

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology



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Programme Director: Vivian Hill

Institute of Education, University College London

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Exploring pupils' experiences of fixed term-exclusion, reintegration and their relationships with peers

Imogen Johnson

Declaration

I, Imogen Johnson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Many children and young people (CYP) have positive experiences in mainstream education, however, for some this is disrupted through the process of exclusion. Exclusion rates, particularly in secondary school in England, have been and remain a significant concern (Black, 2022); for some young people, their education is defined by numerous experiences of exclusion in the form of multiple fixed-term exclusions (FTEs). The negative effects of exclusion are well-documented (IntegratED, 2021) and there is an acknowledgement of the complex and interrelated factors contributing to exclusion (Timpson, 2019).

The process of reintegrating pupils back into the school environment after an exclusion is complex and challenging (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015). The importance of relationships and a sense of belonging are highlighted in the exclusion and reintegration literature (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Thomas, 2015), however, the dynamics of pupils' social relationships are under-explored in the literature. This study examined pupils' lived experiences of multiple FTEs and reintegration and their peer relationships within the context of exclusion and reintegration.

This study used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of 12 secondary aged pupils, 7 males and 5 females, across two inner city boroughs. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (TA) and five themes were identified within the data. Findings suggested that peer relationships play a key role in the exclusion and reintegration cycle, influencing pupils' behaviour but also providing a source of support. In addition, the study suggests that pupils get stuck in a negative cycle of exclusion, related to their primary-secondary transition, the reputation they develop and a lack of understanding of the underlying factors contributing to their

behaviour. The findings emphasise the role of a key trusted adult and opportunities for pupils to take an active role in decisions about their education. They suggest a solutions-focused, strengths-based approach is needed, with the consideration of how to support pupils' social relationships and enhance their sense of belonging within school communities.

The strengths and limitations of this research are highlighted. Implications for school practice and Educational Psychologists (EPs), including directions for further research, are discussed.

Impact Statement

This research contributes to the field of exclusion and reintegration by exploring pupils' experiences of multiple FTEs, under-represented in the literature. It also contributes to the field by exploring pupils' social relationships within the context of exclusion and highlights the importance they play within the exclusion-reintegration cycle.

This research corroborates previous research in terms of the findings related to the facilitators and barriers to reintegration. Specifically, it highlights the role of the environment including social, personal and institutional aspects that influence pupils' experiences at school. It contributes to a move to shift the narrative around exclusion from a within-child perspective to a consideration of the contextual factors at play.

The findings have implications for school settings, Educational Psychologists (EPs), and the field of exclusion in the following ways:

- *Taking action from pupil voice*: the findings indicate that pupils felt unheard in their schools, suggesting it would be beneficial to provide more opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and have their voices heard. Some pupils felt that although their schools listened to them, they did not enact on what they heard, highlighting the need for schools to not only listen to pupils but include their views in decisions made about their education.
- *School settings*: the findings suggest that the need for a sense of belonging to the peer group contributed to pupils' behaviour. This was often not in line with school policies. This highlights the need for schools to develop a psychological understanding of behaviour in order to address

pupils' underlying needs. Peer relationships are a key part of the exclusion-reintegration cycle, emphasising the need to support pupils to develop their social skills and effectively resolve conflict. Findings also highlighted the need to support pupils through key transitions, corroborating the potential value of nurture groups as part of the primary-secondary transition. The importance of relationships and the role of a key, trusted adult was a key finding and thus, suggests that nurturing pupil-pupil and pupil-adult relationships within the school environment is fundamental.

- *EPs*: the findings further highlight the importance of listening carefully to the young people we work with. Supporting settings to take a strengths-based and solutions focused approach including the early intervention of pupils at risk of exclusion is also key. There is also a role for EPS in supporting schools to develop a psychological understanding of behaviour and a space to offer teacher supervision as well as training.
- *Exclusion and reintegration practice*: the findings highlight the role of context and the impact of a reputation on pupils' experiences in relation to exclusion and reintegration. They suggest that successful reintegration requires the breaking of the exclusion cycle which could be achieved through peer support, the family and school working together, and change in the attitudinal barriers towards pupils as well as supporting their access to learning.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP	Alternative Provision
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CYP	Children and Young People
DFE	Department for Education
EBSA	Emotionally Based School Avoidance
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
EP	Educational Psychologist
FSM	Free School Meals
FTE	Fixed-Term Exclusion
GRT	Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish heritage
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NI	Narrative Inquiry
PPCT	Process Person Context Time
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PDB	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour
RQ	Research Question
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Need and Disabilities
SEMH	Social Emotional Mental Health
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SMLD	Specific and Moderate Learning Difficulties
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Many children and young people (CYP) have a positive experience in mainstream education. However, some pupils find their education disrupted through the process of school exclusion. Exclusion can be understood as “*the removal of a child from their existing educational establishment due to their behaviour*” (Gill et al., 2017). This can have significant long-term implications for them including increased risk of criminality, sometimes referred to as the ‘PRU to prison pipeline’ (Bakayoko, 2022). Exclusion rates in England particularly in secondary schools have been, and continue to be, a significant concern amongst education professionals (DfE, 2017).

The negative consequences associated with exclusion are significant and well-documented (IntegratED, 2021). Research suggests that school exclusion is associated with mental health difficulties whereby those with social emotional mental health (SEMH) needs are more likely to be excluded, but also those who are excluded are more likely to experience mental health difficulties (Tejerina-Arreal et al., 2020). Furthermore, pupils excluded from school are more likely to experience behavioural and peer difficulties (Anna Freud Centre, 2021; Gill et al., 2017; Paget et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2016). Research suggests that exclusion disproportionately affects those who are already vulnerable in society and authors argue this perpetuates social exclusion and social immobility (Gill et al., 2017). The most frequent reasons cited for fixed-term exclusion (FTE) and permanent exclusion are “persistent disruptive behaviour (PDB)”, “verbal abuse or threatening behaviour towards an adult” and “physical assault against a pupil” (DfE, 2022a). Whilst these are the officially recorded reasons, the contributing factors related to exclusion are

complex and interrelated. These include individual, home, school, and wider societal factors (Timpson, 2019).

In spite of the known negative associations, there appear to be significant challenges in the reintegration of students in secondary school settings following exclusion (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015). Reintegration is understood as the plan for a pupil to return to the same school setting (after FTE) or to move to another suitable setting (after a managed move or permanent exclusion) (DCSF, 2008).

School plays a vital role in an individual's development, including providing a space for the formation of friendships. Decades of research highlights the importance of peer relationships in CYPs' development (Gergen & Gill, 2020), and peer relationships are linked to adolescents' sense of belonging and self-worth (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). A lack of a sense of belonging at school including peer difficulties has been suggested to be a contributing factor to exclusion (DfE, 2019.) The literature also suggests that peer relationships are an important factor in the reintegration process, however, there remains a gap in the literature exploring pupils' views on their peer relationships and friendships in relation to FTE.

Current government guidance (DfE, 2022b) states that Headteachers should consider pupils' views when deciding whether to exclude. However, it is argued that young people's voices are repeatedly not included in policy and research related to school exclusion:

"Nobody seems to be asking them, the most important participants in the school exclusion debate" (Gordon, 2001, p. 83).

By listening to the voices of those who have experienced multiple FTEs, this study aims to gain insight into how pupils experience the exclusion-reintegration processes that occur within the English school system, and to understand the role peer relationships play in this process. By focusing on experiences of multiple FTEs, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the contributing factors to the cycle of exclusion and reintegration. This study aims to highlight the importance of including pupils in decisions around exclusion and reintegration, and inform strategies and school policy to reduce exclusion and promote successful reintegration.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Definition of school exclusion

Exclusion can be understood as any form of removal of pupils from mainstream lessons (Bennett, 2017). There are different types of school exclusion which include formal and informal processes of removing a child from the classroom or school. The formal processes include permanent exclusion which refers to “*a pupil who is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned)*” (DfE, 2022b, p. 11). A FTE (recently changed back to ‘suspension’) (DfE, 2021a) refers to “*a pupil who is excluded from a school for a set period. This can involve part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous period. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year*” (DfE, 2022b, p. 11). Despite the recent change in terminology, this study will use the term FTE, as a reflection of the language still used by pupils and schools. DfE guidance stipulates that only a headteacher can

exclude a pupil, and this must be on disciplinary grounds and as a last resort (DfE, 2022b). In addition to the formal processes of permanent exclusion and FTE, there are several informal types of exclusion. The different types of formal and informal exclusion are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Descriptions of different types of formal and informal school exclusion

Type of Exclusion	Off - roll	On-roll
Formal	<p>Permanent exclusion</p> <p>Pupil is no longer allowed to attend the school unless reinstated by the Headteacher.</p> <p>The local authority is responsible for arranging appropriate full-time education from the sixth day.</p>	<p>Fixed-term exclusion</p> <p>Pupil is not allowed to attend the school for the duration of their suspension.</p> <p>If the suspension lasts longer than 5 days, the governing body is responsible for arranging appropriate full-time education.</p>
Informal	<p>Managed move</p> <p>Agreement between two schools to transfer a pupil at risk of exclusion to another school for a trial period, leading to a permanent transfer.</p> <p>With regards to the length of the trial period, timescales or outcomes, there is no guidance (DfE, 2022) thus schools follow local authority processes.</p> <p>Coerced moves to elective home education</p> <p>Parents being coerced into home educating their child following a threat of exclusion from the school</p>	<p>Internal exclusion</p> <p>Pupils are temporarily removed from their mainstream classroom due to behaviour, but remain in the school premises.</p> <p>Off-site direction</p> <p>Pupils temporarily placed in an off-site centre when in school interventions or outreach has been deemed unsuccessful</p>

Note. Created from statistics and information from DfE (2022b) and IntegratED (2021)

1.2.2 Definition of reintegration

Reintegration can be defined as the “*efforts made by LEAs, schools, and other partners to return pupils who are absent, excluded or otherwise missing from mainstream education provision*” (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019, p. 340). Thus, reintegration can refer to plans made for pupils to re-join a setting following an

absence (e.g. an illness or emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)) or an exclusion. For this study, reintegration will be understood as attempts made to support pupils to re-join their existing school community after FTE.

To facilitate successful reintegration, schools are advised to develop a plan so that pupils can be supported to readapt to the environment (DfE, 2022b). DfE guidance states that the plan should provide pupils with a fresh start and promote a sense of belonging as well as *“help them understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others and teach them how to meet the high expectations of behaviour in line with the school culture”* (DfE, 2022a, p. 17). The language used by the DfE suggests a focus on the individual and their behaviour. In comparison, guidance written by psychologists to support individuals who have been absent from school due to EBSA appears to offer a more nurturing and child-centred approach. EBSA guidance focuses on meeting underlying needs with examples of how to build a sense of belonging for the reintegrating pupil, including *“key pupils who can positively support the CYP; identified strategies / interventions to support them (e.g. ELSA); consideration of the CYP’s ‘push and pull’ factors and the CYP’s strengths and likes”* (Somerset Educational Psychology Service, EBSA guidance, p. 32). It could be argued that the DfE (2017) guidance does not consider the potential school systems which may have led to exclusion in the first place being the same barriers to reintegration on return (Lloyd & Padfield, 1996). Consequently, Thomas (2015) argues that it is difficult to successfully promote reintegration.

As part of the required reintegration plan already noted, DfE guidance suggests that a ‘reintegration interview’ should take place, attended by the pupil, parents and teaching staff. Suggested aims are to initiate early intervention to address behavioural needs, facilitate productive relationships with parents and

consider additional support (DfE, 2022b). However, research suggests that these meetings can be intimidating, exacerbating underlying issues and leading to further disengagement from school on the part of the pupil (Lawrence, 2011). Reintegration meetings are part of the initial stage of the reintegration process. Therefore, in order to make these meetings more successful and productive for all involved, we need to listen to pupils' experiences of them and the reintegration process.

1.3 School exclusion in context

1.3.1 Inclusion

It is argued that school exclusion contrasts with inclusive initiatives (Luhane, 2017). Many CYP at risk of exclusion or those who are disproportionality affected have a special education need (SEN) (particularly SEMH needs) or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Cole 2015; DfE, 2019). The inclusion of all pupils in mainstream education has been emphasised through several worldwide initiatives. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1990) emphasised the right of a child to have their views about where they should be educated. The subsequent Salamanca Statement recommended that governments *“adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise”* (UNESCO, 1994, p.4) with a central principle being that *“schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions”* (UNESCO, 1994, p.5). In the United Kingdom (UK), the inclusion agenda was brought to the centre of education policy through the introduction of legislation in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act

(Department for Education and Skills, 2001) and The 'Every Child Matters' (2003) initiative, which focused on early intervention and a multi-professional approach to improve outcomes for CYP.

There have been several statutory Codes of Practice outlining legal duties for the provision of CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), however, the recent SEND Review stated that "*there is widespread recognition that the education system is failing to deliver for CYP and their families*" (HM Government, 2022a, p. 9). The review found inconsistency in how CYP's needs are met with outcomes for those with SEND or in alternative provision (AP) to be poor. In response to this, the Schools White Paper (HM Government, 2022b) 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child' set out the current government's ideas for education. This included additional support for schools to secure the basics of behaviour, interventions to target support to those who need it most, equipping schools to identify CYP who need support, including those with SEND and a revision of the behaviour, exclusion guidance (HM Government, 2022b). Whilst the recent Behaviour and Exclusion Guidance (DfE, 2022b) emphasises that exclusion should be used as a last resort number, the number of recorded FTEs has increased (DfE, 2022b).

1.3.2 Government approaches to exclusion

Although school exclusion has always featured within the English education system, changes of government alter the socio-political landscape of the country and different governments take different approaches to school exclusion.

1979 – 1997

From the 1990s there was a sharp rise in exclusion rates. Reed (2003) suggests three possible reasons for this increase which are outlined below:

1. Firstly, the 1989 Education Reform Act pushed schools into competition with each other for pupils and funding. Schools were judged on outcomes which emphasised exam results and increased the pressure on teachers. This resulted in less time for the pastoral side of education and encouraged the exclusion of pupils whose academic performance would negatively impact the school's reputation (Reed, 2003).
2. Secondly, Reed (2003) argues that by viewing standards of pupil behaviour as a benchmark of the quality of the education system (DES, 1985), agency was placed on the individual pupil and the teacher, and thus, the government did not acknowledge the contributing contextual factors to exclusion e.g. socioeconomic status and poverty.
3. Thirdly, the government focus and emphasis on 'discipline' in contrast to an 'emerging fighting for rights culture' meant that there was a reluctance to act in the interests of those at risk of exclusion (Reed, 2003).

1997 – 2010

The new labour government stated a commitment to confronting the issue of school exclusion with an aim to reduce the exclusion rates by one third by 2002 (Reed, 2003). The 1998 Report from the Prime Minister's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) highlighted the link between low income and exclusion, concluding that exclusion needed to be considered within the wider context of social inclusion (SEU, 1988). It is argued that this reconceptualization of behaviour promoted a more holistic view of CYP with behavioural needs (Reed, 2003). However, exclusion rates remained a concern.

2010- Present

Authors identify a focus on punitive approaches and “well-ordered and disciplined classrooms” (Williamson, 2021) in England, compared to more inclusive nurturing methods seen across Europe (Parsons, 2005). It is suggested that this priority of discipline, conventionalism and testing demands high levels of conformity by pupils and can lead to the disengagement of pupils who are struggling (Power & Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, it is argued that curriculum reforms make accessing learning more difficult for some pupils (Bakayoko, 2022).

The DfE states that behaviour policies should “*promote good behaviour, self-discipline and respect, prevent bullying, ensure that pupils complete assigned work, and regulate the conduct of pupils*” (DfE, 2022c, p. 6). However, authors suggest that a rise in ‘zero-tolerance’ and ‘no excuses’ policies which apply predetermined consequences, regardless of contextual factors or underlying needs (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008), is leading to the exclusion of pupils for behaviours that could be managed in the mainstream classroom (The Education Committee, House of Commons 2018). Furthermore, it is argued that these policy initiatives focus on increasing teacher’s capacity to remove ‘unwanted’ pupils rather than supporting them to successfully respond to the needs of these pupils (Caslin, 2021). Rather than promoting positive changes to behaviour, these policies exacerbate behavioural issues (Greene, 2008). Authors suggest that behaviour is communication, often of an unmet need, therefore a compassionate and collaborative approach as opposed to a punitive one, is more likely to promote change (Bakayoko, 2022; Gilbert & Procter 2006; Greene 2008). The recent Timpson review (2019) concluded that current DfE guidance regarding exclusion and reintegration is unclear, leading to variation in practice, with some schools being

more effective in supporting pupils in a mainstream environment. The review also stated that “*the same children were being excluded for multiple fixed periods which is a missed opportunity to address behaviour*” (Timpson, 2019, p. 53). In these cases, schools should consider whether this is an effective strategy (DfE, 2022).

As discussed above, it is argued that changes to the political agenda have undermined inclusive practices, and austerity measures (such as a reduction in local authority (LA) funding) (Bakayoko, 2022) have further impacted on inclusion practice and exclusion processes (Cole et al., 2019). The recent COVID-19 pandemic also perpetuated existing inequalities, further impacting already vulnerable pupils. According to the Institute for Fiscal studies, the amount of spending per pupil in England’s schools was reduced by 8% between 2009-10 and 2017-18 (Sibieta, 2021). A survey of 1,500 teachers by the Sutton Trust (2019) suggested that due to financial pressures, schools are having to make the decision to cut support staff who are a valuable resource in ensuring that pupils have access to a key trusted adult in the school environment (highlighted as important in the exclusion and reintegration literature).

1.3.3 Why are pupils excluded?

Since the academic year 2020/21, up to three reasons can be recorded for each FTE and permanent exclusion, compared to only one reason in the previous academic years. Despite PDB being the most recorded reason for school exclusion, there continues to be a lack of clarity around what PDB consists of in the literature, possibly because disruptive behaviour is based on an individual’s subjective expectations of pupil behaviour (Holt, 2016). One definition refers to “*any behaviour that is sufficiently off-task in the classroom, as to distract the teacher and/or class peers from on-task objectives*” (Nash et al., 2016). Authors have differentiated

between time on-task and time off-task. Time on-task can be understood as the time spent concentrated on a learning task (Romero & Barbera, 2011). Time off-task is the time spent on activities that are not the learning task (Karweit & Slavin, 1982). This can include talking with a peer or the teacher, playing with an object or engaging in disruptive behaviour. (Allday & Pakurar, 2007). DfE (2017) guidance states that “*schools should consider any underlying causes of behaviour before taking the decision to exclude and the decision must be lawful, reasonable and fair*” (DfE, 2017, p. 4). In addition, DfE guidance states, in line with the Equality Act 2010, that pupils with protected characteristics should be safeguarded from discriminatory application of the school behaviour policy (DfE, 2022). It is therefore unlawful for schools to discriminate against CYP by excluding them because of a disability or a SEN that the school does not feel able to meet.

1.3.4 Who gets excluded?

Disproportionality. Pupils categorised as: eligible for free school meals (FSM), often used as an indicator for socio-economic status, SEN, in care or identified as being male are disproportionately affected by exclusion (Strand & Fletcher, 2014). Furthermore, exclusion disproportionately affects certain ethnic groups. The FTE rate (proportion of FTEs, per 100 pupils) in spring term 2021/22 (the most recent data) was 2.4. The FTE rates for the most excluded pupils in the same term was: Gypsy/Roma (8.93), Traveller of Irish heritage (6.51), Black-Caribbean (4.17) and mixed white and Black Caribbean (4.67) (DfE, 2022b). The number and rate of permanent exclusion for boys has decreased, however, they are still twice as likely to be excluded than girls (DfE, 2022b). Nevertheless, recent data suggests that the number and rate of exclusions for girls has increased (DfE, 2020).

Exclusion rates increase as the age of the student group increases, with the highest rates recorded in Year 10 (DfE, 2022b).

Poverty. As previously discussed, pupils who are already vulnerable and from poorer backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by exclusion. The FTE rate for pupils eligible for FSM is more than 3 times the rate for those not eligible for FSM (DfE, 2022b). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014) defines poverty as “*when a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation)*” (D’Arcy & Goulden, 2014, p.3). Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (2023), suggests that 4.3 million children in the UK were living in poverty in 2021-2022 (one third of children in the UK). A direct link between poverty and exclusion has been suggested by the Children’s Society (2018) whereby CYP growing up in poverty are not able to have their basic needs met, with behaviours manifesting in the classroom, and are then not able to protect against the highlighted risks associated with exclusion (Bakayoko, 2022) .

Race and Ethnicity . The recent Edward Timpson Review (2019) was commissioned as a result of figures revealed by the Government’s Race Disparity Audit, outlining the disproportionate exclusion of ethnic minorities. In fact, a previous report by the Children’s Commissioner (2012) implied that institutional racism which “*insinuates intra-institutional rules and regulations favouring the majority populace over minority ethnic groups, which are sometimes referred to as unintentional institutional biases*” (Children’s commissioner, 2012, p.96) is a significant contributing factor to the disproportionate exclusion of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Timpson review (2019) suggests there is a misunderstanding of behaviour due to differences in culture and unconscious low expectations of some children, however, their evidence does not suggest the extent to which this is occurring. Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) found that in reference to black pupils,

teachers' perceptions of behaviour were biased by racist stereotypes. This study used controlled experiments to look at how an individual's perceived race influenced a teacher's response to behaviour. They found that teachers were more likely to stereotype black children as 'troublemakers' and responded differently to white children displaying similar behaviours.

SEND. Evidence suggests that CYP with SEMH needs, Specific and Moderate Learning Difficulties (SMLD) and ASD experience higher rates of exclusion (Timpson, 2019). The FTE rate for pupils at SEN support level, without an EHCP is 6.31 and for those with an EHCP is 5.91 (DfE, 2022b). The SEMH needs category of the SEND code of practice (2014) states that "*children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These include becoming withdrawn or isolated as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour*". This suggests that "disruptive behaviour" could be linked to an unmet SEMH need. Several studies support this suggestion and propose that schools are finding it difficult to, or are failing to identify and meet the needs of CYP with additional needs (House of Commons, 2018; Kulz, 2015;). Due to the often externalising nature of their difficulties, those with SEMH needs are more likely to be excluded and to experience peer difficulties (Visser, Daniels & MacNab, 2005).

1.3.5 Prevalence and trends

Data suggests that exclusion rates have been rising steadily for the past decade (DfE, 2018). Whilst data suggests the number of recorded permanent exclusions across previous academic years decreased (5,100 in 2019/20 to 3,900 in 2020/21), the number of recorded FTEs has increased (DfE, 2022b). In the

academic year 2020/21 there were 352,454 FTEs which demonstrates an increase from the previous year (310,733 FTEs) (DfE, 2022b). However, when analysing recent data, care needs to be taken when comparing yearly rates, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on exclusion practice. The DfE has started releasing termly data on exclusions and FTEs, and thus, the full academic year 2021/22 has not yet been released. However, the autumn term data suggests that both permanent exclusions and FTEs had increased. It is important to highlight that whilst the above figures reflect the available statistics related to formal exclusions; there are concerns about their validity as official statistics do not include the number of children who are informally excluded from school through the processes described in Table 1 which go unrecorded (Gill et al., 2017). This implies that government data underestimates the actual reality of school exclusion thus, not capturing the experiences of all of the young people who are removed from the classroom (Gill et al., 2017).

LA context. The present study took place within two inner London LAs which provide the context for the research. Between 2013/14 and 2018/19 there was a 41% increase in the number of FTEs in London (Just for Kids Law, n.d). The two LAs included in the study have followed the national trend of rising exclusion rates and are in line with London figures. However, it is important to note that at present, the highest permanent exclusion and FTE rates are recorded in the North East and the North West of England (DfE, 2022b).

1.3.6 *The impact of exclusion*

As stated previously, exclusion rates have been a concern for decades (McCluskey et al., 2019) due to the associated negative outcomes and the impact

these have on individuals often already at a disadvantage. Gill et al. (2017) argue that school exclusion is a social justice issue leading to further exclusion from society and therefore, tackling the inequality in school exclusions remains a challenge for society (Just for Kids Law, n.d). Decades of research suggests that individuals who experience school exclusion are more likely to experience peer difficulties and are at-risk of negative outcomes in various aspects of their lives including mental health, employment, qualifications and criminality, resulting in a cycle of “social immobility” (Gill et al., 2017). According to the DFE (2019), only 18% of children who received FTEs achieved good passes in English and Maths GCSEs. Furthermore, repeated experiences of FTEs have been linked to increases in anxiety and disengagement from education (Timpson, 2019). Experiencing multiple FTEs are also a potential antecedent to permanent exclusion for some pupils (Bynner, 2001) as reflected in a study where most pupils had received a FTE at least once before permanent exclusion (Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

1.4 Introduction to theoretical perspectives

The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model

As already noted, the contributing factors related to exclusion are complex and interrelated and include; individual, home, school, and wider societal factors (Gill et al., 2017; Timpson, 2018). Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theories and model of human development are therefore relevant when exploring experiences of exclusion and reintegration. Bronfenbrenner (1976) proposed that an individual’s learning and development is dependent on firstly, the interactions between the individual and their environment (e.g. school), and secondly, the interactions between these environments. Although Bronfenbrenner criticised his own early theories for being

too context-focused (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) authors argue that the theories have always considered the interrelatedness of a person and their context (Tudge et al., 2009). However, the later theories provide a clearer view of an individuals' active role in changing their context. In the 1980s, Bronfenbrenner expanded his theory to include processes to explain the relationship between an aspect of the context or the individual and developmental outcomes. From the 1990s these proximal processes were understood as a key factor in human learning and development, and this led to the applied PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The PPCT model is the lens through which the present research is explored.

Self-determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2015) is another helpful lens in which to consider behaviour and exclusion. This theory supports an understanding of human motivation specifically autonomous (accompanied by feelings of positivity, choice and flexibility) and controlled (accompanied by feelings of pressure and compulsion) motivation, through three basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The theory states that humans are active beings trying to integrate new information into their sense of self and are autonomously motivated, but the environment can promote or hinder this process (Deci & Ryan, 2015). Thus, the theory can support an understanding of how the fulfilment or hindrance of these needs can promote or hinder self-determination. This is relevant because it is argued that self-determination positively contributes to learning, employment, and psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 2015). In the context of exclusion processes, this theory can support an understanding of pupil motivation and how this might influence

behaviours in the classroom, or relationships with peers and adults, and how the school environment may promote or hinder self-determination.

1.5 Summary and aims

The exclusion of pupils from school continues to be a concern and this chapter has highlighted some of the issues associated with exclusion and reintegration. It has discussed relevant policies and practices. There is widespread research into the negative outcomes associated with exclusion. However, the research into pupils lived experiences of exclusion (specifically FTE) and reintegration remains limited. There is an acknowledgement of the importance of listening to young people to gain an insight into their experiences of the world (McCluskey, 2014). This is also reflected in the most recent SEND Code of Practice (2014) which states that young people should be involved in the decision-making processes that affect them. However, whether this occurs is questionable. There is also limited research regarding pupils' peer relationships within the context of exclusion. Research deepening our understanding of pupils' lived experiences of exclusionary processes is important because well planned reintegration into mainstream could help to mediate the risks associated with exclusion and poorer longer-term outcomes. This study aims to:

- Explore the lived experiences of pupils in the exclusion-reintegration process, particularly in relation to their peer relationships.
- Deepen our understanding of the complex factors contributing to exclusion and inform strategies to support reintegration.
- Highlight the importance of including pupils' views in the exclusion decision-making process, seeking to inform policy and practice.

1.6 Researcher Positionality

I acknowledge that my personal and professional background will influence how I carried out the study and interpreted the findings. Through my previous experiences as a secondary school teacher and as a primary school link worker I have developed an interest in school exclusion and reintegration. I recall the pressure I felt as a teacher and my lack of understanding of pupil behaviour. In my current role as a trainee EP, I have also experienced the challenges associated with exclusion and reintegration. I am aware that these experiences will have influenced how I have interpreted the data and identified themes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an explanation of the literature search strategy and the questions the literature review aims to answer (2.2). It will provide a critical review of the literature in relation to views and experiences of exclusion and reintegration (2.3). It will explore definitions and literature related to peer relationships and friendships (2.4). It will discuss relevant theoretical perspectives (2.5). The chapter will conclude with a summary of conclusions drawn from the literature review (2.6) and an outline of the aims and rationale for the study (2.7).

2.2. Literature search

To address the research questions, a thorough search of the literature was employed. The following databases were accessed via EBSCO: British Education Index, ERIC and OpenDisserations. Psych Info and Ovid were also searched. Appendix A provides the search planner for the literature review including search terms. Studies which focused on primary school experiences were not included, however, those that focused on both primary and secondary school experiences were included to ensure relevant findings from the literature on views and experiences were not disregarded. Equally, the type of exclusion (e.g. FTE) was not specified in the search strategy to widen the scope of the literature review. The date range was limited to studies from 2010 onwards due to several changes to relevant legislation at this point including the 2010 Child Poverty Act, 2010 Equality Act and the 2010 Children, School and Families Act. The abstracts were read and the inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 2 below was applied.

Table 2*Inclusion and Exclusion criteria for literature review*

Considerations	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies focused on exclusion, reintegration following exclusion or exclusion and reintegration • Studies related to the experiences of secondary aged pupils excluded from school • Studies exploring the views of staff • Studies exploring the views of pupils • Studies exploring multiple perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies which do not focus on exclusion or reintegration following exclusion • Studies not related to the experiences of secondary aged pupils excluded from school • Studies not exploring the views of staff • Studies not exploring the views of pupils
Time and place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles based in the UK • Articles written in English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies published/theses after 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles not based in the UK • Articles not written in English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies published/theses before 2010
Type of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative studies or mixed methods studies exploring views and experiences in relation to exclusion and/or reintegration • Relevant to educational psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative studies not exploring views or experiences in relation to exclusion and/or reintegration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not relevant to educational psychology • Not full text

Inclusion criteria was applied to the full article which was then critically reviewed. Braun & Clarke (2022) suggest that the literature review should provide a narrative about the chosen topic to situate the study, in contrast to an all-inclusive review of the evidence. Thus, the literature review aimed to guide the readers to understand why this study was important. 10 studies are included in total. 9 peer reviewed studies that fit the inclusion criteria are included in the literature review. Most of the peer reviewed studies have focused on educational perspectives or multiple perspectives, however, there are an increasing number of theses which

have explored pupils' perspectives. One thesis was included as it explored the perspectives of pupils who had received multiple FTEs.

This chapter aims to address the following questions:

1. What does the literature tell us about experiences of school exclusion?
2. What does the literature tell us about experiences of reintegration?
3. What does the literature tell us about peer relationships in relation to exclusion?
4. What are the relevant theoretical frameworks underpinning this study?
5. What are the gaps in the literature that need addressing to deepen our knowledge about pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration, and their peer relationships?

2.3 Literature review: exclusion and reintegration

2.3.1 Literature exploring experiences of school exclusion

Although there has been an increase in the literature that focuses on experiences of exclusion and reintegration, much of the literature is focused on policy, data, and legislation. This section will review some of the existing literature on experiences of school exclusion from multiple perspectives. Authors have recommended that pupils are consulted and listened to in relation to their views of exclusion before adults intervene with their own solutions (Lewis & Lindsay, 1999). Exclusion rates remain high, and reintegration poses a challenge, therefore understanding the process of exclusion from pupil perspectives is key.

Briggs (2010) found that pupils experienced difficulties in their peer and teacher relationships which linked to their exclusions. This study explored the

experiences of 20 excluded young people and their Headteachers in South London. The study was an ethnographic research study with observations taking place in off-site educational centres. It aimed to explore the reasons behind the exclusions, attitudes to education, why the pupils had been referred to off-site centres and their progress in these. 20 boys and seven girls between 15 and 16 years of age took part in the study.

The author stated that pupils seemed to develop “attitude problems” from Year 8 onwards and related these to behaviours which might be understood as PDB, e.g. aggressive or intimidating behaviour, disrupting other pupils, and refusing to follow instructions. It was concluded that these behaviours were in response to a lack of understanding in class, pupils not feeling heard and pupils feeling stigmatised by other pupils or teachers. This highlights the interactions between context and person characteristics and their influence on proximal processes and exclusion practices. Year 9 was seen as a significant time point and by this time relationships with teachers were reported to have deteriorated. Pupils perceived there to be differences in the way they were treated compared to their peers. Interestingly, in this study pupils were reported to have had few issues at home, in contrast to other findings (Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Murphy, 2021). It appeared that school exclusion and time out of mainstream contributed to issues outside of school, including later criminal activity (as previously highlighted e.g. Gill et al., 2017; Timpson, 2019), however, cause and effect cannot be assumed.

A strength of the study was that pupils’ voices were privileged over the perspectives of Headteachers and staff, however, with these voices still included, the practitioner perspective dominates the literature. Furthermore, observations from the study provided examples of off-site experiences, however, it is unclear when these

observations took place (ie straight after pupils were excluded or once they had been there for a while). Finally, the study suggested that pupils were “demonised by their peers” (Briggs, 2010, p. 17), however, there was no mention of this within the findings and no exploration of this in the discussion, and as such, there remains a need for a deeper exploration of the role of peer relationships in relation to the process of exclusion.

In another study, Daniels (2011) interviewed 193 young people (156 males and 37 females) following their permanent exclusion from school. The study was interested in pupils’ trajectories following their exclusion. Initial interviews included the young people and their parents. This was followed by a tracking of their trajectories and then final interviews with the young people, parents and staff approximately two years after each pupil’s permanent exclusion. Following initial contact, only some of the young people could be tracked and the ones who were most ‘engaged’ took part in the study meaning the views of those less ‘engaged’ and harder to reach were not included.

Findings suggested that disengagement from the first placement after exclusion was positively correlated with youth offending, in line with previous findings suggesting a link between exclusion and disengagement from education as well as increased risk of criminality (Briggs, 2010; Gill et al., 2017; Timpson, 2019). However, as this is a correlation, causality cannot be assumed. An interesting finding was that pupils who were excluded for assault (threatened or actual) were more likely to be engaged in education two years after exclusion. This was compared to those excluded for repeated verbal aggression or defiance. The Cambridge dictionary defines defiance as “*behaviour in which you refuse to obey someone or something*”. When considering SDT, it could be that behaviour perceived as

'disobedient' is not in line with school behaviour policies and receives negative feedback which hinders an individuals' sense of autonomy and competence to manage their behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2015), negatively contributing to their later re-engagement in education.

Despite interesting findings and a large sample size, there are several limitations to this study. Firstly, there is a lack of clarity around the methodology and data analysis, highlighting issues related to coherence and transparency, impacting on the trustworthiness of the findings (Yardley, 2008). Secondly, parents and staff were interviewed but their voices were not included in the findings, thus, the authors were not able to triangulate their findings as per the aims. This study explored pupils' trajectories after exclusion providing some insight into the possible consequences of exclusion, however, this is already well-documented in the literature (Gill et al., 2017; Timpson, 2019) and there remains a gap in the literature regarding pupils' experiences of their exclusions.

To address this gap, Caslin (2021) undertook case studies to explore pupils' individual educational journeys and experiences following exclusion. The case studies consisted of 13 pupils (14 – 16 years old), 10 teachers and 10 parents. Interviews took place in three educational settings; a special school for young people labelled as having social emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD), an alternative training provision and a support centre for children who have been excluded from mainstream education, all in the North-West of England. There were two stages to the research. Stage 1 involved a group activity, however; it is unclear how many pupils were in the group, or the adjustments made to ensure pupils felt comfortable to share their experience in a group setting. Stage 2 involved individual interviews.

Findings suggested that the young people *felt like a culprit not a victim*, echoing previous findings (Daniels, 2011; Munn & Lloyd, 2005) suggesting that pupils feel picked on by teachers which subsequently impacts on teacher-pupil interactions. The author concluded that participants agreed that schools adopt a utilitarian approach to deal with “problem pupils”. However, this statement is in relation to staff in the study, and thus, claims about pupil and parent views on this are not evidenced. Overall, the study was helpful in that it triangulated information from different perspectives, in a range of settings.

Findings from a recent study in the South of England suggest there are some commonalities across regions. Murphy (2021) aimed to explore how pupils who are permanently excluded make sense of their exclusion. The study included 18 CYP, aged 6-18, from four Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Findings were discussed in relation to the themes: *personal problems, the school's response and the impact of exclusion*. With regards to personal problems, pupils' experiences of SEN suggested a lack of understanding in class but that pupils did not want to have their needs highlighted. This is echoed by Briggs (2010) who found that pupil behaviour was linked to a lack of understanding. It suggests that supporting pupils with additional needs requires careful consideration to avoid them 'losing face' in front of their peers (Murphy, 2021). Pupils in the study had also experienced issues at home, including abuse. In addition, the study reported that bullying in school and peer judgement contributed to the escalation of personal problems. This is in line with other findings suggesting that pupils experience negative social relationships and bullying in relation to reintegration (Lown, 2005). Furthermore, pupils reported their school misinterpreted the problem (e.g. bullying, learning needs, issues at home) and

labelled and blamed them for their behaviour, again in line with further research (Caslin, 2021; Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

The author concluded that schools can misconstrue distress as disruption, and use punitive measures to manage behaviour, which places judgment and blame on the child, as reported by two of the studies thus far (Caslin, 2021; Daniels, 2011). This finding suggests that a lack of understanding of the reasons behind PDB continues to see behaviour as a within-child issue. It also highlights how labels about behaviour can inform wider, marginalising beliefs about exclusion e.g. with blame residing on the young person and their family (Armstrong, 2018).

A strength of this study is its' relatively large sample size and that, in terms of reflexivity, the author acknowledged how their therapeutic relationship with the pupils could have influenced the findings. Despite these strengths and contributions of the findings, there are several limitations to the study in terms of its' methodology. The author stated that pupils were interviewed individually but also reported that one pupil interrupted another pupil during an interview, raising the question of how data was collected and the transparency of data collection. Secondly, in the discussion, there is reference to pupils being "below the poverty line" and having "disability needs", however the author previously stated that only data on age and gender were collected, again raising potential quality issues related to transparency (Yardley, 2008). The study provided interesting insights into how pupils managed their permanent exclusion and the consequences of this on peer relationships, however, there remains a gap in understanding about the experiences of FTE and how peer difficulties might contribute to the exclusion in the first place.

Summary. In relation to exclusion, these studies explored the consequences and experiences of exclusion from pupil, parent and staff perspectives. These studies suggest that pupils experience difficulties related to interactions, person characteristics and contextual factors including in their home lives, and relationships with teachers and with peers. However, several gaps remain in the literature. Firstly, the studies included above were based on experiences of permanent exclusion. As mentioned earlier, FTE is understood as a potential antecedent to permanent exclusion (Bakayoko, 2022; Bynner, 2001) and repeated experiences of FTE have been linked to increases in anxiety and disengagement from education (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). It is therefore important that these experiences are captured within the literature as it appears that the voices of those experiencing multiple FTEs are currently under-represented. Secondly, these studies focused on the experiences of exclusion alone. However, exclusion and reintegration cannot be studied in isolation, especially in the context of multiple FTEs. Finally, while the studies commented on the consequences of exclusion in relation to rejection from a peer group and bullying, there was little information on the role of peer relationships before and after exclusion highlighting a need for more research in this area.

2.3.2 Literature exploring experiences of reintegration

Educational practitioner perspectives on reintegration

Lawrence (2011) explored the main factors that contribute to successful reintegration from a PRU to a secondary school in a large urban authority in the UK. Through interviews and focus groups, the study sought to explore the views of 11 PRU staff, six mainstream staff and one member of the behaviour support service.

Although there was no explanation of participant recruitment, by virtue of their job titles, the participants seemed appropriate for the study. Data were analysed using TA and findings suggested that staff believed facilitators to reintegration included the young person wanting to return or believing they can be successful (linking to a sense of competence), the school ethos, young people being given a fresh start, parental support and communication between home and school. A focus on the young person's strengths, areas of interest and access to a mentor were also facilitators. There is evidence to suggest that mentoring programmes are linked to a drop in exclusion rates (Timpson, 2019) by helping individuals to work through social and academic issues (Russell, 2007).

Identified barriers to reintegration in the study were the absence of the facilitators above. Importance was placed on the reintegration meeting but there remains a question around what this looks like in practice. In spite of Government guidance stating that schools should "*communicate to the pupil that they are valued, and their previous behaviour should not be seen as an obstacle to future success*" (DfE, 2022a, p.17), findings from this study suggest that CYP and their families found formal meetings to be intimidating and this resulted in them disengaging further from their education. Another finding was that reintegration should be timely (within a reasonable limit) as authors suggest that it is less likely to be successful when individuals have spent long periods of time away from mainstream (Gray & Panter, 2000). There appears, however, to be a lack of clarity in what constitutes a "timely reintegration" following permanent exclusion and it is different for each individual. Another one of the main barriers to successful reintegration was the lack of an "inclusive school ethos" in terms of the school's expectations. Lawrence (2011) suggested that schools can refuse to reintegrate pupils based on their educational

experience or SEN. This undermines the SEND Code of Practice (2014) as well as inclusion practices that highlight equality, full participation and recognising and valuing diversity (Ainscow, 2000). This finding is in line with further research which suggests there is a reluctance from mainstream schools to admit pupils from alternative provision (AP) (House of Commons, 2018; Mills & Thomson, 2018) and poses a question related to the reintegration experiences of pupils following FTEs (if their previous behaviour should not be an obstacle). Another key finding in this study was that not being accepted by a peer group or not developing relationships hindered reintegration, and there was a recommendation that the reintegration package should include strategies to develop peer relationships. However, as these findings are from staff perspectives, there remains a gap in our understanding of the role of peer relationships from pupils' perspectives.

A strength of the study was its' relatively big sample size. It also provided ideas for change at the LA level and contributed to a good practice guidance for reintegration from the stakeholder perspective. However, a limitation of the study was that there was no explanation of how the focus groups were organised. The groups consisted of staff of a mixture of job roles and positions and the author did not discuss the potential implications of this and how they were able to navigate possible differences in power. This could have limited the discussion if some participants felt less comfortable to contribute, and thus, it is unclear whose voices and experiences were privileged in the findings. As this study was based in an urban context, findings cannot be assumed to be transferable to more suburban or rural setting.

Interestingly, Thomas (2015) reported similar findings in a study exploring patterns of pupil reintegration from PRU to mainstream, between KS1 and KS3, in a rural Welsh authority. The study explored educational practitioners' (from primary, secondary and PRU settings) perspectives on factors influencing successful transition into mainstream. The study employed a mixed methods approach which included a review of historical data (tracking pupils' movement into, out of, and within the PRU), a postal questionnaire to an expert sample, a landscape sample including qualitative and quantitative data and finally, semi-structured interviews with staff. The questionnaires were reported to include variables that potentially influence the success of reintegration; however, it is not clear where these variables were derived from, raising quality issues related to transparency (Yardley, 2000). The data were analysed by job title and education sector. Educational practitioners rated pupil and home factors as being the most influential to reintegration success e.g. factors outside of the control of the school. This has important implications for practice. If staff perceive pupils to have the greatest responsibility for a successful reintegration, there is less emphasis on schools to provide a fresh start or to make changes to the environment, which further places the blame and responsibility on the individual pupil and limits their potential success. This is in line with research which indicated that educational practitioners deemed poor behaviour to be a result of deficits within the child, as opposed to being a result of unmet needs (Armstrong, 2018). This view was mostly consistent amongst the different job titles, however, the importance placed on other factors varied by position and setting.

Overall, parental support was deemed the most important factor in relation to reintegration success, followed by school ethos, length of time away from mainstream, staff training, support from the PRU, pupil perceptions and Learning

Support Assistant (LSA) support. The least important factors, in order, were pupil literacy, pupil numeracy, school size, pupil key stage, pupil age, pupil SEN, class size and pupil reputation. As stated earlier, the findings of this study are important in that similar issues were identified by staff in both rural and urban contexts (Lawrence, 2011) suggesting consistencies across contexts. However, it is unclear how many people took part in the study. Furthermore, as the study was based on the perspectives of staff, there remains a gap in the literature exploring pupils' lived experiences in relation to FTE.

Multiple perspectives on reintegration experiences

Studies have sought to include pupil perspectives through exploring multiple stakeholder views to triangulate information from individuals across different contexts and systems. In her thesis, Lally (2013) explored experiences of 'successful' and 'sustained' (three terms in mainstream) reintegration following FTE. This appears to be one of the only studies focusing on FTE, as opposed to permanent exclusion. The study was divided into case studies, comprising four triads of participants: a parent, a teacher and a pupil (KS3 and 4). The study explored risk and protective factors influencing sustained reintegration and particularly focused on lived experiences. The study involved qualitative semi-structured interviews and the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data. IPA is concerned with the meaning that individuals place on an experience (Smith & Osborne, 2003). There was a clear explanation of the recruitment process and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select participants. Interview schedules were also peer reviewed and the author used a diary to demonstrate reflexivity and to minimise the impact of researcher bias, enhancing the quality of the study.

Lally (2013) reported on findings related to the overarching theme of 'security'. 'Threat to security' encompassed risk factors echoing previous research (exploring exclusion) such as negative life experiences (Munn & Lloyd, 2005), negative learning experiences and a lack of belonging. 'Search for security' related to how participants responded to the threats to security including seeking acceptance, loss of control and identity. 'Re-establishing security' encompassed school support (including supportive relationships), parent support and child-based factors such as motivation to change and positive self-efficacy. This study contributed to the field by focusing on experiences of reintegration following FTE exclusion when most of the literature has focused on reintegration following permanent exclusion. However, a limitation of this study is the focus on those who had reintegrated for more than three terms or one academic year. This is at the expense of pupils who may have experienced FTE but not remained in the setting for this length of time, highlighting their lack of voice within the literature.

Pillay et al. (2013) aimed to describe the reintegration experiences of 13 pupils (aged 11-14) with SEMH needs. Participants included three female and ten male pupils who had reintegrated into mainstream from a learning support unit or PRU in the previous 12 months. All participants' parents were invited to complete a qualitative questionnaire and seven mainstream staff were invited to respond to questions over email. The authors also carried out interviews with three practitioners (lead teacher of a PRU, senior learning mentor and learning support unit manager at a participating school). Pupils were provided with sentence starters to help them prepare an essay about their reintegration experiences (40 minutes), however, there were no examples of the sentence starters provided. Four of the pupils were invited to take part in unstructured interviews following the completion of the essay.

Findings related to emotions, relationships and the reintegration process, with risk factors outweighing promotive factors across the themes. With regards to relationships, there were both promotive and risk factors in parent-child, pupil-pupil and pupil-staff relationships. Peer support included guidance in lessons, and helping pupils to catch up on work, and was understood as contributing to a sense of belonging to the school, however, only when pupils managed to form supportive friendships (according to teachers). The organisation of buddy systems, peer mentors and positive peer-group programmes supported reintegration in that there was less peer-based conflict around the pupil. However, there was a greater number of examples of negative peer effects where pupils felt provoked and high-risk peer influences (e.g. truancy) were a risk factor for reintegrating pupils. Antagonistic peer relationships linked to four risk experiences: academic hindrance, negative peer pressure, unconstructive social and emotional relationships with peers and adverse relationships with peers in the community. These contributed to emotions of anger and anxiety, which were caused by feelings of loneliness, and this impacted on the reintegration process.

The findings from this study highlight how peer relationships are both a risk and promotive factor for reintegrating learners (following permanent exclusion) with SEMH needs; however, there remains a gap in our understanding of peer relationships in relation to pupils who experience multiple FTEs, and thus, interact with the same peers when reintegrated. It is important to develop an understanding of how pupils gain peer acceptance, from the perspectives of the young people themselves.

Despite some interesting findings, there are several methodological limitations to this study. The research questions were not made explicit, and thus, it is difficult to

know whether findings related to the aims of the study and to draw conclusions based on this. Although this study sought to triangulate data from multiple perspectives, few parents responded to the questionnaire. A further shortcoming is whether busy teachers could answer questions in sufficient detail over email and whether this impacted on the depth of the answers provided. Finally, four pupils were chosen based on their responses in an essay which could mean that only those who found it easier to communicate effectively in written form were selected, and thus, excludes the views of pupils who may have found it harder to access.

Pupil experiences of reintegration

To address the gap in the literature regarding pupil views on reintegration, some studies have sought to privilege pupils' experiences. Jalali and Morgan (2018) conducted a study which consisted of eight primary and five secondary aged pupils across three PRUs in the Southeast of England. Pupils had attended the PRU for between three months and one year. The authors stated that PRU staff had chosen pupils to participate, however, the criteria used for inclusion in the study are unknown. The authors used semi-structured interviews and supported participant engagement using life grids to map out their educational journeys. Life grids are a visual tool for plotting significant life events against an axis of time and have been found to be a helpful method when discussing sensitive topics (Wilson et al., 2007). To build rapport, one of the authors spent six weeks in each PRU before seeking consent from participants. While building rapport is an important part of the interview process (Mertens, 2010), this could have impacted on the trustworthiness of participants' answers as becoming familiar with the researcher could have resulted in participant bias whereby participants respond in the way they think the researcher wants them to. The study found that primary aged pupils wanted to return to

mainstream school, but secondary students were described as “opting out”. This is reflected in statistics suggesting reintegration rates decrease with pupil age (DfE, 2018). This view is reinforced by other research suggesting that secondary aged pupils do not want to return to mainstream education (Children’s Commissioner, 2017; DfE, 2004).

Jalali and Morgan (2018) found that pupils reflected on feeling targeted or bullied by peers in their mainstream settings, in line with other research (Murphy, 2021) and this was linked to their exclusion. Secondary school pupils also experienced a lack of connectedness to mainstream education. This was explained by pupils’ feelings of failure for not meeting the high expectations in their mainstream school which led to a lack of a sense of belonging to that setting. The authors concluded that an external locus of control, low self-worth and lack of mainstream connectedness were all important factors related to perceived reintegration failure. Although interesting findings, this study used hypothetical reintegration scenarios where pupils had not yet actually reintegrated into a school, illustrating a need to further explore pupils’ lived experiences.

To address this gap and to focus on supportive factors, a study by Atkinson and Rowley (2019) adopted a positive psychology perspective (the study of what makes life worth living (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)) to explore reintegration. The study examined the factors associated with successful reintegration into mainstream education. “Success” was defined as remaining in a mainstream setting for a minimum of 12 weeks. The study included two primary and seven secondary aged pupils, seven of whom had SEMH needs and two were female. Pupils had been excluded for between 3-36 months. There was no discussion of the potential impact of variations in the length of time out of mainstream school on pupil

experiences of reintegration. This is relevant because research suggests that the length of time spent out of mainstream has an impact on reintegration success, where the longer a pupil is away from a mainstream setting, the more difficult it is for them to transition back into a mainstream setting (DfE, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Lawrence, 2011).

The study used Q methodology, a method for exploring human subjectivity developed by Stephenson (1953). Participants sorted pre-written statements derived from questionnaire answers obtained from participants, school staff and parents/carers. It could be argued that participants were not able to give their own full perspectives on the topic, however, the statements were based on multiple perspectives that the authors had gathered, thus, giving a broader perspective on the topic. Q methodology has also been criticised in terms of its' reliability as it does not necessarily produce the same results if repeated with the same person (Stainton-Rogers, 1995). However, it is understood that individuals' views on a subject are dynamic and contextual, therefore, it is not assumed that the results would be the same if repeated. Findings suggest that parents and key members of staff were more helpful than peers in supporting reintegration (for secondary school pupils), in contrast with previous findings (Lown, 2005). However, it is unclear whether pupils were reintegrating into the same or a different school, thus the experience of peer support following FTE remains an area to explore.

The authors concluded that successful reintegration needs to be understood in context, taking account of individual, parental, environmental and relationship factors that impact on the process. They developed an ecosystemic model of reintegration. The model provides examples of factors that pupils found supportive in the reintegration process, such as, a specified key worker and positive relationships

with school staff and peers, which supports a sense of relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This is in line with previous findings that the perceived quality of the relationship with staff and the quality of support available is an important factor in the reintegration process (Lown, 2005). This study aimed to explore the supporting factors which countered a gap in the literature regarding 'what works' in the reintegration process. Whilst it is helpful to consider the facilitating factors in the reintegration process, there is an argument that there is something to be learnt from the barriers to reintegration and how these can be reduced to promote success. Finally, this study focused on the experiences of pupils who had attended AP, and thus, there remains a gap in the literature exploring the experiences of pupils who receive their exclusion at home and reintegrate into the same school, through the process of FTE.

Summary. In relation to reintegration, the studies included in the review have discussed facilitators and barriers to the reintegration process related to: 1) *proximal processes* e.g. adult-pupil relationships; peer-peer relationships (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Pillay et al., 2013), 2), *person characteristics* e.g. pupil attitude; desire to reintegrate; acceptance of support (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas 2015), parental support; sharing responsibility; realistic hopes for the future (Lawrence 2011), 3) *context* e.g. home-school interactions, learning, effective communication; inclusive school ethos (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Lawrence 2011; Thomas 2015) and 4) and *time* e.g. timely and individualised reintegration (Lawrence 2011; Thomas 2015). Several authors in the review have referred to the Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 & 2005) without stating which theory they were using (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Pillay et al., 2013). Furthermore, there was a lack of discussion of proximal processes which were later argued to be key in

human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) leaving a gap in the literature on exclusion and reintegration through the lens of the PPCT model. Whilst the studies highlighted peer relationships as an important part of the reintegration process, there remains relatively little understanding of pupils' lived experiences of their peer relationships in relation to the exclusion-reintegration process and in relation to the different aspects of peer relationships and friendships. This will be discussed further in the next section.

2.4 Literature review: peer relationships and friendships

As highlighted in the literature, peer relationships and a sense of belonging are key factors contributing to exclusion and reintegration. Peer relationships are thought to be associated with peer groups and include the concepts *peer acceptance* and *status*. On the other hand, dyadic relationships, e.g. friendships, are thought to be associated with the concepts: *friendship quality*, *reciprocity* and *intimacy* (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Different aspects of peer relationships are thought to meet different needs and contribute to wellbeing and 'positive adjustment' (one's capacity to adapt to changes in the environment) (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). Friendship is associated with feelings of trust, intimacy and security within a dyadic relationship (Maunder & Monks, 2019). The main aspects of peer relationships and friendships are explored further below.

2.4.1 Peer relationships

Peer status and acceptance

Two similar aspects of peer relationships are *peer status* and *peer acceptance*, which are both connected to how liked or disliked an individual is. Peer status and acceptance are distinct from friendships in that individuals who are not

sociometrically popular may still experience meaningful friendships even though they are not well liked by the rest of the peer group (Blatchford et al., 2016; Maunder & Monks, 2019). Peer status relates to an individual's popularity within a peer group (Dijkstra & Veenstra, 2011) and there has been a vast amount of research exploring the concept (Ladd, 2005). Research indicates that there are differences between how liked a person is (sociometric popularity) and their perceived popularity within the peer group. Individuals who are sociometrically popular tend to show prosocial behaviours e.g. low levels of aggression, are less likely to start fights and are generally kinder and more cooperative (Rubin et al., 2006). It is suggested that this type of popularity can predict positive adjustment in the future (Ruben et al., 2006). On the other hand, perceived popularity can be associated with being of controversial status, instrumental aggressive attributes and social influence. Some researchers suggest that these individuals are the ones who tend to be more dominant in a group (Weisfeld et al., 1984).

Peer acceptance relates to an individuals' acceptance into or rejection from a peer group (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996) and is also connected to positive social behaviour (Allen et al., 2018). Research suggests that pupils who experience behavioural difficulties are less likely to be liked or accepted by their peers (McElwain et al., 2002) and peer rejection is a significant predictor of later social difficulties (Miller-Johnson et al., 2002; Parker & Asher 1987) including; disengagement from school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), lack of social membership and lower academic attainment (Bagwell et al., 1998). In the context of exclusion, PDB is the number one reason cited for exclusion and it has been suggested that pupils may engage in certain behaviours to manage how they are perceived by their peers and to avoid peer rejection. For example, to avoid rejection from a peer group,

Robinson (2013) found that young people (particularly boys) may control the effort they put into work so as not to appear as a “geek”.

Peers provide opportunities for comparison and examples of what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and thus, are understood as having a strong influence over how an individual may think and act (Tomé et al., 2012). Within the context of exclusion, there is a question around how seeking acceptance from a peer group might influence a CYP’s behaviour and how peer relations interact with learning and the classroom environment. Schmuck and Schmuck (2001) state that peer relationships both affect and are affected by classroom learning. In addition, Wentzel (2009) suggests a link between peer relationships and academic aptitude through the concept of peer support, whereby there is a role for peers in providing instrumental support in the classroom (Webb & Mastergeorge, 2003). Positive social behaviour is also connected to peer support and acceptance (Allen et al., 2018) and deviant behaviour is often related to poor quality peer relationships and rejection by peers (Dishion et al., 1995). However, the concept of ‘deviancy training’ suggests that deviant behaviour is reinforced by peers and can bring a group closer together.

The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines ‘deviancy training’ as “*the reinforcement, by the peers of a child or adolescent, of his or her antisocial words or actions*”. It therefore refers to the social processes that occur within interactions including positive reactions and laughter within a deviant group which demonstrate the approval and encouragement of deviant behaviour (Dishion et al., 1996). It is suggested that these reinforcing experiences of deviant behaviour can establish a group identity whilst potentially strengthening an individual’s status within the group (Blatchford et al., 2016). Research suggests that deviancy training can predict peer influence in relation to delinquent behaviour and aggression during adolescence

(Dishion et al., 1996). In the context of exclusion, the engagement in low level disruption could be encouraged and reinforced by peers through the concept of deviancy training.

2.4.2 Friendships

Whilst there is no one agreed definition of friendship, it is usually understood as a dyadic relationship between individuals who like each other and who are not related or in romantic relationships (Blatchford et al., 2016). Demir & Özdemir (2010) state that a friend is “*someone who you enjoy doing things together with, count on to support you when you need it, provide support when he/she needs it, talk about your everyday life, problems, concerns, ideas, and intimate thoughts*” (p. 248). CYP’s friendships are usually symmetrically and horizontally organised compared to adult-child relationships which are asymmetrical and vertically organised (Blatchford et al., 2016). There are also differences in what is valued in a friendship across age ranges and adolescents tend to value trust, reciprocity and closeness (Blatchford et al., 2016). *Quality* and *reciprocity* are thought to be markers of dyadic relationships (George & Harman, 1996; Howe, 2010).

Friendship Quality

Friendship quality varies between friendships and includes both positive and negative features (Bagwell & Bukowski, 2018). One description of friendship quality refers to the resources that a friendship provides such as security, trust and intimacy (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996). Friendship quality is linked to adolescent psychosocial adjustment (Burk & Laursen, 2005) and can affect how children feel about

themselves, their peers and school (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). When an individual's needs are not met within a friendship, conflict can arise (Berndt, 2004).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is understood as a core feature of friendship and refers to individuals providing support, having their needs met within a relationship and mutual interest in one another (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Berndt, 2004). Reciprocity is most commonly measured using sociometric measures whereby an individual is asked to name their best or close friends and if the same people name the individual, the friendships are considered reciprocal (Rubin et al., 2015). This does not however consider individuals' perceptions of their friendships as in some cases, an individual may view someone as their friend, but this may not be reciprocated (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). There are several ways to identify sociometric status within the literature. Authors have identified two-dimensional systems (e.g. Coie & Dodge, 1983) which have been used in many studies to determine an individual's sociometric status based on positive and negative nominations from peers (Maassen & Verschueren, 2005). These nominations can be used to classify an individual into 5 different status groups: popular, rejected, neglected (social preference), controversial, and average (social impact). However, Maassen & Landsheer (1998) state that limited information is collected through nominations based approaches. They argue that there are several advantages to classifying individuals into 5 status groups through ratings (3, 5, 7, or 9 points) as opposed to nominations which include increased variability and reliability of the resulting scores. One useful method to capture these nominations is through sociograms which provide a visual illustration of interpersonal relationships within a group. Based on decades of research on sociometric techniques, Banerjee's Sociogram Tools (n.d.) provide a simple way to

implement nomination procedures. Pupils are asked to nominate three peers with whom they **most** like to play/spend free time and three peers with whom they **least** like to play/spend free time. These can be used to support staff to develop an understanding of pupils' peer relationships and be aware of patterns of acceptance and rejection within peer groups.

2.4.3 Peer relationships and development in adolescence

There is a wealth of literature which highlights the importance of peer relationships for CYP's social and emotional development (Hartup & Stevens, 1996) and sense of belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2015). School belonging has been defined as "*the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment*" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 80) and is influenced by a range of factors including peer relationships. Relationships with peers are related to engagement with school and wellbeing (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2007). Establishing meaningful connections with others facilitates a sense of relatedness, connectedness, and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), one of the three basic psychological needs according to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

The importance of a sense of belonging is apparent throughout the literature. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1981), belonging is in the third tier and is understood as an element in developing self-esteem and self-actualisation. The DfE Green Paper for mental health (2018) states that positive relationships and a sense of belonging are protective factors for good mental health. A sense of belonging in educational settings is positively correlated with prosocial behaviours, good academic outcomes, (Demantet & Van Houtte 2012; Lonczak et al., 2002) and psychological well-being (Jose et al., 2012), highlighting the importance of peer

relationships during adolescence for positive future outcomes. Osterman (2000) found that a sense of acceptance from peers and teachers was associated with interest in lessons, a stronger sense of identity and capacity to take responsibility. In addition, Baumeister et al. (2005) found that a lack of belonging is associated with low self-regulation and anti-social behaviour which is particularly relevant for pupils receiving FTEs.

Although a sense of belonging is important for children of all developmental stages (Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2013), it may be pertinent to the specific period of adolescence (ages 12–18). For decades, researchers have highlighted relationships with peers as one of the most important components of adolescence (Brown & Larson, 2009). A key feature in the development of adolescence is developing an identity, managing changing social relationships and navigating the transition from childhood to adulthood (Erikson 1968; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Peers play a key role in identity formation and social validation and the threat of peer rejection and disconnection can hinder a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018).

It is argued that adolescents spend more time with peers due to prescribed activities such as attending school. Peer group structures become more multi-levelled in adolescence (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011) and there is a differentiation between best friends, close friends and others within larger peer networks (Adler & Adler, 1995). Geddes (2006) proposed that at secondary school, young people may gain acceptance and affirmation from their peer group which acts as a secure base. Schools therefore have an important role in encouraging social networks and offer pupils unique opportunities to develop a sense of belonging (Allen & Bowles, 2013).

It is suggested that during this time, peer acceptance and group identity take prominence (Camodeca et al., 2002; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Experiencing positive relationships with peers is associated with higher levels of self-belief, emotional well-being, principles for prosocial behaviour. Furthermore, children with positive peer relationships are more likely to engage academically (Wentzel et al., 2017). On the other hand, experiencing problems such as rejection, marginalisation, and friendlessness has implications for later psychological adjustment (Schwartz et al., 2015). Thus, as peer relations become a key setting for development during adolescence, establishing quality peer connections is key in fostering good psychological adjustment (Delgado et al., 2022). Some authors argue that the effect that peer relationships have on classroom experiences is frequently underrated by teachers and underexplored in research (Blatchford et al., 2016).

2.4.4 Peer relationships in relation to exclusion

As discussed, studies mentioned in the literature review have reported findings related to peer relationships and school belonging in the context of exclusion (Daniels, 2011; Murphy, 2021), and reintegration (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Lally, 2013; Pillay, Dunbar-King & Mostert, 2013; Thomas, 2015). Relationships were a key theme across the studies which is unsurprising when considering these are fundamental to a sense of belonging. Whilst the studies have suggested pupil-pupil relationships are an important factor relating to exclusion and reintegration, none of the studies have explicitly explored elements of peer relationships and friendships within the context of FTE, leaving a gap in the literature and questions to be explored. We know that peer relationships are important in adolescence and in relation to exclusion and reintegration so if we are to better understand these experiences, we need to hear directly from the young people.

2.5 Theoretical perspectives

2.5.1 The PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

The literature review has highlighted that Bronfenbrenner's theories and model of human development are relevant and helpful when exploring experiences of exclusion and reintegration. The PPCT model will therefore be used as a framework through which to interpret the findings in this study. A central feature of the bio-ecological model is related to interactions within and across contexts. It supports an understanding of the multiple and dynamic precipitating factors related to why a CYP becomes excluded, and which continue to impact on them during reintegration.

Bronfenbrenner (1976) proposed that an individual's learning and development is dependent on firstly, the interactions between the individual and their environment and secondly, the interactions between these environments. In the 1980s, Bronfenbrenner expanded his theory to include processes to explain the relationship between an aspect of the context and the individual, and the developmental outcomes of interest. There is a distinction between distal and proximal processes in that, distal processes relate to aspects that influence the ecosystem of an individual rather than the individual directly, and proximal processes relate to the interactions between an individual and aspects of the direct environment. From the 1990s, these proximal processes were understood as a key factor in human learning and development, and this led to the applied PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Process

Human development is understood to take place through increasingly complex reciprocal interactions between an individual (e.g. a pupil) and the people (e.g. peers or teachers), objects, and symbols in their direct environment. These are known as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes are thus, routine activities and interactions that occur for individuals within their settings. For development to occur, it is argued that these interactions need to take place on a consistent basis over extended periods of time. In the context of the present study, interactions between an individual and their teachers or peers have implications for their experiences in school. Bronfenbrenner explained that “*the form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes*” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996) are influenced by a combination of the developing individual’s characteristics, the immediate and distal contextual influences, and the continuities and changes which happen over a lifetime.

The developing person

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggested that the developing person has characteristics (biological, emotional, cognitive, and social) which influence their interactions with others (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For this study, pupils, teachers and peers are all considered to be developing people, each bringing their own individual qualities to interactions.

Bronfenbrenner described three types of influential person characteristics: demand, resource, and force (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). *Demand* characteristics include an individual’s external features such as age, gender, skin colour, and physical appearance. These characteristics can influence how proximal processes are initiated due to expectations and assumptions immediately formed

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, the skin colour of a pupil might be the same or different to that of a teacher and invite or discourage initial interactions. By contrast, *resource* characteristics are those which are not immediately apparent. These relate to an individual's past experiences, abilities, and skills and to their social and material resources (e.g. access to healthy food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Finally, *force* characteristics are related to an individual's nature, motivation and perseverance and can influence the initiation and maintenance of proximal processes.

In the context of exclusion, a pupil could be highly academically motivated (force characteristic) but previous experiences (resource characteristic) could discourage initial interactions with teachers and impact on their behaviour. These characteristics act as a guide to understanding the developing person's active role in their interactions, and within differing contexts. It suggests that the person can influence the environment, and the environment can also influence the person (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, 2006). Thus, person characteristics are a part of, but also an outcome of, the proximal processes. Through the engagement in effective proximal processes, an individual can change their resource or force characteristics and these will impact their interactions in the future.

Context

The context consists of four interrelated systems which directly and indirectly influence, and are also influenced by, the developing person and the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These include the *microsystem* (any immediate environment such as home, school, or peer groups, in which the developing person engages in) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994).

For this study the school setting including the classroom environment and peer groups act as principal microsystems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the links between two or more microsystems as the *mesosystem* (e.g. connections between home and school). The number of supportive links between the microsystems is thought to increase the developmental potential of that system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, positive working relationships between teachers and parents are beneficial for an individual's development (Allen et al., 2018). Furthermore, in the context of exclusion, relationships between home and school are an important factor in the exclusion-reintegration process. Lawrence (2011) found that effective communication between home and school acted as a facilitator in the reintegration process for a CYP returning to a mainstream setting. The *exosystem* also relates to links and connections between two systems but in which the individual does not directly participate in (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For example, teachers may have responsibilities outside of school (e.g. caring responsibilities) which impact on their time to develop a deeper understanding of a pupil, and thus, the caring responsibilities indirectly influence the pupil's experience. Finally, the *macrosystem* refers to the overarching system which includes social and cultural factors. This does not refer to the specific environment of one developing child but the socio-cultural context in which a child is developing within, including political ideologies and legislation (such as those discussed in chapter 1). For example, as schools exist within a broader culture and society, cultural differences between teachers and pupils may influence teachers' understanding of slang, and thus, their interactions with some of their pupils (Briggs, 2010).

Time

The final component in the PPCT model is *time*, including micro-time (within specific incidences of proximal processes), *meso-time* (the extent to which processes happen across different time intervals e.g. days or weeks), and *macro-time* (constancy and change in the wider socio-cultural context). This is also known as the *chronosystem*. Thus, developmental processes will likely vary according to the specific socio-cultural events that happen as developing individuals are at different ages. This highlights the relevance of research focusing on CYP's current lived experiences because they are experiencing exclusion and reintegration in the context of post-covid, budget cuts and a cost-of-living crisis combined with high levels of inflation.

Arguably, the PPCT model moves away from a 'within-child' view of exclusion and supports a more systemic understanding that considers the complex processes and characteristics impacting on development, learning and behaviour (Kelly & Boyle 2016). It allows for an exploration of how a pupil's characteristics, contextual systems and time factors overlap to directly or indirectly influence the proximal processes and thus, their learning, development and experiences at school. PDB is the most common reason cited for exclusion (DfE, 2022), however viewing exclusion purely in terms of behaviour ignores these complex interactions between systems and individuals. By viewing exclusion in a systemic way there is more scope to explore the underlying reasons for exclusion instead of justifying it by limiting our understanding of individuals' needs to their behaviour alone (Armstrong, 2018).

2.5.2 Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2015)

The PPCT model provides a framework for understanding the complex (reciprocal) interactions between an individual and the systems involved within

education (Kontosh & Zimmerman, 2007), making it a useful model for exploring exclusion related to the person–context (school) interaction (Griffore & Phenice, 2016). However, it is also helpful to consider human motivation, and thus, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2015) provides another broad framework in which to explore factors related to exclusion and reintegration. This theory considers how social and cultural factors can promote or hinder an individual's sense of choice, well-being and performance. In the school environment, teachers are key adults who interact with pupils and can have a substantial influence on a pupil's motivation (Reeve, 2006).

The theory states that there are three basic psychological needs which are linked to motivation; *autonomy, competence, and relatedness*, and these underpin an individual's growth and personal development (Deci & Ryan, 2015). In this study the concern is with how the school environment may promote or hinder these basic psychological needs and how this links to exclusion and reintegration. The authors argue that the perception of autonomy and competence are vital for intrinsic motivation. *Autonomy* refers to the perception that one has a choice over their behaviour and that their individual viewpoint and perspective is understood (Deci & Ryan, 2015). The opposite to autonomy is feeling controlled, and in the context of schools it could be argued that strict, zero-tolerance behaviour policies do not support pupils' sense of autonomy. Authors argue that there is an increasing emphasis on conformity in schools (Caslin, 2021) which would undermine a pupil's sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2015). *Competence* refers to mastery and feeling effective. Providing an individual with challenges and encouraging them to try things out and providing a structure for behaviour with relevant, positive feedback can support the development of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2015). One study found that positive feedback from teachers positively

influenced the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Swinson et al., 2003). Negative feedback on the other hand, diminishes intrinsic motivation through hindering the sense of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2015). In the case of exclusion, it poses the question, do pupils feel competent to manage their behaviour if they consistently receive negative feedback about it? Lastly, *relatedness* refers to the need to feel connected to others and to feel a sense of belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

It is argued that when these three needs are met, an individual perceives themselves to be self-determined. However, within a school environment, the complexities of the classroom including curriculum demands, class sizes and behaviour policies can conflict with pupils' feelings of autonomy and competence. This also relates to the demand characteristics of the PPCT model. Additionally, a key theme in the literature on exclusion and reintegration is the importance of relationships and developing a sense of belonging to the school environment (e.g. Pillay et al., 2013) which is linked to the sense of relatedness described above, and thus, SDT was deemed an appropriate theoretical lens for this study.

2.6 Summary of the literature

The literature review sought to explore what is currently known about pupils' experiences of exclusion and reintegration in school, including their peer relationships and friendships. Across the studies, similar themes emerged, and these were discussed in relation to the PPCT model and SDT. Several studies have tried to understand experiences of exclusion from school (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Lally, 2013; Lawrence, 2011; Pillay et al., 2013; Thomas, 2015). Some of these studies focused solely on secondary aged pupils (Lally, 2013; Pillay

et al., 2013) and some considered the views of pupils and parents (Lally, 2013; Pillay et al., 2013). However, most of the research focuses on the views of educational practitioners with regards to reintegration, which indicates a gap in the research exploring the lived experiences of pupils. Throughout the literature, the definition of “successful” or “sustained” reintegration varied. This ranged from no definition, to 12 weeks (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019) and three terms in another study (Lally, 2013). The present study seeks to explore pupils' experiences of reintegration regardless of the length of time they are back in school. Therefore, to fully capture the experiences and voices of pupils experiencing multiple FTEs, there was no exclusion limit placed on the length of time pupils were back in school before receiving a subsequent FTE.

2.7 Rationale, aims and RQs

The literature review highlighted several areas where further research is required. Firstly, most research has focused on experiences of permanent exclusion and there appears to be limited research exploring the experiences of young people who experience multiple disruptions to their secondary education due to receiving multiple FTEs. Howarth (2004) suggested that critical research can challenge society's norms and “*support silenced or marginalised voices*” (Howarth, 2004, p.360). This study hopes to provide a space for this group of marginalised pupils to have their voices and experiences heard.

Secondly, research has predominantly focused on the views of educational practitioners and the number of studies focusing on pupils are limited. Thus, there remains a gap in the literature exploring lived experiences from pupils' perspectives. Providing young people with a space to talk about their experiences is key to deepening our understanding of exclusion and reintegration.

Thirdly, there is limited clarity about what the reintegration process looks like and how pupils experience it. Studies have focused on “sustained” reintegration (three terms in mainstream) at the expense of pupils who may not have remained in school for this length of time before another FTE. Equally, studies have focused on exclusion and reintegration in isolation. The study that explored both phenomena together included multiple perspectives (Lally, 2013).

Fourthly, the importance of relationships and a sense of belonging was evident across the studies however there is limited research exploring peer relationships and friendships from the perspectives of young people and in relation to their experiences of multiple FTEs. As discussed, peer relationships take a more prominent role during adolescence and the importance of these connections in relation to CYP’s learning and development has been highlighted. As peer relationships appear to be central to the reintegration process, it illustrates the need for more research which specifically focus on pupils’ relationships. Pupils’ voices and their unique interpretations about their peer relationships and friendships are key to deepening our understanding of the interactions between peers and exclusion.

Gordon (2001) argues that pupils’ views are absent from the literature. In relation to this, Kenny (2018) highlighted that listening to excluded pupils’ views has deepened the understanding of the importance of relationships in providing a sense of belonging and security. Although there appears to be increased interest in including pupils’ experience of school exclusion in research there remains a gap.

Lown (2005) stated it is important to learn from:

“the experiences of those who have returned, in order to inform evolving understandings and shape future developments in educational policy and

practice in relation to these pupils, their families, support services and receiving schools” (p.45).

Listening to the views and experiences of the pupils could provide greater insight into their realities (Howarth, 2004) and deepen our understanding of the processes and influences within and across the different interacting systems.

This study seeks to explore pupils’ experiences of multiple FTEs, reintegration and their peer relationships and friendships. To do this, the following research questions have been developed:

1. What are pupils’ experiences of multiple FTEs and reintegration?

- a) To what extent do pupils feel supported during periods of FTE?*
- b) What are perceived facilitators and barriers to reintegration after a FTE from pupil perspectives?*

2. How do pupils who have received multiple FTEs experience peer relationships and friendships?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the chosen methodology for this study and will provide a justification for it along with the ontological and epistemological perspectives underpinning the research (3.2). It will discuss the research design (3.3), data collection methods (3.4), participants included in the study (3.5) and the approach to data analysis (3.6). It will conclude by discussing ethical considerations (3.7) and how reflexivity, validity and trustworthiness were enhanced in the study (3.8).

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Position

Epistemology and ontology are divisions of philosophy that are relevant to psychological research. The research paradigm relates to the underlying assumptions and beliefs the researcher has about the world (Willig, 2008). There are different epistemological and ontological positions that can be taken based on underlying assumptions about knowledge and truth.

3.2.1 *Ontology*

Ontology is concerned with what exists and is real in the world. In terms of research, it indicates the researcher's view on the nature of reality (Walsh et al., 2014 in Sullivan & Forrester 2018 p.20). Ontological positions can be understood as being on a spectrum from realism to relativism. At one end of the spectrum, realism is the view that representations of the world are straightforward reflections of how the world is and that an objective reality can be measured regardless of human interpretations. At the other end of the spectrum, relativism is the view that representations of the world are socially constructed rather than direct reflections of

how the world is, and thus, knowledge is constructed by experiences and social interactions (Sullivan & Forrester, 2018). From this viewpoint, it is understood that individuals will have differing perspectives of an event based on their own interpretations (Robson, 2002).

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge, beliefs and truth are determined (Walsh et al., 2014 in Sullivan & Forrester 2019 p.20). In terms of research, it considers the researcher's view on the nature of knowledge and how it is created, acquired and shared. Positivist researchers look at the relationship between variables to understand phenomena and assume that objective truths about the world can be discovered using the correct, standardised assessment tools and rigorous data collection methods (Bryman, 2016), in line with the realist ontology. Conversely, interpretivist researchers are interested in exploring how individuals construct their life experiences, and believe knowledge to be subjective, in line with the relativist ontology (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3.2.3 My position as a researcher

The present study adopts an ontological position of relativism and an epistemological position of social constructionism. It assumes that the reality of exclusion and reintegration is constructed by individual experiences and social interactions and is thus, subjective in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Language, social interaction and context are imperative to how we make meaning of experiences (Crossley, 2011). To understand people, we must understand the complex context they operate within, and the meanings they attach to things. The present study aims to explore perspectives, interpretations and how individuals make

sense of their experiences, and it is acknowledged that participants will have multiple interpretations of the same phenomena (FTE) within the socio-cultural context in which the research takes place. This research accepts that reality is co-constructed between myself and the participants, and thus, I am not an objective receiver of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I acknowledge that my views and experiences cannot be separated from and influence the research including the design, recruitment, analysis and findings. As a result, it was deemed appropriate that this chapter was written in the first person.

3.3 Research design

The purpose of the current study was exploratory as it was interested in pupils' experiences. To answer the RQs and to get a detailed understanding of young people's perspectives, lived experiences and understandings of repeated FTEs and reintegration, this study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is most often aligned with interpretivist epistemologies due to the emphasis placed on context and language within the data (Robson & McCartan, 2017). Qualitative methods therefore provide the opportunity for developing a rich interpretation of a phenomenon (Smith, 2015).

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are the most extensively used method of data collection in qualitative research (Willig, 2008). Interviews draw on interactive, socio-psychological processes with a focus on subjective interpretations of individual experience. The way individuals speak about experiences depends on many

features of the interaction, and interviewers are advised to listen more than they speak to encourage participants to share their experiences in order to obtain a richer data set (Robson, 2011). Interviews range from structured to unstructured and therefore are an appropriate option as they offer flexibility in research design (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Structured interviews involve the researcher asking each participant the same question in the same order which makes responses easy to compare and analyse (Bell & Waters, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are most commonly used in qualitative research to explore individual experiences and perspectives (Robson, 2011). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of topics, probes and questions they may ask as the interview develops (Robson & McCartan, 2017). Alternatively, unstructured interviews are more participant led as they allow participants to tell their stories in their own way with no pre-prepared questions (Robson & McCartan, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate approach as they allowed participants to share their views whilst also ensuring key topics relevant to the RQs were discussed.

I developed an interview schedule that included several open-ended questions which could be adapted based on the participant and what I deemed appropriate (Willig, 2022). The questions were developed and discussed with my research supervisors and fellow trainees, and some adaptations were made (see Appendix B). Two pilot interviews were conducted, and minor amendments were made based on these (discussed below). Due to the amendments being minor, the two pilot interviews were included in the final analysis. During the interviews, I aimed to remain neutral in my responses e.g. by using neutral language in response to participants so that I did not influence their answers. I summarised and clarified to

encourage a shared understanding to sustain research co-construction (Willig, 2022). I used a range of pre-written prompts and follow up questions such as, “can you tell me more about that?” as suggested by Willig (2022).

The relationship between the researcher and participant is important when co-constructing knowledge and understanding (Mertens, 2010). It was important to build rapport with the participants in order to make them feel comfortable to reflect on and speak about their experiences. I provided participants with a one-page profile (see Appendix C) with information about myself and included some icebreaker questions (see Appendix B). I also used timelines based on life grids which will be discussed in more detail below.

3.4.2 Educational timelines

I explored the use of life grids alongside semi-structured interviews to support participants to reflect on their experiences. Life grids are a grid structure with an axis representing time and parallel columns or rows representing aspects of an individual’s life at different points in time. These create a visual timeline of important events in individuals’ lives and previous research has found the use of life grids helpful when supporting young people to talk about sensitive topics, and to build rapport (Wilson et al., 2007). The life grids were adapted, and a single lined timeline (see Appendix D) was used, as per previous research (Jalali & Morgan, 2018). The pupils in the pilot study found this more helpful in supporting them to reflect on their experiences. Previous research has given participants the option of scribing (Tellis-James, 2013). It was hoped that providing pupils with this choice supported the reduction of barriers to their engagement and all participants apart from one, asked me to scribe. The timelines were explained to pupils alongside the rating scale (0-10)

(see Appendix E) which was familiar to all pupils. Drawing can be a helpful way to support young people to tell stories about themselves (Prior & Niesz, 2013) so participants were shown examples of completed timelines and were given the option to draw pictures or write as they explored their experiences however none of them engaged in this (see Appendix F).

3.5 Research participants

3.5.1 Sampling

Several sampling methods were considered. Quota sampling aims to provide a sample of participants who match the overall population on specific characteristics (Lohr, 2010) so would not have been appropriate for the study. Snowball sampling involves participants acting as recruiters and referring similar individuals and again would not have been appropriate. Purposeful sampling involves selecting participants based on a criteria in order to meet the needs of the RQs and aims to ensure the perspectives provide information to enhance the final conclusions (Creswell, 2014). Purposeful sampling was therefore deemed the most applicable for this study and was used to identify and select the most appropriate participants, according to the inclusion criteria below, based on the aims and purpose of the research (Robson & McCartan, 2017). There were several stages in the recruitment process to manage the challenges associated with recruiting participants from secondary school settings.

3.5.2 Recruitment of participants

Initially, the research aims were shared with the EP team where I am on placement and details of the study were passed on to school settings. I followed up

with schools that said they were interested in taking part and had young people who fitted the inclusion criteria in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Participant Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Pupils in KS3 and KS4	The focus of the study was secondary school pupils as exclusion rates are highest in KS3 and KS4 Peers become increasingly more central to young people's lives during adolescence, therefore, this age group was the most appropriate for the study
Pupils who had experienced two or more FTEs	The research was focus on multiple exclusions, therefore, pupils needed to have experienced at least two FTEs A criteria of more than three could have limited the number of eligible participants
FTEs had taken place at secondary school	To ensure that pupils were able to recall and talk about these experiences

I organised meetings with the relevant staff members at each school, often the SENCO, to discuss the study further and offered to speak with parents if they consented. Initially, two schools consented to take part in the study and school staff discussed the study with parents and pupils who met the inclusion criteria. Pupils who fitted the inclusion criteria were approached by SENCOs to see whether they would be interested in taking part in the study. They were provided with pupil and parent information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix G). I decided to expand my recruitment and approach schools in other LAs to increase participant numbers.

This generated interest from three subsequent schools during the recruitment process. In total, pupils were recruited from three secondary schools.

A total of 12 secondary school pupils took part in the study, 7 males and 5 females, in line with government statistics suggesting that males are more likely to be excluded than females (DfE, 2022b). Participants were provided with an explanation of the study (see Appendix G) and informed consent (see Appendix G) was sought from parents and students. Table 4 provides demographic information about the pupils who took part in the study.

Table 4

Pupil demographic information

Name (pseudonym)	Year group	Gender	Number of FTEs	Managed move	Internal isolation
K9	8	M	2		Yes
Sofia	8	F	2		Yes
Sally123	8	F	2	Yes	Yes
Levi	8	F	2	Yes	Yes
(permanently excluded in year 4)					
TJ	8	M	8		Yes
Santan Dave	9	F	2		Yes
Alex	9	M	3		Yes
South	10	M	14	At risk of	Yes
(Permanently excluded in year 2)					
8A	10	M	15		Yes
Eleven	10	M	16		Yes
Purple	10	F	17		Yes
John	11	M	41		Yes

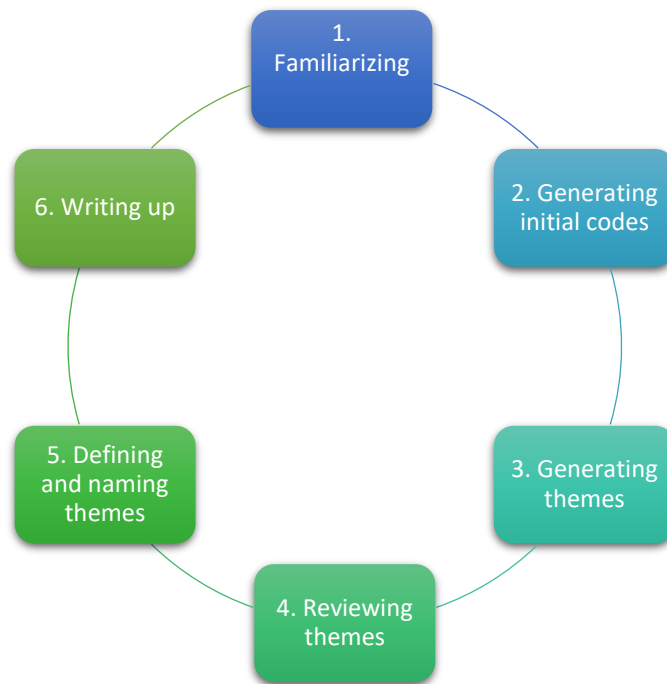
3.6 Data analysis

Research is conducted within a framework, which is described as the methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Four methodologies were considered when designing the current research: Case Study approach, Narrative Inquiry (NI), IPA and TA. Case studies “*explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in the everyday contexts in which they occur*” (Yin, 2003). This approach would therefore have allowed for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of interest within a specific context using data gathered from a range of sources such as, interviews and observations (Robson & McCartan, 2017). The study was interested in exploring pupils’ views and experiences of peer relationships and FTE rather than gathering information from a range of sources therefore a case study approach was not deemed appropriate. A NI approach was also considered, as stories are a way that individuals can make sense of events or important transitions, however, the approach is more extensive in relation to the understanding that is pursued. IPA was also considered as it allows for an in depth examination of the meaning individuals ascribe to a phenomenon. Both NI and IPA involve a detailed examination of a small sample of individual experiences, from a homogenous group and require lengthier, involved interviews. In the context of excluded pupils, many of them have spoken to numerous educational professionals, have undiagnosed needs and are harder to engage in very detailed involved interviews, and thus, they may opt out early on. TA therefore allowed the option of both detailed, longer interviews or less detailed, shorter interviews and flexibility to extend or pause the interview. TA was therefore deemed the most appropriate approach in line with the exploratory aims of the study and to capture the voices of those under-represented in the literature.

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

TA is used to identify, analyse, and report patterns in data and can be used to explore individual's views, perceptions, and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The use of TA in this study allowed for the exploration of individuals' perspectives and experiences of exclusion and reintegration. One of the strengths of TA is that it can be used within a range of epistemological positions which made it appropriate for this study. However, a criticism of TA is that in identifying similarities in patterns, singular anomalies (codes which do not fit with the general pattern in the data) are ignored (McAllum et al., 2019). Thus, I tried to take account of anomalies throughout the data analysis by including them as alternative codes within a theme. Braun and Clarke (2022) describe six phases in the process of TA (see Figure 1) which were followed to ensure a rigorous analysis of the data. Braun and Clarke (2022) highlight that the process of TA is not linear, therefore, I moved back and forth between the phases throughout the analysis. I took an inductive approach to data analysis which allowed me to explore and interpret the data to generate themes (Thomas, 2006). Data were analysed semantically so that I stayed close to the young people's words and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The six phases as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022) are described below:

Figure 1: *Six phases of TA, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2022)*



Phase 1: Familiarize yourself with the data by reading, re-reading and writing down initial thoughts.

I used the transcription element on Otter.ai and then read the transcripts multiple times whilst listening to the audio to ensure they were accurate and to support familiarization with the data. During this process, initial ideas were written down.

Phase 2: Generate initial codes by looking at interesting elements of the data across the entire data set and organising data relevant to each code.

I initially coded the data systematically, participant by participant using comments on Microsoft Word (see Appendix H). During this phase, I engaged in peer moderation so that I could discuss my reflections on the data and engage in personal reflexivity in an attempt to enhance the credibility of the research (Yardley,

2008). Some qualitative researchers reject the use of inter coder reliability (ICR), stating that the aim of qualitative research is not to reveal a single, objective 'reality' (Bauer et al., 2000). However, it can be argued that the aim of undertaking inter-coder checking does not necessarily suggest there is a single true meaning intrinsic in the data. Rather, it can be seen as a way to promote the rigor and transparency of the coding frame and its' application to the data (Joffe & Yardley, 2003) increasing the consistency (Kurasaki, 2000) and transparency of the coding process to provide assurance that efforts were made to ensure the final analytic framework represents a credible account of the data. It is also argued to foster reflexivity and dialogue (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). This encouraged a reflexive approach to data analysis and supported my coding going forwards. The initial coded transcripts were then uploaded to NVivo and reviewed.

When engaging in the TA, I noticed that although the pupils in years 10 and 11 had experienced more exclusions, there were not key differences between them and the pupils in years 8 and 9 who had experienced fewer exclusions. This possibly reflects that the same factors contributing to exclusion in the first place continue to be the same as pupils move through the school, and thus, it was deemed appropriate to keep the TA as one analysis rather than split it into two. It was also deemed appropriate to keep 'John' in the sample as although he had experienced more exclusions, his interview did not provide more codes than the other interviews and therefore themes were not dominated by his codes.

Phase 3: Search for themes by organising codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

The reviewed codes were gathered into folders on NVivo and organised by their meaning into clusters of codes. I tried to be clear on the differences between a topic summary and a theme and attempted to organise themes around a central concept (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The use of the following questions (*What is the theme about? What is the boundary of the theme? What is unique and specific about this theme? And what does the theme contribute to the overall analysis?*) as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022) supported this process.

Phase 4: Review themes by checking if the themes make sense in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. Generate a thematic map of the data.

Initial themes were reviewed in relation to the interview transcripts and coded data. During this process, the code clusters were re-organised and grouped into overarching themes. The themes were discussed with three different peer colleagues and refined based on these discussions.

Phase 5: Define and name the themes involving ongoing analysis to refine the themes and the overall analysis and generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

During this phase, all the coded data and extracts were read in relation to the overarching themes. The themes were reviewed by my supervisors and further refined. Some of the themes were renamed following a discussion with supervisors to provide better descriptions of the theme and data, for example, the theme *'intricacies of pupils' social relationships'* was split up and changed to *'social pressures influencing behaviour and exclusion'* and the *'influence of exclusion on*

pupil relationships' which was deemed to capture the codes in the theme more effectively (see Figure 2: Full Thematic Map).

Phase 6: Produce the report by selecting extracts, carrying out a final analysis and relating back to the research question and literature to produce a report of the analysis.

Overarching themes with associated codes and interview extracts were organised using a table on Microsoft Word (see Appendix I). At this point, codes and interview extracts were reviewed again and re-organised to ensure their relevance to the theme. See Figure 2 in chapter 4 for the full thematic map for the semi-structured interviews.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Several ethical considerations were adhered to when designing this study. Ethical approval was obtained from University College London (UCL) (see Appendix J). Throughout the research process guidelines from the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2016) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) Ethics Committee (2018) were also adhered to. All participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form to sign (see Appendix G). The information sheet provided full details of the study including participants' right to withdraw (which they were reminded about), confidentiality and anonymity. Parents and pupils were required to consent to taking part in the study. I explained anonymity and confidentiality to the participants and checked their understanding. The limits of this confidentiality in terms of safeguarding were made clear and that if there were any issues related to safety these would be passed on to the safeguarding lead.

I adhered to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines throughout the process. It was important that the pupils felt some ownership over the research process, and thus, pupils choose pseudonyms which were used throughout the process, in line with previous studies (Caslin, 2021). This ensured the data remained anonymised. Data was stored in a secure location on a password protected device until the end of the DEdPsy programme. Any identifying features relating to the individual or educational setting were deleted.

I was conscious of power dynamics with regards to recruitment as often young people do not feel they have a choice when asked to do something by an adult. I checked pupils still wanted to take part at the beginning of the interviews and reiterated their right to withdraw, however it is important to note that despite these attempts, they still may not have felt they had a choice. I was also conscious of participant wellbeing throughout the interviews and checked whether they needed a break or wanted the interview to stop. I was aware that the topic of exclusion is sensitive, and participants may have relived negative experiences therefore I organised someone to follow up with the participants (who they had a good relationship with) in case they were worried about the research. I tried to schedule interviews mid-week, so that participants were not left thinking about difficult topics over the weekend or left without support the day of, or after an interview. Interviews took place in pupils' schools as these were deemed to be familiar environments.

3.8 Reflexivity, validity and trustworthiness

Reflexivity. The relationship between myself and the research is an important part of qualitative research. I acknowledge that I played an active part in the research and therefore have an influence over the study. The participants and I are

understood to co-construct knowledge as part of the research process. I interacted with participants to produce data to analyse and therefore I have a role in shaping interpretations and conclusions (Crossley, 2011). It is acknowledged that researchers arrive at the research with their own beliefs, values and attitudes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Reflexivity can be understood as the process through which a researcher becomes aware of their subjectivity and potential influence on the study to try to minimise it as much as possible (Sullivan & Forrester, 2018). Through this process, researchers can become clear about their role in the findings and consider how their “*thoughts, feelings, understandings, reactions and experiences in relation to the research context help to shape insights and interpretations*” (Willig, 2013).

Willig (2003) highlights the importance of both personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. One of the main ways to demonstrate reflexivity is by using a reflexive journal (Sullivan & Forrester, 2018). I used a journal to document some of my reflections throughout the research process (see Appendix K).

To enhance credibility in research, it is important to demonstrate how it has been carried out and to what standard. Due to the flexible, subjective nature of qualitative research, the criteria used to evaluate quantitative research cannot be applied. To address this, useful guiding quality criteria that are relevant to most qualitative approaches have been proposed: reflexivity, transparency, coherence, value/contribution and rigour (Sullivan & Forrester, 2018). O’Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) state that pre-defined quality criteria do not necessarily apply to all qualitative research due to the various approaches used and the inherent flexibility in qualitative designs. However, some authors have proposed various sets of criteria which can be used as guidelines to demonstrate the quality and value of qualitative research

(Yardley, 2008). Yardley (2015) states that qualitative researchers understand that they influence the production of knowledge (through designing and analysing the research). Thus, insightful analysis arrives from engaging actively with the participants. Yardley (2008) proposed four core principles for evaluating the validity of qualitative research to enhance its' credibility: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance. Yardley (2015) states that these criteria should be used as a way of highlighting quality issues as opposed to being a rigid checklist which may restrict the flexibility of researchers. These criteria acknowledge the varying conceptual frameworks and ontological and epistemological positions underpinning qualitative research and were deemed a helpful way to consider potential quality issues and enhance the trustworthiness of the present study.

Sensitivity to context. I have tried to demonstrate sensitivity to context firstly by reviewing previous literature to clarify what was already known from theory and research and to understand the gaps in the literature. Secondly, in relation to sensitivity to the socio-cultural context of the participants, I tried to consider how to ensure participants felt comfortable to take part and express their views. I considered the balance of power in the interview situation and tried to mitigate this through building rapport, repeating participants' right to withdraw and reiterating it was a space for them to share their experiences, with responses remaining confidential and anonymous. I also tried to ensure the analysis and my interpretation was sensitive to the data and the social context.

Commitment and rigour. I have tried to demonstrate commitment and rigour firstly through the comprehensiveness of the sample of participants. In order to adequately address the RQs, I used purposeful criterion sampling to include a

mixture of participants who fitted the inclusion criteria. I also tried to ensure the sample size was large enough to address the RQs. Secondly, during the interview process I checked with participants that I had understood what they had said by clarifying and repeating information back to them to develop a shared understanding. Thirdly, I kept a paper trail including transcripts with notes and examples of coding and themes, some of which are included in the appendices. I have made my role in the research explicit, described in the reflexivity section above. I endeavoured to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity by providing the documents sensitively and ethically. Finally, I tried to ensure I allocated enough time to undertake a rigorous data analysis, however, this was dependent on recruitment.

Coherence and transparency. I have tried to demonstrate coherency and transparency in several ways. Firstly, through a detailed description of coding and modifications, using a range of quotes and disconfirming case analysis, to highlight transparency (see Appendix I). I have explained the data collection process and the approach to coding and analysis and included excerpts in the appendices. I discussed my data and analysis with colleagues and engaged in inter-coder discussions. I was part of a peer research group with fellow Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) in which we reflected on different stages of our research. I also discussed my research with qualified EPs on placement to ensure the implications were relevant and practical (these are discussed in Chapter 5). Secondly, I have tried to ensure that there is a logical link between theories, RQs, the methodology and my interpretation of the data. Thirdly, I have made use of research supervision to develop my thinking and RQs, methodology, and to review coding and themes. I kept notes of research supervision to return to and develop my thinking further.

Finally, I also engaged in journaling, to reflect on my thoughts throughout the research process.

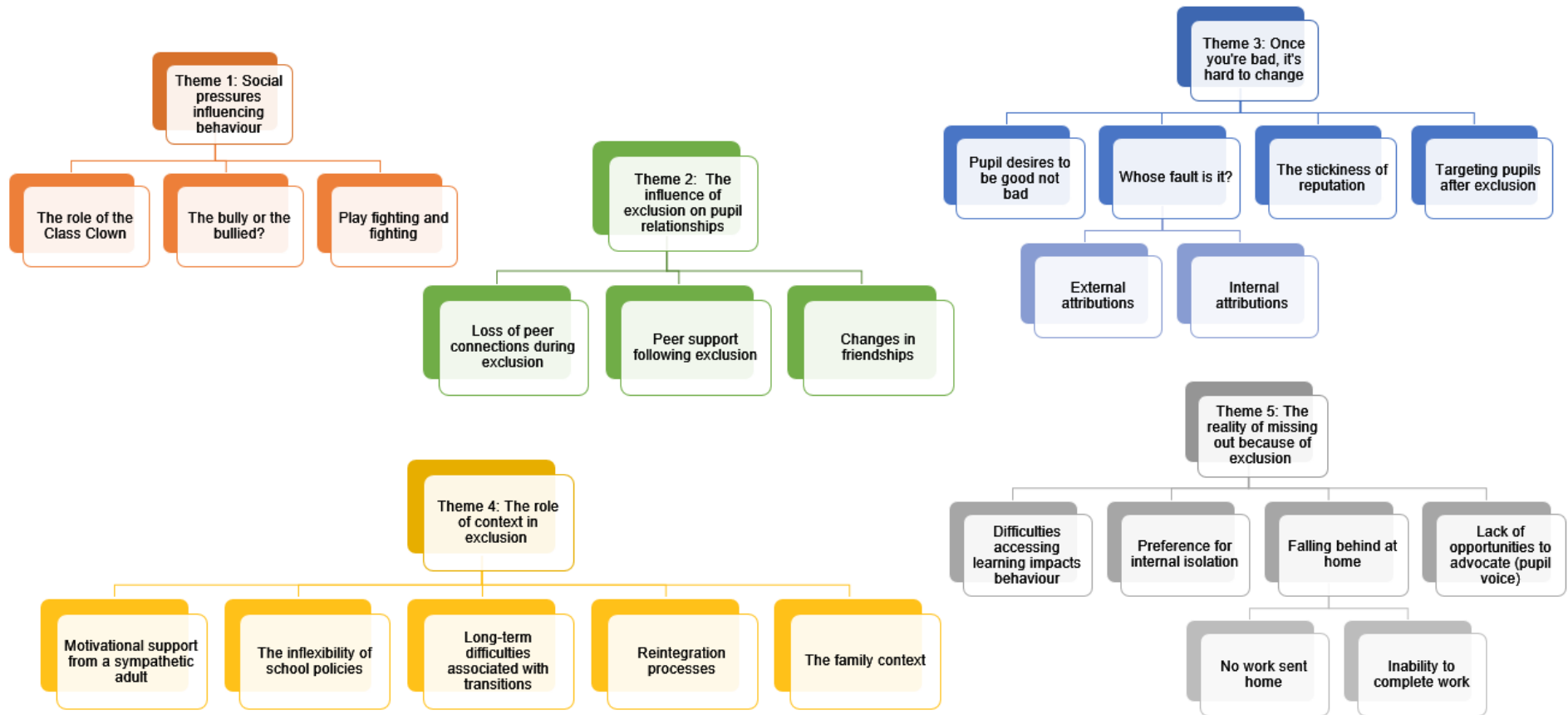
Impact and importance. I have tried to demonstrate the impact and importance of my research by explaining my findings and what they suggest, and considering how the study will contribute to the area of study. Denzin (2005) states that the quality of qualitative research is the degree to which the research highlights an awareness of, or brings about actual change in social justice. I hope that by providing a space for unheard voices and through discussing implications for practice for EPs, schools and policy developers (discussed in Chapter 5), I have highlighted an awareness of some social justice issues.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews. It encapsulates the views and experiences of the 12 pupils who took part in the study. There are five themes which were identified in the data: **1. Social pressures influencing behaviour, 2. The influence of exclusion on pupil relationships, 3. Once you're bad it's hard to change, 4. The role of context in exclusion, 5. The reality of missing out because of exclusion.** See Figure 2 for a full thematic map. Initially a sixth theme '**Opportunities for growth**', was identified, however, as this did not contribute explicitly to the RQs it has been included in Appendix L.

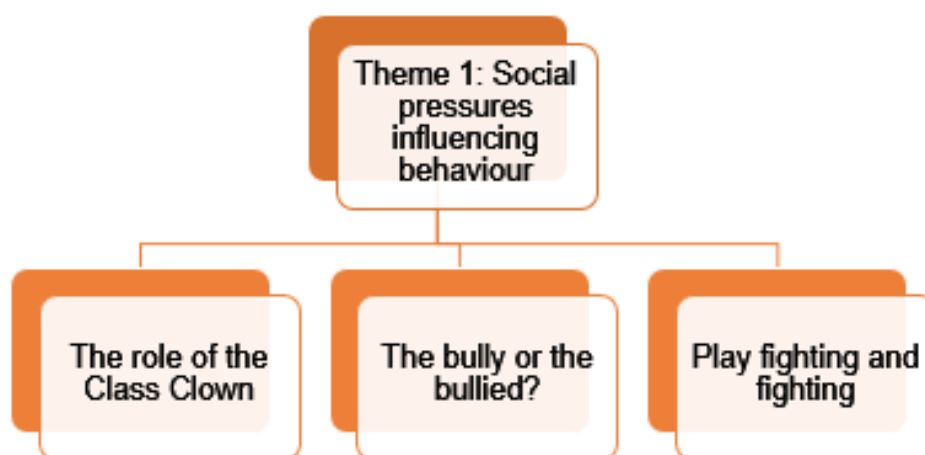
Figure 2 Full thematic map for semi-structured interviews



4.2 Theme 1: Social pressures influencing behaviour

Theme 1 highlights important findings related to the social pressures that pupils experienced which influenced their behaviour and were associated with the exclusion-reintegration cycle. The theme highlights behaviours seemingly linked to gaining social acceptance and social status, including taking on the role of the class clown and engaging in play fighting. It explores conflict within peer relationships including physical fights and incidences of bullying. This theme highlights the need for pupils to feel accepted and validated by their peers.

Figure 3 *Theme 1 Thematic Map*



The role of the Class Clown

This subtheme explores the behaviours that pupils engaged in which could be linked to taking on a role of class clown. This is an important sub-theme because class clown

behaviours e.g. saying jokes in class or, “*making silly noises*” (K9), were connected to pupils’ exclusions, probably because they were deemed to be disruptive to the class. This role was also linked to pupils’ reintegration experiences. The perception of being a class clown was a common theme within the interview data and implied that taking on this role was a potential way to gain social acceptance. Pupils reflected on behaviours such as joking as a way to gain attention from peers. These behaviours tended to lead to behaviour points or pupils being asked to leave the classroom. Pupils reflected on their perceived popularity and linked this to their role as the class clown. It appeared that this role was important in terms of pupils’ reputation amongst their peers:

Yes, most. Some people know me...because of my bad behaviour but at the same time...I’m known as the class clown. So like, people know me a lot. (South)

Some of the pupils also reflected on their positioning within their group of friends. One pupil perceived that they were the leader in their peer group and suggested that peers copied their behaviour. Pupils reflected on stereotypical behaviours associated with being popular and reflected on the perceived status of their peer group within the wider school community:

Like. I’m not like, you know, when people think popular they think like Mean Girls... People would like, you’d think that we’re like popular. Like, we’re not loud. But like we’re not mean, we’re not rude to people for no reason. We’re nice to people. So, we’re not your typical mean popular people. (Santan Dave)

The bully or the bullied?

Some of the pupils reported being disliked by their peers “*Cos most people don’t like me, but I don’t know why*” (K9). Some also experienced issues with bullying which negatively impacted their time at school “*Because it’s like three pupils have just been bullying me a lot*” (Levi). One pupil recounted the bullying incident below in which another

pupil was making fun of her and asserting they wanted to fight her. This resulted in a fight happening and both pupils being excluded, highlighting how both bullying and being the bully can be linked to exclusion:

So, a girl was making fun of me and passing notes. When I read the note, it had a drawing of a hippo and had an arrow drawn down to it that had my name next to it. (Sofia)

In many cases, such as the above, bullying was linked to situations where pupils ended up in fights and were then excluded. Pupils expressed that there were situations where they were “wound up” by their peers to provoke a reaction which they found difficult to manage. For one of the pupils, it was felt that teachers often did not take their bullying concerns seriously which perpetuated the situation, *“Like I don't know what it is, when you tell the teacher something, they don't believe it's that big of a deal than what it really is” (Purple)*. This is another example of how bullying led to retaliation from the pupil, and the situation escalated as they felt their concerns were not listened to or addressed.

Play fighting and fighting

This subtheme explores how pupils potentially maintained social status within their peer groups through fighting and play fighting. Data suggests that pupils may have engaged in behaviours which were considered the ‘social norm’ to fit in. This included taking part in physical fights, sometimes as a response to bullying. One pupil placed an importance on winning a fight as demonstrated in this quote, *“Lots of people kept asking like who won the fight and stuff” (Sofia)*. Many of the pupils in the study reflected on physical fights they had been in and indicated that this was the cause of their exclusions. Winning a physical fight appeared to be linked to their perceived social status within the year group as well as their perceptions of themselves, *“Cos I'm the second strongest” (TJ)*.

Pupils indicated that the threat of a fight continued throughout the course of their exclusion, and when they returned to school, highlighting an ongoing cycle of fighting and behaviours linked to exclusion. Engagement in play fighting also featured heavily in the interview data. Pupils expressed that there were differences between play fighting and fighting, seeing play fighting as having “banter.” However, although pupils perceived there to be a difference between the two, these differences were unclear and were not seen to be understood by the adults around them. It appears there was a need for pupils to engage in play fighting to maintain social acceptance and pupils reflected on perceived social norms in relation to how to respond to play fighting:

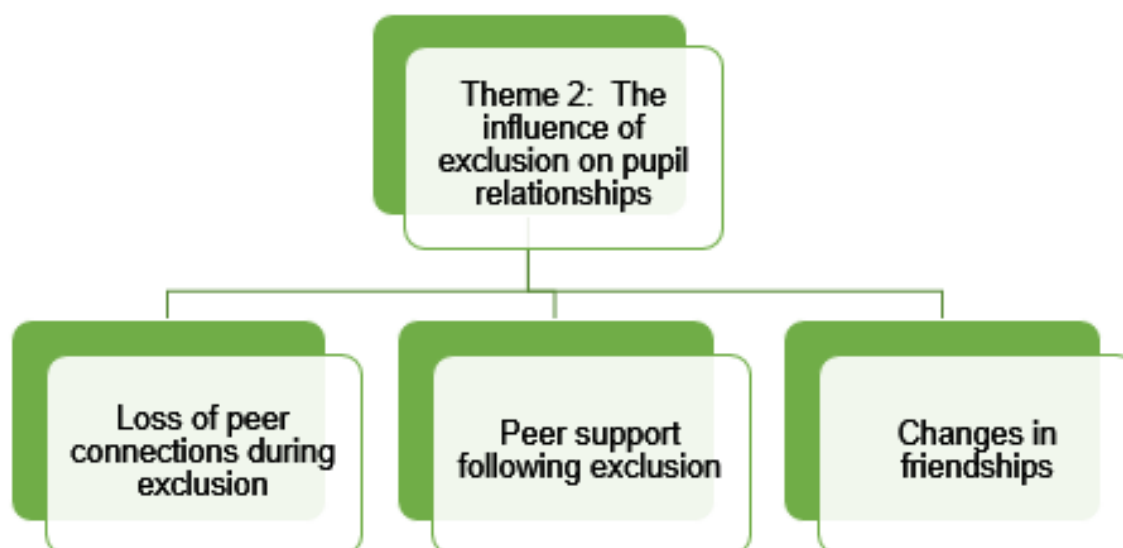
There's like a social norm, like inside school. Where like a person does something to hurt you (stutter) and if you don't...get back you'll seem like the victim or coward... (stutter) I really cared what people actually thought of me so I would (stutter)...do my thing to get back. (Eleven)

The codes and data in this theme suggested that pupils engaged in behaviours as a way to gain and maintain social acceptance, status, and validation from their peers. This included acting as a class clown to make their peers laugh, as well as engaging in fighting and play fighting to ensure they maintained their place in the hierarchy. These acts of self-preservation can be understood as a mechanism for pupils to avoid social rejection or putting themselves at risk of being a victim or bullied. Through engaging in behaviours which are perceived to help them to gain social status, acceptance and validation, pupils may feel a sense of relatedness and competence to their peers. However, these behaviours were also linked to their exclusions and subsequent reintegration as they constituted PDB in class or were not in line with the school behaviour policy. This highlights potential tensions between behaviours to feel a sense of relatedness to peers and behaviours to feel sense of relatedness to the whole school community.

4.3 Theme 2: The influence of exclusion on pupil relationships

Theme two is concerned with pupils' perceptions of how their exclusions and reintegration influenced and were influenced by their peer relationships. It explores pupils' views on their friendships and how they perceived these to change over time and through their periods of exclusion. This theme explores pupils' views on social support they received following their exclusions.

Figure 4 *Theme 2 Thematic Map*



Loss of peer connections during exclusion

This subtheme reflects pupils' loss of peer connections during periods of exclusion. Most of the pupils in the study explained that as a punishment they were not allowed out of the house to see their friends and were not permitted to use their mobile phones during periods of exclusion. This resulted in them feeling disconnected from their friends and not

being able to contact them for support: *“Well I didn’t have my phone because I was excluded. So mostly like a one (on a 1-10 rating scale). Cos I couldn’t talk to no-one” (TJ).*

This social isolation during periods of exclusion impacted how pupils felt about returning to school. Pupils expressed mixed feelings about seeing their friends following periods of exclusion, with some feeling happy about being reunited, *“Excited about seeing my friends” (K9)*, although one pupil felt worried about re-joining their peer group.

Although most of the pupils felt disconnected, one pupil spoke to their friends after school every day during a longer period of exclusion, *“My friendships were fine, because we would talk after school every day” (Sally123)*. Conversely, another pupil did not want to contact their friends possibly because they were unsure how their friends would feel about their exclusion. This was potentially a way to maintain social acceptance.

Peer support following exclusion

This subtheme explores the peer support pupils received following periods of exclusion and the views they believed their friends to have about their exclusions. Pupils expressed views indicating they were worried about how their friends may react to their exclusion, possibly due to fear of social rejection. Interestingly pupils perceived that getting an exclusion would disappoint or upset their friends and for one pupil, exclusion was not something that they spoke with their friends about possibly because they found it difficult to talk about or they felt ashamed, *“I don’t really talk to them about exclusions, most of the time it’s a personal thing” (Eleven)*. This contributes to pupils’ desires to be perceived as good, explored in theme 3.

Interview data suggested that pupils felt most supported by their friends following an exclusion and could count the number of friends who were there for them. This was usually

a small group of friends, suggesting differences between the close friends who provided support after exclusion and the peers who were involved in fighting before the exclusion. Support included instrumental support in class through advocating for pupils if there was a disagreement over homework, supporting them to regulate their behaviour or prompting them to get on with their work, *"Like when I'm off task, on my work and sometimes they would nudge me and be like...do your work and stuff"* (8A). Pupils also received emotional support from their peers which helped them to talk through and reflect on what had happened:

So basically, let's say I told him I got excluded. He will say why. And I'll get to talk to him. And he'll talk to me back and basically, he'll help me out. Like understand what I did wrong and what I shouldn't do, and he'll just be there for me. (TJ)

The findings related to peer support are interesting to consider in relation to the findings on acting as the class clown and engaging in behaviours for social validation. This potentially highlights important differences between social acceptance and status in a peer group and support from close friends, in relation to pupils' experiences of exclusion and reintegration.

Changes in friendships

Interview data suggested that pupils perceived their friendships to change through their exclusions and as they progressed through school. Pupils discussed changes in their relationships due to being rejected from their peer groups as a result of a fight or bullying, as highlighted in the quote below:

Because like because before on the thing with X they were acting like they're my friends. And then just because of one thing that happened is because of the fight and then they start saying, oh, that they're not my friends anymore. (Sofia)

This further highlights the idea that engaging in physical fights is linked to social acceptance to a peer group. Another pupil reflected on how rejection from their peer group, also impacted their relationships with other individuals as their peer group attempted to turn people against them. The loss of a friendship group was linked to negative emotions such as sadness, and pupils found this difficult to navigate, *“What happened is that like...friends good...it's difficult when they kind of turn against you”* (Levi). Pupils reflected on joining new peer groups, following rejection from their previous one.

In addition to changing friendships through periods of exclusion, pupils also reflected on how their friendships had changed over time, *“I think my friendship group has changed a lot over the years... I cut a lot of people off”* (8A). It appeared that as pupils got older, they selected who they wanted to be friends with more carefully and the qualities they looked for in a friend were different:

To understand that sometimes people aren't your friends. But they're just trying to have fun for themselves, take the fun out of you, to entertain themselves, yeah, so now, so now I have like now two three friends, close friends. (Eleven)

This is an interesting finding when considering the role of the class clown and who is being entertained as it again suggests that low level disruptive behaviours e.g. making silly noises, are for acceptance in the wider peer group, and that pupils identify differences between close friends and larger peer networks, *“My close friends, they're people with same interests as me. They're good people, don't necessarily get in trouble that much”* (Eleven).

As well as broad changes in peer group structures, pupils reflected on changes in the closeness of their friendships over time, reflecting on the impact of broken trust:

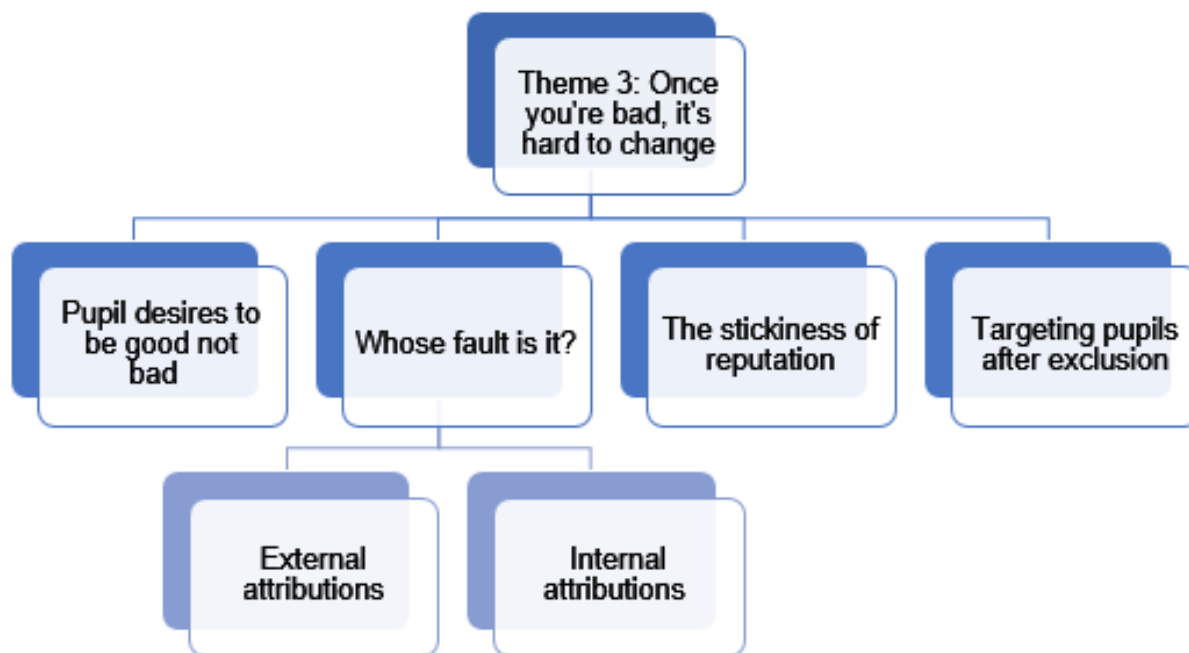
Because what they were doing was like mad out of order like especially cos me and her, we've been friends for ages so I was like why would you do this like. (Purple)

Overall, the codes and data within this theme indicated that pupils engage in behaviours possibly to maintain and uphold social status, and these were often behaviours which then resulted in rejection from their peer group and exclusion. This also impacted on their reintegration experiences. Data highlighted that pupils seek and receive both instrumental and emotional support from their close friends following periods of exclusion, and missed this whilst they were excluded. The data also suggested that pupils' friendships go through changes over time related to their exclusions and related to changes in their understanding of what a good friend is.

4.4 Theme 3: Once you're bad it's hard to change

This theme is concerned with the labels pupils are given and how this contributes to them becoming stuck in a negative cycle of exclusion. It highlights the difficulties associated with developing a reputation, and how hard it is to change this once a pupil has started to go down a perceived wrong path. It explores pupils' perceptions of themselves and their behaviour, and the comparisons they made between themselves and their peers. Pupils described themselves as good and bad with behaviour that was right and wrong, and considered how this is linked to exclusion. This theme is also concerned with how pupils attributed blame for their behaviour and exclusions, including both internal and external attributions.

Figure 5 Theme 3 Thematic Map



Pupil desires to be good not bad

This subtheme is related to pupils wanting to be “good” or show that they are “good” people not “bad” people. It highlights the labelling of pupils and how they internalised some of these labels and the description of themselves as “bad.” It suggests that the perceptions of peers and adults around them influenced how they perceived themselves. Throughout the interviews pupils reflected on their own behaviour as good or bad. This was linked to how they believed their peers to perceive them, *“Because like... everyone used to like...see me as like a bad boy” (South)*. Additionally, pupils felt that the way teachers perceived them (as good or bad) was linked to how their behaviour was interpreted, as highlighted in the quote below:

Because some teachers say like they see me as a good student, and they don't see me as someone that just wants to mess around and don't get any grades. They see me as intelligent and all of that. Some teachers could just say I'm bad and I don't want to follow rules. (John)

Pupils conceptualised “being good” with the number of detentions they had received for example, receiving only one detention was seen as good, *“I think I'm gonna be off report because I've been good, and I only got one detention well the detention wasn't even for a fair reason” (Sofia)*. On the other hand, being “bad” was connected to being on report, and pupils were given ratings for their behaviour. Pupils also reflected on behaviours linked to off-site provision. Being “good” was linked to returning to their mainstream school and “bad” was linked to remaining at an off-site centre. Interestingly, pupils compared themselves to their peers in terms of their behaviour and considered this to be on a continuum, perceiving other pupils to be worse than themselves, despite what parents might think, *“My mum thinks I'm the baddest boy. Not knowing that there's people worse than me.” (Alex)*.

Pupils also reflected on the importance of choosing their friends carefully, highlighting the influence of peers on their development of identity:

So your friends...are like I've always known that like your friends are who you become like you stick around with bad people you become a bad person, you stick around good people they help you, you become a good person yourself. (Eleven)

Whose fault is it?

This subtheme explores the concept of blame, and responsibility for individual behaviour. It explores pupils' internal and external attributions of blame.

Internal attributions

Interview data suggested that some pupils blamed themselves for not being able to manage their behaviour, *“Because I struggle to contain myself” (Levi)*. One of the pupils linked their difficulties with self-regulation to a failed managed move experience, suggesting pupils may experience a within-child view of their behaviour:

Well, the managed move was like, when I was there, you're meant to go there and be very well behaved for 12 weeks and then they decided whether you go back to your old school. But I (emphasised) couldn't behave so I got sent back after four days. (Sally123)

In addition, pupils saw themselves as responsible for situations that arose with teachers, *“But I think during Year 8, because a lot of them were deep, like it was me stirring up teachers and stuff like” (8A)*. One pupil used the label “naughty” to describe themselves, highlighting how the labels that pupils are given can become internalised. Although pupils took responsibility for their behaviour, one indicated that they sometimes lacked awareness of what they were doing, although teachers perceived them to be “misbehaving” on purpose, *“I feel like they just think I just misbehave to be funny or something like that...sometimes I don't even realise I'm misbehaving” (Purple)*.

In relation to their behaviour and involvement in fights, pupils expressed a range of emotions including regret for their actions, suggesting that they perceived themselves to be responsible for engaging in fights and not being able to ignore them, *“I feel stupid. I could have like, walked past away from it or I could have just ignored it” (TJ)*.

External attributions

Interview data suggested that pupils also made external attributions of blame and perceived their peers and teachers to be responsible for them being in trouble, *“Just like a bunch of teachers getting me in trouble. All the rules.” (Sally123)*. Throughout the interview data, pupils feeling blamed for other pupils' actions was a common thread. Pupils expressed they received consequences even when they were behaving, as highlighted in this quote, *“If you're not doing something, then you get called out for doing it” (K9)*. When pupils felt blamed for other pupils' behaviours, they expressed a sense of injustice in receiving an associated consequence for that behaviour, *“Like, she didn't take the detention off even though I told her that it wasn't me” (Sofia)*. In some of the interviews pupils

expressed feeling singled out by teachers *“They just like picking on me”* (Sally123). For one pupil, this impacted on their relationship with a particular teacher:

Like it made me feel like I was being picked on every day and then that same teacher she even saw me this morning, she said are you okay but I didn't reply cos she was the one that got me in B.S.U for almost a week. (South)

Pupils also indicated that they believed they were treated differently to their peers. In some cases, pupils reflected on receiving consequences whilst other pupils were not reprimanded for the same behaviours. They also reflected on being blamed without any evidence it was them, *“Like if someone was talking then you get blamed for but there's no evidence that it's you and then you get points”* (K9). This impacted on their enjoyment of school as highlighted in the quote below:

So it's not enjoyable. Like obviously everyone does things that you shouldn't do but it's like I can do the same thing as someone else but I'll get in trouble, they won't. (Purple)

There was a strong feeling of injustice throughout the interviews, with pupils suggesting that in a situation where there were two sides, teachers were always on a side that was not theirs, *“What they do is they take the other person's side, especially when it's me”* (Sally123). For one pupil, they perceived no-one to be on their side, *“But Year 8, the whole world was against me for no reason”* (Santan Dave). Some pupils linked this sense of unfairness and perceived injustice to their subsequent behaviour and escalation of a situation.

And then somebody else said the same thing as me. And I told her how come you're giving me a detention but they said the same thing and she said “I've had enough, get out!”. And then I got angry and then I swore at her and then I think she just, she started arguing about it with me so I argued back. (8A)

The interview data suggested that pupils perceived teachers to assign punishment based on how much they liked them or how disruptive they were considered to be, using their position of authority.

The stickiness of reputation

This subtheme highlights the perceived difficulty of changing their reputation once they had been labelled, demonstrating the pervasiveness of labels. Pupils ascribed different labels to themselves and made links between the labels they gave themselves and their reputation in school. The labels ascribed to pupils impacted on them developing relationships with new staff members as highlighted in this quote:

My head of year, he's new. But like Mr X & Ms X. They all kind of said to him like what I'm like before so. They haven't even given him a chance to like, proper like see how I am he just has that in his head because of what they've told him. (Purple)

It also had further implications for pupils' relationships within the school community and one pupil indicated that they had developed a reputation as a "bad influence" amongst staff members, *"They'll be like, "Yeah, your daughter's been hanging around with this this person recently. She's a bad influence. She's this. She's that" (Santan Dave).*

Pupils indicated an awareness of the development of their reputation, *"Cos back in Year 7 no teacher used to know my name and then in Year 8 cos like they started to know my name" (Alex).* Pupils indicated that once they had developed a reputation and were perceived in a certain way, it would always be this way, *"Kind of because it's like they always gonna have that in your head on how you really are." (Purple).*

Targeting pupils after exclusion

This subtheme explores pupils' perceptions of being targeted by teachers following periods of exclusion. Data implied a level of hypervigilance from teachers towards some pupils, leading to them feeling like they were being talked about by teachers or constantly being watched. Interview data captured this perceived oversensitivity of teachers towards certain pupils following an exclusion, "*Cos if someone does something I will get the blame cos I'm on report*" (K9). This hypervigilance was linked to an assumption that pupils would be behaving inappropriately following an exclusion and being on report heightened this feeling, "*So, when I'm back some teachers are looking at me... because I just got back from an exclusion, they think I'm going to be up to no good*" (John). This led to pupils feeling like they were always doing something wrong, "*Cos I'm always doing something, well not always doing something wrong, but in her eyes I am*" (Purple). Pupils reflected on how the perceptions of teachers impacted on how they felt about coming back to school.

Interestingly, the quote below shows how one pupil's parent had suggested that some teachers might "pick on" some students, suggesting parental expectations of unfairness within the education system:

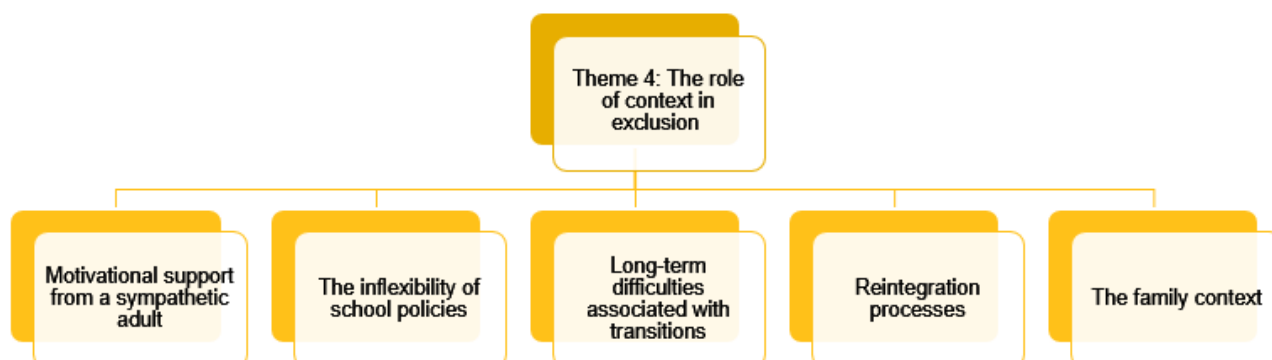
I can feel like nervous a bit because I feel like um cos my mum like always tells me it's not every teacher that likes you so like there might be teachers that are like um, they're like just wanna pick on me or wanna get me out the school so she told me to like be careful. (South)

Overall, codes and data within this theme indicated that pupils became stuck in a negative cycle of behaviour and exclusion, exacerbated by the labels they were given, the reputation they had developed and the oversensitivity of teachers towards their behaviour when they returned from an exclusion. Pupils attributed blame for their exclusions internally, locating the cause within themselves and externally, usually related to their teachers.

4.5 Theme 4: The role of context in exclusion

This theme is concerned with the various systems impacting on a pupil and the role of context in exclusion and reintegration. It explores the immediate microsystems of the school and family around a child, which impact on them throughout the process of exclusion and reintegration. This includes the perceived inflexibility of school policies which exacerbate the difficulties pupils are experiencing at school. The theme explores the factors within teacher-pupil relationships that exacerbate or help the problem of exclusion. It highlights the importance pupils placed on having a sympathetic adult in school who listens to them, understands them, and motivates them. Pupil voice is central to this theme and pupils expressed strong feelings that they do not feel listened to or that schools do not act based on pupils' views. The family environment explores the family's views and perspectives on exclusion and highlights the support pupils receive from home. The theme also considers the primary-secondary transition and pupils' perceptions of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their education and exclusion practices. Finally, the perceived facilitators and barriers to reintegration are also explored.

Figure 6 Theme 4 Thematic Map



Motivational support from a sympathetic adult

Availability of key trusted adult

This sub-theme explores the importance placed on the availability of a key trusted adult in school. Interview data suggested that pupils valued support from specific adults in the school community as well as external professionals. Pupils in the study reflected on different ways that a key adult had supported them including being able to share their feelings with someone. Pupils valued the presence of a key trusted adult, however, expressed that this needed to be someone they could relate to *“I think that’s what kept me going to school because like he was the only teacher that could relate to me”* (8A). An interesting reflection from one of the pupils was that the adults in school who they could relate to do not have the power to change anything within the school system, *“But there’s nothing really they can do about it cos they’re like too low in the teaching system to say*

anything” (John). This highlights pupils’ perceptions of how positions and hierarchies within the school system impact on their experiences.

Although the role of a key trusted adult appeared similar to that of a mentor, pupils also talked specifically about mentoring as another form of support, with mentors taking on various roles. This included someone that pupils could speak to and someone who motivated them. For one pupil, they associated changes in their behaviour with having a mentor. Although mentors were seen as a source of support for most pupils, one pupil was adamant that they did not want a mentor although they were unable to provide a reason as to why. The following statement was repeated twice in the interview, *“No, I don't want a mentor” (Sofia)*. It is possible that having a mentor was associated with being different and isolated from peers, as the pupil that expressed they did not want one reflected on being rejected from their peer group.

In addition to receiving support from adults based in the school setting, pupils reflected on the role of external professionals in providing support. This included sports coaches, and individuals who led extra-curricular clubs in school. Again, this included emotional support, whereby professionals provided encouragement to pupils, and instrumental support, whereby they acted as a mediator between the pupil and their teachers:

But yeah, that was helpful. Because it's like, you have people that you can proper talk to about stuff and they'll actually like, talk to teachers about it for you (Purple).

Relationships which support the problem of exclusion

This sub-theme explores the perceived factors in teacher-pupil relationships that help and exacerbate the problem of exclusion. Pupils suggested that there are a range of positive qualities that teachers have, which support them in school. This included individual

teacher communication styles and approaches, *“People who understand and listen like Miss H. They listen. They don’t just shout at you” (Levi)*. It was also deemed helpful when teachers developed a better understanding of pupils and their needs. Pupils associated changes in their teacher relationships with receiving fewer exclusions. One pupil also reflected on how changes in one of their teacher relationships allowed that teacher to become someone they could confide in.

Relationships which exacerbate the problem of exclusion

Despite the positive aspects of teacher-pupil relationships, pupils also highlighted the factors which negatively impacted on them. Pupils suggested that teachers did not want to listen to them. Furthermore, they suggested that conflict and communication with their teachers were linked to them receiving behaviour points or being excluded. In some cases, pupils suggested that the actions that led to an exclusion were in response to how teachers had spoken to them, *“Year 8 I hated everyone I can’t lie. So they used to be rude to me and I used to be 10 times ruder” (Santan Dave)*.

It seemed that in other situations, teachers were perceived to be the ones who escalated situations and neither the pupil nor teacher backed down:

I just get into trouble for small stuff, like, talking in class. But then, like, teachers will want to argue with me as well. And I’ll just argue back. So it’s more of a thing where I don’t escalate. It’s more the teachers that do and I won’t back down and neither will they. (Sally 123)

One pupil expressed that they found it difficult to start afresh with teachers following an incident when there had been no opportunity to resolve the previous issues. Pupils reflected on their relationships with teachers following exclusions and they had mixed feelings towards them. In some cases, this was based on teacher’s teaching styles and levels of strictness and whether they perceived they could ask for help. In one case, a pupil

reflected on SEN teachers being supportive but the classroom teacher potentially misconstruing them not understanding as not listening and therefore not helping:

Let's say a teacher has explained something, they'll be like do you know what you're doing and if I say no they'll re-explain. Like like there's some teachers who will be like well you should've been listening or just get to work. But most of SEN teachers help me. (South).

For one pupil, they appeared to feel disheartened when reflecting on their current relationships with teachers, *"Like I've given up trying to care if a teacher is rude to me it's just like, Okay. Like, what do you want me to do?" (Santan Dave)*. Interestingly, two of the pupils highlighted teacher stress levels and workload as impacting on their availability to support pupils, *"Because of the work. The work is just too much. When I go to basketball training around 7:00. I already see teachers in the office" (Alex)*. This reflects pupils' awareness of the wider societal factors impacting on their teachers and thus, their experiences at school.

The inflexibility of school policies

This subtheme explores pupils' perceptions of their schools' policies and confinements within the system. Most of the pupils suggested that schools were too strict. One pupil linked their schools' level of strictness to prioritising external ratings of success, suggesting some pupils are aware of the pressures impacting on their school systems, *"This school is so wet. Like they actually they want to be rated by Ofsted so bad" (Alex)*. Pupils also reflected on the structure of the school day including unrealistic expectations about sitting still, *"Because I'm not allowed to move for a long time for like 2 hours...so...it's just quite annoying" (K9)*. Pupils gave examples of behaviours they received negative points for, *"I made a noise or something and the whole the teacher had to stop the class*

just to speak to me like you just stopped my lesson” (South). It was perceived that pupils were frequently being reprimanded for unfair or unknown reasons:

And it's just it makes me angry because if it's if it's not me getting in trouble, then it's someone else and I'm looking and it's just like it's unfair. If you knew the real reason why they're getting in trouble all of this, then it's not fair, because some people get in trouble for some unknown reasons. It's ridiculous. (John)

When considering behaviour policies, pupils also reflected on the effectiveness of report cards and had mixed feelings about them. One pupil felt that being on report helped them to behave in class, “*Good and bad... good so that I can stay in line in class*” (Levi). However, reports were also seen as being an ineffective way to promote change, “*Um I don't really know. Because most the time when I have an exclusion I just go on report and when I'm done finish my report I'm back to how I was before*” (Eleven). Interestingly, one pupil reflected on a change in the school understanding of behaviour which led to them considering pupils' emotional wellbeing needs before exclusion:

And then I think towards the middle of Year 7, that's when they started taking like wellbeing a little bit more serious. Instead of excluding you straight away they would see what they could do to help you to stop you to stop you from being excluded. (8A)

Pupils indicated that school punishments exacerbate issues at home and that schools did not take contextual factors related to their home lives into account when they were punished and put on report:

Like let's say that like you're late to school for like the whole week for like a very serious emergency the school doesn't understand and they're going to put you on report and you're going to be angry, like and then maybe you can't like focus at school in class or something so you're gonna fail your report. (Sofia)

Long-term difficulties associated with transitions

This subtheme highlights how pupils reflected on the different transitions that they had experienced and how these impacted on behaviour and exclusion.

Primary-secondary transition

Pupils reflected on their transition to secondary school in relation to their behaviour and exclusions, citing Year 7 as a difficult year, *“All I know is that Year 7 was the most hectic. Year 9, towards the end of Year 8 I started to like become a little bit more mature”* (8A). They reflected on the different consequences in secondary school compared to primary school, highlighting the need to support pupils with understanding the expectations of secondary school, *“That’s what I forgot about secondary school...they can exclude you. Just for...you’ll get detentions”* (TJ). Another difference pupils highlighted was that they felt that they could access their learning at primary school, but the transition to secondary school was difficult and they perceived themselves as not being “smart” as highlighted in the following quote,

But I wasn’t always dumb like Year 7. No actually why am I lying. The whole, primary school was good, like I was kind of smart. But now it’s just, I think my brain explode. (Santan Dave).

Some pupils felt that Year 7 was a year that was not important in school, and this was a year that one of them seemed to receive a high number of fixed-term exclusions, *“I had the most exclusions in Year 7. Like I just didn’t care. About Year 7. Because the way I looked at it then was Year 7 you’re new, you have nothing to do, nothing to learn”* (8A). As

they moved up through the year groups, they placed more importance on school and this related to their academic achievements, *“Obviously Year 9, you pick your GCSEs. And you have to focus on more. But Year 7 and 8. They’re just year groups I guess”* (Sally123). This is an interesting finding in relation to exclusion data as pupils perceived positive changes in their behaviour as they progressed through the school years, but data suggests that both FTE and permanent exclusion rates are highest in Year 10.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

There were no questions related to the covid-19 pandemic, however, many pupils in the study reflected on the impact that the pandemic had had on their learning, friendships, and school exclusion practices. One pupil reflected on general disruptions to their education, *“Yeah. Last time. Last time I completed a school year was when I was nine”* (Sally123). Pupils also reflected on their experiences in education during the lockdown periods, *“This year, was like COVID. But I got in trouble. Cos I didn’t really log into my lessons”* (John). There was a recognition of changes in exclusion practice during this time (as reflected in DfE statistics, 2022b) and pupils received different consequences for their behaviour online, compared to when they were in school, *“I didn’t necessarily get excluded cos it was online, but they called me in to...come to the school to talk to the head teacher”* (Eleven). One pupil reflected on how the pandemic had influenced the friendships in her year group and she highlighted that friendship issues started when pupils reintegrated back into school together.

Reintegration processes

There were some interesting findings related to reintegration meetings and reintegration processes. All the pupils referred to a “meeting” they had when they returned

to school following exclusion. Some of the pupils mentioned their parents were in the meeting. One of the pupils interestingly highlighted the absence of their Head of Year in the reintegration meeting:

We have a meeting about how I need to develop and then... my head of year is meant to always be there but she's the one that writes the letters but she's never in the meeting, the only meeting she's been to is probably the most recent one in Year 10 and all, all of my exclusions she hasn't been there except from that one exclusion. (South)

Interview data suggested that reintegration meetings focused on the problem of pupils' behaviour with limited discussion about what could be done to promote change, *"in the meeting sir just explains that ah what you did was wrong. And you have to avoid doing that next time" (Eleven)*. Interestingly, pupils perceived reintegration meetings to be ineffective in changing their behaviour and experience in school, due to their repetitive nature:

They're terrible. They are boring. Cos it's just, I've had so much meetings and it's just repetitive, repetitive. And nothing's changed so it's either something they're doing wrong or something I'm doing wrong. (John)

Pupils were left feeling hopeless about the meetings to effect change, indicating that there potentially needs to be changes in the structure of these meetings to promote change, *"And I think the first time. I was like yeah, I don't really care this meeting's not gonna do anything" (8A)*. One pupil also reflected on the pressure that attending the meetings put on their parent.

As well as the perceived ineffectiveness of reintegration meetings, pupils discussed interventions put into place as part of the reintegration process. These seemed to vary and included going on report or going into isolation, extending the punishment. The amount of time spent in isolation was based on the perceived seriousness of the exclusion, *"So basically, when you get excluded. It depends on how big it is, like if it's one week you'll go in*

isolation for three days” (TJ). At other times, pupils were reintegrated back into lessons without any interventions put into place, “Or they make you go back to lessons and they don't like, they just act like it's another normal day” (Purple). For one pupil, interventions were perceived to be tokenistic and not put into place for enough time to make a difference:

But they only put it in for a certain amount of time, a small period of time, to make it seem that they're doing something good and then they just remove it. (John)

The family context

This subtheme explores pupils' perceptions of their families' views on exclusion and the support networks they have access to at home. The family was mostly considered as a supportive environment for pupils, although pupils indicated that their families had mixed views on exclusion. Exclusion was a new concept in one family, and one pupil expressed that their family took their exclusions seriously, *“Of course not good. Well...they don't take it very lightly” (Eleven)*. On the other hand, one pupil was unsure about how their parents might feel, suggesting it was not something they talked about, *“ My parents...probably annoyed” (Levi)*. In another example, one pupil showed an awareness of the perceived impact of exclusion on his parent which made him reflect on his behaviour:

And be like, a little bit, because obviously, like every like three weeks, my mum would come in for a meeting, and it did make her quite sad. And she told me that in May herself. So that's when I started thinking, I'm starting to make people around me sad, because of my behaviour. (8A)

Pupils reflected on whether they felt their parents believed and understood their exclusion with mixed feelings. Some pupils indicated that their families understood the exclusion, *“My sister, my aunty and my dad understood and my dad said that I shouldn't get*

into any more fights” (Sofia). This suggested that pupils’ families were there to advocate for them when it was deemed that behaviour policies were not being followed:

Because my parents we’re trying to like fight back cos like the exclusion was for um...I think it was for getting too many behaviour points. Normally you’re meant to get like a Saturday detention or just BSU which is like isolation and then they excluded me for that so my mum wasn’t happy about that. (South)

Other pupils reflected on their parents not believing them against their teacher:

And yeah again she's not going to believe me because she's going to believe the teachers over me. So there's nothing for me to like do so I was just like I'm just sitting at home bored. (Purple)

Pupils also reflected on the advice they had received from their families, encouraging them to do better in some cases but in other cases, the advice was conflicting:

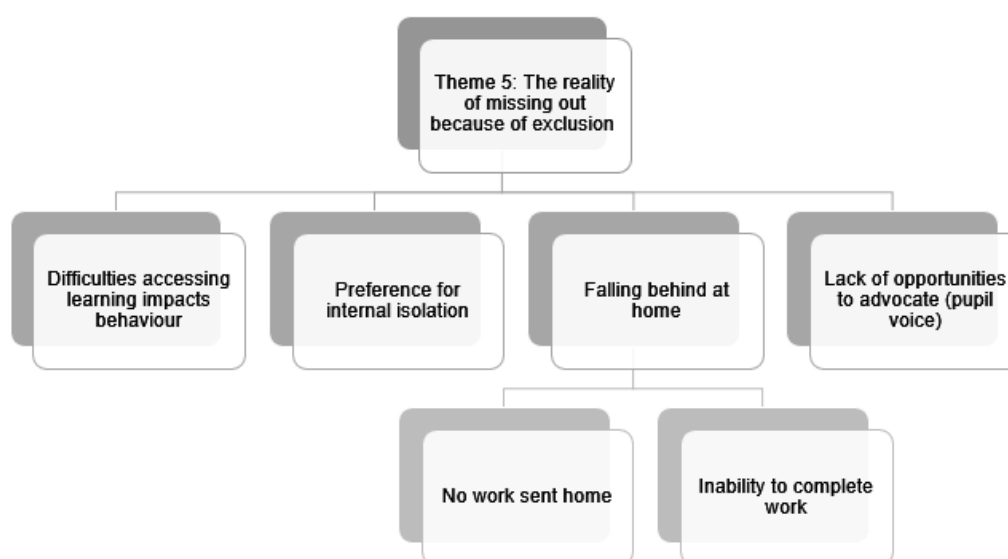
In my defence...when I was in primary school my dad said, if anyone hits me, hit them back. But then he said, now he says if anyone hits you tell the adult. So I just got very confused. (TJ)

Overall, codes and data within this theme indicated that there are several factors in the school and family context that contribute to exclusion and reintegration. Importantly, reintegration practice was inconsistent and often perceived as ineffective in promoting change. It was unclear whether pupils understood the goal of the reintegration meeting which could explain why they felt they were unproductive. Pupils had also experienced multiple meetings, and nothing had changed, thus highlighting why they considered them to be ineffective in promoting change. This has important implications for considering how to make reintegration more effective so that pupils do not continue in the cycle of exclusion.

4.6 Theme 5: The reality of missing out because of exclusion

This theme is concerned with pupils' experiences of missing out on their learning, particularly at home during periods of exclusion. It considers pupils' difficulties accessing learning, linked to their exclusions. Pupils expressed that during these periods they missed out on their education and fell behind with their schoolwork. This was because work was not always sent home, it was too easy or too difficult for them to complete or there were unavoidable distractions at home impacting on their ability to concentrate. Pupils expressed a preference for internal exclusion as an alternative to exclusion.

Figure 7 Theme 5 Thematic Map



Difficulties accessing learning impacts behaviour

Interview data suggested that pupils in the study perceived the learning environment to be something they found difficult to access. This had implications for their behaviour as highlighted in the following quote, “*Yeah, but that's because that's not even because I misbehave. I just it takes me a long time to take things in*” (Purple). In addition, difficulties accessing the learning had implications for pupils' perceptions of themselves as a learner:

I never understand anything. Well, I'm, I'm apparently, I'm a slow person. But I just don't understand anything anyways. And like all the subjects I'm failing? I'm only doing well in like creative subjects like, drama and music (Santan Dave).

It was suggested that during lessons there were times when they did not understand what the teacher was saying, particularly during whole class teaching, but this was perceived as them not listening, "*Just because...the person...doesn't know the work doesn't mean they haven't listened, maybe they didn't understand*" (K9).

There were three factors related to the school environment that pupils highlighted as contributing to their difficulties accessing learning: their academic set, the size of the class and the support they received. One pupil felt strongly about the academic set that they had been placed in, which they linked to difficulties they were having with some of their peers., "*If I'm still in set 6 in Year 10 I am changing schools I don't care cos I never wanted to go to this school*" (Alex). Another pupil reflected on class sizes and the impact of a big or small class for their learning in different subjects, "*I don't mind having big classes for some but English I struggle with having a big class. When I was in the other class, it was normal. It was fine it was easier to focus*" (Levi). Some pupils indicated that they valued having access to support in class which included additional support from an adult to help them understand the work:

Um like, catching up with what we're doing like let's say a teacher has explained something, they'll be like do you know what you're doing and if I say no they'll re-explain. Like like there's some teachers who will be like well you should've been listening or just get to work. But most of SEN teachers help me. (South)

One pupil highlighted the resources which supported his focus and attention, such as something to fiddle with and felt it was unfair when this was taken away, "*It makes me feel like so because it's distracting other people like I can't use it and all this but it's really not distracting anyone because no one has actually complained*" (John). This was interesting

as it highlighted that even when underlying needs were recognised and acknowledged, pupils felt they were prevented from using strategies to support them.

Preference for internal isolation

An interesting finding was that most of the pupils in the study expressed the view that internal isolation would be better than FTE. Pupils gave several reasons for this opinion, related to avoiding boredom, and wanting to be connected to the school community to learn:

Because exclusions you have no homework and you go home, and then you miss out on your education and learning. But with isolation it's better cos you get, you're in school in the environment, you're in the atmosphere, you're in the area where you are learning. (TJ)

Throughout the interviews, most pupils indicated a strong desire to be back in school following periods of exclusion, *“Like that’s how desperate I was to wanting to like be in school even though I wasn’t in lessons I still wanted to like be in school (South)”*. This highlighted the importance of pupils feeling connected to the school system, portrayed through a sense of relief when their exclusion was over, *“I was like finally. Finally. Thank God it's done. It's done now. And then I didn't even get a point in like three week” (Alex)*.

Falling behind at home

Another key subtheme was that pupils felt they were falling behind during periods of exclusion which had implications when they returned to school.

No work sent home

Importantly, one of the reasons given for pupils feeling like they were falling behind at home was that there was no work sent home for them to complete. In some cases, work

was not sent home because teachers were unaware of the situation and did not realise pupils had been excluded:

Because the teacher the teachers they don't send you any work. Like cos sometimes the teachers they don't even realise you're excluded. Sometimes they just think you're ill cos they don't say it. (Purple)

In other cases, pupils indicated that the responsibility for ensuring they had work to do was on a parent, or the pupil themselves, highlighting a perception of a lack of accountability from the school for educating pupils during periods of exclusion, *"If I didn't ask for work. Then the teachers, they wouldn't have sent me anything. I'd (stutter) be behind" (Eleven).*

In some cases, pupils completed their homework at home, but this did not allow them to keep up with what was being taught in class. In one case, a pupil received a consequence for not completing work that they stated had not been uploaded, and therefore they could not access. When pupils returned to school following exclusion, most of them indicated that they felt behind, and it was difficult to understand and keep up with what was happening in class:

Um it was hard because like most of the time when I come back um I was falling back and like I didn't know what was going on or how or how to like catch up with my work. (South)

On the other hand, one pupil expressed an opposing view, and did not feel he had fallen too far behind, *"But I also feel like I'm not far, far behind. I feel like I'm doing good so...not that deep." (John)*. Other pupils expressed more positive feelings about their time at home, seeing it as a time for reflection, *"It was helpful because I could think about more things and it was unhelpful because I couldn't learn" (K9)*. However, as in the quote above, these feelings were mixed and the perception of falling behind remains as an important

finding, *“It was nice. At the same time it got annoying, because I was just at home and behind in a lot of subjects” (Sally123).*

Inability to complete work

Another finding related to pupils’ perceptions of falling behind at home was connected to the level of the work sent home and distractions at home. Some pupils expressed that they were unable to complete work because it was too difficult, *“Annoyed cause I never understood the work she gave me” (TJ)*. On the other hand, for some pupils the work was considered to be too easy, *“Yeah but sometimes I don’t do it because they send Year 3 work. Very, very easy work right which puts me behind in my lessons” (Sally123)*. Pupils also indicated that completing work at home was difficult because there were more opportunities to be distracted and therefore being in school remained their preferred option:

At home you can have 10 crying babies, like your brothers, sisters or your cousins come over or you can have a dog barking and you wouldn’t get no work done. So school is just better in genera. (TJ)

Lack of opportunities to self-advocate (pupil voice)

This sub-theme highlights the importance that pupils placed on feeling listened to in the context of exclusion. A key finding from the interviews was that pupils did not feel they were given a chance to stand up for themselves or have their voices heard. In one case this resulted in a pupil not being able to defend themselves in class and being reprimanded for trying to, *“If I didn’t do something and then I wanna like explain what happened I’m not allowed to I just get a point for trying to” (K9)*.

Before an exclusion when pupils were being sanctioned, they strongly expressed that schools should try to hear what had happened from their perspective. It was suggested that listening to pupils more could prevent situations from escalating:

But try and like look into it cos when I told them that there was going to be a fight and that she still wanted to fight me. They said no, that she didn't want to fight me because she said so. But she was lying to them even though I told them multiple times that she said herself, that she said to me that she wanted to fight me. (Sofia)

Following an exclusion, pupils suggested that schools could take the time to reflect with them to promote a collaborative approach to changing the situation in the future. This suggests that pupils feel they would benefit from opportunities to reflect on and learn from previous situations:

Like they could do what we are doing now like ask the person how they felt about it like how they feel about the exclusion and what they can do to make it better. (TJ)

Overall, the codes and data within this sub-theme highlighted the importance of pupil voice. It indicated that pupils value being heard and having someone to share their thoughts and feelings with. There was a strong sense that they do not always feel heard or have opportunities to self-advocate. When they are listened to, they perceive that their views are not necessarily considered when actions are taken by the adults around them. Pupils also expressed a preference for internal isolation over FTE, as they felt they missed out on their learning and education at home. In most cases, pupils were not sent any work to complete which has important implications in terms accountability for pupils' education during periods of exclusion.

4.7 Summary of themes

The findings discussed above are based on the experiences and perceptions of the 12 research participants. Findings from the pupil interviews indicated that there are multiple factors impacting on pupils which help and exacerbate the problem of exclusion and reintegration. An important finding was related to pupils' social relationships. Some of the behaviours that pupils engaged in appeared to be a way of seeking social acceptance and popularity amongst peers to develop a sense of belonging. Ongoing peer issues linked to bullying and fighting contributed to the negative cycle of exclusion and reintegration that many of the pupils were caught up in. This is important because it suggests pupils are potentially attempting to balance belonging to their peer group and belonging to the school community. In some cases, behaviours relating to one of these contexts, undermines belonging to the other. There is also the consideration that if one peer gets another excluded, they might gain social credibility within their own group. Another key finding related to peers was that pupils experienced instrumental and emotional support from close friends after periods of exclusion.

The themes linked to relationships, including the availability of a key trusted adult, highlighted the importance of pupils' sense of belonging within the school and the extent to which they felt accepted. However, a sense of belongingness (relatedness) to the peer group appears to be more of a motivator than seeking a sense of belonging to the school community. This was also demonstrated in pupils' preference for internal isolation to exclusion. Another key finding was the perceived lack of school and social support for pupils whilst they were at home during periods of FTE, which has implications for school exclusion practices.

The development of a reputation which was difficult for pupils to change linked to the exclusion-reintegration cycle. Pupils felt that they were not provided with a fresh start and that teachers were hypersensitive towards them following an exclusion. They also reflected on the ineffectiveness of reintegration meetings and report cards to change their behaviour.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Key findings in relation to the research questions

This study set out to explore pupils' lived experiences of multiple FTEs, reintegration back into school and to examine their relationships with peers in this context. Findings will be discussed in relation to the two RQs and sub-questions. Strengths and limitations of the study will be considered followed by implications of the findings for schools and EP practice.

5.1.1 RQ 1: What are pupils' experiences of multiple FTEs and reintegration?

This section will consider insights learned from exploring pupils' experiences of FTE and reintegration. It will consider the support they received during periods of FTE and the perceived facilitators and barriers to reintegration. The findings related to peers will be discussed in relation to RQ2.

Sub-question 1: To what extent do pupils feel supported during periods of FTE?

Evidence emerging from the TA suggests that pupils did not feel supported by their schools during periods of FTE. This lack of support from school appeared to start with the decision to exclude pupils in the first place. There was a suggestion by pupils that schools did not consider contextual factors, such as what was going on at home, when deciding whether to exclude. This is a relevant finding as the PPCT model posits that an individual is directly influenced by, and influences the systems in which they are located within. Therefore, the consideration of contextual factors is crucial in developing a deeper understanding of what is happening for a CYP. DfE (2022) guidance states that it is

important that pupils continue to receive their education during periods of FTE and Headteachers should “*take steps to ensure that work is set and marked for pupils during the first five school days of a FTE*” (DfE, 2022, p.12). However, most of the pupils expressed that they were not sent any work to do whilst they were at home. One pupil expressed that this was because teachers are not always aware of the reasons behind a pupil absence. Pupils could be away from school for a multitude of reasons including FTE. This highlights potential issues related to communication processes within school systems, further demonstrating the need for a shared understanding of a situation. In other cases, pupils expressed that the onus was on their parent or themselves to contact the school for work. This appeared to put pupils at a further disadvantage when they returned to school and they were frustrated that they had fallen behind with their learning whilst being at home. This aligns with previous findings suggesting pupils who had been permanently excluded felt frustrated by a lack of homework whilst waiting to move to AP (Murphy, 2021). In relation to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2015), it is possible that this undermines pupils’ sense of competence to complete their work when they subsequently return to school, and thus, hinders their motivation in class.

In the present study, when work was sent home, pupils also felt frustrated that it was either too difficult for them to complete or that it was too easy and therefore, did not support them to make progress in their learning. This is an important finding, which raises questions related to accountability and who takes responsibility for pupils’ education during periods of FTE. It demonstrates one way in which pupils are missing out on their education due to exclusionary processes, as highlighted by Parsons and Howlett (1996). By not providing pupils with opportunities to keep up with their learning, it could be argued that this reinforces the narrative of exclusion being a within-child issue, with the blame placed on the

pupil and the responsibility to have access to work at home, on their parent. This links to previous research suggesting that educational practitioners perceived child and home factors to have the biggest influence on reintegration success (Thomas, 2015).

Pupils linked the lack of work sent home during periods of FTE to them falling behind when they returned to school and they also expressed a lack of understanding in lessons prior to the FTE. This provides useful insight into how a cycle of not being able to access learning in class may lead to exclusion and then subsequent exclusions. Many of the pupils in the study expressed that they found their classwork difficult to access. This was sometimes linked to teachers misinterpreting their behaviour, e.g. when a pupil did not understand something, this was perceived as them not listening in class or being “off-task” (in two instances) and they were not provided with help. Pupils fell behind as there was no work sent home, so when they returned to school, they found it difficult to catch up and the behaviour cycle continued. This finding is in line with previous research indicating that disruptive behaviour in the classroom could be in response to a pupil’s unmet underlying needs (Armstrong, 2018; Caslin, 2021). This provides an example of how focusing solely on behaviour could result in pupils being sanctioned for an unmet need.

During the research interviews, some pupils spoke openly about their difficulties with learning, however, it appeared it was more difficult for them to express this in school, possibly because they did not want their needs highlighted in front of their peers. In relation to this, there were mixed views about the helpfulness of additional support in lessons. This is similar to previous studies which found that pupils did not value additional support (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019) because they did not want to have their difficulties highlighted

(Murphy, 2021). It is likely that this is linked to pupils' perceived reputation and the way they want to be viewed by their peers (discussed in relation to RQ2 below).

Another interesting finding was that pupils perceived internal isolation to be a better alternative to FTE. They stated that they felt more connected to the school environment, where they could learn, if they remained in school. This demonstrates the value pupils placed on a perceived sense of relatedness to the school environment, one of the three psychological needs underpinning SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2015). However, this is in contrast with staff perspectives in Golding's (2021) thesis which stated that school staff do not perceive internal exclusion as a place where pupils are able to learn. In addition, FTE was also perceived to be more of a punishment than internal exclusion for pupils in the present study. This again contradicts findings from Golding's (2021) thesis which suggested that school staff perceived internal exclusion to be more of a punishment because pupils would have more opportunities for leisure activities e.g. playing on their Xboxes at home. Most pupils in the present study, however, stated that at home their devices were taken away as punishment so they were bored at home, and wanted to be working. These are interesting contradictions and highlight why it is important to take account of pupils' views to deepen our understanding of their experiences and to inform decisions about their education. It also highlights pupils' desire to learn and be a part of the school community which is helpful when considering how we can shift thinking around exclusions towards opportunities for learning instead of punishments. Finally, it highlights the need to support pupils to 'catch up' on their learning when they return to school, in a way that does not negatively impact on their peer relationships.

Another notable finding was that pupils considered their families as a source of support. This partly reflects previous findings suggesting that parental support had the biggest impact on reintegration success (Thomas, 2015). However, pupils reflected on the role of their families in relation to support during periods of FTE rather than in relation to reintegration. This contrast could be explained by the difference in context between pupils who are permanently excluded and pupils who are excluded for a fixed period. In the context of FTE, where pupils are moving in and out of the same setting, they may rely on their parents less than their peers or teachers for support. It is possible that peers and teachers were deemed as more fundamental in the reintegration process because pupils were returning to the same setting with the same people, as opposed to a new setting through a managed move or permanent exclusion, with different people. This highlights a potential difference between the experiences of those who are permanently excluded and those who experience FTE, with the latter continuously attempting to achieve a sense of relatedness to an environment or people they potentially feel rejected by.

In contrast to feeling supported by their families, pupils expressed a lack of support from their friends during FTEs, likely related to them being out of school when their friends were in school and not seeing them as much outside of school. This was sometimes because of limited access to digital technology which left pupils with no means to contact their friends, and many felt socially isolated because of this. This echoes findings from a previous study where pupils reported a sense of isolation from their peer groups following permanent exclusion (Murphy, 2021). In the present study, in some cases, a lack of contact during periods of exclusion was linked to social anxieties when returning to school which made it difficult for some pupils to re-join their peer group. This is an important finding because the risk of being disconnected from peers can hinder a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018) and this is further associated with “anti-social behaviour” (Baumeister et al.,

2005). This can contribute to an understanding of pupils' behaviours related to their peer groups e.g. the class clown role to be re-accepted, or continuing in physical fights to maintain social status (discussed in relation to RQ2 below). This validates the need to acknowledge the negative effects of exclusion on pupils' social relationships as well as their learning and highlights the importance of considering peer relationships in reintegration plans.

Sub-question 2: What are perceived facilitators and barriers to reintegration from pupil perspectives?

Facilitators

Evidence emerging from the TA suggests that the presence of a relatable, key trusted adult or mentor (to motivate and listen to the pupils) supported pupils to change their behaviour following a FTE. This in line with previous research (Lawrence, 2011) and is an important finding when considering the current climate of budget cuts, impacting on schools' resources, and leading to decisions which can result in fewer additional staff to provide invaluable emotional support to pupils (Sutton Trust, 2019). There was particular importance placed on adults who pupils were able to relate to and who understood them.

Another facilitating factor for the older (KS4) pupils was their aspirations for the future and their motivation to succeed. This finding contrasted with Daniels (2011) who concluded that many of the young people in their study did not have ideas about the future after being permanently excluded. This provides some evidence for the need for early intervention, to break the cycle of exclusion and prevent permanent exclusion from occurring. This finding also challenges the view that excluded pupils are disinterested or disengaged in their education as the older pupils articulated their future plans, suggesting a need to identify and build on pupils' strengths and promote their sense of autonomy and competence with regards to their lives. However, the pro-active engagement required by

the present study could have attracted pupils that were more engaged in their education, and thus, the sample could be biased towards these pupils.

Relationships with teachers were found to both support and exacerbate exclusion and reintegration. Echoing previous studies, supportive teacher-pupil relationships included teachers listening to and understanding the needs of the pupils as well as communicating with them in a supportive manner, contributing to a sense of relatedness to the school environment (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013). Teacher relationships which exacerbated the problem of FTE and reintegration will be explored in the section on barriers below.

Barriers

Findings in this study highlighted how conflict in teacher-pupil relationships, relating to proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), can exacerbate the problems associated with exclusion and reintegration, in line with previous research (Briggs; 2010; Lally, 2013, Murphy, 2021; Pillay et al., 2013). This related to a lack of understanding of the pupils and misinterpretations of their ways of communicating or behaving. It has been argued that differences in ways of communicating and misinterpretations of language, e.g. the use of slang, can lead to the disproportionate use of discipline and a 'culture clash'. In a previous survey of 1,285 teachers, 37% believed that the disproportionate exclusion of some minority ethnic groups reflected a 'culture clash' (Smith et al., 2012). Further evidence suggests that some teachers are more tolerant of pupils' behaviour than others and their responses impact on the pupil relationships that develop (McCluskey et al., 2019; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013). Proximal processes are understood as a key factor in learning and development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), and the finding above highlights how individual characteristics (e.g. teacher tolerance) and contextual factors (e.g. behaviour policies) influence the interactions that occur between pupils and teachers.

One overarching theme from the findings was the role that the environment played in pupils' experiences of reintegration between their FTEs. In line with previous research, and through the lens of the PPCT model, considering the contextual factors at play in the exclusion-reintegration process is crucial for shifting the narrative from a within-child view of behaviour to a fuller understanding of the needs underlying the behaviour. Various aspects related to context factors will be explored below.

The findings corroborate existing research suggesting that school transitions are difficult for pupils to navigate (Zeedijk et al., 2003). These included the primary to secondary transition and returning to school after the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings highlighted that many pupils experience difficulties in Year 7, related to their learning, peer relationships and behaviour. This suggests that a difficult start to secondary school life can put pupils at risk of exclusion and risks beginning the negative cycle of exclusion that some pupils get caught up in. Once they have started badly, it is difficult for them to break this cycle, partly due to the reputation they develop within the school environment and their desire for social acceptance. It is note worthy that many pupils mentioned the pandemic even though there were no questions asked about this. One pupil pinpointed the return to school following lockdown as the time when difficulties with peers arose, highlighting the need to better support peer relationships through transitions.

The findings above link to an overarching theme on the labelling of pupils and the development of reputations within the school community. This highlights how the labels that pupils are given may begin to define them and inform how others interact with them in the classroom (Caslin, 2021). This is an important finding as it demonstrates how once pupils are excluded, they need to rebuild their reputation, and this could have a positive or negative influence on their reintegration. This is an interesting contrast to Thomas (2015) who found that pupil reputation was deemed the 8th least important factor in the

reintegration process from the perspective of school staff. This suggests that school staff may not be aware of the impact of a pupil's reputation on their capacity to change their behaviour following exclusion, or the difficulty in rebuilding their reputation.

This links to another key finding that suggests there is a hypersensitivity towards pupils, from teachers, when they return to school following FTE, based on their reputation. Pupils felt blamed for situations they did not feel they had caused, or were given differential punishments for the same behaviours as other pupils. Exclusion is a potential opportunity for pupils to reflect on a situation, with the expectation that their behaviour will change afterwards. However, if adults are hypersensitive to their behaviour and interact with them as if they are expecting certain behaviours from them, it can be argued that the increased level of scrutiny can offset the opportunities to change their behaviours. This implies that there is an expectation that pupils will "misbehave" which does not provide pupils the opportunity for a fresh start, as stipulated in exclusion guidance (DfE, 2022). This is pertinent considering, being given a fresh start is a key factor in the reintegration process (Lawrence, 2011). In addition, negative interactions with teachers and negative feedback about their behaviour could be understood as undermining pupils' capacity to feel competent to manage their behaviour and feeling competent is understood as a driver of autonomous motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2015).

Pupils reflected on the ineffectiveness of reintegration meetings and interventions. However, in the study they did not use the terminology "reintegration" to describe the period in which they re-joined the school after a FTE. It is possible that this reflects the lack of clarity of what reintegration is, including the process of reintegration, as the definition of this is vague within the literature (e.g. attempts made to support pupils to re-join their existing school community after FTE). It is also possible that if there are no changes made, pupils do not notice anything different about coming back to school following FTE. Pupils reflected

on a compulsory meeting following FTE, including their parent(s) and a staff member. Evidence emerging from the TA suggests that pupils found the reintegration meeting ineffective in changing their behaviour and reported negative experiences of these meetings. This is in line with some research suggesting that pupils found reintegration meetings to be intimidating (Lawrence, 2011). However, it contradicts findings suggesting that the reintegration meeting was deemed helpful in facilitating the reintegration process in one study (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019). In the present study, pupils expressed that key members of staff (e.g. the Head of Year) were not always present in the meeting or that their parents could not attend. Communication between home and school has been suggested to be an important factor in the reintegration process to encourage common goals between adults (Lawrence, 2011). Thus, the absence of representatives from home or school in the present study could have hindered opportunities for developing shared goals moving forwards. Reintegration meetings also seemed to focus solely on behaviour, missing an opportunity to explore contextual factors and address any underlying needs in order to unpick the behaviours which had led to the exclusion in the first place. Through the lenses of SDT and the PPCT model, it seems important to explore how the interactions between pupils and staff or peers may hinder or facilitate pupils' motivation and behaviour.

This links to another key finding which related to the use of report cards and internal exclusion as a strategy for reintegration. There was a general consensus amongst pupils that report cards did not promote changes in their behaviour, although one pupil found it a helpful reminder of the consequences for his behaviour. This contradicts findings from a study suggesting that the use of a daily behavioural report card had promising outcomes for behaviour changes (Owens et al., 2012). In the present study, it is unclear whether the targets on the report cards were unrealistic for pupils to meet without additional support or whether targets had not been generated in collaboration with the pupils. According to SDT

(Deci & Ryan, 1985), self-generated goals are more likely to promote pupil autonomy and motivation to achieve the goal, if they are realistic (Day & Tosey, 2011). This suggests that pupils could be more motivated to achieve their goals if they are involved in generating them and they are realistic, further highlighting the need to include pupils in decisions about their education.

5.1.2 RQ 2: How do pupils who have received multiple FTEs experience peer relationships and friendships?

A key overarching theme from the interviews was the social pressures pupils experienced, seemingly leading to behaviours for acceptance and validation in their peer groups. It appeared that social acceptance was a key factor related to exclusion and reintegration. Evidence emerging from the TA suggests that in some cases pupils took on the role of class clown as a way to gain social acceptance and popularity amongst their peer group which links to feeling a sense of relatedness. This is similar to findings in the literature suggesting that pupils are concerned with 'fitting in' with their peers (Toothill & Spalding, 2000). This is pertinent considering the behaviours that pupils were engaging in for peer acceptance were also related to them being excluded from school.

Disruptive behaviour has been linked to an underlying desire for acceptance and low self-esteem (Gilbert & Procter 2006; Greene 2008). As discussed in chapter 3, this could be understood through the concept of deviancy training, whereby disruptive behaviours are a way to develop bonds between individuals in groups, however, these behaviours could be seen as working against a school's aims and are often inconsistent with school rules and attitudes towards staff (Catts & Ozga, 2005). This contributes to the literature by further highlighting the role of belonging in school exclusion but also by exploring at a deeper level the possible underlying mechanisms beneath "disruptive behaviour" associated with the

class clown. From the perspective of the teacher, pupils described as class clowns are often perceived to display 'difficult' behaviour (Hobday-Kusch & McVittie, 2002). However, Ruch et al. (2014) suggest there are four dimensions to the role of class clown (class clown role, comic talent, disruptive rule-breaker and subversive joker). Wagner (2019) found that the dimension of *disruptive rule-breaker* was related to various disadvantages in terms of social functioning (aggressive behaviour and low social behaviour) in the classroom. *Comic talent* on the other hand, was related to positives in terms of social functioning. It was also most strongly associated with social status. In the case of the present study, it is likely that the dimension of *disruptive rule-breaker* relates to experiences of exclusion. This is interesting when considering how best to support pupils with regards to their social functioning. It poses the question, how can school environments promote pupils' social skills so that they do not need to engage in disruptive behaviours to develop friendships, as well as supporting them to develop more positive social behaviours.

Another key finding relates to reputation and how pupils potentially maintain status within their peer groups. This appeared to be through engaging in play fighting and fighting. Play fighting is suggested to be connected to popularity and dominance in the male peer group (Pellegrini, 1994). In the present study, some of the pupils reflected on themselves as being popular, but also mentioned multiple fights they had been in. They also reflected on ongoing peer conflict, which was related to their experience of exclusion and specifically, reintegration. The threat of continued fights was an important finding. This linked to the rejection of some individuals from their peer groups following fights whilst at the same time contributed to more experiences of FTE. This is consistent with previous findings stating that peer networks have a key role in reintegration, but prior ones can also jeopardise the process (Lown, 2005). In the present study, it appears that ongoing issues in peer groups

acted as a barrier in the reintegration process. It seems that many of the behaviours pupils engage in in school are related to them trying to establish acceptance amongst their peers.

Bullying and being bullied were both linked to pupils' behaviour and exclusions. Engaging in bullying was possibly another way for pupils to gain status and avoid being victimised themselves. However, pupils in the study also experienced bullying and peer rejection linked to their behaviour and their exclusions. This is in line with research suggesting that individuals who experience behavioural difficulties are more likely to be rejected by peers (McElwain et al., 2002). Furthermore, research by the Anti-bullying Alliance suggests that pupils who say they are bullied daily are three times more likely to be excluded than pupils who are not bullied (Anti-bullying Alliance, 2023). However, it is hard to conclude cause and effect as rejection from a peer group could be a result of or could influence behaviour difficulties (Parker & Asher, 1997).

Evidence emerging from the TA suggests that peer support from friends was a key factor that facilitated pupils' reintegration into school following FTE. Support included both instrumental and emotional support, which adds to previous research suggesting that peers can be a source of instrumental support following permanent exclusion (Pillay et al., 2013). In the present study, in addition to support to catch up in lessons, pupils reflected on their friends taking on an advocacy role or supporting them to regulate their behaviours. They also highlighted the value of emotional support provided by their friends which suggests there is a role for targeted peer support or peer mentoring as part of the reintegration process, as suggested by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2021). There was, however, a distinction between close friends who provided this support and the wider peer group. Some pupils mentioned "knowing everyone" and others mentioned a close friend, although spoke about being rejected from a peer group. This suggests that although pupils may not be part of the wider peer group, they may still have a friend or

close friends. This highlights important differences between social acceptance and status in a peer group and support from close friends, in relation to pupils' experiences of exclusion and reintegration.

Previous research has suggested peer support can be helpful in the reintegration process (Pillay et al., 2013), and is linked to positive social behaviour (Allen et al., 2018). Thus, if pupils are provided with opportunities to receive peer support from their friends as opposed to a less well known peer, this could help to promote positive social behaviours. It suggests a potential role for peers as part of the reintegration process or as part of a buddy system, as per suggestions from EBSA guidance (Somerset Educational Psychology Service, EBSA guidance). It could be argued that support from friends helps pupils to feel a sense of relatedness and connectedness to their community, as suggested by Pillay et al. (2013).

5.1.3 Limitations of the research

Despite interesting findings there are several limitations to reflect upon. The sample of 12 participants is not necessarily demonstrative of all young people experiencing FTEs from secondary schools. Similar to a limitation in previous research, it is likely that the pupils who agreed to take part were those who felt more engaged with their education. It is also possible that there was a bias towards pupils who felt comfortable to express their views in an interview situation. Whilst attempts were made to remove barriers to participation through using timelines and the option to express their views in written or drawing form, it is possible that pupils who felt less confident did not want to take part. Furthermore, during the interviews it became apparent that some pupils had difficulties with expressive language and whilst there were visual supports such as rating scales and emojis, it could have been helpful to think about alternative means for them to express their views, e.g.

using different applications on an iPad to record their thoughts. By not considering international studies in the literature review, there was a missed opportunity to glean methodological designs which may have offered more creative approach to eliciting pupil voice. Furthermore, the structure of the interview schedule could have limited pupils' responses and therefore missing out other relevant and interesting factors contributing to the exclusion-reintegration cycle, e.g. the role of community peers. Finally, the PPCT model alone could be deemed to be limited due to its' focus on interactions and contexts. The use of the PPCT model and SDT together allowed for a deeper and more rounded exploration of pupil motivation and behaviour (linked to exclusion) and how this can be hindered or facilitated by interactions and different environments.

5.1.4 Strengths of the research

On the other hand, there were also a number of strengths to the research. A key strength is that the study contributes to the literature by including the voices of young people who have experienced FTEs, who are an under-represented group. Although there are some similarities in experience, much of the literature explores the experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded, and thus, this study provides insight into the unique experiences of multiple FTEs. The study has also highlighted the difference in perspectives of the young people from possible assumptions made by teachers which is relevant as often adults make decisions which impact CYP without the input of the young person.

Another key strength of this research is that it addresses a gap in the literature regarding pupils' social relationships in the context of FTE and reintegration. It suggests that peers have a key role to play in the exclusion-reintegration cycle. It has highlighted the value of peer support during periods of exclusion and the importance of this during the reintegration process. It adds to the literature by exploring pupils' lived experiences of their

peer relationships and has developed our understanding of some of the possible motivators underlying pupils' behaviour; to gain social acceptance and status as a way to belong. It has added to the findings on some of the facilitating and hindering factors in the reintegration process, further highlighting the importance of contextual factors. A key finding is that successful reintegration requires the breaking of the exclusion cycle. Once a pupil has developed a negative reputation, it is difficult for them to shift this, which can result in internalised views of themselves as bad. Breaking of the cycle could be achieved through efforts to garner peer support, the family and school working together, and changing in the attitudinal barriers towards pupils.

5.2 Implications for schools and EP practice

This research highlights the need to support pupils before they receive a FTE and end up in a cycle of exclusion. This includes careful transition planning, including the identification of learning needs and a coherent plan to address these without highlighting them in front of peers. It suggests that promoting pupil advocacy and actively involving them in decision making may promote a sense of competence and autonomy to the school.

There is a need to consider how pupils can feel a sense of belonging, competence and autonomy to both their peer group and the school. It suggests that interventions to promote pupils' social skills to avoid them engaging in deviant behaviours to gain acceptance, could help to reduce some of the behavioural issues associated with exclusion. Developing pupils' capacity for resolving conflict, possibly through restorative justice interventions or emotional literacy interventions delivered by an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) (Palphreyman, 2023) could be a helpful intervention. EPs have a role to play in developing materials and training which can contribute to developing an evidence-base for these interventions. This research also highlights a potential role for peer-based

intervention groups such as academic peer guidance or peer mentoring. It suggests there could be a role for peers as advocates within reintegration meetings or to provide academic support to help pupils to catch up on missed learning.

The findings further highlighted the key role that a trusted adult or mentor plays and the importance of this for pupils experiencing multiple FTEs and reintegration. Schools should consider access to an allocated mentor who can provide space for individual pupils to reflect and be listened to. Pupils' sense of unfairness and teachers' perceived hypersensitivity towards them following exclusion highlights a need for the whole school system (not just the pupil) to be provided with time to reflect to start afresh. This indicates a role for teacher supervision which could be facilitated by EPs e.g. offering drop-in sessions, a reflective space or group supervision. Furthermore, the findings suggest that teacher-pupil relationships need to be nurtured and for policies to adopt a less punitive approach, including in relation to transitions.

The finding that pupils do not perceive exclusion to change their behaviour resonates with findings from other studies (McCluskey, 2014; Murphy, 2021) and suggests that pupils' underlying needs continue to be unaddressed. The continual labelling of pupils based on their behaviour highlights a need for there to be a shared psychological understanding of behaviour across whole school systems which could also be facilitated by EPs. Whole school approaches which do not place the blame on individual pupils, including attachment awareness (Secure Base in Schools, n.d.) and nurture-based approaches (NurtureUK, 2023) would be appropriate.

This study has highlighted the importance of listening to pupils, taking time to understand their strengths and interests, and consider their future goals and aspirations; and involving them in the decision-making process as much as possible. It argues for a

child-centred approach to supporting inclusion and reducing exclusion. Reintegration meetings which take a solutions-focused approach (Ratner et al., 2012) could support all parties involved to develop strategies that promote positive change. Taking a strengths-based approach, emphasising their curriculum areas of strength and encouraging their interests through extracurricular activities would be beneficial.

With regards to disseminating findings, I will compose a research briefing to share with participating schools. In addition, the findings will be shared with peers on the Institute of Education (IOE) DEdPsy programme and to my current LA colleagues.

5.3 Future research

Future research could further explore associations between pupils' academic sets and their peer relationships. As highlighted by pupils, they miss out on a substantial amount of their learning during periods of FTE, and this could result in them being in lower academic sets. It could be valuable to explore whether this has any implications for their friendships and peer relationships. Secondly, future research could consider the use of specific tools to explore concepts such as friendship quality or changes in social status within the context of exclusion. Thirdly, future research could explore the different dimensions of class clown behaviour in more detail in relation to exclusion, as they appear to contribute to both social status and social functioning within the classroom.

5.4 Conclusion

This study explored pupils' lived experiences of FTE and reintegration and their social relationships within this context. The findings suggest that peers play a key role in the exclusion-reintegration cycle. It seems that pupils are trying to navigate how to feel a sense of autonomy, competence and belonging to both their peers and the wider school system, including staff. Many of the behaviours that pupils engage in could be seen as a way to

establish popularity and develop relationships with peers, in order not to be rejected. It appears this was by being funny and engaging in low level disruptive behaviours, asserting themselves and winning fights and engaging in bullying to gain a particular reputation. Thus, behaviours related to peer acceptance appear to undermine being accepted in the school system.

There were a range of facilitators and barriers to reintegration which highlight the role of context and the influence of proximal processes within the exclusion-reintegration process. The study has highlighted how the school environment can potentially impact on pupils' capacity to be self-determined through hindering pupils' perception of autonomy, competence and sense of relatedness. Despite its' limitations, the study has further highlighted the value of including young people's voices in research, to develop a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Overall, this research suggests that FTE does not benefit the pupils, and is ineffective in changing behaviour, as stated by the pupils themselves. There appears to be a gap between pupils' and teachers' perceptions of FTE and reintegration demonstrates the value of including pupils in decisions about their education. It highlights the role of peers in exclusion and reintegration and suggests that pupils' behaviour is driven by a need to be accepted by the peer group. It emphasises the need to develop a shared, psychological understanding of behaviour and move away from within-child views of behaviour to promote more effective ways of trying to change it.

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Appendices

Appendix A Search Planner for Literature Review

1. Questions for the literature review

- *What does the literature tell us about experiences of school exclusion?*
- *What does the literature tell us about experiences of reintegration?*
- *What does the literature tell us about peer relationships in relation to exclusion?*
- *What are the gaps in the literature that need addressing to deepen our knowledge about pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships?*
- *What are the relevant theoretical perspectives which can provide a framework for this study?*

2. List the main concepts derived from the question into the table.

3. Find the synonyms of those words, alternate spelling, and the words you wish to exclude and insert in the column below.

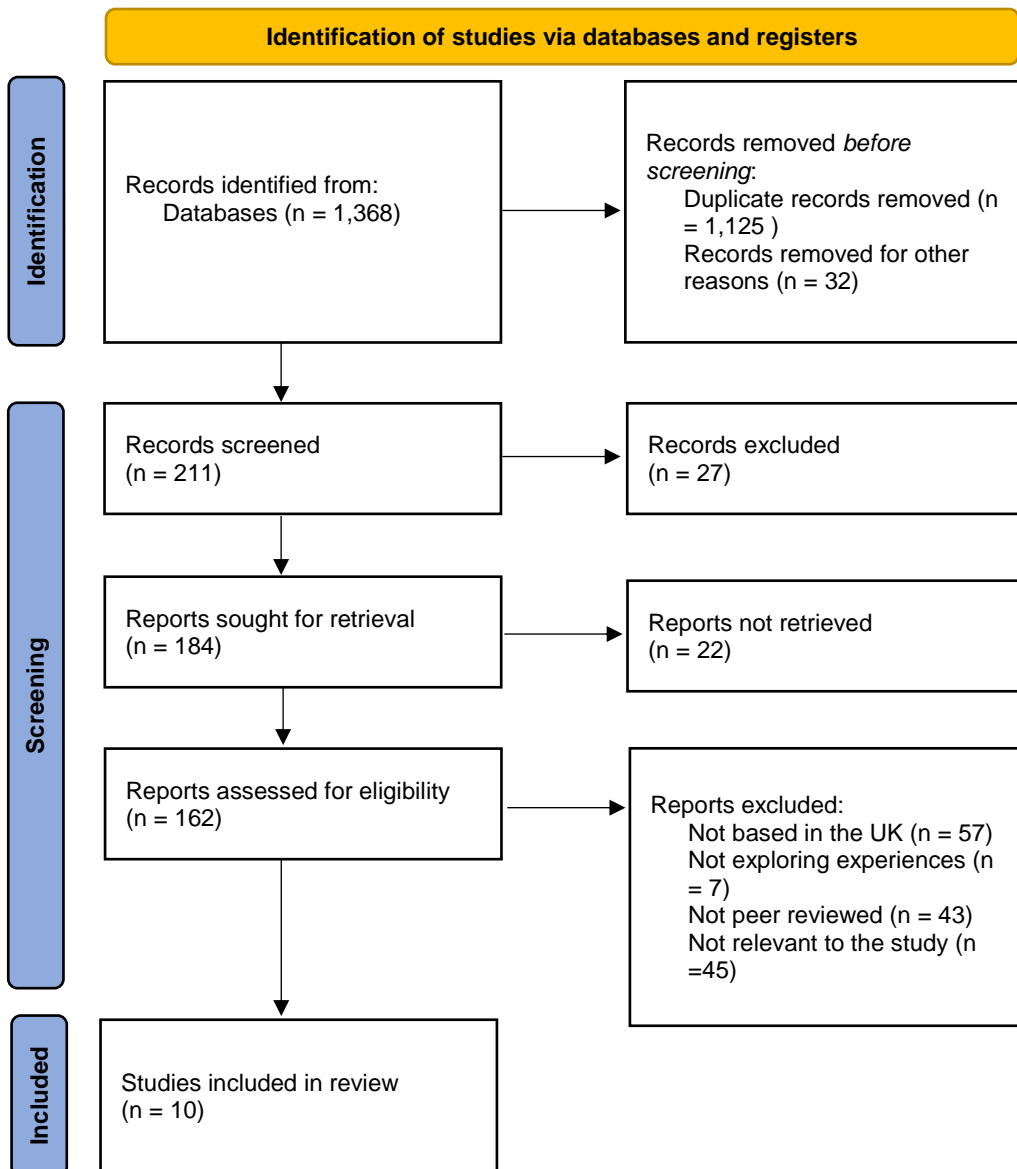
4. Combine searches (Boolean searching using **AND, OR, NOT**)

5. Identify controlled vocabulary (thesaurus terms).

6. Keep a systematic log of recorded database searches including search terms:

School exclusion / suspension / expulsion / exclusion / permanent exclusion / fixed-term exclusion	AND / OR
Reintegration	
Views / perceptions / opinions / thoughts / experiences / attitudes / perspective / beliefs / feelings / qualitative	
Pupils / students	
Staff	
Parents / caregivers / mother / father / parent	
Friendships / friends / relationships / peers	
Belongingness / connectedness / belonging / community	

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and registers only



From: Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., & Mulrow, C. D. (2020). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic review. *BMJ* 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n7

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies focused on exclusion, reintegration following exclusion or exclusion and reintegration • Studies related to the experiences of secondary aged pupils excluded from school • Studies exploring the views of staff • Studies exploring the views of pupils • Any gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies which do not focus on exclusion or reintegration following exclusion • Studies not related to the experiences of secondary aged pupils excluded from school • Studies not exploring the views of staff • Studies not exploring the views of pupils
Time and place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles based in the UK • Articles written in English • Studies published/theses after 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles not based in the UK • Articles not written in English • Studies published/theses before 2010
Type of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative studies or mixed methods studies exploring the views of pupils, parents and staff or multiple perspectives in relation to exclusion and/or reintegration • Relevant to educational psychology • Full text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative studies not exploring the views of pupils, parents or staff in relation to exclusion and/or reintegration • Not relevant to educational psychology • Not full text

Stages of screening:

1. Abstracts read and inclusion and exclusion criteria applied
2. Article/report selected or discarded based on inclusion and exclusion criteria (duplicate studies removed)
3. Inclusion and criteria applied to the full article/report
4. If inclusion criteria met, full report read and critically evaluated (I used the Critical Appraisals and Skills Programme (CASP) (2018) as a basic framework to evaluate the qualitative literature) EBSCO host databases/ UCL explore / other sources: Policy documents, legislative papers, government guidance (DfE) / manual searches undertaken using references from key papers

Appendix B: Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews

Interview Schedule for Pupils Key Stage 3 & 4

Introduction:

- Explain purpose of interview, importance of their views and experiences, right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity
- Read the consent form to the participant and check whether they are still happy to participate, sign consent form
- Introduce the timeline and scaling prompts
- Ask if pupil has any questions.

Home / school / friends

Break each year group into autumn/spring/summer terms ?

Warm up questions:

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

- *What do you like to do?*

How long have you been at this school?

- *What year group are you in?*

What do you like and dislike about school?

Exclusion

Start with timelines and use these to map out the different periods of exclusion.

These questions could be used to explore each period of exclusion.

1. What was happening at the time of your exclusions?
 - What was school like for you?
 - Why do you think you were excluded?
 - How did you feel at the time of the exclusions?
2. What were your relationships like at the time of your exclusions?
 - with teachers, peers, family
3. What helped you in managing your exclusions?
 - To what extent did you feel support during your exclusions? Use scaling here.

Reintegration

1. What was school like for you when you returned?
 - How did you feel about coming back to school?
 - What was happening at the time? The grid could be used to support this.
2. What support did you have when you returned to school?
 - What was most helpful when you came back to school after your exclusion?
(Could use scaling prompt here)

- What was most unhelpful when you came back to school after your exclusion? (Could use scaling prompt here)
 - Who supported you during your reintegration? Is there anyone else that could have supported you?
 - Are there any particular activities that the school organized to support you?
 - Is there anything else you feel the school could do to support reintegration?
3. What is school like for you now?
- How do you feel at school now?
 - Is there anything you think needs to change to make future exclusion less likely?
1. What are your relationships with your peers like now?
- How well do you get along with the pupils at your school? (Present Visual prompt sheet A1-So for example, if '0' means "Very difficult to get along with all the pupils here" and '10' is "Very easy to get along with all the pupils here", what rating would you give on this scale?)
 - Can you tell me a bit more about why it is a...? (for example, pupil gives a rating of '6')
 - Can you describe your friends?

Closing

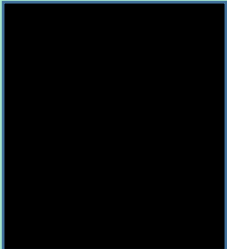
- Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you taking time out of your day for this interview.
- Debrief questions How did you feel about taking part in the interview? How did you feel about the questions I asked you? Was there anything in the interview you found difficult to talk about? How do you feel now? Is there anything worrying you? Is there anything else you would like to say? Do you feel you need any support?
- Just to finish, I would like to let you know what the next steps are. I will transcribe and then analyse the information from this interview and others I am conducting to produce a report. Any information you provide will be confidential and anonymised.

Thank you again for speaking with me today.

***The questions in the interview schedule were developed based on two of the key papers discussed in the literature (Lally, 2013; Murphy, 2021).**

Appendix C: Researcher one page profile

ONE PAGE PROFILE



Who am I?

Hello, my name is Imogen!

People describe me as:

- A good listener
- Thoughtful
- Fun
- Helpful



My job:

I am a trainee educational psychologist.

I work with children and young people to find out what they enjoy, what they are good at and what they may find difficult.

I work with schools and families to think about children's wellbeing and learning.

What is important to me:

- Friends and family
- Travelling
- Yoga
- Nature



What I would like to get better at:

- Headstands
- Relaxing
- Reading
- Using technology

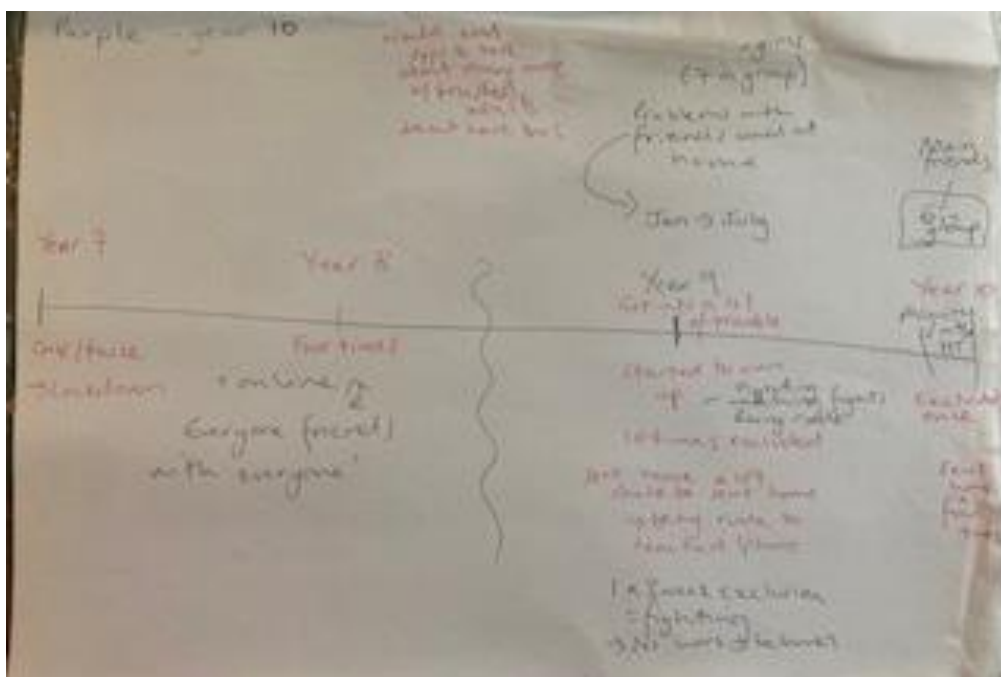
Appendix D: Example of timeline



Appendix E: Example of rating scale



Appendix F: Example of completed pupil timeline



Appendix G: Pupil and parent information sheets and consent forms

*Doctorate in Professional Educational,
Child, and Adolescent Psychology*
Programme Director: Vivian Hill



Exploring pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships

September 2022 – January 2023

Information sheet for parents

My name is Imogen Johnson and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project:

Exploring pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently in my second year of the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DEdPsy) programme at the Institute of Education (IOE).

I am hoping to explore pupil and parent views and experiences of reintegration into mainstream following fixed-term exclusion and pupils' social lives in relation to this. I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Who is carrying out the research?

Main Researcher: Imogen Johnson – imogen.johnson@ucl.ac.uk

Academic supervisor: Ed Baines – e.baines@ucl.ac.uk

Educational Psychologist supervisor: Karen Majors – k.majors@ucl.ac.uk

Why are we doing this research?

It is important that individuals who are impacted by exclusion and reintegration are given a space to talk about their experiences. Due to the negative outcomes associated with exclusion it is important to understand what we can do to support pupils to reintegrate into mainstream where this is the most appropriate option. Friendships are a key factor in reintegration success, therefore understanding more about this is essential. I hope that this research provides an opportunity for your voice to be heard.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You will contribute to the research by providing your narratives of this topic alongside other parents of children who have experienced fixed-term exclusions.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child, and Adolescent Psychology

Programme Director: Vivian Hill



What will happen if my child chooses to take part?

Your child will be invited to take part in a one-one interview with myself at their school. Questions will explore their experiences of exclusion and their friendships. Example questions could include:

- What was happening at the time of your exclusions? And when you returned to school?
- What was/is school like for you?
- What helped you in managing your exclusions? What support did you have?
- How well do you get along with the pupils at your school?

Will anyone know my child has been involved?

Your child will be anonymous, and their name will not be used. Their answers will remain confidential. If there are safeguarding concerns, safeguarding procedures will be followed and what they say will be shared with an appropriate person.

Could there be problems for my child if they take part?

If your child feels uncomfortable at any point in the interview, they are entitled to stop.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Research findings will be included in my research report which will be shared with the university. A research report will also be shared with the school and your child's details will remain anonymous. Data will be stored until the end of the research programme in August 2023. It will be stored on the UCL One Drive account, accessed through an encrypted laptop.

Does my child have to take part?

It is entirely up to your child whether they choose to take part. We hope that if your child chooses to be involved, they will find it a valuable experience. Please note, if they choose not to take part there will be no negative repercussions for them.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at jmogen.johnson@ucl.ac.uk.

If your child would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to jmogen.johnson@ucl.ac.uk or the school by **18th November 2022**.

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Exploring pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships|
Parent Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study please complete this consent form by ticking each item, as appropriate, and return to the research team via the contact details below:

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood this information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these questions adequately answered.
- 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- 3) I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point.
- 4) I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the project. I know that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 5) I agree that small direct quotes may be used in reports (these will be anonymised).
- 6) I understand that in exceptional circumstances anonymity and confidentiality would have to be broken, for example, if it was felt that practice was putting children at risk, or there were concerns regarding professional misconduct. In these circumstances advice would be sought from a senior manager from another local authority who will advise us as to the appropriate course of action and as to whether we need to inform the authority of what you have told us.

Name: ~~~~~

I consent to taking part in this studyyes no

I give permission for my child to take part in this study.....yes no

Signature: Date:

Name of researcher: Imogen Johnson

Signature: *Imogen Johnson* Date:

Imogen Johnson, imogen.johnson.20@ucl.ac.uk

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child, and Adolescent Psychology

Programme Director: Vivian Hill



This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our 'general' privacy notice for participants in research studies [here](#).

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices. The lawful basis that will be used to process any personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data. We will be collecting personal data such as: **[age, school year, gender, SEN]**.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

INFO SHEET

GETTING INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

Who am I?

Hello, my name is Imogen! I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist.



What does the study involve?

If you decide to join this study, you will take part in a one-to-one interview with me. We might use visuals/pictures to explore your experience.

You will be able to take breaks in the interviews which will take place at your school.

If you decide to take part, you can stop at any point.

What is this study about?

I am exploring young people's experiences of fixed-term exclusion and friendships. I would really like to hear about your experiences and your story.

What will I do with your answers to our questions?

All the questions I ask will be kept safe and secure. The only time I would tell someone about it is if I was worried about your safety. At the end of the study I will share what I have found and ask you what you think.

Do you have to take part?

No, it is up to you. Speak with your parent or carer about taking part in this study. You can also contact me if you have any questions. If you decide to take part, your name will not appear and your answers will remain anonymous.

PUT A TICK BY THE ANSWER YOU WANT

Yes, I want to take part in the study.

No, I do not want to take part in the study.

**Your
details**

Your name:

Date.....

For more information, please visit this website:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>

THANK
YOU

Appendix H: Example of interview transcript and initial codes

Example 1:

<p>Imogen 6:05</p> <p>Okay, so now you've got those all written there. Just have a look and what, what was going on at that time?</p>	<p>Johnson, Imogen Transition to secondary school</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Reflecting on own maturity</p>
<p>8A 6:12</p> <p>All I know is that year 7 was the most hectic. Year 9, towards the end of year 8 I started to like become a little bit more mature.</p>	
<p>Imogen 6:24</p> <p>Okay. When you say hectic, can you tell me little a bit more? What do you mean by that?</p>	
<p>8A 6:33</p> <p>Like I just didn't care. About year 7. Because the way I looked at it then was year seven you're new, you have nothing to do, nothing to learn, your GCSEs are all the way there. Year eight, when I finished the end of year seven, my behaviour was way better. And like I started doing good at the beginning of year eight, and then all my friends were messing around. Yeah, then I thought year eight is like four years from GCSEs so it's not really like serious yet. Year seven and eight are not like serious. But then my behaviour was like...towards year 8, I had a mentor in the middle of year eight. So that's when my behaviour started to pan up again, but then my mentor left, and then my behaviour became worse again. And then toward the end of year 8, erm I had like meetings or something like that. And three of them were with the governors. And they said if I got one more, then I'll be permanently excluded. And that's when I started to think about...a little bit about like if I got excluded it's gonna be long and stuff, what schools am I gonna go to and like it's gonna be hard to fit in in other schools and stuff.</p>	<p>Johnson, Imogen Year 7 not seen as a year to learn as GCSEs far away</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen GCSEs as the most important factor in secondary education</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Mentor to support behaviour (link to Purple & others?)</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Connecting changes in behaviour to having a mentor</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Threat of permanent exclusion</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Worried about making friends and fitting in at new school (Purple and South?)</p>
<p>Imogen 7:50</p> <p>Is that something you were worrying about?</p>	
<p>8A 7:53</p> <p>Nah. If I move to other schools, I'm quite a confident person, I don't mind making new friends. But the thing is that the process that's moving it that would make it hard. I'm not scared of it was just, it's long. So I started like thinking about life. And my mum had a talk with me. And I started telling my mum about like my future and basketball and stuff. And then she's told me that because my granddad used to play basketball professionally, for Somalia. But she said for him to get a scholarship in Germany, which he did get, well, he had to have like good grades and stuff. And then, well I have a coach in school as well. And he was telling me about this as well that if you don't get good grades, you won't get like a scholarship or anything. And playing for American unis is quite a lot of stuff. So I started</p>	<p>Johnson, Imogen Contradicting statement here re fitting in at new school</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Parental support</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Thinking about future options</p> <p>Johnson, Imogen Previous family experiences</p>

Example 2:

Just in general, I don't necessarily know (long pause) Sometimes, when you like excluded, it's necessarily a punishment and it's meant for time for reflection so most time parents told me to think about your actions.

Imogen

Is that how you understand it then? Time for reflection you said.

Eleven

Yeah, necessarily cos you can sit down and really deep life. Now I realised that it's a waste of time when you're meant to be at school, doing work.

Imogen 7:49

And so what was happening for you, then? Can you think back what might have been what was going on with you at the time of these exclusions?

Eleven 7:57

Most of the time, it's like (stutter) there's like a social norm, like inside school. Where like a person does something to hurt you (stutter) and if you don't what, get back you'll seem like the victim or coward so like...and after I (stutter) really cared what people actually thought of me so I would (stutter) do do my thing to get back.

Imogen

Okay, okay. So you're saying kind of in is this the whole way through or...?

Eleven

The whole way through then after year 10 I | | (stutter) necessarily stopped cos like a person hurts me doesn't mean I need to hurt them back...like...because it's a waste of time, waste of energy I'm also tired now, I have exams. So there's no point me doing that.

Johnson, Imogen
Exclusion as a punishment but also a time for reflection – how does punishment and reflection go together?

Johnson, Imogen
Reflecting on actions assumed to make pupil change

Johnson, Imogen
Opportunity to reflect

Johnson, Imogen
Maturity with regards to messing around

Johnson, Imogen
Unwritten rules about how to behave

Johnson, Imogen
Social status

Johnson, Imogen
Peer pressure.

Johnson, Imogen
Peer pressure and perception of self by peers

Johnson, Imogen
Change of developmental stage and understanding?

Johnson, Imogen
Fighting is now seen as a waste of time

Johnson, Imogen
Wanting to conserve energy for exams/ school work

Johnson, Imogen
Focus on exams which is tiring

Johnson, Imogen
Couldn't see the point of school before

Eleven 8:45

Yeah it's long

Imogen

And who were these people that you were fighting with?

Eleven 8:54

Most of the time, some of the time it was with my friends. But now, now I don't necessarily see them as friends cos back then I used to think it was okay to have a lot of friends. But they're not really your friends. To understand that sometimes people aren't your friends. But they're just trying to have fun for themselves, take the fun out of you, to entertain themselves yeah so now so now I have like now two three friends, close friends.

Imogen 9:24

And can you describe them then, your close friends?

Eleven

My close friends, they're people with same interests as me. They're good people, don't necessarily get in trouble that much. Yeah.

Imogen 9:42

When you say good people, what kind of qualities?

Eleven 9:45

Like... they don't get into trouble. They have like good good manners are positive

Johnson, Imogen
Not interested in fighting anymore

Johnson, Imogen
Most / some friends?

Johnson, Imogen
Change in perspective on friendships

Johnson, Imogen
Difference between friendship quality and quantity

Johnson, Imogen
People as users

Johnson, Imogen
Change in friendship dynamics – from a big group to a small group

Johnson, Imogen
Definition of close friends that they share interests?

Johnson, Imogen
Good / bad people – dichotomy

Johnson, Imogen
Surrounding self with people who don't get into trouble

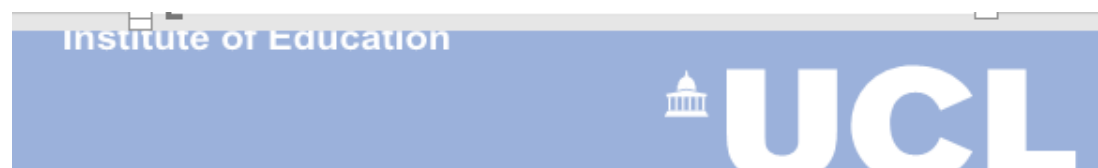
Johnson, Imogen
Repetition – good = don't get into trouble, bad = get into trouble.

Appendix I: Example table of themes, codes and interview extracts

THEME 1: Once you're bad it's hard to change		
<p>What is the theme about? Pupils being stuck in a negative behaviour and exclusion cycle, impacted by reputation, their perceptions of themselves as good or bad and by others and comparisons of themselves to others. Conceptualisation of good and bad/right and wrong behaviour which links to reputation and perceptions. Focuses on the idea that people fall into good and bad and this is hard to shift.</p> <p>What is the boundary of the theme? Focuses on perceptions of self and individual – doesn't cross into relationships or the systems around a child</p> <p>What is unique and specific about this theme? How pupils may get caught up in a negative cycle of detentions and exclusions once they have done one thing wrong.</p> <p>What does the theme contribute to the overall analysis? Unconscious bias which relates to teachers, peers and the individual. What are the expectations of pupils, implications for pupils once they have been excluded. Once excluded, need to rebuild their reputation within the school community.</p>		
Sub-themes	Codes	Extracts
Dichotomy of good and bad	Good or bad behaviour impacting reintegration	"Offsite is like is a place where they send you for six weeks. And then if you're good, you come back and if you're bad you stay" (8A)
	Friends being good and individual not	"Because they're being good and I'm not" (K9)
	Good and bad behaviour	"You had to be like very good and like you have to be doing your subjects and like not get a lot of detentions" (Sofia)
	Pupils viewed as good or bad	"Because some teachers say like they see me as a good student, and they don't see me as someone that just wants to mess around and don't get any grades. They they see me as intelligent and all of that. Some teachers could just say I'm bad and I don't want to follow rules" (John)
	Comparison of behaviour	"Because I know people that are as bad as me" (Alex)
	Downward comparison of behaviour	"My mum thinks I'm the baddest boy. Not knowing that there's people worse than me." (Alex)
	Comparisons of behaviour	

	<p>Self as good and bad</p> <p>Pupil perceived as a good person</p> <p>Perceived as bad</p> <p>Assumption that popular means you're bad</p> <p>need to be good to get off report</p> <p>Ratings for spectrum of good behaviour</p>	<p>“One of the boys that got permed in our year punched a teacher in his face, my mum thinks I'm worse I'm bad. Not knowing that there's people, there's people that's triple the times worse than me.” (Alex)</p> <p>“I was bad and also good like. In year 7 I always used to get 5 achievement points in a day. But I did get disruptive.” (Alex)</p> <p>“And then Mr Campbell was like I know he's really good. It's just that he does silly things. He just does minor things.” (Alex)</p> <p>“Because like before before like no one's, everyone used to like um see me as like a bad boy” (South).</p> <p>“So even though I'm popular, people think like, oh, if you're popular, then you're one of the bad kids. And they do see me get in trouble a lot. But really and truly that I try my hardest not to get in trouble stuff.” (Alex)</p> <p>“I think I'm gonna be off report because I've been good and I only got one detention well the detention wasn't even for a fair reason.” (Sofia)</p> <p>“And they rate you out of 5. I don't even know for this report. One is excellent, two is good, three is alright. Had to be warned. Four is just poor, five is five is a head of year. BSU.” (Alex)</p>
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Appendix J: Completed ethics form and ethical approval



Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified you **must** be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office **before** you submit your ethics application for review. To do this, email the complete ethics form to the [UCL Data Protection Office](#). Once your registration number is received, add it to the form* and submit it to your supervisor for approval. If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

Please note that the completion of the [UCL GDPR online training](#) is mandatory for all PhD students.

Section 1 – Project details

Project title: **Exploring pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships**

- a. Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678): **Imogen Johnson, qtnvij1**
 - a. *UCL Data Protection Registration Number: 26364106/2022/08/07
 - b. Date Issued: **01.08.22**
- b. Supervisor/Personal Tutor: **Ed Baines & Karen Majors**
- c. Department: **IOE Psychology and Human Development**
- d. Course category (Tick one):

PhD	<input type="checkbox"/>
EdD	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEdPsy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- e. **If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.**

- f. If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.
- g. Intended research start date: 1st September 2022
- h. Intended research end date: Friday 19th May 2023
- i. Country fieldwork will be conducted in: United Kingdom. This is a Category 1(A) application confirmed by the link (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#england-has-moved-to-step-4>), indicating that restrictions have been lifted in the research country context at the time of the ethics application.
- j. If research to be conducted abroad please check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be granted: [UCL travel advice webpage](#)
- k. Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?

Yes

External Committee Name:

Date of Approval:

No *go to Section 2*

If yes:

- Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
- Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service \(NRES\)](#) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee \(SCREC\)](#). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

Section 2 - Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Questionnaires
- Action Research
- Observation
- Literature Review
- Controlled trial/other intervention study
- Use of personal records
- Systematic review – if only method used go to Section 5

- Secondary data analysis – *if secondary analysis used go to Section 6*
- Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups
- Other, give details: Life story grids to support participants to talk about their experiences. These provide a visual representation of points in an individual's life. Due to the visual element, life grid methods have been described as useful when discussing sensitive topics as they can engage participants which creates a more relaxed atmosphere.

Please provide an overview of the project, focusing on your methodology. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked), reporting and dissemination. Please focus on your methodology; the theory, policy, or literary background of your work can be provided in an attached document (i.e. a full research proposal or case for support document). *Minimum 150 words required.*

This study aims to explore young people's experiences of multiple suspensions (fixed-term Exclusion) and reintegration into the same mainstream setting and their peer relationships within this. The negative outcomes associated with exclusion from school are well documented. Young people that received multiple suspensions experience frequent disruptions to their education due to spending periods of time off time off-site. When their fixed-term exclusion ends, and they reintegrate/transition back into their school setting they are expected to readjust to the school setting including re-establishing themselves within their peer group. This adjustment period presents several opportunities and challenges.

Previous research has explored the facilitators and barriers to reintegration and the theme of relationships is present throughout the literature. It is suggested that those who are excluded may already have experienced social exclusion from their peers. Peer relationships and friendships have also been found to both support and hinder the reintegration process. Peer relationships take on particular importance during adolescence where young people are trying to form identities, understand who they are and fit into social groups. This influences how a young person may behave and engage in their education.

This research aims to address the following gaps in the literature: previous research has mostly focused on the perspectives of educational practitioners and therefore it is necessary to deepen our understanding of experiences of exclusion from the young people it directly impacts. Equally, most of the research focused on experiences of permanent exclusion and thus, there is a gap in our understanding of pupils' experiences of suspension. Although research has suggested peer relationships play a role in exclusion and reintegration, there is limited research exploring this from young people's perspectives. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships in relation to this.

Research questions:

1. What are pupils' experiences of multiple suspensions and reintegration?

- a) *To what extent do pupils feel supported during periods of FT exclusion?*
- b) *What are perceived facilitators and barriers to reintegration from pupil perspectives?*
2. How do pupils who have received multiple suspensions experience peer relationships?

Research design: This research will take a qualitative approach. A mixed methods design was considered however the aims of the study are to explore views and experiences of therefore a qualitative design was deemed more appropriate.

Participants: Key stage 3 & 4 pupils (n = 8-12) who have experienced multiple suspensions and reintegrated into the same mainstream setting.

Sampling: Purposeful sampling will be used to identify and select the most appropriate participants in mainstream settings. I will also discuss my research at the local authority managed move forum to see whether staff have any pupils in mind. I will also discuss my project with SENCOs at my link schools to see whether they have pupils who meet the criteria.

Data collection: Semi-structured interviews, analysed using thematic analysis. The use of life story grids to provide visual representations and support the interview process.

Reporting and dissemination: A summary of the findings will be shared with the EPS and the participating schools. Participants will be anonymized so that are not identifiable.

Section 3 – research Participants (tick all that apply)

- Early years/pre-school
- Ages 5-11
- Ages 12-16
- Young people aged 17-18
- Adults please specify below
- Unknown – specify below
- No participants

Enter text

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service \(NRES\)](#) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee \(SCREC\)](#).

Section 4 - Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

- a. Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?
Yes* No
- b. Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?
Yes* No
- c. Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?
Yes* No

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

Section 5 – Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

- a. Will you be collecting any new data from participants?
Yes* No
- b. Will you be analysing any secondary data?
Yes* No

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered No to both questions, please go to Section 8 Attachments.

Section 6 - Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

- a. Name of dataset/s:
- b. Owner of dataset/s:
- c. Are the data in the public domain?
Yes No
If no, do you have the owner's permission/license?
Yes No*
- d. Are the data special category personal data (i.e. personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation)?
Yes* No
- e. Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?
Yes No*
- f. If no, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?

Yes No*

- g. If no, was data collected prior to ethics approval process?

Yes No*

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to Section 9 Attachments.

Section 7 – Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

- a. Data subjects - Who will the data be collected from?
 Pupil What data will be collected? Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected
 Pupils: Age, school year, gender, SEN

Is the data anonymised? Yes No*

Do you plan to anonymise the data? Yes* No

Do you plan to use individual level data? Yes* No

Do you plan to pseudonymise the data? Yes* No

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

- b. Disclosure – Who will the results of your project be disclosed to?
 IOE research supervisors, external examiners, Local Authority, the thesis will be publically available

Disclosure – Will personal data be disclosed as part of your project?

No

- c. Data storage – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick**, encrypted laptop** etc. UCL OneDrive Folder, accessed via password protected laptop

** Advanced Encryption Standard 256 bit encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS

- d. Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution) – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLMS divisions, institutes and departments)?

Yes No

- e. How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?
Data will be stored until the end of the course programme. Pseudo anonymised transcripts and research results will be held on the UCL OneDrive for 10 years as per the UCL data protocol.
- Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with GDPR and state what these arrangements are)
No
- Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.)
No
- f. If personal data is used as part of your project, describe what measures you have in place to ensure that the data is only used for the research purpose e.g. pseudonymisation and short retention period of data'.
Pseudonymisation of participant details during transcription phase. Interview recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed. The data will be stored for the shortest period it is required.

** Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues*

Section 8 – Ethical Issues

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

All issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. *Minimum 150 words required.*

- Methods
- Sampling
- Recruitment
- Gatekeepers
- Informed consent
- Potentially vulnerable participants
- Safeguarding/child protection
- Sensitive topics
- International research
- Risks to participants and/or researchers
- Confidentiality/Anonymity
- Disclosures/limits to confidentiality

- Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
- Reporting
- Dissemination and use of findings

Informed consent – detailed information about the study will be shared with participants. The information sheet provides details on the aims of the study, how the participants' confidentiality will be kept, participants' rights to withdraw at any time during the study and my contact details for any questions they may have. Participants' informed consent will be sought in person following introductions and a verbal explanation of the study and a reintegration of their right to withdraw.

Sensitive topics – the topic of exclusion and reintegration may raise sensitive issues for the participants. These could be connected to gender and special educational needs in relation to exclusion. I will ensure I am attuned to participants' body language throughout the interview process so that I notice any signs a participant is feeling uncomfortable. I will ensure participants are aware they do not need to answer any questions they don't feel comfortable to answer. I will also ensure I take the time to build rapport before each interview and give opportunities for breaks if participants need them.

Confidentiality/anonymity – confidentiality will be kept, and data will be anonymised. In the event of any safeguarding disclosures, confidentiality will be broken (as noted in the consent form). Generic job titles will be used and the names of the setting will not be identified.

Interviews – Interviews will take place at the school setting.

Data storage and security – I will ensure the transcription process is complete in a private space to avoid participant experiences being over-heard.

Please confirm that the processing of the data is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual

Yes

Section 9 – Attachments.

Please attach your information sheets and consent forms to your ethics application before requesting a Data Protection number from the UCL Data Protection office. Note that they will be unable to issue you the Data Protection number until all such documentation is received

- a. Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research (List attachments below)

Yes No

Information sheet, consent forms

- b. Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee Yes
- c. The proposal ('case for support') for the project Yes

d. Full risk assessment Yes

Section 10 – Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.

Yes No

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.

Yes No

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name Imogen Johnson

Date 10.06.22

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

[British Psychological Society](#) (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*

Or

[British Educational Research Association](#) (2018) *Ethical Guidelines*

Or

[British Sociological Association](#) (2017) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the [Institute of Education Research Ethics website](#).

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). If you do not

already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental Use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor must refer the application to the Research Development Administrator via email so that it can be submitted to the IOE Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. If unsure please refer to the guidelines explaining when to refer the ethics application to the IOE Research Ethics Committee, posted on the committee's website.

Student name: Imogen Johnson

Student department: Psychology and Human Development

Course: DEdPsy

Project Title: Exploring pupils' experiences of exclusion, reintegration and their peer relationships

Reviewer 1

Supervisor/first reviewer name: Ed Baines

Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research? No

Supervisor/first reviewer signature *Ed Baines*

Date: 2/11/22

Reviewer 2

Second reviewer name: Karen Majors

Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research? No



Second reviewer signature:

Date: 2.11.22

Decision on behalf of reviewersApproved Approved subject to the following additional measures Not approved for the reasons given below Referred to the REC for review

Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC:

Comments from reviewers for the applicant:

Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk.

Appendix K: Extract from reflexive journal

definitions on interviews
OT 11/25

clear & clear in feedback meaning
I think
quite reflective about experiences I wonder
part of the 11 month he is in year 10 -
independently rather than to guide &
can think a bit more about the future
reflections on friendships from a long time ago & if
- changed / returning / figured / decisions!
Good that people - good that friends

BEHAVIOURIST
view of things

How does this relate to attachment theory

reflexivity → subjectivity as a researcher
Our aim to do with
teaching + education
+ how this has influenced
coaching

Attachment theory
→ School system
→ Education
→ Family
→ Culture
→ Society
→ Environment
→ Relationships
→ Identity
→ Self
→ Mind
→ Emotion
→ Cognition
→ Behaviour
→ Learning
→ Development
→ Growth
→ Change
→ Adaptation
→ Resilience
→ Coping
→ Support
→ Care
→ Nurture
→ Protection
→ Guidance
→ Encouragement
→ Challenge
→ Stimulation
→ Enrichment
→ Engagement
→ Participation
→ Collaboration
→ Partnership
→ Community
→ Belonging
→ Connection
→ Relationship
→ Interaction
→ Exchange
→ Reciprocity
→ Interdependence
→ Mutualism
→ Symbiosis
→ Commensalism
→ Parasitism
→ Mutualism
→ Symbiosis
→ Commensalism
→ Parasitism

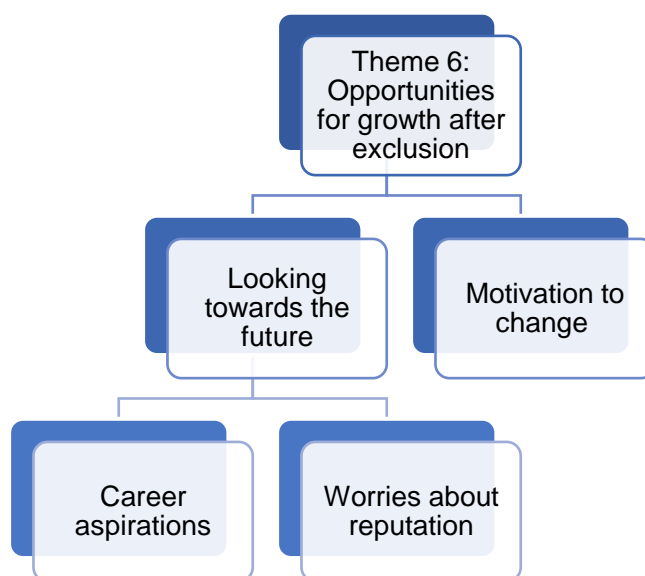
Attachment theory
→ School system
→ Education
→ Family
→ Culture
→ Society
→ Environment
→ Relationships
→ Identity
→ Self
→ Mind
→ Emotion
→ Cognition
→ Behaviour
→ Learning
→ Development
→ Growth
→ Change
→ Adaptation
→ Resilience
→ Coping
→ Support
→ Care
→ Nurture
→ Protection
→ Guidance
→ Encouragement
→ Challenge
→ Stimulation
→ Enrichment
→ Engagement
→ Participation
→ Collaboration
→ Partnership
→ Community
→ Belonging
→ Connection
→ Relationship
→ Interaction
→ Exchange
→ Reciprocity
→ Interdependence
→ Mutualism
→ Symbiosis
→ Commensalism
→ Parasitism

Attachment theory
→ School system
→ Education
→ Family
→ Culture
→ Society
→ Environment
→ Relationships
→ Identity
→ Self
→ Mind
→ Emotion
→ Cognition
→ Behaviour
→ Learning
→ Development
→ Growth
→ Change
→ Adaptation
→ Resilience
→ Coping
→ Support
→ Care
→ Nurture
→ Protection
→ Guidance
→ Encouragement
→ Challenge
→ Stimulation
→ Enrichment
→ Engagement
→ Participation
→ Collaboration
→ Partnership
→ Community
→ Belonging
→ Connection
→ Relationship
→ Interaction
→ Exchange
→ Reciprocity
→ Interdependence
→ Mutualism
→ Symbiosis
→ Commensalism
→ Parasitism

Appendix L: Theme 6 Opportunities for Growth after exclusion

This theme mostly relates to the older pupils in the study (Years 10 and 11) and is concerned with looking towards the future including facilitators and barriers to change. It explores pupils' aspirations and goals for when they leave school and their motivation to change. Interestingly, pupils reflected on how current experiences at school (report cards, detentions, and exclusions) might impact them in the future in terms of employment. They expressed concerns over future employers having access to their school records and whether this would be held against them

Figure 8 *Theme 6 Thematic Map*



Looking towards the future

Career aspirations

This subtheme highlights pupils' plans for their future and explores the different aspirations they have. Interview data suggested that the pupils had considered what they wanted to achieve in the immediate and more long-term future,

including their career goals. Pupils' plans for their future indicated that they chose options related to the subjects they enjoyed or were good at, *"I'm going straight to, you know, X College. I am going to do some construction"* (John). Pupils also considered how their achievement in school would impact on their future goals:

And then, well I have a coach in school as well. And he was telling me about this as well that if you don't get good grades, you won't get like a scholarship or anything.. (8A)

Worries about reputation

Interview data indicated that pupils were also apprehensive about their futures. They shared concerns about how they would be perceived by future employers and worried about them having access to their school records, *"Let's say if I apply for a job like they check the records, something like that, they'll see that and that's not good"* (Eleven).

This appeared to have an impact on how they thought they should behave in school. Pupils indicated that they were aware of the possibility of being moved to another school. For one pupil, the threat of off-site provision was seen as a warning:

I think they was saying I was going to go to a centre. You know that school, yeah. They said I was going to go there. But then I don't know if that was their way of, like, trying to scare me. (John)

For others, they perceived they were on their last chance in their current school and one pupil expressed concerns about the threat of permanent exclusion and what this would mean for their future:

And they said if I got one more exclusion, then I'll be permanently excluded. And that's when I started to think about...a little bit about like if I got excluded it's gonna be long and stuff. (8A)

Motivation to change

This subtheme explores pupils' motivation to change and their reflections on exclusion. Achieving good grades appeared to be a motivating factor for pupils and one pupil reflected on his previous behaviour and how this could impact his exam grades, *"Because it's a waste of time, waste of energy I'm also tired now, I have exams. So there's no point me doing that"* (behaviour) (Eleven). Similarly, another pupil considered the time taken up if they were to end up in detention.

Interview data indicated that sports and hobbies played an important part in pupils' lives, and they linked these to what supported them during periods of exclusion. Sports were also linked to pupils' motivation to change their behaviour:

So I started to pan up. And because of Year 9, I'm going to be picking my GCSEs. And the same thing with basketball. And my England coaches, do look at my school stuff as well. So like if I'm not on top of my grades and stuff, then they'll kick me out. So... (8A)

In some cases, avoiding permanent exclusion appeared to be another motivator for a change in behaviour, *"Yeah but I just dropped because if I was gonna do it I was gonna get permed"* (Alex).

Overall, codes and data within this theme indicated that pupils were considering their futures and had goals and aspirations related to what they wanted to achieve. They also reflected on some of their concerns which related to how future employers would judge them based on their school experiences. Sports and hobbies were also considered to be important/ways in which pupils felt motivated to change and avoid future exclusion.

