

**THE ATTUNED SCHOOL:
THE EFFECT, AND EFFECTIVENESS, OF
DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PUPILS
WITH ATTACHMENT DIFFICULTIES AND
SIGNIFICANT ADULTS**

By

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part fulfilment for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects, and effectiveness, of developing relationships between pupils with attachment difficulties and significant adults. Research suggests that 40 percent of children are insecurely attached; which may not only prove a barrier to their learning, but also pose challenges for schools. While anecdotal evidence exists, pertaining to the benefits of individual support and particular strategies, little empirical research has taken place around teaching assistants' efficacy. This study was designed to add to the current body of work.

An innovative mixed-methods *a priori* purposive sampling process was used to ensure that relevant data was gathered. Firstly, the notion of The Attuned School was created by conducting a structured literature review. Ethnographic research followed, which culminated in a quantitative content analysis that identified four suitable contexts. Subsequently, Boxall Profiles were completed to sample individuals who may benefit from intervention. Ultimately, through two pairings, the significant adult-pupil dyad was explored.

Attachment and secure base theories underpin the study; they give rise to the notion that schools, and significant adults, can become surrogate secure bases from which students can develop social, emotional and behavioural skills. The findings suggest that settings that have a family ethos, and reflective head teachers, are likely to be attuned. 1:1 intervention positively influenced the two case study pupils' progress; their Boxall Profiles and Individual Education Plans provided evidence, as did participants' voices. Noteworthy improvement was made in Section II (The Diagnostic Profile), which opposes prior studies. What also emerges is that a reflective significant adult ensures pupils with attachment difficulties receive equal opportunities and are not discriminated against. Consequently, the thesis makes recommendations; however, further research is also suggested.

DEDICATION

To my daughter, Zinnia – With ‘super’ kisses and ‘squashy’ cuddles!

To my husband, Nick – Thank you for your endless patience.

All my love.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A

Adoption Support (AS)

Adventure Learning (AL)

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

B

Behaviour Support Team (BST)

C

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Child-Centred Play Therapy (CCPT)

Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)

Centre for Evidence Informed Policy and Practice (CEIPP)

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

D

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Disinhibited Attachment Disorder (DAD)

Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSED)

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP)

Dynamic Maturation Model (DMM)

E

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Evidence-based Practice (EBP)

I

Inclusion Support Officer (ISO)

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

K

Key Stage (KS)

L

Learning Mentor (LM)

Learning Support Service (LSS)

Local Authority (LA)

Local Education Authority (LEA)

Local Offer (LO)

Looked After Children (LAC)

M

Master of Arts (MA)

Mixed Methods Research (MMR)

N

National Autistic Society (NAS)

National Health Service (NHS)

The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI)

Nurture Group (NG)

Nurture Group Network (NGN)

O

Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD)

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

P

Personalised Learning (PL)

Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA)

R

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

Randomised Control Trial (RCT)

S

School Action (SA)

School Action Plus (SAP)

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Specialist Advisory Teacher (SAT)

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

Senior Management Team (SMT)

Systematic Review (SR)

Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)

T

Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS)

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Team Around the Child (TAC)

Teacher Training Agency (TTA)

U

United Kingdom (UK)

United States of America (USA)

W

World Health Organisation (WHO)

CHAPTER ONE

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PUPILS WITH ATTACHMENT DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR DESIGNATED SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

1.1 - Introduction and Research Questions

Attachment theory underpins this study; Bowlby's (1944) seminal work on the subject being *Forty Four Juvenile Thieves: Their Character and Home Life*. In this piece, links are made between early childhood experience and personality, an association which lays the foundation for Ainsworth's (1967) later work surrounding insecure and secure patterns of attachment. The level of attunement (Stern, 2000), how the caregiver interacts with their infant, recognising their emotions and responding to these with immediacy, determines which attachment pattern will develop. Where optimum levels are achieved, a secure base (Bowlby, 2005b) is formed; conversely, it is not where factors inhibit the caregiver's availability and responsiveness. The thesis adopts this definition of attachment throughout.

This project examines relationships between pupils in school with attachment difficulties and their designated significant adults. Children with attachment difficulties experience barriers to their learning in the school environment (Edwards, 2009; Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Lyons-Ruth, Easterbook, & Davidson Cibelli, 1997; Lyons-Ruth, Repacholi, McCleod, & Silva, 1991; Pearce, 2009; Ryan, 2006; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988) and the staff who teach them face distinct challenges (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Geddes, 2006; Phillips, 2007). The response has been to provide practical strategies, in order to improve outcomes (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2006; Phillips, 2007; Ryan, 2006); however, these "relational" (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013, p. 342) approaches rely on the use of

1:1 support and only anecdotal evidence exists regarding the effect and effectiveness of an “additional attachment figure” (Bombèr, 2007, p. 14).

Consequently, the purpose of this research was to add to the limited body of work available (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000). While several papers examine positive relationships in school (Galbo, 1989; Glasser, 1997; Groom & Rose, 2005; Kohn, 1993a; Robertson, 2006; Visser, 2002) and others comment upon teacher-pupil interactions, with specific reference to attachment (Aikins, Howes, & Hamilton, 2009; Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Chapman, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, 2012; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; O'Connor, 2010; Riley, 2009; Rose, 2015; Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Zions, 2005), never has the focus been upon individual significant adult-pupil pairings. Moreover, this study argues that a teacher cannot replicate the secure base, given their accountability to other students. Bombèr (2007) suggests that teaching assistants (TAs) adopt the role, although their efficacy has not been exclusively considered. Thus, the key research question was: “What are the effects of, and how effective is, the use of a ‘significant adult’ in changing the behaviour of children with attachment difficulties?”. Suitable pairs of TAs and pupils were included in the study and in-depth data collected, pertaining to the dyad’s relationship, through interviews, observations, diary entries and Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. The study also sought school staff and parents’ views. A thematic ‘Framework’ (NatCen, 2015) was used to analyse the data.

At the beginning and end of the research a Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010) was completed, in order to measure change in relation to the child’s social, emotional and behavioural skills: pupils also needed to be distinguished from the general school population. There were a number of reasons for this choice. One, clinical and behavioural diagnoses such as reactive attachment disorder (RAD), disinhibited attachment disorder (DAD), ambivalent,

avoidant and disorganised attachments might be considered social constructions. Two, whether a child is given a diagnosis, or not, relies upon personal subjectivity. Three, few children in the local authority (LA) are identified with such diagnoses and a broader definition of attachment difficulties would encompass more children. Four, at the study's inception there was no classroom-based assessment to identify attachment difficulties. Five, Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006), who advocate 1:1 support, also recommend the Boxall Profile and, while research suggests (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007; Scott & Lee, 2009) that the profile has been effectively used in Nurture Groups (NGs) there is little empirical work around its use outside this remit (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead, Chilton, & Stephens, 2011). Thus, the current study added to this limited information by answering the research question: "What can a Boxall Profile reveal about pupils' behaviour change, in conjunction with intervention from a significant adult?".

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1944, 1952, 1958, 1977, 1979, 1988, 2005a, 2005b; Salter Ainsworth, 1969, 1985a, 1985b; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Salter Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994) underpinned the research; consequently, an *a priori* purposive sampling strategy was implemented. This ensured that the data collected was relevant to the key question posed. The approach involved a context and participant level, with clear criteria fixed at the outset; the former included the creation of *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014), through a structured literature review that consulted not only work related directly to the suggested techniques, but material pertaining to NGs (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010; Boxall & Lucas, 2010; Evans, Haskayne, Hawkes, Marston, & Williams, 2008), social work (Bell, 2002; Winter, 2009), parenting (Barrett, 2006; Egeland, 2009; McDaniel, Braiden, & Regan, 2009) and from therapeutic work with children and families (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007; Lieberman & Zeanah, 1999;

Pearce, 2009; Seles, 2008). This synthesis of ideas raised a further research question entitled: “How attuned are schools?”. The data collected included policies, IEPs, interviews and observations: it was analysed both deductively and inductively, to create an in-depth picture of local provision for pupils with attachment difficulties.

The sample size achieved was small; from a potential 2309 pupils only two remained. Thus, an additional question investigated: “What factors contributed towards the non-participation of head teachers, parents, carers and social workers?”. This last line of enquiry was deemed methodologically relevant, as consent appears to have received little attention in qualitative research (Curtis, Gelser, Smith, & Washburn, 2000) and any findings could add to the small body of literature in existence; however, of greater relevance to this study, is the criticism that research in the field of attachment interventions lack large enough samples (Hanson & Spratt, 2000). While the above query could not mitigate this study’s sampling size issues, its investigation could uncover obstacles pertinent to pupils with attachment difficulties, which future research may overcome.

The study’s research design is robust in that it gathers evidence from a number of informants; invariably, in similar projects, teacher reports are used (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). While the latter contributed towards an in-depth understanding of the significant adult-pupil dyad, of central importance were the actions and opinions of these principal contributors. Their ‘voices’ are invaluable; especially the children’s, as literature suggests that this element has hitherto been missed (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Hill, 1997). By including pupils, it was possible to uncover what they deemed effective. Thus, the thesis adopted the position that, wherever possible, the children should be involved in the research process and this echoes the *Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014); however, other views’, such as the parents’, were

still required to ensure triangulation. Through this multiple perspective, the research set out to influence provision for children with attachment difficulties.

1.2 - Background to the Research

Action research was chosen, so that the study could run in parallel with employment; the dual role of researcher and Inclusion Support Officer (ISO) within the LA being adopted. The latter involves supporting children with social, emotional and behavioural special educational needs (SEN) within the mainstream setting, including those with attachment difficulties. Two key issues guided the overarching research question. Firstly, in response to schools' requests for advice, literature referring to relational approaches (see, for example, Bebbington & Phillips, 2002) was frequently referred to. Professionals remained sceptical about the strategies' benefits due their reliance upon anecdotal evidence; therefore, this study sought to provide empirical data. Secondly, such intervention was contentious as it required employing a significant adult (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2006), which has financial implications for any school, or LA; thus, it was deemed appropriate to explore the 'value' of this expenditure.

1.3 - The Literature Selection Process

While systematic reviews (SRs) of literature are advocated within educational research (Evans & Benefield, 2001; Oakley, 2003), this thesis does not set this precedent. Such reviews require substantial finance and time-allocation (ibid.), both of which were not available to a lone researcher. It is likely that the study has "missed something out" (Andrews, 2005, p. 414); however, to mitigate this, characteristics of SRs were adhered to whenever possible. The study's literature search followed a clear a procedure, which included obtaining up-to-date information from experts in the field and using multiple on-line databases. This structure was

useful for limiting bias too; although, as not all literature uncovered was appropriate for educational use, judgements were necessary. Researcher subjectivity was relied upon to establish what constituted ‘good’ evidence; thus, realising objectivity was impossible.

Initially, the sample drew from texts referred to by the county’s ISOs, Looked After Children (LAC) teachers and Adoption Support (AS) social workers. The rationale was that these staff are responsible for monitoring children who have attachment difficulties within the LA: those at home (ISOs); LAC (LAC teachers) and adoptees (AS social workers). As these professionals are experts in their field, the assumption was that they would have knowledge of up-to-date information regarding how to meet these children’s needs. Previous material from studying a Master of Arts (MA) in SEN was also included. This approach is subjective; however, Bryman (2012) advocates that in any literature search there are key texts that the researcher has in mind. Thus, books such as *Inside I’m Hurting* (Bombèr, 2007) and *Attachment in the Classroom* (Geddes, 2006) provided a starting point: all work written by these authors, and others used by LA specialists, was read.

These initial writers focussed upon practical strategies; however, it was important to include theory, and relevant research, in the literature review selection. A book list provided by one of the county’s AS social workers became another prompt. Key attachment theorists were mentioned, including: Bowlby (1944); Salter Ainsworth (1967) and Main and Soloman (1990); their seminal, and subsequent, work referred to. The list also included several texts pertaining to social work; for example, Barrett (2006); Bell (2002); Gilligan (1998, 2000) and Winter (2009). These authors provided valuable insight into subjects such as: parenting children with attachment difficulties; the concept of social workers as secondary attachment figures; how social workers can effectively liaise with teachers and the protective value of school. While the views and opinions expressed in this literature could be adapted for use in

the educational context, only the latter directly examined the application of attachment theory to pupils; therefore, it was necessary to expand the search.

As LA specialists may not have been aware of all literature, the next phase of the selection process included searching on-line databases around the application of attachment theory in the school environment and, more specifically, the use of a significant adult with pupils who have attachment difficulties. To do so, the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) was appropriate. While Svensson (2010) questions the impact factors of the database, Bryman (2012) negates the former's concerns, suggesting that credibility is achieved thorough the database's screening process. The latter also suggests that the SSCI is the most useful single source in the field and, if consulted in a methodical fashion, up-to-date, reputable publications will have been included in the search.

The University of Birmingham's "FindIt@Bham" (University of Birmingham, 2009) facility searches the library catalogue, including the SSCI and other databases; consequently, this system was used initially. The research question drove the searches and key phrases were inputted, which included: 'attachment disorder'; 'attachment difficulties'; 'attachment difficulties in school'; 'attachment relationships in school'; 'teacher-pupil attachment relationships in school'; 'attachment in the classroom'; 'attachment in middle childhood' and 'significant adults and pupils with attachment difficulties'. All contained the word 'attachment', so that they were relevant to the study's population. Given that each search retrieved thousands of results it was impossible to read everything; therefore, literature was read by the five most cited authors, dependent upon its relevance to the research question itself. Despite this purposive strategy, it was necessary to discard certain pieces as not all literature was applicable; again, acknowledgment is made of this subjective element.

‘Google Scholar’ (Google, n.d.) was used to source further literature pertaining to key authors, despite contention around the search engine. Hoseth (2011) claims that there are “serious concerns for those who are familiar with more sophisticated and comprehensive search techniques” (p. 39) and believes that the databases’ weaknesses outweigh its strengths. However, Howland, Howell, Wright, and Dickson (2009) advocate its use in conjunction with other databases, asserting that this practice could maximise the amount of information retrieved: indeed, using both methods in tandem, proved apposite in this study.

Given that thesis completion took seven years, further literature was uncovered throughout. Firstly, extra searches supplemented the strategy when additional research questions were posed; for example, in the case of literature surrounding non-respondents. Secondly, authors continued to produce work after the initial trawl had taken place. Materials were uncovered through awareness of the publication of new government legislation, recommendations by colleagues, leads followed in reference lists and browsing the ‘World Wide Web’. To ensure the thesis was timely, the write up included any relevant references.

1.4 - Contexts

“Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) criteria were applied to contexts to create a sample with differing characteristics. The study included sixteen schools, which comprised two feeder primaries from each of the eight secondary settings within a single borough council. One primary was a ‘large’ school, with more than 100 pupils on roll and one was ‘small’, with less than 100. The distinction is the Office for Standards in Education’s (OFSTED’s) (2000). The rationale was that small and large schools would differ in terms of flexibility within strategic resourcing and produce varied results. Some schools had one, or more pupils, with LA identified social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) at School Action Plus (SAP)

(Department for Education and Skills, 2001b), or above, and others did not: this definition was used as, at the time of the research, neither the *Children and Families Act* (UK Parliament, 2014), nor the latest *SEND Code of Practice* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) was published. These criteria enabled comparison between those head teachers who had referred to, or been given advice by, the LA for SEBD between January and July 2012, and those who refrained from doing so. Ultimately, fifteen schools took part either in the full study, or in determining reasons for non-consent. Table 1 shows each school's characteristics:

Table 1. Characteristics of the Schools Approached to be Case Studies

	School Size (on roll)	Referral/Support
School 1	Small (36)	No
School 2	Small (32)	No
School 3	Large (246)	No
School 4	Large (184)	Yes
School 5	Large (334)	Yes
School 6	Large (224)	Yes
School 7	Small (41)	No
School 8	Large (193)	No
School 9	Large (265)	No
School 10	Small (20)	No
School 11	Small (67)	No
School 12	Small (25)	No
School 13	Large (193)	No

School 14	Small (54)	No
School 15	Large (232)	No

N.B. Every school, except one (School 1), had at least one pupil with identified SEBD on the SEN register.

From these fifteen schools, twelve (1-12) were involved in the ethnographic, context sampling phase of the project. They were reduced to four (2, 4, 6 and 7) through the use of The Attuned School Checklist, which had been compiled following the structured literature review. The head teachers of the three remaining schools engaged in semi-structured interviews, which pursued their reasons for not participating.

1.5 - Participants

There were five categories of participants (pupils, significant adults, parents and/or carers, head teachers and social workers) recruited for inclusion in the study. The application of *a priori* purposive sampling criteria was necessary in the first two groups, as the focus of the thesis was on the relationship between pupils with attachment difficulties and their significant adults. The rationale was that the individuals chosen needed to be relevant, in order that the information gathered applied to the existing body of knowledge on the subject; consequently, comparisons and recommendations might be possible. There was no attempt to apply the same criteria to the parents and/or carers, head teachers, or social workers due to their subsidiary research roles; accordingly, the thesis comments upon the defining characteristics of the two former groups at length, but it is not necessary to describe the others.

1.5.1 - Defining “Attachment Difficulties”

A definition of the phrase “attachment difficulties” was required, as pupil participants needed to be distinguished from the general school population. This process was subjective, since there are no biological tests available with which to identify the condition, and arriving at an agreement in terms of meaning was challenging. At the time of the research, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) had not been published, neither had the *International Classification of Diseases-10* (ICD-10), *Version 2016* (World Health Organization, 2016); therefore, the following commentary must be read with this in mind. At the study’s outset, there were various conceptualisations to consider. These included: clinical diagnoses, such as reactive attachment disorder (RAD) (American Psychiatric Association DSM-VI – disinhibited/inhibited types and World Health Organisation ICD-10) and disinhibited attachment disorder (DAD) (World Health Organisation ICD-10);¹ behavioural descriptions, such as the *Strange Situation* experiments (Main & Soloman, 1990; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970) and broad definitions; for example, Bebbington and Philips (2002), Ryan (2006) and Bennathan and Boxall (2010).

Until the 1960s, there was no universally accepted measurement of attachment between infants and their carers. The *Strange Situation* experiments (Salter Ainsworth, 1985b; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Salter Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994), first used by Ainsworth in the 1960/70s, sought to resolve this and further our understanding. Secure base theory proposed that if infants were securely attached, they would stray from their caregivers to explore, but would return after a time (Bowlby, 1977; Salter Ainsworth, 1969,

¹ DSM IV Criteria for Reactive Attachment Disorder and ICD-10 Criteria for Attachment Disorders (Appendix A and B) from Zeanah, C. H. (1996). Beyond Insecurity: A Reconceptualization of Attachment Disorders of Infancy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 64(1), 42-52. Adapted from the original documents. (Appendix A)

1985b; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994). Infants were deliberately separated from their mothers under laboratory conditions, in order to elicit “a wide range of behavio[u]rs pertinent to attachment and to its balance with exploratory behavio[u]r” (Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 52). Paradoxically, while attachment theory explains feelings associated with separation (Bowlby, 1979), in the *Strange Situation* experiments episodes of contact are also observed.

Salter Ainsworth and Bell (1970) described in detail the behaviours they evidenced: proximity and contact seeking behaviours; contact maintaining behaviours; contact and interaction resisting behaviours; proximity and interaction avoiding behaviours and search behaviour. Through examining the behavioural responses of babies in these laboratory situations Ainsworth was able to develop the attachment types assigned to infants in the earlier work in Uganda. Initially, attachments were described as *secure*, *insecure* and *non-attached*, while later they were categorised as *secure*, *avoidant* or *ambivalent-resistant* (Salter Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The descriptions altered as Ainsworth recognised that infants attached to their caregivers in all cases, albeit negatively. Main and Soloman (1990) added a fourth category of *disorganized and/or disoriented*, believing there were a number of children whose behaviour did not fit Ainsworth’s original three groupings: in fact, they displayed no consistent pattern of behaviour. The four categories’ observable features are:

Insecure-Avoidant (A Type)

- No clear preference for their caregiver, or a relative stranger;
- Detached, self-reliant, or self-absorbed;
- Ignoring others and orientating themselves away from their caregiver;
- Preference for engaging in solitary activities.

Securely Attached (B Type)

- Preference for contact with their caregiver, but also a willingness to engage with those whom the caregiver is comfortable with;
- Eagerness to explore an unfamiliar situation;
- Comfortable being left with a stranger for a short period of time;
- Excited by the caregivers return; for example, giving a hug.

Insecure-Ambivalent (C Type)

- Excessively clingy towards their caregiver and distressed during separation;
- Inconsolable upon their return and obsessive;
- Angry, demanding and needy;
- Difficult to settle.

Disorganized/Disoriented (D Type)

- Exhibit no consistent pattern; instead they show bizarre and contradictory behaviours;
- Incomplete movements and affective displays;
- Worried;
- Fail to seek out caregivers if they are showing signs of anxiety.

(Pearce, 2009; Van IJzendoorn, Goldberg, Kroonenberg, & Frenkel, 1992)²

Despite having created the *Strange Situation*, Ainsworth later regretted that researchers and clinicians came to rely heavily on this form of assessment. This opinion was formed through:

² Observable features adapted from Pearce, C. (2009) A Short Introduction to Attachment and Attachment Disorder and Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Goldberg, S., Kroonenberg, P. M. and Frenkel, O. J. (1992) The Relative Effects of Maternal and Child Problems on the Quality of Attachment: A Meta Analysis of Attachment in Clinical Samples

one, believing that fieldwork was still most important and that the test was only valid when it built on real-life observations and two, that judgements based on a single investigation were unreliable methodologically (Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994). Nevertheless, the *Strange Situation* experiments continue to be used by those making a clinical diagnosis; indeed, Zeanah (1996) states that it has “great value in the clinical arena” (p. 46).

There are other assessment tools to measure attachment, which are lengthier procedures and not laboratory based. For example, the Q-set (Vaughn & Waters, 1990) consists of 90 behaviour descriptors sorted into nine piles, after two-three hour home visits. A single person or multiple observers, the latter mitigating subjectivity, can carry out the observations. This process creates a summary of the infant’s attachment behaviour. The Q-set was not fashioned as an alternative to the *Strange Situation*; more to compliment Ainsworth’s earlier work (ibid.). The Q-set materials support Ainsworth’s ideology of using real-life observations (Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994).

Attachment representations are also clinically diagnosed; diagnoses which have their origins in Bowlby’s and Ainsworth’s attachment theory (Walter & Petr, 2004). When sampling took place, insecurely attached English children might receive a diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder (RAD) through using diagnostic criteria. The DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) specified two types (disinhibited and inhibited); the ICD-10 (World Health Organization, 1993) one. Other countries also identified disinhibited attachment disorder (DAD) through the latter (Appendix A). Updates to both manuals are available: the DSM-5 (2013) and ICD-10, *Version 2016* (2016); nevertheless, the existing 2012 criterion forms the basis of the following argument regarding participants.

All descriptors and diagnoses attempt to standardise the concept of attachment behaviour; however, the measurements remain socially constructed from widely differing

perspectives and each required careful consideration to reach a definition for this study. At the selection of the research participants, diverse standpoints regarding the clinical diagnosis of an attachment disorder existed; consequently, those excluded, or included, in the research would differ depending upon the diagnostic criteria used. One discrepancy was that between the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), in which the former recognised two sub-types of RAD and the latter separately diagnosed DAD (Wilson, 2001; Zeanah, 1996; Zeanah, Berlin, & Boris, 2011). While there was consensus in much of the criteria used (Zeanah, 1996), the differences meant that children with differing characteristics may, or may not, be given a diagnosis. For example, while both criteria associated pathogenic care with being the cause of an attachment disorder (Zeanah & Gleason, 2010), the WHO did not stipulate that the latter was a diagnostic requirement, unlike the APA (Zeanah, 1996). Furthermore, the United Kingdom (UK) only used the APA criterion clinically, so diagnoses differed from country to country. This would prevent replication of the study elsewhere, or the findings being transferable.

Added controversy was raised by Minde (2003) and Zeanah and Gleason (2010) who claimed that the criteria were little studied. The former suggested that no research has used:

“validated tools and confirmed the above mentioned symptoms [those identified in the criteria itself] in distinct populations with the appropriate follow-up data on the disorder’s natural history” (p. 378)

while the latter questioned the lack of clarity in the behavioural descriptors and argued that many of them did not describe attachment behaviours at all. Zeanah and Gleason (2010) even suggested that disinhibited types do not have an attachment disorder, but “a deviant tendency to violate culturally sanctioned social boundaries in interactions with others” (p. 32) and

believed that the latter could be called “Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder” (ibid., p. 30) (DSED). Considering this information, the conclusion was that some children diagnosed with an attachment disorder should not be included within the study at all, as their difficulties do not stem from a lack of attachment: this decision proved apposite, as the latest version of the APA DSM-5 (2013) has included DSED as a separate diagnosis.

Furthermore, professionals who may have differing views on what behaviours meet the criteria, and qualify for a diagnosis, assess children. This argument does not only apply to the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) or ICD-10 (World Health Organization, 1993). In the *Strange Situation* experiments (Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970) episodes of contact and non-contact are observed by various clinicians; therefore, despite the behaviours being placed into five categories, they too are open to interpretation. For example, contact and interaction-resisting behaviours include “angry screaming” (Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 55) and people could interpret this differently. Thus, diagnosis might be questionably haphazard, as individuals cannot eradicate observational subjectivity. Children might be misdiagnosed, due to similar presenting behaviours, too; indeed, Romanian orphans were described as “quasi-autistic” (Rutter et al., 1989) and the overlap between attachment disorder and autism led to the creation of the Coventry Grid (Jones & Moran, 2010). [C]onduct disorder, oppositional-defiant disorder” (Wilson, 2001, p. 44), “Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia” (Phillips, 2007, p. 36) can also mistakenly be attributed.

Even with agreement and validation of the attachment disorder criteria, it was still inappropriate to require a diagnosis for inclusion within this study. Despite a belief that the number of children with RAD is on the increase (Hanson & Spratt, 2000), there were few known pupils diagnosed in the chosen LA; therefore, using this clinical definition would not have

generated a large enough sample. Moreover, both sets of criteria stipulate that the behaviours must be evident before five years of age and as their parents, or carers, may not have raised concerns this might limit the number of children diagnosed with RAD. The criteria for DSED, created by Zeanah and Gleason (2010), could have been used as it does not stipulate an age-range; however, with attachment theory underpinning the intervention the social, emotional and behavioural skills of these children may not have been improved, as they do not have an attachment disorder *per se*. Lastly, diagnosis, including the application of the behavioural descriptors for secure and insecure attachments (Main & Soloman, 1990; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970), falls within the remit of health professionals. Due to confidentiality, even if sought after, such information could be difficult to unearth. Sharing of information was only possible with carer, or parental, agreement too and, as this was required for all pupils in the school, this task was too onerous for all involved.

Although a young person may not automatically have a disorder if they have insecure attachments (Follan & Minnis, 2010; Goldberg, 2000), it has been stated that in “child psychiatric populations, insecure attachment is likely to be the norm” (Follan & Minnis, 2010, p. 644). As such, where a young person has mental health issues, Follan and Minnis (2010) advocate measuring attachment security, in order to understand the whole child. Conceivably, while these children may not have a diagnosed disorder, they may have recognised difficulties that could lead to complications in later life: ones that may be barriers to their learning in school and where intervention may be beneficial. Consequently, by adopting a broader view of attachment, significantly more children could be included in the study.

Myers (2012), in an historical background to children’s mental health and illness, highlights another flaw regarding the DSM-IV criteria. The paper states that it is impossible to separate diagnostic labels, and the interventions that arise, from the current social context;

consequently, diagnosis lacks a constant definition and each child is not comparable. Accordingly, when relying upon diagnoses, interventions are only relevant to the subjects in time and are not transferable. Thus, as the research sought illuminate strategies with which to manage and change the behaviour of children with attachment difficulties, and generalise the findings to a wider population, a looser definition seemed more appropriate.

Sampling needed to identify children who might not have a diagnosis of RAD, or DAD, but still have SEBD arising from their early experiences. At the study's inception, no classroom-based measurement of attachment existed. More recently, *Observing Children with Attachment Difficulties in School* (Golding et al., 2013) has been produced; however, little empirical research exists into its effectiveness. As such, parallels were drawn between the present research and Nurture Group (NG) provision; for both are underpinned by attachment theory and the purpose of NGs is not to give a medical diagnosis, but develop the child's social, emotional and behavioural skills (Doyle, 2003). The groups, and the Boxall Profile, were developed in the 1970s (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007). 880 UK children were profiled in order to standardise the test, with reliability and validity determined by further research (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010). In the absence of their own assessment tool, both Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006) advocate the use of the Boxall Profile when referring to pupils with attachment difficulties. Two papers also exist (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011), which suggest that the profile can successfully be used outside the NG remit. Given the above, and the fact that the profile forms a baseline assessment from which to "plan focused intervention" (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007, p. 41) with individuals, it was deemed appropriate for use with the child participants in this study.

Staff who knew the children conducted the assessment. Those pupils who had high scores (42 plus, which was one-third higher than the norm for children aged three years four

months to eight years) in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z) were included in the sample. The justification was that these clusters correlate with a lack of support and nurturing in the early years, potential abuse, or the loss of previous constructive relationships (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010; Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007); these circumstances correspond with the pupils Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006) refer to, which further supports the profile's use. Moreover, as each child participant needed a significant adult to implement the strategies, the methodology supposed that those who had greater difficulties would have additional support. High scores in this section also correlate with “demanding, disorganised, immature behaviour” (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007, p. 4), which challenges staff (Bombèr, 2008); thus, individuals could benefit from advice too.

Despite the use of the diagnostic profile, there remained an element of subjectivity in the process. This could not be eradicated as the sampling procedure took place in different schools; each member of staff completing the profiles might interpret the sliding scale of 0-4, or the behavioural descriptors themselves, differently (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). In an attempt to moderate the process, the researcher discussed each case with the adult completing the profile. Moderation was doubly important as the Boxall Profile also acted as a baseline measurement for behavioural change in the pupils. The two case study children had a profile completed for them at the beginning and end of the intervention period. The same member of staff filled both in, to allow comparisons between the children's initial scores and those gathered on completion of the data collection process.

Had the profile been the sole criteria attributed to the individual sampling process, it would have meant profiling every child within the four schools. For busy teachers this was impractical. If the characteristics of each child had been vastly different, it would also have

been impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions from the study. Thus, further conditions of inclusion, and exclusion, were built-in and the research only comprised the following:

- Key Stage (KS) 2 pupils, as a significant amount of research has taken place around middle childhood (Booth-LaForce, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor, & Burgess, 2005; Easterbrooks, Biesecker, & Lyons-Ruth, 2000; Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler, & Grabill, 2001; Kerns, Tomich, Aspelmeier, & Contreras, 2000; Kerns, Tomich, & Kim, 2006; Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Moss, St-Laurent, Dubois-Comtois, & Cyr, 2005; Rakes & Thompson, 2005; Verschueren & Marcoen, 2005; Zionts, 2005), which is approximately 7-12 years old, and this study chose to focus upon a similar age;
- Pupils with identified SEBD, who were on the SEN register of the school, at either School Action (SA), SAP, or at statutory level (statement), in accordance with the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001). Thus, the process of monitoring the pupil's progress would be familiar and the child would have existing support for their difficulties, which could be explored;
- Those without a diagnosed moderate, or severe, learning difficulty as choosing children with the same level of cognitive functioning would enable comparisons.

1.5.2 - Defining “Designated Significant Adults”

The term “designated significant adult” also needed a definition. This was required to distinguish these participants from the number of differing roles that adults have within school. Again, as there is an element of subjectivity within this process, some difficulties needed overcoming whilst arriving at a decision. The conclusion was drawn through examining the available literature on the subject; notably Bombèr (2007, 2008, 2011) and Geddes (2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010) who consider the relationship from an attachment perspective. Given that

information was limited, additional material relating to the concept of a secure base (Bowlby, 2005b; Howe, 2003; Petters & Waters, 2010; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Waters & Cummings, 2000; Zilberstein & Messer, 2010), NGs (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010; Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007; Bishop, 2008; Boxall & Lucas, 2010; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Evans et al., 2008; Garner & Thomas, 2011; King, 2001; Purcell, Bennathan, McKerrell, Gerrard, & Cooper, 2005; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013) and the role of teachers, TAs, or special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) (Burton & Goodman, 2011; Chapman, 2002; Groom & Rose, 2005; Hughes, 2012; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Pearson, 2008; Robertson, 2012; Zions, 2005) was considered.

As attachment theory underpinned the thesis, it was necessary for the designated significant adults to be in a position to replicate the secure base (Bowlby, 2005b; Howe, 2003; Petters & Waters, 2010; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Waters & Cummings, 2000; Zilberstein & Messer, 2010) usually offered by a child's main caregiver. Bowlby (2005b) first cited the notion of a secure base, suggesting that the role entailed:

“being available, ready to respond when called upon to encourage and perhaps assist, but to intervene actively only when clearly necessary” (p. 12).

Where caregivers reacted accordingly, their children would explore the world around them, but rely on a person of safety whenever necessary; for example, when they were frightened, or hurt. With Bowlby's definition in mind, the research sought to examine only staff with these particular characteristics, as their availability and readiness to respond were paramount.

It was inappropriate for significant adults to be class teachers. Despite there being evidence to suggest that forming positive relationships with these members of staff may be constructive for children with attachment difficulties (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Geddes, 2006;

Zionts, 2005) they could not be considered available, or ready to respond, as they are accountable for other students. Sabol and Pianta (2012) question whether teachers and pupils form an attachment at all, given that their time together is brief. Those children supported by the school SENCo, or members of the senior management team, were not included either. While a SENCo may have the skills to adopt this role with pupils, research has shown that many find it difficult to balance the need for specialist teaching with their other commitments (Pearson, 2008): the research assumed that this would be the case for senior leaders too. The child with attachment difficulties would not be their only area of responsibility and this would not be ideal, given the levels of support that they may need to provide.

Bombèr (2008) agrees that using a teacher as a designated significant adult creates complex relational dynamics and suggests that children with attachment difficulties need someone who is “additional to the support that most pupils receive” who can spend “quality time” (p. 4) with them. The need for consistency in this relationship is also highlighted (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2005, 2006) and would be impractical for members of staff with several responsibilities. Consequently, this thesis did not explore a teacher-pupil dyad and the significant adults to be included were TAs, learning mentors (LMs) (Bombèr, 2007, 2011), or similar participants. Adding the latter caveat was necessary, as the staff member’s title was unimportant: the sampling process considered their situation.

The greatest challenge in defining the designated significant adult’s role involved NG provision and their staff might have been included for many reasons. One, the model is advocated for children who have SEBD (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010; Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007; Bishop, 2008; Boxall & Lucas, 2010; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Evans et al., 2008; Garner & Thomas, 2011; King, 2001; Purcell et al., 2005; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Two, both Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006) highlight the classes’ potential with pupils who

have attachment difficulties. Three, its founders produced The Boxall Profile, which was used both as an individual pupil sampling tool and to assess behaviour change and four, an additional TA or LM is present in the sessions co-facilitating and offering support to students.

Nevertheless, participants from NGs were not included. As two members of staff (one teacher and one TA, or LM) lead traditional NGs, the ratio of pupils to adults is greater than 1:1. Thus, neither member of staff could be consistently available, or ready to respond, as they would have several children to consider. Both are responsible for the entire group and this would have led to complex issues regarding who each pupil's significant adult was; as such, the effect and effectiveness of pairings would have been difficult to assess. However, NGs can be part of a school's provision for children with attachment difficulties and, having read the literature that exists on the subject, *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) suggests that it is one eighth of the picture. Thus, while the study excluded pupils solely provided for within an NG setting, where a child attended both an NG and had a designated significant adult (who fit the criteria) they were included.

1.5.3 - A Priori Purposive Sampling

Through using *a priori* purposive sampling, it was not possible to know, in advance, how many pairs of significant adults and pupils the process would identify; however, from the individual pupil sampling process, seven were. From these, two pairs required discounting due to the significant adult's unsuitability (as commented upon above) and three pairs did not consent to take part. Thus, two pupils and two significant adults were included. Three head teachers, two social workers and one carer gave semi-structured interviews around the subject of non-participation. Later, the research also comprised interviewing consenting parents.

1.6 - Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two sets out the theoretical basis for the research, beginning with an overview of infant attachment theory since Bowlby's seminal work entitled *Forty Four Juvenile Thieves: Their Character and Home Life* (1944). The section explores current thinking around attachment and the development of this knowledge. Examining attachment representations, and the affect these can have upon a person throughout their life, is also a component with particular focus on school-aged children. The chapter concludes by addressing the notion of a designated significant adult in more depth, beginning with their historical background.

Chapter three introduces the latest government perspectives and explores the paradigm shift towards social, emotional and mental health in schools; however, the majority of the commentary reviews the literature that exists related to children with attachment difficulties in education, social work, parenting and from therapeutic intervention with families and individuals. The structured literature review used Bryman's (2012) four stages of qualitative analysis and formed the basis of The Attuned School Checklist, with which to identify the case study schools and the material to be included in the significant adults' training.

Chapter four describes the project's methodology and begins by critically reviewing the process by which the broad area to be studied, and the relevant anti-positivist research paradigm, was chosen. The study's design rejects the evidence-based practice (EBP) movement and justifies Mixed Methods Research (MMR) (Brewer & Hunter, 1989); throughout, ontological and epistemological issues are explored. Furthermore, the chapter examines how the thesis is largely a qualitative multiple case study, which uses ethnographic participant observation and evaluation. Also included is an introduction to the study's pilot and commentary upon the individual data collection techniques. Next, the sampling process

employed, at both context and participant level, is evaluated along with the results gathered from this procedure; this includes feedback from non-participant interviews. A description of the training undertaken by the significant adults follows. Finally, the chapter considers how the methodology employed enhances the trustworthiness of the study, using the four categories identified for use in evaluations (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) by Lincoln and Guba (2007).

Chapter five is devoted to ethical considerations, initially exploring the dual role of the ISO and researcher. Following this, the chapter considers issues of recruitment and consent in relation to both the adult and child participants; dealing explicitly with digitally recorded interviews. Reflecting upon participant withdrawal and feedback is next. Likewise, confidentiality and anonymity is considered in relation to the write-up, storage, *The Data Protection Act* (UK Parliament, 1998), access and disposal of data. Subsequently, the commentary focusses upon the outcomes for children and safeguarding. The chapter concludes by outlining the project's associated risks, focussing upon the significant adults and the issues surrounding involving vulnerable children and young people in research.

The first section of chapter six begins with an overview of the analysis frameworks used, for both the sampling procedure and in answering the research questions. The report then turns to the findings of the project's *a priori* purposive sampling process. This section also examines how attuned the twelve participating schools were in relation to The Attuned School Checklist, created with which to conduct the content analysis. Each of the eight key themes is commented upon and the section summaries interpret these findings in relation to the "Maximum Variation" (Patton, 2002) criteria employed in the sampling process. This chapter also presents those issues raised by head teachers and SENCOs not covered by The Attuned

School concept; as these key figures drive a school's ethos, the subjects were worth consideration, and added to the in-depth findings revealed by the study.

Section two of chapter six focusses on the overarching research question, beginning with analysis of the four Boxall Profiles completed for the two case study pupils (Child A and B); an initial Boxall Profile prior to the significant adults' intervention, followed by a second a year later, allows comparisons to be made regarding pupils' behaviour change. Further commentary explores the effects and effectiveness of the significant adults' role through inductive, thematic 'Framework' (NatCen, 2015) analysis. This approach allowed data to be analysed in terms of each participant, which is innovative given that teacher's views are usually the focus of such research. The following themes were uncovered - [the]:

- social, emotional and behavioural progress made by the children;
- pupils', parents' and significant adults' views of the developing relationships;
- significant adult-pupil dyad with reference to attachment, attunement and reciprocity;
- qualities of the significant adult;
- effectiveness of particular approaches;
- benefits of a small school environment;
- effect external support had on the children and school staff.

each is explored sequentially. Chapter six concludes by summarising the thesis' key findings.

Finally, chapter seven highlights contributions to theory and practice, illuminated by The Attuned School concept. The commentary makes recommendations; however, the project's limitations are also noted. Additionally, this section explores possible avenues for future study. Throughout, the write-up returns to the research questions and summarises the

findings with reference to: reasons for non-participation; what makes The Attuned School; how the Boxall Profile can be used as a measure of behaviour change and, the overarching aim, the role of the significant adult with children who have attachment difficulties. The final comments focus upon the overall advantages and disadvantages of the innovative MMR.

CHAPTER TWO

ATTACHMENT THEORY IN THE INFANT YEARS AND BEYOND

2.1 - Introduction

While the literature surrounding attachment in infancy and early childhood spans 60 years, less exists in terms of its effects on school age children. Nevertheless, the notion of a designated significant adult working with a child who has attachment difficulties in school is underpinned by the theory, with several writers drawing upon the model's principles and applying them to educational settings (see, for example, Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Authors collectively suggest that an increased awareness of the concept of attachment might help to develop positive staff-pupil relationships, which in turn support students' social, emotional, behavioural and academic progress. Specific comments relate to those children who have been diagnosed with an attachment disorder, are adopted, LAC, have suffered trauma, neglect, or loss (see, for example, Bombèr, 2007; Bombèr, 2011; Geddes, 2006).

This chapter explores: what we understand by infant attachment theory and how this knowledge evolved; how the different attachment representations can affect a person across their life span, with particular reference to the school years, and the literature that is available surrounding the notion of a designated significant adult. The latter draws upon work from the realms of teacher-pupil relationships, including Galbo (1989) who uses the phrase "teacher as significant adult" (p. 549), and of other staff present in school; for example, TAs (Groom & Rose, 2005). The conclusions drawn suggest that attachment theory, and the secure base concept, are applicable to the educational environment for use with those children who have attachment difficulties and, as such, pupils might be helped to change their behaviour. Thus,

this thesis sought to examine the effects, and effectiveness, of such a relationship; using the Boxall Profile as a tool against which to measure any behavioural adjustment.

What is Attachment Theory?

2.2.1 - The development of attachment theory – in the infant years

Many authors consider Bowlby to be the founder of attachment theory (Goldberg, 1991; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Waters & Cummings, 2000). In the 1940s, when Bowlby began researching, the psychoanalytic interpretation of the infant-mother dyad was oral in nature and relied primarily on the understanding that a child bonded with its mother, because she fed it (Freud, 1933; Pearce, 2009): the “idea that infants' attachments could develop for any other reason was almost unheard of” (Salter Ainsworth & Marvin, 1994, p. 6). Bowlby was keen to distinguish between the earlier psychoanalytic philosophies and the theory of attachment, introducing the notion that the infant-mother bond was principally evolutionary. The book, *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds* (Bowlby, 2005a), states that:

“What is now known of the ontogeny of affectional bonds suggests that they develop because the young creature is born with a strong bias to approach certain classes of stimuli, notably the familiar, and to avoid other classes, notably the strange.” (Bowlby, 2005a, p. 87).

Bowlby was discussing creatures in the wild, but believed that these relationships developed in the same way with human infants and their mothers. The theory further proposed that protection from predators (the strange) was the main reason why animals stay close to their parents (the familiar): Bowlby felt that this security was as important to the survival of the species as food and reproduction. These theories were supported through research at the Tavistock Clinic

(Pearce, 2009); the findings from which suggested that infants did *not* respond to *any* adult stranger who fed them.

As Bretherton (1992) indicates, Bowlby was also keen to distinguish between “the old social learning theory concept of dependency and the new concept of attachment” (p. 763), suggesting that attachments could be formed without “conventional rewards and punishments used by experimental psychologists” (Bowlby, 2005a, p. 155) and citing the example of an attachment being shaped by neglect. In these cases, the infant might become self-reliant, solitary and not dependent at all. Bowlby’s colleague (Salter) Ainsworth also differentiated between attachment and pre-existing theories by describing three differing views of infant-mother relationships, as: “‘object relations,’ ‘dependency,’ and ‘attachment,’” (Salter Ainsworth, 1969, p. 1). Ainsworth claimed that, although the ideas overlapped to some extent, they were not the same as one another. The first related to the psychoanalytic interpretation, the second to social learning theory and the latter was a new concept in its own right. More recently, Goldberg (1991) agreed; acknowledging the differences, but also suggesting that the theories were interlinked.

Crittenden (2000), a student of Ainsworth, supports Bowlby’s early evolutionary principles by suggesting that attachment theory is chiefly about protection from danger; although others draw upon a wider notion of protection, including illness, injury and upset (Goldberg, Grusec, & Jenkins, 1999). As such, this view does not acknowledge a cognitive, or behaviourist, element and the theory links with the debate on genetics (Beaver, Wright, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2008; Pinker, 2002). Pinker (2002), returns to the nature vs. nurture dichotomy and suggests that much of our behaviour is instinctive, asserting that “unpleasant temperaments” and the “willingness to commit anti-social acts” (p. 50) are heritable; even suggesting that murder is an instinctive reaction to obstacles in our way. Beaver et al. (2008) propose that

genetics influence self-control, which is stable by the age of eight. Such concepts have elicited much discussion as they contrast sharply with cognitive and behaviourist perspectives, in which others believe it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate genetics and experience (Bateson, 2010; Follan & Minnis, 2010; Schlinger, 2002).

Bowlby and Ainsworth refined their work to emphasise the cognitive element. Petters and Waters (2010) cite Bowlby's later description of attachment as a control theory and suggest that, while the concept of the secure base and ethology remained significant, more importance was placed on "mental representation [and]... information processing" (p. 3). Despite this, some writers (Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Waters & Cummings, 2000) suggest that this aspect is not given enough attention and argue that it leads to confusion with regard to secure base theory. They question whether the secure base develops as quickly as Bowlby proposed and doubt that attachment theory can exist without learning and socialisation. Gerhardt (2004) dismisses genetics and places more emphasis on "learning and biochemical organisation within a particular environment" (p. 170), while Crittenden's (2000) Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) asserts that attachment representations in children are part of complex processes and experience; their worlds being more multifarious than infants.

Others have specified environmental factors that they believe shape positive, or negative, attachments. The negative aspects include: maternal depression (Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Lyons-Ruth et al., 1997; Murray, 2009; Pearce, 2009; Ryan, 2006; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988); abuse, or domestic violence (Allen & Vostanis, 2005; Cicchetti & Toth, 1996; Egeland, Sroufe, & Jacobvitz, 1988; Follan & Minnis, 2010; Howe, 2003; Laybourne, Andersen, & Sands, 2008; Pearce, 2009; Ryan, 2006); divorce (Page & Bretherton, 2001); parents who are in prison (Edwards, 2009); substance misuse (Pearce, 2009); the insecure attachments of parents themselves as children (ibid.); low socio-economic status, maternal loss

and poor parenting (Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Lyons-Ruth et al., 1991; Pearce, 2009; Ryan, 2006). The authors assert that these negative factors affect the ability of the caregiver to meet the needs of the infant effectively and form insecure attachments. As Pearce (2009) states, they reduce adult accessibility, responsiveness and affective attunement. The latter, according to Zilberstein and Messer (2010), enables adults to respond effectively to their child's emotional communication and "moderate arousal, providing both stimulation and soothing as necessary" (p. 87). Thus, the absence of this ideal level of communication contributes towards negative attachments and the secure base does not develop.

What is Attachment Theory?

2.2.2 - The development of attachment theory – beyond the infant years

Most of the early research surrounding attachment theory focussed upon infants; for example, Bowlby explained behaviour in terms of a child's experiences from 0 to 30+ months. The theory was divided into four stages; three initial ones and a later fourth referred to as "goal-corrected partnership" (Salter Ainsworth, 1985b, p. 793). Ainsworth's early *Strange Situation* work in Uganda also concentrated upon infants under two (Salter Ainsworth, 1967); however, both authors later recognised the importance of attachment theory throughout the life span. Bowlby (1979) stated that "attachment behaviour is held to characterize human beings from the cradle to the grave" (p. 154) and in *Attachments Across the Life Span*, (Salter Ainsworth, 1985a) Ainsworth not only discussed attachment beyond infancy, but many other "affectional bonds" (p. 799). These included sexual pair bonding (heterosexual and same-sex), friends, companions, intimates, siblings and other kin.

Despite Bowlby and Ainsworth concluding that the care given to an infant would affect them throughout their lives, they did little to investigate these later forms of attachment further.

Waters and Cummings (2000) believe that Bowlby's preference for studying infancy was a "missed opportunity" (p. 166) and that other relationships should have been examined. Since, researchers have provided extensions to attachment theory, with the most notable watershed being in the 1980s, when studies examined the adult-adult dyad. Writers translated Bowlby and Ainsworth's ideas to that of romantic love and considered that affectional bonds also develop in these incidences (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990, 1994a, 1994b).

It was not until the mid-1990s that researchers studied the effects of attachment on school-aged children. When the literature was reviewed, studies were primarily based in the United States of America (USA) and investigated 'middle childhood', which includes pupils from 7-12 years old (Booth-LaForce et al., 2005; Easterbrooks et al., 2000; Kerns et al., 2001; Kerns et al., 2000; Kerns et al., 2006; Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Lyons-Ruth et al., 1997; Moss et al., 2005; Rakes & Thompson, 2005; Verschueren & Marcoen, 2005; Zions, 2005). The findings supported Bowlby's (1979) view that attachment theory can shed light on:

"emotional distress and personality disturbance, including anxiety, anger, depression, and emotional detachment, to which unwilling separation and loss give rise" (p. 151)

and that children's social, emotional and behavioural skills are compromised. Evidence suggests (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Moss et al., 2005; Zions, 2005) that those with disorganized (D) attachment behaviours are most affected by negative environmental factors. Zions (2005) proposes that these children have poorer outcomes in terms of behaviour and peer, teacher and parent relationships. Lyons-Ruth (1996) investigated aggressive behaviour towards peers, finding links with (D) type children, but not avoidant, or ambivalent, patterns; the results suggesting that risk factors within the family, such as depression, were early

indicators of later hostility. Moss et al. (2005) studied family balance (marital difficulties, traumatic events and parental hospitalisation), parent-child relationships and children's attachment style: the evidence gathered from teachers and pupils establishing that, while some children in the other categories had SEBD, only those with disorganised (D) attachment patterns manifested clinical levels of problem behaviours. The authors also claimed that children's security and insecurity grew further apart the longer the negative risk factors persisted.

Researchers have also examined secure attachments and identified that these can have positive benefits within school, in terms of children's social, emotional and behavioural development. For example, Booth-LaForce et al. (2005) present a credible case regarding positive attachments and friendship. With secure relationships built on trust and intimacy, they assert that children who develop these skills as infants are more likely to make friends at school: their studies in Maryland showed that pupils with secure attachments had high self-worth and they were more likely to have high quality friendships. Verschueren and Marcoen (2005) gained similar results regarding peer relationships and acceptance within the group, but they discovered that this related only to a child's perceived security with their father. The above is not conclusive, as when Booth-LaForce et al. (2005) repeated their research in Seattle their findings did not concur; they suggest further examination is required.

This is not the only example of inconsistent research. Bergin and Bergin (2009) state that both shy and outgoing children can have differing attachments. A study of school-age children in Israel (Granot & Mayseless, 2001) also suggests that while many pupils with insecure attachments fared less well at school, this was not always the case; some with secure attachments were not competent socially, emotionally and behaviourally either. Crowell et al. (2002) question whether there is sufficient commonality to comment on the research

surrounding relationships. They recommend further exploration and suggest gaining “clear descriptions of attachment behavio[u]rs in older children, adolescents, and adults” (p. 34).

Most research suggests that attachment representations are not fixed and they can alter over time, dependent upon external factors. Waters et al. (2000) conducted a twenty-year longitudinal study in which they revealed that “throughout childhood, attachment representations remain open to revision in light of real experience” (p. 687). Moss et al. (2005) back this theory and suggest that as “internal working models are flexible, they may be revised in the light of changing experiences occurring beyond infancy” (p. 193). While they concluded that children with ambivalent (27%) and avoidant (14%) attachments were likely to change: their results showed no difference in disorganised (D) type children (0%), due to their “state of fear” (p. 194). Pearce (2009) does not dismiss the latter, stating that:

“even the most disturbed children can be helped to hold, and operate increasingly in accordance with, positive attachment representations.” (p. 70).

Despite the discrepancies and criticisms, this thesis adopts the position that children’s self-esteem, emotional regulation, peer relationships, interactions with teachers and communication can all be affected, to varying degrees, by either secure or insecure attachments. It also asserts that pupil’s internal working models are malleable in the light of positive experiences. Arguably, for insecurely attached children, it would unethical for schools not to address this need and intervene in order to help them manage. Indeed, Bergin and Bergin (2009) propose that it is “morally and practically wrong to assert that schools should only concentrate on academic goals” (p. 61); however, if relationships are the key to improving educational achievement (*ibid.*), applying attachment theory to the classroom context might also improve a child’s academic attainment.

Sabol and Pianta (2012) concur, stating how teachers can support both “improved academic and socioemotional functioning among children with behavioural and demographic risk” (p. 14). Separation-reunion procedures with French-Canadian school children (Moss & St-Laurent, 2001) support the need for intervention, suggesting that engagement, motivation and academic achievement are lower in children with insecure attachments; however, while support is vital for all pupils, those with a disorganised (D) type are most adversely influenced. Thus, this thesis examines ways of replicating the secure base, both within the setting as a whole and by allocating a significant adult (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Phillips, 2007; Zions, 2005), to improve children’s outcomes socially, emotionally, behaviourally and academically. The latter is pertinent, for the role of the significant adult cannot be underestimated; even if success is measured in terms of academic achievement (Mansell, 2011; Office for Standards in Education, 2010b).

Who Are Significant Adults?

2.3.1 - The history of the infant years

Early literature on the subject of attachment referred generally, although not exclusively, to the bond a child had with its mother. Bowlby’s study of young offenders (1944) investigated their mothers’ conscious and unconscious attitude, while a report prepared by Bowlby (1952), on behalf of the WHO, suggested that the role of a father was to support his wife, not their infant, or young child; a view which led many mothers to ask whether they could ever leave their children. In *Can I Leave My Baby?* (1958), Bowlby acknowledged that there was a role for fathers, but described this as a “spare Mummy” and insisted that it was children’s “mothers who are most important to them” (p. 7). The author continued to infer that women should only leave their family when it was absolutely necessary, believing throughout life, that there was a

hierarchy of carers (2004); only towards the end placing more importance on a father's role (Newland & Coyl, 2010).

Not until the 1960s were relationships outside the mother-infant dyad researched (Bretherton, 2010). Schaffer and Emmerson (1964) challenged Bowlby over why fathers were given only a "minor subsidiary role" (p. 72) in terms of their importance in an infant's early life, while Ainsworth's (1967) work in Uganda concluded that extended family could become attachment figures; suggesting that some of the fathers observed even became the main caregiver. Recently, there have been dedicated projects related to exploring attachment in terms of a father's role (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, Bokhorst, & Schuengel, 2004; Hazen, McFarland, Jacobvitz, & Boyd-Soisson, 2010); the former examines shared environments and the latter "frightening behaviours" (p. 51). Furthermore, in the 1990s researchers began to examine attachment figures outside the family unit (Barnas & Cummings, 1994; Goossens & van IJzendoorn, 1990; Sagi et al., 1995): for example, professional caregivers in day-care settings. Sharkey and Sharkey (2010) even explored whether robots could care for infants and the ethical implications of such a proposal.

The outcomes of the above research support the view that infants can form multiple attachments and writers often refer to the most significant attachment figure as a "primary caregiver" (p. 13) indicating that this is not, necessarily, the mother. Such conclusions suggest that more than one (either male or female) attachment can form and these might exist in differing environments: in the case of this thesis, explicitly at both home and school. Thus, in the current research, the significant adult does not seek to replace the child's main attachment figure, but to examine an "additional" (Bombèr, 2007, p. 14) school based one. For this reason, the children's parents, or carers, took an active part in the process too, through invitation to IEP

meetings. Later in the project, they were also included in the interviews; this was following discussion with the parents themselves.

Who Are Significant Adults?

2.3.2 - The history beyond the infant years

Over twenty-five years ago, Galbo (1989) considered existing literature relating to the notion of a teacher, or other key person in school, being a “significant adult” (p. 549) for adolescents. While the review did not specifically relate to children with attachment difficulties, or the age group targeted in this study, some of the remarks are pertinent. The author identified that if positive relationships developed, adults could be a “potential source of influence for the student” (ibid., p. 549); subsequently, suggesting that teachers and pupils be matched according to their need of one another. Visser (2002), whilst discussing children with SEBD, also places importance on relationships and proposes that there are eight implicit “eternal verities” (p. 68) which teachers require if they are to positively influence such pupils.

Neither of the above mentions attachment theory; however, lately there has been a surge of interest in its application to the classroom context (Hughes, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) advocate how teacher interactions with students can be enhanced through understanding their own attachment styles. Others suggest that vulnerable (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Rose, 2015) and at-risk (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012) children can be supported through improved teacher-pupil relationships. Few authors specifically mention children with attachment difficulties; although, several interventions to enhance parental bonding do (Barrett, 2006; Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Berlin, Zeanah, & Lieberman, 2008; Egeland, 2009; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007; Lieberman & Zeanah, 1999; Pearce, 2009; Seles, 2008). In education, the exception is

Zionts (2005) who mentions Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD) and disorganised (D) attachment representations and examines how teacher-student relationships are “a risk factor or a protective factor for elementary-age students who demonstrate [such] externalizing disorders ... with their primary caregivers” (p. 231). The author also offers practical advice on transferring secure base theory to the school environment; for example, how teachers maintaining contact with pupils year-on-year may overcome barriers to their learning. This longevity of experience may be crucial, as Sabol and Pianta (2012) question whether a teacher-child relationship is indeed an attachment, given its brief nature.

Whether teachers can assume the role is questionable, as they cannot consistently be on-call to manage individual children as a parent could (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2005, 2006). Bombèr (2007) proposes that teachers are unable to “keep the child in mind continually” (p. 65) and states that a significant adult should be a TA, or LM, in primary provision; however, there may be “more possibilities” (p. 63) within a secondary school environment. Evidence suggests that TAs are paramount in the effective inclusion of children with SEBD into mainstream schools (Groom & Rose, 2005) and that “time for establishing individual positive relationships” (p. 29) is a key factor in this success. As there may be more flexibility regarding the availability, readiness to respond and permanency of staff who have these qualities (regardless of their title), they appear most appropriate for the role of a significant adult.

Nonetheless, the idea is controversial. Providing a significant adult has financial, organisational and human resource implications. The intervention requires high levels of 1:1 classroom support; however, TAs can have “low impact for high cost” (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015, p. 6) and they may not be as beneficial as was previously thought (Audit Commission, 2011a, 2011b). Using volunteers may overcome the former; however, given the challenges of the role, this might not be appropriate. As the key person must be consistent and

available, protected time needs designating to the role too, making it difficult for the member of staff to work with other children. Additionally, the quality of relationships is vital (Bombèr, 2008) and not everyone possesses the necessary assets, such as: a strong sense of self and humour; the ability to regulate themselves emotionally and a strong rapport with the child (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Visser, 2002). Staff might be helped by counsellors to achieve such an understanding (Bombèr, 2008), but this also involves financial commitment and its effectiveness has not been measured.

Furthermore, the notion of creating “relative dependency” (ibid., p. 4) is at odds with advice from OFSTED, regarding achievements and independence (Office for Standards in Education, 2010a, 2010b); consequently, it may be difficult for some to embrace. Indeed, Chapman (2002) speaks of the professional issues she faced when using techniques to “progress backwards” (p. 94) with individuals within her class. Others (Mercer, 2014; Pignotti & Mercer, 2007) question similar strategies in the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) approach, such as feeding children with attachment difficulties from a baby’s bottle. Thus, in some settings there may be obstacles to overcome prior to implementing a significant adult.

2.4 - Conclusion: A Surrogate Secure Base

With the increased interest in teacher-pupil relationships, we may well “know enough” (Hughes, 2012, p. 219) to provide positive learning environments and promote children’s social, emotional and behavioural development; however, this thesis adopts an extended position suggesting that attachment theory can be applied to the educational environment and, explicitly, that schools can be a “surrogate secure base” (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32) for children with attachment difficulties. Writers provide practical strategies and advocate the significant adult’s role (see, for example, Bombèr, 2007; Bombèr, 2011); yet, the

information must be treated with caution as their observations are anecdotal. Zions (2005) specifies the teacher's protective role for those with ODD, CD, or disorganized (D) type attachment relationships, but identifies a lack of knowledge, highlights remaining questions and states interventions need to be:

“based solidly in theory.... effective and efficient to implement, and.... have a promising longitudinal impact on children's developmental outcomes.” (p. 249).

Sabol and Pianta (2012) agree: they acknowledge significant progress, but also suggest that more research is necessary. Thus, the fact that the effect and effectiveness of the significant adult is largely unknown, and questions remain, drove the current research.

The project employed an *a priori* purposive sampling strategy, as attachment and secure base theory underpinned the rationale. This ensured that the findings were relevant to the study's participants; those defined as ‘designated significant adults’ and pupils with ‘attachment difficulties’. The context level of sampling relied upon an understanding of schools which were most attuned to these children's needs: it was assumed that these environments would most closely replicate the secure base, be responsive to intervention suggestions and produce in-depth data relevant to the overarching research question. The findings might then be generalised to similar contexts and participants. Consequently, existing practice was examined and the next chapter discusses the literature used to create *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014); given the lack of empirical educational research, this includes work from parenting, social work and therapeutic provision.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ATTUNED SCHOOL

3.1 - Introduction

Pupils with attachment difficulties may present one of the greatest challenges to teachers: indeed, the latter can experience stress and culpability (Bombèr, 2008; Chapman, 2002). Individuals' bizarre, unpredictable actions can be problematic and the booklet *Adoption, Attachment Issues and Your School* (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002) highlights numerous behaviours that those with "attachment issues" (p. 2) might exhibit. These include, among others: poor concentration; turning around; talking constantly; continually asking trivial (to others) questions; ignoring instructions; difficulty with transitions; refusal to be helped; lying; stealing and sulkiness. The publication attributes these behaviours to hypothetical situations, such as scanning the room for danger. These authors, and others (see, for example, Ryan, 2006) have responded to teacher's subsequent need for practical help; however, their work lacks grounding in empirical research. This study sought to examine potential educational approaches, including the use of the significant adult as a secure base. To do so, an in-depth critique of relevant literature was required and this chapter describes the process used.

Initially, the section explores the national context of SEN. It comments upon the government's recent acknowledgement of how pupils' behaviour may be indicative of unmet mental health needs (Department for Education, 2014a), but suggests there remains a lack of comprehensive guidance around provision. Next, the chapter defines The Attuned School, as this concept informed: the data collection techniques; the checklist with which to identify the case study schools and the material on which to base training for the designated significant adults. A summary of the structured approach taken to analysing the selected literature follows

(see chapter four for a detailed explanation), with commentary upon the conclusions drawn. The work reviewed not only related to strategies suggested within education, but as this was limited, from material pertaining to NGOs, social work, parenting and from those who work therapeutically with children and their families (see, for example, Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2010; Bennathan & Boxall, 2010; Egeland, 2009; Winter, 2009).

3.2 - The National Context: Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Children's SEN received attention from the UK's last labour government. The *Bercow Report* (Bercow, 2008), *Steer Report* and *Behaviour Review* (2005, 2008), *The Lamb Enquiry* (2009), guidance on exclusion (DCFS, 2008) and the findings from a multi-Local Education Authority (LEA) project designed to illuminate best practice with regard to children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing (Weare & Gray, 2003) were but a few of the publications produced. *The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL) and Family SEAL resource (Department for Education and Skills, 2005, 2006) provided a framework for the teaching of social, emotional and behavioural skills; although some suggest it might be more effective in primary school than at secondary level (Humphrey, Kalambouka, Wigelsworth, & Lendrum, 2010; Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010, 2013). Furthermore, the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) project sought to address the issue of individuals' mental health in education: it too with varying degrees of success (Norwich & Eaton, 2014; Wolpert, Humphrey, Belsky, & Deighton, 2013).

Through their recommendations, all of the above sought to improve provision in schools for children with SEN. Some of the reports' findings highlighted systemic weaknesses; for example, Bercow (2008) noted that many children's speech, language and communication difficulties were not identified early enough and Lamb (2009) advocated changes to the

statementing process. With the arrival of the coalition government, a review of special educational needs and disability (SEND) was commissioned (Office for Standards in Education, 2010a, 2010b) and the group of documents entitled *Support and Aspiration* (Department for Education, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) and the *Indicative Draft: The 0-25 (SEN) Code of Practice* (Department for Education, 2013b) produced. These, along with some of the findings from previous reports, provided evidence for Part 3 of the Children and Families Bill (Department for Education, 2013a). The changes within were heralded as “the biggest reforms to SEN in 30 years” (Teather, 2012, p. 1) and the new proposals promised:

“a radically different system to support better life outcomes for young people; give parents confidence by giving them more control; and transfer power to professionals on the front line and to local communities” (Department for Education, 2011a, p. 7).

Yet, not only would the system change, but the definition of SEN itself. While the *Indicative Draft* (Department for Education, 2013b) included the category “emotional, social and behavioural development” (p. 41), the subsequent *Draft Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice: for 0-25 Years* (2013) coined the phrase “social, mental and emotional health” (p. 61) and the word ‘behavioural’ was omitted. Most recently, this has become “social, emotional and mental health” (SEMH) (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014, p. 85). The definition places “greater emphasis on the underlying needs of young people and removes the emphasis on behaviour” (NASEN, 2014, p. 1). There is also specific reference to “attachment disorder” (p. 98) in this and the follow-up publication *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (Department for Education, 2014a).

This new focus met with approval (Morewood, 2013; NASEN, 2014); however, the National Autistic Society (NAS) proposed that the categories did not adequately define all

children's needs, as autistic pupils may experience difficulties in all four areas, not merely communication and social interaction (The National Autistic Society, 2013). This caveat could apply to insecurely attached children too; for example, the cognition and learning category may be relevant, given the possibility of reduced cognitive functioning (Granot & Mayseless, 2001). Thus, a holistic view is required and the final *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) asserts that "individual pupils have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change" (p. 85).

The guidance is statutory and schools must acknowledge that "[p]ersistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviours" (ibid., p. 96) may indicate unmet mental health issues; in these cases, an assessment of children's needs is required. Settings are tasked with supporting pupils to be "resilient and mentally healthy" (Department for Education, 2014a, p. 5); however, the document gives little direction as to how to achieve this, aside from Annex B that provides "sources of support and information" (ibid., p. 31). *MindEd*, the e-learning website (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2014) provides information on a range of mental health issues, including attachment; although, the latter is not extensive.

Not all literature fully supports government interventions for SEMH; for example, some challenge the social construction of 'vulnerability' itself (Brown, 2013; Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014), with the latter specifically questioning the rise of therapeutic programmes within schools on the basis of their "rules-based, behavioural interpretations" (p. 211). Nevertheless, this thesis assumes that an interest in SEMH, and *appropriate* intervention, is apposite for two reasons. One, statistics available suggest a rise in both children's mental health issues (Humphrey et al., 2013) and RAD (Hanson & Spratt, 2000), along with the 40% of pupils who might have attachment difficulties (Andreassen & West, 2007; Moullin, Waldfogel, &

Washbrook, 2014) and all of these may be identified through assessment. Two, the suggested strategies are underpinned by attachment theory, not behaviourism.

Comprehensive guidance to schools is still lacking. That which does exist (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014) draws upon similar literature to this thesis; however, it does not identify its methodology. Since the study's outset, research has been undertaken around emotion coaching (Rose, 2015); yet, the absence of a pre-existing structured literature review pertaining to "what works" (Hammersley, 2005b, p. 89) educationally for pupils with attachment difficulties remains significant. This drove the concept of The Attuned School, subsequently used to inform the data collection techniques, create a checklist against which to choose suitable contexts and develop a training package; however, this study acknowledges that, given the lack of empirical research, the structured literature review itself is based in theory and further study is required.

3.3 - The Attuned School

A definition of "affect attunement"

The Attuned School is an expression derived from Stern's (2000) work. In *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, Stern suggests that affect attunement is the "intersubjective sharing of affect" (p.141) and that this is the optimum level of interaction between an infant and their primary carer. Pearce (2009) also uses the phrase and states, in addition to the accessibility and responsiveness of the key adult, that it:

"is a concept that is used to describe the process whereby the caregiver recognises the emotional expressions of their infant and reflects them back" (p. 25).

In securely attached children the adult has been available, responsive (Bowlby, 2005b) and attuned; where this is not the case, insecure attachments may form. Thus, the concept of The Attuned School relates to those pupils with compromised development and proposes that settings can replicate this optimum level of interaction to develop effective relationships.

The concept of attunement is also central to DDP, a derivative of Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) (Zeanah et al., 2011), which is used to treat children with “emotional and behavioural problems associated with early trauma and significant difficulty with forming stable attachment relationships” (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, 2010, p. 2); throughout therapy optimum levels of interaction with the child are strived for, so they can feel “safe... and... secure” (ibid., p. 4). As such, the practice draws upon secure base theory. While Becker Weidman and Hughes (Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010) suggests that it is an effective treatment for such children, some question whether the approach either has an acceptable evidence base, or is founded upon attachment theory (Mercer, 2014; Pignotti & Mercer, 2007). Yet, DDP is supported by the National Health Service (NHS) (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, 2010) and Adoption UK (Hughes, 2009); with the concept of attunement also being introduced to schools through literature (see, for example, Bombèr & Hughes, 2013). Therefore, despite little empirical evidence, the concept of The Attuned School drew upon the notion of attunement and sought to examine a relational approach between designated significant adults and pupils.

3.4 - The Checklist

The checklist was formed through a structured literature review of approximately 250 relevant texts (see, for example, Zions, 2005); as a lone researcher it was not possible to conduct a systematic review (SR) of all. The existing literature was examined using Bryman’s (2012)

four stages of qualitative analysis. Due to the anecdotal nature of much of the literature and the uniqueness of every pupil and school, this synthesis of ideas does not presume an evidence base; nevertheless, if each setting considers the advice and adapts it to their own individual circumstances, they may create optimum conditions for children who have attachment difficulties. As such, the reviewed literature: informed the interview questions, observations and document collection; was used to create codes that could be applied quantitatively to the data collected in the *a priori* purposive sampling process and underpinned a training package for the designated significant adults. The process' subjectivity could not be eradicated; however, through using this innovative combined method, researcher bias was limited and the study's replicability enhanced.

Limited work related to best practice in schools for children with attachment difficulties was uncovered (see, for example, Bebbington, 2005), so additional topics were considered; for example, teacher-pupil relationships, social work, parenting and therapeutic environments (see, for example, Lieberman & Zeanah, 1999; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Every piece was scrutinised inductively, uncovering repeated themes. Initial reading took place, all literature re-read and notes made on each text. Core ideas were noted down and analytic memos made; however, given the controversy surrounding holding therapies designed to stimulate reattachment (Hanson & Spratt, 2000; Mercer, 2014; Pignotti & Mercer, 2007; Zeanah et al., 2011) these were disregarded (1st Stage). Ideas were then subdivided into 149 key words, or phrases (2nd Stage), which summarised the literature's content. Through eliminating repetition, these were reduced to 130 (Appendix B) that became the codes with which to conduct a content analysis upon the data collected from the initial twelve participating schools (3rd Stage). By grouping codes with the same content together (4th Stage), eight core themes were created; these were:

- a whole-school approach to attachment difficulties;
- using significant adults;
- allowing children access to therapeutic tasks;
- pro-actively teaching the skills for effective social, emotional and behavioural development;
- having structures in place for managing day-to-day situations;
- setting up an NG (Boxall & Lucas, 2010; King, 2001; Purcell, Bennathan, McKerrell, Gerrard, & Cooper, 2005) or nurturing group;
- facilitating family activities;
- working in partnership with stakeholders.

These themes structure the next section of this chapter, which comments upon the literature available, with the exception of the use of a significant adult discussed previously (see chapter two). The subsequent analysis of the data collected for the *a priori* purposive sampling process (see chapter six) also applies the eight headings.

3.4.1 - A Whole-School Approach

At the heart of the concept of The Attuned School is a whole-school approach for pupils with attachment difficulties. Literature suggests that settings should have policies on attachment, and related issues such as accidents and death (Bombèr, 2007; Geddes, 2006, 2008), and that staff should be adequately trained regarding attachment theory and trauma (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Geddes, 2005, 2006, 2010; Phillips, 2007). Local authorities (LAs) may provide training, as was the case in this study; however, private companies and charities also offer courses and consultancy (Adoption UK, 2013; Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2014; Yellow Kite, n.d.; Young Minds, 2014). Some of these groups are referred to by the

government in their *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (Department for Education, 2014a) document; although, while some of the advice and programmes are funded, much is chargeable and this has financial implications for both schools and LAs. With no budget attached to this project, free training materials were used with the study's significant adults including work by: The National Children's Bureau (Ryan, 2006); Post Adoption Central Support (Bebbington, 2005; Bebbington & Phillips, 2002); Geddes (2006) and Bombèr (2007, 2008, 2011). The latter specifically included reference to conference notes (Appendix H).

Policies and training equip staff with the skills and knowledge to work effectively with children who have attachment difficulties; however, as these pupils can be challenging (Chapman, 2002), individuals may need continued support. Bombèr (2008) speaks of counsellors assisting significant adults, while Geddes (2006) suggests staff networks provide "consultation, supervision and support" (p. 134). Therefore, while the notion of partnership working largely focuses upon specialist provision for the child and family, internal networks can support the professionals involved. Such "[c]ommunication and collaboration increase the resilience potential of the staff group and strengthens the school as the secure base" (p. 11); consequently, complex needs can be met without negative effects on staff. Nevertheless, this approach might still have human resource, practical and financial implications.

Due to the lack of empirical research regarding a whole-school approach to attachment difficulties, it was necessary to examine further literature, though; studies in behaviour management and SEBD paralleled the practical suggestions above. For example, Cefai, Cooper, and Vella (2013) propose that behaviour was improved in a Girls' Secondary School in Malta following training and the development of an action plan; the latter being drawn up with the agreement of the whole staff. Likewise, Cooper (2011) suggests that interventions for pupils with SEBD should be adopted on a school-wide basis, if they are to be most effective.

Consequently, this thesis supposes that effective provision for children with attachment difficulties would encompass whole-school communities.

3.4.2 - Therapeutic Tasks

Many strategies to meet the needs of children with attachment difficulties could be placed under the umbrella of therapeutic tasks; for example, Bebbington (2005), Bebbington and Phillips (2002) and Geddes (2006), recommend using counting, colouring, sorting, building structures, sequencing objects, drawing pictures, copying and reading, or writing stories, with metaphor. They also advocate calming time, which Geddes (2006) combines with the repetitive therapeutic activities above to create a “worry box” (p. 123) and Bombèr (2007, 2011) a “calm box” (pp. 206-211; p. 122). Anecdotally, each helps children regulate arousal, as the “concrete, mechanical and rhythmic” (Geddes, 2005, p. 14) nature is soothing. Using children’s interests as a starting point, ‘Follow-My-Leader’ and ‘Taking the Pen for a Walk’, which develops trust (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Phillips, 2007), are further examples.

Bombèr (2008) asserts that using a significant adult to facilitate these activities not only develops the pupil’s ability to manage their emotions, but provides an opportunity to form a dependent relationship. This stance mirrors therapeutic work; for example, in DDP (Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007) initial tasks are designed to make the child feel comfortable and only once a relationship has formed does the therapist address complex issues. Lieberman and Zeanah (1999) concur, suggesting that effective interventions are free of emotional pressure. Thus, from an attachment perspective, developing the significant adult-child dyad is a priority; the task is less important. Yet, as OFSTED reports upon academic results, this is controversial. This is especially so if the child is in a secondary school, as the activities are associated with young children; however,

the need for differentiation does correspond with government guidance (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014). Furthermore, Geddes (2006) suggests that the tasks set for children with attachment difficulties are integral to the 'Learning Triangle' (p. 4). While not all are appropriate for every child, as Geddes (ibid.) separates her advice dependent upon the behavioural descriptors, staff might assess individuals (Golding et al., 2013) and apply the appropriate response to the task.

3.4.3 - Teaching

At the study's inception, only anecdotal evidence existed to suggest that an available, responsive and attuned significant adult could teach social, emotional and behavioural skills to pupils with attachment difficulties. Bombèr (2007, 2011) acknowledges programmes to develop such expertise including *Social Stories* (Gray, 2010) or the *Talkabout* (Kelly, 1997, 2003, 2004) series; however, most literature suggests using specific phrases and paralanguage *in situ*; for example, when incidents occur. Work proposes validating, not trivialising, a pupil's emotions by asking, "I wonder if you are....?" (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011). Here, the significant adult not only recognises the child's emotions, but also provides them with the words to explain. To develop empathy, the adult is encouraged to make empathetic comments too (Bombèr, 2007, 2011) and use exaggeration as you might with a baby, or toddler (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007). To modify behaviour, Illsley Clarke (1999a) and Bombèr (2007, 2011) also advocate practising suitable responses with pupils; using the phrase, "Let's Practise".

Since carrying out this research, one study has examined the suggestions above based upon "empathy and guidance" (Rose, 2015, p. 1768) and reported favourable results; however, empirical studies have not been conducted using the specific phrases, so their efficacy is

principally unknown. The notion echoes work related to teachers' effectiveness being linked to the use of precise linguistics, though (Prusak, Vincent, & Pangrazi, 2005). Furthermore, language along with non-verbal communication is linked to attunement (Pearce, 2009); such evidence supported the use of these phrases in the checklist. The fact that the approach is exact, using specific words and a particular tone of voice, means that the role is a skilled one for which people need preparation (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013); consequently, attention was given to this method in the significant adult training.

3.4.4 - Structures

Structuring the school day is a recurring theme throughout the literature. The term 'structure' encompasses many strategies, including: visual timetables; appropriate seating arrangements, so that pupils can spot perceived danger and teachers use contingent touch (Bebbington, 2005; Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Chapman, 2002); areas of safety that children can access when they are unable to manage their emotions (see, for example, Phillips, 2007) and items linked to a person with whom the child has a positive relationship, but cannot be present (Bombèr, 2007, 2011). These "transitional objects" (idid., p. 116) might be a toy, blanket, photograph, or handkerchief with a particular perfume, which triggers positive memories. The above can replicate the secure base, but it is vital that the subtle nuances of the strategies are understood; for example, pupils should sit where they can see all exits and personnel, as "danger may come from behind" (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). The extent of physical contact must be agreed upon too; Chapman's (2002) work mentions "a light touch to his shoulder" (p. 94).

Safe areas could be another room, but a space within the classroom may be preferable: Phillips (2007) advises they should have "no blame" (p. 8) attached and others stress the availability of a significant adult to help validate children's feelings; accordingly, they can learn

to regulate their emotions (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Illsley Clarke, 1999a, 1999b). Bombèr (2007, 2011) also believes it is vital to use appropriate techniques for removing pupils from situations; for example, saying “Let’s go....”. Illsley Clarke (1999a, 1999b) specifically terms her approach ‘Time-In’ and talks of it being a learning opportunity, so that children become responsible for their actions. This opposes the technique ‘Time-Out’, which Henderson, French, Fritsch, and Lerner (2000) advocate. They state that the latter and overcorrection are “mild forms of punishment that are highly effective in decreasing the occurrence of inappropriate behavio[u]rs” (p. 35), but Bombèr and Hughes (2013) negate such strategies when they suggests that “behaviour management does not facilitate the development of... relationships” (p. 3). Thus, a more restorative approach might be used (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013), where reparation is the goal; however, extrinsic motivators and deterrents are routinely used in educational settings necessitating a shift in ethos, to create an Attuned School.

Again, the strategies rely on the use of a significant adult and the day structured by their presence. They might “Meet and Greet” (Bombèr, 2007, p. 268) the child, or “Check In” (Bombèr, 2008, p. 4) with them at certain times or prepare the pupil for changes, such as giving information regarding school trips and warning them if there are to be supply teachers. They could also make sure that there is enough food or equipment, as in the past the child may have been deprived of these, and emphasise safety. Thus, boundaries are vital. The DDP approach (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007) specifically mentions setting limits too, but only after a trusting relationship is formed.

3.4.5 - Nurturing/Nurture Groups

Doyle (2003) states that NGs contribute towards the “nurturing school” (p. 1): this concept parallels The Attuned School, with its references to attachment and the importance of

relationships. NGs were set up in Hackney to help children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010). The NG principle is based upon Bowlby's attachment theory and there have been several articles, publications and studies advocating their effectiveness (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Garner & Thomas, 2011; Purcell et al., 2005; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Traditional NGs have a set format. A teacher and TA lead the group and their role is to model positive behaviour and social skills (Doyle, 2003); progress is assessed through the Boxall Profile.

For schools to state that they have an NG, staff must have completed accredited training from The Nurture Group Network (NGN) (The Nurture Group Network, n.d.); however, Garner and Thomas' (2011) research, within three secondary schools, highlights how careful planning is required to meet the needs of pupils effectively and this could mean deviating from the traditional set-up. Staff, organisational and financial limitations could also influence decisions, leading schools to conclude that strictly adhering to the NG approach is unsuitable. Where a different format is preferable, without this accreditation, schools could still have a 'nurturing group'. Thus, the *a priori* purposive sampling process encompassed alternative provision for pupils with attachment difficulties not merely NGs; this included those schools that might only use the Boxall Profile as an assessment tool.

The Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme funded LMs to identify and overcome "barriers to learning" (Bishop, 2011, p. 30; Mintz, 2010, p. 165), their role entailed:

"looking at emotional aspects of learning, including children's motivation for learning and aspects of their mental world, such as relationships at home" (ibid., p. 165).

The similarity between this goal and that of NGs, added to the fact that Bombèr (2007) suggests that significant adults might be LMs, means that such personnel could contribute to The Attuned

School. As such, it was also appropriate to include LMs in the sampling criteria used to determine how attuned a school was.

3.4.6 - Facilitating Family Activities

Home-school partnerships should be encouraged (Ryan, 2006), as improving relationships between caregivers and children with attachment difficulties is paramount (see, for example, Becker-Weidman, 2006). While some therapists give advice independently of the child (Pearce, 2009), others believe that three-way communication yields the best results (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007; McDaniel et al., 2009; Seles, 2008). In DDP, which the authors claim is based on attachment theory (Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010), a therapist facilitates the relationships that occur between themselves and the child, the caregiver and the child and themselves and the caregiver. They strive for attunement through applying a *playful, accepting, curious and empathetic* (PACE) standpoint: the carer is encouraged to do the same, but to add *love* (PLACE) (Becker-Weidman, 2006, p. 157). Non-verbal communication is the focus; for example, facial expressions, mood, emotions, eye contact and contingent touch. The latter rewards positive behaviour and encourages feelings of security.

Staff could replicate this three-way approach with their caregivers, significant adults and pupils; for example, evidence suggests that primary school interventions such as the SEAL programme might be more effective if there were increased parental involvement (Humphrey, Kalambouka, et al., 2010). Evaluations also conclude that the Family SEAL project (Department for Education and Skills, 2006), which provided paired activities, had a positive impact upon caregiver-child relationships (Downey & Williams, 2009, 2010; Taylor, 2009); the latter concentrated upon pupils in NGs. As a secondary equivalent of Family SEAL does

not exist, Bradley Stoke Community School created their own tailor-made activities, which they called the *SEAL 4 Parents Programme* (Bradley Stoke Community School, 2010). They report positive outcomes too and it may be that other KS3, 4 and 5 pupils and their families would gain from this school's package, or a similar personalised approach. Thus, while the interventions do not specifically mention attunement, they are designed to develop relationships and might benefit children with attachment difficulties and their caregivers; however, more research is desirable, as iatrogenic effects were uncovered and sample sizes were small (Humphrey, Lendrum, et al., 2010).

3.4.7 - Partnership Working

Recently, emphasis has been placed upon early identification and intervention for children with SEN (Bercow, 2008; Department for Education, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013a; Steer, 2005, 2008) and, with specific reference to SEBD, Steer's reports (2005, 2008) on school discipline and pupil behaviour stated that timely involvement was vital if exclusions and truancy were to be avoided. Both Bombèr (2007, 2008, 2011) and Geddes (2005, 2006, 2008) advocate early identification and intervention too, with a view to gradually decreasing the required support.

A factor in delivering timely provision is partnership working, involving all agencies and carers (Department for Education, 2011a; Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014), and the government has sought to address the latter's frustration at having to deal with education, health and social care in isolation. Following consultation (Department for Education, 2011a), the government proposed a new "one stop" approach to gaining parents' views, through "a co-ordinated assessment process" (Department for Education, 2013a, p. 11), which culminated in the introduction of the new *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years*

(Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014). The Local Offer (LO) and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were central to the reform.

LAs, or Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), contribute to the LO and the government lists the external support that should be available to schools (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2013, 2014). Educational psychologists (EPs), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), specialist advisory teachers (SATs) and support services (such as hearing impairment), speech and language therapists (SALTs), occupational therapists (OTs), physiotherapists and job coaches are included. “Behaviour Support Teams” are mentioned in the *Draft Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice* (p. 91), but not the final version. The new system claims to place the child and their caregivers at the heart of the process, building upon the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Child (TAC) integrated working approach (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2008). At the study's outset, only government consultation (Department for Education, 2011a) existed to advocate the effectiveness of EHCPs. To date, having searched “FindIt@Bham” (University of Birmingham, 2009), while studies exist examining their impact on services (see, for example, Ko, 2014), there remains a lack of empirical research linked to their efficacy; however, a “general agreement” (Tissot, 2011, p. 1) for working in partnership exists for obtaining appropriate SEND provision.

As attachment disorder is cited in the *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* document (Department for Education, 2014a), this thesis proposes that the government's notion of partnership working applies to this study's subjects. LAC pupils, and those who are adopted, may have attachment difficulties and fall (although not exclusively) under this remit; however, while the *Draft Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2013) mentions EPs working with “looked after children and fostering

and adoption services” (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2013, p. 89), the idea is not transferred to the final statutory guidance. Nonetheless, further literature (Chapman, 2002; Geddes, 2005; Gilligan, 2000) promotes partnership working with foster carers, social care and adoption support. Arguably, children living with their birth parents, or extended family, may also need input from external agencies; for example, they may have experienced bereavement. Provision will vary by locality, although in this study the ISO was responsible. Thus, such pupils were also research participants.

3.5 - Conclusion: Understanding the Significant Adult’s Role

This thesis seeks to examine the effect and effectiveness of relationships between significant adults and pupils with attachment difficulties. Suitably attuned research contexts needed identifying, as hypothetically these settings would be more receptive to attachment theory based approaches. In the absence of a pre-existing structured literature review, the methodology created a checklist (Wall, 2014) with which to conduct a content analysis of the initial twelve schools sampled: despite the government recognising that children’s underlying mental health issues - including attachment disorder - may affect their behaviour (Department for Education, 2014a), they give no guidance on how to meet individual needs. The synthesis of ideas also informed the data collection techniques, particularly the observations, and the basis of significant adult training. Literature concerning practical school-based strategies, and supporting work in other fields, was examined using Bryman’s (2012) four stages of qualitative analysis. The method identified eight key themes and this chapter has commented upon each, with the exception of significant adults (see chapter two). Chapter six reports the content analysis’ findings, answering the question “How Attuned are Schools?”.

The structured literature review suggests that the role of the significant adult is only part of the provision for children with attachment difficulties. Thus, *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) acknowledges the inextricable complexity of classrooms and proposes that, to become a “surrogate secure base” (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32) and create optimum conditions for such pupils, all eight themes must be considered. Schools need a whole-school approach and to work in partnership, not only with other professionals, but with caregivers too. Each might have an NG, or nurturing group, as well. Authors (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Phillips, 2007; Ryan, 2006) suggest that a dependent, significant adult-pupil relationship is fundamental to the success of the practical strategies, though: the activities themselves are insufficient. The Attuned School understands the importance, and subtleties, of the significant adult’s role; consequently, the methodology employed prior to research included training sessions for the significant adults, based upon the work above. The next chapter considers the thesis’ methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 - Introduction

This chapter discusses the project's methodology: its methods and the *a priori* purposive sampling strategy. Both sections critically review the processes undertaken, beginning with the earliest decisions made regarding the broad area of enquiry and the anti-positivist research paradigm adopted. The government's EBP agenda is explored, through the contrasting positions of key writers within this debate; notably, Chalmers (2003) a proponent and Hammersley (2005a, 2005b) an opponent. Outcomes and measurement driven 'evidence-based' research is presented as inadequate for a project focussing upon relationships; its positivist approach, inflexibility, lack of attention to processes and meanings and the ethical issues raised suggest that an anti-positivist, malleable and interpretive approach are more appropriate. The quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is examined too, through papers by Vulliamy and Webb (2001) and Pavey and Visser (2003). Accordingly, neither one approach nor the other is favoured and innovative MMR (Brewer & Hunter, 1989) adopted: the commentary details the reasons for espousing this method.

Having considered these ontological, epistemological and methodological stances, the research design was established; it being a qualitative multiple case study, which employed ethnographic participant observation and where "illuminative evaluation" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) was its ultimate objective. Numerous factors contributed towards this decision; therefore, the chapter examines each in turn. Initially, exploration of the information gathered from the pilot interview, observation and document analysis takes place; subsequently, the methods' strengths and weaknesses are critically analysed. The commentary then addresses how the chosen techniques answered the overarching research question. The section concludes by

exploring the use of the Boxall Profile as an assessment tool within the study, including the measures applied to address its previously identified limitations (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011).

The second section of the chapter justifies the *a priori* purposive sampling strategy. As attachment theory underpinned the research, the process ensured that both contexts and participants were relevant to the phenomenon studied. Initially, to sample the contexts, “Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) criteria were used. *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) was also produced, from relevant literature, and content analysis applied to the data collected. To sample the pupil participants, SENCos completed Boxall Profiles for individuals identified as having SEBD and those who fit agreed criteria were included; the commentary systematically evaluates both the context and participant levels and presents the results of the *a priori* purposive sampling process. The conclusion highlights how the chosen methodology enhanced the study’s trustworthiness; citing Lincoln and Guba’s (2007) anti-positivist definitions of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). It also explores the research’s limitations as far as generalising the results is concerned.

THE METHODOLOGICAL JOURNEY: SECTION ONE

4.2 - The Research Design in its Infancy

Before the final research question was formed several possibilities for study had been considered; for example, examining the benefits and drawbacks of developing pupils' intrinsic, versus extrinsic, motivation with the intention of changing their behaviour. The participants of this study would have been those with SEBD. The idea's origin lay in research undertaken at Master's Level: a case study of a middle school approach to behaviour management. Towards the project's end, questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of extrinsic rewards, as a means of behaviour change, and the views of writers such as Davies (1998, 1999, 2000); Glasser (1997, 2004); Henderlong and Lepper (2002); Kohn (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2001); Wiest, Wong, Cervantes, Craik, and Kreil (2001) considered. These authors assert that developing a child's intrinsic motivation is preferable to using rewards and sanctions and the proposed research would have explored this claim. Therefore, even at this earliest stage, the study intended to focus upon the application of an intervention and analyse its effect and effectiveness.

Throughout the formation of the broad area to be studied, ontological (what we know), epistemological (how we know it) and methodological (the research procedures and guidelines we use to find this out) decisions were made. The choices were influenced by reading existing literature around the subject of SEBD, in particular exclusion (Cooper, Drummond, Hart, Lovey, & McLaughlin, 2000; Munn, Lloyd, & Cullen, 2000; Pavey & Visser, 2003; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001) and inclusion (Day Ashley, 2005; Preece & Timmins, 2004; Timmins & Miller, 2007). Contrasting views concerning EBP were also examined (Chalmers, 2003; Hammersley, 2005a, 2005b; Hodkinson, 2004), as this approach was promoted by the LA where the study was based. This resulted in gaining an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of differing paradigms and the EBP agenda. Consequently, though the final research question differed from

that above, the position adopted remained the same. As a researcher's beliefs shape a study's design and the methods employed, it is pertinent to comment upon this process, particularly as it altered the direction of the thesis.

4.2.1 - Evidence-based Practice: A Government Shift

The medical model of EBP, as described by Chalmers (2003), involves the use of randomised control trials (RCTs) and SRs to find 'what works', with the intention of applying this to all cases. Clinical settings have embedded the approach into practice for many years; however, more recently, educationalists have espoused the medical model of research too, with its rise in experimental methodology, and authors from differing disciplines have published prolifically on the subject. Blunkett (2000), and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), acknowledged this "broadly positivist" (Hammersley, 2005b, p. 86) natural science paradigm, establishing a Centre for Evidence Informed Policy and Practice (CEIPP) following suggestions made by Hargreaves (1996), in a Teacher Training Agency (TTA) Annual Lecture. The professor suggested that the teaching profession would be more effective if it were research-based and that OFSTED should systematically review their inspection evidence, as they had the most complete database of teaching and its efficacy.

A medical practitioner, Chalmers (2003) agreed with the government's new standpoint and focussed upon the ethical necessity to avoid harm. The author cited examples of previous research where lives had been lost through a lack of "rigorous, transparent up-to-date evaluations" (p. 22) and, while educational research is unlikely to result in death, the argument could be applied to school-based interventions which may be iatrogenic (that is, inadvertently of detriment to participants). Chalmers (ibid.) also feared bias in qualitative approaches and argued that the government shift was due to them questioning this also. Oakley (2003)

highlighted the need for a “more reliable scientific base” (p. 21), while Slavin (2002) and Weare and Gray (2003) suggested that randomised and rigorous experiments were necessary to provide children with effective interventions; ones assessed for efficacy.

Thus, the government’s recent educational research agenda has focussed upon measurement and outcomes requiring substantial quantitative methodology; however, the EBP movement is not without its critics, as others do not agree with more positivist approaches (Evans & Benefield, 2001; Hammersley, 2005b; Hodgkinson, 2004; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). The opponents either write specifically on the subject, often replying directly to comments made by followers of the movement, or allude to the approach within their research. Vulliamy and Webb (2001), in a piece on exclusion, clearly state their epistemological position in relation to a more experimental method, and specifically explore:

“methodological concerns arising from the government’s promotion of the potential role of research in ‘evidence-based’ policy formation and of target setting in the raising of educational standards” (p. 357).

As the above research does, this chapter’s next section examines the reasons why this thesis did not adopt the government’s EBP approach. It focuses upon RCTs and SRs, analysing the ontological and epistemological motives for not doing so.

Evidence-based practice and ontology

Originally, the study’s participants were to be children with SEBD. As EBP seeks to find ‘what works’, the research might have aimed to improve outcomes by applying the findings to every child in this category; however, this idea is simplistic. Chalmers’ (2003) assertion that RCTs and SRs can identify ‘what works’ is challenged on ontological grounds (Hammersley, 2005b;

Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). These authors question how terms such as ‘disaffection’ and ‘exclusion’ are defined; for example, suggesting that staff might misrepresent behaviour to improve the school’s status with regard to statistical data (ibid.). As such, the steps leading to exclusion are subjective and the phenomenon itself deemed a social construction. Similarly, arriving at a common understanding of SEBD would have been complicated, as every person interprets the concept differently and will “create” (Pring, 2000, p. 59) an individual reality; there can be no fixed ‘Truth’ and a value neutral position, as strived for in positivism, cannot be maintained. Thus, outcomes and measurements are unlikely to be trustworthy due to the nature of that which is studied (Hammersley, 2005b).

Even if a common definition for SEBD existed, many query whether ‘what works’ can be generalised to a larger population (Gray, 2009; Hammersley, 2005b; Peile, 2004; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). While pupils may share similar characteristics, every child with SEBD is different and not necessarily comparable; therefore, an intervention that might work for one may not for another. Furthermore, Hammersley (2005b) asserts that EBP cannot suggest a single approach to educational issues, due to the complexity of schools and teaching situations. The author alludes to the fact that “treatments” (p. 90) cannot be standardised either, as they too are social constructions, and believes that it is impossible to categorically state whether certain interventions will achieve the desired effect:

“Much of this [educational research over the past 100 years] has used experimental or quasi-experimental method, but the results do not suggest (to say the least) that simple causal relations can be found” (Hammersley, 2005b, p. 90).

These ontological issues are equally applicable to those pupils with attachment difficulties and their significant adults, as to SEBD children; therefore, this thesis neither claims simple causality, or that its results are routinely generalizable to the wider population.

Evidence-based practice and epistemology

Whether educational researchers sufficiently consider epistemology is debatable (Scott & Usher, 1996); however, at this study's outset, such issues were reflected upon. EBP was (and still is) endorsed by the LA in which the project was taking place (Weare & Gray, 2003) and required staff to demonstrate positive outcomes through producing 'Impact Case Studies' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2014). Upheld as examples of 'what works', they were applied to similar settings and pupils; nevertheless, the approach is questioned on epistemological grounds. Firstly, some suggest that EBP is too rigid for use within the educational field (Draper, 1996; Hammersley, 2005b). These authors doubt basing professional practice on evidence, state that flexible judgment is necessary in pedagogy and that information does not necessarily come from research, but from practitioners.

Furthermore, Vulliamy and Webb (2001) believe that educational studies should be inductive, as opposed to deductive, and concentrate upon "processes and outcomes" (p. 358). Arguably, while an anti-positivist approach may be appropriate for all educational research, a more malleable methodology appeared particularly suitable to this project, as it sought to examine developing relationships. Analysis of the research process was an important part of the study, as it gave weight to understanding participants' views. Thus, to answer the overarching research question of the effect and effectiveness of a significant adult-pupil dyad, "illuminative evaluation" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) was employed; the decision being confirmed by Draper (1996) who suggests the approach allows:

“the investigator to hang out with the participants... to pick up how they think and feel about the situation, and what the important underlying issues are” (p. 61).

The ethnographic methods employed, which comprised interviews, observations, diary entries and IEP meetings with pupils, staff and parents allowed this to happen; consequently, participants shared their thoughts and feelings, supported by evidence that they believed was important. This element, and the fact that most of the literature studied was based upon practitioner anecdotal observations, means that the project might have more in common with “Practice-Based Evidence” (PBE) (National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Support Service, 2008, p. 1), than EBP. The LA case studies previously alluded to might also be more usefully categorised as such, as empirical research was not the basis of their findings either.

Secondly, the study did not adopt RCTs due to concerns around the approach. While Chalmers (2003) argues that they should be implemented to avoid harm, others suggest that using them raises ethical issues, such as deliberately excluding a group of students from an intervention (Hammersley, 2005b; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). In RCTs this is unavoidable (Hammersley, 2005b) and pupils may not receive appropriate support for their needs; hence, in the current research, the inclusion criteria were carefully considered and it was not the intention to randomly exclude pupils. Furthermore, the approach relies on large samples and the inclusion of numerous participants was impractical for a lone researcher. Finally, using RCTs would not necessarily have identified sufficient suitable significant adults and pupils; therefore, as the research sought to assess the application of attachment theory in the school context, the methodology comprised an *a priori* purposive sampling process.

Despite not implementing EBP, it would be naïve to suggest its principles did not influence the design process: indeed, the study may fall on a continuum between PBE and it, because the review of literature did adopt a structured approach (see chapter three for more

detail). SRs can replace RCTs, provide an organised way of evaluating research findings and uncover explanations as to why certain interventions are successful (Andrews, 2005; Evans & Benefield, 2001): the alternative being that approaches such as “Circle Time” (Mosley, 1996) are adopted nationally without analysis, leading to questions over reliability and validity. Some authors criticise SRs, though; for example, Denzin (2009) believes that analysis of existing material cannot be considered research and Vulliamy and Webb (2001) question the impact of one study’s findings, as only 11 out of 265 original sources were included. Such practice is commonplace (Goldacre, 2008) and, as this process comprises a subjective element, SRs cannot claim to be wholly objective. Thus, this study applied a rigorously structured literature review to reduce bias; however, as little empirical research exists relating to the project’s overarching question, the approach does not claim to identify ‘what works’. Consequently, the structured approach only identified potentially suitable contexts in which carry out the research and further inductive evaluation was required.

4.3 - The Quantitative-Qualitative Dichotomy

The quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is contended in educational research, with several authors defending the use of quantitative methods (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2009; Tolmie, McAteer, & Muijs, 2011), others qualitative (Denzin, 2009, 2012; Hammersley, 2005a, 2005b). A third category, termed MMR, “encourages [the] integration of two major methodological approaches” (Symonds & Gorard, 2010, p. 121) and entire journals are devoted to such mixed methods. This thesis adopted the latter, although this was only after in-depth consideration of the three. The original research question focussed upon pupils with SEBD, with the intention of gauging an intervention’s success, central to the process was analysis of exclusion rates as a measure of disaffection amongst students. When the study’s focus shifted to children with

attachment difficulties, these statistics were potentially still apposite for assessing the effectiveness of the significant adult; however, an exclusively quantitative methodology quickly became dismissed. Through focussing upon two research projects (Visser, 2002; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001), the following highlights why.

4.3.1 - Vulliamy and Webb (2001)

Vulliamy and Webb (2001) set out their epistemological and ontological position in terms of exclusion rates and EBP in their report summary. Many “methodological dilemmas” (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001, p. 357) are highlighted. Their evaluation data was gathered from a three year Home Office funded project *Meeting Need and Challenging Crime in Partnership with Schools* (Vulliamy & Webb, 1999). Seven comprehensives, with disproportionately high numbers of disaffected and excluded pupils, in two North East of England local education authorities (LEAs) were included in the research. The methods comprised semi-structured and informal interviews, observations, shadowing, questionnaires, document analysis and data on fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The project aimed to reduce the latter and develop a cohesive, multi-agency approach to those “at risk” (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001, p. 363).

4.3.2 - Pavey and Visser (2003)

Pavey and Visser (2003) also explored the epistemological and ontological issues faced when using quantitative data. The commentary incorporates the social construction of exclusion rates, but the authors do not consider EBP. Their study comprised an Inner-City LEA, concerned over rising exclusions, and took three months. Fixed-term and permanent exclusion data from 41 primary schools were analysed, head teachers given questionnaires and interviews

conducted. The work sought to establish whether primary exclusions were escalating and, if so, the possible reasons behind this.

4.4 - Ontology and Epistemology: Arguments For and Against Quantitative Research

Each paper makes ontological assumptions (what exclusion is); but, despite the research objectives being the same, the meaning of the word exclusion varied, even though both projects used 'official' LEA statistics. While each distinguished between fixed-term and permanent, Vulliamy and Webb (2001) recorded the number of exclusions made, along with the total number of days, the number of pupils involved and whether they were repeat offenders: Pavey and Visser (2003) did not. Yet, both authors question the trustworthiness of their quantitative data, as individual schools recorded information differently. Vulliamy and Webb (2001) suggest that figures may be "underestimates of the actual numbers of pupils excluded from school" (p. 361), because of anomalies such as LAC not being recorded; Cooper et al. (2000) concur, stating that exclusion rates for LAC might be fifteen times higher. Unreported, 'unofficial' exclusions were also uncovered in Vulliamy and Webb's (2001) research; for example, pupils were given authorised absences, parents asked to take their children home early, 'isolation' and 'internal' exclusion used. Thus, statistical data is not comparable and, as the means of recording varied from school to school, neither could it be sufficiently analysed (Munn et al., 2000; Pavey & Visser, 2003).

Had the LAs' data collection been more rigorous a trustworthy quantitative result may have been gained (Pavey & Visser, 2003); however, exclusion figures remain a social construction. Everyone's opinions are formed by their cultural background, experience and beliefs (Visser, 2002; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). Statistics do not reliably analyse the events that lead up to exclusions and, even with criteria, the final decision is open to interpretation

(Pavey & Visser, 2003). A head teachers' values can shift the focus of policy from exclusion to inclusion (Cooper et al., 2000; Pavey & Visser, 2003), raising questions as to whose knowledge we are drawing conclusions from. Thus, educational phenomena might be too complex to apply rigid scientific frameworks to (Hammersley, 2005b). As Pring (2000) states, a "personal and social reality.... simply cannot be quantified" (p. 44). Furthermore, every school and its pupils are different; for example, some may have proportionally more children with SEBD than others. Research objects are not the same, "ontological objectivity" (Eisner, 1993, p. 50) from exclusion rate data may be impossible and the authenticity of such statistics questionable. Thus, a quantitative approach to exclusions is inappropriate.

Furthermore, those involved in the research process are "social actors" (Scott & Usher, 1996, p. 71) and we can only know about their world if we voice their views: this prompted a move to an interpretative, qualitative approach from the study's outset. Even with the change in focus, the design did not take a quantitative slant; however, neither was qualitative methodology entirely adopted. The thesis included statistics, particularly in the *a priori* sampling; for example, in the content analysis NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012) showed topic coverage as percentages and Boxall Profile scores indicated those pupils who might benefit from intervention. Such statistical data reduced subjective bias, which was important given the researcher's prior knowledge of contexts and participants. Likewise, data collected from the significant adult-pupil pairings comprised the percentage of IEP targets met and Boxall Profile scores. The study used these statistics as a measure of behaviour change; however, qualitative data was also collected to create an in-depth picture of the pupils' progress.

It would be naïve to assume that the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is simple, though. Distinctions between the paradigms often cannot be made, for the debate is more complex than assuming a division between numbers and words (Craft, 1996; Hitchcock &

Hughes, 1995): indeed, a “false dualism” (Pring, 2000, p. 43) between positivist and anti-positivist has been proposed. Qualitative data can be analysed quantitatively and vice versa. Thus, the thesis employed innovative MMR to answer the overarching research question, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches where deemed appropriate. Neither one precluded the other. The next section further explores the rationale behind this decision.

4.5 - The Study’s Final Position: Mixed Methods Research

MMR lacks a set of agreed characteristics, other than it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, creating “[m]ethodological eclecticism” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012, p. 774); as such, writer’s opinions vary. Hammersley (2005a), despite attacking generalisability and responding negatively to the “new orthodoxy.... that privileges quantitative methods” (Hodkinson, 2004, p. 11) advocates MMR and proposes that educational research should utilise the diversity of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. “[C]ompatibility thesis” (Howe, 1988, p. 10) agrees with this synchronicity, but also suggests that ‘what works’ can be established. Conversely, “incompatibility thesis” (ibid.) exists and there are critics of the approach. For example, Creswell (2011) evidences eleven controversies and Denzin (2012) has linked MMR to “naive postpositivism, audit cultures, [and] neoliberal regimes” (p. 80); however, the latter also states that the “third major research paradigm” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 23) has “an energy... matched by only a few other interpretative communities” (Denzin, 2012, p. 80).

This study’s use of MMR was influenced both by its proponents and the approach’s intensified practise within educational research; lately, there has been a threefold increase in the paradigm and dedicated, specialist journals and handbooks exist (Bryman, 2012). The two studies examined earlier (Pavey & Visser, 2003; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001) revered diverse

research paths, in view of questioning their quantitative data; for example, the former suggested that LEAs needed “information on the alternative strategies used by schools” (p. 185). Arguably, having sought contributors’ views, the studies’ qualitative results negated ‘official’ statistics (ibid.); however, using this quantitative data alongside qualitative may have enhanced the research’s impact. Indeed, recent papers on building secure attachments, and utilising MMR, are linked to this thesis (Rose, 2015; Ubha & Cahill, 2014).

MMR is descended from triangulation (Denzin, 2012), which is a method that gathers “any and all data [to achieve] a more processual view” (p. 281). Therefore, despite effectively countering the legitimacy of exclusion rates (Pavey & Visser, 2003; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001) such statistics may be used in conjunction with other data collection methods. Triangulation is not a validation tool, but a means of attaining in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied (Denzin, 2012). Accordingly, as addressing the latter takes precedence over debate concerning the superiority of quantitative, qualitative, or MMR (Brannen, 2005), the methodology considered how to best answer the overarching research question: “What are the effects of, and how effective is, the use of a ‘significant adult’ in changing the behaviour of children with attachment difficulties?”.

The literature search revealed that similar projects had employed the Boxall Profile and, despite the diagnostic tool’s limitations (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011), this quantitative data was useful; for example, it allowed for measurement of behaviour change in individual pupils, enabled comparison between the current and previous studies and provided statistics that were accessible to a wide-ranging audience, whilst still being rigorous. An exclusively quantitative approach did not address the ontological and epistemological issues raised and the Boxall Profile alone was inappropriate for a study that focuses on relationships, though. Thus, the quantitative element was limited and largely qualitative data sought.

Ultimately, having considered that the purpose of the research was evaluative, the study employed inductive, ethnographic methodology. The latter provided in-depth analysis of the pupil-significant adult dyad and was based upon “illuminative evaluation” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). The next section’s commentary considers the rationale behind this choice.

4.6 - The Purpose of the Research: Illuminative Evaluation

The current study was inductive and sought to uncover the thoughts and feelings of participants. As such, largely qualitative methodology was appropriate and “illuminative evaluation” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) was adopted as a framework. Several authors (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984; Miller & Timmins, 2007; Preece & Timmins, 2004; Vulliamy & Webb, 1991, 1999; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001) highlight the approach’s benefits; yet, these studies focus on SEBD, which is not the subject of this thesis, and they do not examine relationships between pupils and significant adults. With the lack of pertinent research, this comparison was unavoidable; however, as the literature review did reveal projects that linked incidents of negative behaviour with insecure attachments the approach seemed logical. Besides, Timmins and Miller (2007) suggest that evaluation identifies “whether new practice is better” (p. 9) and, as this was an expected study outcome, the choice was relevant.

Whether evaluation is a research design in its own right is debatable. While studies similar to this thesis suggest it is (see, for example, Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984), Robson (2011) believes that it has a particular purpose. The creators of “illuminative evaluation” describe it as a “contrasting ‘anthropological’ research paradigm” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p. 1), while Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) suggest it is set apart from this; “the anthropological, the sociological and the use of case study in curriculum and programme evaluation” (p. 193). This

thesis adopts the latter definition, believing that the study is predominantly an ethnographic multiple case study with evaluation its ultimate purpose.

The ethnographic description is fitting, as boundaries were blurred between the study and the support that children within the LA would usually receive; for example, meetings were held to discuss each pupil's progress with staff and parents, in the same way they might had the research not been taking place. This raised ethical issues over the teacher-researcher role (see chapter five for a lengthier commentary); therefore, the strategy could equally be termed action research, although Cohen and Manion (2007) comment separately upon the two research designs. Draper (1996) suggests that "illuminative evaluation" is not ethnographic; stating that it is a flexible, inductive approach based on "what might now be called loosely, and perhaps incorrectly, ethnography" (p. 61). Thus, divisions are unclear and, while partitioning aids understanding, it is still vital to consider the research's purpose. As this thesis sought insight into what the participants, both adults and children, thought and felt about the relationships that developed and the interventions that were introduced, for this reason alone, "illuminative evaluation" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) was appropriate.

At each stage of data collection, there was an exploratory period linked to "illuminative evaluation". The interventions evaluated were in their infancy and the strategies used in each case were dependent upon the findings. Preece and Timmins (2004) state;

"Illuminative evaluation is useful when managers are curious about initial impact and effects and wish to gather information on broad fronts to inform the development of an intervention or initiative" (p. 27).

Observation took place regarding processes and outcomes, as the interventions began to develop: changes in pupils' provision being dependent upon the previous findings. Individuals

acted upon any conclusions formed; one example, being IEP reviews. Here, participants could comment upon the strategies and their perceived success; with modifications implemented as appropriate. The data gathered was then input into NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012). Formal methods collected information too, such as structured interviews and direct observations. An ethnographic study of numerous schools would have generated substantial amounts of data, so structuring the “illuminative evaluation” was appropriate. Day Ashley (2005) suggests a “progressive structuring” (p. 136) of collection combining ethnographic methods, the study of documents, observations, group discussions and semi-structured interviews; the first exploratory phase of research informing the second semi-structured one. Thus, the *a priori* sampling process not only ensured the selection of suitable contexts, but also reduced the amount of potential data necessary. This meant that, for a lone researcher, the amount of data collected was more manageable.

4.7 - The Research Techniques: Background

For practical and organisational reasons, the techniques used were those common to everyday situations (Robson, 2011). Documentation was already “out there” (Bryman, 2012, p. 543); the only difference being that the process was formalised through the study’s methodology. LA duties continued alongside research and issues such as time management were easier to address. Due to the dual ISO-researcher role, certain methods were most suitable: the documents scrutinised were IEPs that were readily available in schools; the group discussions, in the form of IEP meetings, would have taken place regardless of whether the pairings were involved in the project, or not; the strategies adopted irrespectively and the interventions evaluated too. The latter would have included observations and interviewing the pupils and significant adults. Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) identify that studying programmes in context is one benefit of

the “illuminative approach” and, by adopting those methods that were most usual, the research was achieved as unobtrusively as possible; however, participants needed to understand the subtle differences between the role of ISO and that of the researcher. Consequently, preliminary information clearly stated that the data gathered was for research purposes, consent deemed necessary and participation not guaranteed (see chapter five for further ethical issues).

4.7.1 - The Data Collection Pilot

Yin (2014) proposes that there are six tools for gathering information and, in order to avoid researcher bias (Mason, 2002), the reasons for choosing particular methods need to be explicit. Initially, these were documentation, observations and interviews, as they would generate the data necessary for the *a priori* purposive sampling process; together, they would provide an in-depth understanding of the institutions leading to only attuned schools being included in the sample. The evaluation used similar techniques, but added group discussions relating to the child’s IEP and personal diary entries. The latter gave the significant adults an immediate opportunity to reflect upon the impact of the implemented interventions, their effectiveness and the developing relationship with the pupil. Document gathering, observation and interview pilots took place, as these were common to both the *a priori* purposive sampling process and the yearlong intervention.

Through consulting relevant literature, regarding these methods, it emerged that despite documents, observations and interviews being used in everyday life there is little consensus as to a definition. Authors have attempted to categorise them (Breakwell, 2000; Bryman, 2012; Powney & Watts, 1987; Prior, 2003; Robson, 2011; Scott, 1990; Yin, 2014), though; Scott (1990) distinguishes between personal and official documents, while Prior (2003) separates the written word and multi-media sources. Breakwell (2000) states that interviews are positioned

on a continuum between unstructured and structured, but Powney and Watts (1987) suggest that this is too simplistic and that they should be characterized by the locus of control; they are either respondent or informant interviews. Robson (2011) and Yin (2014) concur, although the latter uses different terminology; his are either prolonged, shorter, or survey interviews that use a structured questionnaire. As for a definition for observation, Wilkinson (2000) organises them into three categories (casual, formal and participant), while Yin (2014) chooses only two (participant and direct).

With little agreement between authors, an amalgamation of the above definitions seemed apposite and the pilot methods described as:

- collecting and referring to a personal written document; the pupil's IEP;
- carrying out a casual, direct observation of a significant adult working with the child, in a classroom situation (Appendix I);
- conducting an unstructured, informant interview with the pupil's significant adult (Appendix J).

The informal nature of these approaches seemed appropriate to a study that sought to gain a person's views, as those writing the documents, being observed and interviewed would create the agenda (Powney & Watts, 1987). Indeed, previous research (Parsons, Daniels, Porter, & Robertson, 2006; Preece & Timmins, 2004) highlights how useful this unstructured approach can be; for example, Parsons et al. (2006) uncovered significant complications that were encountered by adults with learning difficulties in relation to accessing ICT, which may not have been revealed had more structured methods been used. The line of enquiry can be altered depending upon the information being collected and this strategy was deemed useful, in order to explore ideas with participants and any pertinent suggestions be acted upon later (Yin, 2014).

Ultimately, the project's pilot document gathering, observation and interview intended to amass rich data and gain new insights into the relationship between the child and their significant adult, the current strategies that were successful and those that needed to develop; however, each method had their strengths and weaknesses. The following commentary highlights these and the changes made to the research design as a result.

4.7.2 Strengths and Weaknesses: The Collecting and Referring to a Personal Written Document

A strength of using a personal written document was that the data already existed (Bryman, 2012). There was no preparation needed and the IEP could merely be collected, read and analysed according to its content. The plan revealed information regarding the suggested interventions, the targets that the child needed to achieve and their progress. It also included details regarding the support given by those at home. The people most involved in educating the child (their class teacher and significant adult) wrote the IEP, which meant that the information gathered was directly relevant to the intended thesis. While IEPs are not legal documents, at the study's outset they were recommended good practice for children on the SEN register (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b); therefore, it was assumed that each of the pupils sampled would have one. A weakness in this method was unguaranteed data, as it relied on others to produce information. Thus, in the research itself, group discussions informed each IEP review and these included the ISO. This ensured that IEPs were produced and as much detail was contained within them as possible.

4.7.3 - Strengths and Weaknesses: The Casual, Direct Observation

The pilot revealed that casual, direct observation had strengths and weaknesses. One advantage was ease of administration, as there was minimal equipment and planning involved; only a pencil and the observation schedule were required, the latter adapted from the LA. The informality also meant that all information gathered was relevant. There were disadvantages, though. For example, despite using an aide-memoir, the data collected was a chronological, narrative account and, due to the time-consuming nature of note taking, there was difficulty in gathering evidence of all actions. Certainly, there were missed behaviours, which may have led to drawing differing conclusions. The recording of some information was also in retrospect, which meant relying on memory. Videoing the observation would have overcome these issues; however, a camera was inappropriate for several reasons.

One, it would be distracting for pupils (few of their lessons are recorded). Two, children with attachment difficulties are hypervigilant and move frequently (therefore, a degree of skill with a camera is necessary) and three, there were ethical implications if video recordings were used (consent from all parents would have been required). Not recording the proceedings meant addressing the issue of subjectivity, as lone observations are open to interpretation, though; consequently, measures needed implementing to maximise reliability. Firstly, even though the *a priori* sampling observations were unstructured, they concentrated upon the checklist created from the literature review. Secondly, a semi-structured observation schedule (Appendix K) scaffolded the pupil-significant adult observations; therefore, if others conducted them the focus would be similar. Lastly, objective language was used to describe the observations; any researcher inference was noted separately (Wilkinson, 2000).

The data collected was limited, which highlighted the need to conduct several observations to achieve an in-depth understanding of events; however, not only were the

number of observations made considered, but where they occurred. The ecological framework of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) suggests that children are influenced by multiple, complex layers of environmental factors. Elliott (2004) applies this theory to educational research, claiming that studying classrooms in isolation is insufficient; a child's behaviour can be influenced by their home and social environments, both the playground and wider community. Hence, any study of children's conduct that solely refers to the former is naïve and, if observing the child in just one setting, the findings may be limited too. Suppositional links to other circumstances could be made; however, this reignites the generalisability debate (see, for example, Hammersley, 2005b). The study did not include home observations, given that its remit concentrated upon the pupils' relationship with their significant adult within school, although playground and 1:1 sessions were. Every half term, this totalled one and half hours; six hours for each pair overall.

The pilot also uncovered a negative observer effect, as the pupil was aware of another adult's presence. Questions were continually asked of the significant adult; for example, "Who's that?" and "What's she doing?". This reaction was despite using techniques designed to reduce the impact, such as minimal eye contact and avoiding interaction. Due to changes in behaviour, such effects can pose a threat to the validity of collected data (Gray, 2009); consequently, in the subsequent research, "habituation" (Robson, 2011, p. 331) was pursued. This involved visiting each school, as much as possible, prior to formally observing the child and their significant adult to reduce this Hawthorne effect (Landsberger, 1958).

4.7.4 – Strengths and Weaknesses: The Unstructured, Informant Interview

Piloting an unstructured, informant interview also revealed similar advantages and disadvantages to the casual, direct observation. Firstly, the interview was easy to resource; only

pens and paper were required. Secondly, the situation felt relaxed as the role of an ISO usually involves discussions of this nature. The interviewee reported feeling comfortable too. Thirdly, the interview schedule was helpful: it served as an aide-memoir, which meant that the questions posed were relevant to the studied topic. Finally, the fluidity of inquiry meant the respondent could provide details that were personally important. This aspect enriched the data further, through disclosures that otherwise may not have been elicited.

The inductive approach created detailed understanding; however, some data was unrelated to the chosen subject matter and, as a lone researcher, processing vast amounts of extraneous information was to be avoided. Consequently, the final research did not adopt unstructured interviews, but semi-structured ones. Mostly, this led to relevant data collection; yet, in the *a priori* sampling process, head teachers and SENCos often spoke about children's learning, as opposed to behavioural, needs. On reflection, this was due to the questions' wording; consequently, considering exact language was a key component of subsequent interview planning. Moreover, the pilot did not employ a Dictaphone; nevertheless, it was the intention to do so for the ensuing research. As each interview required transcribing, unstructured interviews were impractical due to the vast amount of data that they would create. In part, group discussions were a solution (Lewis, 2002), but this approach could not be used in every situation. Thus, to resolve these issues too, the decision was made to opt for a strategy mid-way on the continuum (Breakwell, 2000).

The pilot also highlighted a need for a quiet, distraction free environment. Throughout the interview, other adults were using the room, despite privacy being organised previously. What emerged was unsatisfactory, as the informant might not have felt able to give their true opinions; fearing they may be overheard. Subsequently, all interviews took place in a room specifically set aside for the task and the Dictaphone stopped, when inevitable interruptions

occurred; equally, recording only resumed once it was quiet again. Interviewing requires particular skills; for example, active listening, paraphrasing, or summarising (Shouksmith, 1978). Powney and Watts (1987) advocate the power of silence too. The design process gave such proficiency further thought and, prior to contacting the sixteen sampled schools, the techniques practised through the ISO's LA responsibilities.

Relationships in the interviewing process were also considered, due to interviewer effects (Breakwell, 2000). In the pilot, no issues were evident, as the TA appeared at ease and there were no, uncomfortable, pauses; however, the role of an ISO for the LA has implications for schools and, consequently, those interviewed may be guarded. To compensate for this, the atmosphere created was as light-hearted and as informal as possible; even so, alternative forms of data collection were necessary. For example, both significant adults requested that, occasionally, they typed up their responses to interview questions, rather than have their answers recorded on a Dictaphone. They both believed that this approach gave them more time to think through their answers and, as a result, the research gathered a more accurate picture of what they felt about different situations. Therefore, from an ethical perspective, it was appropriate to adopt this approach and an 'Interview Feedback Sheet' (IFS) created for each significant adult to take home with them. They completed it at a time convenient for them and emailed it back to the researcher when it was completed.

4.8 - The Outcome of the Pilot

The pilot confirmed that multiple data collection techniques could be used effectively to triangulate data, as in MMR's "original" (Denzin, 2012, p. 82) form; consequently, by implementing such a process, the study's results comprised more in-depth understanding of the significant adult-pupil dyad. What people intend to do and what they actually do can differ,

particularly if time has elapsed between the two events (Oskamp & Shultz, 2014); thus, while provision was written on documentation, it was not necessarily taking place. It was this directness in observation, which made it so advantageous (Robson, 2011) and revealed whether staff were presenting an accurate account of events in interviews and documentation. Equally, observation is only a ‘snapshot’ of time in a child’s educational experience and, due to the complexity of the classroom, it is not possible to observe everything that occurs; therefore, follow-up interviews and documentation can help establish whether behaviour is typical. Accordingly, without practising the techniques, personal diaries and group discussions were included, as these would further triangulate and enrich the data.

At the intervention’s outset, an initial assessment of the existing relationship between each significant adult and pupil was undertaken. Subsequently, the research combined data collection techniques and repeated them throughout the year; the findings could then be analysed to evaluate the effects and effectiveness of the significant adult-pupil dyad as a planned intervention. Firstly, an hour and a half’s semi-structured observation was conducted (Appendix K), which focussed upon the child’s and significant adult’s behaviour and the interaction between the two. Follow-up observations used the same schedule; one taking place each half term. These observations gathered further information on the role assumed by the adult, the child’s behaviour and the relationship’s development. Repeat observations were necessary, to gain a sequential picture of proceedings.

Conducting initial pupil (Appendix L) and significant adult (Appendix M) interviews followed. A child-friendly script was appropriate; therefore, the former’s format differed to the latter’s. While the intention was to interview the adults each half term, only at the end of the study was the pupil interview repeated, in order to limit the number of times that the children needed to speak to the researcher (Appendix N). This meant fewer occasions that singled out

the pupils for research related attention and their commitment was less onerous. In the interim, the children's views continued to be gathered through their input to IEP reviews, along with the parents' and significant adults' opinions. Combining observations, interviews, group discussions and documentation (including the reflective diaries) led to gaining a detailed picture of participants' thoughts, feelings and actions.

The interview questions posed of the significant adults varied, depending upon the information required; for example, the initial ones sought to gather specific data around what they already knew about attachment theory, the needs of these children, the adult's role prior to any intervention and their outlook regarding the involvement. After one half term, there were a different set of questions (Appendix O); these were, on a subsequent occasion, repeated. These interviews focussed upon what new knowledge and insight the participants had acquired. At the end of the year, posing a final set of questions (Appendix P) gave the significant adults a chance to summarise their thoughts. This led to gleaning a comprehensive picture of the significant adults' relationship with their child; although, as alluded to previously, for ethical reasons this was not always in a formal interview situation.

Initially, the study's design did not include interviewing the parents, or carers, of the pupils involved. Issues surrounding the reliability of the information that was divulged by children were noted; however, the comments made by Lewis (2002) regarding accessing children's views, those relating to trust (Bowlby, 1958, 1977; Egeland et al., 1988; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004; Salter Ainsworth, 1985b) and the fact that these pupils might have difficulty telling fact and fantasy apart (Ryan, 2006) were only briefly considered. The study's design assumed multiple data collection techniques would validate the pupils' opinions. IEP review meetings were included, as it gave parents the chance to put forward their views too, but the focus was not upon them at this point. A discussion that took place with one set of parents

(prior to them giving consent for their child) revealed that they might also play a major part in the data collection process, though. The parents questioned whether children would give truthful answers at interview and suggested questioning themselves. Consequently, interviews with the parents (Appendix Q) took place, alongside their being involved in the IEP reviews. Both the pupils, in their final interview, and their parents answered exactly the same questions. In this way, comparison was possible; theoretically, the results would be more valid if both the child and the parents gave the same answers.

4.9 - The Boxall Profile

To establish statistically whether the pupils had made progress in terms of their behaviour, the final task undertaken was the completion of follow-up Boxall Profiles for each of the two participants. There is controversy surrounding the use of the profile (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007) and limited research into its effectiveness (Broadhead et al., 2011). What does exist is also primarily in relation to NGs (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Garner & Thomas, 2011; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007; Scott & Lee, 2009; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013) and, while the latter's contribution to provision for children with attachment difficulties is recognised (Geddes, 2006), such groups are not the focus of this research.

Two studies (one in the USA and the other in the UK) that examine the profile's use outside the NG remit (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011) suggest that the assessment can effectively measure behaviour change in children. The first study concluded that pre-test and post-test profiles indicated that Child-Centred Play Therapy (CCPT) benefitted homeless children in one (of the two) developmental strands and one (of the three) diagnostic strands (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009), while the second advocated that the 'Sallywags' intervention demonstrated "significant improvement" (Broadhead et al., 2011, p. 24) on both

sides of the profile. The former was independent research, whereas the latter involved the programme's developers; therefore, ruling out bias is impossible, although researchers liaised with parents and teachers during the process to mitigate this (ibid.).

Both studies also acknowledged limitations regarding the Boxall Profile, as a means of measuring behaviour change. In the first paper this included: the lack of control groups; the use of the profile in isolation without further assessment tools; insufficient time to deliver the programme and differing CCTP leaders (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009). The second highlighted: issues of subjectivity regarding those who administered the tests, which may lead to unmoderated scoring; changes in the children's behaviour under observation and the distortion of results either knowingly, or unknowingly (Broadhead et al., 2011). As far as was possible, this study's methodology sought to address these concerns; only it was never the intention to use control groups, due to the ethical issues discussed previously.

The first profiles were completed on the 20th and 21st March 2013 (Child A and B respectively) and the second a year later, both on the 27th March 2014. Each child had received support from the same significant adult throughout. Almost equal time had elapsed for both pupils (Child A had an extra day), a year being thought sufficient to monitor their progress. On completing the second profile, no personnel could refer to the first. This was to ensure that the scores achieved previously did not influence staff members. Conceivably, individuals may have remembered the earlier Boxall Profile outcomes; however, the research design could not mitigate this, as the same staff members were required to ensure consistency. The administration of the profiles was not in isolation either; alongside the assessments staff, pupils and parents completed IEPs and evaluated these accordingly. This contributed to the study's in-depth data collection. Neither were the profiles filled in *in situ* (as the authors suggest), so the pupils were unaware they were being scrutinised; rather the assessment was a culmination

of observations made by well-informed members of staff. This decision was made intentionally to mitigate the Hawthorne effect (Landsberger, 1958).

There remained a subjective element to the completion of the profile, despite it being a diagnostic test. Each adult involved could interpret the sliding scale and behavioural descriptors differently, so it was important to ensure as much parity as possible. To achieve this, again the researcher attended. The same teacher who completed the first profile was also present at the second. The process did differ in that the significant adults were involved in the completion of the second profile too; as they had the greatest insight into the child's behaviour, their input was justifiable despite not being involved initially.

Comparison of the profiles then occurred. Given that the profile's assessment produces scores, the analysis took a quantitative approach. Each column of the profile was subject to evaluation: an increase in score would mean that positive behaviour change had occurred, whilst a decrease in score would indicate a negative one. The face value of the data was questionable, though; therefore, the observation and interview transcripts, diary entries and notes made at IEP meetings were inductively analysed to either confirm or discredit the findings. Chapter seven further comments upon each child's Boxall Profile results.

THE METHODOLOGICAL JOURNEY: SECTION TWO

4.10 - The Purpose of *A Priori* Purposive Sampling

Multiple Case Study

Many of the ontological and epistemological decisions were made when the project intended to examine pupils with SEBD; however, the purpose of the study shifted on the ISO's discovery of attachment and secure base theory (see, for example, Bowlby, 2005b). As little empirical work existed around the application of both theories to education, addressing this gap in research was the focus of the study's overarching question. As recreating a "surrogate secure base" (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32) relied upon an attachment figure, the emphasis of the project was on these adults' relationships with pupils; participants' views, including staff and parents, and their interpretation were paramount.

To devise a focussed study, Mason (2002) considers it essential to frame the research questions first, then implement appropriate methodology; therefore, once the overarching focus changed, it was necessary to consider the study's purpose and ensure that the chosen position remained suitable (Gray, 2009; Yin, 2003a). Robson (2011) introduces design, claiming that there are three traditional strategies; experiment, survey and case study. If adhering to these categories, this thesis falls into the latter. Simplistically, the former are positivistic and quantitative in nature and the latter anti-positivist, malleable and largely qualitative; however, others (Gray, 2009; Yin, 2003a) make distinctions between experiment, survey and case study depending upon the research question itself. Gray (2009) states that case study is:

"ideal when a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has no control" (p. 247).

Evaluating the effects and effectiveness of a significant adult in changing the behaviour of children with attachments difficulties is a 'how' question. The events studied were current and the participants guided proceedings, which further corroborated the choice.

As the study's intention was to apply attachment and secure base theory to educational contexts, the settings and contributors needed to be suitable. Therefore, the design employed an *a priori* purposive sampling process, which further dictated the use of a case study approach. Through this procedure, the four most attuned schools were selected for inclusion in the research; consequently, it was not a single case study, but a multiple one as defined by Yin (2012). The decision to include several case studies, rather than one, was made after reading the author's work and noting that a multiple case study is "a worthy objective compared to doing a single-case study" (Yin, 2003a, p. 19). Day Ashley (2005), who researched three schools in India due to the "multiplicity of private outreach innovations" (p. 135), also influenced the choice: as there are differences between schools, their approaches to inclusion and their provision for children with SEBD (Cooper et al., 2000; Pavey & Visser, 2003) the study intended to explore as many variations as possible. The selection criteria was considered carefully, to validate the choices (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2003b).

The following section focuses upon the sampling strategy's two levels: contexts and participants, as identified by Bryman (2012). From an initial sixteen schools, selected using Patton's (2002) "Maximum Variation" (p. 234) approach, two were included; only those significant adults and children who matched criteria were suitable. As case sampling receives less attention than other aspects of research design (Curtis et al., 2000), the results of the *a priori* purposive sampling strategy are examined: the information gathered during the process is relevant for others embarking upon a study of children with attachment difficulties within schools. The commentary highlights the strategy's advantages and disadvantages.

4.11 - A Priori Purposive Sampling

This section critically reviews the study's sampling process. Sampling often centres around participant numbers; however, Hammersley (2015) suggests that regarding cases "*how many*" may not be as important as "*which ones*" (p. 2). With attachment and secure base theory (see, for example, Bowlby, 2005b) at the heart of the research, any information gathered needed to be relevant to the existing body of knowledge; for this reason, *a priori* purposive sampling was chosen. The process created clear inclusion criteria at the outset, for both context and participant levels. These were developed using literature on the subject and designed to maximise the study's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2007); they did not alter throughout the project. The approach aimed to limit researcher bias (Gomm & Hammersley, 1997) and enable valuable replication (Rosenthal, 1997). As all settings and their personnel are unique, it is impossible to claim causality, or ensure that significant adult intervention can be generalised to the larger population; therefore, while the study implemented criteria to capitalize on both, the research acknowledges that each pupil has individual needs and that provision needs personalising. The results that relate to the sampling process are noted here, while chapter six comments upon how attuned the twelve original sample schools were.

4.11.1 - Context Sampling – "*Maximum Variation*"

Method

The study was conducted in a rural borough council with 72 educational settings, which comprised nine secondary, 46 primaries, seven junior and ten infant schools. The researcher was an ISO in all. To facilitate the selection of a purposive sample and maximise the project's trustworthiness, an ethnographic approach was required. This necessitated continued involvement, regular observation and thick narrative description (Lincoln & Guba, 2007) to

gain an in-depth understanding of the behaviour of both individuals and groups (Bryman, 2012). As ethnography is time-consuming, a lone researcher could not include every school in the study; therefore, sampling required inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Most attachment theory literature focusses upon the early years (Granot & Mayseless, 2001); however, as the ISO role supports children from five to sixteen, the sample needed to cover this age-range to be relevant to practice. Staff who could replicate the secure base, being available and responsive (Bowlby, 2005b), were vital; therefore, secondary schools who allocated more than one adult to each pupil were not viable and Key Stage One (KS1 - five to seven years) and Key Stage Two (KS2 - seven to eleven years) remained. National statistics concerning the number of pupils with SEN and statements were consulted; need rose from KS1 to KS2, with an increase in statutory cases at eleven years of age (Clarke, 2012). Thus, the criteria included KS2 to maximise the sample size and improve the likelihood that additional support was available to those with LA funding. As ‘official’ statistics may be unreliable (see, for example, Vulliamy & Webb, 2001), the focus was supported by literature. Limited research into ‘middle childhood’ (seven to twelve years) exists and results are conflicting (Crowell et al., 2002; Kerns et al., 2001); however, pre-adolescence may be an optimum time for intervention, as attachment to adults remains strong, peer relationships are less influential (Kerns et al., 2001; Kerns et al., 2006) and the gap in ability widening.

The remaining 53 primary and junior schools had “Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) criteria applied to them, to make comparisons between contexts and capitalize on generalisability. The smallest and largest setting in each cluster was chosen; OFSTED (2000) defines small, or very small, schools as having fewer than 100 pupils and this definition is adopted. As the study’s LA was rural, with 53% of settings falling into this category, the distinction was noteworthy. Large and small schools have differing characteristics; for

example, with regard to inspection, national test results (Office for Standards in Education, 2000) and budget flexibility (Audit Commission, 2011b). Such variances may influence provision for pupils with attachment difficulties, so the study sought to explore them. Excluding a Catholic High School whose intake came from across the borough, there were two feeder primaries for each of eight secondary schools selected. Academies were not included as LA support differs. Also taken into account were catchment areas, as otherwise the selection of all settings came from four town localities. The total sample was sixteen schools; the smallest had 20 pupils and the largest 334.

The equal division of those schools that had referred to the Behaviour Support Team (BST), and those who had not, was the second criterion used to maximise variation. This aimed to identify eight schools which had a pupil, or pupils, with identified SEBD at SAP level (DfES, 2001), or above, and eight who did not. The data was gathered for six months (January to July 2012), immediately preceding the research. The council database (Capita Children's Services, 2015) was used to retrieve the statistics; thus, exact information relied upon input. To mitigate any inaccuracies, consultation with appropriate staff took place.

Having identified the sixteen schools, each head teacher received an invitation for their setting to participate. Initially, this was through email to establish their interest, followed by a letter explaining the study in depth with an attached consent form (Appendix C and D). Of the sixteen schools originally sampled, twelve agreed to take part, three declined and one did not respond. This was despite measures to limit non-response, which included two follow-up emails and three telephone calls to each head teacher. Although this reached the 75% target uptake the thesis acknowledges that had this data been available, it might have differed from that which was gleaned (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011); thus, the results may have varied. Missing data was unavoidable, as it was unethical to pursue schools.

Results

Gaining consent in educational research has its pitfalls, but there is limited literature available that explores the subject and further analysis is required (Brevik, 2013). Findings from a medical perspective might be transferable to the education sector; for example, one study found that, predominantly, a lack of time prevented participation in a project on childhood obesity (Levickis, Naughton, Gerner, & Gibbons, 2013). This study also cited possible iatrogenic effects, accuracy and professionalism of initial contact as factors. Mfutso, Masiye, Molyneux, Ndebele, and Chilungo (2008) suggest that poor timing, poor informed consent procedures and a lack of study benefits contribute too. Brevik's (2013) research agrees; however, as one of the few educational studies to comment upon non-participation and investigate head teacher's views, it adds that the latter act as "gatekeepers" (p. 8). Thus, as the decision to consent rests with these staff, this overrides other factors.

Notwithstanding these usual drawbacks in educational research, given that four of the schools declined to participate, the current research sought to establish why. If the reasons were specifically related to pupils with attachment difficulties, the findings might be relevant to others studying similar samples. To obtain data, the research design incorporated semi-structured interviews (Appendix E). Of the four head teachers who did not consent, three agreed to a one-off interview, while the fourth did not to respond, despite leaving three further telephone messages. The latter's reasons for not responding could have been explored (Brevik, 2013), but ethically it was not appropriate to continue emailing or telephoning.

Three of the non-participant schools were large and one was small. Only one of the large settings had referred to the LA for support for SEBD in the six months (January to July 2012) prior to being approached. Given previous findings regarding positive consequences

(Brevik, 2013; Mfutso et al., 2008), this may have been significant; perhaps these schools did not need support, so they did not consent. One head teacher stated:

“...we don’t have a great number of children who fall into the category” (head teacher School 15 – large school, no referral).

The questions focussed upon individual’s reasons for not consenting. Verbatim transcripts and analytic memos were made, their contents stored and feedback analysed using NVivo 10 software (2012), with Bryman’s (2012) four stages of qualitative analysis as a framework. With the research’s ethnographic basis, vast amounts of data were to be collected; therefore, it was apposite to store information centrally. Such software was also valuable as the intention was to use quantitative and qualitative analysis: the program can code at word, sentence and paragraph level, reducing human error. The immediate ability of the program to retrieve information also outweighed the time taken to master it. The non-participant interviews were analysed inductively, with the intention of uncovering related themes. The procedure extracted repeated words and phrases, unusual statements, topics that were important to the interviewees and links to literature. The analysis framework (Bryman, 2012) increased the study’s rigour, with codes being grouped together that had similar content. As an in-depth understanding of non-participation was required, such thematic analysis was appropriate; the intensive approach involves immersion in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings revealed that the reasons given for non-consent were those usually associated with research. Most often cited was the timing of the project, as in the study by Mfutso et al. (2008); for example, one school was due an OFSTED inspection and another was in the process of amalgamating with their infant school. The latter’s head teacher explained

that they were retiring and, consequently, there was a new senior management team (SMT). With staff adopting new roles, there was:

“...a lot of uncertainty in school. There’s a lot of unease, because people [are] being taken out of their comfort zones” (head teacher School 15 – large school, no referral).

With the school in a state of flux, and given the project’s time-scales, this head teacher did not wish to consent on behalf of incoming senior managers; given the possibility that they might later withdraw, the data collected would be unusable. These views implicitly support the fact that head teachers act as gatekeepers; however, one informant explicitly protected their own health and well-being, and that of others, by refusing to consent. With existing workload pressures on staff, this head teacher felt that participating would be detrimental, stating:

“I was overwhelmed by the amount of work we had to do and still feel somewhat like that, so to get a request to take part in a research project, it was almost like the last straw” (head teacher School 13 – large school, no referral).

Furthermore, the informant explained they did not read emails properly regarding research, as they received many. Ultimately, while happy to give a one-off interview, they could not agree to any sustained involvement. This correlates with the study by Levickis et al. (2013).

At the study’s outset, the research design considered a 75% uptake sufficient; however, approaching each school later may have overcome these consent issues and increased this percentage. One interviewee, who did not participate due to an impending OFSTED inspection, alluded to the fact that in normal circumstances they would have agreed:

“...ordinarily if it was a normal...year ahead I’ve no problems at all; quite happy to” (head teacher School 14 – small school, no referral).

Unfortunately, due to time-constraints and practicalities this was not possible.

All three head teachers were unclear as to what was required of themselves, their staff, pupils, parents and carers. Given these responses, and the fact that Mfutso et al. (2008) cite poor informed consent procedures as a reason for non-participation, it would have been worthwhile requesting face-to-face meetings with either the head teacher, or all staff, in addition to emails and telephone calls. Informally, the process offered every school this, but only four chose to engage. With these, it was possible to discuss in detail information regarding how much time, who and what was required. All four participated, including an initially reticent head teacher. In repeating this process, those who did not consent may have had their fears allayed; however, it was not ethical to coerce people.

4.11.2 - The “Maximum Variation Quadrant”

The remaining twelve participating schools were organised into a “Maximum Variation Quadrant”, which is shown in Table 2. Their placement depended upon whether they were small or large, as defined by OFSTED (2000), and sought advice (January to July 2012) from the LA BST regarding individuals, or not. Later the quadrants became an analysis tool.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Participating Case Study Schools

	Referral	No Referral
Small School	Quadrant 1	Quadrant 2 School 1, School 2, School 7, School 10, School 11, School 12
Large School	Quadrant 3 School 4, School 5, School 6	Quadrant 4 School 3, School 8, School 9

As small schools appeared not to refer, this highlighted the process's first limitation; indeed, not one out of eight had. Thus, if replicating the study, it would be beneficial to contact more settings at the outset. Many factors could have contributed towards small schools not using the service, but this requires further exploration as it was not the focus of this study. On meeting with schools, discussion included whether or not they had pupils with SEBD on the SEN register. Only one context did not (School 1); however, there was a child in the school who displayed challenging behaviour. The head teacher agreed that, should the school be included in the final sample, the completion of a Boxall Profile could occur, as the parents were aware of the pupils' needs. Consequently, the school remained in the sample.

4.11.3 - Context Sampling – The Attuned School

Method

The data collection for the *a priori* purposive sampling took place on two days per week over eight weeks and had an ethnographic perspective. The purpose of the contextual element was to generate an in-depth understanding of each setting, to establish how attuned they were. The research design process assumed that schools demonstrating an awareness of existing literature would be suitable contexts in which to work. If settings provided a secure base for pupils, they would: be receptive to the research's aims and training; need limited support, as the ISO had to continue working for the LA, and provide rich data to analyse.

Data collection used unstructured mixed methods; casual observations of KS2 assemblies (Wilkinson, 2000; Yin, 2003a), classrooms, breaks and lunchtimes and unstructured informant interviews (Breakwell, 2000; Powney & Watts, 1987; Robson, 2011), or group discussions with head teachers and SENCos (Appendix F). Examining each school's SEN policy, behaviour policy and existing IEPs was also a component. This mix of techniques

generated large amounts of analysis material, but was necessary to limit potential researcher and participant bias in the sampling process. Firstly, ethnographic researchers can be accused of going “native” (Gomm & Hammersley, 1997 paragraph 1.8) and, as some schools were known to the ISO, this approach reduced the element of subjectivity. Secondly, it mitigated token responses, or a reluctance to talk, during interviews (Breakwell, 2000; Bryman, 2012). Finally, the more opportunities schools had to demonstrate how attuned they were, the more likely it was that an accurate, in-depth understanding would be gained; observational data enabled schools to display how attuned they were through their behaviour, even if they did not use language related to attachment in their interviews, or paperwork. Applying content analysis to the collected data further limited sampling bias. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and all observations, notes and documents entered into NVivo 10 software (QSR, 2012).

Results

In keeping with MMR, analysis of the data collected also employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect largely related to the *a priori* purposive sampling process, designed to establish suitable contexts in which to embark upon study of the significant adult-pupil dyad. The research incorporated a quantitative element in order to avoid researcher bias; providing a checklist, to rank schools according to how attuned they were, reduced the element of subjectivity. Following the checklist’s creation, a content analysis used the 130 codes (Appendix B) to sample four attuned schools. Chapter three described the structured review of literature undertaken to draw up the checklist: what follows is an explanation as to how the analysis took place and the results gained.

Given the large amount of data collected, it was deemed appropriate to use software to conduct the content analysis; as Bryman (2012) states “the computer takes over the manual

labour involved” (p. 591) and it was supposed that this would outweigh the time taken to learn how to use the program. As the intention was to analyse at word, sentence and paragraph level the software could quickly retrieve such information. Consequently, all data gained from the twelve participating schools was uploaded to NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012) data analysis software. This included their SEN policies, behaviour policies, IEPs, notes taken during the observations, transcribed interviews and analytic memos. Next, came searching the information gathered for reference to the 130 key words, or phrases, identified from the structured literature review. The search results are in Appendix B. The first list shows those words or phrases mentioned, while those in the second did not appear in any text. The queries were set to include abbreviations, plurals, synonyms and stemmed words; where the latter appeared, they are in brackets.

The amount of coverage (calculated as a percentage of the total source) of each word, or phrase, was considered too: the school with the highest percentage had referred to the code most often. To ensure parity, where two members of staff were separately interviewed the interview scores were halved. The school that gained the highest percentage relating to each code – by mentioning each word, or phrase, most – then received a point from the potential bank of 130. Thus, it was possible to rank the schools against each other. The highest scoring school had 14 points; consequently, they were the most attuned. Ultimately, this identified the four highest-ranking schools. The remaining eight had little knowledge of attachment, as they scored fewer than 5 points. This rigorous process enables replication, as identical searches can be conducted via NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012); nevertheless, subjectivity was not eradicated for the program could not wholly substitute the researcher. It was unable to identify contextual meaning in the data, so manual examination of the content around the words and phrases took place prior to point allocation. This ensured the word, or phrase, was relevant to the research’s

subjects; for example, the word ‘accepting’ appeared, but was discarded as its definition was not related to attunement.

Despite the literature review’s structured nature, the process employed to create the checklist of words, and phrases, was also subjective; consequently, the ranking system contains further bias. There are a number of reasons for this: one, the application of additional exclusion criteria (certain words were not included at the outset, due to their genericity; for example, ‘behaviour’); two, the uncovering of alternative themes, which summarised the literature’s content, had another researcher undertaken the structured analysis and the chosen 130 key words, or phrases, being “buzzwords”. The latter’s definition is:

“a catchword or expression currently fashionable; a term used more to impress than to inform, esp. a technical or jargon term” (OED Online, September 2015a)

and only schools who used such terminology might have been ranked highly. Therefore, while the observations triangulated the interviews and policies, exploration of the richness of the data did not occur for each setting. Arguably, looking at the data in a more holistic way could have uncovered different results and this limitation has bearing on the reported findings; however, the sampling process identified suitable contexts and the follow-up analysis of the data in terms of school size, or referral rates, provide valuable lessons.

4.11.4 - The Attuned School Initial Case Selection

Two of the four schools chosen as case studies were small and two were large. One of the schools had referred to, or received support from, the LA in the last six months (January to July 2012) and three had not; there was no link between this and the size of the school. Neither was there a correlation between either size or those schools who had received support from the LA

and those who had not, in terms of how attuned they were. Table 3 describes each school's characteristics, their checklist score and final ranking:

Table 3. Characteristics of the Final Case Study Schools

	School 2	School 4	School 6	School 7
School Size	Small	Large	Large	Small
Referral/Support	No	No	Yes	No
Attuned	8½/130 (2 nd)	11½/130 (1 st)	5/130 (4 th)	6/130 (3 rd)

N.B. School 2 and School 4 shared a code, as their percentage for “story” was identical.

Through their actions, words and paperwork, these four schools demonstrated knowledge of 31 of the 130 key words and phrases, making them the most attuned. The remaining eight shared another 19 criteria (each with one to four codes), which suggests that their knowledge was more limited. 80 of the key words, or phrases, were not found in any setting (Appendix B); therefore, none revealed an in-depth understanding of the subject.

The schools fell into three categories, with respect to their existing pupil roll: those who did not believe they had children with SEBD caused by neglect, trauma, or loss; those who did, but felt they had not addressed the issue and those who had provision in place. At interview, head teachers in four settings (Schools 1, 3, 9 & 12) stated that either they, or their staff, knew little about attachment; for example, one head teacher said there was:

“...certainly an element [of children with attachment difficulties] through the school, but I don’t think we’ve looked at it. I don’t think we’ve identified it. I don’t think we understand it and know about it” (head teacher School 3 – large school, no referral)

and implied that it was an area in need of consideration. This newly appointed head teacher believed that they had an understanding of attachment difficulties, acquired in another post; however, they had not yet passed this on to their new staff.

While many schools’ head teachers and SENCos could speak at length about attachment, there was little evidence of practical approaches (see, for example, Bebbington & Phillips, 2002) being used in either observations or IEPs, or of attachment being mentioned in policies. The study acknowledges that observations are snapshots and with more time spent in each school the research may have illuminated further examples of good practice; however, choosing to examine the IEPs gave schools an opportunity to demonstrate their current provision. Moreover, while arguably these approaches are only necessary if there are such children in the school, this caveat is not applicable to a setting’s policies. Only one school referenced attachment within such a document, stating:

“Our school recognises that:

Children who are looked after in local authority care have the same rights as all children but may have additional needs due to attachment issues, early neglect, separation and loss, trauma and many placement moves” (SEN policy School 4 – large school, no referral)

and this was only in relation to LAC. These findings explicitly demonstrate why the mixed methods approach was so important, in terms of limiting participants’ bias and how, through triangulating the data (Denzin, 1974), further validation of the sampling process was achieved.

Relying on the feedback from head teachers’ and SENCos’ interviews alone could have led to the belief that the school was attuned when it was not aware of or demonstrating many, or indeed any, of the 130 key areas outlined in the checklist.

4.11.5 - Results of the Individual Participant Sampling Procedure

After ascertaining four appropriate contexts in which to work, the participant level of sampling needed applying (see chapter one for a detailed explanation). The approach involved using clear criteria to identify suitable pupil and significant adult pairings. This rigorous sampling process identified seven children, across the four schools, as potential candidates for inclusion in the study. Administering a Boxall Profile was central to the process and Table 4 shows the scores gained from their completion:

Table 4. Characteristics of the Pupil Sample (BP Score = Boxall Profile Score)

	Child A	Child B	Child C	Child D	Child E	Child F	Child G
BP Score	78	61	54	53	49	44	65

Only pupils whose scores were high (42 plus; see chapter one) in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Strands Q-Z) were included, as these results indicate “inconsistent care... chaotic experience... loss... too little help... [or] not being ‘held’ in a trusting and supportive relationship” (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007, p. 35). Competent pupils, from 3 years 4 months to 8 years, score from 0-7 (approximately): the highest possible score is 126. Child A was the most impaired (score 78) and Child F the least (score 44). All seven could: disengage;

self-negate; make undifferentiated attachments; show inconsequential behaviour; crave, or reject, attachment; have an insecure sense of self; show negativism towards themselves, or others and want, or grab (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010).

The children needed a 1:1 significant adult, who was available and responsive too. Teachers, or those in NGs, were not suitable (see chapter one); therefore, the sampling of TAs or LMs took place. For this reason, despite two pupils (Child F and G) scoring highly on the Boxall Profile they were not included in the study. The schools' SENCOs supported both. Child F was mentored by one and Child G was part of the NG: this provision was overseen by the SENCO, as is usual (Bennathan & Haskayne, 2007). While a SENCO may be skilled enough to adopt the significant adult role, research shows that many find it difficult to balance the need for specialist teaching with other commitments (Pearson, 2008); having further areas of responsibility is not ideal, given that the research's subjects require quality time. Overstretched SENCOs were also not apposite, as the current study demanded a high level of input in the form of interviews, observations and diary keeping. Furthermore, the methodology employed required in-class observations and, in the case of Child F, this would not have been possible, as the SENCO did not support the child within lessons. Thus, the project did not attempt to explore these teacher-pupil dyads.

Arguably, the pupil sampling criteria somewhat conflicted with the overarching notion of *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014), which included the use of NGs; however, while the research acknowledged that provision for individuals in schools is complex and head teachers and SENCOs alluded to this in their interviews (Schools 4 & 8), the sampling process also required transparency to maximise causation. Neither of the children in the NGs had an additional significant adult; consequently, they remained excluded and consent for the five suitable pupils was sought. For confidentiality, the identities of the children, their parents

and carers were unknown and the SENCos, or head teachers, pursued the required permissions, on the researcher's behalf. For those who were LAC (Child D and E), social workers also needed to consent. Once the adults had agreed to participate, the pupils signed a form. From the five children, two individual cases were secured for the study (Child A and B). Both children were in KS2 and on roll at a small school.

All the significant adults consented. The head teacher contacted Child C's parents, but they failed to respond; this was despite two attempts. Social workers replied, on behalf of the two LAC (Child D and E), and declined too. The study's design then requested interviews with the non-participants to ascertain the reasons for not consenting, as with the context sampling procedure. Once more, Child C's parents did not reply and neither did Child D's carer. This non-response could also have been followed up (Brevik, 2013), but it was not deemed ethical to do so and, as consent was not given to interview the children (Children C, D, and E) either, it was not possible to elicit their views. The findings of the semi-structured interviews given by the two social workers (Child D and E) and one carer (Child E) are detailed. Again, analysis employed Bryman's (2012) qualitative process.

Consent was not given for several reasons, including those generic ones uncovered by the head teacher interviews; for example, one carer stated that it was a "bad time" (Social Worker, Child D), but did not elaborate. However, there were also responses specifically related to pupils with attachment difficulties, which highlighted the potential negative effects associated with the study (Levickis et al., 2013) and issues regarding the trustworthiness of pupil 'voices'. Firstly, both social workers, and Child E's carer, suggested that the interviews might place unnecessary emotional pressure upon the children: Child E's situation was complex and their social worker overtly stated that they would be unable to manage:

“I thought ooh, [Child E] is not going to cope with this, at this stage. Maybe if she, if we, hadn’t had a transition and they hadn’t just moved house and [significant adult from previous school] had just not withdrawn” (Social Worker, Child E).

The social worker further explained that the study might have had an adverse effect on Child E’s transition to another school, especially as a new significant adult relationship was forming. Child E was meeting other unfamiliar adults (the number was unspecified) for “counselling” and “therapy” too (Carer, Child E) and the research would entail:

“another person for [Child E] to be dealing with when [Child E] was quite unsettled, so that would have been... negative” (Carer, Child E).

Thus, Child E was expected to develop three, or more, new relationships at the time; a researcher would have been another. As children with attachment difficulties struggle to trust adults (see, for example, Bowlby, 1958), ethical issues are raised. Such concerns are unrelated to a researcher’s role *per se*, but they would have applied to any new relationship; however, it is questionable whether exposing children, in similar situations, to additional stresses is ethical for the sake of educational inquiry. The issue is relevant to all sampling procedures involving external researchers, as it may limit the participants for whom consent is given and some studies in attachment may lack large enough samples for the findings to be meaningful (Hanson & Spratt, 2000). In hindsight, the sample size may have been maximised by beginning with more schools at the outset, or focussing upon children already identified as having attachment difficulties. The latter would mean the researcher already knew the children, but this might have increased the level of subjectivity and researcher bias.

Child E’s carer and social worker also questioned the reliability of any information divulged by the child to a stranger. This is a phenomenon not uncommon in research with

young people, given that we cannot “perfectly” (Lewis, 2002, p. 115) assess children’s views; however, it may be magnified with pupils who have attachment difficulties, as their relationships are problematic. Child E’s carer highlighted how such children may lack the ability to distinguish between fact and fantasy too (Ryan, 2006); consequently, an inaccurate picture of events, thoughts or feelings might be portrayed. While these comments did not affect the sampling process, they were significant, contributing towards a change in the methodology employed in the latter stages of the project: interviews with parents took place, to fully gain their views and enable direct comparison with their child’s responses.

4.12 - Significant Adult Training

Having identified two significant adults who matched the study’s inclusion criteria, they both received information and training regarding children with attachment difficulties. As the adults came from different backgrounds in terms of their previous work experience (Appendix G), this ensured they had similar knowledge, which they could draw upon to support their pupils. The individuals needed to understand the causes of attachment difficulties, realise how these issues might manifest themselves in the classroom, so that they could identify when their pupils were not managing their emotions, and be familiar with strategies that might improve the children’s outcomes. The training incorporated much of the literature reviewed to create the checklist against which to sample the initial twelve schools.

The training provided was informal and delivered in a 1:1 situation at the participants’ schools. A mutually convenient time was organised and the sessions lasted approximately one and a half hours. The training gave significant adults information regarding each of the eight core themes that the structured literature review had uncovered. Detail was not included for every piece referred to, as this would have been too time-consuming; however, the ISO

disseminated a reading list that included all texts, which significant adults could refer to later. The work of Zions (2005) was highlighted to draw participants' attention to that which already existed on the subject. This emphasised the original contribution that the significant adults were making to the field and provided an opportunity to thank them for their input.

Other literature looked at in depth was thought to be a useful general introduction to the topic, or referred to the role of the significant adult. The information needed to be accessible, so any texts shared were concise; the only written information provided were pamphlets, parts of text and notes. Ryan's (2006) and Bebbington and Philips' (2002) work was reflected upon, as both give school staff a brief insight into the world of a child with attachment difficulties. The brochures highlight the reasons why such pupils present with specific behaviours and how an inability to manage feelings and emotions may manifest itself. Such advice gave the significant adults clues as to why their child might behave in a particular way and helped them identify when they were struggling to cope within school.

The focus was upon practical strategies designed to support children with attachment difficulties. Most prevalent was the early work of Bombèr (2007), which was presented to the significant adults in the form of notes taken during a conference by a member of staff from the LA in which the research took place (Appendix G). This information covered:

- the qualities of a significant adult and the necessity for a network of support;
- 'home-school' partnerships;
- the use of effective language;
- children's development;
- strategies that develop dependency, e.g. 'Taking the Pen for a Walk' (see, for example, Phillips, 2007);
- the creation of routines, e.g. using visual timetables;

- safety, e.g. smells that remind the child of their parent, or carer;
- focussing the child, e.g. practising situations;
- keeping the child ‘in mind’, e.g. using photographs;
- the interpretation of situations, e.g. practising social skills;
- promoting empathy, e.g. exaggerating responses;
- teaching children with attachment difficulties to be calm, e.g. using a ‘calm box’;
- the creation of an integrated sense of self, e.g. asking where their ‘helpful’ part is;
- expressing rage safely, e.g. blowing bubbles;
- guarantees that the children ‘have enough’, e.g. food;
- the encouragement of joy and hope, e.g. reading books with this message.

The work of Geddes (2006) was also mentioned, as it comments upon the notion of the designated significant adult too. The advice contained within echoes much of the above.

On completion of the training, the significant adults were in a position to commence their role. They had acquired new knowledge, had at their disposal numerous strategies which they could implement, had been signposted to further material and could ask for additional advice; either face-to-face, via email or by telephone. Thus, over the period of a year, the study sought to assess the effect and effectiveness their intervention.

4.13 - Summary

Maximising Trustworthiness

The flexibility of the illuminative approach was beneficial for a study that focussed upon relationships; however, the above commentary also illustrates how rigorous the research’s framework was. Internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are the usual components of traditional scientific rigor, but Lincoln and Guba (2007) suggest that these

approaches cannot be applied to evaluation. Instead, they use the term trustworthiness and assert that four criteria parallel these positivist conventions: credibility (internal validity); transferability (external validity); dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). Given that this research adopted an anti-positivist approach, these measures are most appropriate and the next section discusses to what extent the study's design maximised trustworthiness in relation to each of the criteria.

4.13.1 - Credibility

The credibility of the research was maximised in a number of ways that are advocated by Lincoln and Guba (2007). Firstly, the time devoted to the project was considerable. Those schools that took part in both phases were involved for five academic terms and visits took place at least once every six weeks. In addition to this, the significant adults were in regular contact through email, telephone calls and, if necessary, additional face-to-face meetings.

Secondly, the observations were thorough. For the *a priori* sampling, observation in each school was for either a whole or half day depending upon the setting's size. All KS2 pupils and their teachers were included. In the yearlong study that followed, the research design included regular observations every half term. Each lasted one and a half hours. The measures above ensured an in-depth understanding of the settings; this was particularly so in the two schools where the significant adult and pupil relationships were examined. To add further credibility to the study, additional collection methods triangulated data; these included interviews, examining documentation and attending meetings.

Lastly, working with others was integral to maintaining credibility. Through regular meetings, the researcher's supervisors gave advice and supported the development of the project at all stages. They were valuable emotional support too. To embark upon the proposed

research, the submission of an ethics form to the University of Birmingham's ethics committee was necessary, as it was in their remit to ensure that safeguards were in place to protect the study's participants. Furthermore, it was necessary to include those who took part throughout; key individuals agreed the data that was collected, gave feedback regarding analysis and read the thesis at different stages in the write-up. The rationale for involving participants in the interpretation of results was that, despite having a clear process of analysis as advocated by Mason (2002), causality might be questioned. Causality is described by Gray (2009) as "event x led to outcome y" (p. 261) and, if those taking part in the research were not consulted, the researcher could suggest that any number of variables might have impacted upon the findings. Consequently, there were conclusions drawn in discussion with parents, significant adults, staff and pupils. The study's methods facilitated this approach too; for example, IEP meetings were particularly useful in this regard as all participants met.

4.13.2 - Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (2007) suggest that to guarantee a study's transferability "thick description" (p. 19) should be used. Ponterotto (2006) believes that the term is often confused, but does offer definitions in terms of manuscript structure and this thesis adhered to these principles wherever possible. For example, the write-up included significant detail regarding the contexts, participants and direct quotations of their thoughts, feelings and opinions. Thus, cross-context, cross-participant comparisons were possible and the final thesis chapter discusses not only the research's contributions to theory, but also to practice; as there are potentially "similar possibilities in other situations" (Pring, 2000, p. 41).

Not all interventions were successful; nevertheless the findings are still useful, as knowing what is least effective can also inform practice (Chalmers, 2003; Miller & Timmins,

2007). This theory echoes the evidence-based approach, which advocates a systematic study of all outcomes regardless of their effectiveness. For this reason, the results provide both the positive and negative consequences of the use of a significant adult.

While transferability enhances the study's trustworthiness, it is questionable whether the results are wholly generalizable. Some authors argue that case studies cannot be generalised (Gray, 2009; Hammersley, 2005a; Pring, 2000) as what works in one context may not in another, owing to differences in schools or individuals. While the *a priori* sampling process identified attuned schools in which to conduct the research and enabled significant adults and pupils with certain characteristics to be identified (Bombèr, 2008), it did not assess the significant adults' personalities. Given that Visser (2002) suggests that anyone embarking upon an intervention with children who have SEBD should have particular qualities, if the study were to be replicated, the results may differ dependent upon the participants in question. Furthermore, despite beginning with a large sample, only two pairings were available and this small sample might not be considered sufficient to make generalisations (Hanson & Spratt, 2000). Thus, readers can make their own judgements as to whether, and how, the findings might be applied elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 2007).

4.13.3 - Dependability and Confirmability

If dependability is akin to reliability then Yin's (2003a) definition is pertinent. It states that the "goal of reliability is to minimise errors and biases in a study" (p. 37) and it could be argued that the research design above has achieved this in a number of ways. For example, in the *a priori* sampling, using NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012) to quantitatively analyse the content of the data curtailed mathematical errors and, in the yearlong analysis of the relationship between the significant adults and their pupils, semi-structured observations reduced researcher bias. By

approaching the study in this controlled way, others may replicate it; however, even if repeating the processes exactly, it is unlikely researchers will arrive at the same conclusions, although not impossible. Every participant, context and event in the subsequent research would be unique and the findings might vary substantially.

According to Lincoln and Guba (2007), there is little that a researcher conducting an evaluation can do to address the areas of dependability and confirmability. They believe that an audit by an “external, disinterested auditor” (p. 19) is necessary to arrive at these judgements. The above arguments might counteract this belief in relation to dependability; however, it could be questioned whether confirmability can be achieved even when the research is audited. Potentially, “all academic knowledge is socially constructed” (Hodkinson, 2004, p. 11), as every person involved in the study, including the researcher, has created a reality (Pring, 2000) formed by their cultural background, experience and beliefs. Thus, it might be reasonable to assume that this study’s main contribution lies in the examination of each pairing: analysing the relationship between the significant adults and their pupils is integral and commentary made upon the role’s effects and effectiveness.

4.14 - Conclusion

There has long been debate over the issue of quality in educational research. In their paper entitled *Where Does Good Evidence Come From?*, Gorard and Cook (2007) argue in favour of experimental design (focussing on RCTs), but disagree on a number of issues including the appropriateness of MMR. While the former positivist trend has gathered support from other authors, in the government and the LA in which the current research took place, alternative anti-positivist approaches are defended: it is the latter that this study adopts. There were a number of reasons for this. One, ethical considerations, such as the iatrogenic effects of interventions;

two, the untrustworthiness of statistical data, due to a phenomenon's differing definitions and social construction; three, RCTs' necessity for large samples; four, an inability to claim causality and generalise to larger populations and five, as the study examined relationships, the need for an inductive approach that explored participants' views. The study's design was not wholly rooted in this approach, though; a structured literature review was useful, as was quantitative content analysis and Boxall Profile and IEP statistical data.

This chapter highlights the literature considered and the research design journey undertaken: the outcome of which was a multiple case study, where the initial focus was upon ethnographic participant observation, action research employed and evaluation its ultimate purpose. In addition to this mixed-methods approach, the analysis applied quantitative and qualitative techniques to the data collected. The design chosen has maximised trustworthiness, through ensuring credibility, transferability and dependability. The study's objectivity is questionable; however, arguably the latter is not necessary in an evaluation such as this as the findings have value in themselves. The next chapter turns to ethical considerations, which are an additional, and vital, part of the study's design.

CHAPTER FIVE

WITH ETHICS ‘IN MIND’

5.1 - Introduction

There were ethical issues to consider, prior to embarking upon the research and throughout the project; consequently, the following chapter comments upon the decisions made, safeguards introduced and the outcomes gained from them. The commentary begins by exploring the teacher-researcher dilemma, given that the study’s design was rooted in ethnography and action research employed. Subsequently, the section examines recruitment, consent and the right to withdraw from the project. An account of the confidentiality process, in terms of both the study’s sampled schools and individuals, follows. The chapter then refers to data handling, which details the feedback given to participants. Finally, the section reflects upon the study’s associated risks, along with the ethical issues surrounding the participants. Particular attention is paid to the pupils involved, as specific considerations apply to children (Morrow & Richards, 1996); those with attachment difficulties are especially vulnerable.

5.2 - The Dual Role of Inclusion Support Officer and Researcher

While action research has become widely used, the ethical issues raised are less well documented (Nolen & Putten, 2007); despite this, substantial thought was given to the positions of ISO and researcher running concurrently in this study. Local schools were used to working in partnership with ISOs to meet individuals’ needs, but no team member had asked any of the settings to take part in research. Thus, as the two roles were now to co-exist, it was vital that the participants were fully aware of the duality and its implications. Nolen and Putten (2007) highlight the “issues of informed consent, participant autonomy, and the coercive potential of

action research” (p. 406); hence, the following section comments upon how each of these concerns were addressed in relation to this thesis.

Concerning consent, there are ethical dilemmas regarding how much to tell participants. If not enough is divulged they might not be fully informed, but if too much is revealed the findings might be affected (Silverman, 2013). The duality of the role added another dimension to this, as current good working relationships with colleagues needed preserving. The intention was to fully inform those taking part and be open and honest throughout. Firstly, the ISO explained the study’s purpose, in enough detail for participants to ascertain their role. Next, the handling of the collected information was explicitly set out, including the fact that the write-up might publish data; hopefully, as a result, the participants would be both frank and involved in making decisions (Nolen & Putten, 2007).

Attending to the position of employment held within schools, and its implications, was also vital. It was important not to abuse the position of an LA representative: to either engage participants, or obtain data from them. Therefore, the recruitment process was non-coercive and there was no penalty if schools, or individuals, did not participate. Asking the significant adults to keep diaries and, consequently, collect their own data also minimised coercion (Nolen & Putten, 2007). To use quotations within the write-up, the ISO sought further permission. Finally, the study disregarded information that was overheard; for example, it was possible to discern conversations behind partially open doors, but data collection only took place when the participants were aware of the researchers’ presence.

The study intended to generate a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data: deciding what information and analysis to divulge to participants, prior to the write-up, was another ethical dilemma. This was particularly so given that the role of ISO was to continue after the research was complete. The most sensitive issue was around informing schools of their

unsuitability for further study; consequently, each school received a personal email regarding the results of the *a priori* sampling process. Head teachers were responsible for disseminating the comments to parents, carers and pupils; if they felt this was appropriate. Given the delicate nature of the information, the ISO offered further verbal feedback, but no head teachers asked for clarification. As additional visits were inevitable, verbal feedback was available to sampled case study schools. Continual discussion surrounded the data collected from significant adults and pupils, as part of collaborative working; however, this was only if staff felt this was beneficial in terms of the latter. The processes were explained fully to all those involved, prior to embarking upon the research. Participants were also aware that senior managers were privy to the findings soon after the initial research had taken place.

Conflict might also have existed surrounding interpreting the findings of the effects and effectiveness of the significant adult, given that assessing individual pupils' needs, planning interventions, implementing them and reviewing their success has long been integral to the role; despite the *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) recently formalising the phrase "Assess, plan, do and review" (p. 86). Thus, on a professional level, it would have been difficult to accept that the intervention suggested had not benefitted the pupils and tempting to conclude that the work was more effective than it was. Gathering the views of all participants, and involving them at every stage in the process, mitigated such overemphasis and reduced researcher bias.

5.3 - Recruitment and Consent

Throughout the recruitment, and consent, process there was no coercion. Every head teacher, adult, parent, carer and child had the right not to participate. From the initial contact, schools were aware that they had no obligation and that they could elect not to contribute without

negative consequences. The written and oral language used throughout the recruitment process was deliberately non-persuasive. This objective approach was particularly important in those schools already known to the LA, as it was unethical to use the dual role of ISO and researcher to coerce people into participating in the project. Transparency regarding the study was also vital. Prior to giving consent, every participant was privy to the purpose of the research and informed that the intention was to publish the thesis. Thus, individuals were aware that the findings would be readily available to anyone who wished to read them; this included senior managers in both the schools in which they worked and the LA.

5.31 - The Adults in the Research

“Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) criteria identified sixteen schools that could potentially take part in the research. Initial contact followed, via a brief email addressed to the head teacher. This member of staff was the first point of contact due to their overall responsibility for the school. The email highlighted the research question and introduced the researcher. This level of detail was sufficient, as schools were only expressing an interest in receiving further information. Once head teachers became interested in the research, it was necessary to ensure their full understanding regarding its purpose. Of the sixteen head teachers, twelve responded affirmatively and were sent the letter and consent form (Appendix C&D). The letter fully explained the study, but there was also an opportunity for head teachers to ask questions. An email address and telephone number were provided and face-to-face meetings offered. Four schools engaged in these discussions, the others did not. All staff members received invitations to a meeting to explain the purpose of the research and the data collection process. In each school, this was organised as a group; yet there were opportunities for individuals to ask questions too. At this meeting, the staff received the same letter as the head teachers, but a

different consent form (Appendix R). The rationale for giving individuals information too was that, even if the head teacher had given approval for the research to take place in their school, each member of staff should give their own informed consent.

Some head teachers did not wish to arrange a meeting, opting to discuss the project with staff themselves. In these cases, they circulated the letters and consent forms. Arguably, the differing personnel might have influenced the decision of individuals to participate, or not. For example, the researcher did not coerce staff into taking part in any way; however, head teachers may have taken a different approach. Despite this, given that head teachers are a school's gatekeeper, the study's ethical framework respected their decisions. Ostensibly, head teachers would act in the best interests of their staff and school.

Occasionally, particularly in the *a priori* sampling process, there were adults present in observations who had not received an explanation of the research; neither had they signed consent forms. Often these individuals were visitors to the schools; for example, students, volunteers, or other members of staff not regularly encountered in the classroom. Initially, in these situations, the researcher gave a verbal explanation of the study and sought verbal permission. Subsequently, if individuals agreed to take part, they filled in a consent form. None of those approached refused to consent; however, had they, it would have been necessary to suspend the observations. Sporadically, if the adult was only present for a few minutes, the researcher withdrew from proceedings and adjourned the observation; for example, when the caretaker entered a classroom briefly, spoke with the teacher and left. Such withdrawal from observations was a planned, research design strategy: its implementation also ensuing if staff required privacy, or if health and safety issues arose.

Every SENCo, in the twelve participating schools, consented to take part in the study and their interviews took place alongside the head teachers' (Appendix F). The pairings' ages

and gender varied. As the concept of an attuned school is a social construction, it was important to explore the views of these key figures at the research's outset. The rationale being that these staff members would shape the school's approach to special educational needs policy and, specifically, the provision for children with attachment difficulties. The feedback gathered added to the in-depth picture gained of each setting; accordingly, those attuned schools chosen would provide data that was relevant to the phenomena studied. Furthermore, choosing such schools would capitalize on the potential for development and improvement of practice. If each had already demonstrated a commitment to applying attachment theory in the classroom context they would, potentially, be open to further suggestions. Even though the head teacher had agreed that the school would take part in the research (Appendix C), the requirement to complete an adult participant consent form (Appendix R) also existed: this was to confirm that they agreed to be included themselves.

On identifying the significant adults, through the *a priori* purposive sampling process, the researcher spoke with them again regarding the study's design. The former's contribution was central to the project, potentially emotional and time-consuming. Regular observations, interviews and IEP meetings were to involve them; moreover, they were required to write their own daily diary. Both significant adults already worked outside of their contracted hours; for example, one was responsible for producing the paperwork for their child's IEP and both planned activities. Given the extra responsibilities, and stressors, the study entailed it was important that the significant adults understood their role before they consented. Explaining the research in this way ensured that their consent was fully informed.

Four schools declined to take part in the sampling phase of study, but it was useful to obtain their views regarding non-participation; therefore, these head teachers received a further email about the research. This raised an ethical issue, as these individuals had not opted to take

part initially; however, the move was justifiable as the requirement was a one-off interview. The request was different. Nevertheless, so as not to continually pursue head teachers, contact was by one email only, along with one follow-up telephone call, if necessary. Regarding the pupils, consent was unobtainable for three. The views of the parent, carers and social workers were valuable too, so these non-participants also had the option of giving a one-off interview: the ethical stance taken was as above.

5.32 - The Children in the Research

It was not practically possible for a lone researcher to recruit and obtain consent for every child in these twelve schools, as this would have meant meeting with 2309 sets of parents, carers, social workers and children; therefore, only those sampled for the significant adult-pupil dyads were included. This required a separate consent form (Appendix S), which school staff explained to identified parents and carers. The latter shared it with social workers. If potential participants requested further information, they could contact the researcher. The parents of one of the five pupils asked for clarification regarding the project and consented following a meeting, another parent consented without discussion and the remaining individuals neither contacted the researcher for further information, nor consented. More participants might have been recruited had a request to speak with the parents, or carers, been made directly; however, this notion cannot be substantiated.

Not obtaining consent from every child raised ethical challenges and concerns that needed consideration. Firstly, all reference to specific pupils needed anonymising. Secondly, in terms of the casual observations of each KS2 classroom, assembly, break and lunchtime the data collected could not contain reference to individual children, only the teachers, TAs, or midday supervisors who had given consent. The general ethos of the classroom, hall or

playground was included, though. The latter involved describing the surroundings in relation to the 130 key words or phrases identified in the checklist. Such observations included a variety of sensory references: for example, a school routinely using rewards and sanctions evidenced by classroom displays (like, 'Golden Time' charts) and pupil talk (like, "I have to see the head and she'll phone my mum, 'cos I'm on Red" - a Traffic Light system).

Application of the study's rigorous inclusion criteria identified only two pupil participants; however, regardless of the sample size, ethical issues needed exploring and the research acknowledged that there were complexities surrounding vulnerable children's recruitment and consent. Firstly, each pupil needed information about the research so that they could agree to take part themselves; in addition to the consent required from those with parental responsibility. Consequently, two discussions took place with the participating children, prior to them embarking upon the research. The wording of the consent form (Appendix S) was such that parents and carers could talk about the study with their child. The researcher also explained the project verbally to the pupils before they agreed: the child-friendly dialog clarifying the children's role in the research and the, subsequent, treatment of the data. Whether this is fully informed, Gillick competent, consent is debatable (Lewis, 2002); however, as most activities in school are non-negotiable, the children needed explicit guidance on dissenting. Without this, they may have felt obliged to participate and the research would have reinforced the idea that pupils have no voice (Lewis & Porter, 2007).

5.33 - Digitally Recorded Interviews

For digitally recorded interviews, it was necessary to obtain specific consent from both adults and children. The research employed a Dictaphone. To protect the participants' privacy and promote candour, these interviews took place in a quiet room that minimised distractions. In

busy schools, there were interruptions; however, on all occasions, recordings were suspended and returned to once the pair (interviewer and interviewee) was alone. It was necessary to avoid leading questions, or judgements, and notifying participants of the possible sensitivity of their answers occurred, as did validating the discussion's content. The final interview question asked the participants whether they wished to add anything. No other auditory, or visual, recordings ensued; therefore, validating observations was problematic. To maximise accuracy, where the proceedings required clarity, the participants later discussed the events with the researcher. This happened immediately after the observation, if convenient.

5.4 - Participant Withdrawal

All participants were aware that they could withdraw, at any point in the study, and that they had a right to ask for the removal of data. They did not have to give a reason. The only caveat to this was that, once data was analysed, collated and included in the thesis withdrawal was not possible. The deadline by which to withdraw was one month on from the final data collection. For the adults, it was sufficient that the consent form stipulated that withdrawal must take place prior to August 2014; however, again the pupils required explicit explanation. The latter highlighted that, throughout the study, they could speak with staff, their parents, or carers and relinquish further contribution, or request the removal of data.

If an adult participant had decided to withdraw from the study, research practice would have been considered (British Educational Research Association, 2004) as a change of approach (for example, using questionnaires rather than face-to-face interviews) might have persuaded individuals to continue. Throughout the discussion, no coercion would force anyone into contributing, though. Granted, this dialogue may also have been sensitive; therefore, much of the time, it might be necessary to honour the decision to withdraw. For pupils, accepting their

withdrawal was definitive; as from an ethical perspective, this approach was not appropriate. Conversations with this element of persuasion might constitute an abuse of adult power and, in these situations, coercing vulnerable children unavoidable.

If either the significant adult or the pupil decided to withdraw, the ISO would have considered whether the intervention should continue, even though the data would not be included in the thesis. Withdrawal may have negatively influenced the pupil's academic progress and behaviour; consequently, there was an obligation to inform senior staff accordingly. Discussion with staff, the child and their parents, or carers, would have taken place to arrive at a judgment. The decision would have been both dependent upon current circumstances, and taken from the perspective of the ISO not a researcher, a distinction made clear to head teachers at the study's outset. How withdrawal might affect the significant adult also required consideration. Ultimately, the school could act upon the advice, or not.

There were no negative consequences for a participant who withdrew from the study, as they would be unidentifiable. Nevertheless, the withdrawal needed to be included in the write-up, so readers were aware that the data was incomplete. Had a participant chosen to withdraw prior to the deadline, a discussion would have followed to ascertain whether the thesis could include the previously collected data. If participants dissented, the researcher would destroy the information; however, none of these situations arose as everyone remained involved in the study until its completion and none of the participants asked for removal of data. Nonetheless, it was important to have these precautions in place.

5.5 - Participant Feedback

From an ethical perspective, it was important to give regular feedback to participants. Initially, following the *a priori* purposive sampling process, it was possible to disseminate the findings

to the sixteen settings involved. Those not chosen for further research received an email, followed by an offer of verbal feedback; however, none of the schools opted for this. Due to time constraints, the default position was a group discussion, but individual feedback was available had any members of staff required this. At that point, the decision to publicise the information to pupils, parents or carers was the schools'. The intention was to produce a written paper and offer a copy of this to all those who participated in the sampling process; however, to date, such an article has not been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal. The report proposed to summarise the findings, but further detail would be available on request; for example, had anyone wished to obtain copies of transcripts.

Throughout the yearlong significant adult-pupil intervention, those taking part were continuously involved in discussing the data collected. Their involvement was paramount; for example, everyone attended two meetings each half term to update the pupils' IEPs and discuss the intervention's progress. This included head teachers (who in both cases acted as the SENCo too), significant adults, parents and the children; however, it was not ethical to insist on their attendance, so not all of the above attended every meeting. Often, the children chose not to be present, or the adults deemed it inappropriate for them to attend.

Despite this, a strength of the study was the inclusion of pupils' views, as authors believe that only recently have researchers begun to fully consider children's opinions (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Hill, 1997). The research explored the pupils' thoughts and feelings; with feedback given on as many occasions as possible. Firstly, the significant adults and parents were encouraged to speak with the children regarding the intervention and comment via the IEP meetings. Secondly, the researcher considered anything that the pupils said during observations; consequently, the children were involved in discussions over whether their significant adult was helpful, without direct interviews. The researcher checked the accuracy

of any ambiguous statements the pupils made in interviews, or observations, by asking them for clarity and sought their permission to use quotations in the write-up.

The reading of the significant adults' diaries took place as soon as possible after their submission, to address promptly any issues around clarity. The significant adults were in contact via email, or telephone, with a response to any messages given at the first available opportunity. Occasionally, it was necessary to refer to the initial training material again; always, further discussion took place to add to the significant adults' knowledge. Memos in NVivo (QSR, 2012) stored noteworthy additional information for later analysis. When the significant adults discovered new ways of working with their pupils, the researcher shared these with their counterparts. It was good practice to give feedback in this way, as it meant supporting the significant adults in what could be a potentially challenging role. It also provided as rich a picture of their views as possible.

5.6 - Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Research Design and Write-up

Confidentiality and anonymity should be the norm within educational research projects (British Educational Research Association, 2004); therefore, this study applied measures to ensure that both were achieved, vis-à-vis the general public. At no time, were the identities of the schools revealed to one another, despite head teachers and other individuals requesting the information. The ISO often visited schools to conduct observations, so identifying contexts was unlikely. Neither were the significant adult-pupil pairings identifiable, as the children would receive the same attention regardless of whether they were participants or not.

Furthermore, the write-up remains confidential and anonymous: it is not possible to identify schools, or individuals, from the text. To achieve this:

- codes are not assigned to either contexts, or participants;
- in the *a priori* sampling, schools are numbered and individuals given their role title;
- the identities of the significant adults and pupils are disguised through the use of pseudonyms;
- quotations are anonymised and only included with specific permission.

Confidentiality and anonymity could not be wholly guaranteed (ibid.), though. As the members of staff, social workers, parents, carers and children knew who each other were, they might be able to identify individuals within their own school. Factors outside of the researcher's control might also have influenced confidentiality and anonymity; for example, participants may speak about their involvement to others.

5.7 - The Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act (UK Parliament, 1998) also needed adhering to. Participants were entitled to know their data's remit. Not only its projected use; but also plans for its storage, who would have access to it, and when it would be disposed of. The letter and consent form provided information regarding the above to adult participants, with further discussion if required. A dialogue took place with pupils, which used simplified language.

5.8 - Storage, Access and Disposal of Data

The following data and its analysis were, and continue to be, stored:

- policies, IEPs and Boxall Profiles;
- field notes pertaining to observations;
- audio recordings of unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews.

Several measures were in place to maximise the security of the data. These included:

- when making field notes in the initial stages, schools were assigned the numbers one to twelve;
- in the significant adult-pupil data collection, pseudonyms were applied *in situ*;
- those interviewed were asked not to name colleagues, parents, carers, or pupils;
- before taking any photocopied documents from a school all names were erased;
- participants were not expected to add their names to data that was collected;
- a locked drawer ensured that paper copies of data were secure, until such time as they could be scanned and saved as a pdf. file. After this had been accomplished the paper copies were shredded;
- at no time was the equipment used to record participants left unattended and the transfer of audio recordings to both private computer and back-up hard-drive took place as soon as possible. Once complete, the original recordings were erased;
- no-one else was given access to the data, apart from the supervisors of the thesis and this was solely for the purpose of research supervision.

A private computer and hard-drive stored electronic data. The computer had an initial password to access it. All data relating to the thesis was then kept in a single folder, in which all the files were password protected and encrypted using Axcrypt (Axantum Software AB, 2014) software. If documents were deleted from the computer and hard drive McAfee Quick Clean and Shredder (McAfee, 2013) software was used. The University of Birmingham's secure systems will store the data following the final write-up. The data will be kept for ten years, in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research (University of Birmingham, 2010-2011). After this, deletion of the electronic data will occur.

5.9 - Outcomes for Children and Safeguarding

It might have been beneficial to reveal information about children to third parties in order to improve their outcomes; however, nothing was passed on without parental, or carer, agreement. In the LA, a specific consent form and protocol for recording such information was available and, had the necessity arisen, the former would have been completed and the latter followed. The only exception would have been if there were safeguarding issues. In cases where a child might be at risk of significant harm, there would be an obligation to disclose to the relevant authorities, even if those with parental responsibility refused consent. It was important that all adults taking part in the research realised this too. The researcher needed a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) - now a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - check, to work with children without supervision from other staff. This was already in place and valid for all LA schools.

5.10 - Risks

Prior to embarking upon the research, the study's potential risks required consideration; therefore, assessments were undertaken, ways of managing risk explored and plans put in place to deal with situations. Subsequently, training raised participants' awareness of potential issues and procedures to follow if an incident occurred. Similar discussions took place with head teachers, or SENCos. It was also necessary to alert these staff to the fact that, due to the intervention's nature, those taking part may be emotionally vulnerable.

5.10.1 - Significant Adults

For the significant adults there were risks surrounding their health and well-being. Potentially, the role could be physically, and emotionally, draining; consequently, several factors needed considering. One, it was necessary to recruit suitable individuals. The adults needed to be:

confident; secure; humorous; have (or have the capacity to build) rapport with the child and not be employed in a teaching position (Bombèr, 2008). The recruitment decision was the head teachers', as they had knowledge of their staff and, in most schools, individuals already held the role. Once the study was underway, the level of support given directly reflected how closely the significant adult matched the description above, according to the head teacher; however, as a working relationship formed between the chosen significant adults and the researcher, the latter employed professional judgement. In one case, the head teacher over-estimated the significant adult's knowledge around attachment theory; whereas, in the other, the significant adult needed appointing, so the characteristics were discussed with the head teacher and used in the recruitment process. The latter matched more of the required qualities (see chapter six for a lengthier commentary).

Two, much of the literature spoke of support networks for staff (Bombèr, 2008, 2011; Geddes, 2006), so it was important to inform head teachers, or SENCOs, of this necessity. The researcher also needed to provide specific strategies to assist the significant adults. Ways of developing networks included:

- having another adult to share the role, if the support was full time (this allowed the member of staff protected time);
- providing an in-school mentor who could support the significant adult;
- ensuring that staff were adequately "Team Teach" (Positive Handling) trained, in case an upset, or angry, child should need appropriate support;
- ensuring that the significant adults knew that the researcher would offer advice, and listen, whenever this was needed (regular visits were arranged, email contact and phone calls encouraged).

5.10.2 - Involving Vulnerable Children in Research

The individual sampling strategy attributed inclusion and exclusion criteria (see chapter one for more detailed commentary). The *a priori* purposive approach ensured that the information gathered was relevant to the phenomena studied and enabled meaningful conclusions. The research only included pupils who:

- had identified social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD);
- were already on the special needs register of the school (both of the above meant that the pupils could be recruited without having to raise the sensitive issue of SEND with parents who were unaware that their children had difficulties);
- did not have a recognised learning difficulty;
- were in KS2;
- had a significant adult working with them and
- had attachment difficulties, as defined by the administering of a Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010).

Through using these criteria, the number of child participants was not calculable in advance; however, as they would be vulnerable youngsters, specific ethical issues required consideration. One, their competencies needed to be established; two, acknowledgement needed to be made of their vulnerability and three, the interpretation of the young people's data should be accurate (Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Throughout the study, pupils were asked for their opinions, as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) states that children should have the right to express their views freely, if they are capable of doing so. Respecting their opinions was paramount; however, while it was necessary to value children's contributions, their age and maturity needed

taking into account (ibid.). Thus, the pupils were supported in their responses when necessary (using language that they could understand and was developmentally appropriate), but care was taken not to ask leading questions, or make judgements. Whenever possible, the questions were open-ended, broadening the children's views to enrich the data.

As the study was conducted with children and young people, it was also useful to refer to, and keep in mind, the MRS guidelines (Market Research Society, 2006); consequently, the research design acknowledged that care should be taken not to upset, or harm, the pupils in any way. Strategies were necessary to ensure that the health and well-being of the pupil participants was uncompromised. Firstly, these included measures specific to the loss of a significant adult:

- having a second significant adult for the child, so that this member of staff could take over the supportive role if, for whatever reason, the main attachment was broken
- should the primary attachment figure cease contact with the pupil, if practical a transition period should be arranged (this could mean further dovetailing of support)
- if it were impractical to maintain face-to-face contact with the pupil then other means of communication should be considered; for example, emails, texts, postcards and letters throughout the transition period
- continued close contact with the child's parents (face-to-face, email, text, etc.), as they should still be the pupil's main attachment figure
- recognition of the fact that should the child's mental health be adversely affected then access to support from CAMHS would be available, through their GP.

The significant adults were either staff already employed to support the pupils selected, or new staff engaged specifically for the role. The school, not the LA or the researcher, employed them and their contract was to continue after the project was completed; therefore, there were no

issues to consider regarding the loss of one-to-one support at the end of the study. In the role of ISO, the researcher was also to maintain contact with the children for as long as necessary. Interviewing children, observing them and attending meetings continued; consequently, this level of attention did not alter when the research ended either.

If inclusion in the project distressed a pupil, this would have needed addressing: the participants knew that they could talk to anyone about proceedings. Members of staff were aware that if a child came to them with any issues they should try to resolve them. If this was not possible, and the pupil agreed to the researcher being involved, then further discussion would take place. If the latter occurred, immediate action would be necessary; for example, if using a Dictaphone upset the pupil an alternative means of collecting the data needed exploring. If the difficulties were unresolvable then it would have been unethical for that child to continue their involvement in the study. In these cases, withdrawal from the project would have been appropriate. The pupil would have been privy to explicit information regarding withdrawal and told that this was acceptable; otherwise, they might feel that they had to continue. No incidents of this nature occurred, however.

There were precautions taken regarding the conduct of children's interviews too. Firstly, how to broach sensitive topics needed consideration: those relating to friendships, for example. The strategy adopted was the solution-focused approach (de Shazer, 1987). This collaborative method frames experiences positively, rather than negatively, and this may mitigate unnecessary stress (Corcoran, 2005). Secondly, to maximise the children's feelings of security during interviews, the schools selected environments where the participants felt safe. The pupils also chose where to sit when led into the room; for example, one child sat on a beanbag in a corner. Finally, interviews only took place with the pupils' full consent. If they were not at ease with the proceedings a postponement, or cancellation, could occur; once, a

child asked not to take part in an interview on a particular day (the anniversary of his father's death, which the researcher was unaware of) and an adjournment followed.

These precautions mitigated most negative incidents; yet, despite careful planning, one episode required managing more effectively. Having conducted an initial pupil interview, it emerged that the parents needed further detail regarding the research led activities. The mother advised that the pupil had become emotionally dysregulated following the first set of questions; consequently, the parents requested advance warning of the day on which the activity was to take place and what was to be included. To minimise further distress on either party, telephone calls and emails (with copies of the questions) followed. The parents would make contact should anything require alteration; however, this did not arise.

The power held by the researcher, and other adults in the study, as opposed to the pupils required consideration; consequently, the methods chosen were not invasive, or confrontational, and involved an element of participation. Within the write-up, the child participants' limited power also needed acknowledging. Children's views, opinions and actions required accurate presentation, but eliminating researcher bias from interpretation and analysis is impossible. To ensure the data's accuracy, each pupil interview needed verifying. If appropriate, analysis of observational content took place within IEP meetings.

Understanding researcher effects is an issue in any study, but is more challenging when the participants may not have learnt to trust adults due to neglect, or trauma (Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008). Validating data through habituation was particularly relevant, given such pupils' profiles; consequently, the participants encountered the researcher regularly to aid familiarity. Furthermore, a range of collection methods existed (observations, examining documentation and holding meetings, which the pupils could attend) to validate information that they gave in their interviews. Yet, later in the project, one parent still

questioned how useable the information that their child gave was; this led to the introduction of parental interviews to triangulate data.

5.11 - Conclusion

To conclude, several measures ensured that the thesis process remained ethical. The initial approval form sent to the University of Birmingham Ethics' Committee is contained within (Appendix T). The basis of the preceding information is located within seeking ethical approval, the granting of conditional approval and meeting the conditions specified via feedback. A less ethically challenging study would not have included vulnerable young people; however, their views were pivotal. Despite the study acknowledging that children with attachment difficulties struggle to comprehend and express their emotions, this thesis adopted the position that their views were significant and the above safeguards were in place to seek these ethically. The ethical process paid particular attention to the pupils who took part in the research, due their vulnerability; however, ethical consideration for the adults was also vital. All participants received the design process favourably, with only minor difficulties arising: addressing the issues overcame them all. None of the participants considered withdrawing either themselves, or their information. Consequently, the analysis chapters include a full complement of data: there are no gaps, aside from the initial non-participant schools. Thus, it is to the analysis and results that chapter six now turns.

CHAPTER SIX: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Introduction

6.12 - Quantitative Analysis

Commensurate with MMR (see chapter four for an in-depth commentary), both a quantitative and qualitative approach was adopted to analyse the data collected. Quantitative data can be analysed qualitatively and vice versa (Bryman, 2012); consequently, this methodology was employed to best address the research questions. Most quantitative work took place regarding the *a priori* purposive sampling process. At the context level, quantitative data (the numbers of pupils on roll and how many schools had referred to the BST) placed schools within the “Maximum Variation Quadrant” and quantitative content analysis examined collected qualitative data. To identify participants, the number of pupils with SEBD was considered, as were their ages and the child’s initial “pattern of functioning” (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010, p. 5) measured by Boxall Profile scores. The analysis of the yearlong intervention also included quantitative data; comparison of Boxall Profile scores (pre and post intervention) being used to measure behaviour change. Finally, qualitative data from IEPs was analysed quantitatively.

6.13 - Qualitative Analysis

While this quantitative deductive approach to analysis was useful, particularly with respect to the sampling process, the study adopted a qualitative inductive stance to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the data. Given that the initial structured literature review had already identified codes and themes, the presence of which indicated attunement, it was logical to employ thematic analysis to uncover further information. Thematic analysis complimented the illuminative approach, as the aim was to uncover the participants’ thoughts and feelings

surrounding the intervention. Its flexibility was valuable. Consequently, despite thematic analysis' relatively recent rise in popularity, and the fact that it is not deemed an approach in its own right (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012), it was implemented.

The quantitative content analysis enabled the schools to be ranked and identify which of the 130 codes they had mentioned, but this format was insufficient if the findings were to be meaningful (Bryman, 2012) regarding *how attuned* schools were, as opposed to *which*; therefore, to elicit this information, the existing qualitative data collected for the *a priori* sampling was further analysed qualitatively, through thematic analysis. Having applied the final stage of Bryman's (2012) framework, the 130 codes were already collated into eight key themes (these formed the basis of the commentary in chapter three); however the participants revealed further information. Each school highlighted issues that they deemed important and often these were unrelated to those originally identified. Without the aid of the checklist, this data generated its own codes and gave additional insight into The Attuned School concept. Again, Bryman's (2012) four stage process was used, as was the NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012) program; having become familiar with both it was appropriate to continue their use. Pertinent quotations were noted, which were later used in the write-up.

Interpreting the results, against each of the quadrants, was then possible: thus, comparing the findings between schools with similar characteristics. Of the final four sampled schools, 2 and 7 were in Quadrant 2 (small schools - no referral to the BST) and 4 and 6 in Quadrant 3 (large schools - referral to the BST). As Child A and B attended schools 2 and 7 respectively they were both in Quadrant 2. No small schools had referred to the BST (Quadrant 1), so data pertaining to these characteristics was not gathered; therefore, the final sample represented three quadrants. Each summary within this chapter looks for similarities and differences between these remaining three, through analysis and interpretation.

Regarding the two case study pupils, while the Boxall Profile scores and quantitative data from IEP aims, objectives and targets measured behaviour change, these statistics on their own were insufficient to draw significant conclusions from: such data suggests that both children made *progress* throughout the yearlong period of study, yet they cannot indicate *what* occurred and *why*. Triangulating the quantitative data with IEP meeting minutes, observations, interviews and the significant adults' diaries provided an in-depth picture of each pupil's development. Thus, qualitative analysis of the data revealed what *transpired* in each relationship and causal links were made possible; however, this thesis acknowledges that in complex school environments the latter has complications (Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

The four stages of qualitative analysis (Bryman, 2012) were used to create themes and an inductive approach was taken. This method was suitable as the research sought to elicit thoughts and feelings of participants in relation to the effects, and effectiveness, of the significant adult as a planned, preventative intervention. As the transcripts and field notes were uploaded to NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012), the information was read (1st Stage). Such readings created intentional assumptions regarding the data, which were summarised as analytic memos, directly onto the software to keep all information centrally. A second reading added any details of further interest. This stage of the analysis took place as soon after the data collection as possible, usually within a few days, as the events were memorable and recall more reliably drawn upon. Systematic coding of the data then occurred (2nd Stage), in this order: IEP meeting minutes; observations; significant adults' diary entries and all interviews (the significant adults', parents' and pupils'). The process continued until no further themes arose. Each code represented a core theme and 44 codes were identified (Appendix One).

As a year had passed since the first inductive analysis of the head teachers' interviews, further knowledge acquisition surrounded thematic analysis and NVivo 10 (ibid.). No need

drove the gathering of this new information; nevertheless, it altered the data handling. 'Framework' (NatCen, 2015) is supported by NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012) and enables users to summarize data into a themed matrix; consequently, having chosen both thematic analysis and NVivo 10 (ibid.), adopting the 'Framework' (NatCen, 2015) method was logical. It also allowed for more easily interpreted data. Learning how to use this aspect of the program was time-consuming; however, this outweighed that spent manually reducing the data collected. The approach adopted in the literature analysis, which relied on re-writing notes continually, had been onerous; so, it was preferable not to repeat it. The 'Framework' (ibid.) method was also novel as it allowed each participant's data to be analysed. This form of thematic analysis equated to Bryman's (2012) third stage; therefore, interpretation was still required.

On examining the 44 codes, seven overarching themes emerged by re-reading the content of every reference attached and determining commonalities. A 'Framework' analysis was produced on NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012), based upon these overarching themes. They included the: social, emotional and behavioural progress made by the child; developing relationships between the significant adults and the pupils; child's, parent's and significant adult's perspective on the role; effectiveness of particular strategies; benefits and pitfalls of a small school environment; effect external support had on the child and school staff and importance of the child's home circumstances. The second section of this chapter comments upon each; however, once the write-up was underway, the themes appeared more interlinked than they had previously, so the text connects themes two and three and six and seven.

6.14 - Summary

To summarise, much of the above was a systematic, deductive approach to analysis designed to elicit how attuned schools were according to the checklist created: the main drive of the

initial data collection being the purposeful selection of schools, and later participants, to answer the overarching research question. Yet, it was not the intention to continue to adopt this stance, as the thesis itself aimed to elicit the “experiences and views of the participants in the innovations” (Timmins & Miller, 2007, p. 10); therefore, a more inductive approach was needed. Thematic analysis involves immersion in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and is intensive. For this reason, it was suitable for a study with a small sample; however, until conducting the *a priori* purposive sampling process, it was uncertain as to how many pairings there would be. With only two, in-depth analysis was possible, which in turn assumed causation; therefore, the findings may be transferrable to similar situations.

THE STUDY'S FINDINGS: SECTION ONE

6.2 - How Attuned are Schools?

The first half of this chapter discusses the ways in which each of the schools were, or were not, deemed attuned against the pre-determined checklist. The commentary is subdivided into the eight key themes identified from the structured literature review, based on Bryman's (2012) qualitative analysis (4th Stage). Under these headings, the chapter also proposes whether the schools themselves considered any of the approaches effective, by including issues that head teachers and SENCos drew attention to in their final interview question (Appendix F, prompt 7). As the prompt was open-ended, some of their comments do not relate to the eight key areas; nevertheless, as they give valuable insight into SMT priorities, the second half of the chapter comments upon the views.

6.2.1 - The 130 Codes and "Maximum Variation Quadrants"

Two sections exist for each of the eight key areas. The first focuses upon the extent to which schools highlighted the 130 codes identified through the structured literature review. The commentary explores head teacher and SENCo opinions on these issues and evidences their implementation; the latter was only possible through analysis of observation notes and documentation, which mitigated participant subjectivity in their interviews. The second section summarises the findings in relation to the "Maximum Variation Quadrants"; consequently, highlighting similarities and differences between the types of school. Only three quadrants are represented (2, 3 and 4), as no small schools referred to the BST.

6.3 - A Whole-School Approach to Attachment Difficulties

From the twelve schools, reference was made to four areas that could be grouped under the heading of whole-school approaches that authors such as Bombèr (2007, 2008, 2011), Geddes (2005, 2006, 2010) and Phillips (2007) advocate. These covered relationships, staff and pupil networks, bereavement and professional development, with the latter specifically mentioning attachment training. Firstly, in terms of networks, one context (School 4) referred to the requirements of the *SEN Code of Practice* (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b) in their SEN policy. The document stated that their SENCo should attend network meetings; however, these were general gatherings not those specifically to support a knowledge of attachment. Similarly, schools regularly referred to staff, and governors, assisting each other with general behaviour management through internal networks, but only once was there mention of:

“a network of staff doing the same [supporting pupils who had attachment difficulties] job” (SENCo School 5 – large school, referral).

The Educational Support Manager, who had received NG training, supported this group. After an audit identified vulnerable children, this member of staff arranged intervention.

In three schools, pupil networks were apparent. These support systems were given different titles in each; peer mentors, peer-to-peer support and peer supporters. The first setting (School 5) spoke of family groups consisting of children from Reception to Year 6, another (School 2) offered pairs of children one-to-one time in which to resolve issues. Bullying was specifically mentioned as a situation in which this approach might be pertinent; a view supported by others (DCFS, 2007; Houlston, Smith, & Jessel, 2009). The last school had “trained” Year 5 and 6 peer supporters, on duty at lunchtime, and their work was:

“preventative... they can go in and sort situations out by just talking, or giving them [the children who are having difficulties at lunchtime] activities to do, which has been a real, real plus” (head teacher School 6 – large school, referral).

This basic tenet here; that peer supporters have a positive impact, is common to studies relating to their effectiveness (Cowie, 2011; Department for Education, 2014b; Thompson, 2011). Indeed, in the latter, peer mediation (which involves talking with the pupils as in the example above) was given the highest rating of all the approaches examined. Despite this, Thompson’s (2011) study also highlights criticisms; for example, pupils who used the service felt that peer mediation was ineffective in managing incidents of bullying.

In only one context (School 6) was the above work mentioned in relation to children with attachment difficulties. Lunchtime peer supporters waited at the back of the line with a pupil whose hypervigilance meant that they needed to stand where they could see everyone. This information was part of the child’s IEP. Consequently, while pupil networks were general practice across the schools, so were they relevant to the young subjects of this research. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this strategy was not examined, although for children with attachment difficulties it could theoretically prevent their continual turning round, as they “scan for danger” (Phillips, 2007, p. 34); therefore, given the lack of current empirical evidence, further research might be pertinent.

Bombèr (2007) and Geddes (2005, 2006) believe that trauma, including bereavement, may cause attachment difficulties and that a whole-school policy should exist on these issues. No school provided such a document, although four schools referenced the terms within other policies. Comments were brief, however:

- the first (School 5) was in their behaviour policy, as they recognised that such an event might impact upon a pupil's behaviour;
- the second (School 4) related to LAC, as their SEN policy acknowledged that trauma and loss could lead to attachment difficulties in this cohort of children;
- the third (School 12) talked of teachers helping pupils to manage their feelings and
- the fourth (School 7) was in terms of an individual child (Child B) who had received support from Barnardo's for a family bereavement. This school covered the topic of trauma most, mentioning it more than once within their SEN policy.

Professional development was also frequently discussed in the literature (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Geddes, 2005, 2006, 2010; Phillips, 2007). Five schools spoke of training in their behaviour policies and all cited it in relation to SEN. While many schools also mentioned the topic in their interviews, rarely was this in relation to attachment training. In fact, only three referred directly to support that they had received previously on attachment; for example, one school spoke of effective training being given in relation to "strategies" (head teacher School 10 – small school, no referral) from both adoption support and other relevant agencies. Likewise, a second setting had received input from adoption support regarding a child with:

"very challenging behaviours.... he came from.... on an emergency.... move from one carer to another...." (SENCo School 4 – large school, referral).

The last school spoke of three staff receiving training from an independent consultant. Subsequently, this information was disseminated to all adults in the school and, according to the head teacher, it helped everyone to "have a very understanding and positive view of this child (Child A)" (head teacher School 2 – small school, no referral). All three schools either currently, or previously, had a child identified with attachment difficulties.

A Whole-School Approach

Summary

There are issues that emerge from the findings. One, the majority of these examples occurred in the four schools ultimately chosen for continued research and, given that this theme refers to a whole-school approach, this supports the assertion that these settings demonstrated the most attuned ethos. Two, each quadrant was represented. Size made no difference, as both large and small schools demonstrated aspects of the whole-school approach. Likewise, some of the schools commented upon here had made referrals to the LA, others had not. Three, in schools where Boxall Profiles were completed (Schools 2, 4, 6 and 7) the results suggested that seven of the children had attachment difficulties: in three of these settings (Schools 2, 4 and 6) the staff were already aware of the pupils' needs, having previously accessed advice and training from the Adoption, or Behaviour Support, Team. In the remaining schools, it was not possible to say if this was the case, as pupil assessment did not take place.

This last matter could indicate that schools developed more whole-school approaches to attachment difficulties if they knew that they had a child with this need on the register; yet, the fourth setting (School 7) was unaware that the pupil in question had such an issue and they had an attuned whole-school approach. Throughout the conducted observations, staff here demonstrated appropriate strategies; for example, using contingent touch. This was despite the head teacher believing that there was:

“little known about [attachment] in all honesty. I don't know much about it.... I don't know if any of the staff have” (head teacher School 7– small school, no referral).

Thus, in schools where key staff assumed that there were no, nor had ever been, children with these needs the topic had not been raised; however, this did not preclude them from using

pertinent strategies. Ostensibly, the child's bereavement might have provided staff with some information. Thus, whole-school approaches were evident in contexts that had children with particular needs, regardless of identified attachment difficulties.

6.4 - Using Significant Adults

Limited research exists in relation to using significant adults with children who have attachment difficulties in school. Zions (2005) writes of teacher-student relationships as a protective factor for children presenting with ODD, CD, or disorganized (D) attachment patterns and Bergin and Bergin (2009), Hamre and Pianta (2001) and Sabol and Pianta (2012) suggest that at risk, or vulnerable, pupils can be supported; however, other work relies on personal experience (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Chapman, 2002; Geddes, 2005, 2006). Addressing this gap in empirical research was this study's overarching purpose, so the data collection methods in the *a priori* sampling process lent themselves to investigating this aspect in depth; for example, the unstructured informant interview question design (Appendix F) intended to elicit relevant information from head teachers and SENCOs. Key topics covered by the collected data included: relationships; significant, or key, adults and in-class support. The findings also related to training received by these additional staff. Consequently, this part of the commentary reveals much about the importance placed on staff-pupil interactions, school's allocation of support and how embedded into the setting's ethos the significant adult role was.

Relationships underpin attachment theory; thus, it was important to explore schools' perspectives on this topic. 24 sources mentioned the concept, more so than any other except the word "feel", which appeared in 33. Most behaviour policies (Schools 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12), and some SEN policies (Schools 1 and 2), referred to the importance of positive

relationships between all stakeholders, including children: these two also made a direct link between this and pupils developing their own skills. One policy (School 1) stated:

“the quality of relationships between pupils, parents, staff, governors, the church and wider community enables the children to become responsible citizens.” (behaviour policy School 1 – small school, no referral).

Three IEPs (Schools 2, 4 and 10) mentioned relationships and all referred to objectives, or targets, that the children needed to achieve. Two contexts (Schools 2 and 4) linked this work directly to the role of a significant adult with children who had attachment difficulties; however, the fact that relationships could have a positive effect on vulnerable children, or those with these specific needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Zionts, 2005), was not explicitly written, or spoken, about. Plans were also in place to support those who had suffered trauma in recognising and responding appropriately to their emotions (Schools 2, 6, 7 and 12) and some staff were observed using skills that might benefit pupils with attachment difficulties; for example, exaggerating facial expressions (School 10), humour (Schools 2, 3, 4 and 11) and verbalising feelings (School 6).

Given that Bombèr (2007); 2011) and Geddes (2005, 2006, 2008) stipulate that a significant adult should be both responsive and available it was important to establish what roles existed in schools, above that of qualified teachers with responsibility for whole classes. This information was available primarily through the interviews with head teachers and SENCOs, but triangulated by observation and the schools’ documentation. Almost exclusively, additional support catered for academic needs. Schools consistently mentioned using TAs for LA recommended *Reading Intervention* and *Structured Reading and Spelling* packages (Swain, 2014). Every school also used support in numeracy, bar one (School 12): this included the

Maths Recovery programme (Willey, Holliday, & Martland, 2007) believed to raise standards at KS 1. Observations confirmed that these interventions were taking place.

While the above might inadvertently benefit those children with attachment difficulties, the criteria for receiving this support was academic competence and pupils would only qualify if they were underachieving in these subjects. Schools did refer to support for SEBD, but to a lesser degree. One head teacher stated:

“... we’re not just looking at... academic intervention, we’re looking at... the social and emotional side as well” (head teacher School 9 – large school, no referral).

Schools spoke of packages relating to general provision; for example, SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2005, 2006), Circle Time (Mosley, 1996), Time to Talk (Schroeder, 2001) and Assertive Mentoring (Farrar & Judson, 2007), but only the latter was observed taking place in one context (School 9). Outside agencies also delivered interventions: one directly related to those children who had suffered trauma and loss. This was Barnardo’s, who worked in one of the small primary schools (School 7) supporting bereavement.

1:1 support for children was largely reserved for those who had statements of SEN, although schools also mentioned this ratio in relation to individual reading time. One (School 4) suggested that this type of reading was beneficial for the social, emotional and behavioural development of their pupils too, as some children did not have this quality time with an adult at home. Frude and Killick (2011) agree: they argue that family storytelling is on the decline and recommend stories as a powerful tool for teachers and health professionals to use, particularly for children with social, or emotional, difficulties. Frequently, schools shared support with other SEN children; for example, one TA (School 11) aimed to develop a child’s independence by working with a small group, not merely the identified child with a statement.

Only two contexts (Schools 2 and 4) mentioned adults supporting children with attachment difficulties. The former head teacher clarified this by saying that the pupil found it “very difficult to focus” (head teacher School 2 – small school, no referral) without.

The training that additional staff received was largely in relation to reading, spelling and numeracy. Reading Intervention, Structured Reading and Spelling and Maths Recovery were mentioned along with Early Literacy Support (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) and Additional Literacy Support (Department for Education and Skills, 1999). In one context (School 11), a senior TA supported pupils with literacy and delivered interventions in the afternoons; she was able to mark the pupils’ work too, as she had received training. Two schools (Schools 5 and 9) were able to mostly allocate a TA to every class and use these staff to deliver planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, or undertake assessments of pupil progress. Three adults supporting work in this area had qualified teacher status (QTS), but worked as TAs. The first had not secured a teaching position (School 3); the second was a retired head teacher (School 1) and the third chose to assist rather than teach (School 2).

Not all training for support staff related to literacy and numeracy. Some schools attended courses with individual children’s diagnoses in mind: one example being autism (School 4). As one context (School 6) was an LA strategic resource for children with severe learning, physical difficulties or both their staff required knowledge of these fields. Training in social, emotional and behavioural issues was also mentioned, which included *Relax Kids* (Viegas, 2014), but most often referred to county-wide, in-service training (INSET) delivered by the LA BST on SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) and Family SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Representatives cascaded this learning to all staff, where head teachers deemed it appropriate.

In some schools, all adults had received safeguarding (Schools 5 and 8) and first-aid training (School 5). Another (School 4) explained that each staff member accessed the same external input; for example, coaching and mentoring, positive handling and attachment training. This head teacher also cited the effectiveness of their in-house training; teachers trained support staff and vice-versa, making the school “self-sufficient” (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral). As such, this individual questioned the phrase “non-teaching staff” in the unstructured informant interview (Appendix F – prompt 4). In their opinion;

“... they’re not non-teaching staff, they do teach and... I would like to think they all feel fairly equal... OFSTED noticed that our teaching assistants went above and beyond what’s normally seen” (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral).

Head teachers and SENCos highlighted the value of experience, as opposed to training, too. For example, one head teacher explained how an individual had no “formal, grand qualification” (head teacher School 10 – small school, no referral), but had 12 months’ experience of working with a child with a statement: this generated an awareness of the pupil’s needs. Other support staff worked predominantly in Early Years and Foundation Stage classes, due to many years’ experience in this particular environment.

Finally, three schools raised finance as an issue in relation to pupils’ support. One head teacher (School 7) stated that there was a voluntary TA in KS 1, because there were no funds. Redundancies were imminent in another setting and, as this was a “delicate” (head teacher School 12 – small school, no referral) situation, the head teacher had refrained from asking staff to undertake interventions. In another school, TA redundancies had already occurred (School 3). Schools also felt that, due to a lack of funds, staff did not receive the training and support they had previously from the LA. One head teacher stated:

“We’ve lost our experts... you know, our specialist teachers were absolutely... annihilated and we needed those” (head teacher School 9 – large school, no referral).

While this school continues to rely upon the LA (and in particular centrally employed specialist teachers) to meet the needs of their pupils, the government no longer recommends this practice (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014). Their latest guidance suggests approaching other organisations; for example, *MindEd* (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2014). Seemingly, this school needs help to obtain support from such sources and build their capacity to respond to the needs of pupils with attachment difficulties, as opposed to relying upon outside agencies. Such a shift in emphasis could facilitate financial savings and achieve similar outcomes for pupils, if freely provided; however, private organisations would require recompense, which could place further financial strain on schools’ budgets. Consequently, SMTs may not direct funding to such training.

The Use of Significant Adults

Summary

This section raises issues pertinent to the overarching research question. Each of the quadrants were represented in the findings and only one discernible pattern could be found; both schools that linked positive relationships to developing the social, emotional and behavioural skills of children were in Quadrant 2. Neither had made referrals and both were small, with 36 and 32 pupils on roll respectively; however, as two other schools had the same qualities (Schools 10 and 12), but did not make the link, causation cannot be determined. Arguably, other factors, such as the head’s knowledge and opinion, may have contributed.

As the focus question examines the use of a significant adult it was vital to obtain a sample with which to work, but sampling generated only two pairs. Along with the consent issues

commented upon in chapter four, factors outside of the researcher's control influenced the availability of suitable adult participants, including the fact that:

- head teachers reported a lack of finances with which to employ support staff;
- support was more often used for academic needs than SEBD and
- training equally focussed upon curriculum subjects and specific support only sought, or received, by schools when they knowingly had a child with attachment difficulties.

These limitations not only indicate a lack of 1:1 provision. The latter also suggests that TAs may have been working with pupils with attachment difficulties with little knowledge of the requirements of such a post. Two contexts (Schools 2 and 4) were the exception to this, in that they knowingly had support for identified pupils in place. These schools' knowledge was greatest as they ranked highest (2 and 1) on the checklist of the 130 key words, or phrases; nevertheless, it is acknowledged that this judgement was arrived at on a whole school level. If scrutinising individual significant adults, they may not have demonstrated such levels of attunement. Clarifying their knowledge was only possible through further research.

One setting (School 10) previously had a TA in the position of a significant adult and received training from the BST, but the child was no longer at the school. This head teacher might have demonstrated knowledge of attachment in their interview (assuming that they had acquired knowledge from the experience), but did not. Moreover, the school's SEN, or behaviour policy, did not reference attachment, trauma or loss; neither did the IEP provided. Therefore, despite their previous experience, this school ranked joint last in terms of how attuned they were. One explanation might be that, as there was no child with attachment difficulties at the time, the concept was not as important. This further supports the assertion that a school's current situation drives how focussed upon the issues they might be.

6.5 - Allowing Children Access to Therapeutic Tasks

There were few references to the use of therapeutic tasks (see, for example, Bombèr & Hughes, 2013), despite interview prompts three and four (Appendix F) being created to elicit this information. Five different contexts demonstrated colouring on seven occasions (Schools 4, 6, 9, 10 and 11), once in an art lesson and the rest at break, or lunchtime; on every occasion, this was for whole classes. Schools also mentioned differentiation fifteen times (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12), almost exclusively in relation to children on the SEN register. One setting (School 10) differentiated for every child in maths, as the class was small. Thus, while this approach inadvertently supported pupils in need of therapeutic approaches, its implementation was not specific to those with attachment difficulties.

In terms of specific references to attuned therapeutic approaches, three contexts (Schools 2, 4 and 8) displayed most knowledge. One (School 8) referred to a “calm box” (see, for example, Bombèr, 2011, p. 122), and two (Schools 2 and 4) referred to the use of stories on five occasions: to illustrate how to prevent bullying; with nursery and reception aged children as a nurturing activity and, in an IEP, to encourage a child with attachment difficulties to recognise feelings and emotions. The latter (School 4) also referenced the phrase “cooling off” in their behaviour policy. No observation of the practice occurred; although, arguably the need to “cool off” would only arise if a child were in crisis. In literature, other phrases such as “calming time” or “safe place” described the same concept, but they were not mentioned either. The same setting (School 4) proposed that environmental factors might trigger negative behaviour in those with attachment difficulties:

“... something we can’t even imagine would trigger something. To them it could be a smell, or it could be a song, a word...” (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral).

This echoes the work of Ryan (2006) and demonstrates how this school could be seen as more attuned than most, as they recognised potential underlying reasons for negative behaviour.

Allowing Children Access to Therapeutic Tasks

Summary

The results, when looked at in relation to the “Maximum Variation Quadrant” show no correlation. Most schools used differentiation (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12) and several (Schools 4, 6, 9, 10, 11) had colouring activities, but neither were used in relation to pupils with attachment difficulties. Contexts (Schools 2, 4 and 8) that spoke of therapeutic tasks, which directly benefitted children with this identified need, were each in a different quadrant; therefore, neither size nor whether they had referred to the BST mattered. No school mentioned significant adults using therapeutic activities with a child.

The data collected shows that, while schools may be adept at using differentiation in the curriculum, it was not prominent in the contexts examined in relation to attachment. Few schools used therapeutic activities, there being evidence of only six from a potential nineteen. List B (Appendix B) summarises those activities mentioned in the literature and, while some of these could be considered specialist techniques such as the programme *Volcano in my Tummy* (Pudney & Whitehouse, 1998), many are reminiscent of activities used with young children. Indeed, the word “play” could replace therapeutic, as the activities would be developmentally appropriate. An attuned school would allow children with attachment difficulties frequent access to play, especially if they were having difficulty managing their emotions. The phrase “Thinking Toddler” (Archer, 2001, p. 14) supports this notion.

6.6 - Teaching Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills

The significant adult is ideally placed to teach social, emotional and behavioural skills, but the role is a skilled one (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013, found in 'Our Joint Statement'). The results of this section attest to this, as schools demonstrated little knowledge of specific teaching strategies advocated by the literature (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007; Illsley Clarke, 1999a; Phillips, 2007). Observations, policies and IEPs provided some data relating to this theme, as did prompts three and four on the semi-structured informant interview (Appendix F), but prompt five was most illuminating as it explored each school's behaviour policy.

Most often, reference was made to implementing SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) activities (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11). Schools wrote of the approach in policies (Schools 2, 5 and 10), had displays on walls (Schools 5, 6 and 9) and spoke about the programme in their interviews; either in relation to the whole-school, or group work (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 11). Only one context (School 2) cited the programme as a current intervention with a child who had attachment difficulties and drew attention to the fact that it had not had a positive effect, but had on other pupils. This interview also highlighted that with no additional funding it was difficult to implement the intervention consistently. This might have contributed to its ineffectiveness. Church affiliated schools (Schools 1, 2, 3 and 4) demonstrated how their faith and values; such as love, trust and forgiveness, supported SEAL. Two contexts (Schools 1 and 4) spoke of the links with assemblies, religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) topics, which delivered a "Christian ethos" (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral).

The SEAL (ibid.) programme intends to support children's emotional development. Many schools addressed this issue directly in their teaching (Schools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

and 11). They did this in three main ways: verbalising feelings for children (Schools 5 and 9); using exaggerated expressions to model empathy (Schools 2 and 10) and discussing feelings and emotions with pupils (Schools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11). Displays were also visible around schools (Schools 5, 6 and 9) that related to these sentiments. These included those entitled: “How Do You Feel Today?” and the “The Anger Solution”.

Schools also mentioned children’s rights and ensuring pupils understood these (Schools 5, 8, 9 and 11). *Kidsafe UK* (Webb, 2015), which explores related issues such as: “Stranger Danger”; vandalism and crime prevention; racism and bullying; drugs and road safety, was also cited frequently (Schools 1, 5, 9 and 11). Each of these schools had staff trained to deliver the programme. The *Kidsafe UK* website (ibid.) shows that other schools in the study (Schools 4, 6, 7 and 8) had received the training too, but failed to mention the approach. Yet, further evidence suggested that these schools might be using the information acquired; for example, two schools had relevant displays (Schools 4 and 8). Equally, another (School 2) mentioned related topics, such as anti-bullying week, without having received the *Kidsafe UK* (ibid.) training, so this was not essential to addressing such issues.

Two schools (Schools 4 and 10) had been given, or read, information regarding how to speak with children who had attachment difficulties. Both had received training from the Adoption, and Behaviour Support, Teams, as the former had a child with attachment difficulties in the school and the latter one previously. The former referred to the phrases “I wonder..” and “Let’s practise...” in their IEP, while the latter was observed using the phrase “Let’s go...”; however, it was unclear whether the child involved had attachment difficulties, or not, as the pupils in this school were not assessed using the Boxall Profile. Contexts (Schools 2, 5, 6, 8 and 12) spoke of modelling desirable behaviour, or wrote it as a strategy within IEPs, and some

(Schools 2, 4 and 12) were observed doing so. Twice (Schools 2 and 6) the strategy related to pupils with attachment difficulties.

Teaching Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills

Summary

The quadrants revealed no discernible patterns in relation to teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills. Those schools that implemented the SEAL (DfES, 2005) and *Kidsafe* (Webb, 2015) programmes came from all three quadrants, as did those who engaged in work on children's rights, or emotions. There was evidence of the use of particular phrases, or modelling, in both Quadrants 2 and 3. This meant that they had received attachment training; nevertheless, only one school ranked in the top four (School 4). Indeed, one setting (School 10) ranked last and, in all other areas, displayed no evidence of an attuned approach. In conclusion, training does not necessarily lead to better practice: the data collection methods gave schools the opportunity to demonstrate their acquired knowledge, but few did.

6.7 - Structures for Managing Day-to-day Situations

Structures are important for children with attachment difficulties (see, for example, Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2008), as they replicate the secure base; however, the practical suggestions recommended consist of subtle nuances that should be understood. For example, teacher driven individual seating arrangements might be beneficial for all students (Bicard, Ervin, Bicard, & Baylot-Casey, 2012), but for those with attachment difficulties there is the additional need for them to sit where they can see danger (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002). The final question on the head teacher and SENCo interview (Appendix F) aimed to elicit such detailed knowledge: schools could demonstrate this provision through IEPs too.

There was evidence of schools implementing appropriate strategies for children with attachment difficulties; however, as not every setting completed Boxall Profiles, it was not possible to ascertain whether such pupils were the focus. For example, one school (School 11) had a visual timetable on the wall of the Year 3 and 4 classroom and another recognised the need to use “positive” seating positions (IEP School 8, large school, no referral), but no explanation was given. Some contexts had clearly responded to such pupils, however. One context (School 6) stood a child at the back of the line, in order to lower their anxiety levels. Another (School 2) sat a pupil with attachment difficulties away from the rest of the group: their back was against the wall, but facing the class so that the whole room was visible. This same school continually kept the pupil “in mind” (Bombèr, 2007, 2011). Lastly, one setting (School 4) recognised that odours could be reminders of negative experiences and might make children feel unsafe.

Only one context (School 9) remarked on the assertion that “troubled children” (behaviour policy School 9 – large school, no referral), which could include those with attachment difficulties, do not respond to rewards and sanctions (Bombèr, 2007); Bombèr (2011); (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013). Their behaviour policy stated that:

“... neither the normal rewards or sanctions procedures may be sufficient to support them” (behaviour policy School 9 – large school, no referral).

The school provided an alternative approach, but this contained ‘smiley faces’ that could still be deemed a reward. Furthermore, when ‘sad faces’ were gained this could add to a child’s “toxic shame” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. v) and might be considered inappropriate. Another setting (School 6) understood how an individual approach was needed, though, and provided a workable alternative; suggesting that their child with attachment difficulties needed “immediate

intervention on her behaviour” (SENCo School 6 – large school, referral) and could not access rewards at the end of the week. The head teacher of this school was keen to treat every child as an individual and involved the pupils in decisions over sanctions.

Exclusion was a contentious issue in one context (School 4), as the SMT had committed to not excluding a child with attachment difficulties. These staff members acknowledged that this pupil had experienced rejection many times; thus, school needed to send an opposing message and, while they had core staff that backed the idea, others disagreed. One head teacher (School 11) also talked of reading early warning signs and de-escalating situations before incidents escalated and children became unable to manage. The same school spoke of bringing pupils together to explain how they made each other feel following an incident, as in the Restorative Approach (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013).

Such responses were scarce. The information gained from observations, interviews, policies and IEPs showed that all schools were implementing behaviour policies based on rewards and sanctions. All mentioned praise and further examples included:

- “Golden Time” (Mosley & Sonnet, 2005) – lose, or gain, five minutes dependent upon inappropriate, or appropriate, behaviour (Schools 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 10 and 11);
- “Warnings” (Canter, 2010) – also known as “Strikes”, where children were given the opportunity to change their behaviour prior to a consequence being given (Schools 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12);
- “Time-Out” (Henderson et al., 2000) from class (Schools 2, 4, 8, 9 and 10) and
- fixed-term and permanent exclusion (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12).

Three settings (Schools 4, 5 and 6) spoke of children having ownership of behaviour management systems: in the first, whole classes decided which behaviours would warrant

placing on each “Traffic Light” (Appendix U), in the second, the pupils wrote the “Golden Rules” and in the third, the children had chosen “Strikes”. One head teacher (School 4) acknowledged that developmentally each year group’s social, emotional and behavioural skills might differ; consequently, so should the reward or sanction. Considering this, such differentiation may meet the needs of Archer’s (2001) “thinking toddler” (p. 14) too.

Three schools (Schools 4, 8 and 10) possessed, or had previously implemented, a “Traffic Light” system; however, one (School 8) was keen to state that they now had a “Behaviour Ladder” (Appendix V) instead. The head teacher and SENCo of this school suggested that the change had improved the behaviour of the children:

“there have been less exclusions...fixed term and there have been less people in the behaviour room” (head teacher School 8 – large school, no referral).

While this may be true, it is not possible to make this single causal link, as other initiatives were introduced alongside; for example, a “Chance Box” (Appendix W), *Assertive Mentoring* (Farrar & Judson, 2007) and the sending home of positive messages. Other factors, such as personnel, may have contributed towards the perceived difference too and it is plausible that a combination of the changes was responsible. Further investigation might have elicited more in-depth information; however, this was not central to the study and not pursued.

While some schools spoke of consistency, and the importance of all staff being able to reward and sanction pupils equally (Schools 2, 5, 6, 9 and 11), invariably senior staff issued prizes in assembly (Schools 2 and 8) and all dealt with the most serious incidents, such as verbal and physical aggression leading to exclusion. Furthermore, being “sent to the head” was a sanction adopted in some schools (Schools 2, 4, 10, 11 and 12). One policy recommended that, “the head should be sent for, or the child escorted” (behaviour policy School 9 – large school,

no referral) elsewhere, as opposed to sending the pupil to the office. This hierarchy opposes the tenet of relationship building that is driven by attachment theory (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007), as incidents are dealt with by senior management, not those involved. As such, it may be counter-productive for those adults who regularly manage the children.

One head teacher (School 7) supported this assertion and indicated that relying on senior staff was not ideal. The school used two-way radios at break times and lunchtimes. They were intended for use in incidents needing physical restraint, or first aid; nevertheless, historically, staff had relied upon contacting the head teacher to manage the behaviour of “one of the older boys” (head teacher School 7 – small school, no referral) who had attachment difficulties. The head teacher was implementing strategies that would empower staff and, to some extent, they were effective as individuals were using the two-way radios less frequently. This scenario indicates that this head teacher was using ‘Reflective Practice’ (Schon, 1991) to improve relationships between staff and pupils. This individual was not alone. Another head teacher (School 4) demonstrated such reflection in their interview too, including a personal element: they felt that staff responses could affect pupil behaviour and, similarly, cited work with a child who had attachment difficulties:

“I always think.... what, what was my role in it? What did I do or what did the class teacher do? What could I do to improve it or make it better? What might I do next time?” (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral).

The head teacher explained that following this questioning, the school adapted their practice; for example, changing rooms, staff and lessons until they found an effective combination.

Structures for Managing Day-to-day Situations

Summary

Reflective practice was explicitly evident in two schools: one in Quadrant 2 and the other in Quadrant 3. Arguably, such an approach is relevant as the basis of a school's general ethos lies in the head teacher's opinions. The school's behaviour policy is central. All schools' policies were based upon rewards and sanctions, with only one in Quadrant 4 explicitly suggesting that this approach may not be appropriate for "troubled children" (behaviour policy School 9 – large school, no referral). This school made adjustments; however, as their alternative contained 'happy' and 'sad' faces, this was not appropriate for children with attachment difficulties either due to its reinforcement of shame (Bradshaw, 2005).

Two schools from Quadrant 3 did adapt their behaviour policies for children with attachment difficulties, by applying strategies from the literature. In the first (School 6) rewards and sanctions were not employed and in the second (School 4) exclusion was ruled out. In both, the head teachers recognised that such pupils needed to be treated as individuals; indeed, the philosophy of the first was that "*every* child has different needs" (head teacher School 6 – large school, referral) and the second looked at "*every* child as an individual" (head teacher School 4 – large school, referral). These head teachers also highlighted that this caveat did not merely apply to those pupils with SEND, but "Gifted and Talented" (G&T) children and the main cohort too. Both schools were large and had made referrals; however, these factors may not have influenced their views. Additional research would have been required to ascertain this and there was insufficient time.

While schools mentioned consistency in terms of rewards and sanctions, there remained a hierarchy of personnel, with the head teacher representing the ultimate sanction. Mostly, this approach was evident in smaller schools, which could be because they have fewer 'levels': the

larger schools might have deputy, assistant, or year heads to take on behaviour management roles. Nevertheless, these results support the notion that a school's response to all children, including those with attachment difficulties, might be at the behest of the head teacher, or SMT. Interviewing all adults may have gained a different perspective on this; for example, not all school staff may have deferred to the head teacher. As this was not the focus of the study, the research did not include this aspect, though.

In conclusion, the three schools which ranked highest as to how attuned they were (Schools 2, 4 and 6) demonstrated an understanding of the subtle nuances surrounding appropriate strategies. One was from Quadrant 2 and the others from Quadrant 3. What they had in common was a pupil, or pupils, with attachment difficulties at the time of the research. However, to be truly attuned the ability to reflect upon the structures in place and treat each child as an individual, rather than rigidly adhering to broad-spectrum behaviour policies, may play a part. This assumption is based upon the fact that the head teacher from the school that ranked number one overall (School 4) not only had a pupil within school at the time, but also was aware of subtleties and demonstrated reflective practice.

6.8 - Setting up a Nurture Group or Nurturing Group

NGs, or those set up along similar lines by those without formal training, were a use of additional support. From the twelve schools that took part in the research, four had this provision (Schools 5, 6, 7 and 8). In three settings (Schools 5, 6 and 8) at least one member of staff had received three day accredited training from *The Nurture Group Network* (The Nurture Group Network, n.d.). It was not possible to ascertain whether the remaining group (School 7) had, as a member of staff from Barnardo's ran it. Two of the schools explained which pupils benefitted from the groups. Access to the facilities in one (School 6) was flexible with children

having short-term, and others long-term, placements. Places were dependent upon the pupils' social, emotional and behavioural progress. In another "children with disaffected learning" (SENCo School 5 – large school, no referrals) were included. An example of this school's interpretation of the phrase was that, if at the start of the year a child was not following the class "Golden Rules", they might enter the NG.

LMs were part of the 130 key words, or phrases, as their role has a similar remit to NGs (Bishop, 2011; Mintz, 2010); however, only one school (School 5) had an Educational Support Manager (ESM), previously called an LM. This member of staff ran the NG and was responsible for a range of duties to support pupils with SEBD, not merely attachment difficulties. Staff referred individuals to the ESM, based on their in-class observations. The ESM would then complete assessments, sometimes including a Boxall Profile, and a meeting would take place with the pupil and parents. At this, all stakeholders drew up an IEP. There were no specific exit criteria, other than in-class and NG observations. This member of staff was also responsible for the "worry box" (head teacher School 5 – large school, no referral), where children posted any concerns they had to be dealt with. The head teacher stated that the ESM was most qualified in the area of attachment and had passed knowledge on to colleagues through in-house training.

Setting up a Nurture Group or Nurturing Group

Summary

A discernible pattern emerged with regard to NGs. Those schools that had their own were all in Quadrant 3, or 4, which meant they were large: they had 334 (School 5), 224 (School 6) and 193 (School 8) pupils on roll respectively. Arguably, unlike smaller schools, they had the necessary funding and used this to train appropriate staff, pay for initial set-up costs and

maintain the group, including staff wages. The research did not explore the accuracy of this assertion, or the source of the finance. Consideration of these issues would be suitable for further study. Regardless of how the groups came to exist, these three SMTs placed importance on NGs, or nurturing groups, for they are non-statutory and not all large schools had this facility. Why other schools did not establish NGs, or nurturing groups, was not examined either; however, conceivably staff had no knowledge of them, chose not to spend the school budget on such provision, did not have pupils with SEBD, or did not recognise them. Again, this would require further investigation if the cause were to be established.

6.9 - Facilitating Family Activities

The literature read in relation to this section (see, for example, Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2010; Bradley Stoke Community School, 2010; Downey & Williams, 2010; Humphrey, Kalambouka, et al., 2010) focusses upon developing three-way relationships between parents, or carers, pupils and schools. The emphasis is on creating activities that support the further understanding and use of verbal and non-verbal communication; for example, facial expressions, mood, emotions, eye contact and contingent touch. All contexts' policies included a commitment to working with parents, or carers, and one head teacher mentioned it in their interview (School 10). Most demonstrated either an understanding of such communication, or used it themselves (Schools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12); however, only one context (School 2) suggested that they had a direct role to play in improving the relationship between the caregiver and child with attachment difficulties:

“By not letting X have control over any objects, we hope he will start to appreciate, respect and form a normal relationship with the people around him, especially his

parents. A significant adult in school would really help in this situation” (IEP School 2 – small school, no referral).

The child’s therapist suggested this approach, so the school was receiving intervention from outside agencies. The strategy did not involve three-way intervention, though. No school mentioned activities such as these, or those included in the Family SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) programme.

Facilitating Family Activities

Summary

From the eight core components of The Attuned School the data collected gave least attention to facilitating family activities; while schools worked with pupils and communicated with caregivers, none of the schools were familiar with the three-way therapeutic techniques advocated in DDP (Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008, 2010; Hughes, 1999, 2003, 2007), nor mentioned organising activities with parents, or carers, that could develop this relationship. The only context (School 2) to indicate how they could support the dyad spoke of not allowing the child control over objects and suggested that a significant adult could help in this regard. The school was in Quadrant 2, but as they were the only one to demonstrate such information, there were no patterns found.

All literature relating to DDP exists outside the realms of education and has sparked a controversial debate between those who advocate the approach (ibid.) and those who believe it to be unsubstantiated by research (Mercer, 2014; Pignotti & Mercer, 2007). Psychotherapy is a specialist field and it is, perhaps, unsurprising that school staff members are unaware of the approach; however, the fact that the technique is approved by the NHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, 2010) and Adoption UK (Hughes, 2009) gives it credence and there is

potential for training and research in this area. Family SEAL (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) is specifically designed for schools, but the data collected suggests that settings have not adopted this either. More use of this resource is apposite, given that research suggests that it benefits both all pupils and those with additional needs (Downey & Williams, 2009, 2010; Taylor, 2009).

6.10 - Working in Partnership with Stakeholders

The family activities section of The Attuned School advocates that settings work in partnership with caregivers; however, further literature suggests that professionals should be involved too, if pupils' needs are to be identified early and appropriate interventions put into place (Cooper, 2011; Department for Education, 2011a; Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014). The introduction of EHCPs builds upon the CAF and TAC processes, which were developed with an integrated working approach in mind (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2008). External agencies are mentioned in the new *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) and there is an expectation that professionals such as EPs and SALTs will train school staff.

Three contexts (Schools 1, 2 and 7) placed importance upon the early identification of pupils' needs and the last two mentioned that assessment was a vital part of this process. The wording implied that this work took place in-house. Two settings (Schools 1 and 8) also mentioned early intervention within their behaviour policies. The emphasis was upon quickly responding to children who had SEBD and involving both parents and outside agencies. The settings involved perceived identification as the schools' role, but any intervention as the joint responsibility of themselves and others; however, what each adult (and, therefore, context) understood by the words "identification" and "intervention" could differ. Potentially, outside

agencies such as EPs could be involved in identifying pupils' needs too. Thus, schools' understanding of these two constructs would need further exploration, in order to reach detailed conclusions: this was not the study's focus, though.

All schools, in either their policies or face-to-face interviews, mentioned working in partnership with outside agencies. These practitioners are not alone in their views, as research suggests that prompt, specialist involvement is vital to meet the needs of pupils with SEBD (Lloyd Bennett, 2006). Support was sought when a child was placed at SAP (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b) on the SEN register and comprised EPs, the BST, Social Workers and the Post Adoption Support Team. Four contexts (Schools 2, 4, 8 and 10) cited LAC and made a link between these pupils and attachment difficulties: a LAC Specialist Teacher was involved with one child (School 4). All support was sourced from the LA and only one context (School 7) spoke of seeking private sector input; this was the charity Barnardo's, who helped a group of children including one pupil with bereavement issues.

Working in Partnership with Stakeholders

Summary

Schools citing early identification, intervention and working in partnership came from all Quadrants, so there were no discernible patterns. Schools contacted a range of professionals for advice including the BST. The role of the ISO falls under the remit of partnership, as its aim is to work with schools and other agencies following referrals; however, only three contexts (Schools 4, 5 and 6) had children known to the service at the time. From the results of the Boxall Profiles, completed in the four highest ranked schools, seven children had attachment difficulties, but five had no referral to the BST. The latter included Child A and Child B, but outside agencies were already involved in both contexts. The first accessed the child's therapist

for advice and the second was working with Barnardo's. As other agencies were already in partnership with schools, a referral to an ISO was unnecessary.

There could be numerous reasons for schools not referring to the BST; for example, they may have been unaware of its existence, have been unsure what the service could offer, not known how to contact relevant personnel, or lacked the time to complete the paperwork. Furthermore, they may not have felt that their pupils required input from outside agencies, or may have accessed support previously, but not found it helpful. The schools' reasons are not clear, but further research could examine this aspect. Whatever the previous circumstances were, to conduct the yearlong research, the ISO had to become involved in the cases of Child A and Child B, which demonstrated both schools' willingness to work with this specialist.

6.11 - The Views of Senior Staff

The final interview question was open-ended. The intention being to explore the views of senior staff regarding issues they might think important. Some contexts had no additional information (Schools 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10) and a few expressed opinions related to the subject of attachment (Schools 1, 4, 10, 11 and 12), but some raised other issues (Schools 6, 8 9). The subjects associated with attachment included a school community replicating family life (Schools 1, 4 and 11), one head teacher purposefully employing nurturing staff to achieve such an ethos (School 11) and another discussing a pupil who had difficulty separating from their grandmother every morning (School 12). One wanted "to make it clear" (head teacher School 10 – small school, no referral) that their experience of attachment difficulties was in the past, not the present. This head teacher also stated that, while they would happily take part in the sampling phase of the research, they would have to consider the second; however, as they were not a suitable context for further study, the issue did not arise.

Four contexts mentioned there being a family ethos: two large (Schools 4 and 5) and two small (Schools 1 and 11). The first linked this to the “Christian... family ethos” (head teacher, School 4 – large school, referral) where everybody helped, and loved, one another. The second spoke of “family groups” (head teacher, School 5 – large school, no referral) that met on a tri-weekly basis to support each other emotionally; these included children from Reception to Year 6. Within the interviews, the two smallest contexts (Schools 1 and 11) also referred to their family ethos frequently, for example:

“the school is a very big family and I’m sure you will have found that, having spent time with the children, it is just a family. The children know each other, you know, they’re siblings...” (head teacher School 1 – small school, no referral)

but what these two schools did in addition to this, which the larger ones did not, was demonstrate this approach whilst observations were being carried out. Lunchtime in one context (School 1) replicated family dining: there were real plates, not plastic trays; the children sat and did not queue up; KS2 pupils took it in turns to wait on tables, sharing food from serving dishes, and all the older children helped the younger ones. Experiences such as these receive little attention in education (Daniel & Gustafsson, 2010), but could contribute to developing positive relationships, as family mealtimes do (Winterman, 2005).

When interviewing for vacant posts, one head teacher (School 11) sought nurturing staff. The individual was previously a LAC teacher and placed importance on this quality:

“what I was looking for when I was selecting staff, was staff who.... would have a.... nurturing.... and.... positive approach towards the children’s behaviour...we’re looking at the whole child” (head teacher School 11 – small school, no referral).

When employing staff to work with children who have attachment difficulties, this approach could be appropriate: indeed, interviewing techniques might explore characteristics such as humour, resilience and the adult's own attachment styles, as some suggest these help to build positive relationships (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Visser, 2002).

Two schools did not relate the last question to attachment. The first (School 6) spoke of *Adventure Learning* (AL) (Hopkins, n.d.) and personalised learning (PL), while the second (School 8) mentioned having low thresholds for physical violence that, initially, resulted in high levels of exclusions. The former was an established head teacher, while the latter was new to the school. Without prompts, these individuals must have felt the issues were important, and both head teachers suggested that they shaped the ethos of their school. AL and PL may be advantageous for children with attachment difficulties, as both have similarities with NGs; the former advocates nurturing within social groups (ibid.) and the latter is consistent with NG curriculum planning (King, 2001). However, the notion of exclusion is at odds with attachment theory. Despite the head teacher of this school feeling that the sanction ultimately led to less physical violence, exclusion represents further rejection (Geddes, 2005, 2008), which serves to reinforce a child's toxic shame (Bradshaw, 2005).

The Views of Senior Staff

Summary

Contexts that raised issues indirectly related, or opposed to, attachment theory were both large schools from either Quadrant 3, or 4; all those who continued to discuss the thesis topic came from Quadrant 2, bar one. Thus, they were predominantly small schools that had not referred. Both contexts that demonstrated a family ethos through observations were from this quadrant too. As these head teachers had not sought advice, these schools may have had no challenging

behaviour; or at least none with which they currently required assistance. Indeed, OFSTED (2000) reported that successful small schools were popular due to many factors, which included their “good standards of behaviour” and “family atmosphere” (p. 6).

Thus, through the views gained from senior staff, and the observations made, the *a priori* sampling process supports OFSTED’s findings. In such settings, it may be possible to encourage good behaviour and create a family feel. Such a combination may be attractive to many parents; however, in terms of this study’s subjects, it may contribute to creating the right conditions to enhance adult availability and responsiveness too. Each small school had few enough pupils for all staff to know all children; mixed aged classes catered for several siblings and teachers stayed with pupils for two, or more, years. The latter supports the argument for continuity, which is underpinned by attachment theory and the secure base, as proposed by several authors (see, for example, Bombèr & Hughes, 2013). Furthermore, it explicitly resonates with Zionts (2005) who states that staff should stay long-term with children who have disorganised (D) attachments. This is not to say that all small schools provide this environment, or that larger schools cannot. Indeed, the most attuned school created such a family ethos too; however, this was through sharing Christian values. Ultimately, certain conditions may contribute to, but not guarantee, attunement.

6.12 - Conclusion

Several issues emerge from the findings. All schools had whole-school approaches to aspects of their day-to-day running and examples of these were their SEN and behaviour policies; however, rarely were children with attachment difficulties mentioned. Working in partnership was another positive feature of the schools examined and parents, or carers, and other professionals were included. For the majority of the eight key themes, there were no discernible

patterns found in relation to the quadrants, though. NGs, or nurturing groups, were the one exception. Those schools with such a facility were all large. The reason for this may be financial: large schools have more flexibility in funding to target such a group; the staff involved can receive training and it is possible to maintain running costs.

Within, and across, the eight key themes other conclusions are conceivable. Firstly, the head teacher's vision influenced provision for children with attachment difficulties. In two of the most attuned schools, the head teachers claimed to treat every child as an individual and place emphasis on meeting their differing needs. Secondly, a school's current situation drove how focussed they were in terms of provision for children with attachment difficulties. The four highest ranked contexts all had such pupils in attendance, whether they were aware of this or not. Three applied strategies from training, as they understood the subtle nuances of attachment theory and how a school might respond; however, one used the techniques because staff had found they worked for particular children. This school had no previous knowledge of the theoretical basis of attachment, which underpins the practices, but still responded to children at a relational level.

In other contexts, a lack of awareness led to the suggestion of unsuitable strategies. This is a concern, which needs addressing, as inappropriate methods may have negative effects upon their pupils with attachment difficulties. Furthermore, through the data collected, most schools did not convey that:

- positive relationships (including that of the significant adult) are vital for developing children's social, emotional and behavioural skills
- particular characteristics are needed by those adults who work with children who have attachment difficulties

- therapeutic activities have a role in developing positive relationships; play is ideal, as developmentally such children are behind their peers
- family activities could be used to develop three-way relationships between parents or carers, staff and pupils
- their training (for example in SEAL, or *Kidsafe*) could be more consistently and effectively applied

The implications for ITT and CPD are significant. The structured literature review identified common themes that may benefit children with attachment difficulties and staff might be better equipped to meet the needs of such pupils with this knowledge. As empirical research into their effectiveness does not exist, the suggestions are anecdotal; consequently, the findings need handling with caution. The yearlong data collection of this thesis does explore the significant adult-pupil dyad (see section two for the results), however.

While the pre-determined checklist identified four schools that appeared the most attuned, the head teacher interview highlighted an additional theme not included in the literature: which, subsequently, uncovered an inadequacy in the approach to ranking the schools. In hindsight, the 130 key words, or phrases, needed to include concepts linked to creating a “family ethos”; for example, every adult knowing every child, mixed-age classes comprising several siblings and continuity of personnel. The findings suggests that such conditions may create positive staff-pupil attachment relationships and schools with this ethos have been linked to good behaviour (Office for Standards in Education, 2000). This research shortcoming would benefit from further exploration, as differing smaller settings (those in Quadrants 1 and 2 – Schools 1, 10, 11 and 12) may have ranked higher.

Neither did the checklist include the phrase “reflective practitioner”. This is another oversight, as two of the highest ranked schools (Quadrant 2 and 3 – Schools 4 and 7) had

reflective head teachers. These individuals examined incidents holistically and analysed staff input into the situation, rather than apportioning blame to the child. If weaknesses existed, staff worked to manage situations better in the future. Occasionally, this meant adapting behaviour policies for children with attachment difficulties in the light of their significant knowledge; for example, committing to non-exclusionary practices, although contentious in one school, resonates with attachment theory. Again, additional research into this aspect would be useful. The fact that the setting (School 4) that best provided the “surrogate secure base” (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32) had both a family ethos and a reflective head teacher is noteworthy; section two’s findings further examine both concepts.

THE STUDY'S FINDINGS: SECTION TWO

6.13 - The Case Studies

Initially, this section gives an overview of the characteristics of the two final significant adult-pupil pairings. Following this, the commentary reports upon the analysis of the data collected with regard to the participants; beginning with the four Boxall Profiles completed, approximately one year apart (Child A, Appendix X and Child B, Appendix Y). The profile produces quantitative data: higher scores indicate positive behaviour change and lower scores negative. Regarding pupils' progress, analysing IEP targets elicited quantitative data too and this chapter presents these results; however, for detailed insight into the effects and effectiveness of the significant adult's role, additional qualitative data was also analysed. Thus, a substantial part of this chapter is based upon a thematic 'Framework' (NatCen, 2015) analysis of the IEPs, interview transcripts, diary extracts and observations conducted throughout the year. The chapter concludes by summarising the potential benefits, and pitfalls, of the use of significant adults with children who have attachment difficulties.

6.14 - The Significant Adult-Pupil Pairings

Following the selection of the four most attuned schools, SENCOs completed Boxall Profiles for all pupils on the SEN registers with identified SEBD. This process revealed seven children (Children A, B, C, D, E, F and G) who had scores above 42 (one-third higher than the norm from three years four months to eight years) in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z). Such pupils were deemed suitable candidates for study, as their scores are indicative of little nurturing and support in the early years, potential abuse, or the loss of an attachment figure. Arguably, given their level of need, these seven pupils might receive 1:1 support over and above that of others. The significant adult needed to be in the position to

spend “quality time” (Bombèr, 2008, p. 4) with them, be available and responsive; NG support was not deemed appropriate. Two (Children F and G) had to be excluded from the research, due to both children being supported by the school’s SENCo. Five pupils remained, but consent could not be gained from three (Children C, D and E). Chapter four commented upon the reasons and they included: non-response; the timing of the project and any potential negative effects of the research on the pupils.

Two boys remained and both attended a small school, which had not previously referred to the BST (Quadrant 2). One pupil was in Year 4/5 (Child A) and the other in Year 5/6 (Child B). Each was taught in a mixed age (Year 3, 4, 5 and 6), mixed ability classroom. The significant adults attached to the pupils were both female and both termed TAs; their profiles are included in the appendices (Appendix G). These contributions show that, apart from sharing the same gender and both having children, there were few similarities between the significant adults in terms of age, family role, qualifications and employment. They differed in:

- age by approximately 20 years (Mrs Y was younger than Mrs Z)
- that one was also a grandmother (Mrs Y was not, whereas Mrs Z was)
- qualifications (Mrs Y trained as a secretary, developed her computer skills and had specific TA qualifications; Mrs Z was a qualified social worker, with dialectical behaviour therapy training)
- and previous employment experience (Mrs Y managed an office, worked in a babywear business and began her career in school working for the Learning Support Service (LSS); Mrs Z had been part of an adult community mental health team and employed as a youth and community worker).

The profile of the significant adults, while not central to the case study analysis, summarises the participant's background from their perspective. Exploring information regarding the TAs' professional life, qualifications and experience, throughout the data collection, gave in-depth insight into their thoughts and feelings around their suitability for the role. The thematic analysis feedback presents the findings, which allows further comparisons.

6.15 - The Results of the Completed Boxall Profiles

The Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010) has ten behavioural descriptors, or “sub-clusters” (p. 10) in each section (A-J on the Developmental Strands and Q-Z on the Diagnostic Profile), which equals 20 (2 x 10) overall. Each sub-cluster, when combined with others, forms a cluster (2 in Section I and 3 in Section II): organisation of experience; internalisation of controls; self-limiting features; undeveloped behaviour and unsupported development. While three clusters on Section II (Q through to Z) identified the pupils with attachment difficulties for sampling, the assessment included all five to maximise comparison. Section I and Section II differ in that on the Developmental Strands low scores are “deviant” (ibid., p. 24), while on the Diagnostic Profile high scores are.

In terms of the Boxall Profile's quantitative results, it is acknowledged that without a control group it is impossible to separate the effect of the intervention from a time effect (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). Furthermore, this study does not employ the *t*-test to compare pre and post Boxall Profile scores, as other research has (Broadhead et al., 2011; Broadhead, Hockaday, Zahra, Francis, & Crichton, 2009; Sanders, 2007); in hindsight, the results may be treated in this way at a later date. The gains made by both children might still be deemed significant, though. Firstly, Sander's (2007) work pre *t*-test suggests that small gains (+1.3) are of significance; therefore, any increase greater than this, in the current study, might

be of note. Secondly, the two pupils chosen to embark upon the intervention had significant needs as identified by their high scores (42 plus, which was one-third higher than the norm for children aged three years four months to eight years) in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z); however, each child was older than eight. Given their lack of progress, any small increment might be considered significant. Even so, due to the limitations of the quantitative Boxall Profile measure, the study does not rely solely on these figures, employing an additional quantitative element and rich qualitative data too to ascertain the intervention's effects and effectiveness.

6.15.1 - Child A, First Profile 20th March 2013

Child A's first profile was completed on 20th March 2013 when in Year 4. Section I (Developmental Strands) shows a score of 81, while Section II (Diagnostic Profile) shows a score of 91. Particularly high scores (+12 and +14 respectively) were evident in Column T (shows inconsequential behaviour) and Column Y (shows negativism towards others). High scores in Column T indicate a child who: is impulsive; cannot manage their own behaviour, or organisation; lacks reflection and has an underdeveloped identity. These behaviours may be neurophysiological, or due to a lack of help in the early years (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010, p. 18). High scores in Column Y are indicative of a child who: is sensitive to threat; can be defensive, resentful, or angry. These behaviours are entrenched, as they provide power and satisfaction (ibid., p. 21).

6.15.2 - Child B, First Profile 21st March 2013

Child B's first profile was completed on 21st March 2013 when in Year 5. Section I (Developmental Strands) shows a score of 80, while Section II (Diagnostic Profile) shows a

score of 61. Particularly high scores (+10 and +11 respectively) were noted in Column V (avoids/rejects attachment) and Column X (shows negativism towards self). High scores in Column V are indicative of a child who: has not, so far, attached to a reliable adult; lacks trust and resists potential attachments (ibid., p. 19). High scores in Column X indicate a child who: feels unvalued; has an injured sense of self; can self-harm, be silent, hurt those they feel are victimising them and fears adult reactions (ibid., p. 20).

The very high scores in Section II that both children have, revealed they needed: “a tentative approach”; “individual attention”; “a warm attachment”; “an early level relationship” and one that is “close and consistently supportive” (ibid., pp. 11-21). The significant adults attached to both Child A and B were encouraged to provide this over the year.

6.15.3 - Child A, Second Profile 27th March 2014

Child A’s second profile was completed on 27th March 2014 when in Year 5. Section I (Developmental Strands) shows a score of 87, while Section II (Diagnostic Profile) shows a score of 49. The profile shows an improvement of **8** in Section I and **32** in Section II. Child A improved most (+8 and +8 respectively) in Column T (shows inconsequential behaviour) and Column X (shows negativism towards self), but did not improve (-2, -1 and -3 respectively) in Column B (participates constructively), Column C (connects up experience), or Column F (is emotionally secure).

6.15.4 - Child B, Second Profile 27th March 2014

Child B’s second profile was completed on 27th March 2014 when in Year 6. Section I (Developmental Strands) shows a score of 113, while Section II (Diagnostic Profile) shows a

score of 36. This profile shows an improvement in Section I of **33** and **25** in Section II. Child B improved most (+**8** and +**6** respectively) in Column D (shows insightful involvement) and Column X (shows negativism towards self), but did not improve (-**3** and -**1** respectively) in Column H (accommodates to others), or Column Z (wants, grabs, disregarding others).

6.16 - Interpreting the Results of the Boxall Profile

For both pupils, 35 out of 40 (87.5%) behaviours had increased, whilst 5 out of 40 (12.5%) had decreased. Overall, this shows that pupil behaviour change was positive. This was also true for Child A and B separately, although Child B showed the greatest improvement:

Table 5. Results of the Four Boxall Profiles Completed for Child A and B

	Positive Behaviour Change	Negative Behaviour Change
CHILD A	17 sub-clusters (85%)	3 sub-clusters (15%)
CHILD B	18 sub-clusters (90%)	2 sub-clusters (10%)

In terms of each individual sub-cluster, the positive scores obtained also outweighed the negative, with the greatest increase being +**8** and the greatest decrease being -**3**. Both children improved in: Column A (gives purposeful attention); Column D (shows insightful involvement); Column E (engages cognitively with peers); Column G (is biddable and accepts constraints); Column J (maintains internalised standards); Column S (makes undifferentiated attachments); Column T (shows inconsequential behaviour); Column U (craves attachment,

reassurance); Column V (avoids/rejects attachments); Column X (shows negativism towards self) and Column Y (shows negativism towards others).

There was no correlation between Section I and Section II, as Child B improved most in the former and Child A most in the latter. This differs from previous work, which claims that progress is most easily gained in Section I (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007); however, these studies used the Boxall Profile in NG settings, not in a 1:1 situation. A resistance to progress within the Diagnostic Profile (Section II) might be indicative of children who have had a lack of early nurturing, suffered abuse, or lost an attachment figure; specifically, those who need a significant adult. As such, this study argues that NGs do not provide the secure base exclusively enough to support this development, whereas 1:1 intervention can. The qualitative data, commented upon later, supports this theory. Arguably, only one pupil's results forms the basis of this opinion; therefore, further study is required.

Little research exists on the use of the Boxall Profile outside the NG remit; two studies are comparable, though. The first, on the intervention Scallywags (Broadhead et al., 2011), agrees with the limitations. More specifically, it suggests some resistance to change in Columns S (makes undifferentiated attachments), V (avoids/rejects attachments) and Y (shows negativism towards others). The present study does not concur; Child A's scores were +6, +4 and +5 respectively, while Child B's scores were +1, +7 and +4 respectively. There was also improvement in Column R for Child A (+2) and Column W for Child B (+4), which the same research cites as being impervious to change too. One explanation for the disparity might be the differing theoretical bases of the interventions: Scallywags had "a cognitive-behavioural perspective combined with a solution focussed framework" (Broadhead et al., 2009, p. 170), whereas the present study provided a "surrogate secure base" (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32), in the form of a significant adult, and was underpinned by attachment theory.

The second piece of research, around CCPT (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009), reports that following play-therapy internalization of controls (A-E), self-limiting features (Q-R) and unsupported development (V-Z) all improved and these findings relate to the present study. CCPT focusses upon “dynamic interpersonal relationships” (Landreth, 2002, p. 16) and seeks to develop attachments to the therapist; therefore, it is also underpinned by attachment theory. Contrary to progress across these strands, the writers express their surprise at there being no improvement in undeveloped behaviour (S-U). They suggest this might be due to the short time-scale in which the therapy took place. As both Child A, and B, improved across Columns S-U the substantial period of time that the significant adults supported could have affected the results; therefore, the present study agrees that sustained involvement is fundamental to behaviour change in those pupils who have attachment difficulties.

6.17 - The Results of the Completed IEPs

The results of the Boxall Profiles for both Child A and B are analysed in conjunction with the feedback given at the children’s IEP review meetings. Five IEP meetings were conducted for each pupil over the period of a year, following government guidelines regarding good practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b) as far as possible. They occurred every half term in June 2013, September 2013, November 2013, January 2014 and March 2014. Although it was not possible to ensure everyone’s attendance at all times, those invited to the meetings included the head teacher, class teacher, significant adult and parents. The ISO was present at all ten meetings. In both cases, the parents deemed that it was inappropriate for their child to attend; consequently, they shared the long-term aims and objectives, and the specific targets set, with the pupils later. Child A and B were able to comment on these too, as pupil voice was

deemed important, and research suggests that IEPs are most effective when students are involved (Goepel, 2009; Pawley & Tennant, 2008).

The format of both meetings followed the pro forma IEP (Appendix Z); beginning with pupil outcomes. A component of the first meeting was analysis of each child's initial Boxall Profile to identify those areas that required most support. For Child A the focus was Column T (shows inconsequential behaviour) and Column Y (shows negativism towards others). For Child B the focus was Column V (avoids/rejects attachments) and Column X (shows negativism towards self). Dependent upon the previous outcomes, new targets around the long-term aims were set. As the process took into account the views of staff, parents and pupils the children's targets were, as far as possible, tailored towards these areas. Throughout the five meetings, the effect and effectiveness of the significant adult was integral to the discussion and each party had the opportunity to comment upon this aspect.

6.17.1 - Child A's IEP Progress

The following were the long-term aims on Child A's IEP; they did not alter throughout the year. They began with "To improve Child A's":

- interactions with other pupils; reduce contempt and criticism
- ability to a close an enjoyable work/play activity
- ability to make appropriate/polite verbal requests of other children
- attention span in order complete tasks to a required standard

The short-term targets were decided upon as a group and focussed on the areas that staff felt Child A needed to improve in most. If the pupil achieved one, the adults wrote a new a target. Sometimes the target remained the same from one IEP to the next, but the number of times that

Child A had to achieve the target ('Success Criteria'; e.g. 4 out of 5 times) was increased, or decreased, according to their progress. The statements began with "I can":

- pay another child a genuine compliment (met and removed November 2013)
- write legibly and to an agreed standard (not met, altered to maths November 2013)
- convey what is required in drawings and take care over them (met and removed November 2013)
- stop an activity when I am asked, even though I am enjoying it (met and removed November 2013)
- give other pupils 'thinking time' and wait for their response (met and removed November 2013)
- help X with X (not met, altered to younger pupils January 2014)
- listen to Mrs Z (significant adult) and act upon her advice (met and removed March 2014)
- be with others and practise acts of kindness (met and removed March 2014)
- help X (a younger pupil) with reading (met and removed March 2014)

The phrases in brackets indicate whether the targets were met, or altered, and at which stage of the process. 78% (seven out of nine) of Child A's targets were met, 22% (two out of nine) were not. Handwriting legibility continued to be inconsistent and, when working with peers of the same-age, Child A was unable to offer help. Post March 2014, Child A remained on an IEP and the ISO continued involvement.

6.17.2 - Child B's IEP Progress

Child B followed the same process. The long-term objectives for this pupil began with “Child B will be more”:

- positive about himself
- secure and self-accepting, have a sense of self-worth and trust

Child B's short-term targets also began “I can”:

- share with pride one thing that I am good at each week with Mrs Y (significant adult)
(met and removed November 2013)
- go to x (place of safety to be decided with CHILD B), if I am having ‘yucky feelings’
(met and removed March 2014)
- share with pride one piece of work (literacy) each week with Mrs Y and mum (met and removed March 2014)

100% (three out of three) targets were met for Child B. Child B had fewer targets than Child A, as there were fewer long-term objectives, and from one IEP to the next mostly the ‘Success Criteria’ (the number of occasions on which Child B had to achieve the target) changed. Arguably, this might have contributed to Child B's greater success rate on his IEP. Consequently, setting consistent targets and changing the ‘Success Criteria’ might be a recommendation for future practice; however, the notion would benefit from further research as little exists at present. At the last meeting for Child B, everyone agreed that continued support from the ISO was no longer necessary and that future work within school would focus on Child B's transition to the secondary setting.

6.18 - The Social, Emotional and Behavioural Progress Made by Each Child

From the analysis of the Boxall Profiles and the pupil's IEPs, it is evident that overall positive behaviour change took place. Each participant's responses supported this view, as did observations undertaken by the ISO. The most frequently recurring theme referenced improvement in the children's social skills. Research suggests that attachment representations effect the quality of peer relationships (Aikins et al., 2009; Booth-LaForce et al., 2005; Kerns, 1994) and it is assumed that insecure children have difficulty making, and keeping, friends. Therefore, Bombèr (2007) suggests that positive interactions are paramount for such pupils, as they allow "a chance to modify our 'attachment template' and thus adapt, improve and update" (p. 213): it appears significant adults can help. Little empirical evidence exists to back this assertion, so the findings below add to the current body of knowledge.

Initially, it emerged that the co-operation of the children's peers was vital for successful, non-structured situations. Pupils had learnt to gauge whether they should intervene in, or step back from, incidents. Child A's parent stated that her son made conscious decisions to attach to children who would help his behaviour (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q8). The pupils backed the assertion that peers were supportive: Child A said that others played with him, but if he hurt them they walked away (Interview, 3rd June 2013, Q8) and Child B thought his friends mediated fights (Interview, 8th May 2013, Q11).

Furthermore, Child A's parent thought it was more important for peers to be able to "handle" (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q4) her son, rather than vice versa. Less importance was placed on Child A's response; although, how many pupils could remain "calm and not confrontational" (ibid.) was questioned. Child A's significant adult recognised that this was most challenging for children who had SEN themselves (IFS, May 2014. Q23). Therefore, while relying on peers may be useful, both pupils needed to improve their social skills to be

fully included. Here the significant adult's role was vital, as they supported the children during unstructured times, group work and when mentoring younger pupils.

An improvement in social skills was particularly evident in Child A and this correlates with the Boxall Profile findings: he improved by eight points in Column H (accommodates to others), while Child B's score stayed the same. This marked difference may have been due to Child A's significant adult focussing on friendships from the start of the intervention. She recognised how "difficult" making, and maintaining, peer relationships were for children with attachment difficulties and stated: "if I could help him with that, that would be wonderful" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q19). The significant adult's motivation was also evident through commitment to self-directed learning; a diary entry (June 5th 2013) reflected upon the work of Bombèr (2007), specifically chapter ten that focusses on friendships.

The significant adult made sure that Child A did not "get into any mischief" (Child A, Interview, 24th March 2014, Q10) by watching him closely, suggesting when mistakes were made and offering alternative ways of managing situations. She was:

"somebody on [his] shoulder... not in a critical way at all, but in a very gentle... and supportive way, suggesting things, wondering if... and supporting... in areas where... they have particular difficulties... helping them in a sense, to get stronger on the things that they are not very strong on, that actually get them into trouble or [make] other children... not very friendly with them (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q4).

Close supervision was vital, as if it were not in place Child A would "create a disturbance one way or another by arguing or attacking children so an adult [would] come" (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q5). Thus, with support there were fewer incidents: however, Child A could still engage in verbal, and physical, aggression when Mrs Z was there; for example, he kicked a

pupil on the football pitch and refused to accept that he had behaved inappropriately. Mrs Z was “shocked” (Diary, 25th June 2013) by this response, unsure of whether he was trying to gain “control” (ibid.) by not admitting his misdemeanour, or whether he “enjoyed” (ibid.) the punishment. Shame may have underpinned his reaction, as Bombèr (2011) states that this is associated with “the usual kinds of discipline we use in school” (p. 190). After this incident, Child A was segregated from his peers, both in the playground and classroom.

Each time the significant adult and Child A were observed many phrases designed to build the relationship were used; for example, “Are we going to do this together?” (Observation, 10th September 2013). After seven months Child A had, in the significant adult’s opinion, “moved from feeling unwanted and excluded, to having a level of acceptance... some acknowledgment from others” on the football pitch (Interview, 6th October 2013, Q10). By the end of the intervention, this was not only noticeable during formal coaching and informal matches, but with groups of mixed-age children playing other games that involved physical contact. For example, with support, Child A participated in “Bulldog”, where the children often touched and pulled each other, but he was able to use contact appropriately (IEP, January 2014). Thus, the significant adult suggested that Child A felt “less left out” (IFS, May 2014, Q20) and he corroborated this:

“I used to go outside and go around... do my own thing, but now I’ve actually got some people to play with” (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q5).

In Child A’s view, it was the support from the significant adult that had helped in this respect (ibid.). “With exposure, support and supervision” (IFS, May 2014) the significant adult enabled Child A to access learning opportunities fully and “to try out his social skills in a very ‘real’ way” (IFS, December 2013, Q6), although he still had a:

“tendency to get too close to pupils in his interactions and miss[es], or ignore[s], the signs that they [were] uncomfortable with this” (IFS, May 2014, Q21).

As Child A’s social skills developed, he took part in further activities involving his peers and the school took a more inclusive approach to accommodating his needs. This was not only the case for outdoor activities, but also any task that involved working in a group. This equality was only possible with the support of the significant adult and this is a key finding of the project; however, with progress, a reduction on 1:1 time may be possible. The significant adult noted that, as Child A’s behaviour improved, less assistance was required and what was in place better targeted to his specific area of need (ibid.). The latter implies that, as significant adults become more attuned to their pupil’s needs, they are better able to pinpoint where help is necessary: this echoes Bowlby’s (2005b) notion of the secure base.

The parents and other staff concurred that Child A had developed relationships and believed that he had a greater circle of friends, because he was more empathetic. Child A’s peers were positively commenting more upon his work, and friendship, which strengthened his self-esteem (IEP, September 2013). Having friends, his own age, was important to Child A, as he wanted help “to get along with more of the children of my age” (Interview, 24th March 2014). The significant adult commented specifically on one new relationship, noting that since its inception Child A had had “three good days” (Diary, 5th June 2013) and wondered if the events were related. By the end of the research, Child A was able to make positive comments towards others and deliver ‘random acts of kindness’; for example, he got a cold compress for a pupil who was hurt, without being asked.

Although Child A tried to help others, when he became hurt whilst playing football no one came to his aid (Interview, 25th March 2013, Q24). The situation visibly upset him and Mrs Z felt “very sad” (ibid.) about the event. She used such circumstances as teaching points;

asking him questions about his, and others', feelings. Thus, she questioned the reciprocity of these friendships, as did Child A's parent, for while he could interact with some peers and enjoy their company, it was not necessarily a mutual arrangement (Interview, 28th March 2013, Q1). Similarly, it was not clear whether any relationships he formed were long-standing, as Child A's friends tended to distance themselves from time to time (Diary, 12th June 2013).

The progress in terms of peer relationships was less dramatic for Child B: his Boxall Profile scores showed an improvement of four points in Column Y (shows negativism towards others). Early on in the research, Child B had some difficulty controlling his anger; for example, he had hit another pupil with a football (Dairy, 4th June 2013). The significant adult had worked specifically on 'Volcano in My Tummy' (Pudney & Whitehouse, 1998) with him and believed that he had become more able to recognise, and manage, his emotions. She was observed validating Child B's feelings and offering alternatives in lessons; for example, stating: "It's O.K. to be upset, but it's how you deal with it, isn't it?" (Observation, 8th November 2013). At the end of the research, as there were less incidents of aggression, Child B's relationships with other children changed. The significant adult believed that the pupils had developed mutual respect for one another (IEP, March 2014).

Consistent, triangulated, feedback was uncovered regarding Child A and B's support of younger pupils too. Prior to the intervention, both had demonstrated an inability to socialise effectively with the infants; for example, each would hug them, or be verbally overbearing. To improve relationships, both significant adults were involved in supporting group activities led by Child A and B: informing them that they were 'Pupil Helpers'. The former read, and listened, to individuals, while the latter supported small group activities; for example, the *Kidsafe* (Webb, 2015) work, instigated by Mrs Y, was shared with KS1.

The curriculum area chosen for this work drew upon each child's strength: Child A's was reading, whilst Child B's was PE. Parents and staff believed that both pupils had become more nurturing over the year. The younger pupils themselves had commented upon how much they enjoyed Child A reading to them, while the infants in Child B's case began to seek him out. Child B's significant adult felt that mutual respect underpinned the relationships. Both parents recognised the importance of this strategy in terms of their child's self-esteem. Child A's reported how her son was particularly pleased with his achievements, while Child B's thought this was now a strength and that he was "tuned-in" to younger pupils (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q3). The latter qualified this assumption by suggesting that her son had needed similar support in the past; for example, he experienced isolation in the playground and, consequently, when an infant was alone he would approach them.

Supporting younger pupils was not the only aspect of the intervention that may have improved the case study children's self-esteem and the Boxall Profiles suggested that both children had improved considerably. For Child A an improvement of eight was measured in Column X (shows negativism towards self) and for Child B six. Child B, in particular, more readily accepted praise. The strategy that the significant adult felt was most effective was the use of his "Scrapbook" in which he placed pieces of work he was proud of: he was also happier to have his work displayed on the walls. He willingly tried more activities in school too; for example, the nativity that he refused the year previously, swimming and PE. He also looked visibly pleased when Mrs Y gave him private praise, which would not have happened earlier. Furthermore, in their second interviews, both children were more confident in answering the first question related to their strengths; this was particularly so of Child B who, a year earlier, had stated: "I don't know" (Interview, 8th May 2013, Q3). Both children cited mathematics as being an area of improvement. This subject often contains 'closed' questions, which have only

one answer; therefore, they can be wrong, lead to rejection (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002) and “toxic shame” (Bradshaw, 2005). Thus, the support of the significant adult may have given them confidence in these lessons; however, this assumption requires further investigation, as this discovery occurred once the research was completed.

The improvement in both children’s self-esteem was tentative, though. Child B was still reluctant to accept public praise: verbal, or tangible, rewards. Neither would engage in conversation about incidents that had occurred, accept they had behaved inappropriately, or apologise. As with mathematics, this would involve the pupils admitting they were wrong and, potentially, reinforcing negative emotions (ibid.). Both parents stressed that their children lacked confidence in their abilities, particularly if they were challenged (Interviews, 24th and 28th March 2014, Q2 & Q17). Observations carried out by the ISO supported this notion: to gain recognition, Child A needed to finish first or be the best at something (Observation, 10th September 2013), while Child B became visibly frustrated when given challenging work (Observation, 1st October 2013). These results are unsurprising, as children’s self-esteem is linked to their internal working models (Ooi, Ang, Fung, Wong, & Cai, 2006); therefore, continued input from a significant adult may be necessary, dependent upon their “level of distress and damage” (Bombèr, 2007, p. 64).

6.18.1 - Summary

The above results attest the progress that each child made. What emerges, most consistently, is the fact that the significant adult’s presence did positively influence the pupils, particularly during unstructured times. At the children’s final IEP reviews all participants affirmed the worth of the role (IEPs March 2014), particularly in relation to improving peer relationships. Without this level of support, both Child A and B could engage in physical and verbal

aggression, which might be “disturbing, dramatic and traumatic” (Cooper, 2008, p. 14), resulting in exclusion; dependent upon the views of the school. When Mrs Y and Mrs Z were present, they were able to intervene in situations and prevent them escalating further. The ability to replicate the secure base, and lower the pupils’ level of anxiety, is consistent with other studies’ findings (Ahnert, Harwardt-Heinecke, Kappler, Eckstein-Madry, & Milatz, 2012; Little & Kobak, 2003). Thus, the significant adults being there enabled the pupils to access the same opportunities as the rest of the school, ensuring equality.

Furthermore, Cooper (2008) and Hallinan (2008) believe that students who have attachments to school may be less at risk of exclusion, as they value the experience; here, the findings support this view and the significant adult’s role may be pivotal in developing each pupils’ feeling of belonging. Exclusion is “punitive and damaging”(Parsons, 2009, p. 4), particularly for students who have attachment difficulties, as they require consistency not further rejection (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013, 'Dispelling The Myths'); therefore, this information is invaluable to both schools and LAs looking to provide appropriate support for these children. Equality and inclusion are at the heart of the *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) and the government deems that schools must make “anticipatory” (p. 93) adjustments to ensure that pupils are not discriminated against; thus, failure to provide a significant adult for pupils with attachment difficulties could be deemed a breach of the code and, furthermore, unethical.

6.19 - Developing Relationships: The Child’s, Parent’s and Significant Adult’s Views

Introduction

The significant adults established positive relationships with the pupils in their charge. Had this not been the case, the children’s outcomes may not have been as favourable. The following

findings highlight how the significant adult-pupil dyad developed. At the start of the intervention, it appeared that Child A accepted the additional support most readily. When asked about the significant adult's help, he stated that he liked it "because, erm, you learn better when there's someone to help you out" (Interview, 3rd June 2013, Q5). Child B hesitated to suggest that the role was beneficial; a supposition supported by his parent:

"I think there's a lot of trust built up... he likes working with her now, where at the start, he was very reluctant" (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q4).

Initial reticence on the part of Child B may have linked to feeling "singled out as different" (ibid.) and may be indicative of the way each significant adult worked. Excluding lunchtime, Child A was consistently included within the classroom setting, whereas Child B often worked 1:1, or had "Time-Out". The significant adult used the latter to pre-empt potentially volatile situations and give him the opportunity to manage negative emotions in a supported environment. It may have been preferable to provide for him in the classroom instead, as Child B's feelings of exclusion support the notion of using the significant adult to fully integrate children, rather than provide for them separately. NG provision removes pupils from mainstream classes and, while copious research exists into their effectiveness (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007; Scott & Lee, 2009), there is minimal empirical research into children's views of this intervention. Where children's opinions have been sought, the feedback is both positive and negative (Garner & Thomas, 2011; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). The latter includes a reference similar to that of Child B, as one pupil stated: "I miss my class" (p. 100).

Child B's comment also provides guidance for significant adults embarking upon relationships with pupils. Both the government (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b)

and researchers (Lewis, 2002; Lewis & Porter, 2007) advocate seeking the views of children who have SEN and, in this case, to ensure as positive a start to the relationship as possible this could have been implemented. Further questioning could have established whether Child B would have been happier being supported in the classroom. Potentially, this may have heightened his feelings of difference; however, without seeking his views, it is impossible to know. Nonetheless, even after eliciting his opinions, it might have been inappropriate to implement them. This was the case with Child A, as he did not:

“like being told what to do, but feels... safer knowing that he’s being kept an eye on all the time, even though he may get cross about it.” (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q5)

and, given the positive impact of close observation, it was apposite to acknowledge the negative feelings that the child had, but continue with the support: even though the pupil would not say he liked boundaries, they were necessary. IEP meeting feedback corroborated this fact, with all those present stating that he felt “less threatened” (IEP, March 2014).

This reluctance on the part of the pupils to accept the support given, while it did not disappear entirely, did diminish over time. At first, Child A’s significant adult believed that there was a positive relationship developing; however, she was unsure how the pupil saw her. Over time, she began to discuss her role with Child A and gained feedback. After a period of not listening to her advice, being “disrespectful and dismissive” (IEP, March 2014), she felt that he started to respond more favourably. The significant adult further stated: “I know he looks forward to... when I’m in school at lunchtimes, as he makes this very clear to me” (IFS December 2013, Q10). Child A directly communicated the benefit of his significant adult during his final interview saying: “Yes. It [being supported by Mrs Z] improves my behaviour and I work a lot” (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q5). This was a shift in thinking from the year

previously, where Child A felt that adults mostly helped him with his work and behaviour was only mentioned in the context of being “told off” (Interview, 3rd June 2013, Q9). Other teachers remained supportive, but Child A specified this was academically.

Similarly, Child B came to realise that he needed support and accepted it (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q5). Within a few weeks, the significant adult felt that there had been progress: Child B was “happier.... more talkative” (Interview, 3rd May 2013, Q19) and she was excited at the prospect of further developments. While his mother described difficult relationships with women (IEP, September 2013), the significant adult gained his trust and, without prompting, he began to ask her for help. He would not meet the gaze of other female staff, but this was not the case with the significant adult: the difference being that she had been consistently present, and intervened, whereas others had not. “Meet and Greet” (Bombèr, 2007, p. 268) sessions were offered and the significant adult reminded him of this availability. In observations, particularly from the latter half of the intervention, Child B appeared comfortable with her; for example, he smiled, held his head up and asked whether she would be supporting him in certain lessons (Observation, 16th January 2014).

The children’s perceptions of the support given by the significant adult differed; however, they both believed it would help their academic performance. Child A spoke of Mrs Z assisting his behaviour and learning (24th March 2014), whilst Child B stated that Mrs Y supported him only when he was “stuck” (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q5). Child B’s significant adult said: “His whole attitude towards learning is starting to change.... he’s wanting to learn” (28th March 2014). Therefore, although the developing relationships sought to change pupil behaviour, they also affected Child A and B’s learning. This finding is significant; it suggests that to improve academic outcomes for children we should address their attachment needs first and build a relationship with an adult in school. The theory is supported by the work

of Bergin and Bergin (2009), who propose that educational achievement is advanced through a focus on secure in-school attachments.

Child B also felt that there was greater support in 1:1 situations than in the classroom. This may be due to the amount of attention he received whilst being supported in the latter environment. All Child B's classroom observations showed that, in these situations, the significant adult supported children other than him. In comparison, all Child A's observations revealed that the significant adult was more focussed on the individual. If assisting other children, the significant adult may not be both "available and responsive" (Bowlby, 2005b, p. 12) and Child A and B's perceptions seems to substantiate this view. Arguably, these findings demonstrate that the secure base is best established, and individuals fully supported, when they do not share the significant adult's attention.

6.19.1 - Attachment, Attunement and Reciprocity

Child A's significant adult largely worked individually with him and this was especially so when a teacher recognised that he was having difficulty managing his emotions. In these situations, the significant adult was used pre-emptively; for example; he and she would work together indoors instead of him being allowed outside at lunchtime. This strategy avoided both pupil-adult confrontations and those between Child A and his peers. The time was used to improve Child A's ability to attend to and complete a task; however, the pupil-adult dyad was also developed. One activity was sewing a cushion, which gave the significant adult:

“the opportunity to talk about what was going to happen after the summer break and for me to give some reassurance to Child A” (Diary, 16th July 2013).

During this task, Child A called the significant adult “Mum” (ibid.). Mum is the only person that Child A has an attachment to (IEP, January 2014). As Child A was making the cushion for his mother this may signify that he was thinking of her; however, it might be indicative of an attachment forming with his significant adult too. Other evidence of this was his desire to know whether she would continue supporting him until he transferred to secondary school. Having said this, Child A still had no such attachment to his father, or grandmother (ibid.), despite spending “quality time” (Bombèr, 2008, p. 4) with them. If Child A had not formed an attachment with either of these individuals, whether the significant adult-pupil dyad was an attachment is questionable and its significance dubious. Arguably, if an attachment is a “deep and enduring affectionate bond that connects one person to another across time and space” (Bergin & Bergin, 2009, p. 142), given the short period of time that the two had worked together, this could not exist (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Such a lasting association is not, necessarily, desirable either, as the role of the significant adult is not to replace the primary caregiver (Bombèr, 2011). The latter may limit the research findings.

Whether there was an enduring attachment, or not, the data suggests that Child A’s significant adult became attuned to his needs. At first, there were incidents where she may not have intervened quickly enough; for example, in one lesson he covered himself in chalk dust and started firing elastic bands at his peers (Observation, 3rd June 2013). Mrs Z acknowledged that she needed to get to know him more than most other children and she did; for example, she commented that when Child A jumped up and down, it was not “a little boy getting excited” (25th April 2013, Q23), but an indication that he was not managing his emotions. Later observations demonstrated how Mrs Z was able to read his signals, including those that were non-verbal, and this early intervention contributed to less negative incidents. Once, Child A was struggling with his sleeves whilst painting: he became visibly frustrated, so the significant

adult pulled them up (Observation, 17th January 2014). A younger pupil might benefit from this gesture, but in Child A's case it was also appropriate as he became visibly calmer. Mrs Z also asked him if he was tired. As the intervention continued, instances of such behaviour became rarer and Child A's class teacher stated that he was more "settled" (Interview, 6th October 2013, Q14) when the significant adult was present.

In all observations, the two smiled and worked in close proximity with one another. When the significant adult addressed Child A it was always at his level. Contingent touch was evident too, as in the following instance; Child A was looking at the ceiling and moving his head backwards and forwards, which signalled dissociation. When the significant adult tapped him lightly on the head, he stopped (Observation, 3rd June 2013). There were also occasions when she took hold of his hand (Diary 3rd July 2013; Observation 10th September 2013) and Child A seemed happy for her to do so. The significant adult recognised the benefit of "a little whisper in the ear and sometimes a very light touch" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q20), suggesting that the best interventions were discreet.

Child A's parent agreed that recognising the smallest signs of anxiety and dealing with her son in an analogous way helped (Interview 28th March 2014). This deep understanding of the pupil was a key reason why the significant adult's intervention was effective. Child A's parent further commented that it was the knowledge that four members of staff (including the significant adult) had of her son that made a difference. These adults knew:

- which children he could, and could not, sit next to;
- that he could not be left unsupervised in the cloakroom, or at any unstructured time;
- when he was "too wild" and calmed him down;
- when he was disassociating through reading (or similar) and re-directed him;
- that his playtime should be limited;

- that an adult needed to be directly responsible for him in the playground and
- to check that he would manage when challenging subjects arose.

Child B's significant adult also seemed attuned to his needs. Observations (8th & 15th November 2013; 15th May 2014) showed that the pair often smiled at one other: the significant adult used a quiet voice, sat in close proximity and leaned in towards him too. Any re-direction of behaviour was private. There seemed to be a collegiate response to tasks (8th November 2013), as the significant adult agreed to help Child B, if he helped her. She was also able to remove Child B from situations to his 'safe area', before events escalated. Reading the early signs of anxiety were paramount here; for example, he would clench his fists, be quieter than usual, show displeasure on his face, hang his head and slouch in his seat. The fact that she was able to diffuse situations helped the other staff and children in school, as they could continue learning. Towards the end of the intervention, he was visibly more relaxed and the relationship had developed to the extent that Child B was able to laugh with his significant adult (16th January 2014), as he had not done previously.

At times, Child A's significant adult felt unsure how to respond to him. She exposed some challenges of the job and questioned her effectiveness, stating:

"[I'm]... not sure... how he's feeling about things... and so... I might think... am I being helpful here, because he's quite difficult to read and then [at] other times I think no, it's okay" (ibid. Q8).

The response indicates a lack of reciprocity in the relationship. Attachment and reciprocity are closely linked; high quality attachments are formed where the caregiver offers high levels of reciprocity, as opposed to low quality attachments where low levels exist (Douglas, 2007). Usually, reciprocity develops gradually until an adult and child share it equally (Marvin, 1970);

however, in the case of children with attachment difficulties, reciprocal responses may be limited. Without reciprocity, it was hard for the significant adult to assess how her interactions affected Child A. She thought he liked and trusted her, but it was “difficult to test that out; it’s difficult to actually know” (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q18). Child A also gave her no indication as to whether he felt that she was being helpful, or not. Thus, striving for attunement in a relationship without reciprocity is challenging (Arnold, 2005).

Consequently, such pupils are complex and significant adults are tasked with forming relationships without reciprocity, which is atypical, and requires perseverance (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013). Child A’s significant adult recognised this early on in the intervention and reflected upon the ambiguous nature of their relationship. She felt that Child A regarded her as unimportant and demonstrated some confusion over this:

"I don’t think I matter, I don’t know whether I matter to him very much at all and I’m not sure about that" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q18).

Such complexities might lead significant adults to struggle emotionally (Bombèr, 2007), as did Child A’s. She described being “emotionally wrapped up” (Interview, 6th October 2013, Q6) and having “transference issues” (ibid.), which prevented her from managing Child A objectively. One example, of this was where Mrs Z had allowed Child A to stay in the playground for a couple of minutes longer, because she felt unkind. Freud’s (1904) theories on transference support the idea that, not only could Child A project characteristics onto Mrs Z, but this might also occur vice-versa. Child B’s significant adult did not readily share her thoughts and feelings; except to say that she had little experience and was unsure if she was supporting her pupil correctly.

Both significant adults' uncertainty dissipated, as their relationship with the children evolved. Child B was beginning to trust his significant adult and approach her willingly for support. As a result, she felt more confident in dealing with him, particularly as she was able to read his body language better (Interview, 10th September 2013). Child A's significant adult stated her anxiety had lessened, because:

“From my perspective, I think the relationship has changed... I feel less ‘attached’ and it feels like Child A is more ‘attached’” (ibid.).

The fact that Child A glanced over at the significant adult and was “checking out [her] responses” (IFS, 6th October 2013) confirmed his dependence. Mrs Z was also impressed by:

“his ability to be patient, sit by my side, take instructions carefully and see the task through... with trust on both sides” (Diary, 16th July 2013).

This was particularly evident throughout the three cushion making sessions. Mrs Z hoped that her kindness and responsiveness would enable Child A to trust her and, in turn, he could learn to trust himself (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q4); however, none of the interviews, observations, or diary entries showed him independently approaching her for help, which would suggest that trust was not fully developed (Geddes, 2006). Mrs Z also described this specific piece of work as “satisfying” (Diary, 16th July 2013), as there was an indication that it might have a positive impact. Child B's significant adult intimated that when he was happy to engage with her, she felt pleased (10th September 2013, Q4) too. Therefore, satisfaction levels in the role may be commensurate with reciprocity. What effect this has on the subsequent relationship is unclear, as this would have required further research.

Although trust may not have fully developed in Child A's case, observations supported the fact that the two were working towards attunement. Non-verbal communication increased and the significant adult was able to work with other pupils too (17th January 2014), as Child A required less support in certain curriculum areas. Mrs Z came to realise the importance of intervening only when necessary (Bowlby, 2005b). Initially, she confronted Child A over all his negative behaviour, but it emerged that conflict enabled him to control situations. Instead, she allowed him to take the natural consequences of his actions as long as he was not hurting others. Mrs Z still gave advice in lessons; however, if he did not heed this, outcomes would not be as positive. She watched him from a distance, so that he could be responsible, but know that she was in close proximity and would assist if need be.

Mrs Z felt able to be assertive with Child A too, though, and was able to judge when this was appropriate. For example, he would attempt to use her as a distraction from work, or try to elicit answers from her; however, with an increased surety of boundaries, she was able to resist (IFS, December 2013). This confidence resulted from: an improved understanding of how his difficulties affected him, academically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally; an ability to distance herself emotionally, when this provoked more challenging behaviour, and her being more comfortable with her "authority" (IFS, 6th October 2013). Despite this more positive outlook, in the IFS she placed the word authority in speech marks, which indicates that she may still have questioned the balance of power between herself and Child A.

6.19.2 - Summary

The findings show that positive relationships led to pupils' behavioural development; without these, the behaviour change may not have been as marked, or non-existent. The analysis gives insight into how the child-adult dyad developed, beginning with all parties' reservations about

the partnerships. Child A was more accepting of support than Child B initially; however, the latter came to trust his significant adult and appreciate her help. Pupil views are important (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b; Lewis, 2002; Lewis & Porter, 2007) and Child B's illuminated two key issues: that he preferred to remain in the classroom; however, he felt more supported in a 1:1 situation. These opinions support the use of an *in situ*, available and responsive significant adult who does not share their attention with other pupils, as replication of the secure base is more probable than in an NG approach.

Mrs Y and Mrs Z recognised the need to build positive relationships and the research indicates that, while the significant adults may not have formed enduring attachments with their pupils, they worked towards attunement and reciprocity. Arguably, these bonds were more intense than the other adult-pupil dyads formed by Child A, and B, in each setting; however, this level of relationship was not easy to develop and, on occasion, the significant adult role could be emotionally challenging. Despite setbacks, Mrs Y and Mrs Z did develop an in-depth awareness of their pupils. They were constantly mindful of their movements, intervened when necessary and acknowledged their thoughts and feelings.

Generating understanding of these complex pupils takes time and working with children in this way is not a quick fix. The data showed that the period needed to develop dependent relationships relied upon the needs of each pupil. Child A's significant adult described the end of "... a settling in process" (IFS, December 2013, Q6) after nine months and suggested that, not until then, did Child A demonstrate dependence upon her. Whereas Mrs Y achieved results in "a few weeks" (Interview, 3rd May 2014). Acknowledgement is made of the subjectivity of each adult's interpretation: nevertheless, this notion supports the need for schools to employ significant adults, long-term. As Zions (2005) suggests they should follow the pupils year-on-year. Practical issues may hamper such plans, including financial considerations related to

providing 1:1 support. Even if significant adults plan to work with children for a number of years (Bombèr, 2007), and the school can accommodate this, events may change unexpectedly for individuals; for example, their health, or job opportunities. Thus, guaranteeing prolonged relationships is impossible.

It emerges that the significant adults adopted the “flexi-support” (Bombèr, 2011, p. 11) concept, through an in-depth understanding of their pupils. They intervened when necessary, but otherwise observed from a distance. The findings show that this approach is effective, but it has further implications for schools and their employees. For the role of the significant adult to be maximised it must be appropriate to the child’s needs, not the adult or school. Mrs Z worked ten hours per week, over two days. Arguably, contact spread over five days would ensure that Child A received support at optimum times; ideally, less structured ones and those involving group activities. The second school employed Mrs Y full-time and, when allocated to Child B, he was her priority; however, as with Mrs Z, she was not available at all times when he required support. She was “on-call” if any issues arose, but not already present to prevent them happening and this was one of the greatest benefits of the role.

Bombèr (2007, 2011) alludes to their being financial solutions to support children with attachment difficulties; however, makes no concrete suggestions. This thesis reveals that there are considerable constraints in small schools. One, in Mrs Z’s case, it was not practical for her to work five days a week, as she travelled some distance. Two, the school was a rural one, with only 128 households (Office for National Statistics, 2011), so there were few adults in the local community to draw upon: they may not have been suitably qualified for, or desired, the role either. Three, Mrs Z’s allocated hours might have been combined with supporting other pupils, as in the case of Mrs Y, but these contracts were already being undertaken by full-time staff, or those employed did not want a further ten hours. Even so, Mrs Z would still not have been

available all week for Child A, only “on-call”. Finally, if Mrs Y reduced her hours, exclusivity for Child B was possible, although the scenario would have mirrored that of Mrs Z and would not have resolved the issue. There might be two solutions to this complex situation. The first would be to employ significant adults full-time, for individual pupils. Funding might be gained through an EHCP; shifting the financial implication to the LAs. The second would be to employ staff willing to work full-time, but for a part-time salary; however, the latter may not be best practice and, with the role an emotionally challenging one, it may not be appropriate to rely on good will. As the role of the significant adult is effective, policy makers must make difficult decisions to ensure pupils with attachment difficulties receive appropriate provision.

6.19.3 - The Qualities of the Significant Adult

Both significant adults did have a positive effect on their pupils; arguably, it may not be the intervention *per se* that is effective, but the personnel. Having experienced many adults working alongside her son, Child A’s parent highlighted certain important qualities:

“It has to be someone who can be firm and understands his issues. Not any adult will do because he will run rings around them... he needs to have an adult who can give him boundaries and then he responds very well. When it works, it works... when it doesn't it can be disaster.” (Interview, 24th March 2014).

Bombèr (2007) lists the “ideal” (p. 66) qualities a significant adult should have and, as the next section will show, this research both supports and negates this advice. The author suggests fifteen such assets, beginning with being “experienced in working and relating to children with emotional and behavioural difficulties [EBD]” (ibid., p. 67). Mrs Y and Mrs Z’s ability, in relation to this first quality, is comparable through the profiles they provided (Appendix G) and

their responses to initial interview (Appendix L) questions. The latter explored their professional lives, qualifications and training with regard to children with attachment difficulties. The backgrounds of the significant adults were, thus:

6.19.4 - Mrs Y

While Mrs Y had worked with children with SEBD in a mainstream setting, she had received no training (Question 6) and, with regard to the subject of attachment, proposed that she had limited knowledge:

“I don’t know a lot about attachment difficulties” (Question 1)... “I’m not always sure that I’m doing the correct work” (Question 9)... and “I know nothing about it, other than going into it blind” (Question 11)

however, she did suggest that children who had not developed a secure attachment with one person could display challenging behaviour (Question 1). She also spoke of how 1:1 support could benefit pupils, as could working at the pace and correct level of the child, offering to listen to them if they needed to talk (Question 20) and being calm (Question 4). The latter is a quality specifically highlighted by Bombèr (2007). Mrs Y’s wider knowledge of education was also evident, in that she was used to planning and delivering programmes to groups of children; for example, literacy (Question 13) and SEAL packages (Question 22).

6.19.5 - Mrs Z

Mrs Z had not worked in an educational setting prior to embarking on her work with Child A; however, her background in social work (Question 6) had contributed to her knowledge and understanding around the subject of attachment. She had received relevant training in this role

and, latterly, had undertaken some self-study on the subject (Question 7); she read *Why Love Matters* (Gerhardt, 2004) and *Inside I'm Hurting* (Bombèr, 2007). She also provided detailed explanations as to why attachment difficulties might occur, stating that:

“not good enough parenting”, “abuse, neglect.... or loss”, being “not loved and cared for” (Question 1)... and “inconsistent care” (Question 3)

were causes. She was also able to discuss concepts such as neurological development (Question 1), the four attachment representations identified by Ainsworth and Bell (1970) and Main and Soloman (1990), the SEBD that pupils might encounter (Question 2) and several strategies that might benefit these pupils. These included modelling situations, wondering aloud, using contingent touch and whispering advice privately (Question 10).

6.19.6 – The Contrasting Significant Adults

The significant adults' experience starkly contrasted each another. While Mrs Y had a background in mainstream school, and had worked with children with SEBD, she knew little about attachment difficulties. Mrs Z's experience opposed this, in that she had less insight into education and had had only limited contact with SEBD children; however, she did have a detailed knowledge of mental health issues, some training on particular therapeutic techniques and substantial knowledge around attachment difficulties. Despite the differences, both significant adults achieved success with their pupils; although, Child A made most progress overall. Consequently, having worked with children who have SEBD may not be a necessary pre-requisite and knowledge around attachment may be more important. Indeed, the term EBD used by Bombèr (2007) is unhelpful; in addition to omitting the social aspect (which pupils with attachment difficulties struggle to manage), it is generic and refers to various conditions.

‘[W]hat works’ (Hammersley, 2005b, p. 89) for one child in this category may not for another. Furthermore, the “relational” (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013, p. 342) approach to attachment difficulties is different to the behaviourist stance taken by many schools to SEBD (Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005; Mader, 2009).

Bombèr (2007) makes no direct reference to preparing significant adults for the role; however, the author does suggest that all those in education should have “attachment training” (p. 289) and, in this study, measures were put in place to offset the differing knowledge of the significant adults. To build on their existing skills, understanding of the topic and experience, the significant adults received the same package from the ISO, which delivered background information on the theory behind the role of the significant adult, helped them to recognise when their pupils were unable to manage and provided them with strategies that might be effective. The evidence shows that both significant adults applied this information; for example, Child A’s used the phrase “I wonder” (Observation, 12th November 2013) and Child B’s suggested they “practise” (Observation, 8th May 2013) expressions.

Experience does not ensure learning takes place (Loughran, 2002); consequently, this alone, in the form of either practice or training, may not mean a significant adult is effective in their role. Throughout this study’s intervention, both Mrs Y and Mrs Z engaged in deliberate reflection upon their experience and it may be that this was a factor in their success. In both cases, there is evidence to suggest that the strategies employed were trialled and, if they were not successful, changed; an example of this would be Mrs Y’s “Calm Box” (Bombèr, 2007, p. 206), which she set up for Child B. She soon realised that she could diffuse situations more quickly and him return to work without this. Mrs Z was continually reflecting upon her role, relationship with Child A and the other staff in school. She also extended her thoughts to the wider educational remit and stated that:

“my consciousness has been significantly raised about the number of children who may have ‘slipped through the net’ and whose needs are not addressed (for whatever reason) and who inevitably, as a result, become disadvantaged both educationally and socially (IFS, 6th October 2013).

The importance of reflection for the two significant adults supports the thesis’ earlier suggestion that those head teachers who were most reflective provided a more flexible approach for those pupils with attachment difficulties. It is not possible to draw a firm conclusion as to how much the pupils benefitted from the significant adult’s reflective practice, but analysis of the interviews and diary entries of the two participants gives rich insight into how they perceived the role. As such, further qualities which Bombèr (2007) highlights can be commented upon, such as resilience.

Throughout the intervention period, the findings show that both significant adults needed to be resilient, robust and tenacious (*ibid.*). Child A’s, in particular, commented upon the challenges faced. At times, she was discouraged, because she felt that the role of the significant adult had not been “optimised” (IFS, May 2014, Q7). She had had ideas about how to use her expertise most effectively, but the head teacher took no action. For example, she had thought she might like to engage in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) with Child A, as she felt that she could be most supportive to him in this environment: she had familiarised herself with the SEAL materials and hoped that she could work with him alongside other pupils to develop his social skills. She admitted difficulty in accepting that other adults in school placed constraints on the significant adult-child relationship. There may have been reasons why the head teacher did not implement these suggestions; however, as the views of other staff were not gathered, it is not possible to comment.

A lack of communication and clarification (Diary, 30th April 2013) also frustrated Mrs Z. She felt staff made decisions regarding Child A, but she was unaware of the motives; for example, incidents had occurred and exclusion from the playground followed. She was unsure how much to expect of Child A in tasks and wanted to know whether she should challenge him for non-completion; evidence suggested that activities were within his capabilities. She also wished to know how much she could help other pupils. Such issues might have led to negative working relationships; however, every observation witnessed positive interactions between staff. Mrs Z also felt that she could rely on others to support her; for example, when she felt that Child A might be ignoring her requests, she told him that she would inform the head teacher (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q21). This reliance upon others dissipated as Mrs Z clarified her position, though. She stated:

“I am building on existing skills, but in particular learning from other staff about how to respond in the school setting and using their knowledge of Child A and attachment difficulties... I am learning how to balance his needs, the requirements of my post and his learning” (Interview, 6th October 2013).

She also alluded to a lack of information regarding her effectiveness and this frustrated her too. She wanted to know whether her responses were appropriate and indicated:

“I am working without sufficient feedback and this can feel directionless” (IFS, 6th October 2013, Q6).

Receiving regular comment from the class teacher, other staff and Child A’s parents would have helped she believed, an idea which is supported by both Bombèr (2008) and Geddes (2005, 2008). IEP meetings were held every six weeks; however, clearly this was not sufficient, as

Mrs Z suggested attending a staff meeting once a month for the first ten minutes to discuss Child A's progress. This demonstrated commitment on her part, as it would have been on a voluntary basis. None of her diary entries, or interview responses, mentioned these meetings again; therefore, presumably, they did not occur. Although Mrs Z "had an idea of what was expected of [her]" (IFS, May 2014), she explained that there was no job description either; had there been, it may have helped her better navigate the position.

Pressures on the class teacher's, head teacher's and parent's time may have contributed to a lack of feedback, but as this aspect was not followed up it is difficult to say. It is also impossible to establish exactly how much support Mrs Z received, as neither she, nor other staff members, kept records. Potentially, several discussions followed. Regardless, the findings show that Mrs Z did not feel adequately supported, though. This lack of assistance might be a drawback of a small school, as individuals are accountable for several areas, and a larger establishment may have been able to delegate this responsibility to a person with fewer duties. A solution may be for small schools to link with others; indeed, Child A's significant adult asked to meet Child B's (IFS, 6th October 2013, Q7). Normally, this would have been possible; however, it was not appropriate during this study for reasons of confidentiality. When considering Mrs Z's feelings, the findings show that the amount of preparation time, and consistent monitoring needed, might be greater than supposed.

Mrs Z may not have felt so much in need of feedback had she been more confident in her own ability; indeed, Bombèr (2007) suggests that a positive sense of sense is important. She admitted to having people who told her she "ought to be more confident" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q9) and both diary entries and interview responses showed that she often questioned whether she was effective, or not. She wondered whether she would "get along"

(IFS, 6th October 2013, Q5) with Child A and her lack of experience in the field of education was of particular concern, for she stated:

"I was anxious about several aspects of the work. Could I do this..., did I have the skills and understanding? This was a totally new work environment" (ibid., Q4).

Occasionally, Mrs Z felt "out of [her] depth" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q8) and believed that certain situations could have been handled better. This was particularly so regarding whether she should intervene in incidents, or not. She hoped that Child A did not feel as if she were on his "back" (ibid., Q11) and wanted to get the right balance between "nurture and structure" (Bombèr, 2007, p. 67). She consulted recommended literature for guidance and her diary entries' commented upon the content. Her inner conflict was further highlighted when she queried how far she should protect Child A, verses allowing him to make his own mistakes and learn from them (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q8). There were also activities she organised which Child A would not engage in as they stood, but altered; causing her to examine the appropriateness of the tasks. She tried not to "judge" (ibid., Q 11) herself, recognising that Child A was not negatively affected. She learnt that such moments were "not the end of the world" (ibid. Q8) and that his needs were more important than hers.

Thus, Mrs Z recognised that it was unhelpful to allow her personal feelings to take precedence. This resilience was particularly useful in conflict situations that occurred with Child A. She found it especially difficult when he showed little respect and "would not listen, or accept, what [she was] saying" (IFS, December 2013, Q4), but realised that he treated others in his life in the same way. To counteract these incidents, she tried to focus on the positive aspects; for example, when he showed self-awareness, or consideration for others. She called these moments "Golden Nuggets" (ibid.).

Mrs Z described the position as being an “emotional rollercoaster” (ibid.). The pupil’s unpredictability contributed towards this feeling, as she stated: “really [having to] think on my feet, as Child A can move at 100 miles an hour!” (IFS, 6th October 2013, Q5). Her response to this was to stay “one step ahead” (ibid.) of him. Furthermore, on some days she also felt satisfied that there was an improvement in Child A’s behaviour, while on others dissatisfied. This, in turn, affected her emotionally. It was towards the end of the intervention that she was most optimistic, suggesting that there was evidence that Child A had made positive changes and she hoped that he could sustain these (IFS, December 2013, Q7).

The responses of Child B’s significant adult further support the fact that having never worked in a school environment might have contributed to Mrs Z’s feelings of inadequacy. Mrs Y felt “pretty confident” (3rd March 2013, Q9) about supporting SEBD children, because she had worked as a TA in schools for twelve years. Her solution focussed approach contributed to this self-assurance, in that if she could see that the child was improving she believed the intervention was appropriate. Nonetheless, as with Mrs Z, Mrs Y felt increasingly more “at ease” (21st November 2013, Q4) later in the intervention and described feeling more secure herself (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q8). She responded more calmly, due to her greater understanding of attachment difficulties and ability to interpret the child’s behaviour, specifically his body language (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q4). She admitted previously thinking that such pupils were “just being naughty children” (ibid.).

Given the reduction in Mrs Y’s levels of anxiety, through a greater understanding of these children’s difficulties, others might benefit too. Literature supports the fact that knowledge about such conditions might reduce teacher stress (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Chapman, 2002; Geddes, 2006); consequently, this finding has implications for ITT, and CPD. Mrs Y’s confidence extended to suggesting that, once she had gained sufficient knowledge, she

might pass this on to other members of staff. She remained enthusiastic and wanted to continue to learn. She was interested in the therapeutic benefits of storytelling, from the work of Sutherland (2001). Child A's significant adult did not mention such an undertaking.

Despite the challenges of the role, and the negative effect that this occasionally had on Mrs Y and Mrs Z, both significant adults showed commitment: they spent their own time reading around the subject, or preparing activities to engage the pupils. Mrs Z was "committed" (Interview, 25th April 2013, Q18) to Child A, as he was "little boy who needed help" (ibid.). Furthermore, both remained positive in their overall outlook; for example, they both mentioned the fulfilment they gained from the role. Mrs Y stated:

"[Working with Child B] makes me feel... I am doing a good job. I want to make a difference with children, whatever their difficulties... and each little step, or difference, in behaviour or work... if they're improving [that's] a bonus" (Interview, 3rd May 2013, Q8).

She also felt privileged, and happy, to be able to work effectively with Child B when others could not; for example, if he became angry, she was able to diffuse situations quickly, help him manage his emotions and direct him to continue with his learning. He ceased to use his 'safe place', possibly because of her intervention. She hoped that her support would help him feel more "secure" (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q12) in the future too and prepare him for secondary school. Similarly, Mrs Z enjoyed working with Child A and, latterly, felt more comfortable in the school environment. She too, thought that secondary school would be challenging and wanted to help Child A prepare for transition. She hoped he would "continue to grow strong and able to cope with what is ahead of him in his life" (IFS, May 2014, Q11); however, she suggested that he would still need intervention and support.

A quality which may have contributed to the significant adults' positive outlook was humour, which has been recognised by both Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Visser (2002) as being important. In both schools, staff moved freely between classrooms in a relaxed and informal way. Humour was evident in staff-staff, staff-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships at both schools (Observations, 10th September and 25th April 2013, Mrs Z and 5th and 8th November 2013, Mrs Y). The use of humour was also written into the children's' IEPs and both significant adults were observed using it with their pupils; however, it had degrees of success. Child A had a sophisticated level of humour, enjoying word play, but Mrs Z had to ensure that he did not become over-excited (IEP, January 2014). Furthermore, Child B was reluctant, at first, to share a joke with Mrs Y. She would say something amusing and he might respond, but not laugh (10th September 2013); however, later in the intervention (16th April 2014) the interaction became reciprocal. Earlier on, it might have been appropriate to acknowledge Child B's negative feelings, through using the phrase "I wonder", but Mrs Y did not do so.

6.19.7 - Summary

The findings support Bombèr's (2007) assertion that a significant adult may not possess all the qualities listed; however, they can still be effective in the role. Having examined Mrs Y and Mrs Z's past experience, previous work with pupils who have SEBD may not be as important as knowledge of attachment difficulties, so a background in mental health may be advantageous. Furthermore, personal qualities, such as resilience could be a defining factor in a significant adult's success. No literature mentions being a reflective practitioner as one of the requisite characteristics for significant adults; however, what this research illuminates, above all, is that being reflective is a vital component to develop learning and practice. This ability to reflect may outweigh any persons' shortcomings; for example, individuals might be

susceptible to transference, but through recognising and examining their responses may be able to override them. In turn, this would lead to them putting in appropriate, rather than inappropriate, responses with their pupils.

Schools also need to be mindful of how confident each person feels in taking on the role and how long they intend to stay, as the relationships took several months to build. The above has numerous implications for the appointment of significant adults. If the right person is employed it can positively affect not only the child with attachment difficulties, but the staff and other pupils too. Recommendations from these findings, relating to the hiring of significant adults, closely reflect those of *Inside I'm Hurting* (ibid.). They include the need to create person specifications for the role; interview and recruit based on the qualities; ensure networks are in place to give staff any reassurance they might crave, or share their expertise, and provide long-term, permanent contracts for significant adults. The addition to this is a need to assess a potential staff member's ability to be reflective.

The Effectiveness of Particular Approaches

6.20 - Introduction

While the significant adults had differing backgrounds, they both received the same training package from the ISO; the basis of which was information uncovered in the structured literature review. This was an attempt to ensure parity in terms of their knowledge around attachment, prior to the start of the research. One area of information focused upon approaches that were available to Mrs Y and Mrs Z; it was hoped that the significant adults would draw upon these and their effect and effectiveness be evaluated. The children's IEPs detailed the strategies; at the meetings, all participants agreed upon them.

Throughout the data collection period, it emerged that both significant adults used the materials. Some approaches mentioned in the literature had a limited effect and it is impossible to embark upon a detailed commentary of every one; therefore, only those that made a significant impact upon participants are included. Others have been discussed elsewhere in the chapter and need not be repeated: Appendix Two lists further strategies which had a positive effect on Child A and B. This section considers the following: any specific language used; the notion of a 'safe' place; any structures established; the motivational techniques tried and any new ideas created by the significant adults. These innovative strategies add to the existing body of practical suggestions to support children with attachment difficulties. The measures of improvement include feedback (received from the parents, the significant adults and the pupils themselves) and observations; however, it is impossible to state categorically the individual extent to which each approach helped, as the intervention cannot be compartmentalised.

6.20.1 - Language

A repeated theme was specific language. Several authors exemplify phrases to use (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2006). They are designed to help pupils recognise their feelings (I wonder); practise appropriate responses (Let's practise) and encourage them to manage strong emotions with support (Let's Go). When observed, both Mrs Y and Mrs Z used the phrases consistently, with the latter explicitly stating, at an IEP meeting (November 2013), that she used this form of modelling and it was effective. Mrs Z used the phrase "Let's Go" to remove Child A from situations (Diary, 26th June 2013 and Observation, 12th November 2013). She also recognised the need to interpret events for Child A, in order for him to understand his feelings; Bombèr (2007) calls this "wondering aloud" (p. 87). Mrs Z had studied the approach in detail (Diary, 11th June 2013), as she was able to replicate it exactly:

“I’m wondering if it would be a good idea if you tried really hard to do this work to an acceptable standard first time. I could help you with this... I’m sure you would feel good... and it would save you having to do it again, which I’m sure you don’t like. I know your class teacher would also be pleased” (ibid).

She felt this strategy helped Child A when he was emotionally dysregulated, but acknowledged that she needed to monitor carefully when to step in. Mrs Y also used the strategy, particularly after incidents; for example, she said: “I wonder if you are behaving this way because there is something you are not happy about?” (Diary, 9th July 2013).

Language, in the form of stories, was used by Mrs Y to discuss feelings with Child B (Observations, 14th May 2013 and 10th September 2013); this was due to her interest in Sutherland’s (2001) work. Child B was able to describe how characters might be feeling, after certain events. Child A’s parent used “Social Stories” (Gray, 2010) to good effect (IEP, November 2013), which staff agreed to try. Mrs Z had hoped to use the *Buddha at Bedtime* (Nagaraja, 2011) stories with both Child A, and other pupils, to teach empathy and compassion (Diary, 11th June 2013); however, there was no evidence to suggest that either of these strategies were implemented, so it is not possible to assess their effectiveness.

6.20.2 - ‘A Safe Place’

Child B’s inability to regulate himself emotionally led to verbal and physical aggression, which often occurred in the playground. At these times, he needed a ‘safe place’ to go to; otherwise, staff felt he might leave the premises. With a designated place, they knew where to find him. The idea draws upon secure base theory, so Mrs Y’s room (“The Cubby Hole”) was chosen and, on occasion, he did make his way there (Interview 10th September 2013, Q8). Mrs Y hoped that trusting him to go to her room on his own would bring about a change in behaviour (ibid.).

The strategy was not always successful, as Child B also locked himself in the toilet (IEP, September 2013), presumably so no one could interact with him; however, he came to need the strategy less and less (IEP, January 2014).

A guaranteed causal link is not possible, though. Other parts of the intervention may have affected Child B's ability to manage his emotions; for example, Child B's parent proposed it was because staff recognised the early warning signs and suggested that he had a "quiet minute somewhere" (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q9), in the classroom. Similarly, Mrs Y felt her presence could de-escalate situations; she would talk with him quietly until he became calm. He was then able to rationalise events, accept that he had behaved inappropriately and apologise (24th June 2013). The impact of his 'safe place' might also have been supported by the programme *Volcano in My Tummy* (Pudney & Whitehouse, 1998), which focusses upon anger management strategies. Mrs Y felt that Child B was implementing calming techniques from their discussions (Interview, 28th March 2013, Q15). Through Mrs Y's dialogues with Child B, relative to this work, she also discovered triggers for his behaviour; for example, noise unsettled him. She was then able to act upon this knowledge. Child A did not have a 'safe place', as moving around school independently might have caused further incidents.

6.20.3 - Structure

Keeping firm structures in place was positive for both pupils. Child B's day had regular timetabled slots for working with Mrs Y. Towards the end of the intervention, he looked forward to these sessions and began asking to have her help at other times (Interview, 28th March 2014). Child B also knew that Mrs Y would be available if needed and where to access this support. Child A was able to work on his own; but, when activities were unstructured, Mrs Z had to intervene. Child A's parent, teacher and Mrs Z all realised how transitions were

particularly difficult for him (Diary, 30th April 2013). This meant that Child A was supervised by an adult when he lined up, in the cloakroom and on the school bus. At transitions, he did not always accompany his peers; for example, he went to and from lunch on his own. This level of supervision would be commensurate with a toddler, but it avoided negative incidents. He became particularly excited on these occasions and would “jump up and down and be inappropriate” (25th April 2013, Q20), so Mrs Z needed to watch him and intervene to avoid situations occurring. Thus, Mrs Z set boundaries by discretely talking to Child A. She also created teaching points from any incident where she did not intervene quickly enough, or at all. In class, he sat where all his peers could be seen (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002). Christmas was particularly difficult for Child A (IEP, January 2014), as was the end of the summer term (16th July 2013), when activities were flexible.

6.20.4 - Motivational Strategies

Both children lacked motivation, at times; however, this was most obvious in Child B. In several observations, he laid his head on the desk (Observations 8th, 15th May & 10th September, 1st October 2013) and disengaged from learning. His lack of motivation was greatest when the task was challenging for him; therefore, suitable differentiation was required. As maths was an area in which Child B had particular difficulty, the class teacher also altered the curriculum time to suit him. Child B’s parent stated that “his brain wasn’t switched on for maths first thing” (Interview, 28th March 2013, Q6) and he found the later time-slot helpful. This willingness to adapt, and listen to Child B’s opinions, created a “good relationship” (ibid.) with his class teacher. Equally important was support from Mrs Y, as she could sense when activities were difficult for him and intervene; for example, she did so in a maths activity (Observation, 1st October 2013), apologising for not being able to answer the question correctly. She had hoped

to raise Child B's self-esteem and inspire him to work collaboratively with her. This strategy was successful, as he engaged with the task.

Child A's reluctance to engage was around writing. He lacked resilience and would refuse to persist when he perceived the task was too difficult, producing "illegible" (Diary, 3rd, 30th April, 20th May & 5th June 2013) script. Mrs Z produced laminated examples of his best handwriting and there was a dramatic improvement following this (IEP, December 2013). Child A could not explain his progress (IFS, December 2013, Q9); therefore, the events may be unrelated and further research is needed to guarantee any correlation.

The effect of praise on motivation is a contentious issue, but both significant adults used it in every observation. There are two contrasting opinions on its use: those who believe that praise undermines a child's intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 2001) and those who feel that it enhances it (Cameron & Pierce, 1994); more recent studies suggest that the type of praise given (either directed at the person, or process) is also important (Dweck, 2012). There are no studies that directly examine the effects of praise on pupils with attachment difficulties; although Hallinan (2008) suggests that praise can enhance pupil attachment to teachers. During the observations, there were examples of using process praise effectively, but Child B seemed most responsive. He could be motivated to persevere with tasks, using phrases such as "You're doing really well with your joined writing...." (Observation, 8th May 2013). Child A, on the other hand, had difficulty managing praise; for example, when Mrs Z used the phrase "Well done" several times in succession he became visibly unsettled (Observation, 12th November 2013). Further investigation into this subject is necessary, as despite this occurring in several lessons other evidence was not available to triangulate the data.

6.20.5 - New Ideas

Playing outside was, according to Child A's therapist, over-stimulating (Diary, 30th April 2013). While Mrs Z agreed, she also felt that Child A was able to function more effectively with her presence; for example, he might become physically too close to others sometimes, but she was able to re-direct him (IFS, December 2014). Despite her reservations, Child A did engage in some 1:1 lunchtime activities with her, instead of engaging with his peers. Activities that might develop dependency (Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Phillips, 2007), through close proximity but limited eye contact, were tried at these times. Child A was dismissive of those in books (IEP, September 2013), as he had completed them often; for example, 'Taking the Pen for a Walk' (see, for example, Bombèr, 2011). Mrs Z reflected upon this and created her own activities. Each encouraged him to plan effectively, choose resources and take his time carrying out the task. She chose activities that would take many hours to complete over several lunchtimes. In one, he learnt to use a sewing machine by following close instructions and copying Mrs Z's stitching; on another, he learnt new painting techniques, copying the work of Jackson Pollock. Child A also made origami butterflies. Child A produced some excellent work and Mrs Z had been pleased with the results. These variations were more successful than those previously suggested were, which shows that it is necessary to adapt advice. The activities needed changing continually too, as Child A became disinterested (ibid.).

6.20.6 – Summary

As attachment theory underpinned the work, the training given to the significant adults and, consequently, their responses were "primarily relational, not behaviourist" (Bombèr & Hughes, 2013, p. 342), with a focus on sharing experience, gaining understanding and developing empathy (ibid.). At home, Child A's parent was also using naturally occurring consequences,

rather than rewards and sanctions (IEP, November 2013 & January 2014). As the debate surrounding nature versus nurture is a complex one, some have even stated it is “wearisome” (Bateson, 2010, p. 2212), it is not apposite to focus upon the topic within this thesis; however, there were stark contrasts between the strategies used by the significant adults and other school staff observed. While Mrs Y and Mrs Z rarely used strategies firmly set within the realm of behavioural psychology, such as rewards and sanctions, other teachers did. The behaviourist approaches had the desired short-term effects. For example, one member of staff at Child A’s school was overheard saying: “If I see you doing that again, I will give you a warning” and the pupil stopped firing elastic bands. The strategy was more immediately effective in this incident than Mrs Z had been, as she had previously asked him to stop and he had not. Child A responded to a perceived hierarchy and the request was delivered by the head teacher, so this may have had an effect. This was not a one-off incident as Child A faced consequences for his actions at lunchtime too; for example, segregation from his peers (Diary, 25th June 2013). Child B also encountered behaviourist strategies. At the start of the research, if he disrupted the lesson, he was asked to leave the room on his own and read (Diary, 13th June 2013). Later, the significant adult intervened and instigated the “Time-In” strategy (24th & 26th June 2013). Furthermore, the school operated the “Golden Time” (Mosley & Sonnet, 2005) system, which Child B was aware of (Interview, 28th March 2014), as he explained that he lost five minutes at a time, when he failed to work.

This duality of approach requires further study, as a definitive conclusion vis-à-vis causation, in terms of each individual approach, is not possible. It is unclear whether the behavioural responses of the class teachers had an impact upon the pupils, or not. Their contribution (positive, negative, or negligible) to the change in behaviour measured by the pupils’ Boxall Profiles, and IEP targets, is uncertain. Strategies, such as “Golden Time” (ibid.),

were in place prior to the research; therefore, presumably they had little impact. Sabol and Pianta (2012) recognise the complexities of undertaking research into this field:

“reciprocal interactions between teachers and children are embedded within a complex system including proximal factors such as families and peers, and more distal features such as schools, communities, and cultures” (Good & Weinstein, 1986; Pianta, 1999; Pianta et al., 2003 cited in Sabol & Pianta, 2012, p. 227).

Therefore, several factors could have influenced the effectiveness of the strategies; for example, the results indicate that a person’s perceived status in school might contribute to whether pupils conform, or not. Given the results gained regarding the necessary qualities of the significant adult, arguably the individual, who delivers the different strategies (whether behavioural or relational), may also affect their success. This further supports the scrutinising of the qualities of those who work with pupils who have attachment difficulties; both Bombèr’s (2007, 2011) and that of reflective practice as uncovered by this research.

6.21 - The Benefits of a Small School Environment

Both primaries included in the final yearlong research were in Quadrant 2, which meant they had fewer than 100 pupils and had not referred to the BST. While the findings of the *a priori* purposive sampling strategy cannot indicate that small, rather than large, schools created the most suitable provision for children with attachment difficulties, the outcomes from the yearlong significant adult intervention can support the fact that certain conditions might have contributed to the attuned ethos of these schools. In both, all personnel knew each other, each mixed-age class contained many siblings and staff remained year-on-year.

In each setting, staff interacted with one another, and the pupils, throughout the day. Neither primary operated a closed-door policy in terms of lessons; consequently, other staff frequently visited and spoke with both Child A and B. For example, Child A's head teacher entered an art lesson and explained how impressed he was with Child A's painting (Observation, 17th January 2014), while Child B's head teacher once brought us all (Child B, Mrs Y and researcher) drinks and biscuits (5th November 2013). On these occasions, both head teachers used humour. This relaxed approach meant that staff knew each pupil, even if they did not teach them directly; however, arguably, these relationships may be superficial. Child A could disassociate with less familiar staff; for example, in one art lesson (taken by the nursery teacher) he spun on the carpet (17th January 2014), while Child B responded more favourably to Mrs Y and his class teacher (Interview, 28th March 2013).

Child A's parent had purposively chosen a small school, believing it would be able to give more attention. She confirmed that it had had a positive effect, as the staff could "work around his problems... [through] an enormous amount of help" (Interview, 24th March 2014). Each staff member was aware of triggers, so they could anticipate situations that Child A might not be able to manage and ensure he did not have to withstand them. The response of Child's B parent was similar, as she stated:

"... he can be volatile, not as much; but it does need a little bit of careful handling"
(Interview, 28th March 2014).

There were also clear lines of communication between both schools and parents; for example, Child B's Mum stated that her son was aware that they "all talked with each other" (ibid.) and, consequently, adults could respond appropriately to his needs. Being a small school might help in this respect, as there are fewer staff to inform; indeed, both head teachers taught KS2.

Both parents acknowledged that even in these tight knit communities there could be issues and divulged their anxieties surrounding transfer. Child B's parent felt that her son might succeed in a mainstream secondary with an enhanced transition plan, including extra visits, liaison between the significant adult and pastoral staff, plus discussion around his learning needs. Mrs Y hoped that she would be able to accompany Child B to his secondary school to ensure that he felt comfortable in his surroundings, prior to transfer. Child A's parent was unsure whether her son would cope in a mainstream school without a "huge amount of help" (Interview, 24th March 2014). Thus, while attending a small rural primary may have been of initial benefit arguably, in the long-term, it made the transition to secondary more difficult. This fact has noteworthy implications for receiving secondary schools, which must ensure that precise transition arrangements are in place.

6.21.1 - Summary

These small schools benefitted Child A and B for many reasons, not least the family ethos. This included the fact that all staff members knew the pupils, many siblings were in the same classes, staff remained with children year-on-year and communication was easier, as there were fewer adults. These characteristics enhanced adult availability and responsiveness, enabling the replication of the "surrogate secure base" (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32); however, their pupils could not remain in such attuned environments, as they transitioned to larger secondary schools: the difference can be vast, in 2010 the average size of a primary was 240 pupils and a secondary 950 (Bolton, 2012).

Secondary schools require pupils to have more independence in that they transition between different staff and classrooms; these alter several times throughout the day, let alone every year. Pupils may not see siblings, even though they attend the same school and

communication is more complex, as there are more adults involved. As a result, replicating the secure base, and avoiding issues such as disassociation, may be more difficult. For example, Child A dissociates through reading and staff who are unfamiliar with him might see this as a legitimate use of his time in school. Similarly, a secondary school's NG might attempt to improve independence (Garner & Thomas, 2011), in order to combat logistical issues; however, this could be developmentally inappropriate for children with attachment difficulties, if they have not mastered dependence first. Thus, continual support from a significant adult could be necessary. Bombèr (2007) suggests how staff might be allocated at secondary school; however, there is little empirical research into how to maximise their effectiveness at both transfer and beyond. Therefore, this study highlights that further research is required around these subjects.

The Effect External Support had on the Child and School Staff

6.22.1 - Parental Involvement

Parental input was valuable, throughout the yearlong intervention, for both the pupils and school staff. The regular IEP meetings were useful for sharing information regarding the children's progress and exchanging ideas as to how to manage the pupils best. Child A appeared to appreciate his parent's part in the process, as he stated:

"I'm pretty good at maths, and my writing's really improved... I'm... sure mum will agree; because she's coming here, I can show her" (Interview, 23rd April 2014).

The new *SEND Code of Practice* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) suggests that a collaborative approach, which puts the views of the child and family at the heart of any provision, is vital to achieve the best outcomes and this study supports this statement.

The research uncovered the following examples that could add to the body of evidence regarding good practice for children with attachment difficulties.

Child A recognised that his mum supported him at home, as when he got “too wild” (Interview, 3rd June 2013) she would ask him inside for a few minutes. At an IEP meeting, his parent also divulged that he only visited the park early in the morning, when there were no other children there, as he may be unable to manage with his peers. These two facts demonstrated that Child A’s parent had the same approach to playing outside as Mrs Z. This reassured both parties that they were treating Child A consistently (IEP, March 2014). Child A’s parent further reassured Mrs Z, by agreeing that her son had been “disrespectful and dismissive” (IEP, March 2014) to her too. The information boosted Mrs Z’s confidence, as she realised that she was not the only person treated in this way (IFS, December 2013, Q4). Child A’s parent was also able to discuss the concept of attachment. The mother-child dyad was tentative, although Child A disassociated frequently when she was away for a few days (IEP, January 2014), which suggests she provides a secure base for him; however, she could share Mrs Z’s frustration at a lack of reciprocity and attunement. Child A’s parent and Mrs Z also shared some specific phrases, which they could use. For example, at home, they used the expression “I can see that your brain isn’t strong enough to make the right decisions, so...”. Mrs Z agreed to try this, to maintain consistency (IEP, January 2014); however, observations did not reveal that she had, nor did any diary entry comment upon the strategy. Thus, measuring its effectiveness is not possible.

The situation with Child B’s parent was somewhat different, as she worked as a TA in the school, albeit in KS1. This meant that she was constantly available and could discuss issues with staff. She could also observe her son’s behaviour at first hand, both at home and in school, and agreed with the concerns raised by staff. She too was able to read the signs that he was anxious; therefore, if he was in this state prior to the start of school, she passed this information

on to other staff. These messages were useful in that different strategies were needed dependent upon his “mood” (Interview, 28th March 2014, Q10 & IEP, September 2013). Without this communication, Child B’s significant adult would not have been able to put the correct strategy into place immediately and more incidents might have occurred.

6.22.2 - Therapeutic Intervention

An issue highlighted by Child A’s parent was the importance of therapy. She felt that the work that home and school had undergone was important, but believed that children who were traumatised needed specialist input. Child A had embarked on such intervention, but it had finished at approximately the time work with the significant adult started. The treatment was not available freely, but Child A’s parents had paid for it. At first, Child A and the family had undergone assessment, then Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) was used; the treatment is thought to be successful with children who have attachment disorder (Cormack, 2000) and Child A’s parent thought that it had been. She rated highly the work undertaken and felt that her son was more able to manage; consequently, she questioned whether subsequent improvement would have been as dramatic had he not received therapy from two specialists who dealt with adopted children (Interview, 24th March 2014). Child B had not received such intervention, although Barnardo’s had been involved previously and carried out some bereavement work. The staff at school made no comment as to the effectiveness, or not, of this work and neither did the parent mention it.

6.22.3 - Summary

The positive professional associations created between the ISO, staff and parents contributed to increasing knowledge of both pupils. These relationships also provided a network of support.

It is not possible to say whether EMDR, or the work of Barnardo's, had an impact upon the subsequent work carried out by the significant adults; however, it is evident that improvement occurred within the year. The complex nature of schools, classrooms and relationships makes it difficult to attribute this to one element, although both staff and parents agreed that the significant adults had played a key part in the process. Child A's parent stated that the support "benefitted him a great deal" (Interview, 24th March 2014, Q5) and the family held Mrs Z in regard. For example, she was given a "beautifully written card" (IEP, September 2013) during the summer holidays. Similarly, Child B's parent was grateful for the support given by the ISO and Mrs Y; his mum was visibly emotional at the intervention's end stating that "working with the significant adult has made such a big difference" (Interview, 28th March 2014).

6.22.4 - Conclusion

The findings show that the initial Boxall Profile was not only useful as a sampling tool, but identified the areas in which the pupils were weakest. Given that they had high scores in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z), it was supposed that they had suffered all, or some, of the following: little nurturing and support from birth; physical abuse; verbal abuse, or the loss of an attachment figure (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010). More specifically, the profile showed that Child A: had difficulty managing his behaviour and organisation; was unable to reflect upon his actions; could be spontaneous; had an underdeveloped self; might be defensive, resentful, or angry, and was sensitive to threat. Child B: had not attached to an adult; found it difficult to trust; feared the reaction of adults; could be silent; had low self-esteem and could physically, or verbally, attack others. The pupil's IEPs included targets for improvement, based upon this Boxall Profile baseline.

The recommendation from the accompanying notes of *The Boxall Profile Handbook* (ibid.) was to give consistent, individual attention to develop early-level attachments to adults who remained close by. This echoes secure base theory. The Boxall Profile was designed for use within NGs; however, this was not deemed suitable provision, because the adults within are not wholly reliable in their responsiveness. Thus, the definition of an attachment figure, as a TA who supported a child on a 1:1 basis, was adopted from the work of Bombèr (2007, 2008, 2011) and Geddes (2006) with the aim of providing a “surrogate secure base” (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32).

The profile was also useful as a means of assessment; measuring behaviour change in the children. For the two pupils combined, the results showed that 87.5% of the Boxall Profile strands improved and 89% of the IEP targets. More specifically, using the assessment demonstrated how effective the significant adult was in developing the Diagnostic Profiles (Section II) of the two children, where low scores directly link to a lack of nurturing, abuse, or the loss of an attachment figure. This contrasts findings from other research, such as that in NGs (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007), Scallywags (Broadhead et al., 2011) and CCPT (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009). Therefore, the 1:1 significant adult intervention might be successful where others have found pupils resistant to change: this outcome is significant. Furthermore, while the Boxall Profile is usually used in conjunction with NGs, this conclusion can add to the small body of work (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011), which suggests that the profile can be used outside the remit of the NG to improve children's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

As the main purpose of the research was to explore the feelings and opinions of participants, this study does not rely on quantitative statistics. Consequently, the qualitative data, and its subsequent analysis, gives a rich picture of the children's progress, their views and

those of the significant adults and parents, regarding the intervention. A key finding was that the significant adults were more effective in the role when they were reflective. The strategies implemented were used, altered, or dismissed through examining practice and a tailored package arrived at. Using reflection, Mrs Y and Mrs Z also avoided becoming too emotionally involved, which ensured they remained positive. This ability, coupled with commitment to the role, was vital to the success of the support.

The significant adult's presence was most valuable at unstructured times, as in these situations conflict can arise between pupils. Mrs Y and Mrs Z replicated the secure base for Child A and B: this ensured equality of opportunity, raised self-esteem, improved peer relationships and kept physical, and verbal, aggression to a minimum. These findings support both the work of Little and Kobak (2003), who suggest that pupils' stress levels are reduced when an adult is available to intervene in conflict situations, and Ahnert et al. (2012), whose neurobiological study measured reduced cortisol levels in children who had close, individual relationships with teachers. The benefits have far-reaching implications, as without this level of "support and protection" (Hayden, 1997, p. 36) pupils with attachment difficulties might not be fully included. Marginalisation might exist at several levels within the educational system, culminating in permanent exclusion: those with SEN are more likely to be excluded (ibid.) and may comprise pupils with attachment difficulties. Ethically, these findings are relevant to schools' and LAs' provision. There is an expectation in the government's agenda of equality and inclusion for pupils with SEND (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) that pre-emptive measures are in place to ensure pupils are treated equally and not discriminated against; therefore, to ensure the educational careers of those with attachment difficulties are not compromised, a significant adult's presence is vital.

A significant adult's employment is insufficient, though: building positive relationships are paramount. The significant adult-child dyad developed slowly. Initially, there were some reservations on both sides; yet, Mrs Y and Mrs Z persevered, despite the challenges, and arrived at an in-depth understanding of their pupils. This attunement and reciprocity took time to establish and, therefore, the findings show that significant adults need to be available long-term. Providing such support is not without its issues. Contracts may prevent schools, or LAs, employing staff year-on-year and unforeseen circumstances, such as illness, may break continuity. Furthermore, unstructured times are, usually, spread throughout the day and require "flexi-support" (Bombèr, 2011, p. 11). The study showed that in these two small, rural primary schools this raised financial, practical and ethical issues. In reality, a perfect scenario may be difficult for many settings to implement, regardless of their size, though. Despite the "Maximum Variation" (Patton, 2002) sampling strategy being used, larger schools were not involved in the research and additional examination is required.

The analysis demonstrates that the flexible approach of both Mrs Y and Mrs Z was effective, despite their differing backgrounds. Bombèr (2007) lists the qualities needed of significant adults and this study, partially, agrees. The research shows that particular personnel are required for the intervention to be successful; for example, Mrs Y and Mrs Z were resilient, robust and tenacious, with a sense of humour. The role was challenging and both needed these qualities to overcome issues, including: a lack of attunement and reciprocity from their pupils; physically, or verbally, aggressive incidents and sporadic progress. Confidence was a factor in overcoming further difficulties, such as: a lack of engagement with ideas; little feedback on effectiveness; poor communication and a vague job description. Mrs Z, but not Mrs Y who was satisfied that her intervention was positively influencing Child B, raised these issues. Mrs Z had not worked in a school environment previously, whereas Mrs Y had and this may have

contributed to her self-assurance; however, this may not be the only causative factor. Staff members' personalities could have played a part too; for example, those in Mrs Y's school may have proactively supported her, whereas Mrs Z may have been devoid of a network. Without examination of this assertion, it is impossible to attribute causation, though.

While experience in school can give significant adults added confidence, working with pupils who have SEBD is not vital. The term SEBD is a generic one, which encompasses a variety of SEN; therefore, staff responses should differ dependent upon the child's need. This intervention's focus upon secure base theory, and forming relationships (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2006), meant that the strategies implemented differed to those behaviourist methods usually be found in schools (Lepper et al., 2005; Mader, 2009); therefore, knowledge of extrinsic motivators and behaviour management techniques was not needed. An understanding of attachment difficulties was useful, which suggests that training in mental health is relevant. Furthermore, ITT and CPD should reference attachment theory and its application in education.

The effectiveness of each individual strategy is difficult to assess; however, both significant adults used those from the training materials and it is possible to draw conclusions. Language was useful to support Child A when he was emotionally dysregulated, while Child B discussed his feelings through story and metaphor. A 'safe place' for Child B had limited success, but though using 'Volcano in my Tummy' (Pudney & Whitehouse, 1998) the ability to manage his anger was improved. Keeping a firm structure in place was more important for Child A, than Child B, as the former required a higher level of supervision to avoid negative incidents occurring. Differentiation was vital to ensure that Child B remained motivated and tailoring the times of the day to suit him was beneficial. Mrs Z laminated examples of Child A's work and, following this, there was an improvement in his handwriting. Praise was more

effective with Child B, than Child A. Mrs Z was imaginative, and she developed new strategies; as they maintained the pupil's interest, they were more successful than those previously mentioned in literature were. The focus of all tasks was on developing the relationship between the significant adult and child; although, other staff used behaviourist techniques and it is unclear how far their actions contributed towards the pupils' behaviour change. Compliance was dependent upon who delivered such strategies, which further supports the need for relationships within school.

Both small school environments used in the final sample replicated a family ethos as several siblings were in the same class, all staff knew all children, there was staff continuity and communication was effective. Such aspects provide the secure base; however, the assertion that all small schools do likewise, is not applicable: some small schools did not have these qualities and it is not possible to guarantee them. Acknowledging the protection that the small primary schools attended by Child A and B, with their attuned outlook, afforded these pupils is pertinent, though. Recreating such environments in other small schools, and more populated ones, may be possible; however, the research also suggests that, while such schools may benefit pupils with attachment difficulties in their primary years, it could make the transfer to larger secondary schools problematic. The decreased levels of support found in larger environments (Van Ryzin, 2010) could lead to pupils with attachment difficulties not managing their emotions, issues arising and exclusions following. Nevertheless, it is unethical to set children up to fail and transfer arrangements need to be considerable; for example, the pupils might maintain their significant adult throughout transition. Further research would be useful. This finding has implications for parents, and LAs, in that it might influence their setting choice.

The complex nature of schools and families means that it is not possible to categorically state that intervention from a significant adult will positively impact upon all children with

attachment difficulties, as Child A's EMDR therapy and Child B's bereavement counselling might have been integral to their later progress. So too might other events in the children's lives outside of school. In addition, while positive behaviour change did occur, the research acknowledges that sustained improvement was questionable. Both children's development in self-esteem fluctuated, they could still be volatile and Child A's friendships were fleeting. The latter's teacher, significant adult and parent also stated that no matter how much provision was available there could still be "glimpses of his old self" (IEP, March 2014). Neither his mum, nor school staff, knew what triggered this. Thus, the research recommends that continued input from a significant adult will be necessary to ensure continuous behaviour change. As how long this support might be required for is unknown, the thesis also recommends research into the significant adults' longitudinal effects.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

7.1 - The Research Questions and their Key Findings

This thesis examined relationships between pupils who have attachment difficulties and their designated significant adults. A plethora of practical classroom strategies (Bebbington, 2005; Bebbington & Phillips, 2002; Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2006; Ryan, 2006) has emerged for use with these children; however, many of the techniques rely upon the presence of a significant adult. While some writers (Glasser, 1997; Groom & Rose, 2005; Kohn, 1993a, 1996, 2001; Robertson, 2006; Visser, 2002) have commented upon the importance of positive relationships in school and others (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Chapman, 2002; Galbo, 1989; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Zionts, 2005) have written about the teacher-pupil dyad with relation to attachment, only anecdotal evidence (Bombèr, 2007, 2008, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008) exists considering the effects and effectiveness of these strategies, as implemented by an ‘attachment figure’ (ibid.) who is not the teacher. This study has addressed the gap in empirical research, through answering the initial research question: “What are the effects of, and how effective is, the use of a ‘significant adult’ in changing the behaviour of children with attachment difficulties?”.

“Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) sampling identified sixteen schools for inclusion in the project and twelve agreed to participate. The sample was involved in ethnographic research that included casual observations, semi-structured informant interviews and examining school documentation. Attachment, and secure base, theory (Bowlby, 1944, 2005a, 2005b; Main & Soloman, 1990; Salter Ainsworth, 1967; Salter Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Salter

Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) underpinned the research; the latter proposing that securely attached infants leave their caregiver to explore, but return after a time. The significant adult provided a “surrogate secure base” (Geddes, 2006, p. 141; Phillips, 2007, p. 32) in school, through being “available and responsive” (Bowlby, 2005b, p. 12). The latter was vital to develop trusting relationships within the significant adult-pupil dyad.

As the findings needed to relate to these theories, the significant adult-pupil dyads were uncovered through an *a priori* purposive sampling process. Through applying quantitative content analysis, using The Attuned School Checklist, further investigation was applicable to four schools. The data collected was also used to answer an additional research question: “How attuned are schools?”. Analysis revealed that, while whole school approaches were set out in policies, rarely were attachment difficulties mentioned. However, working in partnership to meet the needs of pupils was a strength of schools; external agencies, parents and carers being involved in children’s education, which included those with attachment difficulties. Furthermore, while literature suggests that NGs are an important part of provision for such children, these only existed in large schools (over 100 pupils). While exploring the reason behind this did not occur, it may be financial.

Only those schools where children with recognised attachment difficulties attended, demonstrated knowledge of attachment theory; however, one setting, unknowingly, responded relationally in practice. This school provided strategies that were applicable for pupils with attachment difficulties, without in-depth knowledge of the child’s attachment needs. They were aware of the child’s bereavement, though, which is significant. The two small schools (under 100 pupils) in the final sample had a family ethos that may also contribute towards an attuned school. Above all, the research concludes that the head teacher’s vision, and ability to reflect upon individual situations, contributed towards how attuned a school was; those where

behaviour policies were not rigidly adhered to were ranked highest. These findings have implications for ITT and CPD; *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) could support school improvement by using it as the basis for a whole school audit of provision, with a view to implementing any omitted strategies.

Having sampled four schools, those children identified by the SENCOs as having SEBD had Boxall Profiles completed for them. Ultimately, the sampling strategy identified five pupils as individual case studies, from a total 2309 in all sixteen original settings. However, only two could be included due to consent issues. This small sample posed a further research question: “What factors contributed towards the non-participation of head teachers, parents, carers and social workers?”. Notwithstanding circumstances normally associated with disengagement from educational research, such as a head teacher’s lack of time, OFSTED visits and workload pressures upon staff, there were concerns unique to pupils with attachment difficulties. These included inappropriate timing for the children, potential negative consequences and the researcher being a stranger. Accordingly, it is questionable whether the sample is large enough to generalise to the wider population. However, the rigid *a priori* purposive sampling process did ensure that the final pairings were suitable for study: each attended an attuned school; both were in KS2 and they had attachment difficulties, as identified by the Boxall Profile. The significant adults also supported 1:1 in the mainstream environment, which facilitated their availability and responsiveness. This process limited researcher bias, allowed for comparison between the pupils and enabled replication.

The research included conducting semi-structured interviews with pupils, significant adults and parents, carrying out semi-structured, direct observations, monitoring the children’s IEPs and examining diaries. The completion of a final Boxall Profile established change in the pupils’ behaviour. This process was conducted over twelve months and thematic ‘Framework’

(NatCen, 2015) analysis used to examine the collected data. Boxall Profiles are used prolifically in conjunction with NGs; however, few studies exist into their benefit outside this remit (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011). Thus, a further research question was examined: “What can a Boxall Profile reveal about pupils’ behaviour change, in conjunction with intervention from a significant adult?”. The findings reveal that the profile effectively identified the pupils’ areas of weakness, which IEPs then targeted, and that the children made progress. Comparison of the two profiles showed that there was improvement across Section I (Developmental Strands) and Section II (Diagnostic Profile) for both pupils. The results correlate with the pupils’ IEPs where the children met the majority of their targets; thus, both pupils’ social, emotional and behavioural skills improved.

Previous research, in NGs and beyond (Broadhead et al., 2011; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007), has indicated that there might be resistance to change in Section II of the profile; however, this study does not concur. This research suggests that the 1:1 availability and responsiveness of the significant adult contributed towards the improved result. The finding has significance, as it demonstrates the importance of recreating the secure base in this way. Furthermore, attachment theory underpinned this intervention’s methodology, as opposed to a cognitive behavioural perspective in the Scallywags project (Broadhead et al., 2009), and this shows that the relational approach was more successful. Relationships take time to develop, though. Reciprocity, in the significant adult-pupil dyad, was only noticeable towards the end of the year. Therefore, the results of this study were more in line with CCPT evidence (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009), which suggested that the scores from self-limiting features (Columns Q-R), undeveloped behaviour (Columns S-U) and unsupported development (Columns V-Z) could improve, but that progress was dependent upon extended periods of support. Consequently, the study’s quantitative element concludes that significant adults do have a positive effect, but

schools must ensure that they are long-term appointments. The present study can add to the small body of evidence.

While the general trend was one of improvement, when measuring behaviour change against the Boxall Profiles and IEPs, this research acknowledges that the in-depth feedback from participants showed that pupils' development might have fluctuated. Indeed, there were dips in terms of the children's self-esteem, levels of aggression and friendships noted. Conceivably, these findings demonstrate that pupils can take a step backwards, but with continued guidance from their significant adult may get 'back on track'. The findings further support the rationale that staff should remain with pupils year-on-year (Zionts, 2005) in long-term appointments; it is not sufficient to assume that children with attachment difficulties do not have 'blips'. Therefore, despite seemingly positive results initially, maintaining the relationship is paramount so that the pupils' progress might be sustained, or further improved. They will also continue to be included and avoid potential exclusions.

The main purpose of the research was to investigate the thoughts and feelings of the participants, to gain an in-depth understanding of both the children's progress and the role of the significant adult. Through examining the qualitative data, important findings emerged. The first supported the quantitative data, in that positive relationships between the pairings were central to the intervention's success, yet with these complex pupils this level of understanding takes time to develop; therefore, the consistency of the significant adult is vital (ibid.). Furthermore, the significant adult's presence was most needed at unstructured times, which allowed the pupils equality of opportunity and protection against exclusionary practices; to leave pupils with attachment difficulties without such support is unethical, as research has shown that pupils' stress levels can be reduced when supported by an adult in these situations (Ahnert et al., 2012; Little & Kobak, 2003). Unstructured times are *ad hoc* throughout the day,

though. Both these findings raise issues around how best to provide for such pupils, given practical, financial and ethical considerations.

Bombèr (2007) suggests that significant adults should possess certain qualities. Nevertheless, while this study principally agrees with most of the characteristics, it does not demonstrate that experience of SEBD is necessary. Knowledge of attachment theory is useful; however, what emerges is that the ability to reflect upon any knowledge of attachment, and the role itself, is most important. The findings showed that reflective practice was crucial to ensuring that pupils received appropriate, tailor-made, support and for safeguarding the significant adults against emotional overload from their duties. This echoes the anecdotal work of Geddes (2006) and an empirical study by Boorn, Hopkins Dunn, and Page (2010). Other qualities seen as beneficial were confidence, resilience and a sense of humour; commitment to the significant adult role also played an important part.

7.2 - Contributions to Theory and Practice

Considering the findings, lessons might be learned from both the schools and participants involved in the study. The thesis makes a significant value-added contribution to two key areas and the information gathered may contribute, to not only theory, but also practice. Firstly, while there has been growing interest in the teacher-pupil dyad of late (Sabol & Pianta, 2012) and numerous assertions regarding the feasibility of replicating the secure base within schools are made (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Geddes, 2006; Phillips, 2007; Zions, 2005), there is little research which focusses upon the effects and effectiveness of an additional attachment figure in the classroom. Empirical studies exist exploring how an individual adults' presence can reduce anxiety levels in children (Ahnert et al., 2012; Little & Kobak, 2003); however, the benefits of this support from the perspectives of the pupils, parents and staff need exploration. Sabol and

Pianta (2012) agree, for they suggest that further research is needed which gathers information regarding teacher-pupil relationships from multiple informants. The current study does not focus on teachers, but is an in-depth examination of the notion of a significant adult, one who is a TA, acting as a surrogate secure base for pupils. Garnering participant voice was paramount; therefore, its contribution is original.

Attachment and secure base theory underpin the intervention; therefore, the positive findings from the current study indicate that an extension of both theoretical perspectives can apply to the relationship between the significant adult and pupil. Attachment theory is based upon evolutionary principles (Bowlby, 2005a) with infants being drawn towards their main caregivers. Securely attached children can explore their surroundings, but return to the secure base at times of danger (Crittenden, 2000), illness, injury and upset (Goldberg et al., 1999). Without a longitudinal study, it is impossible to measure whether the pupil participants in this study established enduring attachments with their significant adults; nevertheless, positive supportive and reciprocal relationships did develop, albeit slowly.

The reciprocal nature of these relationships may be evidenced by the rich qualitative data gathered. Each significant adult's experience contains examples of where the children in their care began to respond to them differently; for example, in the case of Child A this included the writing, and sending, of a card to Mrs Z without prompting. The former also, albeit fleetingly, called the latter "Mum" (Diary, 16th July 2013) and began to both laugh synchronously and ask when support would be given. With Child B, the same is true; however, from the data gathered, Mrs Y was less conscious of this shift. The change was noticeable in observation sessions, though, with Child B beginning to respond to Mrs Y more positively; for example, their sharing a joke and smiling together. Furthermore, pupils, significant adults, parents and staff all commented upon how both Child A and B, towards the end of the

intervention, sought out the presence of Mrs Y and Mrs Z, both pre-emptively and in times of difficulty. The latter suggests that the two pupils were experiencing satisfaction from their relationships with the significant adults, in a way that they had not previously.

Thus, the current study's findings support the views of Zions (2005) who indicates that the protective role parents and carers play in the wider society can be replicated within school. This was particularly noticeable in the way in which the significant adults ensured that their pupils were fully included in all activities; rather than being excluded at class, or school, level. The former may involve being segregated from peers within the school building, while the latter includes "official", or "unofficial" (Pavey & Visser, 2003, p. 183 & 184; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001, p. 359 & 361), exclusions. An exclusion database records official exclusions, whereas unofficial ones occur when a head teacher, or other staff member, absents a child without recording them. Both Child A and B were, on occasions, separated from their peers following incidents that happened when their significant adult was not present; these situations mostly occurred at unstructured times. Neither school excluded the children, however. The Equality Act (UK Parliament, 2010) states that schools and LAs have a duty to ensure that no pupil with a disability is discriminated against and the *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) suggests that they must adjust provision accordingly. Perhaps, if Mrs Y and Mrs Z had been present at all unstructured times Child A and B might never have been segregated; consequently, if providing pupils who have attachment difficulties with a significant adult can ensure equality and inclusion, practitioners must consider the role vital.

Attaching a 1:1 significant adult to an individual, based upon a relational response to pupils' needs, could be considered far removed from current behaviourist schools of thought around supporting improved learning and behaviour in the classroom (Lepper et al., 2005;

Mader, 2009). However, this study has demonstrated the benefit of such a relationship, specifically for pupils with attachment difficulties, and there is a body of anecdotal work that the findings concur with (Bombèr, 2007, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2006). The LA in which the research was undertaken already looked to such literature to support pupils, specifically in relation to LAC; however, how widespread the practice of delegating a significant adult is, according to this study's definition, cannot be determined without further examination. What was revealed is that two sampled participants were not included in the research, as their attached member of staff was not consistently "available and ready to respond" (Bowlby, 2005b, p. 12). While not every pupil will require a significant adult, these children were "struggling in some way" (Bombèr, 2007, p. 64), as they were on the SEN register and supported by other members of staff. Arguably, they might be receiving inappropriate support to meet their needs, or discriminated against, without the provision of a 1:1 significant adult to act as a secure base. However, each case needs individual attention and this assertion would require subsequent investigation.

Schools and LAs should not assume that placing *any* significant adult with a pupil would provide a protective role and develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills either; as the findings suggest it is paramount that personnel have the right characteristics. Bombèr (2007) suggests several pre-requisite qualities and, while this study agrees with most, previous experience of working with children who have SEBD was not vital, although it may have given Mrs Z more confidence. What did maximise the effect and effectiveness of the role was knowledge around attachment and, above all, the ability to be reflective in practice. Bombèr (ibid.) suggests interviewing candidates for the position of significant adult to ensure a suitable match, which echoes the work of Galbo (1989); however, while this study would advocate this too, the focus of questioning must be on the practitioner's ability to reflect. This

recommendation relies upon interviews being conducted solely for the role and may be somewhat removed from existing practice.

The findings also showed that providing a supportive environment for the significant adults was important and this edict echoes the work of both Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006). Literature states that the role can be challenging (Bombèr, 2008; Chapman, 2002; Geddes, 2005), dependent upon previous experience, and the findings concur; the diary of Mrs Z in particular voiced concerns and provoked questions. With such honesty, it was possible to discuss, and alleviate, some of the issues raised. Moreover, only with such continual dialogue, may true reflection and, in turn, improvement in practice be possible (Loughran, 2002). This has implications for those staff in school who line-manage significant adults, as to maximise effectiveness they must ensure there is a network of support. In large schools, SENCOs might mentor significant adults, as these personnel are available; however, the current study's evidence has shown that in small schools it may be difficult to allocate a mentor, due to fewer staff. Furthermore, while head teachers might feel that informal meetings address staff concerns (Wilson & Brundrett, 2005), this research has elicited that they may not. Thus, in small schools mentors may be drawn from other establishments: Hobson and Sharp (2005) suggest that such mentoring can be effective with head teachers, whose role is similar in that they are isolated; therefore, those responsible for significant adults may look to effective peer-peer support from other schools in the locality.

The second area where the thesis makes a significant contribution is in its use of the Boxall Profile. The study is unique in its application of the Boxall Profile in conjunction with a mainstream school-based intervention, which is not NG provision. Limited research has taken place around the tool's application outside the NG remit (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009; Broadhead et al., 2011); however, it has never been examined as part of a significant adult's role.

Comparison of pre and post involvement scores was possible and the evidence supports the participants' views regarding the impact that the significant adults made. In contrast to previous research (Broadhead et al., 2011; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007), the two children's scores did improve in relation to the Diagnostic Profile (Section II). Low scores in this area are directly related to possible abuse, lack of nurturing, or the loss of an attachment figure; consequently, this information stimulates discussions around the possible extension of attachment theory, whereby a significant adult can provide a secure base in an educational environment. The length of time applied to the intervention was also important, as the CCPT study (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009) noted that positive relationships could not be formed immediately. Empirical evidence supporting the fact that a school-based, significant adult can develop abilities such as a child's self-limiting features (strands Q-R), undeveloped behaviour (strands S-U) and unsupported development (strands V-Z) is new and of interest to any who work with pupils needing to develop these skills.

The above has further implications for practice, as it shows that a 1:1 significant adult in the classroom may be preferable, for some children who have attachment difficulties, to working in an NG situation. This is particularly so, as the pupils also had improved scores on both of the Developmental Strands (Section I: A-E, Organisation of Experience and F-J, Internalisation of Controls), which NGs also claim to develop (see, for example, Sanders, 2007). The *a priori* purposive sampling process revealed pupils who had suffered loss, been abused, or lacked nurturing, that attended NGs within the twelve original schools; however, the current study's findings question this practice. Without further investigation, it is impossible to know how many pupils might be receiving NG provision and whose social, emotional and behavioural skills might benefit from significant adult support instead. Schools, and LAs, should reassess those pupils who attend NGs to take the above into account, potentially providing them with

alternative 1:1 provision; however, the research acknowledges that securing appropriate support for pupils has issues and there may be practical, financial and human resource implications attached to this recommendation.

7.3 - The Attuned School: Recommendations

Having established how attuned schools were, the only discernible pattern was that NGs existed solely in large schools (334, 224 and 193 pupils on roll). Exploration of this phenomenon did not take place, but there could be numerous reasons. Given the conclusion that some small schools may have conditions that more closely replicate a family ethos, one could be that such settings do not require an NG; however, this does not explain the anomalies of other small schools, which might have benefitted from one. Here, further constraints may have played a part; for example, small schools have small budgets and there may be financial implications: a group might have start-up costs and maintenance, including training and wages. Not all large schools had an NG either. Where they did, head teachers placed importance upon developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills and this may have contributed to their existence. Chapter six suggests that senior managers' views dictate provision for pupils with SEBD, including those with attachment difficulties; therefore, despite remaining unanswered questions as to each school's reasons for having an NG, these head teachers held them in regard.

The *a priori* purposive sampling procedure eliminated pupils who potentially shared their significant adult, because they attended an NG, though. The decision to do so was a difficult one, as much of the literature referred to whilst creating *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) suggested that NGs were appropriate provision for pupils with attachment difficulties; however, the methodological judgment was made based upon the need for clear demarcations regarding the pupil-significant adult dyad. Had members of staff been

responsible for more than one child they would not have been able to replicate consistently the secure base. This study's findings indicate that availability and responsiveness are central to determining what effect, and how effective, the role of the significant adult is. Larger schools may have a greater population of children with SEBD; therefore, pooling provision can form NGs and pupils would receive more hours of support. However, this study has shown that the latter may not be best practice and the outcome from the two case studies somewhat conflicts with the inclusion of NGs in the checklist.

Despite this conclusion, the research does not suggest that NGs have no place in supporting pupils who have SEBD; or, indeed, those with attachment difficulties. In Section I, The Developmental Strands (Clusters 1 and 2 – A through to J) progress is made in NGs; therefore, pupils who have difficulties here will be well provided for. NGs may also support those with less complex requirements in Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z). Child A and B's needs were extreme in this area, though, as they scored above 42 (one-third higher than the norm from three years four months to eight years): the findings show, these pupils might benefit from the targeted 1:1 support provided by a significant adult. Furthermore, *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (ibid.) is a whole-school improvement aid, with relevant staff initially conducting an audit of their practice, not to determine provision for individual pupils. Thus, there is no mismatch between NGs and the role of the significant adult; both should remain and schools should offer the former and the latter, with their use dependent upon the assessment of each child's needs. Treating each pupil individually, with a view to providing the appropriate provision, is vital.

Schools could use *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (ibid.) in a number of ways. If detailed analysis is required, settings could adopt the same methodology as this research; replication is possible, as the process was prescriptive. Personnel could conduct observations

referring to the checklist, ascertain staff knowledge using the semi-structured interview schedules and collect the same documentation. Content analysis would be difficult, but not impossible, without NVivo 10 (QSR, 2012); however, schools may make assumptions based upon the collected data, as to how attuned they are. The checklist could also be used according to its dictionary definition, as: “A list of names, titles, etc., so arranged as to form a ready means of reference, comparison, or verification” (OED Online, September 2015b) and, without gathering data, staff could appraise their performance relative to each word, or phrase. By referring to the literature used to form the checklist at the outset, schools could then improve their practice. A positive outcome would be a change that enhanced provision: to be truly attuned schools would need to adhere to all aspects of the checklist.

Additional phrases should be included in the checklist, because of the findings; these are “family ethos” and “reflective practitioners”. The former is required as this quality was highlighted in both the *a priori* sampling process (Schools 1, 4, 5 and 11), and the two schools finally sampled (Schools 2 and 7). In the latter, not only were staff more readily available (for example, the head teachers), but everyone’s substantial knowledge of each other allowed them to respond more appropriately to individual children’s needs. The interpersonal approach was vital, at both whole school and significant adult level, to support successfully pupils with attachment difficulties. Mostly these schools were small; however, the highest ranked school (Catholic with 184 pupils on roll) was large and did not share the above characteristics; however, they created a similar philosophy through their “Christian... family ethos” (SENCo, School 4 – large school, referral). Thus, all schools might have lessons to learn from their counterparts, whether they be small, or large. To become more attuned they might instil the Christian values of love, trust and forgiveness (although they need not be faith schools), or develop long-term relationships (siblings are in the same class, every member of staff knows

every pupil, adults follow children year-on-year and there are fewer staff to communicate with). As secondary schools have, on average, 950 pupils (Bolton, 2012) the former might be less challenging than the latter. Such schools should consider any obstacles to implementing these suggestions and aim to create solutions, though.

Not all small school environments, or larger ones with a family ethos, guarantee positive interactions, though. From the study's findings, the ability to reflect seemed most important, as head teachers who continually examined both their, and other staffs', practice in terms of children with attachment difficulties managed attuned schools. These head teachers treated each child as an individual, adapting policies, procedures, curriculum and support to accommodate pupils successfully, without resorting to exclusionary practices. Furthermore, the significant adult's ability to reflect upon their actions enhanced their effectiveness and this study considers it the most important characteristic they can possess. A mentor, either from within school or another setting, might enrich this reflection through discussion and further improve practice. The research suggests that it is this flexibility of approach which ensures that children with attachment difficulties are fully included and not discriminated against, in line with the Equality Act (UK Parliament, 2010). Despite the logistical ramifications, schools and LAs need to consider such support, as not providing it is unethical.

For whole schools, and significant adults, the above has implications for ITT and CPD. The fact that the twelve original schools sampled knew little about attachment theory and its potential application within the classroom, is of concern; particularly when authors believe that the diagnosis of RAD is on the increase (Hanson & Spratt, 2000) and those considered to have insecure attachment styles is at 40% (Andreassen & West, 2007; Moullin et al., 2014). Consequently, this research recommends that all staff in schools should be familiar with attachment, and secure base, theory. All staff, including significant adults, should be trained to

understand how both theories can inform their own practice too: *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) can be used to audit their current practice and identify areas for improvement. Having done so, settings should then consider the provision given to individual pupils and, where there are difficulties (Bombèr, 2007), each one should be further assessed. This study used a Boxall Profile, which proved successful as it highlighted the effectiveness of a significant adult. Using other assessment tools for attachment difficulties (see, for example, Golding et al., 2013) is possible, but (as far as the author is aware) no evidence exists regarding them in conjunction with this 1:1 intervention.

7.4 - The Limitations of the Study

Before concluding this thesis and suggesting areas for future research, it is essential to recognise the study's limitations. The aim was to maximise trustworthiness in many ways, including:

- devoting substantial time to the project (each of the schools involved were visited for five half terms)
- conducting thorough observations (each lasted one and a half hours) and triangulating this evidence with Boxall Profiles, IEPs, interviews and diary entries
- meeting with supervisors from the University of Birmingham who advised and supported at all stages
- involving the participants wherever possible, through agreeing data, giving feedback, commenting upon analysis and reading thesis chapters
- including significant detail in the write-up about context and participants, with several direct quotations and
- reporting upon both positive and negative outcomes

Despite these efforts to ensure credibility and transferability, due to the complexities of conducting relational research (Sabol & Pianta, 2012), it remains difficult to establish a causal link between the intervention and the children's behaviour change. The in-depth understanding of the process suggests a positive impact, but factors outside the significant adult-pupil dyad may have contributed. The following were noteworthy: the small school environments provided a surrogate secure base for the pupils too; both sets of parents took active roles in their children's development and Child A and B attended therapy prior to the intervention, which may have prepared the pupils for further support. This ecological model echoes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work; consequently, while contributions to the application of attachment and secure base theory can be made, the thesis acknowledges reservations.

Secondly, the rigorous *a priori* purposive sampling process identified suitable contexts and participants with which to work that fit the study's narrow criteria; however, this resulted in only two pupils being studied from a potential 2309. Arguably, this might be too small a sample to generalise from (Hanson & Spratt, 2000). In terms of both contexts and participants, non-participation and non-consent were the greatest barriers to gaining a larger sample with which to work. Apart from the usual obstacles, such as a lack of staff time and OFSTED, there were reasons given that were specific to pupils with attachment difficulties. One, the interviewer would be a stranger and, as these children may lack trust in a new relationship, this would be unnecessarily stressful. Two, parents noted that the pupils may not answer questions truthfully either; it is hard for some children with attachment difficulties to tell fact from fiction (Ryan, 2006). The introduction of parental interviews, which triangulated the responses and correlated the data gathered, partially addressed the second limitation; however, the research did not attempt to mitigate the first. Others embarking upon study in the field might, though. One suggestion would be to develop the researcher-pupil dyad, or have it already exist, prior to

the study. Another preferable approach, despite concerns over bias, might be using an “insider” (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995, p. 888) with the significant adults, or parents and carers, administering the interviews.

Both children attended small schools (those with under 100 pupils on roll), which means that the contributions to theory and practice may be applicable only to similar contexts. This was despite the use of “Maximum Variation” (Patton, 2002) criteria at the outset to secure schools with differing characteristics, both in size and LA support. While this may limit how far the findings can be generalised, the process still has value and lessons may be learned. One, the “Maximum Variation Quadrant” could be used to draw conclusions in terms of how attuned each of the twelve original settings were, regardless of their size. Two, the data gathered during the *a priori* sampling process can be generalised to similar settings; for instance, with sufficient funding, all large schools might introduce NGs. Three, the thesis contains practical suggestions that schools may implement; for example, ‘family’ style lunchtimes. Four, the *a priori* sampling process and the final two settings studied suggest that a family ethos and reflective practitioners were vital components of both attuned schools and in determining the effectiveness of the significant adult role.

Arguably, the remit of the Boxall Profile is not to identify children with attachment difficulties. Moreover, while this thesis makes links between high scores in self-limiting features (strands Q-R), undeveloped behaviour (strands S-U), unsupported development (strands V-Z) and attachment, the link may be tenuous. Consequently, the results may not be generalizable to this pupil population. Nevertheless, both Bombèr (2007, 2011) and Geddes (2006) refer to the profile and there is a correlation between the individuals these authors hope to support with a significant adult and those that score highly on Section II, The Diagnostic Profile (Clusters 1, 2 and 3 – Q through to Z), as they share a lack of nurturing, potential abuse,

or the loss of an attachment figure. Principally, the current study's findings show that with 1:1 support these children can improve their social, emotional and behavioural skills in relation to these strands; therefore, regardless of a diagnosis, an available and responsive significant adult can effectively support pupils who have difficulties in these areas.

At the research's inception, no known classroom assessment tool related to attachment. Since, the checklist incorporated within "Observing Children with Attachment Difficulties in School", by Golding et al. (2013) has been published and can be used to identify whether pupils have ambivalent, avoidant, or disorganised attachments; therefore, it might have been an appropriate pre, and post, intervention assessment tool. Nevertheless, as the behavioural descriptors underpin this checklist complex conversations with parents, around the nature of their child's difficulties, may have been necessary. The present study did not wish to embark upon such discussions: for this reason, the sample included pupils who already had their needs identified on the schools' SEN registers. There is also a lack of empirical evidence relating to Golding's (ibid.) work; therefore, even with this new assessment tool, the Boxall Profile might still have been most appropriate.

The thesis also acknowledges that it used no pre-existing measurement of the significant adult and pupil's attachment relationship. At the study's outset, the researcher knew of none. Further reading highlighted *The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI): Behavioral Systems Version* (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009) and this can be used to measure the extent to which a child uses a teacher as a secure base; however, a literature search uncovered few studies that had applied this tool, making critical analysis difficult. Moreover, the NRI (ibid.) only examines the pupils' perspective. This thesis' approach to measuring the relationship between the significant adult and the pupil is unique; through document analysis, observations and interviews with a variety of stakeholders' viewpoints are gathered. Thus, despite other

assessments being available, the study would have maintained this stance; however, it could have used the NRI's (ibid.) quantitative data in conjunction with these qualitative data gathering techniques and further enhanced the mixed methods approach.

Final study limitations relate to the structured literature review and the creation of *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014). Both processes were as rigorous as possible to avoid bias, although it was impossible to mitigate all subjectivity; potentially, literature was missed and “buzzwords” were created. An SR of existing work was not intended, the justification being that this was impractical for a lone researcher with other full-time employment; however, arguably, to maximise the breadth and rigour of the searches, an SR should have been carried out (Mallett, Hagen-Zanker, Slater, & Duvendack, 2012). Such literature could exist in relation to pupils who have attachment difficulties. This oversight might explain why the study's data uncovered two concepts (reflective practitioners and family ethos) that were missing from the 130 key words, or phrases.

Furthermore, due to a lack of empirical research on the topic, the final checklist includes much questionable anecdotal evidence. To mitigate this, the literature review's design uncovered recurring themes; supposedly, where several practitioners agreed upon approaches, an evidence base would form alluding to ‘what works’ for pupils with attachment difficulties. Material was also critically analysed; consequently, the research discounted practices such as holding therapies (Hanson & Spratt, 2000; Mercer, 2014; Pignotti & Mercer, 2007). Other literature was only included as no negative feedback was found; therefore, while this thesis has extensively researched the effects and effectiveness of a significant adult within school and uncovered relevant findings, this is not the case for the other seven areas of *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014). It is with this, and the above limitations in mind, that the thesis suggests further research.

7.5 - The Attuned School: Future Research

Notwithstanding the above limitations, having conducted a structured literature review, and the yearlong research in schools, the findings from *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (ibid.), especially those concerning the significant adult-pupil dyad, can support school improvement. The study uncovered key contributions to both theory and practice; however, having focussed upon just one piece of the jigsaw, only those that relate to the role of the significant adult are confidently applicable. Thus, further research into the other seven pieces (allowing children access to therapeutic tasks; pro-actively teaching the skills for effective social, emotional and behavioural development; having structures in place for managing day-to-day situations; setting up an NG, or nurturing group; facilitating family activities and working in partnership with stakeholders) might uncover important findings. The current work touched upon each of these sections, in terms of the significant adults' role; nevertheless, this was not an in-depth examination. Each would benefit from study in its own right; consequently, the research undertaking is substantial.

There remain areas of study required in terms of the role of the significant adult, too. One, further work is necessary to establish a direct correlation between improvement in the pupil's social, emotional and behavioural skills and such 1:1 provision. The findings suggest overall gains in the children's IEPs, Section I, and Section II, of the Boxall Profile (The Developmental Strands and The Diagnostic Profile); however, it is not conclusive that this was because of the significant adult's intervention. The most noteworthy finding is around the development of Section II of the Boxall Profile, which previous studies, including those from NGs (Broadhead et al., 2011; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007), have claimed are impervious to change; therefore, it would be pertinent to concentrate upon this area and investigate the links further. Establishing causality in classroom relationships is not without its

difficulties, (Hughes, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012); nevertheless, additional longitudinal research may clarify issues. Such studies would enable researchers to examine, in detail, ecological factors including a child's family, peers and health services; the impact that each of these has on the individual's progress could then be assessed.

Two, longitudinal research is also required to ascertain whether the progress made by pupils can be sustained, or further improved. The evidence presented here suggests that children might encounter 'blips' over one year; however, the general trend was one of improvement. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to remove support after twelve months, believing that the pupil had sufficiently developed, only to discover that progress was not continued. Studying children year-on-year would be advantageous, therefore. Any extended period of involvement would add to the body of evidence already in existence; however, longitudinal studies require extensive resources. If there are constraints, conducting research over a two-three year time-scale may prove informative, as Bombèr (2007) suggests that pupils with attachment difficulties may not need support after this time.

This study chose to concentrate on KS2, due to the body of work that focusses on middle childhood (see, for example, Kerns et al., 2006). Thus, while the results may be generalizable to this population, the study has not investigated other year-groups. Conducting research with younger, or older, children would allow comparison across infant, junior and secondary schools; for example, it may be that the significant adult's role is more beneficial at a particular chronological age, or developmental stage. Equally, it may emerge that continued support, by means of a 1:1 relationship, does not have positive effects after a particular point in time; such as the two, or three, years suggested by Bombèr (2007). With the financial implications of such provision, LAs and schools need to ensure that the intervention is advantageous to specific individuals. There is some preliminary research regarding adolescent relationships with

teachers (De Laet, Colpin, Goossens, Van Leeuwen, & Verschueren, 2014; Kobak, Herres, Gaskins, & Laurenceau, 2012); however, the existing studies do not examine the adult's role as a planned, preventative intervention.

The *a priori* purposive sampling process, whilst ensuring contexts and participants were suitable for research, limited the number of pairings chosen; therefore, only two adult-pupil dyads formed the basis of the current findings. Further study is required to establish whether the results are comparable with other significant adults and children. The sampling process itself was rigorous and replicable; however, more participants were required. There are a number of possible changes to address this. One, more schools could be included at the outset. Two, research could be conducted at a time to suit each setting; thereby, avoiding the pitfalls of non-consent such as workload pressures, OFSTED, amalgamation and staff changes. Similarly, mutually agreeing a convenient time to work with the pupils might help. Three, to overcome the 'stranger' element with those who have attachment difficulties, researchers could build relationships prior to embarking upon the study; however, as the negative effects of participation were another reason for non-consent, this may not be a perfect solution either. The situation would need careful managing, for the subjects of this thesis struggle to form appropriate relationships and undue anxiety may still occur. Alternatively, others well known to the child might interview them; the latter would involve a greater degree of subjectivity, though. Despite the drawbacks, each of these options needs further exploration, as addressing these issues might identify greater numbers with which to work and enable the conclusions drawn to be generalised to the larger population.

In addition to there being a small number of participants, in spite of the "Maximum Variation" (Patton, 2002) criteria being used, two out of the four highest ranked attuned schools were small and the final study was conducted in these: the number of pupils on roll were 32

(Child A) and 41 (Child B), respectively. Again, this raises questions as to whether the findings can be confidently generalised; accordingly, future research might focus upon larger settings. This might include both primary and secondary contexts, as researching establishments with greater numbers may reveal approaches to meeting the needs of pupils with attachment difficulties that have not emerged so far. They may provide solutions for such settings; for example, small units within a larger secondary school may successfully replicate the secure base and develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills. Any barriers to providing support for such pupils, and their solutions, also warrant investigation. If this study's findings are accurate, the secure base might be more difficult to replicate in larger environments; however, it is not impossible, as two of the four highest ranked schools were larger. Successful settings of this nature could pass on valuable information.

The conclusions drawn regarding the effects, and effectiveness, of the significant adult may also differ between these two small schools and others; therefore, further study is required to gather both quantitative and qualitative data in alternative contexts. The ability to reflect emerged as an important skill for significant adults; however, arguably this may only occur when others are available to discuss events and feelings (Loughran, 2002). Evidence from this study suggests that significant adults felt isolated in their roles and lacked a mentoring system; nevertheless, further research may uncover that with more staff, in larger settings, this may not be the case. Moreover, the feeling of isolation may only apply to these two small schools, as the results might depend upon personnel. Observing this phenomenon in further small schools may provide alternative results; therefore, one useful extension to this research would be to investigate how to support staff members in differing settings, both large and small. This is only one example of potential further inquiry: examining all the thesis' findings in additional settings, both large and small, could uncover differing results.

The use of alternative assessments would also benefit from further study. This is particularly so, as arguably the Boxall Profile does not identify pupils with attachment difficulties. The checklist from *Observing Children with Attachment Difficulties in School*, (Golding et al., 2013) might be a useful starting point instead. The thesis also acknowledges that no pre-existing measures of the relationships between the significant adults and pupils were in place, for such tools were unknown at the time. If the study were repeated *The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI): Behavioral Systems Version* (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009) might have been used, as this has been designed to determine the extent to which pupils use teachers as a secure base. As the latter explores only the pupils' point of view (while this thesis, through pre and post document analysis, observations and interviews triangulates several opinions) the quantitative data available from the NRI (ibid.) would be combined with this qualitative approach and enhance the study's MMR: its strength lays in giving multiple stakeholders a voice. Accordingly, its contribution would remain unique.

7.6 - Concluding Thoughts – Answering the Research Questions

To conclude the thesis, the following paragraphs consider each research question. The first summarises the factors that contributed towards the non-participation of head teachers, parents, carers and social workers. The second reviews how attuned schools were. The third appraises the use of the Boxall Profile as a measure of behaviour in conjunction with the intervention of a significant adult, while the fourth addresses the overarching theme throughout the thesis: what are the effects of, and how effective is, a significant adult in changing the behaviour of children with attachment difficulties?

7.6.1 - Non-participation

Notwithstanding the usual hazards in conducting educational research, such as staff time-constraints, OFSTED visits, restructuring and staff turnover, this thesis has uncovered some issues particular to children with attachment difficulties. Such pupils find relationships problematic and this is a barrier to seeking their views. Their life-events, such as the loss of a significant adult in school, new foster placements, or up-coming adoption, may mean that timing could be paramount; therefore, researchers must tailor studies to individual children, not vice versa. Meeting a ‘strange’ researcher may be unnecessarily anxious for the pupils and, while this study has made some suggestions as to how to overcome difficulty, none is without their pitfalls.

7.6.2 - Attuned Schools

Few schools’ whole-school policies focussed upon pupils with attachment difficulties; for example, only one SEN policy mentioned the phrase in relation to LAC. Many settings knew little about the subject, although head teachers suggested that further knowledge would be beneficial. Schools, who had pupils with attachment difficulties in attendance, worked in partnership with outside agencies, parents and carers to meet individual needs and increase their understanding. Nevertheless, provision for pupils with attachment difficulties differed across these schools; for example, some had NGs while others supported pupils 1:1. Further research is required to uncover the reasons for these differences; however, given that only large schools had NGs, presumably they were practical, or financial, not child-centred.

Some small schools (including Child A and B’s), although not all, generated a family ethos that contributed to replicating the secure base; staff members were more available and responsive. Reflective head teachers, who dealt with an individual’s need creatively and did

not strictly adhere to behaviour policies, were also a factor. In the highest ranked school, their SEN policy mentioned attachment difficulties and staff members were knowledgeable, the family ethos was observable through their development of Christian values, the head teacher was reflective and a pupil with attachment difficulties attended. This school was exceptional, though. Others need training, if such children are to be managed effectively; the results uncovered settings that were using inappropriate strategies and this is a concern, as these pupils are not receiving the most effective education available: *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014) can be used as a starting point for self-assessment.

7.6.3 - The Boxall Profile

The Boxall Profile effectively measured behaviour change in the two case study children. Staff completed pre, and post, intervention assessments and compared the results. The quantitative data gathered correlated with the outcomes of the IEPs and feedback from the parents, school staff, significant adults and pupils. Here lies the study's unique contribution to current theory; that a significant adult's availability and responsiveness can improve the social, emotional and behavioural skills of a child who has suffered loss, been abused or lacked nurture. Notably, Columns R (self-negating), S (makes undifferentiated attachments), V (avoids/rejects attachment), W (has underdeveloped/insecure sense of self) and Y (shows negativism towards others) in Section II (The Diagnostic Profile) improved and this is contrary to other studies. Thus, the long-term relational 1:1 approach of the role, which is underpinned by attachment theory, could be of greater benefit to pupils with such difficulties than other interventions suggested; for example, the cognitive-behavioural perspective, solution-focussed approach, or NGs. Nevertheless, as the study sampled only two pairs of significant adults and children, further research is required to substantiate this claim.

NGs seemingly contradict the theory behind a significant adult, for in an NG staff members cannot be available and responsive to all pupils; yet, literature suggested that both were positive interventions and in The Attuned School concept each form one-eighth of the jigsaw. This study continues to recommend that both may be appropriate provision; however, individual need must drive their allocation. This thesis has revealed that for some children an NG is appropriate (those whose needs lay in Section 1 – The Developmental Strands), whereas for others, with more complex needs, a significant adult might be suitable. In the *a priori* purposive sampling process, three large schools had NGs while smaller schools had none. If pupils share personnel in an NG they can be supported for longer, or costs be reduced; however, this raises ethical issues, if schools have differing provision based upon practicalities, rather than meeting the pupil's needs. The *SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years* (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2014) states that schools should: “personalise the support they provide” (p. 181) and this applies to children with attachment difficulties. Using the Boxall Profile as an assessment tool to measure need would ensure the identification of appropriate support for individuals; yet, there may still be financial implications.

7.6.4 - The Significant Adult

The Boxall Profile is a quantitative measurement of the benefits of the significant adult for pupils with attachment difficulties; however, this research design also set out to gather qualitative feedback. Sabol and Pianta (2012) note the need for research to examine the teacher-pupil dyad, from a number of perspectives. This study has achieved this: albeit with TAs and a very small sample. Parents, school staff, significant adults and pupils themselves have given a voice to the study. Important findings emerged, including an extension of attachment theory; that pupils can use their significant adults as a secure base from which to explore the school

setting. Significant adults need choosing carefully, as not everyone can be effective, though. Several qualities may be beneficial; however, those who are reflective in their practice may be more successful. By employing effective significant adults, schools can provide a fully inclusive and indiscriminate environment for pupils with attachment difficulties; therefore, the role is vital and cannot be underestimated.

7.7 - Concluding Comments

This thesis used an innovative approach to MMR, throughout data collection and analysis, following consideration of the two major methodological approaches. At both context, and participant level, the *a priori* sampling process incorporated mixed methods. Two original tools were developed: the “Maximum Variation Quadrant”, based on the work of Patton (2002) and *The Attuned School Jigsaw and Checklist* (Wall, 2014). Data from the yearlong study of Child A and B provided quantitative statistics, which assessed the effect, and effectiveness, of the significant adult through Boxall Profiles and IEP targets; however, qualitative data was also required to provide an in-depth picture. The former conveyed useful information regarding pupil progress, specifically in relation to how both Child A and B developed their social, emotional and behavioural skills in relation to both Section I (The Developmental Strands) and Section II (The Diagnostic Profile); nevertheless, this thesis’ strength lays in gaining the opinions of a variety of stakeholders. Significant adults, members of staff, parents, carers and the pupils themselves had a voice.

The inductive, ethnographic methodology, based upon illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972), enabled the direction of the thesis to change, dependent upon the responses given; consequently, the research was driven by the participants. They added their own information to the findings, due to the research’s flexible approach. That the final sample led

to the study of only two pairs of significant adults and pupils might lead to questions around generalisability; however, the outcomes remain the only empirical research regarding the effects, and effectiveness, of this pairing within schools and suggest that attachment, and secure base theory, can extend to these settings. Thus, participant's disclosures add value to the body of existing literature, both theoretical and practical, on how to carry out research with, and support in school, children who have attachment difficulties.

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