfer wellbeing scores were within or above expected ranges (as indicated by the average score range provided with the measure), conducive to post-transfer wellbeing and future interactions. Hence, synergistic effects of person characteristics and proximal processes are likely to have facilitated positive transition experiences

5.1.5. Pupils settled well with no parental concerns

Parental post-transfer questionnaire data provided further evidence suggestive of positive experiences. Parents strongly agreed children had …*settled well*, and they were …*happy with my child's move,* with *c*omments signalling pupil adjustment:

> *'I am happy with how [Kashif] has settled in…he does seem happy.'*

For Kashif's mother, environmental adjustment and peer relationships were fundamental in assessing Kashif's transition (Figure 18). Overall, she reported positive post-transfer outcomes. Emma's mother alluded to friendships when reviewing the least positive aspects, describing a trade-off with social skills development; aligning with assertions that transition can drive developmental changes (Serbin, Stack and Kingdon, 2013). Bilal's mother did not report any post-transfer concerns.

Key Parent Quotes: Post-transfer views

Kashif's mother

Desired outcomes - 'I *want him to settle in and get used to the learning environment, but first and foremost to get on with his peers and feel comfortable with them and happy to go to school; for him to make friends and manage in the new environment*.'

Most positive aspects - *'He has made new friends, and is excited about the new school; has computer science and DT as new lessons; everything is new and he is trying different things…teachers have no concerns…'*

Emma's mother

Least positive aspects - *'Have been some friendship incidents, learning curve about who friends are, but positive in that she is maturing in that way, so cancels each other out.'*

Most positive aspects - '*More independence; more confident to go out by herself and goes to school independently.'*

Bilal's mother

Least positive aspects - *Needs prompting to be more confident. Nothing bad. No problems yet.*

Most positive aspects - *Has lots of teachers...has settled well.*

Figure 18: Key Parent Quotes – Post-transfer views

Overall, pupils settled well with no parental concerns – factors indicative of successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008), and positive transition experiences.

5.1.6. Summary

Pupils were generally positive about their secondary schools, illustrated by Emma's comment regarding what she most liked:

> '*Erm…my friends…some of the lessons…erm, I don't know, <u>just</u> school...'*

Responses regarding the worst thing included: *Nothing* (Bilal; Kashif); and *Maths* (Emma) (interview responses indicate this was a long-term issue). Whilst Bilal and Kashif suggested minor environmental (toilet sink) and learning ('*easier'*) changes respectively, Emma stated: *'I don't know…I can't really think of one,'* and confirmed there were '*no problems'* overall.

All pupils felt their secondary schools were 'better' than primary - indicating they had adjusted well to changes - and used positive language when discussing secondary school, reinforced by positive non-verbal communication (i.e., body language and facial expressions):

'*I feel good…I'm enjoying it.'* (Bilal)

'It's good, I like it.' (Emma)

'Yeah, new classrooms and new classes, and I like it […] I like the lessons and the friends.' (Kashif)

Pupils post-transfer questionnaires demonstrate positive views about secondary peers, teachers and lessons, while ratings suggest they felt happy, safe and included – indicative of adjustment to new settings, and positive experiences (Coffey, 2013). Research suggests that social integration, institutional adjustment and emotional wellbeing are characteristics of successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018; s.3.1.3). Pupils reported positive views in domains including relationships, learning and wellbeing, indicative of post-transfer adjustment.

Covid-19 circumstances disrupted transition processes (s.4.2.4: TIME). School closures had wide-ranging educational, developmental and wellbeing impacts (Skipp et al, 2021), contributing to microsystemic instability and hindering proximal processes, which could have negatively influenced experiences. Although some negatives were highlighted (s.5.2.4.1), pupil feedback is overall suggestive of positive experiences, corroborated by evidence of maintenance of positive wellbeing, and no pupil or parental reports of major concerns or difficulties.

Assessments of transition success must, however, consider long-term outcomes, which cannot be ascertained for the focus children at this juncture. Nevertheless, the data suggests that these transitions were successful in the short-term. The following section examines factors that may have influenced pupil experiences.

5.2. Research Question 2: What factors influence the experience of transition for deaf children?

This section discusses key themes from across the data corpus (pupils, parents, staff, documents) regarding the multiple interconnected factors that influenced pupils' reported experiences, in order to answer the second research question. Themes are not exhaustive; only the most salient are presented, using the PPCT framework. Figure 19 presents a thematic summary.

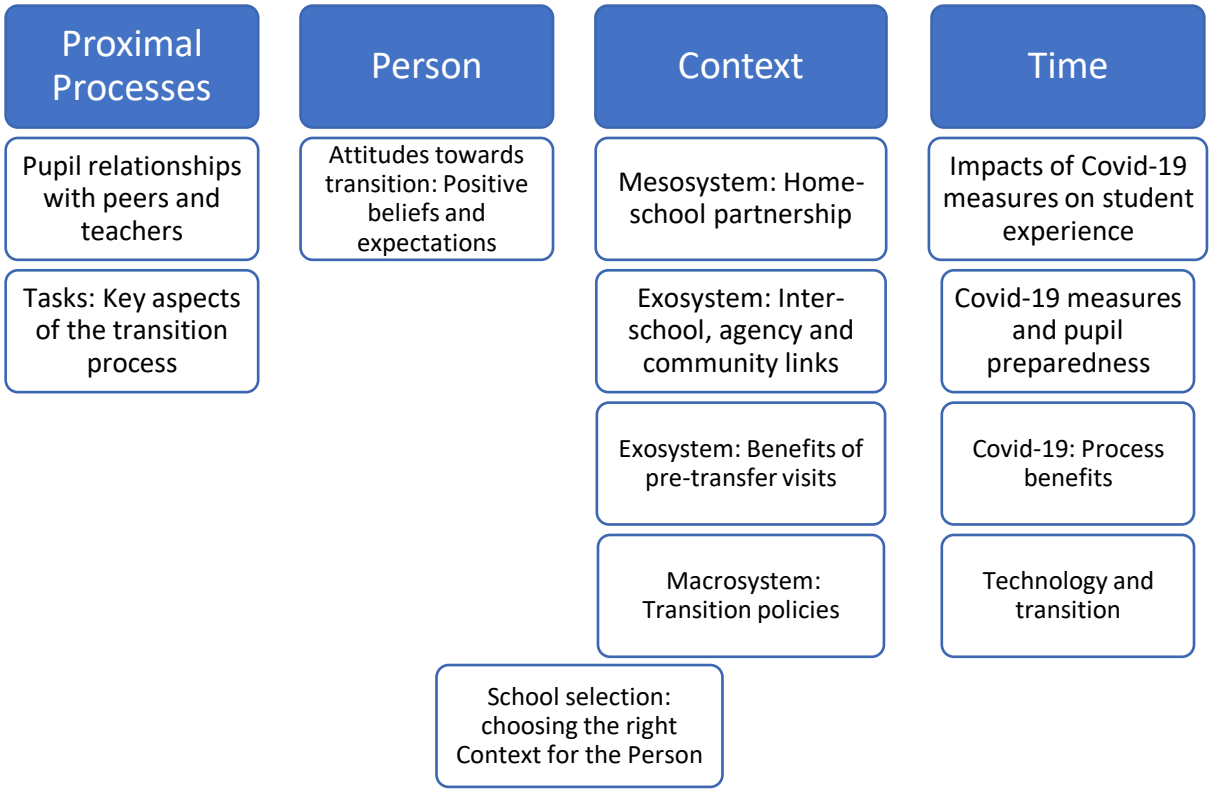


Figure 19: Thematic summary - Factors influencing pupil experiences

5.2.1. Process

Bioecological theory posits that development is underpinned by relationship- and task-focused proximal processes, underpinning formation of internalised working models which shape future attachments and interactions (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Consequently, relationships and task-based interactions mediate pupils' transition experiences.

5.2.1.1. Pupil relationships with peers and teachers

Pupil data describes positive pre- and post-transfer peer relationships (s.5.1.1) and shows sustained positive wellbeing (5.1.4). Friendships are protective – beneficial for deaf learners' wellbeing and resilience (Batten, Oakes and Alexander, 2014; Eichengreen et al, 2021) – and a principal source of transition support (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), found to predict deaf pupil's wellbeing during transitions (Wolters et al, 2012). Although Emma and Kashif moved to the same school, responses did not indicate close affiliation. Consequently, benefits of moving with familiar peers (Evangelou et al, 2008) were not evident.

Research suggests that belongingness and wellbeing during transition are interconnected, with peer acceptance, number and quality of friendships predicting post-transfer adjustment (Vaz et al, 2015; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). All pupils reported forming new, positive friendships. Positive pupil-peer relationships in primary school may have facilitated pupils' post-transfer relationships and adjustment (via positive working models encouraging peer interactions), demonstrating the interconnectedness of peer relationships, wellbeing and positive transition experiences.

Pupils described positive relationships with primary teachers with whom they could discuss problems. Corroborative staff responses described frequent discussions of impending transitions (Figure 20), including programme sessions to share feelings about secondary school (Appendix 28). Review evidence shows that pupils value opportunities to discuss transition-related concerns (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). School closures constrained peer-based interactions (s.5.2.4: TIME); hence, discussions with teachers were likely beneficial.

Key Staff Quotes: Talking about transition

HLTA

Pupils are encouraged to talk about their secondary transition this makes it easy for them to share their feelings, thoughts and concerns and discuss them addressing concerns or misconceptions, but also sharing their excitement and anticipation.

SENCO-Asst

The Year 6 staff are adept at talking about secondary school, what to expect, what concerns students have, what they can do to help themselves.

DRP Head / Lead ToD (DRPH)

1. We always make time to talk about the move to secondary school… This is either done face to face, in lessons, interventions, assemblies, meetings or recently via online learning.

2. *We work extremely hard on building positive relationships with our pupils so they (teachers too) also feel sad when they leave but we explain that they are ready for this move and we cannot wait to see what they go on to achieve...*

Figure 20: Key staff quotes - Talking about transition

Sharing concerns with trusted teachers can reassure pupils and resolve concerns, subsequently reducing the likelihood of negative wellbeing impactors (e.g., anxiety). Positive pupil-teacher relationships were found to predict deaf pupils' wellbeing over transition (Wolters et al, 2012). This could have influenced focus pupils' positive wellbeing scores.

Bidirectional interactions and reciprocal emotions are fundamental to effective proximal processes, and attachment formation, as illustrated by quote (2) in Figure 20. Hence, teachers of deaf pupils require skills that support interactions (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Strong pupil-teacher relationships situate transition as a shared experience. During transition: *Children experience a range of emotions. Feeling worried, excited, nervous…* (DRPH), which are mirrored by teachers. Relationships develop over prolonged periods, potentially intensifying emotions:

> *Most of the children have been with us since nursery. Some are ready when they reach Year 6 and want to move on, but others are worried*. (SENCO-Asst).

Worried feelings may be attributable to loss of this close attachment and primary school environment - factors associated with negative experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Taylor-Baptie,

2021). Post-transfer, only Emma reported missing '…*some'* teachers because she '…*just liked them,'* and described positive relationships with new teachers; therefore, attachment loss does not appear to have significantly impacted her experience.

Pupils expressed positive views regarding secondary teachers and adult support (s.5.1.2) – factors which help pupils feel secure in new settings (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018), stimulating environmental interest and engagement (s.2.2.1.1, Figure 3). There is good evidence that supportive teachers enhance transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020) through provision of safe learning environments that foster relationships and facilitate proximal processes (Coffey, 2013; Jaeger, 2016).

Context-specific interventions (s.5.2.2.2: PERSON-CONTEXT) and communication policies (s.5.2.1.2: PROCESS) also facilitated interpersonal interactions. Positive primary school experiences and relationships influence pupils' expectations of – and interactions with – secondary school peers and staff. Thus, existing and new relationships likely facilitated pupils' post-transfer adjustment, contributing to positive experiences.

5.2.1.2. Tasks: Key aspects of the transition process

Figure 21 summarises staff accounts of the DRP transition process. Initiation and duration of planning processes are key to deaf transitions (Rugg and Donne, 2011). Early initiation was advantageous for these pupils, whose transfers were disrupted by the pandemic:

> …*because we start the transition process early, all children had managed to visit their new school…*(DRPH)

This helped fulfil a fundamental purpose of the process for pupils:

> *To know all about what secondary school will be like (both positive and negative) to have their questions answered. (*HLTA*)*

Parent-primary school information sharing: school choices

- Parents / carers are provided with information about Secondary School options such as mainstream, resource base or specialist settings (i.e School for the Deaf) to help them make an informed choice.

Transition planning meeting

- A group meeting is arranged so 'parents can ask any questions regarding the process and receive support for the application' from primary school staff.

Information sharing: preferred settings

- Where parental preference is expressed, they are provided with information about the Secondary school such as contact details, website and prospectus.

Pre-transfer secondary school visit

- Visits can be arranged for parents / carers and students to attend new setting, along with member of primary staff if desired.

Transition handover meeting

- Once parents / carers have selected a Secondary School:
  - For students in the Deaf Learning Base and who have an EHCP, a handover meeting during summer term or at the annual review is arranged by the Lead ToD/Head of the DRP
  - For mainstream students without an EHCP, a handover meeting during summer term is arranged by the SENCO

School-school information sharing: pupil profile

- Academic assessment information is completed by ToD and specialist TAs and samples of pupil work are selected. Child's file is photocopied and sent to the receiving setting nearer the time of transition.

Multi-agency meeting

- Meeting is held (often as part of EHCP review). Parents / carers, school representatives, students, ToDs and specialist services e.g. Educational Psychologists, Sensory Support, may attend. Choice of provision is finalised.

School-specific transition preparation activities/interventions

- Students undertake 6-8 week Transition programme ahead of transition. Online sessions comprised a short slide show, incorporating a review of the previous session, brief information slides, and reflection activities with written English, images, and short BSL videos. Topics include Deaf and Proud, Feelings about Secondary School, Self-advocacy, Worries / concerns, and Similarities and Differences.
- Students also undertake SMILE programme with weekly sessions to improve communicative confidence (Appendix 28).

Figure 21: Transition Process Overview

Macrosystem policies governed procedural elements such as multi-agency EHCP meetings (incorporating transition planning; s.5.2.3.4: CONTEXT), whilst other elements developed gradually (Figure 22). This aligns with recommendations for flexible school transition programmes, tailored to individual, school and cohort needs, and local circumstances (Zeedyk et al, 2003; Ashton, 2008). Staff perceived the process as effective, despite Covid-19 measures:

> *This year things worked extremely well and considering the restrictions…children and parents were well prepared for the transition to secondary*. (DRPH)

Key Staff Quotes: Adapting the transition process

DRP Head / Lead ToD

We reflect each year on the transition provision and take out things we do not feel have worked well.

HLTA

Each pupil is unique and because of this we can see what works for individual pupils through the process and reflect on what was useful or any elements we would change and adapt for future years.

Figure 22: Key staff quotes – transition process

Information-sharing and transition preparation activities were critical facilitative steps.

i. Information-sharing and communication pathways

All staff identified information-sharing as crucial to the transition process; the school website also described information-sharing responsibilities (Table 16) – primarily centred on sharing information with or about individual pupils. A summary of information types and functions includes pupil and setting information, plus transition-related objects and symbols that underpin task-based proximal processes (Appendix 29).

Table 16: Primary school information sharing during transition

School website: Information-sharing
If your child is moving to another school... (Year 6) • Your child will do focused learning about aspects of transition to support their understanding of the changes ahead. • Where possible your child will visit their new school on several occasions and in some cases staff from the new school will visit your child in this school. • We will contact the school SENCO and ensure he/she knows about any special arrangements or support that need to be made for your child. • We will make sure that all records about your child are passed on as soon as possible.

Poor quality information-sharing can obstruct transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008). Pupils and parents reportedly value new setting information (Coffey, 2013), helpful for informing school choice (s.5.2.2.2: PERSON-CONTEXT) and familiarising pupils with new schools. Older siblings can be an important information source for both pupils and parents (Figure 23), potentially influencing pupil attitudes towards transition (s.5.2.2.1: PERSON). They strengthen home-school mesosystemic links, aiding pupil movement between those systems (O'Toole, 2016), helping ease transition.

Key Quotes: Older siblings as an information source

Bilal's mother

'[Bilal] *knew about school because my older son goes there […] I did not ask a lot of questions but I already knew about the school…'*

SENCO-Asst

If the parents have other children in the school, that is easier as the parents are familiar with the set up and know what to expect. (SENCO-Asst)

Figure 23: Key quotes - Older siblings as an information source

All parents agreed they had received sufficient information; however, Kashif's mother commented:

> *I am cautious of not wanting to seem like an annoying parent asking the same questions all the time*.

This could imply that she was not receiving adequate answers. It echoes research wherein parents of deaf children reported reluctance sharing information to avoid repercussions or conflict, hindering

transition processes (Curle et al, 2017). This demonstrates the importance of proactive information exchange, facilitated by accessible communication pathways that encourage stakeholder proximal processes and relationship development (s.5.2.3: CONTEXT).

For pupils with EHCPs, primary schools must share pupil information (agreed with parents /carers and pupils) with new settings (DfE AND DoH, 2015: pp.6.57). This is advantageous as insufficient interschool communication is associated with negative experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020), causing parental frustration, disenfranchisement, and support concerns (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013).

Pupils were invited to attend EHCP / transition meetings, aligning with recommendations for deaf pupils' involvement in transition planning (Tropea, 2010; Bowe, 2011). Their expressed wishes were included in pupil profiles, increasing their autonomy, and assisting secondary school's understanding of pupils.

Accessible, good-quality information is essential to transitions (Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016). Pupils' (and parent / carer) views about individual needs and support preferences can be obtained during interactions with teachers, EPs and other professionals, as part of general transition planning or specific EHCP processes. EPs work with pupil, staff and parents and are therefore particularly well-placed to ensure pupil views inform transition support (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Clear communication pathways assist with continuity and parental involvement – beneficial for pupils with SEND (Maras and Aveling, 2006). Stakeholder liaison and communication are crucial to successful transitions (Sutherland, 2010; Coffey, 2013), helping to facilitate support and curricular continuity (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020), and the provision of support in accordance with individual pupils' needs and wishes. This may improve pupil experiences by increasing consistency and stability across settings, with resultant effects on post-transfer adjustment and wellbeing (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Thus, information sharing and liaison moderate transition experiences; in this case, participant responses indicate positive effects.

ii. Transition preparation activities

Pupils undertook focused transition learning (Figure 21 above), cohering with recommendations that transition planning processes include individualised pupil preparation (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Insufficient preparation was highlighted as a transition barrier by deaf pupils (Tropea, 2010), while certain interventions were found to increase anxiety for pupils with SEND, underlining the need for tailored support (Rice et al, 2015). Staff viewed preparation as crucial to the transition process, to ensure:

> *Fundamentally, that the child is prepared socially, emotionally and academically and that they are happy with the move. (*DRPH*)*

Focused learning entailed a context-specific transition programme to develop transition-related skills and knowledge (Appendix 28; s.5.2.2: PERSON). DRP pupils also accessed a SmiLE Therapy intervention (Schamroth and Lawlor, 2015), to develop functional communication and social skills – both linked to deaf pupils' peer acceptance and popularity during transition (Wolters et al, 2012). This stimulated development of pupils' protective personal resources i.e., skills facilitative of new relationships, positively mediating their experiences. These programmes accord with recommendations for transition practices to promote social and institutional adjustment, vital to successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008). EPs typical activities include engagement in research and intervention (Farrell et al, 2006); consequently, they may be involved in the development of such programmes, or in the delivery of individual or group interventions.

Acquisition of skills and knowledge through preparatory activities involving regular interpersonal or task-based interactions of increasing complexity, constitute proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Such interactions can inform and reassure pupils, reducing pre-transfer concerns and increasing readiness to transition – important to positive experiences (s.5.2.2.1: PERSON).

As in Taylor-Baptie's (2021) study, pupil recall of preparatory activities was limited. Bilal and Kashif agreed they had spoken with parents and teachers but could not recall content. Emma was '*not too sure'* if she spoke with teachers, but recalled discussing practicalities with her mother:

> *'… like uniform and what form I'm going to be in and those types of things.'*

This corresponds with findings showing that children tended to recall practical rather than emotional parental transition support (O'Toole, 2016) – perhaps because practical support is easier to recognise, or due to learning and recall differences (s.2.2.1.1). Pupil accounts of their preparatory activities also emphasised practicalities:

> '*Uniform buy new*.' (Bilal)

> '*I checked my stuff to see if there was anything miss*ing.' (Kashif)

Limited pupil feedback renders it difficult to determine which preparatory activities, if any, they found helpful. However, informational activities were generally successful, as indicated by positive interview feedback, and the few concerns and queries pupils raised (Table 17).

Table 17: Pupil responses – Information about new school

Statement / Student	**(Pre) Before I go to my new school, I would like to know…**	**(Pre) Do you have any questions about your new school?**	**(Post) Before starting my new school, it would have been helpful if…**
Bilal	*Timetable*	*Uh no*	*Map of the school.*
Emma	*Not sure*	*Will I get lost and get detention if I do?*	*?* *(Interview: 'I don't think so').*
Kashif	*If the school is fun*	*No*	*No response*

Overall, responses suggest that pupils were well-prepared – associated with reduced likelihood of anticipating, and experiencing, post-transfer difficulties (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019), thus contributing to positive experiences. Synergisms between preparatory activities, proximal processes, and pupil transition experiences are elucidated below (Figure 24).

Key Quote: Preparation

DRPH

I would like to think that the children at [DRP school] leave feeling they are prepared to achieve anything that they put their mind to and although at times it may be difficult they are equipped with many tools to support and that they will take a little bit of [DRP school] with them wherever they may go.

Figure 24: Key Staff Quote – Preparation

5.2.2. Person

Person characteristics mediate transition experiences by shaping individual interactions with people and contexts, and may have greater influence than contextual factors (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). All three pupils were diagnosed with severe-profound hearing loss by 2 years old. This entitled them to an EHCP and DRP attendance, demonstrating person-context interactions.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (s.2.3) heterogeneity amongst deaf learners necessitates individualised approaches, acknowledged by staff in reference to adapting the transition process to meet pupils' *unique* needs (Figure 22). This included tailored preparatory activities, corresponding with recommendations that pupils with SEND receive additional support to facilitate transitions (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018), and the bioecological model which necessitates consideration of person characteristics for effective processes.

Resource characteristics include knowledge and skills (i.e., developmental assets), which pupils acquired via transition programmes (s.5.2.1.2.ii: PROCESS). Staff commented:

> *[It] had a huge impact on their confidence and ability to communicate successfully and independently…(HLTA)*
>
> *Children made great progress and their self-advocacy skills improved dramatically. (DRPH)*

Communication skills and confidence facilitate interpersonal interactions, underpinning development of peer and teacher relationships (Wolters et al, 2012), and ameliorating post-transfer adjustment difficulties attributable to communication barriers (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Self-advocacy skills are

widely acknowledged as important for deaf pupils, helping to motivate and empower them (Garay, 2003; Tropea, 2010; Rugg and Donne, 2011). This enhances pupil wellbeing, beneficial for positive transitions (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Pupils could also have benefited from activities to help develop self-esteem – a disposition found to mediate transition experiences (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018) – and deaf identity (Table 18). Equipping pupils with these skills and attributes likely augmented positive experiences.

Table 18: Activities to support deaf identity and self-esteem (DRP Prospectus)

DRP Prospectus: deaf identity and self-esteem
Our purpose: all children to feel supported, valued, nurtured and proud to be Deaf individuals, through: • Access to a strong deaf peer group • Opportunities / visits to learn about deaf culture and positive role models • Access to high quality BSL instruction from deaf role model • Weekly sessions focused on developing deaf ID and pride in being a member of the deaf community. This enables children to learn about their culture, their equipment, BSL, and access to support in later life • Developing proud deaf individuals requires collaboration from the team around the child.

Dispositions include developmentally generative and disruptive attitudes and beliefs, (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), which can shape pupil experiences.

5.2.2.1. Attitudes towards transition: Positive beliefs and expectations

Pre-transfer questionnaire responses indicate pupils were generally optimistic about secondary school with few negative expectations (Appendix 20). Emma's frequent use of 'okay' suggests neither strongly positive nor negative perceptions. Pupils were not overly worried about transition and were looking forward to around twice as many aspects as those of concern.

Post-transfer responses show their expectations were fulfilled; pupils described schools as F*antastic* (Bilal); *Good* (Emma) and *Excellent* (Kashif) (Appendix 22). Multiple-choice data corroborated this.

Pupils reported enjoying features of secondary school (including friends, teachers, subjects and classrooms), most of which they had looked forward to. Fewer options were selected as post-transfer dislikes, than selected as pre-transfer concerns, and no top-rated worries were chosen as dislikes; hence, those negative expectations were unfulfilled.

During interview, Kashif reported that he felt '*quite nervous'* pre-transfer, but '*better now*.' Although Emma felt '…*nervous at first*;' post-transfer she reported feeling '*happy'* with '*no problems.'* Similarly, Bilal who reported feeling *'…not worried, only nervous'* before transition, was *'enjoying it.'* Hence, initial nerves had diminished for all pupils.

Pupils' experiences may have been moderated by their positive expectations – developed through interpersonal and task-based proximal processes. Research found that looking forward to new school was linked to successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008); conversely negative expectations are linked to an increased likelihood of negative experiences; thus, pre-transfer expectations mediate post-transfer adjustment (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014; Gilbert et al, 2021).

Parents reported few pre-transfer concerns (Appendix 24), while staff responses reflected positive discourses:

> *We encourage them to engage [in] the process as part of growing up and being ready for a new and exciting chapter*.

It is possible that positive adult views were transmitted to pupils via reciprocal proximal processes, shaping pupils' subsequent expectations. Pupils also shape adult responses, for example, proffering reassurance about pupils' expressed concerns. This strengthens recommendations for more positive, rather than problem-focused, transition discourses (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

Emma's pre-transfer concern - *Will I get lost and get detention if I do?* – may have been prompted by preparatory discussions with staff, for whom an important part of the process was ensuring:

That the children feel that they are as prepared as possible i.e., they understand what will happen if they forget to hand in work, how detentions work etc. (SENCO-Asst)

Negative perceptions can be reinforced by primary school teachers attempts to prepare pupils for secondary school expectations (Chedzoy and Burdon, 2005; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). No pupil selected 'new rules' as a post-transfer dislike, suggesting this did not negatively impact experiences.

Peer and sibling information can also shape common negative perceptions (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Kashif had older siblings at another school. Emma had no older siblings yet had the fewest pre-transfer concerns (Appendix 21a), contrasting with findings that pupils without older siblings are more likely to anticipate, and experience, transition difficulties (Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019). Bilal – with an older sibling at the same secondary school – thought it would be '…*strict, a bit*,' a preconception seemingly shaped by sibling information:

'…his brother is already at the school…he has obviously told him a lot about [school], so he had some prior information...' (CSW).

Post-transfer, Bilal felt it was strict, but this was not linked to disciplinary consequences – he had received none – nor to specific teachers; when asked about the strictest teacher, he replied: '*No one*.' Possible explanations are multifactorial – the CSWs presence, changing rules and expectations, or because Bilal's preconception of the school as strict influenced his experience of it as strict. Alternatively:

'I think also, obviously, it's this natural perception when you go to a secondary school.' (CSW)

This demonstrates the necessity of giving pupils direct opportunities to learn about new settings and test assumptions with trusted people, to dispel common myths and correct 'misconceptions' (Ashton, 2008) – identified by the HLTA as pertinent to transition discussions (Figure 20).

Older siblings can provide advice and practical strategies from lived experience (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). They serve a protective function, helping to mediate pupil stress during transitions

(O'Toole, 2016), positively affecting wellbeing and experiences. The content of peer-sibling proximal processes moderates these effects. Negative information may generate negative working models and developmentally disruptive beliefs, whereas positive discourse will aid formulation of developmentally generative beliefs.

When asked about advice for Year 6 pupils, Kashif provided an insightful response (Figure 25).

Key Pupil Quote: Don't be nervous

Kashif

I will tell them about, they need to be responsible for their, er, their stuff […] and tell them that…don't be nervous about going to a new year and school [...] because if you, er…if you be nervous, they, er, they wouldn't have friends because they will, er, be quiet, and they won't put, raise their hand if, when the teacher asks a question and, er…and, they won't play with other…people.'

Figure 25: Key Pupil Quote - Advice for transitioning pupils

This might imply Kashif felt nervous feelings were unhelpful or unwarranted given his experience. Kashif could be repeating advice perceived as helpful, in line with research associating positive attitudes and confidence with successful transitions (Evangelou et al, 2008). Alternatively, it might derive from personal experience of nerves affecting peer interactions and engagement. He emphasises behaviours that facilitate new friendships, implying that nervousness can hinder this. This corresponds with bioecological theory, whereby nerves could cause avoidance or withdrawal – dispositional factors that disrupt engagement in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), leading to negative experiences. Positive feedback suggests this did not occur here. Emma also discussed the impact of nerves on self-perceived readiness to transition:

> '… [I] *was just mostly nervous, that makes me think I'm not ready*.'

Proximal processes may influence pupils to have negative expectations or emotions, leading to negative experiences; for example, perceptions of teachers as strict have been linked to negative transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Pupils must be supported to form positive, realistic

school expectations (Ashton, 2008). This does not mean parents and carers (or pupils) should repress their feelings; open communication is essential (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020).

Pupil responses demonstrate generally positive beliefs and expectations of secondary school, likely influenced by positive proximal processes and preparatory activities with teachers. Considering existing research (e.g., Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014) it is probable that these positive expectations underpinned their positive experiences.

5.2.2.2. School selection: Choosing the right Context for the Person

This theme was prominent amongst adult responses, illustrating the person-context synergism that underpins development (Tudge et al, 2016). Staff accounts of the process emphasised the need to give parents / carers secondary options information to assist selection of a suitable setting (Appendix 30). Other instrumental activities included setting visits (s.5.2.3.3: CONTEXT) and multi-agency meetings, assisting decision making pertaining to needs and provision. For Kashif's mother, comparing multiple settings facilitated decision-making:

> '*…out of all the schools seen I felt this one most suited his needs*.'

Consequently, integral to this process was ensuring that:

> *Children and parents have been able to visit secondary provision gaining knowledge of what they have to offer*. (HLTA)

Figure 26 presents quotes showing that staff viewed facilitation of parental choice as essential to their role, and the transition process.

Key Staff Quotes: The most important part of the transition process

SENCO-Asst

Making sure the parents have made an informed choice for their child's next school. That they understand the level of support to expect.

HLTA:

Parents have been able to make their choice having received all the relevant support and information to do so.

DRP Head / Lead ToD

Ensuring the parents and pupils have all of the information needed so they are able to make informed choices.

Figure 26: Key staff quotes - important parts of transition process

This reflects current policy orientations towards parental choice of setting (e.g. DfE and DoH, 2015), a key decision for parents and carers dependent upon factors such as school availability (Tropea, 2010; Taylor-Baptie, 2021), hearing threshold and BSL usage (van der Straaten et al, 2021). A key function of EPs is the assessment of individual need (Farrell et al, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002); thus, the information gathered can contribute to placement decisions. Additionally, EPs work within multiple settings and may therefore be able to contribute valuable contextual knowledge to assist decision making. Staff highlighted a related parental concern:

'*Is the school deaf-aware (if attending local mainstream*)?' (DRPH)

The DRP utilised various strategies to promote deaf awareness (Appendix 31), which correlates with deaf children's social inclusion (Hadjikakou, Petridou, & Stylianou, 2008). Inclusive primary school experiences cultivate positive working models and expectations of secondary school, aiding post-transfer engagement, proximal processes and adjustment. Hence, DRP deaf awareness strategies may have enriched pupils' transition experiences.

The DRP adopted a total communication approach (Appendix 31), to assist pupils to develop broad communicative ability. Communication barriers can obstruct relationship formation, with effects upon pupil wellbeing (Wolters et al, 2012; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Deaf children benefit from access to language-rich environments (Lederberg, Schick and Spencer, 2012). Varied language exposure in a

high-quality, structured learning environment increases the power of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), supporting focus pupils to develop communication skills, engage in interactions, and form new relationships – beneficial to transition experiences. It may also assist choices between mainstream or specialist provision.

For Bilal's mother, his communication needs required specialist provision: *'My* son *need Special Education. In school must need to use speech and sign language,'* unlike Kashif's mother:

> *'We chose the school because of the vocational aspects…more interaction, less day-to-day activities and more different things offered.'*

This echoes conflict expressed by parents in Bagnall, Fox and Skipper's (2021) study, when choosing between specialist (socioemotional) settings – perceived as more nurturing – and mainstream settings, perceived as academically advantageous. Focus pupil data did not indicate differential experiences linked to specialist or mainstream attendance. Contextual discontinuities which may generate negative outcomes (e.g., Mulat, Lehtomäki and Savolainen, 2019) are minimised by macrosystemic policy such as the Equality Act, and accessibility requirements (Chapter 2, s.2.2.1.3.iv).

Research evidence highlights beneficial developmental impacts of co-enrolment for deaf learners, (Xie, Potměšil & Peters, 2014), as offered in the DRP. Mainstream attendance facilitates interactions with hearing peers, assisting skill development. Pupils can benefit from enhanced local links but may lack access to deaf specialist services (Byrne, 2011; s.3.2.2.3.ii). Reduced pupil numbers in specialist settings increases chances for pupil-teacher proximal processes, thus strengthening pupil-teacher relationships – linked to wellbeing over transition (Wolters et al, 2012). Supportive learning environments can offset unstable home contexts (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008) and facilitate proximal processes. This stimulates deaf learners' resilience (Lytle et al, 2011), helpful for coping with transition-related changes. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that DRP attendance –

encompassing mainstream and specialist components – was a positive factor in pupils' development, and transition experiences.

Continuity of primary school provision may determine setting choices. The DRP provision was described as excellent by Ofsted, and '…particularly effective' at supporting deaf pupils. Around 6% of deaf pupils attend similar provisions, which may be lower rated, and secondary settings may not offer equivalent provision. Congruence between individual needs and settings' capacity to meet those needs will inherently influence setting selection, transition experiences and post-transfer adjustment. Overall, school selection is not about the 'best' school, but rather the best setting for that pupil, considering relevant person characteristics. Here, it appears that parents' informed selection of appropriate learning contexts, supported by DRP staff and processes, was a positive factor in pupil experiences.

5.2.3. Context

Bioecological theory posits that interactions within and between systems help to realise human potential (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Multiple contextual influences upon transition experiences were apparent, for example, setting-specific preparatory programmes (s.5.2.1.2.ii: PROCESS).

Participant responses illustrated various system linkages that likely influenced transition experiences, highlighting the importance of close links and communication between stakeholders. Staff comments regarding helpful process features (Table 19) reflect findings that positive stakeholder relationships facilitate smooth transitions (Coffey, 2013; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020). Staff differentiated links with schools and agencies, from relationships with parents / carers; the latter suggesting a deeper, ongoing bond.

This distinction reflects the separate systems surrounding the child. The mesosystem i.e. the linkages between two or more or settings containing the developing child, is represented by home-school partnerships, whereas the exosystem i.e. linkages between two or more settings, one of which does not contain the child, is evident in interschool, agency and community links. Pre-transfer school visits provide another example of exosystemic links. Interactions within and between these systems are further influenced by overarching macrosystemic policies, as discussed in the themes below.

Table 19: Key staff responses (1)

	SENCO-Asst	**HLTA**	**Lead ToD**
Most effective / helpful aspects of the process	*Close links with parents / carers* *Close links with the new school (virtual meetings with the new SENCO/ head of Resource Base/ support staff that will be working with the deaf child.*	*Building links with secondary schools* *Relationships with parents throughout the process* *Links with other agencies involved in transition.*	*Strong relationships with parents / carers* *Close links with the secondary schools* *Strong links with multi-agencies* *Visits and meetings with parents, pupils and new schools*
How parents are supported during transitions	*Parents have been supported with i.e., visits to Secondary schools, regular check ins to check they know timescales etc. Support with appeals, support with transport, support with choices (if a child has an ASD diagnosis, which school would be best placed to support their child after seeking advice from outside agencies).*	• *Filling in applications* • *Transport applications* • *Visits to secondary schools*	• *Visits to secondary school* • *Support with the application form* • *Transport requests* • *Access to virtual tours* • *weekly check ins with the parents to see how they are all doing*

5.2.3.1. Mesosystem: Home-school partnership

The DRP Prospectus and website describe multiple activities promoting home-school partnerships (s.4.2.1, Table 10; Appendix 32), demonstrating the significance the primary school accorded to this. School policies promoted parental involvement alongside national policies e.g., SENDCOP (DfE and DoH, 2015).

School staff have an important role in relationship development and maintenance. The DRP Head / Lead ToD (DRPH) described their principal transition responsibility as:

> *…support[ing] parents and students through the transition…*

Research suggests that supportive staff, including transition coordinators and ToDs, facilitate positive transitions (Rugg and Donne, 2011; O'Toole, 2016; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Staff responses (Appendix 27) demonstrate that they fulfilled equivalent functions, i.e., connecting stakeholders, sharing information, supporting pupils and managing parental expectations, vital to ensuring:

> *That [parents] understand the level of support to expect.* (SENCO-Asst)

> *Transparency between all stakeholders so all aware of the amount of support and independence their child will have*. (DRPH)

This corresponds with claims that expectational management is particularly important to SEND transitions (Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020), vis-a-vis differential provision availability within settings. Support continuity is a common parental transition concern (Tropea, 2010; O'Toole, 2016), only raised by Kashif's mother in relation to temporarily delayed radio aids.

Home-school partnership enhances stakeholder awareness of individual, family, linguistic or cultural needs – important for effective planning and successful transitions (Garay, 2003; O'Toole, 2016). Responses indicate that EHCP review meetings incorporated transition planning, providing space for concerns to be shared and resolved. EHCP eligibility and associated procedural requirements (s.3.1.2.1) thus influenced parental transition involvement and home-school relationships (s.5.2.3.1: CONTEXT). The formalised nature and type of information shared (which may include assessment-based information obtained by EPs) also facilitates curriculum and support continuity.

Staff described providing practical and emotional support to parents and carers, via ongoing communication, e.g., 'weekly check-ins' (Table 19):

> *…close contact with parents is maintained so they have all of the information they need and feel prepared*. (SENCO-Asst)

This involved less formalised channels of communication:

> *As most of our Deaf pupils are transported into school a lot of the communication [with parents] relies on a phone call, email or note in the communication log… (*DRPH*)*

Home-school communication books are useful for keeping parents informed during transitions (Curle et al, 2017). Email and other technology (e.g., video meetings) – enable efficient multi-directional stakeholder information sharing and create additional opportunities for parental concerns to be addressed, helping provide reassurance and manage expectations – important for parents and carers of deaf learners:

> 'I *worry anyway as all parents do, but especially with [Kashif's] extra needs (HI) so maybe a bit more reassurance…that everything is okay.'*

Parental transition attitudes transmit to children via proximal processes. Supporting positive parental attitudes will shape pupils' attitudes, and subsequent experiences (s.5.2.2.1: PERSON). Staff strongly agreed that parents and carers could share concerns, parental views were sought, and parents / carers were well supported. Parent questionnaires confirmed this, showing that parents were not overly worried, and felt their views were discussed (Appendices 24 and 25). Two strongly agreed that they were involved in transition planning; for Emma's mother, ratings were impacted by Covid-19 circumstances (s.5.2.4: TIME). All agreed that they felt supported throughout transition:

> *They have definitely been there*. (Kashif's mother)

The timing of these transitions affected the home-school mesosystem. Covid-19 school closures led to sustained periods of home learning, blurring home-school learning contexts (Moura, Nascimento and Ferreira, 2021). Closures may have weakened home-school links; alternatively, use of technology to augment communication and home learning (ibid.; s.5.2.4.4: TIME) may have increased parental

involvement in transition planning and preparation, beneficial to pupil experiences. Accordingly, context factors influence communication and relationships, with resultant effects upon proximal processes (O'Toole, 2016), and pupil experiences.

Respondents highlighted Covid-19 impacts upon informal communication pathways (Figure 27).

Key Quotes: Covid-19 and Communication Pathways

SENCO-Asst

It is a bit more difficult since covid as parents have to book an appointment to talk to staff or enter the school site. In the past, a quick chat at the beginning or end of the day is not so easy.

Emma's mother

Guess it is different from primary school, for example, sharing information when they are picked up from school. It is not a bad thing; [I'm] made aware of important things via email.'

Figure 27: Covid-19 and Communication Pathways

The change experienced by Emma's mother could be attributable to general reductions in home-school communication frequency following transition, as children grow in independence (O'Toole, 2016). Secondary contextual factors exacerbate this; multiple teachers can obstruct communication pathways and relationship formation, while larger catchment areas and independent travel compromise parental involvement (Sutherland, 2010). Primary school actions to connect parents and carers with secondary schools can stimulate new communication pathways, information-sharing and relationships, strengthening the foundation for new mesosystems to develop.

Positive relationships strengthen home-school mesosystems (O'Toole, 2016), stimulating parental transition involvement. Greater involvement is associated with successful transitions and improved outcomes (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020), maximising resources in the home context (Luft, 2015). Parents can share valuable knowledge, and advocate for their child's rights (Tropea, 2010), positively influencing transition planning processes.

Current policy endorses parental transition involvement (SENDCOP, DfE and DoH, 2015), encouraging home-school partnerships, as did DRP policy. It is probable that strong home-school partnerships positively influenced transition planning processes and parental attitudes, with positive effects upon pupil experiences.

5.2.3.2 Exosystem: Interschool, agency and community links

Interschool links were perceived to influence how far secondary schools were prepared for pupils:

> *The schools that take up the opportunity to engage with us are well prepared, but not every school takes the chance to meet with us to receive information/ get to know the children. (SENCO-Asst)*

Transition studies emphasise interschool communication, absence of which may undermine post-transfer support and accessibility due to insufficient knowledge of pupils (O'Toole, 2016; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016), contributing to negative experiences. Research suggests that primary-secondary school liaison is advantageous to pupil transitions (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008), and EPs have an important role in supporting the formation of school links and the participation of key stakeholders (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020). Transition might engender a teacher's first experience instructing a deaf learner. Insufficient knowledge could compromise transitions; thus, collaboration is essential (Tropea, 2010), assisting support and curricular continuity (Taylor-Baptie, 2021).

Alongside pupil information, the DRP could share specialised knowledge and deaf education strategies with new settings and teachers – useful for settings, like Emma and Kashif's, without specific deaf provision. Information from secondary school helps primary teachers prepare pupils for e.g., behavioural / academic expectations. These activities support post-transfer pupil adjustment, thus positively influencing their experiences.

Contextual factors enhance or constrain collaborative working and the development of setting links*:*

Sometimes, time restraints impact meetings or the amount of pupils a secondary school may be receiving. (DRPH).

Transition timing may mean certain cohorts have greater needs, creating pressure upon support services (Bagnall, Fox and Skipper, 2021). Low access to specialised services impedes transitions (Luft, 2015). DRP pupils benefited from internal and external deaf specialist transition input (Table 20), alongside the involvement of local EP services. Deaf pupils transitioning between other settings may not have equivalent service access, differentially impacting their experiences.

Table 20: Specialist deaf provision in the DRP (School website).

Access to specialised deaf support and agencies in the DRP	
DRP	Local Authority Provision
• ToDs • BSL Deaf Instructors • Speech and Language therapists	• Hearing Support • Sensory Support Team • ToDs • Specialist support assistants • Educational audiologists • Audiological technicians • BSL tutors

Macrosystem policy may specify external agency involvement dependent on person characteristics and needs, enhancing context linkages (s.5.2.3.4: CONTEXT). School-agency links facilitate multi-professional working and holistic transition planning (Maras and Aveling, 2006), enhancing transition experiences. School-community links were also highlighted:

We have strong links with local secondary schools, resource bases and schools for the deaf…we also participate in a range of extra-curricular activities where the children meet pupils from other schools (DRPH).

Community involvement bestows parents / carers and deaf learners with support and information sources (Garay, 2003; Curle et al, 2017), and is recommended for effective transitions (Rugg and Donne, 2011). Meeting other deaf individuals shapes development of identity and belongingness –

important to resilience (Lytle et al, 2011). Resilient pupils will cope better with transition changes, contributing to more positive experiences.

5.2.3.3 Exosystem: Benefits of pre-transfer visits

Pre-transfer secondary school visits were viewed as important for pupils and parents, affirming existing research (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Sutherland, 2010):

> *As part of the process …visits are arranged…on an individual basis or [with] the DRP parent group.* (HLTA)

> *Where possible your child will visit their new school on several occasions and in some cases staff from the new school will visit your child in this school. (*DRP Prospectus*)*

The purpose of visits is to gather information to aid setting selection. This could involve parents and carers undertaking introductory visits to gain knowledge of settings, accompanied by a staff member if requested, before attending with their child to obtain their views.

Responses indicated that pre-transfer visits helped to inform and reassure parents about setting provision, thus alleviating concerns and encouraging positive perceptions about impending transitions (Figure 28). Pupil visits occurred earlier (e.g., open days) and later in the process (e.g., final term transition week), so were partly affected by Covid-19 measures (s.5.2.4: TIME). Accordingly, visits may have held more significance because they had been restricted.

Time in new settings may be particularly useful for specialist pupils transitioning into mainstream. Research suggests it allows pupils to become comfortable with new environments, classrooms, larger groups and noise (Rugg and Donne, 2011). Meeting teachers can facilitate a sense of belonging (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Additionally, it creates opportunities to begin forming new peer and teacher relationships, positively impacting transition experiences.

Pre-transfer visits familiarise pupils with settings – facilitating primary-secondary school linkages, which may stimulate positive transition views. For example, Bilal reported feeling excited about secondary school:

> *'…because I came here first time, last year.'*

Key Quotes: Benefits of school visits

Kashif's mother

'I *had already attended previously, I have spoken to parents who had not seen it, but I had already looked before, also met with [teacher]; I felt comfortable and reassured that all would be in place*.'

HLTA:

Parents have previously arranged to go with other parents and then on a separate visit with their child to get a feel for the school.

Generally parents find the process quite [a] positive experience, being able to visit the school and have their questions answered.

DRP Head / Lead ToD

1. After visiting the school, attending meetings etc parents tend to feel quite positive about the whole process.

2. *Fortunately, parents had already been able to make visits to the relevant secondary settings before…restrictions. Due to the prolonged nature of the situation pupils were unable to attend the usual transition day in the Summer term.*

Figure 28: Key Quotes – Benefits of school visits

This aligns with research findings that pupils regard pre-transfer visits positively (Tropea, 2010; Sutherland et al, 2010). Secondary peers visiting primary settings was also perceived as beneficial:

> *Secondary schools have also previously brought over current students…[which] works very well as the children sometimes ask questions to pupils that they might not necessarily ask to adults. (DRPH)*

Pupils may prefer to ask questions of peers in expectation of more truthful or accurate answers. Therefore, opportunities for pupils to meet peers separately to parental visits are helpful. This aligns with Ashton's (2008) assertion:

> "*… there is no substitute for opportunities for children to find out for themselves about the issues that matter to them. Students…found talking to current students…staff and spending time in their new school to be most useful*."

Strengthening microsystem linkages eases the process of moving between those systems by ensuring maintenance of common elements (O'Toole, 2016), facilitating pupil adjustment. Familiarisation opportunities help to develop exosystemic links, hence, it reasonable to suggest that pupils benefited from pre-transfer visits, enhancing their transition experiences.

5.2.3.4 Macrosystem: Transition policies

Transition process tasks were school-specific (e.g., preparatory activities) and universal (e.g., information sharing), the latter partly governed by national guidance (e.g., DfE and DoH, 2015). Meetings are critical to transition processes (Rugg and Donne, 2011). Parents reported attending multi-agency EHCP annual review meetings wherein placement choices were finalised, rather than separate transition meetings.

Meetings – face-to-face and remote – constitute a communication pathway (s.5.2.1.2: PROCESS) simplifying information-sharing and formation of stakeholder relationships. Meetings involving new setting staff were described as '*helpful'* (Bilal's mother). Stakeholder liaison has been highlighted by deaf pupils and parents / carers as supporting smooth transitions (Tropea, 2010), while multi-agency links maximise resources and service access, beneficial for deaf learners (Luft, 2015). This demonstrates how macrosystemic policy facilitates systemic links and proximal processes. Multi-agency involvement, including specialist input available in the DRP (s.5.2.3.2, Table 20), can reasonably be assumed to have positively influenced planning processes and subsequent pupil experiences.

Annual EHCP reviews incorporate provision review – enabling regular scrutiny of placement suitability, contributing to long-term transition success (Garay, 2003). EHCP processes direct what information is shared and between which stakeholders, and ensures that transition support is individualised, partly through pupil and parent involvement in planning. Consequently, EHCP eligibility influences transition experiences. However, only around 16% of deaf learners have an EHCP (with deafness as a primary need - CRIDE 2021). Recent UK research found that additional transition support for deaf pupils was dependent on LA practices (Taylor-Baptie, 2021), thus pupils without an EHCP, or attending different settings, may have different experiences.

Policies can trigger systemic chaos, and dysfunctional environments can stimulate dysfunctional development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The Covid-19 pandemic and school distancing measures (Gray et al, 2021) generated chaos. Local and national guidance mitigated this, for example, the focus LA produced transition guidance (developed with the assistance of the local EP service) emphasising emotional provision to ease pupils back into school. This could have aided predictability in systems rendered unstable by broader contextual factors, which might explain pupils' positive experiences in adverse circumstances.

5.2.4. Time

Changes and continuities across the life course or sociohistorical period inevitably impact proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Pupils transitioning at different times will have different experiences. Transition timing during adolescence encompasses personal and social changes that impact experiences (Wolters et al, 2012). Although adolescence was not mentioned by respondents, staff described transition as …*part of growing up*. Parental comments illustrate how transition is perceived within the life course, stimulating future development (Figure 29).

Key Parent Quotes: Transition in the life course

Bilal's mother
'[Bilal has] *'Finished at PS, needs to go to secondary.'*

Emma's mother:
'[I am looking forward] To see her mature and be more independent…'

Kashif' mother
'It's a new chapter in his life, seeing him becoming more independent.'

Figure 29: Key Parent Quotes - Transition in the life course

These transitions occurred during the unique sociohistorical context of the Covid-19 pandemic – a recurrent theme. References to previous transitions as 'normal,' emphasised the abnormal conditions, possibly entailing greater impacts for the primary-secondary school cohort than others (Gray et al, 2021).

Covid-19 measures included school closures, visitor restrictions, class bubbles, base classrooms and remote working (Viner et al, 2020). This impacted experiential and procedural transition aspects, and disrupted activities important to successful transitions, such as managing expectations, ensuring learning continuity and stakeholder communication (Gray et al, 2021). Although not evident in participant responses, my own TEP practice demonstrated an important role for EP services in liaising with LA representatives to develop and disseminate local guidance for schools in managing this (and other) novel situations to assist positive pupil experiences.

Staff questionnaires (Appendix 27) compared Covid-19 and regular conditions. Responses indicated that Covid-19 measures primarily impacted information sharing and perceived effectiveness of the transition preparation process, and in addition, stymied participant judgments of the process. For example, when asked about secondary school activities she hoped to try, Emma responded:

'I don't know, it's difficult to think because Coronavirus is stopping everything…'

Emma's mother had similar difficulties identifying helpful process aspects, which was: *Hard because of Covid* – also hampering parents suggested improvements (Figure 30). This implies that elements

requiring improvement were perceived by parents as due to Covid-19 measures, rather than the process itself. Parents acknowledged how circumstances affected their experiences – for example, feeling involved in planning:

'Been a difficult year to plan therefore cannot agree or disagree.' (Emma's mother)

Key Parent Quotes: Suggested improvements to the transition process

Emma's mother:
'Difficult to say as it is not a normal year, so the regular processes were affected.'

Kashif' mother
'It is hard to say because a lot of the issues were to do with the pandemic…'

Figure 30: Key Parent Quotes – Suggested process improvements

Responses highlighted effects of Covid-19 measures on pupil experiences and preparation, and the heightened role of technology.

5.2.4.1. Impacts of Covid-19 measures on pupil experience

All pupils selected *finding way around* as a pre-transfer concern, with Emma and Kashif ranking it in their top three. Research suggests this can be especially challenging for pupils with sensory needs (Evans, Borriello and Field, 2018). However, Covid-19 measures (e.g., classroom-based bubbles) reduced anticipated difficulties. No pupils selected it as a post-transfer dislike. It may have been a minor difficulty for Bilal who felt a *school map* would have been helpful prior to starting; however, Emma and Kashif, who both attended a larger secondary school than their primary school, expressed positive views (Figure 31).

Key Quotes: Covid-19 measures and restricted movement

Emma

'[I] didn't really have any worries, just finding, just getting lost but as Covid happened then we can't even move around apart from lunch.'

'Its easy because of Covid… 'cause there's literally…your hall and lunch. That's all I need to remember.'

Emma's mother

'[Emma] was worried about getting lost but because of Covid, they are in the same class and the staff come to them; it may be an issue once the restrictions are lifted.'

Kashif

'I thought it would be like, erm, the school would be like big and I would get lost […] because there's like different directions, to er, like the different classrooms and I thought I would have to go to different classrooms...'

'I think its good […] because we stay in the classroom and do, er, lessons in the same, er classroom.'

Kashif's mother

'…he has been with the same class so has not had the whole experience, eg, at lunchtime etc and not going to the hall, there are not many options available.'

Figure 31: Key Quotes - Covid-19 and restricted movement

Kashif's mother seemingly perceived Covid-19 measures as barriers to the 'whole' transition experience, particularly facilities and peers. Pupil feedback does not indicate negative effects on peer relationships (s.5.1.1). Measures reportedly reduced the likelihood of getting lost, alleviating one contributor to negative transition experiences (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; s.5.1.3), and cohering with recommendations for Year 7 'base classrooms' to aid transition (O'Toole, 2016). Some degree of environmental discontinuity may be preferable for pupils, to signal the changes transition entails (McLellan and Galton, 2015). However, pandemic-related research found that segregated Year 7 spaces facilitated peer relationships (Gray et al, 2021) – demonstrating Process-Context synergism – and helped ease deaf pupils into new settings (Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Covid-19 measures might therefore have enhanced focus pupils' relationships, and subsequently, their experiences. Reduced navigational demands alleviated pre-transfer concerns about getting lost, and incidental negative experiences.

Despite concerns, Emma's interview responses signalled disappointment – for example, when asked if she wanted to do anything but was prevented:

'I don't know, actually move around, like different classes.'

Emma may have prepared herself for this experience and felt frustrated when obstructed by restrictions, reflecting recent findings that restricted movement and access to subject rooms (e.g., art, science) invoked both pupil relief and a sense of loss of integral transition experiences (Gray et al, 2021). It could reflect desire to experience new facilities, classrooms and clubs - aspects all pupils were looking forward to, and which were restricted by Covid-19 measures (Figure 32). Post-transfer, only Emma selected these as favourable aspects. For Kashif (the only pupil to choose dislikes) these were top-rated dislikes. This demonstrates a minor negative impact of restrictions upon his experience; however, when interviewed he stated, '*There is nothing*' he disliked.

Covid-19 measures created highly structured school microsystems, potentially benefitting pupils by increasing stability, consistency and predictability, advantageous to competency-based development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), helping to manage school entry and minimise pupil concerns about moving around. Difficulty adjusting to new environments is associated with negative transitions (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Experience of similar restrictions in primary school (or operational similarity between base classrooms and the DRP context) could have increased microsystemic continuity, supporting post-transfer adjustment and enhancing pupil experiences.

Key Quotes: Covid-19 measures and restricted activities

Emma

'So there's things that I want to do but can't do because of Covid…. [like] *football […] actually go in the art lab but we can't do that because of Covid…'*

Kashif's mother

'It is different as he is not moving around as much; and limited because there are no after school clubs and, eg, vocational things.'

Bilal's CSW

'Obviously its difficult at the moment what with Covid, we've got a restricted timetable but normally as part of our main provision, that's a big thing for students in Key Stage 3, the food technology.'

Figure 32: Key Quotes - Covid-19 measures and restricted activities

5.2.4.2. Covid-19 measures and pupil preparedness

The DRP completed secondary school visits *…prior to Covid-19. Unfortunately, the children were not able to visit for transition week (HLTA)* – perceived to have limited effectiveness of the preparatory process (Figure 33). Staff ratings decreased from 'strongly agree' for regular conditions, to 'agree' in Covid-19 conditions. Parents described obstructed pre-transfer experiences of new settings.

Key Quotes: Impact of Covid-19 on effectiveness of process in preparing pupils

SENCO-Asst

Not being able to attend their transition day/week and meeting their new peers and teachers.

In previous years we have been able to facilitate meetings between year 6 pupils and current secondary pupils, so they can ask questions about what secondary school is like.

DRPH

Children were not able to meet their new peer group prior to starting school - this can ease any worries for the children regarding making friends.

Emma's mother

'Because of Covid […] they sent some work out and had discussions at home and at primary school, but she did not know what she was walking into, they would know things from being told but had not witnessed it.'

Kashif's mother

'I am happy with how he has settled in but as a parent it would have been good to have more, e.g., more meetings; being able to spend the day there – as he would have done in normal circumstances.'

Figure 33: Key Staff Quotes - Covid-19 impact on pupil preparation

Covid-19 measures necessitated adaptations to transition practices, preventing common strategies including visits, taster days and face-to-face discussions, replaced with virtual meetings, video tours and written information (Gray et al, 2021; Wythe, 2022). Pre-transfer contact with schools, peers and teachers is beneficial (s.5.2.3.3: CONTEXT). Knowing what to expect can lessen pre-transfer anxiety for pupils with SEND (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Bagnall, Skipper and Fox, 2020). Meetings allow new relationships to form, supporting post-transfer adjustment (Ashton, 2008; Coffey, 2013). One recent EY study found that restricted pre-transfer contact constrained teacher knowledge of incoming children, and limited children's exposure to new routines and expectations, affecting post-transfer

adjustment (Wythe, 2022). Thus, lack of pre-transfer contact prevents positive effects, and could heighten the possibility of negative experiences.

Whether virtual alternatives derive equivalent benefits is debatable. For example, pupils' poor recall of preparatory activities could be due to remote arrangements limiting experiential immersivity. Research has suggested that deaf children are less likely to integrate visual and written (captions) video information than hearing peers, and need richer contextual information (Lewis and Jackson, 2001). Emma's mother implies information alone is insufficient; rather, effective preparatory activities should involve direct, physical experience of new settings and peers – lack of which could negatively influence transition experiences by rendering pupils underprepared.

However, pupil feedback does not suggest restrictions were a barrier to new peer relationship formation or post-transfer adjustment (s.5.1). Parent ratings (Appendix 25) show that none disagreed that their child was well-prepared. This suggests that possible impacts of Covid-19 measures upon pupil preparedness were minimal. Post-transfer contexts may have mediated this. Secondary schools implemented enhanced transition policies incorporating, for example, phased year group returns and increased pastoral support (Gray et al, 2021) – potentially ameliorating pupil anxiety related to the pandemic and/or transition, and supporting adjustment. One could speculate that extended periods of home learning weakened primary school attachments, whilst expediting development of (virtual) mesosystem links between home and secondary school. This assists movement between microsystems (O'Toole, 2016), easing the process of primary-secondary school transition, and potentially enhancing experiences.

5.2.4.3. Covid-19: Process benefits

Staff reported pre-transfer benefits of Covid-19 measures relating to transition process procedures (Table 21). This included remote working arrangements, with references to time pressures experienced during regular conditions. Remote meetings reduced time commitments, permitting

more people to attend. This could refer to primary or secondary school staff, or external professionals – enabling multi-agency working in alignment with transition literature and macrosystemic policy recommendations (s.5.2.3: CONTEXT). During the pandemic, many pupils with SEND missed health and care input (Skipp et al, 2021). As discussed, DRP pupils likely benefited from internal specialist access (s.5.2.3.2: CONTEXT); no participants indicated difficulties accessing specialist support.

Table 21: Key Staff Quotes - Covid-19 impacts on transition process

	SENCO-Asst	**HLTA**	**DRPH**
Benefits of virtual meetings	*As the meetings now take place virtually, more people can be invited, there is not the pressure of travelling between schools, arranging lengthy cover in class etc*.	*Meeting being held virtually that could be set up easily and quickly without having to travel to a common venue.*	*Due to virtual meetings, more people could be invited. Less time constraints due to travelling, arranging cover etc.*
Suggested improvements to process	*During Covid, time has been less of an issue i.e. the receiving SENCo/support staff do not need to spend time travelling to us. If meetings could continue to be held virtually, I think this would help.*	*Continuation of video calls with parents and pupils particularly if pupils are arriving at school using local authority transport and while parents and visitors aren't allowed on school premises due to covid restrictions.*	*a. Virtual meetings are a great way of ensuring all information is passed over* *b. Virtual tours, videos have been easily accessible to our families* **c.** *Sharing work, information via the google classroom has also been a positive. This is something I would like to continue*.
Use of technology	*…it is easier to have meetings virtually, so the sharing of information at these times is better. Video tours are a good way of having that link too.*	*All of our pupils were given access to a laptop, which allowed them to access virtual tours and receive information from the secondary schools including welcome packs and video call meeting form teachers.*	*…all of our pupils were given a laptop which meant it was easy to have meetings virtually, set work etc. The sharing of information at these times was also easy to do. Lots of the schools had also provided virtual tours, welcome videos etc. This was lovely for the pupils to share with their families.*

All staff suggested improvements (regarding how well-prepared secondary schools are for incoming pupils) based on continuation of Covid-19 measures perceived as helpful. Responses illustrate the importance accorded to stakeholder communication and information exchange (s.5.2.1.2: PROCESS) relating to pupil preparedness, and how virtual practices simplified this, likely contributing to positive experiences.

5.2.4.4. Technology and transition

The Covid-19 pandemic prevented face-to-face social interactions and access to peers and social contexts, prompting an unprecedented increase in technology usage to facilitate interactions (Moura, Nascimento and Ferreira, 2021). Technology and the Internet were therefore integral to these transitions. During interviews, Bilal and Kashif described interactions with primary and secondary school friends via online gaming, supporting maintenance and development of peer relationships – important to transitions (s.5.2.1.1: PROCESS).

Pupils completed transition programmes via online home learning. Parents could observe and build upon learning activities, rather than relying on pupil accounts, generating complex proximal processes and bolstering development. Alternatively, dependent on parental involvement, pupils may have had fewer chances to ask questions and resolve potential concerns. Teachers' capacity to immediately follow up with individual pupils may have been limited by technological barriers, restricting pupil-teacher proximal processes. Recent research suggests that online learning was often fragmented, due to e.g., Internet / device access and inadequate support (Gray et al, 2021). That study also noted barriers to formal progress assessment following the cancellation of SATS. Additionally, access to purpose-built learning environments was restricted (Moura, Nascimento and Ferreira, 2021), hindering task-based proximal processes.

Pupil and teacher identities are co-constructed and interdependent; removing the teacher's presence inevitably changes the nature of interactions vis-à-vis engagement, interpretations and responses (ibid.). These authors question how far technology-mediated interactions replicate the reciprocity and complexity of face-to-face proximal processes, for example, body language and non-verbal communication are hampered – especially pertinent for BSL users. This is impossible to judge within this study; however, overall positive feedback, and the absence of negative feedback regarding these changes, indicates that potential negative effects of remote rather than face-to-face proximal processes were minimal.

Remote practices permitted a degree of access to secondary settings which could not be physically attended, described in Figure 34. Technology facilitated home-school mesosystems, strengthening communication and accessible information-sharing, and supporting home learning. This corresponds with research recommendations for technology and Internet usage to facilitate information-sharing and transitions (Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016; Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018). Many implemented strategies aligned with evidence-based suggestions from the latter review, including virtual meetings with teachers and peers.

Whether virtual tours replicate physical visits is questionable, particularly regarding factors such as school size, student body and meeting new people. Emma's mother reported that Emma received a virtual tour, '…*but aside from that she went straight there'* – implying the virtual tour was insufficient. This is corroborated by her suggested improvement:

> '*A day at the school to meet the teachers and get a feel for it.'*

Key Staff Quotes: Covid-19 - virtual practices

HLTA

Virtual tours of schools have been available online. Parents and pupils can then share their experiences/ questions / concerns with familiar staff in the Primary setting.

During covid-19 pupils have been able to meet teachers from their secondary school by video link. This has been a very reassuring and positive personalised experience for the pupils.

DRPH

During covid, some schools have sent videos, introducing teachers, lessons, virtual tours etc and this was fantastic for our pupils.

Having access to a laptop and internet provided (if they needed it) really supported our families. (DRPH)

Figure 34: Key Staff Quotes – Covid-19 virtual practices

This is incongruent with positive staff opinions, demonstrating the value of mesosystemic links to ensure consideration of parental (and pupil) views during transitions. Recent research recounted positive pupil and parent views of virtual tours and video peer / teacher meetings (Gray et al, 2021). In this case, virtual activities were a necessary replacement that assisted pupil familiarity with new settings, important to positive experiences (s.5.2.3.3: CONTEXT).

The amount and nature of information to be shared meant remote practices could constitute a barrier (Figure 35). This aligns with findings showing that ICT was infrequently used to share pupil information due to confidentiality concerns (Sutherland et al, 2010). These difficulties have persisted over time; teachers reported difficulties sharing information online during the pandemic (Gray et al, 2021) (also impacting data collection for this study). However, parental ratings regarding information sharing were positive.

Key Staff Quotes: Covid-19 barriers to information sharing

SENCO-Asst

In the past the meetings were face-to-face and…SEND information was handed over then, now we have virtual meetings and the files are so large, we have to arrange for someone to either collect it or drop it off.

DRPH

SEND files can be quite large and not easy to post, prior to Covid-19 they would have been collected at one of the face-to-face meetings. This has meant that some schools have not been able to collect the files due to time constraints, risk assessments in place etc

Figure 35: Key staff quotes - Covid-19 barriers to information sharing

Some Covid-19 measures and adaptations evidently served to alleviate time pressures and improve multi-agency working practices. Technology mediated remote interactions, facilitating stakeholder links and continued learning, and stimulating development of pupils and teachers ICT skills and knowledge (Gray et al, 2021). Experiences of children transitioning during the same period but with limited technological access may have differed (e.g. Mulat, Lehtomäki and Savolainen, 2019). Earlier recommendations for research pertaining to technology and transitions - including wellbeing, interactions, academic and environmental aspects (Evans, Boriello and Field, 2018) remain applicable, in addition to wider applications e.g., supporting home learning for pupils struggling to return to school. In this case, technology appears to have ameliorated potential negative impacts of Covid-19 measures, positively affecting pupils transition experiences.

5.2.5. Summary

Primary-to-secondary school transition is a time of major change:

> *[Pupils] are always apprehensive, as it is the biggest transition they will go through, to date.*
>
> *(SENCO-Asst)*

This study examined deaf pupils' experiences of transfer from a DRP context into secondary school. The first research question asked:

How do deaf children attending a deaf resource provision experience the primary to secondary school transition?

The data suggests that overall, pupils reported positive experiences across social, environmental and academic domains, corroborated by parental feedback (s.5.1). Responses highlighted few difficulties, barriers or suggested improvements, and pupils maintained positive wellbeing. The second research question asked:

What factors influence the experience of transition for deaf children?

Multiple, interconnected PPCT factors affected these experiences. All pupils had an EHCP for a primary need of deafness and attended a high-quality DRP microsystem which implemented specific transition policies and programmes. These included interventions to improve pupils' communicative skills (facilitating proximal processes, and positive relationships), increase transition skills and knowledge, and support home-school mesosystems (and consequently parental involvement), all identified in literature as important to positive transitions.

Studies espouse the need for individualised transition support to ensure successful SEND transitions (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Jindal-Snape et al 2020). Pupils received tailored support, scaffolded by the (macrosystemic) EHCP process, specialist input and clear communication pathways. This, alongside setting visits, aided informed school selection to meet individual needs, facilitating post-transfer adjustment.

DRP processes cohered with research recommendations for adaptable, timely and coordinated transition practices, incorporating frequent communication, information exchange and familiarisation with new settings (Barnes-Holmes et al, 2013; Jindal-Snape and Cantali, 2019). This, alongside transition discourses and activities (proximal processes), may have supported pupils to develop positive expectations and attitudes, linked to subsequently positive experiences (Gilbert et al, 2021). DRP practices therefore encompassed many strategies recommended in transition research

as facilitative of positive experiences, which arguably contributed to positive experiences for focus pupils. In turn, reportedly positive experiences give credence to research recommendations, furthering evidence-based practices. Examination of pupil experiences and identification of contributing factors can support development of policies facilitative of positive, successful transitions.

Regardless of how detailed transition plans or processes are, inherent uncertainty and environmental discontinuities may still cause difficulty (Rugg and Donne, 2011). The Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected transition processes, with variable influences upon pupil experiences. With the caveat that pupils may not have had the 'whole' experience (s.5.2.4.1: TIME), necessary adaptations to transition processes do not appear to have negatively influenced their experiences, and may have reduced post-transfer demands. Transition-related interactions and learning moved from school to home microsystems, heavily mediated by technology. Continuation of proximal processes via online platforms mitigated school access restrictions, suggesting effects of pre-transfer learning contexts upon pupil learning and preparation were less significant than the proximal processes involved. Transition processes (e.g., preparatory activities, school entry), were adapted, demonstrating impacts of differential transition timings on experiences, and research findings.

Time – specifically transition timing during the pandemic – was therefore a significant influence upon these pupil's experiences, as were context factors. Deaf pupils attending other resource provisions may not receive equivalent pre-transfer support or specialist input. Person characteristics i.e., deafness, entitling pupils to EHCPs and DRP attendance, therefore also influenced experiences. Time, context and person factors mediated interpersonal and task-based proximal processes, with relationships and preparatory activities further shaping experiences.

The specificity of the individual and social circumstances pertaining to these transitions restricts generalisability. Reportedly positive experiences are linked to these pupils, their specific needs and

contexts, and the sociohistorical period – and may not reflect experiences of other deaf pupils. This affirms the need to consider the individual child and their context, in line with bioecological theory.

However, many findings were consistent with transition literature and bioecological theory, suggesting broader applicability. These findings form the basis for key principles intended to facilitate positive transfer experiences for deaf pupils. These principles are presented in Chapter 6, with concluding comments.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to explore the primary-to-secondary school transition experiences of deaf pupils attending a DRP and identify factors that influenced those experiences. Chapter 2 outlined Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory and PPCT model with illustrative examples from deaf research. Chapter 3 comprised a literature review of primary-to-secondary school transitions, with discussion of key deaf studies, to provide the research rationale. Chapter 4 discussed methodological considerations, including research design, data collection and analysis. The preceding chapter presented findings, structured according to the research questions and PPCT model, showing that pupils reported generally positive experiences of the short-term transfer, moderated by multidimensional interacting factors. This chapter presents conclusions, including implications for practice and critical reflections upon the research.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the key, intertwined influences upon focus pupils' transition experiences, based on key themes discussed in Chapter 5. Themes were not exhaustive; hence, other factors may have had some influence but were not highlighted within this paper. Interconnections are illustrated, with each factor moderated by another; thus, examination of any single factor would not provide a full account of pupil experiences, nor the forces shaping those experiences.

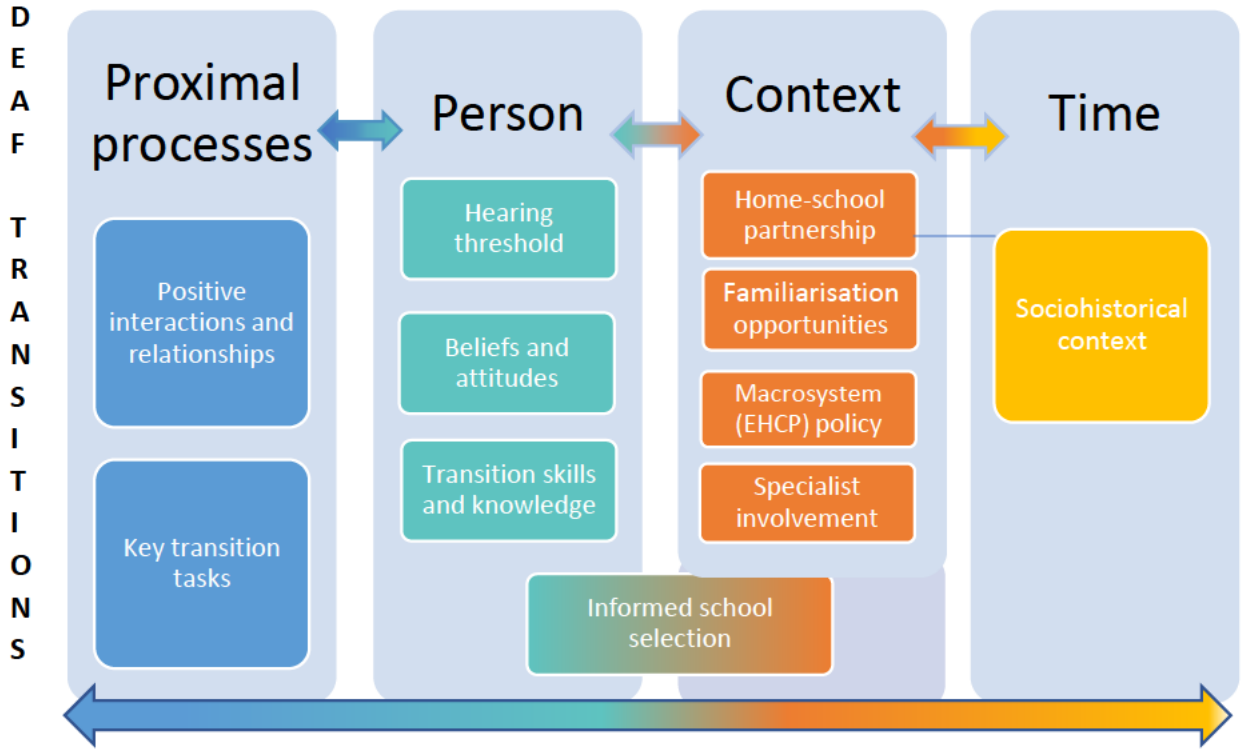


Figure 36: PPCT model of deaf primary-to-secondary transitions

Two key themes were identified in relation to proximal processes. The first – p*upil relationships with peers and teachers* – highlighted positive pre- and post-transfer views held by pupils in relation to peers and teachers in both primary and secondary school. In line with literature suggesting beneficial effects of strong pupil-peer and pupil-teacher relationships during transitions (e.g. Wolters et al, 2012; Jindal-Snape et al, 2020), positive pre-transfer relationships likely influenced post-transfer relationships through the formation of positive internalised working models, and consequently, transition experiences. The second theme discussed *key tasks within the transition process*, reflecting on how information sharing and preparatory activities influenced subsequent experiences. Pupils benefited from access to pre-transition programmes to develop key skills, aligning with recommendations from both general transition research (e.g. Mumford and Birchwood, 2020) and deaf transition research (Taylor-Baptie, 2021) for individualised preparatory support. These interventions supported the development of personal resources such as communication and self-

advocacy skills, demonstrating the interplay between proximal processes and (the development of) person characteristics.

The key theme relating to person characteristics concerned *attitudes towards transition.* Transition studies have found good evidence that pre-transfer expectations influence post-transfer experiences and adjustment (Waters, Lester and Cross, 2014; Gilbert et al, 2021), so it is possible that pupils' positive expectations for transition underpinned their positive experiences. The formation of pre-transfer expectations may occur during interactions with peers, siblings, parents and teachers, thus strengthening recommendations that pupils' be supported to develop positive attitudes about transition (Ashton, 2008). Findings also illustrated synergisms between proximal processes, person characteristics and transition experiences.

Interplay between aspects of person and context is apparent within the theme *school selection: choosing the right context for the person.* Responses indicated that informed parental choice, taking into account pupils' individual needs, was essential to the school selection process. Responses indicate that this process incorporated consideration of both mainstream and specialist settings, demonstrating how decisions about suitable learning contexts are shaped by individual needs. Potential impacts of DRP microsystemic factors (such as activities to promote deaf identity and self-esteem) on subsequent experiences were also discussed.

Four themes were identified in relation to context, relating to the differing systems around the child. Data pertaining to *home-school partnerships* was discussed in relation to the mesosystem, and confirmed earlier research findings regarding the positive effects of support staff upon transition experiences (Rugg and Donne, 2011; O'Toole, 2016; Taylor-Baptie, 2021). Various communication channels were utilised to share concerns and information, thus promoting parental involvement which has been shown to be linked to positive transition outcomes (Jindal-Snape et al, 2020).

Exosystemic aspects were discussed in relation to i*nterschool, agency and community links*, and the *benefits of pre-transfer visits.* Liaison between schools and agencies is particularly beneficial for

pupils with SEND (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Foley, Foley and Curtin, 2016), including deaf pupils (Tropea, 2010) with evidence of both interschool and multi-agency links present in the dataset. Responses indicated benefits of visits for both pupils, in helping to familiarise them with new settings, and for parents, in informing them about potential new settings.

The final theme within context relates to *macrosystemic transition policies.* All of the pupils had needs entitling them to an EHCP, meaning that national guidance such as the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) influenced their transition experiences. For example, obtaining pupil and parent views, information sharing and multi-agency meetings are required as part of EHCP planning and review processes.

The final set of themes are grouped under Time and primarily relate to effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Responses indicated impacts upon *pupil experiences* (for example, restricted access to school spaces) and upon *pupil preparedness* (primarily in relation to not meeting peers beforehand). Adaptations to transition processes were considered, along with the potential impacts of these adaptations. Staff reported *process benefits* such as virtual meetings which facilitated multi-agency involvement. The final theme reflected on the role of *technology,* including consideration of how remote working practices influenced proximal processes.

As noted in chapter 5 (s.5.2.5) findings were generally commensurate with existing literature and bioecological theory, providing the basis for a set of principles intended to inform deaf transitions and facilitate positive experiences, presented below.

6.1. Implications: Principles

Alongside expanding the existing evidence base, and highlighting areas for future research, a key principle of bioecological theory is the application of research to social policies and programmes pertinent to enhancing development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

These findings were not intended to be generalisable. The small group of focus pupils had EHCPs, enabling them to attend a high-quality deaf provision, and access specialist support. Transition practices were adapted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, pupils may have received enhanced transition support to offset school closures, compared to previous years. Helpful practices are therefore based on what worked well for those pupils in that setting at that time. Other deaf pupils, without EHCPs or in different contexts may not have similarly positive transition experiences.

Nevertheless, consistency across participant accounts, corroborative transition literature and alignment with the tenets of bioecological theory means it is possible to identify several key principles that may be transferable to other deaf pupils undertaking this transition, presented below. These principles are intended to inform deaf transition practices, to meet the unique needs of deaf pupils.

i. **Transition planning and support must be holistic and individualised.**

Pupil experiences are dependent on their individual needs, strengths and contexts. Heterogeneity amongst deaf cohorts necessitates tailored approaches that consider individual circumstances and systems around the child. Transition processes must be clear and structured, yet adaptable to changing circumstances. In the absence of an EHCP, it may be helpful for schools to implement equivalent processes to ensure that all deaf pupils are able to benefit from the requirements therein (e.g., multi-agency meetings, information-sharing requirements).

ii. **Positive pupil relationships are important:**

Pupil relationships with peers and teachers influence well-being and post-transfer adjustment, providing support during transitions. Pupils should therefore be supported to form positive relationships with peers and teachers before and after transition. Promotion of deaf awareness within settings can support inclusion and relationship formation. Teachers must also be skilled in facilitating deaf interactions with, and between, pupils.

iii. **Pupils should be supported to develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards transition:**

There is strong evidence that positive pre-transfer beliefs are associated with positive experiences. Pupils may be supported to form positive beliefs through discussions with significant others; hence, positive discourse and frequent opportunities to share concerns or ask questions are crucial. Opportunities to visit new settings and meet peers are also beneficial.

iv. **Pupils should be taught transition-related skills:**

Deaf pupils may generally benefit from language, communication and social skills support. This will be particularly important around transitions, to help prepare pupils to form new relationships and adjust to new environments. Self-advocacy skill teaching is also beneficial for deaf pupils and will help empower them to express their wishes about support.

v. **Information sharing is vital to transitions**:

Good quality and accurate information about the child, their strengths and recommended provision will facilitate school selection and post-transfer adjustment. Information should include parental and child views, and specialist input where necessary. Clear communication pathways – including face-to-face and online methods – through which to share information are essential.

vi. **Home-school partnership should be encouraged**:

Schools should implement policies designed to facilitate home-school partnerships and encourage open communication between home and school microsystems. This will support parental involvement and identification of home-based support and resources and ensure that planning processes meet individual and family needs.

6.2. Implications for EPs

EPs work within and across the systems surrounding the child; thus, they are well-placed to support the primary-to-secondary school transitions of deaf pupils by sharing information about, and engaging in, evidence-based practices.

As previously noted, the typical activities of EPs include consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Farrell et al, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002). Consequently, EPs may be involved at various stages of school transition. Key activities might include individual, group and systemic work, for example:

- Obtaining child views and (psychological) assessment data to inform transition planning, and contribute to EHCPs
- Using consultation skills to obtain parent and teacher views, to assist in promoting positive transition discourses and individually tailored recommendations
- Sharing psychological reports and pertinent information relating to child needs, strengths and recommended provision to inform setting selection and support / curricular continuity
- Engaging in research to develop individual or small group interventions to improve transition-related skills and knowledge, including social, communication and self-advocacy skills; delivery of individual or small group interventions
- Supporting the development of pupil-peer relationships through individual, small group or whole-class evidence-based strategies
- Supporting the development of pupil-teacher relationships, for example, by equipping teachers with key interactional skills
- Liaising with staff to ensure suitability of learning environments e.g. language-rich, opportunities for proximal processes
- Developing and delivering staff training, for example, deaf awareness and instructional strategies to improve staff skills and knowledge

- Liaising with families and professionals including attendance at multi-agency meetings; interschool liaison to assist post-transfer adjustment
- Utilising consultation skills and knowledge of school / local contexts to facilitate stakeholder relationships, develop system linkages and promote parental involvement
- Co-ordinate transition (and EHCP) processes
- Conducting research and disseminating findings to increase awareness of (deaf pupils') transition-related needs
- Systemic work around processes and policies, for example, to promote home-school partnership
- Liaising with other professionals and LA representatives to develop local-level transition guidance (or adapt existing guidance)
- Implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, strategies and interventions to inform best practice.

6.3. Implications for theory

This study has demonstrated applicability of the bioecological theory of human development, and corresponding PPCT framework, to deaf education research. Consistent with the model, findings show that pupils transition experiences were influenced by multi-dimensional, interconnected factors. For example, proximal processes shape pre-transfer beliefs and expectations, affecting future interactions and engagement, thus impacting peer relationships and post-transfer adjustment. Person characteristics (deafness) determine school setting, leading to context-specific policies and interventions, with differential effects upon pupil development, and home-school relationships. Time was a key factor, with Covid-19 measures affecting data collection activities, transition processes and pupil experiences. Overall, findings aligned with key Propositions of the model (Figure 37).

Before devising conceptual models, it is first necessary to identify relevant phenomena (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). This study has highlighted some of the phenomena, and interconnections between them, that underpin transition experiences – providing a useful precursor to further empirical research. It also provided some evidence relating to face-to-face versus virtual proximal processes, thus contributing to one dimension of the theory.

Overall, bioecological theory proved a useful framework for exploratory investigation of deaf transitions, and themes cohered with the PCCT framework. The approach aligns with recommendations for ecological approaches that account for the heterogeneity – and contextually-situated experiences – of deaf learners.

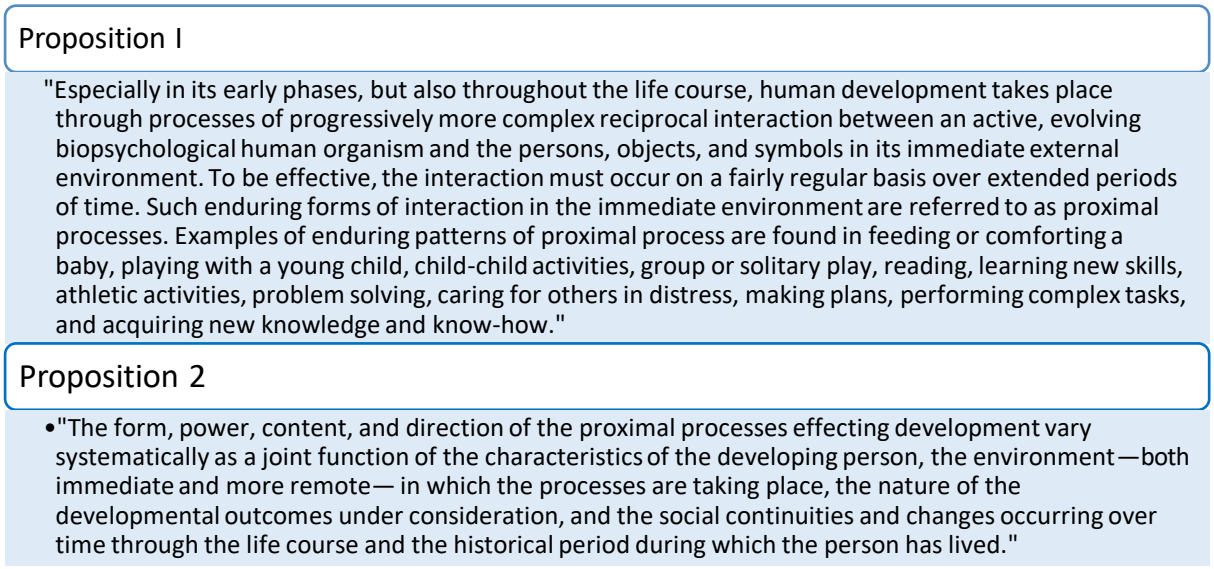


Figure 37: Bioecological model key propositions

6.4. Critical reflections

This study was conducted in a highly atypical context. The change to the original setting shortened data collection timeframes, and meant the study had to be conducted outside of the placement LA in an unfamiliar context with parties unknown to me in my capacity as the researcher. This lack of background professional contextual knowledge – which would have been available to draw upon had

the study been implemented within the placement LA – limited my capacity to develop an informed understanding of the EP contribution to deaf pupils' transitions. Whilst all settings reported the involvement of EPs, this appeared to be as part of general EHCP processes, with general transition support provided by professionals who regularly worked with those pupils (e.g. DRPH, Speech and Language).

The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated data collection constraints. Short-term data collection restricted analysis of longer-term experiences and outcomes that would inform judgements of transition success. Field data was restricted as lesson and meeting observations were prevented. Observational data would have been apposite for the analysis of specific proximal processes occurring within the transition process. Confidentiality concerns prevented the sharing of pupil data over online platforms, preventing analysis of EHCP and transition documents. Consequently, the content and quality of planning, and other pupil documents could not be assessed. This would have strengthened the research, for example, through facilitating analysis of espoused and enacted transition practices.

Staff data, originally intended to be collected during Year 6, was not received until after pupil interviews had taken place. This information would have been helpful beforehand as specific prompts about pre-transfer activities and processes may have assisted pupil recall, thus strengthening the research by enabling greater exploration of pupil perceptions of the helpfulness of different transition-related activities.

Attainment data was also obstructed, meaning changes could not examined. On balance, it was felt that this data would not necessarily illuminate pupils' experiences, but rather reflected outcomes (mediated by the pandemic circumstances) which were not necessarily the focus of this paper. Inclusion of the wellbeing measure provided an alternative indicator of outcomes, and valuable data relating to pupil wellbeing over transfers occurring during the pandemic.

Due to Covid-19 measures and resultant blurring of home-school contexts, differences between home-based and school-based activities were underexplored. A more systematic investigation of activities within the separate home and school microsystems would have been beneficial for illuminating similar or distinct processes within those microsystems.

Upon reflection, pupil interviews may have benefited from a reduced interview schedule to account for time restrictions. Ideally, longer or multiple face-to-face interviews would have better supported rapport, and exploration of points raised therein. The omission of pupil views about their involvement in aspects of the transition process, such as planning meetings, is a disappointing oversight.

Nevertheless, this paper does provide a detailed account of deaf pupils lived experiences of transition – an under researched area. The limited evidence base supports the use of an exploratory research question and case study design frame. The research is strengthened by the inclusion of pre- and post-transfer data, a wellbeing measure, and a multi-perspective approach that also reported parent and staff views – enabling data triangulation. It provides a unique account of the transitions of pupils moving from a specialist DRP in the UK; hence, it includes reflections about processes within that primary school context, and processes linked to national legislation. It has therefore added to the transition evidence bases pertaining to pre-transfer processes and post-SENDCOP transitions. The use of case study, and rich description, supports research transferability. However, the fact that all pupils had an EHCP means the experiences of deaf pupils who are not eligible for an EHCP are not represented within this research. Hence, the aim of expanding the evidence base relating to primary to secondary school transitions of deaf pupils is only partly achieved, in relation to deaf pupils who do have EHCPs. Similar limitations apply with regards to the microsystemic school context, as all pupils attended a DRP. Consequently, the experiences of pupils attending mainstream or specialist settings are also not represented.

It describes transitions occurring during the extraordinary sociohistorical context of the Covid-19 pandemic. By virtue of the research timing, it illuminated the role of technology during transitions, for example, virtual interactions, online learning and remote working practices. Inclusion of aspects pupils were looking forward to, and subsequent focus on facilitative influences upon pupils self-reported positive experiences, meet calls for more positive transition discourses and research. At the time of writing, it is the only paper that has applied the PCCT model to examine the transitions of deaf learners. In doing so, it has helped to identify several practice principles that might contribute to positive transition experiences for other deaf pupils.

6.5. Future research

Future research might consider exploration of the post-transfer secondary contexts, including processes, contextual (dis)continuities, and views of secondary professionals. Ideally, this should involve longitudinal research using ecological approaches to explore pre-and post-transfer experiences and processes, and incorporate pupil views about their involvement in transition planning and decision making. It may also be helpful to explore the specific roles and activities of different professionals, including EPs, within the transition process to further illuminate aspects of stakeholder relationships.

Investigation of deaf provision across settings, or LAs would be useful to highlight associations between level of provision / specialist input and transition experiences. Exploration of the differential experiences of pupils attending mainstream, other DRP or specialist settings would also be useful.

Greater exploration of processes occurring in home and school microsystems would illuminate the differing nature of transition-related proximal processes, and could assist formulation of more specific guidance for parents and carers, and schools supporting deaf learners.

Finally, future research might explore the role of technology in transitions more generally, for example, use of virtual meetings or tours in place of face-to-face activities, and remote information-sharing processes.

6.6. Conclusion

This research involved a case study of deaf pupils transitioning from a DRP into secondary school. It utilised the bioecological model of human development, and the corresponding PPCT framework, to explore pupil transitions, and identify factors influencing those experiences. It provides a unique contribution to the evidence base by illuminating an under-researched area – deaf transitions involving specialist contexts, utilising multi-perspective data. It describes transitions occurring during the unique context of the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of technology during transitions and upon proximal processes, in addition to considering effects of relevant policy. It illuminated the importance of various factors relating to proximal processes, personal characteristics, context and time – and interconnections between them – to transition experiences, reflected in a set of general principles to inform future transition practices for deaf pupils.

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Appendices – Appendix 1: Key Study Table

Author; Title; Type of paper	Research aim / purpose	Participants / Context	Research design / framework	Data collection and analysis	Key findings / themes	Limitations
Tropea (2010) 'Meeting the challenge of deaf and hard of hearing students transitioning to secondary school: parent and student perspectives.' Masters thesis – unpublished	To explore parent and student views regarding benefits and barriers of mainstream high school placements.	• 6 oral deaf / HoH students in grades 9 and 10 (13-14 years) • 3 parents USA: mainstream secondary with hearing resource classroom	Qualitative No theoretical framework explicitly stated	Post-transition student focus group Post -transition parent focus group Constant Comparative method	Need for professional collaboration Student involvement in transition planning Concerns: peer interactions; continuity and levels of support; new school and curriculum Role of ToD Parental (and self)-advocacy	Potential for bias in focus groups. No pre-transition data. No information regarding hearing thresholds. More emphasis on aspects of inclusion than transition.
Rugg, & Donne (2011), 'Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Transitioning Students from a Listening and Spoken Language School to the General Education Setting.' Peer-reviewed journal article	To examine perceptions of the transition process and effectiveness of school programme in preparing students for secondary school.	• 12 parents • 7 teachers (6 ToDs, one language and arts) USA: mainstream secondary	Mixed methods; phenomenological case study	Demographic information (enrolment date, test scores, GPA) Parent interviews Teacher survey Qualitative analysis	**Transition Process**: Initiation & Length of Time for Process; Transition Meeting; Readiness characteristics **Effective practices**: Supportive Staff, Student Presentation Program, Partial Mainstreaming, Parent Workshop **Improvements**: Continue Parent Transition Workshop, Become Active in the Community, Involving Receiving District, More Frequent Discussions of Topic.	Limited generalisability and non-representative sample due to criterion sampling and all female group. Potential bias due to pre-existing relationship between researcher and some participants.

Wolters et al (2012), 'Impact of peer and teacher relations on deaf early adolescents' well-being: Comparisons before and after a major school transition.' Peer reviewed journal article	Study 1: to identify predictors of wellbeing in grades 6 and 7, including peer and teacher relationships, and moderating effects of hearing status, gender and setting.	• 759 Grade 6 (672 hearing, 87 DHH) students • 840 Grade 7 (736 hearing, 104 DHH) students Netherlands: mainstream and specialist settings	Quantitative; cross-sectional No theoretical framework explicitly stated	Sociometric peer nominations. Adapted Dutch School Questionnaire (Smiths and Vorst, 1990) to measure: Well-being (feeling acknowledged in class; happiness in school) and teacher relationship (single G6, all G7 teachers) Background information from parents / teachers. Correlational and regression analyses.	Deaf students in both grades had lower wellbeing than hearing peers. Student-teacher relationship was the strongest predictor of deaf wellbeing pre-transition; Post transition, peer relationship was stronger predictor for deaf MS students. Acceptance, peer relationships and popularity predicted deaf MS wellbeing pre-transition; acceptance and popularity predicted post-transition wellbeing. Pre-transition, teacher relationship predicted deaf special wellbeing, acceptance and relationship predicted post-transition wellbeing.	Neither study considered individual differences (e.g. oral communication skills, degree of hearing loss). Quantitative data does not account for broader student experience and may limit validity of findings.
	Study 2: to compare predictors of wellbeing (as in Study 1) before and after school transition.	Subset of 39 hearing and 59 deaf adolescents from Study 1	Quantitative: longitudinal	Instruments as above. Repeated measures ANOVA	Wellbeing remained stable for hearing students. It increased for deaf MS boys, decreased for deaf MS girls, opposite for specialist. Acceptance & popularity decreased for all; deaf MS students less accepted than peers (acceptance remained stables for deaf boys, decreased for deaf girls). Deaf MS students were less popular than hearing MS and deaf special. Teacher relationship improved for all. Educational setting and gender moderate relationships between acceptance, popularity, teacher relationship and wellbeing.	Small sample in Study 2 could contribute to Type 2 error. Only looked at moves between same settings e.g. mainstream to mainstream, not mainstream to specialist).

Mulat, Lehtomäki, and Savolainen (2019), 'Academic achievement and self-concept of deaf and hard-of-hearing and hearing students transitioning from the first to second cycle of primary school in Ethiopia.' Peer reviewed journal article	To examine effects of transition from specialist to mainstream upon academic and social self-concept and achievement; and identify ways to facilitate student inclusion.	Time 1: 103 students Time 2: 72 students • 29 DHH special classes within MS setting (average 15.4 years); • 31 DHH specialist students (av. 13.1 years) • 43 hearing MS students (av. 12.1. Ethiopia: specialist to mainstream settings.	Quantitative No theoretical framework explicitly stated.	Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ; academic, physical and self-concept; self-esteem. Teacher-assessed grades SPSS Analysis (ANOVA ANCOVA)	Academic achievement significantly decreased for deaf and hearing students who changed settings but not deaf who continued in same setting. Academic self-concept significantly decreased for deaf students who changed settings but not those who continued on. Peer relations self-concept improved for all groups. Post-transition social integration is positive, but drop in academic self-concept indicates issues with academic inclusion.	Potential lack of uniformity in teacher grades. Purposive sample. Did not consider individual differences (e.g. communicative competence). SDQ-1 translation may have affected understanding; sample outside of test age range. More emphasis on inclusion than transition. Significantly different educational context and system.
Taylor-Baptie (2021), 'The Experiences of Secondary School Transition for Deaf Children in Mainstream Education: A Participatory Research Approach.' Doctoral thesis – unpublished	To explore deaf students' experiences of transition and perceptions of support mechanisms, and identify factors affecting wellbeing.	• 4 KS3 students with HI: 2 Year 8, 2 Year 7 (transitioned from mainstream primary to secondary) UK: mainstream settings.	Qualitative Participatory Research Design Attachment Theory; Self-Determination Theory Critical Realism; IPA	Semi-structured interviews Ideal School activity IPA; idiographic and cross-case analysis	**Across-group themes:** **Attachment**: Friendship; Belonging **Challenges**: Difference between primary and secondary school; Communicating with others; New environment **Support**: Consistency and continuity; Familiarity; Processes; Others **New beginnings:** Feelings and expectations; New opportunities **Equal Opportunities:** 'I'm just like everyone else'; Inclusion	Purposive sample. Remote data collection; parental presence during interviews. Retrospective accounts. Discusses how factors may have impacted wellbeing without a defined wellbeing measure.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for bioecological research (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; 2006)

- Specific PPCT components to be investigated should be those that are theoretically relevant to the research question and developmental outcomes (p.808).
- Research designs will benefit from the inclusion of two, complementary developmental outcomes e.g. competence versus dysfunction (p.825).
- The power of a design is enhanced by including more than one proximal process (p.808).
- Interactions under examination should be theoretically based, with direction and form specified in advance (1998: p.1001).
- Research designs exploring [relationship-focused] proximal processes involving others are enhanced by the inclusion of measures of both individual's attentional focus upon the other person's aspects of behaviour, that have been theoretically or empirically identified as relevant to the development outcome under consideration (BB and Morris, 2006, p.813-4).
    - Direct observation is preferential; however, information can also be gathered using interviews or – for younger children – via third-party reports (in footnote, p.814)
- Research designs should also aim to explore interactions with objects and symbols [by differentiating measures of process from measures of environmental structure (p.815).
- Research designs should assess the stability versus instability of Process, Person and Context characteristics (p.821).
- Research designs exploring the impact of Time might compare, for example, groups who have and have not experienced certain historical events; different ages at which particular transitions take place; or different familial experiences of the same event (p821-2).
- Large samples are not necessary providing formulations and research designs are precise (p.804)

Appendix 3 - Ethical Approval

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

1. The project is to be conducted by:
   - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
   - postgraduate research (PGR) students enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the Research Ethics Team.

☑☐ **Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:**

- **The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx)**
- **The University's Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)**

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW	*OFFICE USE ONLY:* Application No: Date Received:

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

An exploration of deaf students' experience of primary to secondary school transition

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other ☐ (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	Mrs Sue Morris
Highest qualification & position held:	MEd (Ed Psych)
School/Department	Education / DISN
Telephone:	
Email address:	

Name: Title / first name / family name	Dr James Birchwood
Highest qualification & position held:	PhD
School/Department	Education / DISN
Telephone:	
Email address:	

b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of student:	Mary-Lynn Yates	Student No:	
Course of study:	Doctorate in Applied Educational and	Email address:	
Principal	Sue Morris		

4. ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT Date: June 2019 / MARCH 2020

ESTIMATED END OF PROJECT Date: September 2020 / NOVEMBER 2020

5. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

Funding Body	*Approved/Pending /To be submitted*
None	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

Study involves the collection of pre-transition data during the Summer Term of 2019.

6. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to explore the perceptions and experience of primary to secondary school transition, from the perspective of students who have severe to profound hearing impairment (HI). At the time of application, a comprehensive literature review identified multiple current and historical studies examining the primary to secondary school transition, but none that explicitly consider the perspective of children with severe to profound HI.

Background Rationale

The Scottish Government recently commissioned a review of the evidence base relating to primary to secondary school transition. It found strong evidence for the longstanding claim of an academic attainment dip following the transfer to secondary school (Jindal-Snape et al 2019). In addition, there was evidence of significant decline in student motivation, school engagement and attendance.

National statistics indicate an attainment gap between children who have a HI and their peers – students with HI are less likely to achieve grade 4 or above in maths and English at GCSE, and less likely to achieve expected standards at KS1 and KS2. (National Deaf Children's Society, 2018). As an already-vulnerable group, students with HI may be at even greater risk of poor educational outcomes following the transfer to secondary school.

The Jindal-Snape et al (2019) review adds to the findings of an earlier review by Evans, Borriello and Field (2018) which found that academic achievement, emotional health and social integration constituted key indicators of successful transition. The Jindal-Snape et al (2019) review found evidence of the negative impact of school transition upon student wellbeing, with many students experiencing higher levels of depression and anxiety post-transfer.

HI has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of mental health conditions such as depression and conduct disorders (Theunissen et al, 2014). The link between transition and wellbeing is thus important when considering students with HI who are generally at greater risk of experiencing social, emotional or mental health difficulties. There is some evidence that, overall, wellbeing for hearing students remains stable during the transition to secondary school, but not for deaf students (Wolters et al, 2012). The Wolters et al study was the only study identified that specifically explored transition in relation to students with a HI. It investigated the impact of peer and teacher relationships upon the wellbeing of deaf students, before and after the secondary transition. It was drawn from a larger national student study, and it did not provide information on the level of hearing loss or oral communication skills, or their specific impact during the transition process.

The Wolters et al (2012) study found that peer and teacher relationships had a moderating effect on wellbeing across the school transition. Students with HI are more likely to experience difficulties with communication, and consequently with peer interactions (Xie, Potmesil and Peters, 2014). Supportive peer relationships were identified as a protective factor for transition in the Jindal-Snape et al (2019) transition review, and evidence for the relationship between positive social networks and wellbeing across the primary to secondary school transition was also found by Evans, Borriello and Field (2018). The development of relationships with peers and teachers may, however, risk being hindered by communication difficulties linked to HI. This could lead to a differential, potentially more negative, experience of transition for students who have communication difficulties stemming from HI.

The need for plans to be appropriately tailored for students with additional needs was also highlighted in the Jindal-Snape et al study (2019), as was the need for further transition-related research, particularly that involving students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Evans, Borriello and Field (2018) identified that children with SEND were more at risk of poor transition, noting specifically the impact of moving to an unfamiliar environment for students with sensory difficulties.

In a review of the transition evidence specifically relating to children with SEND, Hughes, Banks and Terras (2013) found that children with SEND reported more anxieties relating to practical aspects of transition, and recommended research to identify children who may be at particular risk of negative experiences and / or outcomes during and / or following school transition, to support the development of targeted interventions.

Existing studies into deaf transition tend to be focused on post-secondary outcomes such as preparedness for employment or further education. One study found that students with HI reported limited involvement in the development of their transition plans, and a sense of alienation due to an emphasis on general SEND needs, as opposed to their specific needs such as communication (O'Brien, 2015).

The importance of representing student views is emphasised in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015). Deaf education research is often limited to the perspectives of parents, staff or hearing peers, or involves participants who have mild to moderate hearing loss, who are able to communicate orally. My own planned research aims to illuminate the experience of transition from the perspectives of students with severe to profound HI.

Using a nested case study design, situated within a specialist setting (a resource base for primary-aged children with severe hearing impairment), the research will explore the (Year 6) children's expectations of school transition, their level and means of involvement in the planning process, and, post hoc, when they are settled in Year 7, their views on the transition itself. In doing so, it may identify risk and protective factors, and aspects of practice that could facilitate better-supported and more successful transition, with greater student involvement. Analysis of attendance and attainment data will help provide objective indexes of the potential impact of school transition.

A nested case study research design was selected as severe to profound HI is a low incidence disability, and to identify Year 6 children with severe HI as prospective participants within the local authority as a whole would present a number of practical and ethical challenges. By focusing on a single, specialise setting which is designed to address the educational needs of primary-aged children with severe HI, the task of identifying prospective participants in non-stigmatising ways is clearly greatly eased, as is access to their parents, and to school attendance and attainment records, once participant and carer consent has been concerned.

Moreover, in the current case, resource base staff are concerned on their pupils' behalf, about the risks primary-secondary transition will present to their pupils. The 'in principle' commitment of resource base staff will facilitate / mediate initial communication with parents / carers and, once consent is secured from parents / carers and children, will also support ease of the pre-transfer data collection.

A convenience sample will be drawn from the specific Year 6 cohort of students with severe to profound HI who attend this specialist resource base. Case studies are widely used in deaf education research as they provide an in-depth, holistic and contextual exploration of both universal trended and variability amongst students with HI (Enns, 2017).

This study will add to the existing evidence bases in relation to the education experiences of children with severe to profound HI, and the primary to secondary transition in relation to students with SEND.

Research Questions

1. How do children with a HI experience the primary to secondary transition?
2. What factors influence the experience of transition for children with a HI?
3. To what extent d perceptions prior to transfer correspond with perceptions following transition?

7. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

1. **Questionnaires**

Students and their parents will be asked to complete two questionnaires, one during the Summer Term of Year 6 and one during the Autumn Term of Year 7. The pre-transfer student questionnaire (**pages 18-22 of the Appendix**) will consist of 2 multiple choice questions, 13 rating statements and 10 brief incomplete statements relating to the child's perceptions and expectations of secondary school. The post-transfer student questionnaire (**pages 23-22 of the Appendix**) will consist of 2 multiple choice questions, 12 rating statements and 9 brief incomplete statements relating to their experiences of their new secondary school. Students will be asked to complete the questionnaires with the support of a familiar member of the school staff. Incomplete statements can be completed with either written or drawn answers.

The pre-transfer parent questionnaire (**pages 9-12 of the Appendix**) will consist of questions relating to demographic and information, and the child's hearing impairment, followed by 11 rating statements and 4 open-ended questions relating to parents' perceptions of their child's secondary school, and their experience of their child's transition process. The post-transfer parent questionnaire will consist of 7 rating statements and 4 open-ended questions relating to their views on their child's transition to secondary school.

Pre- and post-transfer responses to rating statements will be compared and descriptively analysed. The case study research design involves too small sample size for inferential statistical analyses to be conducted.

AMENDMENT: Where viable, staff working in the hearing impairment resource base will be invited to participate in a staff focus group in order to explore their perceptions and views around the transition into secondary school. This will be in addition to the student and parent questionnaires to be completed prior to the transfer to secondary school.

2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted using each student's preferred mode of communication (oral language, sign-supported English or British Sign Language) and drawing upon a Total Communication approach. This approach includes all forms of communication including sign, speech, gesture and visual prompts. A member of the school staff who is familiar to the child will be present to facilitate the interview process. An interpreter may be used if requested by the student or their parents.

Visual resources will be used to act as prompts and to aid accurate recording of information within the interview (See pages 30-34). The student will have the option of completing the resource sheets themselves as they respond to questions; alternatively, sheets will be completed by the researcher and written recorded responses will immediately be checked for accuracy with the interviewee. Where consent is given, interviews will also be video-recorded.

The researcher will take notes during the interview. The completed resource sheets and researcher notes will be cross-referenced with video footage during the data analysis stage. Interview responses will be thematically analysed [Braun and Clarke 2006].

3. Documents / data

Attainment and attendance data will be requested from each student's primary and secondary schools. Pre- and post-transfer attendance and attainment data will be compared for each child as an index of the impact of transition.

Subject to parental agreement, copies of each student participant's transition plans will be requested from the primary school during Summer Term. Minutes of any transition meetings or visit records will also be requested. These documents will be reviewed to provide information on key decision points, when they took place and who was involved.

Data from the questionnaires, interviews and documents will be presented within an individual student

case study. Overall themes across questionnaire and interview responses will be presented if there are two or more participants.

8. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

9. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

The study will involve a small sample of male and/or female participants who are currently attending Year 6 in a specialist hearing impairment resource base in the West Midlands, who will be transferring to a new secondary school at the end of Summer Term 2019.

Inclusion criteria:
Participants will have severe to profound hearing loss.
Participants will currently be attending enhanced resource base provision for students with hearing impairments within a specific West Midlands Local Authority.
Participants will cease attending the enhanced resource base provision at the end of Summer Term 2019, and transfer to mainstream or specialist secondary settings within the same local authority in September 2019.

Exclusion criteria:
Students with complex co-morbid conditions or life circumstances that may compromise their current capacity to participate in study.

10. RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

Convenience sampling will be used. The study involves students with severe to profound HI. I have an existing working relationship with staff within the HI Resource Base. Scoping discussions have taken place and school head teacher and staff within the resource base have expressed interest in, and support for the proposed research, expecting to harness the findings to strengthen transition support for future cohorts.

Information sheets, consent forms, and the inclusion / exclusion criteria will be provided to the school Headteacher and lead staff who work Resource Base for Hearing Impairment. This information will be provided and explained by the researcher and Local Authority Educational Psychologist who works with the Resource Base. The Lead Teacher in the Resource Base will then pass this information on to parents of potential participants. Consent forms will be collected from the school, or returned directly to the researcher. (Information for school / resource base staff is presented in the Appendix, (pp. 2-3), for parents, (pp. 6-7), and for pupils, (pp. 15-16).

11. CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why**.** If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

Consent for the study to proceed will be sought from the head teacher of the school and also confirmed with the lead of the resource base. Parent / student information sheets and consent forms [pp. 6.8] will be given to the primary school head teacher and lead teacher for the resource base to share with parents whose children meet the study criteria.

Parental consent forms will be returned to the school. Student consent forms will be collected by the lead teacher, and completed during school time, with help available from resource base staff, to ensure that students can confirm (or elect to withhold) their informed, freely-given consent. Where students have completed consent forms with parental support at home, staff will check that the student has indeed understood the information sheet and their right to participate, withhold and /or later withdraw their consent.

Consent will be sought from the secondary school once primary school, parental and student consent have been obtained.

Both parental and children's consent must be obtained, and will be reaffirmed during the Autumn Term prior to the post-transfer questionnaire and interview.

For staff participants, separate information sheet and consent form were provided.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? **Yes** ☐**No** ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

N/A

12. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

The information sheet will provide participants with a full description of the research purpose from the outset. Following completion of the post-transfer questionnaires, parents will be contacted through their preferred mode to thank them for their participation, and to remind them of the final date by which they can withdraw their own and / or their child's data

Student participants will be offered an invitation to have a further short, private meeting with me, where I will talk though a short report, written in an accessible way, which summarises the main research findings and suggested action steps.

This 'debrief' is optional, and intends to offer the children the opportunity to learn the research findings and also to comment on how far they judge the reported findings to be trustworthy, and the proposed developments to practice, relevant and helpful.

13. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw via the information sheets provided at the outset. Parents and students will be reminded of the right to withdraw when reaffirming their consent during the Autumn Term prior to completing post-transfer questionnaires, prior to interviews, and at the end of the study.

Students will also be informed of their right to withdraw immediately prior to the interview in the Autumn Term, and will be given a debriefing slip reminding them of the final date by which they can withdraw their data (See pages 2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8, which all note and / or explain the right to withdraw).

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

There will be no consequences for any participants if they choose to withdraw. If either the child, or the parent, indicates that they wish to withdraw consent, all data relevant to that child collected up to that point will be destroyed / securely disposed of should the parent and / or child so request.

14. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial ☐ ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

ii) Non-financial ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

N/A

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

b) Will all data be treated as confidential? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

At the point consent is obtained, student participants will be assigned a number. When parent and student questionnaires are completed, identifying data (i.e. name) will be removed and the anonymised data recorded in a table and stored in an electronic file labelled with the assigned student number. Attainment and attendance data will be anonymously recorded in the same student table.

Student interviews will be video-recorded, subject to the child's and parent's consent, and transcribed by the researcher. Students will complete worksheets confirming their responses [see Appendix: pages 30-34] which will be marked with their participant number. Notes taken by the researcher during the interview will be typed up, and worksheets will be scanned, with all such records then stored electronically with the questionnaire data.

All data will be anonymised for storage purposes and in all written reports or summaries.
AMENDMENT: Qualitative data may be obtained via a staff focus group. It will be audio-recorded and then transcribed into a anonymised plain text document for short-term storage.

NB - Where students' preferred mode of communication is solely BSL, I am currently undertaking Level 3 BSL which will assist transcription. Interpreter support may be required to facilitate transcription. In this event, I will record myself signing the relevant portions of the video requiring transcription, and provide this re-recorded footage to interpreters.

The training and supervision of the well-qualified interpreters upon whose skills this local authority draws, emphasise the needs to safeguard service user confidentiality. If (an) interpreter(s) is / are used for research purposes, the importance of safeguarding confidentiality for research participants will be reiterated, and interpreters asked to confirm that they agree to adhere to this expectation / right of the research participants.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

The parent and student information sheets explain that video recordings may be made, and detail how information will be kept confidential.

16. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

Hard copies of the consent forms and the first page of the parental pre-transfer questionnaire will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has access. These raw data will be destroyed on 1st November 2020. A digitised copy of the consent form and demographic information will be stored in an encrypted file on an encrypted hard drive which only the researcher will have access to (access to which may be granted to my research supervisor and / or examiners if necessary e.g. for data verification purposes).

Parent and student questionnaire data will be anonymised and recorded electronically, as will pertinent information abstracted from transition documents. Anonymised data will be stored in a file linked to each participant's assigned ID number in the University of Birmingham's Research Data Store (RDS) for the duration of the project; access to the RDS is restricted to project members. Backup copies of data are taken on a daily basis and data are stored in separate buildings from the live data. The RDS has a backup and retention policy on how it looks after the data including archiving of primary data here:
https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/teams/infrastructure/research/bear/research-data-service/RDS/BackupRetentionPolicy.aspx

Video data from student interviews will be transferred immediately after the interview from an encrypted recording device to an encrypted file on a password protected laptop to which only the researcher has access. Once transcribed, the videos will be transferred from the laptop to an encrypted hard drive which only the researcher will have access to (access to which may be granted if necessary e.g. for data verification purposes). The transcribed and anonymised file will be stored in the file linked to the participant's assigned number in in the University's RDS.
AMENDMENT: Audio data from the focus group will be transferred immediately from an encrypted recording device to an encrypted file on a password protected laptop to which only the researcher has access. Once transcribed, the recordings will be transferred from the laptop to an encrypted hard drive which only the researcher will have access to (access to which may be granted if necessary e.g. for data verification purposes). Recordings will be deleted by February 1st 2021.

Once the final project report is written, anonymised data previously held in the RDS will be deleted, following transfer of the data to the University BEAR data storage facility for a period of 10 years.

At the publication of a paper, a subset of the data that underpins the paper will be transferred to the UoB Research Data Archive (RDA). Once transferred, the data will be set to 'read-only', to prevent any inadvertent additions or deletions of the dataset. The RDA solution has been created to be highly resilient and is located at two data centers in two different sites, with a backup placed in a third site. Data are stored for 10 years. Should data access be requested within a 10-year period, the 10 year clock is then reset from the point of last access. After the 10 year period **ALL** data are deleted.

17. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

Enhanced DBS clearance confirmed in September 2017, as a condition of acceptance on Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate.

18. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

This study will present the views of students who have a severe to profound hearing impairment, who are underrepresented in education research. It will add to the existing evidence base in relation to primary to secondary school transition, and specifically the transition of students who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

It will empower students to express their views about transition, and encourage them to reflect on the process of transition in preparation for transitions in later life.

The findings may be harnessed to support service delivery and provision at the local level.

The study will highlight factors that facilitate and hinder the transition process from the student and parent perspective. It may also highlight areas where students would benefit from additional support to help them settle successfully into secondary school.

19. RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

Potential risks to the participants or researcher will be minimised by the interviews taking place during school hours and on school premises.

If / where an interpreter is necessary, a valid DBS will be required, and the interpreter will be bound by the same responsibilities to safeguard confidentiality as the researcher.

In the event of any safeguarding-related disclosures during the course of the research, local authority safeguarding procedures will be followed, and further supervision will be sought.

There is a possibility of disclosures relating to discriminatory treatment or poor practice. Should this occur, further supervision will be sought in order to determine appropriate next steps. This may involve additional consultation with school staff or parents where appropriate and necessary.

If the disclosure were made by the student, their consent to discuss this with parents and staff would be sought where appropriate (i.e. in cases which are not addressed though local authority safeguarding procedures, which preclude such negotiation prior to ‘formal’’ reporting.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

N/A

20. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please specify

21. EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

You may be asked to nominate an expert reviewer for certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Name
Contact details (including email address)
Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability

22. CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☒
- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life) ☐
- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐
- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐
- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐
- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐
- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐
- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	☐	☐
Participant information sheet	☐	☐
Consent form	☐	☐
Questionnaire	☐	☐
Interview Schedule	☐	☐

23. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project supervisor:	Sue Morris
Date:	06 May 2019

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Application for amendment ERN_19-0699A

SW **Samantha Waldron** [redacted]
27/05/2020 08:55

To: Sue Morris Cc: Mary-Lynn Yates; Mary-Lynn Yates

Dear Mrs Sue Morris

Re: "An exploration of deaf students' experience of primary to secondary school transition"
Application for amendment ERN_19-0699A

Thank you for the above application for amendment, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I can confirm that this amendment now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as now amended, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review. A revised amendment application form is now available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx . Please ensure this form is submitted for any further amendments.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

If you require a hard copy of this correspondence, please let me know.

Kind regards,

Ms Sam Waldron
Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group
C Block Dome (room 137)
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
[redacted] k to you)

Appendix 4 – Letter to Head of Resource Base and consent form

Dear_____

I am a trainee educational psychologist currently attending placement in _____. Part of my training involves the completion of a research project. I am interested in the experiences of children and young people who have a hearing impairment. I am writing to enquire whether it would be possible for students who are currently attending your school's resource base to participate in my project.

The focus of this research project is the perceptions and experiences of your students as they undergo the transition from primary into secondary school. The intended purpose is to improve understanding of this transition process as experienced by students who have a hearing impairment.

What is involved?

In addition to seeking consent from you, I will provide information and consent forms for the individual students and their parents.

If all parties give consent to participate, pre-transfer questionnaires will be provided for students to complete during the Summer Term of Year 6. Wherever possible, these questionnaires should be completed with support provided by an adult who is familiar to the child. The questionnaires will include a mixture of rating statements and brief questions relating to transition. It can be completed on paper or online. The questionnaires should take around 45 minutes to complete.

During the Summer Term, pre-transfer questionnaires will also be provided to parents, to explore their views on their child's move to secondary school.

In addition, it would be helpful to have access to any transition plans or documentation relating to those children for whom consent for participation is confirmed, and to attendance and attainment data, again, where consent for this has been given by parents. Similar data will also be requested from the secondary school (again, subject to parental agreement).

What will happen next?

In the Autumn Term of Year 7, post-transfer questionnaires will be provided to the relevant secondary school(s) for students to complete. I will complete brief interviews with the students to further explore their experiences of moving to a new school and views of the transition process. Parental post-transfer questionnaires will be sent to parents to explore their views of the transition process.

The data collected will be written up in a formal research project report. A summary version of this report can be provided upon request. All participants will be anonymous, and any information collected will be stored securely and confidentially

An edited version of the formal research project report may be submitted for publication. All reported data will be anonymised to ensure that participating individuals or schools are not identifiable.

Please note, any safeguarding concerns will be reported to the relevant safeguarding officers.

Participation is voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw their consent at any time before 30th September 2020. If consent is withdrawn before this date, any collected data will be destroyed upon request.

If you would like any further information, please email me at Mary-Lynn.Yates@...

If you consent to your students' involvement in this project, subject to their own and their parents or carers' agreement, please sign the attached form and return it to your Link Educational Psychologist. Alternatively, it can be scanned and emailed to the above email contact address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for giving this matter your attention.

Kind Regards,

Mary-Lynn Yates
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Supervising Tutor Contact Details:
Sue Morris
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TU
Email:
Phone Number

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

Yes	No	**Please tick the relevant box.**
		I have read the attached information sheet.
		I consent to students from my school participating in this research project.
		I understand that if I wish to withdraw my consent, I can do so at any time before 30th September 2020.

Hello,

My name is Mary. I am a trainee educational psychologist.

That means I am interested in how children learn and what they think.

I go to different schools and talk to teachers.

I talk to students about their school. I ask about different things they learn and what they like to do.

I am doing a project about children moving to secondary school.

After the long summer holidays, you will be at a new school.

I would like to find out what you think about Year 6 and how you feel about moving to a new school.

In Year 6, there will be a form with some short questions. An adult can help you complete it.

It will take around 45 minutes.

Once you have started Year 7, there will be a similar form to complete. It will take around 45 minutes.

I would also like to talk to you about your new school.

I will come to your new school to meet you.

When we meet, I will video-record our meeting to help me remember what you say.

I will **not** show anybody your video.

I might ask:
What do you like about school? What do you do at school?
What would you change at school?

It will take no longer than one hour.

It will be very helpful to know what you think are the best and worst things about moving school, and if there are any things that made moving to a new school easier or harder.

I will keep your information safe.

I will write a report about what different children think about secondary school.

Other people will read this but your name will be **secret**. No-one will be able to work out who the children are who have taken part in this research!

Would you like to take part?

NO >> No problem! You do not have to take part if you do not want to.

YES >> Ask an adult to help you fill out the next page.

Not sure? >> Tell a parent or teacher if you would like to talk to me first, or if you have any questions.

If yes, you can change mind at any time before Wednesday 30th September 2020. Please tell your parent or teacher if you do not want to take part in the project.

Thank you

Pupil consent form

Name _____ Date of birth:_____

Please circle which language you prefer.

English British Sign language Other _____

Please tick the relevant box.	 YES	 NO
I have read the sheet.		
I consent to take part in this project.		
I agree to complete a questionnaire about moving to secondary school.		
I understand that my personal information will be kept secret.		
I agree to take part in a video-recorded interview.		
I understand that if I want to change my mind about taking part, I can do so at any time before September 30th 2020.		
Where preferred language is British Sign Language:		
I understand that an interpreter may attend my interview.		
I agree to the use of an interpreter if necessary.		

Appendix 6 - Parent Information Letter

May 2020

Dear _____,_____

I am a trainee educational psychologist currently attending placement in Dudley. Part of my training involves the completion of a research project. The focus of this research project is the perceptions and experiences of children as they undergo the transition from primary into secondary school. I am particularly interested in the experiences and views of children who have a hearing impairment.

The purpose of my project is to improve understanding of this process as experienced by students who have a hearing impairment, and to harness my research findings to identify and support any changes which would improve the transition process.

I am writing to ask whether your child would be willing to take part in this study.

What is involved?

In addition to seeking your consent, I will provide information and consent forms for your child and for the head teachers of your child's primary and secondary schools.

If all parties choose to take part, pre-transfer questionnaires will be provided for students to complete during the Year 6 Summer Term 2020. These questionnaires will be completed with support provided by an adult who is familiar to your child. The questionnaires include a mixture of rating statements and brief questions relating to school transition, and should take around 45 minutes to complete.

During the Summer Term 2020, pre-transfer questionnaires will also be provided to parents to explore your views on your child's upcoming move to secondary school. Support to complete these forms is available upon request. The questionnaire should take around 35 minutes to complete.

In Year 7 Autumn Term 2020, post-transfer questionnaires will be provided to your child's secondary school for students to complete. I will meet your child in school to further explore their experiences of moving to a new school and their views of the transition process. An alternative location can be arranged if necessary.

These interviews will be video-recorded, if your own and your child's consent for this is given. A familiar member of the school staff will be present. An interpreter may be available upon request.

Post-transfer questionnaires will be sent to parents during the Autumn Term to explore your views of the transition process. This questionnaire should take around 30 minutes to complete.

What will happen next?

The data collected will be compiled into a formal research project report, which will form part of my thesis at the University of Birmingham. Participation is voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw their consent at any time before 30th September 2020. If consent is withdrawn before this date, any collected data will be destroyed upon request.

Data protection

Data relating to your child's transition, including transition plans, attendance and academic attainment data will be requested from your child's schools. This will be used to gauge the impact of the school transition. If you do not wish to consent to this, please indicate on the consent form.

Data including information from your child's school, videos and questionnaires will be stored securely and confidentially. Any data that has identifying information will be for my use **ONLY**. Video recordings will be for my use **ONLY.**

Video recordings will be transcribed and anonymised. All written data, including interview transcripts, will be anonymised and transferred to secure electronic storage. All data will be anonymised in any written reports or summaries.

Video recordings and questionnaire responses will be deleted on 30th November 2021.

An edited version of the formal research project report may be submitted for publication. All reported data will be anonymised to ensure that participating individuals or schools are not identifiable.

Please note, any safeguarding concerns would be reported to the relevant safeguarding officers, in line with the school's usual safeguarding policy and protocols

For more information, see http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/.

What do I need to do?

If you would like your child to take part in this project, please sign the attached consent form and return it to your child's headteacher by May 22nd 2020. Alternatively, it can be scanned and emailed to the above address.

If consent is given, the pre-transfer questionnaire will be provided for you to complete during Summer Term 2020. The post-transfer questionnaire will be provided for you to complete in Autumn 2020. Questionnaires and interviews involving your child will be arranged directly with the school, and you will be notified once they are arranged.

Please note, completion of the questionnaires is voluntary. You and your child do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to.

Summary

May 22nd 2020	• If you agree that your child can take part, please sign and return the consent form.
Summer term 2020	• Pre transition questionnaires to be completed by: 1. Parents 2. Students
Sept - Oct 2020	• Post-transition questionnaires to be completed by: 1. Parents 2. Students • Interviews with students
30th Sept 2020	• Final date to withdraw consent

If you would like any further information, please email me at [redacted]
Alternatively, you may wish to speak to a member of staff at your child's school.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kind Regards,

Mary-Lynn Yates
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Supervising Tutor Contact Details:
Sue Morris
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TU
Email: [redacted]
Phone Number: [redacted]

Parental consent

Name: _____

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____

Preferred language: _____

Child's preferred language: _____

Contact number / email: _____

Please tick the relevant boxes.	**Yes**	**No**
I have read the attached information sheet.		
I consent to my child participating in this research project, subject to her / his agreement to do so.		
I consent to the school sharing data relating to my child's transition with the researcher.		
I agree to complete a questionnaire about my child and their move to secondary school.		
I understand that all information collected will be confidential.		
I understand that any video-recordings will be for the use of the researcher only.		
I consent for my child to be video-recorded during the interview (s).		
I understand that if I wish to withdraw my consent, I can do so at any time before 30th September 2020.		
I understand that if my child wishes to withdraw their consent, they can do so at any time before 30th September 2020.		

Where preferred language is British Sign Language:		
I understand that an interpreter may attend my child's interview.		
I consent to the use of an interpreter if necessary.		

Appendix 7 - Staff information letter and consent form

Dear _____,

I am a trainee educational psychologist currently attending placement in Dudley. Part of my training involves the completion of a research project. The focus of this research project is the perceptions and experiences of students as they undergo the transition from primary into secondary school. The intended purpose is to improve understanding of this transition process as experienced by students who have a hearing impairment.

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to take part in this study.

What is involved?

In addition to seeking your consent, I will provide information and consent forms for the head teachers of your school, eligible students and their parents.

If all parties give consent to participate, pre-transfer questionnaires will be provided for students and their parents to complete during the Summer Term of Year 6. Pre-transfer questionnaires will also be provided to parents, to explore their views on their child's move to secondary school.

During Summer Term, key staff within the resource base will be invited to participate in a focus group to explore their views and perceptions of the transfer into secondary school as experienced by students within the base. The session will be audio recorded. It should last around 30 minutes.

In the Autumn Term of Year 7, post-transfer questionnaires will be provided to the relevant secondary school(s) for students to complete, in addition to a brief student interview. Parental post-transfer questionnaires will be sent to parents to explore their views of the transition process.

What will happen next?
The data collected will be written up in a formal research project report. All participants will be anonymous, and any information collected will be stored securely and confidentially.

Data protection
The focus group will be audio recorded. This recording will be transcribed and anonymised. All written data will be anonymised and transferred to secure electronic storage. All data will be anonymised in any written reports or summaries. The audio recording will be deleted following transcription, and no later than 1st February 2021.

An edited version of the formal research project report may be submitted for publication. All reported data will be anonymised to ensure that participating individuals or schools are not identifiable.

Please note, any safeguarding concerns would be reported to the relevant safeguarding officers, in line with the school's usual safeguarding policy and protocols.

For more information, see http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/.

Participation is voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw their consent at any time before Friday 1st November 2020. If consent is withdrawn before this date, any collected data will be destroyed upon request.

What do I need to do?

If you would like any further information, please email me at [redacted]

If you would like to take part in this project, please sign the attached consent form and return it to your headteacher or Link Educational Psychologist. Alternatively, it can be scanned and emailed to the above address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for giving this matter your attention.

Kind Regards,

Mary-Lynn Yates
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Supervising Tutor Contact Details:
Sue Morris
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TU
Email: [redacted]

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

Please tick the relevant box.

	Yes	No
I have read the attached information sheet.		
I consent to participating in this research project by attending a staff focus group.		
I consent to be audio-recorded during the focus group.		
I understand that all information collected will be confidential.		
I understand that if I wish to withdraw my consent, I can do so at any time before Friday 1st November 2020.		

Appendix 8 - School information letter and consent, secondary school

Dear _____,

I am a trainee educational psychologist currently attending placement in Dudley. Part of my training involves the completion of a research project. I am interested in the experiences of children and young people who have a hearing impairment. I am writing to enquire whether it would be possible for one or more Year 7 students who have a significant hearing impairment, who are currently attending your school, to continue participation in my research project following their transition into the school in September.

The focus of this research project is the perceptions and experiences of hearing-impaired students as they undergo the transition from primary into secondary school. The overall purpose is to improve understanding of this transition process as experienced by students who have a hearing impairment, to inform improvements of existing pre- and / or post-transfer support for such students.

What is involved?

In addition to seeking consent from you, consent forms were completed by individual students and their parents during the Summer Term of Year 6, whilst they were attending [redacted] Students and their parents also completed pre-transfer questionnaires at this time.

The next stage of the project involves the students and their parents completing post-transfer questionnaires in relation to their experience of the transition to secondary school. Student questionnaires should preferably be completed during schooltime, with support provided by an adult who is familiar to the child. The questionnaires include a mixture of rating statements and brief questions relating to transition. The questionnaires should take around 45 minutes to complete.

Students are also asked to engage in a semi-structured interview, to further explore their views on transition. It would be helpful if this interview could take place during school time, supported by an adult familiar with the student's preferred mode of communication. An interpreter may be available upon request. The interview should take a maximum time of 90 minutes to complete. It will involve the student answering questions and/or completing brief activity sheets relating to their transition.

Please note – interviews can be arranged to take place remotely in line with any Covid-19 arrangements.

In addition, it would be helpful to have access to any transition plans or documentation, and to attendance and attainment data, where consent for this has been given by parents. (Similar data were requested from the primary school).

What will happen next?

The data collected will be compiled into a formal research report (as a substantive component of my research thesis for the University of Birmingham). A shorter report can be provided upon request. In this, as in my thesis, all participants will be anonymous, and all information collected will be stored confidentially.

An edited version of the formal research project report may be submitted for publication. All reported data will be anonymised to ensure that participating individuals or schools are not identifiable.

Please note, any safeguarding concerns will be reported to the relevant safeguarding officers.

Participation is voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw their consent at any time before Friday 30th October 2020. If consent is withdrawn before this date, any collected data will be destroyed upon request.

If you would like any further information, please email me at Mary-Lynn.Yates@[redacted]

If you would like to consent to your students' involvement in this project, please sign the attached form and return it to the above email address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider this request.

Kind Regards,

Mary-Lynn Yates
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Supervising Tutor Contact Details:
Sue Morris
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TU
Email:[redacted]
Phone Number:[redacted]

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

Please tick the relevant box.

	Yes	No
I have read the attached information sheet.		
I consent to students from my school participating in this research project.		
I consent to the researcher working with participating student(s) during school hours.		
I consent to the use of video recording on school premises.		
I understand that if I wish to withdraw my consent, I can do so at any time before Friday 30th October 2020.		

Appendix 9 - Pupil Debrief Form

It was great to meet you today!

Thank you for telling me about your new secondary school.

What next?

I will write a report about what you told me today.

Other people will read my report. Your name will be a **secret**.

People will not know who you are when they read my report.

Remember!

You can change your mind until Friday 20th November 2020.

Please tell your parent or teacher if you do not want to be in the project anymore.

Appendix 10 - Pupil pre-transfer questionnaire

Name _____ Date of birth:_____

What are you looking forward to about secondary school?
Tick all the boxes that apply.

	Making new friends
	My siblings will be there
	Friends I know now are going too
	Having new teachers
	Having new adult support
	Learning new subjects
	Learning new skills
	Different classrooms
	Different facilities
	Trying new activities
	New timetables
	Attending new clubs
	More freedom

Is there anything else that is not on the list?

Please list the top 3 things you are looking forward to.

1.

2.

3.

What worries you about secondary school? Select all that apply.

	Making new friends
	Do not know anyone there
	Bullies
	Having new teachers
	Having new adult support
	Homework
	Learning new subjects
	Finding way around
	Different classrooms
	Different facilities
	New rules
	New timetables
	Attending new clubs
	More responsibility

Is there anything else that is not on the list?

Please list the top 3 things you are most worried about.

1.

2.

3.

Please complete the following sentences with a word, a short sentence or a drawing.
The best thing about my primary school is…
My favourite thing about Year 6 is…
When I leave Year 6 I will miss…
I think my new school will be…
I think the teachers at my new school will be…
I think the students at my new school will be….
I think the lessons at my new school will be…
I hope my new school is…
Before I go to my new school, I would like to know…
Do you have any questions about your new school?

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Please include any comments in the spaces below.

I am happy when I am in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I have at least one close friend in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I have at least one adult I can talk to in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I am happy with the help I have in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I would like more support in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I feel safe when I am in school.

1 		2			3		4		5 	

I feel included when I am in school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I like my school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I am worried about starting secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I will make at least one new friend at secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I will like the teachers at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I will like the students at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I will like the lessons at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

Appendix 11 – Pupil post-transfer questionnaire

What do you like about secondary school?

Tick all the boxes that apply.

	Making new friends
	My siblings are there
	Friends I know from before are here
	Having new teachers
	Having new adult support
	Learning new subjects
	Learning new skills
	Different classrooms
	Different facilities
	Trying new activities
	New timetables
	Attending new clubs
	More freedom

Is there anything else that is not on the list?

Please list the top 3 things you like about your new school.

1.

2.

3.

Are there any things you dislike about your secondary school?
Select all that apply.

	Hard to make new friends
	Do not know anyone there
	Bullies
	Having new teachers
	Having new adult support
	Homework
	Learning new subjects
	Finding way around
	Different classrooms
	Different facilities
	New rules
	New timetables
	Attending new clubs
	More responsibility

Is there anything else that is not on the list?

Please list the top 3 things you are most dislike about your new school.

1.

2.

3.

Please complete the following sentences with a word, a short sentence or a drawing.
The best thing about my new school is…
The worst thing about my new school is…
I think my new school is…
I think the teachers at my new school are…
I think the students at my new school are….
I think the lessons at my new school are…
If I could change anything about my new school…
Before starting my new school, it would have been helpful if …
Before coming to this school, students should…

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Please include any comments in the spaces below.

I am happy when I am in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I have at least one close friend in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I have at least one adult I can talk to in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I am happy with the help I have in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I would like more support in school.

1 		2		3		4		5 	

I feel safe when I am in school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I feel included when I am in school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I like my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have made at least one new friend at secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I like the teachers at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I like the students at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I like the lessons at my secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

Appendix 12 - Parent pre-transfer questionnaire

Name _____ Date: _____

Child's name: _____

*Please note, all questions are voluntary.

What is your child's level of hearing loss?

At what age was your child identified as experiencing hearing loss?

Does your child use hearing aids?

Yes, in one ear		**Yes, both ears**		**No**	

Does your child have a cochlear implant?

Yes		**No**	

Does your child have any other diagnoses? If yes, please provide details below if you are happy to do so.

Yes		**No**		**Prefer not to say**	

Does your child have any other additional needs? If yes, please provide details below if you are happy to do so.

Yes		**No**		**Prefer not to say**	

Do you, or does anyone else in your child's family have hearing loss? If yes, please provide details if you are happy to.

Yes		**No**		**Prefer not to say**	

Does your child have a sibling who is / will also be attending their secondary school?

What aspects of secondary school is your child looking forward to?

What aspects of secondary school are you looking forward to?

Do you have any concerns about your child starting secondary school? If yes, please give details.

Does your child have any concerns about starting secondary school? If yes, please give details.

Does your child have a transition plan for their move to secondary school?

Yes		**No**		**Not Sure**	

Have you attended any school meetings about your child's move to secondary school?

Yes		No		Not Sure	

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Please add any comments in the spaces below.

I am worried about my child moving to secondary school

1		2		3		4		5	

My child is well-prepared to start secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have felt involved in planning my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child has been involved in planning their move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have felt supported while planning my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child has been supported while planning their move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My views about my child's move to secondary school have been discussed.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child's views about their move to secondary school have been discussed.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have had enough information about my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

Please answer if you attended a transition meeting at school:

I felt involved during the transition meeting.

1		2		3		4		5	

I feel my views during the transition meeting were discussed.

1		2		3		4		5	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return to:

Appendix 13 - Parent post-transition questionnaire

Name _____ Date: _____

Child's name: _____

*Please note, all questions are voluntary.

What have been the most positive aspects of your child's move to secondary school?

What have been the least positive aspects of your child's move to secondary school?

What aspects of the transition process have been helpful?

How could the transition process be improved?

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Please include any comments in the spaces below.

I am happy with my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child has settled well into their new secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child was well-prepared to start secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have felt involved since my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have felt supported since my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

My child has been supported since their move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

I have had enough information since my child's move to secondary school.

1		2		3		4		5	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return to:

Appendix 14 - Staff Focus Group Interview Schedule

Issue / topic	Main questions	Possible prompts	Probes
Students	How do the students feel about moving to a new school? How far do you think students are well prepared to move school? How far do you think students FEEL they are well prepared?	Do students feel more positive or negative? What is involved in this? What helps them to prepare? Is there anything else that might help?	In what way? How can you tell? How does it help?
Processes	Is there a specific transition process? How effective is the transition process? How far is the student / their parents involved in preparing for transfer?	What does it involve? Who is involved? Is it helpful? Does anything need to change? Should they be more / less involved?	Is it effective / helpful? Should anyone else be involved? What difference would that change make?

Appendix 15 - Staff Questionnaire – for staff supporting students who are deaf

Job title: _____ Date: _____

Is there a specific transition process in your setting? If yes, please describe: a) What the process involves; b) Who is involved in the process.
What is your role in supporting students who are deaf to prepare for secondary school?

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Please add any comments in the spaces below.

The transition process is effective in preparing students for secondary school.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What are the most effective / helpful aspects of the process?										
What are the least effective / helpful aspects of the process?										

What has been the impact of Covid-19 on the transition process?

The transition process supports information sharing between primary and secondary school.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What information (if any) is shared to help support the student's transition into secondary school?										

Students views are sought as part of the transition process.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
How are students supported to prepare for the move to secondary school?										
How do students feel about the move to secondary school?										

What aspects of secondary school are students looking forward to?

Students have the opportunity to share any concerns about the move to secondary school.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What aspects of secondary school have students expressed concerns about?										
Have students had the opportunity to (remotely) visit their new school?										

Students are well-prepared for the move to secondary.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What, if anything, could improve this?										

Secondary schools are well-prepared to support incoming students.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What, if anything, could improve this?										

Parents views are sought as part of the transition process.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What aspects of secondary school do parents feel positive about?										

Parents are well supported during the transition process.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
How are parents of students supported with regards to their child's move to secondary school?										

Parents have the opportunity to share concerns about their child's move to secondary school.

Regular conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Covid-19 conditions										
1		**2**		**3**		**4**		**5**		
Comments:										
What aspects of secondary school are parents concerned about?										

What are the most important aspects of the transition process for you?
What are the most important aspects of the transition process for students?
What improvements, if any, could be made to the transition process?
Any other comments?

Appendix 16 – Pupil Interview Schedule

Issue / topic	**Main questions**	**Possible prompts**	**Probes / Resource sheets**
General school	Can you tell me about your new school? What do you think about your new school? How do you feel when you are in school? What do you like / dislike about your new school? How is this school different to your old school?	Tell me about (e.g. classrooms, journey, resources etc)? Why do you think that? What makes you feel that way? Is that different in a good or bad way? Is that better or worse?	General probes: What do you mean by …? Can you tell me more about…? Can you explain that to me? 'Year 7' sheet 'My new school' sheet
Moving school	**When you were in Yr 6:** How did you feel about going to a new school? What did you think your new school would be like? Did your teachers / parents talk to you about your new school? What helped you prepare for your new school? What would have been helpful for you to know or do before starting new school?	What were you worried / excited about…? What did they tell you? Did they ask you any questions about your new school? What they and other people did; what information was helpful?	**X = derived from pre transfer questionnaire responses** Were you worried about / looking forward to X? 'Before starting Year 7' sheet
Staff / support	Can you tell me about your teachers in Year 6? Can you tell me about your teachers in Year 7? How are the teachers here different to your old school? What is helpful in your new school?	What do you like / dislike about your teachers? Do you have an adult you can talk to in school? Different in a good / bad way? Same / different as Year 6?	'My old school' sheet 'My new school' sheet 'Relationship circle' sheet 'Year 7' sheet
Friendships	Can you tell me about your friends in your old school? Can you tell me about your friends in this school? Do you feel included in school?	Did / do you have one close friend? Have you made any new friends? Same / different as primary?	'My old school' sheet 'My new school' sheet 'Relationship circle' sheet

Lessons	Can you tell me about your lessons in Year 6? Can you tell me about your lessons in Year 7? What is different about your Year 6 and Year 7 lessons?	What do you like / dislike about your lessons? Is that better or worse?	'My old school' sheet 'My new school' sheet
Comparison	Is there anything you miss about your old school? Is there anything from your old school that would be good in your new school? Is there anything you would change in this school?	What was the best / worst thing about old school? Any particular people, anything about work, classrooms etc?	'Before starting Year 7' sheet 'Year 7' sheet

Before starting Year 7…

Excited about?

Worried about?

Thoughts about Year 7

What helped me prepare for Year 7?

What would have been helpful?

Things I miss about my old school

General thoughts / feelings

My teachers and adults that help me

MY OLD SCHOOL
[SCHOOL LOGO / PIC]

My lessons and classrooms

My friends

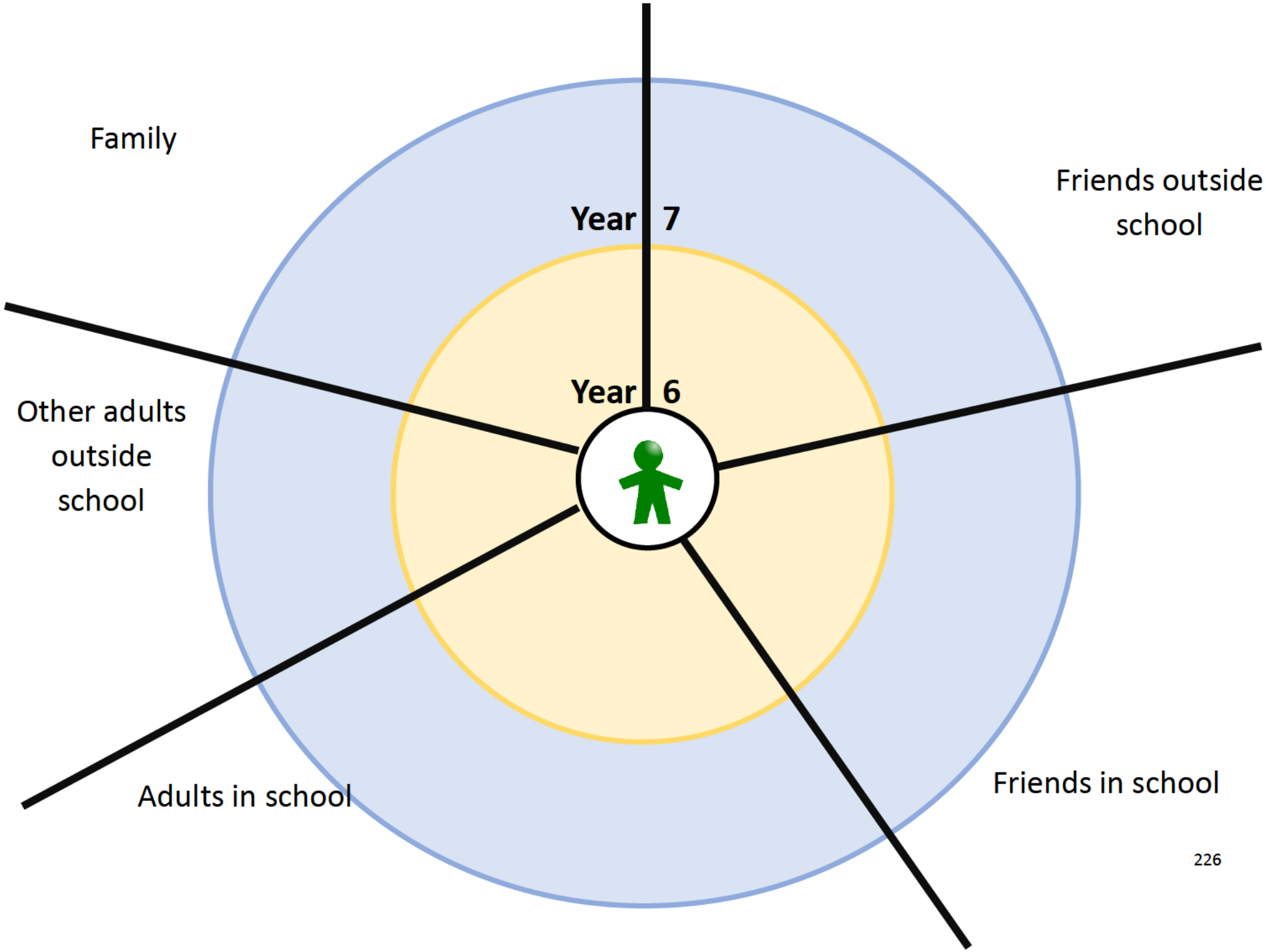
General thoughts / feelings

My teachers and adults that help me

MY NEW SCHOOL
[SCHOOL LOGO / PIC]

My lessons and classrooms

My friends


Family
Year 7
Friends outside school
Year 6
Other adults outside school
Adults in school
Friends in school

YEAR 7

Likes	Dislikes
Helpful	**Not helpful**

Things that I would like to change

Appendix 18 - Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale

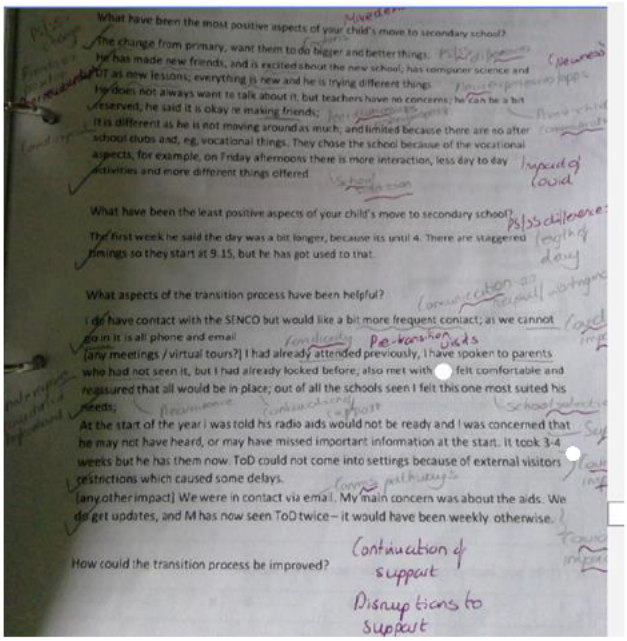
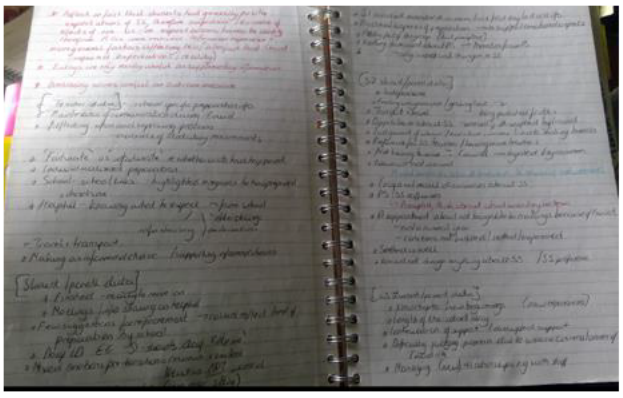
Here are some statements or descriptions about how you might have been feeling or thinking about things over the past couple of weeks.

For each one, please circle the number which best describes your thoughts and feelings; there are no right or wrong answers.

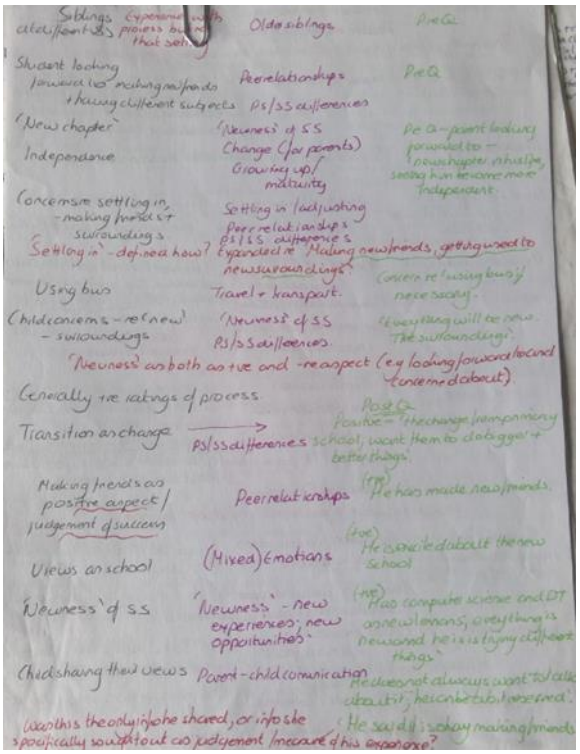
Statements	Never	Not much of the time	Some of the time	Quite a lot of the time	All of the time
1. I think good things will happen in my life	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have always told the truth	1	2	3	4	5
3. I've been able to make choices easily	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can find lots of fun things to do	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that I am good at some things	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think lots of people care about me	1	2	3	4	5
7. I like everyone I have met	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think there are many things I can be proud of	1	2	3	4	5
9. I've been feeling calm	1	2	3	4	5
10. I've been in a good mood	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy what each new day brings	1	2	3	4	5
12. I've been getting on well with people	1	2	3	4	5
13. I always share my sweets	1	2	3	4	5
14. I've been cheerful about things	1	2	3	4	5
15. I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5

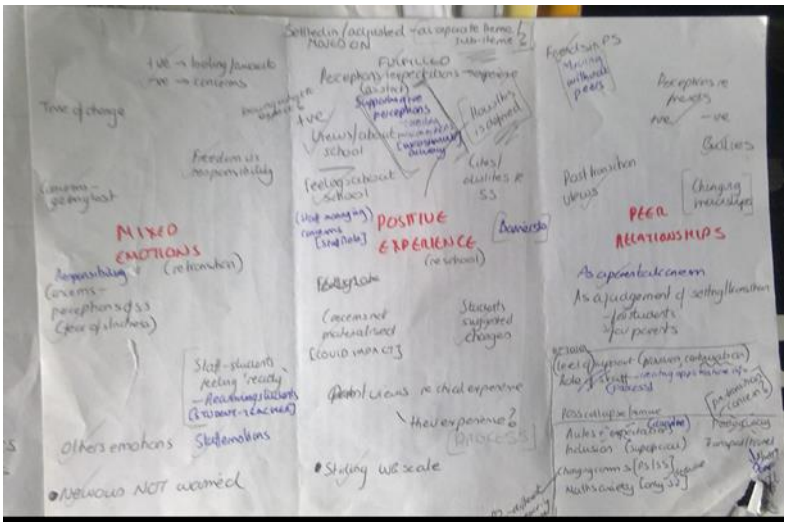
Reference: Liddle, I. and Carter, G.F.A. (2015). 'Emotional and psychological wellbeing in children: the development and validation of the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale.' *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 31(2), 174-185.

Appendix 19: Reflexive account of data analysis process

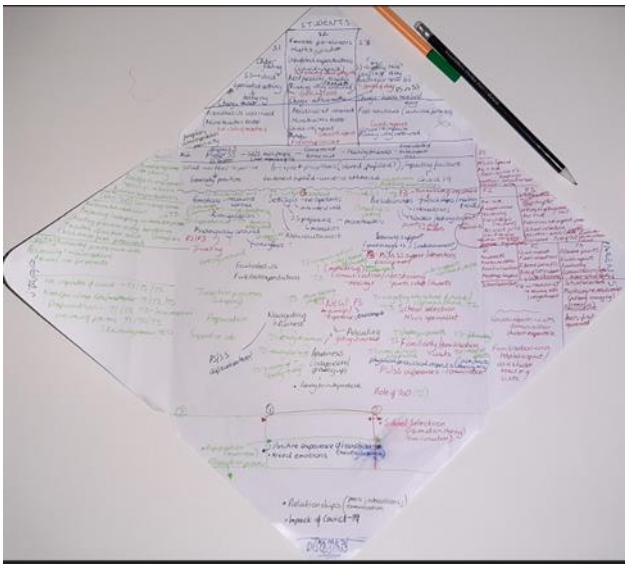
Phase		Action
1	Familiarisation with dataset	Interview data was manually transcribed. To check its accuracy, I read the transcripts whilst watching the interview video and made notes pertaining to non-verbal communication. All data was then read through once to get an overview of the story across the disparate data sources. I reread the transcripts and noted initial thoughts relating to interesting points and potential patterns in the data (Appendix 23). Sample of coded parent data:  I fully immersed myself in the data by rereading it multiple times in different orders, e.g., all students then all parents then all staff, or by student-parent subunits. I noted down points relating to key quotes, meanings and reflections related to individual data items, subunits and the dataset – both on the dataset and in separate handwritten notes:  I began to critically engage with the data by reflecting on, for example, whether there were underlying assumptions to their responses or to my initial interpretations. I also made brief summaries of the students' stories of their transitions.

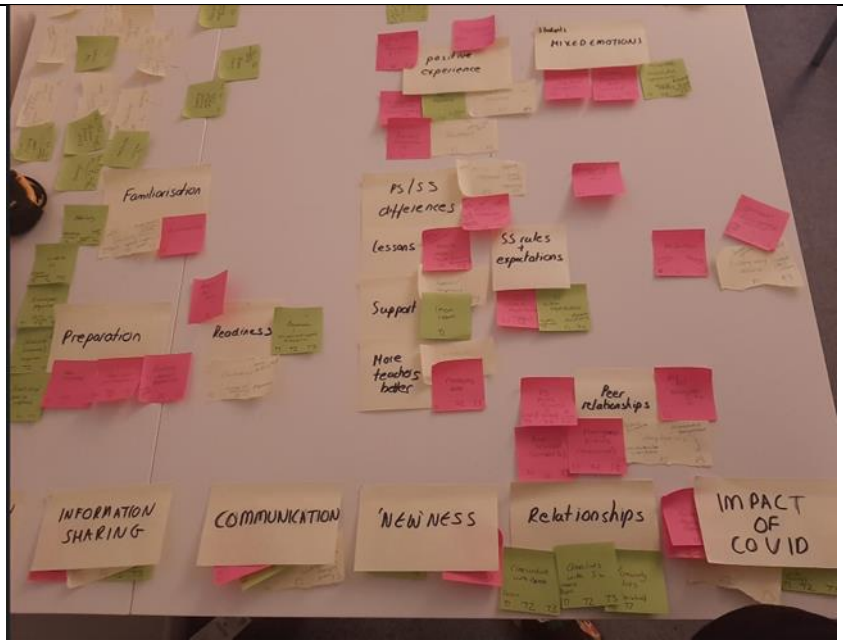
2	Data coding	I systematically went through the dataset and began to code data items of interest, or those which were relevant or meaningful to the research questions, with brief descriptive and interpretative code labels noted in the margins. Data items were of varying lengths, and some had different code labels to reflect the different meanings in that item. RTA does not require multiple coders, given its acceptance of researcher subjectivity. Instead, I completed successive rounds of coding, distinguishable through different colour ink to help track new codes and how existing codes were developing following multiple readings of the data, again in different orders. This helped to ensure analytic insight and rigour through thorough engagement with the dataset. I also noted down points of conflict or convergence in the data. At one point, I had to move to electronic coding following an eczema outbreak which prevented handwriting. This was helpful for coding staff questionnaires, but I returned to manual coding of hard copies as I felt this allowed me to better engage with the data. During this process, I noticed that some code labels were too narrow and therefore superficial, so broadened them out e.g.: *Not feeling ready to transition → Readiness for transition* Others were too broad and lacked meaning, so were divided into more meaningful code labels e.g.: *Communication → Communication pathways; communication viewed as helpful; parents wanting more communication; school-parent communication; school-school communication* I collated the initial code labels along with the related data items, then reviewed the entire list of code labels to check how far they were representative of the dataset:

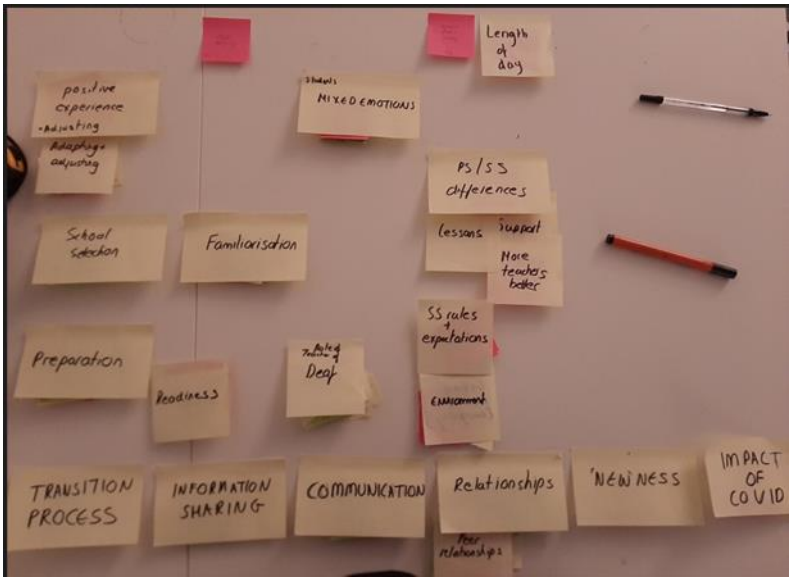
		
3	Generate initial themes	When collating the code labels, certain labels clustered together around shared concepts or patterns of meaning e.g.: *Concerns about making new friends* *Excitement about making new friends* *Primary school friendships* *Parental views about friendships* *Feeling included* → *Importance of peer relationships during transition* I began to develop candidate themes, comparing them to the research questions for relevance, e.g.: *Aspects of the transition process* *Students experience mixed emotions during transition* *Choosing the 'right' school…*



Visual mapping activities were used to assist this process, by highlighting interconnections or disconnections between candidate themes, and between candidate and potential sub- themes:



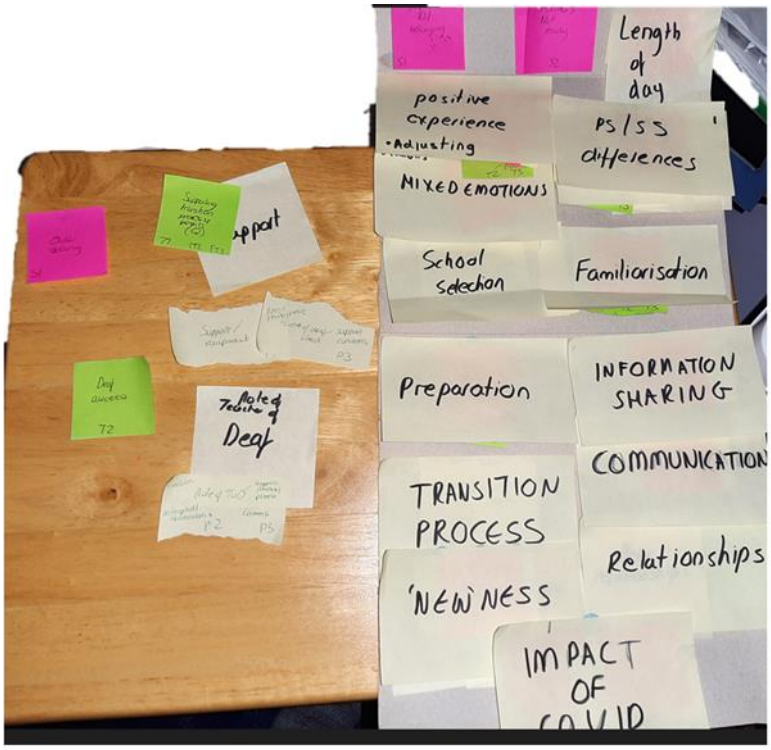




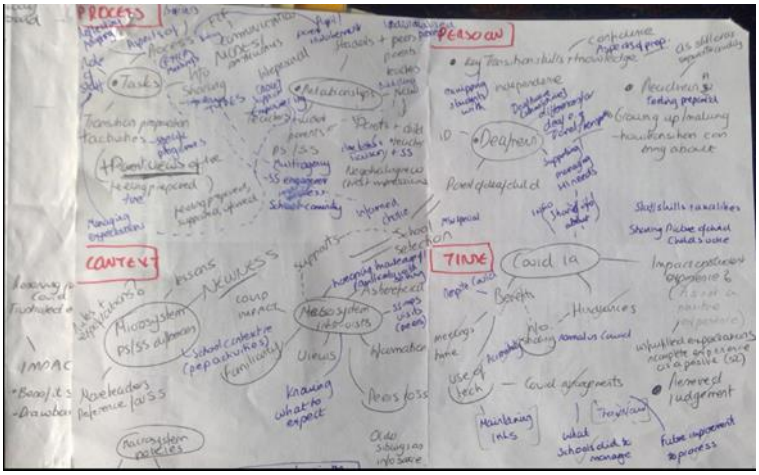
At this point, I questioned whether the initial themes were inductive i.e., from the data – or whether they were influenced by previous reading? I found it difficult at times to balance knowledge of the literature with ensuring that I fully engaged with the data and allowed the themes to flow from it, rather than being more aware of data items that collated into codes / initial themes that matched what I thought I should be finding from a transition study.

I revisited the list of collated codes and highlighted those that clearly had a deductive orientation e.g., *transition as change,* was influenced more by literature relating to conceptualisations of transition. I reflected on the strength of the associated data items to ensure themes were inductively oriented.

Themes were discarded if they represented only individual participants meaning, rather than shared meaning across the data set e.g., *maths anxiety*

		was only expressed by one student. Other themes were discarded as too derived from the questions asked e.g., *students felt included in secondary school,* was influenced by question phrasing in interview – 'Do you feel included?' and data did was not meaningful enough to constitute a full theme. I had tried to develop too many themes in an attempt to represent all the codes and all of the data. I struggled to 'detach' from the codes, so I made a separate list of leftover codes and what I perceived as weaker themes, or discarded themes, in case I wanted to review them at any point. This allowed me to focus on themes with richer data and meaning. 
4	Develop and review themes	At this point, I reviewed my candidate themes against associated data extracts and then against the whole dataset with particular regard to whether they: • Were meaningful • Had a central organising concept • Had clearly defined boundaries • Were relevant to the research question • Told the reader something important about the dataset, research question or wider context Themes that did not meet these criteria were discarded, with notes made detailing the reasons for themes being discarded. This stage involved moving recursively between this phase and phase 3, to assist review of themes with regard to the associated codes. I divided the themes according to their relevance to the two research questions – experience and factors impacting that experience. Some themes

		were potentially relevant to both questions e.g., *students developed new relationships with teachers.* I reflected on whether I had elevated certain themes because they expressed more frequently recurring patterns of meaning, rather than focusing on themes which had greater meaning or salience but were less frequently expressed, particularly for student data. I felt that I had given prominence to salient themes even where not frequently recurring e.g., *adjusting to the length of the school day*. I found comparing possible themes to the overall dataset helped to delineate themes which told the story of the data from those that did not. It helped to contextualise the themes and check my interpretations of the data, as reflected in the theme. Some themes were discarded as I had overemphasised areas I found interesting or that I was aware of from literature, but that did not really tell the story of the data or answer the research questions e.g. *deaf identity*. Themes were discarded for being topic summaries e.g., *the 'newness' of secondary school*, or redefined to add subthemes: *The impact of Covid-19 on transitions* → *Benefits of Covid-19 on transition processes* *Drawbacks of Covid-19* In some instances this was difficult. For example, students had a positive transition experience, and I wanted a theme to reflect this, but the data was too wide-ranging in terms of the reasons for those positive experiences. The actual reasons were linked to better defined candidate themes e.g., *students developed new relationships with teachers*, but the individual themes did not reflect the overall story. *Students had positive transition experiences* became main theme for the first research question, with subthemes that were more representative of reflexive thematic analysis. Subthemes were used where necessary to maintain the boundaries of themes, or draw attention to key aspects of that theme. Certain themes were collapsed into each other, where it became apparent they had the same central concept, or where it added to the richness of the overall theme. This included reviewing leftover codes and data to check their relevance to newly developed themes, e.g.: *Parent-school communication* *School-school communication* } *Close links and communication* *Parents wanting more communication*
5	Refine, define and name themes	At this stage, I considered whether the themes represented the story of the data in a logical and coherent way in relation to each research question. I wrote brief summaries of each theme to help check that they were consistent and coherent. I decided on theme names that demonstrated the meaning and analytical direction of the theme. Wording tended to be explanatory rather than catchy or witty. I frequently returned to this phase after beginning the write-up to help

		tighten themes, partially driven by the need to stay within the word count without losing the meaning of the themes.
6	Write analysis	The process of writing up resulted in me moving between phases 3-6 as certain themes needed refinement so that the analysis flowed. I divided themes according to the relevant research question. Whilst writing up I reviewed data extracts to ensure: • They were balanced across the dataset (e.g., P3 was particularly informative so was overquoted at points) • They were clear and compelling • There was no repetition across sections • Relevant context was provided e.g. the question asked was given where that context was not obvious from quoted response. Data extracts were used primarily illustratively i.e., as evidence to support the analytical claims made. Revision was required where data extracts were paraphrased rather than analysed, necessitating additional interpretation, or where data extracts did not clearly support the claim made. For the latter, I found more evidence or omitted it as a standalone theme, subsuming relevant data into other themes as appropriate. To help structure the findings, relevant themes were reconsidered in line with criteria from literature (positive and negative transition experiences – Jindal-Snape et al, 2020; successful transition – Evangelou et al, 2008). Themes that were consistent with criteria were retained, themes that were not were discarded. Where criteria did not have a relevant theme it was omitted, e.g., one criteria of successful transitions is increased confidence and self-esteem, but there was not enough data to support a theme around this. For the second research question, inductive themes were retrofitted to the PPCT framework, which helped to structure the themes and provide flow. Mapping exercises assisted with this:  I reflected particularly upon whether the proposed themes aligned with the theoretical concept of proximal processes. I restructured this section to place Relationships ahead of Tasks. Some themes were renamed to align

		with aspects of the PPCT model: *Pre-transition visits are important* → *Exosystemic links: the importance of pre-transition visits* *School selection* → *School selection: Choosing the right Context for the person* Analysis and discussion chapters were combined; therefore final themes were discussed with reference to the wider literature, and the wider context as represented by the PPCT model. As a final check, I returned to the research questions, and went through the analysis while asking 'so what?' reflecting upon whether the selected themes answered the research questions, represented the data gathered and were coherent with the theoretical framework and relevant literature. This resulted in some theme changes. Unsurprising themes were removed e.g., *pupils experience mixed emotions, primary / secondary differences*. A new theme, *Technology and transition* was added.

Appendix 20: Pupil pre-transfer questionnaire data

Bilal	Emma	Kashif
Please complete the following sentences with a word, a short sentence or a drawing.		
When I leave Year 6 I will miss…		
My friend; teacher	Friends and teachers also my class	My class
I think my new school will be…		
Good	Good and different	Different
I think the teachers at my new school will be…		
Kind and respect	Okay	Kind
I think the students at my new school will be…		
Friendly, no bullies	Okay (maybe kind)	Making friends
I think the lessons at my new school will be…		
Well	Okay (could be difficult)	Confusing
PRE: I hope my new school is…		
Best	Good	Like the same as the old one
PRE: Before I go to my new school, I would like to know…		
Timetable	Not sure	If the school is fun
PRE: Do you have any questions about your new school?		
Uh no	Will I get lost and get detention if I do?	No

Appendix 21a: Pupil pre- and post-transfer questionnaire data – multiple-choice

	PRE: What are you looking forward to about secondary school?			POST: What do you like about secondary school?		
	Bilal PRE	**Emma PRE**	**Kashif PRE**	**Bilal POST**	**Emma POST**	**Kashif POST**
Making new friends	X	X	X	X	X	X
My siblings… PRE: …will be there POST: …are there				X		
Friends I know… PRE: …now are going too POST: …from before are here	X	X	X		X	X
Having new teachers		X	X	X	X	X
Having new adult support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Learning new subjects	X	X	X	X	X	X
Learning new skills	X	X	X	X	X	X
Different classrooms	X	X	X		X	
Different facilities	X	X	X		X	
Trying new activities	X	X	X		X	X
New timetables		X		X	X	X
Attending new clubs	X	X	X		X	
More freedom	x	?	X		X	X
Others	Football background playground	N/A	Playground; making statues; technology; woodwork	No	N/A	N/A
TOP 3 1	Different facilities	Making friends	More freedom	PE lesson like	New friends	Making new friends
2	More freedom	New clubs	Learning new subjects	Cooking lesson like	Different classrooms	Learning new skills
3	Try new activities	Different facilities	Making friends	New staff	New subjects	Having new teachers

	PRE: What worries you about secondary school?			POST: Are there any things you dislike about secondary school?		
	Bilal PRE	**Emma PRE**	**Kashif PRE**	**Bilal POST**	**Emma POST**	**Kashif POST**
Making new friends / hard to make new friends						
Do not know anyone [there / here]	X		X			
Bullies	X		X			
Having new teachers		X				
Having new adult support		~~X~~				
Homework	X					
Learning new subjects			X			
Finding way around	X	X	X		Not sure	
Different classrooms	X		X			X
Different facilities						X
New rules			X			
New timetables	X		X			
Attending new clubs						X
More responsibility	x		X			
Others	N/A	Maths	N/A	No	Maths	N/A
TOP 3 1	Bullies	Finding my way around	Bullies	Can't think of anything	Maths	Attending new clubs
2	New timetables	New teachers	Finding my way around	-	-	Different classrooms
3	More responsibility	-	New rules	-	-	Different facilities

Appendix 21b: Pupil pre- and post-transfer questionnaire data – views about school ratings

STATEMENTS	PRE			POST		
STUDENTS	Bilal	Emma	Kashif	Bilal	Emma	Kashif
I am happy when I am in school.	4	5	5	5	5	4
I have at least one close friend in school.	3	5	3	4	5	5
I have at least one adult I can talk to in school.	3	5	4	5	5	5
I am happy with the help I have in school.	5	5	4	5	5	5
I would like more support in school.	5	3	5	3	2 – depends on subject	1
I feel safe when I am in school.	5	5	5	5	4/5	4
I feel included when I am in school.	3	5	5	4/5	5	5
Pre - I like my school. *Post – I like my secondary school.*	4	5	5	5	5	5
I am worried about starting secondary school.	3	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre -I will make at least one new friend at secondary school. *Post - I have made at least one new friend at secondary school*	5	4	5	4	5	5
Pre - I will like the teachers at my secondary school. *Post - I like the teachers at my secondary school.*	4	3	5	5	5	5
Pre - I will like the students at my secondary school. *Post - I like the students at my secondary school.*	5	3	4	5	4/5	5
Pre - I will like the lessons at my secondary school. *Post - I like the lessons at my secondary school*	5	4	3	5	4	5

1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

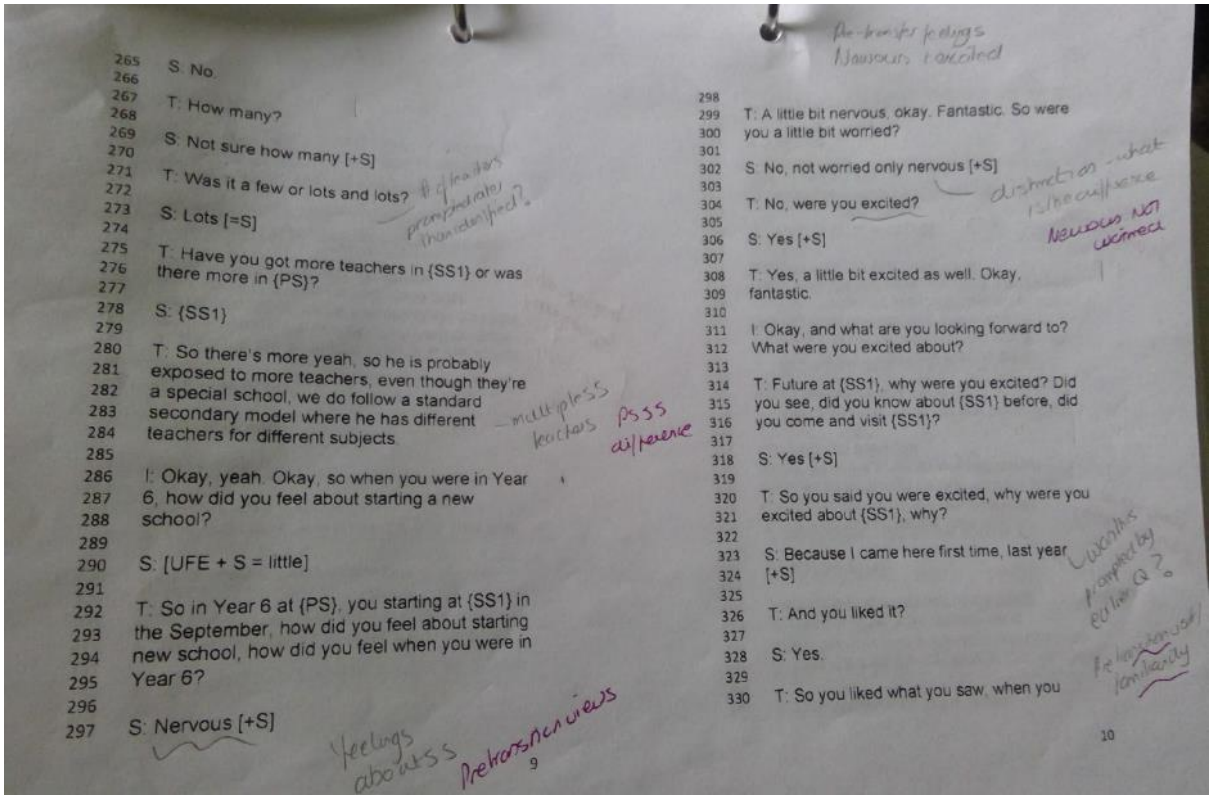
	Rating negatively shifted by 1 or more
	Rating unchanged
	Rating positively increased by 1
	Rating positively increased by 2

Appendix 22: Pupil post-transfer questionnaire data

Please complete the following sentences with a word, a short sentence or a drawing.		
Bilal	**Emma**	**Kashif**
The best thing about my new school is…		
Lunchtime outside playing football	Friends	Talking to friends and fun lessons
The worst thing about my new school is…		
Nothing	Maths	Nothing
I think my new school is…		
Fantastic	Good	Excellent
I think the teachers at my new school are…		
Good clear signing and help	Nice	Kind
I think the students at my new school are…		
Good because they make good friends	Kind	Talkative
I think the lessons at my new school are…		
Good interesting good learning	Good most of the time	NR
If I could change anything about my new school…		
Toilet sink are close together	Not sure?	Longer playtime. It would be the short school days like to 3.00pm.
Before starting my new school, it would have been helpful if…		
Map of the school	?	NR
Before coming to this school, students should…		
Uniform buy new	?	NR
POST - please list the top 3 things you like about your new school.		
1. PE lesson like 2. Cooking lesson like 3. Like new staff	1. New friends 2. Different classrooms 3. New subjects	1. Making new friends 2. Learning new skills 3. Having new teachers
POST – please list the top 3 things you most dislike.		
1. Cant think of anything	1. Maths	1. Attending new clubs 2. Different classrooms 3. Different facilities

Appendix 23: Pupil interview data (coded) excerpts

Bilal:



S: No.

T: How many?

S: Not sure how many [+S]

T: Was it a few or lots and lots?

S: Lots [=S]

T: Have you got more teachers in {SS1} or was there more in {PS}?

S: {SS1}

T: So there's more yeah, so he is probably exposed to more teachers, even though they're a special school, we do follow a standard secondary model where he has different teachers for different subjects.

I: Okay, yeah. Okay, so when you were in Year 6, how did you feel about starting a new school?

S: [UFE + S = little]

T: So in Year 6 at {PS}, you starting at {SS1} in the September, how did you feel about starting new school, how did you feel when you were in Year 6?

S: Nervous [+S]

T: A little bit nervous, okay. Fantastic. So were you a little bit worried?

S: No, not worried only nervous [+S]

T: No, were you excited?

S: Yes [+S]

T: Yes, a little bit excited as well. Okay, fantastic.

I: Okay, and what are you looking forward to? What were you excited about?

T: Future at {SS1}, why were you excited? Did you see, did you know about {SS1} before, did you come and visit {SS1}?

S: Yes [+S]

T: So you said you were excited, why were you excited about {SS1}, why?

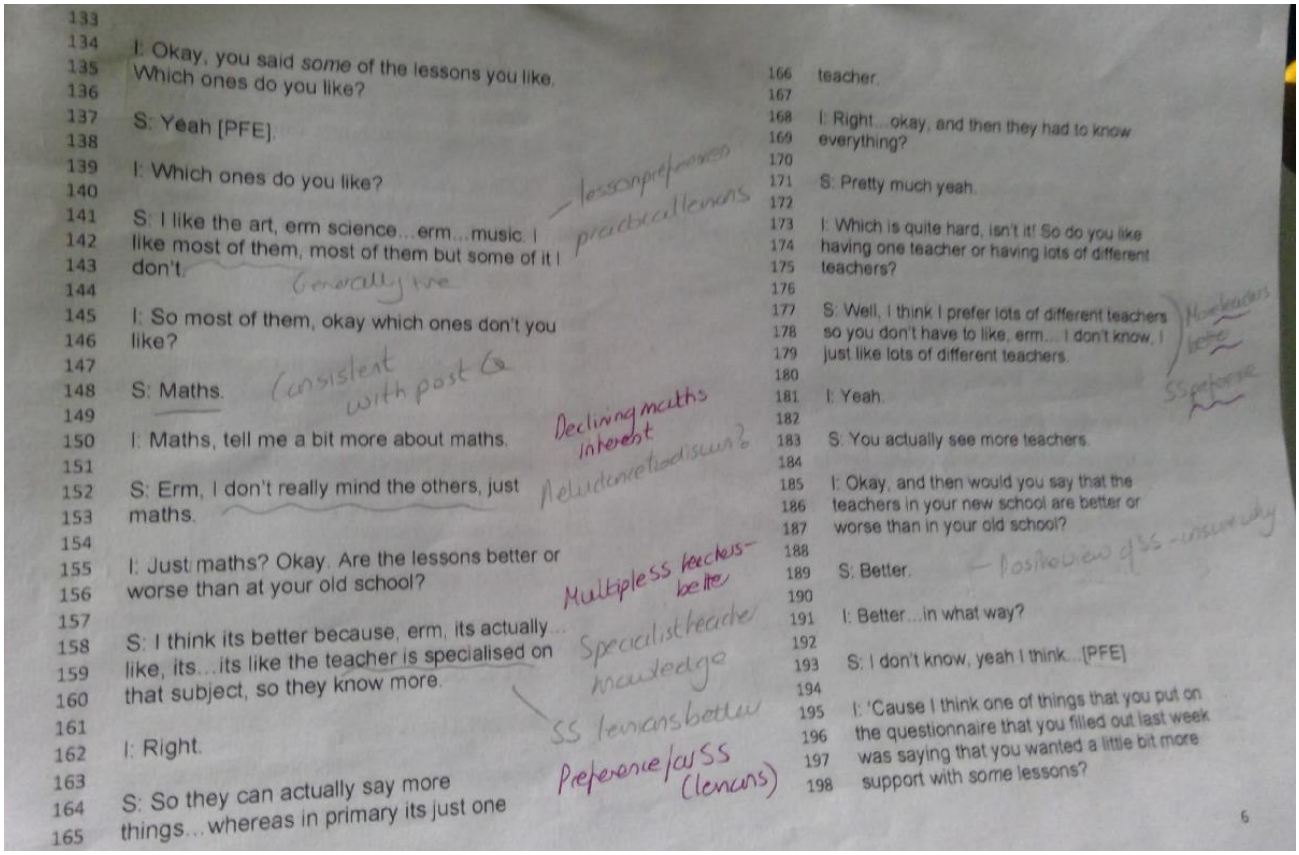
S: Because I came here first time, last year [+S]

T: And you liked it?

S: Yes.

T: So you liked what you saw, when you

Emma:



I: Okay, you said *some* of the lessons you like. Which ones do you like?

S: Yeah [PFE].

I: Which ones do you like?

S: I like the art, erm science...erm...music. I like most of them, most of them but some of it I don't.

I: So most of them, okay which ones don't you like?

S: Maths.

I: Maths, tell me a bit more about maths.

S: Erm, I don't really mind the others, just maths.

I: Just maths? Okay. Are the lessons better or worse than at your old school?

S: I think its better because, erm, its actually... like, its...its like the teacher is specialised on that subject, so they know more.

I: Right.

S: So they can actually say more things...whereas in primary its just one teacher.

I: Right...okay, and then they had to know everything?

S: Pretty much yeah.

I: Which is quite hard, isn't it! So do you like having one teacher or having lots of different teachers?

S: Well, I think I prefer lots of different teachers so you don't have to like, erm... I don't know, I just like lots of different teachers.

I: Yeah.

S: You actually see more teachers.

I: Okay, and then would you say that the teachers in your new school are better or worse than in your old school?

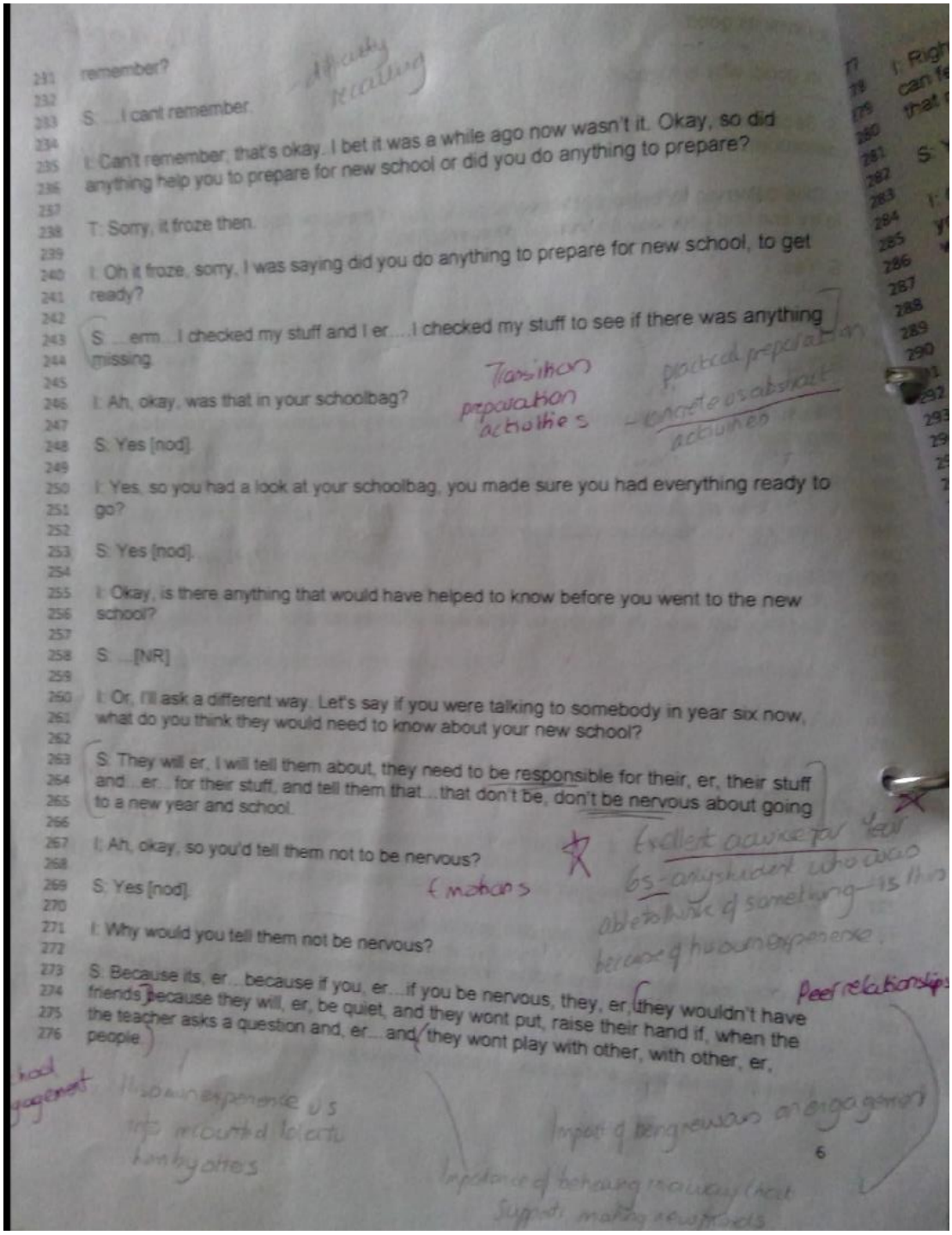
S: Better.

I: Better...in what way?

S: I don't know, yeah I think...[PFE]

I: 'Cause I think one of things that you put on the questionnaire that you filled out last week was saying that you wanted a little bit more support with some lessons?

Kashif:



remember?

S: ...I cant remember.

I: Can't remember, that's okay. I bet it was a while ago now wasn't it. Okay, so did anything help you to prepare for new school or did you do anything to prepare?

T: Sorry, it froze then.

I: Oh it froze, sorry, I was saying did you do anything to prepare for new school, to get ready?

S: ...erm...I checked my stuff and I er....I checked my stuff to see if there was anything missing.

I: Ah, okay, was that in your schoolbag?

S: Yes [nod].

I: Yes, so you had a look at your schoolbag, you made sure you had everything ready to go?

S: Yes [nod].

I: Okay, is there anything that would have helped to know before you went to the new school?

S: ...[NR]

I: Or, I'll ask a different way. Let's say if you were talking to somebody in year six now, what do you think they would need to know about your new school?

S: They will er, I will tell them about, they need to be responsible for their, er, their stuff and...er... for their stuff, and tell them that...that don't be, don't be nervous about going to a new year and school.

I: Ah, okay, so you'd tell them not to be nervous?

S: Yes [nod].

I: Why would you tell them not be nervous?

S: Because its, er... because if you, er...if you be nervous, they, er, they wouldn't have friends because they will, er, be quiet, and they wont put, raise their hand if, when the the teacher asks a question and, er... and they wont play with other, with other, er, people.

Appendix 24: Parent pre-transfer questionnaire data

Bilal's mother (BM)	Emma's mother (EM)	Kashif's mother (KM)
What aspects of secondary school is your child looking forward to?		
Mainstream	Independence; new friends/teachers; experience of new classes/clubs	He is looking forward to meeting new friends and having different subjects
What aspects of secondary school are you looking forward to?		
Mainstream	To see her mature and be more independent with a variety of friends	It's a new chapter in his life, seeing him becoming more independent
Do you have any concerns about your child starting secondary school? If yes, please give details.		
Need for special education in school; need to use speech and sign language	No	I am worried about him settling in, making new friends, getting used to new surroundings. Using the bus if necessary
Does your child have any concerns about starting secondary school? If yes, please give details.		
As above	Getting lost in the building when moving to different classes and getting detention	Everything will be new. The surroundings
Does your child have a transition plan for their move to secondary school? [Y, N, NS]		
Not sure	Yes	Not sure
Have you attended any school meetings about your child's move to secondary school? [Y, N, NS]		
No	Yes	Not sure

Appendix 25: Parent pre- and post-transfer questionnaire data – views about transition ratings

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. Please tick the box that applies.
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Please add any comments in the spaces below.

BM pre	BM post	EM pre	EM post	KM pre	KM post
PRE: I am worried about my child moving to secondary school *POST: I am happy with my child's move to secondary school.*					
3	5	2	5	1	5
PRE: My child is well-prepared to start secondary school. *POST: My child was well-prepared to start secondary school.*					
4	5	4	3	3	4
		POST: Because of Covid [anything?] they sent some work out and had discussions at home and at PS, but she did not know what she was walking into, they would know things from being told but had not witnessed it.		POST: Mental /physically	
PRE: I have felt involved in planning my child's move to secondary school.// *POST: I have felt involved since my child's move to secondary school.*					
5	5	3	4	4	4
		PRE: Been a difficult year to plan therefore cannot agree or disagree POST: Guess it is different from primary school, for example, sharing information when they are picked up from school. It is not a bad thing; made aware of important things via email			
PRE / POST: My child has been involved in planning their move to secondary school.					
4	n/a	3	N/A	NR	N/A
PRE: I have felt supported while planning my child's move to secondary school. *POST: I have felt supported since my child's move to secondary school.*					
4	5	4	4	4	4
		POST: I have not met staff but the ToD always phones / texts / emails updates		POST: They have definitely been there	

PRE: My child has been supported while planning their move to secondary school. *POST: My child has been supported since their move to secondary school.*					
4	5	4	5	4	5
		POST: [e.g. knowing where to go when there is a problem] – yes In the original questionnaire, Emma was worried about getting lost but because of Covid, they are in the same class and the staff come to them; it may be an issue once the restrictions are lifted; I gather it will be things like getting the bus or getting lost [that she is worried about]			
PRE / POST: My views about my child's move to secondary school have been discussed.					
4	n/a	5	N/A	4	N/A
PRE / POST: My child's views about their move to secondary school have been discussed.					
4	n/a	5	N/A	Nr	N/A
PRE: I have had enough information about my child's move to secondary school. *POST: I have had enough information since my child's move to secondary school.*					
4	5	4	5	4	4
POST: My child has settled well into their new secondary school.					
n/a	5		5	4	4
				Post: He is settled but is reluctant to talk about it, although he does seem happy	
Transition meeting					
I felt involved during the transition meeting.					
3	n/a	5	N/A	NR	N/A
I feel my views during the transition meeting were discussed.					
3	n/a	5	N/A	NR	N/A
				Attended EHCP review where teams were there	

Appendix 26: Parent post-transfer questionnaire data

BM	EM	KM
What have been the most positive aspects of your child's move to secondary school?		
Has lots of teachers; Finished at PS, needs to go to secondary; settled well	More independence; more confident to go out by herself and goes to school independently She was a bit worried about travelling and getting lost; I took her the first day to school on one bus – it takes two – and by the second day she was happy to do it herself	The change from primary, want them to do bigger and better things; He has made new friends, and is excited about the new school; has computer science and DT as new lessons; everything is new and he is trying different things He does not always want to talk about it, but teachers have no concerns; he can be a bit reserved; he said it is okay re making friends; It is different as he is not moving around as much; and limited because there are no after school clubs and, e.g., vocational things. They chose the school because of the vocational aspects, for example, on Friday afternoons there is more interaction, less day to day activities and more different things offered
What have been the least positive aspects of your child's move to secondary school?		
Needs prompting to be more confident Nothing bad / no problems yet	Have been some friendship incidents, learning curve about who friends are, but positive in that she is maturing in that way, so cancels each other out	The first week he said the day was a bit longer, because its until 4. There are staggered timings so they start at 9.15, but he has got used to that.

What aspects of the transition process have been helpful?		
Secondary school more meetings Met with MD over Zoom and with [SS1 headteacher], it was helpful B knew about school because my older son goes there, [Able to ask questions?] I did not ask a lot of questions but already knew about school, when spoke with headteacher she explained everything so no need to ask [Written information provided?] Can't remember, they sent an email with school directions and some other information	Hard because of Covid; did a virtual online tour of the new school, but aside from that she went straight there [transition meetings?] No, had an EHCP review and met with SENCO over video, and the ToD but that was it. [any opportunities to give info or share concerns] – I had the option to email about queries or concerns.	I do have contact with the SENCO but would like a bit more frequent contact; as we cannot go in it is all phone and email [any meetings / virtual tours?] I had already attended previously, I have spoken to parents who had not seen it, but I had already looked before; also met with KC; felt comfortable and reassured that all would be in place; out of all the schools seen I felt this one most suited his needs; At the start of the year I was told his radio aids would not be ready and I was concerned that he may not have heard, or may have missed important information at the start. It took 3-4 weeks but he has them now. ToD could not come into settings because of external visitors restrictions which caused some delays. [any other impact] We were in contact via email. My main concern was about the aids. We do get updates, and M has now seen ToD twice – it would have been weekly otherwise.

How could the transition process be improved?		
N/A	Difficult to say as it is not a normal year, so the regular processes were affected. A day at the school to meet the teachers and get a feel for it.	I am happy with how he has settled in but as a parent it would have been good to have more, e.g., more meetings; being able to spend the day there – as he would have done in normal circumstances. It is hard to say because a lot of the issues were to do with the pandemic; More contact from school regarding how he was settling in; I worry anyway as all parents do, but especially with his extra needs [HI] so maybe a bit more reassurance that he has settled in and that everything is okay; His TA did call for the first week or 2, and gave opportunities for any concerns to be raised, and there is a home-school book in place; Cautious of not wanting to seem like an annoying parent asking the same questions all the time; the school did ring while he was off self-isolating which was nice; I asked her about his friends or if there was anything he was not telling me and the TA said she will keep an eye out; he was back in yesterday; I want him to settle in and get used to the learning environment, but first and foremost to get on with his peers and feel comfortable with them and happy to go to school; for him to make friends and manage in the new environment; At primary school he was in the resource base and stuck to his peers, but SS2 is different, but he has been with the same class so has not had the whole experience, e.g., at lunchtime etc and not going to the hall, there are not many options available.
Any other comments		
He has school transport. At the moment no.	No	At primary school he had a bit more interventions, not sure about secondary, it could be in-class support. I rang and asked and the class teacher said they were aware of what support he needs. Do wonder whether the TA is there all the time, or will there be more intervention, for example, 1:1, out of class or feeling that not as much is needed. Primary school set more targets.

Appendix 27: Staff data

Transition Processes

Is there a specific transition process in your setting? If yes, please describe: **a) What the process involves;** b) **Who is involved in the process.**
Moving to Secondary Yes, parents are given information about options for Secondary, whether that be their child moving to a mainstream, resources base or special school. When parents show a preference, they are given info for that school, visits can be arranged, close contact with parents is maintained so they have all the information they need and feel prepared (such as transport arrangements). Once a school has been chosen, if the child has an EHCP, the Head of the Deaf Learning Base (or SENCo if the child is mainstream and doesn't have an EHCP), arranges a handover meeting in the summer term or at the annual review. The school will have completed a range of assessments so that the new school has an accurate picture of where the child is academically. They invite outside agencies who have been involved with the child, along with the child for part of it, if they wish. Closer to the time, the child's SEND file is photocopied and is ready to handover too. A member of staff can accompany the Y6 child to the new school, with the parents if they wish. An 8-week program is put in place, covering topics such as; worries, similarities and differences, Deaf and Proud etc. The Head of the Deaf Learning Base is in close contact with all relevant agencies i.e. transport, NHS SALT etc. Joining our school in Reception When SENAR informs the school of a new starter, the school liaises with sensory support to arrange visits to school. The child and family will be able to see all parts of the school, meet the staff and other deaf children. A transition pack is provided and parents are signposted to the school website where there is a dedicated area to our Deaf Learning Base. This has lots of useful information. If a deaf child leaves or joins our school at any other times of the year, similar arrangements as above can be put in place.
What is your role in supporting students who are deaf to prepare for secondary school?
[SENCO] My level of support would depend on the child. If they were a child in our Deaf Learning Base, my role would be possibly more of an admin role i.e. to book meetings, arrange handover of paperwork, book outside agencies in to assess children in preparation for annual reviews etc. If they were a deaf child in the mainstream, i would have more involvement such as; accompany the child on visits to the new setting, prepare paperwork for review, ensure assessments are up to date, liaise with parents etc.

Is there a specific transition process in your setting? If yes, please describe: a) What the process involves; b) Who is involved in the process.
Moving to Secondary Parents are given information about options for Secondary school. This will be information regarding their local mainstream, resources base or School for the Deaf. This means that the parents have all of the necessary information to make an informed choice. We arrange a group meeting so parents can ask any questions regarding the process and receive support for the application etc. As part of the process, they are given the school website address, school prospectus and visits are arranged. This can be done on an individual basis or as part of the Deaf Learning Base parent group. Once a school has been chosen, the SENCO and/or the Lead teacher of the Deaf, Sensory Support, Educational Psychologists are invited to attend the EHCP review. This is then an opportunity for an initial handover meeting. A Teacher of the Deaf and specialist teaching assistants will complete a range of assessments. This is so the secondary school can have an accurate picture of where the child is academically. We also ask the pupils to select work from across the curriculum which we send over to the new school. This showcases the pupil's achievements and interests. Closer to the time, the child's file is photocopied and sent to the new school. Secondary schools have also previously brought over current pupils so the children can ask any questions. This is something that works very well as the children sometimes ask questions to pupils that they might not necessarily ask to adults. We then provide a 6-8 week program that covers a range of topics such as; Self advocacy, worries, similarities and differences, Deaf and Proud etc. As part of our school interventions, we also run smile therapy sessions (NB – Information moved to Appendix 10).
What is your role in supporting students who are deaf to prepare for secondary school?
As Lead of the Deaf Learning Base, it is my role to support parents and pupils through the transition to secondary school. I plan and deliver sessions, arrange meetings with parents and liaise with a range of agencies. I also attend transition meetings with parents and pupils and deliver EHCP reviews.

Is there a specific transition process in your setting? If yes, please describe: a) What the process involves; b) Who is involved in the process.
<u>Moving to Secondary</u> Parents are provided with a range of information regarding their options for their child's secondary education, mainstream schools, resource bases and schools for the Deaf, to allow them to make an informed choice regarding the most appropriate secondary provision for their child. Parents are given contact details and website information for the relevant settings to then make arrangements to visit the schools and ask questions. Parents have previously arranged to go with other parents and then on a separate visit with their child to get a feel for the school. An EHCP review meeting will be scheduled to include educational psychologists, sensory support service, TOD lead, and SENCO, parents and later in the meeting the pupil, to finalise the choice of provision, change of placement and overall suitability. Pupil's files will be shared at a later date as well as samples of work and assessments undertaken to provide a clear and accurate picture of the pupil. In previous years we have been able to facilitate meetings between year 6 pupils and current secondary pupils, so they can ask questions about what secondary school is like. A transition program is delivered over a number of weeks looking at a range of areas including Deaf and proud and worries/concerns Year 6 pupils have had a weekly SMILE therapy intervention, which has a huge impact on their confidence and ability to communicate successfully and independently in a range of situations- knowing when to wait, how to greet people, asking for an item. They have an initial video recording, which they evaluate themselves, they rehearse the skills in a 'safe' role play environment over a number of weeks then have a final video recording and reevaluate their progress before sharing the footage with parents.
What is your role in supporting students who are deaf to prepare for secondary school?
Leading SMILE therapy sessions, answering questions about secondary school, signposting parents to secondary provision and encouraging contact and visits by parents through phone calls, face to face contact and communication logbooks. Sharing enthusiasm and excitement about the transition process with the pupils to help put the pupils at ease and start to think about the impending transition.

1. **Transition process**
    a. **What are the most important aspects of the transition process for you?**

SENCO-ASST: Making sure the parents have made an informed choice for their child's next school. That they understand the level of support to expect. That the children feel that they are as prepared as possible i.e. they understand what will happen if they forget to hand in work, how detentions work etc.

HLTA:

- Parents have been able to make their choice having received all the relevant support and information to do so
- Pupils are ready to make their transition emotionally and socially

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- Ensuring the parents and pupils have all of the information needed so they are able to make informed choices.
- Fundamentally, that the child is prepared socially, emotionally and academically and that they are happy with the move
- Transparency between all stakeholders so all aware of the amount of support and independence their child will have.

b. What are the most important aspects of the transition process for students?

SENCO-Asst: As above

HLTA: To know all about what secondary school will be like (both positive and negative) to have their questions answered

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: As above

c. What improvements, if any, could be made to the transition process?

N / A

Ratings

	Senco-Asst		HLTA		DRP Head / Lead ToD	
	Reg	Covid	Reg	Covid	Reg	Covid
The transition process is effective in preparing students for secondary school	5	4	5	4	5	4

d. Comments

SENCO-Asst: Obviously, not being able to go to the school is unfortunate, but it is easier to have meetings virtually, so the sharing of information at these times is better. Video tours are a good way of having that link too.

HLTA: Fortunately, parents had already been able to make visits to the relevant secondary settings before eCovid-19 lockdown restrictions. Due to the prolonged nature of the situation pupils were unable to attend the usual transition day in the Summer term.
All of our pupils were given access to a laptop, which allowed them to access virtual tours and receive information from the secondary schools including welcome packs and video call meeting form teachers.

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: We had done all of our visits prior to Covid-19. Unfortunately, the children were not able to visit for transition week. But all of our pupils were given a laptop which meant it was easy to have meetings virtually, set work etc. The sharing of information at these times was also easy to do. Lots of the schools had also provided virtual tours, welcome videos etc. This was

lovely for the pupils to share with their families.

e. Most effective / helpful aspects of process

SENCO-Asst: Close links with parents/carers
Close links with the new school (virtual meetings with the new SENCo/head of resource base/support staff that will be working with the deaf child)

HLTA: Building links with secondary schools
Relationships with parents throughout the process
Links with other agencies involved in transition.

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: Strong relationships with parents / carers.
Close links with the secondary schools
Strong links with multi-agencies
Visits and meetings with parents, pupils and new schools

f. Least effective / helpful aspects of process

HLTA: Each pupil is unique and because of this we can see what works for individual pupils through the process and reflect on what was useful or any elements we would change and adapt for future years

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: We reflect each year of the transition provision and take out things we do not feel have worked well. This year things worked extremely well and considering the restrictions in place the children and parents were well prepared for the transition to secondary.

g. Impact of Covid-19

SENCO-Asst: As the meetings now take place virtually, more people can be invited, there is not the time pressures of travelling between schools, arranging lengthy cover in class etc.

DRP Head /Lead Tod:

- Children were not able to meet their new peer group prior to starting school - this can ease any worries for the children regarding making friends.
- Due to virtual meetings, more people could be invited
- Less time constraints due to travelling, arranging cover etc.

HLTA:

- Not being able to attend their transition day/week and meeting their new peers and teachers
- Meeting being held virtually that could be set up easily and quickly without having to travel to a common venue

The transition process supports information sharing between primary and secondary school.	5	4	5	4	5	4

a. Comments

SENCO-Asst: S In the past the meetings were face to face and the children's SEND information was handed over then, now we have virtual meetings and the files are so large, we have to arrange for someone to either collect it or drop it off. SEND files are 'so large' they have to be collected or

dropped off 'now we have virtual meetings'

HLTA: Children and parents have been able to visit secondary provision gaining knowledge of what they have to offer. Virtual tours of schools have been available online.
Parents and pupils can then share their experiences/ questions / concerns with familiar staff in the Primary setting
Pupil's files will be passed on to the secondary provision providing a clear and accurate picture of the child's needs, strengths, attainment and progress.

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: Prior to Covid-19, meetings were completed face to face but because we start the transition process early, all children had managed to visit their new school at least once.

b. What information (if any) is shared to help support the student's transition into secondary school?

SENCO-Asst: The SEND history for the child, including; the latest assessment information, a pen portrait, attendance information etc.

HLTA: Assessments, pupil and parent voice questionnaires, examples of work, audiology details, SEND history

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- The SEND history of the child
- Assessment information
- Pupil voice
- Parent voice
- Examples of work
- Page profiles
- Audiological information

Students views are sought as part of the transition process	5	5	5	5	5	5

a. Comments:

HLTA: Pupil voice questionnaires

b. How are students supported to prepare for the move to secondary school?

HLTA: Transition sessions, pupil voice, attending meetings.

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: As previously mentioned pupils attend any meetings with the secondary school, attend visits, complete a pupil voice, receive a 6-8week program, Smile therapy sessions etc.

How do students feel about the move to secondary school?

SENCO-Asst: They are always apprehensive, as it is the biggest transition they will go through, to date. Most of the children have been with us since nursery. Some are ready when they reach Y6 and want to move on, but others are worried.

HLTA: We encourage them to engage the process as part of growing up and being ready for a new

and exciting chapter. They will of course have mixed emotions of excitement and nervousness. We tell them we will be in touch with their secondary school as we want to see how well they are getting along

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: Children experience a range of emotions. Feeling worried, excited, nervous etc. We work extremely hard on building positive relationships with our pupils so they (teachers too) also feel sad when they leave but we explain that they are ready for this move and we cannot wait to see what they go on to achieve in the future. I would like to think that the children at [primary school] leave feeling they are prepared to achieve anything that they put their mind to and although at times it may be difficult they are equipped with many tools to support and that they will take a little bit of [primary school] with them wherever they may go.

c) What aspects of secondary school are students looking forward to?

SENCO-Asst: Some children enjoy the thought of having lots of new lessons to study. Others enjoy moving to a school which their older siblings attend. Some look forward to the freedom of getting to school themselves (and having a mobile phone).

HLTA:

- Making new friends
- learning new subjects
- joining clubs

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- New friends
- New environment
- Learning new skills
- Lunch always seems to excite the children
- A new uniform
- Different after school clubs

Students have the opportunity to share any concerns about the move to secondary school.	5	5	5	5	5	5

a) Comments

SENCO-Asst: The Y6 staff are adept at talking about secondary school; what to expect, what concerns students have, what they can do to help themselves etc.

HLTA: Pupils are encouraged to talk about their secondary transition this makes it easy for them to share their feelings, thoughts and concerns and discuss them addressing concerns or misconceptions, but also sharing their excitement and anticipation

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: We always make time to talk about the move to secondary school. We have a communication log where parents can also tell us how their child is feeling. This is either done face to face, in lessons, interventions, assemblies, meetings or recently via online learning.

b) What aspects of secondary school have students expressed concerns about?

SENCO-Asst: Travelling to school, homework, tests, bullying, getting lost, detentions, making friends, not getting into the school of their choice, good friends going to different schools.

HLTA:

- forgetting their equipment
- getting a detention
- making new friends
- finding their way around the building

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- Getting lost
- Forgetting their things
- Friendship
- Travelling to school
- Bullying

c) Have students had the opportunity to (remotely) visit their new school?

SENCO-Asst: Yes
HLTA: Yes
LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: Yes

Students are well-prepared for the move to secondary.	5	5	5	5	5	5

a. **Comments**: N /A
b. What, if anything, could improve this? N / A

Secondary schools are well-prepared to support incoming students.	5	5	5	5	5	5

Comments:
SENCO-Asst: The schools that take up the opportunity to engage with us are well prepared, but not every school takes the chance to meet with us to receive information/ get to know the children.

HLTA: During covid-19 pupils have been able to meet teachers from their secondary school by video link. This has been a very reassuring and positive personalised experience for the pupils

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: We have strong links with local secondary schools, resource bases and schools for the deaf. In Birmingham, we also participate in a range of extracurricular activities where the children meet pupils from other schools. Sometimes, time restraints impact meetings or the amount of pupils a secondary school may be receiving. During covid s, some schools have sent videos, introducing teachers, lessons, virtual tours etc and this was fantastic for our pupils.

a. What, if anything, could improve this?

SENCO-Asst: During Covid, time has been less of an issue i.e. the receiving SENCo/support staff do not need to spend time travelling to us. If meetings could continue to be held virtually, i think this would help.

HLTA: continuation of video calls with parents and pupils particularly if pupils are arriving at school using local authority transport and while parents and visitors aren't allowed on school premises due to covid restrictions

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- Virtual meetings are a great way of ensuring all information is passed over
- Virtual tours, videos have been easily accessible to our families
- Sharing work, information via the google classroom has also been a positive. This is something I would like to continue.

Parents views are sought as part of the transition process.	5	5	5	5	5	5

a. **Comments:** N / A

b. **What aspects of secondary school do parents feel positive about?**

SENCO-Asst: If the parents have other children in the school, that is easier as the parents are familiar with the set up and know what to expect.

HLTA: Generally parents find the process quite positive experience, being able to visit the school and have their questions answered.

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: After visiting the school, attending meetings etc parents tend to feel quite positive about the whole process.

Parents are well supported during the transition process.	5	5	5	5	5	5

a. **Comments**:

SENCO-Asst: Parents have been supported with i.e. visits to Secondary schools, regular check ins to check they know timescales etc. Support with appeals, support with transport, support with choices (if a child has an ASD diagnosis, which school would be best placed to support their child after seeking advice from outside agencies).

HLTA:

- Filling in applications
- Transport applications
- Visits to secondary schools

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- Visits to secondary school
- Support with the application form
- Transport requests
- Access to virtual tours
- weekly check ins with the parents to see how they are all doing

b. **How are parents of students supported with regards to their child's move to secondary school?**
N /A

Parents have the opportunity to share concerns about their child's move to secondary school.	5	4	5	5	5	5

a. **Comments:**

SENCO-Asst: It is a bit more difficult since covid as parents have to book an appointment to talk to staff or enter the school site. In the past, a quick chat at the beginning or end of the day is not so

easy. We have made phone calls to parents (welfare checks) to check if everything is ok.

HLTA: We communicate with parents primarily through a written communication log as the majority of our pupils arrive at school on local authority transport from round the city, though phone calls are welcomed

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD: As most of our Deaf pupils are transported in to school a lot of the communication we have relies on a phone call, an email or a note in the communication log so not much has changed with regards to that.

b. What aspects of secondary school are parents concerned about?

SENCO-Asst: similar concerns that the children have

HLTA:

- travelling independently
- bullying
- new friendship groups

LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD:

- Transport
- Independence
- Amount of support the child will receive
- Is the school Deaf Aware (if attending local mainstream)
- bullying

Appendix 28: Transition programmes information

SMILE programme summary

[From staff questionnaires] The aims of Smile Therapy are for the children to:

- become actively responsible for their own communication and learning
- have range of strategies to prevent or repair communication breakdown in F2F situations
- develop strategies to clarify information received
- self-evaluate
- work with their peers in a group and be respectful
- develop socially appropriate behaviours e.g. greetings, to wait if another person is busy

Prior to Covid 19, the pupils had sessions focusing on asking for information, visiting a shop and paying for an item, visiting a cafe and crossing the road safely. We had planned to do a train or bus journey in preparation for secondary school but unfortunately this was not possible.

A unit of work focuses on:

- complex communication skills are broken down into manageable components.
- skills are taught explicitly.
- students are assessed (using camcorder) on how they manage in a specific communication situation. They know what they are aiming for and why. The 'what's in it for me' factor is high.
- a student-centred approach ensures that the needs of the pupils determines the pace of session.
- skills are practiced through role play with sufficient time given for them to become established.

Children made great progress and their self-advocacy skills improved dramatically.

HLTA: '[*It] … has had a huge impact on their confidence and ability to communicate successfully and independently in a range of situations – knowing when to wait, how to greet people, asking for an item. They have an initial video recording, which they evaluate themselves, they rehearse the skills in a 'safe' role play environment over a number of weeks then have a final video recording and re-evaluate their progress before sharing the footage with parents*.'

Key Reference: Schamroth, K., & Lawlor, E. (2017). *Smile therapy: Functional communication and social skills for Deaf students and students with special needs*. Taylor & Francis.

Key website: https://www.smiletherapytraining.com/

Transition programme outline

6–8-week pre-transition programme. Online sessions comprised a short slide show, incorporating a review of the previous session, brief information slides, and reflection activities with written English, images, and short BSL videos. Topics include:

- Deaf and Proud,
- Feelings about Secondary School
- Self-advocacy
- Worries / concerns,
- Similarities and Differences.

Appendix 29: Types and functions of information

Who	What	Why
Primary School (PS) + Students	Pupil voice	'Pupils are encouraged to talk about their secondary transition this makes it easy for them to share their feelings, thoughts and concerns and discuss them addressing concerns or misconceptions, but also sharing their excitement and anticipation.' (HLTA) To obtain student views To help students prepare for move
	General SS information	(*What is the most important aspect of the transition process for students*?) 'To know all about what secondary school will be like (both positive and negative) to have their questions answered.' (HLTA)
	Learning activities	'Sharing work, information via the google classroom has also been a positive.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)
PS + Parents	Secondary school options	'…to allow them to make an informed choice regarding the appropriate secondary provision for their child.' (HLTA) '…[so] that the parents have all of the necessary information to make an informed choice.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)
	Secondary school contact information; website; prospectus	'…for [parents] make arrangements to visit the schools and ask questions.' (HLTA)
	Communication log	'We communicate with parents primarily through a written communication log as the majority of our pupils arrive at school on local authority transport from round the city, though phone calls are welcomed.' [HLTA] 'We always make time to talk about the move to secondary school. We have a communication log where parents can also tell us how their child is feeling. This is either done face to face, in lessons, interventions, assemblies, meetings or recently via online learning.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)
PS + Secondary schools	Academic / assessment information SEND file	'The school will have completed a range of assessments so that the new school has an accurate picture of where the child is academically.' (SENCO-Asst) '…to provide a clear and accurate picture of the pupil.' (HLTA) '… so the secondary school can have an accurate picture of where the child is academically.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD) 'Pupils files will be passed on to the secondary provision providing a clear and accurate picture of the child's needs, strengths, attainment and progress.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)

	Examples of student work	'We also ask the pupils to select work from across the curriculum which we send over to the new school. This showcases the pupil's achievements and interests.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)
	Audiology details Attendance information Pen portrait / page profile Pupil and parent voice questionnaires	Additional suggestions in response to the question: *What information, if any, is shared to help support the student's transition into secondary* school?
Secondary schools + students / parents	Transition booklet	'Being a primary school, they are given a transition booklet with information about the school, [lessons?] times of day that he would have filled in.' (CSW)
	Virtual tours, welcome packs	'All of our pupils were given access to a laptop, which allowed them to access virtual tours and receive information from the secondary schools including welcome packs and video call meeting from teachers.' (HLTA) 'Virtual tours of schools have been available online. Parents and pupils can then share their experiences/ questions / concerns with familiar staff in the Primary setting (HLTA) 'During covid s, some schools have sent videos, introducing teachers, lessons, virtual tours etc and this was fantastic for our pupils.' (LEAD TOD / DRP HEAD)
	General SS information	'… [the SS] they sent an email with school directions and some other information.' (Bilal's mother)
Students + peers / siblings	General SS information	'…, his brother is already at the school so obviously there is a lot of information from his older brother, so he has obviously told him a lot about {SS1}, so he had some prior information to start with, obviously.' (CSW)
Parents + schools		I had the option to email about queries or concerns. (Emma's mother) '...; as we cannot go in it is all phone and email' (Kashif's mother) 'I asked [the TA] about his friends or if there was anything he was not telling me and the TA said she will keep an eye out…' (Kashif's mother)

Appendix 30: Staff accounts of school selection process

SENCO-Asst

- Parents are given information about options for Secondary, whether that be their child moving to a mainstream, resources base or special school. When parents show a preference, they are given info for that school, visits can be arranged, close contact with parents is maintained so they have all the information they need and feel prepared (such as transport arrangements).

HLTA

- Parents are provided with a range of information regarding their options for their child's secondary education, mainstream schools, resource bases and schools for the Deaf, to allow them to make an informed choice regarding the most appropriate secondary provision for their child. Parents are given contact details and website information for the relevant settings to then make arrangements to visit the schools and ask questions. Parents have previously arranged to go with other parents and then on a separate visit with their child to get a feel for the school. An EHCP review meeting will be scheduled to include Educational psychologists, sensory support service, TOD lead, and SENCO, parents and later in the meeting the pupil, to finalise the choice of provision, change of placement and overall suitability.

DRP Head / Lead ToD

- Parents are given information about options for Secondary school. This will be information regarding their local mainstream, resources base or School for the Deaf. This means that the parents have all of the necessary information to make an informed choice. We arrange a group meeting so parents can ask any questions regarding the process and receive support for the application etc. As part of the process, they are given the school website address, school prospectus and visits are arranged. This can be done on an individual basis or as part of the Deaf Learning Base parent group. Once a school has been chosen, the SENCO and/or the Lead teacher of the Deaf, Sensory Support, Educational Psychologists are invited to attend the EHCP review. This is then an opportunity for an initial handover meeting .

Appendix 31: DRP deaf awareness and communication policies

DRP Prospectus: promoting deaf awareness
All children attending the school have access to BSL as an additional language, including: • Mainstream BSL Introduction lessons • All DRP children working towards Level 1 Mainstream teachers are trained in deaf awareness ToDs teach individual pupil programmes, and teach alongside MS teachers School-wide Deaf Awareness week and activities

DRP Prospectus: Communication Policy
Our purpose is to provide specialist staff, equipment, resources and teaching methods / strategies that will support the pupils ability to acquire language, enabling them to communicate effectively. We have a flexible, child centred language and Communication policy. We incorporate a variety of communication methods to ensure that the student has full access to the national curriculum. All mainstream classrooms are acoustically treated with sound field systems and Babble guards. Supporting spoken English: • Develop children's language and communication skills by providing flexible support. Encourage use of residual hearing • Encourage clear speaking where able • Lip reading, finger spelling and signs to support acquisition of English • Radio aid to further access speech and environmental sounds • Opportunities to develop listening and speech skills in class and through small group work

Appendix 32: DRP home-school partnership

Prospectus / Website Quotes
We believe a child's education is the joint responsibility of parents and teachers. Therefore cooperative home school relations will enhance everything our school does. A positive supportive and genuine partnership between home and school is vital. Home / school links comprise of a 3-way partnership [diagram: learner-teacher-parent triangle]. Home links encourage the success of each child, with parents having a positive role in supporting the work of the school, whilst teachers help to foster understanding and openness in the link with the home. It is vitally important to maintain regular contact with parents; time must be set aside for this. Parents require regular information about progress and performance as well as having access to professional advice and counselling. interpreters are available for those families who require them. DVD and photographic materials can also be invaluable resources to indicate progress, especially for our less linguistically able children. Our policy is to welcome parents at any time whether socially or educationally. Parents are encouraged to keep in contact with their child's staff via the communication log, via e-mail or by telephone as often as they wish. We welcome and encourage parental support in all school activities from reviews, parent evenings to school assemblies. "The school even supports me with my worries and concerns. They keep me up to date with the communication diary that she has" (parent). Many of the children attending the resource base or travel to and from school some distance from their home and local environment. Being away from the locality can mean isolation for all concerned and we aim to minimise this possibility. Home visits are arranged for those families who find contact directly with the school difficult.
School activities
• Parent workshops (Language Development; Inspire) to support parent-child communication. • Weekly (EY) stay and play. • Termly hearing aid maintenance drop-in sessions • Termly paediatrician clinic • Coffee mornings