

**Applied Educational and Child Psychology Professional Practitioner Research
Reports**

By

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Section	Page
Chapter 1	Introductory chapter	ix
Chapter 2	PPR1: Raising literacy attainment in schools for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).	1 - 56
	What are the driving and restraining forces for one secondary SEBD school?	
	Abstract	1
	1 Introduction	1
	1.1 Raising Literacy Attainment	1
	1.2 Young Offenders	8
	1.3 SEBD Provision	11
	1.4 Purpose of the Study	14
	2 Methods	15
	2.1 Setting and Context	15
	2.2 Participants	17
	2.3 Data Collection Procedures	18
	3 Findings	20
	3.1 Force Field Analysis	23
	4 Discussion	26
	4.1 Emerging Issues	26
	4.1.1 National level	26
	4.1.2 Organisational level	27
	4.1.3 Child level	29
	4.2 Limitations and Future directions	31
	4.3 Conclusions	33
	List of references	34
Appendices		
	A1 Semi-structured interview questions	41

	A2 Findings from the semi-structured interviews	42
	A3 Raising Achievement: Reflections on two WebCT discussions	51
Tables		
	Table 1: Aims of the Framework for Secondary English	2
	Table 2: The Four Strands of the English Curriculum	4
	Table 3: Findings from the semi-structured interviews	20-22
Figures		
	Figure 1: Force Field Analysis (Lewin, 1951)	25
Chapter 2	PPR2: Developing a workbook to prepare children to visit a family member in Her Majesty's Prison	57 – 163
	Abstract	57
	1 Introduction	57
	1.1 Background	57
	1.2 Interventions	63
	1.3 Contact: Visiting Prison	68
	1.4 Purpose of the Study	72
	2 Methods	73
	2.1 Setting and Context	73
	2.2 Ethical Considerations	77
	2.3 Participants	80
	2.4 Data collection procedures	81
	3 Results	85
	4 Discussion	88
	4.1 Workbooks	88
	4.1.1 Inclusion of rules/ procedures/ prison specific information	88
	4.1.2 Use of drawings and pictures and child-friendly layout	89
	4.1.3 Emotional aspects	90
	4.2 The Educational Psychologist's role in gaining children's views	92

4.3 Methodological challenges and future directions	94
5 Conclusion	96
List of References	98
Appendices	
A1 Workbook for pre-school aged children	108
A2 Workbook for primary school-aged children	122
A3 Workbook for secondary-aged children	139
A4 Information and Consent Letter for Parents	156
A5 Consent checklist	158
A6 Findings from the semi-structured interviews	159
Table	
Table 1: Discussion of the five main resilience frameworks	61-62
Table 2: Four interventions to protect children from the effects of parental separation through imprisonment (adapted from Murray and Farrington, 2006, p725)	64
Table 3: Key points to ensure a child's authentic and deliberative voice is heard (adapted from Archard and Skivenes, 2009, p393)	68
Table 4: Aims of the research	73
Table 5: Categories of prisoners explained	75
Table 6: Goals of the Think Family Project	76
Table 7: Ethical Considerations (BPS, 2009)	77-79
Table 8: Profile of child participants	80
Table 9: Profile of adult participants	81
Table 10: Questions used in the interviews with the children and parents/carers	82
Table 11: Sequence of questions in an interview (adapted from Robson, 2002, p277)	83
Table 12: Themes arising from thematic analysis of the interview data	87
Table 13: Considerations when interpreting the data collected	95
Chapter 3	
PPR3: Developing task persistence in Year 1 children	164 – 218
Abstract	164

1 Introduction	164
1.1 Superscale Points	164
1.2 Developing Persistence	167
1.3 Specific Praise	174
1.4 Purpose of the study	178
2 Methods	179
2.1 Setting and Context	179
2.2 Participants	179
2.3 Ethical Considerations	181
2.4 Data Collection Procedures	184
3 Results	192
3.1 Pre-Intervention results	192
3.2 Post-Intervention results	193
3.3. Comparison of pre- and post-intervention results	194
4 Discussion	196
4.1 Discussion of the results and the effect increasing task persistence may have upon children's learning in the classroom	196
4.2 Implications for the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs)	199
4.3 Limitations and future directions	201
4.4 Conclusion	203
List of References	205

Appendices

A1 Overview of EYFS scale points	214
A2 Consent letters for parents	215
A3 Children's consent sheet	217
A4 Powerpoint presentation handout	206
A5 Staff suggestions	See library
A6 Collation of staff ideas	copy of
A7 BAS-II subtest instructions	thesis
A8 t-distribution table	

Table

Table 1: The six areas of learning and development (DCSF, 2008)	165
Table 2: Phases of data collection in Hamilton and Gordon's (1978) study	175
Table 3: Aims of this research study	179
Table 4: Participant characteristics	180
Table 5: Ethical considerations (BPS, 2009 and HPC, 2008)	182-183
Table 6: Strategies used by the teachers during the four-week intervention period	185
Table 7: Past research methodology used to investigate task persistence	187-189
Table 8: Results from the pre-intervention activities using the Pattern Construction subtest of the BAS-II	192
Table 9: Results from the post-intervention activities using the Pattern Construction subtest of the BAS-II	193
Table 10: Comparison of results from the pre- and post- test Pattern Construction activity	194
Table 11: Related t-test figures	195

Figure

Figure 1: Formula for related t-test	194
--------------------------------------	-----

Chapter 4 **PPR 4: Using a Realistic Evaluation Framework to evaluate a six-week behaviour course**

218-303

Abstract	218
1. Introduction	218
1.1 What strategies can be used to improve pupils' behaviour?	219
1.2 What particular elements of an intervention help to promote positive behaviour in pupils?	220
1.3 Evaluation methods	228
1.4 Realistic Evaluation	232
1.5 Purpose of the study	243
2 Method	244
2.1 Setting and Context	244

2.2 Participants	245
2.3 Data Collection Procedures	246
2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews	247
2.3.2. Unstructured observation	249
2.3.3 Questionnaires	255
2.4 Ethical considerations	259
3. Results	262
3.1 Semi-structured interviews with pupils	262
3.2 Observation of Focus	265
3.3 Staff Questionnaires	267
4. Discussion	269
4.1 Discussion of the findings from the collected data	269
4.1.1 What does the data conclude about the evaluation questions?	269
4.1.2 Identified C, M, O's	277
4.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists	281
4.3 Methodological challenges and future directions	283
5. Conclusion	285
List of References	287

Appendices

A1 Questionnaire for Teachers	294
A2 Consent letter for parents for their children to be interviewed	295
A3 Consent from children to be interviewed	297
A4 Consent from parents for observation	299
A5 Observation notes	See library copy of thesis
A6 Teacher questionnaire responses	
A7 Information booklets for staff and parents about Focus	300

Table

Table 1: The focus for the three projects in Fletcher-Campbell's (2001) meta-analysis	224
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Table 2: A Typology of Evaluation Models (Hansen, 2005, p449)	230
Table 3: Description of CMOs synthesised from Pawson and Tilley (1997)	236
Table 4: Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) RE process (p444)	238
Table 5: The key points from the identified C, M, Os	239
Table 6: CMOs, identified through the literature review, that promote positive behaviour	240
Table 7: Aims of the research	244
Table 8: Pupil participant characteristics	246
Table 9: Sequence of questions in an interview (adapted from Robson, 202, p277)	248
Table 10: Advantages and disadvantages to using unstructured observation	251
Table 11: Advantages and disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires (Robson, 2002, p233)	257
Table 12: Ethical considerations (BPS, 2009 and HPC, 2008)	259
Table 13: Answers given in the semi-structured interviews with pupils	262
Table 14: Main points from the observation of Focus	266
Table 15: Main points identified from the staff questionnaires	268
Table 16: How the data collected answers the evaluation questions set	270
Table 17: Identified CMOs from collected data	277

Figures

Figure 1: The realist explanation (Robson, 2002, p31)	233
Figure 2: The realist evaluation cycle (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p85)	237

Introductory Chapter

Structure and content

This volume of work comprises the second part of a two-volume thesis, which forms the written requirements for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. Volume Two consists of four professional practice reports (PPRs) that exhibit certain aspects of my experiences as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) employed by a local authority (LA), during years two and three of the doctorate course.

Cameron (2006) discussed five distinctive factors whereby Educational Psychologists have a distinct perspective and make a unique contribution to the children, young people, their families and the community with whom the work. The five factors are:

1. Adopting a *psychological perspective* of the nature of human problems.
2. Drawing on the knowledge base of psychology to uncover *mediating variables*, which may provide an explanation of why certain events may be related.
3. Unraveling *problem dimensions* using sophisticated models, which can be used to navigate through a sea of complex human data and to provide a simple but useful map of the interaction between people factors and aspects of their living/ learning environments.
4. Using information from the research and theoretical database in psychology to recommend *evidence-based* strategies for change.
5. Promoting innovative concepts or *big ideas* which are underpinned by psychological research evidence and theory and which can enable clients to spot potential opportunities for positive change.

(Cameron, 2006, p293)

The four professional practice reports (PPRs) within this volume provide examples of how psychology has been applied to school settings and community settings to promote some of the factors described above. PPR 1, 3, and 4 describe 3 small-scale studies that have been conducted within school settings to address an identified need by the school staff and visiting Educational Psychologist (EP) and PPR 2 describes a project to support the children of prisoners.

All four PPRs use information from research and from the theoretical database within psychology to recommend evidence-based strategies for change and future development. In PPR 1 the use of force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) is illustrated in order for the constraints and facilitators on raising literacy attainment in one Secondary SEBD school to be highlighted. Findings from semi-structured interviews are discussed in terms of the key challenges to raising literacy standards, and how these challenges may be addressed at a national, organisational and child level so that literacy interventions can be effectively used and embedded within the school.

The development of a workbook to prepare and debrief children and young people on their first visit to see a family member in prison is explained in PPR 2. This was an area of interest for the author and commissioned by the Local Authority Think-Family Project. By applying a psychological perspective to try to understand how to reduce stress for children and young people and their families around visiting a prison, the development of a set of materials that aimed to provide children and young people with clear, honest explanations about what happened during the visit was achieved. The work promoted the '*big idea*' of supporting children and young people and alleviating their stress around the context of the

prison environment and helped them develop potential opportunities for positive change around visiting time.

The small-scale study outlined in PPR 3 was negotiated from an area of need identified by the SENCo within the targeted primary school. Task persistence was felt to be an area of weakness for the Year 1 children and therefore, using a psychological perspective and applying research from psychology an intervention was developed and evaluated, using pre- and post- intervention measures, to promote task persistence.

Finally, PPR 4 describes an evaluation of a six-week behaviour course within a secondary school. A Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) framework was used to support the evaluation as the school staff wanted to know what approaches worked, in what circumstances, and for whom in the behaviour course in order to develop a future behaviour course for older pupils.

Local Authority Context of the Work

The educational psychology service (EPS) in which I was employed as a TEP at the time of writing the PPRs for this volume, is part of a large, urban local authority (LA). The city has high areas of deprivation with unemployment rates at twice the national average (Brighter Futures Strategy 2007, City Council), and also more affluent areas with their own associated challenges. Within the authority there are 434 schools comprising 302 primary, 76 secondary, 28 special, 25 nursery and three pupil referral units. Half of the pupils in schools are from minority ethnic communities (Ofsted, 2007).

The EPS uses a consultation model of service delivery for its work with schools and other education settings. Wagner (2000) presents the following definition of consultation:

Consultation in an EPS context aims to bring about difference at the level of the individual child, the group/class or the organisation/whole school level. It involves a process in which concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint problem exploration, assessment, intervention and review (Wagner, 2000, p.11).

The central feature of the consultation model within the EPS is a 'plan-do-review' cycle.

Each EP has an allocation of schools, grouped in clusters, to which they provide a service through a pattern of regular visiting. In addition to their role as a visiting EP to their schools, early years cases and 'non routine' (out of authority) cases are allocated on a rota basis.

Following the creation of integrated children's services in the local authority, the EPS was increasingly involved in multi-agency work, particularly with pre-school children. EPs were also involved in various projects alongside colleagues in a range of settings such as social care, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Looked After Children Service (LACES) and the Prison Service. The most notable effect, however, upon the role of the EP within the authority is the change in service delivery. The EPS is moving away from a free service to schools to a 'bought in' traded service and at the point I left the authority, the impact upon the role of the EP was in the early stages of being experienced and negotiated with schools, parents and other professionals.

Reflections

The research based professional practice reports have provided opportunities to develop research skills, which are integral in informing an evidence-based approach to EP practice. In an increasingly multi-professional environment, EPs need to develop a distinct

professional identity and MacKay (2000) and Cameron (2005), amongst others, have argued that evidence-based practice may be crucial in establishing a distinct psychological contribution. The professional practice reports have enabled the development of research skills such as; the critical appraisal of existing literature, planning and conducting rigorous research including ethical considerations, employing and evaluating a variety of data collection techniques and analysis methods and the reporting and interpreting of outcomes. These skills will be used within future work at the individual, group, family and organisational levels, as described by Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecosystemic approach.

All four PPRs used a range of methodological designs, which was a deliberate decision, in order to develop applied research skills. Farrell et al (2006) made a recommendation that EPs should 'expand and develop their activities in different areas where their skills and knowledge can be used to greater effect, e.g. in group and individual therapy, staff training and in systems work' (p11). It is hoped that the four PPRs within this volume demonstrate this application of psychological skills and knowledge in a wide range of activities and settings.

Finally, undertaking the practice reports has developed knowledge and understanding of a range of specific topic areas and has led to a consideration of the need to maintain this approach to case work following qualification. This is in order to ensure that knowledge of current research informs creative and innovative practice, that is also reflective and ethical, so that it can contribute to positive outcomes for children, young people and their families with whom I work.

It is hoped that some of the PPRs within this volume may contribute to areas of developing practice at the organisation level within the EPS in which I was employed, prompt wider discussion and reflection among EP colleagues, and serve as an example of the breadth and depth of the role of educational psychologists in the context of ongoing debate about their value and unique contribution. This final point is particularly pertinent to the current review of SEN and disability, including the role and training of EPs, that is being undertaken by the Department for Education (DfE) within the Green Paper (DfE, 2011). As the DfE consult about their proposals regarding SEN assessment and outcomes, it is hoped that examples of research, such as those presented in this volume of work, can illustrate the diverse role of the EP.

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Raising literacy attainment in schools for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). What are the driving and restraining forces for one secondary SEBD school?

Abstract

This paper considers the literature regarding raising literacy attainment in schools for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and what the driving and restraining forces are for one secondary SEBD school. This study explores, through a qualitative methodology, the perspectives of staff linked to one SEBD secondary school in a large local authority in the West Midlands. Force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) was used to identify the factors perceived to drive and constrain the school in attempting to raise literacy standards. Findings from semi-structured interviews are discussed in terms of the key challenges to raising literacy standards, and how these challenges may be addressed at a national, organisational and child level so that literacy interventions can be effectively used and embedded within the school.

1. Introduction

1.1 Raising literacy attainment

Attainment is defined, for the purposes of this paper, as acquiring skills in order to make progress in the National Curriculum. Raising children and young peoples'

attainment in literacy is a key focus for the Government. In 1997, a National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was introduced in England, with an initial focus on primary schools and then the pilot of the secondary 'framework' in 2000.

The aims of the Framework for Secondary English can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Aims of the Framework for Secondary English

Aims
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• support schools in raising standards and closing attainment gaps through guidance on planning and teaching to ensure effective progression• promote continuity and progression from Key Stage 2 through to the end of Key Stage 4 in line with the new programmes of study• provide a basis for target setting and promote high and consistent expectations for the achievement of all pupils• give a sharper focus to tracking pupils' progress by integrating existing guidance on assessment• emphasise the place of personalised learning, thinking skills and functional skills in the English curriculum• provide a flexible electronic format to support planning for progression• build on existing National Strategies resources and further develop guidance, especially on the new areas of the curriculum

(www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/NationalStrategies)

Despite this new strategy, Goodwyn and Findlay (2003) highlighted their concerns about the lack of resources schools had to accommodate the NLS. They were also

concerned about the 'fundamentalist tendency of the discourse of the policy' (p33) which they felt could restrict and constrain all schools, especially those with challenging and diverse contexts such as SEBD schools, and limit the attainment of children and young people. In the school year 2000-2001 a new English Framework was piloted in 200 schools within 17 priority local authorities. It followed the word, sentence and text level pattern of the primary framework but emphasised text level. It included revision objectives, speaking and listening and drama plus thinking skills, as well as following the English curriculum orders for Year 7. Following on from the 2001 framework, the current Framework for secondary English was developed and implemented. According to the DCSF (2009) National Strategies guidance online, the renewed framework for Secondary English provides 'guidance on planning and teaching to ensure effective progression. It is designed to support schools in raising standards and closing attainment gaps, with the particular aim of increasing the proportion of pupils who make two levels of progress within a key stage and who attain grade C or above at GCSE.'

The new objectives for the English curriculum are now:

- expressed as objectives for pupils' learning;
- based on new programmes of study;
- extended to Key Stage 4 (and include a number of higher level extension objectives related to more complex and challenging learning); and
- organised by the three language modes of Speaking and listening, Reading and Writing plus a fourth section, Language (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: The Four Strands of the English Curriculum

Strands
<i>Speaking and listening</i>
1 Listening and responding
2 Speaking and presenting
3 Group discussion and interaction
4 Drama, role-play and performance
<i>Reading</i>
5 Reading for meaning: understanding and responding to print, electronic and multi-modal texts
6 Understanding the author's craft
<i>Writing</i>
7 Composition: generating ideas, planning and drafting
8 Composition: shaping and constructing language for expression and effect
9 Conventions: drawing on conventions and structures
<i>Language</i>
10 Exploring and analysing language

(<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>)

It is envisaged that English teachers will deliver the framework but that the links throughout the curriculum will be made explicit to all staff so that all curriculum areas will strengthen pupils' literacy development. The framework includes cross-curricular objectives as it is acknowledged that all English teachers will teach skills that other

curriculum areas will draw on. It appears the key message from the new framework is development of literacy skills across the curriculum to raise pupils' achievement.

In addition to the Government's focus on the English curriculum, there is a drive to raise achievement through evaluation and data collection. In 2002 the Department for Education and Skills published a document entitled 'Releasing Potential, Raising Attainment: Managing Data in Secondary Schools,' which aimed to encourage schools to:

'Combine analysis of pupil performance data with a range of pedagogic skills to devise individual programmes which maximise each student's attainment.'

(DfES, 2002. p3)

This was based on guidance published by OFSTED in 2002 that stated good schools are those which 'use assessment evidence well to set high goals for pupils and challenging targets for the school and for individual staff' (DfES, 2002. p3) Data management is seen as 'a key element in striving to raise attainment, rather than as a means to justify weak performance or reinforce complacency' (DfES, 2002. p3). Using data can be a way of encouraging reflective practice, collaborative problem solving and raising standards of teaching and learning. Although the guidance contains no research evidence or case study data to reinforce why using data can impact upon attainment in schools, the underlying principle of using evidence-based practice fits with the ethics and practice of an Educational Psychologist (BPS, 2009.

p7), who aims to support schools in all aspects of teaching and learning and could be a key agency for schools to work with in raising attainment.

Developing this focus on raising attainment further, recently the 'National Strategies: Progression Guidance 2009-2010' was published by the DCSF. The purpose of this guidance is to raise expectations of learners with special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities (SEN/LDD). National comparative data are used for English, mathematics and science to inform professionals' expectations and to help set realistic, yet stretching targets for this group of learners. It is argued that this in turn will help to develop a clear understanding of what constitutes good progress for pupils with SEN/LDD and therefore help to raise attainment.

Although curriculum and data management guidance forms the foundation of literacy within schools, it is also essential that the teaching itself and the application of the curriculum is scrutinised. Lewis and Wray (2000) report that during the Autumn of 1997, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 49 secondary schools identified as being involved in local, regional or national literacy development interventions as well as to those having a more general focus on language across the curriculum. These visits sought to identify 'what active measures successful secondary schools take to improve literacy standards, for all pupils but particularly for those whose literacy levels on entry are low' (Department for Education and Employment, 1997b. para 1). Literacy was defined beyond a simple functional definition and it highlighted the importance of literacy to the world of school, to life within wider society and in the personal growth of the individual; 'It enables pupils to gain access to the subjects

studied in school, to read for information and pleasure, and to communicate effectively. Poor levels of literacy impact negatively on what pupils can do and how they see themselves.' (DfEE 1997b. para 3). The report also stressed the role of teachers other than English teachers in supporting literacy which is reflected in the current English framework for schools.

Seven key conclusions were drawn in the report which included:

- Considerable efforts are often put into literacy development but many schools do not monitor or evaluate the outcomes of their efforts.
- Approaches that involve curriculum areas other than English, together with work done in English departments, are more likely to be successful than initiatives that are confined to English and/or SEN departments.
- Literacy development is inextricably connected with the development of the whole person and is linked to students' perceptions of themselves and their place in the world.

These conclusions highlight not only the importance of literacy in all aspects of a child's school and life but also the complex nature of how to raise literacy attainment. One of the impacts of not raising literacy attainment, however, on young people has been raised by Stephenson (2005). He highlights areas where there appear to be significant links between education and offending by young people and these include:

- educational under-achievement, particularly with respect to literacy and numeracy; and
- detachment from mainstream education.

The Youth Justice Board commissioned ECOTEC Consulting to undertake an audit of education and training provision for young people in custody on Detention and Training Orders. ECOTEC (2001) highlighted that it is likely the above aspects have complex and negative inter-relationships. For example, the barrier to learning represented by low levels of basic educational attainment (in particular in relation to literacy and numeracy) is likely to be a significant factor in pushing young people out of formal learning. Once outside mainstream education a young person's attainment may fall even further behind and ECOTEC warned they then may become more seriously involved with youth offending services.

1.2 Young Offenders

Findings from the Youth Justice Board's (2003) review of the education and training experiences of young people on detention and training orders (DTOs) indicated that:

- Over 50 per cent of young people on DTOs have literacy and numeracy levels below those of the average 11 year old.
- Some 19 per cent were functioning at or below the level of the average seven year old in literacy and 31 per cent below that level in numeracy.

- 80 per cent of young people receiving custodial sentences had no qualifications.

Furthermore offenders were also identified by the DfES as a group requiring attention 'as a matter of urgency' (DfES, 2003) because their numeracy and literacy skills are under-developed compared with those of their peers.

Ball and Connolly (2000) were given access to 270 pre-sentence reports requested by courts for a cohort of 10-15 year olds from four urban/inner city areas in Inner London, the Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East. Courts sentencing defendants under the age of 18 are required to consider pre-sentence reports; the purpose of these is to assist the court by providing information and analysis of offence, offender and other related matters. If the report is on a school aged defendant it must address their educational situation (Home Office, 1995). The quality of school-based information provided within the reports varied; however they did reveal that 85% of the defendants (N=229) were perceived to have had problems at school, and in 25% of cases (N=67) they were reported to have had chronic multiple difficulties. Only 19% (N=48) were referred to as having a good record of school attendance. Where the information was provided it suggested that 73% were on the roll of a mainstream school, 22% were on the roll of a special school and in 5% of cases the category of school was unclear. The majority of defendants (58% of the total sample) were reported to have an emotional and behavioural difficulty, which is recognised as a special educational need in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).

In their interim research report Hurry et al (2005) explored ways of improving the literacy and numeracy of young offenders (YOs) with under-developed basic skills and looked at the impact literacy and numeracy have on economic activity and offending over time. 199 young people, between 15 to 18 years of age, participated in the study. The data were drawn from interviews with young people, the results of their Basic Skills Agency initial assessment, observations and more general work with educators at the participating sites. Because their report was an interim report the data presented, however, were largely descriptive in nature and therefore open to interpretation and subjective analysis. From their findings Hurry et al (2005) gave recommendations for teaching YOs and stated that 'education departments need to reflect on their learning objectives for basic skills' (p11). The recommendations included:

- 1) If learners can be convinced that learning will be useful, educational barriers may be more easily overcome. One strategy may be to offer a clear rationale at the outset (one that makes sense to the learners) for the value and relevance of improving numeracy and literacy skills.
- 2) Resources need to match learners' interests as well as to ensure curriculum coverage.
- 3) A significant motivating force for these young people is getting a job. Embedding basic skills within a vocational context will tend to be more appealing than a formal literacy or numeracy curriculum.

- 4) It is good practice to use different teaching methods within lessons, particularly with young people who dislike formal education and have a tendency to be restless in class.
- 5) Learning needs to be fun: motivation is critical.
- 6) There is a need to recognise differences in levels of ability and this should have implications for how teachers teach.

(Hurry et al, 2005. p11-12)

The high proportion of YOs with SEBD found in Ball and Connolly's (2000) research suggests that it may be appropriate to relate the above recommendations to the education of young people with SEBD and facilitate a rise in their attainments in literacy.

1.3 SEBD provision

The latest national statistics on pupils with Special Educational Needs produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families were released on 25th June 2008. They showed that 30,600 children aged between 2 and 19 years of age had a Statement of Special Educational Needs with the primary need identified as emotional, and behavioural difficulties (EBD) (14.3% of Statements).

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), paragraph 7:60 describes behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) as 'a learning difficulty where children and young people demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties such as:

being withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing.’ Learning difficulties can arise for children and young people with BESD because their difficulties can affect their ability to cope with school routines and relationships. In the DCSF (2008) guidance it states that:

‘All schools should strive to develop and deliver their school curriculum in ways that match their aims, meet the varied needs of their pupils and fulfil statutory requirements. The curriculum in all schools should be balanced and broadly-based and provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve...’ (paragraph 109)

In order for children and young people with SEBD to attain in school the curriculum must be ‘appropriate and relevant’ and should be ‘carefully sequenced to build on previous learning and ensure progression. They should emphasise personal development and essential life skills’ (DCSF, 2008. p28), similar to the recommendations made by Hurry et al (2005) above. However, Daniels and Cole (2002) suggest that ‘an essentially mainstream framework for inspection of special schools (Ofsted, 1994) (has) brought about an enforced revolution in many EBD schools who (are) no longer able to prioritise personal and social education’ (p322). Daniels and Cole (2002) feel that ‘through interpreting Ofsted wishes, EBD schools tend to adopt mainstream, specialist subject-oriented timetables in place of more flexible topic-based approaches that would allow more easily for informal personal, social and emotional work’ (p322). Cole et al’s (1998) review of EBD literature reports the preference of many pupils for practical and experiential rather than abstract and formal learning, highlighting the possible threat to pupils’ attainment of using more formal learning in SEBD schools.

To add to this Wagner et al (2005) aimed to provide a national perspective of children and youth with emotional disturbances in special education in America. The data in this study were collected from telephone interviews with parents of sample members of two longitudinal studies conducted in 2000 and 2001: the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) and measures of students' reading and mathematics abilities from direct assessments of SEELS students. Although the sample relates to the American education system there are interesting points that can be considered in relation to SEBD education in the UK. Amongst their findings Wagner et al (2005) gave a reminder that;

'Children 'bring to the table' their past experiences with school and other service systems that helped shape their current performance, including such factors as the stability of their school environment, the onset of their support services, and their parents' involvement in and satisfaction with their educational and service experiences.' (p80).

They also concluded that 'at the practice level, there needs to be an increase in effective curriculum (both academic and social/behavioral) and effective instructional strategies to implement this curriculum' (p91). The 'reciprocal relationship between behavior challenges and academic achievement' was highlighted and the need for education staff to recognise and plan for this if effective teaching and learning is to take place. Wagner et al (2005) reference Greenwood and Abbott, (2001) who argue that such a comprehensive task illustrates the need for effective teacher support and collaboration with other outside agencies.

To strengthen support for the attainment of children and young people with SEN the DCSF launched the Inclusion Development Programme in 2007. It is a four year programme with the aim to narrow the gap between those who have SEN and the overall school population, and focuses on attainment and progress across all five outcomes of the Every Child Matters Change for Children agenda (DfES, 2004). Supporting schools and early years settings through the development of resources and guidance to support mainstream teachers and staff is the main focus of the programme. There are four targeted areas of SEN, including a focus on SEBD, which seems to indicate that the attainment of children and young people with SEBD, in addition to young offenders, has become a key focus area for the government.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This small-scale research project aimed to provide a personal and contextualised account of the barriers and facilitators to raising literacy attainment in secondary SEBD special education. The study aims to support the continuing work of the visiting Educational Psychologist in one SEBD school in raising the literacy attainment of the pupils. The study focuses on the perceptions of staff linked to the secondary SEBD school, highlighting the challenges faced in raising literacy attainment.

The aims of this research were to:

- elicit the views of professionals linked to a secondary SEBD school in one UK local authority about the function of the school in terms of raising literacy attainment;
- identify the factors perceived to drive and constrain a secondary SEBD school in raising literacy attainment; and
- draw conclusions and recommendations about actions which may serve to increase the driving forces and reduce or remove the restraining forces so that literacy interventions could be effectively implemented.

2. Methods

2.1 Setting and Context

This study was carried out in a large local authority in the West Midlands, which has one Secondary SEBD school, split over two sites, one in the north of the authority and the larger site in the south of the authority. It is for

students aged 11-16 and is located in an extensive campus that includes boarding facilities for some of the students. All students have a statement of special educational needs because of their extreme social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many have missed several years of education by the time they are admitted to the school, due to non-attendance or exclusions, and their level of attainment is consequently very low on admission. They can be admitted at any time of the year. Many come from highly deprived backgrounds and 34, out of 173, are in

the care of the local authority. The great majority are boys, mostly White British, but almost a third are from minority ethnic groups.

The visiting EP to the school has had involvement with raising literacy attainment in the school through group consultation with the staff and direct work with particular staff members. Despite this involvement literacy attainment remains an area for development in the school. OFSTED judged that:

'The school's capacity to sustain improvements is satisfactory. This is reflected in the pace with which students' attainments are being raised in English. Leaders have been aware of the need to raise standards for some time. They have begun to analyse students' progress and to implement measures such as additional reading groups, more frequent writing in other subjects and the monitoring of teaching of all subjects. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the standards of attainment at the top of school. However, the pace of improvement has not been sufficiently rapid to have a significant impact.' (p 3)

Following from this OFSTED identified that for the school to improve further they should:

'Raise attainment, particularly in English, by improving the teaching with more specific learning aims, making better use of end-of-lesson reviews of what has been learned, and clearer feedback, including marking, so that students know how to improve their work.' (p 4)

This links to the OFSTED guidance in 2002 that encourages the use of assessment evidence to set targets for pupils and Hurry et al's (2005) recommendation that learners need to be involved in their learning to make it more useful and relevant to

them. To support this target an investigation of the barriers and facilitators to raising attainment would be beneficial in order to uncover any underlying strengths and weaknesses the school, as an organisation, may have. Lewin (1951) described the nature and pace of change as dependant on the balance of driving and restraining forces in relation to a particular target situation, and therefore by building on the school's strengths and developing any areas of weakness or barriers, any implemented intervention to raise literacy attainment, should be more effective. This is also reflected in Senge et al's (1999) work who highlight the need to 'understand the forces and challenges that impede progress, and to develop workable strategies for dealing with these challenges' (p10) in order effectively to promote change or intervention.

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were the Literacy Co-ordinator at the school, the Acting Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at the school, the higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) linked with the English department and the visiting Educational Psychologist (EP) for the school. These participants were chosen in order to gain a range of perspectives from individuals linked to the school.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four participants, as a way of 'providing rich and highly illuminating information' (Robson, 2002. p273). A semi-structured interview was chosen in order to capitalise on its flexibility to encourage respondents to explain their answers at length.

The interviews included a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit participant perceptions about raising literacy standards and the barriers and facilitators to this in the context of the school. The questions were:

1. 'Raising pupils' literacy standards is important.' What do you think about this statement? How does it relate to your experience in the school?
2. What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?
3. What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?
4. What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?
5. Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

The use of open-ended questions in interviews allows the 'interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth as necessary, or to clear up any misunderstandings' (Cohen et al. 2008. p357). It is acknowledged that, as with any self-report method, the 'interview approach relies upon respondents being able and

willing to give accurate and complete answers to the questions posed, no matter what their format' (Breakwell, 2000. p247). Cohen et al (2008) highlight that interviews encourage co-operation and establish rapport; however, Breakwell (2000) argues that respondents may be motivated to lie or wish to sabotage the research or that even if the interviewees wish to co-operate, they may be unable to answer accurately because they cannot remember the details correctly or they do not understand the question. In addition, Rosenthal (1966) illustrates that 'the kind of person the researcher is, how they look and act may by itself affect the subject's responses' (p109). Breakwell (2000) suggests that a way to establish the validity of interview data is to complement it with other types of data, e.g. observation.

The Interviews were not audio taped; the responses were summarised by hand during the course of the interviews. Smith (1995) argues that a tape-recording 'allows a much fuller record than notes taken during interview' and also 'allows the interviewer to concentrate on how the interview is proceeding' (p18). However, Smith (1995) does also acknowledge that tape-recording may discourage people from agreeing to be interviewed and whilst it produces a fuller record, it does not produce a 'complete, objective' record as non-verbal behaviour is not recorded. In addition the tape recording still requires interpretation from the transcriber and this interpretation introduces a potential for bias, causing the data to lose some of their validity. It was Nietzsche who attacked the idea of knowledge as 'disinterested, which attends the epistemological enterprise and claim(ed) that the activity of knowing is rooted in our affective constitution' (Owen, 1995 p33). The goals, values, beliefs and motivation of the researcher, and of the object of the research, are interlinked with their past and present experiences and also their understanding and

experience of the research itself. Those involved with the research have a 'consciousness that is neither disembedded nor disembodied; knowing, like seeing, is an activity, which attends the embedded and embodied character of human subjectivity' (Owen, 1995 p33). Whatever those involved with the research experience, observe, report or interpret will be bound up with their own subjectivity, and this should be recognised and made explicit.

If a larger sample had been involved in the research, a focus group could have been used to provide a more in-depth look at the issue of raising literacy attainment. As part of the group, participants could have used the force field analysis model collaboratively to identify the key driving and restraining factors. A discussion of this nature, amongst different professionals, may have provided more illuminative data, such as conflicting perceptions of the rhetoric and reality regarding raising literacy standards. A key point to note, however, is that the individual voice can be harder to hear in focus groups and power hierarchies and group dynamics can impact upon who speaks and what they say (Robson, 2002. p284) and therefore the use of focus groups should be carefully considered.

3. Findings

The findings arising from the semi-structured interviews can be seen in Appendix 1 but the key points are summarised below in Table 3:

Table 3: Findings from the semi-structured interviews

Interview 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy is the 'key to everything' and poor literacy skills 'severely hampers' pupil progress, access to the curriculum and pupils' self esteem. • There is a need for a 'uniform approach' throughout the school rather than staff trying different approaches. • Children need to be targeted through withdrawal as they find this less threatening than working in a large group. • Staff are sent on courses to develop their level of understanding and skill in raising literacy but more staff need to be trained on a consistent approach to teaching. • Timetabling and the lack of time given to planning and delivering the literacy interventions was seen as a big issue, although it was acknowledged that time allocation and availability is a difficult issue to resolve.
Interview 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising literacy attainment was seen as paramount especially in the area of youth offending. 'If you raise literacy standards it will have an impact upon the young peoples' lives by reducing youth offending and raising their confidence.' • Money, time, amount of staff available and staff training were identified as key factors in impeding raising literacy standards. • The requirement for senior management to focus on Government targets that are unrealistic for the children at the school was also identified as a barrier to developing literacy as they provide a distraction from the actual levels of the pupils at the school. • One to one teaching, by trained staff, in a safe environment, with an atmosphere of respect where achievement is recognised was highlighted as the ideal way of raising literacy standards within the SEBD school. • There was an acknowledgment that people within the school are aware of the need to raise literacy standards, however, it was felt more people need to be trained in one consistent approach, and an absolute commitment from all staff within the school needs to be generated so that more 'joined up thinking' can be done in the school. • The school was seen to be in a 'state of flux' due to the changing Head Teacher and acting Deputy Head.

Interview 3

- Literacy skills were described as the 'foundation for all learning' and that once a child had grasped those skills their self-esteem and confidence in other subjects increased.
- Staff absence, and the resulting cover by other staff members was identified as a barrier to raising literacy skills, as it often meant that allocated time for literacy was lost.
- One to one work was highlighted as key to raising literacy standards as children are embarrassed to show their poor skills in front of their fellow classmates and therefore use behaviour as a defence, resulting in poor engagement with the work and ultimately their learning. Children are reported to like the one to one work and often 'ask to come along even if they don't know what I am doing.'
- Being sent on courses was seen as a facilitator to raising standards, however it was felt that more planning about what courses staff are sent on is needed to ensure a consistent approach is developed by all staff across the school, rather than lots of staff going on lots of courses, and none of the learning becoming embedded.
- 'Thick and fast' work needs to be done with year 7 and year 8 as it becomes more difficult with year 10 and year 11 due to coursework demands.
- Children need encouragement from all the staff that acknowledges their work within literacy programs to help foster their confidence across all subject areas.

3.4 Interview 4

- Literacy attainment is incredibly important as it helps us access all aspects of society, links to Government policy, links to a child's social and emotional development, and inclusion within schools.
- The school seem to know it is important but there needs to be more action within school to reflect the importance of literacy.
- The openness to training and the logistics of how it is implemented and run on a day-to-day basis, across the school is an area that needs to be developed.
- Collaborative working between teachers and teaching assistants and also across the whole school is needed to develop a whole school focus about literacy.
- Teachers need time not only to take on board and implement the training but also to deal with behaviour issues and this can mean technical aspects of teaching and learning are not at the forefront.

- Staff need to be willing and ready to try things and to have constructive conversations about what how things can be improved and implemented, with SMT support. Effective checks on how things are progressing needs to be done, both formally and informally to promote a supportive environment, through peer supervision and to ensure good practice is maintained. Short measurable targets for each child should be set with links to specific rewards and monitored, and shared with home.
- Parents should be included, through positive home school liaison and by inviting parents to see what is being done at the school. Using role models, such as authors and poets, may inspire parents, children and staff to promote literacy more.
- Using resources, such as Pupil and School Support, multimedia resources and the local library, or the library within school could be a way of raising attainment and motivating the children.
- Gaining the views of the young people is important for getting ideas about how to raise literacy standards and for what motivates the pupils.

3.1 Force Field Analysis

Force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) provides a framework for identifying forces that are driving movement towards a goal and those which are restraining movement towards a goal. Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) explain if the 'driving forces are overwhelming, then the goal can probably go ahead without any significant problems' (p584). If the restraining forces are overwhelming then the goal is unlikely to be achieved and should be abandoned until conditions improve. If the driving and restraining forces are in balance then the force field analysis can be used to determine appropriate action. Lewin (1951) suggests weakening restraining forces rather than strengthening driving forces, as this may strengthen resistance also.

Responses from the semi-structured interviews were analysed in terms of the factors perceived by the participants to drive and restrain the school in raising literacy

standards. These driving and restraining forces are set out diagrammatically (see Figure 1) and it can be seen that there are more restraining forces than driving forces to raising literacy attainment in school, as viewed by the participants.

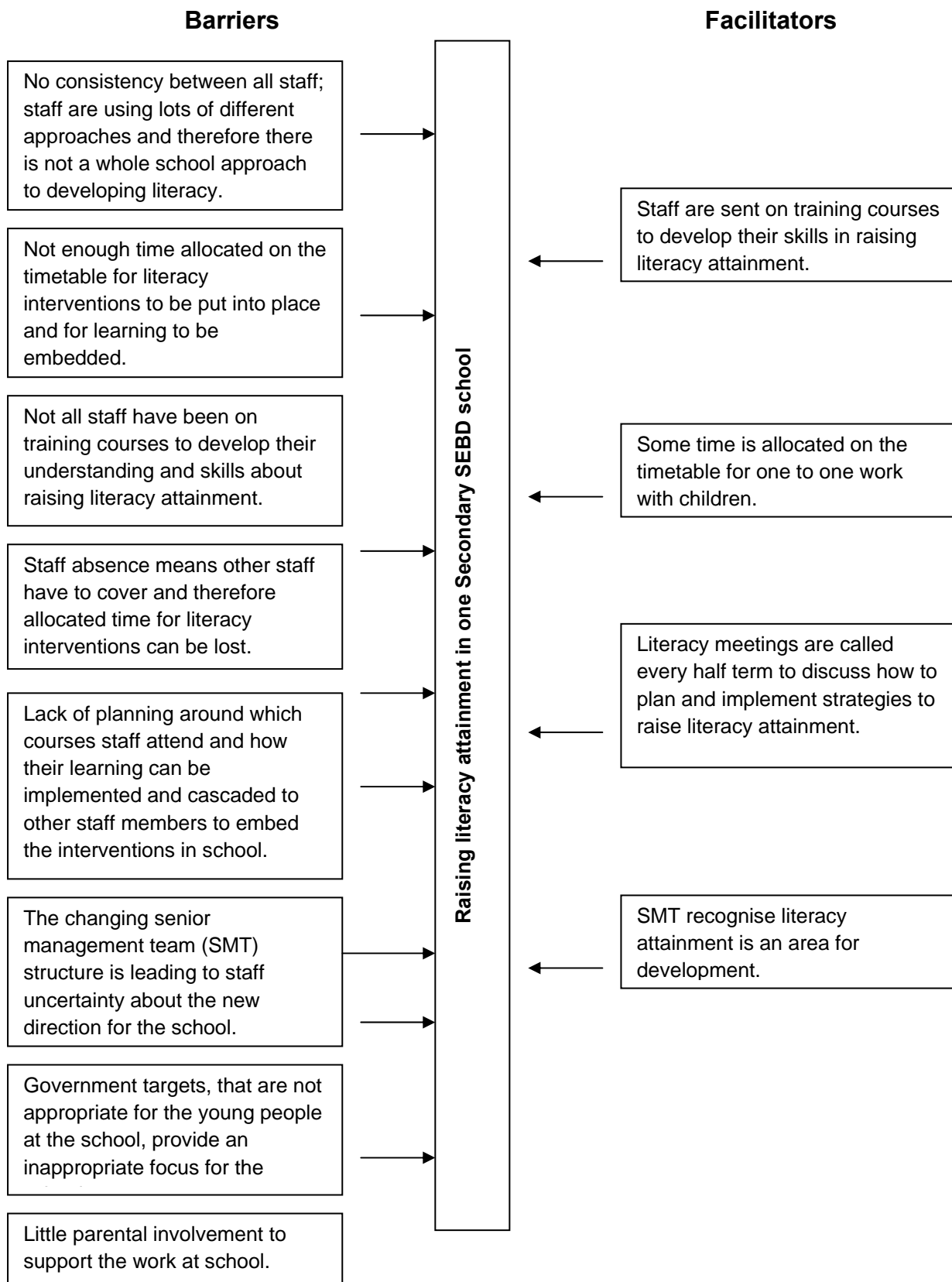


Figure 1: Force Field Analysis (Lewin, 1951)

4 Discussion

4.1 Emerging Issues

In order to raise literacy attainment in the SEBD school Lewin (1951) suggests weakening or overcoming the barriers, rather than strengthening the facilitators. The identified barriers can be organised into three levels: national, organisational and child. Below is a discussion about each level and how the barriers can be weakened.

4.1.1 National level

Unrealistic Government targets were identified as a barrier to raising literacy attainment because of the focus of time and resources upon achieving these targets, rather than upon strategies and interventions targeted at a more appropriate level.

In line with this the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) (2008) responded to the DCSF consultation on performance target setting for underachieving pupils by outlining concerns ‘that the nature of targets and government initiatives, together with a narrow and over-prescriptive curriculum, leave teachers with “little opportunity, power or incentive to engage with the complex webs of local factors that create and compound inequities” (Centre for Equity in Education, 2007 p16) (ATL, 2008 p7).

The ATL also described ‘an unhealthy imbalance between teachers’ professional autonomy and prescription by government and education managers, which has a significant impact on equality and fairness within the education system’ (p7).

However, the DCSF (2009) progression guidance promotes the need for targets as a way of developing high expectations, 'which are key to securing good progress' (p8), ensuring accurate assessment, 'which is essential to securing and measuring pupil progress' (p8) and the need for age and prior attainment to be the starting points for developing expectations of all pupils. Pietrowski and Reason (2000) reviewed theory and research on learning, literacy development and motivation and they identified eight areas needed for appropriate learning opportunities to be developed for children. One of these areas is progression and whether the materials that are used show a clear progression of targets. Targets are an important aspect of evaluation and progression monitoring, although focusing upon unrealistic, inappropriate targets provides a barrier to successful teaching and learning. As identified by Participant 4, the use of short, measurable targets that are regularly monitored and are linked to specific rewards should be considered so that the pupils can recognise their progress and feel motivated to work towards their targets.

4.1.2 Organisational level

In line with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecosystemic approach the systems around the child, including the family and the school need to be examined before interventions can be established successfully. Staff training, a whole school approach and procedures for monitoring and supporting staff, were highlighted in the interviews as being required in order for interventions to be effectively embedded to raise literacy attainment. Included within the development of a whole school approach, would be looking at issues of time, resources and SMT support that were also raised as key barriers to the success of any intervention to raise literacy attainment.

Staff training was highlighted as a facilitator and also as a barrier to raising literacy attainment. Staff were seen to be supported by the SMT to attend training courses; however it was reported that there is little forward planning about the type of courses and how the learning will be disseminated to other staff and embedded within the school, leading to an inefficient learning system. The DfEE (1997b) raised concerns that considerable effort is often put into literacy development but that many schools do not monitor or evaluate the outcomes of their efforts. This appears to be a key barrier within the SEBD school, not only to raising literacy attainment but also to developing a whole school approach. The DfEE (1997b) highlighted that approaches involving curriculum areas other than English, alongside work done in English departments, are more likely to be successful than initiatives confined to English and/or SEN departments. Solution circles could be used to generate ideas from the staff as a whole group about how to raise attainment. Solution circles offer a way of problem solving through the use of 'community capacity' (www.inclusive-solutions.com) and therefore encouraging all staff to be involved and feel empowered to work together to raise literacy attainment in this context.

Parental engagement was another identified barrier to raising literacy attainment. The DCSF (2007) guidance into parental engagement with schools and the effects upon pupil achievement reports that parental engagement is a powerful lever for raising achievement in schools of all pupils. Where parents and teachers work together to improve learning, the gains in achievement are reported as being significant. It states that:

'Parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school. It is their support of learning within the home environment that makes the maximum difference to achievement.' (p6)

Easen et al (1996) describe the need to develop 'ways in which both teachers and parents can see that they have complementary but contributive roles' (p10) in the process of the pupils' learning in order to involve and engage parents to support the school.

4.1.3 Child level

The embarrassment children may feel at showing their poor literacy skills within a whole class environment was indicated as a reason for one-to-one literacy interventions to be used, as it was reported that the children feel less threatened by this. Frederickson and Cline (2005) assert that where pupils are experiencing difficulties with some aspect of literacy it can be valuable to find out why they think they are having problems as this may have an effect upon their motivation and subsequent achievement. The children at the school have either previously been excluded from school or have been sent to the school on a managed move indicating a history of difficulties, either academically or behaviourally. Wagner et al (2005) remind us 'children 'bring to the table' their past experiences with school and other service systems that helped shape their current performance' (p80) and so any literacy intervention to raise attainment needs to consider these factors.

Subsequently, as Participant 4 highlighted, gaining the pupils' views about how to

raise literacy attainment may be an effective way of finding out what would work for the young people and what would motivate them and what has been a barrier to their learning in the past. Article 12 in the 1989 UN convention on the Rights of the Child (<http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/UN-convention/>) states:

‘Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, and the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’

Specifically to education, young people have the right to participate, and have their views heard about all aspects of schools, including in relation to teaching and learning, which are the core purposes of schooling.

Although one-to-one work was identified as important, the previously mentioned timetabling issue was reportedly a barrier to this. Once a child has grasped certain skills within literacy their confidence will increase: to access whole class lessons and one to one intervention is seen as the starting point for this. Haring (1978) proposed ‘The Instructional Hierarchy’ or ‘Learning Hierarchy’ as a way of articulating the stages people pass through when learning a new skill:

- Acquisition
- Fluency
- Maintenance
- Generalisation
- Adaptation

This hierarchy emphasises the need for children initially to acquire a skill fluently before it can be maintained and subsequently generalised and adapted to new concepts. This hierarchy is particularly relevant in teaching children with learning difficulties because they are often more reliant on adults to plan and monitor their progress through the stages. One to one work provides the opportunity to support the child in initially acquiring and becoming fluent in literacy skills but it is essential that teachers provide opportunities for generalisation and adaptation in whole class, and within a whole school ethos, so that children's literacy skills develop.

4.2 Limitations and future directions

Similarly to any small-scale qualitative study, these findings cannot be taken as representative of the beliefs and perceptions of all staff linked to SEBD schools about raising literacy standards. However, this study can highlight the challenges faced by a single SEBD school in one local authority in the UK, at a particular point in time. The range of perspectives included and excluded in the study may have had an impact on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and therefore had an impact upon the emerging issues for discussion. Interviewing the head teacher and the assistant head teachers may have provided another perspective that was not represented within the data gathered. If the force field analysis model had been used to guide group discussion this may have raised different issues than those raised through individual interviews. The inclusion of parent and pupil views may have also raised different or additional driving and restraining forces to raising literacy

standards. In addition, observation of some of the English lessons may have generated complimentary data to that obtained through interviews.

This study only investigated the perceived driving and restraining forces to raising literacy standards in the south site of the secondary SEBD school and so the experiences within the northern site, or even a primary SEBD school may be different and therefore would need further investigation. Moreover, completing an in-depth exploration of an individual pupil's circumstances, through a case study methodology, may provide richer data about the restraining and driving forces for raising literacy standards of particular sub-populations and their wider systemic influences.

To extend the current research a discussion group, with members from a range of subject areas within the school, around the findings of this small-scale study could be used to elicit views about how to develop a whole school approach to raising literacy attainment in the school. Possible strategies and 'next steps' could be discussed around raising attainment in literacy and an action research approach adopted in order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the strategies. Robson (2002) describes action research as involving the 'improvement of practice... the improvement of the understanding of a practice by its practitioners and... the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place' (pg215). This would be a valuable extension to the research to ensure practice within the school, for raising attainment, does evolve as a result of the findings from the interviews and the force field analysis.

4.3 Conclusions

The findings from the current study highlight the difficulties faced by staff at one SEBD school to raise literacy attainment of their pupils. The barriers and facilitators to raising attainment were found to be at various different levels, therefore indicating a need for interventions to be targeted at organisational and group level, rather than only at child-level. The implications of pupils leaving school with an inadequate level of literacy are far reaching and can have impacts upon all aspects of their lives, as highlighted by the DfEE (1997b) report that concluded literacy development is connected with the development of the whole person and the students' perceptions of themselves and their place in the world. Youth offenders have also been identified by the DfES as a group requiring attention 'as a matter of urgency' (DfES, 2003) because their numeracy and literacy skills are under-developed compared with those of their peers; highlighted also, by the Youth Justice Board's (2003) review of the education and training experiences of young people on DTOs.

This study has reported the subjective reality experienced by staff linked to a SEBD school in attempting to raise the literacy attainment of their pupils. The findings of the research raise questions about whether the Government rhetoric and guidance adequately reflects the needs of the pupils and staff working in SEBD settings and whether more intervention needs to be targeted at a national and organisational level, before interventions aimed at the young person can effectively raise literacy attainment.

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Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 'Raising pupils' literacy standards is important.' What do you think about this statement? How does it relate to your experience in the school?
- What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?
- What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?
- What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?
- Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

Appendix 2

PPR 1 answers: Participant 1

‘Raising pupils’ literacy standards is important.’ What do you think about this statement? How does it relate to your experience in the school?

- Very important due to the nature of the kids at the school.
- Having such poor literacy skills makes it difficult accessing the curriculum and has a knock on effect on attendance.
- As you go up through school and start looking at exams it gets worse because the memorising the children do doesn't work and so they are not reaching their potential.
- Lack of literacy is a barrier and therefore pupil progress is severely hampered by it. It is the key to everything.
- Self-esteem is also affected by it.

What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?

- We need a uniform approach, one system. Not lots of staff trying different approaches, all have go different approaches for example PAT, phonic awareness training, a variety of different reading books. There is no consistency between teachers.
- Children need to be targeted, withdrawn. Some argue that it isn't good but here, rather than mainstream, it hasn't got that stigma. Children won't show their poor ability in front of the class and so don't try but in a one to one they are less embarrassed.
- Need more time, there is only 1 HLTA doing it.

What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?

- We are given a reading lesson timetabled for each form.
- Management are aware of the poor literacy.
- We are sent on courses (SENCO, Literacy Co-ordinator and HLTA) but the problem is so acute we need more TA support. Need to train all TAs to do literacy interventions

because of the population of the school and the problematic backgrounds of the children there needs to be more TA support.

- A whole-school approach is needed. Over the years management have put into place various reading schemes but each have gone by the by, I'm not sure why.

What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?

- Sending myself and the literacy co-ordinator on the literacy course for 5 days.
- Literacy meetings to work out viable ways of implementing and planning, therefore we have senior management team support.
- If the course had been at Easter time then it would have been easier to timetable some time for the next year but the timing of the course is making this difficult.

Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

- No not really. Staff are enthused about it (the new literacy program) as a BESD school in Oxford have used it and senior management recognised the success of it in that school.
- Timetabling is the issue but trying to find ways around it is difficult.
- The key is not to lose the skills from the course and therefore try to use it as soon as possible.

Appendix 2

PPR 1 answers: Participant 2

'Raising pupils' literacy standards is important.' What do you think about this statement?
How does it relate to your experience in the school?

- It is paramount, you can not have children leaving school illiterate.
- For whatever reasons children do and if you go into young offender institutes you will find children who can not read and write and it is unacceptable. We have children who are on p-scales and if they leave us still on p-scales we have failed them.

What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?

- Money, time, lack of staff, lack of staff training, lack of commitment of senior management.
- Commitment to Government targets that are unrealistic for our children.

What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?

- One to one teaching, trained staff, time and commitment by management so it is seen as a priority.
- A safe environment so children don't feel threatened.
- An atmosphere of respect
- Achievement, an understanding that they will achieve.

What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?

- It is acknowledged that it needs to be done and putting in place what they can; sent three people on the literacy course, trying to find ways of letting us do our jobs.
- Need a flexible timetable to support one to one work and need more people trained.
- Having a reading lesson for the weaker children first lesson each day but it would be better if all teachers and TAs were trained in raising literacy standards.

Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

- Needs an absolute commitment by everyone that this is important.
- Joined up thinking that if we raise literacy standards it will have an impact on young peoples' lives for example reducing the number in young offenders institutes and making them feel confident.
- People have been trying for years to embed interventions.

Appendix 2

PPR 1 answers: Participant 3

'Raising pupils' literacy standards is important.' What do you think about this statement?
How does it relate to your experience in the school?

- Of course it is, it is the foundation of all learning.
- Working with children and trying to raise their literacy skills, once they catch on their self-esteem rises and their confidence in other subjects rises because they can access them.
- It helps across the board.

What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?

- Difficult to answer. Staff absence means TA and teachers have to cover and therefore time is lost.
- We used to have a reading lesson every morning and it was stopped. I thought it was a good thing/good start to the day but now due to the curriculum there is no time.

What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?

- One to one work because the children are so poor and therefore won't be embarrassed to show poor skills in front of others. Their behaviour is a cover up to not accessing and thinking they are unable to learn.
- I do a lot of one to one and the children like it, children will ask to come along even if they don't know what I'm doing. They like the attention.

What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?

- I always have time on timetable but attendance of children doesn't help.
- I was set on the literacy course.
- I've done basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

- I'm nurture group trained but I don't use it directly.
- People find a course, go on the course, think it will help but it doesn't get implemented. Need to look more closely at the courses. I went on a course but it needed a whole school approach and therefore it didn't get done.

Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

- More planning and understanding of the rest of the staff of what's happening and how it is going to benefit needs to be worked on.
- It is hard to take yr 10 and yr 11 because of course work and therefore needs more thick and fast work with yr 7 and yr 8, more work done earlier on.
- Things need to be noted with the children, encouragement linked to the one to one work I do so children know it is noticed.

Appendix 2

PPR 1 answers: Participant 4

‘Raising pupils’ literacy standards is important.’ What do you think about this statement? How does it relate to your experience in the school?

- Incredibly important. Society is based on a literary world, it helps to access lots of things.
- Links to policy documents that professionals have to work towards, e.g. ‘Raising Achievement.’
- Linked to social and emotional aspects, like self-esteem and there are inclusion implications with it.
- The school has pupils who nearly all have literacy difficulties. Not only that but they have emotional and social difficulties also and therefore there is a lot to deal with.
- Although I feel the school think it is important there is something stopping them being as appropriate as possible. I would like to see more action that reflects the importance of literacy.

What factors impede the raising of literacy standards?

- Training: they’re not that open to receiving training, however I have been in to observe literacy and do some training but there are concerns about the day-to-day running and implementation of the training.
- Teamwork is important and they are not used to working in teams. It seems that the TA and class teacher are separate and training is needed to develop effective teamwork between the TA and class teacher and the whole school. A whole school ethos or focus about literacy is needed.
- The time available and the time to take on board training and to deal with behaviour issues is a factor. Sometimes the technical aspects of teaching and learning are not always at the forefront.

What factors facilitate the raising of literacy standards?

- Good sound training where staff understand what they are doing and why they are doing it, that it is based on research.
- Teamwork: organisational skills to get everyone together.
- Needs to be seen as a whole school target as the skills are generalised into other subject areas.
- Staff that are willing and ready to try things out and enter into constructive conversations about things that can be improved and implemented.
- Clear lead; SMT needs to endorse it and be enthusiastic about it.
- Effective checks about how things are going to prevent a downward spiral. This needs to be formal and informal to promote a supportive approach i.e. peer supervision.

What is being done at the school to raise literacy standards?

- Staff have been on courses and are trying to disseminate the knowledge but they could liaise with other professionals to help them disseminate effectively.
- Allowing this project to happen.

Do you think there is anything else that could be done to raise literacy standards?

- Looking at the role of parents/homes, which is complex, but there needs to be some home-school focus to add to the success. Do people give up on it too quickly because this is hard? Need to invite parents to see what they are doing at school. The school do communicate effectively with parents but is the communication related positively in terms of reading and writing?
- There is a gender imbalance at the school and therefore this needs to be taken into account with any intervention
- Staff need to think 'outside the box', e.g. bring in role models to inspire parents, children and staff for example poets and authors.
- Persistence needs to be part of the focus for positive reinforcement.
- Could use Pupil and School Support materials to support what is being done.
- Creating or using their own library or the local library.

- Looking at multimedia information sources and link to literacy skills
- Short measurable targets for each child need to be set and it needs to be co-ordinated with specific rewards and shared with home.
- Getting the views of the young people is most important. Their views for how to raise literacy standards, what motivates them and building this into the program.

Appendix 3

Raising Achievement: Reflections on two WebCT discussions

This reflection is based upon the two WebCT activities that were completed during September to November 2009. Both activities were based on the theme of 'raising achievement;' whereas the first activity was a critical review of an article, the second activity was a collaborative task looking at strategies to raise achievement of working class white boys.

Through the use of the two online WebCT activities and discussion my own understanding and confidence of how to be critical when reading a research paper has increased by reading other people's perspectives and findings from their own research. Reading other people's ideas and perspectives about research into raising achievement for the second activity gave me a wider perspective, other than my own, into the research that is available and also other people's views surrounding this research. Jones and Cooke (2008) describe online discussion and virtual learning environments as based upon the social constructivist perspective, which places the role of communication and interaction at the heart of education. This perspective favours the Vygotskian approach of enabling the construction of meaning and knowledge through shared dialogue and discourse and the confirmation of understanding through mutual sharing and testing of ideas in a collaborative environment (Jones and Cooke, 2008). I was able to use and adapt some of the research and ideas from the WebCT activities in my own discussion around the barriers and facilitators to raising literacy attainment in one social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) secondary school. These ideas may not have been included without the use of WebCT.

Being involved in an online discussion, however, does not automatically result in learning, or even posting threads within the discussion does not indicate an involvement in the discussion. To support this, Kanuka and Anderson (1998) suggest

that students ignore messages that are incompatible with their existing knowledge, while learners need subject experts and skilled teachers to facilitate more constructive discussion. In addition, Skinner (2007) found, from an examination of two online discussions, that some students 'feared that others would be unreliable sources of information and felt insecure online' (p390) and so were more resistant to accommodating and using other people's ideas. After completing the WebCT activity I feel that threads can be posted by people who have not read any other postings or are simply posted to prove that a contribution has been made in line with a course requirement. On the surface it may appear that they have made a contributed to the discussion, but little engagement has been made with the discussion and therefore little learning will have taken place. A facilitator, or tutor, may be needed to question, or explore postings with the individual to check their understanding of the posting and also their understanding of the discussion context in which the posting has been made. Clouder et al (2006) assert the importance of a good facilitator to support participants' learning, and they have included the facilitator as a central feature within their model of factors that influence group dynamics and learning dynamics within virtual and face to face, blended learning. Similarly, Jones and Cooke (2008) highlight an additionally important role for tutors which is to ensure 'students feel secure in the 'safe house' of the learning environment,'(p272) so that they are encouraged to participate in the discussion. To support this, Rovai (2002) also stresses the importance of spirit, trust, interaction and learning within virtual groups, which could be fostered by a facilitator.

Xie et al (2006) looked at two studies where participants were students on an undergraduate instructional technology course at a large Midwestern university in America. Motivation was measured using Deci and Ryan's (1985) Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) and questionnaires, and although the sample used in the research was American there are some principles that can be generalised to my activity with the two WebCT activities. They found that 'students' participation in online discussion was related to their intrinsic motivation... if the students perceived the online discussion as valuable, interesting, and enjoyable, they were more likely to participate in the online discussion' (p85). Through the student interviews, factors

influencing the students' motivation to participate in the online discussion were reported and the following themes were identified:

- 1) Instructor's role in discussion
- 2) Interaction between peers
- 3) Discussion topics
- 4) Course requirements

The presence of the tutor was a definite motivator to contribute as it made me aware that the discussion was being monitored, although I feel that if the tutor was too involved it may have had a negative effect and made me feel less inclined to contribute as the discussion would feel too controlled. Because the discussion was also a course requirement this had an obvious impact upon my motivation to contribute, but more so was the ability to discuss topics, within the overarching topic theme, that I was interested in and wanted to learn more about. My interest was increased when I had feedback and interaction between other peers on a topic I had discussed, as found by Xie et al (2006).

Using the WebCT discussion forum gives an opportunity to discuss topics with a large group of people without having to organise a venue, making it an effective use of participants' time. However, there was no face-to-face contact and feedback during the process and I felt therefore, a lack of rapport was established during the discussion. Nevertheless, because we work together regularly at university there was some rapport already built up from previous tasks we had done, but I feel the activity would have benefited from more face to face rapport being built. Beaver (2003) identifies rapport as 'the most influential factor in determining the attainment of a satisfactory solution' (p2) and during the second activity I felt this element was missing, which seemed to make the process of deciding upon three suggestions more difficult. There was little discussion around which strategy to suggest, simply people posting different strategies to use and then voting individually for which three they preferred. No collaborative discussion was involved at the final stages of

determining the three strategies and so an opportunity was missed for learning from other peoples' perspectives.

Another benefit of using online discussion is that it can be accessed at any time throughout the day and so people can contribute at a time that suits them, rather than at a specified meeting time. However, during the second task, where it was reliant upon everyone contributing and giving an opinion, people who are organised and keen to start the task, became frustrated waiting for those people who took longer to think about their contributions, or who were busy and therefore had no time at the beginning of the task to contribute. Skinner (2007) examined two online discussions and found that the frustration of others not joining as expected was damaging to people's motivation and learning. A coping mechanism for those people may be to post numerous threads to prompt others to contribute; however, as Rourke et al (1999) argue, high levels of social presence within an online discussion may be detrimental to the learning of others and I feel this happened on occasions during the second WebCT activity.

Overall, the WebCT activities were interesting; however the time limit of the second activity made it more difficult to post contributions and feel enthusiastic about the task. It has been discussed that motivation to contribute to online discussions can be derived from various aspects of the task but once engaged with the discussion there is real potential for learning from other people's ideas and contributions. A facilitator may be needed to guide the process and to monitor content and support the learning process.

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Developing a workbook to prepare children to visit a family member in Her Majesty's Prison

Abstract

This paper considers the literature regarding children who visit a family member in prison and what interventions are appropriate to support these children. This study explores, through a qualitative methodology, the perspectives of children of prisoners and their parents/carers, regarding the contents of a workbook to prepare children for their first visit to a prison to see a family member. Findings from semi-structured interviews are discussed in terms of what the key features of the workbooks should be, the role an Educational Psychologist can have in eliciting children's views and also the key methodological challenges associated with research concerning children of prisoners.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Children Act 1989, Section 1 (1) states that 'the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration' and this is invoked within legal proceedings surrounding parental divorce or separation. Further, in Section 2 (7) the Act refers to the notion of shared parental responsibility, to which children are entitled, whether parents are together or separated. Additionally, in 1991, the UK ratified the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989), which states that:

- Children who have been separated from their parents have the right to maintain personal relations and personal contact, unless it is contrary to their best interests (Article 9c).
- Children's best interests should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them (Article 13).
- Both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child (Article 18).
- Children have the right to express and have their views considered in all matters affecting them (Article 12).
- All the rights in the Convention apply to all children without discrimination, irrespective of their parent's status (Article 2).

Therefore, unless a child is known, in some way, already to have been abused by a parent, childcare policy in England and Wales assumes that the establishment and continuation of contact with both parents is beneficial to stable child development (Boswell, 2002). No evidence to date has been provided to suggest that 'this assumption should not apply as much to children and their imprisoned parents as to children and parents who are otherwise separated from each other' (Boswell, 2002, p14). According to Government statistics, at least 150,000 children in England and Wales experience the imprisonment of a parent each year (DfES, 2003).

In order for children to cope with this enforced separation from their parent and other associated challenges, e.g. loss of family income, actual and anticipated discrimination, collapse of family structures, (Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Group, 2001) their resilience needs to be fostered. Fonagy et al. (1994) define resilience as 'normal development under difficult conditions,' (p233) which suggests that there may be experiences that inoculate children against stress. It is these experiences that researchers have endeavoured to identify and comprehend in order for interventions and programs to be developed that can promote resilience-enhancing factors and processes. The concept of resilience is further defined as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Werner, 2000). Rutter (1990) argued that resilience could not be thought of as an attribute children are born with or even acquired during development, but that it was an indication of a process, which characterises a complex social system at a moment in time. Resilience, according to Rutter (1990) should be seen as a set of social and intra-psychic processes that take place across time given fortuitous combinations of child attributes, family, social and cultural environments. This definition proposes a multi-faceted nature of resilience and a complex interplay between the individual, their environmental context and their experiences. It highlights the role family and community members play in facilitating and supporting children's resilience through psycho-social processes such as conversations and behaviour modelling.

There are five main frameworks that have guided research in the area of resilience;

- 1) Framework proposed by Garmezy (1991);
- 2) Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model;
- 3) Structural-organisational perspective (Cicchetti and Schneider-Rosen, 1986);
- 4) Attachment theory (Bowlby (1969); and
- 5) Cumulative stress model (Jaffee et al, 2007).

All of these emphasise the multiple levels of interaction between child and environment to promote resilience. In order to begin to understand how to develop resilience in children with a family member in prison, the five frameworks will be examined in the table below:

Table 1: Discussion of the five main resilience frameworks

Framework	Characteristics of framework
Framework proposed by Garmezy (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three levels of protective factors and processes are viewed as operating at the individual, the family, and the community levels.
Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This links with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model, which focuses on the child and the interaction with their ecological context (Luthar et al, 2000). • Although the multiple levels of influence upon resilience are acknowledged, the impact historic experiences may have upon resilience development does not seem to be fully acknowledged. • This is an important consideration when examining resilience in children of prisoners, as the prisoner's past behaviour, for which they have been sentenced, may have been witnessed, or experienced by the children and therefore remains a key factor for their resilience development.
Structural-organisational perspective (Cicchetti and Schneider-Rosen, 1986);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This perspective acknowledges the ecological context and also posits that the individual's choice and self-organisation exerts influences on development with historical factors and current influences important to the development process. • A child's cognitive processing of events, past and present, is a key feature in their development of resilience. • In the context of children of prisoners, cognitive processing of events needs to be consistently supported by the adults around them that are both imprisoned and are living with them. • Children's self-efficacy and self-awareness need to be fostered, according to this perspective as part of any intervention to develop children's resilience.
Attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framework of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) proposes that interventions

theory (Bowlby (1969);	<p>to develop resilience must encourage and foster children's positive social relationships in order to help them develop an awareness of self and others. It is argued that this generates a secure internal model of self and others within the child (Fonagy et al, 1994), which contributes to a child's resilience in the face of hardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This framework poses particular difficulties for children of prisoners, where a family relationship has inevitably been broken due to imprisonment. • How the imprisonment is perceived and experienced by the child will effect their mental representation of the family member and others, their relationship to that family member and ultimately, according to attachment theory, their internal working model of self. • If visitation to the prison is limited, or the visiting time is not perceived to be positive, the child's social relationship with the imprisoned family member is impacted upon which, in line with attachment theory, effects child's ability to build resilience.
Cumulative stress model (Jaffee et al, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fifth framework proposes that risk factors tend to accumulate within particular families and children's individual strengths must be viewed within the context of their life circumstances. • From this framework it can be seen that children of prisoners present as a vulnerable group as their life circumstances may be particularly prone to risk factors and may exceed the individual strengths a child may possess.

Following imprisonment of a parent, children are often left feeling confused, guilty, scared and as if their world has fallen apart (Mazza, 2002). Dallaire (2007) highlights the social, emotional and psychological difficulties children with an incarcerated mother can experience and the shame and embarrassment children can feel

regarding their parent's incarceration (Johnston, 1995). In addition to this, Loucks (2004) highlights that 'children too show signs of stress surrounding visits' (p16) which is supported by research conducted in Northern Ireland (NIACRO, 1994) that reported many children showed atypical behaviour both before and after visits. Similarly, McEvoy et al (1999) found that the period before visits 'appeared to be a time of considerable anxiety' for the whole family, manifesting itself in a range of physical and emotional symptoms' (p183). From this it can be suggested that the psycho-social support children need to develop resilience, as described in the five frameworks above, may not be effectively available to some children of prisoners. Additional support and intervention for children needs to be offered in order to support their development of the resilience required to help them cope with their changed life circumstances.

1.2 Interventions

Murray and Farrington (2006) suggest that 'four intervention strategies have been proposed that could protect children from harmful effects of separation because of parental imprisonment' (p725). These strategies are described in the table below:

Table 2: Four interventions to protect children from the effects of parental separation through imprisonment
(adapted from Murray and Farrington, 2006, p725)

Intervention	Purpose
Communication	Give children's caregivers professional advice about how to provide honest and clear explanations about parental absence to children (Poehlmann, 2005)
Placement	Children need to be provided with stable care arrangements during parental imprisonment, ideally with families or friends (Trice and Brewster, 2004)
Contact	Increase children's opportunities to maintain contact with their imprisoned parent (Trice and Brewster, 2004), in particular through more child-friendly visiting arrangements in prisons.
Therapy	Offer counselling and therapeutic services for children of prisoners to help them cope psychologically with the separation (Hames and Pedreira, 2003)

Each of the interventions described in Table 2 is different in its methodology, but all have a common purpose to increase children's ability to cope with the imprisonment of a family member. A key consideration of any intervention is that each child of an imprisoned parent is an individual and children may react differently over time (Bilchik, 2007). In particular, children's level of maturity may affect their reactions to parental imprisonment and therefore any interventions must take account of the age and stage of development of each child. Another consideration, is that although, as discussed earlier, children of prisoners are a vulnerable group (Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Group, 2001) interventions aimed at increasing a child's ability to cope with the imprisonment of a parent are not widely researched. It is important to recognise that without a sound scientific basis, even well intentioned

interventions can be ineffective, or even harmful (McCord, 2003, in Murray & Farrington, 2006). This is a key point to consider, within the context of this small-scale research project, because the aim is to develop a workbook that will support a child's understanding of the practical and emotional aspects of their visit to a prison in order to help prepare them for their first visit into prison to see a family member.

Research has shown that prisoners' maintenance of family ties can offer mutual benefits for the prisoner, the family, and the prison (Loucks, 2006) and Dallaire (2007) states that 'visitation with parents has been identified as a protective factor in the population of children with incarcerated mothers' (p17). However, it is important to remember that some children are positively affected by the removal of a family member, especially if that family member is violent or uncaring, and can flourish in the period of respite that parental imprisonment provides (Murray, 2003, in Hartworth & Hartworth, 2005).

Poehlmann (2005) suggests that children cope better when they are given clear and honest explanations about separations, when they have stable care arrangements during separations, and when they have confident expectations of their parent's availability if needed. This indicates the need for children's caregivers to be given advice and information on providing clear and honest explanations about parental absence to children (Poehlmann, 2005). This, however, does not take into consideration the needs of children who have special educational needs, which may impact upon their ability to process information about the separation. Without understanding simple facts about their parent's imprisonment, children may

experience reduced capacity to process their traumatic loss psychologically, or voice any preferences they may have about contact (Murray, 2003) and therefore parents and carers need support and advice to be able to tailor their explanations to the emotional and cognitive needs of their children.

Material that helps children to learn about imprisonment and understand their own feelings can be formulated in several ways; for example, material that stimulates writing or drawing, or books that children can read (Loucks, 2004). Any resources that are created for children should use accepted techniques for communicating with children, such as stories involving fictional children that assist a child's understanding of problems. Materials should address children's expectations about the parents and family, focus on concerns about the unknown and refer to the future (Loucks, 2004). Crucially, resources for young people should be based on consultation with them. This was recognised by the Social Care Institute for Excellence in the 'Children of Prisoners- maintaining family ties' guide where it was stated that 'families should be involved in the design, development and delivery of core services for families of prisoners' (p50).

Archard and Skivnes (2009) identify two reasons to elicit children's views. The first is a pragmatic or instrumental reason and frames the child's participation 'as a way of securing information or evidence that facilitates the making of a decision and its subsequent implementation' (p398). In agreement with this Lundy (2007) states 'children have a right to have their views listened to (not just heard) by those involved in the decision-making processes' (p936). The distinction made between

being heard and listened to is an important one and all researchers should ensure they are not gaining children's views in a tokenistic way, but children's views are listened to and adopted. The second reason identified by Archard and Skivnes (2009), is based more on principled or moral views and sees children as 'having a basic entitlement to express a view and to be involved, as the source of a view about their own interests, in the decision-making process' (p398). In addition to this, Lundy (2007) identifies a key point for researchers to consider; 'children's right to express their views is not dependent upon their capacity to express a mature view; it is dependent only on their ability to form a view, mature or not (Lundy, 2007, p935). Therefore, children of all ages should be given the opportunity, through the application of appropriate methods, to participate in research and have their views listened to.

Hading and Atkinson (2009) assert that the predominant method reported for ascertaining children's views is direct questioning. Archard and Skivenes (2009) argue that no matter the method for gaining children's views the most important features should be that 'the child's *authentic* voice is heard and a *deliberative* one' (p392). In order to achieve this Archard and Skivenes (2009) suggest a number of points as highlighted in Table 3:

Table 3: Key points to ensure a child's authentic and deliberative voice is heard (adapted from Archard and Skivenes, 2009, p393)

Key Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children clearly need to be adequately informed about and able to understand the issues at stake. • Information must be provided to children in a manner sensitive to their character, abilities and particular circumstances. • If and when children do have questions, these need to be comprehensively answered. • It is crucial that there is somebody with whom the children can fully and frankly talk through all the issues. • Children need the space and time to think about matters and to form an opinion.

Although the face validity of these assertions is good, Archard and Skivenes (2009) give no theoretical basis or research evidence to back up their claims and therefore the validity and reliability of these claims needs to be questioned.

1.3 Contact: Visiting Prison

Poehlmann (2005) suggests that 'young children may need additional emotional support and reassurance to cope effectively with [such] a prison visit so that the experience functions as a positive means of maintaining and strengthening parent-child relationships' (p693). This is in line with the framework of resilience as encapsulated by attachment theory, (Bowlby, 1969), described earlier. Poehlmann (2005) asserts that if the visit is not child-friendly it can be a catalyst for less positive representations of the parent to be formed and therefore, as described within attachment theory, the children may form less positive representations of themselves

as a result. In line with this, Sack and Seidler (1978) conducted interviews with 22 children in the visitors' waiting room at the Oregon State Penitentiary, USA. Although this is not a comprehensive study as only a small sample was used and it was not UK-based, it does provide some qualitative data about the child's mood, quality of relationship between the child and their imprisoned father and the child's understanding of the situation. Important to note, however, is that the data were collected from 'one off' interviews and therefore should be interpreted cautiously, as the children may have been distrustful or defensive towards the interviewer and so the information given may be unreliable. Ideally, rather than a one-off interview it may be necessary to talk to the child several times or to talk while participating in their normal everyday activities (Smith et al. 2003, p. 212). Despite this, the authors proposed that for children:

'Visitation was an important link of continuity in their paternal relationship. Since their peer and general social relationships seemed so barren, this family tie may have been doubly important to them. It also seemed to help them come to terms with conflicts they experienced over this form of separation and perhaps helped 'square' the perception of the prisoner-parent in reality, with a more subjective, internalised 'good parent'. Moreover, visitation for the child may have counteracted initial frightening fantasies about the prison' (p265).

A study by Stanton (1980) however, highlights factors that need to be considered before a decision about a child's visitation should be made. Although this study focuses on imprisoned mothers it is important to consider the findings and how they may also relate to imprisoned fathers and their children. Two interviews were conducted with 75 mothers and their children, who were between 4 and 18 years old.

A standard interview form was used with open-ended questions and the same interviewer always conducted both interviews, although different sets of interviewers were used for the interviews inside the jail and outside the jail. Tape recording of the interviews within the jail environment was prohibited and therefore hand written notes had to be taken. The use of open-ended questions, hand written notes and different sets of interviewers leaves the data collection procedure open to researcher bias and interpretation as 'what the researcher brings to the situation in terms of assumptions and preconceptions' (Robson, 2002, p172) may affect the selection of data for reporting and analysis. This needs to be considered when interpreting the findings from this study.

The first interview was conducted in jail for an incarcerated mother or at home for a mother on probation, and for both groups, the second interview was conducted at the subject's residence. The children were seen wherever they were living at the time of the interview. Through these interviews the mothers reported that 'children were most satisfied with visits when physical contact was allowed and visits were longer than ten minutes' (p65). This highlights the need for visit arrangements to take into account the child's needs, such as how long the child requires with their parent and whether physical contact is appropriate. Another finding from this research was that the 'mother's attitude toward visitation is extremely important in establishing a favourable atmosphere. A mother who seeks to reassure her child of well-being and her continued concern for the child will quite likely promote a beneficial effect for the child' (p65). Not only is it important that the environment and arrangements for the visit are considered in terms of the child's need, but this study highlights the need for the imprisoned parent to be supported and prepared for a visit from their child. If the

parent is prepared and is willing to be open with their child, the visit has a more beneficial effect for their child. A visit from children should not always be presumed to be an appropriate action for all families with an imprisoned parent. If the parent does not have a positive attitude toward or relationship with their child visiting this may have a negative impact upon the child. Stanton (1980) also raises the issue of 'the child's age and temperament, the length of sentence and the probability of reunion afterward' (p66) as factors that need to be considered when making a decision about whether visits from the children should be encouraged and arranged.

If it is deemed appropriate for the child to visit their parent in prison preparation for the child is key to a successful, less stressful visit. In a report by Loucks (2004) it was highlighted that the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales had developed a list of expectations for prisoners' contact with family and friends. In the inspectorate's view, all visitors should be given 'clear and up to date information in advance about how to get to the establishment, visiting hours and the procedures to expect when they arrive at the establishment and again whenever circumstances or procedures change' (July 2001: Expectation 17).

Visiting a parent in prison can be an upsetting and frightening experience for many children. Long journeys, waiting at the prison gates, searches and sniffer dogs, an environment where physical contact or play is difficult can all exacerbate the child's anxiety and distress (Murray, 2003). Therefore, children need as much support to help them prepare for their first visit and also to provide an opportunity for reflection about the visit. This support can be offered through talking with a supportive adult or

friend, or through the use of a workbook or leaflet about the visit (Grimshaw and King, 2002). Family and Corrections Network (FCN) (2002) highlights that through a leaflet the child will receive more information which means they can anticipate more and therefore 'the greater control the child will have over any anxiety they may be experiencing.'

1.4 Purpose of the study

The aim of this small-scale research was to elicit children's views to inform the design of a workbook to prepare and debrief children/ young people after their first visit to see a family member in prison. As highlighted earlier, it is accepted good practice that resources for young people should be based on consultations with them (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2008).

Therefore this small-scale research project aimed to elicit the views of children and young people about the design of a workbook to support a child's/young person's first visit into a prison within the West Midlands to see a male family member. The focus upon a male family member was due to the categorisation of the prison where there are only male prisoners. Family members' views were also elicited as it has been acknowledged earlier that family members are part of the child's support system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and can facilitate their coping strategies by offering clear and honest explanations (Poehlmann, 2005). The use of a workbook can provide support for parents of children with a family member in prison, during this period of anxiety (McEvoy and colleagues, 1999) by offering a set of materials to guide discussions about factual information or emotional aspects of the visit.

The aims of this research are highlighted in the table below:

Table 4: Aims of the research

<i>Aims</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elicit the views of children/young people about a draft workbook to inform the final workbook design;• Elicit the views of parents/carers about a draft workbook to inform the final workbook design; and• Discuss the difficulties associated with conducting research centred around prisoner's children.

2. Methods

2.1 Setting and Context

This study was carried out in a large local authority in the West Midlands in conjunction with the Think Family project. The aim of the Think-Family project was to promote positive outcomes for children who have a male family member in a prison in the West Midlands. Initially the project focussed on establishing procedures within the prison, compatible with the Common Assessment Framework (DCSF, 2010) processes already established in schools, where prisoners could raise concerns they had about a child. Following initial discussions, the prison staff decided they wanted to extend the project, under the broad aim of promoting positive outcomes for

children, so that their visiting sessions could become more 'child-friendly.' A wide range of agencies was invited to become involved so that professionals from different areas, including the Early Years team, third sector volunteers, the Local Authority's Common Assessment Framework Team, Parenting projects, Educational Psychology Service and members of staff from the prison, could contribute ideas to help facilitate this project.

The prison holds up to 1450 adult male prisoners, both convicted and unconvicted. The prison's primary role is the holding of remand and trial prisoners. The prison has four sentenced wings holding both Category B and Category C. The prison also has a small population of retained Category D prisoners (HM Prison Service, 2009). See Table 5 for an explanation of each category.

Table 5: Categories of prisoners explained (<http://www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk/opus7.html>)

Category	Description
A	Prisoners classified as Category A are those for whom escape must be avoided at all costs as they pose extreme danger to the public. They are placed in top security prisons
B	Prisoners classified as Category B are those for whom the maximal conditions of security are not necessary but for who escape must still be made very difficult.
C	Prisoners classified as Category C cannot be trusted in open prison conditions, but are seen as not having the resources and motivation to make a determined escape attempt
D	Prisoners classified as Category D are those who can be reasonably trusted in open conditions. Prisoners serving longer-term sentences should have their security category reviewed at regular intervals. By the time a prisoner is released they should have moved down to category D.

There were three broad goals that were decided upon by the multi-agencies involved within the Think Family project, which are presented in the table below:

Table 6: Goals of the Think Family Project

Goals	
1	To set up processes within the prison that were compatible with the Common Assessment Framework used in schools in order for the imprisoned men to be made more aware of their child's welfare and to be able to raise any concerns they may have;
2	To make visiting the prison more accessible and 'child friendly,' through staff from the local children's centre developing areas within the waiting and visiting rooms where children could have access to games and activities. Staff from the children's centre would also be available during the visits to interact with the children and to model play and interaction skills to the adults;
3	To develop a workbook that could be used to prepare and de-brief children after their first visit to the prison.

Through discussion it was decided that Educational Psychologists were the best placed professionals to design the workbooks due to their understanding of developmental psychology and the role of psychology in understanding a child's thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It is this final part of the project that this piece of small-scale research supports.

Three draft workbooks were designed by two trainee educational psychologists and a senior educational psychologist, (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3) to cater for three different age groups: pre-school, primary and secondary aged children/young people. The draft workbook designs were informed by the design of existing leaflets available through Ormiston Children's and Family Trust (2003). These draft workbooks

formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with children/young people and their families.

2.2 Ethical considerations

According to the British Psychological Society (BPS) 'Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines' (2009) there are ethical considerations that must be followed when conducting research with human participants. Table 7 highlights the most relevant principles to this piece of small-scale research and how they have been adhered to.

Table 7: Ethical considerations (BPS, 2009)

Ethical principle	How it has been addressed
2.1 The essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated... It should be borne in mind that the best judge of whether an investigation will cause offence may be members of the population from which the participants in the research are to be drawn.	A pilot study would have addressed this principle, however due to the time scale of the Think-Family project a pilot study was not conducted before the interviews were carried out. However, each participant was questioned after the interviews about whether they had any concerns that had been raised from any of the questions and a contact number was given to them for the researcher in case any concerns arose following the interview.
3.1 Whenever possible, the investigator	This was explained to the parents/carers in the

should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation.	consent letter (Appendix 4) and also orally explained to both parents/carers and children/young people.
3.3 Where research involves any persons under 16 years of age, consent should be obtained from parents or from those in loco parentis.	Consent was gained using the consent letter in Appendix 4.
5.1 In studies where the participants are aware that they have taken part in an investigation, when the data have been collected, the investigator should provide the participants with any necessary information to complete their understanding of the nature of the research.	After the semi-structured interviews were conducted the opportunity was given for the participants to ask any further questions about the study and to alleviate any concern the participants may have had.
6.1 At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time.	This was stated in both the information in the consent letter for parents/carers (Appendix 4) and the consent checklist (Appendix 5) and was explained orally to adult and child participants.
7.1 Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs.	Confidentiality was explained in both the information in the consent letter (Appendix 4) and in the checklist of consent (Appendix 5) after oral discussion of this with all participants. It was also explained that anything a participant expressed during the interview may be included in the written research but would not be identifiable to any participant.
8.1 Investigators have a primary	Although the questions were not threatening to the

responsibility to protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation. Normally, the risk of harm must be no greater than in ordinary life, i.e. participants should not be exposed to risks greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal lifestyles.	psychological well being of the participants, the participants were in an anxious state because of the environment in which the interviews were conducted. The participants were approached within this environment and this may have raised their anxiety levels further. Each participant was given the right to withdraw (as explained in point 6.1) however no alternative time or venue that may have been more convenient, could be offered to the participants as many participants had travelled from other counties to visit their family members in the prison. The participants, at the time of the interviews, would not have known when they would be returning to the prison as they are dependent on the prisoner requesting their visit and prisoners can be moved to different prisons at short notice.
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As highlighted in Table 7, there are some ethical considerations surrounding the participants' emotional state and also the impact the interviews may have had as a result of obtaining participants' involvement in the study 'in-situ'. Ideally information would have been gathered about the design and role of the workbook over a few weeks by giving the workbook to the families and then interviewing them on a subsequent visit. Due to the security restrictions at the prison, however, the visitors could not take the workbooks into the prison with them or bring the workbooks back into the prison. Arranging a follow up interview at the prison would have been difficult as the visitors were unaware of when they would be returning to the prison as the prisoners had to request their presence. Another contributing factor was the distance

some of the visitors had to travel (some from London boroughs) and therefore follow-up interviews at their place of residence would have been difficult within the boundaries of this piece of small-scale research.

2.3 Participants

The participants interviewed were chosen due to their presence at the prison on two separate visiting times. Six children and four parent/carers were interviewed altogether and Tables 8 and 9 summarise the participants' profiles.

Table 8: Profile of child participants

Participant	Sex	Age	Ethnicity
Child 1	Male	15	White
Child 2	Male	5	Black Caribbean
Child 3	Female	9	White
Child 4	Female	15	White
Child 5	Female	5	White
Child 6	Female	4	White

Table 9: Profile of adult participants

Participant	Sex	Relationship to child	Ethnicity
Parent 1	Female	Mother	White
Parent 2	Female	Mother	Black Caribbean
Parent 3	Female	Mother	White
Parent 4	Female	Mother	White

2.4 Data Collection Procedures

Semi structured interviews, centred on a draft workbook, were conducted to elicit the children's and parents'/carers' views of what the final design of the workbooks should be. Arksey and Knight (1999) indicate that it is important to combine methods and activities in an interview, e.g. drawing, playing, writing, playing a game, using pictures, when interviewing younger children. However, time constraints and prison security rules that constrained what materials could be brought into the prison made this difficult. This needs to be considered when interpreting the results from the child interviews and could be an area to consider for future development of this study.

The table below illustrates the open-ended questions that were asked of the children and parents/carers:

Table 10: Questions used in the interviews with the children and parents/carers

Questions asked of the children	Questions asked of the parents/carers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are you visiting today? 2. Have you visited him in prison before? 3. How do you feel about coming to the prison to visit him? 4. Here is a booklet that has been made to help children and young people get ready for their first visit into prison. I would really like to get your ideas about it so would you mind having a look at it with me? 5. Do you think this booklet will help children get ready for their first visit into prison? Why? 6. What three things do you like about the booklet? Why? 7. What three things do you think need to be changed about the booklet? Why? 8. Is there anything you think has been missed out of the booklet? 9. Is there anything else you would like to say about the booklet? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think there should be something available to prepare children for their first visit to see a family member in prison? 2. What kind of things should be done? 3. Do you think using a booklet would help? 4. Do you think this booklet will help children get ready for their first visit into prison? Why? 5. What three things do you like about the booklet? Why? 6. What three things do you think need to be changed about the booklet? Why? 7. Is there anything you think has been missed out of the booklet? 8. Is there anything else you would like to say about the booklet?

Robson (2002) suggests that the sequence of questions within an interview should be as described in Table 11:

Table 11: Sequence of questions in an interview (adapted from Robson, 2002, p277)

Question Type	Related question from interview schedule used
Introduction where the interviewer introduces themselves and explains the purpose of the interview.	Built into agreeing consent to take part in the interview
'Warm-up' where easy, non-threatening questions are used to settle both the interviewer and interviewee.	Questions one and two for children, and question one for the adults as 'warm-up' questions
Main body of the interview, which includes questions covering the main purpose of the interview.	Questions three to eight for children and two to seven for adults as the main body of the interview, focusing on the design of the workbooks.
'Cool off' where there are a few straightforward questions at the end to defuse any tension that might have built up.	The last question for each participant as a 'cool-off,' straightforward question.
Closure where 'thank you and goodbye' are said.	Built into the interview at the end

Semi-structured interviews were used to allow the interviewer to be flexible in the approach so that the participant's views could be explored and expanded upon. The use of open-ended questions in interviews allowed the 'interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth as necessary, or to clear up any misunderstandings' (Cohen et al. 2008. p357).

The participants were initially approached whilst they waited on the landing outside the visits hall and the aim of the research was orally explained to them. Consent was gained from the children's parent/carer for their own involvement and for their child's involvement in the project using the information and consent letter in Appendix 4, while the children's consent was gained through an age-appropriate oral description of the activity and also a signed checklist to show the children understood what they had been told (Appendix 5).

A colleague and I conducted the interviews as we believed two researchers could interview more participants during the maximum of thirty minutes that the families were waiting before they entered the visiting room.

The use of two researchers is an important point of consideration as it was Nietzsche who attacked the idea of knowledge as 'disinterested, which attends the epistemological enterprise and claim(ed) that the activity of knowing is rooted in our affective constitution' (Owen, 1995 p33). The goals, values, beliefs and motivation of the researcher, and of the object of the research, are interlinked with their past and present experiences and also their understanding and experience of the research itself. Those involved with the research have a 'consciousness that is neither disembedded nor disembodied; knowing, like seeing, is an activity, which attends the embedded and embodied character of human subjectivity' (Owen, 1995 p33). Each researcher will have their own past and present experience and therefore will bring different beliefs and understanding to the interviews that may in some way 'affect the way in which they behave in the research setting... or the selection of data for

reporting and analysis' (Robson, 2002, p172). As a result of this semi-structured interviews, as opposed to unstructured interviews or structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate data collection method to adopt in order to reduce researcher bias as much as possible through the use of a structured approach, whilst still allowing the opportunity for the participants' answers to be explored further if necessary. These points are important to consider when analysing and interpreting the results from the semi-structured interviews.

3. Results

The full responses from each participant can be seen, in written format, in Appendix 6. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyse the patterns (themes) within data collected from the semi-structured interviews (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Thematic analysis was used because it has a theoretical freedom and the flexibility to provide a rich and detailed account of data. However, it is important to recognise that the absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis can mean that the 'anything goes' critique of qualitative research (Antaki et al., 2002) could be applied to this method. Further to this, the flexibility of the method could mean that the potential range of things that can be said about the data is broad and can make developing specific guidelines for higher-phase analysis difficult, which can be potentially inadequate to the researcher with lots of data trying to decide what aspects to focus on. Braun and Clark (2006) suggest another issue to consider is that a 'thematic analysis has limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it

is not used within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made' (p97).

After coding the participant responses, the key themes about the design of the workbooks that emerged from the thematic analysis were: 1) inclusion of rules/procedures/prison specific information, 2) use of drawings and pictures, 3) child friendly layout, 4) emotional aspects, 5) other. The table below highlights the responses made within each theme:

Table 12: Themes arising from thematic analysis of the interview data

Theme	Adult and Child/Young Person responses
1. Inclusion of rules/procedures/prison specific information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like that it (the workbook) tells you what happens. • I like it because it's got rules in what you can and can't do. • The (<i>prison</i>) specific section would help because it shows what's going to happen.
2. Drawings and pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like that you can draw. • It needs more signs or pictures so you can circle how you get to the prison, for example the Travel West Midlands sign. • I like the drawing pictures. • I would like a picture of the inside of the prison too. • It would be better if the picture (of the prison) was at the front. • I don't like writing, needs more pictures. • Drawing is good because children like drawing. • Needs more pictures. • I like you can draw a picture of who they are visiting, you could send it to them.
3. Child friendly layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more colour to make it interesting for children. • I want colour- pink, silver and gold. • Bubbles instead of squares would make it more child friendly and cartoon characters to help children understand what they have to do on each page. • The questions about getting there makes it fun.
4. Emotional aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a nervous time (going to the prison). • I like the things that you like and don't like (pages in the workbook). • Having the chance to express their feelings (one thing they liked). • Asking about emotions (one thing they liked).
5. Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is learning involved as well as preparing the children. • It's helpful because it teaches you lots of things. • I like the 'About me' because it's interesting.

All the adult participants reported that the workbooks were a good idea to support children and that they would use them with their children if they were available.

4. Discussion

4.1 Workbooks

The results from this small-scale study indicated that children and their parents/carers felt positively about the use of workbooks to support children's understanding of the prison visit and to contribute to preparing them more effectively for the visit. There were several themes that were highlighted from the interviews with the first being the inclusion of rules/procedures/prison specific information into the workbook as this was considered important in preparing children for their visit to prison.

4.1.1 Inclusion of rules/procedures/prison specific information

Several charities and associations have detailed what should be included in material that has the purpose of informing children about, or preparing children for visits to prison. The Family and Corrections Network (FCN) (2002) highlights that a leaflet needs to:

'Describe the ride to the institution, what the institution looks like, and what the check-in procedures will be. The more information the child has and the more he can anticipate, the greater control the child will have over any anxiety they may be experiencing.'

In line with this the Children of Prisoners Library facts and issues sheet 105 (accessed 2010) purports that 'the known is always easier than the imagined...when possible, be truthful' (p8).

An additional point, related to the inclusion of information in the workbook was highlighted during the interview of child participant 1. Whilst discussing the workbooks an officer walked past with a dog ready to search the visitors as they walked in. The young person became more anxious at the sight of this dog and when questioned about it he replied that a dog had attacked him the previous night and he did not know dogs could be used to search visitors before they entered the visits hall. This is an example of how the workbook could have prepared child participant 1 by informing him of all the possible events that could occur during his visit and therefore reduce his anxiety levels when he arrived. It is also important to consider, however, that if the child had access to this information prior to their visit it may have raised their anxieties and resulted in them not attending the visit session. This indicates a potential risk of a child using the workbook without the presence of a supportive adult who can discuss any anxiety or uncertainty that arises from the information presented.

4.1.2 Use of drawings and pictures and child-friendly layout

The use of drawings and pictures was another key theme highlighted by all participants and ensuring the layout of the workbook was child friendly was seen to be essential. Loucks (2004) suggested that material to help children to learn about imprisonment and understand their own feelings could be formulated in several ways

and it seems the participants in this study favoured the use of drawings in the workbooks and opportunities for the children to draw, rather than too much writing. However, as highlighted by Child Participant 3, who stated she did not like the drawing bits because 'I don't like drawing,' all children are different and therefore the workbook needs to contain a range of different formats to cater for different children's likes and dislikes.

4.1.3 Emotional aspects

Another important theme that arose was that the participants liked the aspects of the workbook that supported a discussion or identification of emotional aspects to the prison visit. Poelmann (2005) suggested that 'young children may need additional emotional support and reassurance to cope effectively with such a prison visit' (p693) and the workbook offers a way of facilitating this support. Further, the FCN (2002) describe the need for material to 'help the child to identify and label their feelings and offer them reassurance' and to 'help the child to formulate questions for their parent and help them focus and rehearse the specific things they want to tell their parent about.' This is because 'helping the child focus on a few specific topics for discussion will in turn help them organise their thoughts.' A note of caution must be made however, as previously noted, that without a supportive adult facilitating the use of the workbook a child's emotional state could be negatively impacted upon if any feelings of anxiety or worry are produced by the workbook and are left unexplained or resolved.

In a similar way to this study, although on a larger scale, Grimshaw and King (2002) conducted an assessment of information resources and support materials for families and friends of prisoners and for professionals working with them in the UK, Europe, USA, and other English-speaking countries. Among their main findings were that:

- Leaflets deal best with priority issues such as getting support, informing children, and preparing for a first visit to prison.
- Stimulus material can be useful if it gives expression to feelings that do not emerge in ordinary conversation.
- Resources for young children should be based on consultation with them.
- Resources for young people should use quotes from young people, focus on getting the facts straight and assure young people that their self-esteem can be undiminished.

An extension to this study would be to develop a guide for parents/carers, or a supportive adult, to help the child/young person complete the booklet. There is a potential role for school and teachers, as acknowledged by the charity 'Ormiston' which has produced a fact sheet entitled 'Time for Families.' Attending school is a large part of a child's day and therefore 'teachers will recognise that children visiting prison may be anxious and excited before the visit, and show signs of stress afterwards.' An important note is that all children will react differently and therefore some children may want to talk about the visit and some may not, but no child should

be asked to share more information than they wish to (www.ormiston.org). The involvement of school staff is important; however, within the Local Authority there is currently no system for identifying children of prisoners to school staff so that they may give any additional support that is needed. The ethical considerations of sharing sensitive information, such as whether a child has a family member in prison, poses a tension linked to confidentiality and stigma that would need to be resolved before any identification system could be implemented. This highlights a possible area for joint future research and development for the Local Authority and the Educational Psychology Service.

4.2 The Educational Psychologist's (EP's) role in gaining children's views.

Lundy (2007) emphasised that in order for children's views to be effectively and appropriately elicited 'there is a need for psychologists to provide insights into children's capacity, sociologists to document the social impacts of compliance and non-compliance, and educationalists to identify the educational benefits and most effective practices within schools' (p940). Although this provides a simplistic division of role between professionals and does not show the multiple levels of involvement each professional can have with a child, it does highlight the combined psychological and educational knowledge and skills an EP has and therefore illustrates the role they can play in gaining children's views. Hobbs et al. (2000) note, however, that consulting with children poses difficulties for EP practice and warn that 'Educational Psychologists cannot just ask the child for their view of their situation, and expect them to tell us' (p110). In support, Armstrong (1995) found that when a child was asked their view, they often said nothing, as they did not know what to say. Further

to this, Armstrong et al. (1993), focusing specifically on statutory assessment, found that children rarely believed that genuine attempts were made by EPs to involve them or even encourage them to contribute.

Harding and Atkinson (2009) report in their study that questionnaires, skills profiles, self-report scales and sentence completion tasks were often used by EPs. Caution needs to be taken when using these approaches, as Quike (2003) writes that 'off the shelf' questionnaires and attitude scales may not relate to existing views of the particular pupils involved and that many of the approaches have a limited frame of reference. The use of open-ended questions, through a semi-structured interview in this study, aimed to reduce this risk by allowing the children and interviewer to explore themes within questions.

Notably, May (2004) points out that the emphasis on professionals eliciting children's perspectives relies on adult interpretation of the pupils' responses, which may lead to inaccuracies in how the voice of the pupil is represented. Alderson (2000) emphasises the limitations of a one-off meeting in enabling effective consultation with children to take place. Rapport, identified by Beaver (2003) as an important feature during consultations, cannot be sufficiently built during a short, one-off meeting, and therefore this needs acknowledging when interpreting the results from the interviews with children in this study. If the child felt no rapport, or connection with the researcher, did they give answers to the questions that reflected their true opinions or did they simply give answers to the questions in order to hurry the interview up?

4.3 Methodological challenges and future directions

There were a number of methodological challenges, illustrated by this small-scale research, concerning work with children who have a family member in prison. The identification of this population of children was difficult because of the lack of records available within the policies and procedures of the Local Authority and the prison. Only children who visited the prison on the two occasions that the researchers were present at the prison during visiting times could be identified as potential participants in this study. A further implication of this was that the children had to be interviewed whilst they waited to go into the visits hall to see their family member. This has a number of ethical limitations (discussed in section 2.2) and also consequences for the collection and interpretation of the data as detailed in the table below.

Table 13: Considerations when interpreting the data collected

Consideration	Implication for interpretation of data
The children were in a heightened emotional state because of where they were interviewed, the unfamiliarity of the surroundings and the presence of the researcher, asking questions, may have added to this emotional arousal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have resulted in the participants not engaging fully with the questions about the workbooks and giving answers that were quick and sufficient to satisfy the researcher. • In order to conduct an effective child interview, Arskey and Knight (1999) highlight the importance of putting the child at ease quickly and helping them to feel confident, however this was made difficult by the surroundings the interviews were conducted in and the nervous emotional state many of the children said they were in. • Ideally the participants needed time to read the workbooks and engage with the text, away from the prison environment, so that they fully understood the purpose and content before they answered questions about it.
The interviews had to be conducted on the landing outside the visits hall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other visitors were around which may have resulted in the participants being conscious about the answers they gave, and so giving public rather than private view points. • This is also highlighted by Harden et al (2000) who argue that it is not only the surroundings but also the researcher-child relationship that can cause bias in the participants' answers. • Harden et al (2000) also argue that interviews with children should be particularly problematic because the power relations between adult researchers and children are likely to increase the tendency of children to give public rather than private accounts in the interview setting.
Lack of privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other visitors, officers and activity around them distracted the participants. This may have impacted upon the participants' cognitive processing of their answers and therefore this needs to be considered when interpreting the results.

This small-scale research study aimed to give a small number of children within this population a voice about the design of a workbook to be used as a tool to mediate coping with prison visits. It has also acknowledged the methodological challenges in identifying children of prisoners and in collecting reliable data from this population.

Future studies need to be undertaken that focus on monitored implementation of the workbooks, over time and with a sample of children/young people and families so that the question of how children's/young people's needs are best addressed and the

function the workbook fulfils can be considered in more depth. In addition, the role of a supportive adult needs to be considered in order for the workbook to be used with children/young people in a sensitively attuned way, over time. A case study methodology could be used, which is the 'development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case', or of a small number of related 'cases' (Robson, 2002, p89). This methodology would allow the study of children/young people and their families, using the workbook, within familiar contexts, and data about this could be collected using a range of techniques (Robson, 2002). Although case study can be considered 'a 'soft option', possibly admissible as an exploratory precursor to some more 'hard-nosed experiment or survey' (Robson, 2002, p179) Cook and Campbell (1979) see case studies as a fully legitimate alternative to experimentation in appropriate circumstances. However, the methodological challenges acknowledged within this study would need to be considered carefully.

5. Conclusion

The literature review from the current study highlighted the need for appropriate interventions and strategies to be put into place to support children of prisoners and this small-scale research focused on the development of a workbook to prepare children for their first visit into prison to see a family member. The aims of this small-scale research were to elicit the views of children of prisoners and their parents/carers to inform the design of the workbook and also to discuss the difficulties of conducting research with this population. Using semi-structured interviews with children of prisoners and their parents/carers, and applying thematic

analysis to the collected responses, five key themes were identified regarding the content of the workbook. However, as acknowledged and reported by this study, there are methodological and practical difficulties surrounding the identification of this population of children and the collection of reliable data. While the reported methodological issues, such as adequate identification, associated ethical considerations and the lack of information to ensure adequate follow-up work, need to be carefully considered, it is important that these children are given a voice and are listened to if appropriate interventions and strategies are to be put into place to support their emotional well-being. There is a scarcity of research focusing on eliciting the views of children/young people from this group and therefore more work is needed to encourage the participation of these children in research. Discussion about the role of EP's within this research has illustrated the potential involvement EPs could have in contributing to this area and their psychological and educational insights that can be used to ensure the children's authentic and deliberative voice is heard (Hading and Atkinson (2009). Further time needs to be invested in eliciting information so that a broader exploration of children's needs in relation to their emotional well-being can be conducted.

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Visiting the prison



My workbook

This is me...

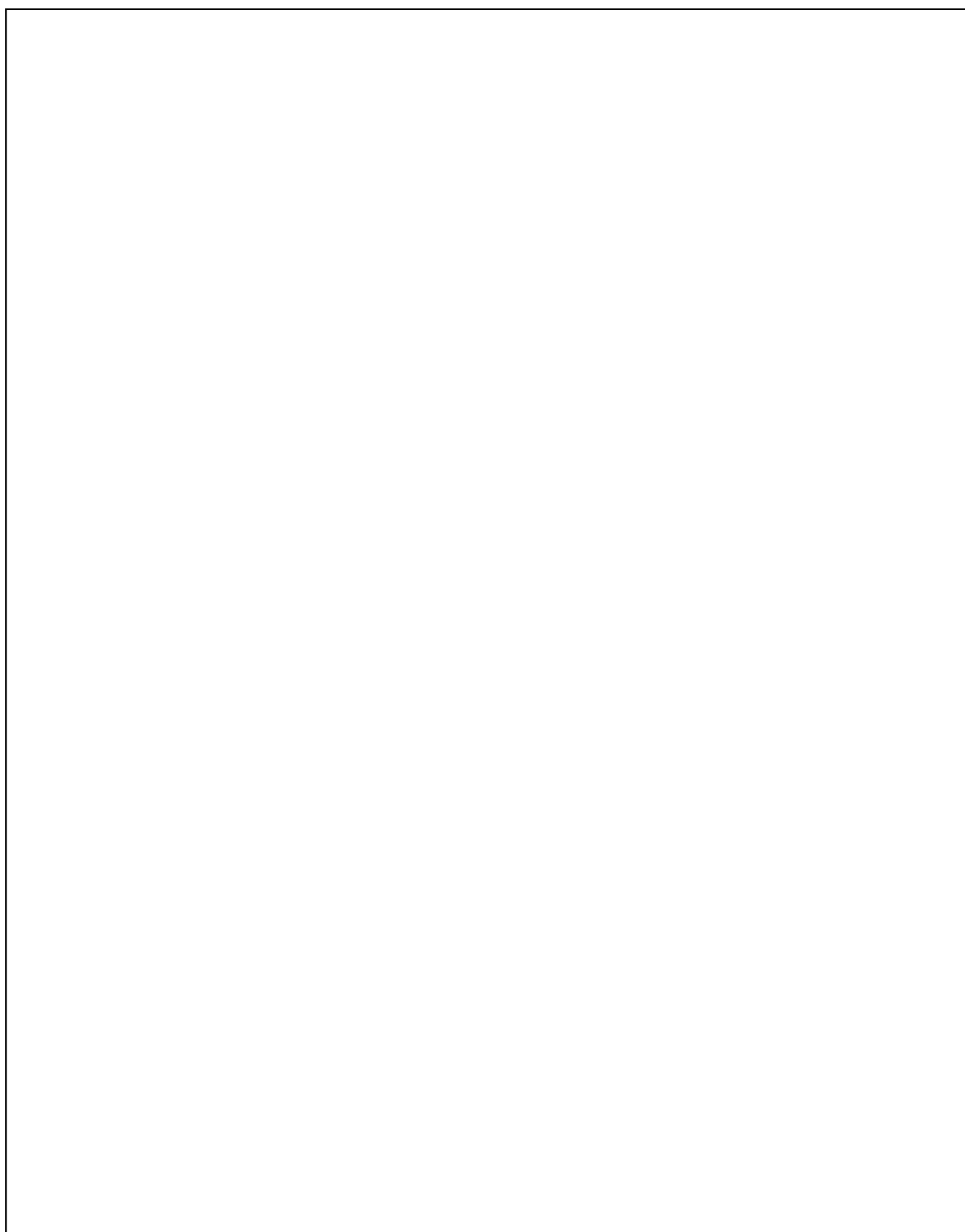
Name:

Age:.....

The person I am visiting is called

.....

He looks like...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or a detailed description of the person being visited.

This is how I feel about him being in prison...

Happy

Sad

Worried

Upset

Angry

The Prison

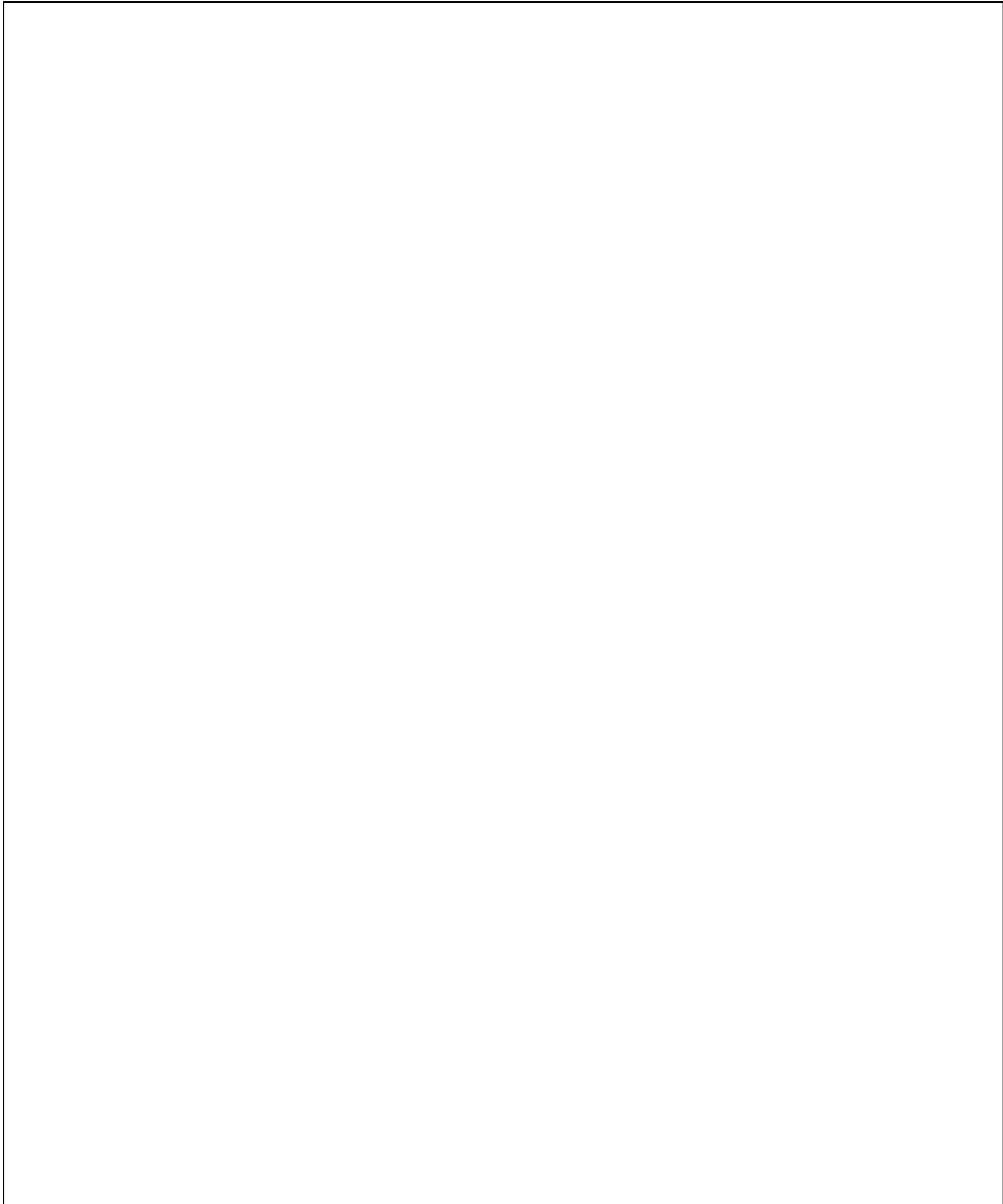
This is what it looks like from the outside

Visiting ...

- When you first arrive, the adult that you are with will sign a register for you both.
- Next you will go through to the security section. You will have to put your bags through a special machine.
- A lady will then search you by patting down on your clothes just to check that there is nothing sharp that you are carrying into the prison as sharp items could be used to hurt somebody.
- You will then go upstairs where you will wait until you get called to go into the visiting room.
- If you do have any bags with you, you will need to put them in a locker which is in the waiting room.
- You can take this booklet in to the visit with you, you can also take loose change for the drinks machines.
- Sometimes there are dogs who might sniff you and the adults you are with, this is part of the security at the prison. You can stand on your own or with an adult if you like.

- You can then go through to the visiting hall.

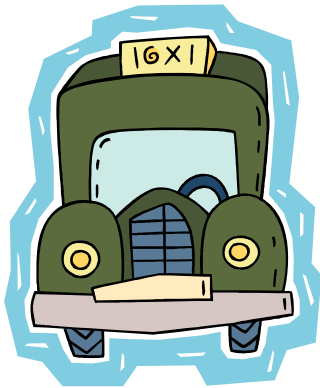
Is there anything else I want to know about visiting him?



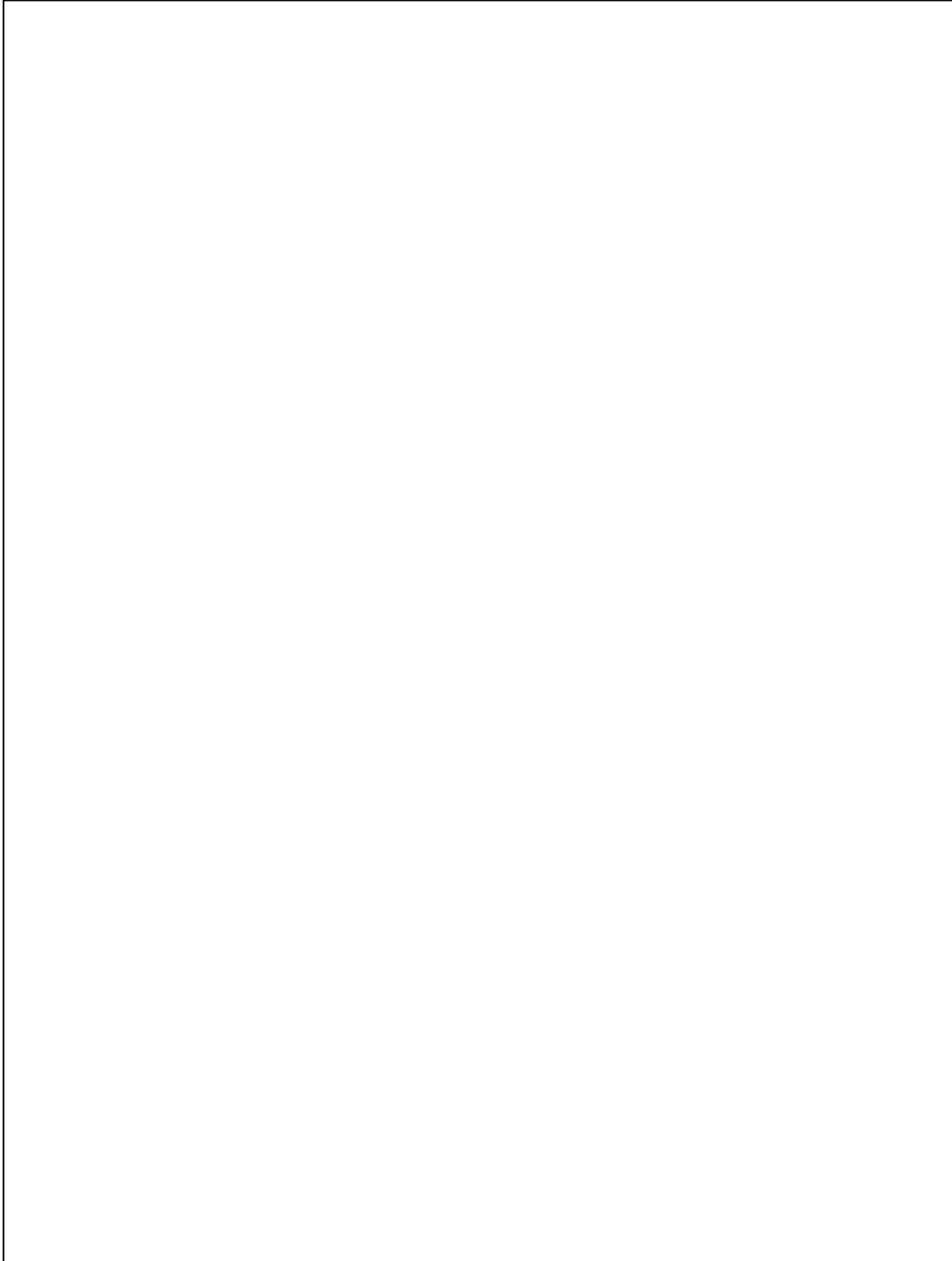
Getting there

I am going to visit him
with.....

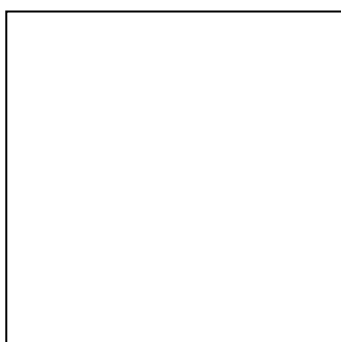
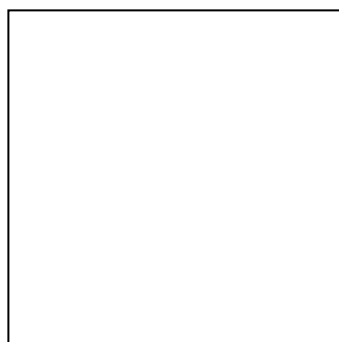
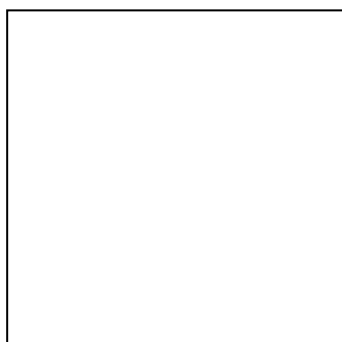
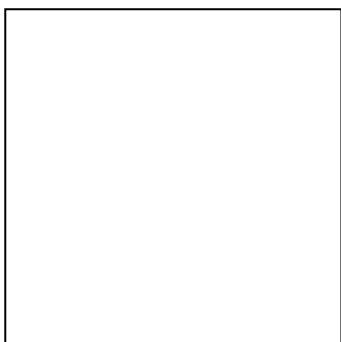
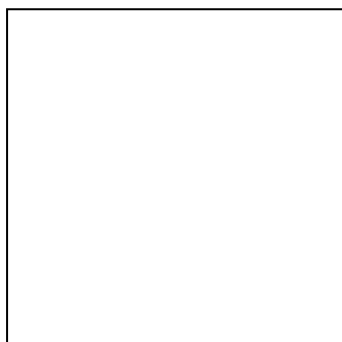
I am getting there by...



When I see him, I want to tell him
about.....

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.

This is how I felt after seeing him...



The best part was...

.....

.....

.....

.....

The worst part was...

.....

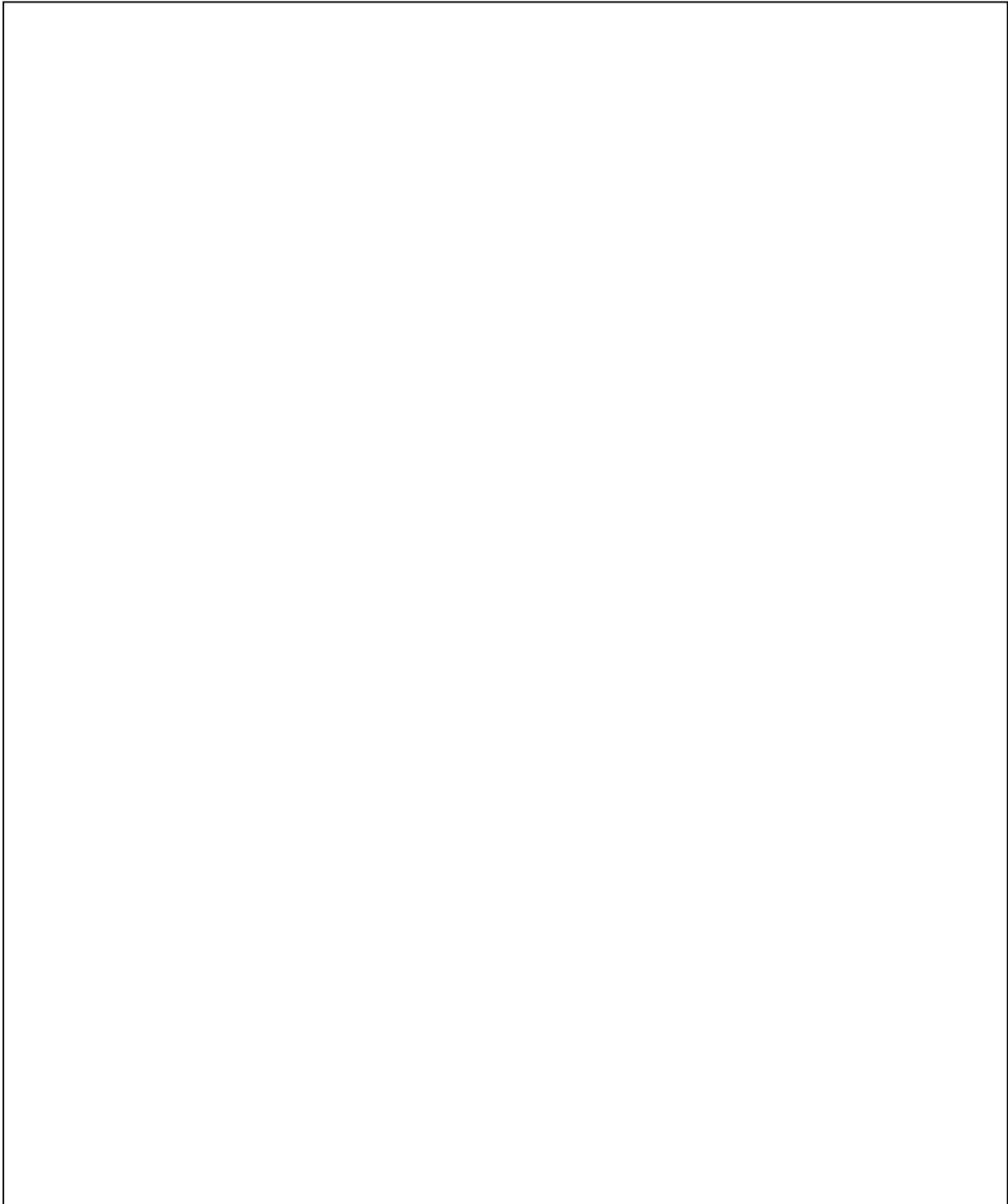
.....

.....

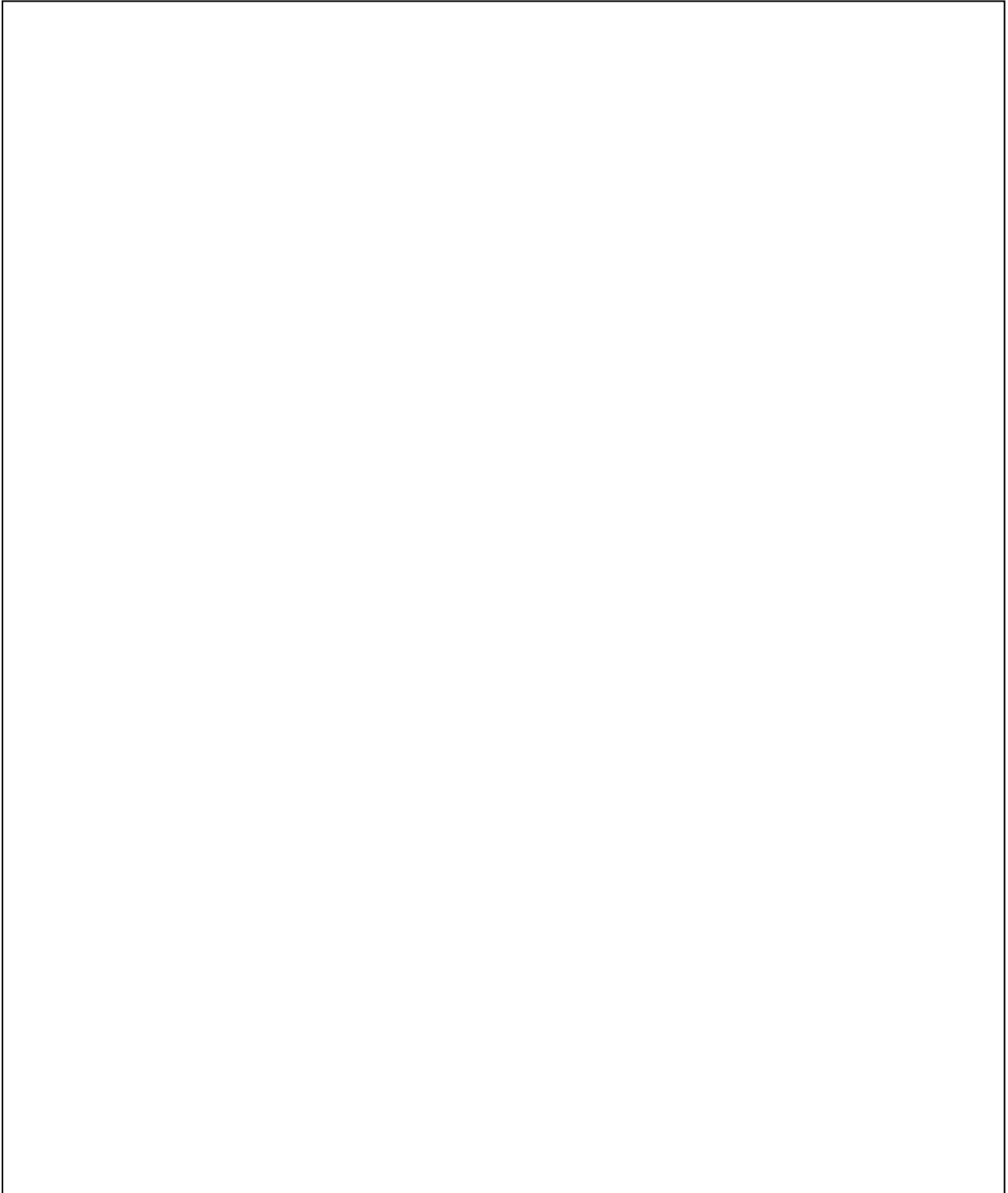
.....

I am going to speak to him again
on.....

Is there anything else you would like to draw or write about your visit today?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw or write about their visit.

Would you like to draw a picture or write a story to give to the person you are visiting today?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw a picture or write a story.

Need to talk?

Call ChildLine



**Calls are free and
confidential**

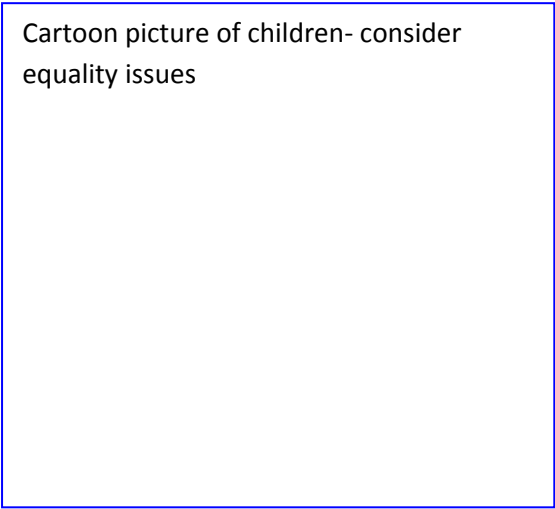
Produced by ... Educational Psychology Service

With thanks to ... Prison

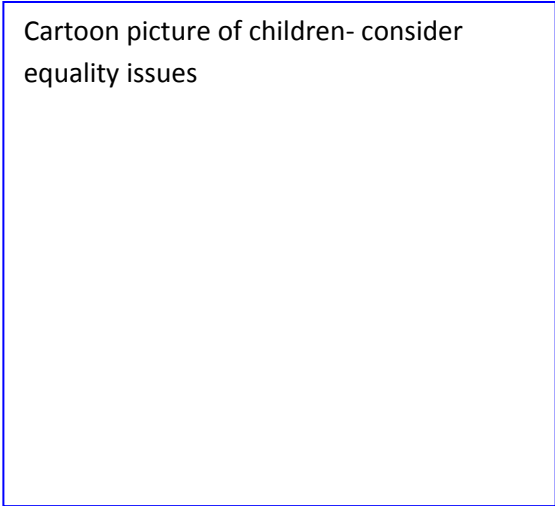
Appendix 2: Workbook for Primary school-aged children

Visiting the prison

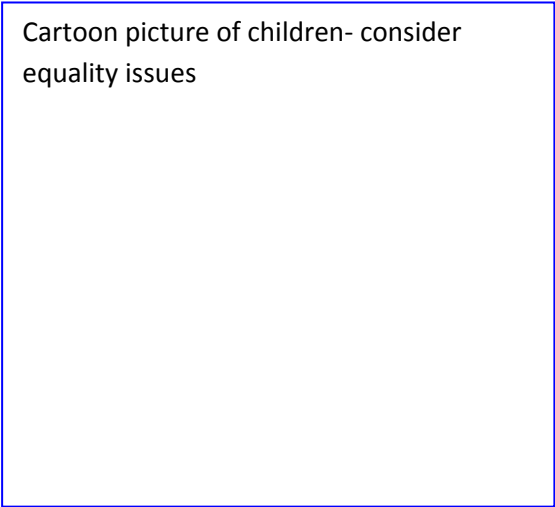
Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues



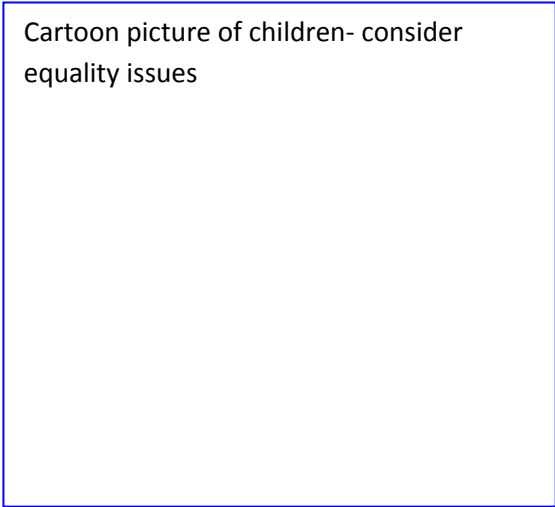
Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues



Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues



Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues



My workbook

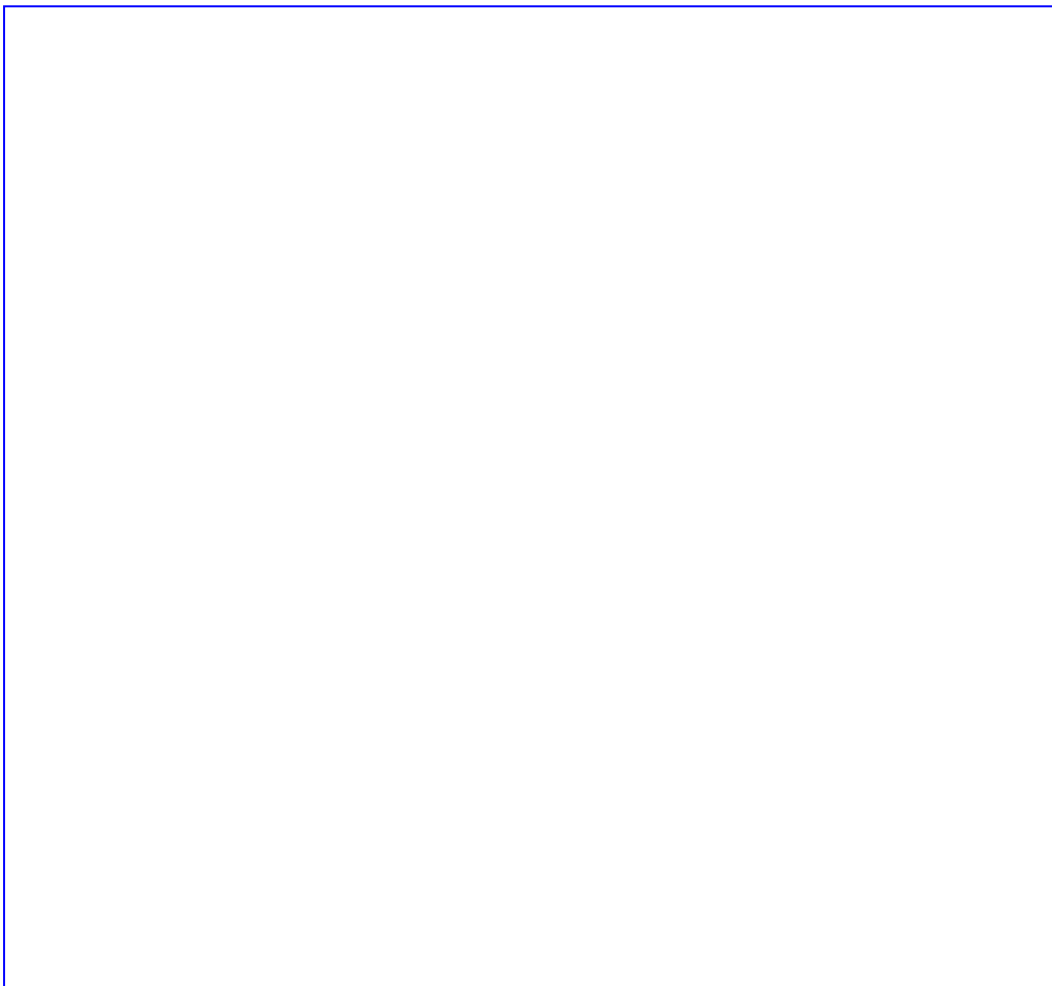
Name:

Age:.....

I like.....

I dislike.....


This is me...



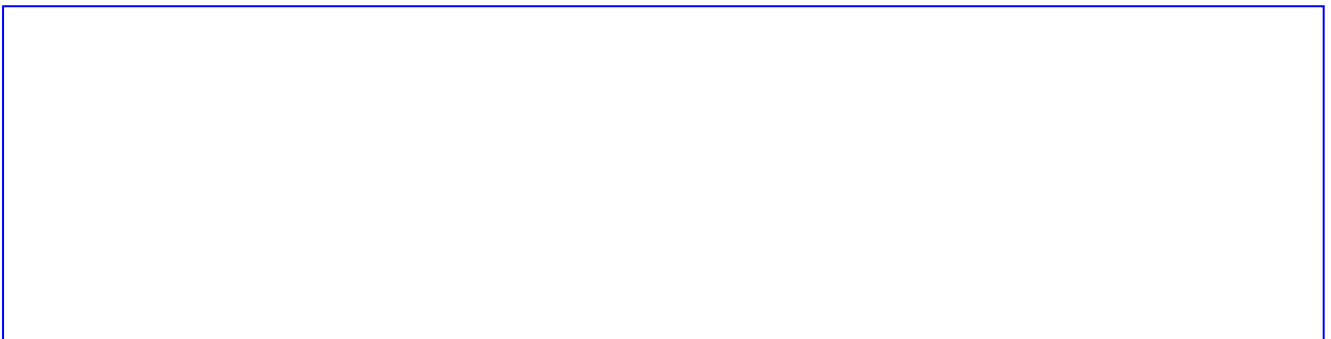
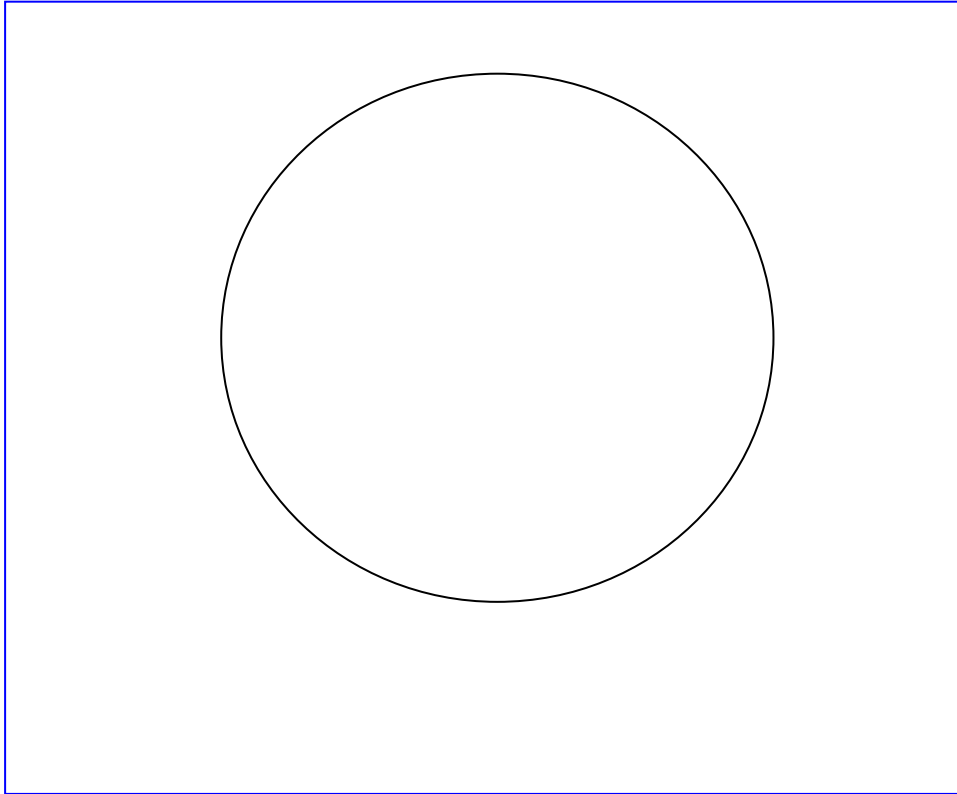
I am visiting...

His name is.....

Write or draw something about him

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying the lower half of the page. It is intended for the user to write or draw something about the person they are visiting.

Can you draw a face that shows how you feel about them being in prison, for example you may feel scared, stressed, helpless, loss, love, safe, shocked, disgusted, cheated, relieved or happy.



About

This is what it looks like from the outside

The visit

Times-

What happens when I visit?

- When you first arrive at the prison, you will need to sign in at the visiting centre across the road from the prison.
- Then you will go across the road to the prison, the adult that you are with will sign a register for you both.
- Next you will go through to the security section. You will have to put your bags through a special machine.
- A lady will then search you by patting down on your clothes just to check that there is nothing sharp that you are carrying into the prison as sharp items could be used to hurt somebody.
- You will then go upstairs where you will wait until you get called to go into the visiting room.
- If you do have any bags with you, you will need to put them in a locker which is in the waiting room.

- You can take this booklet in to the visit with you, you can also take loose change for the drinks machines.
- Sometimes there are dogs who might sniff you and the adults you are with, this is part of the security at the prison. You can stand on your own or with an adult if you like.
- You can then go through to the visiting hall.

What can I take?

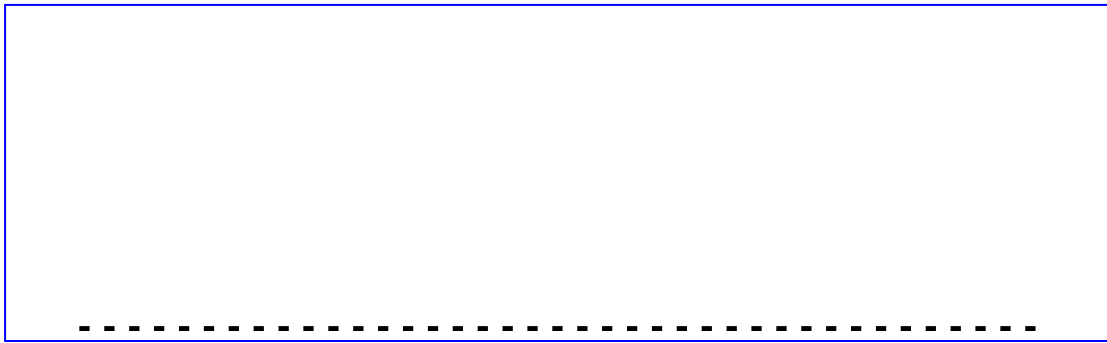
- You can take things to read or play with while you wait but when you go into visit the person that you are going to see, you can not take any of those things in with you. This is because some items, especially anything sharp may be used to hurt someone.

Is there anything else I want to know about visiting him?

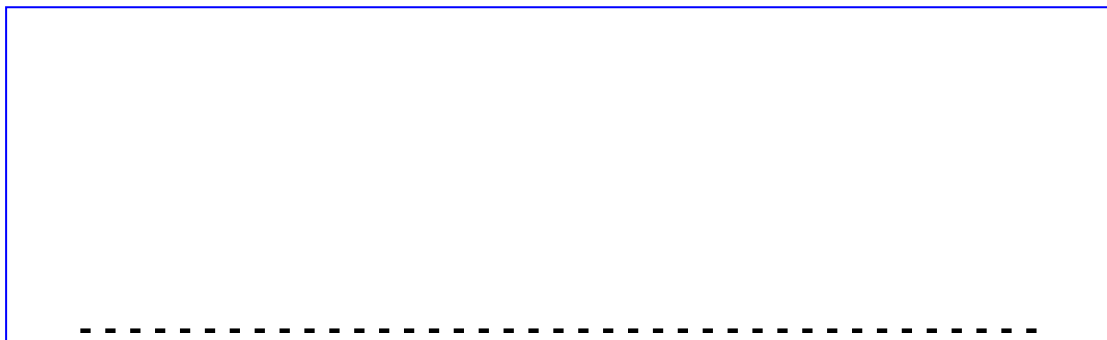
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying the central portion of the page. It is intended for a user to provide a response to the question above it.

Getting there

I am going to visit him with...



We are travelling there by...



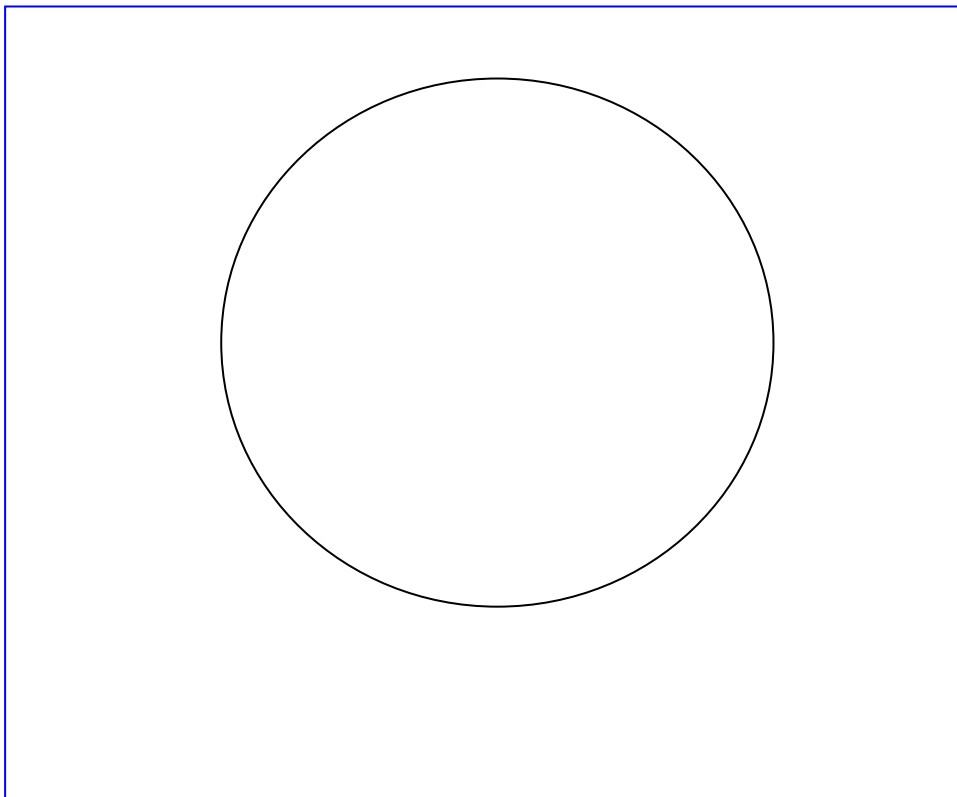
When I see him, I want to tell him
about.....

Me:

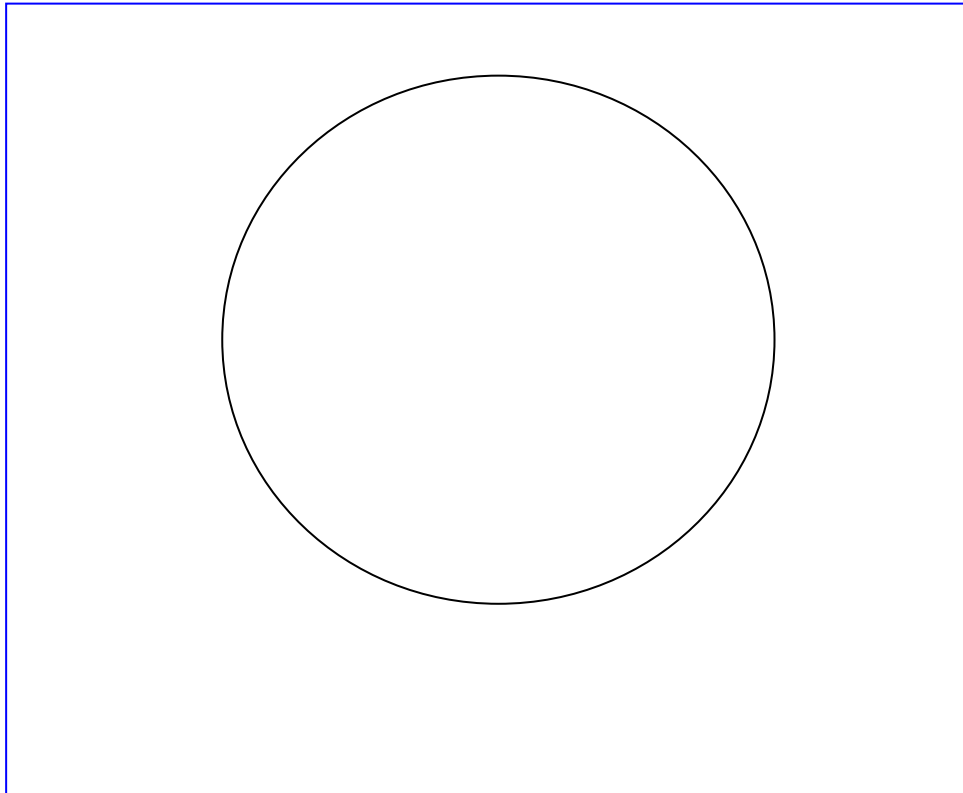
Home:

School:

How do you think you might feel
when you see him? For example you may
feel scared, stressed, helpless, loss, love, safe,
shocked, disgusted, cheated, relieved or happy.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue outline. This box is intended for a written response to the question about feelings.

This is how I felt after seeing him, for example you may feel scared, stressed, helpless, loss, love, safe, shocked, disgusted, cheated, relieved or happy.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border. This box is intended for a person to write a description of their feelings or a narrative related to the experience.

The best part was...

.....

.....

.....

.....

The worst part was...

.....

.....

.....

.....

What would I do differently?...

.....

.....

.....

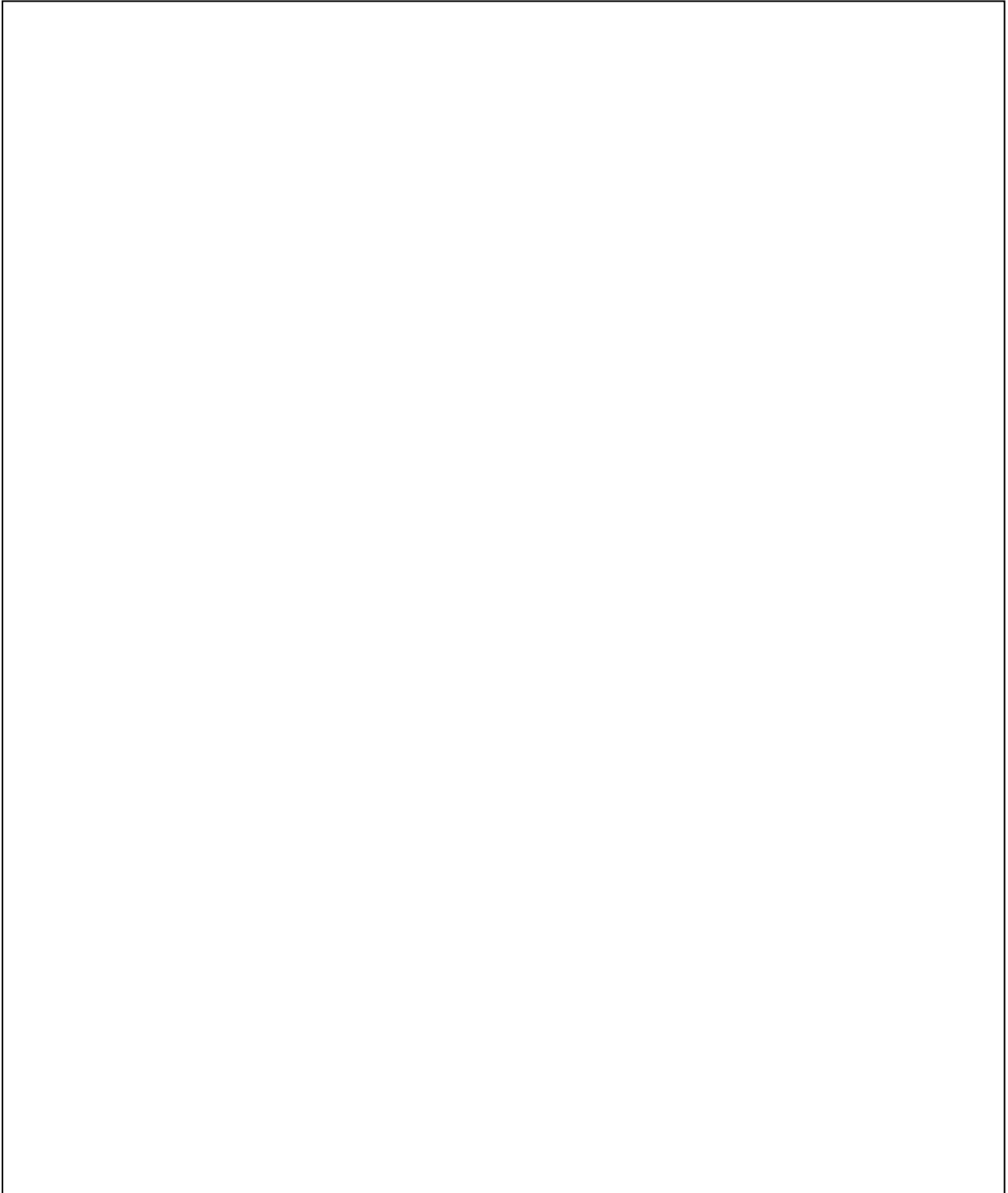
.....

I am going to speak to him again
on.....

Is there anything else you would like
to draw or write about your visit
today?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for a drawing or written response.

Would you like to draw a picture or write a story to give to the person you are visiting today?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw a picture or write a story.

Need to talk?

Call ChildLine



**Calls are free and
confidential**

Produced by ... Educational Psychology Service

With thanks to ... Prison

Appendix 3: Workbook for Secondary school-aged children
Planning my visit to ...

Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues

Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues

Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues

Cartoon picture of children- consider
equality issues

About me

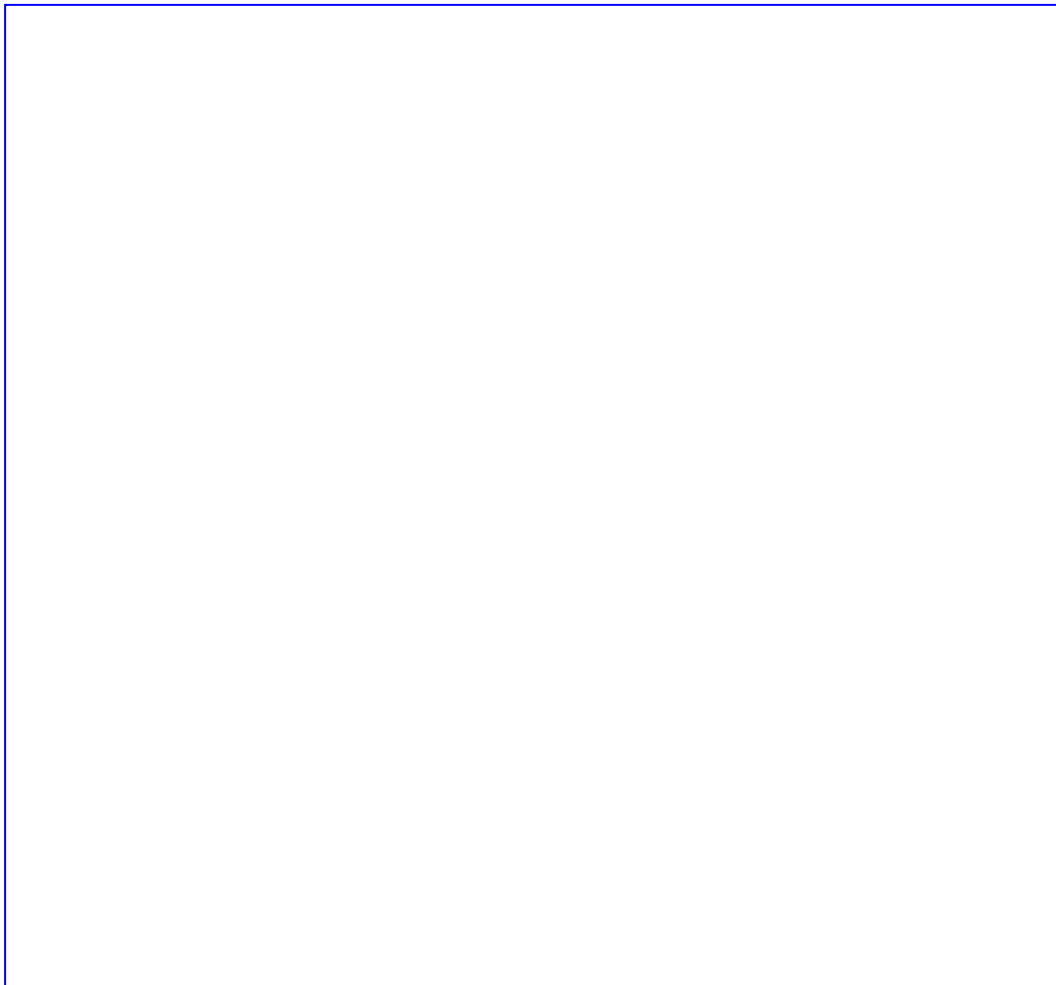
Name:

Age:.....

Hobbies.....

.....

This is how I see myself (you can write or draw)



Who am I visiting?

I am going to visit.....

He is my.....

Here are a few things about them (you
can write or draw)



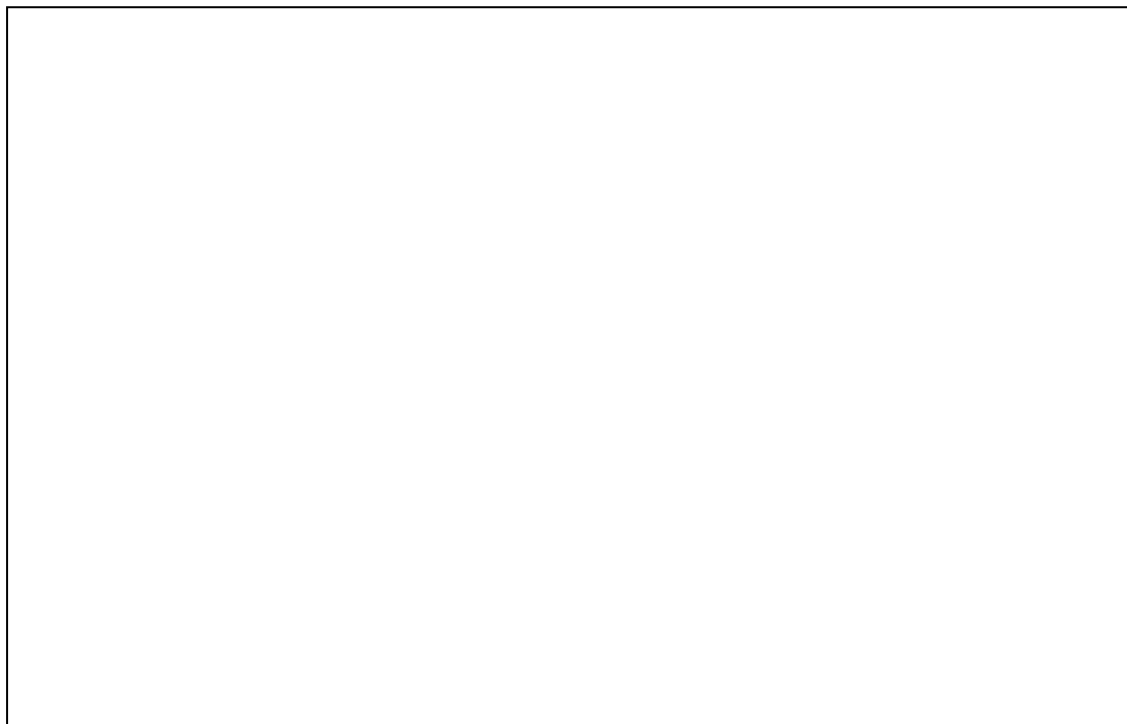
You can feel lots of different things when your Dad is in prison....

You can feel lots of different things when you visit prison...

Put a circle round the ones that you have felt or write some of your own...

happy
lonely
worried
safe
embarrassed
upset
different
confused
angry
ashamed
sad
guilty
ignored

Write or draw what you think...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to write or draw their response to the prompt above.

About ...

This is what it looks like from the outside

Address:

Procedure

- When you first arrive at the prison, you will need to sign in at the visiting centre across the road from the prison.
- Then you will go across the road to the prison, the adult that you are with will sign a register for you both.
- Next you will go through to the security section. You will have to put your bags through a special machine.
- You will then be searched by a member of staff just to make sure you are not carrying anything that may be seen as dangerous.
- You will then go upstairs where you will wait until you get called to go into the visiting room.
- If you do have any bags with you, you will need to put them in a locker which is in the waiting room.
- You can take this booklet in to the visit with you,. You can also take loose change for the drinks machines.
- Sometimes there are dogs who might sniff you and the adults you are with, this is part of the security at

the prison. You can stand on your own or with an adult if you like.

- You can then go through to the visiting hall.

Is there anything else I want to know about visiting?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, occupying the central portion of the page. It is intended for a user to provide a response to the question above it.

Planning my route

Date and time.....

Who am I going with?

How are we getting there?

.....

.....

.....

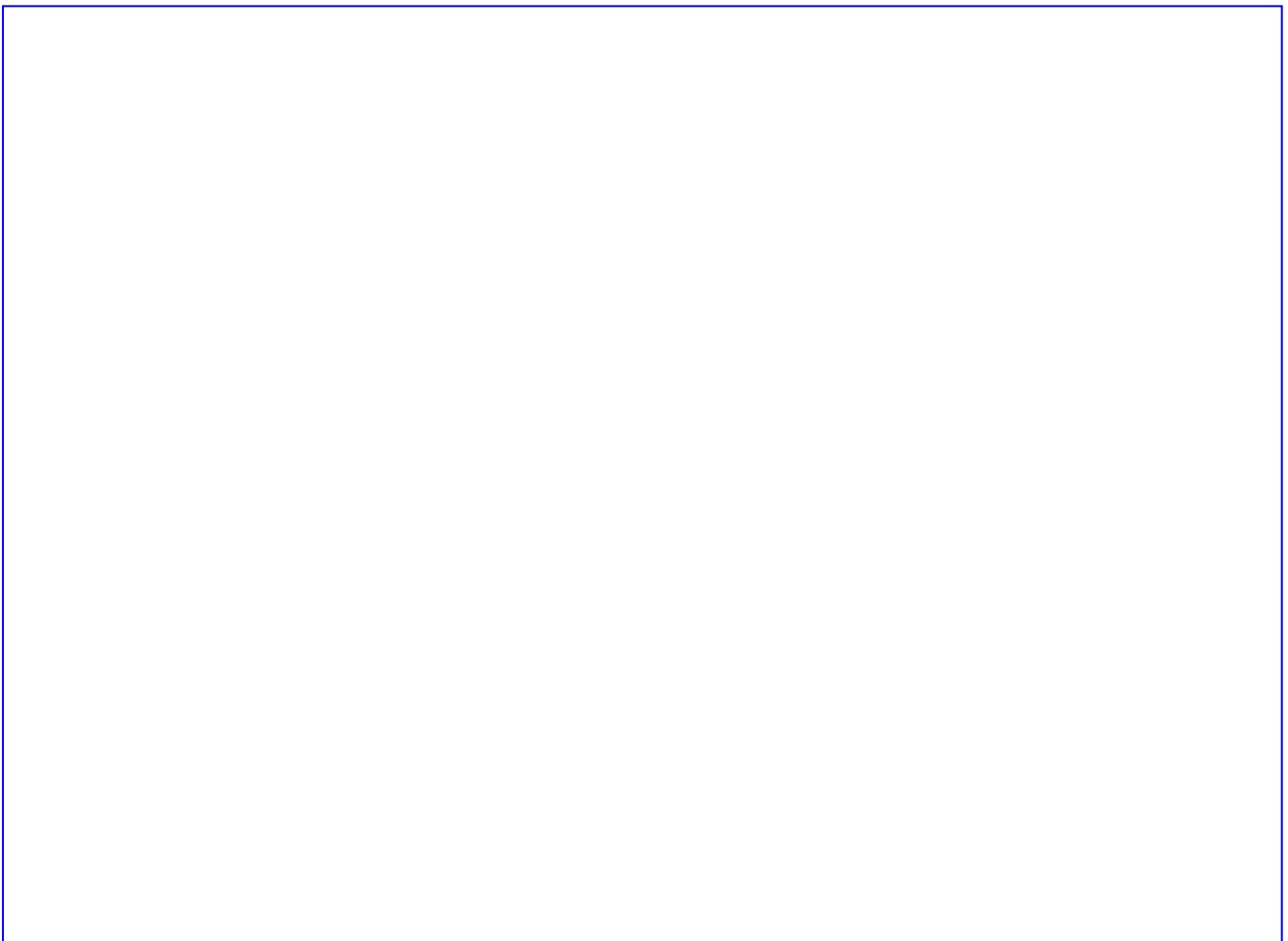
.....

.....

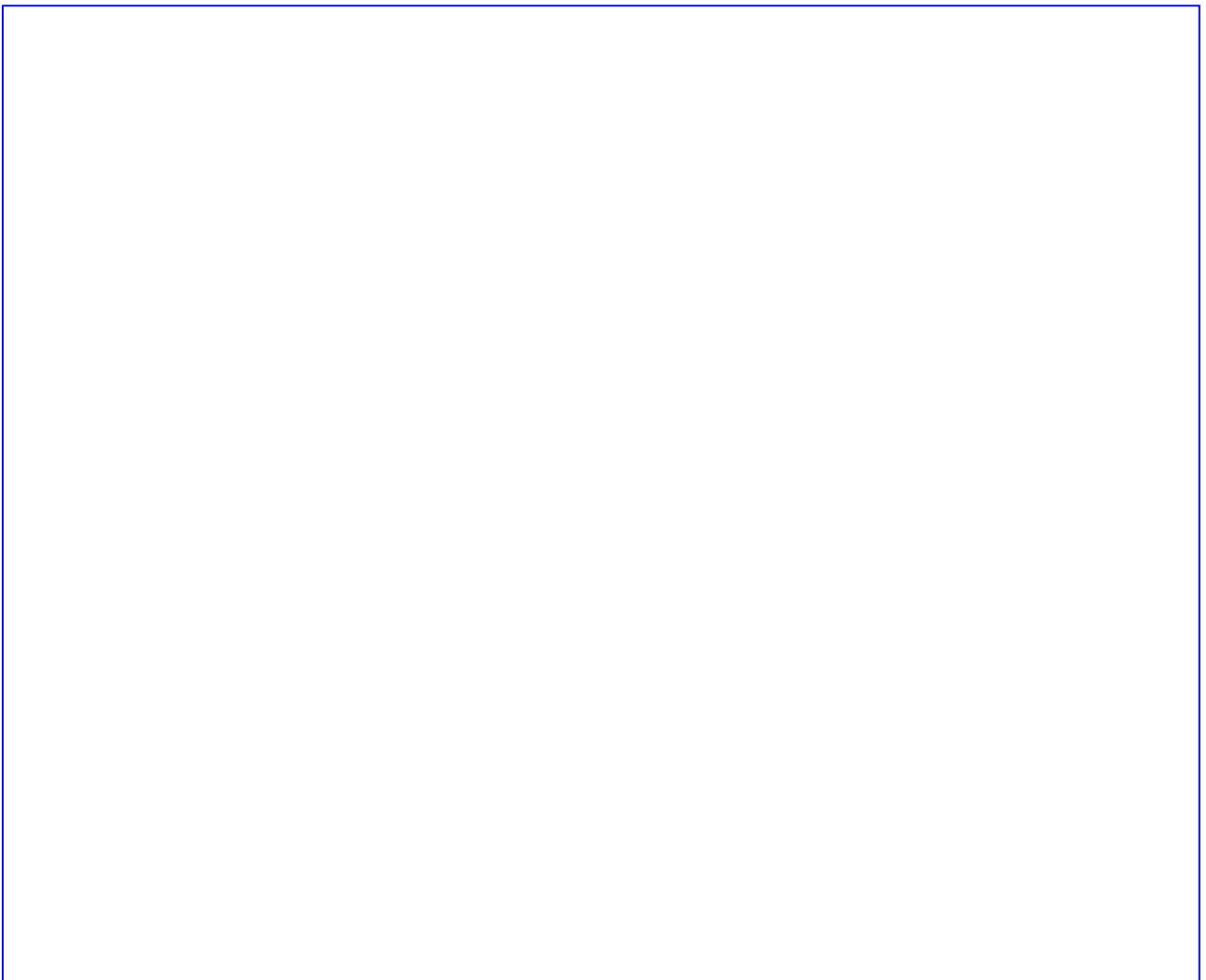
.....

When you are visiting, what do you want to talk about eg, anything about yourself, home or school?

How do you think you might feel when you see the person you are visiting, for example you may feel scared, stressed, helpless, loss, love, safe, shocked, disgusted, cheated, relieved or happy.



This is how I felt after seeing the person I was visiting, for example you may feel scared, stressed, helpless, loss, love, safe, shocked, disgusted, cheated, relieved or happy.



The best part was...

.....

.....

.....

.....

The worst part was...

.....

.....

.....

.....

What would I do differently?...

.....

.....

.....

.....

I am going to speak to him again
on

Is there anything else you would like to draw or write about your visit today?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for a student to draw or write about their visit.

Here is space for you to draw a picture, write a story or a letter to the person you are visiting today if you would like to....

Need to talk?

Call ChildLine



**Calls are free and
confidential**

Produced by ... Educational Psychology Service

With thanks to ... Prison

Appendix 4: Information and Consent letter

Dear,

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of B City Council's Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The EPS is currently interested in gaining children and young people's views about a booklet that is being designed to help children and young people prepare themselves for their first visit to see a family member in prison.

I would like to ask your child their views about a booklet that has been designed by the Educational Psychology Service. Their views will be used to finalise the design of the booklet before it is printed and sent out to other children.

Everything that your child says will remain confidential, so that when I report back to the local authority, your child can not be identified from the work done. I will be writing down what is expressed by your child but this will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to read it is me, Claire Smith (trainee Educational Psychologist), HB (trainee Educational Psychologist) and HH (Senior Educational Psychologist). I will not be storing your child's name with the work, so no one will be able to identify the work as your child's. The only time we cannot keep your child's views confidential is if they say something that suggests they, or someone else is at risk of harm. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in their school.

Your consent is required for your child to work with me. If your child changes their mind about participating, they can stop the work at any point and I will not ask why. It will not be possible to remove your child's views from the research after the work has been completed as their name will not be stored against the work.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Smith

Trainee Educational Psychologist

.....

I **give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith/ HB to discuss their views of the booklet.

I **do not give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith/ HB to discuss their views of the booklet.

Signed.....

(Parent/Guardian)

Relationship to child.....

Date.....

Appendix 5: Consent checklist

My name is

I would like to participate in the work with Claire Smith/ HB to discuss my views on the 'Visiting Prison' booklet. I have been told information about the work and understand that:

	Yes/No
If I decide to, I can stop the work at any point.	
I will not be able to withdraw my views after the work if I wish to do so	
My views will be used within doctoral research and may be used to develop interventions to support children and families visiting a family member in prison.	
My views will be recorded and kept locked in a filing cabinet that only Claire Smith, HB and HH will have access to.	
My views will be kept confidential unless I say anything that suggests I or another are at risk from harm.	

Signed.....

Appendix 6: Responses for each participant

Child participant 1 (secondary age booklet):

- It was this young person's first time visiting a family member in prison and he said he felt nervous, especially of the bars and gates you see.
- The booklet was good because it has 'got rules in what you can and can't do.' He said that he had bought his mobile phone in and that if he had known he couldn't bring it in he would have felt happier leaving it at the front gate.
- He liked that the booklet had space to draw pictures, and gave you chance to say what you liked and didn't like and also what hobbies you have. He also thought the front title stood out.
- He felt that on the 'Getting there' page there needed to be less writing and more pictures and signs so you can circle which one you are using. He gave an example of putting the West Midlands Travel sign on.
- During the interview an officer walked past with a dog. I asked the young person whether he knew that a dog could be present to conduct searches and he said he was not. He said it made him feel more nervous, especially because he had been attacked by a dog the previous night and he showed me the bruises and bite marks on his arm.

Child participant 2 (early years booklet)

- It was this child's first visit to see his dad in the prison and he said he felt happy.
- He felt that the booklet would help children and he liked that you could draw pictures inside.
- When the child saw the picture of the outside of the prison he said that there should be pictures of what the prison looks like on the inside as well.

- The child thought that the booklet is helpful because 'it teaches you lots of things.'

Child participant 3 (school age booklet)

- It was not her first time into prison but she recalled feeling nervous the first time she did come in and thought the booklets were a good idea so that other children 'won't feel as nervous.'
- She liked the pages that told you what was going to happen, asked you how you felt and also the 'About me' page because they were interesting.
- She did not like the bits where you had to draw because 'I don't like drawing.'
- She said it would be better if the picture of the prison was at the front 'so children can see what it is like.'
- There was nothing else that she said should go into the booklet.

Child participant 4 (secondary school age booklet)

- She said that she felt nervous coming into prison and that she would have used the booklet to help her.
- She felt that there needed to be more colour to make it interesting and that there needed to be more pictures and less writing.
- She said there was too much writing on the 'Procedures' page.

Child participant 5 (primary school age booklet)

- She thought the pictures were interesting but there needed to be more pictures inside.
- She thought there should be more colour, specifically pink, silver and gold.

Child participant 6 (early years booklet)

- The girl said she felt happy to be at the prison because 'I like seeing dad.'
- She liked the footprints on the front and the picture of the prison because 'that is where daddy is.'
- She thought that the booklet should be more colourful, specifically pink and blue.

Parent/carer participant 1 (secondary age booklet)

- The parent thought that children need to be prepared to visit the prison because 'they don't know what to expect when they come in.' She felt that there needs to be 'things that explain; they see prison on TV but when they come in they don't know what to expect.'
- She felt the section about the prison in particular was good as it told the young people what to expect and what's going to happen. She liked the space for pictures and photographs to be included and the opportunity for the children and young people to express how they feel.
- She liked the section about what can be taken in but she felt this needed to be in a list format and she also felt that there did not need to be a section describing who they were visiting.

Parent/carer participant 2 (early years booklet)

- This parent felt that a play area in the visit centre would help the children settle before they came over to the prison. She also commented that the visit centre should be open for longer so that the visitors have somewhere to wait before they can go over to the prison.

- She liked the section about getting to the prison as it 'makes it more fun' for the children using the booklet.

Parent/carers participant 3 (early years booklet)

- This parent felt that there needs to be a play area for children in the visiting room and also for the visit centre to be open for longer.
- She liked the booklet but felt that it needed more pictures. She said that it would be something she would use with her son and that it would be useful.

Parent/carers participant 4 (early years booklet)

- The booklets are a good idea.
- She liked that the child could draw a picture of whoever they were visiting because it could be detached from the booklet and given to the prisoner to keep.
- She felt the booklets not only prepared the children but there were aspects of it that taught the children something, for example the transport page.
- She felt the booklets should be more colourful and child friendly by having bubble shapes and wavy lines rather than black square boxes. She also felt that including a cartoon character that showed children what to do on each page, e.g. write or draw would help their understanding.
- She agreed that it would be something she would complete with her child.

Parent/carers participant 5 (primary school age booklet)

- She felt the booklets were a good idea and if it was her daughter's first time visiting the prison she would use it.

- She liked the pages where the children could draw because 'children like drawing.'
- She liked that the booklet asked children about their emotions.
- She felt there was nothing else that needed to be included.

Developing task persistence in Year 1 children through the use of adult modelling, verbal feedback and specific praise

Abstract

This paper considers the literature regarding developing task persistence by increasing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) through the use of adult modelling, verbal feedback and specific praise. This study explores, through a quantitative methodology, the effectiveness of a four-week classroom-based intervention aimed to increase task persistence of two Year 1 classes through the use of adult modelling of task persistence behaviour, verbal feedback and specific praise. Using a one tailed related t-test a significant increase was reported in the task persistence behaviour of ten children in Year 1 after the intervention. The findings from the intervention are discussed in terms of the potential impact upon the children's learning within the classroom, the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) and the limitations and future directions of this piece of small-scale research.

1. Introduction

1.1 Super scale points

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) 'sums up and describes each child's development and learning achievements at the end of the EYFS' (DCSF,

2008, p5). Each child's development is recorded against thirteen assessment scales, based on the early learning goals and divided between six areas of learning and development as shown in the table below and also highlighted further in Appendix 1:

Table 1: The six areas of learning and development (DCSF, 2008)

Areas of learning and development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal, Social and Emotional Development; • Communication, Language and Literacy; • Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy; • Knowledge and understanding of the World; • Physical Development; and • Creative Development.

Judgements against each of the scales are made from observations of consistent and independent behaviour, predominantly from children's self-initiated activities.

The Open Early Years Education (EYE) criticises this for being too 'prescriptive and demanding' (Open EYE, 2008) and also claims that the EYFS assumes that 'literacy, problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy are of equal importance for this age group as are (for example) physical, social and emotional development' (Open EYE, 2008). Coolahan et al (2000) highlight the importance of children's social development in their study investigating 'whether low-income preschool (6years-8years of age) children's peer play interactions related to learning behaviors (*e.g. task persistence, motivation, initiative, attentiveness, and openness to new challenges*) and problem behaviors (*e.g. disruption of lessons and aggression*)' (p458). The study was

conducted in a northeastern U.S. city and therefore there will be differences in culture, educational systems and population characteristics compared to a city in England. It is important to consider these differences when interpreting the findings from the study in the context of the EYFS, however, there are still interesting points to highlight from the study. Coolahan et al (2000) found that 'positive interactive play behavior was associated with active engagement in classroom learning activities, whereas disconnection in play related to inattention, passivity, and lack of motivation' (p458).

This study shows an important association of social interaction and play on a child's learning, which would indicate an under-acknowledged importance of play and social development in the EYFS compared to the more academic focus. Supporters of the early learning goals argue, however, that they lay secure foundations for future achievement and therefore give children the best possible start in their life as long learners (Staggs, 2000).

Within the EYFS, point scores are awarded to show levels of achievement made by a child (see Appendix 1 for an overview of the EYFS scale points). The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) has stated, in an article entitled 'Foundation Stage Profiling and Target setting,' (www.naht.org.uk) that:

'Some scale points, known as 'super scale points,' with research, appear to have a greater link to KS1 outcomes than others, particularly those that involve creativity, thinking and applying, rather than rote learning. Some specific scale points (the 'super scale points') seem to indicate that without them, a child is unlikely to achieve more than a 2c at KS1.'

In line with this, House (2008), quotes from an unpublished report about the DCSF funded 'Super Scale Points Project' that 'in every aspect of attainment at KS1, DA 8, 'maintains attention and concentrates,' was a distinguishing factor in final attainment.' This highlights the importance of developing attention and concentration skills in young children, which are the characteristics of a motivated, persistent learner.

1.2 Developing Persistence

Motivation is a key aspect of engaging children in learning activities. One way of understanding motivation is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic where intrinsically motivated children are more involved in their own learning and development because their motivation is not reliant upon an external reward. Closely linked to motivation is the concept of persistence, which will be the focus for this small-scale study. Persistence is the ability to stay with a task for a reasonably long period of time; children learn persistence when they are successful at a challenging task. The art in building persistence is in offering a task that is just challenging enough, but not overwhelming and is also motivating for children (www.nasponline.org).

In 1977 Bandura developed his Social Learning Theory, which is a theory that people learn new behaviour through overt reinforcement or punishment, or via observational learning of the social factors in their environment. If people observe positive, desired outcomes in the observed behaviour, then they are more likely to

model, imitate, and adopt the behaviour themselves. Bandura (1977) suggested a combination of environmental (social) and psychological factors influenced behaviour and social learning theory outlines three requirements for people to learn and model behaviour: retention (remembering what one observed), reproduction (ability to reproduce the behaviour), and motivation (good reason) to want to adopt the behaviour. Within Social Learning Theory Bandura (1977) identified that individuals create and develop self-perceptions of capability that become instrumental to the goals they pursue and to the control they are able to exercise over their environments. These self-beliefs about a person's own capabilities are called self-efficacy beliefs. Pajares and Schunk (2002) describe how self-efficacy beliefs:

'Influence students' behaviour... they influence the choices that students make; students engage in tasks about which they feel confident and avoid those in which they do not... Self efficacy beliefs also help determine how much effort students will expend on an activity and how long they will persevere- the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort expenditure and persistence.' (p 18)

Pajares and Schunk (2002) highlight that 'because young children are not proficient at making accurate self-appraisals, they rely on the judgements of others to create their own judgments of confidence and of self-worth.' (p22) The family and education system surrounding the child play an important role in the development of their confidence and self efficacy. Bandura (1986) argued that 'educational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children's beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future.' (p417)

Zimmerman and Ringle (1981) describe Bandura's theory of self-efficacy by stating:

'Bandura assumes that people's behavioural functioning is determined by their feelings of efficacy in coping with a particular situation. These efficacy beliefs seem to be derived from social experience such as verbal statements from others, exposure to models, and consequences of personal actions. Bandura postulates that a person's expectations of personal efficacy determine whether coping behaviour will be initiated, how much effort will be expanded and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences.' (p485)

This draws our attention to the importance of verbal feedback and also behavioural feedback from others for developing self-efficacy. From this it seems persistence at a task is a skill developed partially out of social learning and social consequence of behaviour.

Dweck and Legget (1988), however, propose an alternative model for personality, motivation and subsequent task persistence, where "individuals' goals set up their pattern of responding, and these goals, in turn, are fostered by individuals self-conceptions" (p257). The model is representative of a social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality in that it 'seeks to illuminate specific, moment- to-moment psychological mediators of behavior and assigns a central role to interpretive processes in the generation of affect and the mediation of behavior' (p257). The cognitive, interpretative aspect of an individual's task persistence behaviour is important as it provides the filter through which an individual observes the world and others' behaviour and interprets the feedback received from a person's own behaviour.

Zimmerman and Blotner (1979) explored the effects a social model's performance had on children's persistence in problem solving by using a wire puzzle task. The study was conducted with eighty predominantly white, middle class 6 and 7 year olds from New York. The children were assigned to one of four live modelling groups: high persistence, low persistence, success and no success or to a no-model control group and their duration of effort on the task was recorded using a stopwatch. Although the study is now thirty years old and was conducted in New York with a limited range of participant ethnicity and socio economic status, there are key points that can be considered. Zimmerman and Blotner (1976) found that

'Children's willingness to persist on a challenging task was varied directly with the duration of the model's efforts. The model's degree of success also affected the children's length of problem solving. However, modelling of persistence was twice as influential as vicarious consequences in determining the children's persistence' (p511).

Children who were exposed to the successful persistent model made a significantly longer attempt to solve the puzzle than children in the control group, whereas children exposed to the unsuccessful, non-persistent model displayed a significantly shorter effort than their control group counterparts. This study indicates that modelling experiences can improve as well as inhibit children's motivation to achieve. No study of children's self-efficacy judgments were made in this study and so the effects on children's perceptions of their achievements can not be commented upon. There was also no investigation into the long-term effects of the study on the children's learning behaviour and whether the persistence behaviours remained. Zimmerman and Blotner (1979) also highlight the important role of the family as they

comment that 'modelling may be an important family process which influences children's achievements' (p512).

In 1981 Zimmerman and Ringle conducted another study that explored the influence of an adult model's degree of persistence and statements of confidence with one hundred 6 and 7 year old black and Hispanic children in New York. The children were randomly assigned to groups of high or low model effort crossed with confident or pessimistic model statements of achieving a solution. In each condition a male model unsuccessfully attempted to separate two rings of a wire puzzle and the child was subsequently presented a different insolvable ring puzzle to solve. The duration of the child's effort was recorded in seconds by a stop watch with a time limit of 15 minutes imposed. A day later, the child was tested again with an insolvable embedded word puzzle and the duration of their effort recorded in seconds by a stop watch. In addition a series of faces were used 'to assess the children's self-efficacy estimates about solving the puzzles' (p487) extending the research conducted by Zimmerman and Blotner in 1979. The study by Zimmerman and Ringle (1981) 'indicated that a model's persistence in problem solving affected children's persistence on a similar wire puzzle' (p491). They also claimed that this was the first study to provide evidence that 'vicariously induced motivations to achieve on one task are generalisable to a very different type of task' (p491). This is a key finding in terms of a child's approach to learning, as it appears to indicate that if persistence and motivation are modelled and promoted in one task, a child will transfer these skills into other tasks and areas of learning, which is a central feature to successful learning (Haring et al, 1978). Zimmerman and Ringle (1981)'provided evidence...

that a model's expressed confidence about achieving a solution to a problem affected a learner's motivation to persist' (p491).

There are considerations to be made, however, about Zimmerman and Ringle's (1981) study before the findings can be fully accepted. The study was conducted in New York nearly thirty years ago and therefore societal practices and influences may have changed indicating a need for a more present day study into the effects of modelling persistence with children from the UK. Zimmerman and Ringle (1981) also highlight 'it is possible that the children in the present study felt socially compelled to overtly behave in a manner concordant with the model's behavioural example despite their covert belief changes in an opposite direction' (p492). Although the overt behaviour seemed to indicate rises in task persistence, the children's beliefs may have been different to this but may have remained covert due to social pressures.

Further, Mischel et al (1974) used the Stanford Preschool Internal-External Scale (SPIES) to measure preschool children's expectancies about whether events occur as a consequence of their own action (internal control) or as a consequence of external forces (external control). Mischel et al (1974) found that 'individual differences in children's beliefs about their ability to control outcomes are partial determinants of their goal-directed behaviour, but the relationships hinge on extremely specific moderating conditions with regard to both the type of behaviour and the type of belief' (p278). This links to the theory of locus of control (Rotter, 1966), which describes the extent to which people believe they have control over

events and factors. It also links to the research surrounding the different perspectives of control people can have about the same factor (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Hong et al, 1999) and the impact this has on a person's behaviour. Mischel et al (1974) found that internal control for positive events, but not internal control for negative events, was related to persistence where instrumental activity would result in a positive outcome. Internal control for negative events, but not for positive events, was related to persistence when instrumental activity could prevent the occurrence of a negative outcome. When the same situation was structured so that instrumental activity would not affect the outcome, persistence on the task was related negatively to internal control of negative events.

Multon et al (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance and persistence. In the meta-analysis for persistence 18 samples from 18 studies were used with a total sample size of 1194 subjects ($M=66.1$, range 24-162) and with a mean average age of subjects as 11.9 years (range 9.1 to 20years). They found that 'across various types of student samples, designs and criterion measures, self-efficacy beliefs account for approximately 14% of the variance in students' academic performance and approximately 12% of the variance in their academic persistence' (p34). They also found, however, that 'the relationship of self-efficacy to performance and persistence may vary across types of students, measures, and study characteristics.' Multon et al (1991) established that 'effects sizes obtained from measures of time spent on task were significantly smaller than those based on number of items/ tasks completed or attempted' (p35). However this may be a procedural artefact as it would be expected that students with high self-efficacy beliefs would take less time to answer problems

over which they felt efficacious than students who expressed low self-efficacy beliefs with regard to the same problems. Therefore 'higher self-efficacy might sometimes appear to lead to less, rather than more, persistence' (p35). Multon et al (1991) suggest that the literature included in the meta-analysis may not provide a fully consistent test of Bandura's (1986) hypothesis and therefore it is important for researchers to consider factors such as 'task difficulty, stage of learning and subjects' performance skills when investigating self-efficacy in relation to persistence' (p35). A note of caution must be taken, however, when considering the meta-analysis conducted by Multon et al (1991) as they found data reporting practices used in the literature were 'less than optimal' and they urged future researchers to ensure 'adequate reporting of summary statistics.'

However, it is not only modelling and feedback of behaviour that is important to a person's self-efficacy and ultimately their persistence at a task. The verbal reinforcement a person receives impacts upon their self-perceptions and beliefs about persistence at a task. In the next section the importance of specific praise is explained and how this impacts upon a person's behaviour.

1.3 Specific Praise

Hamilton and Gordon (1978) investigated specific aspects of preschool teacher-child interactions as they relate to task persistence in classroom vs laboratory settings.

The study was divided into five main phases as described in the table below:

Table 2: Phases of data collection in Hamilton and Gordon's (1978) study

Phase	When it occurred in the study	What happened during the phase
1	The first two phases occurred simultaneously during the first three and a half weeks of the study.	The first phase consisted of timed observation of the interactions of teachers and aides with children in the classroom.
2		The second phase was observation of the individual child's on-task behaviour in the classroom.
3	Phase three occurred during the third week.	During phase three (pre-testing) each child was taken out of the classroom to an empty classroom and was asked to copy block designs from a series of designs of increasing levels of difficulty. The level of difficulty at which the child stopped was recorded and used as a reference point for phase five
4	The last two phases occurred during the final week of the study	In phase four the researcher participated in each classroom for 1 day in the role of teacher's aide to lower the children's avoidance or fear of the researcher.
5		In the final phase the researcher took each child out of the classroom and asked them to complete a block design two levels higher than where the child had stopped in phase three.

Hamilton and Gordon (1978) described that 'teacher behaviours of criticism, suggestion, and direction were significantly related to children's task behaviour.'

(p465) Children in classrooms with critical and directive teachers were found to be low on task persistence. Hamilton and Gordon (1978) explained that:

'Directiveness may discourage the development of internal controls and autonomous behaviour in children, of which persistent and independent work on a task is indicative. The use of suggestions on the other hand, implies some recognition of a child's autonomy and appears to foster independent, persistent behaviours. These results imply that it is important for teachers to distinguish between the use of suggestions and directions, and to be aware that the behaviour seems to be related to children's development of task behaviours' (p466).

Kamins and Dweck (1999) found that specific praise is more effective when it is directed at a person's effort or strategy. 'There were differences in children's persistence and the strategies they generated in addressing and resolving the setback, with children in the person-criticism group exhibiting less persistence (including fewer constructive solutions) compared with children in the process-criticism group' (Kamins and Dweck, 1999, p841). Kamins and Dweck (1999) found that 'children who endorsed the view that their worth was contingent on their behavior or performance, in a subsequent session showed more negative self-judgments, greater drops in affect, more negative ratings of their performance, and less persistence after setbacks than children who did not endorse the view of contingent worth' (p845).

Further to this, Chalk and Bizo (2004) found, using the Observing Pupils and Teachers in Classrooms (OPTIC) observation schedule, that teachers instructed to give specific praise had significantly higher levels of pupil on-task, persistent behaviour than those just instructed to give praise. Specific praise also significantly increased children's perceptions of themselves as academic learners, as assessed by pupil's completion of the 'Myself as a Learner' (MALS) scale (Burden, 1998). Specific praise could also increase learner's knowledge of learning strategies and effort required for success, and therefore their ability to self-regulate learning. Chalk and Bizo (2004) comment that 'children are more vulnerable to the effects of failure following a history of receiving person-oriented praise, such as 'You're a good girl/boy', whereas effort or strategy praise, such as 'You must have tried really hard,' increased mastery and persistence in the face of setbacks (Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Clearly it is critical that reinforcement is targeted at behaviour not the child' (p337). To support this, Swinson and Harrop (2005) showed that a one hour training session increased teachers' approval contingent upon behaviour, decreased disapproval and was accompanied by increases in pupils' on-task behaviour. This indicates the possibility of altering teacher's behaviour positively and the impact this can have upon the children in the class.

However, Weaver et al (2004) highlight an important point through their study into the effects of ability- and effort-based praise on task persistence and task performance. Although only 7 students aged between 9-12years of age were used, and the study was intended only as a pilot study, a key issue was raised. It was found that 'some participants displayed more task persistence while receiving ability-based praise, while others were on-task more while receiving effort-based praise'

(p364). Weaver et al (2004) suggest that the reason a consistent pattern did not emerge is that 'there is no consistent pattern in the population at large' (p364). The individual differences between children, such as history of experiences and likes and dislikes, must be acknowledged and taken into account when conducting research and also in everyday practice. Weaver et al (2004) warn that 'general assumptions that are made regarding all children or groups of children may often be harmful, or at the very least, provide inadequate information for the purposes of assessment and treatment' (p364). It is important to recognise this and evaluate individual children's performances and make interpretations and generalisations with caution. In line with this, another point highlighted by Weaver et al (2004) is that while 'a particular stimuli may serve as a reinforcer for some individuals, that same stimuli may not serve as a reinforcer for others' (p365). Each child has differing perspectives and beliefs of the world, as elaborated by the theory of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955), and therefore different events and objects will have different meaning to different children. This needs to be considered when working with children to build their confidence, self-efficacy and their ability to persist at a challenging task.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This small-scale research project aimed to provide an evidenced-based account of a project to develop the skill of persistence within children in Year 1. The aims of this research are highlighted in the table below:

Table 3: Aims of this research study

Aims
1. Explore the literature around fostering and maintaining task persistence in children in a school context;
2. Implement an intervention to develop persistence in Year 1 children; and
3. Measure the effectiveness of the intervention using pre- and post- intervention measures.

2. Methods

2.1 Setting and Context

This study was carried out in a large local authority in the West Midlands, in an Infant school. The visiting EP to the school had previously completed an activity that had focussed upon the skill of persistence in Reception age children. Staff at the school were positive about this initial project and were keen for a further project to be conducted, specifically focused upon developing persistence in Year 1 as this was felt to be an area of need within the year group from the teacher assessments done against the EYFS profile the previous year.

2.2 Participants

All children in Year 1 were part of the intervention and consent forms (see appendix 2) were sent to all the parents with 10 giving consent for their children to be involved

in the pre- and post-intervention activities (see table below for participant characteristics).

Table 4: Participant characteristics

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	English as an additional language?
1	Female	White British	No
2	Female	White British	No
3	Female	White British	No
4	Female	White British	No
5	Male	White British	No
6	Female	White British	No
7	Female	White British	No
8	Female	White British	No
9	Male	White British	No
10	Female	Pakistani	Yes

The girl with English as an additional language understood all the instructions to the activity, as far as I could ascertain, and was able to progress through the task to a high level.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The table below highlights the ethical considerations that have been highlighted by the BPS (2009) and also by the Health Professions Council (HPC) (2008) and how they were addressed in this study. However, the primary ethical considerations for this study were:

- Ensuring the study presented no risk of harm to the participants;
- Gaining informed consent:
- Ensuring the participants understood the purpose of the study and knew that they could withdraw from the activities at any point; and
- Storing the collected data according to the Data Protection Act.

Table 5: Ethical considerations (BPS, 2009 and HPC, 2008)

Ethical principle	How it has been addressed
<p>BPS (2009) p2: Psychologists shall normally carry out investigations or interventions only with the valid consent of participants, having taken all reasonable steps to ensure that they have adequately understood the nature of the investigation or intervention and its anticipated consequences.'</p> <p>The researcher should 'recognise and uphold the rights of those whose capacity to give valid consent to interventions may be diminished including the young...' (p3)</p>	<p>All children involved in the research gave verbal and recorded consent (through the use of stickers) to be withdrawn from class for the pre- and post-test measures after the activities had been explained fully to them (see appendix 3 for a copy of the consent sheet used).</p>
<p>BPS 3.1: Whenever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation.</p> <p>HPC 7: You must communicate properly and effectively with service users...</p>	<p>The activity was explained to the children before they attempted it and also the purpose of the task was explained, in an age appropriate way, e.g. as 'a way of finding out how to improve children's learning in school.'</p>
<p>BPS 3.3: Where research involves any persons under 16 years of age, consent should be obtained from parents or from those in loco parentis.</p> <p>HPC 9. You must get informed consent...</p>	<p>Consent was gained using the consent letter in Appendix 2.</p>
<p>BPS 5.1: In studies where the participants are aware that they have taken part in an investigation, when the data have been collected, the investigator should provide the participants</p>	<p>After the children had completed the activity they were given the opportunity to ask anything they wanted about the task. The teachers were also given the opportunity, after</p>

with any necessary information to complete their understanding of the nature of the research.	the post-intervention measures were taken, to ask any questions about the research they may have had.
BPS 6.1: At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time.	This was written on the children's consent chart and verbally explained to them.
<p>BPS 7.1: Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs.</p> <p>HPC 2 and 10: You must respect the confidentiality of service users and keep accurate records.</p>	The consent letter to the parents (see Appendix 2) and the consent chart used with the children (see Appendix 3) explained that the children's data would be kept but the data would be confidential and anonymised.
<p>BPS 8.1: Investigators have a primary responsibility to protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation. Normally, the risk of harm must be no greater than in ordinary life, i.e. participants should not be exposed to risks greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal lifestyles.</p> <p>HPC 1: You must act in the best interests of service users.</p>	The activity being completed with the children was similar to activities normally conducted within the classroom. The children were reminded throughout the activity that they could stop at any time which gave them control over the activity and tried to reduce any anxieties they may have had.

2.4 Data Collection Procedures

Mason (2002) suggests that it is important for researchers to consider the parties, bodies or practices that might be affected by the research and the implications of the answer to these questions for the conduct, reporting and dissemination of the inquiry. In line with this the school staff were fully involved in each stage of the project. A staff meeting was arranged to collaboratively devise the data collection methods and the planned intervention. The differing perspectives of developing persistence and the related research evidence was presented to the staff in order for them to make informed decisions about what format the intervention, within school, should take. See appendix 4 for the powerpoint presentation delivered to the staff and appendix 5 for the staff suggestions. Following the staff meeting, the ideas from the whole staff were collated (see appendix 6) and used in a consultation with the Year 1 teachers and the SENCo, to devise the intervention and to plan the dates for the data collection. A process consultation model (linked to Schein 1998) was adopted for this consultation as it empowers the teachers and utilises their existing skills and resources. Process consultation focuses on helping the client to form their own solutions based on their understanding of the issues and the associated contextual factors. Leadbetter (2006) highlights that process consultation is a 'useful model for educational psychologists to adopt when aiming to work with and through teachers to improve children's progress and learning' (p20).

As a result of the consultation the teachers decided that the intervention should be devised so that it would not be in the format of discrete activities with individual or groups of children, but that it would be conducted over a period of four weeks and

would permeate the teacher's current teaching and all curriculum areas. The table below indicates the strategies that would be used throughout the intervention period:

Table 6: Strategies used by the teachers during the four-week intervention period

Strategy	Example
Verbal feedback	Highlighting to the children when they are persisting, through verbal feedback such as 'I can see you are persisting at that task,' 'even though you are finding that task difficult you are persisting really well,' 'I think you can persist at that task for a little bit longer to see if you can find the answer.'
Modelling persistent behaviour	The teachers persisted at seemingly challenging tasks for a long time in front of the children and verbalised their persistence through phrases such as 'I'm sure I can do this,' 'I just have to keep trying,' 'I think I am nearly there'
Positive praise and reward systems	Use of phrases such as 'well done, you persisted really well on that task' or 'you must have tried really hard.' 'Star of the week' was introduced on a Friday for those children who had persisted at a task.

This reflects Bandura's (1977) position that self-efficacy beliefs are derived from social experience such as verbal statements from others, exposure to models, and consequences of personal actions and is in line with the research previously

mentioned that highlights the importance of adult modelling (Zimmerman and Ringle, 1981) and feedback (Chalk and Bizo, 2004) in developing children's task persistence.

Although the chosen study design is not a rigorous experimental design that can be controlled and monitored easily and is therefore open to bias such as differing teacher behaviour between the three teachers in Year 1, or differing amounts of modelling and verbal feedback throughout the four weeks due to differences in teacher behaviour, it is the design that was chosen by the teachers involved. Robson (2002) states 'there is much to be said in favour of collaborative ventures, where such persons have a substantial say in the enterprise' (p1) as it encourages their participation and commitment to the study, whereas if a more rigorous experimental design, such as group withdrawal of the children at different points during the week, had been imposed on the teachers, they may have felt less motivation to participate in the study. The Deputy Head of the school played an important role in monitoring the intervention over the four weeks to ensure all of the Year 1 teachers were using positive verbal feedback and modelling persistent behaviour.

It was agreed that the intervention would occur in the first half of the Summer term and that pre-intervention measures would be taken in the first week, followed by the intervention, as described above, then in the final week of term, the post-intervention data would be collected. Past research into developing task persistence indicated that pre- and post-intervention measures were the favoured methodology in this area

of research. See table 7 for a description of some of the past research methodology and associated strengths and challenges with each.

Table 7: Past research methodology used to investigate task persistence

Authors	Methodology	Data	Methodological Strengths and Challenges
Bandstra et al (2001)	Task persistence was measured by the 'amount of time a child spent persisting in effort to complete a challenging puzzle task, defined as completion of at least two solutions within 2minutes, but not the entire task'. (p 548)	Quantitative	<p>Strength</p> <p>Quick, easy data can be collected with reduced researcher bias.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>No qualitative data was collected about task persistence and therefore factors such as environment, behaviour and cognition were not investigated.</p>
Thomas and Pashley (1982)	Used a bridge task (one insolvable version and one solvable version) that involved crossing a series of bridges without crossing one more than once. Persistence was measured as the amount of time spent on the insolvable puzzle before trying the second solvable one. They also measured the number of copies of the insolvable puzzle that the children tried as another measure of persistence.	Quantitative	<p>Strength</p> <p>Quick, easy data can be collected with reduced researcher bias.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>No qualitative data was collected and therefore factors such as environment, behaviour and cognition were not investigated.</p>

Multon and Brown (1991)	Conducted a meta-analysis of the relations of self-efficacy beliefs to academic performance and persistence	Quantitative review of data	Challenge for studies into persistence Found that a large portion of effect size variance could be explained by the manner in which persistence was operationalised. 'Effect sizes obtained from measures of time spent on task were significantly smaller than those based on number of items/tasks completed or attempted' (p35). This highlights the impact the type of pre- and post-test measurement used can have upon the results obtained and the need to acknowledge this when results are being interpreted.
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<p>Kamins and Dweck (1999)</p>	<p>Two alternative measures of persistence were used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To determine whether children were interested in pursuing the activity to a successful conclusion, they were asked, "Would you like to do the Lego house again or something else instead?" 2) The children held up the dolls and then were asked, "What happens now?" giving them the opportunity to construct an ending (a solution) to the test scenario. This was designed to examine whether the children would persist by generating constructive strategies for resolving the setback. <p>Children's open-ended responses to these items were categorised as persistent (1 point) or non-persistent (0 points) by raters unaware of which group the children had been assigned to. The criterion for persistence was that the answer contained some mention of a constructive solution or the desire to attempt to try again.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Strength</p> <p>Cognitive processing was explored more in this methodology.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Dependent on the raters' interpretation of the child's answer to the question and whether clarification was allowed, to support the children's understanding, after the questions had been asked.</p> <p>Seems more open to researcher bias through interpretation of answers compared to quantitative data.</p>
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For this piece of small-scale research the pre- and post-intervention measures were taken as the amount of time, in minutes and seconds, the children spent on a challenging item of the 'Pattern Construction' subtest taken from the British Ability Scales Second Edition (BAS-II) test kit. Using this task allowed the children to progress through the activity in a structured way before reaching their own level of

challenge, with set instructions allocated to the task to reduce any researcher bias on participants' understanding and subsequent scores (see Appendix 7 for the instructions). The post-interventions measures started from the item 2 levels before the challenging item recorded during the pre-intervention measure, similar to Hamilton and Gordon's (1978) study described in section 1.3, in table 2, to ensure the participants have some experience of success before they are given the more challenging item. It is important to acknowledge the test-retest effect that may influence the children's post intervention results, as they will have completed the same task before. Cohen et al. (2008) state that it is important to ensure that 'the time period between the test and retest is not so long that situational factors may change' but 'the time period... is not so short that the participants will remember the first test' (p146).

The research has a quasi-experimental design, which is 'an experimental approach but where random assignment to treatment and comparison groups has not been used.' (Robson, 2002, p133) This approach has 'considerable attraction for those seeking to maintain a basic experimental stance in work outside the laboratory.' (Robson, 2002, p135) Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) suggest that 'ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, and these, in turn, give rise to methodological assumptions; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection' (p21). Therefore, our understanding of being, affects how we acquire, come to understand and disseminate knowledge. For our purposes as educational researchers, our search for the truth is influenced by our approach to knowing, reasoning and interpretation in any particular domain. In essence, you pick the research method/design that best represents your view on

how the world works. However, contrary to this, Robson (2002) suggests that a researcher should 'use whatever philosophical or methodological approach works best for a particular research problem at issue' (p43) and therefore the same researcher could use different methods/designs even though they have particular ontological and epistemological assumptions. In line with Robson (2002) the data collection methods of pre- and post-intervention measurements do not reflect my constructivist view of the world, rather they reflect more of a positivist stance, however the use of pre- and post-intervention measures of timing the children's persistence at a given task was deemed to be the most appropriate, and the most reflective of the research to date by the school staff and researcher.

3. Findings

3.1 Pre- intervention results

Table 8: Results from the pre-intervention activities using the Pattern Construction subtest of the BAS-II.

Participant	Task level reached pre- intervention	Pre-intervention: Time spent on task (mins/secs)
1	9	2mins 20secs
2	10	59secs
3	15	45secs
4	18	2mins 17secs
5	9	1min 13secs
6	10	46secs
7	10	4mins 4secs
8	20	2mins 5secs
9	8	36secs
10	16	1min 1sec
Average time persisted on task		1min 37secs

In order to ensure as little researcher bias as possible, each activity was carried out in accordance with the guidelines and set instructions as detailed in the BAS-II handbook (see Appendix 7).

3.2 Post-intervention results

Table 9: Results from the post-intervention activities using the Pattern Construction subtest of the BAS-II.

Participant	Task level reached post- intervention	Post- intervention: Time spent on task (mins/secs)
1	14	4mins 1sec
2	10	56secs
3	18	45secs
4	17	3mins 27secs
5	14	1min 24secs
6	15	1min 13secs
7	22	5 min 52secs
8	25	3min 40secs
9	9	1min 32secs
10	16	1min 24secs
Average time persisted on task		2min 25secs

3.3 Comparison of pre- and post- intervention results

Table 10: Comparison of results from the pre- and post- test Pattern Construction activity

Average task level reached pre-intervention	Average pre-intervention time spent on task (mins/secs)	Average task level reached post-intervention	Average post-intervention Time spent on task (mins/secs)
10	1min 37secs	16	2min 25secs

Table 5 illustrates the increase in time the children spent on the challenging test from pre- to post-intervention and also the increase in level of challenging task the children reached. This seems to indicate that adult modelling of persistence, verbal feedback and specific praise around persistence has a positive impact upon the children's own task persistence. However, in order to find out whether task persistence increased significantly a related t-test was carried out using the formula in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Formula for related t-test

$$t = \frac{\overline{X}_1 - \overline{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2 - \frac{(\sum d)^2}{n}}{n(n-1)}}$$

The related t-test was used because the difference between two conditions (pre- and post- intervention) needed to be examined, with only one variable and with related subjects (Hinton, 2001). The calculated figures, to insert into the above formula, can be found in the table below:

Table 11: Related t-test figures

Participant		Pre-intervention (sample 1 X ₁)		Post-intervention (sample 2 X ₂)		Difference d		Squared d d ²	
1		140secs		241secs		-101		10201	
2		59secs		56secs		3		9	
3		45secs		45secs		0		0	
4		137secs		207secs		-70		4900	
5		73secs		84secs		-11		121	
6		46secs		73secs		-27		729	
7		244secs		352secs		-108		11664	
8		125secs		220secs		-95		9025	
9		36secs		92secs		-56		3136	
10		61secs		84secs		-23		529	
Total	<i>n</i> =10	Mean	97secs	Mean	145secs	Total	-488	Total	40314
Degrees of freedom (df) (<i>n</i>-1)= 9						Total²	238144		

Inserting the figures into the t-test formula (shown above) the result is:

$$t = - 3.545, df = 9$$

Using the t distribution table for a one-tailed t-test (Hinton, 2001, p307) (see appendix 8) it can be seen that the calculated value of t of –3.545 is greater than the table value of 2.821 and therefore the result is significant at the $p=0.01$ level of significance. From this it can be concluded that the children persisted significantly longer at the challenging BAS-II subtest after the four-week classroom-based intervention compared to their persistence at the BAS-II subtest before the intervention.

4. Discussion

4.1 Discussion of the results and the effect increasing task persistence may have upon children's learning in the classroom

The results from this small-scale research show a significant increase in children's task persistence behaviour after a four-week intervention with adult modelling, specific praise and verbal feedback. When interpreting the results, however, it is important to be cautious and to take into consideration the effect of the children's familiarity with the task and with the researcher during the post-intervention measures. The children may have felt more relaxed during the post-intervention task due to their familiarity with the researcher and task; many children commented that they remembered completing the task with the yellow and black blocks. Robson (2002) illustrates that there may be 'changes occurring as a result of practice and experience gained by participants on any pre-tests' (p105) and therefore caution

needs to be taken when interpreting the results. In order to reduce the effects of test-retest, an alternative activity could have been used for the post-intervention measure that assessed the same cognitive skills as those assessed using the pattern construction activity, for example the 'Block Design' subtest of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Fourth Edition (WISC-IV) which requires children to arrange red and white blocks into a given design.

The three Year 1 teachers commented that the children 'liked the word persistence' and they kept mentioning it during the four weeks. Participant 8 who, after she had indicated that she wanted to stop after 3minutes and 40seconds, spontaneously stated that she thought she had persisted at the task for a long time. When questioned about the meaning of the word 'persistence' she reported that 'it is trying really hard even when it gets too tricky.' None of the participants at the pre-intervention stage used the word 'persistence,' however it is important to note that it was not explicitly asked about and therefore the children may have been aware of the concept without mentioning it. Although this is a statement from only one of the participants it seems to indicate that the children have become more aware of the meaning of the word 'persistence' and can apply it to their own learning and task behaviour.

This small-scale research study aimed to develop children's task persistence through the use of adult modelling and specific praise. Through this it can be argued that the children have become more aware of what makes them successful at a task, such as what strategies to try and the amount of effort required. Further to this, Rohrkemper

and Corno (1988) argue that when pupils are aware of learning strategies they need less instruction. Chalk and Bizo (2004) purport that 'increasing a child's self-efficacy may ultimately reduce demands' on the teachers' time' (p348) which allows them to focus on students who require more help or those students who require further academic stimulation.

Another important impact of developing pupil's understanding of what makes them successful at tasks is the development of students with transferable skills that they can generalise across the curriculum and across learning environments. By applying an intervention that permeated all lessons throughout the school day it is anticipated that children would be able to apply any learnt skills of task persistence to all curriculum areas, however, no measure was put into place to measure this and therefore no definite conclusions can be drawn about the generalisability of the learnt skills (see limitations and future directions for further discussion about this).

In addition to increasing a learner's self-efficacy another key consideration to successful learning in the classroom is suggested by Corrie (2004) who purports that learners need to 'generate strong positive emotions about what they are learning' and be given the opportunity to express 'negative feelings caused by upsets, fights, loss, stress or worry before being asked to learn, otherwise these feelings will adversely affect the learning' (p102). From this it can be suggested that even if a child has been exposed to adult modelling of the skills of task persistence and has received verbal feedback and specific praise about persistence, their emotions may disrupt the process of learning. This may give one explanation for the results

obtained from participant 2 and 3. Although the mean time of persistence on the task significantly increased, table 2 and 3 indicate that participant 2 persisted for less time on the post-intervention task and participant 3 had no change in the amount of time they persisted at the task. Corrie (2004), however, gives no evidence base for this assertion and therefore conclusions drawn from the results on the basis of this would need to be done cautiously and any research would need to be conducted into the accuracy of this before any evidence-based interventions around this could be implemented. Despite this, however, it is an interesting concept for teacher's to consider and potentially an important learning barrier that would need to be overcome by some children before they can be receptive to the persistent behaviour modelling, verbal feedback or positive praise.

4.2 Implications for the role of Educational Psychologists (EP)

This piece of small-scale research provides an opportunity to explore an example of the proactive, early intervention, systemic work and training an EP can become involved with as opposed to the reactive assessment and support of individual children with special educational needs.

Developing persistence in Year 1 children is an example of an EP engaging in developmental issues and preventative working which Baxter and Frederickson (2005) describe as a more 'radical' role in implementing an aspect of the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) agenda. In addition Cameron (2006) identifies the following as two out of five distinctive contributions that EPs can make.

- Using information from the research and theoretical database in psychology to recommend *evidence-based* strategies for change.
- Promoting innovative concepts or *big ideas* which are underpinned by psychological research evidence and theory and which can enable clients to spot potential opportunities for positive change.'

(Cameron, 2006, p293)

These two areas highlight the researcher skills EPs have and can apply to their work. These skills promote the development of evidence-based strategies and can be seen as central to this piece of small-scale research.

Importantly, however, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) highlight that it 'may be unrealistic on economic grounds for EPs to deliver primary and secondary preventative work directly to children and families, other than as pilots aimed at research and development' (p99). Nevertheless, they recognise that EPs are likely to be among the best qualified professional groups to undertake research and development, training and supervision of staff who are delivering these services directly and this is an area for future development of this project to develop task persistence in other schools. EPs are also well placed to carry out monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives, such as the one discussed in this piece of small-scale research, and to advise commissioners on how to maximise value-added with available resources (Baxter, 2002).

By training staff and involving whole year groups this project can be seen to have taken a systemic psychology perspective. Farrell et al (2006) made a recommendation that EPs should 'expand and develop their activities in different areas where their skills and knowledge can be used to greater effect, e.g. in group and individual therapy, staff training and in systems work' (p11). This project gives one example of how this recommendation can be implemented in practice.

Supporting the school to monitor the application of this intervention is a role for the EP and also to evaluate the impact across the whole-school would be a natural next step in the partnership between the school and the EP.

4.3 Limitations and future directions

No qualitative observations were made throughout the four-week intervention period, which would have supplemented the quantitative data and added depth to the discussion and conclusions drawn from this piece of small-scale research. Robson (2002) suggests that although fixed, quantitative designs are 'well adapted to establishing relationships between variables' (p372) they are weak in establishing reasons for them and 'qualitative methods can help in developing explanations' (p372). The results obtained from this piece of small scale research indicate that in the particular school, the 10 children who participated in the pre- and post-intervention tasks significantly increased their task persistent behaviour after four weeks of teacher modelling, verbal feedback and specific praise. Using only quantitative data, as discussed above, does not allow for an analysis of possible

reasons for this impact on task persistence and therefore makes generalising the effects into other schools and environments more difficult. Employing additional qualitative data collection methods in future studies, such as the description section within the OPTIC observation schedule, as used in Chalk and Bizo (2004), which allows the observer to compare teacher and pupil behaviour or a less structured narrative based observation, however, would allow for this analysis to take place and permit more generalisation of the results.

An important consideration is the re-test effect that may have impacted upon the children's performance on the task from the BAS-II. Table 4 illustrates that the average challenging task level increased from pre- to post-intervention. This may be indicative of an increase in problem solving skills as a result of an increase in task persistence behaviour, or it may result from the children's familiarity with the task given to them. No measures were put into place to account for this effect in the current study (see discussion in section 4.1 about using a WISC-IV subtest) and therefore future studies may wish to explore this further. A further point to consider is the use of control groups. Testing a comparison group of pupils, rather than the same group for the pre- and post- measures, would be an additional way to ensure the changes in the children's persistence were attributed to the intervention and not to any practice effects. Bell et al (2001) states that 'showing difference between groups, not just describing the particular characteristics of any one group, is necessary if you are to infer that you have isolated the cause of a particular phenomenon' (p132). However, only 10 parents returned consent forms to allow their children to be part of the pre- and post measures, therefore there were not enough

children to be divided into two comparison groups for this study. Future studies should use comparison groups to ensure practice effects are controlled for.

Within this piece of small-scale research the effects of the gender of the adult modelling the behaviour and giving the verbal feedback and the gender and the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children were not explored. This would be a valuable extension to this project to begin to understand the most effective ways to make an impact upon children's learning. In addition, the effects of adult modelling, verbal feedback and specific praise on other behaviour, for example social interaction behaviours such as sharing, positive language use, could be explored.

Finally, it is important to consider Weaver et al (2004) who stress that each child is an individual and therefore individual differences between children, such as history of experiences and likes and dislikes, must be acknowledged and taken into account when working with children. This highlights the caution that needs to be taken when interpreting the results from this study and making general claims about developing task persistence. Weaver et al (2004) warn that 'general assumptions that are made regarding all children or groups of children may often be harmful, or at the very least, provide inadequate information for the purposes of assessment and treatment' (p364).

4.4 Conclusions

From the literature surrounding task persistence behaviour it was found that verbal feedback (Bandura, 1977), specific praise (Chalk and Bizo (2004) and adult modelling (Zimmerman and Ringle, 1981; Bandura, 1977) were important in the

development of self-efficacy and therefore task persistence behaviour in children. After a four-week intervention to increase the children's self-efficacy through verbal feedback, specific praise and adult modelling of task persistent behaviour the children were found to spend significantly longer on the Pattern Design task from the BAS-II. Although a significant increase was reported in the time spent on the post-intervention task it is difficult to explore the reasons for this result or attribute this result clearly to the four-week intervention. Some considerations are highlighted by Weaver et al (2004) who stress the individuality of each child in terms of experience, skills and perceptions and the impact this may have upon the results. Multon and Brown (1991) highlight the impact the data collection methods can have upon the results obtained and also the impact test-retest can have upon the increase in children's performance on the task. Future studies need to explore the impact of the intervention in more detail, using more qualitative methods, in order for researchers, school staff and other professionals to understand how to develop task persistence fully and therefore devise and implement effective interventions that are tailored to meet the needs of the population of children within the school.

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Appendix 1: A Table to show the Early Learning Goals and Scale points within the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

Point s	The Early Learning Goals Divided into the Six Areas of Learning												
	Personal, social and emotional development			Communication, language and literacy				Mathematical development			Knowledge and understanding of the world	Physical development	Creative development
	Dispositions and attitudes	Social development	Emotional development	Language for communication and thinking	Linking sounds and letters	Reading	Writing	Numbers as labels and for counting	Calculating	Shape, space and measures			
1	Shows an interest in classroom activities through observation or participation.	Plays alongside others.	Separates from main carer with support.	Listens and responds.	Joins in with rhyming and rhythmic activities.	Is developing an interest in books.	Experiments with mark-making, sometimes ascribing meaning to the marks.	Says some number names in familiar contexts, such as nursery rhymes.	Responds to the vocabulary involved in addition and subtraction in rhymes and games.	Experiments with a range of objects and materials showing some mathematical awareness.	Shows curiosity and interest by exploring surroundings.	Moves spontaneously, showing some control and coordination.	Explores different media and responds to a variety of sensory experiences. Engages in representational play.
2	Dresses, undresses and manages own personal hygiene with adult support.	Builds relationships through gesture and talk.	Communicates freely about home and community.	Initiates communication with others, displaying greater confidence in more informal contexts.	Shows an awareness of rhyme and alliteration.	Knows that print conveys meaning.	Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning.	Counts reliably up to three everyday objects.	Recognises differences in quantity when comparing sets of objects	Sorts or matches objects and talks about sorting.	Observes, selects and manipulates objects and materials. Identifies simple features and significant personal events.	Moves with confidence in a variety of ways, showing some awareness of space.	Creates simple representations of events, people and objects and engages in music making.
3	Displays high levels of involvement in self-chosen activities.	Takes turns and shares with adult support.	Expresses needs and feelings in appropriate ways.	Talks activities through, reflecting on and modifying actions.	Links some sounds to letters.	Recognises a few familiar words.	Represents some sounds correctly in writing.	Counts reliably up to six everyday objects.	Finds one more or one less from a group of up to five objects.	Describes shapes in simple models, pictures and patterns.	Identifies obvious similarities and differences when exploring and observing. Constructs in a purposeful way, using simple tools and techniques.	Usually shows appropriate control in large- and smallscale movements.	Tries to capture experiences, using a variety of different media.
4	Dresses and undresses independently and manages own personal hygiene.	Works as part of a group or class, taking turns and sharing fairly.	Responds to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate.	Listens with enjoyment to stories, songs, rhymes and poems, sustains attentive listening and responds with relevant comments, questions or actions.	Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet (at least 20/26 sounds, 14/26 names)	Knows that, in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom.	Writes own name and other words from memory.	Says number names in order.	Relates addition to combining two groups.	Talks about, recognises and recreates simple patterns.	Investigates places, objects, materials and living things by using all the senses as appropriate. Identifies some features and talks about those features s/he likes and dislikes.	Moves with confidence, imagination and in safety. Travels around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. Shows awareness of space, of self and others.	Sings simple songs from memory.
5	Selects and uses activities and resources independently.	Forms good relationships with adults and peers.	Has a developing awareness of own needs, views and feelings and is sensitive to the needs, views and feelings of others	Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences.	Hears and says sounds in words.	Shows an understanding of the elements of stories, such as main character, sequence of events and openings.	Holds a pencil and uses it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.	Recognises numerals 1 to 9.	Relates subtraction to taking away.	Uses everyday words to describe position.	Asks questions about why things happen and how things work. Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change.	Demonstrates fine motor control and coordination.	Explores colour, texture, shape, form and space in two or three dimensions.
6	Continues to be interested, motivated and excited to learn.	Understands that there need to be agreed values and codes of behaviour for groups of people, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously.	Has a developing respect for own culture and beliefs and those of other people.	Interacts with others in a variety of contexts, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation.	Blends sounds in words.	Reads a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently.	Attempts writing for a variety of purposes, using features of different forms.	Counts reliably up to 10 everyday objects.	In practical activities and discussion, begins to use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting.	Uses language such as 'circle' or 'bigger' to describe the shape and size of solids and flat shapes.	Finds out about past and present events in own life, and in those of family members and other people s/he knows. Begins to know about own culture and beliefs and those of other people.	Uses small and large equipment, showing a range of basic skills.	Recognises and explores how sounds can be changed. Recognises repeated sounds and sound patterns and matches movements to music.
7	Is confident to try new activities, initiate ideas and speak in a familiar group.	Understands that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs that need to be treated with respect.	Considers the consequences of words and actions for self and others.	Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words.	Uses phonic knowledge to read simple regular words.	Retells narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories.	Uses phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.	Orders numbers, up to 10.	Finds one more or one less than a number from 1 to 10.	Uses language such as 'greater', 'smaller', 'heavier' or 'lighter' to compare quantities.	Finds out about and identifies the uses of everyday technology and uses information and communication technology and programmable toys to support her/his learning	Handles tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with basic control.	Uses imagination in art and design, music, dance, imaginative and role-play and stories. Responds in a variety of ways to what s/he sees, hears, smells, touches and feels.
8	Maintains attention and concentrates.	Understands that s/he can expect others to treat her or his needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect.	Understands what is right, what is wrong, and why.	Speaks clearly with confidence and control, showing awareness of the listener.	Attempts to read more complex words, using phonic knowledge. (without adult support)	Shows an understanding of how information can be found in non-fiction texts to answer questions about where, who, why and how.	Begins to form captions and simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation. (without adult support)	Uses developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.	Uses developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.	Uses developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.	Builds and constructs with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources, tools and techniques and adapting her/his work where necessary.	Recognises the importance of keeping healthy and those things which contribute to this. Recognises the changes that happen to her/his body when s/he is active.	Expresses and communicates ideas, thoughts and feelings using a range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role-play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.
9	Sustains involvement and perseveres, particularly when trying to solve a problem or reach a satisfactory conclusion.	Takes into account the ideas of others.	Displays a strong and positive sense of self-identity and is able to express a range of emotions fluently and appropriately.	Talks and listens confidently and with control, consistently showing awareness of the listener by including relevant detail. Uses language to work out and clarify ideas, showing control of a range of appropriate vocabulary.	Uses knowledge of letters, sounds and words when reading and writing independently.	Reads books of own choice with some fluency and accuracy.	Communicates meaning through phrases and simple sentences with some consistency in punctuating sentences.	Recognises, counts, orders, writes and uses numbers up to 20.	Uses a range of strategies for addition and subtraction, including some mental recall of number bonds.	Uses mathematical language to describe solid (3D) objects and flat (2D) shapes.	Communicates simple planning for investigations and constructions and makes simple records and evaluations of her/his work. Identifies and names key features and properties, sometimes linking different experiences, observations and events. Begins to explore what it means to belong to a variety of groups and communities.	Repeats, links and adapts simple movements, sometimes commenting on her/his work. Demonstrates coordination and control in large and small movements, and in using a range of tools and equipment.	Expresses feelings and preferences in response to artwork, drama and music and makes some comparisons and links between different pieces. Responds to own work and that of others when exploring and communicating ideas, feelings and preferences through art, music, dance, role-play and imaginative play.

Appendix 2: Consent letter to parents

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of B City Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve situations for children and young people. One area we work on is ensuring children and young people have the skills to learn effectively. B Infant and Nursery School, together with the Educational Psychology Service, is currently interested in developing the skill of task persistence in children.

Persistence is the ability to stay with a task and is seen to be important in developing children's ability to tackle challenging problems and in developing their confidence as a learner. I will be doing some research that will help us begin to understand how we can develop this skill of persistence in Year 1 children.

I would like to invite your child to do some work with me. There will be a four week intervention based within school. I will check your child's level of persistence at the beginning and at the end of the four weeks, based on fun activities. Teachers will use the language of persistence when they feedback to the children about their work. There will also be a class praise assembly once a week focused on children who have shown persistence at a task throughout the week. The ideas I gain from the project will be used to help teach all children to learn effectively, although the information about your child will be anonymised and remain confidential.

Your consent is required for your child to work with me. If you would like any further information, please contact me on ... Please complete and return the attached consent slip to your child's teacher by 1st April 2010.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Smith

Trainee Educational Psychologist

P H

Deputy Head Teacher and SENCo

✂.....

I **give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith to measure their level of task persistence.

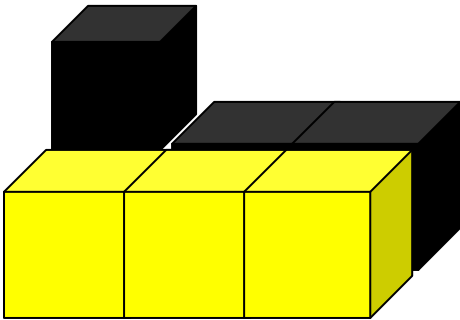
I **do not give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith to measure their level of task persistence.

Signed.....

(Parent/Guardian)

Relationship to child.....

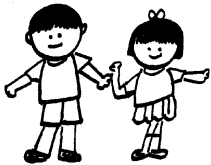
Date.....



My name is Claire Smith and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist. We work with young people, parents, carers, teachers and other professionals to help improve things at school.

- I would like to complete a pattern building activity with you. You can stop the activity at any time if you want to. Is this ok?
- Is it ok if I time how long the activity takes you?
- Is it ok if I keep your time on a piece of paper, locked in my filing cabinet, to use in some work I am doing?
- Is it ok if I come back in four weeks to do the activity with you again?

Everything is ok, I want to do the activity	Everything is not ok, I don't want to do the activity



Using a Realistic Evaluation framework to evaluate a six-week behaviour course

Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of 'Focus,' a six week behaviour course within 'B' Secondary school. Factors that promote positive behaviour within schools are examined and differing evaluation methods are considered as part of the introduction. In order to collect qualitative data to inform the evaluation of 'Focus' an observation of one session of the course, semi-structured interviews with pupils and questionnaires sent to the staff were used. Using Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) as a framework, the Contexts (C), Mechanisms (M), and Outcomes (O), that promoted improved behaviour from the course, were identified to inform the development of a further behaviour course for older pupils. In addition, opportunities for future studies and methodological challenges are discussed.

1. Introduction

In the following sections the strategies that can be used to improve pupil's behaviour will be discussed, alongside an examination of the particular elements of an intervention that help promote positive behaviour. In addition to this, different evaluation methods will be considered followed by a more detailed description of Realistic Evaluation; the framework used within this particular study.

1.1 What strategies can be used to improve pupils' behaviour?

The DfES (2003) stated that:

‘Positive behaviour and attendance are essential foundations for a creative and effective learning and teaching environment in which all members of the school community can thrive and feel respected, safe and secure’ (p3).

In addition to this, Steer (2009) began his review of behaviour and standards in schools stating that ‘poor behaviour in schools cannot be tolerated and that both teachers and pupils have the right to work in an orderly environment’ (p4).

There are occasions when, in order to improve pupil behaviour, the young person needs to be withdrawn from the classroom. Steer (2009) highlights that ‘school provision out of the classroom should be used as part of a planned early intervention strategy and, if possible, before incidents of serious misbehaviour occur’ (p14). Steer (2009) highlights four possibilities of out of classroom provision:

- a) A withdrawal room on the school site when pupils need to be removed from class immediately;
- b) The use of a Learning Support Unit within the school (or another local school within the partnership) as a planned, positive referral;
- c) The use of alternative provision as part of early intervention;
- d) Access to services provided in another school or Pupil Referral Unit in the behaviour and attendance partnership. (p14)

OFSTED (2006) looked at the progress of 21 secondary schools assessed to be in special measures, 11 secondary schools with serious weaknesses and 15 secondary schools where behaviour 'was identified as an isolated weakness' (p2) during the academic year 2005-2006. It was found that schools that had made the most progress:

'Identified vulnerable students and provided one-to-one mentoring to discuss issues and work on solutions. In-house support units and external placements were used as part of a thought-through strategy for individuals' (p3).

It is important to remember, however, that 'when the withdrawal of pupils from the classroom is necessary, withdrawal should be for the minimum time necessary to assess need and to effect a change in behaviour' (Steer, 2009, p6).

1.2 What particular elements of an intervention help to promote positive behaviour in pupils?

Preece and Timmins (2004) investigated the perceptions of students in their evaluation of an Inclusion Centre. They found that students valued the following elements:

- It provided access to a smaller teaching environment
- It provided respite for some students from the perceived social and academic pressures of mainstream classes

- It provided opportunities for students to talk to staff about their difficulties
- It provided opportunities for students to reflect upon their behaviour in a safe environment
- It provided advice to students on how to modify their behaviour
- It allowed students to learn social skills which equipped them for mainstream classes
- It allowed students to develop a rapport with adults in and out of the centre
- It allowed students to continue with their education through centre and mainstream inputs

(p29)

Further to this, Kinder et al (1998) found that pupils and teachers indicated that smaller classes resulted in an environment that met pupils' need for support and teaching. In Preece and Timmins' (2004) study, only 12 students out of 20 were interviewed for the study due to the 'time and resources available for the research' (p26). The study can be described as an illuminative evaluation where the initial impact of the centre was evaluated and information gathered about broad themes to inform the development of the inclusion centre. Preece and Timmins (2004) recognised that a more in depth evaluation would have allowed for all the students from the inclusion centre to be involved and for student outcome measures, and strategies used to support the students to be measured. In addition, 'an analysis of time taken for full inclusion and exclusion rates for the school' (Preece and Timmins, 2004, p29) would have been an additional success criterion to use in the evaluation.

Munn, Loyd and Cullen (2000) believe that schools and teachers can make a difference to young people's self-esteem by giving them confidence and, as a consequence, prevent learning problems from becoming behaviour problems (p95). In addition, McLaughlin (1999) surveyed the views of pupils who were seen as being at risk of exclusion and who were involved in a personal tutoring scheme. McLaughlin (1999) found that teachers who listened to pupils on a regular basis were highly valued by the pupils and she also reported that pupils felt this act had contributed to their remaining in school and had prevented exclusion. Interestingly, McLaughlin found that teachers often failed to appreciate the value to pupils of such conversations. In line with this, Kinder et al (1998) reported that all pupils:

'Spoke positively of the support they were receiving...Pupils also emphasised the air of mutual respect which they felt existed in the special needs block... They emphasised how they enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the relationship that they had built up with the teachers... It was these teachers they would go to for help with other problems.'

(p52-53)

In their study Wise and Upton (1998) investigated pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) and looked at their perceptions of the factors that influence their behaviour in school. It is important to note that only a small sample size was used (36 pupils, 31 boys and 5 girls), with a majority of boys, and that the pupils attended only one EBD provision in the South of England. Therefore the data collected should be treated with caution as it can not be said to be reflective of all pupils in all EBD provision across all of the UK. However, there are some key factors

that should be acknowledged to help our understanding of what pupil's value within EBD provision. The factors that were identified by Wise and Upton (1998) that could be influenced by school staff included class size, teaching quality, irrelevant or challenging curricula, the quality of teacher-pupil relationships and bullying. Wise and Upton (1998) concluded that 'more opportunity for communication and relationship building between pupils and teachers and in particular the chance for pupils to talk and be heard' (p11) should be attempted by schools. In line with this, Watkins (2000) suggests that 'schools with a strong sense of community have better behaviour' (p2) because schools forming tight communities will attend to the needs of the students for affiliation and provide a range of available adult roles. These adults can then engage students personally and challenge them to engage in the life of the school.

Fletcher-Campbell (2001) researched pupils' perceptions of factors that triggered an inappropriate response from them in the classroom and led to their exclusion from school by conducting a meta-analysis of three research projects (see table below for the focus of these projects).

Table 1: The focus for the three projects in Fletcher-Campbell's (2001) meta-analysis

Research project	Focus of the projects: All completed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
1	Integration into mainstream schools of pupils with special educational needs.
2	The education of young people who are 'looked after' by their local authority;
3	Pupils who are 'disaffected' with school and are at the centre of problems of disruptive behaviour, truancy and poor attendance and exclusion.

Fletcher-Campbell (2001) does not give any details about the samples used in the three projects, the context in which the data was collected in the three projects in terms of geographical location or educational provision. As a result it is difficult to generalise the findings from this meta-analysis, however, it is interesting to examine what factors the pupils highlighted. Factors included teachers who did not explain work clearly, did not listen to them, blamed them unjustly, showed no interest in them or exposed their learning difficulties in public. In addition, these pupils did not like working in distracting classroom conditions. Fletcher-Campbell (2001) derived a number of positive actions that schools could carry out to ensure the successful inclusion of pupils, particularly those at risk of exclusion. These included:

- Providing clear expectations in relation to behaviour and personal organisation

- Providing clear criteria relating to what pupils are expected to learn
- Attempting to understand why pupils might not be demonstrating appropriate behaviour and personal organisation
- Attempting to understand why pupils might not be learning.

(p87-88)

Holland and Homerton (1994) noted the strengths of on-site units (specialist provision for SEBD on the site of a mainstream provision) and their potential for providing help for the most difficult pupils through the provision of a calm environment, breathing space for class teachers and the effective coordination of external agencies. This provision also has the potential to offer pupils opportunities for respite and support in small groups, whilst keeping them in touch with the mainstream curriculum. However, Holland and Homerton (1994) also identified some disadvantages of these units. They felt that some teachers were likely to disown the problem of pupils with ESBD in their classrooms, because the key skills required to support such pupils were perceived to be possessed by the few people associated with the unit. As a consequence mainstream teachers would be less likely to make a preventive response to any difficulties they encountered. These concerns are addressed, to some extent, in the DfES (2002) good practice guidance relating to learning support (inclusion) units in schools, which points to the importance of a whole school approach:

‘Crucial success factors [are] learning support unit procedures that are in harmony with the school’s overall ethos for inclusion... [The need for] regular training for all school staff on behaviour management practices, policies and systems.’ (p7)

In line with this, the DCSF (2009) stated that schools should have ‘effective policies in place to promote good behaviour and discipline’ (p3). Further to this, Steer (2009) commented that ‘effective behaviour management in a school requires that agreed policies are followed consistently by all staff’ (p10). The DfES (2003) acknowledged that ‘schools are most effective where the behaviour policy is applied consistently’ (p4).

Watkins (2000) highlights that ‘schools vary in the style of ‘explanation’ they use for difficult behaviour’ (p1) and that they may emphasise various versions of:

‘They’re that sort of person’

‘They’re not very bright’

‘It’s their age’

‘This is a difficult neighbourhood’

Watkins (2000) proposes that when such explanations are over-used, ‘the school inadvertently contributes to it’s own disempowerment’ (p1). Maxwell (1987) conducted a study in six Scottish schools and looked at the opinions of a sample of management and pastoral care staff with respect to the issue of disruptive behaviour in schools. Sixty-three questionnaires were completed by key personnel in the school

organisation who had responsibility for preventing or managing disruption within the school. The questionnaire contained three sections; the first section sampled the respondents' opinions on a variety of issues relevant to the issue of disruptive behaviour, issues such as corporal punishment, support from other agencies and the use of out-of mainstream provision. The second section presented the respondent with a menu of hypothesised causes for disruptive behaviour and asked for them to be rated for importance, whilst the third section adopted a similar format, this time asking the respondent to rate a range of possible intervention strategies for likely effectiveness.

The schools that participated in the study were selected in order to provide data about pupils from a range of different catchment areas and also from a range of different sized schools. Although this is a positive methodological consideration, it is also important to note that the data collected may have been different if the schools had been English schools, and therefore within the English education systems and policies. This needs to be considered when discussing the results in relation to English education provisions.

To gain an understanding of how the schools reacted to more serious incidents of disruptive behaviour data were gathered on the number of short terms suspensions (three days) and longer-term exclusions (four weeks) each school had used during the academic year 1984/5. Data were also gathered on the number of referrals for behaviour problems each school had made to the Child Guidance Service (a multi-

agency advisory service) during the same year. Although the study is over 20 years old and conducted in Scottish schools there was an interesting finding that schools varied in the extent to which the respondents believed the problem of disruptive behaviour was within the power of the schools to resolve. Maxwell (1987) found that higher rates of suspension were found amongst those respondents who tended to have less confidence in their own power to tackle the problem. Another consideration to make about this study, however, is that the respondents self-completed the questionnaires and therefore it is impossible to determine 'whether or not the respondent is giving serious attention to the questions' (Robson, 2002, p253) and therefore whether their answers are a true reflection of the school systems and opinions. Watkins (2000) suggests that managing the language used around disruptive behaviour is one way of improving school behaviour and that responses using school-based strategies are most likely to reduce disruptive behaviour.

A range of different elements has been described above that seem to promote positive behaviour in school pupils. It is important, however, to evaluate and understand how, or if, a particular school is promoting positive pupil behaviour. The following section examines evaluation methods that could be used.

1.3 Evaluation methods

Hansen (2005) summarises two definitions of evaluation as:

‘A study designed and conducted to assist some audience to assess an object’s merit and worth’ (Stufflebeam, 2000, p35); or in the same vein as a ‘careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output and outcome of government interventions, which is intended to play a role in future, practical action situations’ (Vedung, 1997, p3).’ (p448)

Both of the above definitions seem to indicate two theoretical traditions within evaluation studies; programme evaluation and organisation evaluation. In addition, Hansen (2005) describes six different evaluation models that exist. See the table below for a summary of each.

Table 2. A Typology of Evaluation Models (Hansen, 2005, p449)

Evaluation Models	Questions	Criteria for Evaluation
Result models		
a) Goal-attainment model	a) To what degree has the goal(s) been realized?	a) Derived from goal(s)
b) Effects model	b) Which effects can be uncovered?	b) Open, all consequences should be uncovered
Explanatory process model	Is the level of activity satisfactory? Are there implementation problems?	Performance is analysed from idea to decision and implementation and to the reaction of the addressees
System model	How has performance functioned as a whole?	Realized input, process structure and outcome assessed either in relation to objectives in same dimensions or comparatively
Economic models		
a) Cost-efficiency	a) Is productivity satisfactory?	a) Output measured in relation to expenses
b) Cost-effectiveness	b) Is effectiveness satisfactory?	b) Effect measured in relation to expenses
c) Cost-benefit	c) Is utility satisfactory?	c) Utility measured in relation to expenses
Actor models		
a) Client-oriented model	a) Are clients satisfied?	a) Formulated by clients
b) Stakeholder model	b) Are stakeholders satisfied?	b) Formulated by stakeholders
c) Peer review model	c) Is professional quality in order?	c) Formulated by peers
Programme theory model (theory-based evaluation)	What works for whom in which context? Is it possible to ascertain errors in programme theory?	Programme theory is reconstructed and assessed via empirical analysis

Timmins and Miller (2007) stated that:

‘The importance of evaluation of any initiative or innovation in professional practice is clear. We need to know whether new practice is better than what we did before and we need some evidence that a new way of working is preferable. ... Practice and policy need to be informed by evidence, but evidence is often highly context-related. It is important to find out, in any evaluation, what worked in a particular setting and why it was successful or not.’ (p9)

Further to this, Robson (2002) states that ‘evaluation is often concerned not only with assessing worth or value but also seeking to assist in the improvement of whatever is being evaluated’ (p205). Pawson and Tilley (2001) explain that ‘good evaluation is good social science. For us, this embraces the gallant aims of precision in articulation of theory, rigor in empirical testing, confederation in lines of inquiry, and cumulation in the body of findings’ (p234).

For the purposes of this study one particular model of evaluation, Realistic Evaluation (a programme theory model) will be examined in more detail. This is because it assess the validity of a programme theory on which an intervention or organisation is based and questions what works for whom in which context. This aligns with B school’s purpose of the evaluation of ‘Focus.’ Hansen (2005) explains that programme theory is either reconstructed and compared with empirical analysis of problems and problem-solving (as suggested in the ‘theory-based’ evaluation approach by Birckmayer and Weiss, 2000), or empirical observation is used to analyse the causal relations between context, mechanism and outcome (as suggested in the ‘realistic evaluation’ approach by Pawson and Tilley, 1997 and

expanded in the 'realist synthesis' approach by Pawson, 2002). Pawson and Tilley's (1997) Realistic Evaluation (RE) will be discussed in more detail below, with an examination of the features that make it suitable for evaluating a behaviour improvement course and informing the development of a second behaviour course for older pupils.

1.4 Realistic Evaluation

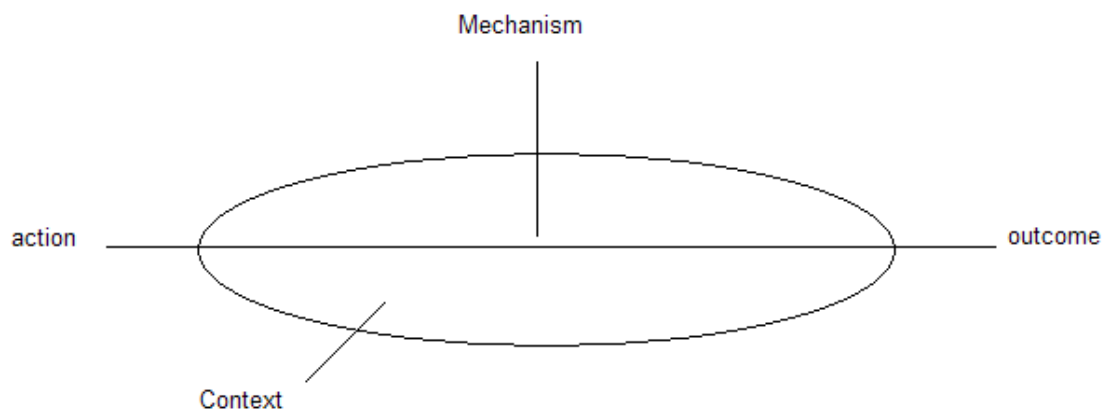
For this particular study the aim is to evaluate an intervention within the context of a school by trying to understand how it works, why it works and what factors support it to be effective. Examining this type of data fits with an epistemological position of critical realism. 'Critical realists recognise the importance of both individual agency and the influence of the structures and culture of society' (Byng et al, 2005, p72).

Robson (2002) further explains that realists:

'Develop knowledge and understanding about the mechanism through which an action causes an outcome, and about the context which provides the ideal conditions to trigger the mechanism. There may be several such mechanisms, as well as other mechanisms, which could have the effect of blocking the effect of the action (Robson, 2002, p30-31).'

The figure below gives a representation of this realist explanation:

Figure 1: The realist explanation (Robson, 2002, p31)



This is important for this particular study, as the aim is to evaluate an intervention that is placed within a social context. Trying to understand how or why an intervention works requires an examination of the context the intervention is placed within and the mechanisms that are within the intervention that result in the outcomes (positive or negative).

Manicas and Secord (1983) stress the diametrically opposed position of realism and positivism. For positivists, observations are the unquestioned foundation and theoretical entities merely hypothetical but,

‘For realists, theoretical entities are not hypothetical, but real; observations are not the rock bottom of science but are tenuous and always subject to reinterpretation.’ (Manicas and Secord, 1983, p406)

Pawson and Tilley (1997) developed a framework for evaluating social programmes based on a realist perspective called Realistic Evaluation (RE). RE facilitates the description of how different layers of social reality interact in the presence of an intervention, as a means of evaluating the intervention. Pawson and Tilley (1997)

argue that evaluations of social programmes take place in environments that are rapidly changing and in which the setting is just as important as the intervention being evaluated. People are a critical factor in any intervention and it is the people that cause the programme to work and not the programme itself (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). They further argue that it can not be claimed that programmes make things change but that it is the people who are embedded in their context who, when they are exposed to programmes, do something to activate the given mechanisms, and then change (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The role of causation consequently requires a more thorough examination beyond the usual cause-and-effect emphasis of traditional research methods, as there are multiple causes of any change. Therefore, for this particular study, rather than asking if the intervention (Focus) works, or comparing one intervention to another, RE, within the epistemological position of critical realism, will be used to understand why Focus works, for whom it works, and in what circumstances it works.

Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) state that:

‘Context is key to understanding the interplay between programmes and effects. Context itself is multifaceted and operates at a variety of levels, including political, social, organisational and individual dimensions... context, therefore, must be considered as part of the evaluation and can be key to uncovering the circumstances in which, and the reasons why a particular intervention works’ (p441).

RE acknowledges that ‘particular contexts can enhance or detract from programme effectiveness and that such contexts may include factors that are within or outside the control of programme implementers... context is also seen as important in terms

of replicating the intervention in any future setting or in learning about possible generalisable causal pathways.'

In the RE approach, a programme and the factors that go together to make it up are conceptualised in terms of contexts (Cs), mechanisms (Ms) and outcomes (Os).

Contexts are the settings within which programmes are placed or factors outside the control of programme designers. Mechanisms are the things people working within the programme do or manipulate to produce the desired outcomes (Timmins and Miller, 2007). See the table below for a fuller description of the CMOs.

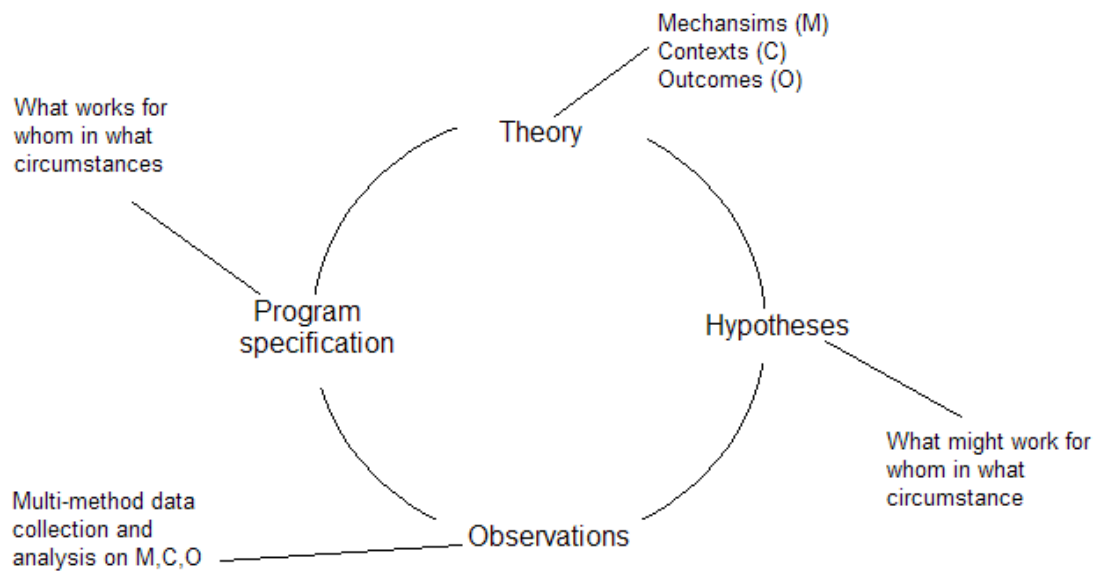
Table 3: Description of CMOs synthesised from Pawson and Tilley (1997)

	Description
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe those features of the conditions in which programmes are introduced that are relevant to the operation of the programme mechanisms. Must not be confused with locality. What is contextually significant may not relate to place but also systems of interpersonal and social relationships, and even biology, technology, economic conditions etc. Salient conditions should be identified as part of programme theory.
Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what it is about programmes and interventions that bring about any effects. These can often be hidden. The process of how subjects interpret and act upon the intervention plan is known as the programme mechanism and is the pivot round which realist research revolves. Refer to ways in which any one of the components of an intervention, or any combination of them, or any steps or series of steps, brings about change.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprised of the intended and unintended consequences of programmes. There is not necessarily a distinction made between outputs (intermediate implementation targets) and outcomes (changes in the behaviour targeted). Can take many forms and programmes should be tested against a range of output and outcome measures.

The task in RE is to determine which contexts are most effective in triggering the mechanisms that result in the desired programme outcomes.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) have created a visual representation of the realistic evaluation process as shown below:

Figure 2: The realist evaluation cycle (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p85)



Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) have adapted a step by step approach to RE as shown in the table below:

Table 4: Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) RE process (p444)

Step	Description
1	The evaluator, through dialogue with programme implementers attempts to understand the nature of a social programme.
2	The evaluator maps out a series of potential mini theories that relate the various contexts of a programme to the multiple mechanisms by which it might operate to produce different outcomes.
3	At this stage the evaluator undertakes an 'outcome inquiry' in relation to these mini theories. This involves building up a quantitative and qualitative picture of the programme in action.
4	Through an exploration of how CMO configurations play out within a programme, the evaluator refines and develops tentative theories of what works for whom in what circumstance.

Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) explain that RE 'requires that an intervention's theory be used to inform the evaluation's purpose and focus, and the key questions that it will address. Theory should also drive the selection of methods' (p445). In line with this the emerging CMO's from the existing literature have been identified (see table 6) to inform the data collection of the evaluation of 'Focus.' From the identified CMO's the following points were considered by the researcher (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and the evaluator in school (Behaviour Co-ordinator who developed 'Focus') to be key within the evaluation of Focus:

Table 5: The key points from the identified C, M, O's

Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does Focus provide a safe teaching context where pupils feel they can discuss their behaviour and feel listened to by adults? 2. Are pupils given the opportunity to reflect upon their behaviour? 3. Are whole school strategies used and a shared language of these strategies used within Focus and the main classes? 4. Is there a combination of withdrawal and in class support for the pupils in Focus? 5. Are there clear expectations of pupils' behaviour, with clear criteria provided? 6. Do staff within Focus take time to understand the pupils and their behaviour?

Table 6: CMO's, identified through the literature review, that promote positive behaviour

Study	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Preece and Timmins (2004)	Smaller, safe teaching environment	Respite for some students from the perceived social and academic pressures of mainstream classes.	Students' responses to interview questions indicated they valued the identified mechanisms.
		It allowed students to continue with their education through centre and mainstream inputs	
		Opportunities for students to talk to staff about their difficulties	
		Opportunities for students to reflect upon their behaviour	
		It provided advice to students on how to modify their behaviour	
		It allowed students to learn social skills, which equipped them for mainstream classes.	
		It allowed students to develop a rapport with adults in and out of the centre.	

Watkins (2000)	Sense of community	Attending to the needs of the student	Improved behaviour through engagement
Steer (2009)	School where all teachers have agreed the behaviour policies	Consistent application of behaviour policy by all staff	Effective behaviour management
Maxwell (1987), Watkins (2000)	Empowered, confident school staff	School-based strategy language used with pupils	Maxwell (1987) found less pupil suspensions, after analysis of questionnaire data.
Study	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Wise and Upton (1998)	Pupils attended an educational establishment for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and were interviewed about their mainstream school experience.	Listening to pupils	Value and respect to pupils.
			Give professionals more insight and an improved understanding of pupil behaviour.

Kinder et al (1998)	Relaxed atmosphere and mutual respect between teachers and pupils in the 'special needs' centre	Combination of in class and withdrawal support	Pupils valued both types of support
	Pupils who had been out of school for some time and worried about catching up on their work valued the small group environment	Individualised teaching and support	
Fletcher-Campbell (2001)	Classroom and school	Clear expectations of behaviour and personal organisation	Preventing pupils' inappropriate responses
		Clear criteria provided relating to what pupils were expected to learn	
		Attempts to understand why pupils were not demonstrating appropriate behaviour	
		Attempts to understand why pupils were not learning.	

It is important to recognise that although the realist evaluator will have articulated the theory through conversations and interviews with a selection of stakeholders, the theories generated, 'whilst partly emerging from discussions with stakeholders, are specified and owned more by the evaluators rather than approved and signed up to' by the stakeholders. Similarly it is the evaluator who prioritises the CMO configurations that are worthy of further investigation and that become the foci of the evaluation' (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007, p447). This needs to be considered when examining the data collected and drawing conclusions from it.

1.5 Purpose of the study

This small-scale study aimed to evaluate a six-week behaviour course that had been developed for year 7 and 8 pupils after the school, as an area for improvement, highlighted behaviour within these year groups. The Secondary school wanted to evaluate the existing behaviour course in order to inform the planning and development of a behaviour course for year 9 and 10 pupils.

The aims of this research can be seen in the table below:

Table 7: Aims of the research

Aims
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the behaviour course, 'Focus,' using a realistic evaluation framework.• Identify the context, mechanisms and outcomes that promote effective outcomes of improved pupil behaviour within 'Focus.'• Use the identified contexts, mechanisms and outcomes to provide suggestions for the development of a behaviour course for year 9 and 10 pupils.

2. Method

2.1 Setting and Context

The study was set in a large Secondary School, 'B,' in the West Midlands. The study aimed to evaluate 'Focus,' 'a six week course designed to modify behaviour in order to allow pupils to learn, enjoy, achieve and progress in and out of school (see appendix 7 for the staff and parent information booklets).

'Focus' meets the needs of a small group of pupils who struggle with transition and prepare them for the classroom environment. 'It takes an holistic approach to a pupil's progression, involving parents, teaching staff, mentors and external agencies' (B Staff Information Pack, 2010). Pupils are taught in small groups of 6-8 by a team of school teaching staff with support from a full time mentor.

Lessons follow the National Curriculum but are focused on practical and theory

based activities encouraging good behaviour. The lessons model skills required for the classroom environment such as, cooperation, working as part of a team, and independent learning. They also provide general skills of social interaction, SEAL and improve self-esteem and confidence. In B's Ofsted report (2009) it stated that 'focused support for pupils who have... behaviour difficulties means that these pupils achieve in line with their peers' (p7).

2.2 Participants

All of the staff working within 'Focus' were sent a questionnaire (see appendix 1) and were given the option of whether they wanted to complete it.

The six pupils attending Focus during the first half of the Autumn Term were given a letter for their parents/carers to give consent for them to be interviewed (see appendix 2). Three pupils returned these slips and consent were gained from these three pupils for them to be interviewed (see appendix 3). See table below for pupil characteristics.

Table 8: Pupil participant characteristics:

Pupil	Gender	Ethnicity	First language	Year group
1	F	British	English	8
2	M	British	English	8
3	F	British	English	8

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Following from the identified key points for the evaluation of Focus and from the CMO's highlighted within existing literature above, it was felt, by the researcher, that interviews with students attending Focus, questionnaires to all staff involved with Focus and an observation of Focus, would be effective data collection methods. The use of content analysis to analyse behaviour reports from pupils who had previously attended 'Focus' as a pre- and post-examination of behaviour was considered, however, the amount of data that would need to be analysed was felt to be beyond the time scale of this piece of small-scale research. Robson (2002) also highlights that 'it is very difficult to assess causal relationships' (p358) using content analysis and therefore even if there was found to be a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents after a pupil had attended 'Focus' it would be difficult to attribute this to the pupil's attendance at 'Focus.' Another consideration is that the behaviour reports written by school staff would have been written for a different purpose to that of

the research and therefore it would be 'difficult or impossible to allow for the biases or distortions' (Robson, 2002, p358) that this would introduce.

2.3.1 Semi structured interviews

Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three out of the six pupils attending Focus, as a way of 'providing rich and highly illuminating information' (Robson, 2002. p273). A semi-structured interview was chosen in order to capitalise on its flexibility to encourage respondents to explain their answers at length.

The use of open-ended questions in interviews allows the 'interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth as necessary, or to clear up any misunderstandings' (Cohen et al. 2008. p357). It is acknowledged that, as with any self-report method, the 'interview approach relies upon respondents being able and willing to give accurate and complete answers to the questions posed, no matter what their format' (Breakwell, 2000. p247). Cohen et al (2008) highlight that interviews encourage co-operation and establish rapport; however, Breakwell (2000) argues that respondents may be motivated to lie or wish to sabotage the research or that even if the interviewees wish to co-operate, they may be unable to answer accurately because they cannot remember the details correctly or they do not understand the question. In addition, Rosenthal (1966) illustrates that 'the kind of person the researcher is, how they look and act may by itself affect the subject's responses' (p109).

Breakwell (2000) suggests that a way to establish the validity of interview data is to complement it with other types of data, which is why an observation of 'Focus' was conducted, as well as staff questionnaires.

Robson (2002) suggests that the sequence of questions within an interview should be as described in Table 9:

Table 9: Sequence of questions in an interview (adapted from Robson, 2002, p277)

Question Type	Related question from interview schedule used
Introduction where the interviewer introduces themselves and explains the purpose of the interview.	Built into agreeing consent to take part in the interview
'Warm-up' where easy, non-threatening questions are used to settle both the interviewer and interviewee.	Questions one and two were 'warm-up' questions as they required the pupils to state facts
Main body of the interview, which includes questions covering the main purpose of the interview.	Questions three to five as the main body of the interview, focusing on the effectiveness of 'Focus'
'Cool off' where there are a few straightforward questions at the end to defuse any tension that might have built up.	The last question for each participant as a 'cool-off,' straightforward question.
Closure where 'thank you and goodbye' are said.	Built into the interview at the end

In line with Robson (2002) the questions that the pupils were asked were as follows:

1. Why are you in Focus?
2. What happens in Focus?
3. What do you think of Focus?
4. Has your behaviour improved since being in Focus?
5. How do you think Focus could be improved?
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Focus?

2.3.2 Unstructured Observation

As the actions and behaviour of the staff and pupils are central aspects to the 'Focus' programme, an obvious data collection method was to watch what happened in 'Focus', to record it in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret what was observed (Robson, 2002).

The observation used in this data collection was direct, the researcher was a non-participant and it was an unstructured observation. According to Cohen (2008) 'a structured observation will already have its hypothesis decided and will use the observational data to confirm or refute these hypotheses. On the other hand, a semi-structured and, more particularly, an unstructured observation, will be hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing. The semi-structured and unstructured observations will review observational data

before suggesting an explanation for the phenomena being observed' (p 397).

The process of Realistic Evaluation is about generating theories about the programme's effectiveness and therefore an unstructured observation was used so that the collection of data was not limited and therefore no data deliberately ignored.

The advantages of using observation as part of the research design include the directness of the approach. Further advantages and disadvantages to collecting data through observation are detailed in the table below:

Table 10: Advantages and disadvantages to using unstructured observation

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>It is direct; you are not asking for people's views, feelings or attitudes and so social desirability response bias is controlled for more than with, for example, a questionnaire.</p>	<p>A major issue centres on how the observer affects the situation under observation. There are a number of observer biases including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective attention: all perceptual processes involving the taking in of information by observation and its subsequent internal processing are subject to bias. Attention, the concentration on some aspects of our surroundings rather than others, is an essential feature of coping with the overwhelming complexity of those surroundings. Our interests, experience and expectations all affect what we attend to. • Selective encoding: expectations inevitably colour what you see and in turn affect the encoding and interpretation of this. This is a rapid, usually unconscious, set of processes and hence, difficult to guard against. Related to this is the 'rush to judgment' where something is categorised on the basis of initial and very partial information. • Selective memory: the longer you wait after the event in constructing a narrative account, the poorer such an account will be in terms of its accuracy and completeness, and the more in line it will be with your pre-existing schemas and expectations.

	(Robson, 2002. p324)
The data obtained contrasts with, and can often usefully complement, information obtained by virtually any other technique. Interview and questionnaire responses can be discrepant between what people say that they have done, or will do, and what they actually did, or will do. As Agnew and Pyke (1982) put it 'on a questionnaire we only have to move the pencil a few inches to shift our scores from being a bigot to being a humanitarian. We don't have to move our heavy-weight behaviour at all.'	This collection method is time-consuming
It is an appropriate technique for getting at real life in the real world.	

Acknowledging that the observer can interact and affect the situation under observation is essential before conducting an observation. By acknowledging it, the researcher can begin to take steps to reduce the effects, 'knowing what distortions and biases we are likely to introduce in our observation should help in counteracting them' (Robson, 2002, p322).

The effect of the researcher is described further by Rosenthal (1966) who suggests that the type of person the researcher is, their appearance and how they act may by itself have an affect upon the subject's responses. Sometimes the effect is a direct and simple one, but sometimes, too, the effect is found to interact with subject characteristics, task characteristics or situational characteristics. Rosenthal (1966) also noted that it is not only the kind of person the researcher is that affects their behaviour but it is also the things that happen to them before and during the research that affect their behaviour and may have an impact on the responses elicited from the participants. The participants' behaviour may also have feedback effects on their own subsequent behaviour not only directly but also by changing the experimenter's behaviour, which then alters the subject's response. It is important to consider that the interaction between researcher and research participant is complex and two-way and may have an effect upon the outcomes of the research.

According to Schutz (as reported in Cohen et al, 2008), our understanding of others and of their behaviour is dependent on a process of typification, where the observer makes use of concepts resembling 'ideal types' which are derived from our experience of everyday life. It is through them, claims Schutz that we classify and organise our everyday world (Cohen et al, 2008). Therefore, our understanding of others' behaviour is tied up with our own experience and understanding of the world around us which will bias our observation of others.

Harris (1982) also highlights that it is not only the observer who can bias the observation but subject reactivity presents a threat to the internal and external validity of observational research. Harris suggests that 'to reduce this it is recommended that researchers a) use procedures that minimise the obtrusiveness of the observation process such as electronic monitoring equipment and/or equipment such as one-way glass and portable observation booths which minimise contact between observers and subjects, b) periodically collect observational data through less conspicuous levels of observation than are used routinely during an investigation, and c) include independent assessments of targeted behaviours using methods of assessment other than observational data' (p 536). No electronic monitoring equipment was used and it was a one-off observation, however the data was compared against self-completed questionnaires and pupil interviews so that more reliable conclusions could be drawn from the data.

Ethically it is important to acknowledge the affect the observer may have had upon the observed situation, and also that the observer will have, unconsciously, interpreted the data through a filter of their own beliefs, values and understanding of the world.

Another important ethical consideration of observation is pointed out by Murphy and Dingwall (2001) who state that 'research participants may experience anxiety, stress, guilt and damage to self-esteem during data collection' (p340). How the researcher explains the research being conducted, and their presence

during the observation, i.e. body language, facial expression, eye contact, needs careful consideration so that no participant feels under any undue stress. Throughout the observation, attempts were made to give eye contact equally to everyone involved, and body language was open and relaxed. In addition to this, gaining informed consent from everyone who will be observed is an essential part of observation data collection. All participants were asked at the beginning of the observation whether it was ok for that particular session of 'Focus' to be observed and everyone consented.

2.3.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent out to the staff involved with 'Focus' in order to triangulate the data collected from the pupil interviews and the observation of a 'Focus' lesson. There are three main ways a questionnaire can be administered:

1. Self-completion
2. Face-to-face interview
3. Telephone interview

Due to the time constraints of the study it was decided to administer self-completion questionnaires. Although in face-to-face and telephone interviews a rapport can be built up, which can encourage honest answers, and questions can be clarified, the self-completion questionnaire was felt to be the most

suitable form of data collection for the purpose of the research (see appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire).

The central features of surveys are:

- The use of a fixed quantitative design
- The collection of a small amount of data in standardised form from a relatively large number of individuals
- The selection of representative samples of individuals from known populations. (Robson, 2002)

A self-completion questionnaire was used because of the ease of distribution and also the economical use of the researcher's time. However, there are issues about self-completion questionnaires that need consideration: the complexity of the questions has to be kept to a minimum and the control of question order completion is lost as respondents can answer the questions in any order, which may effect the answers that are given. The self-completion questionnaire also has to rely more on the quality of it's presentation because there is no opportunity for rapport to be built up between the interviewer and respondent to aid completion of it (Robson, 2002). However, the lack of direct contact also means that self-completion questionnaires may be better for dealing with sensitive topics. Robson (2002) also highlights that a low response rate is a common problem with self-completion questionnaires.

Robson (2002) highlights other advantages and disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires, as detailed in the table below:

Table 11: Advantages and disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires (Robson, 2002, p233)

Advantages	Disadvantages
They provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives.	Data are affected by the characteristics of the respondents (e.g. their memory, knowledge, experience, motivation, and personality.)
They may be adapted to collect generalisable information from almost any human population	Respondents won't necessarily report their beliefs, attitudes, etc accurately (e.g. there is likely to be a social desirability response bias)
High amounts of data standardization	Typically have a low response rate. As you don't usually know the characteristics of the non-respondents, you don't know whether the sample is representative.
They can be extremely efficient at providing large amounts of data, at relatively low cost, in a short period of time.	Ambiguities in, and misunderstandings of, the survey questions may not be detected.
They allow anonymity, which can encourage frankness when sensitive areas are involved.	Respondents may not treat the exercise seriously, and you may not be able to detect this.

Self-completion questionnaires can be subject to response bias; for example, people with reading and/or writing difficulties are less likely to respond and these skills would not be called for in an interview situation. However an interview process takes a longer amount of time. Additionally, Rosenthal (1966) highlighted that participants may respond in the way they feel to be most proper in the light of the researcher's attributes or their purpose of investigation.

Rosenberg (1965) suggested that subjects in experiments, as well as respondents in surveys, want to do the right thing and want to be well evaluated and therefore this needs to be taken into account when the data is analysed.

Another issue is raised by Rattray and Jones (2007) who reflect that data collection through a questionnaire '...assumes that the researcher and respondents share underlying assumptions about language and interpret statement wording in a similar manner' (p235). This highlights the need to make sure all questions are unambiguous and clearly set out so that this bias can be controlled for as much as possible.

It is important to consider the ethical issues of using questionnaires as a data collection tool. Cohen (2008) state that 'it will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent, be it in terms of time taken to complete the instrument, the level of threat or sensitivity of the questions, or the possible invasion of privacy' (p317) and therefore consent needs to be gained and no respondent should be coerced into completing the questionnaire. Additionally, unnecessary questions,

or poorly constructed questionnaires place time pressures on the respondents and so there needs to be a stage of thoughtful and reflective development of the questionnaire before the tool is used.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Table 12: Ethical considerations (BPS, 2009 and HPC, 2008)

Ethical principle	How it has been addressed
<p>BPS (2009) p2: Psychologists shall normally carry out investigations or interventions only with the valid consent of participants, having taken all reasonable steps to ensure that they have adequately understood the nature of the investigation or intervention and its anticipated consequences.'</p> <p>The researcher should 'recognise and uphold the rights of those whose capacity to give valid consent to interventions may be diminished including the young...' (p3)</p>	<p>All young people involved in the research gave verbal consent to be observed, as well as the consent of their parents/carers being sought for the pupils to be observed (see appendix 4). The pupils involved with the interviews gave recorded consent to be included within the research (see appendix 3) and the consent was gained from their parents/carers.</p> <p>The teachers were given the option to complete the questionnaire, with a paragraph explaining the purpose of the research at the beginning of the questionnaire. Written feedback of results was given to the school staff to disseminate to all participants.</p>
<p>BPS 3.1: Whenever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the</p>	<p>At the start of the interviews the pupils were given an information sheet that</p>

<p>investigation.</p> <p>HPC 7: You must communicate properly and effectively with service users...</p>	<p>explained the purpose of the research (see appendix 3). The pupils also completed a checklist to show they understood and agreed with the research conditions (see appendix 3).</p> <p>At the start of the questionnaire sent to the staff there was a paragraph explaining the research purpose (see appendix 1)</p>
<p>BPS 3.3: Where research involves any persons under 16 years of age, consent should be obtained from parents or from those in loco parentis.</p> <p>HPC 9. You must get informed consent...</p>	<p>Consent was gained using the consent letter in Appendix 2 and 3.</p>
<p>BPS 5.1: In studies where the participants are aware that they have taken part in an investigation, when the data have been collected, the investigator should provide the participants with any necessary information to complete their understanding of the nature of the research.</p>	<p>After the interviews the pupils were given the opportunity to ask anything they wanted about the task.</p> <p>Staff were given the contact number of the researcher in case they had any further questions about the research.</p>
<p>BPS 6.1: At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time.</p>	<p>This was written on the consent form and verbally explained to the pupils.</p> <p>Staff were given the option of whether they wanted to complete the questionnaires.</p>

<p>BPS 7.1: Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance.</p> <p>Participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs.</p> <p>HPC 2 and 10: You must respect the confidentiality of service users and keep accurate records.</p>	<p>The consent forms and questionnaire (see Appendices 1, 2, and 3) explained that the data collected would be kept but the data would be confidential and anonymised.</p>
<p>BPS 8.1: Investigators have a primary responsibility to protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation. Normally, the risk of harm must be no greater than in ordinary life, i.e. participants should not be exposed to risks greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal lifestyles.</p> <p>HPC 1: You must act in the best interests of service users.</p>	<p>The data collection methods being completed were not unusual to teaching methods, or tutor sessions that the participants were already exposed to.</p>

3. Results

3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews with pupils

Below is a summary of the responses made by the pupils to each question asked:

Table 13: Answers given in the semi-structured interviews with pupils

Question	Pupil 1	Pupil 2	Pupil 3
1) Why are you in Focus?	'Cause of my behaviour. Being defiant, being cheeky and walking out of lessons.	To improve my behaviour. I was being cheeky to teachers and truanting.	Doing naughty stuff like throwing pencils and giving teachers attitude. I was shocked to be put in Focus because I'm not as naughty as other kids in Focus.
2) What happens in Focus?	Miss (Learning Mentor) helps us communicate with teachers correctly. There are five lessons a day.	You choose targets to work towards. You have lessons with the same teacher you would normally have.	Same lessons as classes but only six of you. There's reintegration and stuff. I've got my new timetable and I've only got three Focus lessons which is good because I'm back with old friends

			<p>and not with the same five.</p> <p>Some of the work is better in Focus because you have more freedom to do what you want.</p>
<p>3) What do you think of Focus?</p>	<p>It's good because it's helping my behaviour.</p> <p>When I first came I had lots of anger in me. I learned to control it- Miss has helped me. She talked to me about consequences.</p> <p>I like being in a small group- don't get distracted. You can't do stuff like run around like you can in a bigger room.</p> <p>It's calm, there's only a few of us and no distractions.</p>	<p>I like that there is only 6 people in the lesson; it is quieter and you can concentrate more because there's less distraction.</p> <p>It's good because they try and help you improve your behaviour instead of kicking you out.</p> <p>I get on with the teachers more, the ones you didn't get on with before, there's less people so they get to know you and know what you are really like.</p>	<p>It works. It just does; it makes you realise there's only one more chance before you get kicked out.</p> <p>The teachers in Focus are better than in main class.</p> <p>The one-to-one sessions are good because they give you more strategies to help control your anger.</p> <p>Teachers understand how you feel.</p>
<p>4) Has your behaviour improved</p>	<p>Well I've learnt to be less cheeky. I want to be better- I don't want to get</p>	<p>I have started to concentrate more. All the teachers have noticed,</p>	<p>Yes. When we did the cooking thing the Head Teacher said we were</p>

since being in Focus?	kicked out.	<p>they say I'm good at taking part now.</p> <p>I've mostly stopped being cheeky to teachers. I don't truant anymore;</p> <p>Focus has shown me that lessons can be fun.</p>	perfect- it felt good to be praised up.
5) How do you think Focus could be improved?	Nothing	<p>I don't always like the one-to-one sessions because you always talk about the same thing. It would be good to talk about how to control anger and keep comments to yourself.</p> <p>The mobile is a bit too small because when you do activities you have to move the tables.</p> <p>There could be ten people so it feels more lively.</p>	Teachers could let you choose the 3 lessons you go back in to rather than them choosing for you.
6) Is there anything else you would like	<p>I felt happy when I was told I was going in to Focus because Miss (Learning Mentor) is a</p>		<p>If you get sent out of lessons you have to come back to Focus and do work in silence- it's</p>

to tell me?	good teacher. I will still come and see Miss when I leave Focus.		boring so makes you feel like you want to be back in class. It helps- that's the thing. It gives you confidence to be good again.
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3.2 Observation of 'Focus'

An observation of 'Focus' was conducted for an hour (see appendix 5 for the observation notes) and the table below indicates the main points identified:

Table 14: Main points from the observation of Focus.

Main points from the observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus was conducted in a mobile classroom with two rooms; one room as a classroom and one with comfier chairs used by the Learning Mentor (LM) as a room for 1:1 discussion or smaller group work. • The pupils seemed to respond to the use of humour by the LM and it seemed to calm the pupil down and facilitate a discussion about the pupil's behaviour. • The pupils seemed to respond to the LM's open and friendly body language, which seemed to promote open discussions about topics in class or the pupil's behaviour. • The LM was observed to use the language of targets, consequences and strategies to promote a discussion about how the pupil could improve their behaviour. • Individual pupil targets were displayed on their personal board in the classroom, which the children seemed to use to help them work towards achieving them. • The pupils had an area of the display board where they could display some of their work. The pupils, when asked, said that it made them feel 'proud' of their work and their achievements. • The sanctions and rewards system were displayed on the wall and these were identical to those used in the main school building. • Encouragement was used by the teacher and LM which seemed to promote discussion about the topic in class, e.g. 'good answers, 'well done,' 'C is thinking really hard.' • One pupil, who had previously attended Focus, was observed to come down, during lesson time, to work quietly in the Focus environment to complete his work.

3.3 Staff Questionnaires

Out of a possible 20 staff involved with 'Focus' 2 returned questionnaires via the internal school email system and one was interviewed due to their availability at the time the observation was conducted. No data was collected about the gender, ethnicity, or role of the member of staff within the school as questionnaires were returned via email. The responses can be seen in appendix 6, however the main points that were highlighted included:

Table 15: Main points identified from the staff questionnaires

Main points identified from staff questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil's behaviour had generally improved after they have attended 'Focus.' • 'Focus' gives a chance for pupil's to reflect on their behaviour. It also gives staff a chance to explain why their behaviour was unacceptable. • Staff can get to know the child and then it is easier to make a connection with the child and discuss behaviour, their family and background issues. • The pupils monitor their own targets and therefore develop sense of maturity. • Some pupils want to get into Focus and therefore might disrupt lessons in order to be sent into Focus. • If the group of pupils accessing Focus has a mix of needs, e.g. truanting due to anxiety, aggressive behaviour, disruptive behaviour, this does not help as the work and mentoring cannot be tailored specifically enough. A mix of different needs can also lead to pupils learning negative behaviour off each other. • Negative parental influences and a non-supportive attitude towards school can be a negative influence upon the pupil's progress. • Some members of staff have been critical of the course and it has been hard to show them it is a long-term project and pupils' behaviour is not just 'fixed'. A staff information pack has been developed to help with this.

4. Discussion

4.1 Discussion of the findings from the collected data

All of the pupils that were interviewed stated that they felt their behaviour had improved as a result of 'Focus' and the staff that gave responses to the questionnaires all agreed that generally pupils' behaviour did improve after they attended 'Focus.' It is important to note, however, that there was a poor response rate from the staff questionnaires and therefore the data collected from the 3 members of staff can only be used cautiously to represent the views of the staff in general within the school. However, from the data it can be broadly stated that 'Focus' does seem to improve pupil's behaviour.

To expand on this broad conclusion further, the data collected from the observation, the pupil interviews and the returned staff questionnaires has been used to examine the identified individual evaluation questions (see table 16) and also to identify the CMO's that have led to improved behaviour from attending 'Focus' (see table 17).

4.1.1 What does the data conclude about the evaluation questions?

The following table illustrates the questions that were highlighted as the framework for the evaluation of 'Focus' and the data collected that indicates whether the questions have been addressed.

Table 16: How the data collected answers the evaluation questions set

Question	Y/N	Data to support
Does Focus provide a safe teaching context where pupils feel they can discuss their behaviour and feel listened to by adults?	Yes	<p>P1: When I first came I had lots of anger in me. I learned to control it- Miss has helped me. She talked to me about consequences.</p> <p>P2: There's less people so they get to know you and know what you are really like.</p> <p>P3: Teachers understand how you feel.</p> <p>Staff: 'Focus' gives a chance for pupil's to reflect on their behaviour. It also gives staff a chance to explain why their behaviour was unacceptable.</p> <p>Obs: The LM was observed to use the language of targets, consequences and strategies to promote a discussion about how the pupil could improve their behaviour.</p> <p>P1: It's calm, there's only a few of us and no distractions.</p>
Are pupils given the opportunity to reflect upon their behaviour?	Yes	<p>Staff: 'Focus' gives a chance for pupil's to reflect on their behaviour. It also gives staff a chance to explain why their behaviour was unacceptable.</p> <p>P2: You choose targets to work towards.</p> <p>P1: It's good because it's helping my behaviour. When I first came I had lots of anger in me. I learned to control it- Miss has helped me. She talked to me about consequences.</p> <p>P3: It (Focus) gives you confidence to be good again.</p>
Are whole school strategies used and a shared language of these strategies	Yes	<p>Obs: The sanctions and rewards system were displayed on the wall and these were identical to those used in the main school building.</p> <p>P2: You have lessons with the same teacher you would</p>

used within Focus and the main classes?		<p>normally have.</p> <p>In line with this, Steer (2009) commented that 'effective behaviour management in a school requires that agreed policies are followed consistently by all staff' (p10).</p>
Is there a combination of withdrawal and in class support for the pupils in Focus?	Yes	<p>Obs: Focus was conducted in a mobile classroom with two rooms; one room as a classroom and one with comfier chairs used by the LM as a room for 1:1 discussion or smaller group work.</p> <p>P3: Same lessons as classes but only six of you. There's reintegration and stuff.</p> <p>I've got my new timetable and I've only got three Focus lessons</p>
Are there clear expectations of pupils' behaviour, with clear criteria provided?	Yes	<p>Obs: The sanctions and rewards system were displayed on the wall and these were identical to those used in the main school building.</p> <p>Obs: Individual pupil targets were displayed on their personal board in the classroom, which the children seemed to use to help them work towards achieving them.</p> <p>Obs: The LM was observed to use the language of targets, consequences and strategies to promote a discussion about how the pupil could improve their behaviour.</p> <p>P2: You choose targets to work towards.</p>
Do staff within Focus take time to understand the pupils and their behaviour?	Yes	<p>P3: Teachers understand how you feel.</p> <p>Staff: Staff can get to know the child and then it is easier to make a connection with the child and discuss behaviour, their family and background issues.</p>

The table above illustrates that from the data collected from 3 pupils, 3 members of staff and from an observation during the first half of the Autumn Term, 'Focus' does seem to provide a safe teaching context where pupils can discuss and reflect upon their behaviour. Similarly, as discussed in section 1.2, Preece and Timmins (2004) found that students valued opportunity to reflect upon their behaviour in a safe environment. The results from this study also indicated that the pupils valued being listened to and understood by the staff. This reflects the findings of McLaughlin (1999), discussed in section 1.2, who found that teachers who listened to pupils on a regular basis were highly valued by the pupils. In addition to this, as described earlier in section 1.2, Fletcher-Campbell (2001) stated that to support the inclusion of pupils at risk of exclusion schools should attempt to understand why pupils might not be demonstrating appropriate behaviour why pupils might not be learning. Pupil 2 commented that they felt the teachers 'get to know you and know what you are really like' which seems to indicate that the pupils' feel the teachers are trying to get to know them and understand why they are demonstrating inappropriate behaviour.

All three pupils discussed the positive impact of the smaller size of Focus on their ability to concentrate on work and reflect upon their behaviour. This was a key factor, as discussed in section 1.2, that was found to have an impact on pupils' behaviour within school and withdrawal units (Preece and Timmins, 2004; Kinder et al, 1998; Wise and Upton, 1998).

In this study the LM was highlighted from the pupil interviews, and from the observation, as a valuable part of 'Focus' to support pupils' own self-reflection and their learning and development. Steer (2009) supports this finding, within his recommendations for improving behaviour in schools, by suggesting that the role of Learning Mentors are a member of staff who can get to know pupils well and 'who is able to support them with their learning and development and, through effective monitoring, ensure that any needs are quickly identified and addressed' (p11).

The data collected also highlights that a combination of in class support and withdrawal takes place through the re-integration programme built into the course and also that a shared school language and behaviour strategies around behaviour are used. The displays of individual pupil targets, reward and sanction posters and one to one sessions with the LM about the consequences of an individual's behaviour also indicate that clear expectations are set with clear criteria. This was identified by Fletcher-Campbell (2001) (discussed above in section 1.2), as a positive action that schools could promote in order to promote the inclusion of pupils at risk of exclusion due to behavioural difficulties.

One teacher highlighted that if the group of pupils accessing Focus has a mix of needs, e.g. truanting due to anxiety, aggressive behaviour, disruptive

behaviour, the work and mentoring cannot be tailored specifically enough and therefore the course is not as effective in improving pupil behaviour. In line with this OFSTED (2006) reported that in order to improve behaviour schools needed to ensure 'strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour are based on a thorough analysis of issues' after which 'a coherent, phased programme of support' can be developed.

The pupil interviews and staff questionnaires did, however, highlight areas where it was felt 'Focus' could be improved. Pupil 2 commented that the mobile could be larger because when activities are being conducted in the lessons all the tables have to be moved to make room. Although all pupils commented that they liked the smaller group size and the smaller environment because there were 'less distractions' and it made them 'feel calmer' there is a need to balance the practicalities of lessons and to ensure pupils have enough space to participate safely and effectively in all types of learning activities.

Pupil 3 commented that 'Focus' could be improved by giving the pupil more choice over which lessons they could reintegrate back into rather than these being chosen for them. This is a comment that needs consideration for future courses to ensure that pupils feel a sense of control over their participation into lessons, which may contribute to a more successful reintegration in some cases. In addition, one teacher commented that some pupils may want to get into 'Focus' because of their perceptions of what it is about. In order to reduce

this, more work could be done to educate the pupils and staff within the school about what 'Focus' has been developed for and what the main objectives are for the six-week course.

4.1.2 Identified CMO's

The following table illustrates the data collected from the observation, pupil interviews and staff questionnaires as C, M, O's. The C, M, O's in italics illustrate the combinations that were felt to result in less positive behaviour outcomes within 'Focus.'

Table 17: Identified CMO's from collected data

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Learning Mentor working solely within Focus with time to give regular 1:1 mentoring sessions throughout the six-week course and beyond to aid re-integration.	Humour.	Facilitate discussion.
	Discussions with pupil's, parent's and teachers to try to understand the pupil's more and 'get to know the child.'	Pupils feel staff understand them and staff can make a connection with the pupil's to facilitate more effective discussions of their behaviour and their targets.
	Use of praise.	Pupils feel encouraged and their self-esteem is increased.
	Regular 1:1 sessions to discuss targets, consequences, alternative behaviours and give pupils the opportunity to reflect on their	Pupils feel listened to and understood by the teachers.
		Pupils understand their targets and what they are working towards.

	behaviour.	Pupils are given the 'confidence to be good again.'
Small environment with separate area for teaching and 1:1 sessions.	Use of language about strategies, targets and consequences	Pupils are able to, and supported to, think of alternative behaviour.
	Fewer pupils and less distraction.	Pupils feel calmer.
Small environment with separate areas for teaching and 1:1 sessions.	Pupils have their own space on the display board to display their targets, attendance charts and any work they are proud of.	Pupils feel their work and progress is valued and they feel 'proud' of their work.
		Pupils can monitor their targets and attendance charts and feel a sense of ownership of each. This develops a 'sense of maturity' in the pupils.
	Differentiated, different teaching activities where pupils have more 'freedom.'	Pupils view lessons as being 'fun' again and are motivated to attend lessons.
		<i>Pupils want to get into Focus and will misbehave in school to be put into Focus.</i>
Sense of belonging to the school.	Use of whole-school strategies and shared language of strategies displayed clearly in	Pupils know what is expected of them and can develop their ability to follow the shared rules and routines.

	Focus: Steer (2009) commented that 'effective behaviour management in a school requires that agreed policies are followed consistently by all staff' (p10).	Pupils feel the school is keeping on to them 'instead of kicking you out' and are motivated to continue in school.
	Teachers from main classes teach pupils in Focus.	Pupils feel the teachers 'get to know' them better and understand who they really are.
Pupils missed being with their friends in main classes.	Re-integration process where pupils attend an increasing number of lessons in the main school building from week 3 of the course.	Pupils stay in contact with peer group.
<i>Negative parental influence, not supportive of school or pupil.</i>	<i>Exerts a negative effect upon the pupil and the pupil's ability to implement and use alternative behaviour strategies.</i>	<i>No change, or a negative change, in pupil behaviour.</i>
<i>Group of pupils in Focus at one time all with differing needs.</i>	<i>A range of different behaviours need addressing.</i>	<i>Tailoring and differentiation of the course is difficult due to the varying needs of the pupils.</i>
		<i>Pupils may learn negative behaviour from other pupils.</i>

It is important to consider that deciding whether something was a mechanism or a context was difficult and therefore an element of researcher bias may be linked to the identified C, M, O configurations. Another consideration to make is that it 'could be argued that each mechanism or context involving social structures, human action and thought is itself made up of many C, M, O configurations' (Byng et al, 2005, p89). Future studies may wish to investigate each identified C, M, O identified in this current study and illuminate the underlying C, M, O configurations to provide further data on how and why pupils' behaviour is improved through 'Focus.'

4.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists

The behaviour co-ordinator expressed an aspiration at the beginning of this piece of research, that the findings be used to inform the development of a behaviour improvement course for pupils in years 9 and 10. EP's are among the best placed professionals to be able to use their skills of consultation to support the generalisation of the C, M, O findings from this study (see below for a further discussion about generalisation of findings) to inform the development of this behaviour course.

Cameron (2006) identifies the following as two out of five distinctive contributions that EPs can make.

- Using information from the research and theoretical database in psychology to recommend *evidence-based* strategies for change.

- Promoting innovative concepts or *big ideas* which are underpinned by psychological research evidence and theory and which can enable clients to spot potential opportunities for positive change.'

(Cameron, 2006, p293)

These two areas highlight the researcher skills EPs have and can apply to their work. These skills promote the development of evidence-based strategies and can be seen as central to the development of a behaviour improvement course.

Baxter and Frederickson (2005) highlight that it 'may be unrealistic on economic grounds for EPs to deliver primary and secondary preventative work directly to children and families, other than as pilots aimed at research and development' (p99). Nevertheless, they recognise that EPs are likely to be among the best qualified professional groups to undertake research and development, evaluation and supervision of staff who are delivering these programmes directly. EPs are also well placed to carry out monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives, such as the one discussed in this piece of small-scale research, and to advise commissioners on how to maximise value-added with available resources (Baxter, 2002). Supervision of staff or continued evaluation of the behaviour courses is an area for future development of this study.

By focusing on an evaluation of a behaviour course, this study can be seen to have taken a systemic psychology perspective. Farrell et al (2006) made a recommendation

that EPs should 'expand and develop their activities in different areas where their skills and knowledge can be used to greater effect, e.g. in group and individual therapy, staff training and in systems work' (p11). This project gives one example of how this recommendation can be implemented in practice.

4.3 Methodological challenges and future directions

It is important to consider that there was only a single, one hour observation of 'Focus' and therefore the data collected only relates to one particular lesson, with one particular group of pupils, with one particular teacher. Further observations of 'Focus' throughout the academic year would allow for more generalisable data to be gathered, however, the physical environment, routines, rules and key principles of Focus could be observed during the one observation and the data could be triangulated with the data collected from the staff and pupils.

Another important consideration that needs to be highlighted is that only three pupils from year 8 were interviewed and that they were all of a White British ethnicity.

Therefore future studies should investigate a larger sample of pupils to collect data about any differences the age, gender and ethnicity of the pupil may have upon the effectiveness of the identified CMO's from this study. In addition, only three teachers responded to the questionnaires and therefore the teacher perceptions cannot be generalised to be inclusive of all the staff members associated with 'Focus.' By the nature of the teachers responding to the questionnaires it can be argued that they felt more positively connected towards 'Focus' and therefore the data collected from the

teachers may be biased towards more positive comments. Future studies would need to arrange interviews with a wider range of staff to ensure their views and comments are included within the conclusions made.

Any generalisations of findings from this evaluation can be difficult as the CMOs are context specific. In line with this, Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlighted that 'all situations are unique and that problems or solutions cannot be generalised from one context to another' (p118). However, they further explain that there are two clear and crucial contrasting goals of evaluation;

- 1) The quest for the 'continual betterment of practice' and
- 2) The goal of the 'secure transferability of knowledge'

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p119).

It is the first of these two goals that in realist terms the CMO configuration focuses. Generalisation of the findings from this study would be a process of abstracting the findings and applying them to further programmes rather than understanding the typicality of the programme (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This concept has been defined by Pawson and Tilley (1997) as 'realistic cumulation' (p117) and has been expanded by Pawson (2002). According to Pawson (2002), evaluation should not be about discovering whether a set of programmes work and then aggregating the results, but rather the task of evaluation should be to test, refine and adjudicate the middle-range

theories. Pawson (2002) explains that evaluation is a process of abstraction, through which the researcher moves from one specific empirical case to a general theory and back to another case, and so on. 'What are transferable between cases are not lumps of data, but set of ideas' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p120).

Future studies should examine the long-term effects of the behaviour course using a longitudinal study design. This would ensure data could be collected about the pupil's inclusion within the mainstream lessons and what C, M, O's could be identified with successful inclusion.

5. Conclusion

From the literature review a range of C, M, O's were highlighted that were felt to contribute to pupil's improved behaviour. These C, M, O's were used to develop six questions to base the evaluation of 'Focus' on. The broad themes included pupil's feeling listened to and staff taking time to understand the pupils' and their behaviour, pupils having the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour, pupils' being given clear expectations with clear criteria for their behaviour, a range of strategies used with pupils and whole school strategies and a shared language being used around behaviour. From the observation of 'Focus,' three semi-structured interviews with pupils and three completed staff questionnaires it can be cautiously reported that 'Focus' does seem to improve pupil behaviour. The C, M, O's were also identified from the collected data to try to illuminate how and why 'Focus' positively effects the pupil's behaviour. Considerations surrounding the generalisations of the findings are acknowledged,

however, the school have expressed an interest in using the identified C, M, O's to develop another behaviour course for older pupils in conjunction with the visiting EP. Future studies need to explore whether pupil ethnicity, family background or gender plays a role in behaviour change, and longitudinal studies should examine the longer term effects of the behaviour course on pupil's behaviour in mainstream classes.

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Appendix 1

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of Birmingham City Council's Educational Psychology Service. I am interested in teacher's views about how schools encourage positive pupil behaviour and particularly how 'Focus' operates to improve behaviour at Baverstock. I would be very grateful if you could spend a few minutes answering the five questions below about 'Focus.'

Everything that you write will remain confidential and will be kept in a locked cabinet. I will not be storing your name with the work, so no one will be able to identify the work as yours. The only time we cannot keep your views confidential is if you say something that suggests you, or someone else is at risk of harm. If you would like any further information on the research, please contact me on 01213031166.

Please take your time to answer the questions as openly and as detailed as possible.

1. How did you become involved in Focus?
2. What happens in Focus to make it a behaviour improvement course?
3. Does Focus improve the young people's behaviour? Why?
4. How do you think Focus could be improved?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Focus?

Many thanks for taking the time answer these questions.

Appendix 2

Dear,

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of B City Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve situations for young people. One area we work on is how to improve children and young people's behaviour in school. The Educational Psychology Service is currently interested in children and young people's views about how school encourages positive behaviour in school.

I would like to interview your child about the 'Focus' group they are currently attending and what they feel is good about it.

Everything that your child says will remain confidential, so that when I report back to the local authority, your child cannot be identified from the work done. I will be writing down what is expressed by your child but this will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to read it is me, Claire Smith (trainee Educational Psychologist) and Huw Williams (Educational Psychologist). I will not be storing your child's name with the work, so no one will be able to identify the work as your child's. The only time we cannot keep your child's views confidential is if they say something that suggests they, or someone else is at risk of harm. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in their school.

Your consent is required for me to talk with your child. If your child changes their mind about participating, they can stop the work at any point and I will not ask why. It will be possible to remove your child's views from the research after the work has been completed.

If you would like any further information on the research, please contact me on Please complete and return the attached consent slip to by.....

Yours sincerely,

Claire Smith

Trainee Educational Psychologist

.....

I **give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith to discuss their views on 'Focus.'

I **do not give** consent for my child.....to work with Claire Smith to discuss their views on 'Focus.'

Signed.....

(Parent/Guardian)

Relationship to child.....

Date.....

Appendix 3

Dear,

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of B City Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve situations for young people. One area we work on is how to improve children and young people's behaviour in school. The Educational Psychology Service is currently interested in children and young people's views about how school encourages positive behaviour in school.

I would like to interview you about the 'Focus' group you are currently attending and what you feel is good about it.

Everything that you say will remain confidential, so that when I report back to the local authority, you cannot be identified from the work done. I will be writing down what is expressed by you but this will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to read it is me, Claire Smith (trainee Educational Psychologist) and Huw Williams (Educational Psychologist). I will not be storing your name with the work, so no one will be able to identify the work as yours. The only time we cannot keep your views confidential is if you say something that suggests you, or someone else is at risk of harm. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in their school.

If you change your mind about participating, you can stop the work at any point and I will not ask why. It will be possible to remove your views from the research after the work has been completed. If you would like any further information on the research, please contact me on Please complete and return the attached consent slip to by.....

Yours sincerely,

Claire Smith

Trainee Educational Psychologist

.....

I **want** to discuss the 'Focus' group with Claire Smith

I **do not** want to discuss the Focus' group with Claire Smith

Date.....

My name is

I would like to discuss 'Focus' with Claire Smith. I have read the information sheet about the work and understand that:

	Yes/No
If I decide to, I can stop the work at any point.	
I will be able to withdraw my views after the discussion	
My views will be used within doctoral research and may be used to develop another behaviour improvement course	
My views will be recorded and kept locked in a filing cabinet that only Claire Smith and Huw Williams have access to.	
My views will be kept confidential unless I say anything that suggests I or another are at risk from harm.	

Signed.....

Appendix 4

Dear,

My name is Claire Smith (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and I work as part of B City Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve situations for young people. One area we work on is how to improve children and young people's behaviour in school. The Educational Psychology Service is currently interested in how children and young people's behaviour is positively encouraged in school. I would like to observe the 'Focus' group that your child is currently attending.

Everything that your child is observed to say or do will remain confidential, so that when I report back to the local authority, your child cannot be identified from the work done. I will be writing down what happens within 'Focus' but this will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to read it is me, Claire Smith (trainee Educational Psychologist) and Huw Williams (Educational Psychologist). I will not be storing your child's name with the observation notes, so no one will be able to identify your child. The only time we cannot keep any observation data confidential is when a child says something that suggests they, or someone else is at risk of harm. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in their school.

Your consent is required for me to observe the 'Focus' group. I shall be observing on If you have any concerns about this observation taking place please contact me on ... by If I do not hear from you I will assume you are happy for me to observe the 'Focus' group.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Smith

Trainee Educational Psychologist

How can you support?

- ♦ **Know your pupils targets**—Targets are published on the P:DRIVE, emailed on reintegration and are displayed on reports
- ♦ **Complete Reports**— Pre-course and Post-Course assessment, Daily Target Cards and BLUE reports
- ♦ **FRESH START**—In order for the pupils to make that vital change pupils may need a fresh start
- ♦ **Positive Reinforcements**—During the course we modify behaviour through this strategy and feel success is maintained if praise (for minor and major changes) is consistently used
- ♦ **Follow the normal code of conduct**— Please use the code of conduct ladder consistently

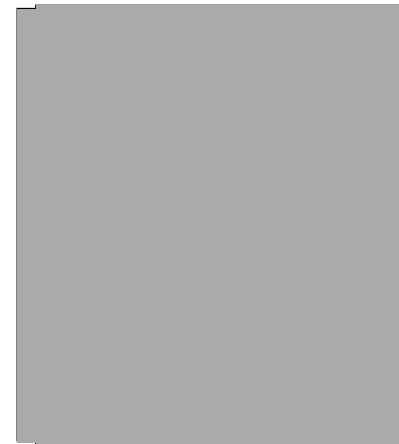


Questions and Queries

If you require any further information about individual pupils or the course itself please feel free to speak to [REDACTED]

Please remember the door is always open for visits etc

FOCUS



[REDACTED] In School Behaviour Course

STAFF INFORMATION PACK

Key Contacts:

[REDACTED] - Assistant Head

[REDACTED] - Behaviour Manager

[REDACTED] - FOCUS Learning Mentor ([REDACTED])

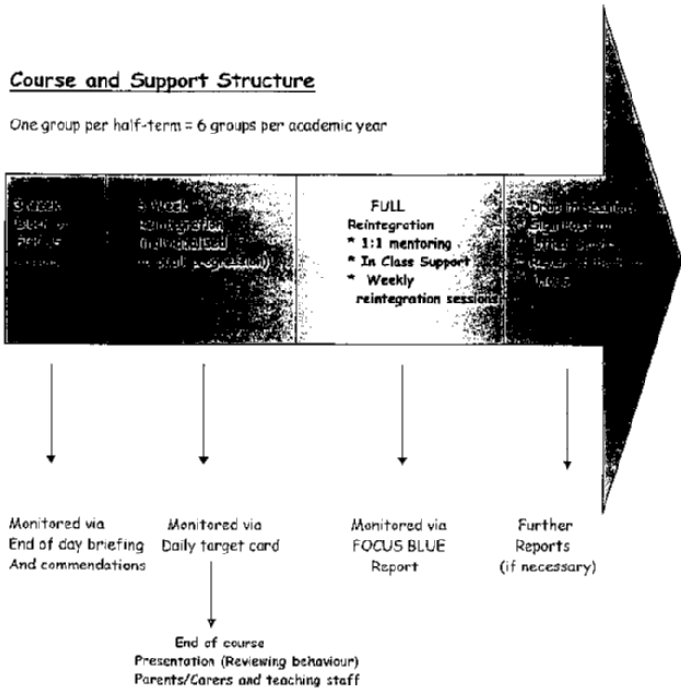


FOCUS Aim

- ⇒ Focus is a supportive strategy NOT a punishment
- ⇒ Focus is a 6 week course designed to modify behaviour in order to allow pupils to learn, enjoy, achieve and progress in and out of school
- ⇒ Focus meets the needs of a small group of pupils who struggle with transition and prepare them for the classroom environment
- ⇒ Focus takes a holistic approach to a pupils progression, involving parents, HoLs, teaching staff, mentors and external agencies

Course and Support Structure

One group per half-term = 6 groups per academic year



Focus Lessons and Projects

Team Building



Food Tech



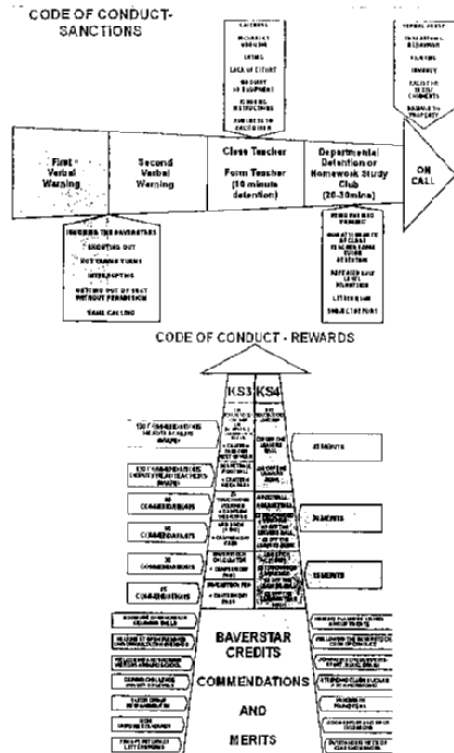
Textiles



Mentoring

Sanctions and Rewards

FOCUS complies with [redacted] code of conduct promoting positive behaviour and behaviour for learning, following the sanctions and rewards ladder.



To encourage a change in behaviour we apply the theory of positive reinforcement awarding equipment prizes: such as pens, pencils, rulers and rubbers, for achieving weekly behaviour targets.

Excellent behaviour, attendance and general improvement in and out of the classroom can result in the reward of an offsite activity at the end of the 6 week course.

Focus Referrals

Focus exists in years 7 and 8 only

Referral to Behaviour Coordinator

Referrals taken from interested parties such as; HoL/G; Form tutors and concerned staff, which is then compared with eportals, time in HoL/G detentions, time on GREEN/AMBER/RED report, time in IER and amount of fixed term exclusions

Waiting List

A waiting list is then devised, from which we combine a group of similar needs

Parent Referral Meeting

Parents are invited to a meeting to review referral reasons and discuss any concerns of home and social life

Start Course

Once consent is received the group list is published in briefing and referral is logged on pupils eportal

Course Content Summary

Pupils are taught in small groups of 6-8 by a team of school teaching staff with support from full time mentor; [redacted]

Lessons follow the normal curriculum but are focused on practical and theory based activities encouraging good behaviour. The lessons model skills required for the classroom environment, such as; cooperation, working as part of a team, independent learning. They also provide general skills of social interaction, SEAL and improve self-esteem and confidence.



Pupil Assessment

Pupils are assessed before, during and after the course.

Pre course assessment: Pupils are assessed before engaging in the course via the pre-course report. This is a vital tool to be completed by teaching staff to collect overall concerns.

Pupil Assessment		
Name	Class	Teacher
Area of concern	Target	Comments
Behavioural		
Academic		
Attendance		
Relationships		
Self-esteem		
Other		

Course Assessment: During 3 week block pupils are assessed via commendations to encourage positive reinforcement. Then during reintegration pupils are assessed via daily target cards and report to FOCUS mentor at the end of each day

Post-Course Assessment: Pupils are assessed using the FOCUS Blue post-course report and report to the FOCUS mentor at the end of each day. After 3 weeks of full reintegration pupils are then assessed via the post-course report.

Pupil Assessment	
Name	Class
Area of concern	Target
Behavioural	
Academic	
Attendance	
Relationships	
Self-esteem	
Other	

Please note that in some cases pupils are referred back to HoL for lack of engagement or improvement.

FOCUS Mentoring

After initial assessment of individual needs, pupils engage in one-to-one mentoring, addressing specific needs such as: **anger management, relationships, social skills, dealing with conflict, self-esteem and feelings and emotions.**

If necessary pupils are signposted to relevant services such as BSS, YISP, CAMHS and Cognitive Behavioural therapist (CBT).

When personal targets are identified an action plan is created and published on the P:Drive. All support is also logged on the mentoring database:

*
Based
on
"Focus
Targets"

Focus Action Plan					
Name	Start Date	Finish Date	Review Date	Comments	
Area of concern	Target	Comments	Target	Comments	Target
Behavioural					
Academic					
Attendance					
Relationships					
Self-esteem					
Other					

The FOCUS mentor also communicates targets with staff upon reintegration to lessons, and Helen Price will devise a School Action IEP for behaviour based on the 'Focus Action Plan.'

Individual Education Plan					
Name	Class	Teacher	Start Date	Finish Date	Review Date
Area of concern	Target	Comments	Target	Comments	Target
Behavioural					
Academic					
Attendance					
Relationships					
Self-esteem					
Other					