

**AN INVESTIGATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS' PERSPECTIVES ON
THE WORK OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

The number of teaching assistants (TAs) employed in schools across England is steadily increasing (Department for Education, 2015). Due to limited information on this large workforce, the 'Deployment and Impact of Support Staff' (DISS) project was undertaken (Blatchford et al., 2008). Concerning findings from this project have influenced further research and informed advice for changes for TA practice and deployment. Although pupils are the key stakeholders of TA support there is limited research gaining their perspectives on this area (Cajkler et al., 2007), particularly for secondary school pupils.

In this study, a mixed method design underpinned by a strength-based perspective was used to investigate secondary school pupils' perspectives on TAs. Findings suggest that supporting pupils with their learning was perceived to be a primary aspect of the TA role, in addition to several other forms of support across multiple contexts. Strategies to support learning, communication, personal characteristics and working within a context to meet the needs of the pupil, were perceived to contribute to effective TA practice and deployment. TAs were also perceived to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing. These findings contribute to the existing literature and have implications for research and professional practice.

DEDICATION

To my parents Wendy and Mark, for your love, encouragement and belief in me.

To my brothers David and Simon, for being my inspiration.

To Matt, for everything.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPS	British Psychological Society
CoP	Code of Practice
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
EP	Educational Psychologist
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
MFL	Modern-Foreign Language
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
PPA	Planning, Preparation, and Assessment time
RQs	research questions
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UNCRC	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
WPR	Wider Pedagogical Role

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This volume presents research undertaken as part of the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme. It is comprised of six chapters, each beginning with an overview or introduction to the chapter's content and purpose.

1.1 Structure of Volume One

The present chapter gives a rationale for this research and an overview of the two main domains: the practice of TAs and the concept of pupil voice. In Chapter Two a review of the pertinent literature is presented, detailing research which gathers pupils' voices on the TA role, and an introduction to the present study is provided. In Chapter Three, the methodology applied within this research is discussed and a rationale is given for the selection of the approaches used to collect and analyse data within a mixed methods design. In Chapter Four, the research findings are described. In Chapter Five, the findings are corroborated to answer the research questions and are interpreted and discussed in relation to existing literature. Chapter Five then concludes this volume by considering the contribution of the research, reviewing the research process and findings, and outlining the implications for future research and professional practice.

1.2 Overview of Chapter One

This chapter begins with a rationale for this research from the personal perspective of the researcher. This is followed by an overview of the current issues surrounding the practice of TAs and the key and contemporary pieces of research and guidance. Pupil voice is then introduced and key policies and

legislation relevant to education and pupil voice are outlined, providing a brief overview of the historical background that lead to the current context. A discussion of the challenges associated with ascertaining pupil voice within research is also provided. Overall, this introduction outlines the broad areas related to this research in order to set the scene for the next chapter.

1.3 Rationale

Prior to being a trainee educational psychologist (TEP), the researcher worked as a TA within mainstream primary, secondary and sixth form settings. Working as a TA provided first-hand experience of the nature and demands of the role, situated within wider debates about inclusion, TA deployment, and impact on pupils' academic attainment. These issues were particularly prominent within secondary school settings where pupils encountered increasing academic demands, a more complex environment, and a larger social network. The lens of a TEP then provided a more detailed insight into wider influencing factors, such as policy, research and embedded systems and resources within different settings. Reflecting on this work led to a desire to explore pupils' views regarding the support they receive from TAs.

Given personal experiences and developing knowledge within the area, it was judged that a positive, strength-based approach to research would provide a valuable and unique contribution. Furthermore, this research would inform practice on a personal level as a future educational psychologist (EP) working alongside schools, TAs, and young people to promote positive outcomes.

1.4 An Overview of Teaching Assistant Practice

1.4.1 Terminology

Within this research the term used will be ‘teaching assistant’ (TA) as this was stated to be the Government’s preferred term (DfES, 2000) and is currently the dominant term used (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015). It is an umbrella term that encompasses other education-based support roles such as, ‘high level teaching assistant’ (HLTA) and ‘learning support assistant’.

1.4.2 Influential policy and research on TA deployment and impact

There has been a steady increase in the number of TAs employed in schools across England; statistics show a gradual rise each year from 79,000 in the year 2000 to the most up-to-date figure of 255,100 in the year 2014 (DfE, 2015b). Of significance to this rise in TAs was the introduction of the ‘Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement’ (2003). This policy aimed to reduce teachers’ workloads, expand support staff roles, and raise standards in schools (DfES, 2003). Two of the key changes introduced by this policy were providing teachers with Planning, Preparation, and Assessment time (PPA) and the creation of the HLTA role (DfES, 2003).

The ‘Deployment and Impact of Support Staff’ (DISS) project (Blatchford et al., 2006; Blatchford et al., 2007; Blatchford et al., 2008; Blatchford et al., 2009a; Blatchford et al., 2009b) was a large, longitudinal study significant to the field of TA research. One of the aims of the DISS project was to gather reliable data on

the number and characteristics of support staff in primary, secondary, and special schools in England and Wales, using a large-scale survey (Blatchford et al., 2007). Findings indicated that there was a significant increase in the number of TAs over the course of the project (Blatchford et al., 2009b). The main reason given for this in Wave 1 was a change in the number of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) (Blatchford et al., 2006), and in Wave 2, the implementation of PPA time (Blatchford et al., 2007). The most common reason for a change in support staff across all three waves of the project was change in the number of pupils with SEND (Blatchford et al., 2009b).

Despite the rise in number of TAs, there was limited information on TA deployment and the impact of this support on teachers and pupils (Blatchford et al., 2008). The DISS project aimed to provide detailed information on these areas, using a mixed methods approach (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Findings suggested that TAs had a pedagogical role, mostly supporting pupils with SEND or pupils who were low-attaining (Blatchford et al., 2009c). In secondary schools, TAs often supported individual pupils, whereas in primary schools TAs tended to work with groups of pupils (Blatchford et al., 2008). Findings also indicated that the higher the level of need the more individualised attention the pupil received from a TA (Blatchford et al., 2008). However, for secondary school pupils, increased TA interactions were associated with reduced teacher interactions (Blatchford et al., 2008).

With regard to the impact on teachers, findings suggested that support staff decreased teachers' stress and workload and had a positive effect on teachers' job satisfaction (Blatchford et al., 2009a). At a classroom level, support staff had a positive effect on classroom control and classroom engagement, and undertook

tasks that enabled teachers to focus on teaching (Blatchford et al., 2009a). A systematic review of the literature concerning the impact of support staff by Alborz et al. (2009) drew some conclusions that were similar to the findings from the DISS project. For instance, the review identified that TA support had a positive impact on pupil engagement and teachers' stress and job satisfaction, and did reduce teachers' class-based workload but also increased managerial responsibilities for the teacher (Alborz et al., 2009).

The DISS project also indicated that TA support had a significant positive effect on Year 9 pupils' 'positive approaches to learning' (Blatchford et al., 2009a). This means that the more support pupils received, the more positively the teacher rated the pupils in relation to factors such as relationships with peers, distractibility, disruptiveness, and independence (Blatchford et al., 2009a). However, there were no significant effects of TA support on positive approaches to learning for any of the other year groups (Blatchford et al., 2009a). This suggests some differences between primary and secondary settings in relation to the impact of TAs as perceived by the teachers.

With regard to the impact of support staff on pupils' academic progress, a key finding from the DISS project indicated that, when controlling for confounding factors, 'the more support pupils received, the less progress they made' (Blatchford et al., 2009a, p.34). This negative relationship between quantity of support and academic progress was found across seven different year groups, and in some cases, was greater for pupils with SEND (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Contradictory findings from the systematic literature review by Alborz et al. (2009)

suggested that TAs had a positive impact on pupils' academic progress through delivering literacy-based interventions to individuals or small groups of pupils. Alborz et al. (2009) concluded that appropriately managed, well trained, and supported TAs have a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly when focusing on the development of literacy skills. Blatchford et al. (2009a) acknowledged the contrasting findings from Alborz et al.'s (2009) review and suggested the findings from the DISS project reflected everyday TA practice as opposed to using specific interventions.

A naturalistic design was utilised within the DISS project which enabled the researchers to examine everyday conditions and genuine aspects of TA work (Blatchford et al., 2009a). The study was also longitudinal to enable the relationship between amount of TA support and pupils' academic progress, as measured by beginning and end of year attainment measures, to be examined (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Scrutinising the project, Blatchford et al. (2009a) suggested that different measures of TA support and attainment to those used could have provided additional depth to the findings; alternative measures would also allow for smaller steps of progress to be considered. Despite these limitations, it is important to note that this is a large scale project which used multiple methods of data collection, for instance the amount of TA support was measured through estimations from staff and observational data, and findings were repeated with larger sample sizes to strengthen the trustworthiness and generalisability of conclusions (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Overall the scale, design and multiple methods of data collection are significant strengths of the DISS project.

A further strength of the DISS project is that a number of pupil characteristics known to affect academic progress (such as prior attainment and SEN status) were controlled for which enabled the relationship between the amount of TA support and pupils' academic progress to be considered without these confounding variables (Blatchford et al., 2009a). However, Blatchford et al. (2009a) acknowledge that there may be many other variables that could offer an explanation and that in order to conclude a causal relationship a randomised control trial (RCT) design would be required. Therefore, findings from the DISS do not provide undisputable evidence that TA support has a negative impact on pupils' academic progress. Due to the complexities of undertaking research within schools, it would be a practically and ethically challenging task to devise a study in which TA support was randomly allocated and possible confounding variables were successfully identified and controlled for. Furthermore, within such an artificial study it would not be possible to consider the natural circumstances of TA support as was done in the DISS project.

To further inform the debate as to the effectiveness of TAs, Farrell et al. (2010) reviewed a narrower pool of literature focusing on the impact of TA support on pupils' academic achievement. The findings from this review suggested that targeted TA intervention had a positive impact on the academic progress of primary-aged pupils with literacy and language difficulties (Farrell et al., 2010). However, findings also suggested that the general presence of TAs within the classroom had no impact on pupils' academic progress (Farrell et al., 2010). This finding supports conclusions drawn by Blatchford et al. (2009a).

In 2013, the DfE completed a review of efficiency in schools, examining the relationship between budget spending and pupils' outcomes. Findings indicated that high attaining schools spent more on teaching staff and less on support staff, in comparison to lower attaining schools (DfE, 2013). TA deployment was considered crucial to efficiency and it was suggested that differences in how TAs are deployed account for some of the conflicting conclusions drawn in the literature related to the direction and extent of TA impact (DfE, 2013). This supports conclusions drawn by Blatchford et al. (2009a) and Farrell et al. (2010).

In order to provide a comprehensive explanation of the negative relationship identified in the DISS project between TA support and pupils' academic progress, Blatchford et al. (2009a) argued that it is necessary to consider how the wider situational and structural factors within which TAs work impact upon their effectiveness. The 'wider pedagogic role' (WPR) model (see Figure 1) was devised to outline the components involved in TAs' work and to demonstrate how these interact with one another (Webster et al., 2011). Webster et al. (2011) used this model as a framework within which to discuss the findings from the DISS project in order to demonstrate how issues within the components reduced TA effectiveness. They suggest that preparedness, deployment and practice are the three main components of the model which have the greatest influence over the effectiveness of TA support; TA characteristics and conditions of employment are deemed to be less influential (Webster et al., 2011).



Figure 1: The WPR model (figure from Webster et al., 2011, p.12)

With regard to the preparedness component of the mode, Webster et al. (2011) present findings from the DISS project which highlight a lack of training for TAs, limited training for teachers to enable them to work with and manage TAs and limited time for TAs and teachers to discuss planning and feedback. As a result of these factors, it is suggested that TAs were not sufficiently prepared to support pupils with their learning.

Findings from the DISS project related to the deployment component of the model indicate that there are some key differences between how TAs and teachers work and who they work with; for example, while TAs often worked with pupils in groups (primary TAs) or individually (secondary TAs), teachers most frequently worked with whole classes of pupils (Webster et al., 2011). Furthermore, TAs' interactions with pupils were described as more sustained and interactive, whereas within teacher-pupil interactions pupils were described to be more passive and one of

many amongst a class (Webster et al., 2011). A key finding from the DISS project which has previously been discussed is that TAs were deployed to have a direct pedagogical role, mostly supporting pupils who were not making expected academic progress and those with SEN (Webster et al., 2011). Webster et al. (2011) suggested that as a result of how TAs are deployed, the pupils they support become separated from the teacher and the curriculum. TAs have therefore been described as the 'primary educators' of pupils with SEN despite it being a teacher's responsibility as the trained expert to educate all the pupils within their class (Webster et al., 2010, p.329)

The final main component of the WPR model, practice, related to interactions with pupils and findings highlights further differences between TAs and teachers. For example, Webster et al. (2011) present the findings from the DISS project indicating that teachers' interactions with pupils were spent explaining, providing feedback, making links to prior knowledge and promoting pupils' thinking and engagement with the task. TAs' interactions with pupils on the other hand were preoccupied with task completion, as opposed to understanding, and involved providing a more reactive response to the needs of the pupil and the lesson (Webster et al., 2011). Therefore, despite TAs having more focused and sustained interactions with pupils, these were of a lower quality to teacher-pupil interactions (Webster et al., 2011).

In summary, examining findings from the DISS project using the WPR model indicates how it may be possible for three broad and interacting situational components to reduce the effectiveness of TA work in relation to pupils' learning.

Using the model also makes some of the distinctions between TAs and teachers explicit, whilst indicating that the professions overlap in relation to being deployed to have a pedagogical role. It is argued that TAs are being used without a clear role remit or a clear idea as to what their support should entail (Blatchford et al., 2009a), an issue which Webster et al. (2013) suggested should be addressed at a national level and is discussed further in the next section. Overall, through using the WPR model, a convincing argument as to why TA support was found to be negatively related to pupils' academic progress is provided and areas which require change are identified. However, a limitation is that it is not possible to provide statistical evidence to support this explanation using the DISS findings (Webster et al., 2011).

The WPR model has been applied to further research in the form of the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project (Webster et al., 2013).

Focusing on the three main components of the WPR model, the aim of the EDTA project was to trial and evaluate alternative approaches to TA preparedness, deployment and practice across 10 different schools in order to increase their effectiveness (Webster et al., 2013). Webster et al. (2013) expressed that measuring the impact of these changes on pupils' academic progress was not appropriate at this early stage and so further research is necessary to determine the implications on pupils' learning. However, initial findings that were able to be reported were positive: TAs were more prepared for lessons due to allocated liaison time and improved lessons plans; TAs were deployed to enable teachers to spend more time with pupils experiencing difficulties; and TAs' interactions with pupils improved and focused on supporting understanding and independence

(Webster et al., 2013). This research has been used to inform guidance promoted to schools which is discussed in the next section.

1.4.3 Implications of research and guidance on TA work

In order to address the issue of TA role ambiguity, the DfE initiated plans to develop a set of standards for TAs (DfE, 2014). However, it was decided that the TA standards would not be published, as schools were considered best placed to set standards and make decisions about TA deployment (DfEa, 2015). In a recent development within this area, a group of professionals who were dissatisfied with this decision requested permission to publish the standards as a non-statutory framework with which the DfE was no longer involved (Unison et al., 2016). The recently published Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (2016) divides the standards into four themes: personal and professional conduct; knowledge and understanding; teaching and learning; and working with others (Unison et al., 2016). The document also defines the role of the TA as follows:

The primary role of the teaching assistant should be to work with teachers to raise the learning and attainment of pupils while also promoting their independence, self esteem and social inclusion. They give assistance to pupils so that they can access the curriculum, participate in learning and experience a sense of achievement (Unison et al., 2016, p.5).

In addition to the professional standards, Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2015) have produced a toolkit to inform TA practice. It is advised that these documents are used together in order to maximise the impact of TAs and generate positive outcomes for pupils (Unison et al., 2016). The guidance offers seven recommendations that relate to using TAs within the classroom, TAs delivering interventions out of the classroom, and making links between learning in

classroom and intervention contexts (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015).

The existing evidence-base on TA practice informed these recommendations; in particular, follow-on studies from the DISS project were drawn on, such as the EDTA project.

Research on TA support and subsequent guidance also has implications for professionals who work alongside schools, such as EPs. In a review of psychological services, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) (2002) outlined 5 core functions of an EP's role: consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research. These core functions are carried out by EPs at three levels: the individual level; the school level; and the local authority level (SEED, 2002). EPs can therefore work in a range of ways across multiple levels to raise awareness to the research on TA support and contribute to improving the components of TA work within the WPR model. For instance, EPs could deliver training at the school level on relevant theories of learning and evidence-based strategies to improve TA preparedness and practice. Furthermore, EPs have been referred to as practitioners who can challenge 'common practice' (Cameron, 2006 p.295) and so they could work with schools to utilise the research findings and guidance and where appropriate support them to reconsider or more clearly define the pedagogic role of the TA.

Webster (2014) also highlights the role of the EP with regard to statutory assessments of SEND and the pedagogical processes in place to support pupils with SEND. Webster (2014) argues that research on TA support challenges a widely held assumption that the most appropriate provision for pupils with SEND is

increased TA support. He also suggests that parents often desire a high amount of TA support as an outcome of the statutory assessment process. Therefore, Webster (2014) suggests that in light of the research evidence, EPs have a critical role within the statutory assessment process in managing expectations through their work with parents and in recommending teacher-led practice to support pupils with SEND. In addition, Webster (2014) suggests that EPs could provide training to other practitioners who support parents with the statutory process, so that they are also aware of the research evidence and the implications for practice.

1.4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise in the TA workforce generated questions regarding their role, impact, and efficiency. A large body of research has explored this area and some of most influential studies and key literature reviews have been outlined in this section. Research findings, particularly those suggesting a negative impact of TA support, have led to a number of follow-on studies and the proposal of the WPR model which has been used to inform guidance aiming to support schools to maximise the impact of TA support. Over the course of the research reported in this volume, non-statutory professional standards for TA practice have also been introduced. Overall, several professionals and organisations are endeavouring to change how TAs are used, based on a clearer definition of the role and evidence-based recommendations. Furthermore, EPs are in an ideal position to use their skill-set and range of work to support this process.

1.5 An Overview of Pupil Voice

Interest in eliciting and hearing children's views in relation to their health, care and education has significantly increased in recent years (Hopkins, 2010). Within education, this process has been termed 'pupil voice', where 'pupil' refers to the school-aged child or young person. The concept of 'voice' is more complex. Hopkins (2010) suggests that 'voice' has a literal, metaphorical, and political meaning. The literal meaning refers to the pupils' speech, the metaphorical meaning relates to aspects such as their tone, and the political meaning highlights the right for their opinions to be shared and heard (Hopkins, 2010).

A review by Cook-Sather (2006) explores how the term 'student voice' (a synonymous term) emerged in an attempt to enable pupils to contribute to educational reform. Commentators from across the world, including the United Kingdom, have referred to this idea since the 1990s (Cook-Sather, 2006). Lewis (2004) suggests that interest was initially generated by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), which stated:

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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12).

Since the introduction of this right, a succession of educational legislation and guidance indicating the need for pupil voice to be gathered has followed. Table 1 outlines some of the key documents within this area.

Legislation/Guidance	Reference to Pupil Voice
Special Educational Needs (SEN) CoP (DfES, 2001)	A fundamental principle underlying this guidance was that children's views should be gathered and taken into account. The guidance refers directly to the UNCRC when stating that children with SEN have the right to participate in all decisions about their education.
The Education Act (2002)	This Act specifies that consultation with pupils is necessary when making educational decisions that affect them.
Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003)	This document refers to the importance of listening to children's views in order to improve services and achieve particular outcomes for children: to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.
The Children and Family Act (2014)	Within this Act, the importance of children and young people being able to participate in decision-making processes is highlighted.
SEND CoP (DfEc, 2015)	A principle underpinning this guidance is ensuring that children and young people are able to participate in discussions and decisions about support at an individual and strategic level. The document states that there is a 'clearer focus' (DfE, 2015c, p.14) on this participation than there was in the SEN CoP (2001).

Table 1: Educational legislation and guidance documents that refer to pupil voice

As highlighted in Table 1, pupil voice has had an impact on historical legislation and the supporting guidance. Within the current context, the expectation to attend to pupils' perspectives is becoming increasingly emphasised, as indicated in Table 1, with reference to the SEND CoP (DfEc, 2015). Furthermore, the SEND CoP (DfEc, 2015) recommends a person-centred approach in order to give priority to the voice of the child or young person. Eliciting the voices of pupils with SEND is particularly relevant to this research as this subgroup of pupils may be provided with support from a TA; supporting pupils with SEND is one of the suggested reasons for the rise in numbers of TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009b).

In addition to an increasing political recognition of the significance of listening to and acting upon children's voices, researchers such as Hopkins (2010) have commented on the value of pupil voice in ensuring effective pedagogy and personalised learning. Pupil voice is suggested to be beneficial for pupils, teachers and schools (Bearne, 2003). As contemporary research and guidance suggests that change is necessary in order to ensure more effective deployment and maximise the impact of TAs (see Section 1.4.3), it is important to consider how pupil voice may interact with this process. Levin (2000) argues that changes made within schools and wider educational reform will only be successful if pupils are involved. The rationale behind this view is based on a number of pragmatic arguments, related to aspects such as pupils having unique knowledge and the need for commitment to change in order for it to be effective (Levin, 2000). Furthermore, from an educational perspective, Levin (2000) also argues that taking an active role in educational debates is in itself critical to learning and promotes engagement and motivation.

Research, legislation, and guidance highlight that pupils are key stakeholders in their educational experiences, who have the right and need to contribute to decisions which will affect them. However, this is not a straightforward process and the possible challenges of eliciting pupil voice within research are discussed in the next section.

1.5.1 Challenges

The essence of pupil voice is that it refers to *all* pupils and not just those whose voices are easily elicited (Lewis and Porter, 2007). Pupil voice therefore

encompasses a wide age range and a breadth and depth of needs. Consequently, eliciting the voice of pupils can be a challenging task in which ethical issues need to be addressed and appropriate methods need to be applied.

An important ethical issue is the power relation between researcher and pupil. This has implications for the challenges of ensuring that pupils are able to provide or withhold informed consent and that participation is voluntary (Lewis and Porter, 2007). Viewing consent as an ongoing process, alongside a self-critical and reflective approach to research is recommended (Lewis and Porter, 2007). Lewis and Porter (2007) also raise awareness of a right to silence: something pupils may prefer in relation to certain issues.

The methods used to elicit views also require careful consideration due to the social, linguistic and cognitive demands they place upon pupils. Researchers such as Lewis (2004) have assembled research in this area in order to provide evidence-based guidance on how best to gain pupil voice and reduce the likelihood of bias such as acquiescence. Acquiescence response bias refers to the increased likelihood of participants agreeing or saying 'yes' to closed questions, which Lewis (2004) points out is more common in children and particularly those with learning difficulties. From reviewing the evidence, Lewis (2004) argues, 'a recurrent theme is the importance of using multiple approaches so that the limitations of one are offset by another' (Lewis, 2004, p.4). Other recommendations gleaned from the literature include encouraging requests for clarification and the opportunity to express that they do not know (Lewis, 2004), using statements rather than questions (Lewis, 2004), using open 'wh' questions

(Dockrell, 2004), and making it explicit that there is no correct response (Lewis and Porter, 2007).

It is also important to acknowledge the challenges faced following the elicitation of pupils' voices. Lewis and Porter (2007) draw attention to the difficulties of moving from individual views to a collective voice. Furthermore, Fielding (2001) argues that these voices not only need to be heard but they also need to be actively listened and responded to. As discussed in Section 1.5 a pupil's right to express their views has underpinned educational legislation and guidance whilst also being recognised by several commentators as an essential and valuable process. This suggests that the voice of pupils is of paramount importance in informing decisions that concern them. However, this does not mean that other types of research evidence should be discarded; alternatively, pupil voice may complement other research or be used to inform future research using an alternative approach. When balancing evidence of differing kinds and from differing sources, or when research using pupil voice is all that is currently available, it is necessary to critically review evidence with regard to the trustworthiness and generalisability of data in order to inform decision-making. It is still possible that tensions may arise when evidence obtained through alternative research methods contradict conclusions drawn within pupil voice research. In these cases it is necessary to be cautious about prioritising pupil voice over other sources of information. This challenge is highlighted in Section 5.5.2 in discussion of findings from the current research study. A further challenge is then how to explain to pupils why certain decisions have been made, having gathered, and listened to their views (Lewis and Porter, 2007).

Overall, there are many challenges encountered with gaining pupil voice and in response to this; there are some evidence-based pointers to guide ethical research and ensure methods are appropriate and accessible. These challenges are extremely relevant to this research and as such this guidance was harnessed when designing this research and is addressed within the Methodology (see Chapter 3) and revisited in discussion of its findings (see Chapter 5) in order to review the implications for the validity of this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Chapter Two

Within this chapter, the existing research drawing together TA practice and pupil voice is considered. Studies that have gathered pupils' voices across a variety of ages, contexts, and needs are critically reviewed in order to outline what is currently known and to identify 'gaps' within the literature. This leads to a justification for the current research and a rationale for using a strength-based perspective. This chapter concludes with an introduction to the current research and the research questions.

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

A systematic approach was applied to search for relevant literature on pupils' perspectives on the role of TAs. This process began by using Boolean operators and specific search terms (see Appendix 1) to search relevant databases including PsychINFO, Web of Science, and British Education Index. No time filters were applied to the search. Studies identified in this search were then screened by reading their titles and abstracts and were deemed appropriate to this review if they met the inclusion criteria (see Table 2). To compensate for any studies that were missed during this process, a 'snowball' approach was then employed which involved looking up references cited in other papers and considering whether or not the studies found also fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Eleven studies were considered to be relevant to this review, which ranged from the year 1997 to the year 2012.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
UK research	International research
TAs (see search terms for other terminology used)	Learning Mentors Home-school support workers
Considers the perspectives of children and adolescents (18 years old and under), pre-school to college age.	Adults (over 18 years old), university students and above.
Peer-reviewed	Not peer-reviewed
Pupils' perceptions are referred to explicitly within the study.	The study is reported in a way that means it is not possible to separate pupils' perceptions from those of others gathered such as teachers or TAs.

Table 2: Exclusion and inclusion criteria

2.3 Existing Literature Considering Pupils' Perspectives on TAs

Firstly, of relevance to this literature review is a small element of the DISS project that sought pupils' views on TAs; Blatchford et al. (2008) briefly refer to these within their report. Findings suggested that pupils believed that TA support could improve their learning, highlighted concerns around dependency and withdrawal, emphasised 'the "more personal" nature of their interactions' (Blatchford et al., 2008, p. 80), and preferred TA support to a teacher's (Blatchford et al., 2008). As previously indicated, the DISS project was undertaken in primary and secondary school settings; however it is not clear whose views are reported and only a summary of findings is provided. The only indication of age is the suggestion that pupils in Year 1 did not distinguish between the TA and the teacher, naming all adults as 'teachers', whereas pupils in Year 3 and above distinguished between the adults (Blatchford et al., 2008). This is interesting given the previously outlined findings from the DISS project that suggest differences exist between primary-

based and secondary-based TA practice (see 1.4.2). In order to take a more in-depth look at pupils' perspectives, the literature identified for this review has been organised according to primary and secondary age groups.

2.3.1 Primary-aged pupils' perspectives on the TA role

When reviewing the literature, a collection of studies was found to explore the perspectives of primary school pupils in relation to their view of TAs (Eyres et al., 2004; Groom and Rose 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Williams and Connor, 2010; Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). These will be discussed in this section, considering aspects of the aims, findings and conclusions that are deemed relevant to this review. For instance, where a study has gathered other stakeholders' perspectives, in addition to pupils', these will not be discussed. Furthermore, where findings support or contradict another's study, these issues will be explored in order to provide a clear overview of what information is already known about this field of research. Individual studies will be critically reviewed throughout this section and, in addition, factors that apply to a number of studies, such as the use of a particular data gathering method, or the limitations of the overall collection of studies considering pupils' perspectives on the TA role will be discussed in Section 2.4.

Eyres et al. (2004) elicited primary pupils' perspectives in relation to the adults who work in their classroom. Findings suggested that pupils encountered several adults in their classrooms, all of whom they were happy to work with, and for some pupils, TAs provided a sense of continuity in these busy environments (Eyres et al., 2004). The pupils also believed that TAs are associated with working with

groups of children and ideally, there would be one TA per group (Eyres et al., 2004). Furthermore, the pupils perceived TAs to have a different status to teachers: the teacher has a managerial responsibility for the class, while the TAs 'help' the teacher or the pupils (Eyres et al., 2004). However, Eyres et al. (2004) reflected that it was unclear what 'help' meant and that TAs and teachers were perceived to undertake similar tasks. While pupils expressed that the roles differed, they were unsure of exactly how:

'Overall our impression was of children racking their brains for evidence to support the view that people with different job titles must be doing different things, rather than articulating a difference they found obvious or even particularly visible within their everyday experience' (Eyres et al., 2004, p. 158).

Within Eyres et al.'s (2004) study, data was gathered across 6 different schools by interviewing 78 pupils aged 5-11 years old in pairs. The interviews had an element of structure, through the use of an interview schedule, and flexibility, through the use of additional prompting (Eyres et al., 2004). Although authors comment that this is a small-scale study, the sample size is relatively large in comparison to other research on primary-age pupils' views on the TA role. Interviewees were also stated to be representative of the population of each school with regard to demographic factors (Eyres et al., 2004). However, interviewees were chosen by school staff and relatively limited information as to why these pupils were selected over others who met this criterion is provided, indicating possible selection bias in the sampling process. This bias would reduce the representativeness of the sample and compromise the ability to generalise the findings.

Research by Fraser and Meadows (2008) and Williams and Connor (2010) expands on some of the key findings reported by Eyres et al. (2004); for instance,

both studies found that pupils could articulate how TAs 'help'. Williams and Connor (2010) found that pupils defined 'help' in various ways such as, supporting their learning, supporting pupils with SEND (a primary aspect of the role), and supporting the teacher. Pupils within Fraser and Meadows' (2008) research perceived that TAs were present to help 'everyone', the teacher and all of the pupils. Within this study, helping pupils with their work was perceived to be an important job for TAs and concrete examples of 'helping' were provided, such as, when a pupil is 'stuck' with their work the TA, 'explains really hard words' (Fraser and Meadows, 2008, p. 358).

Both studies also supported Eyres et al.'s (2004) findings that when compared to a TA role, pupils identify the teacher as having a managerial role and ultimate responsibility for the class (Fraser and Meadow, 2008; Williams and Connor, 2010). However, Williams and Connor (2010) also suggest that pupils are not aware of, or perhaps concerned with, the differences between adults' roles within their class. They suggest that pupils are comfortable with TAs and teachers assuming either a 'helper' or a 'teacher' role at different times:

The roles that exist are not mutually exclusive. The descriptions indicate that children do not see the teaching role as the sole property of their class teacher (Williams and Connor, 2010, p. 136)

On the other hand, Fraser and Meadows (2008) concluded that pupils made a clear distinction between the roles in that they perceive the function of 'teaching' to be exclusive to the teacher, while 'helping' was the role of the TA. An important difference between these studies is that Williams and Connor's (2010) research is based on HLTAs who are able to cover lessons and take responsibility for

teaching the whole class, and so are likely to be perceived slightly differently to other TAs. Furthermore, Williams and Connor's (2010) study only focused on a narrow age range of pupils who were in Years 5 and 6. This provides a more detailed picture of these pupils' views but also means that the findings are not applicable to younger primary-aged pupils. Fraser and Meadow's (2008) research on the other hand gathered data from across the primary age range and was more impressive in scale and design; 419 pupils completed a questionnaire and 86 pupils participated in semi-structured small group interviews, providing the benefits of both structure and flexibility. This design enabled researchers to use different types of data to corroborate findings on pupils' perspectives and strengthen conclusions that can be drawn.

Another key finding by Fraser and Meadows (2008) links to the relationship between pupil and TA. Such relationships were identified to be of great importance, with pupils' viewing TAs as being more than an academic helper but also individuals whom they could trust, talk to and, in the words of one pupil, could be perceived as a 'friend' (Fraser and Meadows, 2008, p.354). Further support for this finding is reported by a study Groom and Rose (2005) in which it is suggested that the positive relationships formed between pupils and TAs comprise an important factor in effectively including and supporting pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). However, gathering pupils' views was a small element of Groom and Rose's (2005) study, only 10 pupils were interviewed and their characteristics (age, sex etc.) and whether they attended different schools is unclear. Consequently, the generalisability of the findings is significantly limited.

Bland and Sleightholme (2012) undertook research to explore whether pupils found TA support useful and to consider what constitutes a 'good' TA from pupils' perspectives. Findings suggested that the majority of pupils believed that TAs should be present in every lesson, all pupils believed working with a TA made them more confident, and pupils' constituted a 'good' TA as having desirable personal characteristics such as being kind, fun, assertive, happy, creative and having a good sense of humour (Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). This supports findings from Williams and Connor (2010) who also referred to pupils valuing a good sense of humour as a desirable characteristic for a TA. It is important to note that the Bland and Sleightholme (2012) study was carried out by HLTAs as part of a professional development course. Consequently, the researchers' identities could have influenced aspects of the research, such as the extent to which participants felt able to negatively comment on the TA role and the interpretation of the findings, arguably to a greater extent than a researcher who is more detached from the role of TA. This would compromise the validity of the findings.

2.3.2 Summary

Overall, several of the studies discussed suggest that primary school pupils believe that TAs support their learning, and value such support (Eyres et al., 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Williams and Connor, 2010; Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). Pupils perceive the TA role as distinct from a teacher role (Eyres et al., 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008), yet in some cases, pupils perceived an overlap in the roles, and in practice the activities undertaken by the two groups of professional can be similar (Eyres et al., 2004; Williams and Connor, 2010). In order for TAs to be effective, primary-aged pupils suggest that TAs need particular

desirable characteristics (Williams and Connor, 2010; Bland and Sleightholme, 2012), want TAs to be present for the majority of the time (Bland and Sleightholme, 2012), and reflect on the positive relationships they can form with a TA (Groom and Rose, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008). Although this body of research is small, there is some consistency across the findings reported.

2.3.3 Secondary-aged pupils' perspectives on the role of the TA

Some of the findings presented in research focusing on primary-aged pupils suggests that older pupils may have different perceptions regarding TA support. For instance, Fraser and Meadows (2008) found that for the majority of pupils there was no stigma attached to working with a TA; however, they also commented that some of the older children were more likely to feel embarrassed by working with a TA. Given the change in school environment, older age and the suggestions of differences in TA practice found in the DISS project (Blatchford et al., 2008), exploring the perceptions of secondary-aged pupils as a distinct group is necessary. However, the literature search undertaken for this review identified only two studies that exclusively considered the age group of secondary school pupils (Jarvis, 2003; Chambers and Pearson, 2004). Consequently, this section also includes a number of other studies identified in the search, which gathered the perspectives of pupils from across a wider age span, ranging from primary to sixth form education (Bowers, 1997; Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999; Mencap, 1999). In a similar approach to Section 2.3.1, studies presented in this section will be critically reviewed throughout and additionally the factors that apply to a number of the studies will be discussed in Section 2.4.

Bowers (1997) aimed to explore both primary and secondary school pupils' explanations for the presence of TAs and specifically whether pupils felt that this was due to the 'need' of the teacher or of the pupil. The scale of Bowers' (1997) study is a strength of the research as it is the largest in this review with the views of 713 pupils gathered. However, although 27 schools were involved they were all within the West London Borough and therefore do not represent a range of areas in the UK. Conclusions drawn were that younger pupils within the sample tended to explain that TAs were present to assist the overworked teacher, whereas believing TAs were there to support a pupil was more common in older pupils (Bowers, 1997). Furthermore, similar to the findings summarised for research that only considered primary school pupils' perspectives, the majority of pupils in Bower's (1997) study liked and valued the additional support. However, there was a minority of pupils who were reported to feel as though the support was 'singling a student out as different' (Bowers, 1997 p.230).

However, a significant limitation of this study is that Bowers (1997) asked the pupils to comment on what they thought their peers who received support felt about this. Therefore, findings were based on the pupils' perceptions of their peer's views, which reduces the validity of the findings. Furthermore, Bowers (1997) comments that there was a wide range of professionals present in the classrooms (in addition to the class teacher), including specialist teachers and unqualified aides and as such it is difficult to distinguish to whom the pupils were referring (Bowers, 1997).

Despite the limitations of Bowers' (1999) study, further research by Farrell, Balshaw and Polat (1999) supports Bowers' reference to a minority of pupils expressing feelings of being 'singled out' by receiving TA support. Farrell, Balshaw and Polat (1999) found that pupils felt that they needed the extra support but wanted it to be available when necessary as opposed to a TA being close to them all of the time. This was particularly true for secondary-aged pupils who felt that a TA sitting next to them emphasised their difficulties and so caused them embarrassment (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999). This is an important finding given that the DISS project found that TAs within secondary schools are more likely to be deployed to work individually with pupils (Blatchford et al., 2008) and it will be important to determine if this perception remains, given the changes since Farrell, Balshaw and Polat's (1999) research. Furthermore, Farrell, Balshaw and Polat (1999) found that due to the pupils not wanting their difficulties to be highlighted to their peers, they had mixed views on whether they preferred working with a TA inside or outside of the classroom. Withdrawing pupils from the lesson to work with a TA was perceived as both positive, so that this support was not given in front of peers, and negative, as this highlighted their need for support (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999).

Gathering pupils' views was only a small element of Farrell, Balshaw and Polat's (1999) research but due to the larger scale of the overall study they were able to interview pupils from a variety of different contexts. A range of schools from across the UK took part in the research; this included primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and schools which funded TA support in several different ways. This research may therefore reflect a more nationally representative sample

of pupils who receive TA support. However, this also means that within a relatively small sample of 47 pupils, there would be a wide range and variety of differences between the pupils and their experiences of TA support.

Other research in this area has a more specific focus in that it aimed to elicit pupils' views from a particular population. For example, Jarvis (2003) gathered the views of deaf secondary school pupils, and Mencap (1999) considered the views of pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Both studies reflected on the pupils' views to some extent in relation to the TAs role in supporting their inclusion. Within the research by Mencap (1999), findings related to the pupils' perspectives specifically are minimal. However, pupils explained that a TA's role was to help and teach them with regard to a number of activities within the classroom, in addition to supporting them with more practical and everyday tasks outside of the classroom, such as driving them to the provision or tying their shoelaces (Mencap, 1999).

Javis (2003) used both individual and focus group discussions in order to reduce the limitations of each method and enable as many pupils as possible to participate. Furthermore, a number of techniques were used within these methods, such as mind-maps, pictures and role-play. These techniques enabled pupils to share their views in various ways and reduced the linguistic demands placed upon them but the resulting data may have also been challenging to analyse and compare. Findings reported by Jarvis (2003) stated that pupils perceived themselves as needing support to engage with some lessons and that this support took multiple forms: aiding interpretation; helping pupils to understand work and

overcome difficulties; and supporting pupils to stay on task. Some pupils expressed that they only asked for and received support when they needed it, while others felt that they received too much support at times (Jarvis, 2003). Finally, Jarvis (2003) quotes a pupil stating a dislike for the support staff watching and joining in when she is conversing with her peers, suggesting that TA support can be perceived to interfere with peer relationships. A limitation of this study is that it does not consider perspectives on the TA role exclusively. Although findings provide an overview of what pupils perceive as aspects of support that facilitate and inhibit their inclusion, Jarvis (2003) notes that it was not always clear whether the pupils were discussing TAs, teachers or communication support workers.

Chambers and Pearson (2004) undertook research which focused on the inclusion of secondary school pupils during Modern-Foreign Language (MFL) lessons and perceptions of the role of the TA in such lessons. TA support in MFL lessons is a narrow focus of the study and therefore means that findings cannot be generalised to other school subjects. On the other hand, it also provides a more detailed and in-depth account of TA support in this subject in particular which was the focus of this study. Findings reported by Chambers and Pearson (2004) of relevance to this review include:

1. The pupils had a clear view of TAs' undertaking a supporting role, particularly in comparison to the teacher, who was perceived to be the expert in the subject and have ultimate responsibility for marking. There was some disagreement over who was able to distribute rewards, with supported pupils expressing that TAs and teachers are able to do this, while pupils who were unsupported suggested that the teacher had the

final word on this. Some pupils commented that they preferred asking the TA for help, rather than the teacher.

2. All pupils within the study, whether supported or unsupported, valued TA support. However, more than one TA in the classroom was considered distracting.
3. Pupils had an awareness of the TA's subject-knowledge and as such the limitations on their abilities to provide subject-specific support.

In addition to the research discussed, the literature search identified some studies that gained pupils' perspectives more generally, which lead to findings related to the role of TAs. For instance, Kidger et al. (2009) found that secondary school pupils expressed the need to have someone to talk to when experiencing emotional difficulties and the authors named TAs as one type of professional who could fulfil this role. Furthermore, in a case study by Herold and Dandolo (2009), the TA was found to have a significant role in supporting the learning and emotional well-being of a visually impaired secondary-aged pupil during physical education lessons. In this study, the pupil named the TA as the teacher of these lessons, as opposed to the actual class teacher, which Herold and Dandolo (2009) expressed was a significant reflection of the pupils' perception of the importance of the TA's role. It is likely that there are other studies which have reflected on the TA role as an outcome of gathering pupils' perspectives, perhaps alluding to pupils' perceiving the TA role in supporting many areas of their learning and development. Similar to the findings with younger pupils, there are hints within the literature that secondary school pupils can build a positive and influential relationship with TAs, sometimes highlighted by referring to them by their first

name (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999) and perceiving them to be ‘more like “friends – someone to turn to”’ (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat 1999, p.22).

2.3.4 *Summary*

Findings from this collection of studies suggest that like their younger peers, secondary pupils see the role of the TA as different to the teacher in that the teacher has ultimate responsibility for the class (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999; Chambers and Pearson, 2004). However, there is still some uncertainty with pupils expressing that the TA is their teacher (Herold and Dandolo, 2009) and that part of their role is to ‘teach’ them (Mencap, 1999). Where distinctions between roles were clear (Chambers and Pearson, 2004), this may have been due to the pupils being able to highlight the limitations of the TA role in relation to their specific subject knowledge in MFL lessons. There are also hints within the literature that pupils perceive TAs to support with areas in addition to their learning, such as tasks outside of the classroom (Mencap, 1999). In addition, TAs could be used to provide emotional support for which pupils expressed a need (Kidger et al., 2009). The nature and importance of the working relationship between the TA and the pupil is also reflected upon (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999), which relates Blatchford et al.’s (2008) findings about the interactions between TAs and pupils. However, such conclusions are rather tenuous, as there appears to be limited evidence or less clarity on the views of this age group in relation to the role of a TA.

Furthermore, with regard to the perceived impact and effectiveness of TAs, secondary school pupils also valued the TA role and the support that they provide

(Bowers, 1997; Chambers and Pearson, 2004). Although some older pupils perceived the TA as being present to support specific pupils (Bowers, 1997), it is also expressed that TA support can be beneficial to all pupils (Bowers, 1997; Chambers and Pearson, 2004). However, as could be speculated from comments made by the older primary-aged pupils in Fraser and Meadows' (2010) study, some secondary-aged pupils reported feeling embarrassed or singled out by TA support despite feeling that they needed it (Bowers, 1997; Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999). This issue was sometimes linked to how the TAs are deployed, for instance working individually with pupils and their physical proximity to them in the classroom (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999). Research demonstrates that this also has implications for pupils perceiving TAs to interfere with their peer relationships (Jarvis, 2003).

Although these conclusions are drawn tentatively, it is clear that they are based on limited information. The following section summarises what the existing literature within this area reveals as the collective voice of pupils and considers the extent to which this is a valid, clear, and representative voice.

2.4 Collective Voice and Concluding Critique

In order to extract and synthesise the key findings on pupil voice in relation to TA support, it is important to consider the conclusions drawn from other systematic literature reviews undertaken in this area. Relevant systematic literature reviews considered stakeholders' perspectives on role of TAs in primary schools (Cajkler et al., 2006) and the role of TAs in secondary schools (Cajkler et al., 2007). Both of these reviews explored pupils' perspectives.

For primary school pupils, Cajkler et al. (2006) concluded the pupils perceived TAs as adults who supported their learning and who helped the teacher. Pupils also perceived that a TA was someone to whom they could turn and would listen to them (Cajkler et al., 2006). This review only considered five studies which elicited pupil voice and the conclusions drawn were largely based on information from the largest and most influential study by Bowers (1997) (Cajkler et al., 2006). Bowers' (1997) study not only has the limitations previously discussed (see Section 2.3.3), it also pre-dated the changes to practice summarised in Section 1.4. As Bowers' (1997) study gathered secondary school pupils' perspectives, it was also included in Cajkler et al.'s (2007) secondary school review. In total three studies were used within both reviews, due to reporting primary and secondary pupils' views. This overlap is prominent within the reviews, and the conclusions outlined above were also drawn within Cajkler et al.'s (2007) review regarding secondary-aged pupils' perspectives.

However, within Cajkler et al.'s (2007) review, some findings were identified to be specific to the research considering the secondary school environment, such as TAs being perceived as co-learners or models of learning. There was also the suggestion that pupils may perceive TAs as having a role in linking school and home; however, further exploration of this was suggested before conclusions could be drawn (Cajkler et al., 2007). It is not always clear which of the secondary-specific perceptions noted in Cajkler et al.'s (2007) review reflect the pupils' voices (as opposed to the other stakeholders' views); however, direct reference is made to older pupils being more likely to perceive TAs as linked to pupils who required additional support, which had some negative connotations (Cajkler et al., 2007).

Furthermore, it was also concluded that some secondary school pupils felt that TAs' support could be considered 'intrusive and unhelpful' (Cajkler et al., 2007, p.6) which appears to be a conclusion drawn from comments regarding over-support and intrusion on peer relations.

Overall, the findings presented by Cajkler et al. (2006) and Cajkler et al. (2007) mirror some of the key points discussed within the present literature review with regard to pupils perceiving TAs as providing academic support and generally helping pupils with their learning, in addition to some of the concerns raised in relation to older pupils' perceptions. There is a clear overlap with the studies considered in this review. However, the larger, UK-focused and more up-to-date pool of research reviewed within the current literature review provides a more in-depth account of existing knowledge in relation to factors such as considering what learning support entails and perceived effective qualities, whilst also drawing attention to lack of clarity and the need for further research.

The reviews by Cajkler et al. (2006) and Cajkler et al. (2007) highlight some of the significant limitations within this area of research. Firstly, it can be challenging to identify which stakeholders' perceptions are being referenced (Cajkler et al., 2006); studies characterised by any such ambiguity were excluded from the present review. Within some studies, it is impossible to separate primary and secondary pupils' perspectives (Cajkler et al., 2006; Cajkler et al., 2007). None of the studies within the secondary school review were classified to be of a high quality (Cajkler et al., 2007). Finally, pupil voice is under-represented within research on TAs (Cajkler et al., 2006; Cajkler et al., 2007).

Although there is now a larger number of studies available to provide information on pupils' perspectives, research gathering secondary school pupils' perspectives in particular remains sparse. Within the current review, only two studies exclusively highlighted secondary school pupils' perspectives and these focused on a specific population of pupils and on a specific lesson. It appears that there has been no research exclusively gathering secondary school pupils' perspectives on the role of the TA, since Cajkler et al.'s (2007) review. Within the current context of the changing TA role and issues of deployment, as influenced by recently published guidance (see Section 1.4.3), keeping up-to-date with pupils' views regarding the support they receive is imperative.

As raised within Chapter 1 of this report, a key challenge underlying this area of research is to harness an appropriate methodological approach to ascertain pupils' views. For instance, Eyres et al. (2004) reflected on difficulties such as the influence an interviewer's questioning can have on pupils, and the challenges of undertaking research within schools due to the presence of school staff prompting pupils during interviews. These factors are likely to increase the risk of bias and ultimately reduce the validity of findings.

Many of the studies discussed used group interviews as a means to ascertain pupils' views (Bowers, 1997; Jarvis, 2003; Chambers and Pearson, 2004; Eyres et al., 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Williams and Connor, 2010). Group interviews have many advantages as a method of data collection used with children: enabling children to have thinking time; feel more confident to share their opinions; generating discussion; and revealing consensus views for group

behaviours (Lewis, 1992). However, conducting group interviews is challenging due to issues such as group dynamics and group composition, for example: some children may feel more intimidated in a group than in an individual interview while some children may dominate the discussion (Lewis, 1992). These issues will have influenced the findings presented within this literature and may not have enabled all pupils to have their voices heard.

A further challenge acknowledged within Chapter 1 of this report is how to form a 'collective voice'. Given the current research available, this challenge is emphasised, as some of the studies only consider specific populations (Groom and Rose, Jarvis, 2003), specific subjects (Chambers and Pearson, 2004), HLTAs (Williams and Connor, 2010), or are ambiguous as to which group of professionals the pupils are referring (Bowers, 1997; Jarvis, 2003). Therefore, it is difficult to group or apply these studies collectively to school practice beyond specific lessons or categories of need.

Overall, there remains some uncertainty about how pupils view TAs, particularly with regard to older pupils' perspectives. A review of the research that does exist highlights minimal evidence and indicates some methodological and practical limitations (Cajkler et al., 2007). Furthermore, given the suggested changes for TA support, up-to-date research is necessary. Given this concluding critique, there is scope and a need for further research to be undertaken in order to address some of the identified gaps within the literature and further contribute towards research knowledge. In particular, although some limited information is provided about secondary-aged pupils' perceptions of the difficulties related to TA support, it is not

clear what they perceive to be the strengths of the role and what they consider to be effective TA support that does, or in an ideal situation would, contribute to positive outcomes. The following section outlines an approach to research which could be used to examine these factors and a justification for using this within the current research study is given.

2.5 Positive Psychology and a Strength-Based Perspective

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argued that following World War II, a focus on difficulties and attempts to heal these dominated psychology and consequently it neglected to consider the positive factors of life. To remedy this, they promoted the idea of 'positive psychology' in an attempt to widen the focus of psychology and complement the existing knowledge base (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). They suggested that positive psychology aims to document and understand the factors that contribute to individual wellbeing and thriving communities, making it possible build on these positive qualities and strengths (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology has therefore been defined as, 'the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions' (Gable and Haidt, 2005, p.104).

The use of positive psychology has grown rapidly since this promotion, underpinning assessment and intervention, and is suggested to have had a 'remarkable impact on psychological research and practice in recent years' (Pawelski, 2016 p.339). Positive psychology has also generated an interest in uncovering strengths (Franks, Rawana and Brownlee, 2013) and has been

suggested as an approach which could be applied to conceptualise strength-based practice (Bozic, 2013).

Given the limited research on pupils' perspectives and in particular their views on what factors and conditions contribute to ideal and effective TA support, it was thought that these areas could be investigated within the current research study using a strengths-based perspective to address this gap. In addition, there were three key reasons for using a strengths perspective in the current research study. Firstly, the researcher believes that every individual and setting has strengths, a fundamental principle of the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 2009). The current guidance surrounding TA practice stresses that in order to maximise impact of TAs, it is the responsibility of professionals such as the senior leadership team to make changes to more effectively deploy and prepare TAs (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015). Ultimately, this will introduce change for the practice of TAs and identifying and building on strengths may be a motivating means to support change. Therefore, it is argued that if pupils' perceptions of effective TA practice (as the key stakeholders of their support) are highlighted, this would create an encouraging platform to build on these strengths and implement positive changes if necessary.

Secondly, a further principle of the strengths perspective is an awareness that every environment is full of resources (Saleeby, 2009). This links to the guidance presented by Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2015) which stresses that each school should draw on the skills of individuals and existing resources in order to maximise the impact of their workforce.

Finally, using a strength-based perspective to gain young people's views has been successfully applied to other areas of research and was thought to be a positive experience for those involved (Doutre, Green and Knight-Elliott, 2013). It was expected that this research would also achieve this outcome and give pupils opportunities to discuss ideal practice, ensuring that existing pupil and TA working relationships are not damaged whilst making a positive contribution to the existing literature.

2.6 Introduction to the Current Research

Within education, the role of a TA and the decisions made about this role are most influential to pupils; pupils are the key stakeholders. Despite this, their views are under-represented and are less commonly considered within research than the perspectives of teachers and TAs (Cajkler et al., 2007). The research available suggests that secondary school aged pupils are the least consulted age group, even though some dissatisfaction has been alluded to with regard to their views on the TA role. Although, this dissatisfaction appears to sit within a wider appreciation of the TA role in general. However, due to the limitations referred to within this literature review, there is a general lack of clarity as to pupils' perceptions of TAs, regarding their role, what constitutes effective practice, and impact. In light of this, the current research aims to explore secondary-aged pupils' perspectives, gathering information to further inform and expand on what is already known using a strength-based approach (as outlined in Section 2.5) This research will address the following research questions (RQs):

1. What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive to be the role of the TA?

2. What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive as effective TA practice and deployment?
3. What impact do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive TA support to have on pupils?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview to Chapter Three

Within this chapter, the methodology utilised in this research is described. Firstly, the use of a pragmatic mixed methods approach to answer the RQs is justified. This is followed by an explanation of how this two-phased study, involving a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with pupils in one maintained mainstream secondary school was carried out. A description of how the methods were implemented and tailored to ensure that they were accessible and inclusive for all pupils is provided. Ethical considerations of the research are discussed alongside the actions taken to overcome challenges to ethical practice and adhere to guidance. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis procedure undertaken.

3.2 Paradigms and Research Design

Within social science research, two dominant paradigms underpin researchers' assumptions and consequently the approaches used and choice of design. Firstly, a positivist paradigm advocates that 'knowledge about the social world can be obtained objectively' (Thomas, 2013, p.107). Working within this paradigm the detached researcher can test their hypotheses and uncover findings that can be generalised (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). On the other hand, interpretivism as a paradigm advocates that 'knowledge is everywhere and is socially constructed' (Thomas, 2013, p.107). Therefore, working within this paradigm, the researcher holds the assumption that the process will be subjective and that there

are multiple ways of interpreting and understanding findings. Positivism is predominately associated with quantitative research while interpretivism is linked to qualitative research (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The 'incompatibility thesis' refers to the idea that it is not possible to undertake research which is both quantitative and qualitative as the associated paradigms are not able to be combined (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Robson and McCartan, 2016). However, some commentators acknowledge that while there are distinct differences between the paradigms and their underlying assumptions, they strongly reject the idea that quantitative and qualitative data are incompatible (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Thomas, 2013). When designing research, the researcher must determine which approach would best answer the RQs (Thomas, 2013); Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that combining methods to complement one another is often the most effective way to do this. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is known as 'mixed methods' and this has been referred to as a separate paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Some of the advantages of using a mixed methods approach include enabling the researcher to embrace the strengths and minimise the limitations of individual methods, have a more complete understanding of a topic and triangulate data to improve the validity of the findings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Some commentators argue that this results in superior research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), although others caution that ultimately the quality of research is dependent on how it is designed and conducted more generally (Bryman, 2014). It is acknowledged that mixed methods

research can place high demands upon the researcher's skill set and time (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

3.2.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism has been described to offer an outcome-orientated approach to social research as it focuses on action as opposed to philosophising (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other words knowledge is derived from action and truth is considered to be 'what works' (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.26); the solution that is useful. Therefore, a pragmatic approach is not concerned with the dualism between quantitative and qualitative research and alternatively encourages the researcher to use approaches that will best address their RQs, and as such is compatible with a mixed methods design (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.2.2 The Current Research Study

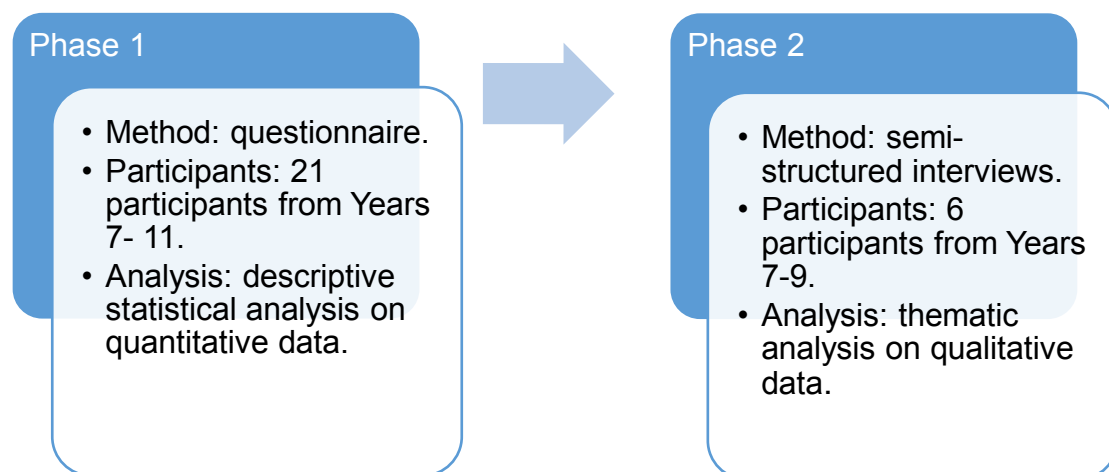


Figure 2: Overview of the research design

This research adopted a pragmatic perspective and applied a mixed methods design in order to answer the RQs and benefit from the advantages outlined above. It was undertaken with pupils in one maintained mainstream secondary school and, as indicated in Figure 2, the mixed method design encompassed the use of questionnaires, producing quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews, producing qualitative data. Figure 2 highlights that the questionnaires formed the first phase of the research, while the semi-structured interviews formed the second phase, meaning that a two-phase sequential approach to data collection was used. The methods applied were selected to complement one another and limit weaknesses: an approach recommended when researching pupil voice (Lewis, 2004). Phase 1 allowed the researcher to gain a wider breadth of perspectives based on information from the literature, and Phase 2 supplemented and provided a more in-depth understanding of some of these perspectives. Data were then triangulated in order to answer the RQs. Further details and justifications for selecting these methods of data collection are described below.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Phase 1: Questionnaire

A questionnaire was chosen for the first phase of this research to answer the RQs posed and, in order to align with the view that all pupils' voices should be heard, it was considered necessary that an element of this research should use an approach that would enable a larger number of pupils to participate.

Questionnaires are a well-established means of gathering the perspectives of a number of participants, with relative ease and efficiency. Furthermore, the decision

was influenced by other research within this field that successfully used questionnaires to gather pupils' perspectives on TAs (Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). The questionnaire was a self-report measure completed by hand, as opposed to online. The rationale for this decision was that this gave the researcher more control over the facilitation of the questionnaire and who completed it.

Coates and Vickerman (2013) highlighted the difficulties associated with using questionnaires to gather the views of children with SEND, related to the nature and level of their needs. Children must be able to access, understand, and comfortably respond to the questionnaire in order for the data to be accurate. However, although Coates and Vickerman (2013) recognised these challenges, they also draw attention to a number of studies that successfully used questionnaires, particularly with children with SEND in mainstream settings. The setting for the current research was a mainstream school and some (but not all) participants within the sample were identified by the school to have SEND (see Appendices 2 and 3). In order to ensure that the questionnaire was accessible and appropriate for all participants it contained clear and unambiguous language, was pre-tested and piloted (see Section 3.4.3), and was read aloud by the researcher when administered. Furthermore, following guidance provided by Lewis (2004) (see Section 1.5.1), participants were actively encouraged to seek clarification or say that they did not understand; it was made explicit that there were no correct answers, and a 'don't know' option was provided for every question.

The researcher designed the questionnaire utilised in this research (see Appendix 4), with each question created to gather information to answer particular RQs (see Table 3). In line with the strength-based approach underpinning this research, where possible, the questions were positively framed, for example asking participants, ‘where is the best place for a teaching assistant to work with a pupil?’ In addition to tailoring questions to answer RQs, the items within each question were based on information gleaned from the existing literature. For example, the first question within the questionnaire asked participants what jobs a TA does and the options provided were informed by the literature. To answer this question participants were able to tick as many options as they considered relevant.

Question Number and Type	Research Question linked to
Q1 Closed, multiple choice	RQ1 (TA role)
Q2 Closed, multiple choice	RQ1 (TA role)
Q3 Closed, multiple choice	RQ2 (effective practice and deployment)
Q4 Closed, multiple choice	RQ2 (effective practice and deployment)
Q5 Likert-type scale	RQ3 (impact of TA support)

Table 3: Questions types within the questionnaire and the linked RQ

As indicated in Table 3, the majority of questions were closed and multiple choice in format. The decision to use this type of question was made in the belief that existing knowledge provided sufficient information to create a list of likely responses. Furthermore, within the pilot and pre-test, respondents were provided with the option to add other ideas and were asked orally if there was anything else that they could think of. This aimed to ensure that the list of options was exhaustive from their perspectives. Closed questions also have the advantage of enabling straightforward analysis, whereas participants can provide responses to

open answers that are irrelevant or difficult to analyse (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011).

The final question of the questionnaire used a Likert-type scale where participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. Likert (type) scales were chosen as they allow for a degree of sensitivity which is not offered by dichotomous questions (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011) and research suggests that children prefer them, in comparison to visual and numeric analogue scales, as they are easier to complete (Van Laerhoven et al., 2004). The statements in this question reflected findings from within the existing literature and focused on the broad areas of inclusion and approaches to learning. Negatively worded statements were also included to reduce the risk of acquiescence response bias (Rattray and Jones, 2007).

3.3.2 Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the second phase of this research to illuminate, supplement, and expand on information gathered in the first phase. This enabled data from both phases to be collated and triangulated to answer the RQs. Interviews are considered to be a suitable for use in combination with other methods (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Furthermore, interviews allow more in-depth data to be gathered and provide the opportunity for any unanticipated points to be raised and interesting responses to be further explored (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Gaining depth was necessary to answer the RQs, given the complexities of eliciting pupils' perspectives.

Group interviews were considered as an alternative method to individual interviews. The advantages and disadvantages of group interviews previously outlined (see Section 2.4) were reviewed carefully in relation to this research. Individual interviews were chosen in order to overcome the evasion of confidentiality associated with group interviews and the issues that can present due to group dynamics and group composition, particularly as participants were from different year groups, with different levels of need. Therefore, individual interviews were considered to be more appropriate and suitable for this research.

The interviews were semi-structured to allow for an element of both structure and flexibility. Flexibility within the interview schedule was incorporated by including possible follow-up questions and probes. This enabled the researcher to seek or provide clarification, ask the participant to expand on a point or ask further questions to gain more depth and understanding, also giving a conversational feeling to the interview. Structure was included in that key questions were asked to draw out the information related to the RQs (see Table 4). The interview schedule followed a model suggested by Thomas (2013) and is presented in Appendix 5. Table 4 provides an overview of how the key interview questions linked to the RQs and describes the types of question used. The card sort activity referred to in Table 4 was introduced as a result of piloting the interview (see Section 3.4.3).

As highlighted in Table 4, many of the questions used were open 'wh' questions and the probes used were often instructions rather than questions, such as 'tell me more'. These techniques followed advice from Dockrell (2004) and Lewis (2004) in an attempt to reduce likelihood of acquiescence (see Section 1.5.1). In

addition, for the same rationale as with the questionnaire, participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and were encouraged to say they did not know and seek clarification when necessary. As seen in Table 4, a fictional character was also used to support participants within the interview. The character was a named pretend pupil, (Sam), who was introduced through a clipart image of a cartoon boy. It was explained to the participant that this pupil had never met a TA before. Some of the questions were framed as though the fictional character wanted to know the answers. This technique provided a means for the participant to talk about the TA role as if no prior knowledge was held, rather than feeling as though the researcher may already know the answer. It was also a means to keep the discussion detached from the participant, for ethical reasons in case they had negative experiences or felt any embarrassment about being supported by a TA.

Question Number	RQ Linked to	Question Type
1	RQ1 (TA role)	Open 'wh' question with possible follow ups and probes, based on the use of the fictional character
2	RQ1 (TA role)	Open question with possible follow ups and probes
3	RQ3 (impact of TA support)	Open 'wh' question with possible follow ups and probes
4	RQ2 (effective practice and deployment)	Open 'wh' question with possible follow ups and probes
5	RQ2 (effective practice and deployment)	Open 'wh' question with possible follow ups and probes, based on the use of the fictional character
6	RQ1 (TA role)	Discussion based on the card sorting activity
7	RQ2- (effective practice and deployment)	Discussion based on the card sorting activity
8	N/A	Summarising, asking for any other comments and thanking the participants

Table 4: Question types within the interview and the linked RQs

The interviews took place in a private room with no school staff present in order to help participants to give honest answers. Meeting the participants during Phase 1 meant that the researcher was less of a stranger and some rapport had been built. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and, with the permission of the participant, were audio recorded using a Dictaphone so that data were not missed due to writing notes, enabling the researcher to concentrate on the discussion.

3.3.3 Pre-test and piloting

The information leaflets, consent forms, questionnaire and interview schedule were pre-tested and piloted with pupils within the population of interest who attend a different secondary school. The purpose of this was investigate the appropriateness and accessibility of the methods, documents, and overall process of data collection. The benefit of completing a pre-test prior to the pilot was that it encouraged someone to give the researcher their initial thoughts and think aloud as they answered; this highlighted any difficulties and gave an insight into how the questions may be interpreted (Bowling, 2009). It was thought that a respondent who was familiar and comfortable with the researcher would be appropriate and so the pre-test was conducted on the researcher's relative who was a male Year 10 school pupil. His mother was also asked to pre-test the parental information. The pilot was then administered on four pupils (Year 10 male, Year 9 male, Year 8 male and Year 7 female) who received TA support in a school with which the researcher has connections.

The pre-test and pilot demonstrated that the information leaflets, letters and consent forms were mostly appropriate and accessible. Some minor amendments

to wording were made. However, it was noted that when asked to read these documents independently some respondents struggled to read crucial words, for example reading aloud the word 'assistant' as 'assessment', while other participants paid minimal attention to them. Consequently, it was decided that the researcher would read aloud all of the information and questions to the participants within the research. It was also decided that the questionnaires would be administered to a group of participants, in order to reduce time demands and to put the participants at ease, providing the security of their peers and avoiding the suggestion that the participant as an individual would have difficulty reading.

Another issue raised through pre-testing and piloting was that a question within the questionnaire was not answered appropriately. Participants were asked to rank the options they had chosen as jobs TAs completed in relation to level of importance and things that TAs are 'best at'. Within the pilot, rather than using the options provided, some of the participants wrote their own responses. These were often vague, needed further exploration and were difficult to analyse, such as 'helping'. In relation to the interviews, it was noted that some were very short in length, with the participant struggling to expand on their answers given the prompting used.

To overcome these challenges, the ranking questions within the questionnaire were removed and were incorporated into a card sort activity within the interview. This activity involved arranging cards with different statements on them into a diamond shape (see Figure 3) in order to obtain information about perceived relative strength/rank (Hopkins, 2010). The diamond shape enabled participants to

place cards at the highest or lowest rank, whilst allowing for a number of cards to be placed in the middle (Hopkins, 2010). Hopkins (2010) used the card sort activity to elicit secondary school pupils' views on the conditions which support effective learning, and commented that the technique, 'allowed pupils to manipulate statements into a hierarchal diamond and generate significant dialogue as they wrestled with their decisions' (Hopkins, 2010, p.51). Therefore this approach was considered appropriate as a tool to promote and encourage discussion of pupils' perceptions of the most 'important' jobs and those which TAs are 'best' at, given the difficulties faced in the pilot.

It was decided that the cards used in the activity would contain statements which participants identified in the questionnaire as jobs that the TA completes.

Furthermore, to support understanding of the card sort activity a star system was incorporated, with the highest card allocated 5 stars, the next row 4 stars and so on until the bottom card was allocated 1 star (see Figure 3).

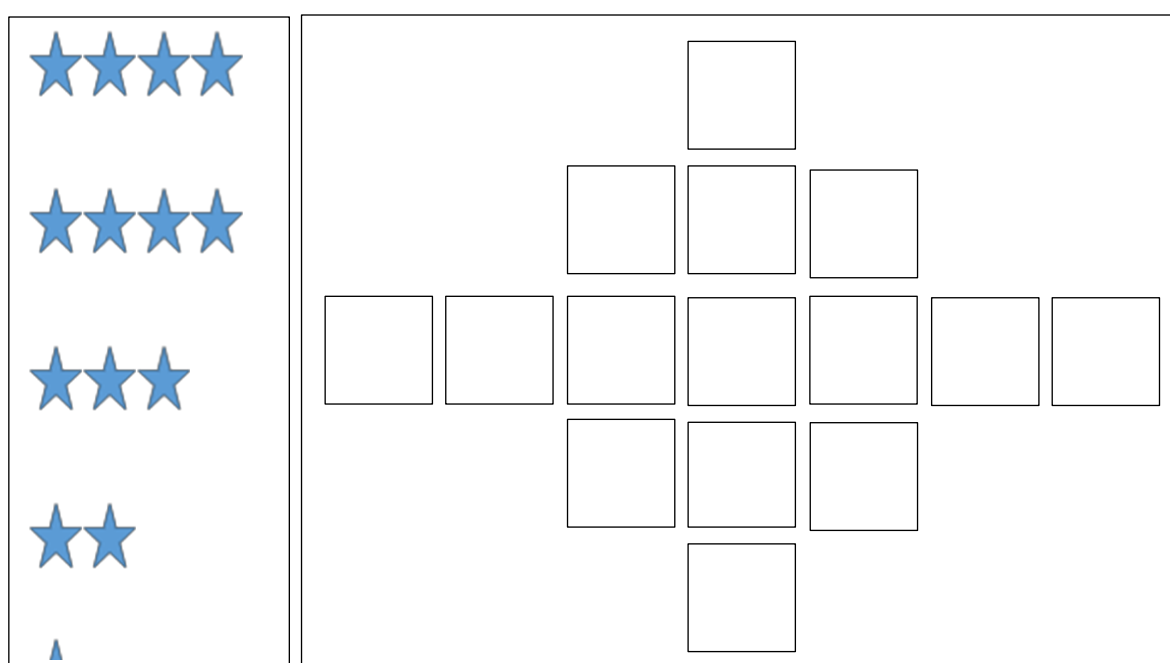


Figure 3: Card sort activity and star rating

3.4 Participants

3.4.1 School setting: Recruitment, procedure and characteristics

In order to recruit a school for this study, EPs within the researcher's workplace were approached and were asked to identify potential schools within the Local Authority which met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included:

1. The school catered for secondary aged pupils
2. The school was a mainstream setting
3. The researcher did not work in the school as a TEP
4. The school had a number of TAs deployed to support all year groups
5. The school's EP anticipated that the school would be willing and able to engage with the research and could allocate an appropriate named contact to liaise with.

Once a school had been identified by an EP, a recruitment letter was sent to the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) (see Appendix 6). This letter included an overview of the proposed research, the commitments required from the school, and stated any possible risks and benefits. If the school respondent expressed an interest, a meeting with the named contact in the school was arranged in order to answer any questions, confirm involvement and organise times and dates.

The mainstream secondary school within which this research took place has 5 year groups, each with 7 form groups, catering for pupils aged 11-16 years. It is a larger than average-sized school with approximately one thousand pupils on roll

and the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with SEND and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium is in line with the national average. It is an improving school with the most recent Ofsted inspection (2016) reporting that the overall effectiveness of the school has moved from a 'requires improvement' to a 'good' rating. In particular, it is indicated that the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now rated to be 'good'. Within the latest Ofsted report it is stated that pupils with SEND make good progress and that they appreciate the additional support they receive in lessons.

Documentation outlining the SEND policy states that a graduated approach to SEND support is used within the school, which comprises of three waves of support. Wave 1 is titled 'in class' support which consists of provision such as a differentiated curriculum, whole school approaches including the behaviour policy. Wave 2 is titled 'small group' support which includes provision such as in class support from a TA and participation in programmes such as guided reading. Finally, wave 3 is named 'individual support' and involves provision such as in class support from a TA and small group or one-to-one support for the area of need, such as literacy or social skills work. Advice from agencies such as the Educational Psychology Service are also outlined under wave 3. It is stated within the school policy that a pupil is deemed to have SEN if they do not make 'adequate progress' despite access to the differentiated curriculum. A 'strategy sheet' for each of these pupils is written, containing information about the pupil's needs, suggested provision and interventions, and advice for teaching staff. Pupils with SEN in Key Stage 4 are also able to choose a 'skills for adult life' course

instead of one GCSE option if deemed appropriate. Whole school training is supplied for teaching and supporting pupils with SEND and additional training is provided to TAs on areas such as supporting speech and language needs. This would support the preparedness of TAs with regard to the WPR model.

The SENCo manages a team of 6 TAs (one of whom is a HLTA). With regard to the deployment component of the WPR model, this team of TAs are primarily deployed to provide in class support to specific pupils according to their level of need and to provide support at the direction of the class teacher. The SENCo explained that TAs are deployed within the school to mostly support pupils' learning needs and mentors are employed to support pupils' emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils are reported to be grouped according to ability for the majority of their subjects and the SENCo explained that there is a system whereby if the pupil with whom the TA is allocated to work with in class does not require support, then the TA reverts to a default system of 'table touring' in which they support other pupils and ensure those with known difficulties are attended to. TAs also provide withdrawal support for lower attaining pupils which mainly focuses on developing literacy skills.

3.4.2 Sample: Recruitment and characteristics

A purposive sample was used in that all pupils within the school (school years 7-11), who received sufficient contact with a TA, were invited to complete a questionnaire. 'Sufficient contact with a TA' was defined as the pupil spending at least 30% of their school timetable in the presence of a TA in order for the pupil to have some experience and understanding of the role. This percentage was

agreed collaboratively with the school contact with an aim to gain the largest number of participants as possible for this phase. In practice spending at least 30% of school time in the presence of a TA meant that pupils who were not identified as having SEND could also participate in the research. However, these pupils were those in lower attainment groups in which a TA was present to provide in class support and so were not broadly representative of the pupils in school, but did meet the selection criteria and focus of this study. At the time of this research, a larger number of pupils from Year 7 fulfilled the sampling criteria (see Table 5) as TAs generally provided more support to this year group.

During the consent process (see Section 3.7), 26 parents were contacted, 5 pupils or their parents opted out of the research and so 21 secondary school pupils completed a questionnaire (see table 5 for more information on interviewees' characteristics). These participants spent between 30% and 62% of their school timetable in presence of a TA and so some pupils (due to their higher levels of need) were the focus of more targeted and frequent support than others. There were a mixture of participants with and without SEND in all year groups except for Year 8 (all Year 8 participants had identified SEND). Appendices 2 and 3 provide more details of the sample's characteristics, according to categories of year group, sex, SEND status and primary area of need.

Preserving the anonymity of participants was prioritised over analysing and presenting data according to individual pupils' characteristics and the amount of TA support they received in comparison to other participants. This decision was made as although participants' names were not included, due to the relatively

small sample size, pupils would be identifiable by their distinctive characteristics, particularly by school staff. This would be a breach of ethical guidelines related to confidentiality. Furthermore, the focus of this research study was not to consider differences related to particular individual circumstances or the specific practice within this particular setting, rather it considered what these pupils viewed more generally as the TA role and the impact of their support and what they believed ideal and best TA practice to be.

Due to the sample size and in anticipation of response difficulties, all of the participants who completed a questionnaire were then invited to participate in an interview. Pupils' parents were sent a letter and were asked to offer their signed consent (see Section 3.7). The intended plan was to interview two pupils from each year group. The decision to use two participants per year group was to ensure that more than one perspective was gathered and confidentiality could be protected. However, except for pupils in Year 7, a limited number of consents were received. It was therefore decided that a random sampling method would be applied to sample two Year 7 pupils (from the group who had parental consent). This was done using a random number generator on the computer. It was also possible to interview two pupils from Year 8 and Year 9 for whom signed parental consent has been confirmed. However, due to limited responses, no pupils in Key Stage 4 were interviewed. Table 5 gives an overview of the characteristics of the participants who were interviewed.

Method	Number of participants							
	Year Group					Sex		Total
	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Male	Female	
Questionnaire	10	3	2	3	3	13	8	21
Interview	2	2	2	0	0	5	1	6

Table 5: Number and characteristics of participants

3.5 Timeline of Research Procedure

Table 6 provides a timeline of this research, indicating what action was taken and when.

Date	Action Taken
May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham granted study approval
June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-test Pilot Amendments were made following the pre-test and pilot. Discussed research with EPs EP suggested an appropriate school Sent recruitment letter out to school
July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with school contact School contact agreed research with senior leadership team Gained information about the school and discussed sample characteristics, possible sample size and consent procedures.
September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School contact sent out information leaflets (see Appendix 7) and opt-out letters (see Appendix 8) to parents explaining that if they did not reply by a specified date (two weeks after the letter was distributed) then their child would be asked if they would like to participate.
October-November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those pupils whose parents did not withdraw them from the study were introduced to the researcher in groups of between 2-4, based on year group and the school timetable. The group was talked through an information leaflet (see Appendix 9) and participants were then asked to offer or decline their written signed consent (see Appendix 10). The questionnaires were then administered to the group.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information letters and consent forms (see Appendix 11) were sent to pupils' parents by the school contact (for the interview phase) • Courtesy calls were made to parents to remind them to return their consent forms if they would like their child to participate. • Pupils for which signed parental consent had been received met with the researcher and were guided through an information letter and another consent form (see Appendix 12). The pupils were asked to offer or decline their written signed consent and the interviews were conducted. • Courtesy calls were made to parents whose children were not randomly selected to participate in an interview, to inform them of this and to thank them for their time.
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Table 6: Timeline and procedure

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research was designed to ensure adherence to the standards of ethical practice, as advised by The Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and The University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research (University of Birmingham, 2014) were adhered to. An application for ethical review was submitted and approved by The Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham. The most prominent ethical considerations within this research are discussed below in relation to each research phase.

3.6.1 Phase 1

Information letters and leaflets (see Appendices 7 and 8) were posted to pupils' parents to ensure they were informed about the research and able to give informed consent for their child to participate. This information introduced the researcher, explained the research nature and purpose and provided appropriate

information about aspects such as confidentiality, right to withdraw and data protection and security. For example, the information leaflet informed parents that all written information (questionnaire and consent forms) would be kept in a locked filing cabinet, which only the researcher and researcher's supervisor had access to. Furthermore, in accordance with the data storage and retention requirements of The University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research (University of Birmingham, 2014), data would be kept and would remain accessible for ten years. After this time the data will be destroyed. Contact details of the researcher and researcher's supervisor were also included within the information and parents were invited to contact with any further questions, providing them with the opportunity to gain additional informational and clarity as necessary.

An opt-out consent form was included in the letter and parents were asked to return the form if they did not want their child to participate in the questionnaire. An opt-out approach to gain parental consent was chosen as it places less demands on the parent and reduce practical challenges, such as posting, timing, and costs. Furthermore, it was decided that the questionnaire process would be anonymous (participants were asked to avoid writing their name on the questionnaire) in an attempt to reduce social desirability bias and encourage the participants to be honest in their responses. As anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, in addition to the reduced burden on parents, it was agreed with the school contact that an opt-out procedure was appropriate for the questionnaire phase. This consent process is in accordance with BPS guidelines which state, 'researchers should ensure that parents or guardians are informed about the nature of the

study and given the option to withdraw their child from the study if they so wish' (BPS, 2014, p.32).

It was also ensured that the participants were provided with appropriate information about the research so that they were able to give (or withhold) their informed consent. Information leaflets (see Appendix 9) and consent forms (see Appendix 10) were shared with and read aloud to groups of participants. These documents contained images, large font, and accessible language to support the participants' understanding. Once the participants had given signed consent, they were able to withdraw this and their questionnaire responses while they were still with the researcher. Some pupils harnessed this right and withdrew without consequence. However, due to the anonymity of the questionnaires it was not possible for participants to withdraw their data once they had handed their responses in. Participants and their parents were notified of this in the information leaflets and participants were required to tick to signal their agreement to this on the consent form.

3.6.2 Phase 2

To inform parents about the interview phase they were sent another letter, explaining the interview process and purpose (see Appendix 11). This letter also included a consent form which parents were asked to sign and return in a pre-paid and addressed envelope if they wanted their child to participate. This approach to parental consent was considered necessary for this phase of the research due to the greater involvement required to participate in an interview. Parents were asked to tick to signal their consent, having read and understood the information

provided about the research, to their child being interviewed and the process being audio recorded, to quotations being used in the write-up, to understanding the right to withdraw, and to understanding that withdrawal will not be possible after the deadline date. This deadline was necessary as after this time the data were combined, making it difficult to identify and withdraw individual participants' information.

The pupils were again provided with information about the interview phase through the use of an information letter (see Appendix 12). This was written in a similarly appropriate style to the questionnaire leaflet and was read to them by the researcher, to ensure that they understood and had the opportunity to ask any further questions. Pupils were then asked to offer or decline signed consent signalling that they: were willing to be interviewed and audio recorded, understood their right to withdraw and the conditions of the withdrawal deadline, and understood that quotations would be used in the write-up. One pupil chose to stop participation in the interview half way through; this pupil said that they were happy for the data already collected to be used, but did not want to answer any further questions. It was explained that was not a problem, the pupil was thanked and was able to return to their lesson.

Due to the relatively small sample size, it is recognised that anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed for the interview phase of the research. However, a number of steps were taken to minimise any risk to confidentiality. Firstly, the interviews took place in a location where participants could not be overheard, the door was shut and staff were notified not to disturb. Furthermore, steps were taken when

transcribing and analysing the data to ensure all identifiable features of the participants were removed. Within transcriptions and write-up, identification codes were used to identify participants, and any other names used during the interviews (for example, of other pupils or members of staff) were excluded. Names of the school and the Local Authority were also excluded.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Phase 1

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were calculated and reported for the questionnaire data. The data were also analysed in relation to age according to what Key Stage the participants were in. The Key Stage 3 category consisted of participants from school years 7, 8 and 9, and the Key Stage 4 category consisted of participants from school years 10 and 11. The purpose of this additional layer of analysis was to explore whether any age-related findings or trends were present within the data. However, it is noted that the research was not designed to investigate this specifically.

3.7.2 Phase 2

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was the method applied to identify, analyse and report the data generated through the interviews. This method was selected due to its systematic, accessible, flexible, and theoretically independent approach that provides a rich account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Table 7 details the phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) alongside the precise steps taken in this research (see Appendix 13 for additional information and an annotated transcript extract). However, it is important to note that, in line with comments made by Braun and Clarke (2006), this process was also recursive in nature, in that moving between phases occurred when necessary.

Phases of thematic analysis	Process undertaken in this study
1. Familiarisation with data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audio recordings were transcribed in order to gain a written verbatim account of the interviews and to become familiar with the data. • The entire data set was read whilst making notes on initial ideas and areas of interest. • The transcriptions were checked against the recordings.
2. Generating initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcriptions were imported into NVivo, a computer software programme that supports the management and analysis of qualitative data • Working systematically through the entire data set an inductive approach was utilised to identify initial codes at the semantic level. • Codes were labelled using the node system in NVivo which acts as a container for that data extract. Some data extracts were coded into several different nodes. • As this process evolved, the list of codes (nodes) increased and it became possible to collate data under the same codes or continue to generate new codes as necessary. Nodes were also split and expanded as the coding system was reviewed.
3. Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (nodes) were grouped into initial themes and sub-themes. • Considering the relationships between codes was supported by manually drawing visual representations of these links.
4. Reviewing themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The themes and sub-themes were checked against the coded extracts and were refined as necessary. This

	<p>process involved further merging and splitting of sub-themes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic maps were generated. • The entire data set was re-read to ensure the themes accurately reflected the information gleaned from the interviews and to code any extracts that were missed.
5. Defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final refinement of each theme and sub-theme • Each theme was clearly defined and named accordingly. • Final versions of thematic maps were generated.
6. Producing the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of analysis and the generated themes were written up, using extracts to capture the nature of the theme and sub-themes • Themes were linked to RQs within the discussion (see Chapter 5).

Table 7: Phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and a description of how they were undertaken in this study.

3.7.3 Card sort activity

The cards used in the card sort activity were labelled with the letters A-J. This enabled the researcher to note down where the participants had placed the cards and allocate a score of 1 to 5 based on the star rating (5 star equated to a score of 5 and so on). The total scores for each card were calculated and the cards were ranked in order of what participants perceived to be the most important jobs for a TA and the jobs at which TAs are best.

3.7.4 Trustworthiness and generalisability of the data

The content and administration of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews was carefully considered in order to reduce threats to the trustworthiness of the data collected (see Section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 for further details). In addition, amendments were made following a pilot (see Section 3.3.3)

and the use of a mixed methods design minimised the limitations of individual methods. Consequently, the data presented in the following chapter is believed to be trustworthy. However, due to the small-scale of this research and the recruitment of pupils from a single mainstream secondary school, data cannot be generalised to the wider population of secondary school pupils. Within Section 5.4, the validity of this research and the strengths and limitations of the methodology utilised is discussed in more detail.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Overview to Chapter Four

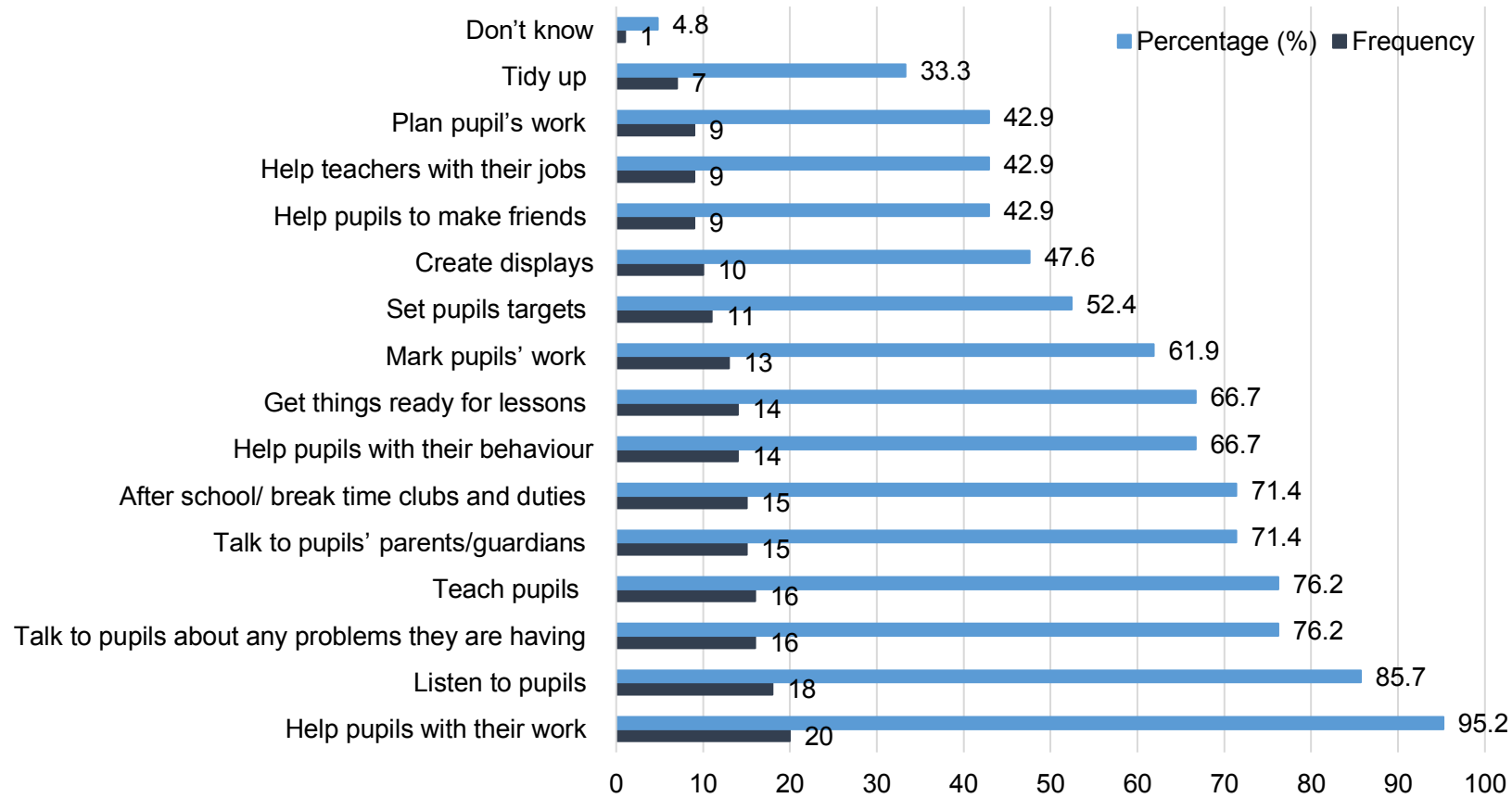
Within this chapter, the quantitative data descriptively analysed are presented under the headings of the related RQs. This is followed by a summary of the key points related to the further analysis undertaken by Key Stage. The themes generated through thematic analysis of the interview data are then presented. Thematic maps are used to demonstrate how the themes that were abstracted are thought to relate to the three RQs. Many of the themes have sub-themes within them and each is described alongside an illustrative quotation. The data gathered from the card sort activity are also presented under the appropriate RQ.

4.2 Phase 1: Questionnaire

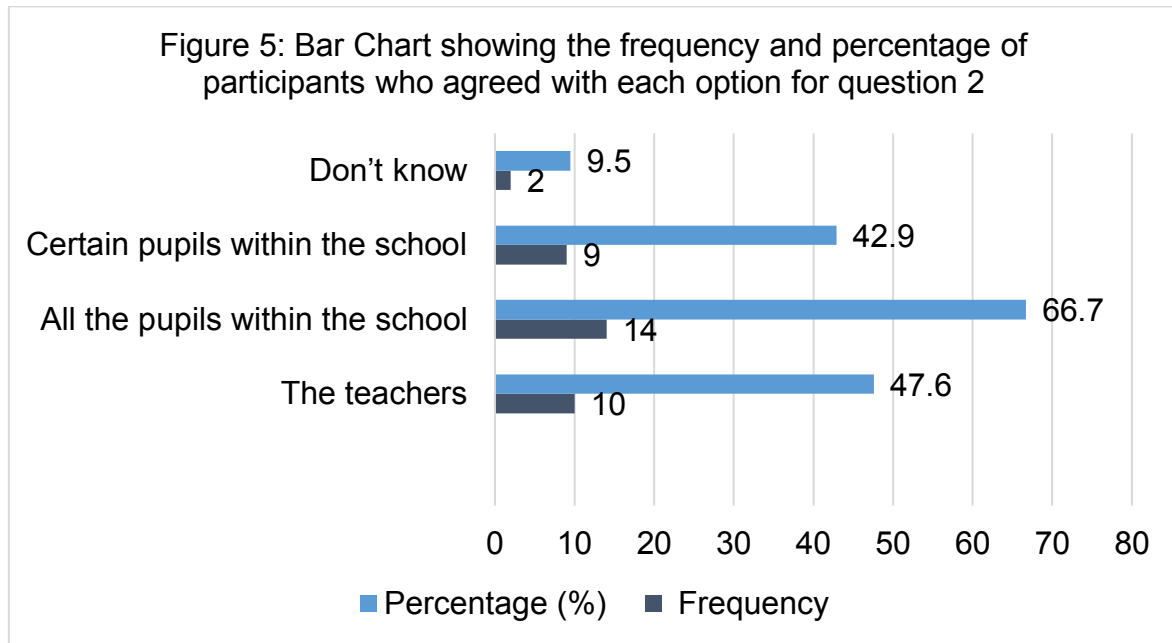
4.2.1 *RQ1: What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive to be the role of the TA?*

The first question in the questionnaire asked the participants 'what do teaching assistants do?' Participants were able to tick as many answers as they agreed with. Figure 4 presents the responses for this question and highlights that 'help pupils with their work' was the most frequently selected response, which 95.2% of pupils chose as one of their options. Other than the 'don't know' option, the response which was selected the least was 'tidy up' with 33% of participants agreeing with this option.

Figure 4: Bar chart showing the frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each item in question 1



The second question in the questionnaire asked ‘who are teaching assistants at school to help?’ Participants were able to tick the boxes of all the answers with which they agreed. Figure 5 indicates that the majority of participants (66.7%) thought that TAs were there to support all of the pupils within the school.



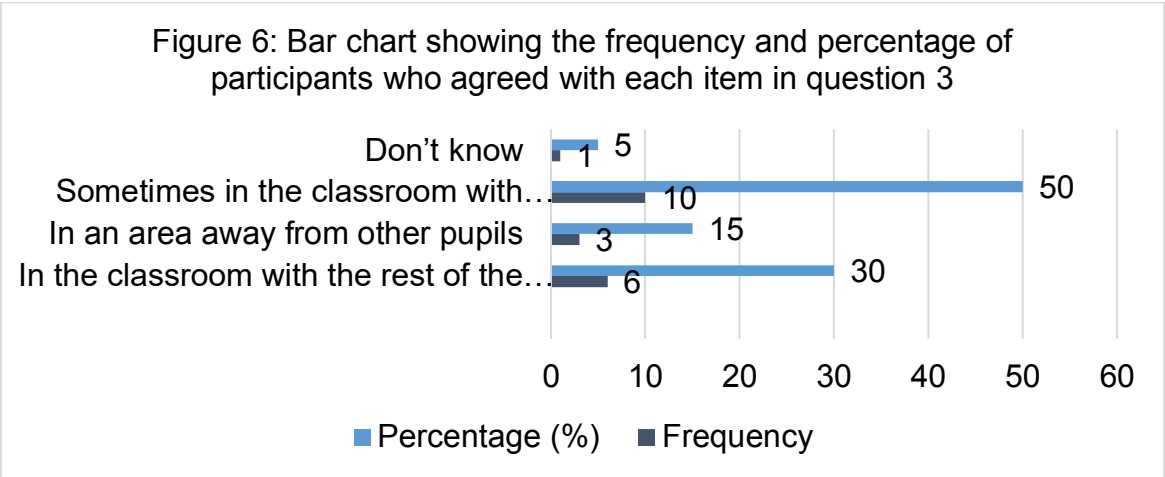
4.2.1.1 Analysis by Key Stage

In relation to participants’ responses for what jobs TAs do, all Key Stage 4 participants (100%) were consistent with the overall trend for the most frequently chosen option of ‘help pupils with their work’. The same percentage of Key Stage 3 participants (93.3%) selected ‘talk to pupils about any problems they are having’ and ‘help pupils with their work’. The least frequently selected answer for Key Stage 3 participants was, ‘plan pupils’ work’ (chosen by 40% of Key Stage 3 participants). None of the Key Stage 4 participants chose ‘create displays’ or ‘tidy up’. See Appendix 14 for further information.

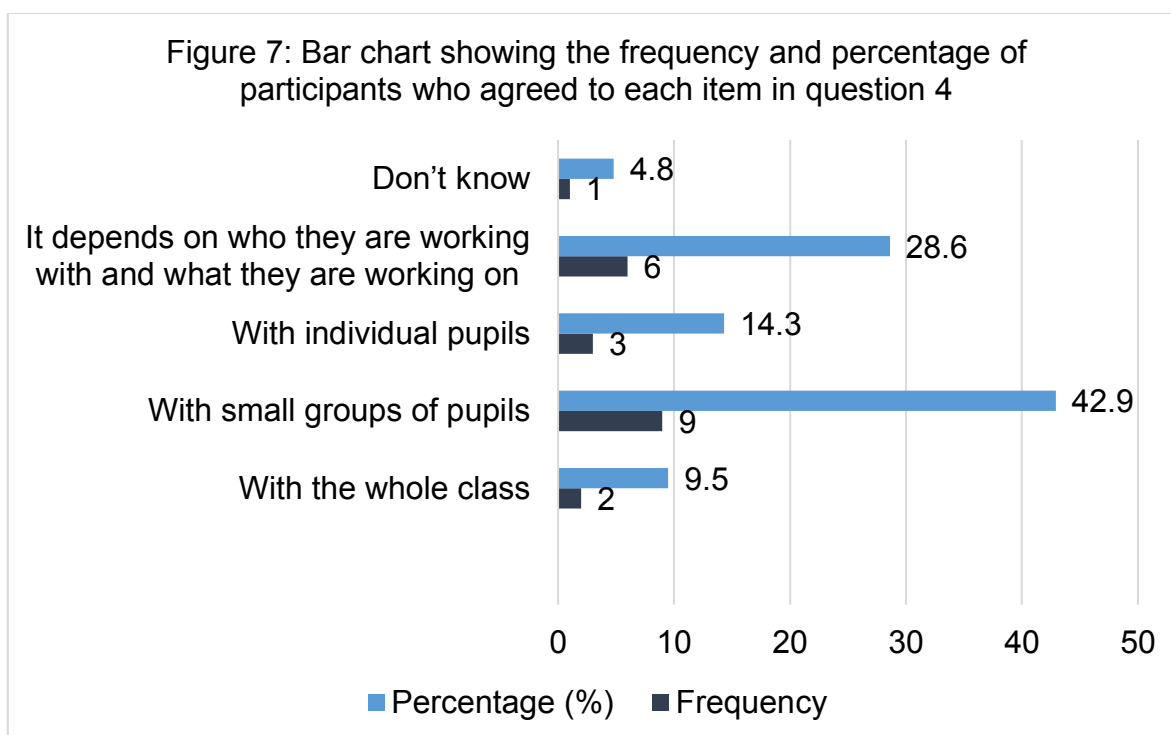
Findings also indicated that the overall trend of participants selecting that TAs support ‘all pupils within the school’ was consistent with Key Stage 3 participants (a majority of 73.3% gave this response). However, the most common responses for Key Stage 4 participants were ‘the teachers’ and ‘all the pupils within the school’, with both items selected by 50% of participants as one of their responses. See Appendix 15 for further information.

4.2.2 RQ2: What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive as effective TA practice and deployment?

The third question in the questionnaire asked ‘where is the best place for a teaching assistant to work with a pupil?’ For this question, participants were asked to only tick one answer. Figure 6 indicates that the majority of participants (50%) selected the option which suggests the best place to work can vary between in and out of the classroom. One response in this question was not applicable and so was not included.



In the fourth question participants were asked, ‘what is the best way for a teaching assistant to work?’ Participants were asked to tick only one response and Figure 7 highlights that the majority of participants (42.9%) felt that this was for TAs to work with small groups of pupils.



4.2.2.1 Analysis by Key Stage

The majority of Key Stage 4 participants (83.3%) thought that the best place for a TA to work can vary between being in the classroom and in an area away from other pupils, which is consistent with the overall trend. The same percentage of Key Stage 3 participants (35.7%) indicated that the best place would be in the classroom with the class, and that the best place can vary. See Appendix 16 for further information.

In relation to question 4, working 'with small groups of pupils' was chosen by the majority of Key Stage 3 participants (46.7%). However, the majority of Key Stage 4 participants (50%) chose the option which suggests that it is dependent on the person and their work. See Appendix 17 for further information.

4.2.3 RQ3: What impact do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive TA support to have on pupils?

The final question asked participants to rate their level of agreement in relation to a number of statements. The distribution of participant responses is presented in Table 8. Modal responses are presented in bold: for instance, for the statement, 'TAs help pupils to get on with the people in their class', the answer 'I agree' was the most commonly selected response, by 38.1% of participants. For some of the statements, response patterns were skewed, suggesting some shared opinions between participants. For example, no participant disagreed with the statements 'TAs help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things' or 'TAs help pupils to feel more motivated to learn', indicating that participants unanimously agreed with these. With other statements, however, such as 'pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time', participant perspectives were more divided, with an equal percentage (28.6%) selecting 'I agree' (28.6%) and 'I disagree'. Furthermore, for some of the statements, such as 'pupils spend more time with a TA than with other pupils' the majority of participants (38%) selected the 'I am not sure' option, suggesting this is something they did not know, or did not have an opinion on.

To provide greater clarity on the collective perspectives of the sample as a whole, further analysis was undertaken by combining the categories of agreement ('I agree a lot' and 'I agree') and disagreement ('I disagree a lot' and 'I disagree'). This technique can be useful in highlighting the general trends in the data (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). For instance, for the statement, 'pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time' the general trend favoured agreement with this

Statement	I agree a lot	I agree	I am not sure	I disagree	I disagree a lot
TAs help pupils to feel more motivated to learn	5 (23.8%)	15 (71.4%)	1 (4.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
TAs distract pupils from what they are supposed to be doing	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	1 (4.8%)	6 (28.6%)	9 (42.9%)
TAs show pupils how to do things so that they know what to do	11 (52.4%)	6 (28.6%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)
TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own	1 (4.8%)	7 (33.3%)	8 (38.1%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)
Pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time	4 (19%)	6 (28.6 %)	5 (23.8%)	6 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
TAs help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things	12 (57.1%)	7 (33.3%)	2 (9.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pupils who have help from a TA can feel left out from the class	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	4 (19%)	6 (28.6%)	6 (28.6%)
TAs help pupils feel like a part of the school	7 (33.3%)	8 (38.1%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	1 (4.8%)
TAs help pupils to get on with the people in their class	6 (28.6%)	8 (38.1%)	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)
Pupils spend more time with a TA than with other pupils	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	8 (38%)	4 (19%)	4 (19%)

Table 8: Frequency and percentage of participants' responses for each item in question 5.

response (47.6% of participants). In relation to the statement 'TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own', this analysis demonstrated that both agreement and uncertainty (38.1% of participants for both) were the most common responses. Modal responses are presented in Table 9, alongside key points from further analysis by Key Stage. A breakdown of the combined agreement calculations is presented in Appendix 20.

Table 9 highlights some further discrepancies and consistencies between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 participants in relation to the strength and direction of responses. For example in relation to the statement, 'pupils who have help from a TA can feel left out from the class' Key Stage 3 participants were more likely to disagree strongly. A noticeable difference between the age groups was identified in relation to the statement, 'pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time': Key Stage 3 participants more often agreed with this statement, while Key Stage 4 participants were unsure or disagreed. Detailed crosstabs in relation to Key Stage are provided in Appendix 18.

Statement	Modal Response when Combined (all participants)	Key Points from Analysis by Key Stage
TAs help pupils to feel more motivated to learn	Agree (95.2%)	Consistency in the pattern of responses between Key Stage 3 and 4. More participants in Key Stage 3 (26.7%) than in Key Stage 4 (16.7%) chose 'I agree a lot'.
TAs distract pupils from what they are supposed to be doing	Disagree (71.4%)	A higher percentage of participants from Key Stage 3 (46.7%) selected 'I disagree a lot' than the percentage of participants in Key Stage 4 (33.3%) who chose this option.
TAs show pupils how to do things so that they know what to do	Agree (81%)	All of the Key Stage 4 participants (100%) and the majority of the Key Stage 3 participants (73.4%) agreed with this statement to some extent.
TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own	Both agree and unsure (38.1%)	The majority of participants in Key Stage 3 (33.3%) indicated that they were not sure about this statement. Half of the Key Stage 4 participants (50%) were also unsure while the other half (50%) agreed with this statement.
Pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time	Agree (47.6%)	The majority of Key Stage 3 participants (33.3%) chose the 'I agree' option. An equal majority of Key Stage 4 participants were unsure (33.3%) or disagreed (33.3%).
TAs help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things	Agree (90.4%)	The majority of participants in Key Stage 3 (66.7%) selected the response 'I agree a lot' in relation to this statement. While the majority of participants in Key Stage 4 (66.7%) selected the response 'I agree' in relation to this statement.

Pupils who have help from a TA can feel left out from the class	Disagree (57.2%)	The majority of participants in Key Stage 3 (40%) selected the response 'I disagree a lot' in relation to this statement, while the majority of participants in Key Stage 4 (50%) selected the response 'I disagree' in relation to this statement.
TAs help pupils feel like a part of the school	Agree (71.4%)	The same percentage of participants (33.3%) in Key Stage 3 and 4 selected 'I agree a lot' in relation to this statement. The majority of Key Stage 3 participants (40%) chose the 'I agree' option.
TAs help pupils to get on with the people in their class	Agree (66.7%)	The majority of participants in Key Stage 3 (40%) selected, 'I agree' in relation to this statement. However, the same percentage of Key Stage 4 participants (33.3%) chose 'I agree a lot', 'I agree' and 'I am not sure'.
Pupils spend more time with a TA than with other pupils	Unsure (42.9%)	Most of the Key Stage 4 participants (66.7%) indicated that they were not sure about this statement. However, the same percentage of Key Stage 3 participants (26.7%) chose 'I disagree' and 'I am not sure'.

Table 9: Mode responses when combining the categories of agreement for all pupils and key points from further analysis by Key Stage.

4.3 Phase 2: Interview

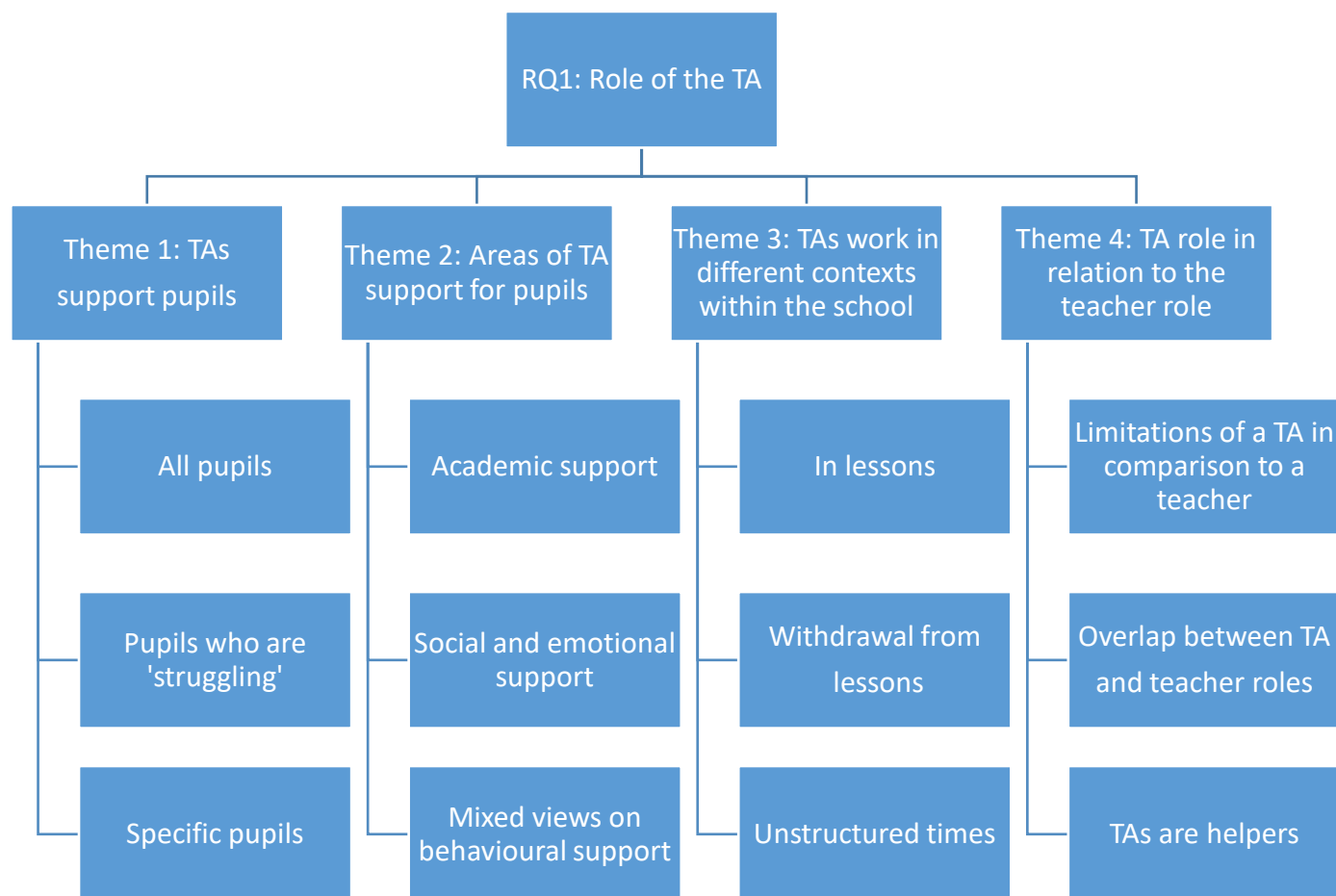


Figure 8: Thematic map of themes related to RQ1

4.3.1 RQ1: What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive to be the role of the TA?

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: TAs support pupils

All participants spoke about the TA role in relation to supporting pupils. The participants comments were grouped into three sub-themes as presented in Figure 8. The first sub-theme contains comments that suggest that participants perceive TAs as present to support all of the pupils within the school/class.

- *‘(TA) works with all range of different children’* (Interviewee A).

The second sub-theme, ‘pupils who are struggling’ represents the largest number of references made by participants, which suggested that a TA supports pupils who are ‘struggling’ in some way.

- *‘(TA) help the pupils that are struggling with everything like their work and stuff like that’* (Interviewee B).

The third sub-theme, ‘specific pupils’ relates to comments made about TAs supporting specific pupils or pupils with a particular need.

- *‘The class teacher talks to other people who are struggling, where I have (TA) who helps me’* (Interviewee A).

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Areas of TA support for pupils

Participants spoke about several areas within which TAs provide pupils with support and help. As can be seen in Figure 8, the types of support participants said that TAs offer have been divided into three sub-themes. The first sub-theme

‘academic support’ refers to the participants stating that TAs taught or helped them with their learning and their class work.

- *‘They come in to help you, to learn you how to spell and read and that’* (Interviewee C).
- *‘They help other pupils like in their learning’* (Interviewee B).

With reference to the second sub-theme, ‘social and emotional support’, participants spoke about TAs offering social support in relation to their friendships, forming or repairing these, and then generally about supporting their emotional state. Some participants also linked this support to their home lives.

- *‘Make sure everyone’s ok, all friendships all ok and everything’* (Interviewee D).
- *‘Calming them (pupils) down, making them happy when they’re sad, making their life more easier’* (Interviewee B).
- *‘If pupils have problems with like with other pupils or have problems at home or something like that you can speak to them and they’ll listen and answer the questions for you, if you’ve got any questions’* (Interviewee B).

The final sub-theme, ‘mixed views on behavioural support’ relates to some of the participants’ comments about TAs having a role supporting pupils’ behaviour, such as managing behaviour within the classroom and monitoring pupil behaviour.

However, views within this sub-theme were mixed as other participants commented that TAs could not support behaviour, or could only support by taking the pupil to another adult who could deal with the situation.

- *‘If you’re messing around they’ll tell you to stop’* (Interviewee C).

- *'They're not mostly able to like tell them off, cos they can't like, they can give them detentions but they can't like actually put them in other things like isolation and exclusions'* (Interviewee E).
- *'Well, I wouldn't say that they're as good at helping pupils with behaviour because you have to have special teachers don't you to calm pupils down sometimes'* (Interviewee D).

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: TAs work in different contexts within the school

This theme emerged from participants' comments about TAs working within three different contexts as part of their role. The first sub-theme presented in Figure 8, 'in lessons' relates to participants discussing the TA role within the context of lessons across several subject areas.

- *'We have different lessons and a lot of them I see, quite a lot of them I see learning assistants (TAs) in'* (Interviewee A).
- *'They're (TAs) in like English and Maths they're like the most lessons and sometimes History'* (Interviewee F).

The second sub-theme in Figure 8, 'withdrawal from lessons' relates to participants discussing that TAs withdraw pupils from lessons and often work in this context.

- *'In English, sometimes they (TAs) take you out for like spelling tests and stuff and spelling things'* (Interviewee D).

Finally, the third sub-theme of 'unstructured times' relates to participants' comments about TAs in working in the playground and 'around school', indicating

that TAs also work within contexts where the pupils' time and activities are less structured.

- *'You'd see them everywhere really cos they're out in the corridors'*

(Interviewee B).

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: The TA role in relation to the teacher role

This theme derived from comments participants made about the TA role in relation to the teacher's role, and highlights some of the complexities in distinguishing between the two. The first sub-theme displayed in Figure 8 grouped a number of areas where the participants appeared to describe limitations of TAs in comparison to the teacher, such as the TA having less knowledge, less training and less experience. Participants also explained other limitations in that there were some jobs that TAs could not do or were the responsibility of the teacher, such as setting targets and planning and marking work.

- *'Because like teachers that have been doing it for longer have more experience doing it so they can help more and tell you more, but with a TA, they can only tell you like little bits because they haven't been doing it for as long'* (Interviewee F).
- *'I don't think they (TA) should be doing it (setting pupils' targets); the class teacher should do it because they know our targets more than the (TA) do'* (Interviewee A).

The second sub-theme 'overlap between TA role and teacher role' reflects that some participants did not perceive or were unable to explain a clear distinction between the teacher and TA role. Participants' comments suggested some

confusion as they explained that there are some tasks that TAs do when they withdraw pupils, such as marking pupils' work, which they had originally discussed were jobs for the teacher. There were also times when participants reflected that both the TA and teacher should undertake a certain task as part of their roles. This sub-theme also encapsulates the participants who openly stated that they were unsure or that the roles were similar.

- *'Marking pupils work: it's like the main teacher marking it. Oh actually, sometimes, if they do like, if they (TA) take them out and do a piece of work with them, like if they do a sheet of paper they'd have to mark it, wouldn't they'* (Interviewee D).
- Interviewee A- *'well to help pupils to make friends, that they can talk to other pupils and see what they have in common and then talk to us and see what we have in common with the other people and then we can start talking about them and things and then we've got friends'*
Interviewer- *'ok, so why is that important for a teaching assistant to do?'*
Interviewee A- *'it's, I don't know really but it's important like, the class teacher's job to do it as well, so it's like mixed really, they should both do it'*.
- (When asked how is the TA different to the class teacher) *'erm, I don't know, I can't explain. I'm just trying to think, I can't explain it though'* (Interviewee B).

The final sub-theme, 'TAs are helpers', relates to participants' comments about the concept of 'helping' class teachers within the classroom when necessary.

Participants explained that part of the TA's role is to help the teacher, such as by handing things out, but also that it is a TA's role to help pupils, while it is the

teacher's role to teach and tell pupils what to do. Sometimes this was related to the class teacher supporting the class and the TA supporting particular pupils.

- *'Teachers have to organise the lessons and like the people (TAs) just come in like, they're helpers, they just come in like help the pupils and help them with what they have to do and that'* (Interviewee C).
- *'The LS teachers (TAs) like help out like a lot of pupils when the teacher's like trying to teach the rest of the class'* (Interviewee B).

4.3.1.5 Card Sort Activity

Table 10 highlights that when participants were asked to rank cards in relation to what they considered were the most important jobs for a TA to do, the card with the highest overall rank was 'help pupils with their work', indicating that participants saw this job as an important part of the TA role. 'Tidy up' was the lowest ranked card, suggesting that this is the least important job from the participants' perspectives.

Most Important TA Jobs

Card Statement	Total score	Rank
Help pupils with their work	22	1
Listen to pupils	20	2
Teach pupils	18	3
Help pupils to make friends	17	4
After school/break time clubs and duties	16	5
Get things ready for lessons	16	5
Talk to pupils about any problems they are having	16	5
Talk to pupils' parents/guardians	16	5
Help pupils with their behaviour	15	6
Mark pupils' work	15	6
Create displays	13	7
Help teachers with their jobs	12	8
Set targets for pupils	12	8
Plan pupils' work	11	9
Tidy up	6	10

Table 10: Total score and overall rank position of importance for each statement in the card sort activity

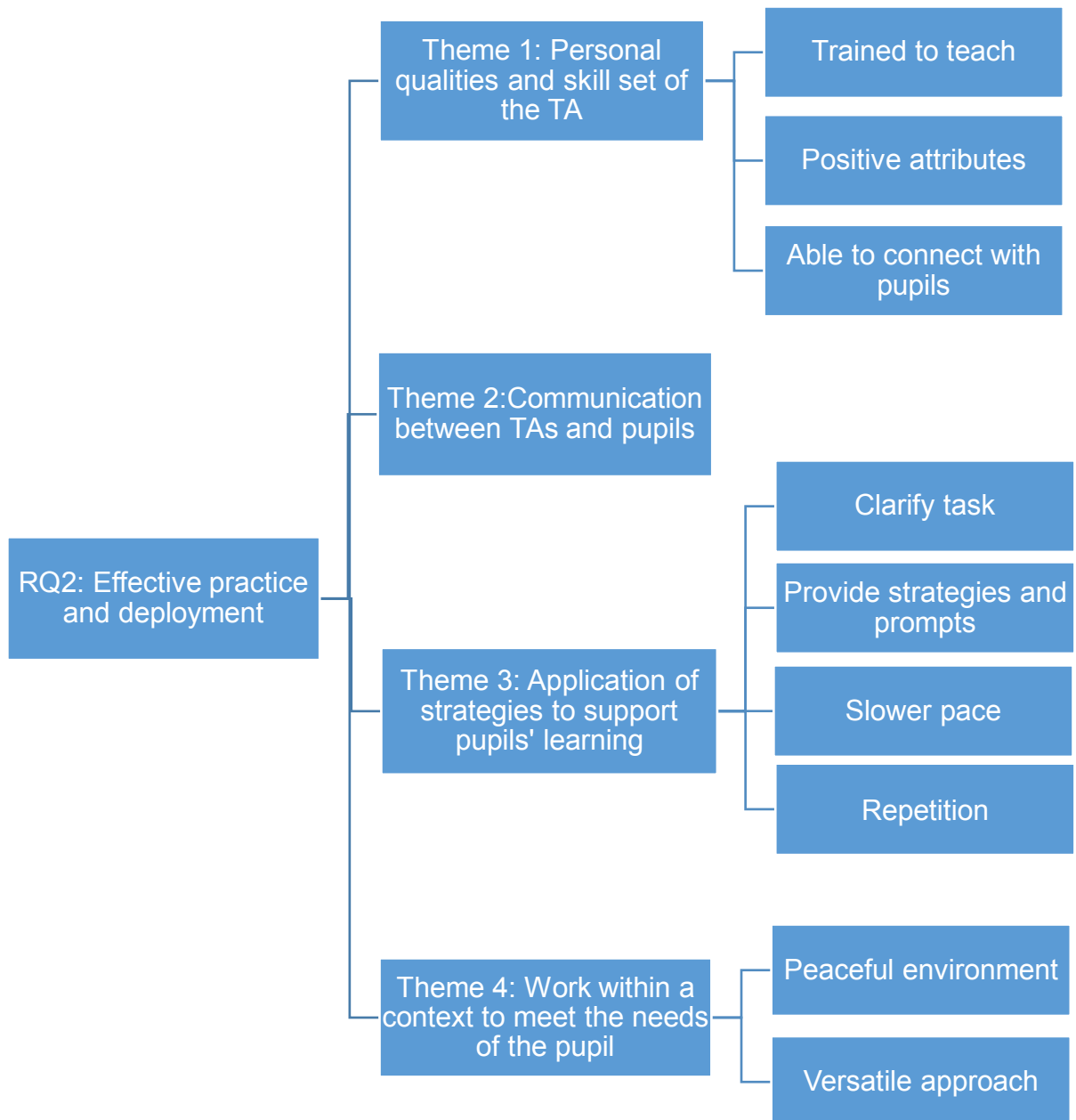


Figure 9: Thematic map of themes related to RQ2

4.3.2 RQ2: What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive as effective TA practice and deployment?

4.3.2.1 Theme 1: Personal qualities and skill-set of an effective TA

This theme encompasses the qualities which participants expressed TAs require in order to be effective in their role. It focuses on the type of person an effective TA would be, their nature and skills. As illustrated in Figure 9, three sub-themes were generated. Due to the nature of the questioning, taking a removed and idealistic approach, this theme includes some ideas that were based on an idealised reality, as opposed to an experienced reality. For instance, the first sub-themes ‘trained to teach’ refers to two participants who commented that having this skillset would make an ideal TA.

- *‘They’d (ideal TA) be like fully trained and teaching children like normally’* (Interviewee D).
- Interviewer- *‘ok and is there anything else that would make a really good TA?’*

Interviewee E- *‘yeah if (TA) was like erm a normal teacher as well but when someone’s away (TA) can cover the lessons’.*

Another sub-theme is ‘positive attributes’, which emerged as a result of participants describing the qualities of the most effective TAs, including attributes such as being kind, polite and nice.

- *‘They’d (ideal TA) be kind and they wouldn’t shout and things when they do something wrong’* (Interviewee A).

- (Ideal TA would be...) *'kind, helpful, calm, good working'* (Interviewee C).

The final sub-theme 'able to connect with pupils' refers to participants' comments about the significance of a TA who could bond or relate to the pupils, understanding how the pupils are feeling because they had similar experiences.

- (When talking about why TAs are good at helping pupils with their work) *'because they know how you feel and things like if you get frustrated and things, they know how you feel and things because they were, only a couple of years ago, they were like us, getting frustrated and things and they can really relate to us'* (Interviewee A).

4.3.2.2 Theme 2: Communication between TAs and pupils

This theme developed from participants' comments about how TAs talk to and listen to pupils and the effectiveness of this in supporting pupils across various areas of their lives: learning; friendships; behaviour; and home life. Participants spoke about the TA initiating communication with pupils by checking in on them to see if they needed help or if they were ok. They also spoke about pupils communicating their concerns or need for help to the TA. In general, participants spoke about pupils valuing being able to talk to TAs about their concerns and appreciating the TAs listening to enable them to understand the situation and try to help.

- (when explaining how a TA had helped to improve behaviour) *'like at the end of the day (TA) talks to me and asks how my day's been, and she says keep it up, and she talks to me about it'* (Interviewee C).

- *'Listening to pupils: that's a good one as well because if they have any problems with work or stuff they can ask the teaching assistant, they can say well if you do this' (Interviewee D).*
- *'Like when they (TA) listen to you like, say if you've had a really bad day, they listen to you, they don't just like blank ya, you go up to them and tell them what's happened and they'll try and sort it out and if they can't they'll keep on trying to talk to ya and asking if you're ok and that' (Interviewee C).*

4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Application of strategies to support pupils' learning

Participants spoke about a number of strategies which were applied by TAs during lessons which were perceived to be effective in supporting their learning. At times, participants commented on how these strategies were different to the teacher's practice. As can be seen in Figure 9, this theme is split into the following sub-themes:

1. 'Clarifying the task'. Many participants spoke about how TAs explain and demonstrate tasks in order to clarify the requirements and support a pupil's understanding of what to do.

- *'They would erm like get out a piece of paper and explain what you've got to do and do some like working out with you: they show you what to do' (Interviewee F).*

2. 'Provide strategies and prompts'. Participants explained that TAs provide strategies to support pupils' learning, sometimes suggesting alternative methods to those given by the teacher, and also prompts in the form of suggesting how to improve their work.

- *'Because when I was at school I had this spelling book and I erm did a spelling test and every time we used to get like 10 out of 10 because how they (TA) used to do it; they used to make like phrases up and say and like I do know the words now, I can remember them'* (Interviewee D).
- Interviewee 2- *'like sometimes if you'm struggling what the teacher has set, they'll (TA) change it and tell you how to do it another way'*

Interviewer- 'ok'

Interviewee 2- *'like we were doing angles and then we had to use something different and then (TA) showed me another way'*

Interviewer- *'and did you find that...'*

Interviewee 2- *'easier'*.

3. 'Slow pace'. Several references were made to TAs explaining things at a slower pace than the teacher and the benefits of this when the pupil is finding it difficult to 'catch up'.

- *'The teaching assistant is like, the class teacher's like talking an explaining things whereas the teaching assistant goes through things like slower than the class teacher'* (Interviewee A).

4. Repetition. Participants referred to the benefits of TAs revisiting and repeating things in order to improve pupils' knowledge and focus.

- *'Because the TAs would like keep saying the same thing over and over again to get it in to ya, like pupils' knowledge, until they get it and they move on and keep doing the same, but the teachers keep giving us different subjects to do'* (Interviewee E).

4.3.2.4 Theme 4: Work within a context to meet the needs of the pupil

This theme emerged from comments participants made about the most effective context for them to work with a TA. It has two sub-themes. The first sub-theme, a 'peaceful environment' related to participants describing a quiet setting with minimal distractions as an ideal place for a pupil to work with a TA because it enables pupils to concentrate. Participants related this environment to being withdrawn from the classroom.

- Interviewer: *So if Sam was going to work with a TA, where would be the best place for him to do that?*

Interviewee B: *One-to-one, like a different room to all the other pupils*

Interviewer: *ok and why would that be the best place?*

Interviewee B: *because it's quiet and it they can learn more.*

Interviewer: *ok so where it's quiet?*

Interviewee B: *yeah*

Interviewer: *ok and why is that better than being in the classroom?*

Interviewee B: *you don't get distracted, disturbed about learning and you don't get stopped learning and doing your work.*

The second theme, 'versatile approach', related to participants discussing that TAs can provide individual or group support and that this can be through a withdrawal or class-based approach. Participants suggested that the most appropriate context varied, depending on the individual pupil's needs. For some participants this meant working one-to-one and being withdrawn; for others, this meant being supported within the classroom, as this was where they struggled the most. Other participants were able to reflect beyond their own needs and explicitly stated that it

would depend on a pupil's difficulties or the nature of the task. For this reason, TAs needed a versatile approach to whom they work with and where this work is situated.

- *'I can't cope with people talking around the classroom when I'm doing my work so I come down here sometimes'* (Interviewee E).

- Interviewer- *ok and would it just be Sam and the teaching assistant?*

Interviewee D- *sometimes, or sometimes in groups. It depends what you're doing really. If you're doing one-to-one, like if you struggle really bad and you need really help, so like, just do in a pair because you get more like one-on-one and you can concentrate more then, because the teacher is only focusing on you. If there's like a group of ya some of them might not be even paying attention and might just be like ignoring you.*

Interviewer- *ok, so are you saying that sometimes it's best one-to-one?*

Interviewee D- *yeah and sometimes not. Like altogether.*

4.3.2.5 Card Sort Activity

Table 11 highlights that when participants were asked to rank cards in relation to what jobs they felt TAs are best at doing, the card with the highest overall rank was 'help pupils with their work', while 'tidy up' was the lowest ranked card.

Jobs TAs are best at Doing

Card Statement	Total Score	Rank
Help pupils with their work	21	1
Teach pupils	18	2
Talk to pupils' parents/ guardians	17	3
Help pupils to make friends	17	3
Help pupils with their behaviour	16	4
Talk to pupils about any problems they are having	16	4
Listen to pupils	16	4
Get things ready for lessons	16	4
Help teachers with their jobs	14	5
Mark pupils' work	14	5
After school/break time clubs and duties	14	5
Plan pupils' work	13	6
Set pupils targets	13	6
Create displays	12	7
Tidy up	8	8

Table 11: Total score and overall 'best' rank position for each statement in the card sort activity

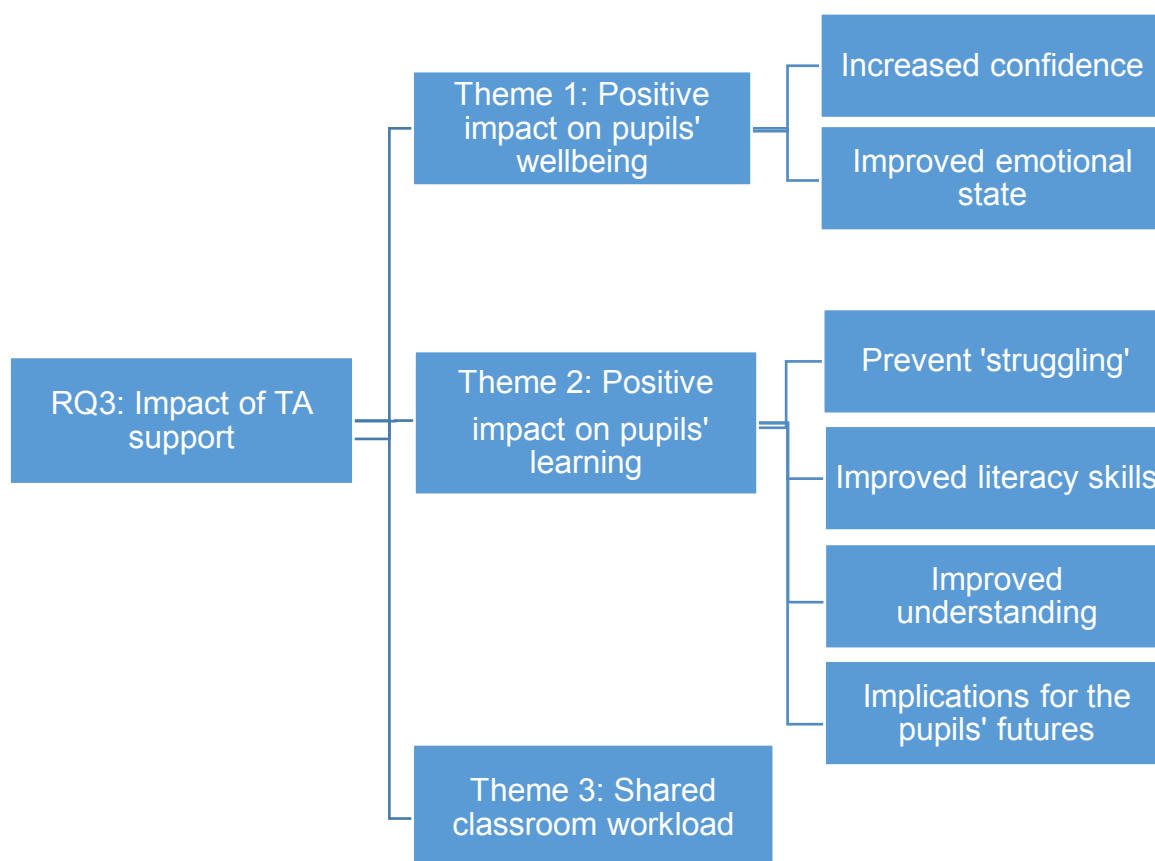


Figure 10: Thematic map of themes related to RQ3

4.3.3 RQ3: *What impact do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive TA support to have on pupils?*

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: *Positive impact on pupils' learning*

During the interviews, participants discussed the impact TAs have on aspects of their learning. As demonstrated in Figure 10, these comments were categorised into four sub-themes. The first sub-theme is 'prevent struggling' which related to participants discussing that pupils would struggle with aspects of their work without the support of a TA, suggesting that support from a TA prevents these difficulties and enables pupils to engage with the learning task.

- *'Instead of pupils like struggling to catch up with teachers or struggling with a word, the TA can help them'* (Interviewee B).
- Interviewer- *so what would it be like then if there weren't any TAs at the school?*

Interviewee C- *I'd struggle, with my writing and reading and that.*

The second sub-theme is 'improved literacy skills': a small sub-theme where two participants spoke about improved reading and spelling ability as a result of TA input.

- *'I used to be really bad at reading and (TA) made me really really good and I've gone up a lot'* (Interviewee C).

The third sub-theme is 'improved understanding', where participants spoke about TAs enabling pupils to understand the work and the requirements.

- *'They've got a way of explaining and that what makes it easier to understand' (Interviewee A).*

The final sub-theme, 'implications for the pupils' futures' represents participants' comments relating to the TA's positive impact on learning on a pupils' future prospects, such as enabling them to achieve higher grades and secure good jobs.

- Interviewer- *ok, so if Sam was going to have a teaching assistant in his class would you say that was a....*

Interviewee D- *mm yeah it's a good idea because it helps him more; say if he's struggling with his spelling and his maths and his subjects and stuff, it's good for him to get more because if he's got more help he can er he can get further in life get a better a good job when he's older, if he gets good results.*

4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Positive impact on pupils' wellbeing

This theme was titled 'wellbeing' as it contains two key areas of this concept which participants spoke about during their interviews. The first area and sub-theme is an 'increase in pupil confidence'.

- *'...the teaching assistant makes them more confident and when they like feel more confident they can go off and get ready, prepare for like exams and stuff and get better at them' (Interviewee D).*

The second sub-theme of 'improved emotional state' refers to pupils who commented that TAs helped them to overcome feelings such as anger or sadness.

- *'I think I'd struggle quite a lot without them (TAs), I think I'd get upset and angry and things that I couldn't do it' (Interviewee A).*

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Shared classroom workload

This theme relates to participants commenting that TA support can help within a busy classroom environment, perhaps where there are several pupils who need support. The TA is able to share the workload with the teacher by supporting those who need help, in turn helping the pupil, teacher, and the overall dynamics of the classroom.

- *'Help the teacher like, instead of the teacher running around to help everyone else the LS teacher (TA) will help and get to other pupils that she can't get to' (Interviewee B).*
- Interviewer- *'what might it be like in a school that didn't have TAs?'*
Interviewee F- *'it would be like hard to learn and like difficult in lessons like; what I mean by that is you wouldn't have as much help because like one of the teachers might be helping another (pupil) and like you need some help so you'd have to keep your hand up for ages and not complete your work'.*

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview to Chapter Five

Within this chapter, the results from this research are discussed in relation to the RQs, the relevant contextual literature presented in Chapter 1, and the literature regarding pupils' perspectives reviewed in Chapter 2. The contribution this study makes in regards to the existing literature is discussed alongside the strengths, limitations, and implications of the research.

5.2 Main findings and Links to Existing Research

5.2.1 RQ1: What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive to be the role of the TA?

Triangulating results indicates that a fundamental aspect of the TA role, as perceived by pupils, is to support pupils with their learning and academic work. This aspect of the TA role was the most commonly chosen questionnaire response when describing what TAs do, the most highly rated 'important job' and emerged as a sub-theme through qualitative analysis (see Figure 11). In relation to the WPR model outlined in Chapter 1, this suggests that these pupils perceive TAs as being deployed to have a pedagogical role.

However, academic support was not the only perceived aspect of the TA role. Within the questionnaire, participants indicated that TAs undertook a number of other jobs, with over half of the sample selecting the majority of options available

(see Section 4.2.1). This indicates the wide range of dimensions of the TA role, highlighted in the quotation below. Analysis of richer qualitative data highlighted that pupils perceived TAs to also provide social and emotional support (see Figure 11).

'They (TAs) do, like, help you with millions of things really' (Interviewee E)

In their review of the literature, Cajkler et al. (2007) queried the TA role in relation to linking home and school, as this was found to be the perception of TAs, teachers and parents. Within the current research, questionnaire data indicated that talking to pupils' parents or guardians was a frequently chosen response. Furthermore, two pupils did refer to TAs providing emotional support when they were experiencing difficulties at home, such as parental divorce. This suggests that some pupils also perceived an aspect of the TA role as bridging their school and home lives and that this can be related to offering emotional support.

Triangulated data also emphasise pupils' mixed views about whether or not an aspect of the TA role is to provide behavioural support (see Figure 11). It is likely that this is influenced by the particular school context, of this research as supporting pupils' behaviour was referred to by the school contact as the responsibility of another group of professionals. Findings which indicate the jobs that TAs are less likely to be perceived to do as part of their role adds further clarity to the existing knowledge on this area, a need identified from the literature review (see Chapter 2). Corroborated data from this research suggest that TAs are less likely to be perceived to be expected to undertake tasks such as tidying up or planning pupils' work.

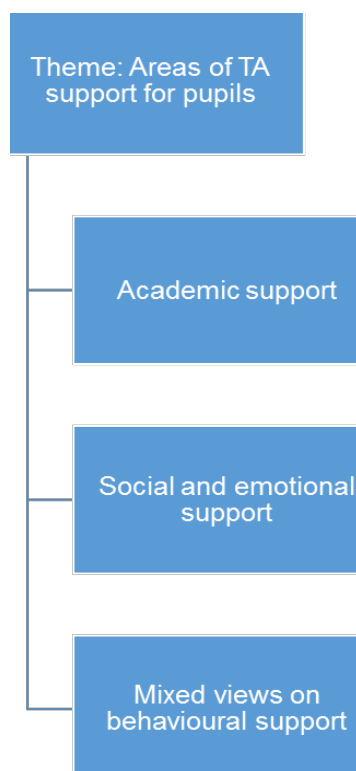


Figure 11: 'Areas of TA support for pupils' theme and sub-themes

Questionnaire data indicated that the majority of pupils perceived the TA role within schools as to support *all* of the pupils (as opposed to specific pupils or the teachers). However, further analysis indicated that Key Stage 4 pupils just as frequently indicated that TAs support teachers. This contradicts previous research that suggested that older pupils perceived TAs as supporting individual pupils, while younger participants perceived TAs as present to support teachers (Bowers 1997). Contradictory findings could be due to the substantial changes that have occurred since Bowers' (1997) study, affecting how TAs are perceived and explaining why these findings align more with Chambers and Pearson's (2004) study.

Figure 12 presents a theme that illuminated this finding. Findings suggest that a fundamental element of the TA role is perceived to be supporting pupils, yet despite a majority perception from the quantitative data indicating that TAs support all pupils, rather than specific pupils, three sub-themes from the qualitative data emerged (see Figure 12). This highlights the value of gaining depth within this research. A substantial sub-theme emerged which related to the TA's role in supporting those pupils who 'struggled'. There was a lack of clarity within this theme, as a 'struggling' pupil could refer to anyone in the class or a specific pupil whom the TA has been allocated to support. Individual pupils were inconsistent in their comments; for example, at different times during the same interview, Interviewee A said:

'(TA) works with all range of different children'

'If like you're struggling with your learning, they'll (TA) help you'

'The class teacher talks to other people who are struggling, where I have (TA) who helps me'

This inconsistency did not appear to be indicative of the pupils' confusion, rather it seemed to reflect the complexities of the TA role and perhaps relates to specific strategies used to deploy TAs when considering the finding in relation to the WPR model. For instance, the TA may be allocated to support a pupil but encouraged to move away if that particular pupil does not need support at that time. This would enable the TA to support others or provide general classroom assistance to the teacher.

'...if the people they (TAs) have to work with is ok, they'll go and help everyone else', (Interviewee C).

This may influence the overall perception that TAs are present for all pupils. Alternatively, it could suggest that all pupils can 'struggle' at times and so TA support is appropriate for all. However, there was no indication of TAs working with higher attaining pupils and the focus was more centrally around pupils who were having difficulties.

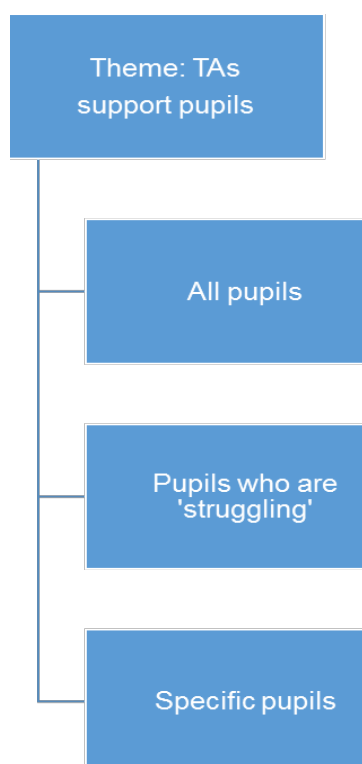


Figure 12: 'TAs support pupils' theme and sub-theme

As presented in Figure 13, pupils also had complex views on the distinctions and overlap between the TA and teacher roles. In comparison to teachers, pupils perceived TAs as helpers and that the role has limitations. The perception of TAs as 'helpers' is consistent with findings from the primary school research (Eyres et al., 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Williams and Connor, 2010). The limitations sub-theme sheds light on to some of the perceived differences between the roles, such as experience and knowledge and the implications this has on the tasks TAs

can undertake as part of their role. These findings give further information, from pupils' perspectives, to some of the issues that sit within the frames of TA preparedness and TA characteristics within the WPR model. Furthermore, some of the limitations pupils discussed were consistent with secondary school findings from Chambers and Pearson (2004), such as TAs' relatively limited depth of subject knowledge, suggesting these perceptions are not unique to MFL lessons.

'...they (TAs) sometimes don't know the right stuff to teach' (Interviewee E).

However, as indicated by the sub-theme related to overlap between the roles (see Figure 13), some pupils expressed uncertainty or suggested that in practice aspects of the roles were not mutually exclusive. This supports previous findings related to primary-aged pupils (Eyres et al., 2004; Williams and Connor, 2010). Interestingly, the perceived overlap between roles in this research was sometimes associated with additional responsibilities taken on by the TA when withdrawing pupils.

The final aspect of the TA role as perceived by pupils was that they work in a number of different contexts. These are presented within Figure 14. Pupils related these contexts to aspects of the TA role: for instance, providing academic support within lessons or through withdrawal, or withdrawing to give emotional support.

'if someone gets upset they take them out of the classroom and have a little chat and bring them back in when they're more happy' (Interviewee B).

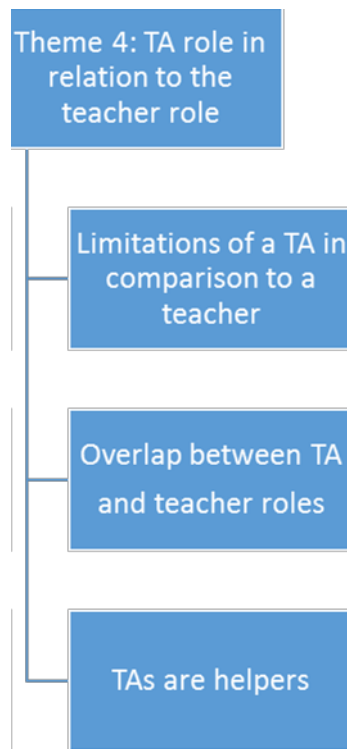


Figure 13: 'TA role in relation to the teacher role' theme and sub-themes

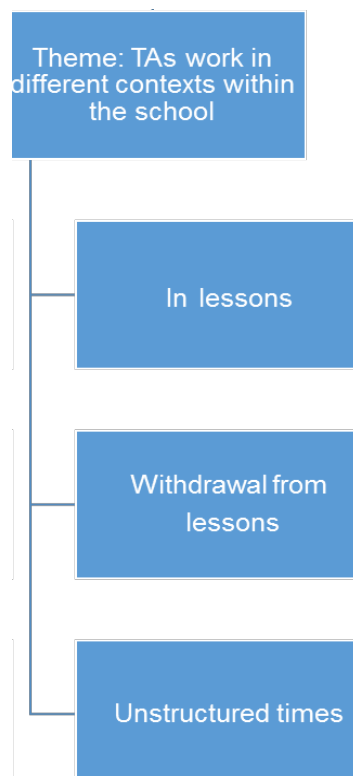


Figure 14: 'TAs work in different contexts within the school' theme and sub-themes

5.2.2 RQ2: *What do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive as effective TA practice and deployment?*

A theme which emerged that is relevant to this RQ is 'application of strategies to support pupils' learning' (see Figure 15). Within the card sort activity pupils ranked 'helping pupils with their learning' and 'teaching pupils' as the activities that TAs are best at, and this theme emerged from pupils' describing how TAs provide this academic support in an effective way, enabling pupils to overcome any difficulties. Several comments within this theme refer to how the effective strategies applied by the TA relate to the teacher's practice; for example, TAs may use a slower pace, repeat topics covered by a teacher, clarify the task instructions, or provide an alternative method to complete the task. It appears that effective TA practice was perceived to be teaching or re-teaching aspects of learning through these strategies.

'Because when you're like struggling you're technically teaching them what to do at a slower pace than the class teacher' (Interviewee A).

This aligns with findings from the DISS project, suggesting that TAs are often deployed to fulfil a pedagogical role (Blatchford et al., 2009c) and suggests that these pupils perceive this method of deployment as effective and can comment on how it interacts with the practice component of the WPR model.

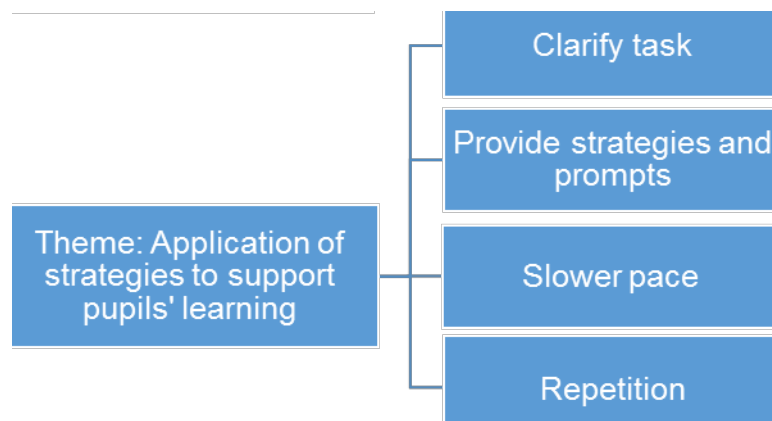


Figure 15: 'Application of strategies to support pupils' learning' theme and sub-theme

Another theme which was relevant to this RQ was 'communication between TAs and pupils'. This emerged from pupils explaining the effectiveness of this communication in enabling the TA to provide support in the various areas covered in RQ1. This builds on research by Kidger et al. (2009) which suggested that the TA could be a professional to whom pupils talk about their concerns. In addition, 'listening to pupils' was ranked the second most important job for a TA in the card sort activity and was ranked fourth for jobs at which TAs are best. This suggests that pupils value this and see it as an aspect of effective practice that perhaps TAs could improve on.

A further theme which was considered relevant to this RQ was the theme 'personal qualities and skill set of the TA' (see Figure 16). Pupils perceiving ideal personal attributes as an element of an effective TA has been recognised in other research (Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). Furthermore, the value placed upon the ability of the TA to connect with the pupils can also be related to previous research, where researchers have commented on the importance, nature, and distinctness of pupils' relationships and interactions with TAs (Farrell, Balshaw and

Polat, 1999; Groom and Rose, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Blatchford et al., 2008). However, unlike previous research (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999; Fraser and Meadows, 2008), none of the pupils within this study referred to TAs as a friend; rather, they described how a TA who could effectively support them would be someone with whom they could form a bond, or who could relate to them. This theme could be used to reflect on the characteristics component of the WPR model and suggests that although Webster et al. (2011) did not consider this to be an influential component, data from this study indicates that pupils may regard it with a higher significance when considering what contributes to effective TA support. A possible reason for this could be that Webster et al. (2011) used the model to explain the impact of TA support on pupils' academic progress specifically, whereas pupils in this research were referring to TA support more generally and holistically.

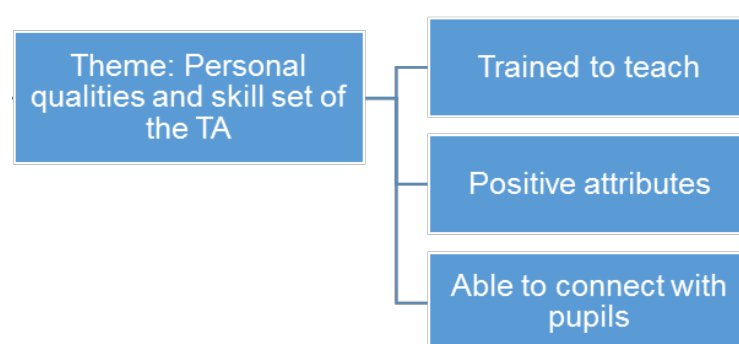


Figure 16: 'Personal qualities and skillset of the TA' theme and sub-theme

In relation to pupils' perceptions of the best place to work with a TA, the majority of participants indicated that this could vary between in the classroom with the rest of the class, and out of the classroom. Younger pupils just as frequently indicated that the best place for TAs to work was in the classroom. The majority of participants also argued that it was best for a TA to work with small groups of

pupils. However, older pupils more frequently indicated that whether the TA works with an individual or a group should be dependent on the pupils and their task.

A more in-depth exploration of these views was undertaken in the interview and the theme '*work within a context to meet the needs of the pupil*' was abstracted (see Figure 17). This theme is linked to this RQ as it reflects pupils' preference for where they work (withdrawal or class-based) and with whom (individual or small group), when being supported by a TA. It suggests that effective practice in the deployment of TAs is not fixed, such as always to work with a pupil in lessons or to withdraw groups, but can be dependent upon the needs of that pupil at that particular time with regard to that particular topic. A peaceful environment was an important factor to some pupils, which they related to being withdrawn from the classroom. Overall, findings suggest that effective deployment of TAs as perceived by pupils' is flexible and often relates to the need to accommodate individual needs.

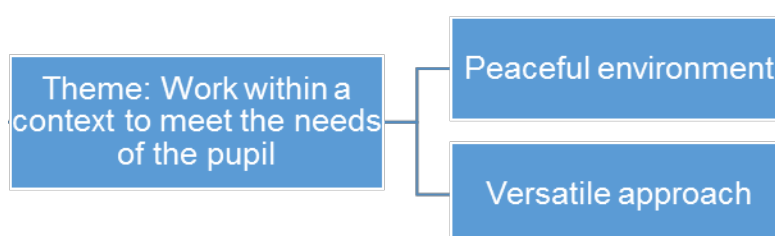


Figure 17: 'Work within a context to meet the needs of the pupil' theme and sub-theme

5.2.3 RQ3: What impact do pupils from the secondary school where this research was undertaken, perceive TA support to have on pupils?

A finding relevant to this RQ, present in both qualitative and quantitative data, was the positive impact TAs are perceived to have on pupils' confidence. The majority

of pupils strongly agreed with this. This finding is consistent with research exploring the impact of TAs as perceived by primary-aged pupils (Bland and Sleightholme, 2012). As presented in Figure 18, this was one of two sub-themes, the other being an improved emotional state, overall indicating that TA support is considered to have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

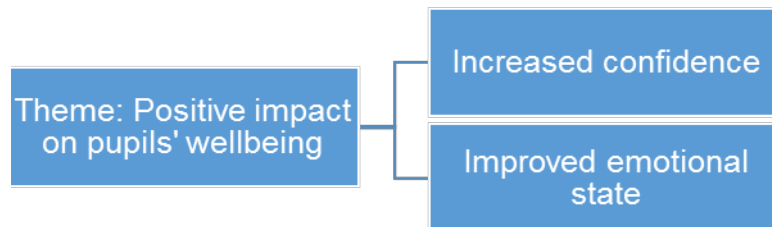


Figure 18: 'Positive impact on pupils' wellbeing' theme and sub-theme

A further theme relevant to this RQ is presented in Figure 19 and refers to the perception that TAs have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Although linked to learning, the sub-themes reflecting pupils' belief about the impact of TA support are not necessarily areas that can be measured by considering a pupil's academic progress or attainment. For example, the extent to which a TA has prevented a pupil from 'struggling' within lessons cannot be directly measured with an attainment test. This is also the case for the quantitative finding indicating that TAs made pupils feel more motivated with their learning, and the triangulated finding suggesting that TAs improve pupils' understanding of what to do.

Interestingly, one participant related improved confidence as a result of TA support to longer term implications for a pupil's future.

'the teaching assistant makes them more confident and when they like feel more confident they can go off and get ready, prepare for like exams and stuff and get better at them' (Interviewee D).

This could suggest that the perceived impact of the TA is indirect in relation to progress and attainment and instead affects pupils' approach, ensuring they are confident and motivated, and able to engage in learning, ensuring they have the necessary understanding and are not 'struggling'. This indicates that pupils have a similar view to teachers, where the DISS project findings suggested that teachers perceived that the impact of TA support was not necessarily related to attainment but to factors such as motivation (Blatchford et al., 2008). On the other hand, it is noted that a small sub-theme (see Figure 19) emerged from the pupils' perception that TAs can also improve pupils' literacy skills. This is a perception that is supported by empirical evidence (Alborz et al., 2009).

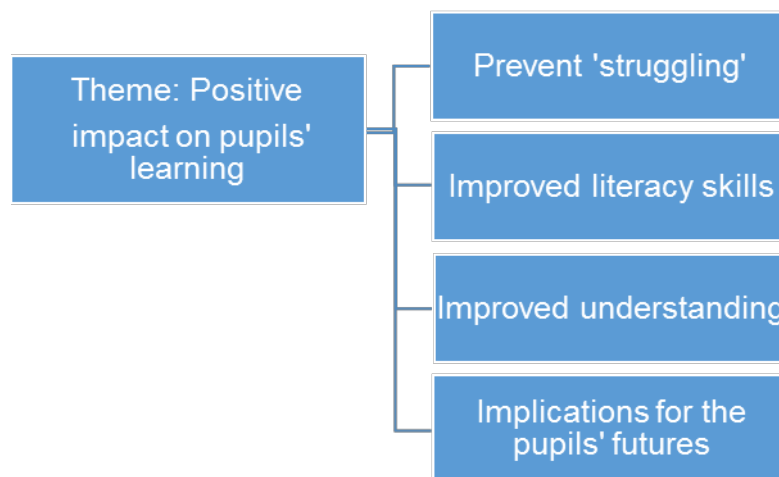


Figure 19: 'Positive impact on pupils' learning' theme and sub-theme

Pupils had differing opinions on the statement, 'TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own', as the majority of pupils either agreed or were unsure. This demonstrates that although a majority perspective is reported within this research, opinions for this item in particular were divided. Further analysis indicated that a majority of Key Stage 3 pupils were unsure, while opinions in Key Stage 4 divided

equally between agreement and uncertainty. This suggests that some pupils may feel over-supported, a finding that has emerged from other research (Jarvis, 2003) which has negative implications for developing independence, a proposed aim of TA support (Unison et al., 2016). However, there was no suggestion from pupils that this was unwanted or intrusive support, as has been previously suggested (Cajkler et al., 2007).

A lack of consistency in pupils' responses was also found in relation to the statement, 'pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time'. However, once the categories of agreement were combined, findings showed that an overall majority of pupils agreed with the statement to some extent. This finding further suggests some degree of dependence on TAs, which is an undesirable outcome of their support. Further analysis also suggested that the majority of Key Stage 3 participants agreed, while Key Stage 4 participants' views were mostly divided between uncertainty and disagreement.

Previous research has indicated that constant physical proximity to a TA can cause embarrassment (Farrell Balshaw and Polat, 1999) and that TA support can cause a pupil to feel 'singled out' (Bowers, 1997). In the current research, no references were made to these issues. Acknowledging that questions were positively framed and the bias this creates, it is argued that there were opportunities for pupils to raise these concerns within the interview if they existed, for example when discussing why they preferred a particular context to work with a TA. It is possible that these concerns were not raised as no interviews were undertaken with Key Stage 4 pupils, meaning that they were not able to discuss

these views. However, due to the small sample size it is important not to overstate the findings related to Key Stage. Further research would be necessary to explore whether any significant differences exist.

Another possible explanation as to why pupils did not have or did not raise these concerns is that the majority view for this sample was that TAs support all pupils. Therefore, it is assumed that receiving support would not be perceived to 'single out' a pupil. Furthermore, quantitative findings highlighted that the majority of pupils disagreed or strongly disagreed that TA support makes pupils feel left out from the rest of the class, and agreed that TAs help them to feel like a part of the school. This suggests that TA support is perceived to have a more positive impact on dimensions such as inclusion and school connectedness than has previously been suggested in other research.

Finally, the 'shared workload' theme was considered relevant to this RQ as it represents pupils' perceptions of the impact the TA has on the classroom in relation to the teacher, the pupils, and the general classroom dynamics. This finding can be related to existing research that suggests that TA support decreases a teacher's workload and reduces their stress (Alborz et al., 2009; Blatchford et al., 2009). Teacher wellbeing can have an important impact on pupils; Roffey (2012) suggests that it is crucial for the school environment as a whole and the learning of pupils. The direct effect of this TA support perceived by pupils was often that they would not have to wait for help and that there was always an adult available.

5.2.4 *Summary of key findings*

In relation to the perceptions of these secondary school pupils on the role of the TA (RQ1), findings suggest that a primary focus of the TA role is perceived to be providing academic support to all pupils. However, pupils also perceived that a TA's role is to provide other forms of support to pupils in need across a number of different contexts, suggesting they provide a more holistic form of support. Pupils distinguish TAs from teachers by perceiving them as 'helpers' whose role has limitations in comparison to the teacher. However, pupils also perceive elements of the TA role to overlap with the teacher role and there is suggestion that this occurs when TAs withdraw pupils.

With regards to these secondary school pupils' perceptions of effective practice and deployment of TAs (RQ2), findings suggest that pupils perceived the use of particular strategies to support learning, and positive communication between TA and pupil, as elements of effective TA practice. To be effective, a TA would also have a particular skill set and personal qualities enabling them to relate to pupils. Pupils also perceived that the effective deployment of TAs may involve them working with small groups of pupils or taking a versatile approach to who they work with and where they work, which would ultimately be in a context to meet the needs of the particular pupils they are supporting.

Finally, findings suggest that these secondary school pupils perceived TAs to have a positive impact (RQ3) on aspects of their learning, wellbeing, and connectedness to the school. However, impacts on learning were not necessarily associated with attainment or progress, as some findings related to a positive

impact on the pupils' ability to access academic work and on factors such as motivation and confidence with regards to learning. Pupils also perceived that TAs shared the classroom workload which had practical benefits for them and the teacher. Tentative findings suggest that some pupils perceived that TAs can over-support pupils, and others wanted constant physical proximity to a TA, these issues have implications for the impact of TA support on a pupil's level of independence. However, these questions in particular highlighted inconsistencies between pupils' perceptions. This leads to queries as to whether questions were accessible to pupils or whether differences are due to other factors such as age, particularly as these issues were not raised in the interviews. Further exploration would be required to make any firm conclusions.

5.3 Contribution to the Literature

This research contributes to existing literature in that it provides an insight into a small number of secondary school pupils' perspectives in relation to the TA role, elements of effective TA practice and deployment, and the impact of TA support. Eliciting pupil voice in these areas is an important contribution to the literature given influential research such as the DISS project, where findings have initiated a drive to change elements of TA practice and deployment in order to maximise TA impact (Blatchford et al., 2009c). Within Chapter 1 it was argued that pupils have a need and a right to contribute to such decisions which affect their educational experiences.

As concluded in Chapter 2 secondary school-age pupils' views in relation to the TA is an area of limited research where further clarification and focused,

contemporary research was required. Findings from the current research contribute pupils' views to the definition of the TA role, which has been described as unclear and was seen as a contributing factor to the concerns in the area (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Findings within this research identified the complexities of the role from pupils' perspectives and in some instances supported and expanded on existing findings, for example with regards to pupils' perceptions of the TA role in relation to the teacher role. In addition, this research provides an insight into secondary-aged pupils' perceptions on what constitutes effective TA practice and deployment and the perceived positive impact such support can have on pupils' learning and wellbeing. This addressed a significant gap in the literature and utilising a strength-based perspective offered a unique approach to this area of research.

In relation to the WPR model, this framework has been used previously to explain the negative impact of TA support on pupils' academic progress (Webster et al., 2011) and to guide alternative approaches (Webster et al., 2013). Findings from the current research study provide an insight into pupils' perspectives of TA work in relation to the model and provide factors within the components of the model that they perceive to improve TA effectiveness. In addition, this research explores the concept of effectiveness with respect to all aspects of TA support, as opposed to just considering academic progress. Consequently, the TA characteristics component of the WPR model is deemed to have an increased significance in contributing to TA effectiveness.

In order to discuss these findings in relation to existing knowledge, it was necessary to draw on research considering primary-aged pupils' views due to the limited and in some cases overlapping existing research. Consequently, this discussion contributes to literature as it suggests some similarities between primary and secondary school pupils' perspectives. For example, based on the findings from this research in relation to existing research from Bland and Sleightholme (2012), both primary-aged and secondary-aged pupils perceive that TAs improve pupils' confidence and that there are desirable attributes for TAs such as being kind. It is more challenging to reflect on the differences between these age groups, particularly given the focus and aims of the current research. In order to explore similarities and differences in more depth future research would be required.

To conclude, it is argued that the findings of this research study make a significant contribution to knowledge in the area of secondary-school pupils' perspectives regarding TAs. This research also has implications beyond the contribution to literature in relation to practice and future study. These are explored in section 5.5. However, given the scope and size of this research it is important to recognise the limitations of the findings and this research as a whole. Therefore, some of the key limitations of this research are discussed in the next section.

5.4 Methodological Considerations

This section considers the strengths and limitations of this research with regard to the design, methods, procedure, and analysis. In order to do this, the intended purposes and whether these were achieved are examined, in addition to issues of

reliability and validity. Reliability and validity are criteria used to evaluate social research (Bryman, 2014). Reliability refers to whether results can be repeated and the measures are consistent (Bryman, 2014). Validity refers to the integrity of the conclusions that are drawn from research (Bryman, 2014).

A strength of this research was the mixed methods design employed. The individual methods of data collection had strengths and limitations affecting the validity and reliability of the research. These issues will be discussed below. However, use of a mixed methods design, enabled the methodological strengths to be combined and compensated for some of the limitations. Furthermore, the data were able to be triangulated. Data from the interview phase of this research often corroborated data from the questionnaire phase, which emphasised the validity of the findings (Robson and McCartan, 2016) and confidence in the conclusions drawn to answer the RQs.

Considering the methods individually, administering questionnaires made it possible to gain the views of a larger number of participants with relative ease and efficiency. Reading to participants ensured that the method was accessible, improving the validity of findings, and administration was standardised, improving the reliability of the data produced. As the questionnaires relied on self-report and the researcher was present, it is acknowledged that the risk of bias is increased which is a threat to the validity of the research. However, it was stated that there are no correct answers, as this is believed to reduce social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Furthermore, precautions were taken to reduce acquiescence response bias (see section 3.3.1) and given that pupils both agreed

and disagreed with a number of statements to varying extents, it appears that they thought carefully about each of their answers rather than constantly selecting the same rating for each statement.

Careful consideration was given to the creation of the questions used within the questionnaire. A justification for the closed question type was provided and a pilot was undertaken to ensure accessibility and whether any other answer options were relevant to pupils. The answers provided were also informed by the literature. For instance, the items used within the Likert-type scale were influenced by existing findings related to the broad areas of approaches to learning and inclusion. Typically, a Likert scale would be designed to ensure uni-dimensionality, where each item measures the same underlying domain (Oppenheim, 1992). This would be achieved by using a large number of participants and item analysis to select and refine items (Oppenheim, 1992). To assess internal reliability, whether a participant's score on one item within the scale relates to their score on another item in the scale, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient could then be calculated (Bryman, 2014). However, this was not the intended purpose of the Likert-type scale within this research; the items were not combined to give a total score and instead were analysed separately. Therefore, the question met its intended purpose for this research and no claims can be made about the internal reliability. However, such improvements could be pursued in further research if this questionnaire were to be used again as a stand-alone instrument.

Using semi-structured interviews made it possible to expand on data gathered in phase 1 and the approach enabled prompting and provided depth to the findings.

Careful consideration was again given to the types of questions and prompts (see section 3.4.2) and this resulted in successfully eliciting pupils' views. Using techniques such as a fictional character gave the pupils someone to talk about and to talk to, enabling pupils to talk openly without being concerned that the interviewer knew the answers. Using the card sort activity was also an effective method of generating discussion. In addition, it enabled a rank score to be calculated for each card. These results were discussed with caution and corroborated with other findings to improve their validity as some pupils needed to be reminded that they were ranking in relation to the most important jobs for a TA and those that the TA was best at, as opposed to what TAs did most frequently. This also alludes to an issue with how the RQs within this research overlap. It is argued that clear distinctions between the RQs were made and these were embedded throughout the design and methods, enabling findings to relate to specific RQs. However, it is acknowledged that in practice the areas covered by the RQs are intertwined.

When analysing the qualitative data, it is likely that the researcher's personal beliefs, knowledge and experiences influenced the themes that developed, the interpretations that were made and the conclusions that were drawn. This means that another researcher could have identified different themes and generated alternative conclusions; this is a threat to the validity in the research. To overcome this limitation a second researcher could have analysed the data to determine if the same themes emerged. It was not possible to do this due to the time demands this would place on a second researcher.

A significant limitation of this research was the relatively small sample size and the imbalances within the sample. Despite setting out to gain a fairly even distribution of ages, the majority of participants were in Year 7. There were also more males than females. This uneven distribution was more pronounced in Phase 2 as due to the limited response rate only one female was interviewed and all the interviews were conducted with pupils from Key Stage 3. This is an important issue to consider when triangulating data as those interviewed were not representative of the sample, although it was ensured that two pupils from each Key Stage 3 year group were interviewed (Year 7, 8 and 9). Furthermore, one pupil chose to end their interview and so the card sort activity was not completed and less data was generated. However, this does suggest that the pupil had understood the ethical rights that had been explained and felt able to exercise them.

The implications of a relatively small sample, the imbalances within it and a non-probability approach to sampling create a threat to the external validity of the research. External validity relates to whether or not conclusions can be generalised beyond the sample and context of the research (Bryman, 2014). A small sample size is a threat to external validity because it may not be representative of the wider population of pupils who experience TA support. The use of a non-probability method sampling also indicates that findings cannot be generalised (Bryman, 2014). This limitation is particularly significant to the additional analysis undertaken on different Key Stages, further reducing the number of participants. Therefore, only tentative suggestions are made regarding these findings with a possibility to inform future research. In addition, the fact that the research was undertaken in just one school, where there was a particular

policy on the deployment of TAs, also limits the generalisability of the findings. However, findings may be transferrable or may be relevant, with a certain level of caution, to other similar settings. Furthermore, it is argued that findings are relevant to practice and as such have practice-based implications. These are discussed in the following section.

Finally, an important issue within this research is the extent to which pupils had differing opinions and a 'collective voice' was able to be obtained. As would be expected, pupils were not unanimous in their quantitative responses and each interview was unique. Despite this, it was possible to consider the majority responses through the quantitative data and develop themes based on repeated patterns of responses within the qualitative data. Each sub-theme emerged from at least two pupils' comments and often reflected the majority of pupils' perspectives. Furthermore, the researcher was careful to highlight and comment on areas across both phases where it was clear that pupils had mixed views.

In summary, the methods of data collection used in this research were carefully designed and reviewed (following an extensive pilot), in order to fulfil their purposes and minimise any limitations that may reduce the validity and reliability of the findings. Although the remaining limitations within the research pose as a threat to the validity and reliability of the findings, overall it is argued that the methodological approach enabled pupils' perspectives to be successfully elicited and the researcher was able to corroborate findings to enhance their validity and answer the RQs.

5.5 Implications

5.5.1 Future research

Future research could be pursued by expanding on these findings, this research study, and the area of research more generally. In relation to the findings, tentative suggestions made with regard to differences due to pupils' age could be further explored to determine whether there are any differences between subgroups in relation to perspectives of TAs. If differences were identified this could have implications for how TAs are deployed in respect of pupil age. As TA support can extend beyond the secondary school years, older pupils' perspectives could also be explored.

A further implication of the findings relates to how TA practice is measured. According to pupils within this sample, TA support has positive impact in a number of areas. This impact was not necessarily related to attainment or progress. Therefore, based on pupils' perceptions, future research could apply measures associated with factors such as pupils' confidence or motivation in order to evaluate the impact of TA support. However, decisions about how to measure the impact of TA support need to relate to the definition of the TA role and the intention of their support. Findings from this research suggest that pupils perceive TAs to have multiple aspects to their role and so a combination of measures may be appropriate. Guidance suggests that individual schools should clearly define the TA role and remit (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015) and so this may vary between schools. Therefore, future research would need to have a clear understanding of the context in which the research is conducted, ensuring that impact is measured accurately.

An appropriate expansion of the current research study would be to repeat the design and approach with a larger sample of pupils in order to improve the external validity of the findings. This would enable a larger number of pupils to have a voice in relation to TA support, generating findings that present a more representative 'collective voice' that could be used to inform decisions and practice.

Finally, guidance suggests that schools should move away from deploying TAs to support specific pupils for long periods, allowing pupils with the highest levels of need to receive more support from the teacher (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015). Therefore, it could be beneficial for future research within this area to use a sampling approach and criteria similar to the one used in this study. The approach to sampling applied in this research led to pupil voice being elicited from a wide variety of pupils, with and without SEND, experiencing TA support for a number of different reasons. Findings from the current study, indicating that pupils perceived TAs to support multiple areas for the majority of pupils, suggests that this is an appropriate approach when investigating pupil voice in relation to the TA role.

5.5.2 Professional practice

This research highlights the importance of gaining pupils' views with regards to decisions affecting their educational experiences. EPs are in an ideal position to elicit pupil voice in school settings and this is often part of their practice. However, this research also draws attention to the challenges of eliciting pupil voice and the need to ensure the methods used are appropriate. The methods and approaches applied in this research, such as the card sort activity, the types of questions used

in the interview and questionnaire were considered to be accessible and successful in eliciting a range of pupils' perspectives about TA support. Therefore, similar methods could be applied to the practice of professionals such as EPs who seek to elicit and advocate pupil voice.

The strengths in TA practice identified by the key stakeholders could be shared as a way to acknowledge what is working well, promote effective practice, or act as a positive starting point to build on if changes are to be introduced. However, although pupil voice is extremely valuable it has limitations in that perceptions of effective practice may not corroborate with evidence-based guidance. For example, within the current findings using prompts was interpreted to be a strategy which pupils perceived TAs to apply to effectively support their learning. However, a detailed exploration of the use of prompts by Blatchford et al. (2009a) indicated that prompts were not always used effectively to encourage thinking and independence. Therefore, the implications of these findings and others within the area of pupil voice need to be considered in relation to other research evidence to ensure that the practice promoted is effective. Professionals such as EPs are well placed to raise school staff's awareness and understanding of evidence-based practice and interventions and can support and train schools to implement these in addition to considering the pupils' views.

5.6 Summary and Concluding Comments

Eliciting pupil voice regarding TA support is a valuable and necessary task. The findings of this research give an indication of the perceptions of a group of secondary school pupils regarding elements of the TA role, what constitutes

effective TA practice and deployment, and the impact of TA support. These findings make an important and timely contribution to literature given the limited existing knowledge on secondary school pupils' perspectives and a drive to implement changes to TA practice. This research has important implications future research and for professionals such as EPs, who are in an ideal position to support schools to elicit and act on pupil voice in relation to TA support.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Literature Search Strategies

Concept	Search terms
Teaching assistant	“Teach* assistant”, “Class* assistant”, “learning support assistant”, “class* aid*”, “teach* aid*”, “special educational needs assistant”, “curriculum support”, “paraprofessional”, “support staff”, “support assistant”
Perceptions	Perceptions, views, perspectives, attitudes, voice
Pupils	Pupil* Student* Child* young person* adol*

Appendix 2: Sample Characteristics: Questionnaire Phase

Year Group	Total Number of participants	Number of participants with SEND	Priority areas of need for those with SEND	Number of male participants	Number of female participants
7	10	5	MLD, SpLD	6	4
8	3	3	ASD, SpLD, MLD	3	0
9	2	1	SEMH	2	0
10	3	2	MLD, SLCN	0	3
11	3	2	SpLD, MLD	2	1
Total	21	13	N/A	13	8

Appendix 3: Sample Characteristics: Interview Phase

Year Group	Total Number of participants	Number of participants with SEND	Priority areas of need for those with SEND	Number of male participants	Number of female participants
7	2	1	MLD	1	1
8	2	2	SpLD, MLD	2	0
9	2	1	SEMH	2	0
Total	6	4	N/A	5	1

Appendix 4: Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you what you think about the job of a teaching assistant.

Teaching assistants are paid adults that work in the school, they may also be called learning support assistants or classroom assistants.

Before you start, please read the instructions.

Instructions

- Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
- Read each question carefully.
- Answer the questions by putting a tick in the box next to the answer you agree with. Each question will tell you how many boxes you can tick.
- Answer the questions as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.
- You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.
- You can stop at any time.
- If you have any questions then please ask me
- Let me know when you have finished



1. What do teaching assistants do?

Tick the boxes of all the answers you agree with.

Help pupils with their work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help pupils to make friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to pupils' parents/guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help teachers with their jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help pupils with their behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark pupils' work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to pupils about any problems they are having	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set pupils targets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create displays	<input type="checkbox"/>	Get things ready for lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listen to pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan pupil's work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tidy up	<input type="checkbox"/>	After school/ break time clubs and duties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teach pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Who are teaching assistants at school to help?

Tick the boxes of all the answers you agree with.

The teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Certain pupils within the school	<input type="checkbox"/>
All the pupils within the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Where is the best place for a teaching assistant to work with a pupil?

Tick only ONE answer.

In the classroom with the rest of the class	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes in the classroom with the rest of the class and sometimes in an area away from other pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>
In an area away from other pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What is the best way for a teaching assistant to work?

Tick only ONE answer.

With the whole class

☐

With individual pupils

☐

With small groups of pupils

☐

It depends on who they are
working with and what they are
working on

☐

Don't know

☐

5. These questions are asking what you think about teaching assistants.

Next to each sentence, put a tick in the box that you feel best describes what you think.

	I agree a lot	I agree	I am not sure	I disagree	I disagree a lot
Teaching assistants help pupils to feel more motivated to learn					
Teaching assistants distract pupils from what they are supposed to be doing					
Teaching assistants show pupils how to do things so that they know what to do					
Teaching assistants do things for pupils that they can do on their own					
Pupils like a teaching assistant to be close to them all the time					
Teaching assistants help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things					
Pupils who have help from a teaching assistant can feel left out from the class					
Teaching assistants help pupils feel like a part of the school					
Teaching assistants help pupils to get on with the people in their class					
Pupils spend more time with a teaching assistant than with other pupils					

Write down your age and year group in the spaces below and put a circle around the word 'male' if you are a boy and a circle around the word 'female' if you are a girl.

Age: _____ years old

Year group: _____

Male

Female

Thank you!



Appendix 5: Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview
- As you know, I am going to ask you some questions about teaching assistants
- There are no right or wrong answers, this is just to find out what you think. You can say you don't know if you are not sure how to answer a question
- If you're not sure what I mean when I ask a question then please tell me by saying something like 'can you explain?' and I will try to explain what I mean.
- You don't have to answer anything you don't want to and we can stop at any time, just say 'stop'
- I will not use your name so no-one will know what you said- but if you tell me something that worries me I will need to tell someone at your school what you said. I will tell you if that happens.

Character introduction

- This is Sam (show picture)
- Sam is a pretend (made-up) pupil we are going to use to help us talk about teaching assistants today.
- Sam has just started at this school. He has never met a teaching assistant before and would like to know a bit more about them.

Questions

No.	Issue/ topic	Possible question	Possible follow up question	Probes
1. Warm-up	Role of TA	Pretend you are talking to Sam and he has asked you what teaching assistants do, what would you say to him?	<p>If there was a camera in the room, what would I see?</p> <p>What would the TA do to help Sam? What other ways could TAs help Sam (if mention help pupils)</p> <p>Where might Sam see a TA in the school?</p>	<p>Tell me more about that</p> <p>Is that so</p> <p>Pause</p> <p>Any other things?</p>
2.	Role of TA	How is a TA different from the other adults in the school?	<p>How is a TA different from the class teacher?</p> <p>What do TAs do that a class teacher doesn't?</p>	Can you give me some more examples
3.	Impact of TA	What would it be like if the TA wasn't at school?	<p>What difference do TAs make to the pupils?</p> <p>What are the good things about having a TA in the class?</p> <p>What difference do TAs make to the teachers?</p>	
4.	Effective	Think of a TA who was really good at their job, What would they be like? (use reference to Sam if necessary- i.e. tell Sam about the best TA)	<p>What would they do?</p> <p>Why would that be helpful?</p>	
5.	Deployment	Where would the best place to work with a TA be? (refer to Sam to provide example if necessary)	<p>Think of the places in your school...</p> <p>Why would that be the best place?</p>	

			Would anyone else be there?	
6.	Role Card sorting activity	What's a TAs most important job? (Provide opportunity to answer this q- then do sorting activity with options from questionnaire and blank cards for new answers if provided)	<p>Why do you think that one is the most important?</p> <p>How do TAs do that?</p> <p>Why do you think that one is the least important?</p> <p>Why have you put that card there?</p> <p>Do you have any other ideas?</p>	
7.	Effective Card-sorting activity	What are TAs best at doing? (Provide opportunity to answer this q- then do sorting activity with options from questionnaire and blank cards for new answers if provided)	<p>Why do you think that job is what TAs are best at doing?</p> <p>How do TAs do that?</p> <p>Why do you think that job should g at the bottom?</p> <p>Why have you put that card there?</p> <p>Do you have any other ideas?</p>	
7. Cool-off	Any other comments	We have talked about.... Is there anything else you would like to tell me about TAs?		

Closure

- Do you have any questions?
- Remind participants that a summary of the research findings will be sent to them.
- Thank you and goodbye

Appendix 6: Recruitment Letter

Date:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Charlotte Gallimore. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently on placement with X Educational Psychology Service and studying for my Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. I am writing to inform you about a piece of research that I would like to conduct at your school as part of my course.

What is the research about?

The purpose of the research is to find out what secondary school pupils' perspectives are in relation to the role of the teaching assistant. It is hoped that this will build and expand on current research in this area.

The research questions I am currently hoping to answer are:

- What do secondary school pupils' perceive to be the role of a TA?
- What support provided by TAs do secondary school pupils' perceive to be effective and/or valuable? And why?
- What impact do secondary school pupils' perceive TAs to have on pupil learning and development?
- What do pupils' perceive to be the most effective ways to deploy TAs?

Please note these can be subject to change slightly as research progresses.

Why have I approached this school?

I have discussed this research with my colleagues from the Dudley Educational Psychology Service and have asked them to suggest appropriate secondary schools who may be interested and willing to support me. The educational psychologist who works with your school named it as an appropriate setting.

What will happen during the research?

I hope to recruit pupils from the school who spend at least 50% of their school timetable in the presence of a teaching assistant, this may be to support them directly or the class as a whole, dependent on the organisation of your school.

Firstly, I will ask these pupils to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire will

ask questions about the role of the teaching assistant and aim to answer some of the research questions.

I will then select a smaller number of pupils (approximately 10) to participate in interviews. These interviews will seek to gain more in-depth information and further expand on the questionnaire responses. These interviews are expected to last approximately 30-40 minutes.

Once this information has been collected and analysed I will then be able to feed this back to the school in a method that is most appropriate for yourselves, for example this could be through a presentation, a staff meeting, or a summary report. I will also provide a short written summary report to be sent to participants and their parents.

What would the school need to do?

In order for the research to be successful I would ask that the school, and a named contact within the school, to support me with the following:

- I would ask the school to support me in identifying pupils appropriate for my sample.
- I would ask that the school support me to distribute the appropriate information and consent forms to this sample of pupils.
- I would ask the school to work alongside me to plan and organise appropriate dates, times and places to collect the data.

What are the potential risks and benefits?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Committee. This means that this research will follow standards outlined in their Ethical Code or Practice by ensuring aspects such as voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to withdraw, confidentiality and data protection procedures are adhered to.

As you can see from the research questions, this research focuses on drawing out the strengths and positives of the teaching assistant role and practice. Pupils will not be asked about members of staff within the school. Rather they will be asked about the general role of a teaching assistant and questions will be worded in a detached manner focusing on pupils in general or on a more hypothetical situation for a pretend pupil. If pupils do name specific people then these will be excluded from the transcription of data and no names at any point will be shared.

For the pupils who participate in the research this will give them the opportunity to share their views about how they are supported in schools, a notion that is prominent at the current time with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015) placing a high emphasis on a person-centred approach . Furthermore, there is limited research on the perspectives of secondary school pupils and as such this study may make a valuable contribution to the area.

How long will the research take?

I hope to collect data from the questionnaire prior to the summer holiday and then to conduct the interviews straight after the summer holiday period. This will be dependent on how quickly we can get started.

What happens next?

If you are willing for this research to be conducted within your school, or if you have some further questions, then please inform your educational psychologist that you would like me to contact you, or please contact me directly on the details provided below.

I hope that you feel that your school would benefit from this research and would like to discuss this further. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me via email at XXXXXX@bham.ac.uk or by telephone on 0XXXXXXXXX.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Charlotte Gallimore

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 7: Parent Information leaflet

Does my child have to take part in this study?

No. It is completely up to you and your child to decide whether they take part. If your child wishes to withdraw from the study he/she is perfectly entitled to do so and can inform Charlotte on the day. Please note as the questionnaires will not have names on, it will not be possible to withdraw your child's responses once they have handed their questionnaires in.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Committee of the University of Birmingham.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no known risks of taking part in this study. However, your child does not have to answer anything that they do not feel comfortable with, and they can stop at any time.

What will happen if I agree for my child to take part?

On a particular day at the school, we will provide your child and his/ her peers with information about the study and ask them if they would like to participate and provide their written consent.

If your child agrees to take part, then...

Your child will be asked to complete a questionnaire to find out about his/her thoughts towards the role of a Teaching Assistant. Once he/she has finished, they will be allowed to return to their normal routine. If your child has difficulty reading, we can help your child to read the questions.

Is taking part confidential?

Yes. No names or personal details will be included in the write-up of the research. All information gathered will be stored in a locked cabinet and electronic information on an encrypted memory stick and backed up on password-protected computer. The only people who will have access to the data are Charlotte and her university tutor. 10 years after the research is completed this information will be destroyed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

This study will help us understand the pupils' perspectives on the role of the Teaching Assistant. By looking at this, we can help schools to consider what type of support is most valuable and effective for the pupils.

What if there is a problem?

If there is a problem arising from the study, Charlotte can be contacted during 9-5pm Mon-Fri, however, it is not expected that any part of this study will cause any problems to anyone taking part in it.

What will happen after the study?

The results will be written up into a research report. A summary will be presented to the staff at the school. We will send you and your child a summary of the results of the study when they are ready.

Who is running
the study?

This research is being carried out by Charlotte Gallimore, Trainee Educational Psychologist (School of Education, University of Birmingham). Her research supervisor is Julia Howe (School of Education, University of Birmingham). Charlotte is also supervised by X, Educational Psychologist (X Educational Psychology Service).

Why has my child
been invited to take
part in this study?

We are asking the parents/guardians of pupils within the school who have regular contact with a Teaching Assistant.



Would you like your child to take part in
this study?

If your answer is yes then you do not have to
do anything else.

**If your answer is no and you do not want
your child to take part in this study** then
please fill out the slip attached to the
supporting letter and post it back to me in the
pre-paid and addressed envelope. Please note
the deadline for this is _____, after this
date I will be conducting the research within
the school.

Would you like more information before
you decide?

If so, please feel free to ask any questions
using the contact details below:

Charlotte Gallimore

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Email: XXXXX@bham.ac.uk

Phone: XXXXXX

Julia Howe

Senior Lecturer (Charlotte's supervisor)

Email: XXXX@bham.ac.uk

Phone: XXXXX



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM**

Information Leaflet

We would like your child to participate in
the research study:

Secondary school pupils'
perspectives on the role of a
Teaching Assistant

This leaflet tells you more about the study
and how your child can take part in it.
Please read the leaflet carefully.



Appendix 8: Parent Opt-out Letter

Dear parent/guardian,

My name is Charlotte Gallimore. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for X Educational Psychology Service. I am studying at Birmingham University for my Doctorate in Educational Psychology and as part of my course I am planning to do a piece of research at X School.

I am writing to you to seek your permission for your child to be involved with this research. The broad aim of this research is to investigate the perspectives of secondary pupils on the role of the Teaching Assistant.

Before you decide whether or not you will grant permission for your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the included information leaflet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Having read the leaflet if you decide you that are happy for your child to take part in the study then you do not need to do anything else. **If you decide that you would not like your child to take part in the study then please complete the slip below and send it back to me in the pre-paid and addressed envelope by _____.** After this date I will visit the school to conduct the questionnaire and so it is important that you let me know before then. Please note, participation is voluntary so it is completely up to you and your child.

If you have any further questions or would like to know any more information then please contact me or my university supervisor (Julia Howe). Contact details are provided below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and the information leaflet.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Gallimore

Charlotte Gallimore
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Telephone number: 0XXXXXXXXXX
Email address: XXXXX

Julia Howe (supervisor)
Senior Lecturer
Telephone number: XXX
Email address: XXXXX

Please only return this slip if you are not happy for your child to participate in the research. If you are happy for them to participate, do nothing.

I have read the information leaflet and **do not** want my child to participate in the research.

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 9: Pupil Information leaflet

Do I have to take part in this study?

No. It is up to you. Charlotte has also sent a letter to your parents as they need to agree to you taking part. Your parents have been asked to let Charlotte know if they do not want you to take part.

If you do agree and then change your mind that's fine, just say you want to stop.



What will happen if I agree to take part?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will ask about your thoughts about the role of teaching assistant. Once you have finished, you will go back to your normal lessons.

If you have difficulty reading, we can help you to read the questions.

What is this study all about?

This study is trying to find out what pupils who go to secondary school think about the job of a teaching assistant.

This study will try to find out what is important to pupils and what works best for pupils.

It is interested in finding out what you have to say!



Who will know what I said?

Your answers to the questions will be confidential. This means that when this study is written up, your name will not be used and no one will know what answers you picked in the questionnaire.

What if you ask me a question I don't want to answer?



You do not have to answer anything that you do not want to, and you can stop at any time.

What will happen after the study?

All the information will be joined together and a report will be written. These findings will also be shared with you, your parents and the school.

**Who is doing
study?**

This study is being done by Charlotte Gallimore. Charlotte is a Trainee Educational Psychologist which means that she works in schools and also attends the University of Birmingham. This study is part of Charlotte's university course.

**Why have you asked
me to take part in this
study?**

We are asking you because you often work in a classroom that is supported by a teaching assistant.



**You will now be asked if you
would like to take part in this
study and if you have any
questions.**



Thank you!



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM**

**What are pupils' thoughts
about the job of a teaching
assistant?**

We would like you to take part in
a research study to find out!

Read this leaflet to find out how
you can get involved.



Appendix 10: Pupil Consent (Questionnaire)

Please tick the boxes to show that you agree with the statement next to it.

Do not tick the boxes if you do not agree.

I have read the information leaflet and have understood the research

☐

I am willing to complete a questionnaire

☐

I understand that if I change my mind when answering the questionnaire and do not want to carry on then I am able to stop and can ask that my answers are not used in the research.

☐

I understand that after I hand my questionnaire in, it will not be possible to get rid of my answers and they will be used in the research

☐

I understand that my answers will be confidential, which means my name will not be used so that when the study is written up and shared no one will know which answers I picked.

☐

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Year Group: _____

Date: _____



Appendix 11: Parent Information and Consent Form (Interview)

Dear parent/guardian,

My name is Charlotte Gallimore. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for X Educational Psychology Service. I am studying at Birmingham University for my Doctorate in Educational Psychology and as part of my course I am currently doing a piece of research at X School.

Some time ago, I wrote to you to seek your permission for your child to be involved with this research. Your child and many other pupils in the school took part in completing a questionnaire about the role of a teaching assistant. For the next stage of this research, **I am now writing to you to seek your permission for your child to be interviewed.** This will involve me meeting with your child and asking him/her some more questions. The purpose of this interview is to find out a little more about what pupils think, giving them the opportunity to share and explain their views and tell me things I had not considered in the questionnaire.

I would like to voice record the interviews so that I can listen back to them at a later stage and include quotations in my write-up. This information will be confidential, so that no names will be included in the write-up and it will not be possible to identify who said what. All written information gathered will be stored in a locked cabinet and electronic information on an encrypted memory stick and backed up on password-protected computer. The only people who will have access to the data are my university tutor and me.

As with the questionnaire, participation in this interview is voluntary, it is completely up to you and your child. Your child can also ask to stop at any point during the interview and that would be fine. If you or your child change your mind after the interview, you can contact me by XXX and ask to withdraw and I will delete the recording and shred my notes. After this date it will not be feasible to withdraw your child's data, since responses from all participants will have been integrated, making it problematic to identify and withdraw information provided by any particular person.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. **To give your consent for your child to be interviewed, please complete the attached consent form and return it in the provided envelope.**

If you have any further questions or would like to know any more information then please contact me or my university supervisor (Julia Howe). Contact details are provided below.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Gallimore

***Please put a tick in the box next to each statement to signal your agreement.
Do not tick those statements with which you do not agree.***

I have read the information letter and have understood the research ☐

I give consent for my child to be interviewed by Charlotte Gallimore as part of the research study ☐

I give consent for the interview to be audio recorded ☐

I give consent for quotations to be used in the write-up of this research and understand that confidentiality will be ensured so that it will not be possible to know who said what ☐

I understand that, should I or my child change our mind about her / his participation , either of us can withdraw our consent and request that the data collected is not used in the analysis or write-up of the research ☐

I understand that if I want to withdraw the data then I need to let Charlotte know by XXXX. After this date I understand that it would not be feasible to withdraw my child's data, since responses from all participants will have been integrated, making it problematic to identify and withdraw information provided by any particular person. ☐

Child's Name: _____

Child's Year Group: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you!

Please contact my supervisor or me on the details below if you have any questions or concerns:

Charlotte Gallimore
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Telephone number: XXXXXXXX
Email address: XXXXXXXX

Julia Howe (supervisor)
Senior Lecturer
Telephone number: XXXXXX
Email address: XXXX@bham.ac.uk

Appendix 12: Pupil Information and Consent (Interview)

Interview Information Sheet

My name is Charlotte Gallimore. I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at the University of Birmingham.

Some time ago I asked you to do a questionnaire about the job of a teaching assistant. This was for part of a research study I am doing for my university course which is interested in pupils' thoughts about the job of a teaching assistant.



I am now asking some of the people who did the questionnaire if they would also like to do an interview with me. This means I would like to meet with you to talk about what pupils think about the job of a teaching assistant.



During the interview I would like to record our voices so that I can type it up later without forgetting anything. I will then put the things you and other pupils said in a report with the results from the questionnaire. I will make sure that the things that you say will be confidential; this means that no-one would know who said what.

Would you like to take part in an interview?

You do not need to take part in the interview if you don't want to. If you did agree, but then changed your mind, this would be fine. You can stop at any point.



If you change your mind about me using your answers after the interview then that would be fine too, you just need to let me know by 23.11.2015 and I can delete the recording and shred my notes. After this date I will not be able to get rid of your answers so it is important that you tell me by then. Your parents have also been told about this date and have my work telephone number if you need to let me know.

If you would like to do the interview, you will now be asked to fill out a consent form so that I am sure you have understood and are happy to be involved.

Thank you!

Please tick the boxes to show that you agree with the statements next to them.

Do not tick the boxes if you do not agree.

I have read the information sheet and have understood the research

☐

I am willing to be interviewed by Charlotte

☐

I am willing for the interview to be recorded so that Charlotte can play it back to hear our voices

☐

I understand that, if I change my mind during the interview and do not want to carry on then I can let Charlotte know and the interview will end.

☐

I understand that if I decide I do not want Charlotte to include my answers in her write up then I have until XX to let her know. After this date Charlotte will not be able to get rid of my answers.

☐

I understand that my answers will be used in the write up of this research but that they will be confidential, which means my name will not be used so that no one will know who said what.

☐

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Year Group: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 13: Annotated Transcript Extract and Additional Information

Transcript Extract- Interviewee A (I= interviewer, A=interviewee)	Code	Sub-theme	Superordinate theme
<p>I- OK if Sam said he was struggling to a TA, what would the TA then do?</p> <p>A- they would show him what he has to do, explain it</p> <p>I- ok and would that help Sam?</p> <p>A- yeah</p> <p>I- ok, so do they do anything that a class teacher doesn't do?</p> <p>A- sometimes it depends what you ask them</p> <p>I- ok</p>	Clarify work by explaining or demonstrating	Clarify task	Application of strategies to support pupils' learning
<p>A- like sometimes if you're struggling what the class teacher set, they'll change it and tell you how to do it another way</p> <p>I- ok</p> <p>A- like we were doing angles and then we had to use something different and then (TA name) showed me another way</p>	Provide different strategies	Provide strategies and prompts	Application of strategies to support pupils' learning

<p>A- they'd be kind and they wouldn't shout and things when they do something wrong and then they'd talk to you and things</p> <p>I- ok so they'd be kind, and they'd talk to you and they wouldn't shout, Is there anything else they would do to help in the classroom?</p> <p>A- I think that they'd like.... Can't explain it ... that they'd sit and talk to you and they'd be kind and they'd show you different ways of what to do</p> <p>I- ok, so do they help in all different lessons?</p> <p>A- yeah, we have different lessons and a lot of them I see, quite a lot of them I see learning assistants in</p> <p>I- ok so they work in all different lessons? (A- yeah) and do they work with all different people?</p> <p>A- yeah like me and (pupil name) we get on quite well and then (TA name) sits next to us and talks to us and then say in (lesson name) she helps with our learning and things when we had to write a diary entry she explained stuff for us</p> <p>I- ok so the TA explained things for you- did the TA do anything else?</p> <p>A- like if we wanted to ask her if a sentence makes sense she'll tell us yes that makes sense but you could add like other connectives in and things</p> <p>I- ok, and was that the purpose of what you were doing, connectives?</p>	<p>Personal attributes Talk to pupils</p> <p>Provide different strategies</p> <p>Support in lessons</p> <p>Talk to pupils Academic support Clarify work by explaining</p> <p>Prompts</p>	<p>Positive attributes</p> <p>Provide strategies and prompts</p> <p>In lessons</p> <p>Academic support Clarify task</p> <p>Provide strategies and prompts</p>	<p>skill set if the TA</p> <p>Communication between TA and pupils</p> <p>Application of strategies to support pupils' learning</p> <p>TAs work in different contexts in the school</p> <p>Communication between TA and pupils</p> <p>Areas of TA support for pupils</p> <p>Application of strategies to support pupils' learning</p>
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<p>A- yeah</p> <p>I- ok so if Sam wanted to work with a TA, where would be the best place do you think for him to work with them?</p> <p>A- sometimes in like classrooms and things like that, sometimes if you'm on LS you can come here and talk to the TAs what work in here</p> <p>I- ok, so where do you thinks the best place?</p> <p>A- probably LS</p> <p>I- what's LS?</p> <p>A- learning support</p> <p>I- ok and what is it about LS that would make it a good place?</p> <p>A- it's quiet, you haven't got all the shouting what you get outside in classrooms and things</p> <p>I- and why is that a good thing?</p> <p>A- because you can concentrate more as well</p>	<p>Peaceful environment helps concentration</p>	<p>Peaceful environment</p>	<p>Work within an environment to meet the needs of the pupil</p>
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(Colour coding used to identify the links between quotations, codes, subthemes and superordinate themes.)

Example of the coding process related to this extract and specific subthemes

Phase 1. An initial thought whilst transcribing and becoming familiar with the data was that this interviewee was talking about the ways in which a TA supported pupils' learning.

Phase 2. Initial codes related to explaining a task, suggesting different strategies and using prompts were generated and labelled using the node system in NVivo (some extracts coded more than once).

Phase 3. When searching for themes it was apparent that the same or similar codes had been used within transcripts from other participants and so these were grouped and initial themes, such as 'clarify task', were created.

Phase 4. When reviewing the themes it was clear that there were several which could be considered sub-themes if joined under a superordinate theme related to strategies used to support pupils' learning. Individual extracts were checked and sometimes moved into more suitable subthemes as they were refined.

Phase 5. The superordinate theme were finally titled 'application of strategies to support pupils' learning' with the sub-themes 'clarify task', 'provide strategies and prompts', 'slower pace' and 'repetition' within it.

Phase 6. Quotations were used within the write up to explain the sub-themes and superordinate themes. The superordinate theme was linked to RQ2 concerning effective TA practice.

Appendix 14: Analysis by Key Stage for Question 1 in the Questionnaire.
Frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each option.

Response Options	Key Stage	
	3	4
Help pupils with their work	14 (93.3%)	6 (100%)
Talk to pupils' parents/guardians	11 (73.3%)	4 (66.7%)
Help pupils with their behaviour	11 (73.3%)	3 (50%)
Talk to pupils about any problems they are having	14 (93.3%)	2 (33.3%)
Create displays	10 (66.7%)	0 (0%)
Listen to pupils	13 (86.7%)	5 (83.3%)
Tidy up	7 (46.7%)	0 (0%)
Teach pupils	13 (86.7%)	3 (50%)
Help pupils to make friends	7 (46.7%)	2 (33.3%)
Help teachers with their jobs	8 (53.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Mark pupils' work	10 (66.7%)	3 (50%)
Set pupils targets	7 (46.7%)	4 (66.7%)
Get things ready for lessons	11 (73.3%)	3 (50%)
Plan pupil's work	6 (40%)	3 (50%)
After school/ break time clubs and duties	11 (73.3%)	4 (66.7%)
Don't know	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 15: Analysis by Key Stage for Question 2 in the Questionnaire.
Frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each option

Response Options	Key Stage	
	3	4
The teachers	7 (46.7%)	3 (50%)
All the pupils within the school	11 (73.3%)	3 (50%)
Certain pupils within the school	7 (46.7%)	2 (33.3%)
Don't know	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 16: Analysis by Key Stage for Question 3 in the Questionnaire.
Frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each option

Response Options	Key Stage	
	3	4
In the classroom with the rest of the class	5 (35.7%)	1 (16.7%)
In an area away from other pupils	3 (21.4%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes in the classroom with the rest of the class and sometimes in an area away from other pupils	5 (35.7%)	5 (83.3%)
Don't know	1 (7.1%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 17: Analysis by Key Stage for Question 4 in the Questionnaire.
Frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each option

Response Options	Key Stage	
	3	4
With the whole class	2 (13.3%)	0
With small groups of pupils	7 (46.7%)	2 (33.3%)
With individual pupils	2 (13.3%)	1 (16.7%)
It depends on who they are working with and what they are working on	3 (20%)	3 (50%)
Don't know	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 18: Analysis by Key Stage for Question 5 in the Questionnaire. Frequency and percentage of participants who agreed with each option

Statement	Key Stage	I agree a lot	I agree	I am not sure	I disagree	I disagree a lot
TAs help pupils to feel more motivated to learn	3	4 (26.7%)	10 (66.7%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	4	1 (16.7%)	5 (83.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
TAs distract pupils from what they are supposed to be doing	3	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	7 (46.7%)
	4	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)
TAs show pupils how to do things so that they know what to do	3	7 (46.7%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)
	4	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own	3	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)
	4	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	3	3 (20%)	5 (33.3%)	3 (20%)	4 (26.7%)	0 (0%)

Pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time	4	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)
TAs help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things	3	10 (66.7%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	4	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pupils who have help from a TA can feel left out from the class	3	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	6 (40%)
	4	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)
TAs help pupils feel like a part of the school	3	5 (33.3%)	6 (40%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)
	4	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)
TAs help pupils to get on with the people in their class	3	4 (26.7%)	6 (40%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)
	4	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pupils spend more time with a TA than with other pupils	3	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	4 (26.7%)
	4	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	4 (66.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 19: Combined Agreement Analysis for Question 5 in the Questionnaire (all participants)

Statement	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
TAs help pupils to feel more motivated to learn	20 (95.2%)	1 (4.8%)	0 (0%)
TAs distract pupils from what they are supposed to be doing	5 (23.8%)	1 (4.8%)	15 (71.4%)
TAs show pupils how to do things so that they know what to do	17 (81%)	1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)
TAs do things for pupils that they can do on their own	8 (38.1%)	8 (38.1%)	5 (23.8%)
Pupils like a TA to be close to them all the time	10 (47.6%)	5 (23.8%)	6 (28.6%)
TAs help pupils to feel more confident to have a go at things	19 (90.4%)	2 (9.6%)	0 (0%)
Pupils who have help from a TA can feel left out from the class	5 (23.8%)	4 (19%)	12 (57.2%)
TAs help pupils feel like a part of the school	15 (71.4%)	2 (9.6%)	4 (19%)
TAs help pupils to get on with the people in their class	14 (66.7%)	3 (14.3%)	4 (19%)
Pupils spend more time with a TA than with other pupils	5 (23.8%)	9 (42.9%)	7 (33.3%)

Appendix 20: Card Sort Activity

Card	Most Important							Best at						
	Scores Given by Participants					Total	Rank	Scores Given by Participants					Total	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E			A	B	C	D	E		
Help pupils with their work	5	4	4	4	5	22	1	4	5	4	3	5	21	1
Talk to pupils' parents/guardians	3	3	3	4	3	16	5	4	3	3	4	3	17	3
Help pupils with their behaviour	4	2	3	2	4	15	6	2	3	4	3	4	16	4
Talk to pupils about any problems they are having	3	3	4	3	3	16	5	3	3	4	3	3	16	4
Create displays	3	3	2	2	3	13	7	3	3	1	3	2	12	7
Listen to pupils	4	5	5	3	3	20	2	3	4	3	2	4	16	4
Teach pupils	4	4	4	3	3	18	3	5	4	3	2	4	18	2
Help pupils to make friends	3	3	2	5	4	17	4	3	4	2	5	3	17	3
Help teachers with their jobs	1	3	3	3	2	12	8	1	3	5	2	3	14	5
Mark pupils' work	3	3	2	4	3	15	6	4	2	2	4	2	14	5
Tidy up	2	1	1	1	1	6	10	3	1	2	1	1	8	8
Set pupils' targets	2	2	3	3	2	12	8	2	2	3	3	3	13	6
Get things ready for lessons	3	3	3	3	4	16	5	3	3	3	4	3	16	4
Plan pupils' work	2	2	3	2	2	11	9	3	2	3	3	2	13	6
After school/break time clubs and duties	3	4	3	3	3	16	5	2	3	3	3	3	14	5