A REALISTIC EVALUATION OF TRANSITION PROGRAMMES IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN A SMALL MULTI-CULTURAL CITY IN THE MIDLANDS: HOW ARE THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE MET DURING THE TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL?

by

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Abstract

Background

The transition from primary to secondary school marks a potentially problematic experience for young people who have special educational needs, for those who are socially marginalised or thought to be vulnerable for a range of alternative reasons (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). The research literature has primarily concentrated on the effects of transition on young people, without exploring **what works for whom** and in **what ways**.

Purpose of the Research

The aim of the research thesis is to explore **how** two individual transition programmes meet the needs of vulnerable young people prior to, during and after the transfer to secondary school. The research will ask:

> "What are the contextual factors and the mechanisms by which transition programmes lead to successful transition outcomes for vulnerable young people?"

Methodology

The research will utilise a mixed methods design comprising a comparative Realistic Evaluation methodology (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Data related to students' and staff views of the transition process was obtained through focus group and semi-structured interview methods, and outcome data, measuring the degree of successful transition for participants, was conducted using two standardised questionnaires: the School Children's Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007) and the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993). The psychological mechanisms which were triggered by the transition

programmes were extracted using a Realistic Evaluation approach, and a series of seven Programme Theories was developed.

The thesis concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the study before outlining implications for transition practice in schools and for Educational Psychology practice.

To Paul, Adam, Luke and Lauren, for all their support, love and patience

Now we can have some fun...

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ACRONYMS

ADHD	ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER
ASD	AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER
BERA	BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
CMO	CONTEXT, MECHANISM, OUTCOME
CMOC	CONTEXT, MECHANISM, OUTCOME CONFIGURATION
DECP	DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY
DfE	DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION
EAL	ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
EP	EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
EPPSE 3-14	EFFECTIVE PRE-SCHOOL, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION PROJECT
FSM	FREE SCHOOL MEALS
HPC	HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL
LAC	LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
ORACLE	OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH AND CLASSROOM LEARNING EVALUATION
PSSM	PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP
PT	PROGRAMME THEORY
RE	REALISTIC EVALUATION
SATs	STANDARD ATTAINMENT TESTS
SEN	SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
SENCo	SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATOR
TEP	TRAINEE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
UK	UNITED KINGDOM

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, employed during Years 2 and 3 of the Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate by an Educational Psychology Service in a culturally and ethnically diverse small city in the Midlands. This volume of research represents the first of a two-part thesis and presents a small-scale, multi-phased 'realistic' study focusing on the complex transition experiences of two groups of vulnerable Year 6 students before and immediately after their move from junior to secondary school, bridging the academic years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. The data collection phase of the multi-phase study was conducted during 2011.

I have elected to present the volume using the first person as a reflection of my identity as a researcher. As a researcher I am aligned to a critical realist perspective (Bhaskar, 1989), acknowledging the influence I undoubtedly exert on the objects of the research: the participants; as such I strive to induce in the reader a sense of realisation of my own accountability which I recognise must interact with the views, behaviour and emotions of those being examined. By using the first person throughout the volume of work, I hope to instil in the reader a sense of my interaction with the research itself.

The present study was developed from my professional interest in one of the most universal experiences that befalls primary age pupils annually, that of transfer to mainstream secondary provision. As a Trainee Educational Psychologist, I have frequently encountered anxiety and apprehension in staff, parents (or carers) and students which, it appears, is caused by the students' imminent transfer from primary to secondary school. The Educational Psychology Service where I work also suggested that I focus my doctoral thesis on peer mentoring, an

intervention approach utilised in several secondary schools in the city during the transition period.

In addition, having reflected on my own secondary transition experience and the imminent secondary school transfer of my eldest child, this area of the educational experience also drew my interest on a personal basis.

My initial overarching research aim was to explore transition from the students' perspective, so that any findings would be grounded in the lived experience of the students and therefore would be pertinent and applicable for both primary and secondary school practitioners. Moreover, the requirement to ensure the research was aligned with theory and capable of providing an original contribution to the body of research related to school transition, led to my exploration of Realistic Evaluation as a methodology with a suitable epistemological framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

The city where I work has fourteen secondary schools and seventy-four infant, junior and primary schools, of which the present study incorporates data elicited from a group of students from two of the feeder junior schools who transferred to two of the city's secondary schools.

Rather than conducting an evaluation of a transition programme, scrutinising whether it proved beneficial to its recipients or not, the present study comprised a Realistic Evaluation (RE; Pawson and Tilley, 1997) of two transition programmes. The rationale for carrying out research using a Realistic Evaluation methodology is highlighted in the third chapter. One of the participating schools incorporates peer mentoring as a major element of its transition programme, while the other school does not incorporate peer mentoring as a formal aspect of its approach. By exploring the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs) of both

programmes, I aimed to highlight the common and contrasting aspects of each, using Pawson and Tilley's (1997) critical realist approach of evaluating complex social programmes.

This study sets out to build on the current body of research in the subject area of primary to secondary school transition and, crucially, to examine the key positive mechanisms within transition programmes and the aspects of the transition programmes that promote positive outcomes in vulnerable students who have experienced transition in the previous year. From this study, harnessing data that will be collected alongside the student and staff participants and in parallel with research literature, I formulated Programme Theories which, it is argued, can be applied more broadly to a transition programme specification for vulnerable students. The term 'Programme Theory' (PT) refers to the critical realist assumption that underlying theory can be generated and provides a contribution to knowledge of how interventions work by extracting the specific contexts, mechanisms generated and outcomes of the interaction between an intervention and its participants. A more detailed exploration of this specific terminology, 'Programme Theory', is positioned in Chapter 2 in section 2.6.3 and 2.6.4, and in Chapter 3, in sections 3.8, 3.12 and 3.14.

I intended that these findings should contribute to the body of extant research and associated theory by identifying the aspects of transition programmes that work for vulnerable students and under what circumstances, so that transferable knowledge could be extracted (in the form of a Programme Theory) and made available for all settings involved in this transfer process.

Eliciting the student voice is a salient aspect of this research, balanced with the professional views of the staff who are responsible for managing the transition process in each of the two schools being examined. The student voice was considered an essential source of data

capable of enabling researchers, policy developers and others to ensure young people's hopes and fears about the move to secondary school are genuinely addressed (Ashton, 2008).

Furthermore, this research addressed the specific experiences of a small group of vulnerable students, for whom the body of literature suggests transition is likely to be particularly problematic (Burden, 2005; Evangelou et al., 2008; Shepherd and Roker, 2005; West et al., 2010). The body of literature focusing on the transition experiences of vulnerable students is limited and I expected the findings to illuminate their experiences so that others in a similar position can benefit from the Programme Theories that would be co-generated.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 outlines a review of the literature pertaining to secondary school transition and comprises the main areas of research which informed the initial Context, Mechanism, Outcome configuration (CMOC) taken from the literature. The conclusion of the review primarily identifies the potential contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs) inherent in the papers' findings.

Thereafter follows Chapter 3, a methodology chapter which illuminates the Realistic Evaluation approach and the design of the present study. Ethical considerations and threats to the trustworthiness, applicability and confirmability of the study are also presented.

In the fourth chapter, the initial Programme Theories are presented, as derived from a combination of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the data gathered from the participants, during the pre-transition phase of the study (Phase One occurred during the summer term of the student participants' time in Year 6). Evidence to support, reject or refine these Programme Theories is considered and a final series of seven super-ordinate Programme Theories, based on this evidence, is displayed. In addition, outcome data are presented so that the efficacy of the two transition programmes can be ascertained. The outcome data comprise

responses derived from two questionnaires, completed by the student participants, pertaining to their sense of positive affect related to school and their sense of school belonging.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, comprises a discussion of the findings of the present study within the context of the literature presented in Chapter 2, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and concludes with recommendations for practice in the domain of primary to secondary transition.

CHAPTER 2

A THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CURRENT TRANSITION LITERATURE

This chapter outlines the key area of primary to secondary school transition and its potential impact on young people's social, emotional and academic functioning, presenting the reasons for prevailing interest in studying this topic. In addition, the impact of transition on vulnerable students is discussed within an in-depth thematic review of the research literature. The final section orientates the reader to the rationale for employing a Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) methodology to an investigation of two transition programmes in two secondary schools.

2.1 CONCEPTUALISATION OF TERMINOLOGY USED

For the purposes of this study, 'transition' refers to the process lasting approximately one year, between the Summer term of Year 6 to the Summer term of Year 7. The terms 'transition' and 'transfer' are typically used inter-changeably in the domain of primary to secondary school movement. To define the two, 'transfer' refers to the actual moving event between schools and 'transition' refers to the more long-term adjustment and adaptation process that occurs when changing school settings. I elected to use the term 'transition' throughout because the current study tracks students through the first half of this transition process.

Regardless of the differences in terminology used, there is general agreement that change events are periods of increased stress and therefore increased psychological risk within the lifelong developmental process (Rutter and Smith, 1995; Webster-Stratton, 1999).

In addition, at this stage it is essential to conceptualise the term 'vulnerable' so that theoretical cohesion is established from the outset. According to the online Oxford English Dictionary (2009), 'vulnerable' originates from the Latin 'vulnerare' which means 'to wound'. The precise definition in the dictionary states that vulnerable is an adjective meaning:

"exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally"

Rutter (2007) argues that the damaging influence of bio-ecological risk factors can be reduced by the presence of bio-ecological protective factors, such as having a good relationship with one parent, having a positive temperament, or having a social support network. Therefore, in the current study, the term 'vulnerable' is conceptualised by the risk factors frequently referred to within the social sciences. These risk factors are displayed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Key Risk Factors for Children (Taken from Buchanan and Brinke, 1998)

Factors in the Person	Socially isolated
	Genetic factors making the children more vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems
	Temperament
	Impulsiveness
	Physical illness/impairment
	Mental disabilities
	Communication difficulty
	Low self-esteem
Factors in the Family	Family adversities
	Poverty
	Mental illness in the parents
	Alcoholism, criminality
	Conflict with and between parents
	Lax, inconsistent discipline
	Punitive, authoritarian/inflexible parenting
	Death and loss
	Physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse
Factors in the school/ community	Poor reading/low school attainment
	Bullying in schools
	Disadvantaged community/ neighbourhood crime
	Racial tension/harassment

	An experience of public 'care'
Factors in the wider world	Economic recession
	Unemployment
	Housing shortage
	Family change
	Family breakdown
	Long working hours/ job insecurity

2.2 LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

2.2 (i) PURPOSE OF THE SEARCH

The primary purpose of the thematic literature review was to consider professional and policy-based research that has been conducted in the area of primary to secondary school transition, so that potential CMO configurations could be extracted using a thematic framework. The CMO configurations extracted from the literature were presented to staff participants who contributed to the current study, to elicit their views and experiences so that a series of Programme Theories could be developed. In particular, I intended to review research focusing on the most vulnerable students, of which there were few studies.

2.2(ii) SEARCH STRATEGY

The University of Birmingham online library facility was utilised iteratively during the period between October 2010 to March 2012, to locate pertinent research papers which would inform the literature review and initial Programme Theories related to the present study. I elected to discard research that was conducted prior to 1997, except the seminal ORACLE study (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation; Galton and Willcocks, 1983; Delamont and Galton, 1986) which was included so that a comparison between current and previous transition research could be considered.

Table 2.2 presents the search strategy, keywords and phrases used and numbers of papers located and deemed relevant to the present study. Papers were selected based on the population studied, with the vast majority of papers focusing on research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK).

Table 2.2: Search Strategy

Database	Search terms	Domain	Number (number relevant)
Education Resources Information Center ERIC	'secondary school transition AND uk'	General transition in UK	63 (4)
University of Birmingham online library search engine (Swetswise)	'Secondary school transition and vulnerable'	Transition for vulnerable people	10 (3)
As above	'secondary school AND transition'	General transition	340 (33)

Thirty-four of the papers identified from the literature search were included in the development of initial PTs, and additional pertinent papers were discussed in sections 2.3 through to 2.6.

2.3 TRANSITION: AN OVERVIEW

As previously declared, for the purposes of this chapter, transition refers to the transfer of students from primary to secondary level education, from National Curriculum Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Primary to secondary school transition has been an area of sustained interest in the United Kingdom, particularly over the last thirty years or so (Galton and Willcocks, 1983; Delamont and Galton, 1986; Galton et al., 2000; Evangelou et al., 2008; Topping, 2011). The

reason for this interest in how effectively students adapt to the environmental, organisational, cognitive, social and emotional changes during transition is directly linked to the well documented negative impact that transition potentially presents for some individuals (such as Action for Children, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

The seminal ORACLE study, conducted between 1975 and 1980, focused primarily on the differences in delivery of the curriculum across primary and secondary school settings, by observing students in primary and secondary school, using a longitudinal design. The study's findings included trends related to levels of student anxiety steadily diminishing from their highest peak in the Summer term of Year 6 over the course of a year to the Summer term in Year 7; a shift in pedagogy and curriculum delivery on entry to secondary school; a change in some of the students' learning behaviour and motivation which the researchers attributed to secondary school teacher behaviour and, secondary school teachers' overall negative attitude towards the learning fostered in primary school (Galton and Willcocks, 1983; Delamont and Galton, 1986). Galton et al. (1999), in a follow-up study, argued that school staff generally exert a disproportionately large amount of effort on smoothing the transfer of primary school students to secondary school, rather than exploring how best to sustain students' motivation and interest in learning and academic attainment.

As a result of the sustained interest in this area of education, the previous United Kingdom Labour government funded a longitudinal study which focused on the transition experiences of students in six Local Authorities in England (Evangelou et al., 2008). However, some researchers, particularly interested in the field of primary to secondary school transition, view the general transition research literature as scant, considering the cited potential negative impact a poor transition can contribute to students' social, emotional and academic outcomes (Topping, 2011).

Research that argues the developmental changes associated with the onset of puberty, which occurs around the same time as primary to secondary school transfer, are the primary influence determining the success of transition, has been criticised for failing to also take environmental and ecological factors into account (Anderson et al., 2000). Thus, the majority of current research acknowledges contextual factors, such as increased class and school size, and attempts to elicit their impact on students' coping abilities (Burgess et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008).

Some students experience marked deterioration in self-concept on transfer to Year 7 (Fenzel, 2000; Watt, 2000), while others experience a sense of anxiety or depression leading to reduced motivation (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Furthermore, a decline in educational attainment during the course of Year 7 has been identified as typical in secondary school settings for a significant minority of students (Whitby et al., 2006). This reduction in academic attainment, frequently cited in research papers, is argued to be the result of a decrease in academic self-concept around the time of transition (Mullins and Irvin, 2000). Furthermore, some research suggests that this attainment dip is an international rather than a national phenomenon, although there is recognition that England pupil attainment tracking systems are more stringent than many of the other countries surveyed (Whitby et al., 2006).

A synthesis of research conducted into primary to secondary school transfer reveals two commonly occurring phenomena; an attainment 'dip' in Years 7 and 8 and a more general identification of socio-emotional difficulties (Whitby et al., 2006; Topping et al., 2011). Both of these phenomena are discussed in this chapter.

The degree to which individuals manage to adjust to secondary school transfer is argued to have a direct impact on their ongoing development during adolescence (Eccles et al., 1997).

Reduced motivation, poor self-concept, poor social adjustment and disaffection are potential consequences of less than adequate support during this significant period (Fenzel, 2000; Watt, 2000; Whitby et al., 2006; Burgess et al., 2008; Jordan et al., 2010).

However, a substantial volume of research that has been conducted into the field of primary to secondary school transition suggests that while this is a significant and potentially stressful life event for children, its effects are predominantly short-lived and for most adolescents a rapid adjustment to their new school environment occurs (Walls and Little, 2005; Evangelou et al., 2008). A study into the quality of life and needs satisfaction of Year 7 students, undertaken by Gillison et al. (2008), indicated that the transfer to secondary school has a temporary negative impact on these psychological aspects of adolescent well-being (quality of life and satisfaction of need) for some but suggested that the psychological adjustment generally occurs by the end of the students' first year.

In the main, there is agreement that any negative transition effects are short-lived and that most students have adjusted sufficiently by the end of their first year at secondary school. It remains to be evidenced that this is also the case for the most vulnerable students.

In a paper synthesising eighty-eight international research papers which explore primary to secondary school transition, Topping (2011) suggests that research which focused on staff perspectives has a tendency to highlight student attainment, whereas student-focused research emphasises the importance of socio-emotional factors in determining a successful transition. These differing perspectives will be examined in sections 2.5.1 to 2.6.2 (vii).

Sirsch (2003) found that students view the transfer to secondary school as both challenging and potentially threatening. However, alternative research studies indicated that students experience "anxious readiness" (Zeedyk et al., 2003), and feel optimistic about some aspects

of their new school, such as making new friends and being able to make more choices (Lucy and Reay, 2000).

The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project 3-14 (EPPSE 3-14) research project published in 2008 argued that there are five key areas of transition that were key in supporting children in realising a successful transfer to secondary school:

"The data analysis revealed five aspects of a successful transition. A successful transition for children involved:
- *developing new friendships and improving their self esteem and confidence*
- *having settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents*
- *showing an increasing interest in school and school work*
- *getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease*
- *experiencing curriculum continuity."*

(Evangelou et al., 2008, p.8).

The conclusions drawn from this research suggest the need for transferring students to experience social adjustment, adjustment to school as an organisation and the facilitation of interest in schoolwork provided by curriculum continuity. These conclusions support the findings of the ORACLE study more than thirty years before. The reason why this knowledge has not been comprehensively implemented remains unexplained.

Although the EPPSE 3-14 project involved data drawn from a sample of 550 children from six local authorities in England, the findings reflect the experiences of young people who transferred during the academic year of 2005-6; the sample was heterogeneous and did not target vulnerable groups. However, twenty percent of the sample was described as vulnerable. This group descriptor comprised students with an identified special educational need and those from families described as low socio-economic status. However, this group descriptor may not have included those students whom primary school staff perceived to be at risk of experiencing a problematic transition, such as those who live in complex and

challenging home circumstances, those who are disaffected, or those who are shy, anxious, withdrawn or socially isolated. These perceived vulnerabilities are supported by the widely agreed risk factors referred to previously (Garmezy, 1991; Townley, 2002; Department of Health, 2004).

There therefore appears to be a justifiable rationale for conducting research which focuses upon, and therefore illuminates the current experiences of vulnerable groups of students and those processes leading to a successful transfer. Given that previous research studies have highlighted a lack of general adjustment in terms of systems incorporated to facilitate general student transition to secondary school (Evangelou et al., 2008), the current study intends to explore the experiences of the most vulnerable students.

The findings will explore the extent of school system adjustment potentially implemented for this group of at risk young people, if this is the case. If the findings of the current study replicate those presented by others in the field, this is useful in terms of a comparative application over time. However, the present research also intends to contribute evidence to clarify potential reasons why and how key features of transition programmes are effective. A series of Programme Theories will be developed from previous pertinent research literature and current practices in two secondary schools, to contribute theory development to the extant literature.

2.4 COMMON FEATURES OF TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

Although individual and local differences between schools are acknowledged, there has been recognition that some common features exist in schools' approaches to ensuring that Year 6 students are sufficiently prepared for transferring to secondary school (Evangelou et al., 2008). These include explicitly sharing information with Year 6 students about secondary

schools and the transfer process, using booklets and other media, visits by secondary school staff to primary schools, aiming to bridge the primary and secondary school curricula, pedagogic practices and pupil-teacher relationships to facilitate continuity, Year 6 students visiting secondary school, and evening meetings for students and their parents or carers. Furthermore, some schools engineer the organisation of the secondary school so that the first day of attendance was only for the newly registered Year 7s (Evangelou et al., 2008).

Schools are argued to have an understanding of what they wish to achieve by offering these transition activities but are not considered to have insight into the processes that may, or may not, lead to a successful transfer when students engage in the activities offered (Galton et al., 1999; Aston, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008). It could be argued that school staff are not yet privy to the processes underpinning the interaction between student and transition experience; as yet, therefore the mechanisms triggered by the transition programme remain largely unidentified. Furthermore, the impact of most secondary school transition programmes could be described as not generally well measured and some of their typical aspects may, in fact, hinder, rather than enhance, students' transfer to secondary school (Galton et al., 1999; Evangelou et al., 2008). Clearly, this is an area that would profit from exploratory research, so that secondary school staff can be assured that any programme they offer to transferring students has a good prospect of being effective, in realising its intended outcomes.

2.5 THE NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Students can be considered 'vulnerable' around the time of transition to secondary school for a number of reasons, such as having special educational needs (SEN), being eligible for free school meals (FSM), using English as a Second Language (EAL) amongst others (Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

Research investigating the needs of the most vulnerable students at transition, such as those who have Looked After status (LAC), emphasises the importance of information sharing and the promotion of individualised packages of support (Brewin and Statham, 2011, Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

A study conducted by Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) demonstrated a positive impact on the transition concerns of vulnerable students, of a six-session targeted intervention which aimed to reduce worry related to the curricular, social and organisational changes characteristic of secondary school. In fact, the vulnerable group had a much higher pre-intervention level of school related concern, when compared to a benchmark group of same aged students, but entered secondary school with a similar level of concern as the comparison group, and were therefore much less worried about the transfer. Moreover, this study found no gender differences in response to the transition experiences.

It can be argued whether the prudence of forging links amongst the most vulnerable students during periods of change, such as transition, is a judicious option given the additional risk factors interacting within this context. The implementation of peer mentoring, executed as intended, appears to be a viable alternative. By carefully selecting and matching older and more socially and emotionally competent peers to mentor vulnerable students, the pitfalls of mutual disadvantage could essentially be minimised or even overcome. Secondary school staff, therefore need to be aware of the potential barriers to this approach, such as a possible power imbalance, as suggested by Pawson (2005).

2.5.1 TRANSITION FOR VULNERABLE STUDENTS

The research literature summarised above acknowledges the typically short-term difficulties faced by most students prior to and following their transfer to secondary school. However,

students participating in the current study are considered to be at increased risk of poor or slow adjustment due to their identification as 'vulnerable'. Their description as 'vulnerable' emerged from discussions with primary school staff and from information from secondary school staff that these students were chosen to attend additional transition support groups during the Summer term of Year 6.

Although thought to be at increased risk of experiencing a problematic transition, a considerable oversight in the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of students is argued to exist (Galton et al., 2000; Ashton, 2008; Dann, 2011). There are a few notable exceptions, such as Dann's research focusing on the experiences of young people with a diagnosis of autism (2011), an account informed by six case studies monitoring individuals with special educational needs in the south of England (Maras and Aveling, 2006), Brewin and Statham's (2011) paper focusing on the needs of Looked After Children (LAC) during secondary school transfer, a paper contributing salient data gathered from an empirical study of transferring students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Thompson et al., 2003), and Bloyce and Frederickson's (2012) recent paper adds to this small research corpus, focusing on measuring the impact of a transition package on vulnerable students. The findings of these highly pertinent papers are discussed in section 2.5.1.

In recognition of the potential longer term effects of a poorly managed transition on the most vulnerable students, section 2.6 to 2.6.1 (v) will focus primarily on factors which have been previously identified as stressors for young people or to be of relevance in negotiating their transfer to secondary school. Each salient aspect of transition to secondary school is considered sequentially before its contribution to the present study is established. There is a reasonable quantity of research evidence that indicates the long term negative effects of a

poor transition to secondary school, which include increases in depression and lower

academic attainment (West et al., 2010),

2.6 POTENTIAL RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH TRANSITION

The remainder of this chapter focuses primarily on potential psychological risk factors and

protective factors or interventions, as considered within transition research literature. The

first four sections focus on potential areas of psychological risk which may exacerbate

difficulties experienced when negotiating secondary school transfer. The subsequent five

sections consider potential protective factors or school-based interventions which could

alleviate the impact of students' bio-ecological risk factors or vulnerability.

2.6.1 RISK FACTORS

2.6.1 (i) IDENTITY

Identity formation and re-formation, which is an intrinsic part of adolescence (Harter, 1999),

relies on a successful negotiation of a plethora of changes: inter-personal, biological,

cognitive and academic (Wigfield and Eccles, 2002). By effectively integrating the changing

roles, expectations and experiences generally representative of adolescents leaving childhood

behind, a secure sense of self can begin to emerge (Harter, 1999). However, it is likely that,

for more vulnerable (or less resilient) students, these changes can become overwhelming and

may lead to increased tension between stable and emerging self-identities (Elias, 2002;

Walker, 2002).

Changes in identity and the re-construction of self are identified as particularly relevant for

students during the transition to secondary school (Osborn et al., 2006). Potential changes

influenced by transition could be perceived as either positive or negative, so that a student's current identity could be both challenged and offered the opportunity of re-evaluation and change. This possibility was argued to be particularly pertinent for students who may have experienced difficulties at primary school (Osborn et al., 2006). The prospect of viewing oneself in a more favourable light than previously could arguably contribute to a sense of optimism that one's future could be an improvement on the past. However, it is likely that vulnerable students would benefit from support in managing this potentially challenging time, rather than the process being construed as a natural progression.

Jordan et al. (2010) suggest that a gender-specific phenomenon occurs around the transition period, where individuals adhere more closely to their gender stereotypes than previously. The authors of this research argued that students experiencing change avoided additional cognitive load by maintaining familiar roles associated with stereotypes, such as males being aggressive. Jordan et al. (2010) suggest that males are more adversely affected by stress, compared with females overall, perhaps explaining increases in hyper-vigilance and territorial behaviour in males, to which they refer. However, the Jordan et al. study was carried out six months into the first year of secondary school and was therefore heavily reliant on student participants' recall of thoughts, feelings and behaviour during Year 6. The data collection process took place at what is argued to be a more settled time, six months into the students' first year (Walls and Little, 2005; Evangelou et al., 2008), when they would be perhaps more likely to view the transition experience more positively than may have been the case at the time of the move.

2.6.1 (ii) PERCEIVED LOW LEVEL OF COMPETENCE

Gillison et al. (2008) argue that their research indicates that a reduction in a sense of competence is commonplace for students who have transferred to secondary school, in parallel with rarely observed increases in relatedness or autonomy, as measured by self-report questionnaires. However the study involved exploring the views of only sixty-three students over a ten week period after they had already transferred to secondary school. Moreover, no comparative measure was integral to the research to enable an assessment of each student's sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness *before* and *after* the transition itself. Therefore, the conclusions drawn, which suggest that transition reduces sense of competence for some students, are based on an assumption that the students possessed a higher sense of competence when attending primary school, when compared to the scores reported during the first term of secondary school. Furthermore, the same students completed the questionnaire on three occasions over the course of ten weeks, potentially compromising the trustworthiness of the students' responses. Repeated measures design can lead to changes in response which are associated with practice or familiarity effects; similarly boredom or fatigue can influence the responses provided (Robson, 2002). Nevertheless, the results of this study suggest that the passage of time and its associated exposure to a range of experiences does not produce increases in students' sense of competence. Clearly, instilling a sense of competence in transferring students requires explicit support, rather than assuming that this will occur spontaneously over time.

Research exploring the transition requirements of students with a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition highlights the importance of students' possessing practical knowledge, such as familiarisation with the timetable prior to starting Year 7 and developing a working understanding of what to do at lunch times (Dann, 2011). This corresponds closely with

findings from studies focusing on the generic needs of all students (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008) and should therefore not be considered a specific requirement relevant only to vulnerable groups of students.

The concept of 'getting lost' in the new larger environment of a secondary school is one which is frequently referred to in research literature (Ashton, 2008; West et al., 2010). An explanation for worry and anxiety associated with becoming lost and therefore inevitably being late for lessons is cited as contributing to a poor or low sense of competence in young people. Furthermore, being preoccupied with planning routes between classes is highly liable to result in a reduction in academic engagement during lessons (Tobbell, 2003).

Zeedyk et al. (2003) argue that schools have a proclivity for implementing generic undifferentiated systemic support for imminently transferring students, thus failing to ascertain individual students' needs and abilities that could influence a successful transition. This omission has the potential to exert a detrimental effect on the students' sense of competence during transition. To potentially mitigate against this oversight, Woods et al. (2010) found that the more students were meaningfully involved in a transition plan, the higher their self-reported sense of competence.

Ryan and Deci (2000) define motivation as an intrinsic state which can be increased through achieving a sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness. Thus a reduction in a sense of competence around the transition period may lead to a motivational decline and increased anxiety; factors which may inhibit the students' enjoyment and positive perception of moving to secondary school and reduce levels of academic engagement. As highlighted by Rice et al. (2011) raised anxiety, depression and peer difficulties are a typical consequence of experiencing concerns around transition.

2.6.1(iii) SENSE OF LOSS AND DIFFICULTY COPING WITH CHANGE

Experiencing a sense of loss of the familiar is also considered commonplace during the move to secondary school (Measor and Woods, 1984). Evidence suggests that vulnerable students are much more at risk of being adversely affected by transition, compared to their less vulnerable counterparts (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). This is considered to be due to their exposure to increased risk factors at differing levels, such as potential child-oriented disadvantages (puberty, emotional difficulties) interacting with micro-systemic factors (challenging home life). The research advocates the timely identification of vulnerable students by primary school staff, and the implementation of a planned protective pastoral package on arrival at secondary school (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008).

According to Dickinson et al. (2003), young people's experiences of the changes and loss associated with secondary school transition have the potential to lead to increases in depression, anxiety and academic and behavioural difficulties. This is acknowledged as particularly problematic for young people who have additional stressors to process, such as those that exist within their family systems or within the community (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). The changes or ruptures in friendships, which are considered an inevitable part of secondary school transition, constitute a large proportion of the potential loss experienced around transfer time, along with a loss of security, of supportive relationships with class teachers and of the familiar environment of a typically small primary school setting (Weller, 2007; West et al., 2010).

Targeted interventions have been presented as having the potential of reducing the impact of loss on young people undergoing transition to secondary school (Dickinson et al., 2003; Evangelou et al., 2008), although previous research has acknowledged the limitations of

extrapolating findings based on small samples when the change mechanisms were not explored. By measuring cognitive, affective or behavioural change using standardised self-report tools, the actual processes whereby young people's coping or resilience increases are neglected. It could be argued that this omission is commonplace in research related to secondary school transition. Furthermore, the suggestion that avoiding risk is wholly inappropriate and that successful exposure to and engagement with risk can build resilience (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008), should be considered when planning transition support for vulnerable secondary school students.

2.6.1(iv) PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Possessing at least one good friend has been generally accepted to be a protective factor, which purportedly increases resilience in the face of adversity (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). This suggestion has been supported by several researchers interested in the domain of secondary school transition whereby stress and a sense of isolation has been effectively reduced by the presence of supportive peer relationships (Hertzog et al., 1996; Carter et al., 2005). In addition, students who had an older friend or relative already at secondary school when they themselves were still at primary school, were found to be more able to adjust to the peer environment post-transition (West et al., 2008). This implies that peer relationships are of considerable importance and can have a beneficial influence on the well-being and adjustment of transferring students. This will be discussed in section 2.6.2(ii), 'Peer Mentoring'.

Students anticipating the secondary school transition suggested that they were not concerned about academic factors, but rather were more apprehensive about the social and environmental changes they were expected to manage. Furthermore, friendships were

highlighted as the primary concern for this group (Ashton, 2008). In support of this argument, being able to increase the breadth and depth of peer friendships was found to boost self-esteem and confidence in students experiencing primary to secondary transition (Evangelou et al., 2008) and that this factor alone was found to be positively correlated with students' adjustment to secondary school life, becoming increasingly interested in school work, and acclimatising to the organisational demands of school (Shepherd and Roker, 2005).

Weller (2007) argues that friendships typically undergo upheaval during secondary school transition and that the social capital derived from these friendships acts as a catalyst when students attempt to develop new peer relationships. Social capital is a term which has been increasingly introduced into current discourse which surrounds young people and the skills or resources they are argued to require to manage and indeed thrive in society (Leonard, 2005). Ridge (2002) suggests that:

"Friendship plays an important role as a social asset; it is a valuable source of social capital, and an integral part of an increasingly complex and demanding social world… Friendship for children, as for adults, is an entry point into wider social networks."
(pp. 142–143).

The research literature describes social capital, and in essence possessing the skills to make and extend social networks, as essential for students who are perhaps moving to a secondary school without the protective element of being supported by previously formed friendships. This would also be argued to be true for students who were socially isolated at primary school or who had experienced bullying or marginalisation and were therefore more at risk of experiencing a problematic secondary school transfer.

The concept of social capital could suggest that transition programmes should intentionally endeavour to support vulnerable students in developing new friendship networks prior to

entry into Year 7. It is clearly an area that students themselves are concerned about and one which is reportedly often overlooked by secondary school staff (Ashton, 2008). Furthermore, disrupted friendships have been cited as a frequent and potentially negative factor in influencing the well-being of students undergoing transition (Pratt and George, 2005).

2.6.1(v) SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS

Secondary school transition coincides with a period of biological, psychological and social transformation for young people (Anderson et al., 2000; Action for Children, 2008). Although many young people cope well with the sense of loss associated with moving schools, as well as potentially experiencing disrupted friendships, a loss or change in identity and feelings of reduced competence, the vast majority are found to adjust approximately within the first term of Year 7 (Gillison et al., 2008). It is the vulnerable students, potentially influenced by within-child, micro-systemic or meso-systemic risk factors, which are argued to require additional support to negotiate and overcome the potential difficulties discussed in the previous sections. School systems generally enable staff to develop an awareness of the vulnerable students who may be at increased risk of experiencing more pervasive transition difficulties (Action for Children, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008), and this information can be used to implement additional support at primary and secondary school levels.

The remaining sections of this chapter outline possible interventions and protective factors that can be exploited by schools, to support vulnerable students during this crucial period.

2.6.2 PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

Section 2.6.2 considers the ways in which students can be supported during the transition process, either by utilising bio-ecological protective factors to overcome potential risk of

transition difficulties, or via particular mechanisms triggered by the transition programmes provided by schools.

2.6.2(i) INCREASING SENSE OF COMPETENCE IN STUDENTS

The risk for students who possess a perceived low sense of competence was outlined in the section considering risk factors, section 2.6.1(ii). By targeting students' sense of competence in a bid to increase its protective elements, students may engage in more proactive and self-organised behaviour, leading to an increase in perceived competence (Woods et al., 2010).

The application of drama to ease transition difficulties has been argued to promote a sense of confidence in students about to embark on the secondary stage of their educational experience (Jindal-Snape et al., 2011). Possessing sufficient levels of confidence is suggested to contribute to increased protection against mental health difficulties, and in effect increase resilience, and the ability to manage challenge (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010). Resilience is the individual capacity for adaptation and to influence positive outcomes despite challenge or threat (Masten et al., 1990). Therefore it appears prudent for transition programmes to incorporate learning experiences and activities that serve to increase students' sense of competence and confidence. This is reported to result in a reduction in social and emotional difficulties which may otherwise arise from or during this key period in students' experiences (Rice et al., 2011). Although, it could be argued that increasing perceived competence and confidence may not similarly develop social competencies, particularly for students who have difficulties in forming supportive and reciprocal friendships.

Worthy of consideration are the alternative, more curriculum embedded interventions proposed to support the most vulnerable young people (Kapasi and Hancock, 2006). These suggested interventions concentrate on the development of students' coping and

organisational skills during their final year of primary school, so that they are better equipped to manage the change that transition to secondary school presents. Zeedyk et al. (2003) argue that by acquiring the skills required to cope with challenge, students can enjoy an increased sense of control in their lives.

2.6.2(ii) PEER MENTORING

Pupil Mentoring was introduced in the United Kingdom from the United States during the 1980s (Pyatt, 2002). Topping (1988) aided the progression and development of mentoring into mainstream education through his work in this area. Mentoring has been implemented in many diverse forms over the last three decades, such as through peer reading support, mentoring groups of vulnerable children and young people, and as a means of reducing bullying (Sharpe, 1996). Russell (2007) suggests that most peer mentoring programmes are aimed at disaffected young people, and are predominantly provided for boys who are academically underachieving (Younger et al., 2005).

The traditional model of mentoring which developed in the United States comprised an adult providing a young person with a supportive relationship (Phillip and Hendry, 1996). These programmes were found to have a modest positive effect on young people (Dubois et al., 2002).

Peer Mentoring schemes in the United Kingdom are underpinned by the aim of effecting a positive impact on mentees' identification with school (Knowles and Parsons, 2009), on their academic effort (Younger and Warrington, 2009), competence and the importance they attribute to learning, as well as contributing to improved 'softer' outcomes such as increased self-confidence and raised ability to make and maintain friendships (Knowles and Parsons, 2009). The potential positive effects of Peer Mentoring on both mentor and mentee self-

esteem have been documented (Charlton, 1998). However, there is some evidence to suggest that Peer Mentoring can be counter-productive and mentors may abuse their position and engage in domineering or bullying behaviour targeting their mentees (Pawson, 2005). Students being mentored suggest that their experience of being mentored is generally enjoyable, particularly citing the helpfulness of this relationship, in terms of realising their individual goals (Knowles and Parsons, 2009).

Knowles and Parsons' (2009) research established that 67% of the 180 schools participating in a peer mentoring evaluative project had used peer mentoring for the distinct purpose of supporting student transitions. However findings generally suggested that mentees' experiences of being mentored were not specifically related to transition support but from their perspective the aim of the mentors was:

"To care for other people, make sure they are happy; help with learning and make new friends"

(Knowles and Parsons, 2009, p. 211).

Peer mentoring was regarded as enjoyable by 87% of mentees and Knowles and Parsons (2009) suggested that this was primarily due to the one-to-one nature of the dyadic relationship.

Overall though, the evidence to support the positive impact of peer mentoring is equivocal (Hattie, 2009), particularly when compared to the effect size of peer tutoring which was rated as higher than that of teacher influence (Hattie, 2009; Miller et al., 2010). However, peer tutoring tends to be associated with specific learning tasks, while peer mentoring relates to the development of a wide range of socio-emotional and organisational skills (Department for Education, 2010) potentially triggering competence and sense of belonging mechanisms in its recipients.

Conversely, cultivating a supportive relationship with an adult has been shown to promote success for vulnerable students around the time of transition (Van Ryzin, 2010).

2.6.2(iii) ATTACHMENT FIGURE AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS

Developing a supportive relationship with a member of the school staff has been documented to have a protective influence for vulnerable students undergoing school transition (Geddes, 2006; Gilligan, 2007; Van Ryzin, 2010; Dann, 2011). However this research omitted to explore the reasons **why** developing relationships with staff was helpful and also failed to elucidate the processes which led to better outcomes for vulnerable students.

Nevertheless, Dann (2011) did suggest that the act of sharing information about vulnerable students (specifically those with a diagnosis of autism) is an important element of a successful transition to secondary school. This included information shared amongst staff and between staff and parents or carers of the students. This potential benefit of positive inter-personal adult relationships does not provide a coherent explanation of why supportive staff relationships are argued to exert a positive influence on vulnerable students. One possibility is linked to increased perceptions of staff competence and understanding, from the parents' perspective, which in turn may be transmitted via reassurance and confidence in their discourse with their children about transition (Dann, 2011).

Many researchers in the field of secondary school transition argue that the differing culture or ethos reflective of primary and secondary school settings, usually as a direct result of the different organisational systems and curricula, have a salient impact on students (Maslowski, 2005; Peterson and Deal, 2009). In fact, the nature of the relationships between secondary staff and students has been proposed to be a key factor in the degree of success achieved at transition (Lucas et al., 2006; Cook et al., 2008). Generally, primary school students enjoy a familiarity and continuity of student-staff relationships which is essentially different to that

experienced by secondary school students. The attachment that is afforded within many primary schools enables, and even encourages, teachers and support staff to assume a substitute caregiver role (Lucas et al., 2006; Colley, 2009). This is thought to have many benefits, particularly for the most vulnerable students (Cook et al., 2008).

Nurture group provision is primarily implemented in primary school settings, for example, although there has been a growing interest and appreciation of their effectiveness at secondary school level more recently (Lucas et al., 2006; Cook et al., 2008; Colley, 2009; Perry, 2009). These groups are underpinned by attachment theory principles (Boxall, 2002; Lucas et al., 2006; Perry, 2009) which promote the benefits of supportive and trusting relationships. Primary school staff often assume a similar role to nurture group staff, particularly in Key Stage 1 (Geddes, 2006), perhaps providing an explanation of the need for the more vulnerable students to continue to access this type of relationship beyond primary school.

Students moving to secondary level provision are expected to cope with a multitude of changes, one of which is often a shift in the role and level of support provided by staff (Wells, 1996). This is likely to be principally due to the specialist role associated with subject teachers and students are therefore exposed to many more teachers, each for a much smaller proportion of the school day compared to the generalist role of the primary school teacher (Alexander, 2009). This can place the least prepared and most at risk or vulnerable students at a distinct disadvantage (Wells, 1996). Students on the cusp of transferring to secondary school often perceive the increases in numbers of staff they are expected to interact with, as a potential stressor (Ashton, 2008; Van Ryzin, 2010; Rice et al., 2011).

Brewin and Statham (2011) advocate establishing a positive relationship with a member of school staff and suggest this is particularly salient in terms of resilience building and

academic engagement for Looked After Children, an identified group of students particularly at risk of experiencing a problematic transfer to secondary school.

By consciously planning and organising transition programmes which aim to foster supportive and trusting relationships with a member of staff who has a dedicated transition role, a less problematic transition is expected for vulnerable groups of students (Evangelou et al., 2008). However the EPPSE 3-14 study found that only 4.6% of young people viewed secondary school staff as being able to enhance transition and only 1.5% of parents viewed good pastoral care as important (Evangelou et al., 2008). Unsurprisingly, students rated maintaining exiting friendships as the most important aspect of moving to secondary school, whereas for parents the distance from home and possessing a good reputation for teaching were the most important factors when choosing a secondary school for their children (Evangelou et al., 2008).

Furthermore, experiencing a positive relationship with adults in secondary school presents as important for establishing trust and respect for teachers, which may be inter-dependent and therefore contribute to students' enjoyment of school and reduced concerns about school (Rice et al., 2011). Having lots of different teachers was highlighted as one element of 'school concerns' presented by research conducted in Scotland, along with the size of the school and workload (West et al., 2010). The difficulty in establishing secure relationships with others was highlighted by parents and professionals as contributing to a reduction in motivation for vulnerable students (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

It seems evident from the literature that for the most vulnerable students, having access to a familiar adult may constitute a protective factor during transition.

2.6.2(iv) SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT OF INTER-PERSONAL SUPPORT

From the evidence presented above, it appears that the impact of supportive peer and adult relationships during times of increased tension, due to change, can be beneficial. The reasons for such a positive impact are argued to be related to consistency, reassurance, and trust (Van Ryzin, 2010). The sections to follow primarily examine the psychological effects of affiliation with the new school setting and the sense of security established when transition is emphasised in positive terms.

2.6.2(v) ESTABLISHING TRUST

Trust is an essential element of psychological preparedness for engaging with an individual or a group (Action for Children, 2008). Following an investigation of research into transition, including a survey of the most vulnerable young people's views, Action for Children recommend that all children, particularly those about to undergo transition to secondary school, have at least one adult they trust to support them during this period of flux. It is suggested that 'middle childhood', the period between approximately 6 and 13 years of age, is particularly challenging for children in terms of their emotional, social and physical development (Harold, 2003). Some researchers argue that the period of middle childhood coincides with increasingly reduced adult supervision, placing the young people at increased risk of emotional and physical harm (Mayzer et al., 2006). For this reason, developing a trusting relationship with a member of secondary school staff, to complement supportive peer friendships is regarded as invaluable, particularly around transition (Galassi et al., 1997). The importance of the staff members engaging in sufficient planning, realistic allocation of their time and possessing an appropriate skills base is highlighted as facilitating this relationship in having a positive impact on the students (Galassi et al., 1997).

However, Rice et al. (2011) reported reductions in levels of adult trust and respect in Year 7s who had been identified as having higher levels of concerns about school, when compared to their peers. These findings provide support for the view that establishing trust in an adult at school and a positive experience in Year 7, are linked. However, the research does not offer an explanation for the direction of the relationship between these two variables; whether a lack of trust is correlated with school concerns, or school concerns lead to a reduction in trust.

2.6.2(vi) SENSE OF BELONGING

As mentioned in the section focusing on a sense of loss, establishing a sense of belonging in a school setting is an essential part of ensuring students are socially and emotionally secure (Sancho, 2010). Possessing a sense of belonging has been highlighted by Maslow (1962) as a key basic need, without which individuals are unable to fulfil their potential and therefore self-actualise. In a Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) presentation entitled 'Psychological Processes during Primary-Secondary School Transition', Sancho (2010) outlined the evidence-based perspective that facilitating a sense of belonging should be a fundamental premise of transition programmes. Evidence suggesting that a lack of or a poor sense of belonging can have a detrimental effect on academic engagement and socially desirable behaviour was cited as the rationale for the research Sancho conducted (Goodenow, 1993; Battistich and Hom, 1997). Despite the fact that this cited research could now be considered out-of-date, Sancho's more contemporary findings suggest that students who expressed having a sense of belonging at their secondary school were more academically engaged and reported positive emotional well-being. The central themes which facilitated a sense of belonging were elicited from the students' interview transcripts and comprised having positive and supportive relationships within their tutor groups and more generally with secondary school staff and with their peers. These findings support the literature referencing

staff as secondary attachment figures for students on transfer to secondary school (Gilligan, 2007; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Dann, 2011) and the importance of friendships (Ridge, 2002; Ashton, 2008; Evangelou, 2008).

Ashton (2008) argues that establishing a sense of belonging in school for newly transferred students is an essential and, in fact, primary concern for schools and local authorities. She goes on to suggest that without this students cannot be expected to participate fully in "personal development and learning" (p. 181). Ridge (2002) argues for recognition of the importance of developing a sense of belonging for vulnerable young people, and suggests that this can be achieved through peer support and accordingly having the opportunity to broaden social networks. Furthermore, school and social connectedness during early secondary school experiences, are argued to be key indicators of positive outcomes for students, including completion of mandatory schooling, reduced risk of mental health difficulties and substance abuse and increased academic achievement (Bond et al., 2007). However this research fails to attempt to provide an explanation about how this social and school connectedness can be achieved.

Having confidence in one's own ability to negotiate the school environment independently is suggested to enhance students' sense of belonging in their new school (Ganeson and Ehrich, 2009). Indeed, a sense of belonging is referred to in many of the research papers focusing on transition and can therefore be argued to be a potentially crucial feature of any transition programme aiming to facilitate a smooth transfer for its students.

Sancho (2010) argues that secondary school transition studies to date have not focused on the psycho-social factors inherent in this significant life event, and therefore proposes that a more holistic understanding of the change processes should be undertaken.

2.6.2(vii) OPPORTUNITIES FOR A FRESH START

Rather than merely presenting vulnerable young people with a period fraught with challenges and barriers to overcome, the primary to secondary school transition also affords the chance for a fresh start. This theme has a limited position in the literature, only documented by Galton et al. (2000), Weiss and Bearman (2004), Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) and Brewin and Statham (2011), but is one which could be argued to have face validity, particularly when considered in the context of vulnerable students who may have experienced poor attainment, bullying, social isolation or victimisation while at primary school.

Opportunities for a fresh start at secondary school could be facilitated through effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff, as suggested by Kapasi and Hancock (2006), whereby pertinent information pertaining to individual students can be disseminated. Many of the most vulnerable students, who have experienced various challenges at primary school (such as bullying or behaviour difficulties), are reportedly appreciative of having the opportunity to forge new identities for themselves at secondary school (Weiss and Bearman, 2004). This was alluded to in an exploration of the views and perceptions of looked after children, who welcomed the chance for a fresh start (Brewin and Statham, 2011). Unfortunately, further details about how the students themselves contemplate the processes that occur in these contexts, are not provided.

2.6.2(viii) SUMMARY OF THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous sections in 2.5 and 2.6 present research literature which acknowledges the common themes of the unfamiliar school environment, friendship disruption, curricular and pedagogic adjustments as being anxiety-provoking in all students transferring to secondary school (for example, Galton et al., 2000; Evangelou et al., 2008).

The literature review presented above argues that vulnerable students are more at risk of experiencing long-term and more significant difficulties than is typical, during the primary to secondary transfer phase.

However, none of the research previously conducted, has attempted to explain how these potential difficulties or barriers to a successful transition have been overcome. Nevertheless, there are a number of interventions and factors which should be considered essential when planning and executing additional transition support for this group of students.

The literature reviewed will be utilised throughout the present study and will itself inform initial exploration of the needs of vulnerable students with participants, comprising staff and students. Table 2.3, on pages 42-44, presents a series of CMO configurations extracted from the research literature explored.

Additionally, the present study aims to explore how transition programmes work and seeks to elicit the enabling mechanisms which the programmes trigger for the students experiencing the transition process. Furthermore, the question of how transition programmes can improve the experiences of vulnerable students at this crucial time will be examined.

2.6.3 RATIONALE FOR EMPLOYING A REALISTIC EVALUATION OF TWO TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The tendency, evident from the review of literature presented above, to overlook or minimise the importance of exploring **why** and in what ways a successful or unsuccessful transition occurs within the research literature, provides a vacuum. The research being discussed in the current paper aims to provide an original contribution to the understanding of this concern, and in essence to explore what works for whom and in what circumstances (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.2).

A review of the research literature suggests that the majority of the studies examined primarily provide a descriptive rather than an explanatory contribution to understanding primary to secondary school transition (Tobbell, 2003; Topping, 2011). In the most recent paper exploring the transition experience for 'vulnerable' students, Bloyce and Frederickson, (2012) suggest that the processes triggered by the differing contextual factors between schools have not been adequately investigated. This adds further credibility to the argument that all interventions work selectively (Pawson, 2006). Furthermore, the paucity of research which explores the interaction between the transition experience itself and the changes that occur after the move has been highlighted (Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

Topping (2011) made recommendations related to specific features of transition programmes, based on his comprehensive literature review, including the suggestion to: *"develop a structured series of peer interactions with older students" (p. 281)*.

However, as is the case with the vast majority of the research papers, Topping fails to discuss the mechanisms whereby peer interactions improve transition for the younger students. He does acknowledge that peer interactions with older students can potentially increase pupil confidence and self-esteem but the research does not investigate further 'why' or 'how' this occurs.

A considerable proportion of the research previously undertaken appears to be positioned within a positivist epistemological paradigm, whereby students are often allocated to a control or matched group, or a 'treatment' group using a repeated measures methodology (for example, Qualter et al., 2007; Rice et al., 2011; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012). By seeking to evaluate the impact of secondary school transition by ascertaining change in measurable traits, such as intensity of concern related to school or attainment, the design and aims of the

research could be argued to be simplistic or reductionist (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Robson, 2002). A randomised control trial fails to illuminate why or how a programme or intervention works (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Applying a Realistic Evaluative methodology (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Tilley, 2006), as an alternative to the experimental tradition in evaluation, enables exploration of the concern in explaining the "black box problem" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 30). This refers to the attempt to include not only a description of the outcomes of an intervention or programme, but also to contribute an analysis and, therefore, an explanation of why it works or fails to work. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The limitations of the research literature, as outlined above, provide a sound rationale for utilising a methodological approach which incorporates an alternative epistemological paradigm. I elected to position the current study in a critical realist epistemology (Bhaskar, 1989), namely Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The reason for this decision is linked to the omissions identified in the research literature, in terms of a poor understanding of the mechanisms triggered by a programme, which produce a positive outcome.

Critical Realism ⊢ Context + mechanism = outcome
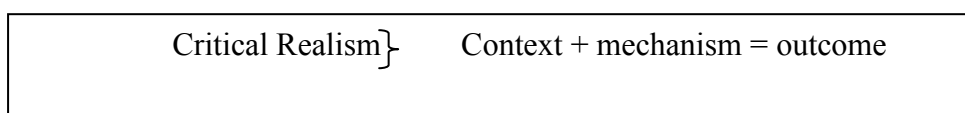
The critical realist epistemology asserts that the manner in which people acquire and accept knowledge is closely aligned with a post-positivist paradigm (Bisman, 2010). To illustrate, critical realism argues that there are multiple realities, shaped by history and culture, recognising the virtues of scientific rigour and the influence of context. The world as contemplated through a critical realist lens is viewed as both structured and changing (Bhaskar, 1989).

"What causes something to happen has nothing to do with the number of times we observe it happening"

(Sayer, 2000, p.14).

Critical realism acknowledges the complexity of the social world but also appreciates and seeks to understand the regularities that are part of these intricacies (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Archer et al., 1998; Robson, 2002). Figure 2.1 presents the realist evaluation cycle, depicting the research process employed in the present study.

Figure 2.1 The Realist Evaluation Cycle
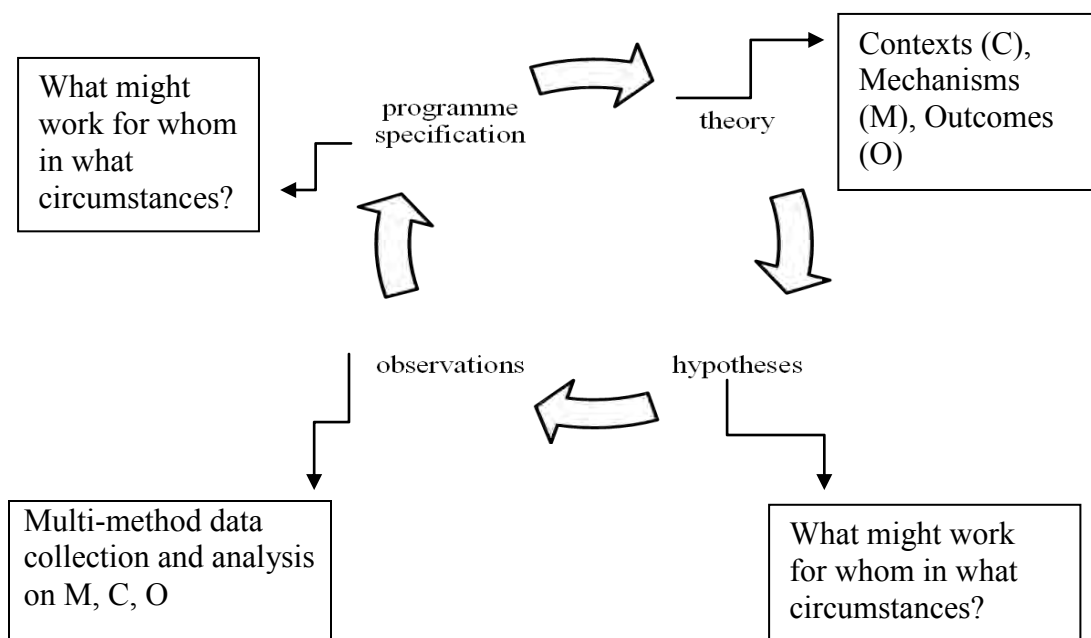
Taken from Pawson and Tilley (1997, p. 85)

2.6.4 CONTRIBUTION MADE BY RESEARCH LITERATURE TO THE PRESENT STUDY

As highlighted in the previous section, the findings of research literature have a prominent position in the current study. By abstracting the CMO configurations (CMOCs) from the research papers examined, a series of initial CMOCs was developed. These CMOCs formed

the basis of the iterative exploration of the participants' (students and staff) perceptions and experiences, which would contribute to the concluding Programme Specification. By ensuring the concluding Programme Specification (consisting of seven Programme Theories) had been initially formulated from the primary to secondary transition research evidence-base, the trustworthiness of the Programme Specification should be enhanced. Essentially, I elected to develop trustworthy and applicable Programme Theories which could then be investigated by the staff and student participants who had direct experience of one of the two transition programmes. By basing the initial CMOCs on existing research literature, the emergence of common patterns and themes could potentially contribute meaning to the evidence-base for what works for vulnerable students undergoing transition and identify the ways in which the programmes operate to produce effective transfer to secondary school for this particular group of young people. Rather than relying merely on the extraction of practitioner "folk theories" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 88), the current study intended to also base its Programme Theories in extant research so that realistic theory formulation could be incorporated into the study. Folk theories are the theories elicited from practitioners who have an understanding of the types of programme that work, for whom and under what circumstances, based on their prior experiences and reflections.

Table 2.3, on pages 42-44, outlines broad CMOCs which summarise the initial programme theories derived from the research literature. These CMOCs were elicited from thirty-four pertinent research papers dating from 1997-2011. The CMOCs were presented to staff participants for their comments during Phase One of the data collection process. As is evident, individual child-related contexts may potentially apply to various mechanisms and outcomes. The rationale underlining this non-linear presentation was to enable the staff to

perceive their role as augmenting and therefore shaping potential CMO configurations using this information taken from the basis of the research literature.

In order to evaluate the mechanisms being triggered by the two transition programmes under scrutiny, the individual contexts must also be disclosed. These will be identified more conclusively in the results chapter.

2.6.5 CONCLUSION

After careful consideration of the research literature identified in the search, there was a resounding message that very little has explicitly changed since the ORACLE study was conducted more than thirty years ago, in terms of appropriately matched pedagogy and curriculum delivery to complement the needs of the students. The apparent lack of satisfactory transition provision in primary or secondary school settings, for the overt purpose of better supporting vulnerable students during the transition period, is disappointing. Crucially, there is limited evidence to suggest that for the most vulnerable, for example Looked After Children, students with a medical diagnosis or those with severe or complex needs, some adjustments have been made in accordance with the practices, policies and ethical frameworks of individual settings (Maras and Aveling, 2006; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Dann, 2011; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

However, the students who fulfil the majority of the 'vulnerable' criteria presented at the beginning of this chapter (such as the socially isolated, those who live in complex family circumstances), in Table 2.1 (pages 7-8), are a more broadly reaching group, who could be argued to go largely unnoticed by staff in large and complex organisations, such as in secondary schools.

Table 2.3: Initial Transition Programme CMO Configurations from Research Literature

Initial CMOs From Research Literature			
Level	**Context**	**Mechanism**	**Outcome**
Micro level	Shy, anxious pupil Degree of disaffection Low motivation Low Educational attainment Bullied student Mixed feelings about transition High anxiety June of Y6	I can cope with change mechanism I can manage the sense of loss mechanism Familiarity mechanism (know what to do) Maturity mechanism (I'm growing up) Sense of belonging mechanism Increased motivation/ aspiration mechanism Entering the 'real' world; rising to the challenge mechanism A fresh start mechanism Independence mechanism Building supportive relationships mechanism Increased resilience through social support mechanism Self efficacy and sense of competence mechanism	Perceived competence Sense of belonging in school Happiness and enjoyment Optimism Anxious readiness Reduction in worry Relief

		Dispelling myths and associated fears mechanism I know what I have to do mechanism Flying the nest; leaving the 'safety' of primary school mechanism **Many of the mechanisms could link with many contextual factors and outcomes**	Anxiety
Macro level	Has siblings already at the school Moving up with friends / able to make friends easily Peer Mentoring Happiness and well being tends to diminish (temporarily) on transition Matthew effect (youngest, lowest attainers etc at most risk Schools providing written or visual documentation at transition visits	I feel a psychological connection with the school mechanism I know people and am not on my own mechanism Uncertainty and lack of competence mechanism I rehearse and remember important information which helps me feel prepared mechanism	Feels connected; sense of belonging Has social support networks Has sufficient knowledge to cope with organisational demands Is happy Is anxious and unhappy

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| Meso level | School ethos and climate → | This is a friendly, supportive school mechanism → | Hope |
| | Positive discourse around transition → | Expectations are high and I should rise to the challenge mechanism → | Reduced worry |

The assumption that appears to be made by secondary school staff, as outlined in the literature review, is that by disseminating information about the organisation of the school, staff expectations of new Year 7 students and practical experiences of the physical school environment, this knowledge sharing will form a mechanism that triggers behaviours and thinking in the students, which result in a successful transition. That sharing knowledge leads to a 'sense of competence' mechanism, which serves a protective outcome, is yet to be evidenced. The significant contribution made by peers, considered vital from the students' perspective as a protective mechanism, has not been thoroughly targeted for development in reported primary to secondary school transfer studies.

The aim of the present study is to provide information which supports or disconfirms the various transition mechanisms abstracted from the research literature and from the direct experiences of vulnerable students undergoing transition. As such, the overarching research question which this study intends to answer is:

What are the Programme Theories that can illuminate the enabling mechanisms which are triggered in vulnerable students when they engage in transition programmes delivered by secondary schools?

Or 'what works for whom and in what circumstances?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.2)

The contribution made by the secondary school staff centres primarily on the illumination of the secondary school contexts of this study and the individual student contexts relevant to the study. Unless the specific contexts are elicited and identified, the mechanisms triggered by the transition programmes will remain weakly supported by evidence.

Additionally, given the paucity of contemporary research focusing on the transition needs of vulnerable students, this study seeks to provide an original contribution, specifically contributing to theory development, to the field of transition research, and to generate findings that may benefit staff involved in supporting vulnerable students during the peri-transition phase of their school experiences.

By extracting CMO configurations from the research literature and presenting these to the two members of staff during Phase One of the data collection, initial Programme Theories, pertaining to the two school settings involved in the present study were developed. Phase Two primarily comprised a checking procedure whereby evidence to support, refute or refine the initial Programme Theories was gathered from the staff and the students who experienced the transition programme. The epistemological position of the research is embedded in critical realism, therefore I do not intend my role to be that of an objective researcher, but rather my role during the data gathering stage was to conduct realistic interviews with the individuals who 'hold' information about the transition programme to jointly consider potential Programme Theories related to the interventions. In essence, the purpose of the research was jointly to elicit the mechanisms triggered by the interaction between the elements and features of the programme (the context) and the psychological (behavioural, emotional and cognitive) changes that occurred (the outcomes).

By conducting this research study I intended to provide school staff with pertinent information to inform their transition support for the most vulnerable students. Neither of the schools previously measured the impact of the transition programmes they offer; therefore I expected my own study would contribute contemporary feedback to inform refinements to these programmes to facilitate improved outcomes during transition for future cohorts of vulnerable students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the current research study in terms of its overall focus and purpose, its aims and questions, as well as an account of the rationale for the design and methodology selected. The chapter also outlines salient ethical considerations, potential threats to the trustworthiness, applicability and confirmability of the research findings and the steps taken to reduce the impact of these threats.

3.1 RESEARCH AIM

The present study is concerned with exploring and evaluating the transition programmes provided for vulnerable students transferring from primary to secondary level education in two secondary schools, and asks how the needs of vulnerable young people are met during the transition. The two programmes are examined from both the staff and students' perspectives to elicit the mechanisms triggered by the programmes and the outcomes for students engaging in the package of support. Crucially, the aim of the research is to specify **how** the transition programmes work as well as the oft-posed question of whether a programme works or not. The study aims in particular, to identify the psychological mechanisms that are triggered by engaging in the transition intervention programmes, in line with a critical realist epistemology (Bhaskar, 1989).

3.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE

The findings of this study could be shared with relevant stakeholders so that the mechanisms underpinning successful transition for vulnerable students can be identified and applied to similar contexts. By doing so, the two schools participating in the current study could

develop an understanding of 'what works and for whom' in their settings and could make adjustments to their own transition programmes. In addition, the findings would inform my practice as an Educational Psychologist and could contribute theory development to the body of extant transition research literature.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed from the research literature review and are positioned within a critical realist paradigm.

1. What are the individual and group outcomes for vulnerable students engaging in two specific transition programmes?

2. What are the contextual features of each of the transition programmes which are effective in supporting vulnerable students?

3. What psychological mechanisms are triggered in vulnerable students by successful transition programmes?

Essentially the research questions ask "what works for whom and in what circumstances?" (Pawson and Tilley, 2000; p.2) rather than 'what works?' or 'does this programme work?' By asking these questions I intended to develop Programme Theories which would elucidate the ways in which specific features of each of the transition programmes operate in the complex context of each secondary school.

The research questions are grounded in a critical realist epistemology (Bhaskar, 1989) and thus I elected to adopt Realistic Evaluation as the methodological framework guiding and structuring the thesis. Critical realist epistemology and Realistic Evaluation will be described later in the chapter.

3.4 DESIGN

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure

Preliminary Phase	Secondary school data analysed and two best matched schools selected	Initial contact made with two secondary schools	Initial meeting with Head of Transition in each school	Contact made with two junior schools and students selected
Phase One	Formulation of initial CMOCs from research literature	Initial staff interview in secondary schools	Focus groups conducted in two junior schools	Initial Programme Theories developed
Phase Two	Year 7 student participants complete outcome questionnaires	Individual interviews conducted with Year 7 students	Second staff participant interviews conducted	Concluding Programme Theories formulated
Phase Three	Feed back Programme Specification to each secondary school separately			

To facilitate a clear understanding of the data collection procedure, Figure 3.1 above will be presented at different stages during Chapters 3 and 4, with the relevant procedural section highlighted to indicate the stage of the process being discussed.

The current research study utilised a mixed methods design comprising flexible Realistic Evaluation methodology (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Robson, 2002). A comparative study of two secondary schools (matched for size, Special Educational Needs, English as an Additional Language, socio-economic status, free school meals data and attendance figures) provided data related to pupils' and staff views of transition processes, and outcome data were generated using two norm-referenced standardised self-report questionnaires. See Table 3.4 (pages 67-8) for full details of the matched school contextual data utilised.

Data collection methods were mixed, reflecting the epistemological position of the study. Pluralism and flexibility in choice of method are advised, but its alignment to the purpose and research questions is crucial (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

The data were collected using the following methods:

(i) A Thematic Literature Review (Preliminary Phase);

(ii) Two individual interviews with two staff participants (at Phases One and Two);

(iii) Two focus groups with student participants (Phase One);

(iv) Outcome questionnaires completed by students (Phase Two); and

(v) Eleven individual interviews with student participants (Phase Two).

3.5 SELECTION OF THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

School settings are complex social environments which can be researched using a range of methodological approaches. Positivism has been criticised for failing to take the context being examined into account (Scott and Usher, 1996; Robson, 2002; Cohen et al, 2003). Realistic Evaluation seeks to correct this significant omission by positioning context at the heart of its methodology, alongside programme mechanisms and outcomes.

Positivism, interpretivism (or relativism) and critical realism (Bhaskar, 1989) will now be discussed, to ascertain the value of each as epistemological and ontological positions, as well as contextualising the methodology of the current study.

3.6 POSITIVISM AND RELATIVISM (OR INTERPRETIVISM)

How we understand our being in the world and the nature of reality (ontology) and how we understand knowledge including the relationship between the knower and that which is to be known (epistemology), depends on many variables, including our experiences, how we make sense of these and what has been constructed as important by society (Mouly 1978).

Taking the epistemological and ontological positions of researchers into account when determining how an intervention or programme should be evaluated is essential. Doctoral researchers are in a strong position to contemplate their own epistemological and ontological identities with care, and consider how these can appropriately inform their decisions about their research design and methodology.

The evaluation of an intervention is a complex and controversial subject matter, which often results in a division of opinion into two main camps. These are the adoption of a positivist epistemological position or an interpretativist stance.

Despite considerable diversification in social science research methodology over the last century, public policy tends still to privilege the discourse and assumptions of positivism, where the randomised control trial continues to be held as the gold standard determining the reliability and presumed trustworthiness of the findings of educational and psychological research (Ryan and Smith 2009). A pertinent question which should be posed is 'can prediction and generalisation be realised in the fields of educational and psychological research?' Equally, is the social world orderly and predictable? Can research conducted in one school illuminate phenomena in other schools? Habermas (1972) criticised positivism for being reductionist in nature and being unable to illuminate important and complex areas of

life, such as the much researched and universal phenomenon as primary to secondary school transfer.

Positivism or natural scientific research is typified by methodology such as observation and experiment because the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning it suggest:

- that the social world is similar to the natural world and can have the same principles applied to it;

- that the world is objective and exists independently of those that 'know' it;

- that the (subject) researcher is wholly objective and therefore unbiased and neutral in relation to the findings;

- that everything can be measured;

- that the natural world is governed by rules which can be generalised; and

- that the natural world can have predictions made about it, and can therefore be controlled.

(Taken from Scott and Usher, 1996; Cohen et al., 2003)

However, Kuhn (1962) suggests that researchers are not culturally, historically or value neutral and are not wholly rational beings. Scientists have interpreted data since research originated because data do not speak for themselves, and therefore require meaning to be generated from them.

The second movement of thinking which was developed in response to a critical view of the natural science paradigm was that of the interpretative paradigm. The ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this approach are:

- the social world has very different characteristics from the natural world;

- all human action is meaningful and should be interpreted within its social context;

- realities are multiple and are socially constructed, therefore invariant or absolute truth cannot be determined;

- two researchers can measure or observe the same people in the same context at the same time, and generate two sets of individual hypotheses. These hypotheses are influenced by the researchers' experiences, values and belief system, perception of the world, constructs and so on;

- the subject (researcher) is not unbiased or neutral and the object of the research also interprets the social interaction which is occurring; and

- the researcher offers an understanding of the world in comparison to an invariant rule or inviolable finding, which can be refuted.

(Taken from Scott and Usher, 1996; Cohen et al.,2003).

The interpretative paradigm emerged during the 1970s, but was criticised for being atheoretical and descriptive, rather than based on empirical evidence. Within the interpretativist paradigm the assumption that the subject of the research (the researcher) assigns meaning to that which is being studied, based on their values and experiences, is fundamental. However Berger and Luckmann (1966) have criticised this as a flawed method of interpreting social phenomena because this fixed and therefore restricted view of the world does not encourage us to challenge social constructions, leading to a comatose way of life.

3.7 CRITICAL REALISM

"Realism can provide a model of scientific explanation which avoids both positivism and relativism"
(Robson, 2002, p. 29)

Critical realism emerged as a philosophical movement during the 1980s which related to the principles of both positivism and to interpretativism, but essentially positioned itself away from either extreme (Robson, 2002). Rather, critical realism offered a middle ground, whereby pertinent aspects of each viewpoint were incorporated to develop a realist approach to understanding the complexities of the social world (Sayer, 2000). Critical realism is argued by its proponents to afford an optimal epistemological position underpinning research designed and conducted by educational psychologists, acknowledging the complexity of reality and *"that any particular set of data is explicable by more than one theory."* (Kelly et al., 2008, p.25).

"Critical realism is critical then because any attempts at describing and explaining the world are bound to be fallible, and also because those ways of ordering the world, its categorisations and the relationships between them, cannot be justified in any absolute sense, and are always open to critique and their replacement by a different set of categories and relationships."

(Scott, 2005, p.635)

Critical realists challenge both positivist and interpretative traditions of social research and state that both approaches are conducted by powerful researchers investigating powerless people (Cohen et al., 2003). As such, neither of these approaches purposefully attempts to effect a positive impact on the object of the research, by providing data which can contribute to freedom, democracy or justice. Critical realist research regards the social world it studies with a critical eye, in order to fashion positive change and ultimately potentiate emancipation (Sayer, 2000; Robson, 2002).

Critical realism advocates the philosophical concept that social change is **generated** rather than **caused** by an intervention or programme (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Holma, 2011). This is different to interpretativism, since critical realist research aims to explore more than merely the participants' interpretations of an intervention; rather it seeks to explore and identify the generative mechanisms that the intervention triggers in the context being explored (Bhaskar,

1989; Holma, 2011). The mechanisms themselves may be elusive to the individuals engaging

in the intervention, and unobservable. These mechanisms, which can generate changes in

reasoning and in capabilities or resources, contribute to the development of Programme

Theories alongside the intervention outcomes and the context being studied (Pawson and

Tilley, 1997). Even if there are infinite ways of describing the world, this does not

necessarily mean that the world exists in infinite ways (Pring, 2000). In essence, critical

realism argues that there are indeed regularities and patterns in the social world which, once

identified, can be a useful means of developing a deeper understanding of the processes that

exist when change is brought about intentionally or unintentionally (Scott, 2005).

Table 3.1 presents the differing epistemological, ontological, methodological and analytical

positions of critical realism, compared to both positivism and interpretativism.

Table 3.1: A Comparison of Positivism, Interpretativism and Critical Realism

	Positivism	**Interpretativism**	**Critical Realism**
Ontology	Only what is observable exists and is separate to the observer. Only one way of understanding reality: universal laws.	Reality is socially constructed and meaning is attached to the social world by the individuals who interact with it. Many alternative ways of understanding reality.	Social reality is stratified. Social regularities are explained by their underlying mechanisms. Understanding of context is crucial. Our understanding of the world changes independent of actual change: different ways of understanding reality, but within a determinable series of regularities.
Epistemology	Value-free; knowledge is about discovering universal causal laws	Value-laden; knowledge is constructed and appreciates the relativist nature of what is studied	Knowledge relates to theory development of potential underlying generative forces. Reality is a complex layered pattern of activities or mechanisms (reasoning and resources), on which a range of theories can be established and tested

Methodology	Experimental, fixed: Quantitative data, control groups	Open to interpretation: Qualitative	Mixed methods, to suit research purpose and questions; to generate and test theories: CMO configurations
Analysis	Findings are causal and concerned with validity, reliability and, replicability	Findings are not explanatory; rather they are fluxing constructions that can be interpreted in many ways	Findings have a generative element; teaching and learning process enables an accumulation of knowledge of what works for whom and in what circumstances

Developed from Pawson and Tilley (1997), Robson (2002) and Cohen et al. (2007).

3.8 REALISTIC EVALUATION

Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) is a methodological approach underpinned by critical realism, and as such aims to achieve a better understanding of the complex and fluid contextual social world. It is essentially an explanatory, rather than a predictive approach (Robson, 2002).

Sayer (2000) argues that in order to select an appropriate method for conducting a research study, it must be:

"...appropriate to the nature of the object under study and the purpose and expectation of the study."

(Sayer, 1992, p.4)

Realistic Evaluation seeks to collaborate with key stakeholders in order to jointly formulate Programme Theories through an iterative process, so that the change mechanisms which are activated to overcome problem mechanisms can be determined.

"Identifying mechanisms involves the attempt to develop propositions about what it is within the program which triggers a reaction from its subjects. These hypothesised processes attempt to mirror how programs actually work, and they always work in a 'weaving process' which binds resources and reasoning together" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 66)

Thus by considering the context, mechanisms and outcomes (CMO) of a programme, a clearer understanding of what works and for whom can be attained (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Furthermore, the Realistic Evaluation methodological approach minimises the potential criticism that researchers are often positioned as more powerful than research participants, by including them as participants throughout the study and checking the trustworthiness of findings with them iteratively (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Robson, 2002).

The data gathered in the current research study are intended to provide information relating to how the transitions programmes operate in the two different contexts, identifying particular mechanisms which lead to particular outcomes. The research is therefore explanatory and does not attempt to predict the manner in which all vulnerable students could be supported through the transition process to secondary school.

The critical realist paradigm also advocates the idea that social research can avoid "both positivism and relativism" (Robson, 2002; p.29). Equally, critical realism adopts aspects of both these but avoids either extreme, thus encapsulating the hypothesis that the real world is underpinned by a combination of human 'laws' or similarities, AND individual or communal and cultural differences. Therefore, outcomes are important, but equally so are the processes of understanding and sense-making by which the outcomes are (or are not) achieved. Realism is widely considered to be an appropriate paradigm for social research (Scott, 2000; Robson, 2002). Pawson and Tilley (1997) have positioned themselves within the critical realist

paradigm and cite clarification of the complex inter-relationships between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes as the heart of meaningful social research, particularly in the evaluation of social interventions or programmes. These concepts are not new and have been studied since the 1970s (Sayer, 2000).

I considered this methodology more likely to yield relevant and useful data about how a programme may work and for whom and in what contexts it would be likely to work. This is a very different research position to that of measuring the impact of a programme on a particular set of pre-determined constructs or attitudes (using a pre and post-intervention design), such as attainment, enjoyment of school and a sense of belonging.

Realistic Evaluation allows a deeper and theoretically driven exploration of the effects of an intervention, in terms of developing an understanding of the ways in which the programme can influence the reasoning and resources of the individuals who engage in social programmes, thereby determining how outcomes are generated. These data can then be applied to the programme with a better understanding of how it works and for whom.

In order fully to appreciate Realistic Evaluation and its contribution to realist research, a shared understanding of the terminology used in the present study is essential:

3.8.1 DEFINITION OF CONTEXT

In Realistic Evaluation, context refers to more than the setting in which the intervention is implemented. It can also include individuals' motivation and other internal states (and which are potentially non-manipulable in the positivist sense).

"Context refers to the spatial and institutional locations of social situations together, crucially, with the norms, values, and interrelationships found in them." (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 216)

Pawson and Tilley (1997) provide the illustrative example of gunpowder only having the propensity to explode (outcome) when the conditions are right (context); where the conditions are dry and oxygen is present. However, the enabling mechanism is also an essential element of this process.

3.8.2 DEFINITION OF MECHANISMS

These can be what someone thinks about and acts upon, which produces an outcome. Or to complete the example above, the chemical composition of the gunpowder substance (mechanism), is triggered when the context is suitable. In social programmes, mechanisms are a combination of reasoning and resources. The context in which the programme is implemented may trigger a mechanism (such as a sense of group identity) which in turn leads to positive outcomes. There is recognition that mechanisms can be individualistic and a programme will have a different effect on each of its participants, although there is likely to be a limited range of mechanisms which are triggered for subgroups within the group. As such, the programme will produce outcomes which are reflective of the differing combinations of mechanism and context for an individual. Mechanisms are expected:

"...(i) to reflect the embeddedness of the program within the stratified nature of social reality; (ii) to take the form of propositions which will provide an account of how both macro and micro processes constitute the program; (iii) to demonstrate how program outputs follow from the stakeholders' choices (reasoning) and their capacity (resources) to put these into practice" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997. P.66)

3.8.3 DEFINITION OF OUTCOME

The outcome is likened to the typical meaning of the word, and reflects the changed states (emotional, cognitive, perceptive and so on) of the participants after the intervention. Identifying and understanding the outcome regularities or patterns of a programme enables the CMOCs to be tested.

3.9 MEASURES

3.9.1 CONTEXT MEASUREMENT

The contexts being studied in the present research project were measured using one main approach, at an individual bio-ecological level. The reasons why the students were suggested for additional transition support were elicited from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at each junior school. Table 3.3 (p. 66) presents further information related to this. In addition, the Year 6 students' general attitudes and reasoning related to their imminent transfer to secondary school were gathered during Phase One focus groups, to ascertain how typical their perspectives of secondary school were.

Furthermore, the structure and content of each transition package was elicited from each Transition Manager during Phase One interviews.

The measurement of the relevant contexts in the present study were primarily conducted by school staff. It was they who determined which students were vulnerable and which categories they were assigned to in Table 3.3 (p. 66). In addition, I relied on the secondary school staff accounts of the contextual information of the actual transition programmes themselves. Pawson and Tilley (1997) advocate the analysis of the individuals and the

situations for whom the programme will be of benefit, by examining between and within programme outcomes, to increase trustworthiness of the findings.

3.9.2 MECHANISM MEASUREMENT

Students participated in a pre-transition focus group to elicit their views of the imminent transfer to secondary school. They also took part in individual realistic interviews in November 2011. This informed my formulation of the mechanisms which had been triggered by the act of engaging in the transition support programmes offered by each school.

The two members of staff who were responsible for organising and managing the transition programmes in each of the two schools, participated in two realistic interviews (which will be discussed more fully in section 3.12.3); the first took place in July 2011, to elicit their description of the programmes on offer and to gather their feedback related to the initial CMOCs developed from the literature review; see Table 4.3 (p. 95-96) for programme features. The second set of interviews took place in December 2011 and formed the second phase of data collection and enabled further validation of the Programme Theories.

3.9.3 OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

In order to measure how successful the transfer to secondary school was for the student participants, I elected to use two standardised measurement tools to determine how happy the students rated themselves at school, and the degree to which they felt a sense of belonging in their new school. The questionnaires were completed in November 2011 and scores were used to ascertain the outcomes of the transition programme, whether successful or less successful, based on the scores reflected in the standardisation sample. Post-intervention only scores were elicited and used to determine the impact of the secondary school environment on the students' subjective well-being. I elected not to administer the questionnaires as a pre-

intervention measure because this data would reflect the students' perceptions of their junior schools and would therefore restrict the usefulness of a comparison between the two sets of scores. School-related well-being and a sense of belonging at the junior school (which the students would have attended for several years), would not be reliably comparable with the same outcome measures, as reported by the students after attending a new secondary school for less than a term.

The outcome patterns, in combination with the data gathered from the realistic interviews, were intended to form evidence for the CMO-based Programme Theories which were developed from analysis of the research data.

The measures employed were The School Children's Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007) and The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM; Goodenow, 1993). These tools were selected to measure school-related subjective well-being, an important perception determining satisfaction with school, and a sense of belonging, argued to influence social and emotional security, determining a successful transition (Sancho, 2010).

3.9.3 (i) THE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S HAPPINESS INVENTORY

This questionnaire was standardised on a comparable British sample of students. Its focus is to identify the influence of environmental factors on children's self-reported happiness in the previous week. The author describes the inventory as a *"state-like measure of school-related happiness"* (Ivens, 2007; p. 11). It is a 30-item Likert scale with a balance of 15 positive and 15 negative items, comprising somatic, affective, work-related and social aspects of the school experience. For example, 'I was interested in working' or 'I felt that school was a safe place'.

For Year 7 students the following norm-referenced scores were taken from the standardisation sample as a comparison for the present study's participants' scores. To ascertain reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a validation study provided reliability co-efficient of 0.86 and a test-retest correlation of 0.72. Standardisation scores for Year 7 students are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Standardisation Scores for Year 7 Students

Year Group (Mean; Standard deviation)	Very low	Low	Low Average	Average	High Average	High	Very High
Year 7 (90.98; 13.79)	<63	63-72	73-81	82-99	100-108	109-118	119

3.9.3 (ii) THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP SCALE

This questionnaire was designed to measure pupils' perceived sense of belonging in their school, which incorporates the extent to which they feel included, supported and accepted. It was developed for use with pupils aged between 10 and 14 years. It comprises 18 items measured using a five-point Likert scale incorporating pupils' perceptions of the areas described above, with possible scores ranging from 1.0 to 5.0. For example, 'I can really be myself at this school' or 'Most teachers at my school are interested in me'.

Shochet et al. (2006) identified a predictive link between scores measured using the PSSM and future mental health difficulties in young people. Goodenow (1993) suggests that scores below 3.0 reflect a more negative than positive view of school, and that young people who score below this mid-point are at risk of social exclusion or academic disengagement.

Standardisation data suggest that the mean for young people at secondary school is 3.1 for urban schools with a standard deviation of 0.67.

3.10 PARTICIPANTS AND SCHOOL INFORMATION

Participants consisted of thirteen vulnerable Year 6 students from two junior schools and one member of staff from each of the two secondary schools. Liaison occurred with senior managers at the two junior schools and the two secondary schools initially in order to identify the students and to negotiate the data collection element of the study.

3.10.1 SAMPLING

Student participants were selected for inclusion in the study based on their identification as 'vulnerable' by the junior school in collaboration with the member of staff who was interviewed as part of the study. The factors contributing to why the students were constructed as 'vulnerable' are presented in Table 3.3 (p. 66). Vulnerable students are typically included in targeted additional transition packages offered by the two secondary schools during the Summer term of Year 6.

A purposive sampling strategy (Robson, 2002) commonly used within flexible research design, was adopted to facilitate the initial stage of data collection, which encompassed two focus groups containing Year 6 students. As the sampling strategy suggests, the two groups of vulnerable students were chosen because they attended the additional transition programmes and for the specific purpose of gathering their views of the transition programmes in which they would be engaging (Cohen et al., 2003). The findings of this study would therefore provide information which is pertinent to the needs and views of vulnerable groups of students only.

3.10.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES A 'VULNERABLE STUDENT?

The junior school staff who were responsible for identifying students for additional transition support were asked to provide information about what led to their perception that the students were 'vulnerable'. Staff were asked to identify the reasons why they had selected these particular students for the extra support, as a result of perceiving them as being 'vulnerable'. Rather than provide staff with a pre-determined list of potential vulnerabilities to check each students against (as displayed in Table 2.1 in pp. 7-8), I asked staff to select their own criteria, so that their thinking was not constrained. The following criteria were chosen by staff to rate each student's vulnerability:

- low educational attainment,
- challenging home circumstances,
- student characteristic, such as shy or anxious,
- socially isolated,
- behaviour difficulties,
- looked after child,
- only child,
- child with numerous siblings,
- low socio-economic status,
- poor attendance,
- disaffected,
- immature,
- learning difficulties, and
- parent with mental ill health.

Staff selected at least two reasons for describing each student as 'vulnerable'. These factors were identified as constituting risk factors for poor outcomes at transition in the research literature (Evangelou et al., 2008).

Table 3.3 provides an overall representation of the vulnerabilities of each student in the study.

Table 3.3: Individual Vulnerability Criteria

Vulnerability Factor	Participant, e.g. A1, B6
Low educational attainment	A1, A2, B1, B3, B4, B5, B7
Challenging home circumstances	A3, A4
Pupil characteristic e.g. shy, anxious	A1, A2, A4, A6, B1, B3, B5
Socially isolated	A4, A5, B1
Behaviour difficulties	A5, B2, B4, B7
Looked after child status	B6
Only child	B5, B6, B7
With numerous siblings	A2
Low socio-economic status	A3, B1, B3, B4, B6, B7
Poor attendance	A3
Disaffected	B2, B7
Immature	A5, B7
Learning difficulties	A1, A2, B1, B4, B5, B7
Father has mental ill health	A4

3.10.3 SECONDARY SCHOOL INFORMATION

The two secondary schools involved in the current study were selected prior to the selection of both the Year 6 students and the junior schools. This was primarily due to the need to gain the consent of senior managers for a school's participation in the research before proceeding to enlist the students. For ease of data collection, once the two secondary schools had agreed to participate, I approached two feeder junior schools with at least six identified vulnerable Year 6 students due to enrol at each of the secondary schools.

The two secondary schools were selected as the two best-matched schools within the city, for a variety of measurable factors, as indicated in Table 3.4 below, such as number of students with SEN and value added scores. Schools were thus matched to reduce the potential impact of these factors on the findings of the study and because they each offered very similar transition support packages to vulnerable students.

Table 3.4: An Analysis of Each of the Secondary Schools Involved in the Present Study (2009-2010)

School Factor	School A (Percentage of school population)	School B (Percentage of school population)
Number on roll	1273	1322
Value Added Score (100 is average)	96.7	105.2
Gifted and talented	152 (11.9%)	187 (14.1%)
SEN register School Action	243 (19%)	292 (22%)
SEN register School Action Plus	40 (3.1%)	43 (3.3%)
SEN register Statement of SEN	6 (0.5%)	16 (1.2%)
Behaviour Emotional Social Difficulties	19 (1.5%)	17 (1.3%)
English Additional Language	46 (3.6%)	696 (52.6%)
FSM	215 (16.9%)	259 (19.6%)
Looked After Children	4 (0.3%)	3 (0.2%)
Pupils living in 20% of most deprived areas nationally	449 (35.3%)	644 (48.7%)

Authorised absence 2009-2010	10115	9486	
Unauthorised absence 2009-2010	4393	3641	

Table 3.5 below uses the codes assigned to each participant. A or B refers to the secondary school each participant attends and the number was given based on alphabetical ordering of first names. The letter 'S' refers to the participant being a member of staff.

Table 3.5: Participants and Details of Their Involvement

Code	Student or Staff	Focus Group	Phase One Interview	Phase Two Interview
A1	Student	Yes	No	Yes
A2	Student	Yes	No	Yes
A3	Student	Yes	No	Yes
A4	Student	Yes	No	Yes
A5	Student	Yes	No	No
A6	Student	Yes	No	Yes
AS	Staff	No	Yes	Yes
B1	Student	Yes	No	Yes
B2	Student	Yes	No	Yes
B3	Student	Yes	No	No
B4	Student	Yes	No	Yes
B5	Student	Yes	No	Yes
B6	Student	Yes	No	Yes
B7	Student	Yes	No	Yes
BS	Staff	No	Yes	Yes

From my perspective the group of Year 6 pupils at the primary feeder school for secondary school B, were more disaffected than those at the feeder school for school A. This perception was realised at the initial focus group during the summer term of Year 6. The data from Table 3.3 (p. 66) confirms this view, where two of the seven students from School B were described by staff as disaffected whereas none at School A were thus described.

3.11 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Focus group and interview questions were piloted in the Summer term of 2011 with Year 6 students in another primary school to ensure vulnerable students could fully understand and participate in a discussion related to their views of transition. In addition, the potential questions to be included in the staff interviews were discussed with Educational Psychology colleagues, to ascertain their relevance to the research questions being answered. No difficulties were anticipated as a result of this piloting procedure and focus groups and interviews were conducted as planned.

The timeline of the data collection procedure is outlined in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Data Collection Procedure

Phase of Data Collection	Procedural Event	Purpose	Time of Occurrence
Preliminary data collection phase	Secondary school data analysed and two schools selected	To identify two schools with similar populations for matching purposes (see Table 3.3, p.66)	April 2011
	Initial contact made with two secondary schools	To seek school consent for involvement in the research (See Appendix 1 for exemplar letters)	April 2011

	Initial meeting arranged with Head of Transition in each school	To explain research purpose and design; to gather information about specific features of each school transition programme; to identify feeder junior schools with at least six vulnerable students	June 2011
	Contact made with two feeder junior schools	To request school, parent and student consent and arrange initial focus groups (See Appendix 2 for exemplar forms and 3 for leaflet to students)	Early July 2011
Phase One	Formulation of initial Programme Theories from research literature	34 research papers read, CMO configurations elicited and initial PTs formulated in simple form (See Table 2.3, pp. 42-44)	April-June 2011
	Initial staff interview	To discuss initial Programme Theories and elicit views to confirm, reject or refine each (see Appendix 4 for script)	Mid July 2011
	Focus groups for Year 6 students	To elicit students' ratings of programme features and potential mechanisms; to elicit views of imminent transition (positives and negatives). To gather individual students' ratings of transition programme features. (See Appendices 5 and 6)	End of July 2011
Phase Two	Year 7 students completing questionnaires	To gather post-transition outcome data using two self-report questionnaires: School Children's Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007) and The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993). (See Appendix 7 for copies of the questionnaires)	Mid November 2011
	Individual interviews with Year 7 students	To identify and explore the most important mechanisms of the Transition Programmes from each student's perspective (See Appendix 8 for rating activity)	End of November 2011

		Second staff interviews	To present second phase of Programme Theories for final confirmation, rejection, refinement. The final Programme Theories were sent to the staff prior to the interview, so that they could have time to reflect on each and consider the merits and application of each (See Tables 4.6.1 to 4.6.16). A series of seven Superordinate Programme Theories were then developed from the evidence gathered and by combining Programme Theories with similar CMOCs.	December 2011
Phase	**Three**	Present findings to each school separately	To provide data verification and presentation and recommendations to improve practice (See Appendix 9 for PowerPoint presentations used)	April 2012

3.12 PHASE ONE DATA COLLECTION

3.12.1 DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME THEORIES

Pawson and Tilley emphasise that the predominant purpose of Realistic Evaluation is to seek to "explain interesting, puzzling, socially significant regularities" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.71). By drawing on the literature review and research data in the field of primary to secondary school transition, and integrating findings from Phase One of the data collection in the current study, initial Programme Theories were formulated. These initial Programme Theories are located in Table 4.5 in Chapter 4 (pages 102-103).

Table 2.3 in Chapter 2 (pages 42-44) sets out CMO configurations extracted from thirty-four research papers dating from 1997 to 2011. These CMO configurations were integrated into the initial Programme Theories in conjunction with the information provided from secondary school staff during the initial interviews in Phase One and from data elicited during the focus groups and from mechanism rankings. Appendix 10 outlines the evidence from Phase One data collection which contributed to the formulation of the sixteen initial Programme

Theories. Data elicited from participants were colour coded for ease of CMO configuration formulation.[1] To exemplify the coding process, the coding process for Programme Theory 1 is located in Appendix 11. The second stage of the data collection cycle was therefore crucial in determining the final Programme Theories, which are essentially a refinement of the initial Programme Theories.

3.12.2 FOCUS GROUP PROCESS

Thirteen students participated in the focus groups at Phase One. Six students participated from School A and seven from School B. The first phase of data collection incorporated focus group methodology for three main reasons: in order to explore how each group of vulnerable students perceived transition in comparison to the findings in the literature. Moreover, at this stage the students had some experience of the transition support programmes and this information was used to inform the initial Programme Theories. Finally, the focus groups enabled me to gather information about the importance of potential contexts and mechanisms relevant to transition, as rated by the students.

Focus groups are viewed as an efficient means of generating a large amount of data (Robson, 2002) but are also recognised as having significant disadvantages, such as the influence of social conformity bias in the general expression of less extreme views. However the documented shortcoming of focus groups, that individual views cannot be sought or followed up, were not realised in the present study.

The research was designed so the data collection process incorporated a second phase which aimed to elicit individual participants' views, so complementing the focus group data.

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[1] Data were colour coded: orange=context; green=mechanism; blue=outcome. Initial CMO configurations were devised from evidence provided by participants and from research literature.

Furthermore, I considered focus group methodology to be appropriate given the vulnerability of each student participant; the students were more likely to have the confidence to express their views in the familiar context of a peer group more willingly than during a meeting with an unfamiliar adult (See Appendix 5 for the script).

The participants were asked to complete a rating scale of the main features of the transition programmes, on an individual basis, as elicited from the initial staff interviews and from the research literature. Student participants were asked to consider how important each of the features was by giving each item a score from 1 (most important) to 20 (least important) (See Appendix 6).

I issued confidentiality guidelines at the beginning of the focus group to encourage all participants contributed to the discussion and were comfortable throughout (See Appendix 12). Furthermore a familiar member of the pastoral staff from each school was asked to be available during and after each focus group took place. The student participants were provided with the option of opting out at any stage of the process and were fully aware that this individual was available to meet with them should they become worried, upset or unsettled as a result of participating in the discussions.

Two of the thirteen original student participants chose not to participate in the second phase of data collection.

3.12.3 REALISTIC INTERVIEW PROCESS

Pawson and Tilley (1997) advocate adopting realistic interviews as an approach for gathering data during a realistic evaluation. This process is argued to enable a researcher to explore potential explanations for social phenomena in collaboration with those who have practical

experience of them in action (Robson, 2002). The realistic interview differs substantially from other types of interview and can be distinguished by its predominant features:

1. The researcher's thinking and theory formulation is rendered transparent.

2. The process is both iterative and collaborative.

3. Accounts and experiences elicited from participants are integral to the evaluation process and are positioned as critical to the data triangulation.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe the realistic interview as comprising two major and distinctive features:

"(i) the *teacher-learner function* and (ii) the *conceptual refinement process.*"

(p. 165).

3.12.4. THE TEACHER-LEARNER FUNCTION

This concept relates to the understanding which evolves between the interviewer and the interviewee during the process of the interview. Rather than attempting to optimise the chances of achieving a shared understanding by controlling and structuring the questions employed during the course of the interview (as is typically the case with interview approaches underpinned by a positivist epistemology), the realistic interviewer uses simple, non-leading, non-ambiguous questioning to draw out the interviewee's views and reasoning linked to the phenomenon being studied. The teacher-learner function also acknowledges the reciprocal discourse which occurs within the interviewer-interviewee dyad and that there is a genuine openness to learn from one another's viewpoints and understanding of the

phenomenon being explored (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). See Appendix 13 for a transcript of a staff participant interview.

3.12.5 THE CONCEPTUAL REFINEMENT PROCESS

 This refers to the collaborative process which enables researchers and participants to consider the collected data in terms of programme mechanisms and their interaction with programme context and outcome. The conceptual refinement process refines, refutes or confirms the

"...formula for investigating how subjects make choices in relation to a programme..."

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997; p.167).

It is during this stage of the data collection process that the interviewee is encouraged to reflect on the Programme Theories portrayed by the researcher and potentially engage in the following thinking:

"*This is how you have depicted the potential structure of my thinking, but in my experience of those circumstances, it happened like this...*"

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.169).

Participants were invited to refute, refine or indeed confirm Programme Theories throughout the research process. See Appendix 6 for semi-structured script used with staff participants.

3.13 PHASE TWO DATA COLLECTION: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT INTERVIEWS AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

Students were asked to each complete two questionnaires, as described in section 3.9.3, 3.9.3(i) and 3.9.3(ii) in November 2011.

In addition, students participated in individual interviews. Although initial data pertaining to students' views of the transition programme and their imminent transfer were elicited during focus groups at Phase One, I also intended to explore actual experiences and views following the transfer itself. This afforded an individualistic exploration and analysis of the actual transition as experienced by vulnerable students. Furthermore, all students had previously met with me on two separate occasions prior to Phase Two individual interviews (focus groups and outcome measurement) and, as a result, would therefore be more likely to feel sufficiently comfortable in discussing their views and experiences in a one-to-one context.

Students were asked to read through a list of sixteen statements developed from Phase One data collection, see Appendix 8, which incorporated both the contextual features of the transition programme, as elicited from the member of secondary school staff, and the potential mechanisms that the programme may have triggered. The sixteen statements were aligned to the sixteen initial Programme Theories developed from Phase One of the data collection procedure. Each student was asked to sort these statements, for example 'having the opportunity for a fresh start' into piles according to how much value they placed on that aspect of their own transition experience. The cards were sorted into those the student rated as 'very important', 'quite important', 'not important' or 'I did not experience this'. The cards were given to the student one at a time in a random order, to minimise order effects, and there was no restriction placed on how many statements could be placed in each category. Students were then asked to talk in more detail about the statements they had placed in the 'very important' pile only. This information was recorded using a Dictaphone and later transcribed for inclusion in Phase Two data, which were utilised as evidence to confirm, reject or refine Programme Theories.

3.14 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using specific approaches which were dependent on the type of data collected. Numerical (quantitative) data, from the two standardised questionnaires and the ranking activity, were typically treated by calculating mean scores, while qualitative non-numerical data from focus groups and individual interviews were analysed using a realist thematic approach which linked closely with the development of CMO configuration underpinning the development of Programme Theories (based on Miles and Huberman's three-staged approach, 1994), which outlines an initial data reduction stage followed by a second stage incorporating data display and, finally, conclusion drawing).

3.14.1 DATA REDUCTION

Before the focus groups and interviews were transcribed the study design, encompassing CMO configurations extracted from current literature, determined the nature of data to be analysed. Therefore, data reduction was integral to the research design. The section below describes the inclusion criteria stipulated as part of the data reduction process.

3.14.2 INCLUSION CRITERIA

The initial theories which were examined in this section of the thesis evolved from following specific criteria set. These criteria were established to optimise the trustworthiness and applicability of the study, and comprised strict guidelines for the inclusion of data to inform the Programme Theories. The criteria comprised reference to specific contexts, mechanisms or outcomes by at least two different participants. The participants could be from the same or differing schools. Data which were included were either an affirmation of the presented Programme Theory or a spontaneous referral to a relevant context, mechanism or outcome.

Data were colour coded into context, mechanism, outcome with the purpose of informing initial CMO configurations for the initial Programme Theories.

3.14.3 DEVELOPMENT OF INITIAL PROGRAMME THEORIES

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure

Preliminary Phase	Secondary school data analysed and two best matched schools selected	Initial contact made with two secondary schools	Initial meeting with Head of Transition in each school	Contact made with two junior schools and students selected
Phase One	Formulation of initial CMOCs from research literature	Initial staff interview in secondary schools	Focus groups conducted in two junior schools	Initial Programme Theories developed
Phase Two	Year 7 student participants complete outcome questionnaires	Individual interviews conducted with Year 7 students	Second staff participant interviews conducted	Concluding Programme Theories formulated
Phase Three	Feed back Programme Specification to each secondary school separately			

Information from the literature review indicated potential links between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, in relation to the impact of transition programmes on students who were identified as 'vulnerable'. By unpicking what 'vulnerable' means to staff in the two individual junior schools who were involved in identifying the student participants for the present study, a clearer picture of the contexts could be attained. For example, were the students identified as vulnerable due to externalising behavioural responses or internalising anxious or shy responses in school? This would enable a group level analysis to be conducted should there be patterns in what led to the identification of the students as vulnerable.

Each initial Programme Theory was derived from CMO configurations extracted from the research literature and from focus group and staff interview data. Data elicited during Phase One of the project were transcribed and collated according to themes generated by the research literature initially; themes were further analysed by displaying them in colour-coded tabular form according to school-based CMO configurations and, finally initial Programme Theories were developed from this evidence. Participants' views of the initial PTs were ascertained during Phase Two of the project, whereby the third stage of data analysis was conducted and conclusions drawn.

3.14.4 ANALYSIS OF PHASE TWO DATA

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
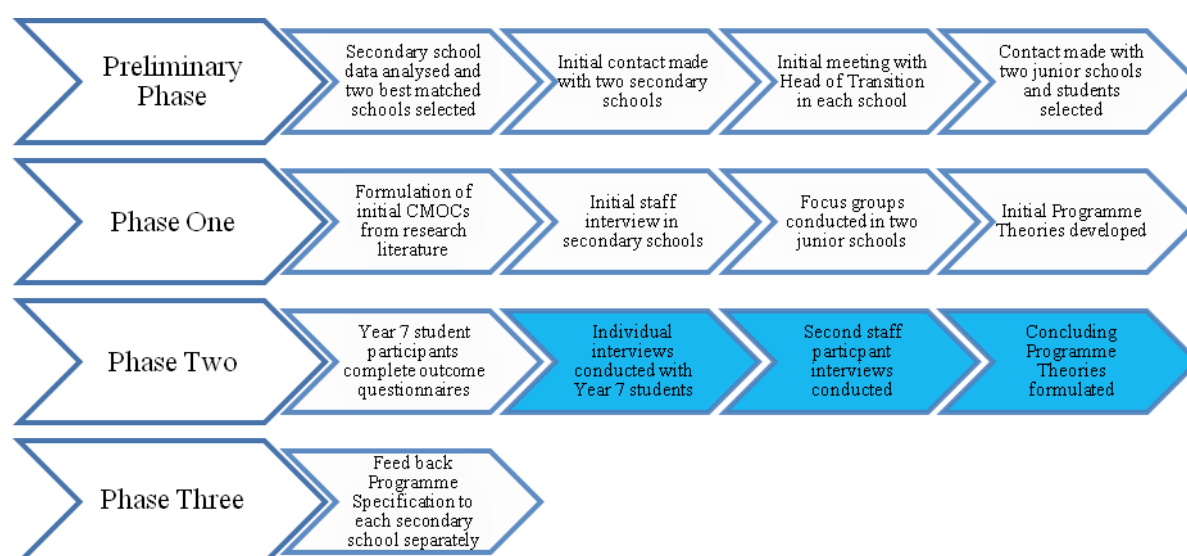
As mentioned previously, information gathered from the semi-structured realistic interviews generated data by focusing primarily on applying a thematic analysis of the information linked to the Programme Theories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed within two weeks of occurring. However, I acknowledge the

omission of non-word verbal utterances, for which there can be no written translation, thus transcriptions may fail to capture all of the meaning intended by participants. Nevertheless, final feedback to schools in April 2012 allowed a further data and analysis validation check, which permitted verification of the meaning intended by both secondary school staff participants involved.

"Even interview transcripts are not data. All these are documentary materials from which data must be constructed through some formal means of analysis" (Erickson, 1990; p.161).

The nature of Realistic Evaluation requires information to be analysed as it is collected and this can result in additions to or transformations of the dataset. Information from both student and staff interviews was read several times to gain an overall sense of potential themes which would emerge. This included those which aligned clearly to the Programme Theories and those which either had the potential to refine the Programme Theories or which were additional to them. The inductive analysis of this additional information therefore had the potential to develop new Programme Theories.

Once the information had been read thoroughly I organised and analysed sections of the transcribed interviews into themes, using matrices. The data coding was conducted manually rather than by employing an electronic tool such as NVivo, as advocated for small scale research projects by Basit (2003). Secondly, meaning was abstracted from the transcript extracts during this manual analysis process, based on the CMO configuration reflected in the initial PTs which had been explored during the second cycle of the data collection procedure.

Furthermore, the frequency of individual participants' references to a theme was recorded, to indicate the strength of evidence suggesting that individual PTs should be maintained in the report of the research findings.

Thirdly, a process of semantic equivalence between emerging themes were identified and data reduced to a subset of themes. These were matched against the initial PTs, and each PT was then judged to have been supported, requiring refinement or rejected in light of this analysis. Themes providing evidence to support PTs were identified as either applying to both, or specific to one school context. If a specific theme emerged for at least two individuals, then this was judged sufficient to support the PT. Additional themes were not abstracted, although student participants did make several suggestions for improvements to the transition programmes, based on their personal experiences of transferring to secondary school. Rather than formulate additional PTs, I elected to feed this information back to Transition Managers for their consideration and judgement related to amendments to be incorporated within future programmes.

As will become apparent, data analysis revealed substantial evidence to support seven key Programme Theories which could be utilised to inform the transition programmes of other secondary schools offering additional transition support to vulnerable students. One Programme Theory was rejected due to a lack of student-supported evidence.

Figure 3.2 below presents the data analysis process, illustrated using data from initial PT1.

Figure 3.2: Process of Thematic Data Analysis and Presentation of CMO Configuration

1. Interview data transcribed for all 13 participants

2. Data read several times and organised in tables into themes linked to initial CMOCs

3. Words and phrases colour coded according to PT; additions and refinements coloured red

4. Initial PTs refined if evidence suggests this is required, CMO configurations made explicit

5. Super-ordinate PTs developed where similar CMOs are apparent

See Appendix 10 for raw data presented with each of the 16 initial PTs

it's no one knows so you can just like start all over again, make new friends

I can enjoy it a bit more

See Appendix 17 for refinement tables for each of 16 PTs

3.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I applied for consent from the University of Birmingham's Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee in April 2011. No contact with schools or students was initiated until ethical approval was secured. A copy of the ethical consent form can be found in Appendix 14.

3.15.1 CONSENT

A child's freely given fully informed voluntary consent should be gained prior to their participation in research, in accordance with the British Educational Research Association

guidelines (BERA, 2004) and Health Professions Council's Standards of Conduct and Ethics for Students (HPC, 2009). In addition, as a first step, Head Teachers from both primary and secondary schools were asked to consent to the research on behalf of their staff and students. Once overall consent was agreed, individual staff and students were approached by letter. All participants were fully informed of the purposes and methodology of the research project as part of the process of gaining their informed voluntary consent. A letter was sent to all potential participants identified by Year 7 staff, and to their parents or carers in June 2011. Participating school staff were asked to sign a consent form with the same information, written using appropriate language, and explaining their role within the research as well as that of the students (see Appendix 2 for all versions of consent form used). Leaflets containing relevant information which explained the research purposes and procedures were also provided to students and their parents and carers to inform their decision regarding whether to agree to participate. An example of this leaflet can be located in Appendix 3.

3.15.2 DATA STORAGE

Data were stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003) and within a locked cabinet during data transcription and analysis. Only my academic tutor supervising the research and I had access to the anonymised data during the procedure.

3.15.3 RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

All participants had the right to withdraw, without giving a reason, at any stage of the data collection process and this was clearly documented in the letter requesting informed voluntary consent and I also checked that all parties had an understanding of this prior to their involvement in focus groups or interviews. The letters are included in Appendix 2. Data were not stored in a way that enabled individuals to be identified so data was not able to be

withdrawn after individuals participated in Phase One.

No attempt was made to coerce or persuade individuals to continue to participate when they indicated they wished to withdraw, as advocated by the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2004). Only two students elected to withdraw from the research, one at the end of the first focus group and the other after he started in Year 7.

3.15.4 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

All participants were assigned an identification code comprising letters and numbers to differentiate between the adults and young people from School A and School B. This was necessary for the analysis of the data within each school and between schools. This coding ensured confidentiality.

Focus groups discussions were recorded using a Dictaphone, with data used to inform potential CMO configurations, so individual views were not required. No information identifying individuals was recorded during focus groups, except coded data to enable discrimination between the two school groups.

Interviews were also recorded using a Dictaphone, and each participant's individual code was recorded on the tape prior to each individual interview.

The only personally identifiable information that was stored was on consent forms.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus groups (Robson, 2002) and this was explained to all participants. Group rules were jointly formulated within groups and confidentiality was included in this discussion.

The scripts used are in Appendices 4 and 5. All reported data were anonymised according to the identification codes assigned.

3.16 DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

In order to minimise the risk of either school reputation being perceived as being damaged due to less favourable research outcomes, when compared to the other school, research findings were presented to each school individually. Risk of invidious comparison was further reduced by acknowledging that each school context was unique.

3.17 THREATS TO TRUSTWORTHINESS AND APPLICABILITY

Potential threats to the trustworthiness and applicability of the research findings include the specific methods and techniques used by me, my experience and perspective of research per se. Table 3.7 outlines the potential threats and steps taken to overcome these.

Table 3.7: Treats to the Trustworthiness and Applicability of the Research

Threat	Steps Taken to Minimise Threat
The findings of the study will not be generalisable and therefore of limited use in its application to real life.	This is not the aim of RE. Critical realist methodology seeks to optimise trustworthiness and relevance of PTs. By presenting a clear documentation of the methodology used, this study could be conducted again in other settings and subsequent findings have the potential of supporting the findings of the present study. Findings can therefore be added to the overall body of research and knowledge in relation to transition. I acknowledge the context specific nature of the findings and the PTs thereof.
The data collection methods and the analysis of data do not provide reliable or valid results due to confirmatory bias.	Realistic evaluation minimises confirmatory bias by ensuring that initial Programme Theories are developed from research literature and from information provided by staff who have an in-depth knowledge of the transition programmes. At all salient stages of the research, all participants' views are sought about how good the fit is between the data presented by me and their own experiences and perspectives. Participants are encouraged to confirm, reject or refine PTs. I positioned myself as a researcher-participant and not as an expert and also acknowledged that other researchers may interpret the data gathered differently.

The research will not be conducted in accordance with the Realistic Evaluation methodology and epistemology.	I have undergone doctoral level research training and am supervised by a tutor who has previous research experience of Realistic Evaluation. Data triangulation and the use of multiple methods in the design will reduce the permeation of a positivist or interpretivist analysis.
Trustworthiness of information gained from interviews and focus groups affected by non-standardised structure.	Whilst RE means that the exploration of CMO configurations will be potentially subtly different in different settings, I used the same format of questions for focus groups, of reference to initial PTs in staff interviews and of rating PTs and exploring why they were important to students in student interviews. Transcription of all interviews and focus groups were conducted within two weeks. Data contained in the transcripts were subjected to a systematic process of coding and categorisation according to contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. The coding was completed by me and checked with my university tutor.

3.18 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 outlined the methodological framework of the current study, incorporating its ontological and epistemological position and the methodological processes utilised to optimise the trustworthiness and relevance of the PTs that were formulated.

Chapter 4 presents the results of Phase One and Phase Two of the data collection process and concludes with a series of eight Programme Theories extracted from the literature and from an exploration of two secondary school transition programmes for vulnerable students.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) of two transition programmes, focusing primarily on how the final Programme Theories evolved from an iterative and collaborative consideration of the key Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes (CMO) as experienced by students and staff in the two sets of primary and secondary schools in which the study was based. In addition, the journey from the initial CMO configurations extracted from research literature to the refinement of the Programme Theories applicable to the two particular research settings, based on ecologically trustworthy and applicable evidence, is outlined.

The reporting of the findings of this Realistic Evaluation focuses exclusively on the enabling contexts that exist in the two school settings and the enabling mechanisms that the transition interventions triggered. By omitting the inhibiting factors, a much greater depth of evaluation and consideration of helpful CMO configuration is achieved. Furthermore, time constraints and word limit constraints led to this decision being taken.

Findings are displayed in tables and bar charts to facilitate their interpretation and are separated into between-school and within-school frameworks of analysis throughout. This reflects an appreciation of the differences and, principally, the similarities traversing the two settings.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions are listed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Research Questions and Corresponding Data Gathered

Research Question	Data Type	Data Provided by Whom?
Research Question 1 **What are the individual and group outcomes for vulnerable students engaging in two specific transition programmes?**	Self-completion questionnaires: (a) School Children's Happiness Inventory (b) Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale	Students (N=11)
Research Question 2 **What are the contextual features of each of the transition programmes which are effective in supporting vulnerable students?**	Realistic interviews conducted with one member of staff in each school (staff member responsible for co-ordinating and co-delivering transition programme)	Staff (N=2)
Research Question 3 **What psychological mechanisms are triggered by successful transition programmes?**	Realistic interviews conducted with students and staff; in addition students rated each mechanism into one of four categories and those deemed 'very important' were explored further during interview	Students and staff (N=13)

These three Research Questions are answered by the presentation of the final seven

Programme Theories, comprising a series of CMO configurations.

The CMO configurations and the resulting final Programme Theories will be tracked from

Phase One of the research, whereby initial CMO configurations elicited from the relevant

research literature were presented to students and staff prior to the students' transition to Year 7. Furthermore, the data gathered from this phase were refined by working within a teacher-learner cycle with participants, resulting in the development of 'folk theories' referred to the "I'll show you my theory if you'll show me yours" process (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 169). The Phase One data are then incorporated into to the second phase, which culminated in a series of refined Programme Theories based on the evidence provided by staff and students from the two secondary schools featured in the study. The final refined Programme Theories introduce a transition programme specification, which, it is argued, may be applicable within similar secondary school contexts.

4.2.1 PRELIMINARY PHASE: CONTEXTUAL DATA

4.2.1(i) CONTEXTS

The two secondary school settings offered a series of transition activities to students identified as 'vulnerable', as well as providing a more general programme to all students transferring to Year 7. Therefore the relevant contextual variables in this study represent within-young person factors as well as setting specific factors. These are discussed in further detail below.

4.2.1(ii) WITHIN-YOUNG PERSON CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

As highlighted in the methodology chapter in sections 3.9.1, 3.10, 3.10.1, 3.14.4 and in Table 3.3 (p.66) respectively, the sample for this study comprises vulnerable young people. They were identified as vulnerable by their primary school teachers and primary school SENCo for a range of differing reasons. Through initial discussions with the two members of secondary school staff, who hold primary responsibility for managing Year 6 to Year 7 transition, the students who would benefit from participating in additional transition support were identified. Table 4.2, below, presents the reasons each student has been categorised as vulnerable. As

will become evident, some within-young person contextual factors, such as experiencing

behaviour difficulties, have specific mechanisms triggered by the transition intervention that

do not feature for young people who are shy, anxious and socially withdrawn, for example.

For ease of interpretation, the second column in Table 4.2 highlights the three highest ranked

programme features and mechanisms for each student participant during individual interviews

at Phase Two.

Table 4.2: Within Young Person Contextual Factors and Highest Ranked Transition

Programme Features and Mechanisms

Student code	Highest ranking aspect of transition programme (in red); 2nd and 3rd	Criteria for identification as vulnerable	Key
A1	Extra visits to SS for small groups of Y6; having family member at SS already; having visits to SS before I start	ED, PC, LD (dyslexia)	ED: low educational attainment
A2	People at SS being positive and friendly; being given info about school layout (map); feeling like I belong in SS before I start	ED, PC, NS, LD	CHC: Challenging home circumstances
A3	Asking older students Qs about bullying and other things I'm worried about; finding out about the behaviour system; being given info about school layout (map)	CHC, LSES, PA	PC: pupil characteristic, e.g. shy, anxious
A4	Feeling like I belong in SS before I start; being given info about school layout (map); having the chance for a fresh start	CHC, PC, SI, O (father mental ill health)	SI: socially isolated
A5	Having the chance for a fresh start; finding out about the behaviour policy; practice thinking about organising myself to be more independent	SI, BD, I	BD: behaviour difficulties
A6	Having the chance for a fresh start; feeling like I belong in	PC	LAC: looked after child

Key (continued):

OC: only child

NS: Numerous siblings

LSES: low socio-economic status

			PA: poor attendance
	the school before I start; meeting staff at SS before I start		
B1	Talking to Y7s who used to go to same PS; having visits to SS before I start; talking to other students about the move	ED, PC, SI, LSES, LD	D: disaffected I: immature LD: learning difficulties O: other
B2	Moving up with friends from PS; finding out about the behaviour policy; having the chance for a fresh start	BD, D	
B3	Having extra visits to SS for small groups of Y7s; people from SS coming to visit us at PS; practice thinking about how I will organise myself to be more independent	ED, PC, LSES	
B4	Talking to Y7s who used to go to PS; having visits to SS before I start there; talking to other students about the move	ED, BD, LSES, LD	
B5	Meeting staff from SS; meeting staff from SS; being given info about school layout (map)	ED, PC, OC, LD	
B6	Practice thinking about how I will organise myself to be independent; finding out about behaviour policy; being given info about school layout (map)	LAC, LSES, OC	
B7	Moving up with friends from PS; being given info about school layout (Map); meeting staff at SS	ED, BD, D, I, OC, LSES, LD	

4.2.1(iii) CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SETTING

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
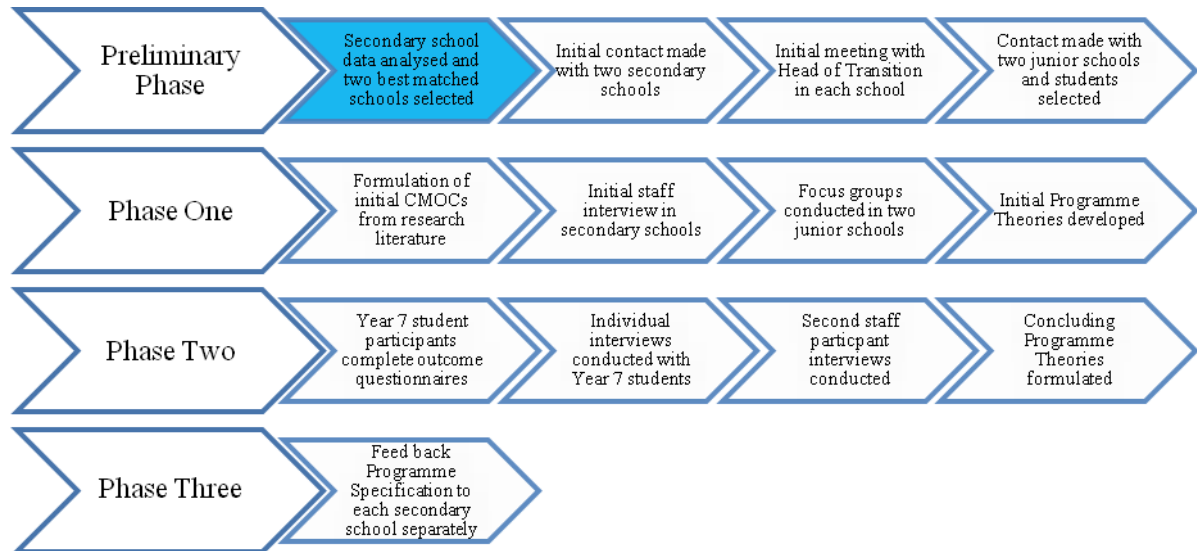
Each of the two secondary schools were primarily matched for number on roll and, the

remaining data: value added scores, absences, free school meals (FSM) and numbers of

students registered on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register, was utilised for

comparison purposes. Size of school has been argued to exert an influence on how well

students develop a sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993; Bond et al., 2007). The two schools

selected were the best fit from the sample of schools in the city. Table 3.4 (pages 67-8)

outlines the main relevant contextual factors which may exert an indirect influence on new

students transferring to Year 7. The data for the remaining twelve schools is located in

Appendix 15.

The contexts relevant to this study are related to the size and demographic of each school, as

well as on an individual level, associated with the specific reasons why a student may have

been identified by staff as vulnerable. The psychological mechanisms triggered by the transition programme will therefore necessitate a comparison of the contexts in which this occurs. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: PHASE ONE

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
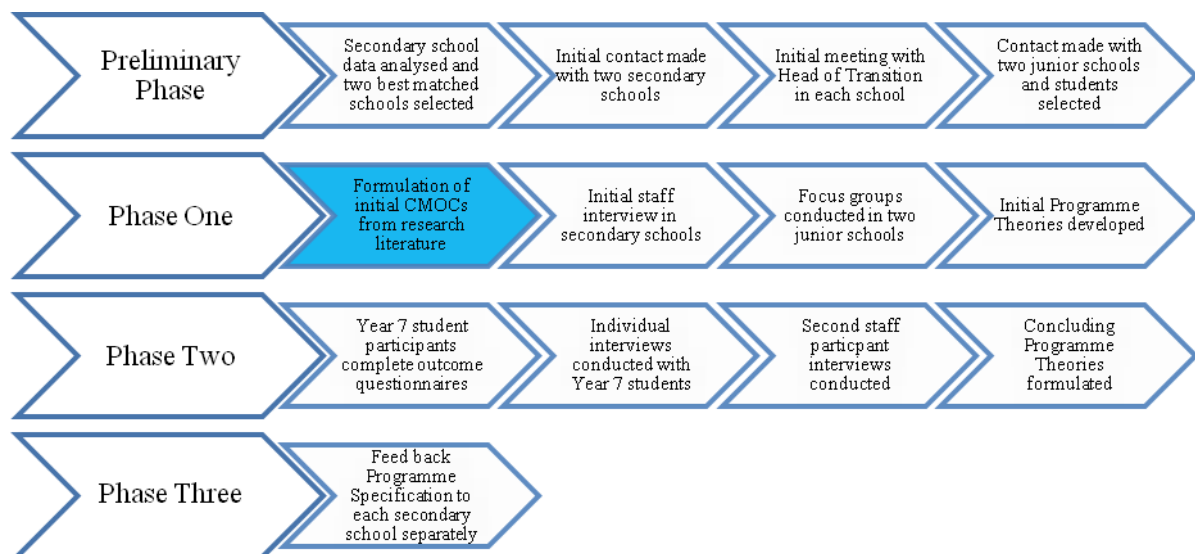
A review of the transition literature was conducted and from each relevant paper, the Context (s), Mechanism(s) and Outcome(s) were elicited. Please see Table 2.3 (pp. 42-44) for a tabular presentation of these CMO configurations.

Phase One of the data collection procedure concentrated on the presentation of the initial CMO configurations to the two members of staff who were principally responsible for the transition programme in their secondary school. At this stage, staff were asked to comment on the initial CMOCs as presented in Table 2.3 (pp. 42-44), comprising contextual factors pertinent to their transition programme, such as the types of students who are selected for

additional transition support and the school ethos. They were also asked to provide their views of the mechanisms that were elicited from the relevant literature, and to suggest examples of practice that they had experienced in their roles, illustrating, refining or rejecting the initial CMOCs presented.

A realistic interview comprises a genuine exploration of the situation or programme being interrogated, whereby neither the researcher nor the practitioner is positioned as an expert, rather both sets of skills are combined to produce a realistic understanding of the relevant CMO configurations. In essence, in the current case, the researcher reports the regularities found in previous studies of transition programmes, stating that 'this may be relevant' and asks the practitioner to describe their views of this, based on their previous experiences and their understanding of the programme being examined.

"I'll show you my theory, if you'll show me yours"

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p169).

4.3.1 THE TRANSITION PROGRAMME IN EACH SETTING

School A and B have a transition programme which incorporates the features summarised in Table 4.3 (page 95-96). The differences and similarities between the two programmes are likely to influence students' transition experiences, their views of the school and transition outcomes.

Both Schools A and B organised group support for vulnerable students according to their perceived need. Group support comprised at least four and up to eight weekly sessions, with session content being specifically designed to address need. For example, socially isolated and shy students met together and had opportunities to foster friendships with each other, tour

the school and discuss their hopes and fears; students who had been identified as having behaviour difficulties accessed additional transition support which emphasised rules and expectations; and in School A only, students who were the only student transferring from their primary or junior school attended sessions entitled 'Friendly Faces', which aimed to facilitate friendship development.

Table 4.3: Shared Features of the Transition Programmes Offered by Schools A and B, as Described by Staff Participants

Feature	Purpose	For Whom	Time-scale
Head of Year 7 visits primary school with Assistant Head Teacher and older students (usually Y7 or Y8 who themselves attended that primary or junior school)	To introduce themselves to prospective pupils and present them with initial information; to have initial discussions with staff to identify vulnerable pupils; students are able to have informal discussions with older students	All Y6 students	March and April of Year 6
Vulnerable students are invited to secondary school for additional visits and participate in specific group work (behavioural or social and emotional focus)	To foster practical, social, emotional and behavioural knowledge and skills, depending on the needs of the individual students Number of sessions depends on when (Standard Attainment Tests) SATs are held, but usually occur for between 4 and 8 weekly sessions	Vulnerable groups of students only	After Key Stage 2 SATs (end of May-beginning of June of Year 6)
Common Transfer Day	All Year 6 students spend a full day at their new secondary school, to familiarise themselves with the setting, staff and peers.	All Y6 students	July of Year 6
Induction Day	New Year 7s only spend the first day of term in the school following their usual timetable. No other students attend school that day, so that Year 7s have the	All Y6 students	September of Year 7

	opportunity of experiencing school without the added pressure and stress of being around large numbers of older students.		

School A's Transition Manager did not perceive the involvement of older students in the transition process as adhering to 'Peer Mentoring' principles, in contrast to School B's Transition Manager, who holds Peer Mentoring as an integral aspect of their school culture and pastoral and organisational operation.

The staff interviews contributed evidence to support, reject or refine the initial CMO configurations. However, the students experiencing the actual transition process on a personal level also hold information about how the transition programme exerts its effects on them (triggers mechanisms) and how these effects produce positive outcomes. In order to gather initial views, based on their attendance at the additional transition visits for vulnerable students (outlined in Table 4.3, p.95), the students were asked to rate key mechanisms extracted from the literature during the focus groups, from 1 (most important) to 20 (least important) on an individual basis. Mean scores were calculated for each group, as well as a combined mean score being computed in order to compare the overall rated importance of each mechanism.

Table 4.4 below presents the students' ratings of the most commonly referred to mechanisms in the research literature. In addition, cells have been colour-coded to illustrate the importance placed on each feature or mechanism, by the students in each school. Green signifies very important (a score of between 1-5.9 inclusive); orange means quite important (a score of between 6-10.9 inclusive) and red of little importance (a score of between 11-15.9 inclusive). No-one ranked any of the features or mechanisms as being of no importance. This was perhaps due to mean ranking scores not being sensitive to data range, thus the mean

ranking score is not reflective of individual students' views of certain transition features. Individual student views of the three most important transition programme features and mechanisms are highlighted in Table 4.2 (pp. 90-1).

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure

Preliminary Phase	Secondary school data analysed and two best matched schools selected	Initial contact made with two secondary schools	Initial meeting with Head of Transition in each school	Contact made with two junior schools and students selected
Phase One	Formulation of initial CMOCs from research literature	Initial staff interview in secondary schools	Focus groups conducted in two junior schools	Initial Programme Theories developed
Phase Two	Year 7 student participants complete outcome questionnaires	Individual interviews conducted with Year 7 students	Second staff participant interviews conducted	Concluding Programme Theories formulated
Phase Three	Feedback Programme Specification to each secondary school separately			

Table 4.4: A Presentation of Students' Mean Ranking of the Importance of

Features of Two Transition Programmes

Ranked statement	Mean for school A N= 6 (rank of importance)	Mean for school B N=7 (rank of importance)	Overall mean N=13 (rank of importance)
Having visits to sec school while in Year 6	8.2	5 (2nd)	6.6 (2nd)
Talking to other students about the move	11	6.4	8.7
Talking to year 7s who went to my PS	14	4.7 (most important)	9.4
Moving up with friends from PS	10	5.3 (3rd)	7.7
Meeting staff at the new school	6	8.4	7.2
Being given info about school layout (map)	8.3	5.9	7.1 (joint 3rd)
Info about behaviour policy / consequence system	4.4 (3rd)	7.1	5.8 (most important)
Feeling like I belong there before I start	11.3	9.4	10.4
Finding out about work and homework	8.3	11.4	9.9
Meeting other pupils from other schools (potential of developing new friendships)	6.4	10.1	8.3
Having extra visits in small groups	8.8	8.7	8.7
PS staff talking about SS in positive terms	11.8	11.3	11.6

Having a family member at the school	3.7 (most important)	10.4	7.1 (joint 3rd)
Practising organisational skills	11.2	8.6	9.9
SS staff and students visiting PS for info share	14.2	10.3	12.3
Being treated as grown up and mature	11.8	11.5	11.7
SS staff being positive and friendly	10.7	13.2	12
Seeing the main features of SS (tour)	10.8	13.2	12
Having the chance of a fresh start	3.8 (2nd)	12.4	8.1
Asking older SS students about bullying and other worries	8.2	13.1	10.7

4.3.2 CONCLUSION OF FIRST PHASE RANKING ACTIVITY

Each of the groups of students in the two schools had different views, overall, of what the most important aspects of the transition programme were. As can be seen from Table 4.4 above, there was no between school agreement of the most important features of the transition programmes they had experienced, at this stage. However, both sets of students were in agreement that all aspects of the transition programmes they expected to experience, or had already experienced, were of some importance. In addition there was some agreement that how primary school staff talked about secondary school was of little importance in preparing them for secondary school. Furthermore, being treated as mature and responsible individuals held very little significance for the students from both schools. School A students viewed

having a sense of belonging in the school as of little importance, while the students from

School B did not depict having a fresh start as relevant to them.

4.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF INITIAL PROGRAMME THEORIES

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
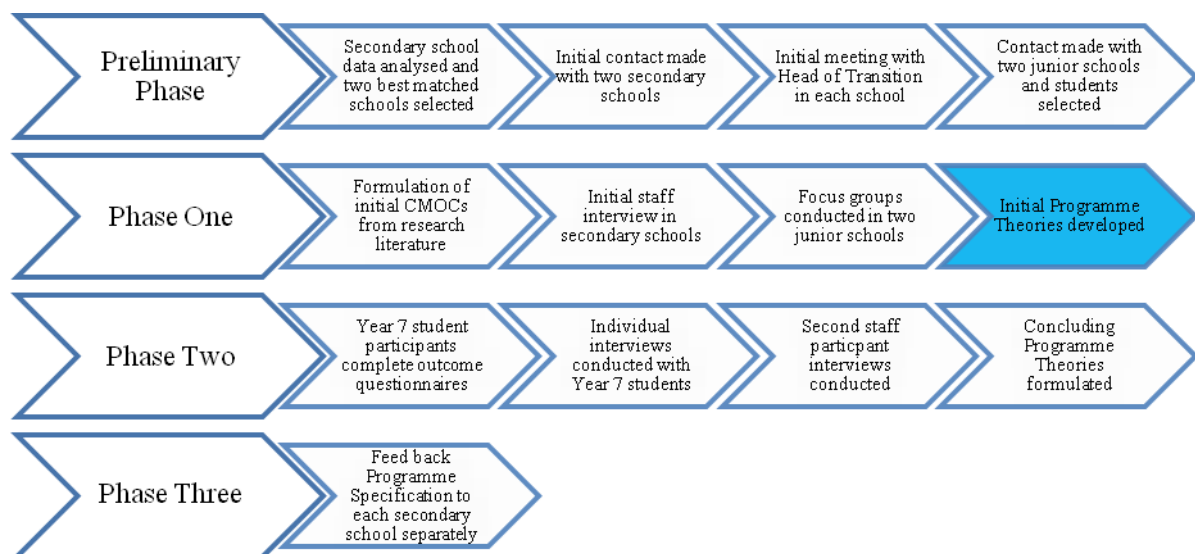
The initial key contexts, mechanisms and outcomes taken from research literature and Phase

One data collection are presented in Table 4.5 (pp.102-103) and evidence to support, reject or

refine the initial sixteen Programme Theories is presented in Appendix 10. Although the

strength of evidence is highlighted in Appendix 10, in relation to how robustly a specific PT

is supported, it is essential to contextualise this evidence; for example there is weak evidence

provided by student and staff participants from School B, at Phase One, to support PT1 but

strong evidence to support this PT from the perspective of students at School A. This

suggests a difference, at this stage, of CMOCs between schools. Phase One evidence elicited

from staff is highly likely to be robust given their previous years' experiences of transition programmes for vulnerable students; however evidence to support, reject or refine PTs which is elicited from students must be measured with a degree of caution, given that their initial views of the transition programme were based on pre-transition experiences and perceptions. As will be documented later, the views of the students did shift, particularly towards some of the most prominent PTs, when data were collected during Phase Two during the late stages of the first term in Year 7. To illustrate, the majority of students from school B rated PT1 (fresh start mechanism) as very important following their experience of transition, in November of term 1 of Year 7. As referred to above, prior to engaging in the additional transition programme, School B students did not consider having a 'fresh start' important.

From the focus group data, the transcripts of which are located in Appendix 16, the majority of the students in School A did not feel ready for the imminent move when asked to rate this on a scale of 0= not at all ready; 10= fully prepared; ratings ranged from 0 to 4, with only one student stating that he was fully prepared for the move to secondary school. In School B, the students rated themselves from 5-10, with three students scoring their level of preparedness as a '10'. Evidently, at this early stage, the students transferring to School B perceived themselves as more prepared than the students at School A, overall.

Student comments from focus groups and staff comments from Phase One interviews, alongside mechanism ranking data in Table 4.4 (pp. 98-99), were colour coded to facilitate the development of 16 initial Programme Theories. See Appendix 10 for this evidence.[2] Table 4.5, below, displays the sixteen initial Programme Theories as determined by data gathered and analysed during Phase One of the research study.

---

[2] Colour coding used throughout: orange=context; green=mechanism; blue=outcome

Table 4.5: Initial Programme Theories Derived from Research Literature and Participants' Views Following Phase One Data Analysis

Programme Theory 1	Transition programmes that emphasise that Y7 is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' and specifically select the information that is to be shared with teaching staff (M), instil a sense of optimism, hope and motivation for students (O), particularly for those students who have experienced behavioural difficulties or have had negative experiences at primary school (C).
Programme Theory 2	Transition programmes that provide students with a consistent key person to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7 (C), support students who are vulnerable (isolated, shy, anxious etc) (O) by helping them to feel cared for and looked out for (M).
Programme Theory 3	Transition programmes that facilitate open and frank discussion between prospective Y7s and older students (M) enable vulnerable prospective Y7 students (C) to trust what they have been told and consequently to feel prepared for coping with secondary school in terms of behavioural, social and emotional expectations (O).
Programme Theory 4	Transition programmes that give vulnerable students direct experiences of the school building, timetable, staff (C) and provide specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included) promote psychological preparation prior to transfer to enable vulnerable students (C) to feel a sense of competence, confidence and self efficacy (M) so that they have reduced anxiety at the start of Y7 (O).
Programme Theory 5	Transition programmes which foster familiarity and communication between staff and prospective students (O) support students who feel vulnerable and at risk of being bullied (C) by instilling a sense of being looked out for or protected in school (M).
Programme Theory 6	Transition programmes which provide vulnerable Year 6 students with opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing friendships (O) minimise the sense of loss and anxiety (M) in students who worry about being socially isolated or bullied (C).
Programme Theory 7	Transition programmes which seek to remove the barriers between new students and older students (via vertical tutoring etc) (O) minimise the sense of being different, marginalised (M) and maximise sense of being nurtured / looked out for (M) in the youngest, smallest, most vulnerable students who feel like 'the little fish in the big pond' (C).
Programme Theory 8	Transition programmes which have additional visits before and (crucially) **after** common transfer day (C) increase vulnerable students' sense of having the coping strategies and being prepared (M) for the experience of being confident students in the school (O).

Programme Theory 9	Programmes which have clear and effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff (C) enable prospective students to be prepared for the additional and induction visits to the secondary school during the summer term of Year 6 (M) and therefore feel more at ease and to have acquired the information which they perceive as necessary (O).
Programme Theory 10	Programmes which provide students who have experienced behaviour difficulties at primary school (C), with information about the behaviour policy and consequence system, support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries (M) thus creating a successful transition (O).
Programme Theory 11	Transition programmes aim to foster motivation and independence (O) in vulnerable Year 6 students (C) by providing them with practical information, relevant experiences, behavioural expectations and social support networks (staff and student) (M) so that they have a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness (self determinism) (M).
Programme Theory 12	Transition programmes that make use of the older students by involving them in the transition meetings with Y6s (C), increase the students' confidence and trust of Year 6s (M) so that they have a positive experience and perception of their role within the school (sense of belonging) (O).
Programme Theory 13	Transition programmes which include exciting or novel experiences, such as practical lessons (C), increase a sense of enjoyment and curiosity in students (M) so that they feel enthusiastic and motivated about starting Year 7 (O).
Programme Theory 14	Transition programmes enable liaison between staff of both schools and parents so that the individual needs of vulnerable students (C) can be identified (M) and appropriate interventions or support implemented (O).
Programme Theory 15	Transition programmes which offer formal and informal peer mentoring to vulnerable students (C) provide emotional and practical support to new Year 7s (M) so that they feel supported and less anxious about the changes they are experiencing (O).
Programme Theory 16	A transition programme which provides continuity of the primary school curriculum in a nurture group, thereby reducing cognitive load and stress associated with change and provides one attachment figure in a small group (M), leads to a smooth and successful transition to Year 7 (O) for vulnerable students (C).

Overall, at this stage of the study, the evidence from the ranking activity, the focus groups and the staff interviews (displayed in Appendix 10) suggests that the best supported PTs are 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 15 with PTs 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 16 being least robustly supported.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: PHASE TWO

In order to base the research findings on actual experiences, the students' views were again elicited after the transfer to secondary school, during the late stages of their first term of Year 7. Phase Two of the data collection comprised two strands:

- Eliciting the students' views of the transition experience and the most important aspects of the programme implemented by the secondary school; and,

- Checking the validity of the initial PTs with the two members of staff who managed the transition intervention itself.

4.4.1 PHASE TWO DATA ANALYSIS

Phase Two data comprised outcome measures (Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale and the School Children's Happiness Inventory); individual student participant interviews, during which they were asked to identify the most important mechanisms or features of the transition programme for them; and, staff verification interviews.

Meaning was allocated to the raw data during the manual analysis process during Phase Two data analysis, based on the CMO configuration reflected in the PTs which had been explored during the second cycle of the data collection procedure. The refined Programme Theories are displayed in sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.16 which present the themes which emerged, differentiating between those which were associated to the initial PTs and those which emerged separately.

A hierarchically organised schema of final Programme Theories, and super-ordinate PTs, is displayed in Table 4.7 (pp. 126-128). Furthermore, the frequency of individual participants' references to each theme was recorded, to indicate the strength of evidence that individual PTs should be maintained in the research findings.

4.4.2 OUTCOME MEASURES

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
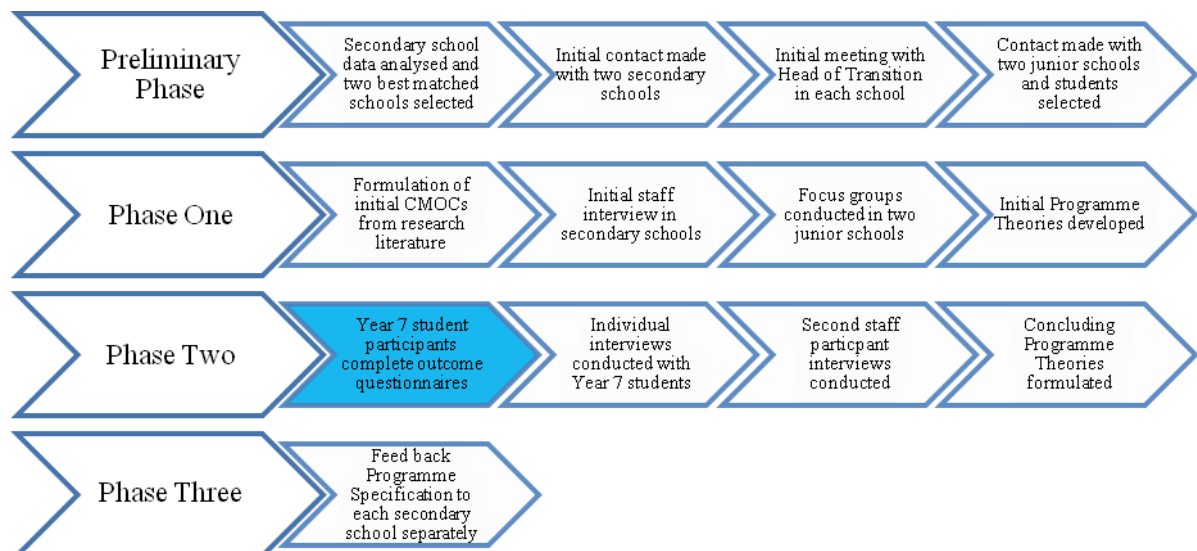
As outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.13, in order to ascertain the success of the two transition programmes, outcome measures were generated for each student who participated in the research toward the end of their first term in their secondary school. Bar charts 4.1 to 4.4 depict individual students' self-rated scores on the two measures employed: The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM; Goodenow, 1993), and The School Children's Happiness Inventory (Ivens, 2007). For the purpose of between-groups

comparison, the schools have been displayed separately. Questionnaires were completed in November 2011, when students were in the first term of Year 7.

4.4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP

Bar Chart 4.1: School A Participants' Self-Rated School Membership Scores
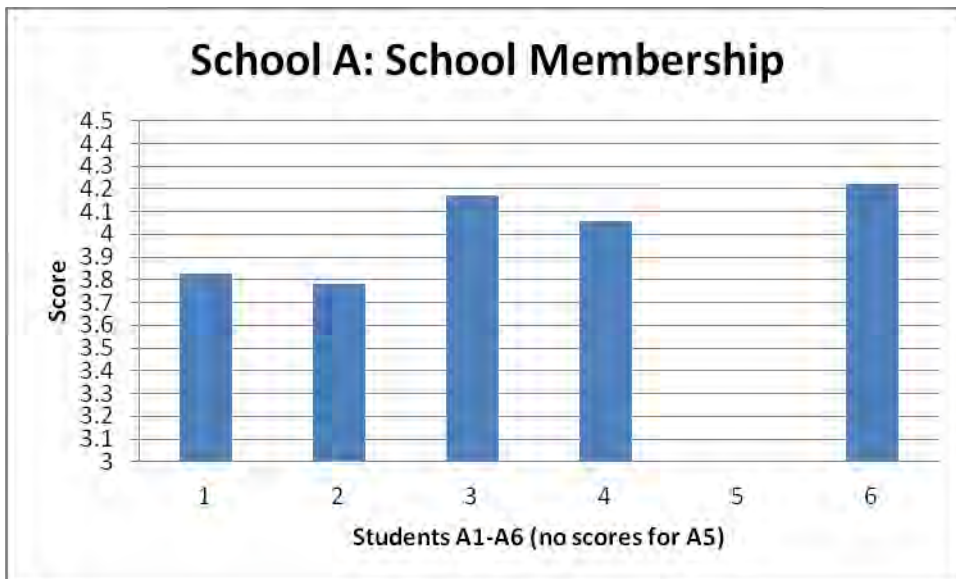
Scores of below 3.0 reflect a more negative than positive perception of school. In urban areas the mean score is 3.1, with a standard deviation of 0.67 (Goodenow, 1993). Using these urban standardisation scores, all participants in school A rated themselves to have a positive perceived sense of belonging, suggesting they felt generally included, supported and accepted in their new school. Two students' scores were positioned within one standard deviation of the mean and the remaining three students' scores lay within two standard deviations of the mean.

In relation to specific vulnerability criteria, students A1 and A2, both with low educational attainment, associated learning difficulties and described as shy or anxious, rated themselves with the lowest sense of belonging in school of this group.

Bar Chart 4.2: School B Participants' Self-Rated School Membership Scores
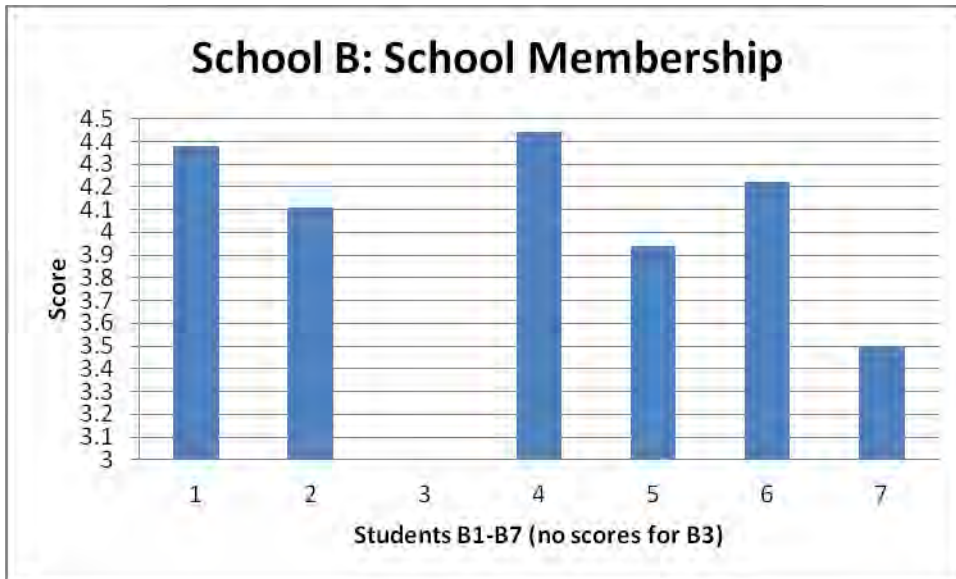
All six students in School B rated themselves as having a positive perception of school. One student's score was positioned within one standard deviation of the mean, while the remaining five scores lay within two standard deviation of the mean. Student B4 rated himself with a score of 4.44, reflecting a very high sense of belonging in school, on the cusp of falling within the top 5% of scores.

Both lowest scoring students, B5 and B7, were described by primary school staff as having poor attainment and associated learning difficulties. Student B5 was also described as shy or anxious, but student B7 was identified as having behaviour difficulties at primary school.

4.4.4 SCHOOL CHILDREN'S HAPPINESS

Bar Chart 4.3: School A Participants' Self-Rated Happiness Scores
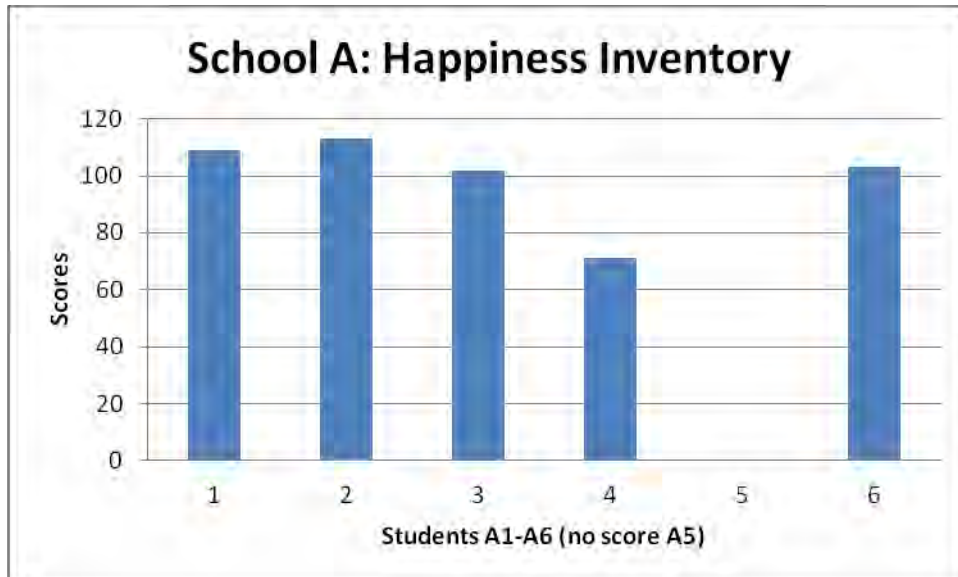
Scores indicate students' school-related happiness in the social, work-related, affective and somatic domains. Scores of between 82 and 89 are considered 'average' and scores of below 63 are considered to be 'very low'. Based on the norm-referenced standardisation sample scores, Students A1 and A2 rated themselves as 'high' in terms of happiness, students A3 and A6 had 'high average' scores and only student A4 had a 'low' score of 71. Student A4 was described as socially isolated and to have challenging home circumstances as a result of his father experiencing mental health difficulties. Therefore his low rating on the happiness measure may have been influenced by factors outside school.

Bar Chart 4.4: School B Participants' Self-Rated Happiness Scores

School B: Happiness Inventory
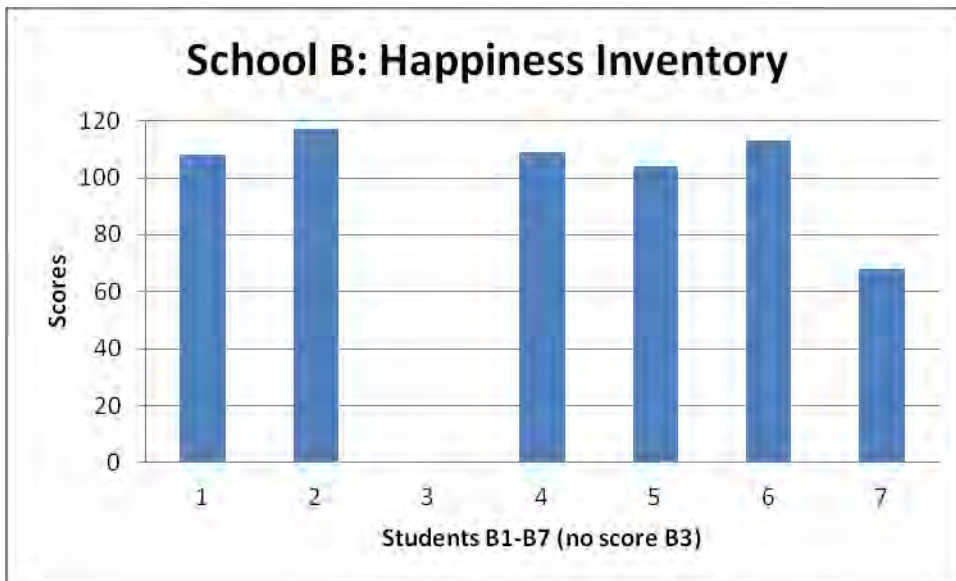
Of the six students at School B who participated in the research, three had 'high' scores (B2, B4 and B6); two had 'high average' scores (B1 and B5) and only one student (B7) had a 'low' score of 68.

During the individual interviews, student B7 did not rate any aspects of the transition programme as 'very important' and reported his strong dislike of having to attend school at all. Student B7 was rated by the primary school staff as vulnerable because of his disaffection, behaviour difficulties and immaturity. It is perhaps therefore not unexpected that Student B7 did not rate his experience of school as being particularly happy.

4.4.5 SUMMARY OF OUTCOME DATA

In both schools, the majority of students rated themselves as happy, in relation to school. In each school, only one student had low scores on the happiness measure (Students A4 and B7). All students who completed the questionnaires rated themselves to have a positive sense of belonging in their new schools.

The following quotation from the member of staff interviewed at School B illuminates her perception of how this sense of belonging develops:

"...I think there they've got that sense of belonging quite quickly, like the house system kicks into play quite quickly...so they'd quickly very very quickly attach themselves to that system (house groupings)."

(BS)

Therefore overall, the outcome data suggest that for all students, despite the recent transition to secondary school, they had all managed to experience a sense of integration in the new setting. Furthermore, nine of the eleven students reported at least high average levels of happiness in their new school.

The two students who reported a lower sense of happiness may have additional complex needs which influenced their perception as measured by the questionnaire. In this instance, these two students did not experience transition in such positive terms as the remaining vulnerable students who participated in this study. Student A4 and student B7 were not identified as 'vulnerable' for the same reasons; thus a pattern of contextual factors cannot be claimed here.

However, it could be argued that the additional transition support provided by Schools A and B, whilst successful for the majority of vulnerable students, did not trigger a 'happiness mechanism' in all the students who had been considered vulnerable. Certainly, Student B7 was memorable during the data collection Phases One and Two as a result of his apparent disinterest in school and in engaging in the research process.

> *"What was it about the extra visits that you came up here for that was good or helpful?"(JM)*
>
> *"I got to miss lessons at primary school..."*
>
> B7 (interview at Phase Two)

However, Student A4 did not present as disaffected, but rather was experiencing challenging home circumstances which may have exerted an influence on his general happiness and well-being.

Overall, the data presented in this section suggest that all of the students had experienced some degree of success on transfer to secondary school, and the majority reported very positive views of themselves and the school. From these data, it is feasible to argue that both transition programmes triggered enabling mechanisms in the vulnerable students during the period prior to and immediately after transfer to Year 7.

4.5 PHASE TWO OF THE PROGRAMME THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure
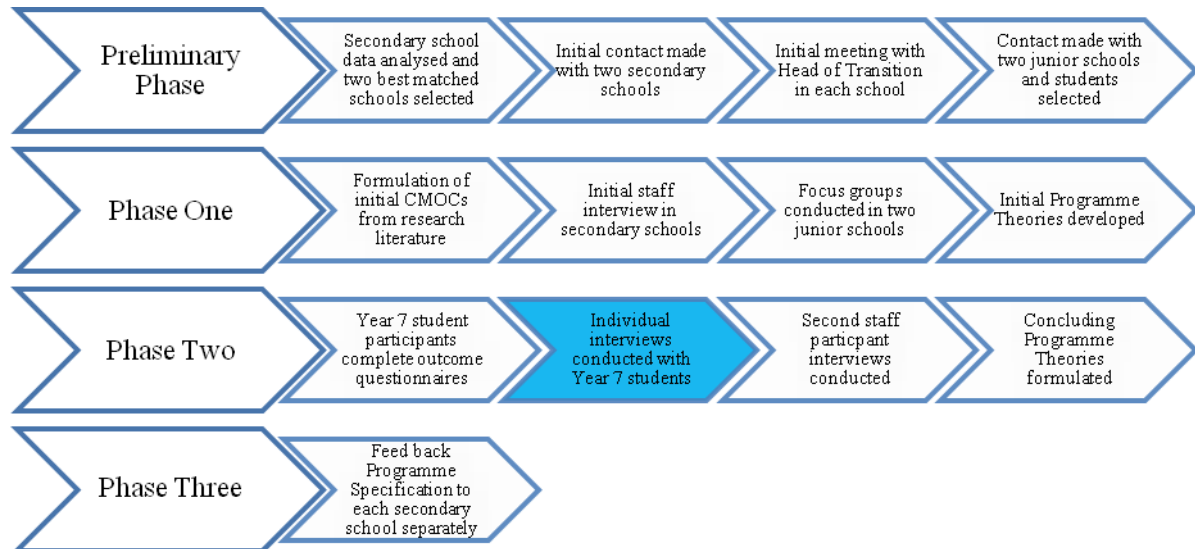
4.5.1 INDIVIDUAL STUDENT INTERVIEWS

In November 2011, the eleven students who were available for this phase of data collection (5 students in School A; 6 students in School B) were asked to select the features and mechanisms of the transition programmes that were most important to them, on an individual basis. Each student was then asked to talk about each of the 'most important' mechanisms and these data were used to refine initial PTs, as outlined below, in conjunction with data provided by the two members of staff.

Bar Chart 4.5 presents the frequency of selection of each mechanism, as described in each of the sixteen initial PTs, as 'very important'. Bar charts display student choices on an

individual school basis and as a combination of the two settings. This approach enables a within and between school comparison of the most frequently rated PTs.

Bar Chart 4.5: Student-Selected Very Important PTs
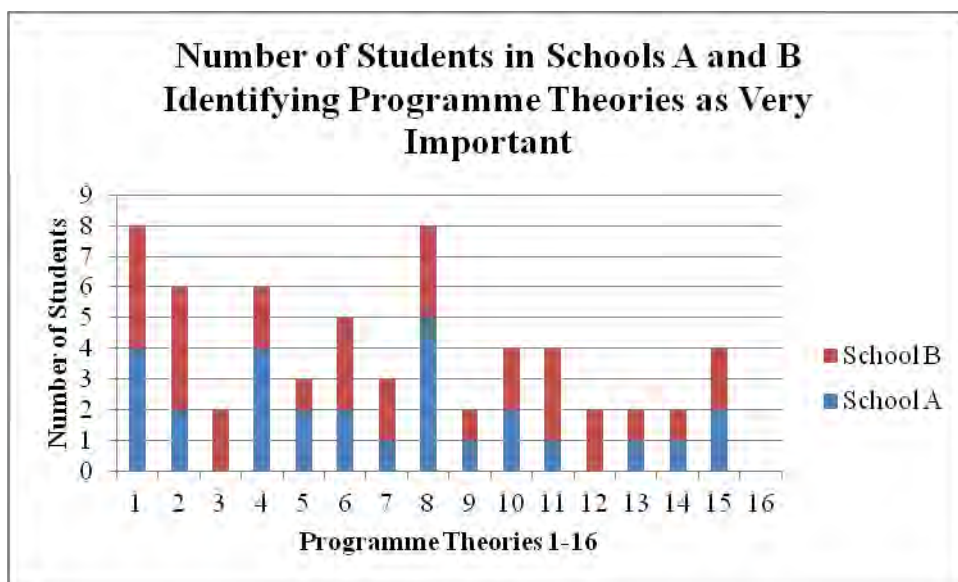
The total number of students who contributed to this data set was ten, because student B7 did not chose any PT to be very important, so his data were not included in this section.

The most frequently chosen PTs were PT1: *a fresh start*: (selected as very important by 8 students) and PT8: *additional visits* (selected by 8 students). These PTs were concerned with providing students with a sense that secondary school could offer them a 'fresh start' (PT1) and enabling additional visits to be made to the secondary school in order to facilitate the students' development of a sense of being prepared, self-efficacy and confidence (PT8).

PT2: *consistent member of staff,* and PT4: *direct experiences of timetable and building,* were each selected by six students as very important to them. PT6: *fostering new friendships,* was rated very important by five students and PT10: *behaviour policy information,*, PT11: *fosters motivation and independence,* and PT15: *peer mentoring,* had four students rate as very important. The least important PTs were PT3: *open and frank discussion with older students*,

PT9: *liaison between primary and secondary school*, PT12: *older students visiting primary school*, PT13: *novel and exciting lessons*, PT14: *liaison between staff and parents or carers,* which all had two people rate them as very important. No-one rated PT16: *curriculum continuity through nurture group or behaviour support access,* as very important.

However staff interviews provided some evidence to suggest that PT16 does have relevance for some vulnerable students, in their view. The students who participated in the present research did not have direct experience of either the nurture group or the behaviour support team, so were not able to assert an informed view of this PT.

4.5.1(i) MOST IMPORTANT PTs FOR STUDENTS IN SCHOOL A (5 students)

PTs 3 and 12 were not very important to anyone in School A. This will be explored later. By far the most important PT, to all five of the students involved in Phase Two of the data collection, was PT8 (additional visits). The following reasons were given:

"It was like I got to meet different people and different teachers, so I knew more people when I got to the school." B2

"Yeah because I had experience of like going here and knowing what to do like...I had experience of cos if I had experience then I'd know what to do here." A3

PT1 (fresh start) and PT4 (provides direct experiences of building, timetable, visual information) were the next most important PTs. Even if only one student rated a specific PT as very important, then this should still be considered a relevant PT because it was highly significant for that particular student, thereby triggering an enabling mechanism which resulted in a successful transition.

4.5.1(ii) MOST IMPORTANT PTs FOR STUDENTS IN SCHOOL B (6 students)

Overall students in School B chose PT1 (fresh start) and PT2 (providing a consistent person to liaise with) as the most important elements of their transition programme.

> PT1
>
> *"At the juniors it wa the bullying, it did happen but nobody knows that, like it's no one knows so you can just like start all over again, make new friends."* A1
>
> *"You've got the chance to do what you want, and no one can question you and what you've done before."* B6
>
> PT2
>
> *"...you know her and she teels you that if you've got any problems then you can just go to ther straightaway..."* A6
>
> *"So that I know that I can go to her for help if I need help."* B4

Three of the six students who chose 'very important' PTs, identified PT3 (open and frank discussions with older students), PT8 (additional visits) and PT11 (encourage independence by supplying required information and social support) as key for them. Only PT16 was not chosen by any student as being very important.

4.5.2 REALISTIC INTERVIEWS

All students and staff were interviewed on an individual basis as part of Phase Two of the data collection process. Students were asked to clarify the factors influencing their rating of PTs as 'very important', and to elucidate the ways in which these mechanisms were triggered. Staff interviews at this stage of the study, were conducted to validate, refine or reject the initial PTs, in parallel with the data from student interviews.

At least two students had chosen each of the PTs, except PT16, as 'very important' so none was excluded at this point. Staff provided evidence supporting PT16, which justified its inclusion in the study, at this stage.

4.5.3 EXPLANATION OF THE CMOCS AND PT REFINEMENT PROCESS

Once all of the second cycle staff and student interviews were transcribed, data were categorised into CMO groupings according to each Programme Theory. These groups of data, located in Appendix 8, enabled the reading and re-reading of the key messages for each individual Programme Theory, gleaned from the participants. Key words and phrases that provided evidence to support initial PTs were colour coded for ease of interpretation.[3]

The subsequent analytic task was to collate CMOs for each Programme Theory based on each school's data. Where CMOs were identical or almost identical across settings, a refined Programme Theory was developed, based on the evidence from students and staff. In the case of CMO configurations which were pertinent to one school only, a Programme Theory was developed or refined but labelled to be school-specific.

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[3] Colour coding throughout: orange=context; green=mechanism; blue=outcome; red=new evidence

Figure 3.1: Data Collection Procedure

Preliminary Phase	Secondary school data analysed and two best matched schools selected	Initial contact made with two secondary schools	Initial meeting with Head of Transition in each school	Contact made with two junior schools and students selected
Phase One	Formulation of initial CMOCs from research literature	Initial staff interview in secondary schools	Focus groups conducted in two junior schools	Initial Programme Theories developed
Phase Two	Year 7 student participants complete outcome questionnaires	Individual interviews conducted with Year 7 students	Second staff participant interviews conducted	Concluding Programme Theories formulated
Phase Three	Feed back Programme Specification to each secondary school separately			

For example PT1, which relates to transition programmes that facilitate **a fresh start,** has a CMO configuration that encompasses the perspectives from both School A and School B.

> *"For learning and that, and it's a fresh start for making new friends. It's like starting school all over again, like in a higher school and keeping the knowledge that you already had."*
> *(Student A4)*
> *"Then I don't have to worry about the things that was [sic] going on in the old school."*
> *(Student B1)*

This CMO configuration reflects the almost identical nature of the reported experiences and perspectives of students and staff from both settings and suggests it may be a PT which is applicable in other secondary schools. Although full generalisation is not an aim for this study, given the critical realist epistemology of the research design, themes can be extracted from the data which are likely to hold relevance across other similar settings. In essence

patterns or regularities in the data are presented as potentially useful or relevant in other similar settings.

As an illustrative example, Table 4.6 below outlines PT1 and the evidence provided by staff and students, who supported, rejected or sought refinement of the message encapsulated by this PT. Evidence for remaining PT refinement is located in Appendix 17.

Table 4.6: Evidence Provided by Participants for Second Phase Analysis and Refinement of Programme Theory 1

PT1 (fresh start)	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School A	Students who experienced bullying, were socially isolated, had poor attendance, had behaviour difficulties or did not achieve to their potential Staff facilitate a new start by ensuring children are not judged by their previous behavioural difficulties Staff ensure children who have inter-personal difficulties are not grouped together	Experience reductions in worry or anxiety, feel they can have a fresh start, feel that school will be enjoyable, feel that they have control over attendance and attainment improvements, will be able to make new friends	Feel happier, more positive about school, feel optimistic about better opportunities, can become more socially included
School B	Students who experienced bullying, had difficulties managing their own behaviour and were perceived by others negatively, did not have supportive friendships Staff emphasise high expectations relating to behaviour	Can interact with more pleasant people than before, can forget about the negative experiences at primary school, can experience a range of activities, can start again and not be judged by your previous actions / mistakes	Reconstruct yourself more positively, have a new start, make new friends and enjoy school, take charge of your behaviour, learning and future

	Staff ensure children who have negative influences on each other are encouraged to interact with more appropriately behaved students		

4.5.3 (i) ORIGINAL PT1

PT1: Transition programmes that emphasise that Y7 is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' and specifically select the information that is to be shared with teaching staff (M), instil a sense of optimism, hope and motivation for students (thereby resulting in a successful transition) (O), particularly for those students who have experienced behavioural difficulties or have had negative experiences at primary school (C).

4.5.3 (ii) REFINED PT 1

PT1: Transition programmes that emphasise a 'fresh start' will be possible for students who previously experienced behavioural, relationship or educational difficulties at primary school (C), facilitate a sense of hope and optimism (M) and provide students with reassurance that they will not be judged by their previous difficulties (M) so that they believe that secondary school will be a positive and enjoyable experience that will promote social inclusion, expand their opportunities and create better outcomes[4] (O).

4.6 FINAL PROGRAMME THEORIES

Evidence provided by students and staff enabled the initial sixteen PTs to be refined. The refined PTs are presented below.

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[4] Text in red signifies changes in wording following second phase analysis

4.6.1 Programme Theory 1

PT1: Transition programmes that emphasise a 'fresh start' will be possible for students who previously experienced behavioural, relationship or educational difficulties at primary school (C), facilitate a sense of hope and optimism, reduce anxiety (M) and provide students with reassurance that they will not be judged on their previous difficulties (M) so that they believe that secondary school will be a positive and enjoyable experience that will promote social inclusion, expand their opportunities and create better outcomes (O).

4.6.2 Programme Theory 2

PT2: Transition programmes that provide students with consistent key people to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7 makes students feel secure, looked after, listened to and prepared (M) so that particularly shy, anxious and socially isolated students (C) develop the competencies to cope with transition and the new demands of Y7 (O).

4.6.3 Programme Theory 3

PT3: Transition Programmes that facilitate open, frank and informal discussions between prospective Year 7s and older students (C) enables vulnerable students to develop knowledge and information that they trust to be true (M) so that they feel prepared for the move and have the information needed to overcome any difficulties they may encounter (M) thus creating a successful transition (O).

4.6.4 Programme Theory 4

PT4: Transition programmes that give vulnerable students (C) direct experiences of the school building, timetable and provide specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included) promote psychological preparation and reduce fear and anxiety (M) prior to transfer so that students to develop a sense of competence, confidence and self-efficacy and experience a smooth transition (O).

4.6.5 Programme Theory 5

PT5: Transition programmes which foster familiarity and communication between key staff and vulnerable students (M), particularly those who are shy, anxious and socially isolated (C), facilitate a sense of being looked out for and a sense of confidence in the students (M), so that they know who to go to for support if needed (O).

4.6.6 Programme Theory 6

PT6: Transition programmes that provide vulnerable students, who have been isolated or have experienced difficulties (C), with opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing ones thus minimising anxiety, loss and developing security and inclusion (M) thus creating a successful transition (O).

4.6.7 Programme Theory 7

PT7: Transition Programmes that remove the barriers between vulnerable new students and older students by promoting a supportive ethos amongst students (C) through vertical tutoring and peer mentoring, create a successful transition for vulnerable students (O) by minimising the sense of being different or inexperienced and maximising the sense of being looked after and supported (M).

4.6.8 Programme Theory 8

PT8: Transition Programmes that provide additional visits for vulnerable students to the school prior to the start of Year 7 (C) increase the students' sense of self-efficacy, preparedness and confidence (M) so that they experience a smooth transition and cope well with the transfer (O).

4.6.9 Programme Theory 9

PT9: Effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff regarding students who require additional support around learning or pastoral care (M) assures anxious students who may have low attainment (C) that appropriate, personalised support will be implemented for them (M) so that they can transfer with a sense of ease and confidence in the secondary school staff (O).

4.6.10 Programme Theory 10

PT10: Transition programmes that provide students, who have experienced behaviour difficulties or are worried about the behaviour / consequence system (C), with information about the behaviour policy and consequence system, will reduce anxiety, develop self-regulation strategies and support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries (M) thereby facilitates informed decision-making and creates the potential for a successful transition (O).

4.6.11 Programme Theory 11

PT11: Transition Programmes that aim to foster a sense of responsibility in vulnerable students (C) by providing them with practical information and tools (planners, timetables) and social support networks so that they increasingly develop the skills required (autonomy, self-organisation, problem solving and motivation) (M) for succeeding in school and later in life more generally (O).

4.6.12 Programme Theory 12

PT12: Transition programmes that optimise the development of a group identity and membership (O) by involving older students in transition meetings and by highlighting groupings (C) thus increase the impact of positive experiences and a sense of belonging and trust (M) in vulnerable students on transfer.

4.6.13 Programme Theory 13

PT13: Transition programmes which include exciting and novel experiences, using different equipment and practical demonstrations (C), increase vulnerable students' sense of enjoyment and curiosity (M) so that they feel enthusiastic and motivated about the move to secondary school (O).

4.6.14 Programme Theory 14

PT14: Transition programmes that enable liaison between staff and parents and carers (M) of vulnerable students (C), increase assurance that appropriate support will be implemented by the school (O) by identifying and sharing individual needs and by providing salient information to families (M).

4.6.15 Programme Theory 15

PT15: Transition programmes that offer formal and informal peer mentoring provide emotional and practical support to Y6s before and after transfer, so that they feel supported, understood, and less anxious about the changes they are experiencing (M), thus creating a successful transition (O) especially amongst vulnerable students (C).

4.6.16 Programme Theory 16

> **PT16:**   A transition programme that provides continuity of the primary school curriculum in a nurture group for the most vulnerable students (C), thereby reducing cognitive load and stress associated with change and increase security by promoting positive relationships with a small number of consistent staff (M), leads to a smooth and personalised re-integration into mainstream lessons during Y7 (O).

4.7 DATA FROM STUDENT AND STAFF PARTICIPANTS WHICH SUPPORT IDENTIFIED BETWEEN-SCHOOLS DIFFERENCES

In reference to PT2 (providing a key consistent person to liaise with), School B do not promote the role of the Year Manager as being emotionally available for the students, which is a different approach to School A. In School A, the Year Manager refers to herself as:

AS

"A school mum"

And suggests that:

"...I think because they know me, they know me from early on, they know me from Year 6, cos you know we go in to see them quite often, they come here, they sort of get to know me, they feel more comfortable you know they're not afraid to approach me; I'm not just the old fashioned Head of Year who deals with behaviour." (p.3)

PT7 (vertical tutoring) and PT15 (peer mentoring) refer to the importance of removing barriers between new students and older students, through vertical tutoring and peer mentoring.

"...it (vertical tutoring) does make them have less fear of the older children." AS

Whilst both schools have implemented vertical tutoring, according to transition tutors in both schools, to positive effect, only the Transition Manager from School B explicitly stated that she utilises peer mentoring to support transferring students. However, evidence from staff interviews, suggests that both schools adopt a comparable approach with older students being employed throughout the transition process. The difference between the two schools, therefore, lies in the narrative explanation of this involvement, as formal or informal peer mentoring. Several students referred to the benefits of having an older friend or relative attending the school. This reportedly provided the new students with a sense of being 'looked out for' and of having prior anecdotal knowledge of the school ethos and salient operational factors, such as the behaviour policy and consequence system.

PT8 refers to additional visits to school, and both schools offer the new Year 7 students the opportunity to experience secondary school an Induction Day without the older students being present. There is some evidence to suggest that some of the students found this challenging, in relation to managing expectations.

> *" the only problem was when we had the extra day no one was there; NO that was the first day yeah when we had the first day by ourselves it was ok to get used to the school and everything but I think you should have had the big kids cos then you'd get used to the kids and everything"*
>
> (Student A3; individual interview, Phase Two)

They argued that this first day at school was therefore not fully reflective of the reality with which they would be faced the following day.

PT11 encapsulates the concept of a school fostering independence and a sense of responsibility in its new students. However, School B adopts a different approach to School A because it is explicitly aiming to provide a team of staff to support vulnerable students

rather than one consistent (attachment) person (as does School A). The School B system was reportedly implemented due to a decision made by the school's management team as a direct result of school staff previously experiencing difficulties with students becoming so attached to a member of staff that they refused to talk to anyone else if difficulties arose.

"...what we're trying to do, is like with the inclusion team, is have a team of people so that children aren't reliant on just one person but inevitably some children do latch onto one member of staff, but what we needed to get away from was, what we used to have, was 'I'm only talking to that member of staff' and no there's a team of people you can talk to"

(Staff Participant School B; individual interview Phase Two)

4.8 DEVELOPMENT OF SUPER ORDINATE PROGRAMME THEORIES

Several of the PTs have similar themes underpinning them, for example, PT3, PT7, PT12 and PT15 all encompass the contextual factor of older students interacting with the vulnerable Year 6 students. Therefore, it would be useful to integrate these individual PTs and construct a super-ordinate PT which reflects the key contexts, mechanisms and outcomes contained in each of these more specific PTs.

This process resulted in eight final PTs (four of which are Super-Ordinate PTs and the remaining four are initial PTs), I acknowledge that some PTs have stronger evidence to support them than others. In order to demonstrate the strength of each PT, they are presented in order of value to the participants, with the first being the most important for most people. In addition, alongside each super-ordinate PT the number of participants, in whose view the PT was rated as of high importance, is presented in brackets.

Table 4.7: Hierarchically Organised Final Programme Theories and Super-Ordinate

Programme Theories

Super-Ordinate PT1 (combining refined PT4, PT8, PT11 and PT13)

Transition programmes that provide vulnerable students with direct practical and novel experiences of the school building, practical lessons and the timetable and provide specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included) (C) promote psychological preparedness, reduce fear and anxiety (M) and foster responsibility, curiosity and motivation (M) prior to and during transfer so that students to develop a sense of autonomy, self-organisation, competence and self-efficacy and experience a smooth transition (O) which enables them to acquire the necessary skills for school and later life (O).

(20 student and 2 staff nominations)

Super-Ordinate PT2 (combining refined PT3, PT7, PT12 and PT15)

Transition programmes that facilitate open and frank discussions between prospective Year 7 students and older peers, seek to remove barriers by instilling a supportive community ethos, encompassing formal or informal peer mentoring and vertical tutoring and, optimise group identity and a sense of school membership (C) enable vulnerable students to develop knowledge and information that they trust to be true (M) so that they feel less anxious, more understood and prepared for the move, and have the information needed to overcome any difficulties they may encounter (M) thus minimising the sense of being different or inexperienced and maximise the sense of being looked after and supported, thus creating a successful transition (O).

(11 student and 2 staff nominations)

Super-Ordinate PT3 (combining refined PT2 and PT5)

Transition programmes that provide students with consistent key people to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7 makes students feel secure, looked after, listened to and prepared (M) so that particularly shy, anxious and socially isolated students (C) know who to go to for support and develop the competencies to cope with transition and the new demands of Y7 (O).

(9 student and 2 staff nominations)

Final PT4 (from refined PT1 only)

Transition programmes that emphasise a 'fresh start' will be possible for students who previously experienced behavioural, relationship or educational difficulties at primary school

(C), facilitate a sense of hope and optimism (M) and provide students with reassurance that they will not be judged on their previous difficulties (M) so that they believe that secondary school will be a positive and enjoyable experience that will promote social inclusion, expand their opportunities and create better outcomes (O).

(8 students and 2 staff nominations)

Final PT5 (from refined PT6 only)

Transition programmes that provide vulnerable students, who have been isolated or have experienced difficulties (C), with opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing ones thus minimising anxiety, loss and developing security and inclusion (M) thus creating a successful transition (O).

(5 student and 2 staff nominations)

Super-Ordinate PT6 (combining refined PT9 and PT14)

Effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff and, between secondary school staff and parents or carers, regarding students who require additional support around learning or pastoral care (C) assures anxious students who may have low attainment and assures parents or carers (M) that appropriate, personalised support will be implemented for the students so that they can transfer with a sense of ease and confidence in the secondary school staff and ensures parents or carers have the relevant information needed to support their children (O).

(4 student and 2 staff nominations)

Final PT7 (from refined PT10 only)

Transition programmes that provide students, who have experienced behaviour difficulties or are worried about the behaviour / consequence system (C), with information about the behaviour policy and consequence system, will reduce anxiety, develop self-regulation strategies and support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries (M) thereby facilitates informed decision-making and creates the potential for a successful transition (O).

 (4 student and 2 staff nominations)

Final PT8 (from refined PT16 only)

A transition programme that provides continuity of the primary school curriculum in a nurture group for the most vulnerable students (C), thereby reducing cognitive load and stress

associated with change and increase security by promoting positive relationships with a small number of consistent staff (M), leads to a smooth and personalised re-integration into mainstream lessons during Y7 (O).

 (2 staff nominations only)

Final PT8 did not have sufficient evidence from the current study to justify its inclusion in the final discussion, and was therefore rejected at this stage. However, staff from both schools did express their view that nurture group provision is a useful means of supporting vulnerable Year 6 students transferring to secondary school. For the purposes of this study, though, only features of the transition programmes that were evidenced by student participants will be included in the final conclusions drawn.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In order to discuss the findings of the present study using a logical and applicable approach, I have elected to focus on the evidence to support the final Programme Theories rather than compartmentalising data into each of the three research questions separately. Essentially the research questions ask what are the similarities and differences between individuals' experiences of the transition programmes, and what are the contexts and what are the mechanisms which were triggered by the interventions?

Therefore, by exploring the CMO configurations inherent in each Programme Theory, the three research questions will be routinely discussed. All but two of the eleven students who participated in Phase Two of the research project, reported at least average levels of school-related happiness and all eleven students reported at least average levels of school membership, post-transition. This adds further support that the notion that the CMO configurations generated from the data elicited from the students, do reflect the processes that occurred during successful transition.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the overall Programme Specification to be discussed does indeed offer evidence-based guidance in relation to the facilitation of salient proactive and effective transition support for vulnerable students.

5.2 DEVELOPMENT OF FINAL PROGRAMME THEORIES

The present study led to the co-formulation of a series of seven Programme Theories which are argued to underpin transition programmes for vulnerable students, implemented by two

urban secondary schools in the Midlands. Contemporary research in this field has a penchant for focusing on the outcomes of generic transition interventions, or of eliciting practitioner or student views related to transition (for example, Ashton, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Dann, 2011; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), yet has not generally sought to elucidate the underlying mechanisms which are potentially triggered by the interventions themselves.

I will now discuss the main findings systematically before presenting the study's limitations, so that the reader can ascertain their level of application. To illustrate how future research could be conducted, based on improving the areas outlined in the 'limitations' section, I will suggest some pertinent recommendations for both future research and for practitioners.

5.2.1 THE FEELING PREPARED PROGRAMME THEORY (Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 1)

The CMO configuration of the Feeling Prepared Programme Theory essentially comprises the facilitation of pertinent information sharing and access to experiences which instil a sense of competence in vulnerable students by explicitly planning for and supporting students in a range of ways, including providing tours of the school building, guided use of planners and so on. PT1 is supported by previous research findings in the domain of the relevance of increasing students' sense of competence (Ashton, 2008; Gillison et al., 2008; Dann, 2011) which promote explicit support in fostering this important psychological construct (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Of the participants in the present study, ten stated that having access to practical experiences and visual aids was a very important aspect of transition intervention in increasing a sense of preparedness and competence as well as reducing anxiety about the move to secondary school. The only student (B7) who did not select the CMO configurations, incumbent in the Feeling Prepared Programme Theory, as very important, did

choose initial PT8 (having extra visits to the school before starting in Year 7) as quite important during Phase Two of the data collection process. Furthermore, Student B7 did not select any of the mechanisms presented during in his individual interview, as very important.

The evidence to support the Feeling Prepared Programme Theory appears to be persuasive and for this reason, it is highly likely that planned and explicit support for facilitating direct, novel and practical experiences and for encouraging guided discovery for vulnerable students should be a chief aspect of all transition interventions so that their students are well-prepared, motivated and confident.

Jindal-Snape and Miller (2010) suggest that students who feel confident and competent are more likely to manage the challenges which are an inevitable part of secondary school transfer. Furthermore, primary schools have a potentially influential role to fulfil in supporting their most vulnerable students to prepare for secondary school (Zeedyk et al., 2003). Teaching organisation and coping skills and, instilling a sense of taking responsibility while still at primary school are argued to be particularly effective means of implementing smooth transitions for vulnerable students (Kapasi and Hancock, 2006).

However, supplementary and complementary CMO configurations have also been identified as very important.

5.2.2 THE FEELING SUPPORTED BY OLDER PEERS PROGRAMME THEORY (Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 2)

Seven of the eleven students involved in Phase Two of the data collection process selected the involvement of older students as being very important in supporting them through transition. Students in School B chose this as a very important feature of transition more often than students in School A (four compared to three), although three of the four students in School B

who each selected the support provided by older students as very important, did so at least twice during their individual interviews. Peer Mentoring is heralded as constituting a large proportion of supportive practice in School B, not exclusively for transition work, but also throughout the school organisation. Yet, three of the five students in School A also ranked the involvement of older students as very important to them, despite Peer Mentoring not being identified as a formal modus operandi in that setting. Staff involved in the current study perceived the contribution of older students as a key means of providing support and information to the younger students, because this creates a sense of school membership, identity and trust. This statement can be evidenced by their direct quotations below.

> *"...I also say to them that you'll probably believe what the children, my students say more than what I'll say..."*
>
> (BS)
>
> *"...when we go back into junior schools we take the children back in as well, the students who have come from that junior school, so they probably know them and they trust them and if you know they're saying 'it's fine, we're happy' then they'll think 'ok that's alright then'."*
>
> (AS)

Sancho (2010) strongly recommends facilitating a sense of belonging in secondary school, as part of the transition process, because of the evidence base suggesting that this aids academic engagement, social competence (Goodenow, 1993; Battistich and Hom, 1997) and personal development (Ashton, 2008). Ridge (2002) suggests that peers can greatly contribute to new students' sense of belonging in school. Interestingly, there are some links with Super-Ordinate PT1, in that having confidence in one's own ability to independently negotiate the school environment is suggested to enhance students' sense of belonging in their new school (Ganeson and Ehrich, 2009).

5.2.3 THE FEELING NURTURED BY A CONSISTENT MEMBER OF STAFF

PROGRAMME THEORY (Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 3)

The research suggests that having a consistent key liaison person (or people) to be in contact with during stressful events, such as transition, can be beneficial (Geddes, 2006; Gilligan, 2007; Van Ryzin, 2010; Dann, 2011). Seven of the eleven students involved in the current study nominated having contact with a consistent person (or people) in the secondary school they attended as very important. From the interview transcripts, the member of staff in School A who was responsible for transition and who was also the Year 7 Manager, felt strongly that she was "a school mum" (Phase Two staff interview transcript, p. 3). She also stated that:

> *"I think they rather see me as their security blanket..." (p.3)*

Although four of the six students in School B perceived having access to a consistent person during the transition period as important, the member of staff in School B was unsure whether vulnerable students viewed her as fulfilling this role, but rather

> *"the teaching assistants that run the moving on up groups and those six weeks prior to Induction day, that when they would be more consistent people for those most vulnerable than what I would even be." (Phase Two staff interview transcript p.23)*

The students' perceptions of this CMO configuration were more illuminative when they suggested that:

> *"...she's the Year Manager and she knows." (Student A2)*
>
> *"...if you went to another person who didn't know you, then they can't explain what to do..." (Student B1)*
>
> *"...(the pre-transition meetings) showed me that she was a nice teacher, and so if I'm in trouble, or somebody's bullying me, then I could tell her." (Student B2)*

Although students appeared aware that key staff were available to support them if this was required, the staff perceived their own roles as encompassing a combination of emotional support **and** encouragement to develop independence as Year 7 progressed. This rationale is supported by previously conducted research which argues that developing a supportive relationship with a member of school staff offers emotional protection for vulnerable students (Geddes, 2006; Gilligan, 2007; Van Ryzin, 2010; Dann, 2011). Furthermore, Lucas et al. (2006) and Colley (2009) suggest that the substitute caregiver role often assumed by primary school staff, can be beneficial for the most vulnerable students (Cook et al., 2008). Nurture provision in secondary schools continues these conditions (Boxall, 1969; Lucas et al., 2006; Perry, 2009) but having access to a consistent key person could arguably be good enough for the students whose needs are not so significant as those who would access nurture provision (Brewin and Statham, 2011).

5.2.4 THE FRESH START PROGRAMME THEORY (Final Programme Theory 4)

This PT incorporates the concept of secondary school transition providing vulnerable students with 'a fresh start'. This PT was not formulated from a combination of initial PTs and has been in existence as a PT in its own right from the beginning of the research project. Although few students viewed having a fresh start as important in the run up to their transfer to Year 7, eight of the eleven students perceived this as very important on reflection, during individual interviews at Phase Two of the research study. Both members of staff involved in this study identified 'offering a fresh start' as very important at all stages of the research. As

members of staff who have been over-seeing the transition of students for several years, they are highly likely to have developed 'folk theories' about what is most relevant or useful for vulnerable students. These folk theories are typically grounded in evidence, whether anecdotal or more robust (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

The research literature focusing primarily on transition for vulnerable students is limited and more general literature investigating the concept of a fresh start is even less well established. However, Weiss and Bearman (2004) argue that students who have experienced peer, academic or behavioural difficulties at primary school welcome the opportunity of a fresh start on transfer to secondary school. The majority of student participants involved in the present study concur with this proposition, as evidenced in the following quotations:

> *"...because you've got another seven years ahead of you, then that's basically seven years of a fresh start, and then like you want to improve better [sic], and you want to get good grades whatever..."* (Student A6)
>
> *"Cos I was quite naughty at primary school, cos at primary school people just called me "idiot" and that they'd talk about me and stuff"* (Student B2)

Evidently, some of the students experienced secondary school transfer as a potentially positive experience which permitted them to feel optimistic that school life could be better than before. By experiencing an increased sense of optimism and positivity related to school, it is argued that motivation may be higher than previously, which in turn could have a beneficial impact on their academic, behavioural, social and emotional outcomes (Galton et al., 2000; Weiss and Bearman, 2004; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; and Brewin and Statham, 2011). Clearly, this PT is one which practitioners would benefit from being aware of, so that transition programmes could actively emphasise the possibility of experiencing a new

beginning and enjoying positive outcomes for their most vulnerable students. By doing so,

students may avoid academic and social disengagement by being reassured that they will not

be judged by their previous mistakes.

> *"...and I think we do highlight our students who we think might have experienced behaviour difficulties and are aware of them but that is limited on who is aware of them the teaching staff aren't aware cos then we can give them that fresh start otherwise if we give everybody the information that fresh start isn't going to happen is it?" (Staff interview; School A)*

As highlighted in the quotation above, some school staff intentionally restrict student

information that is potentially available so that students will not be judged or misrepresented

by teaching staff. This demonstrates a commitment to the 'fresh start' mechanism and

appears to facilitate this for the students. Other settings may construe the 'fresh start' with

subtle differences that emphasise increased expectations on the students, as does School B:

> *"...maybe the most vulnerable ones would want a fresh start and you would sell it like that to them... one of the things we do say is 'c'mon you're in secondary school now you've got to there's a different set of expectations for you we work in different ways from primary school." (Staff interview; School B).*

5.2.5 THE PEER FRIENDSHIPS PROGRAMME THEORY (Final Programme Theory 5)

Peer relationships have been consistently highlighted as of the utmost importance to students

during the transition period (Ashton, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008), and a factor often

reportedly overlooked by staff (Ashton, 2008). In fact, disrupted friendships have been cited

as a frequent and potentially negative factor in determining the well-being of students

undergoing transition (Pratt and George, 2005).

The findings of the current study support the conclusions of previous research and suggest

that friendships are considered very important to approximately half of the group of

vulnerable students questioned (five of a total of eleven). Conversely, both members of staff

interviewed confirmed their perception that maintaining existing or forging new friendships

was indeed important in optimising the chances of a successful transition for vulnerable

students but they did not consider this to be the most important element of transition:

> *"...what we have to in secondary school we sort of have to part of my role is from when they start and this is what we have to do with the parents as well is get them into the feeling that they're in the lessons to **learn** to not be with their friends and that takes with these vulnerable children that's a long process..." (Staff interview; School A)*

> *"...but it's a fine balance between putting a pressure on another child to look after one and actually knowing that it is a productive friendship..." (Staff interview; School B)*

Rather, staff appear to comprehend the importance of fostering new friendships during the

pre-transition phase but advocate academic effort once year 7 commences, rather than social

and emotional inclusion. This learning-related emphasis may be directly linked with the

reported attainment dip noted around the time of transfer to secondary school, and reflective

of staff endeavours to optimise learning and academic outcomes. There is some evidence,

therefore, to suggest that staff under-estimate the importance of peer friendships as a

protective factor during the transition process, despite evidence being available to support this

claim (Hertzog et al., 1996; Mental Health Foundation, 1999; Carter et al., 2005; West et al.,

2008). Furthermore, being supported in maintaining old friendships and developing new

ones, may protect against the sense of loss, often cited as pertinent for students transferring to

secondary school (Measor and Woods, 1984; Dickinson et al., 2003). In fact, to safeguard

against the manifestation of emotional or mental ill health, as a result of loss of friendship,

increased stress and so on (Weller, 2007; West et al., 2010), it seems prudent for secondary

school staff to support vulnerable students with their peer relationships. The following

quotation is an opportune reminder of the importance of this aspect of transition:

"I didn't have that many friends in my old school...I knew I would have more friends there (secondary school)...(so) I won't feel left out..." (Student A1).

5.2.6 THE ADULT LIAISON PROGRAMME THEORY (Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 6)

Effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff and between secondary school staff and parents and carers is considered essential for a successful transition by four of the eleven students and for both members of staff interviewed during the present study.

Crucially, this liaison enabled parents and carers and their children to feel reassured that pertinent information had been shared and that, therefore, the appropriate support would be implemented at secondary school level. The literature suggests that sharing salient information may offer reassurance to parents and carers, that staff are competent and can meet their children's needs (Dann, 2011).

From the student participants' perspective, involving primary school staff and parents or carers in the transition process resulted in a sense of ease that secondary school staff have an understanding of their individual needs. In addition, some students articulated their relief that, as a result of this liaison, their parents were able to access the required information so that they (the student) would not have to worry over the summer holiday about whether their school uniform was appropriate or not. It appears evident that effective liaison reduces students' level of worry or unease prior to transfer, therefore culminating in a less stressful and more enjoyable transition.

> *"Because then my other teachers could tell them what my levels are and what I'm like"* *(Student B5)*

> *"...they gave my dad information about the school...like the uniform..."* *(Student B4)*

A limitation of the present study, which will be explored later, was the omission of the views of parents and carers. Therefore, it is impossible to suggest what they found helpful about the transition intervention that they and their children received.

5.2.7 THE KNOWLEDGE OF BEHAVIOURAL EXPECTATIONS PROGRAMME THEORY (Final Programme Theory 7)

Four students rated receiving information about the behaviour policy and consequence system as a very important element of the transition package they experienced. Of these four students, two were identified by primary school staff as vulnerable as a result of behaviour difficulties; one as a result of challenging home circumstances (paternal mental ill health) and one as a result of being shy or anxious. Although staff participants were not convinced that sharing behaviour policy and consequence system information actually occurred, the students found this helpful, in terms of having relevant information which would enable them to make informed choices about their behaviour. There is limited reference to this CMO configuration in research literature, although fostering a sense of competence and autonomy in relation to operating within behavioural boundaries and norms could be argued to be of relevance (Gillison et al., 2008).

> *"Well it was important to me to know actually how to behave; it's just like if you didn't know what to do...you don't want to get in trouble."* *(Student A4)*

As a result of disseminating the findings of the present research study, staff at School B have taken the decision to explicitly include information associated with the school's behaviour policy and system from the academic year 2011-2012.

5.3 SUMMARY

As is apparent, the evidence for final Programme Theories 1-7, provided by the participants in this study, is generally supported by previous research literature, although the concept of offering vulnerable students a fresh start had not been previously given prominence. The current study suggests that this is an important factor for vulnerable students, in realising a successful transition. Further recommendations will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

5.3.1 THE IMPACT OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ON OUTCOMES

As referred to in the previous results chapter, within-student factors may have additionally had a prominent role in determining student outcomes as a result of triggering specific mechanisms in the students when they engaged in the transition programme offered by an individual school. The following Table, 5.1, presents individual students' rated 'very important' PTs in parallel with the reasons they were categorised as vulnerable. This will enable an exploration of the types of students who value each of the specific PTs most; information that could be very pertinent when sharing the findings of this study with educational professionals.

Table 5.1: An Exploration of Contextual Factors and Value Placed on Specific PTs (X denotes student's selection of PT as very important)

PT / Student	PT1 (feeling prepared)	PT2 (feeling supported by older students)	PT3 (feeling nurtured by staff)	PT4 (fresh start)	PT5 (peer friendships)	PT6 (adult liaison)	PT7 (behavioural expectations)
A1 (shy, anxious)	X			X	X		
A2 (shy, anxious)	X	X	X	X		X	
A3 (poor attendance)	X	X			X		
A4 (shy, anxious)	X		X	X			X
A6 (shy, anxious)	X	X	X	X		X	X
B1 (shy, anxious)	X	X	X	X			
B2 (behaviour)	X	X	X	X	X		X
B4 (behaviour)	X	X	X	X		X	X
B5 (shy, anxious)	X	X	X		X	X	
B6 (LAC)	X			X	X		
B7 (behaviour) *PTs rated as quite important only*	X	X	X				X
TOTAL	11	8	8	8	5	4	5

Furthermore, the impact of the difference between Schools A and B in terms of overall percentage of the school population of students who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) must be acknowledged. Clearly, School B has a much higher percentage of its students using English as an additional language (52.6%) in comparison with School A (3.6%). This factor could have implications in relation to the vulnerable students' sense of belonging and social integration, depending on their first (and second) language use. However, whilst this difference should be acknowledged, the present study did not aim to make a comparison between the two schools but rather intended to identify common programme theories across the schools.

5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.

All eleven students rated the 'feeling prepared' Programme Theory as very important. All three students in School B who were categorised as having experienced previous behaviour difficulties rated the 'knowledge of behavioural expectations' Programme Theory as very important. In addition, two shy and anxious students at School A rated this PT as very important. All but one of the shy and anxious students selected the 'fresh start' Programme Theory as very important; and similarly all but one of the shy and anxious students deemed the 'feeling nurtured by a consistent member of staff' Programme Theory very important. More students in School B rated the support of same and older aged peers as very important, when compared to School A students. This may be due to School B's strong emphasis on the role of peer mentoring during transition.

5.4.1 OVERALL SUMMARY

The research which I designed and undertook both endeavoured to explore the mechanisms triggered by two such transition programmes, from a practitioner and a student perspective,

and to focus primarily on the needs and experiences of the most vulnerable students. These two specific foci form the original contribution of my research to the field of transition research. By jointly exploring the ways in which intervention programmes work for vulnerable students in two similar secondary schools, I intend the findings to have use for other similar settings, including staff in primary schools who appear to exert a potentially significant influence on how well prepared vulnerable students are prior to transition (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008) and who can, and often do, work effectively and collaboratively with their secondary school partners (Kapasi and Hancock, 2006).

The evidence base which emerges from research conducted using a Realistic Evaluation approach, has been argued to encompass external validity primarily because the resulting Programme Theories are grounded in prior evaluation research and afford collaborative realistic theory generation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). By exploring the pattern of change for vulnerable students undergoing transition to the two secondary schools described in the present study, I intend to contribute to a greater understanding of what happens when such students interact with various aspects of transition interventions, so that staff, parents and carers can be fully informed about 'what works for whom and in what circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.2). I plan to share these findings with practitioners in peer-review and academic journals, in order that increased numbers of vulnerable students can enjoy a positive and successful transition to secondary school as a result of staff in primary and secondary schools having a better understanding of the processes underpinning transition.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

In attempting to explore how well the needs of vulnerable students are met during the secondary school transition period, I have been successful in generating a series of

Programme Theories. These final Programme theories have been co-constructed using previous research literature, the experiences and perceptions of a small sample of vulnerable students and the experiences and perceptions of two members of secondary school staff who are responsible for co-ordinating the transfer of all Year 6 students annually. However, as is the case with all research studies, there are inevitably some limitations which must be declared in order to assist the reader in contextualising the findings of this study.

5.5.1 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Whilst the application of Realistic Evaluation naturally reduces researcher bias (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) by including iterative data checking with participants throughout Phases One and Two of the data collection and dissemination of findings process, there are some noteworthy criticisms of the approach. Timmins and Miller (2007) have argued that research utilising a Realistic Evaluation framework *"...in complex and fluid systems, such as schools..." (p.15)* may suffer from significant difficulty in clearly identifying individual contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. Although the outcomes measured in this study were clear, there is some potential overlap in the mechanisms triggered and the contexts of the transition programme intervention in both schools.

For example, Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 2 has a defined context which emphasises school membership and group identity and mechanisms which comprise feeling less anxious and more understood and prepared. The context here could arguably be alternatively construed as a mechanism that the transition programme triggers. However, from my perspective, potential intermittent ambiguity pertaining to the definition of context and mechanism will not exert a detrimental effect on the Programme Specification for practitioners. The reason for this is that by sharing each of the individual Programme

Theories with practitioners, it is intended that they regard and implement the whole theory and do not select individual components of it, thereby whether school membership is a context or a mechanism, the fact that practitioners will potentially seek to instil this as either part of their school culture, or as an element of the transition programmes they provide for vulnerable students, it is expected that the outcomes will be essentially the same.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) outline the nature of the *"teacher-learner function" (p.165)* of Realistic Evaluation as crucial to the co-construction of realistic Programme Theories. Although I took steps to avoid a power imbalance by explicitly explaining to participants that I was not the expert and that their views, alongside prior research literature would be the most important element of the research project. In addition, by inviting staff to refine, reject or concur with the initial Programme Theories, and subsequently include any changes in the final Programme Specification, I intended to minimise social conformity bias and to maximise validity and reliability (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, by asking the student participants to rate each of the features of the transition programmes and potential contexts, my personal views and prospective biases would be less likely to influence their responses. Potentially significant mechanisms were elicited by exploring only the (student selected) very important contexts and features of the transition programmes.

Whilst actions were taken to minimise the limitations described above, I acknowledge that if the interviews and focus groups were repeated with the same or a different group of individuals, the Programme Specification may be dissimilar. Nevertheless, Pawson and Tilley (1997) recognise the transitory nature of research findings and advocate further research being conducted within the research community so that cumulative patterns and regularities in CMO configurations can emerge, thus strengthening the external validity of transition programme specification.

"Evaluators need to acknowledge that programs are implemented in a changing and permeable social world and that program effectiveness may thus be subverted or enhanced through the unanticipated intrusion of new contexts and new causal powers."

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 218)

5.5.2 ADDITIONAL LIMITATIONS

Super-Ordinate Programme Theory 6 focused on liaison between primary and secondary school staff, and staff and parents or carers; however the current study did not propose to include the views of parents or carers due to time limitations and the potential complexity of incorporating a further layer of data collection.

5. 6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research described in this thesis sought to elicit transferable and cumulative information about **what** occurs when vulnerable students successfully engage in transition programmes prior to, during and after transfer to secondary school. In exploring **what** occurs, the mechanisms triggered by the transition intervention, such as psychological, cognitive, behavioural or inter-personal changes, are expected to be exposed (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). By forging an appreciation for the processes operating, and revealing the specific contexts in which the processes are most likely to occur, it is intended that other vulnerable young people may benefit. In effect, the Programme Theories can be used to inform or validate the content of transition intervention programmes for vulnerable students.

In order to capitalise on this initial attempt at understanding the transition process for vulnerable students, I have made some recommendations for practitioners. The

recommendations could be implemented at a whole school level, a community level or, preferably, at a Local Authority policy level.

As referenced above, future research should include the views of the parents or carers of vulnerable Year 6 students, thereby elucidating the likely mechanisms triggered within the home environment or within the parent-child dyad, which have been cited to potentially afford a beneficial influence on the young people directly or indirectly (Evangelou et al., 2008; Dann, 2011).

Primary school staff should also be provided with information about transition and, crucially, with the need for vulnerable students to be prepared for changes in organisational responsibilities, problem solving and increased autonomy. In essence, disseminating the findings of the present study and, more specifically, the seven evidence-based Programme Theories could be considered essential in attempting to improve transition outcomes for vulnerable students.

As a result of the findings of this study, future research should be conducted to measure the impact of implementing these specific skills at an earlier time than is currently typical. Exploring Year 6 students' views of the benefits of being exposed to this type of work in preparation for secondary school transfer could be achieved by using Realistic Evaluation or an alternative methodology that elicits qualitative data, such as focus groups or individual interviews (Cohen et al., 2003).

5.7 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

As external consultants who are often asked to provide evidence based advice for the most vulnerable students in school settings, Educational Psychologists should be fully aware of the

most recent and relevant research related to transition. This thesis intends to provide Educational Psychologists with salient information pertaining to the ways in which vulnerable students can be supported during the crucial and potentially problematic (Ashton, 2008; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Dann, 2011; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012) experience of secondary school transfer. The Programme Specification for vulnerable students, as identified and defined by the thesis, should be shared with primary and secondary school staff. In order to promote successful outcomes for vulnerable students, Educational Psychologists should outline the seven key Programme Theories generated from this thesis, in relation to individual case-work in a timely way (at Year 5); at a systemic level, for example during planning meetings and at a Local Authority level when invited to contribute to policy development.

The seven keys features which should be advised to be carefully planned and implemented as an integral part of transition programmes are:

1. Providing vulnerable students with a range of practical experiences in their new secondary school, including map reading and familiarisation with the environment, using the homework planner effectively and, practising reading timetables and packing school bags accordingly. These experiences are understood to facilitate confidence and a sense of competence in students. Work towards the acquisition of these skills should commence during the students' primary education.

2. Transition programmes should explicitly seek to involve older students at all stages, including initial visits to primary school, to act as guides during tours and familiarisation visits, to be available for formal adult-led and informal student-initiated discussions to share pertinent information and to promote a sense of school membership in new students by socially including them where possible.

3. Ensuring that all vulnerable students have easy access to a consistently available key member of pastoral support staff who genuinely perceives their role as supportive, nurturing and, crucially, as aiming to promote students' independence skills.

4. Emphasising secondary school transfer as an opportunity for a fresh start for vulnerable students, particularly those who have experienced prior social, academic or behavioural difficulties. Framing secondary school in positive terms, where students will not be judged on their previous difficulties, is thought to foster a sense of optimism and motivation in students.

5. Fostering new friendships and supporting existing positive friendships for vulnerable students, so that they feel socially included, develop a sense of belonging in school, and experience school related subjective well-being. These are argued to facilitate school engagement and maintain motivation (Fenzel, 2000; Watt, 2000; Whitby et al., 2006; Burgess et al., 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jordan et al., 2010).

6. Promoting effective iterative liaison between primary and secondary school staff and between secondary school staff and parents or carers. This is argued in the thesis, to promote a sense of reassurance in vulnerable students that they will be supported in the appropriate manner and to ensure that parents or carers do not feel anxious about their child's transfer (Evangelou et al., 2008).

7. Sharing relevant information related to the secondary school's behaviour policy and consequence system, so that vulnerable students are able to make fully informed decisions about their behaviour before they enter Year 7. Students who had prior behaviour difficulties primarily found this information to be useful, in combination with being offered a fresh start.

It would be useful if further collaborative research in this field could be conducted by Educational Psychologists, using a Realistic Evaluation methodology, so that additional CMO configurations and data regularities could be combined with the findings of this thesis, so that the Programme Specification for transition programmes for vulnerable students could be refined and extended.

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APPENDIX 1

Consent Form for School Involvement in Educational Psychology Service Research

Dear Head Teacher,

Thank you for considering this request for your school's participation in an exciting piece of research exploring the transition from primary to secondary school.

Purpose: I want to try and find out how schools support their students when they are about to start Year 7 and what happens during that first term in Year 7 to help them to settle in. Each school does something different to support Year 6s and I would like to talk to some staff who are involved in managing these transition programmes. I hope to find out how these different programmes help students. I will also be talking to some of the students to ascertain their views of the transfer to secondary school.

I would like to meet with staff during July 2011and again in November 2011. I would also like to interview about four students in November 2011 and have a discussion with them about their views of the programme, its aims and what makes it successful. These interviews will each last around 60 minutes and will be recorded on a Dictaphone, so that I can analyse views and the information provided, at a later date. Staff and student names will not be referred to during the interview and personal details will not be stored alongside the data. Any report which includes individual views will not identify the school or the staff job title, thus minimising the risk of their identity being compromised.

All information that is provided by the participants will be confidential. Views will be treated as anonymous as each participant will be given a code which enables me to know whether they attend a particular school, and can help me to match both sets of questionnaires so that I can track any changes. The findings will be reported to the school and also within my service, but no names will be used, and no information will be shared that would enable participants or the school to be identified.

🔓 All information provided will be stored and treated in confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003) and used for the purpose of doctoral research and for Educational Psychology Service use only. Data will be stored and accessible for a period of ten years following the research project, as required by the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research. The findings of the research will be written up as my doctoral thesis, but participants' names or identities will not be included

By signing the consent form, you are agreeing to all the aspects of the research as described above.

If students or staff choose to withdraw from the research at any time before the 30 November 2011 and this will be accepted without any need for an explanation of the reasons for doing so. Data gathered will be destroyed should participants wish, and they should indicate this at the time of notifying me of their intention to withdraw. The data that has been gathered prior to their withdrawal can remain part of the research should they wish, and may be used in the data analysis, if relevant. After 30 November 2011, all data will be included in the research publication, even if they wish to withdraw at this time.

If you would like the school to take part, but have some questions about the research, then please give me a ring on the number below or you can email me on Judith.Mcalister@.gov.uk. The research will be supervised by Academic Tutor at the University of Birmingham **and** Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist

Yours sincerely,

Judith McAlister

Trainee Educational Psychologist

I **agree/do not agree** (delete as appropriate) to participate in the research project on behalf of the school as described in the letter above. I understand that all data will be treated as anonymous and confidential.

I understand that names will be stored on this consent sheet, but that for all other aspects of the research participants will be given a code to preserve their anonymity. I understand that participants must inform Judith McAlister by 30 November should they wish to withdraw their data from the research. After this time I understand that removal of participants' data will not be possible.

I understand that the findings of this research project will be published as a doctoral thesis written by Judith McAlister, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Birmingham.

Signed:_____ Date: _____

Name (Please print): _____

On behalf of the following secondary school:_____

APPENDIX 2

Consent Form for Involvement in Educational Psychology Service Research

Dear Member of Staff,

Thank you for considering this request for your participation in an exciting piece of research exploring the transition from primary to secondary school.

Purpose: I want to try and find out how schools support their students when they are about to start Year 7 and what happens during that first term in Year 7 to help them to settle in. Each school does something different to support Year 6s and by talking to you in your role as transition co-ordinator, I hope to find out how these different programmes help students. I will also be talking to some of the students to ascertain their views of the transfer to secondary school.

I would like to meet with you during July 2011 and again in November 2011and have a discussion about your views of the programme, its aims and what makes it successful. This interview will last around 60 minutes and will be recorded on a Dictaphone, so that I can analyse your views and the information you provide, at a later date. Your name will not be referred to during the interview and your personal details will not be stored alongside the data.

All information that is provided by you and the other participants will be confidential. The data I gather from you will be treated as anonymous because each participant will be given a code which enables me to know what school you work at. The findings will be reported to the school and also within my service, but no names will be used, and no information will be shared that would enable you to be identified. It may be possible that other members of the school where you are employed could identify you from the report because of your role within the school. If you are concerned about the inclusion of information that you consider sensitive in the report, it is possible for you to read the report prior to me sharing it with the school, and you will be able to request the omission of specific information. I will check this with you before the report is presented.

The findings of the research will be written up as my doctoral thesis, but neither your name nor the identity of the school will be included and therefore there will be no need for information to be omitted. These findings will be shared with the Educational Psychology Service team and stored at the University of Birmingham.

🔓 All information provided will be stored and treated in confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003) and used for the purpose of doctoral research and for Educational Psychology Service use only. Data will be

stored and accessible for a period of ten years following the research project, as required by the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research.

By signing the consent form, you are agreeing to all the aspects of the research as described above.

If you choose to withdraw from the research at any time before the 30 November 2011 and this will be accepted without any need for an explanation of your reasons for doing so. Data gathered from you will be destroyed should you wish, and please indicate this at the time of notifying me of your intention to withdraw. The data that has been gathered prior to your withdrawal can remain part of the research should you wish, and may be used in the data analysis, if relevant. After 30 November 2011, all data will be included in the research publication, even if you wish to withdraw at this time.

If you would like to take part, but have some questions about the research, then please give me a ring on the number below or you can email me on Judith.Mcalister@.gov.uk . The research will be supervised by Academic Tutor at the University of Birmingham **and** Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist

Yours sincerely,

Judith McAlister

Trainee Educational Psychologist

I **agree/do not agree** (delete as appropriate) to participate in the research project as described in the letter above. I understand that all data will be treated as anonymous and confidential.   I understand that my name will be stored on this consent sheet, but that for all other aspects of the research I will be given a code to preserve my anonymity. I understand that I must inform Judith McAlister by 30 November should I wish to withdraw my data from the research. After this time I understand that removal of my data will not be possible.

I understand that the findings of this research project will be published as a doctoral thesis written by Judith McAlister, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Birmingham.

Signed:_____   Date: _____

Name of secondary school:_____

APPENDIX 3

What will happen at the end of the research?

I will spend some time thinking about all the information I have been given from you, from staff and from the questionnaires you filled in. I will organise the information so that I can see what helps Year 6 settle into their secondary school most. This might be to do with how the staff support you or it might be other pupils who help the most.

I will write a report about what I found out and I will present this at the school in the summer term 2012.   The report will also talk about what is important to Year 6s and 7s and what isn't so important when they move schools. You will be invited to this presentation.

If you have any questions about any of this information, please ask me when we meet.

If you decide to stop being part of the research at any time, that's fine. Just let me know. I will tell you more about this when we meet.

If you would like some more information or need to contact me, please ring me on 01111 1111111

Judith McAlister

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Secondary School Transition Research: What is it?

An information leaflet for young people

What will the research be looking at?

I want to try and find out how schools support their students when they are about to start Year 7 and what happens during that first term in Year 7 to help you to settle in. Each school does something different to support Year 6s and by talking to you and other students like you, I hope to find out how these different programmes help you. People think that this is a very important time for young people, and that sometimes this can be a stressful and scary time, as well as an exciting time. Some people need more help to cope with this change of schools and this may be because they are shy and quiet, have some additional needs, do not know anyone from the new school, or find learning and behaving very difficult.

Why will I be meeting a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP)?

When you meet with me I will want to know about what YOU think about the move to Year 7. I would like to hear from young people because their views are very important. I hope that by doing this research, schools will find out more about what works and what doesn't work so well, and why this might be. This means that schools might want to try and make their transition programmes even better!! This will hopefully help other young people like you.

What will we be doing?

You will meet with me in a small group first of all. This will happen in the summer term while you are still in Year 6. I will come to your school and we will spend about an hour talking about moving up to secondary school. There will be about ten people in the group. I will record the discussion with a Dictaphone so that I can concentrate on what you are saying, and then listen to it again later on.

I will not use your names and no one who reads the report will know who said what, so you don't need to worry about saying something negative. It's fine if you are worried about something, like making new friends or the work, as I think everyone worries about these things too. If you or someone else says something that makes me feel worried for their safety or someone else's, then I will have to share this with a member of staff in your school. But I will talk to you about this first.

Later some of you will be asked to meet with me in November 2011, when you have been in secondary school for nearly a term. This will give the chance to ask you about how the move went, what helped and what did not help you to settle in.

I will also ask all of you to fill in a set of questions before the first meeting and again in November. This will give me information about how you see yourself as a person, a learner and so on.

What's in it for me?

I think you will find it helpful to talk to other young people about moving up to secondary school, and you may enjoy having the chance to chat about your worries and the things you are excited about.

By getting involved in this research you will be helping schools find out about what works for Year 6 students and this might help lots of other Year 6s in the future.

 You will get a certificate for participating in the research, at the end of the project.

APPENDIX 4

General ideas for staff semi-structured interview

The interviews will provide data related to RQ1: what are the aims of the transition programme? RQ2: what mechanisms are triggered by the transition package before during and after the move?

1. What do you think the students are particularly worried about or ill prepared for around transition?
2. Describe the school context for me in terms of size, curriculum etc for Year 7s, ethos of the school community and so on.
3. What are the main aims of the transition package you offer?
4. In what ways do you think this programme supports students?
5. What do you think the programme offers students that other programmes may not?
6. How do you judge the support to have been successful?
7. What aspects of the programme do you view as particularly successful, and why do you think this is?
8. Which aspects of the programme are problematic or least helpful? Why do you think this is?

There may be some overlap in the responses given, so some of the questions may be omitted depending on the previous answers given.

During the interview I will share my initial views of the context, mechanisms triggered and potential outcomes, based on the literature related to transition. This adheres to the "I'll show you my theory, if you show me yours" which is characteristic of Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Staff will be informed that this is my initial assumption based on research literature and they will be invited to refute, revise and accept my CMO configurations, as part of the interview process.

These initial CMO configurations may be related to fostering a sense of belonging, familiarisation with the new setting and emotional support. In addition, the research indicates that successful transition may be the result of fostering aspiration in students (Younger and Warrington, 2009); increasing self esteem and a sense of competence (Miller et al., 2010); developing supportive relationships (Ashton, 2008). We may explore staff views of a gender effect, as described by Jordan et al., (2010) who suggested that males are more adversely affected by stress than females and are therefore more likely to benefit from supportive programmes.

APPENDIX 5

General ideas for focus group questions

The focus group will provide data related to RQ1: what do prospective students have concerns about? RQ2: what mechanisms are triggered by the transition package before the move?

1. Rate individually how prepared (ready) you feel to manage at your new school? This will be done in a circular format, as participants will be seated in this way. A visual aid will be available detailing a rating scale from 0 to 10 (being not at all ready, 10 being totally ready). Participants will be asked to rate themselves according to a number on the scale. This will be done near the start of the session so that each participant feels able to contribute at any time in the discussion.
2. What are you most looking forward to when you move to your new school? Why are these things exciting?
3. What are you worried about? Why are these things worrying you most?
4. What could the secondary school do to support you in this move and change?
5. How do you feel you will cope with the change and new challenges ahead? What will you do to settle in?
6. What plans have you made to help you settle in? What way will this be of benefit do you think?
7. What has the primary or secondary school done already to help you through the move? Has this been helpful? In what ways?
8. If you could wish for one thing that the primary or secondary school could do to help you feel more prepared for the move, what would that be? (this will be asked to each participant in a 'round' to ensure all participants have the opportunity to express their views).

APPENDIX 6

Please read through the following statements and put them in order of importance for YOU. Everyone will think differently and this is fine.

Put a number '1' next to the most important thing for you, number '2' next to the next most important, all the way down to '20' the least important. I have left some space for you to add any other things that have been important for you in planning for the move to secondary school in September.

Having visits to the secondary school before I start there   ____

Talking other students about the move   ____

Talking to Year 7s who used to go to my primary school   ____

Moving up with friends from primary school   ____

Meeting staff at the new school (Head of Year, form tutor, teachers)   ____

Being given information about the layout of the school (map)   ____

Finding out about the behaviour policy/ consequence system   ____

Feeling like I belong in the school before I start   ____

Finding out about the work and homework I'll have to do (attending a lesson etc)   ____

Meeting other children from other school   ____

Having extra visits to the school for small groups of Year 6s   ____

Primary school teachers talking about secondary school in a positive way   ____

Having a brother / sister / cousin already at the school   ____

Practice thinking about how I will organise myself to be more independent   ____

People from secondary school coming to visit at primary school to tell us about it ____

Being treated as grown up and mature young people and not as little kids   ____

People at the new school being positive and friendly   ____

Seeing the dinner hall, toilets, classrooms, outside areas so I know what it'll be like ____

Having the chance to have a fresh start   ____

Asking older students questions about bullying and other things I'm worried about _____

APPENDIX 7

(only available through the Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Portfolio; see references)

APPENDIX 8

Script for Year 7 Students' Interviews

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. We are going to spend about 20 minutes thinking and talking about the move from Year 6 to Year 7. First of all I want you to try to remember the summer term in Year 6 after the SATs. Around that time you went on visits to your secondary school and staff from the secondary school came to your primary school to talk to you about the move. Lots of different things happened during the visits to secondary school and we will be thinking about those visits and what your primary school did to help you prepare for the move.

I have developed 16 cards which detail aspects of the transition programme you experienced, so for example "having different or exciting experiences when visiting the secondary school" so for example a science experiment: you may have thought this was very important, quite important or not important to you.

I have shuffled the cards and now can you read the 16 sentences in front of you? What I want you to do is to sort them into four different piles. I have placed 4 sheets of paper in front of you: this one says 'very important to me', this one 'quite important to me', this one 'not important to me' and this one 'I did not experience this'. So if we look at the first card, where would you place that? (To complete all 16)

JM to note which cards are placed in each sorting square.

Interview: right let's have a look at the ones you put in the 'very important to me' pile.

What about this one (reads) what was it about XXX that was so important to you? Other questions will involve asking why it was important and what effects it had on the individual's thinking, feeling or behaviour.

APPENDIX 9

Transition Research

Feedback from a collaborative project
2011-2012

Judith McAlister
Trainee Educational Psychologist
STePS
Judith.mcalister@gov.uk

Research Aims and Participants

- Aims:
  - To generate theories about the transition package offered to **vulnerable** Y6 students
  - To develop an understanding of what it is about the programme that works, and **in what ways** rather than evaluating if it works or not
- Participants
  - 2 schools: 11 students, 2 members of staff in total
  - School A: 1 staff member and 5 students (plus 1 student who took part in Phase One of data collection)

- Use of Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

  – Critical realist approach, focusing on the outcome regularities that occur when vulnerable students engage in transition programmes

  – Embedded in previous research literature

  – Generates Programme Theories (PTs) to elicit impact of the supportive programme and the **mechanisms** which are triggered by engaging in it

  – A collaborative approach, where the researcher is not the expert. Views and experiences of students and staff are key to developing the PTs

- Research identifies the mechanisms triggered by the transition programme and develops CMO configurations which generate realistic theories about how a programme works:

- Mechanisms are 'fired' to produce outcome regularities but are context-specific, i.e. The research also needs to identify the social processes in which the mechanisms occur

-

mechanism (M)

Context (C)

Outcome Regularity(O)
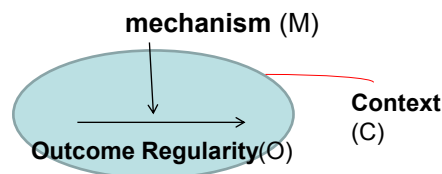
"An action is only causal if its outcome is triggered by mechanism acting in context" (p. 58)

Research Design

Summer term 2011

Identification of Y6 students from 1 primary school (vulnerable)	Consent gained from parents / carers and young people; also from schools

Cycle 1 of data collection: Summer term- Contact with Junior school made

Initial interview with Head of Y7	Focus group to gather students views

Cycle 2 of data collection: interview with Head of Y7 / individual interviews with students

Questionnaires completed	Rating of Programme Theories	Interview with staff

What does the research literature tell us?

- 2 main longitudinal studies: ORACLE (1975-1980) and EPPE 3-14 (published in 2008)
  - ORACLE: Showed that student anxiety related to transition reached a peak in the summer term of Year 6 and had diminished over the course of Year 7; curriculum delivery and content was not consistent across the two settings: these differing staff attitudes and teaching styles resulted in lowered expectations and a reduction in pupil motivation in Year 7
  - EPPE 3-14: 5 aspects for a successful transition
    - Developing new friendships and raising self-confidence
    - Settling into school well enough that parents are not worried
    - Showing an increasing interest in school and school work
    - Getting easily used to school routines and its organisation
    - Curriculum continuity

Other research findings

- Only 4 or 5 recent studies conducted focusing on the needs of vulnerable students during primary to secondary school transition
- Acknowledgement that times of change and transition are stressful and potentially harmful to those at most risk
- Many studies suggest an attainment dip on entry to secondary school; decreases in students' perceived competence; friendships being disrupted; experiencing a sense of loss; change in identity; changes in quality of relationships with teachers and other staff; need for greater independence and self-organisation.
- Protective factors or supportive interventions included: peer mentoring; opportunities to practice, social and organisational / independence skills; getting to know staff; fostering peer friendships; establishing trust, a sense of belonging, a fresh start.

What were Y6 students worried about?

- Bullying (several mentioned this)
- Getting lost; because it's a huge school and we're getting a new building (most agreed with this)
- Making friends
- Being the smallest and youngest in the school
- Ability grouping and being placed in the wrong bands

- **All typical responses which are supported by research**

- None of your students mentioned being concerned about the work / homework, which the students from the other school did.

What was helpful about visits from secondary school staff and students?

- Having regular extra visits; having a tour of the school
- Being asked to rate their feelings about school each time they visited; showed progression in terms of feeling more confident
- Meeting other members of staff; to get to know who they are and their role in the school; so that they might remember us if we need help once we start Y7
- Hearing about the school from older students

Focus Group Data (views while still in Y6)

- I asked students to rate the features of the transition programme into one of four categories: very important, quite important, a little important, of no importance. Mean scores suggest that:

- **Very important:**
- Having a member of family already at this secondary school;
- Having the chance of a fresh start;
- Being given information about behaviour policy.

- **Quite important:**
- Meeting staff at the new school;
- Meeting other pupils from other schools (potential of developing new friendships);
- Having visits to secondary school while in Year 6;
- Asking older students about bullying and other worries;
- Moving up with friends from primary school;
- Being given info about school layout (map);
- Finding out about work and homework;
- Having extra visits in small groups;
- Secondary school staff being positive and friendly;
- Seeing the main features of secondary school (tour).

- **Of little importance:**
- Talking to other students about the move;
- Practising organisational skills;
- Feeling like I belong there before I start;
- Primary school staff talking about secondary school in positive terms;
- Being treated as grown up and mature;
- Talking to year 7s who went to my primary school;
- Secondary school staff and students visiting primary school for info share.

- *No one said any aspect was of no importance*

CMO Configurations

- **Context:** School or student context
- **Mechanism**: emotional, cognitive, behavioural
- **Outcomes**: can be measures, e.g. happiness in school; sense of belonging

- The mechanisms are the result of the interaction of the student with the programme

Outcome Measures

A Bar Chart Showing School 'A' Students' Scores on the School-Children's Happiness Inventory

Students A1-A6 (data for A5 missing)
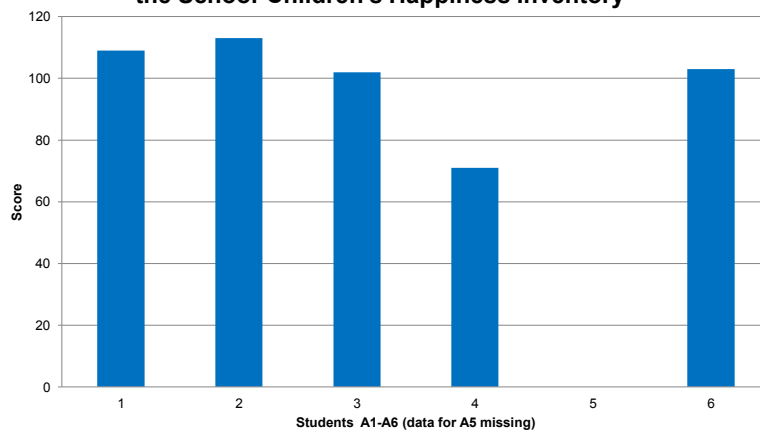
Outcome Measures

School A: School Membership

Y-axis: Score (3 to 4.5)
X-axis: Students A1-A6 (no scores for A5)
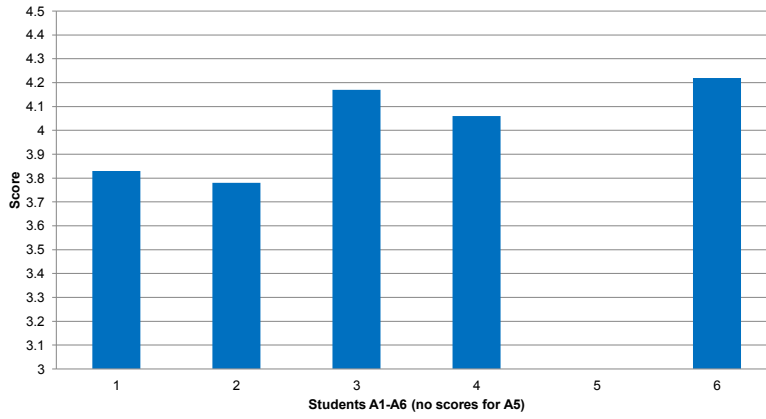
Overall Student views of PTs

Number of Students Choosing Programme Theories to be Very Important

Y-axis: Numberos Students (0 to 9)
X-axis: Programme Theories 1-16
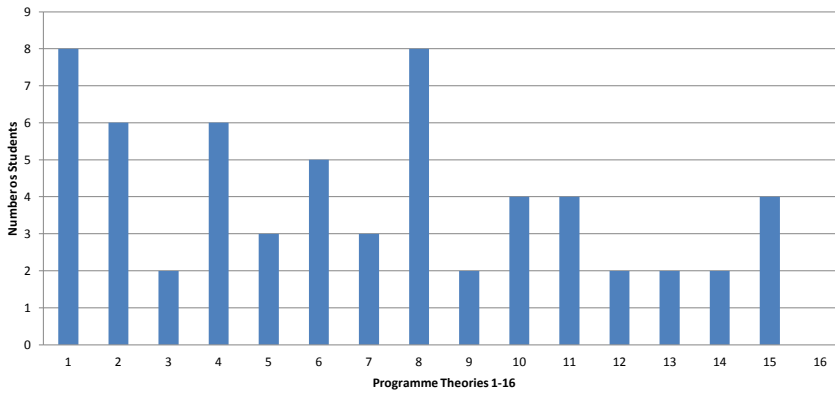
Students' Views of PTs

Number of Students in School A Identifying Programme Theories as Very Important (of 5)
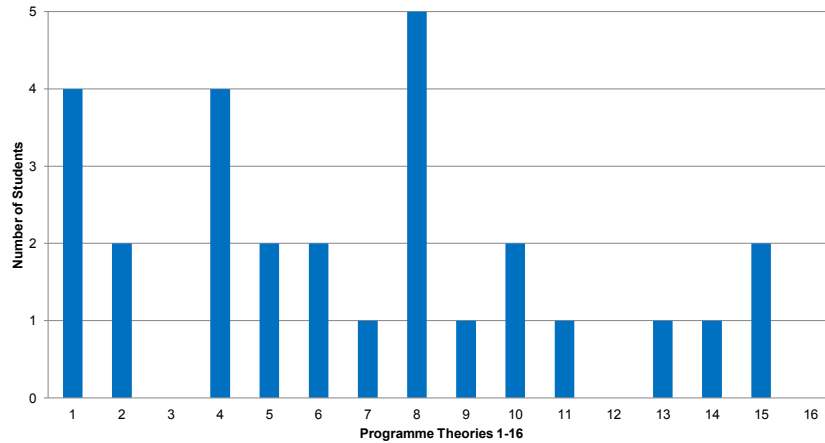
Programme Theories

- Now we will have a look at each in turn and explore your students' views of each

- Remember the students only talked about the PTs they rated as VERY IMPORTANT

- I have combined some PTs to develop Super-Ordinate PTs; we will look at the seven that were most applicable to this research

Feeling Prepared PT 1

- **Super-Ordinate PT1** (combining refined PT4, PT8, PT11 and PT13)
- Transition programmes that provide vulnerable students with direct practical and novel experiences of the school building, practical lessons and the timetable and provide specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included) **(C)** promote psychological preparedness, reduce fear and anxiety **(M)** and foster responsibility, curiosity and motivation **(M)** prior to and during transfer so that students to develop a sense of autonomy, self-organisation, competence and self-efficacy and experience a smooth transition **(O)** which enables them to acquire the necessary skills for school and later life **(O)**.

- **(20 student and 2 staff nominations in both schools)**

Feeling Supported by Older Peers PT 2

- **Super-Ordinate PT2** (combining refined PT3, PT7, PT12 and PT15)
- Transition programmes that facilitate open and frank discussions between prospective Year 7 students and older peers, seek to remove barriers by instilling a supportive community ethos, encompassing formal or informal peer mentoring and vertical tutoring and, optimise group identity and a sense of school membership **(C)** enable vulnerable students to develop knowledge and information that they trust to be true **(M)** so that they feel less anxious, more understood and prepared for the move, and have the information needed to overcome any difficulties they may encounter **(M)** thus minimising the sense of being different or inexperienced and maximise the sense of being looked after and supported, thus creating a successful transition **(O)**.
- **(11 student and 2 staff nominations in both schools)**

Feeling Nurtured by a Consistent Member of Staff PT3

- **Super-Ordinate PT3** (combining refined PT2 and PT5)

- Transition programmes that provide students with consistent key people to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7 makes students feel secure, looked after, listened to and prepared **(M)** so that particularly shy, anxious and socially isolated students **(C)** know who to go to for support and develop the competencies to cope with transition and the new demands of Y7 **(O).**

- **(9 student and 2 staff nominations from both schools)**

The Fresh Start PT4

- **Final PT4** (from refined PT1 only)
- Transition programmes that emphasise a 'fresh start' will be possible for students who previously experienced behavioural, relationship or educational difficulties at primary school **(C),** facilitate a sense of hope and optimism **(M)** and provide students with reassurance that they will not be judged on their previous difficulties **(M)** so that they believe that secondary school will be a positive and enjoyable experience that will promote social inclusion, expand their opportunities and create better outcomes **(O).**

- **(8 students and 2 staff agree the importance and relevance of this PT)**

Peer Friendships PT5

- **Final PT5** (from refined PT6 only)
- Transition programmes that provide vulnerable students, who have been isolated or have experienced difficulties (C), with opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing ones thus minimising anxiety, loss and developing security and inclusion (M) thus creating a successful transition.

- **(5 student and 2 staff nominations)**

The Adult Liaison PT6

- **Super-Ordinate PT6** (combining refined PT9 and PT14)
- Effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff and, between secondary school staff and parents or carers, regarding students who require additional support around learning or pastoral care (C) assures anxious students who may have low attainment and assures parents or carers (M) that appropriate, personalised support will be implemented for the students so that they can transfer with a sense of ease and confidence in the secondary school staff and, ensures parents or carers have the relevant information needed to support their children (O).

- **(4 student and 2 staff nominations)**

Knowledge of Behavioural Expectations PT7

- **Final PT7** (from refined PT10 only)
- Transition programmes that provide students, who have experienced behaviour difficulties or are worried about the behaviour / consequence system (C), with information about the behaviour policy and consequence system, will reduce anxiety, develop self-regulation strategies and support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries (M) thereby facilitates informed decision-making and creates the potential for a successful transition (O).

- **(4 student and 2 staff nominations)**

Nurture Group Curriculum Consistency PT8

- **Final PT8** (from refined PT16 only)
- A transition programme that provides continuity of the primary school curriculum in a nurture group for the most vulnerable students (C), thereby reducing cognitive load and stress associated with change and increase security by promoting positive relationships with a small number of consistent staff (M), leads to a smooth and personalised re-integration into mainstream lessons during Y7 (O).

- **(2 staff nominations only)**

What else do the students need?

- **From their perspective the students at your school said that:**
- *Visual aids (maps / timetables) before they start*
- They would like the older students to support them in the first couple of days; showing them about and so on;
- They would like signs placed around school showing them where specific areas are and how to get there;
- They would like photographs of the staff with their job title so they can become familiar with key staff before they start in September;
- Transition visits to occur as close to the summer holiday as possible, so that the information does not decay.
- *They also stated that they generally found having a member of their family in the school as very helpful*

Questions or comments?

References

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APPENDIX 10

CMO CONFIGURATIONS FROM THE DATA WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO INITIAL PROGRAMME THEORY DEVELOPMENT AFTER PHASE ONE DATA COLLECTION

Programme Theory (PT)	Evidence from School A	Evidence from School B
PT1: Transition programmes that emphasise that Y7 is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' and specifically select the information that is to be shared with teaching staff (M) , instil a sense of optimism, hope and motivation for students (O) who have experienced behavioural difficulties or have had negative experiences at primary school (C).	Year 6 students rated 'having the chance of a fresh start' with a mean score of 3.8, where scores of 1-5.9 are ranked as very important. **Strong evidence to support PT** Staff quote: " but we have to remember when they come to secondary school even though we have this information, it's still a fresh start"......" they like that" Staff quote "....where there's children who have behaviour issues, we really really force this is your fresh start, try and plant that seed in their head"	Year 6 students rated 'having the chance of a fresh start' with a mean score of 12.4, where scores of 11-15.9 is ranked as of little importance. **Weak evidence to support PT** Staff quote "..I'd probably say that I can think of one student this year who I've been to a multi-agency meeting with, and we would definitely sell it (transition) as a fresh start".
PT2: Transition programmes that provide students with a consistent key person to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7(C), support students who are vulnerable (isolated, shy, anxious etc) (C) by helping them to feel cared for and looked out for (M).	Year 6 students ranked 'meeting staff' with a mean score of 6, meaning it was quite important; 'secondary staff being positive and friendly' was rated as quite important, with a mean score of 10.7. Student focus group quotes: "it's just to know who they are and who to go to when something's happened"; "it helps to know the staff.....if you were lost and you didn't know anybody's name"; "say you needed to speak to (Year 7 Manager) and you know where her room is". "having other people to look after you" Staff quote: "the children do come and tell you everything all the time, which is fine, that's what	Year 6 students ranked 'meeting staff' with a mean score of 8.4, meaning it was quite important; 'secondary staff being positive and friendly' was rated as of little importance, with a mean score of 13.2. No evidence from focus groups Staff quote: "we do have a nurture group for our

	they do.."; "coming here, seeing me they see me quite a few times over the whole transition process so they feel quite confident in approaching me, so I think that's very successful"; "I like the fact that the children get to know me through Year 6 ....and I'm still the person in Year 7"; "I know the children and have a good overview of the children.....which I think is key for that first year of settling in..."; "I'm almost that junior school teacher and I give them what they need......I'm a school mum".	vulnerable children and that is a primary school setting so to speak, so they're taught by one member of staff.....”; "...those who we think will struggle with their conduct in lessons and in managing with seeing lots of different members of staff would go and work in our inclusion hub with our esbd mentors..."; "I know my group of 250 children and I would like to think that I would know who's struggling..."; "I had them when they were little and I've watched them grow up".
PT3: Transition programmes that facilitate open and frank discussion between prospective Y7s and older students (M) enable vulnerable prospective Y7 students (C) to trust what they have been told and consequently to feel prepared for coping with secondary school in terms of behavioural, social and emotional expectations (O).	Year 6 students ranked 'talking to Year 7s who went to my primary school' with a mean score of 14, of little importance. They also ranked 'asking older students about bullying and other worries' with a mean score of 8.2, meaning quite important. **Weak evidence** Student focus group quotes: "there was this girl and when I went for a quick visit she took me for a tour around the school and she also said that it took her about a week to get used to it" Staff quote: "they get to write questions and the older children will answer them and they have a feel for the school as well. So that makes them less nervous" "we say to them, you can say to me 'will I really enjoy school?' and I can say 'yes you will' but you need to hear it from somebody who's going through that process"	Year 6 students ranked 'talking to Year 7s who went to my primary school' with a mean score of 4.7; this was the highest ranking score from the list for this group, reflecting high importance. They also ranked 'asking older students about bullying and other worries' with a 13.1, meaning of little importance. **Strong evidence** Student focus group quotes: "there were two pupils that came that day, Year 10s.....told us about other people....told us if we were bullied that we could always go to them...things you're allowed to do and things you're not allowed to do." Staff quote: "...if those myths or any concerns that they've got are addressed through those children who come out (mentors), and they talk to them, so if they've got worries about bullying then our children can tell them about the systems we have in place and talk it

	"it's important that the children the older children cover that (school myths), I can say it's all rubbish, it's all made up, but they need to hear it from the children"	through with them..." "the opportunity for Year 6 children to talk to older students is so valuable to them..." "...they (Year 6s) trust them (older students) a lot more than when they're listening to me...."
PT4: Transition programmes that give vulnerable students direct experiences of the school building, timetable, staff (C) and provide specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included) promotes psychological preparation prior to transfer to enable students to feel a sense of competence, confidence and self efficacy (M) so that they have reduced anxiety at the start of Y7 (O).	Year 6 students ranked 'being given info about school layout' as 8.3, quite important. 'Seeing the main features of the school (tour)' was ranked at 10.8, **quite important**. 'Having visits to the school' was ranked at 8.2, **quite important**. Student focus group quotes: "I'm worried about getting lost" "they could give us a little map or something, showing you just a plain one and then you could colour it in...." NO MAP PROVIDED. "The visits really helped as well ......you did a tour of the school which helped us quite a bit...." Staff quotes: "they get a feel of the school, they get in and they've looked round and they get a feel for what the school looks like..." "they take them on a tour of the school" "they have a feel for the school...so that makes them less nervous I think".	Year 6 students ranked 'being given info about school layout' as 5.9, **very important**. 'Seeing the main features of the school (tour)' was ranked at 13.2, of little importance. 'Having visits to the school' was ranked at 5, **very important**. This was the group's second highest ranking. Student focus group quotes: "showed you inside the building and you know where everything is..." "they showed us the timings of the lessons, and break and lunch" "we also did homework diaries" STUDENTS ALSO WANTED A FLOOR PLAN Staff quotes: "they do lessons during that day, they also have a pretend tutor in the morning who does kind of a tour of the school, or shows them how to use their dinner card..." "they do a tour of the school..they go round the school just being more familiar with the school...so they feel more confident, so they might have seen the homework timetables, they might have seen planners..."
PT5: Transition programmes which foster familiarity and communication between staff and prospective students (O)	Focus group quotes: "there's so many teachers on the playground up there (secondary school)" "it (secondary school staff) could keep an eye on you"	Focus group quotes: "my form tutor's fairly chilled, half of the pupils were swearing at her, but she just sat down, she didn't care..."

support students who feel vulnerable and at risk of being bullied (C) by instilling a sense of being looked out for or protected in school (M).	"to know who they are and who to go to when something's happened" "at least you know them and so you can actually tell them things" Staff quotes: "with both groups...they've sort of got the opportunity to meet staff, key staff so...they're going to sort of need to build a relationship up with the staff members" "they see me quite a few times over the whole transition process so they feel quite confident in approaching me"	**Strong negative evidence** Staff quotes: "they'll have around an hour with their form tutor, just that one on one time"
PT6: Transition programmes which provide vulnerable Year 6 students with opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing friendships (O) minimise the sense of loss and anxiety (M) in students who worry about being socially isolated or bullied (C).	Student rating scale ranked 'moving up with friends from primary school' as 10, **quite important.** 'Meeting other pupils from other schools, to make new friends' was ranked as 6.4, **quite important**. This was the fifth most important aspect of the transition process for the students overall. 'Having a family member already at the school' was the most important factor, rated with a mean of 3.7, **very important**. Focus group quotes: "you make more friends, like all of my friends are going there but my bestest friend isn't..." "in this school (primary) I've not got many friends and anyone I know if they like get new friends and I'm not sure if I'll be like myself (on my own)" Staff quotes: "We've got a Making Friends event which is for children where there's only one or two of them...so they can all meet each other so when	Student rating scale ranked 'moving up with friends from primary school' as 5.3, **very important**. This was the third most important aspect of the process for the students. 'Meeting other pupils from other schools, to make new friends' was ranked as 10.1, **quite important**. 'Having a family member already at the school' was rated with a mean of 10.4, **quite important**. No mention of friends during the focus group. Staff quotes: "they're mostly worried about...being with their friends still" "the additional sessions...they get to mix in with each

	they start in September they already know somebody...and I try to put them it her same forms as well, try and keep them together" "they're given a yellow form...and we always say put three friends down who you'd like to be with..."	other enough" "they'll meet five or four other children that they're going to be with (in tutor groups)" "they'll know people when they come in September already (vertical tutor groups)" "and I have also said to some of the children, keep an eye on X, she's struggling a little..."
PT7: Transition programmes which seek to remove the barriers between new students and older students (via vertical tutoring etc) (O) minimise the sense of being different, marginalised (M) and maximise sense of being nurtured / looked out for (M) in the youngest, smallest, most vulnerable students who feel like 'the little fish in the big pond' (C).	Focus group quotes: "we're the lowest in the school, it's like we're going back to year 1" Staff quotes: "the children get to mix, for example a Year 7's going to come in to a form in September, they're going to be with Year 8s, Year 9s, year 10s and year 11s....but they're going to get to know older children straightaway, which sort of breaks down that barrier" "the older children they like the responsibility of nurturing the younger ones..."	Staff quotes: "...they're little fish in a very big pond" "...with the vertical system...the older ones are already looking after them and indirectly mentoring and nurturing them" "the behaviour in form time is dramatically improved compared to when we have chunks of year groups..."
PT8: Transition programmes which have additional visits before and (crucially) after common transfer day (C) increase vulnerable students' sense of having the coping strategies and being prepared (M) for the experience of being confident students in the school (O).	Students rated 'having visits to secondary school in Year 6' as 8.2, **quite important** and 'having extra visits in small groups' as 8.8, also **quite important**. Focus group quotes: "it was really useful like going there but as soon as we went with everybody (common transfer day)...it made me really worried cos it just like changed that quick, cos it was different from what you expected" "yes maybe (summer school visits) ...just like all the	Students rated 'having visits to secondary school in Year 6' as 5, **very important.** This was the second highest rated aspect of the transition programme in this group. 'Having extra visits in small groups' was rated as 8.7, **quite important**. Focus group quotes: "we had a worry box (during visits) ...anything you were worried about, you had to put your worries in" "we did a treasure trail around the whole school"

	Year 7s mainly and then you'll like go round and get used to it and then when everyone else comes, it's not as strange as it would be" Staff quotes: "So they've done two maybe three sessions where they've come, they've walked around and get that feeling of familiarity, the making friends event, they stopped for lunch..."	Staff quotes: "They have the additional sessions...so they work with two of our teaching assistants...and they do different activities with them." "Well on induction day the Year 6s go into their tutor groups with all the older children and their form tutor and do an activity with them...so they've done that already, so they'll know..."
PT9: Programmes which have clear and effective liaison between primary and secondary school staff (C) enable prospective students to be prepared for the additional and induction visits to the secondary school during the summer term of Year 6 (M) and therefore feel more at ease and to have acquired the information which they perceive as necessary (O).	Focus group quotes: (these quotes are based on what the students would like to happen in the programme) "they could have like ages ago...got pictures of all of the teachers and then...tell them what room they'd be in and what their subject was..." "the teacher takes us there and brings us back and we still go and stay together...so we'll just see what the lessons are like" Staff quotes: "they sent a couple of staff with each group" (additional visits to secondary school) "they (primary staff) know me, know and it works I can just pop in and it works really well" "I know the link there well, and she's brilliant at giving me the information that I need..."	Focus group comments: In response to the question 'would it have been helpful to do some work here, to talk at primary school about secondary to get you ready for it?' students felt this was **not important**, except one pupil who did. Staff quotes: "I've gone round and collected the information from the primary schools, not only academic data but then also comments that we talk to the primary schools about...and then make that decision" (in relation to identifying vulnerable students) "But next year we've got quite a good plan linking into the university and using our other feeder primary school"
PT10: Programmes which	Ranked with a mean of 4.4, **very important** to	Ranked with a mean of 7.1, **quite important** to students

provide students who have experienced behaviour difficulties at primary school (C), with information about the behaviour policy and consequence system, support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries (M) thus creating a successful transition (O).	students pre-transfer "well it was important to me to know actually how to behave, it's just like if you didn't know what to do, if you were trying to make jokes with somebody and or a teacher and like they didn't want that and they might think it's offensive to people and that's what you want to know cos then you, like want to have a good time in the school and have laughs and that. You don't want to get into trouble." "It made me feel like how you feel when you know what they're going to say about cos all schools say it, you know you've got to behave" Staff quotes: "...to give them that fresh start..."	pre-transfer "Well I knew how to behave and that encouraged me to be that good, was if I was bad, I would have got a C2 and I've have to stay behind..." "So I know that if I'm naughty I'm expecting to get eh a hard punishment" Staff quotes: "...we won't have sat down and told them the consequence system beforehand or anything, it's something they would learn when they come up" "...I mean if they do ask about detentions, I will say if you're late for school, you will get 10 minutes at night and things like that..."
PT11: Transition programmes aim to foster motivation and independence (O) in vulnerable Year 6 students (C) by providing them with practical information, relevant experiences, behavioural expectations and social support networks (staff and student) (M) so that they have a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness (self determinism) (M).	Students ranked 'practising organisational skills' with a mean of 11.2, **of little importance**. 'Being treated as grown up and mature' was rated as 11.8, **of little importance**. Staff quotes; "so we need to encourage them to be independent but on the same token is a huge thing for them, going from junior to secondary" "they need to deal with this (ruptured friendships and fall outs) and be a bit more independent" "...when it's coming towards the end of Year 7 I've got to start detaching and start encouraging them to be more independent, so it's a slow process..."	Students ranked 'practising organisational skills' with a mean of 8.6, **quite important**. 'Being treated as grown up and mature' was rated as 11.5, **of little importance**. Staff quotes: "I would talk to them about how important it is for them to go up and act in a responsible mature manner; the older students are going to be watching you, em you need to make sure you conduct yourself in a grown up way ..." "I talk to them alot, em about how important it is that you push for your levels and how well you do...and we want you to push yourselves at all times...must make sure you make a good impression..." "...they are having to be more independent...and they are having to get to lessons...we say you must prepare things at night, get your act together a little bit with

		things"
PT12: Transition programmes that make use of the older students by involving them in the transition meetings with Y6s (C), increase the students' confidence and trust of Year 6s (M) so that they have a positive experience and perception of their role within the school (sense of belonging) (O).	Students rated 'talking to other students about the move' as 11, **of little importance**. 'Talking to Year 7s who went to my primary school' was rated as 14, **of little importance**. 'Staff and students from secondary school visiting us to share information' was rated as 14.2, **of little importance**. **Weak evidence** Focus group quotes; "they (older students) could help you find your way around the school" Staff quotes: "we use children to help with that day too; so we attached children to, actually it was a mixture, either Year 7s, 8s or 9s, we attached a couple of them to each group..." "...the students have been fantastic with the younger ones this year..."	Students rated 'talking to other students about the move' as 6.4, **quite important**. This was the fifth most important aspect of the transition programme for this group. 'Talking to Year 7s who went to my primary school was rated as 4.7, **very important** (the most important aspect of the programme for the group). 'Staff and students from secondary school visiting us to share information' was rated as 10.3, **quite important**. **Strong evidence** Focus group commented that it was helpful for the older students to visit them at primary school. Staff quotes: "I take my children (peer mentors) to my visits to the big feeder primary schools..." "the opportunity for Year 6 children to talk to older students is so valuable to them..."
PT13: Transition programmes which include exciting or novel experiences, such as practical lessons (C), increase a sense of enjoyment and curiosity in students (M) so that they feel enthusiastic and motivated about starting Year 7 (O).	Staff quotes: "practical science, that's the one (they enjoy most), because they're not used to the equipment that we've got here...so that's a wow factor, science has always got a wow factor" "...they want to go and explore, you now even those that are really nervous, that curiosity..." "...and enjoying it (the lessons)..."	**No evidence**
PT14: Transition programmes enable liaison between staff of both schools and parents so	Staff quotes: "...then I'll liaise with the girls upstairs (learning support base) and we'll do that (think about additional interventions required) but children that	Staff quotes: "...what we do expect is that come September, there will be some children that we will have missed, because for whatever reason they found it

that the individual needs of vulnerable students (C) can be identified (M) and appropriate interventions or support implemented (O).	are already highlighted to me who I know, I will key work them initially anyway: I'll see them on a one to one you know weekly or fortnightly, or whatever's needed" "...it's really important and why I know the children and I have a good overview of the children and the parents which I think is key for that first year of settling in" "mum's been in for a couple of meetings, he (Year 6 pupil) did the vulnerable sessions...I've moved him around in his groups...so I've been able to meet his needs"	(transition) more difficult, and therefore we can put them into nurture group..." "It may be that I've attended other multi-agency meetings about the children beforehand or our child protection co-ordinator would have gone out...in preparation for September ..." "...we can speak to parents quickly, so we can deal with that (difficulties)..." "you would hope really that we don't get any surprises pretty much cos we hope that we've gained enough information from primary school..." "...our EWO...and he looks out for our children, so again he'd know families..." (regarding poor attendance) "I sit with the Year 6 teachers again and gain more information about it myself so that might, might be the children they're really worried about" "...we've had a couple of students who you know medically will struggle...met with parents and set up protocols ready for when they come in..." "...so sometimes you're grasping at straws at the last minute, to try and get all the information back, but we've got really good links with our primary schools"
PT15: Transition programmes which offer formal and informal peer mentoring to vulnerable students (C) provide emotional and practical support to new Year 7s (M) so that they feel supported and less anxious about the changes they are experiencing (O).	Mean ranking 8.2 for talking to older students about worries **Quite important** Focus group quotes: "...there was this girl and when I went for a quick visit she took me for a tour around the school and she also said that it took her about a week to get used to it" Staff quotes: "...if one of my Year 7s are struggling	Mean ranking of 13.1 for talking to older students about worries **Not important** Focus group quotes: "there were two pupils that came that day, Year 10s...told us about other people,,,told us if we were bullied we could go to them...things you're allowed to do and things you're not allowed to do" Staff quotes: "...I take some of our current students to the school (primary) to talk to the whole group of

	for whatever reason, I might say to one of my others in that form (older student), can you check in with them every morning and make sure they're ok and look out for them, and that works well..." "...but when they start their lessons that will be mentors/ buddies, children that will go and pick them up and help them go to their lesson while they're getting to know the place"	students" "they'll have all had peer mentoring training and I will have talked to them about it beforehand" "...we do lots of things like mentoring,...we would attach our pupils to those...and there are trained esbd mentors and they would be attached to some of our younger students who are struggling with their conduct in school..." "...by going into form groups they're going to be getting that one to one mentoring..." "...mentoring; it's kind of one of our priority areas that we want developing..." "...I think there's probably a lot more peer mentoring going on than we even probably give ourselves credit for, it probably happens informally quite a lot really" "including transition mentors has worked really well and that....we've added those children in and that's worked really well for them..."
PT16: A transition programme which provides continuity of the primary school curriculum in a nurture group, thereby reducing cognitive load and stress associated with change and provides one attachment figure in a small group (M), leads to a smooth and successful transition to Year 7 (O) for vulnerable students (C).	No evidence from students No evidence from staff	No evidence from students Staff quotes: "...we do have a Nurture Group (NG) for our vulnerable children and that is a primary school setting so to speak, so they're taught by one member of staff who is a trained primary teacher and who has worked in Year 7 as well. And we identify those children who we think are going to become emotionally vulnerable in the transition process, and they go into that NG"

APPENDIX 11

Phase 2 Data Analysis at PT Level: quotations from students

PT1: Transition programmes that emphasise that Y7 is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' and specifically select the information that is to be shared with teaching staff (M), instil a sense of optimism, hope and motivation for students (thereby resulting in a successful transition) (O), particularly for those students who have experienced behavioural difficulties or have had negative experiences at primary school (C).

A1

 Just the friends and stuff and how like at the juniors it was the bullying, it did happen but nobody knows that, like it's no one knows so you can just like start all over again, make new friends, yeah

I didn't have many friends at my junior school and I didn't really enjoy it but now I've got more friends and stuff that I can enjoy it a bit more

A2

If you like got worried like in the junior school but I didn't, but if you did, you would get a fresh start at the secondary school like, no one bullying you or anything

A4

Em, it gives me the chance for a fresh start because in the junior school my attendance was one of the things that worried me cos I was poorly quite a lot back then cos I didn't know I had half the things and now my immune system has grown better, so then it's a bit easier for me and it's a fresh start for everything as well.

For learning and that, and it's a fresh start for making new friends. It's like starting school all over again, like in a higher school and keeping the knowledge that you already had

It's like, so you can actually start again and meet new people, rather than just get staying with the old ones; you can stay with the old ones and just meeting new people...

it just made me feel a bit happier cos it's a fresh start really, something new and something different...and to have opportunities

A6

Cos when you start Y3, that's like quite a big step up as well from Year 2, and then like that was a fresh start from Year 3 to Year 6, and then like because you've got another seven years ahead of you, then that's basically seven years of a fresh start, and then like you want to improve better, and you want to get good grades whatever and you want to be a...

B1

Yeah cos if like my old school if I was a bit worried cos people were mean to me, and now I can stay away from the people and have a fresh start

Meeting new nice people

Then I don't have to worry about the things that was going on in the old school

B2

Cos I was quite naughty at primary school, cos at primary school people just called me "idiot" and that they'd talk about me and stuff

B4

When I was in junior school, there was a few people that I didn't like, up here it's alright cos it's new people and meeting new people

Taking up clubs at dinner time and in junior school we didn't have many. Eh it means I'm not just sitting down; that I'm getting around and stuff.

B6

Em, well if you'd done something wrong, which I didn't, let's just say that if you did something wrong in your old school, you'd just be coming to your new school and it would be like a new sheet of paper, you can start all over again.

Em, you've got the chance to do what you want, and no one can question you and what you've done before

School A staff interview

M Yes I thought that was very important cos I think that's something that we most definitely need to do at secondary school and I think we do highlight our students who we think might have experienced behaviour difficulties, and are aware of them, but that is limited on who is aware of them, the teaching staff aren't aware, cos then we can give them that fresh start, otherwise if we give everybody the information, that fresh start isn't going to happen is it?

JM Yes, so you're trying to avoid the pre-conceived ideas of the students...

M And a fresh start works extremely well for some students, you know they're come with, maybe at risk of exclusion at junior school, but they come here and it's totally different and they cope so it does work very well

JM So whenever you said, the fresh start, when you're emphasising that fresh start, and you're saying it works well for some students, is it usually as you say, the students who've had behaviour difficulties or is it a different group, or as well as other people? What's your experience?

M Em, I suppose I'm looking at fresh start from a behaviour point of view really, but I think if you think about friendship issues, coming to secondary school can also be a fresh start for new friendships and it's in secondary school, if I'm aware of something, and if there's been problems with certain students in junior school, if I'm aware of that, I can put them separate, you know they can go into different bands so they don't have to meet each other, so then they get that fresh start in that respect as well.

JM So that would link into the 'negative experiences' then, whether it be bullying, or just fall outs or a bit more

M Yeah, yeah

JM What about kids who are quite socially isolated, maybe don't have any friends at all?

M Again that's, I think they are given that fresh start because they're highlighted to us, they should be highlighted to us from the junior school, again then that's part of my transition groups, children who have had similar difficulties they wouldn't necessarily be with the behaviour students, they'd be with children with similar difficulties

JM So then you're actually separating out who you have in different groups? You don't have...?

M Yeah, I wouldn't have the behaviours with the sort of anxious, isolated, the withdrawn students, cos I want them to sort of not have to worry about

JM Right I didn't realise that, through all of our conversations...I've obviously missed that! So you have one with the behaviour and I guess in those sessions so you have a different focus?

M Well I don't do the behaviour one, the behaviour issues is done by the girls upstairs, and they went through expectations and things like that, whereas I didn't have to sort of focus on that, I focused more on taking away the barriers of anxiety

JM And you had the scale for measuring that?

M Yes, so we do light and enjoyable tasks to put them at ease and that sort of thing

JM So talking to the girls who do the behaviour group, in terms of them talking about the fresh start, so it was information about what they're expecting of them, not everyone's going to know about the past; this is your opportunity to...and those kind of foci? From your feedback from them, do they find that that focus is helpful for those children with the behaviour difficulties, generally?

M With the behaviour difficulties, generally I think it does, then when you know we've got certain students who're on that cycle, you know they might initially start off ok in secondary

school, cos they're a little bit not quite sure what's going on here, but then they're sort of more complex cases, they do back on that cycle..

JM Because they've worked out the boundaries and...?

M Yep, yeah

JM So generally speaking it's pretty good apart from those children whose needs are quite ingrained?

M Yeah, does that make sense?

JM Oh yes, so it sounds like you'd agree with PT1?

M Yes definitely yes.

School B Staff interview

R I definitely think that's something I emphasise when I go out and do my talks to the students and particularly if we've got a student who needs a fresh start then that would be emphasised by the primary teacher and then also by ourselves as well...

JM And do you and the primary teacher talk about that being clear about this and that this is what we need to raise

R Yeah, probably because when I have all the meetings with them I would talk through all the children and it might be that it would come up, and fresh start is a term that comes up for a lot of students and that it might be appropriate, and what we also do as well to link in with that a little bit more is that we move different children into different house groups, so for example from one primary school this year we'd got a group of girls, that we knew were going to be, the primary school had already told us that they were quite problematic together, so what we said would be a good idea is that we use the house group system to give them even more of a fresh start, by filtering them not only are they coming up to a big school and it's a big change but we're diluting it again, cos we've got the 5 house group option as well

JM Would those generally be young people who have behaviour difficulties or who would have had negative experiences?

R Definitely with the behavioural difficulties, we make sure that we've got a spread of those across the house groups and if we know, if primary tell me that there's two children 'oh they don't need to be together' then we have a list that we know who to try and avoid, so when we're agreeing the groups we break them up...

JM So it sounds like the information you're getting from that discussion with the primary staff is really important in making sure these kids do have that fresh start, so in terms of the young people themselves, can you see that they are aware of the fresh start opportunity?

R Yes, I do think so, maybe the most vulnerable ones would want a fresh start and you would sell it like that to them, sometimes they're not able to make that fresh start cos their difficulties are so high, em but I do think that a lot of places do say come on this is a fresh start, one of the things we do say is 'c'mon you're in secondary school now, you've got to, there's a different set of expectations for you, we work in different ways from primary school

JM I remember that theme from last time we talked that was quite a big key point for you to pass onto the children, ok so you would agree with that PT, the first one?

R Yes I would do yes

JM What about needing to tweak the wording around that sense of optimism and hope, does that fit?

R Yes I think so, I think we would use it not just for the vulnerable but for a lot of children as well really, new expectations; on the first day of term em you know we emphasise to the children that we're watching children, we're going to be looking at how your behaviour is and the Head would be saying that as well, and saying 'I want to see how you do and how you're going to be in September with us, so that is emphasised quite strongly, on Induction day, 'come on this is your new school here, you've got to push yourself forward, so that's probably not just something we do with vulnerable, but probably with the whole group really

JM So you're encouraging, but in quite a strong way, which is kind of giving the children the message, actually I need to pull my socks up

R Yes, we are a formal setting, this is where you will work and these are the expectations

APPENDIX 12

<u>Confidentiality and Anonymity Script for Focus Groups' Participants</u>

We will shortly be discussing issues and topics related to school, and the imminent move to secondary school. Within this group you may say something that you want to be kept private and confidential. We will agree group guidelines together, but one which we must stick to is that of confidentiality: this means that whatever is said here during the group is not to be discussed by any group member outside the group. Obviously you cannot be anonymous for this part of the research because you know each other, but we all need to agree not to discuss this with anyone outside the group or after the group discussion has finished.

Everything you do say will be recorded on Dictaphone and I will use this as data for my research. Nobody in the group will be identified on the tape, nor will any names be used either in the report I write or in the feedback to the school later on. So your information and what you contributed to the group discussion will be anonymous from this point onwards.

However I must make it clear to you all that if you do say something that causes me to be concerned for your safety or of others' safety, then I will have to discuss this with a member of the school staff. They will then decide what needs to be done next, but if this happens you will be told about it. This is part of my responsibility to keep you safe during this discussion.

If someone says something that you do not agree with, that's fine, but we need to remember to respect what others say and believe. If you feel upset or annoyed by something, please let me know straightaway, and you can either sit quietly for a bit, or leave the room. There is a member of staff available to talk to you about this and I will make sure that I come and talk to you as soon as the group discussion is finished.

APPENDIX 13

Cycle 2 Staff Interviews School B December 2011 (#20 and 21 on Dictaphone)

Introduction to the interview:

JM this is an opportunity for us to have a think about what I've done so far; these Programme Theories have really been devised from literature that I've read about transitions, the first meeting that you and I had, the focus groups with the children when they were in Year 6. So I've tried to put together some theories from this about what it is your transition programme that might be working for those vulnerable children, not for the general group but just thinking about those vulnerable ones, and what might work for them and help them settle in and have a really successful transfer, so the second part of the research that I started two weeks ago with the children and with you today, is to look at 'this is what I think, what do you think', do you agree, do you disagree or are there bits of this that you think should be changed....

R Do we go through them then?

JM Yeah and you might have some examples of when that did happen and 'this is something I see each year' or whatever...so the first one is about the 'fresh start'

R I definitely think that's something I emphasise when I go out and do my talks to the students and particularly if we've got a student who needs a fresh start then that would be emphasised by the primary teacher and then also by ourselves as well...

JM And do you and the primary teacher talk about that being clear about this and that this is what we need to raise

R Yeah, probably because when I have all the meetings with them I would talk through all the children and it might be that it would come up, and fresh start is a term that comes up for a lot of students and that it might be appropriate, and what we also do as well to link in with that a little bit more is that we move different children into different house groups, so for example from one primary school this year we'd got a group of girls, that we knew were going to be, the primary school had already told us that they were quite problematic together, so what we said would be a good idea is that we use the house group system to give them even more of a fresh start, by filtering them not only are they coming up to a big school and it's a big change but we're diluting it again, cos we've got the 5 house group option as well

JM Would those generally be young people who have behaviour difficulties or who would have had negative experiences?

R Definitely with the behavioural difficulties, we make sure that we've got a spread of those across the house groups and if we know, if primary tell me that there's two children 'oh they don't need to be together' then we have a list that we know who to try and avoid, so when we're agreeing the groups we break them up...

JM So it sounds like the information you're getting from that discussion with the primary staff is really important in making sure these kids do have that fresh start, so in terms of the young people themselves, can you see that they are aware of the fresh start opportunity?

R Yes, I do think so, maybe the most vulnerable ones would want a fresh start and you would sell it like that to them, sometimes they're not able to make that fresh start cos their difficulties are so high, em but I do think that a lot of places do say come on this is a fresh start, one of the things we do say is 'c'mon you're in secondary school now, you've got to, there's a different set of expectations for you, we work in different ways from primary school

JM I remember that theme from last time we talked that was quite a big key point for you to pass onto the children, ok so you would agree with that PT, the first one?

R Yes I would do yes

JM What about needing to tweak the wording around that sense of optimism and hope, does that fit?

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JM So you're encouraging, but in quite a strong way, which is kind of giving the children the message, actually I need to pull my socks up

R Yes, we are a formal setting, this is where you will work and these are the expectations

JM That one seems like it's got evidence from yourself, I meant to say to you that I asked all of the children a couple of weeks ago, not to look at these, but I pulled out the end bit which is the mechanism, and asked them to sort them into piles of very important, quite important, not important and did not experience...and that, so there's some evidence for the theories from them and for those with not so much evidence from them, you might provide some...Right the second one is looking at this transition programme, in providing a consistent key person that the children would liaise with, probably yourself, before, during and after this term, helping the students to feel looked after, particularly among those who are shy and anxious...

R If it was that, then it comes back to those who probably do that 'moving on up' group, where we invite the students up and they work with two of our teaching assistants and we also have two students from the university this time, working on that programme as well, and it's an opportunity for them as well cos they wanted more experience so we put an advert at the uni, cos that's one of our trust partners, so they came in and helped, but probably I would say

it's been myself and also the teaching assistants that run the moving on up groups and those 6 six weeks prior to Induction day, that when they would be more consistent people for those most vulnerable than what I would even be

JM So what you're saying is you provide consistent key people, even if that isn't yourself, and now do you think that does have that impact for that vulnerable group?

R I would hope so, I'd have thought so cos in those groups you have the transition mentors as well and those same children stay with that group all the way through the sessions, so they come out of their lessons and they go to the, and they will have seen those children all the way in the run up to and then seeing them again on induction day and again on induction evening you see.

JM And do you ever get any feedback from those children who come up and do those extra sessions?

R I honestly don't know whether or not cos I don't plan them, I don't know whether or not the ladies that run then do questionnaires with them or anything but I think out of all of this I do probably need to do more questionnaires and do thing s like that cos what we don't do is often is measure it, we just do it.

JM So it will be interesting to see what the students think of it, so would you say that those are the students that you would identify for those groups or are there other additional students?

R It would just be those kind of isolated, shy, anxious students, it isn't students who are going to be presenting with behaviour difficulties, we don't do that with those students

JM And obviously that's been running for quite a while now so it's obviously having some kind of impact, whether that be anecdotal rather than evidence based as such?

R Yeah

JM Ok, so the third one 'programmes that facilitate open and frank discussion Year 6s and older peer mentors', this is what I'm thinking is that that's developing trust because I think students, Year 6s are going to believe what the older students tell them, I think in a way ...

R Yeah I think they do tend to and I also say that, I also say to them that you'll probably believe what the children , my students say more than what I'll say, em and when and it is obvious that when we go to primary schools and meet with the teachers and then the students, at the end of the sessions when we've done our presentation, they flock around the students, they don't need me to tell them anything at all, they do want to ask the questions and they do need to be more open in asking the questions, we do a question and answer session and they ask things that are ridiculous you know they'll ask about how you're allowed to wear your hair, how you're allowed to wear your uniform...

JM But really important to them?

R Yeah, yes, really important but probably sometimes they wouldn't ask me it but they come out, and actually we end up with having to put a stop on them cos they do get a bit too ridiculous (laughs)

JM So maybe that needs changing then, it's not just open and frank, but they can really ask what it is they genuinely want to find out

R I think they do do that..

JM So it gives them that opportunity, ok that's really good and again is that the vulnerable students or is that everybody?

R That again would be everybody, there'd probably be more in the moving on up group, more question and answer sessions for them to do that, with the select two mentors in that time; I'm not part of the moving on up group as well, I just say that this is when it needs to happen and people do it and

JM So so far those three seem to be fairly well as you'd expect, ok em the next one, the fourth one for those vulnerable students 'giving them those direct experiences, coming to the building...'

R I thought about that actually, what they do do, and what X did with them last year, she did a video with them and they did a DVD of the school site, and we have a treasure hunt and that has photos of the school site, em that all the children would do, but actually the moving on up group put that together during their sessions

JM And so then they are actually going around and well, so they get a really good

R Yes, get that really good concrete ability of being able to do that, so it does help an awful lot

JM Do you ever sort of, I mean I know that it's not you that runs it, but do you ever sort of, seeing the kids come and go year on year, do you think that's a really important part of the transition programme for them?

R For the vulnerable yes, one of the main big worries children have is, we're such as big school, and how do I move around it, will I get lost, and actually as staff on the first couple of days when they're there, we're always out on changeover of lessons to help them, it probably takes them a good two weeks, cos we have a 2 week timetable, really the first 2 weeks they are still very much asking questions about where is this room and where is that room and obviously this year was even harder for them cos we've totally revamped the site so when they came on Induction day really we didn't say, we did a little treasure hunt and had a look around the school but actually it wasn't of that much benefit for them, so their confidence of

learning how to move around a big site was useful but actually for any value come September, don't know if it did or not really.

JM I suppose it still gives them that opportunity...

R It gives them a certain awareness...

JM Exactly

R But we did do that more with the moving on up group people so that emphasis of them finding their way round and we even have some children in the school who are autistic and we take photos for them and they carry round cards with photos of rooms that we might need if you are going to have a room change, this is your card and that's what that room might look like, when you go to it. So learning support would go into more depth and they tend to support some of the children who are autistic in the school

JM And when you say that you're out and about during lesson changeover time, are you and the staff aware of those kids who might be the ones who are more vulnerable and who might need

R Yes, you'd know who we are putting in the nurture group because then of course you'd see those vulnerable aren't in the mainstream environment, they're in the nurture group with Mrs S and there's only about 16 or 18 children to think about this year

JM And they're not moving about in the same way are they?

R They're mainly based in one classroom

JM And I'm wondering if any of the children that I saw, they're not nurture group children, were they?

R I don't think they are, although..

JM All considered to be vulnerable but not necessarily in that way?

R No no and you see that's sometimes the difference not all necessarily not all of the children identified as needing to come up to the moving on up groups would automatically go into nurture either, because what we do find is that sometimes when they do come up and be in the moving on up groups we kinds of go, 'they'll be fine' and so there's sometimes a contrast in opinions actually.

JM So it's almost a vetting process in a way?

R A little bit (laughs); it is cos sometimes how the actual description of the child comes from primary , when we meet them, and staff having a bit more knowledge of our environment, they go 'no, this isn't a nurture group...'...

JM Or the other way round maybe?

R Yeah, I remember a girl who's in Year 9 now and I took her on the first 2 lessons on her induction day and I popped her straightaway and said this needs to be a nurture student, she's not going to manage, she stuck out; I don't know how we didn't pick her up through the process; as soon as we looked at her we just went 'oh'

JM And that's your experience coming in

R She needed that, and actually that student is an interesting one cos she goes into nurture now and helps the younger children and so she's a peer mentor in a way; she is a trained peer mediator, but actually one of the things that's helped her during Year 8 and 9, is going back into nurture group

JM It's almost like safety...

R And she's really good with those nurture group children

JM And that certainly seems to be, no transition programme could get away without doing that

R Not at all, not at all

JM Ok, that pretty much seems to be evidenced really. The fifth one then 'looking at communication between staff and the Year 6s to feel protected and looked after', and it certainly seems to sound like there's a real presence in the first few weeks anyway

R Yep, there is a massive staff presence at the start of the school and obviously on induction day by putting the transition mentors attaching each of them to two of the class groups on that day that gives them a greater sense of protection I think

JM I mean I've put in here that that's for the students who need to feel protected or those that may feel at risk of being bullied, is that your experience or not so much?

R If they were at risk of being bullied then we might look at that or to decide if they were a nurture group candidate, and if, we've got a young lady who's there now that I can think of and we were very worried about her and how she would be perceived by others within the school and how the children would, so she went into the nurture group to give her another layer of protection, so rather than, I mean in the moving on up groups they would talk about it, about what to do if you're being bullied, and I would say, you know sometimes bullying does come up, em in primary talks and I would often say to them, well you've got, these are the people who to go to, you go to your house tutor, so that would be explained to them at that time...

JM So it certainly sounds like here you know the staff are very aware that they need to be about, they need to be seen as involved, do you know what I mean? And as you say sort of offer that reassurance...

R You do tend to notice who needs more help

JM So is there anything about that fifth one that you think needs to be tweaked? Does it sound as if it makes sense to you?

R Yeah I don't know whether or not we do do an awful lot, you know I tell them when we go out in the presentations who their point of contact will be, em I think that's probably developed more once the children have arrived, than necessarily through the transition process, because it's not until the children actually arrive and start knowing house managers and we start knowing them and their family, that sense of security develops I think later on in the process rather than maybe before they get here

JM So it's more communication than familiarity then?, I can certainly change, ultimately what I want to do is change the wording so it makes sense

R Yeah ok

JM Sixth one looks at those who again are worried about being isolated or bullied giving them opportunities to foster new friendships and perhaps maintain those existing ones, apart from the groups that cause behavioural difficulties (laughs) obviously, to minimise the sense of loss and anxiety, I mean do you agree with that, is that your experience?

R Yeah in regards to the maintaining existing friendships, yeah the teachers would tell us at primary school if these two would be really good together, they need to be kept together, I can think of two that came up this year that probably needed to be kept together...

JM In terms of minimising their anxiety?

R In order to minimise the anxiety of it, yeah, and we had another boy last year I think and they said 'oh look his mate really really helps him' but it's a fine balance between putting a pressure on another child to look after one and actually knowing that it is a productive friendship, so you know and if that was the case I would always talk that through with the teacher and listen to what their opinion on it is; but they would definitely tell us 'oh it would be a really good idea if these two students are together'.

JM Right, ok so you try to take that on board?

R Yeah we do, there's not been many occasions when we haven't em been able to match them up and keep them together..

JM And in your experience that's been ok generally, it's not caused more problems

R No, no, no, cos we're careful of ones we need to keep try to keep apart, the problem is is that, they don't always move around in clear groups, you know they do see lots of different children, sometimes they do move around in clear groups and we try and work with them but different subjects don't always mean we can

JM And I suppose it's always those first few weeks when everything's completely new, once they've been through the process the first couple of times they might not necessarily need that security blanket so much in a way...

R We do allow them to have it, we do do that

JM What about the fostering the new friendships bit, thinking about those particularly in the moving on up groups...?

R But also what we do is on the first day of term, we have, first day of term is just Year 7s in, and in that tutor group, those 4 or a maximum of 5 Year 7 students will be with one member of staff and they'll spend like a good two hours, probably about two and a half hours during the day just in that particular group

JM Doing what? Doing activities and talking things through?

R Yeah, ice-breakers and learning all about the school, things like that and actually that is a really good opportunity for any children to build that up, now the nurture group are on their own, in that small group, building a bit of a team on that day themselves, whereas all the other children themselves are in those little groups.

JM Are you aware, for the vulnerable kids particularly, those tutor groups and those groupings, so they....?

R I would think very carefully about that, about if I've got children that have been identified as being vulnerable in my house I would carefully at which tutor I was putting them with, em and knowing the child; I've got one girl who was coming up and we were very worried about her, so she's gone with a very strong female member of staff, em we as house managers have a discussion about who's having which vulnerable child...

JM So you're almost matching personalities as well in a way?

R Yes

JM Right so that's something I haven't captured in here so maybe I need to add...

R Sometimes you see, well with this girl, we were very you know worried, doesn't have a mother figure at home, and so actually from the information we thought, that primary had given us, I said I would take her on, and then also because it was also child protection issues, and then also I would give her to one of my strong female tutors. We've built that into it for her so actually, as house managers, there's 5 of us, we would have that meeting and make sure they were equally spread and also look at what other ones, other children you've got in there in house groups, so if you've got more, a high ratio of problematic boys, we sometimes say I'll have some girls then, just to break it down so you're dealing with all it...

JM It's a massive jigsaw puzzle

R It really is a massive process, I mean the spreadsheets that we have are are on big pieces of paper and we have to go through them all the time, and make sure that we're fine and things like that. Just make sure that we've got an equal spread of the children

JM You see that's something that I hadn't considered, yes you're fostering friendships in lots of different ways, but you're also fostering relationships with adults as well, ok well that certainly is something that I'll add

R And we do that all the way through the school, and

JM Do you move them around, they don't stick with the same tutor in the year group?

R Yeah they do, they do, in theory they do unless something major's happened, em I've got one student and he has come out of the tutor group because of a problem that he gave that particular member of staff and it really broke the trust down so we had to put him with a strong male this time; so yeah we do try to develop those relationships so em with particular children

JM Sounds good; so the seventh one is looking at the vertical tutoring, which we've just already talked a bit about, but it's more about the new Year 7s and the older students, trying to remove those barriers

R One of the things actually that we've just started doing, and I don't know if you've heard of it, it's called NEGOTIATE, we're doing some really good work with it, and actually that has been fantastic in getting the young children to work with the older children. We would be expecting the tutors to be doing that in form time, not getting the children just to sit with their year but to sit with the older children as well. But then we also have our prefects going into our form, and we have what's called mentoring Monday, em in theory on Mondays going into tutor groups, you have a Year 11 prefect and you have a millennium centre student who go into forms to work with the younger children, and that works really well, and actually what's nice, is that one of the young children told me oh actually told mum, he's a Year 8 boy, that he's really pleased with his mentor, that he's got now, and he's not got anybody attached to him, he just sees those two people who come into that form, as two people who mentor him...but the millennium centre students are the Year 12s who I would have had when they were young, and they've been with me for 5 years and then have gone to the millennium centre but we have still attached them to the same house group, so the children can see that they've moved on again and that's good because it shows the aspirations of what you can do after you've left...

JM I mean in terms of so those vulnerable people, but yes particularly thinking about the vulnerable Year 7s who anyway are young and small and all of that...

R If I'm honest with you, and I maybe said it before, that one of the things I've not really done all that much is with groups of mentors in school, but once we have em got the vulnerable children here I don't always continue that link very well, with the transition

mentors and I think that's a fault with the programme really but I don't know if they get picked up in other ways, because we have esbd mentors, we have other ones everywhere!

JM but what I'm trying to think about here is that you said you can see that some of the children feel nurtured and looked out for by that opportunity to meet with the older students and stuff and maybe this bit here doesn't make sense, 'by minimising the sense of being different or marginalised', this is the Year 7s

R I don't know necessarily that they are feeling different and marginalised really because it's just part of the process, you move from primary to secondary school and you're going to be the Year 7s and they know that we're going to get a new batch of Year 7s coming in. I would talk to my house in assembly and say 'it's induction day next week, you need to make them feel really welcome' and that's always said but I don't think that's always that the children necessarily know, I don't know if the children told you anything different, I wouldn't particularly think what we do is try to make them feel less different cos I don't know that they do feel different coming in the first place, they're in their uniform, they look exactly the same as all the other children

JM And those vulnerable children will have already have had those additional experiences anyway and perhaps that's not so relevant, ok, maybe that's why they don't feel different because of the work that's gone in before

R Maybe, and actually you know there'll be the vulnerable groups and actually on induction day we'll have the same format of the day, they'll come into assembly, they'll do dinner, they'll do everything the same, as everybody else but they'll just spend more time in the nurture group that day you see, but actually the format of the day is the same for everyone, they're starting and finishing at the same time, they have their lunchtime at the same time, they're just receiving more one to one intervention when they're going into an academic lesson you see

JM I can tweak that if needed then, that's the whole point of this then; the eighth one is looking at the additional visits, and we know that you do the additional visits and that they're successful because all of the children have said that they really helped

R Oh did they that's really nice to hear

JM I haven't really analysed what they've said and I will and feed that back, from your point of view do you feel that the students feel that they're able to cope better and that they're more prepared for the ...?

R Yes, one of the things you do notice is going back to what we said before, is about the confidence level and actually quite quickly we can see how their confident the children are and that they're probably not going to be as vulnerable as what we thought they would be really, so that's quite a useful tool to see that they are quite confident and that they are going to understand things, but we will have gone through all the things like their planner and how

the day works and stuff like that, so hopefully they will feel just a little bit more prepared and it's not as much of an unknown when they do come

JM The Year 7s themselves did talk about this being helpful and they did talk about feeling more able to cope; the ninth one then, you've talked a lot already about the effective liaison between primary and secondary staff so that you know the kids and what their needs are and that, now the students themselves felt that staff didn't really talk to each other, well actually they do, but behind the scenes and they're not aware of it! But clearly it's a massive part of what you do, so that em basically to have those students feel more at ease or as you said that they're not having to experience higher levels of anxiety because they are with kids that they know or whatever...

R I think that through talking to the teachers, we have our eyes on the ones that we need to have our eyes on, whereas we're just coming in blindfolded you know beforehand, for the majority they'd probably come and get on with it, but for those ones that we're talking about here the most vulnerable ones, it's quite a good idea because then I will have brought back the information and talked it all through with the house managers so we're prepared and the pastoral team, we're a little more prepared about what's coming to us and also things like if we've got any children who are on things like child protection, or children in need what we've done this year, we've not normally done it cos sometimes we've got a lot, but some children we've gone to their review meetings in the July so we're in it, ready for September, so we've got a little more in depth information

JM I think that's massively important, cos if you didn't have that liaison how would you know who's coming up?

R And for some children, and if we can go to some of those meetings that actually it's really helpful for matching the personalities to the children because when you go to a core group, you know so much more information than what the teacher can just give you as well

JM So in terms of passing that information onto the teachers...

R The form tutor would have that information, more than...

JM Yes with the information being confidential as well. So clearly that's vitally important; the tenth one is the kids who have had behaviour difficulties at primary school and are vulnerable for that reason, having info about the behaviour policy here and the consequence system...

R I don't know that we necessarily do that but I don't think they, it depends really, we won't have sat down and told them the consequence system beforehand or anything, it's something they would learn when they come up here; if we've got children who we are really worried about then they probably would have had some additional visits and we would have had parents up and there would have probably been multi-agency meetings but as regards to

actually being that precise with the information necessarily, I don't think we would have actually done it. Probably a good idea actually, to have told them...

JM Interestingly a couple of the children from this school I interviewed, now it may be cos of the timing of the interviews, as they'd been here for more than half a term, they did say that this was very important to them, and they found it really helpful! So they felt they knew but it may that their memory has sort of, that they found out in the first couple of weeks

R And they might do more of it than I realise then in the moving on up group with them, maybe, as a blanket whole I don't say well 'if you get a C2, a C3, a C4 then you get all these things' I don't tell them all of that...

JM It's a little off-putting maybe for that first meeting?

R the only time that we do talk about seclusion or, they do ask you sometimes when I'm out having my meetings, but I think they only know that because they've got brothers or sisters with us already and they'll say 'oh tell me about this seclusion' and I'll always say to them 'don't worry, you won't need to know about that' you know, but I don't tell them all about the behaviour system, the other way they might come to know about it, come to think of it, is in their Year 7 handbook; that they get on induction day, cos in that we explain...

JM That induction day is at the end of the process though isn't it (Yes) so, it seems to be that, and this is where it's really interesting, the children themselves are really worried about the behaviour system, not just in this school, but in schools in general, so maybe there is something in that and it's about the balance of how much you tell them without putting them off as well

R Yes, I mean if they do ask about detentions, I will say if you're late for school, you will get 10 minutes at night and things like that, but I don't normally tell them in my presentation. I might be worth me trying to get you a programme of work that they do in moving on up...

JM That would be really helpful, yes please

R It might tell them more about it than I realise they do

JM It is interesting that a couple of the students did say that that was something that was important to them and it was really helpful to know because it helped them almost say 'right, I know what I can get away with and I know how far to push the boundaries and to stay within that in terms of my behaviour'

R Right, well maybe that is something we could do more of

JM So number 11, again 'programmes that foster motivation and independence in the vulnerable kids again by giving them the practical information that we talked about' relevant experiences, social networks and all of that, helping them feel like they can do things for themselves and are competent, is that something that you are aware of, sort of motivation and

independence, or are you thinking that actually because they're vulnerable, they need a little bit of extra support?

R We would give them more support to create that independence, and then during the year, for example the most vulnerable, would start going out into different mainstream lessons, so we would help them with that cos I suppose they won't always have as much motivation or independence because they are being considered more vulnerable, but I think that by showing them things like, this is your planner, these are your lessons, these are your rooms, you're giving them more independence

JM And a bit of responsibility?

R Well the responsibility is massive, because they know that they have to carry all their belongings around, they've got to go to the right lessons on time, they've got to understand their timetable,

JM Get their stuff ready the night before...they talked about that, that was something that stuck in their heads

R I tell them that, they tell them that in moving on up, get yourself organised and that sense of responsibility again goes back to you're in secondary school now, this is not, you haven't got a tray to put your things in, you've got to do all these things yourself. And I tell all the children including the vulnerable students they all have a list of what you might need to bring and we talk that through with the children, so they will be told from a very early stage of going out to the primary schools and that will be emphasised to them

JM From my experience of talking to the 6 or 7 students, this does stick with them, 'we need to get organised the night before' and they were saying things like 'otherwise we'll be rushing around like headless chickens the next morning'; I think that's been quite key for them though, almost teaching them self-organisational skills. Ok

R And I think the social networks goes back down to us deciding which vulnerable children we will be attaching to which staff, relationships

JM Do you talk to the students then about different tutors...oh he's really good because he....or she...?

R No. They'd all be considered as all really good. And they wouldn't necessarily have any idea that I'd put them with a particular tutor for a particular reason. And we would only really need to do that with the most vulnerable children as well, the identification of a particular member of staff...

JM So it's not actually helpful for them to know they've been singled out?

R No because what we're trying to do, is like with the inclusion team, is have a team of people so that children aren't reliant on just one person but inevitably some children do latch

onto one member of staff, but what we needed to get away from was, what we used to have, was 'I'm only talking to that member of staff' and no there's a team of people you can talk to

JM So that's been a conscious effort, an explicit decision almost?

R Yeah, it came from high up the school, they actually changed things on a ground level, changed the way we worked

JM So was that cos of it being problematic, with a few students being...?

R Yes maybe in the past

JM Let's move on to the twelfth one then; this is a little bit like the previous one in a way, so it might be that I have to collapse the two together

R Did the children, out of interest, talk about the older children?

JM Yeah they did

R So they knew about the mentors?

JM They did they did. Mentors? Some of them said 'who are they?' what does that mean and I sort of explained that these are the young people who have been trained to help you...oh yes, yes, so they knew who they were, but maybe the term is kind of perhaps slipped a bit. Obviously your programme involves the older students massively in the transition and again you talked about the confidence and trust, now in your experience, do you think that there is a sense of belonging when they get here, because of the work that you've done and with the moving on up groups?

R Yes I think there is and also I think there they've got that sense of belonging quite quickly, like the house system kicks into play quite quickly and you could ask them the younger students, and say 'I think my house is the best' and they'd say 'no miss, this is the best' so they'd quickly very very quickly attach themselves to that system

JM So it's part of their identity in a way?

R Big time. They're proud of being in their house

JM And tutor groups are they a mix of houses?

R No they're a mixture of ages

JM But not a mixture of houses?

R No, There's 5 house groups and in my one house group I've got 11 little tutor groups

JM That is almost again reinforcing that this is our group, we're together?

R And my Year 7-11 have a whole assembly with me weekly and I tell them they're a team and that we're the best and they often compare with the other ones and sports day and stuff

JM So some healthy competition?

R Yeah it is always healthy competition; but if your brother or sister are already here and in a house group, then you go into their house group

JM Now then, PT13 now, this one is the visits to this school when they're still in Year 6, is it something that you think is important for the children to have a new or exciting experience, in terms of I don't know of doing a science lesson or...?

R Yeah they do well to be honest something that we've done more of and we hadn't done loads of it in the past was is do Inspire sessions and then so we've been doing one week, one very close to us primary school, we did some art sessions, music and dance sessions; some of come here, we do literacy sessions and some do peer reading with some Year 5 children from a local primary school as well, and I would like to do more of that and hopefully with the new build that will help that along

JM And do you think that does instil a sense of enjoyment, 'oh it's going to be quite different and it's going to be more...'?

R We try and sell it to all the students like that, and try to sell it like, 'oh wow, you're coming here and isn't it going to be fab?' you know and what with the new build and last year some of the schools, in fact one school have said can we come and do science work with you cos they want to come and use our science labs, and we try to wow them a little bit with our, look what you can do when you come here, and we try and use the older children to demonstrate that to the children

JM I think that's a massive selling point, isn't it cos primary schools...

R It is if you can do it, cos some ...logistically it's ever so hard

JM 14, em this is more about parents, and I know that you do have good links with parents or carers, so through the work that you do, liaising with the primary school parents, so that you can in terms of children in care or whatever, children in need...

R That works cos if I've already got older brothers or sisters in school, then I already know the family so, but obviously quite a lot of children are brand new into the school, there're always new generations of children, especially with the vertical tutoring system your links with parents are really strong cos I would just have one family attached to me, so that I'm their one point of contact really, not their only their main one, so I would have a greater understanding, in theory, of what's going on at home and they would know me to ring to and so therefore that helps an awful lot actually, if you've got a child that's coming up that is quite vulnerable, if you've already got older siblings here you kind of say 'you can talk to so and so, they'll tell you about the system, they know about it'

JM Do you find parents or carers are quite happy to pick up the phone and tell you that their child is going to find something difficult and talk to you about it?

R Yeah some do and they would, and at first they would probably just come and see me as the transition co-ordinator and I would probably say to the house managers, 'actually this is a problem and you might need to pick up a few individuals in the house group' and so yes we would do that, and there are sometimes particular parents who would ring me and say ' I am worried, this is a particular issue, you need to be aware of my child in school, and the primary school may not have told you'

JM So it's important for you to have that very strong link with primary schools in a way to initially identify the children that might need extra support, but also they might not be aware of some of the stuff...?

R Yes, I might be able to say to the primary school, look give them (parents) my name directly and the number and ask them to ring me and the school sometimes do that and parents will sometimes ring up through that process...

JM I mean the thing, one of the things I regret not doing as part of this research, is involving parents, because it would have been really interesting to get their perspective of how the schools...

R Yeah, but we do evaluate parents, we do get parent feedback and that's the one way we do get it is at the end of induction evening, and we ask parents to fill in questionnaires about how they found the evening and found the process and where they got information from, that's one of the things we actually do monitor; they don't always fill them out but...

JM It would be interesting to ask the parents for whom it's been more important to have the contact with, those vulnerable young people, you know what they thought, cos I imagine at home there'll be conversations around secondary and moving up and stuff, and if the parents are feeling 'the school are really taking on board what I'm saying'...

R Our induction evening is packed the hall is, it's our busiest night of the year. Busier than all the other parents evening and options evenings and everything like that...

JM I bet, parents are anxious aren't they?

R They are, we tried a while ago actually to run, in conjunction with the authority, to run some parenting classes, but we really got very poor take up, it's not interested, so we didn't do it again; but we tried other things to do joint learning and that's not be very successful either

JM PT15, 'peer mentoring; which provides emotional and practical support to the new Year 7s, so they feel supported and less anxious about changes'; is that something that you would agree with?

R Oh yeah, that is the aim, behind it, em but like I said I don't have any evidence necessarily to prove that it works

JM But you do have your own experiences, don't you?

R I do I could talk about my own experiences, I think that definitely becomes much stronger when they go into forms with the older children, and I sometimes explain to our older children as well, who are trained mentors, that you are mentoring these children all the time, every time you have a chat to them you're doing the process of mentoring, and you are training, you've got more skills and we've focused your skills and you've got these skills, and actually some of the older children don't realise they're doing it (laughs)

JM Yeah, it's one of those natural organic things. So in terms of the moving on up groups that the vulnerable children are attending and there are some mentors there,

R There are, the same 2 all the way through

JM Right and are those mentors aware that these are students who are going to need a bit of extra support?

R They are, yeah. I would have told them that these are children that need extra sessions and would you like to help, cos they need more? And they're always really willing to. But because of timetable, in an ideal world, we would maybe even get them the transition mentors to go into the nurture group in September and spend more time with them, but because of their timetable, we're not always able to do it, we just do it for that one individual because it's good for her as well.

JM It becomes difficult when you're starting to lose lessons here and there...

R It does and I think that's where I don't use the transition mentors as much as I'd like to in September, they've got to be in their lessons, especially at the start of the year...I've got a young lady in Year 7 now, and she has meetings with a mentor that we've set up with one of the Year 11 girls, and she's become more vulnerable since she got here, you know worries about bullying and things like that, and I set it up and now the Year 11 girl arranges to meet her once a week, and I think they really like it actually; she's wrote a bit of a nickname in her planner about this Year 11 girl, so I thought they must really feel comfortable

JM So that really gives us evidence for the part about emotional support, not just the practical support of how you get to various places

R Again I chose that prefect carefully because she's a prefect that's had bullying and dealt with peer group issues all the way through school, so she's really good at looking after them as well. However I've done that with other students and they've not really followed it through, and I wonder if that's probably because the Year 7 student didn't need the mentoring as much as the parent thought, what I thought; the other system I set up with the other pair

works nicely whereas the other one didn't really come of anything, and I didn't push it cos I thought it'll either work or it won't.

JM At least they knew it was there are available to them...and then the last one, is looking at the nurture group and continuity of the primary school curriculum cos you talked about that before, in terms of not putting too much pressure on those very vulnerable students, the move itself is a big enough thing to deal with, so let's have you in the same place, you're not moving about the school, we talked about that reducing cognitive load, and stress associated with change providing an attachment figure

R It is, we just provide one nurture group teacher and teaching assistants do go into that group so that group is heavily supported. And she's a trained Year 6/7 teacher you see, she really does know her stuff, curriculum, it's brilliant, it works really well. As that member of staff gets to know the children she will say 'right, your strength is in maths, let's put you in mainstream maths lessons'

JM And do it gradually?

R Yep, so there'll be some children in the nurture group and by now (December) she will already, I won't necessarily now them, but some of them will already be attending mainstream lessons, because she's seen a strength in their subject area and in theory by the end of it, she's rolled them all out by the time, by the end; and what we do on induction day, the current nurture group work with the Year 6s nurture group for the day,

JM So that gives them a different sort of status in a way

R Yeah and by now they've gone through that whole process and now we're giving you a whole heap of responsibility to look after the new students that are coming in. It's worked for us, the current nurture group love looking after the new nurture group

JM It's that nurture group principle, having the attachment figure in there and not too much pressure, so maybe that PT needs tweaking in terms of, yes that's what you do but you're always mindful of identifying strengths, saying yes let's move you forward, so it doesn't become too much of a pattern
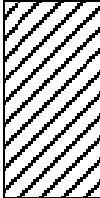
R No they'll know that this lasts for this period of time...

Finish

APPENDIX 14

APPENDIX 15

Secondary School Data for Matching Purposes

	Number of pupils	FSM	EAL	SEN register	Pupils living in 20% of most deprived areas nationally	Unauthorised absences
1	1054	335	151	416	801	2648
2	982	120	59	264	125	2155
3	1187	82	30	192	105	1484
4	1707	102	36	184	35	682
5	626	214	47	226	340	1666
6	900	243	361	226	629	4375
7	1176	149	20	260	199	2003
8	757	239	446	469	576	2576
9	1100	234	250	256	432	1358
10	1050	178	86	107	167	1786
11	957	304	44	258	289	3409
12	1078	263	278	239	278	2078

APPENDIX 16

Transcript of focus group for Year 6 pupils to attend school B September 2011

Confidentiality script read out to group of pupils and questions invited (none asked); pupils complete questionnaire SIP-C and CMO configurations rating sheet individually, once J had read through the 20 statements for validity purposes. *Some children state that only 'having a fresh start' was important or 'extra visits'........*

J So the first thing I wanted to ask you about today was how ready you feel to move up to secondary school (scale 0-10)

Pupil responses

6, 10, 8, 10, 5, 9.5, 10.

J What's the thing that you're most looking forward to?

Pupil responses

- Em I'm looking forward to better dinners

- Moving to different classrooms instead of staying in just one; (why?) because if when you first go up there, it'll make you explore the school more and you'll know where everything is

- Hometime! (do you not enjoy school much?) No not really

- Playing cricket

- Probably just getting closer to finishing school (so you don't much like school?) no

- Probably PE

- Science

- science

- Making stuff in D&T

- *Other pupils responded by answering making paper aeroplanes and water bombs; reflecting their ambivalence possibly about the move or, to entertain their peers; higher degree of disaffection compared to school A*

J What about the things that you might be worried about, as everyone gets a bit worried when there's a change?

Pupil responses

- Bullying

- Getting lost; because it's a huge school and we're getting a new building

- Homework (several agreed with this)

- Forgetting something, cos then you can't use it (equipment)

- Being late, being late for school cos you have to stay after school for 10 minutes

- J Question: did the school explain their consequence system (yes) and did this make you feel more or less worried, once you knew about the system?

- Bit more, a tiny bit more

- Bit more

J when you went to your visits, and when X came to the school to talk to you and give you the powerpoint presentation; what about that was useful?

Pupil responses

- Em, I wouldn't say, it was ok; it showed you inside the building and you know where everything is, she talked mostly about all the stationary you need (a bit helpful); new building would look like

- School uniform, finding out.....

- J Q: did she tell you about any of the pupils who go there, and how they might help out?

- Yes there were 2 pupils that came that day, Y10s.

- J Question: what did they tell you about?

- Told us about other people

- Told us if we were bullied that we could always go to them

- Things you're allowed to do and things you're not allowed to do

-

J And was it helpful to hear from other students, because sometimes kids like to hear from other kids rather than adults.   Was it helpful then to have the other students there as well as the member of staff?

General agreement

 J Did you get to visit the secondary school more than once?

Pupil responses

- More than once

- We went four times

- I went 3 times

J Brilliant, and what did you do on those visits?

Pupil responses

- We had a worry box, kind of thing, anything you were worried about, you had to put your worries in (J question: and then did someone read them out at the end and answer your worries?) Yeah

- We did a treasure trail around the whole school and that's all I can remember

- *J prompt, did you go to any lessons, did you meet any staff?*

- Oh yeah, we had some green cards hidden somewhere like, and we had to find them; they were linked to our worries

- *J did they give you some more info about those things you were worried about?*

- Yeah

- *Anything else that was helpful on those visits? Did you get a floor plan or anything, so that you could have a go at getting from A to b?*

- No (J question: would that have been helpful?) yeah

- *J and what about things like timetables; do you know which groups you're going to be in and what houses you'll be in?*

- Yeah, we did that on induction day (*general agreement that this was helpful, to know this already*)

- *J were you given any year 7 timetables to look at?*

- Yeah, they showed us the timing of the lessons, and break and lunch

- We also did homework diaries (*J: tell me more about that?*) well you got your homework diary and you have to write down your homework in it, and then if you forget anything.....

J so how do people feel about that, the homework, so say you might get a science, an English, a maths so you've got about 3 or 4 homeworks to do, do you feel you've got the skills to organise yourselves?

Pupil responses

- Don't know

- Depends how hard it is

J What about here at primary school, here at your junior school, did your teachers here talk to you or any other members of staff about moving up to secondary school?

Pupil responses

- They did talk a bit

- Not really

J would it have been helpful to do some work here, to talk at primary school about secondary to get you ready for it?

General consensus that this was not really important to the pupils; except one pupil who nodded to suggest they would have found it useful

J the last question I'm going to ask you is, if you could wish for one thing that either your primary school or the secondary school could have done to really help you feel ready for secondary school, maybe to settle in, what would it be?

Pupil responses

- Have an earlier home time

- But you do finish earlier than at primary school! And you start earlier too

J But the interesting thing is, that the research says that students should be starting school later in the day (late morning) but in fact schools seem to start earlier when you go to secondary school!! So anything else?

- Better teachers (laughter) (*J question: did you meet some of the teachers on the day?)* nods *(J were you not impressed?)* No, Mr X was horrible, strict

- The French teacher's too Frenchy, all she does is speak French so, I don't understand her

- She's proper French, these ones here (primary) have just been to France and back, but that one there (secondary) she lived in France

- We could write down what she says on a notepad and then go on the internet to find out

- Em they could have like little signs around the school, you know what I mean? So you know where you're going

J That's a good idea. Do they not have that?

- Em, I'm not sure, don't know

- It's silly.......sweets in the afternoon

J what about you girls down this side, you've been quiet: anything else you would find helpful to help you settle in?

Girls shake heads and nod in response to J's question that they feel happy with the way things have gone

J It seems to me that School B have done a pretty good job (of transition), would you agree?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, no (pupil indicates he does not like school and doesn't want to go)

J so some of the schools have been thinking about having pupils visit the schools over the summer holidays, so you wouldn't be doing work, but you might be doing some fun activities and getting some of you together, would that be something you'd be interested in?

No no yes no no maybe yes

J looks like a gender divide, boys are saying no thanks, don't want any more school, girls are saying yeah

Additional pupil responses

One male pupil says he'd want to play on his X box over the summer rather than go to the school

Another pupil stated that his form tutor was weird

My form tutor's fairly chilled, half of the pupils were swearing at her, but she just sat down, she didn't care, some were playing on their mobile phones, one of the girls was playing games with the sound on.

I found something out about school B when I was there: I needed the toilet and they lock the toilets (during lesson times)

J What has struck me about this group that was different to the other group, is that none of you have mentioned friendships; it seems that you're all happy to go to school B, with the friends you have here and perhaps to make some new friends too

Thank you and conclusion of focus group and notification about the second cycle of data collection

APPENDIX 17

Programme Theory 2 Second Cycle Analysis / PT Refinement

	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School A	Students who are shy, anxious or withdrawn	Know they have someone to turn to if school proves difficult Feel secure and looked after ("school mum" and "security blanket") Trust that the Year Manager will give them accurate information Provides empathetic listening "Boosted up a bit every time I visited"	So that the students access the support needed to facilitate the development of independence skills for coping later on in the school "makes me feel better"
School B	Students who are shy, anxious, socially isolated (have low educational attainment, behavioural or learning difficulties)	Know they have someone / particular people they know and trust to talk to when they encounter a problem (transition mentors) Gives the students information that they need to know: increases competence and confidence 'Forewarned is forearmed': students have awareness of expectations (behavioural and learning)	Feel looked after and are sufficiently prepared for new expectations both learning and behavioural

Refined PT

PT2:

Transition programmes that provide students with consistent key people to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7 makes students feel secure, looked after, listened to and prepared (M) so that particularly shy, anxious and socially isolated students (C) develop the competencies to cope with transition and the new demands of Y7 (O).

NB

School B do not promote the role of the Year Manager as being emotionally available for the students, which is a different approach to School A.