

**A community of possibilities: using bibliotherapy to understand the
facilitators, barriers and interventions that promote school belonging**

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D.Ed.Psy. Educational and Child Psychology

Thesis Volume 1, 2024

University College London

Abstract

Sense of school belonging and its benefits have been well-researched but the applicability of this into the classroom can be difficult to establish.

Increasing levels of anxiety, lower sense of school belonging (SOSB) and greater pressures on school staff mean that developing an understanding of 'belonging' in a school context and strategies to develop this are particularly pertinent. Currently, there is a scarcity of cost-effective, time-efficient universal interventions. Bibliotherapy, the use of texts to explore emotions and situations in a safe environment, is an intervention designed to support educators working with children experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

A systematic literature review explored pupils' experiences of facilitators and barriers that contributed to a greater (or lesser) SOSB. Findings from the 13 reviewed studies suggested six key themes that impact on students' sense of school belonging: adult-pupil relationships, peer relationships, parental involvement, perceived control, community (membership) and curriculum and (extra) curricular activities.

The empirical paper utilised a mixed-methods approach to consider the effectiveness of a whole-class bibliotherapy intervention on reducing anxiety and increasing SOSB from pupils' and educators' perspectives. This occurred in two phases. Firstly, 112 lower key stage two participants (intervention $N= 57$) completed anxiety and SOSB measures whilst staff completed wellbeing measures. Secondly, the views of six pupils, who

accessed the intervention, were gathered through an in-person focus group. Views of the staff (interventionists) were accessed via an online focus group. Quantitative findings suggested no significant impact of the intervention on anxiety or SOSB, although a trend suggested anxiety reduction. Qualitative findings suggested that pupils and staff enjoyed the intervention with the exploration of key texts allowing them to explore emotions in a safe way. Participants highlighted strategies learnt through the intervention as helpful to deploy in coping situations. Recommendations for professional practice and future research are considered.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Gavin Morgan who has been an instrumental source of support throughout this process. He has been a great source of calm and humour and has constantly provided helpful reflection and challenge.

I also owe great thanks to Professor Konstantinos Petrides for his time and patience in developing and understanding the quantitative aspects of this research.

My greatest thanks go to the teachers and children who participated in this research. Despite the constraints and pressures of the curriculum, they understood the vision and value of this research, ran with the project wholeheartedly and provided fantastic reflections on the process.

I am incredibly grateful to my UCL cohort who have all been amazing in their own way throughout this process. To those of you who helped develop and edit the lesson plans and resources, and read countless revisions of the intervention, a special thank you.

Outside of the course, I am so grateful to Surrey Educational Psychology Service who were amazing in supporting me during the recruitment process. And to both Surrey and Croydon Educational Psychology Service who, again, saw the value in the research and allowed me to share it with the Emotional and Literacy Support Assistants in their respective authorities. I would also like to say a huge thank you to my ELSA group, who showed such interest

and gave such helpful feedback when they used the lessons. I also owe a debt of thanks to the teachers I had growing up, who will probably never know how much they impacted me or about the journey they set me upon to get to this point. To Mr Prout, for showing me the impact a book can have on shaping a life. To Mr Delaney, for showing me that teachers can be human too and to Ms Stewart, who taught me how fun psychology can be, but also that your background doesn't limit your potential.

Finally, a special thanks goes to my family, Naomi, for being so incredibly patient over these last three years. Joshua, for letting me read you so many different books to check out if they were appropriate and for being a great cheerleader! And to David, for reminding me, when things were hardest, why I chose to do this in the first place.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on bibliotherapy, which is the use of texts to explore emotions and situations in a safe environment. The thesis is comprised of four chapters. Chapter one explores the rationale behind why this topic was chosen and the conceptual link between the review paper and empirical research. The epistemological position, theoretical perspectives, chosen methodology and the methods used to conduct the research are also outlined. Chapter two provides a systematic literature review exploring the key facilitators and barriers to the development of a sense of school belonging. The main aim of this literature review was to provide an up-to-date understanding of the research, adding to the work already offered by Allen et al. (2018) and to consider the application of this understanding to the current educational context. Chapter three explores a new intervention intended to help develop a sense of school belonging. This mixed-methods design study explores the use of whole-class bibliotherapy to reduce anxiety, increase a sense of school belonging and seeks to understand the experience of the participants involved in the intervention. This study is a novel piece of research in the United Kingdom (UK) education setting. Chapter four concludes the thesis with an outline of the impact and dissemination strategy for the review and empirical chapters.

1.2 Rationale for Thesis Topic

1.2.1 *What is bibliotherapy?*

Bibliotherapy is the use of texts to explore emotions and situations in a safe manner. It allows for time for the important process of exploration and social

connection through the intimate relationship that can come from unlimited access to a character in a text (Shah, 2024). This is particularly important considering the ever increasing mental health needs of our children, young people and teachers (Education Support, 2023; Headrest, 2024). Shah (2024) notes Freud's reflections that the writer is like a therapist who guides us through our emotions without fear or shame, allowing for one to develop a sense of distance and safety whilst exploring potentially challenging emotions and situations. The reading of books can be considered an intimate relationship as, through the written word, books can mirror the world to us whilst exposing us to a whole new world, allowing for the development of empathy, compassion and understanding. Bibliotherapy can be considered a safe way to work through challenges that the characters are facing, allowing a whole class to utilise the experience and expertise of their peers and teachers (Morgan, 2024). Books and stories are a standard part of the curriculum through English and PSHE lessons. Therefore, developing the skills of teachers to ask questions that enable a bibliotherapeutic slant, rather than focussing purely on academics, gives a whole class the opportunity to develop themselves in their understanding of themselves and others, greater capacity to cope with life's challenges and an increased sense of belonging in school due to being heard and understood in an effective manner.

1.2.2 Anxiety

Anxiety is the most commonly recognised mental health condition in children and young people (Mazzone et al., 2007; Prymachuk et al., 2024) with some

suggesting a median onset age between six (Merikangas et al., 2010) and 11 years old (Reardon et al., 2020). It is estimated that 5-19% of children and young people have an anxiety disorder in Britain and that up to 5% of these children and young people are under 12 years of age (NHS Inform, 2023). Access to services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) is limited due to capacity (Campbell, 2022). Research has also suggested that children's access to mental health support may be contingent on parental experience of these services (Gronholm et al., 2015). This situation highlights the need for evidence based, accessible interventions which allows all children who need it to benefit from it. This is a key reason that a whole class approach was suggested for the bibliotherapy intervention. The understanding that all children are learning about approaches to feelings of anxiety can destigmatise the process within the classroom and, due to the nature of the discussion, can ensure that relevant problems are addressed for the children in the class, something that is considered important if an intervention is to be impactful (Stuart, 2016). CBT is considered to be the current 'gold standard' for supporting children and young people with anxiety (C. Creswell et al., 2020; James et al., 2020). Although recent meta-analyses highlight the efficacy of CBT for children and adolescence (Pegg et al., 2022) it is important to note that the variability of success regarding CBT means that it is not effective for all children and young people (Canady, 2024). Leichsenring & Steinert (2017) recognise that caution should be taken when stating CBT is the 'gold standard' due to the limited study quality, efficacy and limited clear evidence of CBTs superiority over other psychotherapies. They state that CBT is effective for 50% of individuals with depression or

anxiety which highlights the importance of understanding that CBT is not the answer for all individuals who experience mental health difficulties.

There is also the potential risk that suggesting the use of therapy (as in CBT) increases the pathologisation of typical human experience (Xiao et al., 2023). It is logical and often protective that CYP experience levels of anxiety when there are periods of stress, transition or change. Engagement in CBT may suggest that there is something to be 'cured' in the individuals or groups taking part, therefore the importance of recognising the preventative nature of developing coping strategies for now and the future is essential to ensure that CYP are not pathologically labelled. This is an important distinction to make regarding the bibliotherapy intervention, children and staff were not engaged in CBT, but in Cognitive Behavioural Approaches (CBA) which aimed to develop a preventative toolkit for the future.

1.2.3 School Belonging

School belonging is a developing area in terms of academic research (K. Allen & Kern, 2017). Despite a lack of clarity around the correct terms to use (Heyne et al., 2024), there is a growing recognition that a strong sense of school belonging impacts academic success, personal wellbeing and overall mental health (K. Allen et al., 2024; Arslan, 2022). Riley et al. (2020) completed a small-scale research enquiry to shed light on school wide approaches that positively impacted CYP, families and the wider school community (rather than what was not working). They found that one in four

young people feel that they do not belong in school and that it is likely this number is increasing, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in children presenting with emotionally based school avoidance. Although reasons for reduced sense of school belonging were not discussed, it is possible that, in line with research, a poor school culture, a lack of staff and pupil autonomy, poor staff retention and a lack of authentic relationship between staff and pupils contributed to a lower sense of school belonging (K. Allen & Kern, 2017). Exploring how to increase sense of school belonging was key to this research process, in part because evidence suggests low-cost approaches to this are needed but also due to proposed benefits proffered through increased sense of school belonging. This is particularly important considering the increase of schools taking up zero tolerance behaviour policies (Millar, 2020) despite evidence that they are not effective and that preventative measures that promise a sense of belongingness should be prioritised (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

1.2.4 Teacher Wellbeing

Education Support (2023), a UK charity committed to supporting teacher mental health and wellbeing, have found a significant decline in teacher wellbeing in the last year. Their report shows that 45% of those surveyed felt that they could be presenting with symptoms of anxiety and 26% felt isolated at work. It has also been noted that there has been a decline in teachers who see themselves remaining in teaching within the next three years (B. Allen et

al., 2023). Another key aspect of this thesis was to consider if whole class bibliotherapy benefitted the wellbeing of staff who led the intervention. Considerations were made regarding teacher workload (training and all lessons/resources were provided), support for staff (weekly online supervision check-ins were offered) and the impact of the intervention on the curriculum (it was written to be part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic curriculum).

1.2.5 Cost of living crisis

The recent increase in the cost of living within the UK is having an impact, not just on families and pupils at home, but also on access to provision within school settings. Schools are increasingly trying to reduce their expenditures which is directly impacting on the experience of pupils and on the learning environment (Lucas et al., 2023). School leaders and teachers want to provide for the needs of the children in their care and have noticed an increase in pupils experiencing anxiety and a reduced sense of belonging. This was a key consideration when developing the bibliotherapy intervention to support school staff. The books chosen for the intervention were affordable and accessible for a variety of pupils which meant that they were suitable for a whole class intervention. Ensuring that staff within the school were equipped to deliver the intervention meant that costs related to additional staff or time were minimal. Also, recognition that there is a high cost related to anxiety conditions in UK (Fineberg et al., 2013), and that many people either cannot or do not access more than one session for support (Schleider, 2023), led to the consideration that a whole class, cost effective approach is

important to explore as a strategy to support children and young people with their feelings of anxiety and sense of school belonging.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to give an overview of the facilitators and barriers to the development of a sense of school belonging and then to provide an exploration of bibliotherapeutic intervention which utilises cognitive behaviour-based techniques to reduce anxiety and develop a sense of school belonging.

Based on these four considerations, it was decided that it would be important to develop an intervention that sought to reduce feelings of anxiety and increase a sense of school belonging in a cost effective, universal manner. Furthermore, it was hoped that gaining the views of both children and staff involved in the intervention would support a deeper understanding of what was useful within the intervention.

1.3 Conceptual links between the review paper and empirical paper

Across the systematic literature review in Chapter two and the empirical paper in Chapter three, there are conceptual links that are helpful to consider.

Chapter two considers why a sense of school belonging is important and what helps to facilitate (or hinder) the development of such a sense. It summarises into a new framework of six key areas what is useful to consider when aiming to promote a sense of school belonging. This was important in

ensuring a pragmatic outcome was provided from the evidence base as the practicability of the systematic literature review was key. This information was used to guide the development of the intervention undertaken in Chapter three. For example, teacher-pupil relationships are key to a young person's sense of school belonging, therefore time to develop this through whole class conversation (where staff were also encouraged to appropriately share something of themselves) was an important part of the planning. There was an emphasis on whole class activities and minimising marking so that teachers felt that they could engage more fully rather than be concerned about the output of the pupils. There was also a great level of consideration that went into choosing the books, with the teachers ultimately choosing from a small selection of texts which linked most with the situations currently being experienced by the children in the class, allowing them to 'see themselves' in the curriculum. Examples of how the intervention was shaped by the Final Framework for Analysis can be seen in Table 1.1.

Chapter two also aims to provide a framework for universal considerations within a school (whilst still acknowledging that individual differences must be considered). This is part of the aim within chapter three, to consider a universal approach to supporting children with possible anxiety and low sense of school belonging. Research has highlighted the difficulty of screening for these concerns across a population and suggested that universal prevention interventions may be a part of the solution for addressing these widespread concerns (Ahlen et al., 2015).

Table 1.1

Influence of the Final Framework for analysis on the bibliotherapy intervention

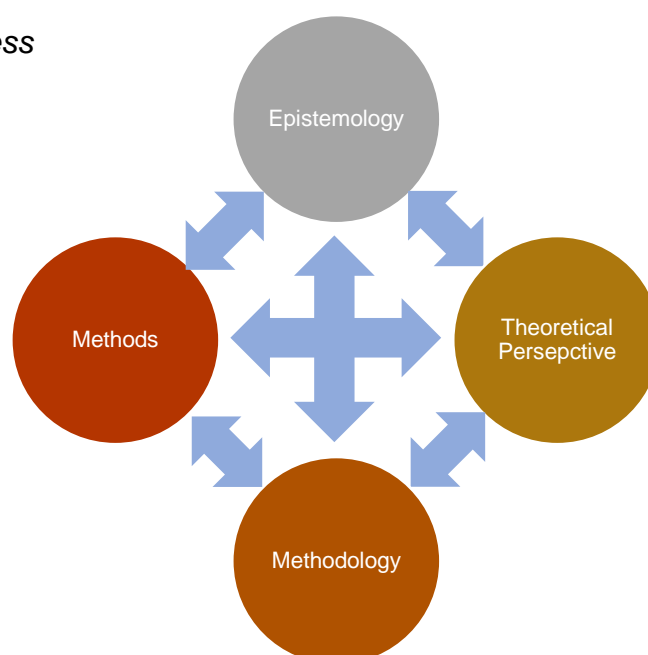
Theme	How this was achieved in the intervention
Adult-student relationships	Focus on quality interactions with the class teacher and pupils.
Peer relationships	Development of a safe space to explore emotions and situations with peers.
Parental involvement	Parents were informed of the intervention through an information sheet and were given the opportunity to discuss this with the researcher.
Perceived control	Children were given opportunities to complete a variety of activities which led to further discussion about the classroom environment and what was important to them.
Community (membership)	Children were able to discuss their expectations within a friendship and strategies to better manage a variety of situations and were able to be part of the shaping of a 'class narrative'.
Curriculum and (extra) curricular activities	The teachers were enabled to lead the class in a curriculum more attuned to the needs of the children which was reflected in the final book choices and the activities completed.

1.4 Epistemological position, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods

An important consideration for researchers when developing, conducting and reflecting on their work is that of their worldview, the philosophical lens that they look through that shapes the choices they have made (J. Creswell, 2009). This is because our worldview impacts the lens we see things through and therefore the actions we take in attempting to understand the world. This also impacts our reflexivity and how we view the research process as a whole. In his seminal work, Crotty (1998) notes that there is much confusion around the language and understanding of methodologies and philosophical underpinnings and offers four elements that researchers should consider when undertaking research: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Cyclical depiction of Crotty's (1998) four elements for consideration in the research process



Crotty (1998) also suggests that each of these elements, although described individually, should be considered collectively as they are intrinsically linked to one another.

1.4.1 Reflexivity and axiology

Reflexivity is considered a key aspect of research as it provides clarity over the intentions and positions that the researcher holds which may impact upon the design and data collection process (Walker et al., 2013). Axiology can be understood as a theory of value, the consideration of one's core values (Smith & Thomas, 2016). Consideration of reflexivity and axiology is a strength of mixed-methods research as it also allows for a greater understanding which can add to the quality of the research. This research has been shaped and informed by passion for and understanding of the importance of community and belonging in shaping individuals. This began with reflection upon personal experience and the importance of relationships with teaching staff. It was also informed by personal experience of reading as a child and how this again shaped the views held and the career path taken through the research process. The voice of the child is significant throughout the research as it enables an in-depth understanding of the data, acknowledging that stories are data with a soul (Nadar, 2014). This is shown in the mixed-methods approach that was used as it allowed for the voice of the participants to add depth to the quantitative data collected.

1.4.2 Epistemological Position

Epistemology helps us to consider the theory of knowledge (Barker, 2016) and can be described as “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). According to Crotty (1998) there are three broad epistemological stances that can be taken: objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism.

Objectivism, which encompasses positivist and post-positivist thinking, states that there is both truth and meaning within an object which is not subject to human interpretation. Within objectivism, the key aim is explanation of phenomena through considering what may happen and controlling for it. It has been noted that this approach can be seen as reductionist and consider the researcher as an ‘expert’ rather than an enquirer into the phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Claims of complete objectivity should be considered with caution as it has been recognised that this is unachievable (Sprenger & Reiss, 2020). Therefore, reflexivity and an understanding of positioning are essential elements of the research process as they enable a greater understanding of the lens through which the research is being approached. Subjectivism is the view that meaning is given to an object by the subject (Gray, 2022). Crotty (1998) explains that meaning is made from the unconscious mind, from dreams and religious belief rather than with interaction with the object.

Constructionism is the idea that all knowledge and meaning within reality is based upon the interactions that take place between humans and the world

they inhabit. These meanings are developed and shared within a social context (Crotty, 1998). It is thought that objects may have meaning but that this is only through interaction with consciousness that meaning can be exhibited, or as Crotty (1998) puts it, “[...] meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p.43). Meaning is considered a representation of conscious thought. Within this thought, meaning is not created, as the object with meaning already exists, but we do *construct* meaning as we interact with the objects of the world. This is achieved through intentionality, which means to reach out and into the object, creating an interaction which forms a sense of relatedness. Constructionism is a useful middle ground as it proposes that there are many interpretations of the same idea and that no single interpretation is true or valid. Some interpretations may be more useful than others, but none can claim to be truthful for all. A mixed methods approach is appropriate for this thesis as it aims to hold objectivity and subjectivity together through the gathering of data and the in-depth analysis of participant voice.

Social constructionism focuses on the way in which meaning is generated and states that social realities are socially constructed. It is culture laden, and it is the communal mind generating meaning shaped by language and social process. It recognises that culture shapes how we think and feel and is key to the views we hold of the world (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism on the other hand is based on the individual.

Crotty (1998) argues the importance of not simply stating you are constructionist in your thinking, and to that end, this research is developed and understood through the lens of social constructionism. This is primarily because social constructionism gives credence to the understanding that meaning is socially constructed and our cultural understanding of anxiety, belonging and how to affect these are impacted by cultural conscience.

1.4.3 Theoretical Perspective

The matter with human beans is that they is absolutely refusing to believe anything unless they is actually seeing if right in front of their own schnozzles
(*The BFG*, in Haigh et al. 2019).

Crotty (1998) helpfully explains that theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that is a foundation of decision making in relation to methodology. This research is underpinned by a critical realist pragmatic perspective. Pragmatism allows for knowledge to be judged based upon its consequences in action, “knowledge mediates our relation to the physical and social world” (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009, p.802). A pragmatist’s key focus is ensuring the usefulness and practicality of research is its priority (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Within pragmatism, ‘knowledge is judged according to its consequences in action’ (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009, p.802), meaning that the usefulness and applicability in the current context is at the heart of the thinking in pragmatism, rather than a focus on one, central truth, as truth is considered subjective (Fogarty, 2012). Underlying premises of pragmatism include that meaning comes from human

experience, truth is ever changing (context and time dependent) and that human experience is understood through communication and language. This approach is considered to be pluralist (there are various forms of knowledge), critical (asking, 'who is this knowledge serving?') and non-relativist (we evaluate knowledge based on its usefulness). A key aim within a pragmatic study is to identify a problem and to then understand it within its context. In this research, the real-world problem was the increase in anxiety and decrease in a sense of school belonging. This was then explored through a systematic literature review of qualitative belonging research and considered in a mixed-methods research study exploring the effects of bibliotherapy in a primary school setting.

Within critical realism (CR), it is posited that truth exists, but that human experience (which is social) moulds how we understand and experience truth (Braun & Clarke, 2022). There is one truth, but that there are different perspectives and interpretations of that truth. Maxwell highlighted the importance of culture and language within this, saying "The world as we perceive it and therefore live in it is structured by our concepts, which are to a substantial extent expressed in language" (2012, p.9). In CR, the purpose of the research is to offer theories of explanations for situations that have been observed or people have experienced (Haigh et al., 2019). CR is considered an approach that is in line with post positivism, pragmatism and social constructivism (Brunson et al., 2023). Helpfully, CR allows us to consider the usefulness of knowledge whilst also recognising that we must be cautious around any knowledge claims we make. Similar to pragmatism, CR suggests

that knowledge comes from the interaction of ideas and actions, “it is possible to construct credible and actional knowledge about a real world, although this knowledge is always imperfect and incomplete” (Brunson et al., 2023, p.5). Fletcher (2017) has suggested that CR is useful as you not only analyse the identified problem but are also able to offer thoughts for how to make a change.

Bhaskar notes two categories of objects within the scientific realm: transitive (our ever-developing understanding) and intransitive (the structures and events of the world that are not dependent on human understanding of them to exist) (Booker, 2021). As scientific understanding is transitive, it is never fully possible to perceive reality. This is important for psychological research as it highlights the necessity to appreciate that, to engage effectively in the realm of research, we must recognise the external reality that becomes known to us through research (McGeorge-Hill, 2024). As Bhaskar states, “[...] the experimenter is a causal agent of a sequence of events but not of the causal laws which the sequence of events enables him to identify” (in McGeorge-Hill, 2024, p.2). Therefore, it is essential that, as researchers, we endeavour to be transparent in our methodology and reflexivity to recognise the influences on us as researchers and the impact of this on the research conducted.

The empirical aspect of this thesis adheres to the CR theoretical perspective as children were part of an intervention that aimed to impact anxiety and sense of school belonging which have clear implications for academic

success. Furthermore, the initial data collected as part of the sequential explanatory control design was intended to support the understanding of the impact of the bibliotherapy intervention. It should be recognised that factors such as absence from the intervention and the interventionists influenced these results.

The CR theoretical position is helpful in understanding the qualitative data collected, as it allows for the consideration of the personal experiences of those who participated and expands on what made the intervention enjoyable and useful for both children and teachers involved. Despite non-significant quantitative data, regarding the impact of the intervention on increasing sense of school belonging and reducing anxiety, the focus group data highlights the potential positive impact of bibliotherapy on anxiety, sense of school belonging and staff wellbeing.

1.4.4 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was utilised within the empirical paper of this thesis as it was consistent with the epistemological position of social constructionism and the theoretical perspective of pragmatic critical realism. Mixed-methods research can be considered the *third research paradigm* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), the other two being qualitative and quantitative. The key goal behind mixed methods research is to draw on the strengths and limit the weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It allows for a more 'real life'

approach to research as it describes and develops techniques that researchers put into practice. A mixed methods sequential control design was used to gather quantitative data and to inform the qualitative data collection which allowed for a broader and richer understanding of individuals' experience of bibliotherapy (Ivankova et al., 2006). The two concepts explored in the empirical paper, anxiety and belonging are suited to being measured via self-measurement tools such as the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS) (Spence, 1997) and the Sense of School Community Scale – Primary (SOSCS-P) (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). Anxiety measures which are considered to be validated and reliable can be useful in understanding levels of clinical anxiety but also in noting changes in anxiety over time (Baker et al., 2019). Sense of school belonging is an area that is less well defined, particularly as researchers do not currently have universal agreement on how to operationalise it (Alink et al., 2023). However, a mixed methods approach allowed for the use of a standardised measure to be used as well as the benefits of in-depth qualitative data derived from focus groups, providing the opportunity to hear from individuals what it means to them to belong.

1.4.5 Research Methods

Two methods of data collection were employed for the empirical paper; online questionnaires and focus groups (face to face for children and online for staff). The two questionnaires used; The Sense of School Community Scale Primary (SOSCS-P) (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009) and Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS) (Spence, 1997) were chosen as they are

considered valid and reliable measures of the constructs they are measuring. These measures allowed for a pre and post measurement which was intended to support the understanding of the impact of the bibliotherapy intervention.

Focus groups were utilised as they allow you to look beyond the numbers given in quantitative data to the meaning behind these numbers (Leung & Savithiri, 2009). Within a focus group, open questions should be used (therefore not limiting participant responses) and participants need the opportunity to build upon one another's responses (Rosenthal, 2016). The children's focus group was held in school with a familiar adult (a teaching assistant) so that the children felt as at ease as possible.

1.5 Orientation to Thesis Content

Chapter One of this thesis has provided an outline of the rationale for the topics covered in chapters two and three and has offered a discussion around the epistemological stance, theoretical perspective, methodology and research methods utilised within this thesis.

The systematic literature review explored the views of school aged pupils on barriers and facilitators that contribute to an overall sense of school belonging. A sense of school belonging, the idea that one feels 'valued, included and encouraged by others' (Goodenow, 1993, p.25), is known to have many beneficial impacts on learners. These include academic achievement, better behaviour and less absenteeism (something particularly pertinent considering the rise in emotionally based school avoidance)

(Hamilton, 2024), a greater sense of happiness and better physical health. A literature search found 12 qualitative studies that met the inclusion criteria for the review. These studies were considered through Gough's Weight of Evidence Framework (Gough, 2007) and were evaluated using an adapted version of Mays and Pope's Coding Protocol Criteria (Mays & Pope, 2000). The review led to an adapted framework for analysis which suggested six key thematic outcomes for the development of a sense of school belonging: adults-student relationships, peer relationships, parental involvement, perceived control, community (membership) and curriculum and (extra) curricular activities. These themes were expanded upon using examples from the research and recommendations for future research and EP practice were also considered.

Chapter three, the empirical paper, aimed to explore the impact of a whole class bibliotherapy intervention, underpinned by cognitive behaviour techniques, on primary aged pupils' levels of anxiety and sense of school belonging. It also explored the impact of the intervention on staff wellbeing. A six-week intervention was developed which used three picture books to explore the key themes of change, friendship and jealousy. Each session involved whole class reading of a text, with key questions being asked and activities linked to developing a greater understanding of coping strategies being completed by all the children. Measures were completed by children pre and post intervention and at a follow up point. A 2x2 mixed-ANOVA was used to explore variation within groups (levels of anxiety and sense of school belonging) and between groups (intervention vs. control group). Staff also

completed a wellbeing measure and descriptive statistics were used to explore these. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was used to analyse the data from the focus group conducted with six of the children who partook in the intervention. RTA is an accessible approach used to interpret qualitative data and develop themes to create a level of understanding around the data gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). A focus group was also used to gain the views of the two members of staff who led the intervention and a content analysis was used to develop an understanding of their views. The quantitative data showed no significant changes in anxiety reduction or an increase in school belonging, however there was a trend to suggest that anxiety was decreasing. The focus groups indicated many benefits of the bibliotherapy intervention, for example, the benefits of difference, the importance of the learning environment, useful coping strategies and how books help us to escape reality and explore it in a safe environment. Staff highlighted the benefits of time, which allowed the teachers to relax and give themselves more fully to the sessions, allowing the children to open up in a way they had not before. Staff also recognised how much the children enjoyed the intervention, which meant, for the staff, that the sessions were something to look forward to. This was an important reflection when considering how to boost staff wellbeing. This was followed by a discussion on the strengths and limitations of the research.

Recommendations for future research and EP practice were also considered.

Chapter four considers the dissemination and impact of the research. It outlines the ideas of evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence

and provides a consideration of the strengths and limitations of each approach. An overview of the implications of the findings from the review and empirical paper for the following areas: practice, policy and further research is also included. The chapter concludes by considering how the research will be disseminated to yield the most impact for different audiences.

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Chapter Two: Review Paper

What are school aged pupils' views of the barriers and facilitators to creating
a sense of school belonging?

2.1 Abstract

This systematic literature review explored the facilitators and barriers to the development of a sense of school belonging based on views of a wide variety of school aged students from both mainstream, SEND and non-dominant backgrounds. Belonging is a fundamental human need which brings with it many positive benefits, both academic and psychosocial whilst a lack of sense of belonging is predictive of many negative consequences. The aim of this review was to understand what is at the core of developing a sense of belonging within a school setting. A comprehensive literature review found 13 studies which met the inclusion criteria. These studies were reviewed using an adapted version of the Mays and Pope (2000) Coding Protocol Criteria which informed the overall Weight of Evidence score assigned to each study. The findings suggest that six key themes are prominent in developing a strong sense of belonging in a school setting. These are: adult-student relationships; peer relationships; parental involvement; perceived control; community (membership) and curriculum and (extra) curricular activities. Overall strengths and limitations of this review have been acknowledged. Recommendations for future research and current EP practice have also been considered.

2.2 Introduction

2.2.1 Why is a Sense of School Belonging important?

The premise that belonging is essential for humans is well founded (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943). A young person's sense of belonging is key to their ability to thrive in a school setting. Over many years, research has highlighted the multitude of benefits linked to belonging including: high emotional and behavioural engagement in school (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021); greater academic achievement (Hattie & Yates, 2014; Riley, 2022); better behaviour and less absenteeism (Allen et al., 2018) as well as greater life satisfaction (Jose et al., 2012). Goetschius et al. (2021) found that a sense of school belonging was also a protective factor for young people who had experienced social deprivation (such as a lack of support in the home environment). The Harvard Study of Adult Development, a study spanning seven decades, found that social connectedness brings great benefits including increased happiness, better physical health and life longevity (Waldinger, 2015).

Despite this wealth of research stating the importance of belonging, it is something many schools are struggling to develop as systems around young people and also within the young person themselves. Exclusion rates have been increasing, as have rates of emotionally based school non-attendance. Riley (2019) states three reasons for this: evidence about the benefits of belonging is being ignored; the impact of exclusions and not belonging have not been acknowledged; schools' staff are driven by targets (e.g., higher grades, increasing attendance, an ever-demanding curriculum) to the

detriment of what young people actually need. Riley's work suggests legitimate reasons that school staff may sometimes be overlooking the importance of developing a sense of belonging.

There is a marked deterioration of students' sense of belonging across OECD countries. In the United Kingdom, 38% of respondents felt like they did not belong in their school, 25% felt like outsiders and 24% felt awkward and out of place at school (OECD, 2019). Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic it is likely these figures will have increased alongside the increase in levels of anxiety and depression (Duan et al., 2020). With the understanding that research has given of the importance of belonging and the steady decline in students' sense of belonging, this continues to be an important area of research to develop.

EPs have an ever-increasing role in the social, emotional and mental health considerations of the young people we serve within schools. Our role in this area is challenging as, although there is a desire to support children and young people with SEMH needs, statutory demands have reduced the capacity for EPs to focus on this area. As such, an awareness of the importance of school belonging and the ability to appropriately challenge detrimental school practices (whilst offering pragmatic, evidenced based solutions) is an important part of their role.

2.2.2 Defining a Sense of School Belonging

Libbey (2004) states that the research world related to school belonging can be seen as extremely confusing due to there being a wide variety of terms (such as school: engagement, attachment, bonding, climate, involvement, connectedness) linked to school belonging. This mixture of terminology is accompanied by a broad variety of definitions which has been described as an ‘overlapping and confusing definitional spectrum’ (Libbey, 2004, p.274).

A popular definition of belonging comes from Goodenow (1993), who defined it as a “[...] sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the academic classroom setting” (p.25). This definition also included aspects of having a role in the school community as well as a consideration of the importance of autonomy and being an individual. This definition was broadly used across the ten papers included in this review and will be the definition this review is based upon.

Research shows us how belonging evolves as a result of context and connections in relationships. Goodenow’s popular definition of belonging highlights the value of external influences but does not consider the wider systems around the child as highlighted in Allen and Kern’s bio-psycho-socio-ecological model of school belonging (2017). This model recognises the importance of ‘micro moments’ (Roffey, 2024); moments of warmth and acceptance in which the individual is valued for who they are and what they bring to the school context (Roffey, 2011). A warm, welcoming school ethos in which individuals can learn and grow is a key element of what it means to truly belong (Brown, 2021). This has been highlighted in Riley’s research

(2020) which notes that leadership impacts school culture and school culture shapes agency and belonging for both staff and pupils.

2.2.3 Developing a Sense of School Belonging

Brown (2021) believes that our need for a sense of belonging is something so natural, that we will do our best to gain this sense by any means possible.

Belonging may include trying to fit into social groups and settings by changing who we are as we seek to connect with those around us. Brown (2021) suggests that, by doing this, we are forfeiting a true sense of belonging and putting up a barrier to this sense as, to truly belong, we need to be authentically ourselves. This state of vulnerability (to feel able to open yourself up so that you are truly known) is risky, and scary to many people, especially young people who are trying to find their place in the world.

Neuroscientists have found that our brains have developed in line with an increasingly social world (Hohnen et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a desire for belonging from a young age, even though seeking this puts people in a vulnerable position. This is an important point to note as the conflict to be authentic and accepted is something that many young people can struggle with. Being more aware of this may better enable EPs and educators to name and address this concern.

School belonging is a complex construct and developing a sense of this in schools is a real challenge. As schools are communities of individuals who bring with them a broad array of life experience, each person is likely to have their own understanding of what it means to belong (Nichols, 2008; Shaw,

2019; Whitlock, 2006). As challenging as this task is, it is an important one considering the many positive outcomes associated with developing a sense of belonging in the school community. Perhaps, as Allen et al. (2021) suggests, if we can develop a sense of belonging in our young people, this will flow over into our communities, and we can make the world a better place to live.

2.2.4 Reflexive stance

Prior to training as an educational psychologist, having been a primary school teacher has shaped my understanding of the importance of belonging and how to achieve this in the classroom. The reviewer was also motivated by his personal belief that a sense of belonging and community is essential for human thriving. These views have helped to shape the understanding that has developed from the research reviewed.

As research shows, a sense of school belonging is associated with a wide variety of benefits, both academic and social. It is with consideration of the current context in which social isolation, an ever-pressing academic curriculum and greater levels of school non-attendance that this review aims to shed light on how to support the development of a sense of school belonging within our schools.

2.2.5 Review question

‘What are school aged pupils’ views of the barriers and facilitators to creating a sense of school belonging?’

This review question considers the barriers and facilitators to creating a sense of school belonging in a variety of school aged pupils (rather than a specifically defined population within school aged pupils). This review aims to consider the lived experience of school aged pupils and which factors impact the facilitation or building of barriers for sense of school belonging. The review will also show broad themes which can be the focus of future research for the development of intervention to increase the likelihood of these facilitating themes being present in the school environment.

2.3 Critical Review of the Evidence Base

2.3.1 Literature search

A systematic search of the literature was conducted throughout August 2022 to find papers which would be appropriate to contribute to the research question. An additional search was completed in August 2023 using the same terms and databases. The following databases were used to conduct a scoping search using key search criteria which is shown in Table 2.1:

PsychInfo, Education Resources Information Centre (Eric/EBSCO) and Web of Science. A variety of key terms were used to ensure as much as possible relevant research was included in the initial scoping search (see Table 2.1). Initially a computerised database search was used due to its sensitivity to key terminology (Conn et al., 2003) and then an additional ancestral search yielded two pieces of grey literature which were used in this review. Grey literature was considered an important source of data due to the potential reduction in publication bias and the overall comprehensiveness of the research, as recognised by Paez (2017). The 1,914 studies found through

searching were screened for duplicates then by date, title and abstract. This process led to 29 studies being identified for a full-text review. The inclusion and exclusion criteria used to explore the relevance of these papers can be found in Table 2.2. These criteria were necessary to ensure that the papers reviewed were relevant to the research questions and the current context being explored. Of the 21 studies that underwent a full-text review, nine were deemed to not meet the appropriate criteria. Appendix A shows the studies excluded at full-text screening and the rationale for exclusion. The 13 studies which met the inclusion criteria were selected for further analysis as part of this review (references for which can be found in Table 2.3). A visual summary illustrating the screening process can be found on the PRISMA diagram in Figure 1.

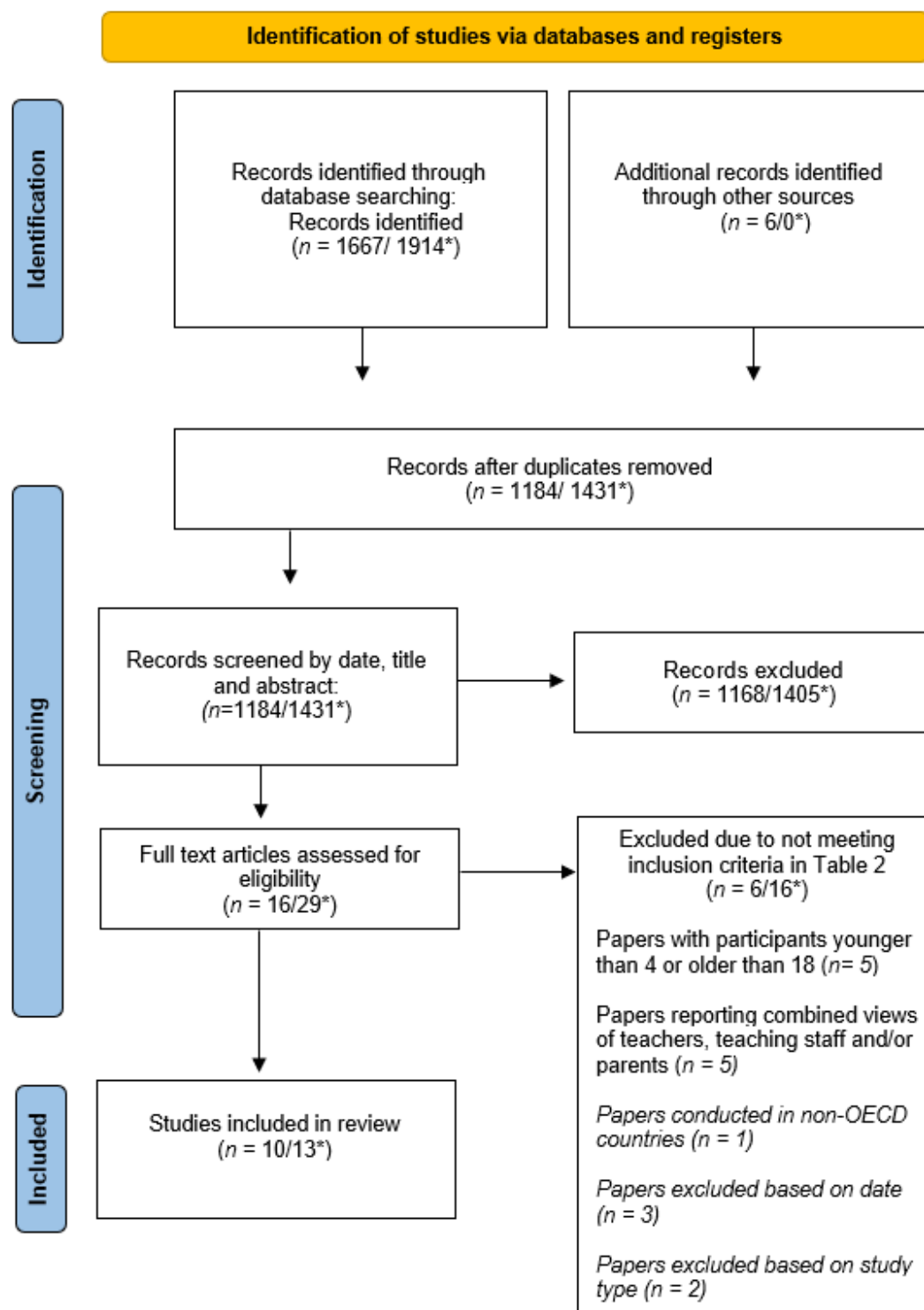
Table 2.1*Database and Search Terms*

Database	Search terms
PsycINFO (<i>n</i> =466)	infant* OR primar* OR junio* OR “school age*” OR adolescen* OR student* OR child* OR pupil* OR “young people” OR Teen* OR girl* OR boy* OR learner*
AND	
ERIC (EBSCO) (<i>n</i> =765)	sense of school belonging or school relatedness or belonging or connectedness or SSB or SOSB or belong* or School belong* or School connect* or School attachment* or School bonding or School enag* ¹
AND	
Web of Science (<i>n</i> =436)	Experience* OR account* or theme* OR perspective* OR factor* OR concept* OR conception* OR qualitative OR grounded theory OR thematic analysis OR IPA OR interpretative phenomenological analysis OR interview OR focus group OR content analysis OR narrative analysis OR discourse analysis OR phenomenology OR exploratory analysis

Note: ¹These terms were searched in the ‘in title’ field on these databases to enhance the likelihood of yielding relevant results.

Figure 2.1

PRISMA diagram depicting the database search and screening process



Note. An asterisk (*) indicates results found and added during the systematic literature search conducted in August 2023. The new numbers represent a combining of the original search results with the additional papers found.

Table 2.2*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for current review*

Study Feature	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
1 Types of studies	The studies follow a qualitative methodology	The studies do not follow a qualitative methodology	Qualitative studies can provide rich data which can elicit an explanation to a question, which is the focus of this review question (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011)
2 Language	Study published in the English language	Studies published in a language other than English and not translated into English	Only studies written in English could be used as there were no translation services available
3 Participants	School aged pupils between 4 – 18 years in a typical education setting	Participants younger than 4 years and older than 18 years not in a typical education setting	The review looks at school aged pupils and, in the UK, pupils can start school (Reception) in the academic year in which they turn five-years-old and typically students can leave at 18 years-old if they have continued in a school setting for sixth form

4 Outcome	The study reports the views of school aged pupils' thoughts on school belonging	The study reports the combined views of teachers, teaching staff or parents in their results	This review is considering the views of school aged pupils on the barriers and facilitators to creating a sense of school belonging
5 Country of study	The studies are from countries within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Studies which were conducted in non-OECD countries	Countries within the OECD (2021) share contextual similarities with the United Kingdom which may therefore allow for more generalisability to a UK context
6 Date (post 2014)	Journal articles published between 2013-2022	Studies published pre-2013	A systematic literature review was published in 2018 (Allen et al., 2018) in which studies published up to March 2013 were included. Therefore, this review looked at studies published from 2014 onwards.

Table 2.3

The final studies included in the systematic literature review

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- 1 Bouchard, K. L., & Berg, D. H. (2017). Students' School Belonging: Juxtaposing the Perspectives of Teachers and Students in Late Elementary School Years (Grades 4-8). *School Community Journal*, 27(1), 107-136. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
 - 2 Cullinane, M. (2016). *Sense of Belonging of Students with Special Educational Needs and their Mainstream Peers in a Post-Primary School in Ireland [Doctoral Thesis, University College London]*. University College London. [An exploration of social inclusion and engagement of students with special educational needs at second level \(ucl-eu-west-2-moodle-sitedata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://ucl-eu-west-2-moodle-sitedata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/An%20exploration%20of%20social%20inclusion%20and%20engagement%20of%20students%20with%20special%20educational%20needs%20at%20second%20level)
 - 3 Durand, T. M., & Blackwell, R. (2022). Dimensions of Belonging and "Othering" in Middle School: Voices of Immigrant and Island-Born Puerto Rican Adolescents. *Journal of Education for Student Places at Risk (JESPAR)*, 0(0), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2022.2136179>
 - 4 Einarsdottir, J., Juutinen, J., Emilson, A., Olafsdottir, S. M., Zachrisen, B., & Meuser, S. (2022). Children's perspectives about belonging in educational settings in five European countries. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 30(3), 330–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2055099>
 - 5 Garrelts, C. (2016). *What contributes to a sense of belonging in school in African Caribbean pupils who have met national standards in Key Stage 2? [Doctoral Thesis, University College London]*. University College London. [Microsoft Word - VOLUME 1 THESIS \(F\) \(ucl-eu-west-2-moodle-sitedata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://ucl-eu-west-2-moodle-sitedata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20VOLUME%201%20THESIS%20(F))
 - 6 Jessup, G. M., Bundy, A. C., Hancock, N., & Broom, A. (2018). Being noticed for the way you are: Social inclusion and high school students with vision impairment. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 36(1) 90-103. <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0264619616686396>
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- 7 Keyes, T. S. (2019). A Qualitative Inquiry: Factors That Promote Classroom Belonging and Engagement among High School Students. *School Community Journal*, 29(1), 171–200. [ERIC - EJ1219861 - A Qualitative Inquiry: Factors That Promote Classroom Belonging and Engagement among High School Students, School Community Journal, 2019 \(ed.gov\)](#)
 - 8 Martin, S., Horgan, D., O’Riordan, J., & Maier, R. (2023). Refugee and migrant children’s views of integration and belonging in school in Ireland – and the role of micro- and meso-level interactions. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 0(0), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2222304>
 - 9 Myles, O., Boyle, C., & Richards, A. (2019). The Social Experiences and Sense of Belonging in Adolescent Females with Autism in Mainstream School. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 36(4), 8–21. [ERIC - EJ1245928 - The Social Experiences and Sense of Belonging in Adolescent Females with Autism in Mainstream School, Educational & Child Psychology, 2019-Dec](#)
 - 10 Pesonen, H., Kontu, E., Saarinen, M., & Pirttimaa, R. (2016). Conceptions Associated with Sense of Belonging in Different School Placements for Finnish Pupils with Special Education Needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2015.1087138>
 - 11 Shaw, E. (2019). ‘How do I know that I belong?’ Exploring secondary aged pupils’ views on what it means to belong to their school. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 36(4), 79–90. [ERIC - EJ1245934 - 'How Do I Know That I Belong?' Exploring Secondary Aged Pupils' Views on What It Means to Belong to Their School, Educational & Child Psychology, 2019-Dec](#)
 - 12 Sobitan, T. (2022). Understanding the experiences of school belonging amongst secondary school students with refugee backgrounds (UK). *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 38(3), 259–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2022.2084042>
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- 13 Drolet, M., & Arcand, I. (2013). Positive Development, Sense of Belonging, and Support of Peers among Early Adolescents: Perspectives of Different Actors, *International Education Studies*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v6n4p29>
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2.3.2 Appraising qualitative research

Within the context of educational psychology in the United Kingdom, there is an epistemological debate on the purpose and appraisal of the value of scientific research regarding the nature of reality and knowledge. Educational Psychologists in the UK hold a tension between traditional empiricist views towards research and the development of understanding around social constructivism (Cline et al., 2015). Due to the complex nature of human behaviour, we cannot simply apply a quantitative 'yes/no' response to questions which require an understanding of the 'how and why'; questions that attempt to explain a relationship rather than purely state that one exists (Cline et al., 2015; Mays & Pope, 2000; Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011). This is where qualitative research can provide useful insights. However, the appraisal of qualitative research is a contentious issue and depends very much on the individual's epistemological stance as to how we judge quality and if we should even attempt to judge the quality of qualitative research (Mays & Pope, 2000). Typically, extreme realists would argue that there is an observable universal truth which can be understood through research whereas extreme relativists argue that truth is a social construct, changing over time and depending upon the context of the situation being explored (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The author of this review takes the commonly held critical realist understanding that there is truth in this world but that we can

only hold a limited, experiential understanding of this truth (Barker et al., 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Williams, 2020). In the world of academia, this debate could be all-consuming. However, for applied scientist-practitioners such as educational psychologists it is useful to remember the important balance between utilising a strong evidence base and making a practical difference to the lives of the children and young people (CYP), families and communities that we serve. (Burnham, 2013). With this perspective in mind, it is important to consider the appraisal of qualitative research.

A fundamental aspect of the role of qualitative research is to consider “multiple views of a context-specific “reality”” (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011, p.452). The use of criteria for the appraisal of qualitative research is a contentious issue but can allow for a deeper understanding of the value of the research (Côté & Turgeon, 2005). It has been noted that the use of criteria can allow for some level of comparability which is why the author of this review has chosen to utilise the critical appraisal approach. Munthe-Kaas et al. (2019) mapped 102 critical appraisal tools for qualitative research and developed key framework themes based on these tools. Although prevalence of a theme did not signify its importance in appraisal, it did allow for the consideration of commonality in appraisal checklists. The author of this review compared these themes against those recommended in the Mays and Pope (2000) criteria and noted that there was a common thread from the recommendations made by Munthe-Kass et al. (2019). Therefore, due to the relevance and acceptability of the considerations in the Mays and Pope

(2000) criteria, the author has adopted these criteria for the purpose of this review.

2.3.3 *Weight of Evidence (WoE)*

The Weight of Evidence Framework (Gough, 2007) is a tool used to evaluate each piece of research and its relevance in relation to its suitability for answering the review question. This framework was utilised in the appraisal process for this review. The framework considers several aspects of a piece of research, including its methodological quality, how relevant the methodology is and the suitability of the research in contributing to the specific review question. The framework considers each of these aspects under the following headings: Weight of Evidence A, B and C.

Weight of Evidence A (WoE A) is a non-review specific judgement considering the quality of the studies in comparison to others of its type (Gough, 2007). This review used a modified version of the Mays and Pope (2000) criteria (the adaptations and rationale for which can be found in Appendix C) and considered the hierarchy of evidence-for-practice in qualitative research as recommended in Daly et al. (2007).

Weight of Evidence B (WoE B) is a review-specific judgement which considers the relevance of the methodology used for the research being reviewed (Gough, 2007). The criteria selected, based on the recommendations in the paper by Mays and Pope (2000), can be found in Appendix C.

Weight of Evidence C (WoE C) is also a review-specific judgement that takes into consideration the relevance of the research in relation to the question being reviewed (Gough, 2007). The criteria used for WoE C can be found in Appendix C.

Weight of Evidence D (WoE D) is the average of WoE A, B and C and offers an overall assessment of the suitability of the evidence from each piece of research in relation to the review question (Gough, 2007). An overview of the scores for the ten studies in this review can be found in Table 2.4. A rating ≤ 1.4 was considered 'low', 1.5 – 2.4 was considered 'medium' and ≥ 2.5 was considered 'high'.

Table 2.4

WoE D - Overall Weight of Evidence

Author (Year)	WoE A	WoE B	WoE C	WoE D
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	2.3 (Medium)	3 (High)	3 (High)	2.8 (High)
Cullinane (2016)	2.3 (Medium)	1 (Low)	2.7 (High)	2 (Medium)
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	2.1 (Medium)	3 (High)	2.7 (High)	2.6 (High)
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	2.1 (Medium)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)	2.4 (Medium)
Garrelts (2016)	2.3 (Medium)	1 (Low)	3 (High)	2.1 (Medium)
Jessup et al. (2018)	1.6 (Medium)	1 (Low)	2.7 (High)	1.8 (Medium)

Keyes (2019)	2.6 (High)	1 (Low)	3 (High)	2.2 (Medium)
Martin et al. (2023)	1.4 (Low)	2 (Medium)	2.3 (Medium)	1.9 (Medium)
Myles et al. (2019)	2.3 (Medium)	3 (High)	2.7 (High)	2.7 (High)
Pesonen et al. (2016)	2.6 (High)	3 (High)	1.7 (Medium)	2.4 (Medium)
Shaw (2019)	1.9 (Medium)	1 (Low)	2.3 (Medium)	1.7 (Medium)
Sobitan (2022)	2.9 (High)	3 (High)	3 (High)	3 (High)
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2.3 (Medium)	2.1 (Medium)

Note: WoE D ratings described as 'Low' ≤ 1.4 , 'Medium' for scores $1.5 - 2.4$, and 'High' for scores ≥ 2.5 .

2.3.4 Research Questions

The research questions considered from the studies in this review focussed on factors that contributed towards or hindered the development of a sense of belonging in a variety of school settings and for varied pupil populations (Cullinane, 2016; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Keyes, 2019; Myles et al., 2019; Sobitan, 2022). One study specifically focused on how students defined and developed a sense of belonging in a school context (Bouchard & Berg, 2017), whilst another focussed on hinderances towards the formation of a sense of belonging for a population of students with SEND and what educators could do to support the development of a sense of belonging (Pesonen et al., 2016). Three studies (Jessup et al., 2018; Martin, 2023; Shaw, 2019) did not provide clear

research questions and therefore received lower WoE A scores for 'Clarity of the research question(s)'.

2.3.5 Study Participants

A total of thirteen studies were reviewed including 317 participants between the ages of 4-18 years old and were from either the United Kingdom (UK) (Garrelts, 2016; Myles et al., 2019; Shaw, 2019; Sobitan, 2022), Ireland (Cullinane, 2016; Martin et al., 2023), Canada (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Drolet & Arcand, 2013), United States of America (Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Keyes, 2019), Australia (Jessup et al., 2018) or Finland (Pesonen et al., 2016). The research by Einarsdottir et al. (2022) was part of a broader project conducted across Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands. All of these studies were conducted in countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2021). Two of the studies (Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Pesonen et al., 2016) received lower WoE C scores for criterion C 'Location' due to their different ages that children transition through the schooling system. The studies selected for this review cover a range of ages and special educational needs as this is reflective of the education system in the UK. For example, some participants had additional needs such as visual impairment (Jessup et al., 2018) or autism (Myles et al., 2019). Two studies focussed on migrant and refugee experience (Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Martin et al., 2023) but made mitigations for the impact of possible additional needs. The authors of these papers explored the impact of an additional language rather than considering it as an additional need. However, the majority of research was conducted in

a mainstream school setting with the exception of one study (Pesonen et al., 2016). Higher WoE C scores for given for criterion B 'Participants' where the research stated that participants had no additional learning needs (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Garrelts, 2016; Keyes, 2019; Sobitan, 2022). This was due to the majority of school aged pupils in the UK not reporting the need for accessing SEN support and therefore increasing the transferability of the results of these studies. Details of participant characteristics can be found in Appendix B and impacted the WoE A scores given for dimension 5 'Sampling' in which detailed participant characteristics resulted in a higher WoE A score.

2.3.6 Study Design

All of the studies for this review had an element of qualitative design within them. Those that were purely qualitative and utilised individual semi-structured interviews (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Myles et al., 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016; Sobitan, 2022) were given a higher WoE B rating. Appendix C, Table 3 gives the criteria for this and Table 4 gives the overall WoE B score. Qualitative studies can help develop a deeper understanding of the issues that much research investigates and goes beyond asking if a particular phenomenon is important, instead asking *why* it is important (Gemma Cherry et al., 2017). A particular strength of the semi-structured interview process is that it is initiated by the researcher and then led by the participant, allowing the opportunity to share their personal understanding and experience (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) therefore

enabling a better understanding of the phenomenon. The majority of the studies (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019; Myles et al., 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016) used an individual semi-structured interview design. One researcher (Sobitan, 2022) was contacted as they did not comment on whether they used individual or group semi-structured interviews (they used individual semi-structured interviews). One study (Shaw, 2019) utilised a semi-structured group interview approach. Another study (Martin et al., 2023) utilised focus groups, however, from the description in the study this was similar to a group semi-structured interview approach. One study (Einarsdottir et al., 2022) used individual conversations based on walking interviews and photo elicitation (due to the age of the participants). One study (Drolet & Arcand, 2013) did not provide clarity on whether they used group or individual interviews.

2.3.7 Study Methodology

The majority of studies utilised a thematic analysis methodology to explore the themes from the data (Cullinane, 2016; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Myles et al., 2019; Shaw, 2019). However, other methodologies were also utilised including an inductive analysis (Bouchard & Berg, 2017), constructivist grounded theory (Keyes, 2019), interpretative phenomenological analysis (Pesonen et al., 2016; Sobitan, 2022) and content analysis (Drolet & Arcand, 2013). Einarsdottir et al. (2022) used the Yuval-Davis' three analytical facets of belonging which considers social locations (e.g. gender and nation), identifications and emotional attachments (including narratives around belonging to a group) and ethical and political

values (including the acceptance of an individual by others) (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Martin et al. (2023) utilised a child-centred participatory focus group approach. Durand and Blackwell (2022) used a variety of qualitative approaches (both inductive and deductive) but did not specify a particular approach. Their analysis was guided by the Immigrant Paradox Framework. This framework helps explore the phenomenon that newcomer immigrants initially show better developmental outcomes compared to their counterparts which diminish in areas of development and academia over time and generations. The overall purpose of all these methods is to gain a richer understanding of the lived experiences of the participants to then understand key themes which facilitated (or hindered) a sense of belonging in a learning context.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Best Fit Framework Synthesis

A systematic review by Allen et al. (2018) considered papers published between 2002 and 2013 focusing on secondary school settings was utilised for developing the initial guiding framework for this review. The review by Allen et al. (2018) considered individual and social level factors that contributed to a sense of school belonging and identified 10 key themes that impacted a sense of school belonging. These themes can be found in Table 2.5. Allen et al's. (2018) review considered the views of 67,378 participants across 51 studies and gave a comprehensive justification for themes they developed for their framework. Therefore, this framework was considered as

an appropriate starting point for the development the themes considered in this paper.

A total of 56 themes were identified across the thirteen research papers in this review. Many of these themes contained sub-themes which helped to explore the meta theme in more detail. It was noted that there was a commonality across many of the themes but that the language used to identify these varied.

Initially, the themes were matched to the initial guiding framework (Table 2.6) and from here, the suitability of these themes was considered. A coding procedure was used across the 56 themes (See Appendix D) to consider commonality and from this procedure one central theme (relationships) and six sub-themes were identified (see Table 2.7 and Table 2.8). Completed coding protocols for WoE A for all 13 papers can be found in Appendix E.

Table 2.5*Initial Guiding Framework for Analysis based on Allen et al. (2018)*

Theme	Definition
Academic motivation	The expectancy of academic success through goal setting and future aspirations (p.4).
Emotional Stability	These include coping skills, positive affect and hope (the inverse was also used as markers for emotional instability) (p.4).
Personal Characteristics	Positive and negative aspects of a student, including their personal qualities, attributes, abilities, temperament and nature (p.4).
Parent Support	The ability for parents/ caregivers to provide academic support as well as social support, open communication and supportive behaviour (p.5).
Peer Support	Trust and closeness with friends and peers (p.5).
Teacher Support	Teachers who promote mutual respect, care, encouragement, friendliness, fairness and autonomy (p.5).
Demographic characteristics	This includes gender and race and ethnicity (p.4).
Extracurricular activities	This can include anything beyond the general curriculum such as play, sports clubs, leadership positions, music clubs etc (p.5).
Environmental/school safety	This links to discipline procedures, fairness and safety policies (p.5).

Note: The article states 10 overall themes, however, in the definitions, gender and race and ethnicity were considered to be under demographic characteristic which is how they have been identified above.

Table 2.6*Framework themes connected to reviewed papers*

Theme	Author (Year)
Academic motivation	Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018
Emotional Stability	N/A
Personal Characteristics	Myles et al., 2019
Parent Support	Garrelts, 2016; Shaw, 2019
Peer Support	Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019; Martin et al., 2023; Myles et al., 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016; Shaw, 2019; Sobitan, 2022.
Teacher Support	Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019; Martin et al., 2023; Myles et al., 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016; Shaw, 2019; Sobitan, 2022.
Demographic characteristics	Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Martin et al., 2023; Sobitan, 2022.
Extracurricular activities	Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2023.
Environmental/school safety	Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Keyes, 2019; Martin et al., 2023; Sobitan, 2022.

Table 2.7*Final Framework for Analysis*

Theme	Definition
Adult-student relationships	This theme focuses on the importance of relationships between all adults (e.g. teachers, counsellors, teaching assistants, head teachers) and students.
Peer relationships	This theme focuses more on the individualised experience of peer relationships.
Parental involvement	This theme focuses on the impact of parent attitudes towards education and their support of the student in learning.
Perceived control	This theme focuses on students being able to share their views and feel valued and recognised in the decision-making process.
Community (membership)	This theme focuses around 'being a part of something' as well as the value of routines and rules.
Curriculum and (extra)curricular activities	This theme focuses on understanding the impact of in class curriculum opportunities (and support to succeed in the curriculum) to develop understanding of others and build relationships as well as extracurricular opportunities such as clubs and school trips.

2.4.2 Thematic Outcomes***Theme 1: Adult-Student Relationships***

Each study highlighted the importance of adult-peer relationships. This extends the understanding that it is not purely the teacher-student relationship that is important (Chiu et al., 2016) as there is often a community

of adults around a child in an educational setting (e.g. the class teacher, teaching assistant, headteacher, office staff).

Facilitators

“I’m not just one of the 90 faces he sees a day, I’m actually myself, an individual.” (Keyes, 2019, p.185)

The adult-student relationship involves a variety of adults who can contribute to the school context, both in school and outside professionals (Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Pesonen et al., 2016). At its core, the theme of *knowing the individual* was fundamental to the success of the adult-student relationship. This included taking time to understand the student and the contexts that they are carrying with them from outside of the school system (e.g. difficulties with parental relationships). An example of this came from a pupil who said that the teacher “...knows more of my story, so he’s like more careful what he says to me and stuff” (Sobitan, 2022, p.268). Another important factor was reciprocity in the relationship which was highlighted in Bouchard and Berg (2017) when a pupil shared how they knew some of their teachers “interests and favourite subject” (p.120). This indicates that teachers showing an appropriate level of vulnerability (for example, their likes and dislikes) can facilitate a better adult-student relationship. A subtheme noted across many of the papers was that of trustworthy adults being seen to have a ‘protective role’ (Einarsdottir et al., 2022, p.336), who can help you build relationships, resolve conflict and engage the students in learning. Both Shaw (2019) and Keyes (2019) noted the higher emphasis on the adult-student relationship over peer relationships in facilitating a sense of belonging. This was partially linked to the idea that good teachers could help you achieve (see Theme 6)

but also that when a level of trust was built, teachers encouraged greater responsibility for students to be 'examples and role models' (Shaw, 2019, p.85). Another area noted was the teacher's ability to motivate pupils, recognise and award achievement and create a sense of safety in the learning environment (e.g. through shared spaces, strict but fair behavioural expectations). A teacher's willingness to support the individual was important; being willing to run extra classes at lunch or after school, breaking down instructions, showing students that success was possible, recognising the importance of the student's first language and cultural background (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2023; Pesonen et al., 2016). Three studies (Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Durand & Blackwell, 2022) highlighted the power of positive affirmation and feedback. The ability of teachers to show their human side by showing a sense of fun was also noted in Cullinane (2016). This was noted through one child's comment on regarding the relationship they had with their teacher, "She said that I'm a real person...That teacher helped me stay in school" (p.126). The accessibility of key adults (such as teaching staff) was also noted as important in the development of trusting relationships that lead to a greater sense of school belonging (Drolet & Arcand, 2013).

Barriers

With regards to barriers to the adult-student relationship, there were several factors that impacted this but the primary issue was not engaging with the student as an individual. This was recognised both in the academic

(Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Jessup et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2023; Myles et al., 2019; Sobitan, 2022) and social sphere (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016). With regards to academia, students noted that there was often a lack of appropriate support and differentiation in both classwork and homework and that, at times, work could lack the level of engagement needed to encourage the students to participate. Myles et al. (2019) noted that some pupils felt they were treated like babies by staff due to their diagnosis of autism and the pupils felt their teachers 'hate me' (p.15) due to the students perceived difficulties with listening. Pupils from a refugee background who had English as an additional language felt that some teachers contributed to pupil anxiety by demanding something that the student simply could not achieve for example, writing an answer in English (Sobitan, 2022) or reading aloud in class (Martin et al., 2023). This attitude towards pupils from the 'non-dominant' background was also shown in a quote by a young pupil who felt they could not talk in their home language whilst at school as the teacher would not like it (Einarsdottir et al., 2022). Some pupils noted the lack of support for social situations in which teachers did not address social difficulties such as playground arguments or bullying (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Martin et al., 2023). In some circumstances, a lack of appropriate individualised support meant that some students struggled to manage their behaviour which led to several changes in educational setting for them (Pesonen et al., 2016). This could lead to a diminished sense of school belonging due to the students not having time to form relationships or develop familiarity with their community. Had the adults understood the triggers for the individual, preventative

measures could have been put in place to reduce the likelihood of behavioural issues occurring. Some pupils also shared that certain teachers favoured other pupils which the students found difficult (Cullinane, 2016).

Theme 2: Peer Relationships

Facilitators

A key facilitative factor for students was friendship or companionship with peers who shared similar interests such as attending the same sports club after school. One pupil commented that, “good friends are everything” (Bouchard & Berg, 2017, p.120). It seemed that there was agreement across several studies that good friends were there for you in a time of need and people who accepted you for who you were (for example if you had a different cultural identity or religion) (Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Martin et al., 2023; Sobitan, 2022). Some students found it easier to be close to peers with similar experiences, “It’s nice to talk to someone like me” (Sobitan, 2022, p.269), whilst others commented that social inclusion made you feel appreciated and that having one close friend, or a small group of close peers was easier to manage. Participants in Drolet & Arcand’s (2013) study called this a ‘circle of friends’ (p.33). This was particularly important to students with autism who found that they felt the need to ‘mirror’ the behaviour of the group (which some may see as a negative) so that they could be accepted (which the students found important) (Myles et al., 2019). Pupils with visual impairment shared that they found being truly listened to and noticed by their peers helped develop their relationships. They shared that some friends showed they understood the

visual impairment by making adaptations such as a friend who would “describe what they’re pointing at” (Jessup et al., 2018, p.95). The ability to have time with your peers (e.g. at playtime or during group work) to develop relationships was also considered important with some pupils suggesting that more ‘getting to know you’ activities should be used during curriculum time. Younger pupils seemed to show a preference for playing with children of the same gender in one study (Einarsdottir et al., 2022).

Barriers

The biggest barrier with peer relationships was a focus on difference. For example, a young girl commented that boys were too rough at playtime and so she preferred to play with other girls (Einarsdottir et al., 2022). Several studies noted that rejection and being ignored when attempting to make friends led to a lack of sense of belonging. One student commented, “I can step away and no one notices” (Myles et al., 2019, p.14). This study also found that some children, due to their autism, were actively told not to join in by their peers. This rejection led to fear of social situations, as well as perceived awkwardness due to limited social skills, meant that several of the autistic students chose not to attempt joining in with their peers. Pesonen et al. (2016) found that some students felt the need to hide their SEN status to avoid stigma as it could lead to bullying and impact the students mental and physical well-being with one pupil saying, “I wanted to kill myself” (p.68). The desire to hide who you truly are goes against the definition of belonging suggested by Brown (2021) who states that we need to be authentically ourselves to truly belong. Some students shared that, due to their SEN, they

were always with the same group which meant they rarely had the opportunity to mix with mainstream pupils and develop friendships (Cullinane, 2016). For some of these pupils, bullies had transitioned with them from the primary to post-primary setting which could suggest that there is a need for a better transition between educational settings to make staff aware of these issues so that they could be effectively dealt with. One young person shared that there may be an overemphasis on self-reliance in the friendship making process and felt that their secondary school was ineffective in supporting social integration (Martin et al., 2023). A final difference commented on was that of peers laughing at individuals' accents (Sobitan, 2022). One area not related to difference but linked to peer relationships is that of broken trust in which a child commented, "I thought they were my friend" (Bouchard & Berg, 2017, p.120)

Theme 3: Parental Involvement

The importance of parental involvement was noted as a facilitative factor by Garrelts (2016) and Shaw (2019). They found that if parents wanted you to achieve then the young person felt a sense of duty as you are expected to do what your parents want. Another finding indicated that parental support with activities such as homework or additional tuition facilitated a sense of school belonging. Some parents utilised rewards to promote effort in school and to set high expectations of their children. Additionally, it was found by Garrelts (2016) that some schools sent home communications that enabled parents to know what was being studied so that they could support their children at home.

Theme 4: Perceived Control

This theme focused on students being able to share their views and feel recognised and valued when decisions were being made about their time in an educational setting.

Facilitators

There were several specific areas that students noted enabled them to have a voice whilst at school. This included activities such as school council and setting maths and literacy targets in collaboration with your class teacher rather than being told what you needed to work on (Garrelts, 2016). This approach to target setting indicated to students that what they wanted to learn and achieve was important. Another consistent theme that came through several papers (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Keyes, 2019; Martin et al., 2023; Pesonen et al., 2016) was the importance of students not just having a voice but feeling like staff have listened to their thoughts and taken on board their ideas. One pupil felt that a teacher who listened to feedback “validated the importance of their [the students] thoughts and ideas” (Keyes, 2019, p.186). Jessup et al. (2018) found that visually impaired students valued having control over certain decisions regarding their learning, such as being able to choose which assistive technology to use in their classroom learning. This also linked to the importance of making appropriate curriculum adaptations which will be discussed further in theme 6. Some children with SEN noted that being able to go home at lunch time (as school staff had appreciated the student’s individual characteristics)

prevented undesirable behaviour which meant they were less likely to be disciplined (Pesonen et al., 2016). These pupils also valued being taught skills to develop independence and self-sufficiency which added to their sense of control over their education and life. Some pupils felt the opportunity for self-expression, such as wearing earrings or girls being allowed to wear trousers would have helped them feel like they had more control over their choices and therefore a greater sense of belonging (Cullinane, 2016). This may be because they would then be allowed to show a level of individuality and be 'true to themselves'.

Barriers

Some pupils found that their desire for control caused conflict between staff and peers (Jessup et al., 2018). These pupils also found that a lack of accessibility led them to have a lower sense of control over their learning. For example, in some lessons teachers continually used PowerPoint presentations that could not be seen due to the student's visual impairment or physical education lessons were inaccessible due to a lack of teacher consideration which meant that the students could not participate. Sobitan (2022) was able to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this impacted students' perceived sense of control. Due to the pandemic, students' grades were impacted and they felt their hard work to show their best had gone to waste. These refugee pupils also reflected on how their lack of control impacted areas such as their ability to sleep and led to frustration and mental health issues. They felt that there was often inconsistency around how staff applied the school rules (something students have no control over),

particularly around bullying which led to students deciding not to report their concerns. This could link to barriers around bullying which were discussed in theme 2.

Theme 5: Community membership

This theme focuses on being part of something and the importance of rules and routines.

Facilitators

A key facilitative factor for community membership was the development of an inclusive culture. For younger pupils, this involved being allowed to play with their peers but also having a place that they could call their own, such as a name tag and peg that they could put their rucksack on (Einarsdottir et al., 2022). These children also valued having shared resources (such as Lego) and spaces such as a nearby sofa that children could go to if they were unwell. This idea of safe spaces was also noted by autistic pupils as an important way to check in with staff or peers during, for example, attending a lunch club (Myles et al., 2019). Jessup et al. (2018) found that students valued engaging in activities that they could do well in and be acknowledged for, such as playing nicely with friends at playtime. As has been mentioned in other themes, the importance of clear but flexible rules and routines which are applied fairly to all students created an 'orderly but relaxed atmosphere' (Keyes, 2019, p.186; also commented on in Garreht, 2016). This study also found that a culture of honest and encouraging feedback as well as an acknowledgement that mistake making and risk taking was part of the

learning process enabled pupils to feel safe to learn. Clear teacher instruction was noted as important but not consistent across the setting. In the study by Pesonen (2016) the pupils valued that all adults worked together and that they were all considered teachers (they were respected and there was a limited sense of hierarchy). A school culture of adapting to student needs, for example, making learning more accessible and allowing pupils to participate in fewer subjects enabled students to feel more a part of the school community (Cullinane, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019). Some pupils recognised that teachers had high expectations of them which enabled them to feel like they were worthy of being challenged academically. One pupil commented that the high expectations “freed me up because I had room to improve no matter what” (Cullinane, 2016, p.121). A sense of membership was also developed through extra-curricular activities which are discussed in theme 6.

Barriers

Exclusionary practices were highlighted as a barrier to many pupils in experiencing a sense of school belonging. These included both students (Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Jessup et al., 2018; Myles et al., 2019; Sobitan, 2022) and adults excluding pupils (Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019; Sobitan, 2022). Students found that at times, their peers would not let them join in activities or group work. Jessup (2018) found that some groups did not recognise the individual’s strengths with one pupil saying, “they just don’t want to see you” (p.97). Sobitan (2022) found that deportation was a fear experienced by at least one pupil and that some pupils developed a sense of

'othering' due to bullying around accents, skin colour and being told to "go back to your own country" (p.269). All of these experiences were seen to be barriers to developing a sense of school belonging.

Theme 6: Curriculum / (extra) curricular activities

This theme focuses on understanding the importance of the impact that curriculum opportunities have on developing understanding of others, as well as how extracurricular activities can impact a sense of school belonging.

Facilitators

Several studies noted the value of lunch time and after school clubs in allowing opportunities to develop both practical and social skills and the time to build relationships with others who may share similar interests (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2023). Three studies (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013) noted the importance of curriculum opportunities in school to help foster a sense of belonging. Students from these studies suggested that activities such as the Christmas play, musicals and whole school celebrations (e.g. Diwali) help you to feel like you are "[...] part of something...something big" (Cullinane, 2016, p.114). In line with this, Martin et al. (2023) commented that pupils felt a greater sense of belonging when teachers took the time to ask questions about their culture and history and then make adaptations to the curriculum linked to these interactions. Five studies commented that success in lessons through the use of interactive games (Bouchard & Berg, 2017), hands on and accessible activities and

lessons (Cullinane, 2016; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018) developed their sense of connectedness. Cullinane (2016) also found that being able to express opinions and knowing that there was not always a right or wrong response (for example, in a Religious Education debate) led to more engagement in lessons which impacted connectedness. Students in two studies (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016) agreed that bonding activities throughout the year would help develop a greater sense of belonging (instead of ice-breaker games in the first lesson only). Students shared that recognition of the skills gained from activities outside of the school (e.g. volunteering as a radio announcer) developed their sense of connectedness in school. The value of affordable school trips was also commented on as a great way to have more opportunities to socialise with people you may not normally mix with (Cullinane, 2016). Sobitan (2022) asked a student how they felt about going on school trips to which they responded, “I feel more at home” (p.268).

Barriers

One study (Cullinane, 2016) reported several barriers linked to this theme. They found that gaining poor exam results, exam stress and not understanding curriculum content impacted a student’s sense of belonging. There was frustration that teachers gave “[...] No recognition if you went up 2 or 4%” (p.116) in a test. One pupil with dyslexia commented that they felt their peers were annoyed with them if they had to read aloud in class due to their slow reading speed. Students also shared that streaming (being placed in ability groups) led to fewer opportunities to excel academically and

socially. This was in part due to teachers' lower expectations of the students but also due to being with the same set of students all of the time. Finally, students in this study shared that they thought if others had a greater respect for religious views, a deeper sense of school belonging could be achieved. A push for an English only learning environment was noted as a barrier to a sense of belonging for some pupils (Martin et al., 2023). These pupils felt a lack of support in developing their mother tongue and felt that the school limited embracing a multi-language culture in preference for a mono-lingual environment (suggesting that it was important to develop a greater understanding of the English language).

Table 2.8*A Summary of Themes identified across the papers*

Study	Relationships					
	Adult-Student	Peer	Parental	Perceived Control	Community (Membership)	Curriculum ((Extra)Curricular Activities)
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	✓	✓				✓
Cullinane (2016)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	✓	✓			✓	✓
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	✓	✓			✓	
Garrelts (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jessup et al. (2018)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Keyes (2019)	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Martin et al. (2023)	✓	✓			✓	✓
Myles et al. (2019)	✓	✓			✓	
Pesonen et al. (2016)	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Shaw (2019)	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Sobitan (2022)	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	✓	✓				✓

2.5 Conclusion

This review explored thirteen studies which considered both facilitators and barriers for developing a sense of school belonging in school aged pupils.

The studies in this review included mainstream students as well as students with additional learning needs as this is reflective of a typical classroom in the United Kingdom. Each of these studies utilised (at least in part) a qualitative method to gain an insight into the lived experiences of the students they were seeking to understand. Four studies (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Myles et al., 2019; Sobitan, 2022) gained a high score for WoE D whilst the others gained a medium score. This indicates that the methodology was appropriate and relevant to this review question. The results indicated in the six themes show a variety of facilitators and barriers which can impact a student's sense of school belonging. Across the studies, the importance of relationship was highlighted as key in developing a sense of school belonging. Through consideration of the many views gathered, it is clear that, although there are themes that occur, there is much crossover between these themes, and that the golden thread seems to be linked to relationship. This involves relationship between: adults and students, peers, yourself (perceived control), membership in your community, parents (and how they engage with you in schooling) and your relationship to the curriculum and extracurricular activities (as shown in Table 2.7).

The results of these studies show that, despite coming from different populations, there is a commonality in what students feel helps them belong to their school community. For example, although there were different adaptations required to ensure the curriculum was accessible (Cullinane,

2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Pesonen et al., 2016; Sobitan, 2022), all students appreciated adaptations being made through changes in teacher instruction, breaking down problems into manageable steps and the individualised scaffolding of support. These changes helped students feel like they had been listened to as individuals, ensured that the whole class was more likely to succeed together and encouraged risk-taking and mistake-making as part of the learning process. Thus, developing a safe learning environment. Adults who showed less care due to a lack of understanding around each individual student hindered the development of a sense of school belonging (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2023; Myles et al., 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016; Sobitan, 2022). The medium to strong WoE A score on the quality of the studies reviewed suggests that the conclusions reached based on these can be considered with a level of trust in their dependability. The studies reviewed offer a variety of adaptations to daily practise that could have a major impact on pupil's sense of school belonging (and all the benefits that come from this). Therefore, a focus on developing a greater understanding of how we develop a sense of school belonging among all students in our settings would be beneficial across all educational contexts. However, these review findings need to be understood in light of the limitations of the reviewed studies. Finally, the findings from a majority of included studies (Cullinane, 2016; Garrelts, 2016; Jessup et al., 2018; Martin et al, 2023; Pesonen et al., 2016; Sobitan, 2022) highlight the importance of gathering pupil voice and using the information to co-construct support for that student (e.g. via curriculum amendments, follow up with the pupils). Although recommendations can be drawn based on the themes identified,

school staff must continually hold each child and their context in mind so that they are ensuring we never lose the important sense of individuality within a community. The recognition of this individuality supports a young person's ability to be authentic and therefore truly accepted which allows for the development of a strong sense of school belonging (Brown, 2021).

2.6 Limitations

Several studies reviewed were undertaken in countries outside of the United Kingdom (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cullinane, 2016; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Durand & Blackwell, 2022; Einarsdottir et al., 2022; Jessup et al., 2018; Keyes, 2019; Pesonen et al., 2016). All of these studies are considered part of the OECD (OECD, 2021), however, there will be distinct variations in recommended teaching practices, cultural values and political priorities as well as slightly different transitional phases which limits the direct transferability of the results to the UK contexts. Therefore, further UK based research would be recommended to allow for a greater level of transferability. This study aimed to focus on a variety of student populations to consider commonality across students' responses. Although a strength of this review, it should be noted that pupils with additional needs and non-dominant backgrounds placed different emphases, in comparison to mainstream peers with no identifiable additional need, on what facilitated or hindered their sense of school belonging. Therefore, further research into specific populations should be considered an important next step so that we can gain a more in-depth understanding of how to support some of our more potentially vulnerable pupils.

2.7 Recommendations for further research

Based on these papers alone, there are many areas to consider for further research. Sobitan (2022) highlighted the BPSEM which considered the biological/individual factors, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem and how all of these interact to contribute positively or negatively to a sense of belonging. Considering the impact of government policy, such as Operation Vaken (Home Office, 2013) dubbed Theresa May's 'Go Home' vans (Hattenstone, 2018) and how these policies filter into the attitudes of communities and school would be helpful to understand considering one pupils fear of deportation and others being told to go back to their own country (also noted in Martin et al., 2023). Developing a greater understanding of the impact of school clubs, trips and extracurricular activities and how they influence school belonging could be a helpful way to engage certain pupils in school, therefore reducing exclusions. Research should also consider the importance of variety in the curriculum (rather than a focus on the traditional core subjects) as many pupils highlighted benefitting from a chance to succeed in 'non-academic' areas and gaining insight from debates. Further consideration could also be given to the transition process between primary and secondary (and between year groups) alongside a more developed programme of 'getting to know you' activities across the school each year and how this impacts a students' sense of belonging. This may be particularly useful to help school staff know how to welcome pupils who start mid-year (such as those who have recently joined many schools due to the Ukrainian refugee crisis). Sobitan (2022) noted that some refugee

pupils enjoyed being together with others of a similar background whereas some avoided this as it led to further bullying and detachment. It would benefit school staff to have a greater understanding of how best to support diverse communities. A recent study by Shi and Watkinson (2019) considered how best to support English language learners in developing a sense of school belonging for the purpose of increasing academic success in their students. They recommended that an adapted form of bibliotherapy which is culturally sensitive may be a helpful intervention to develop this sense of belonging in the students. This, alongside other potential interventions identified by Allen et al. (2022) as efficacious would warrant further research.

2.8 Recommendations for Educational Psychologists practice

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are well placed in the school environment to offer evidence-based guidance to schools and having a deeper understanding of the facilitators and barriers for students' sense of school belonging would enable them to advise schools on how best to build this. A key area that EPs could develop is their use of systemic, whole school training to consider areas such as: developing relationships in school (across the six themes explored in this review) and staff training on working with children who have SEND or are from non-dominant backgrounds (including cultural and religious understanding as this was highlighted as an area of need in Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Whiteman, 2005). Further, evidence-based training regarding whole school policies, particularly in settings with 'zero-tolerance' behaviour policies would benefit schools and reduce the barriers

that these can place on a sense of school belonging (which may also impact exclusion rates). Another important area for EPs to consider is that of multi-agency work. It was noted in this review that students valued having their voice heard when adults worked together. Therefore, a priority for EPs amongst the increasing workload and challenges faced is to keep the voice of the child central to their work at all times, encouraging other practitioners to do so also.

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Chapter Three: Empirical Paper

Medicine for the soul: What are the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engaged in whole class bibliotherapy?

3.1 Abstract

The aim of the current study was to explore the emotional benefits of a whole class, six-week bibliotherapy intervention and to consider if it supports in the reduction of anxiety and increases a sense of school belonging and the impact this intervention has on teaching staff who were the interventionists.

The study also aimed to explore the overall views of pupils and staff who partook in the intervention. Children completed anxiety and sense of school belonging measures (pre, post and follow up) whilst staff completed a wellbeing measure (pre/post) online. They then participated in a six-week intervention exploring three picture books covering themes of friendship, jealousy and change and explored key coping strategies linked to cognitive behaviour techniques. Children and staff then partook in separate focus groups, analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, to gain an understanding of their overall experience of bibliotherapy. Findings suggest that there was a trend in anxiety reduction but no significant difference, whilst no difference was found on the sense of school belonging measure.

However, qualitative data suggest that both children and staff enjoyed the intervention, that it supported them in their understanding of themselves and others and that coping strategies taught were both useful and applicable to other situations. Strengths and limitations of the research are discussed and considerations for implications of EP practice and future research have been explored.

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 A Brief History of Bibliotherapy

The ancient philosopher Cicero, in sharing his thoughts on the mental benefits of being alone with books used the phrase “*medicina animae* (medicine for the soul)” (Lutz, 1978) suggesting that, even early in our history, the positive impact of reading had been noted. McDaniel (1956) suggests we may owe the first patient libraries to religious endeavour, as historically, many religious books (the Bible and Koran) were bought for patients to read whilst in hospital due to the idea that reading ‘*might make us better men*’ (p. 586). According to McNicol and Brewster (2018) , the main idea behind bibliotherapy is that “information, guidance and solace can be found through reading” (p.14). We can develop this purpose with the work of Kanewischer (2013) who includes the idea that bibliotherapy can allow for the discussion of emotions, model differing attitudes, allow for a sense that others experience similar problems and offer possible solutions.

Bibliotherapy, a term first coined by Samuel Crothers (1916), is a field that has developed within the last century (McNicol & Brewster, 2018). Prior to the 1940s, a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts were utilised to support individuals (McNicol & Brewster, 2021). However, since then, the medical profession seems to have taken over the use of bibliotherapy, particularly within the UK. The medical model in the UK works on the basis that GPs and other health professionals are able to recommend self-help books in conjunction with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to treat conditions such as anxiety and depression (Fitzpatrick, 2021). This can be linked with

third sector organisations such as 'Books on Prescription' (Brewster, 2009) or the 'Reading Well' Scheme (The Reading Agency, 2024). It is also possible that, through local libraries, an individual can self-prescribe a text to support them in a time of need (Merga, 2022). In recent years, this has been extended to 13-18 year olds through the 'Reading Well for Young People' scheme (Walworth, 2018).

3.2.2 Bibliotherapy in the education sector

There are many possible reasons that the education sector has not harnessed the potential of bibliotherapy. For example, the use of the term therapy may put some educators off as it is not their role to be therapists (Weld, 2023), it may be considered by some to detract from the purpose of reading a book for educational purposes (although it could be argued that developing a love of reading comes from true engagement with a text, something central to bibliotherapy) and it may simply be that there is not enough time in the school day. However, teachers regularly use texts to engage children in new or unfamiliar situations or in ones that children are currently experiencing. If teachers were aware that they were already on the journey towards a bibliotherapeutic approach, were able to access high quality CBT based resources and felt equipped then maybe the use of bibliotherapy would become common practice in education. This is where the role of the EP is extremely useful. EPs are in a position to support schools in this because of their background in education and in applying psychology effectively to support the learning and well-being of children and young

people. Developing an understanding of the use of bibliotherapy in UK schools would be beneficial for EPs as it would give them another beneficial tool to offer to schools which allows for an effective use of resources. This is particularly necessary now due to the increase in mental health challenges in young people (Soneson et al., 2020; Walworth, 2018). With the EPs unique understanding of psychology and education, we are in a prime position to develop resources around good practice already in schools to the benefit of the children and staff.

3.2.3 Evidence on the usefulness of bibliotherapy

Evidence suggests bibliotherapy may assist individuals in coping with traumatic life changes, emotional issues and behavioural challenges (Gangi & Barowsky, 2009; Jack & Ronan, 2008; Wheeler, 2007). This occurs through shared discussion around feelings, attitudes, values and shared problem-solving. Shared discussion around a text is considered to be as important as the text itself (Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 2019). Many young people can develop maladaptive coping strategies and bibliotherapy can help rectify this (Green, 2006). This is achieved through identification with the experiences shared through the text and associations with characters. Reading helps children explore their feelings and attitudes, develop their understanding of the world around them, can increase self-esteem and provide comfort and coping strategies with challenging experiences. Stories enable us to explore the complexity of emotions without the emotions becoming too much for us to cope with (Oatley, 1999). Immersion in a story

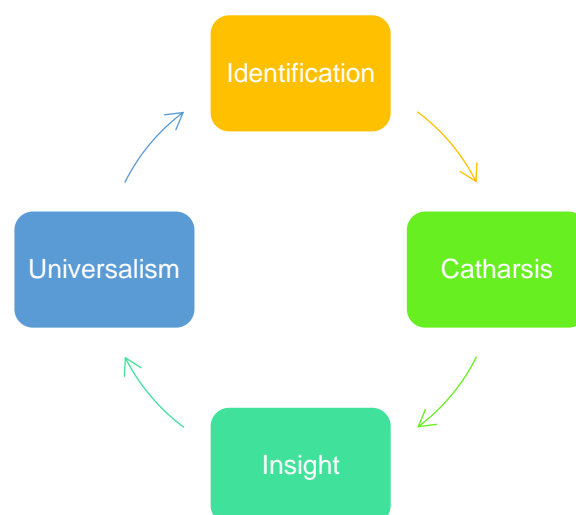
can allow individuals to experience the perspectives of others (Green, 2006; Palmer, 1992). McNicol (2018) states, “although the text is fictional, it can feel immediately very real when read aloud, prompting participants to shift from outward attention to inward attention as they review their own experiences in the light of the literary context” (p.35). In an exploration of ‘transportation’ into a text, three key outcomes are noted: ‘creating connection with characters; reducing counterarguments; and making narrative events seem more like real experiences.’ (McNicol, 2018, p.27).

3.2.4 Theoretical underpinnings of bibliotherapy

There are a number of theoretical underpinnings to bibliotherapy. One approach is the psychodynamic model which suggests four stages for bibliotherapy which are identification, catharsis, insight and universalism (McNicol, 2018; Stewart & Ames, 2014).

Figure 3.1

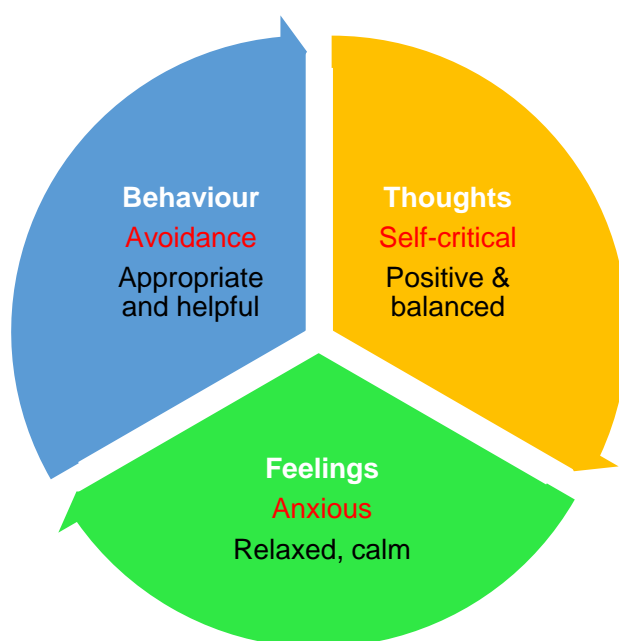
The Stages of Bibliotherapy (Stewart & Ames, 2014)



Another approach for bibliotherapy includes the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Brewster & McNicol, 2021). CBT as a theory was developed by Aaron Beck (Beck, 1989) and focuses on the interaction between our thoughts, emotions and behaviours (Fenn & Byrne, 2013). CBT encompasses a variety of broad approaches and models which have been adapted to help with different problems. The key to grasping CBT is that it is underpinned by the understanding that our ‘thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all linked’ (Miller, 2022, p.20). These can create a functional or dysfunctional thought cycle as shown in Figure 3.2 . Evidence suggests that CBT is an effective form of treatment in reducing symptoms of anxiety in young people (James et al., 2015) as well as a range of other emotional problems (Stallard, 2021). Canty describes how the process of using the talking therapy and CBT techniques can be utilised as part of the bibliotherapy process (2017). A CBT approach to bibliotherapy would be directive, enabling the participants to consider specific situations and move beyond negative automatic thoughts (NATs). This links to a coaching approach which can be utilised within a CBT model (Miller, 2022).

Figure 3.2

The CBT Cycle (adapted from Stallard, 2019, p.7).



Note. The red text indicates the dysfunctional cycle and the black text indicates the functional cycle of thinking.

The use of texts and exploratory questioning is common practice in many classrooms, often with a 'therapeutic' slant that teachers may not be aware of, for example, in reading 'The Koala Who Could' (Bright, 2017) and exploring how to overcome worries. This text is relatable for young audiences, non-threatening and allows for engagement in a difficult topic without it being burdensome for those listening. It helpfully covers themes of familiarity, the desire to try new things, life being out of control and the positives of change through a simple rhyming story. A variety of texts are being used in the classroom throughout the year already through English lessons, whole class reading, guided reading and PSHE lessons, for example. Therefore, developing teacher practice in this area, to make it more

intentional, could have many beneficial effects on the children in the class with minimal additional teacher effort.

The field of bibliotherapy and its use with children has very little empirical research to show its usefulness (De Vries et al., 2017), and the majority of research seems to be based in American settings. In America, bibliotherapy has been used in grammar schools to work with 'socially maladjusted children' since the mid-1940s (McCulliss, 2012) and is seen to be a non-threatening way to engage children in difficult problems. Historically, medicine has 'owned' bibliotherapy and this research aims to be a catalyst to engage the UK education system in the approach. To consider the benefits of bibliotherapy in UK schools, research needs to be conducted in UK based settings. This research is an important original study as there appears to be no research considering the use of bibliotherapy with UK school settings. It is particularly important now, for a variety of reasons. The mental health challenges that many young people face, particularly anxiety (Mazzone et al., 2007), have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Racine et al., 2021) and bibliotherapy may be an effective intervention to add to a school's repertoire of support (Tukhareli et al., 2018). Reading for pleasure helps reduce anxiety (McNicol, 2018) and stress, especially if you are a regular reader (Billington, 2015). Also, with the teacher retention crisis continuing to be a prevailing issue (Bateman, 2022), it is important to consider ways to help teachers stay in the profession and support their personal wellbeing. Developing skills in CBT through bibliotherapy may also have a positive impact on the staff delivering such interventions. Bibliotherapy interventions, if effective, would be useful for EPs as they can be implemented with minimal

cost and training, something necessary considering the lack of time in schools for staff and the lack of funding in our schools.

3.2.5 Rationale

The research proposes to examine the psychological benefits of bibliotherapy in both primary aged children and their teachers. The use of texts and exploratory questions are common practice in UK classrooms, however, there is no research of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy with children in the UK. Therefore, this research hopes to develop the work started in American class settings and ‘kick start’ research in UK class settings. This will begin to provide an evidence base for bibliotherapy interventions in the UK classroom. Glazzard and Rose (2019) suggest that children know when their teachers are not ok (even if the teacher is trying to shield the children from this) and that children then focus on supporting the teacher to feel better when they are stressed. This can impact the children’s ability to learn, as suggested by Glazzard and Rose (2019), “Relationships are one of the most important aspects of school for primary school children. The relationship that they build up with their classroom teacher is key to their ability to learn. When this is disrupted, so are their chances to progress and attain their full potential” (p.40). Riley et al. (2020) note from their research the importance of staff sense of belonging too. This strong sense of belonging helps teachers to be more creative and confident, to be more likely to stay in a school setting and to have a greater sense of wellbeing and agency. Considering the long term impact of school closures over the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s mental health, the importance of developing wellbeing in schools should be receiving

more attention (Mazrekaj & De Witte, 2023). Therefore, a focus on developing pupil and staff wellbeing will be beneficial for the learning environment as a whole. Shi & Watkinson (2019) indicate that bibliotherapy can be a useful approach to developing a sense of school belonging in the classroom.

This study aims to explore whether a whole-class bibliotherapy intervention has an impact on a child's sense of belonging and feelings of anxiety as well as on teachers' sense of wellbeing. The following section will explain the design and procedure as well as the 'Medicine for the Soul' intervention process, the results of the intervention and recommendations based on these.

3.2.6 Research Questions

1. To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy create a deeper sense of belonging within the classroom?
2. To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy decrease any sense of anxiety within the classroom?
3. To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy increase a teacher's sense of personal wellbeing?
4. To explore the views of children and teaching staff who participate in bibliotherapy

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Design

For this study, a mixed methods sequential explanatory control design was used as this method utilises the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Ivankova et al., 2006). McBride et al. (2019) note that the use of mixed methods designs has increased recently, in part because the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods produces a reliable source of information, as the method combines ‘in depth, contextual views of qualitative research with the broader generalisations of larger population quantitative approaches’ (p. 696). This method is particularly appropriate for this study as it is possible to interpret the quantitative data through a qualitative lens. This offers the opportunity to gain a much richer understanding of the data collected and may help develop further focus group questions in addition to those considered prior to the quantitative data collection (see Figure 5).

3.3.2 Participants

The G*Power programme (Erdfelder et al., 2009) was used to calculate the sample size needed to achieve a small effect size of 0.15 (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2018). A sample size of 90 was necessary for a small effect size. An opportunity sampling method was utilised through my work with link schools in a Local Authority in South East England. This method allowed access to a sample through the researcher’s own knowledge of a local population (Brady, 2011) and offered flexibility to gain a sample when practical considerations

such as population access are challenging (Farrugia, 2019). During planning meetings with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) I explained the project and asked them to consider whether they would like to participate. It was also shared that participation in the project would not affect my involvement with them as their link Educational Psychologist (EP). Several SENCOs expressed interest in the project; however, only two followed up and accepted the invitation to participate. Further information was shared regarding participation, gaining consent and the project as a whole. These took the form of a participant information sheet (Appendix F) and template emails that could be shared with staff and parents (Appendix G). The staff for the intervention group were introduced to the project, basic cognitive behaviour approaches (CBA) (as these were explored within the intervention activities) and an outline to the timeline in a twilight training session (Appendix H). In this session the purpose of the project was reiterated, as was the timeline and the measures which were to be utilised. Staff were able to reflect on the measures and ask any questions they had relating to them.

All participants were in lower key stage 2 (LKS2, ages 7-9 years) and from primary schools in Southeast England. LKS2 was targeted as these year groups are not as pressured for time relating to SATs preparation and transition to Secondary School. This increased the likelihood of gaining participants, as there was a greater potential for deviation from the standard curriculum (which would allow for the intervention to take place). Also, it was hoped that targeting LKS2 with strategies for coping with feelings of anxiety would enabled the participants to be equipped for the potentially more

anxiety inducing years in Upper Key Stage 2 (Bradbury, 2019; Jerrim, 2021) and the transition to secondary school (Rice et al., 2011). For phase one (quantitative phase), child participants for the intervention group were made up of two Year Three classes ($n= 57$), $n= 26$ *viable at follow up and $n=32$ viable for pre/post) from a mixed, Church of England, voluntary aided primary school with 6.9% of children in the school eligible for free school meals (FSM). Teachers formed the group of adult participants. Participants for the control group were from two Year Four classes. Originally there were 60 participants, however, five were removed due to an incomplete dataset ($n= 55$) from a mixed, Catholic, voluntary aided primary school with 13.3% of children in the school eligible for FSM. Further demographic information can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Demographic Characteristics of the child participants

	Intervention (n) (Year 3)	Control (n) (Year 4)
White British	45	24
White and Asian	2	1
White and Black Caribbean	1	2
White European	1	8
Indian	1	8
Any other mixed background	5	5
Any other ethnic group	1	1
White and Black African	1	0
Black African	0	2
Black Caribbean	0	2
White Irish	0	1

Chinese	0	1
Male	29	27
Female	28	28
Total Participants	57	55

The staff participants ($n=2$) were self-selecting as, after an introduction to the project, they consented to participate. The intervention school staff were particularly keen to participate in the project as they had recognised greater levels of anxiety and friendship issues in the year group. Staff felt that this was due to missed social opportunities in earlier years caused by the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also shared that reading was a priority on the school development plan.

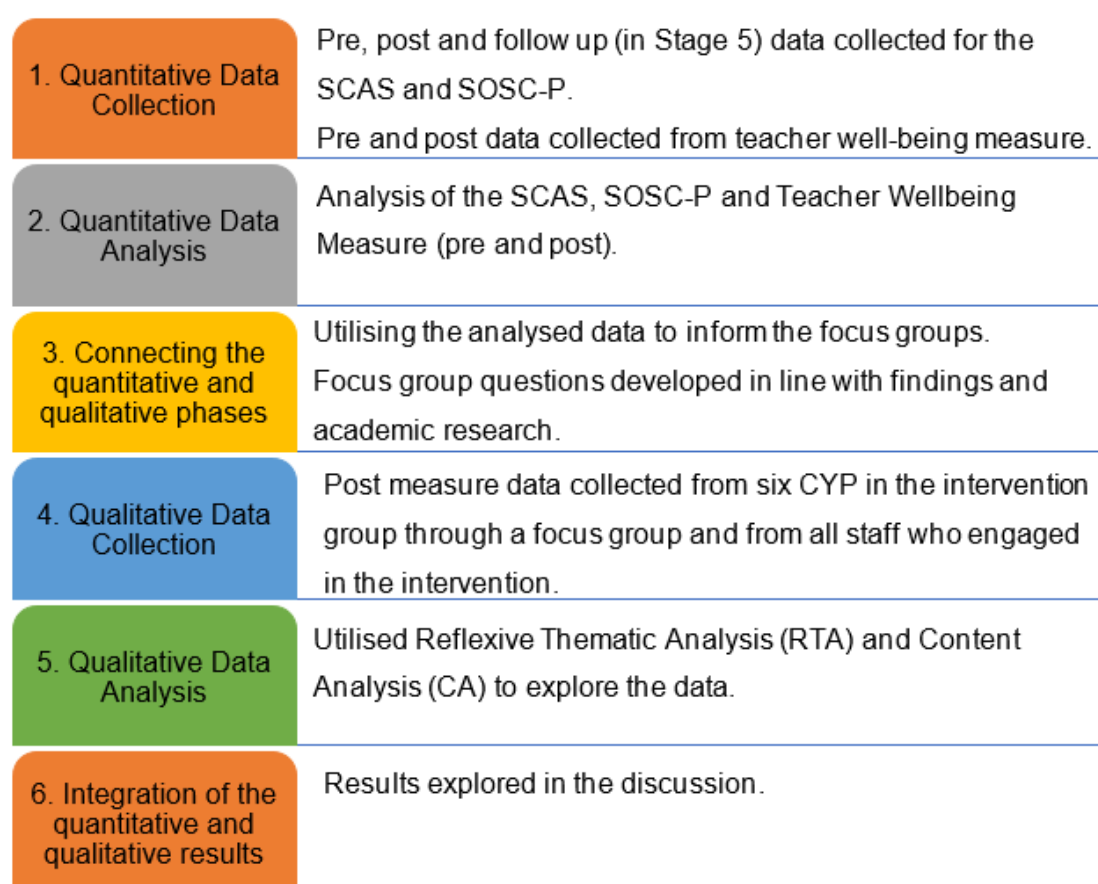
For the quantitative stage, a total of 117 participants were recruited utilising the opt-out approach. Teachers consented to the project on behalf of the children (although parents were given the opportunity to withdraw their child if they wished) as part of the PSHE curriculum (Appendix I). For the qualitative stage, as the total number of participants was over what was necessary for a focus group (Braun & Clarke, 2013), child participants were asked by their teachers if they would like to participate in the focus group. Of the children that volunteered, six were randomly chosen (three boys and three girls) by teachers. Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend between 2-4 participants in focus groups, however, other researchers note that up to 10 participants, known as a 'full group' (Lavrakas, 2008), can be acceptable dependent on the groups expertise and feelings around the topic being explored (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Due to participants having been involved in bibliotherapy for six weeks, it was felt that a group of six children would be sufficient to give a

broad reflection on the experience whilst offering a small enough group space for in depth sharing if participants wished to. For the teacher focus group, staff consented prior to the start of the study to participate in a short, online focus group to discuss their experience of the project and any impact on their wellbeing. Two teachers were chosen to participate as they conducted the intervention in the class.

3.3.3 Procedure

Figure 3.3

A visual representation of the mixed methods sequential explanatory design process (Ivankova et al., 2006, p.16)



Stage 1: Quantitative Data Collection

Three measures were used to gain a score for anxiety, school belonging (RQ1 and RQ2) and a sense of staff wellbeing (RQ3). The information gathered was then considered in the development of questions asked within the focus groups for pupils and class teachers (RQ4).

The Sense of School Community Scale Primary (SOSCS-P) (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009).

The SOSCS-P is a 38-item questionnaire and was administered to assess the class's overall sense of school belonging. This was chosen due to its appropriateness for use with primary-aged children as well as its high level of internal consistency for the primary scale (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009).

The software package SPSS (Reliability module; Cronbach's alpha model) was utilised to investigate the internal consistency of the measure. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Reliability ratings for SOSCS-P measure

Time Point	Intervention		Control	
	α	n	α	n
Pre-Intervention	.877	57	.896	58
Post intervention	.844	41	.919	56
Follow up	.905	44	--	--

Note. An alpha score of .80 or higher is considered 'good' (Barker, 2016).

Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)

The SCAS is a 44-item questionnaire exploring children's anxiety (Spence, 1997). It was used to give a quantitative measure of the individuals' level of anxiety which will be considered pre and post intervention as well as after a follow-up period. However, to ensure the appropriateness and usefulness of the measure, adaptations were made. Questions related to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and physical injury fear were removed due to their lack of relevance to the research. There are six positive filler items which are not scored within the overall measure (questions 11, 17, 26, 31, 38 & 43). This resulted in a 27-item questionnaire being used to gain an overall anxiety score. The software package SPSS (Reliability module; Cronbach's alpha model) was utilised to investigate the internal consistency of the measure. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Reliability ratings for the updated SCAS measure

Time Point	Intervention		Control	
	α	n	α	n
Pre-Intervention	.930	57	.917	59
Post intervention	.925	43	.925	57
Follow up	.929	51	--	--

Note. An alpha score of .80 or higher is considered 'good' (Barker, 2016).

The Wellbeing Measurement for Schools: Staff Survey (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), 2008).

This survey focuses on what could be changed within a staff member's life by measuring wellbeing and stress. This measure was used as it asks questions

regarding the staff member's knowledge and confidence in supporting children with their own mental health challenges as well as providing an overall perceived stress score.

Table 3.4

A visual representation of the data collection schedule

	Intervention Group	Control Group	Staff (intervention & control)
Baseline Measures	SOSC-P & SCAS (n=32)	SOSC-P & SCAS (n=55)	SWEMWBS (n=4)
Intervention Period/ TAU	SOSC-P & SCAS (n=32)	SOSC-P & SCAS (n=55)	SWEMWBS (n=2)
Follow-Up	SOSC-P & SCAS (n/a)	None	None

Note. *Treatment as usual (TAU).

Stage 2: Quantitative Data Analysis

Data from the SOSC-P and SCAS were analysed using a two by two ANOVA to explore the variation within groups (e.g. levels of anxiety and sense of school belonging) and between groups (intervention vs. control group). By using an ANOVA, we will be reducing the likelihood of type 1 error (Kim, 2017). G*Power is a statistical power analysis program which provides a suggested appropriate sample size. This allows for results to provide more accurate estimates enabling a greater likelihood of evidence based suggestions to be made from the research data (Erdfelder et al., 2009; Kang,

2021). Data from the Wellbeing Measurement for Schools was analysed by hand and descriptive data was recorded.

Stage 3: Connecting the quantitative and qualitative phases

Data from the SOSC-P and SCAS was considered and analysed at an individual level. All responses to individual questions were analysed to give a separate individual sense of school belonging and anxiety score. Responses to questions were then considered and utilised in the development of an updated list of questions for the focus groups. These questions were considered by another Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) who had experience as a class teacher and SENCO. This led to the final set of questions outlined in Appendix J. Data from the Wellbeing Measurement for Schools was also considered in the development of focus group questions to be used with staff.

Stage 4: Qualitative Data Collection

Six pupils across Year 3 were recruited to participate in an hour-long focus group to gain a more detailed understanding of their sense of belonging and levels of anxiety in school as well as their overall experience of the bibliotherapy. From the class, certain children were removed from the recruitment, as they preferred not to participate in the focus group. Therefore, teachers recruited a convenience sample of volunteers. Clear guidelines were given to the children regarding the process of a focus group and children were given multiple opportunities to share their thoughts. Audio of the pupils was recorded using the 'Sound Recorder' app via a laptop and a

Sony ICD-PX333 voice recorder. This was to ensure that a clear recording of the children could be taken and provided an additional opportunity to check clarity when sound was muffled. Two teachers were selected to take part in the teacher focus group as they were the members of staff involved in the delivery of the intervention. This was conducted and recorded via MS Teams.

Stage 5: Qualitative Data Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was chosen as the method for qualitative analysis because it is proven to be a helpful way to identify themes (or patterns) from a qualitative data set and useful in enabling researchers to gain a deeper understanding of participant's experiences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Reflexive Thematic Analysis also allows for the researcher's subjectivity to be considered a resource in the process of analysis and knowledge production (Braun et al., 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2022). The six phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

The Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Phase	Description	Application of phase / What I did
1: Familiarising yourself with the data set	Immersing yourself in the data through (re)reading transcripts/ listening to audio files and noting thoughts.	Listened to the recordings several times whilst editing transcripts and begun noting

		areas of significance.
2: Coding	Systematic identification of interesting and relevant data and applying a relevant description (code label).	Used NVivo 14 (NVivo, 2023) to create codes.
3: Generation of initial themes	Generation of candidate themes through the compilation of codes with a shared broader concept.	Printed and compiled codes manually and then organised these using a word processor.
4: Developing and reviewing themes	Consideration (based on the full data set) that themes make sense within extracts and the full data set. Revision of themes if necessary. Consideration of existing knowledge and the relationship between themes.	Check codes against extracts and within the context of the entire transcript and considered links between potential themes.
5: Refining, defining and naming themes	Consideration of how themes fit the overall story of the data and creating a definition for each theme.	Organised themes into a table using a word processor and considered overarching themes.
6: Writing up	Create a 'coherent and persuasive story about the dataset that addresses your research question' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.36).	

To consider the views gathered from class teachers, a conventional content analysis method was utilised (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is a

way to explore meaning from verbal, written or video communication (Baxter, 2020; Bengtsson, 2016). A focus group was used to gather data exploring the experience of the two members of staff involved in delivering the intervention. The process for analysing this data can be found in Appendix T.

Stage 6: Integration of the quantitative results and qualitative findings

Considerations of trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important to show that a study has been conducted in a clear, systematic, logical manner to ensure confidence in the recommendations made by the findings (Nowell et al., 2017). This is achieved through a variety of considerations which will now be explored.

Credibility refers to the ability to recognise how the researcher's interpretation has been drawn from the data gathered (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1984) suggest a variety of ways to show credibility including continued engagement, peer debriefing and member checking, all of which were utilised in this research. It is important to note that Thomas (2017) states that member checking is not a useful tool for increasing research quality in theory development but may still be justified if used to ensure accuracy of participants views, although this relies on the underlying assumption that the participants know what their views are. Although peer debriefing is an often-used approach to ensure credibility in qualitative research, the validations that come from such an approach may be influenced by power dynamics,

social desirability or limited understanding, and therefore should be considered with caution (Ahmed, 2024).

Transferability refers to how generalisable the research is (Nowell et al., 2017). This is achieved through detailed descriptions of the findings so that others can properly consider their use in other settings. This was achieved through clear descriptions of the themes and linked quotations.

Dependability refers to a clear and logical research pathway that is laid out by the researcher for the reader to follow. This can be achieved by clearly laying out the logic (or an audit trail) underlying decisions made by the researcher across the research process (from theoretical underpinnings to decision making in the methodology) (Koch, 1994).

Confirmability is met when 'credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved' (Nowell et al., 2017, p3). It depends upon how clearly the findings are embedded in the dataset.

3.3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the project was given by University College London (UCL) Research Ethics Committee (project ID: Z6364106/2022/09/49) on 11th November 2022 (Appendix L). Approval was also sought from the Local Authority Principal Educational Psychologist (Appendix M) and was granted on 19th October 2022 (with the condition of UCL ethical approval). The BPS ethical guidelines for Human Research Ethics were observed throughout the

research (Oates et al., 2021). Ethical considerations are detailed in Appendix N and brief consideration is found in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Principle	Actions taken
Risk	Consideration was made with regards to participant vulnerability, support necessary for participants who rated as highly anxious and teachers who presented with wellbeing concerns. The books used as part of the intervention were also from major publishers and available in local libraries and bookshops and were therefore considered appropriate for use with children. Concern was expressed by staff that parents might feel apprehensive regarding the use of the word 'anxiety', therefore the term 'anxiety' was replaced by the word 'worry' except for on the name of the anxiety scale.
Valid Consent	Informed consent was gained by class teachers via an online consent form after the sharing of an information sheet and the opportunity to clarify understanding in a twilight training session. Parents were sent an information sheet regarding the research and how to opt-out. Children's assent was gained via the children watching a YouTube video explaining their participation in the project and staff sharing that participation was voluntary.
Confidentiality	Minimal personal information was collected and all necessary information was pseudonymised. Information was only shared with the SENCO if children rated highly in their anxiety scores so that appropriate support could be put in place if the SENCO deemed this appropriate. The lawful basis used to process personal data was

	performance of a task in the public interest and the lawful basis used to process special category personal data was for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.
Giving advice	Advice was not explicitly given during the intervention; however, Cognitive Behavioural approaches were explored within a whole-class context. Weekly supervision was offered to teaching staff running the intervention to explore questions or concerns rising from the sessions. Teachers were given information regarding wellbeing support as part of the wellbeing survey and SENCOs were contacted if children presented as highly anxious so that standard school procedure and support could be initiated if deemed necessary.
Deception	No deception was involved in the process.
Debriefing	Teachers were debriefed at the end of their focus groups (as were participants in the pupil focus group). Teachers were also provided with a simple debrief video thanking the children for their participation which could be shared with the class.

3.3.5 Measures and Data Collection

Quantitative Phase

The following measures were used for the pre, post and follow-up data collection in the quantitative phase:

The Sense of School Community Scale Primary (SOSCS-P) (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). The SOSCS-P is a 38-item questionnaire exploring an individual's overall sense of school belonging. This was chosen due to its appropriateness for use with primary-aged children as well as its high level of

internal consistency for the primary scale (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). Overall scores were taken from an average of individual pupil's scores (n/amount of pupils in class). The subscale, question numbers and example questions can be seen in Table 3.7 and a more detailed example is found in Appendix O. To minimise the impact of cognitive overload in the 38 items, the online questionnaire only showed a maximum of five statements at a time (Lovell, 2020).

Table 3.7

A breakdown of the Sense of School Community Scale Primary

Subscale	Question Numbers	Example Statement
Classroom Supportiveness	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	Pupils in my class are willing to go out of their way to help someone
School Supportiveness	15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28	Teachers and pupils treat each other with respect at the school
Classroom Autonomy	29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 10	In my class I am able to do the things I want to do

Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS). The original SCAS is a 44-item questionnaire exploring children's anxiety (Spence, 1997). The SCAS is considered a reliable and valid measure (Essau et al., 2002; Spence, 2018). It was used to give a quantitative measure of the individual's level of anxiety which will be considered pre and post intervention as well as after a follow up period. However, to ensure the appropriateness and usefulness of the measure, adaptations were made (as highlighted above). This also allowed

for a reduction in the overall amount of questions the children were responding to. This resulted in a 27-item questionnaire being used to gain an overall anxiety score. A Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .900$) was calculated to assess the reliability of the new overall anxiety scale (Field, 2018) and was considered to show a good level of reliability (Barker, 2016). The subscale, question numbers and example questions can be seen in Table 3.8 and a more detailed example is found in Appendix P. To minimise the impact of cognitive overload in the 27 items, the online questionnaire only showed a maximum of five statements at a time (Lovell, 2020).

Table 3.8

A breakdown of the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale

Subscale	Question Numbers	Example Statement
Separation Anxiety	5, 8, 12, 15, 16, 44	I would feel afraid of being on my own at home
Social Phobia	6, 7, 9, 10, 29, 35	I feel scared when I have to take a test
Panic/agoraphobia	13, 21, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39	I suddenly feel as if I can't breathe when there is no reason for this
Generalized anxiety	1, 3, 4, 20, 22, 24	When I have a problem, I get a funny feeling in my stomach

Note. This information is from <https://www.scaswebsite.com/portfolio/scas-child-scoring-and-interpretation/>

The *Wellbeing Measurement for Schools: Staff Survey* (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), 2008). The WEMWBS is a

valid and reliable measure (Tennant et al., 2007) with high internal validity within a UK general population (Ng Fat et al., 2017). This measure is split into three sections as shown in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9

A breakdown of the SWEMWBS

Section	Measure	Linked Measure
1	Staff wellbeing	1a. SWEMWBS ^a 1b. Perceived Stress Scale
2	Setting attitudes to staff wellbeing and the culture within the setting	These sections are not linked to other measures and instead aim to inform the school how well supported their staff are feeling, what particular areas of improvement might be and to identify the professional development needs of staff.*
3	Staff knowledge of children and young people's mental health and staff confidence in providing support to pupils and families.	

Note. *This information came from personal communication from the Wellbeing

Measurement for Schools Team at the Anna Freud Centre. ^a "Short Warwick Edinburgh

Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and

University of Edinburgh, 2008, all rights reserved."

This survey focuses on what could be changed within a staff member's life by measuring wellbeing and stress. The key reason this measure was used was that it asks questions regarding staff's own knowledge and confidence in supporting children with their own mental health challenges.

All measures were administered online using Microsoft Forms. For measures completed by children (SOSCS-P and SCAS), teachers were available to read out any questions and help children who might not have understood a particular question. Children accessed the measure by scanning a QR code using school tablets.

Qualitative Phase

Focus group questions were developed based on the research questions and informed by the quantitative data. Considerations were made regarding the anxiety and belonging scales and the changes in responses post intervention. The aim of the focus group was to allow participants to voice their experience of exploring the three texts (Bright, 2017; Percival, 2022; Small, 2021). Focus groups, a method of collecting data from multiple participants through unstructured, guided social interaction, were used as an effective way to gather and explore views of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Examples of questions used in the focus group can be found in Appendix J. Both child and staff focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed utilising the online word transcription tool. These were then checked against the original recordings for accuracy.

3.3.6 Medicine for the soul intervention

Over 50 books were considered for the intervention and twenty-two were read in greater detail with considerations being made in areas such as age appropriateness, cost and availability, illustrations and attractiveness and overall message. As part of the selection process, potential questions to ask the children were written for the final 22 books and activities were noted

down. These were shared with a trainee EP with experience in using cognitive behavioural approaches to support children. Considerations were made around the appropriateness and relevance of the texts for the key theme explored in the book and the benefits of the questions and activities suggested (Appendix U). Ultimately, a six-session intervention was created using three children's books; *The Duck Who Didn't Like Water* (Small, 2021), *The Koala Who Could* (Bright, 2017) and *Milo's Monster* (Percival, 2022). A fourth book was considered, *Mooncat and Me* (Corry, 2022), but teachers thought it was too abstract for the children. Each book was explored over a two-week period (2 lessons per book, see Table 3.12 to ensure that there was enough time to engage with, explore and enjoy the text as well as complete the CBA related tasks. Lesson plans included the following:

- An introductory page including an explanation of how to use the plans, a book summary, a key theme and reflection space for staff.
- A one-page lesson plan for each lesson including which pages to read, related questions, linked activities and suggested timings for a 30- or 45-minute lesson.
- An appendix containing all linked activities.
- A PowerPoint was also provided for each book so teachers could share linked activities and basic instructions with the whole class easily. Videos were embedded into these PowerPoints for ease of access (Appendices Q, R & S).

Each lesson plan was developed by the researcher who had an eight-year teaching background spanning Reception to Year Six and each plan was

reviewed by two TEP's one of whom had been a SENCO and class teacher for 12 years and one who had been a teacher for two years. Linked activities were created using a variety of CBA resources and these were reviewed by a TEP who has two years' experience of being an Education Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP). Plans were also linked with the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum which enabled lessons to be part of the original curriculum, rather than having the need to find additional lesson time. Plans and resources were shared with teachers via a private link to Microsoft Office online which enabled embedded videos to work seamlessly. Lesson plans and resources were created to be as easily accessible as possible with minimal additional input needed by the teachers. The aim of this was to allow teachers to engage as fully as possible in the conversations explored within the lesson and to minimise any additional stress that might come from lesson planning.

Table 3.10

Texts used for intervention

Title	Key Theme	Week(s)	Lesson(s)	Appendix
The Duck Who Didn't Like Water	Friendship	1 & 2	1 & 2	Q
The Koala Who Could	Change	3 & 4	1 & 2	R
Milo's Monster	Jealousy	5 & 6	1 & 2	S

Table 3.11*Intervention Schedule*

Planned schedule			
<u>Baseline</u>	<u>Intervention</u>	<u>End of intervention</u>	<u>Follow up</u>
<u>Measures</u>		<u>measure</u>	<u>Measures</u>
24.02.23	24.02.23 - 31.03.23	31.03.23	12.05.23
24.02.23	(6 weeks)	31.03.23	12.05.23
<i>No intervention</i>			
Actual Schedule			
24.02.23	24.02.23 - 31.03.23	18.04.23*	26.05.23
27.04.23	(6 weeks)	15.06.23	(5 Week
<i>No intervention</i>			follow up)
			<i>No follow</i>
			<i>up</i>

Note. Writing in *italics* refers to the control group. *Two weeks after intervention due to Easter Break and staff illness).

3.4 Results

The following provides an outline of the statistical findings from the SCAS and SOSB measures. An exploration of the qualitative results is then provided through a Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) for the children's focus group and a content analysis for the teachers' focus group.

3.4.1 Statistical results*Children*

Of the 57 intervention participants, 32 provided pre-post intervention data. Many participants provided inconsistent data at follow up (some completed the SCAS and not the SOSCS-P or vice-versa) therefore 32 out of 57

intervention participants had only pre or post level data analysed. This is an attrition rate of 44%. There are many possible reasons for this including, for example, technological issues, absence from class and participating in other intervention groups.

Data analyses were completed using SPSS for RQ 1 and 2. Descriptive statistics were explored for RQ 3 and NVivo was used for RQ4.

The SCAS scores were analysed using a 2 x 2 mixed-ANOVA with the within-subjects factor of anxiety scores (pre/post scores) and the between-subjects factor of group (intervention vs control). There were no statistically significant main effects for pre or post anxiety $F(1,85) = .495, p .484$, or for intervention vs control $F(1,85) = .131, p .718$. There was no significant interaction between SCAS scores and group participation; $F(1,85) = 1.477, p .228$.

The SOSCS-P scores were analysed using a 2 x 2 mixed-ANOVA with the within-subjects factor of belonging scores (pre/post scores) and the between-subjects factor of group (intervention vs control). There were no statistically significant main effects for pre or post anxiety $F(1,85) = .831, p .364$, or for intervention vs control $F(1,85) = .819, p .368$. There was no significant interaction between SOSCS-P scores and group participation; $F(1,85) = .159, p .691$.

Teaching Staff

Descriptive data was provided by staff through completion of the SWEMWBS. This data showed no change post intervention. However, due to staff capacity, post intervention data was not able to be collected.

Table 3.12

Pre-Intervention results

Teacher	Sex	Intervention or Control	SWEMWBS		Perceived Stress Scale	
			Raw ^a	Metrics	Raw	Descriptor ^b
1	F	Intervention	27	24.11	8	Low stress
2	M	Intervention	21	19.25	20	Moderate Stress
3	F	Control	25	22.35	16	Moderate Stress
4	M	Control	22	19.98	16	Moderate Stress

Note. ^a Raw scores range between 7-35. A higher score is indicative of higher wellbeing. ^b

Scores ranging from 0-13 are considered low stress; 14-23 are considered moderate stress and 27-40 are considered high perceived stress. Further information on scoring can be found here: <https://d1uw1dikibnh8j.cloudfront.net/media/18956/wellbeing-measurement-for-schools-staff-survey-2023.pdf>

Table 3.13

Post-Intervention results

Teacher	Sex	Intervention or Control	SWEMWBS		Perceived Stress Scale	
			Raw ^a	Metrics	Raw	Descriptor ^b
1	F	Intervention	*	*	*	*
2	M	Intervention	*	*	*	*

3	F	Control	24	21.54	19	Moderate Stress
4	M	Control	26	23.21	19	Moderate Stress

Note. * Teachers in the intervention group did not complete post-intervention measures. ^a

Raw scores range between 7-35. A higher score is indicative of higher wellbeing. ^b Scores ranging from 0-13 are considered low stress; 14-23 are considered moderate stress and 27-40 are considered high perceived stress. Further information on scoring can be found here: <https://d1uw1dikibnh8j.cloudfront.net/media/18956/wellbeing-measurement-for-schools-staff-survey-2023.pdf>.

3.4.2 Qualitative results

The qualitative analysis explores themes derived from child and teacher voice gathered in the focus groups. The thematic map (Figure 3.4) provides an overview of the themes and subthemes which are then explored and exemplified through quotes from participants who have been pseudonymised.

Figure 3.4.

Thematic Map

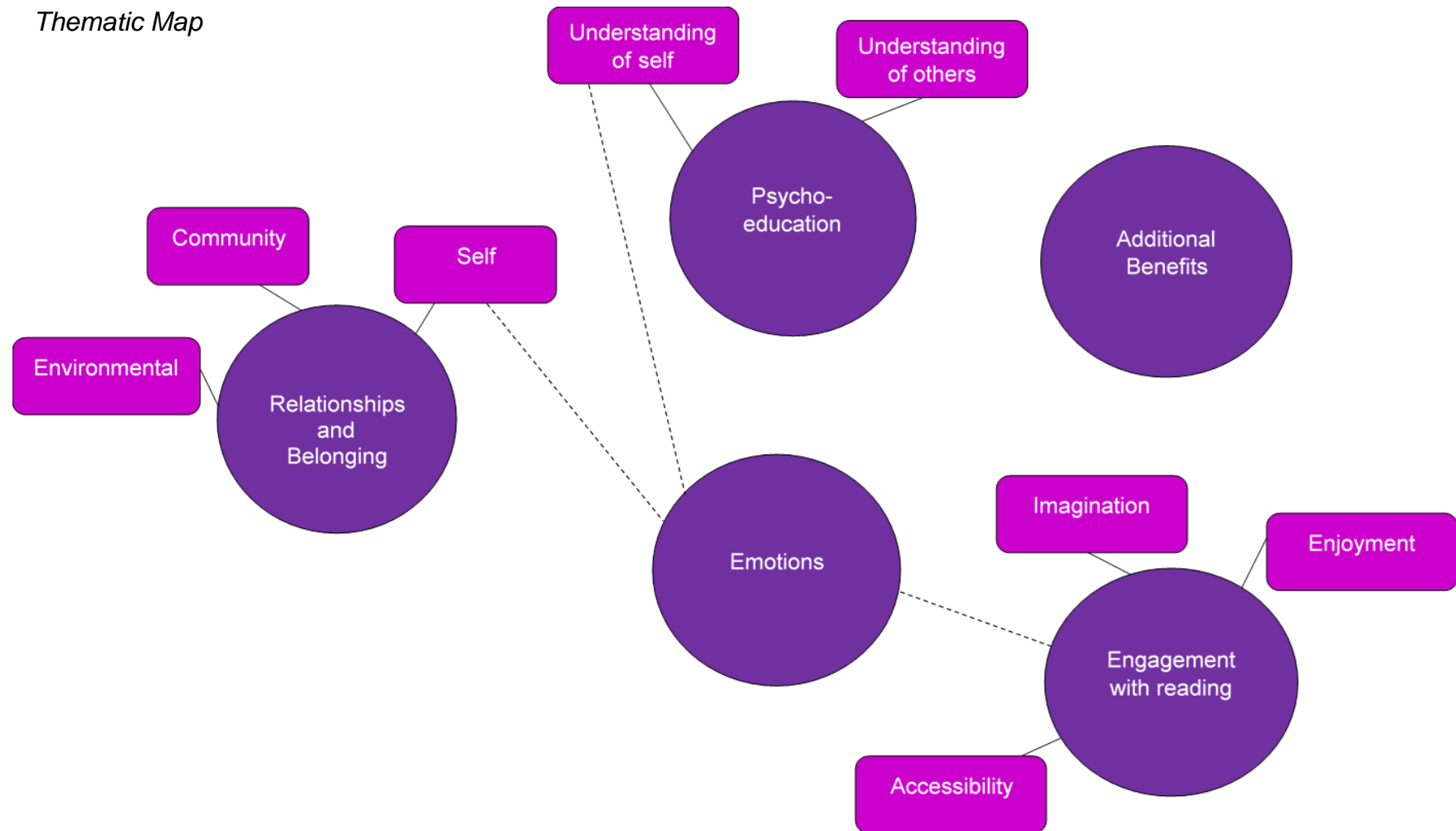


Table 3.14*Themes derived from RTA*

Guiding Theme	Definitions
Additional Benefits	This theme relates to the cross-curricular links children made, the broad vocabulary children used and the awareness of children's potential in expressing themselves.
Relationships & Belonging	This theme relates to children's awareness of the importance of understanding and valuing others, making connections between themselves and their situations, and the importance of a safe space within the learning environment.
Emotions	This theme explores children's experience of how books can make them feel, recognising and defining emotions based on personal experience and developed through understanding a text.
Psychoeducation	This theme explores children's understanding of useful strategies for themselves, the benefits of these and how these help engagements with others.
Engagement with reading	This theme explores the enjoyment children found in reading, how they were able to use their imagination to escape reality and the importance of pictures to support understanding.

Theme One: Additional benefits

Throughout the focus group children built upon the contributions of others and were able to support one another in developing their vocabulary, which is a great advantage of reading (Duff et al., 2015). The space to hear quality texts and to develop cooperative strategies through guided conversations

within the bibliotherapy sessions (modelled and moderated by the class teacher) will have been a support for this style of learning, which can be applied across subjects.

Joey: Yeh. Matilda she...

Phoebe: She can move stuff with her eyes.

Joey: Yeh that's what I was gonna say.

Ross: Telekinesis.

Another child was able to highlight a connection between learning they had completed in a Religious Studies lesson (linked to the school's values) and what they had learnt from one of the scenarios explored in a book.

Phoebe: I was gonna say love your neighbours as you love yourself.

Finally, despite not being clearly recorded in the transcript, it is valuable to highlight the Teaching Assistant's closing comments about how surprised she was with regards to how much the children had picked up from the texts and the depth of understanding they showed. This highlights the importance of giving children the opportunity to exceed what we expect of them and to ensure the curriculum does not limit a child's potential to show a deeper understanding.

Theme Two: Relationships and Belonging

Children showed a great awareness of community, highlighting that difference is not a weakness, but something that, as a group, can be beneficial as everyone brings different talents to the community (be that in the class or amongst friends). There was a sense of acceptance within the

group that people should be who they are (their authentic self). Monica effectively explained the concept of understanding and valuing others when she shared, *“Everyone’s got different talents so some people might be really good at one thing, and others might need a bit of help so people that have that talent can help the others, and then everyone can help each other to be better.”*

Another key message that came from the conversation regarding ‘The Duck Who Didn’t Like Water’ was linked to Figure 3.5. In this picture (Small, 2021), Duck was searching for his friend, Frog, through the storm, despite not liking water. The picture effectively utilises colour and space (it was a double page spread) to emphasise the effort that Duck is putting in to finding his friend. This was something with which children connected.

Figure 3.5

Image from The Duck Who Didn’t Like Water (Small, 2021, pp.22-23).



Joey shared his enjoyment of this *“because the ending was really good because the frog went away, then the duck had to swim, swim on top of the water in a boat. And it was raining. And next he found it. He found the frog.”*

This was expanded upon by Monica who stated, *“He did what he really hated, just for a friend. [...] “I like that it showed how good friendships can be and friends will do anything for you.”* This simple picture evoked something significant within Monica as she realised that there can be a depth to relationship and that there is hope for what a friendship may look like.

Phoebe also noted that books can support you when trying to consider solutions to real life problems: *“Because if that happens in real life you can do what the book says.”*

When discussing books generally, the children were able to make links with their own personal situations. This highlighted some possible safeguarding concerns which were shared with appropriate school staff. It also enabled children to consider sibling relationships which, if raised in the bibliotherapy session, could have been a tool for considering perspectives and aspects of possible change. For example, Ross shared that, *“because me and my brother, we don't get on along good together, and some books remind me of it because Tom Gates first, Tom has a really annoying sister, and that reminds me of my brother.”*

One of the activities linked to ‘The Duck Who Didn’t Like Water’ was to design a poster based on the child’s ideal classroom. From this activity, children were able to reflect on the importance of their relationship to the environment and areas that made them feel like they had a safe space. For example, Emily shared that, *“I liked it when like it’s wet play and they're getting really stuck and putting it in your desk. I made, like, a little bit just for wet play.”* Emily was talking about a special place to keep activities to do during wet play which made her feel comfortable and safe.

Theme Three: Emotions

Children shared their understanding of emotions and how books can create a protective barrier from the real world, a safe space that you can explore as a way to escape reality. Phoebe shared that, *"I feel relaxed because if you're feeling stressed in the outside world, you can just go into the book world."*

There was also a recognition of what emotions mean to individuals and how they can grow. For example, Emily shared, *"Worry means to me that there's something that's happening small and it's always in the back of your head. And it keeps on getting in the back of the head and then you start to worry about it more and more."* This was an important reflection as it highlights the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) concept of snowballing (a small worry becoming bigger) which, if identified by the young person, is something that can be addressed, making the worry more manageable.

Several children mentioned that some books can make them feel negative emotions, sometimes due to the content (e.g. not liking the use of pirates) or because of the themes of the text. This highlights the importance of choosing a variety of texts covering several situations but also the level of sensitivity needed by staff to ensure that children feel safe when exploring these texts. It also enables the realisation that the teacher and child are in control of their engagement with text. If they are not connecting with the text in a beneficial manner, they have the autonomy to step away from the text and choose whether and when to return. This can also offer valuable opportunities for discussion based upon why they may not have connected with the text.

Theme Four: Psychoeducation

Children discussed and shared some of the strategies they had learnt from the text and activities involved within the intervention. They were able to explain how seeking support could be beneficial for themselves and also how to encourage others to seek support when necessary.

When exploring the subtheme of understanding of others, Monica was able to express her understanding of the Koala's situation and what made the difference to his attitude:

Monica: The koala was very overwhelmed, but when he when he got down, he actually really liked it because he tried it. It's cause he never tried it. He didn't know what it was going to be like.

Ross was able to add in that the lessons from these texts could be utilised across a variety of situations:

Ross: [...] this reminds you to think of books you've read and if they help people, you can use the words or things and you can tell them to do that."

When exploring the subtheme of understanding of self, Ross was able to recognise his responses to friendship challenges and what he might need to be cautious of:

Ross: [...] you need to take a little bit of time each [...] you need to be really careful with what you say with your words."

Emily, a quieter member of the focus group shared that it is important to, *"Always let people know to tell someone that you are worried and then it will feel better."* This was a useful reflection for the group as it emphasised the importance of the simple act of catharsis, the ability to share and feel a sense

of release. In a group setting, this is a valuable insight as it allows the group to hear and recognise the importance of listening to one another, without necessarily being able to solve the concern raised.

Theme Five: Engagement with reading

Within this theme, children acknowledged the use of humour in texts, the usefulness of the images to understand key concepts, the feeling that reading was 'better for you' and the excitement and safety that can come from being engrossed in a good book. Of particular note were the reflections on the use of images for which Monica shared, *"I liked when he talks to them, the monster got smaller and smaller umm and then he finally got rid of it."* This was a useful image from the book *Milo's Monster* (Percival, 2022) in which a green eyed monster got smaller and smaller as Milo resolved his feelings of jealousy. Phoebe also noted the relaxing and safety benefits of reading when she said, *"I feel relaxed because if you're feeling stressed in the outside world, you can just go into the book world."* This quote highlights the impact and importance of having a 'safe space', even if it is imaginary, in which a child can engage with reading in order to escape reality, find safety and simply relax.

Content Analysis

A content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was conducted based on the teacher focus group which comprised of two staff members involved in the delivery of the intervention. The process for analysing this data can be found

in Appendix T. Two key themes were established: Engagement and Enjoyment. Themes and their subthemes are further explored below.

Engagement

Quality and accessibility of texts

Staff spoke to the quality of the texts (both the written text and the pictures) which enabled the children to be instantly engaged and to remember their learning week on week. Both members of staff felt that the books were good stories with beautiful illustrations and felt that the children became really engaged with the books, sharing that the children, '[...] *loved the books. Yeah, they still read it now*' (Mrs Bing). It was also felt that the books, partly because they were picture books, were accessible to all children. Mrs Bing shared that, '*I think they all enjoyed it definitely. And I think like you said, it's really suitable across the abilities. So, unlike the other lessons where you know you've got your top table and the ones who think they're a bit weaker and things like that, I just think in that one it was just completely neutral.*' This seemed to allow an opportunity for children who may not achieve in the typical academic sense to develop a sense of presence within the class, to show that they could offer valuable contributions.

Relatability

The core messages in the books were also relatable to the children and their life experiences. Mrs Bing shared, '*Then we spoke about jealousy as like a whole and [...] a little girl who's only got a mum. She said well, I'm jealous of my cousin. She's got a mum and a dad and like she's never had*

conversations like that before.' The relational aspect of these conversations, that the children felt able to share their experiences and staff had enabled the safe space for children to share, was a highlight for the staff. It was noted that because the books were '*all good stories*' (Mr Geller) that the children loved engaging with them. Mrs Bing shared that the lesson created time and space for '*opening conversations up*' for example, two children highlighted their dislike of noise (they often wear ear defenders) and were willing to share this with the class.

Understanding and coping strategies

Engagement was also linked to the children developing their understanding of themselves and creating links with the world around them. One child had shared that, '*I think the tree symbolizes change and he doesn't like it*' when reflecting on The Koala Who Could. The tentative response beginning 'I think' reflects the safe space created as it allowed children to share and explore their thoughts in a supportive, safe environment. This was reflected by Mrs Bing who shared, '*I think they were a bit more open to chat about things like that [...] they were a bit more willing to talk.*' Staff shared how useful the strategies explored in the lesson had been. They were able to reflect on the key themes and experiences within the books and consider how the children might change their responses. For example, when talking about the five-finger calming technique, Mrs Bing was able to share, '*We sit in our chairs and we do that together now and they're really good. We don't need to say it now. We just do it.*' Not only were the strategies supportive for individuals and class management, but the development of these strategies enabled the

class teacher to reflect on how well the children have learnt them and how they are more capable now to regulate as a class.

Enjoyment

A key message that was shared by both teachers was that the children engaged in the lessons because they enjoyed them. Both children and staff reflected that the books were fun. Staff shared that:

Mr Geller: They didn't really see it as a lesson.

Mrs Bing: No, they just loved it.

Mr Geller: So, the fact that they didn't see it as a lesson, they enjoyed it more.

The lessons were considered to be creative as there was opportunity for art and colouring but also to have open, honest conversations. This allowed children to hear each other and to learn and reflect on others' experiences (within the class and within the books).

The teachers also highlighted their enjoyment of the lessons. They found the lesson plans accessible and easy to adapt. When asked if they felt other teachers would benefit from teaching these lessons, it was shared that:

Mrs Bing: Definitely takes the pressure off. When we had bibliotherapy we knew it was gonna be a nice morning.

Mr Geller: It's something to look forward to.

This enjoyment was noted for both children and staff. The setup of the lessons (highly structured and organised with room for flexibility) and the break from the pressure of evidencing and marking work had a positive

impact on the teachers' attitudes towards the lessons which supported the children's enjoyment; in fact, children shared in their focus group how staff could benefit from the bibliotherapy sessions too by utilising the coping strategies. This was important from a wellbeing perspective as staff were able to reflect that they felt relaxed during these lessons (due to the protected time they had to deliver them and the fun they had in them) and that the result of that was open, engaging conversations with the children. Mrs Bing noticed that she was able to use some of the skills she taught in the activities within her own thinking. For example, when panicking over a lesson observation, she would be able to reflect on what she can do rather than '*just sit there and panic.*' Mrs Bing also took her learning around bibliotherapy to a staff wellbeing team meeting as something to consider within year group teams as a way of supporting whole school staff wellbeing.

3.5 Discussion

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the emotional benefits of a whole class, six-week bibliotherapy intervention and to consider if it supports the reduction of anxiety and increases a sense of school belonging. The impact of the intervention on teaching staff was also considered. The views of pupils and staff were also gathered to develop a greater understanding of the usefulness of the intervention. The following discussion will present a summary of the research findings for each of the research questions in light of previous research and theories around anxiety, belonging and wellbeing. This will be followed by a reflection on the strengths and limitations of the

current research. A consideration of future research and implications for practice within Educational Psychology will then be explored.

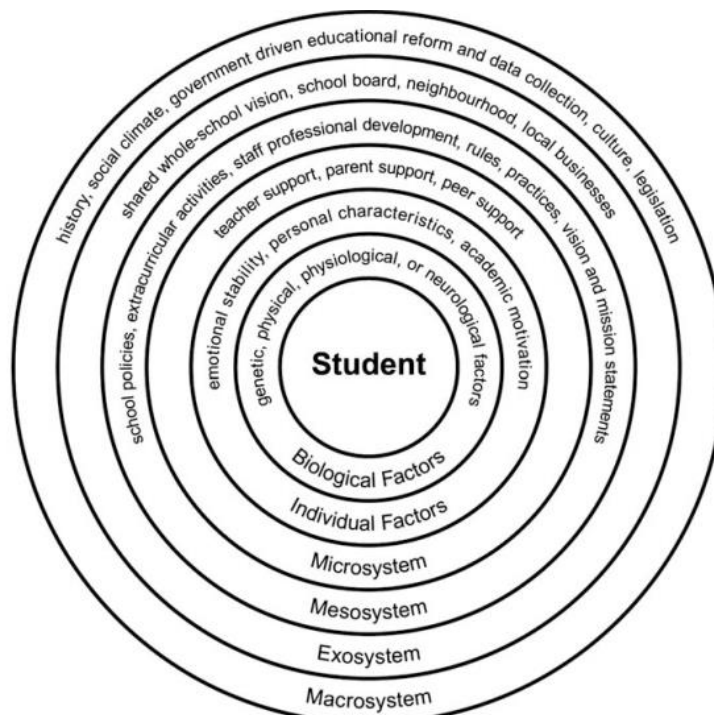
3.5.1 Overview of research findings

RQ1: To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy create a deeper sense of belonging within the classroom?

From this study, there were no statistically significant main effects of the intervention on belonging. This aligns with other research which acknowledges that a sense of belonging is multifaceted. This is highlighted by the bio-psycho-social-ecological model of school belonging developed by Allen and Kern (2017) (Figure 3.6) and as noted within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).

Figure 3.6

The bio-psycho-socio-ecological model of school belonging (Allen & Kern, 2017, p.55)



This model shows that school belonging is influenced by many factors and systems within and around the child. It is hard for a single measure to account for all of these aspects and therefore, key areas may not have been recognised or known about regarding a pupil's circumstances that would have an impact on their sense of school belonging. It is not viable for researchers or staff to be aware of all aspects of a child's life, however, as was shared in the teacher focus group, the discussion element of the intervention allowed pupils to share pertinent personal information enabling both staff and children to have a greater insight into the lives of those in the class. This, in turn, encouraged and promoted greater compassion and understanding from peers and staff. A bibliotherapy intervention has the potential to work within the individual factors for a child (helping them to explore their personal characteristics and motivations); microsystem (exploring teacher and peer support) and macrosystem (exploring school rules, values and the curriculum). However, if a child's basic needs are not being met, such as nutrition and housing, their ability to focus in class and benefit from such interventions will be reduced. A recent report suggests that almost 30% of children are currently living in poverty in the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2024) and this will need to be addressed at a macrosystem level alongside the use of other interventions.

It is also recognised that it takes time for relationships between teachers and pupils to develop and that the nature of these relationships will change over time (O'Connor et al., 2011). The majority of pupils in this study had been in their year groups for one term, although information about their attendance,

access to the teacher and other potential influencing factors was not considered. Research identifies that the relationship between a teacher and child can contribute to a learning environment that allows for the development of a sense of school belonging (Allen et al., 2021; Nix et al., 2022). A greater emphasis on the understanding of what this relationship looks like in class and how pupils recognise this is an important consideration for future research.

RQ2: To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy decrease any sense of anxiety within the classroom?

Despite the results not producing statistical significance, there was a trend showing that, for the intervention group, there was a reduction in anxiety while for the control group, anxiety increased. It was helpful to note that the SCAS picked up a known trend; that anxiety is often higher in female students in comparison to males students (Farhane-Medina et al., 2022; Hosseini & Khazali, 2013). This suggests that the adapted measure was still appropriate and valid.

Although whole-class interventions to reduce anxiety have been shown to be effective (Herzig-Anderson et al., 2012), consideration of the interventionist is necessary to ensure long-term benefits. It is possible that, due to the intervention being teacher led, the necessary understanding around anxiety and how to support its reduction through the use of CBA was not as developed as it would have been had the intervention been led by health professionals. This is consistent with research findings from Stallard et al.

(2014) who found that teacher-led mental health programmes were not as effective as those led by health professionals. It is possible that if the teachers had had the time to engage in further training as well as time to engage in the weekly supervision offered, greater exploration around the needs of the children would have been possible. This in turn could have had an impact on the approach that teaching staff used in the following sessions. Currently, teachers are not effectively equipped through initial teacher training (ITT) to promote good mental wellbeing (Byrne et al., 2015). Considering the importance of good mental health and academic outcomes (Murphy et al., 2015), the promotion of mental health should be an essential part of initial teacher training and teachers' continuing professional development. Lowry et al. (2022) consider the teacher as pivotal in promoting health in children (particularly mental health) and suggest that, within ITT, teachers should be trained in the fundamentals of health, wellbeing and child development.

RQ3: To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy increase a teacher's sense of personal wellbeing?

The SWEMWBS and Perceived Stress Scale were completed by staff in the intervention and control group. Unfortunately, staff in the intervention group were unable to complete the post-intervention measure due to ill health and work-related pressures. Therefore, comparison to consider the impact of bibliotherapy on staff wellbeing is impossible. However, it is worth noting that staff in the control group showed an increased raw score on their perceived stress scale and one member of staff showed a slightly decreased raw score on the SWEMWBS, indicating a slightly lower sense of wellbeing.

Teacher wellbeing is important not just for the health of the adult but also for the health and academic outcomes of the children they are teaching.

Glazzard & Rose (2019) found that children were aware when their teachers were stressed and learnt more when their teachers were happy. They also found that inconsistency in staffing could lead to behavioural issues. As more teachers leave the profession or take sick leave, the capacity to build consistent, trusting relationships with children becomes lessened, and this will ultimately have an impact on children's academic and social progress. Teachers within this study found it hard to find time to attend weekly online supervision. This is an important observation as, despite the busy nature of schools, supervision is considered an important provision for teachers who are at the frontline in supporting children from varied, often complex backgrounds (Carroll & Esposito, 2020). If teachers within this study had been able to utilise the supervision offered, the discussion and psychoeducation provided would have been likely to benefit both them and the pupils. Furthermore, those who engage in supervision can experience greater job satisfaction and a greater ability to cope with stressors (Carroll & Esposito, 2020) as well as benefiting from the therapeutic nature of the supervision process (Weld, 2023). Therefore, planning time within a teacher's schedule for supervision might have an impact on the teacher's ability to support both their own and their pupil's wellbeing.

A further exploration of the sense of staff's personal wellbeing is considered below through the qualitative data gained in the focus groups.

RQ4: To explore the views of children and teaching staff who participate in bibliotherapy

Children's Experience

Five themes emerged from the RTA regarding the CYP's views on the bibliotherapy intervention. These were: additional benefits, relationships and belonging, emotions, psychoeducation and engagement with reading.

Theme one: additional benefits

In line with previous research, reading opens up many additional benefits. These include developing a greater understanding of the world (Cremin & Scholes, 2024), increased vocabulary (Nation et al., 2022), increased wellbeing, prosocial behaviour and cognitive performance (Kennewell et al., 2022; Mak & Fancourt, 2020; Sun et al., 2024). The findings in this thesis extend the current research base as they highlight the fact that children felt that books enabled them to have a greater capacity to express themselves. This, in part, was due to the texts offering a voice to the personal experiences of the children. The children were able to relate the texts to prior learning and to possible future scenarios.

Theme two: relationships and belonging

Within this theme, the children highlighted the sense of safety that comes from reading a book. This was essential to the success of the intervention as the sense of safety allowed children to explore emotions and scenarios without fear of judgement. With the use of a book, there is a level of distance

between the reader and the content which allows for the free discussion of thought and for offers of tentative reflections and solutions (Shah, 2024). Another important aspect is that of autonomy. When engaged in whole class bibliotherapy, the children were in control of how much they chose to participate and how much they chose to share of themselves. Due to the nature of the lessons, there was no expectation that children would have to share; they could simply listen and reflect. This lack of pressure seemed to open up space for children to feel safe enough to share their genuine thoughts and reflections on their, and others', experiences. This fits with previous research in Self Determination Theory (SDT) which suggests that children are motivated by having autonomy, a sense of belonging to a group and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2015). Bibliotherapy allowed children to have a sense of choice, to develop a greater understanding of their peers and teacher (developing belonging) and to offer their views in a non-judgemental environment (enhancing the child's view of their competence). This was noted in Cullinane (2016) who found that participation in lessons where there were no correct answers increased pupil participation, creating a greater sense of connectedness.

Children also reflected that they felt staff would benefit from the intervention for two key reasons: teachers could use the strategies being taught and staff felt that they were making a difference by equipping the children with helpful strategies. This adds to research by Glazzard & Rose (2019) who highlighted that children are able to attune to their teacher's emotions (even if teachers are trying to hide the emotion) and respond accordingly. From this research,

children were able to gain the sense from the teacher that they were making a difference in the lives of the pupils, through sharing and modelling helpful conversations and coping strategies. This modelling of strategies also showed the children that the adults found it beneficial (particularly as in one class a breathing strategy was adopted and used daily).

This research also adds to the view of Brown (2021) who suggests that hiding who we truly are is a barrier to developing a sense of belonging. The children were able to share that everyone is different and this gave them the opportunity to learn about others and to assist in this learning too. In other words, we can all help each other be the best we can be. It was felt that other children would benefit from bibliotherapy as everyone needs to learn to cope with worry (anxiety) and it equips you to better look after yourself. This again allows for greater autonomy through group participation.

Theme three: emotions

Participants in this study noted the value of exploring how books can make them feel and how they enable greater recognition and understanding of themselves. Pulimeno et al. (2020) note that bibliotherapy can be a useful tool in promoting children's wellbeing when used as part of the school curriculum. They highlight that, throughout history, stories have been used to help us understand ourselves. This is consistent with what the children shared; they had a better understanding of their own emotions through the text and imagery and that they could also better understand the feelings of others. Children were also able to effectively connect and reflect on their own

situations (at school and home) suggesting that this school-based intervention could make an impact outside of the school too.

Another consideration is each child's use of language and what they understood by it. When children shared their thoughts regarding worry (anxiety) and belonging, each child had their own understanding of what this meant. This was important to share within the group to ensure that there was an understanding of the unique perspective that each child brought to the lessons.

Theme four: psychoeducation

Within this theme, children reflected on the usefulness of strategies for themselves and others. Children saw the value in being informed and shared that even if they had not experienced a situation personally, they could use their understanding from the books and discussion to support others. This is in line with research that suggests that developing coping skills early on in life is supportive for later life experiences (Frydenberg et al., 2021).

It was interesting to note that the children enjoyed the 'freer' activities when considering psychoeducation. The children found that drawing and having fewer expectations of them about the task enabled them to express themselves more fully and to share verbally what they were thinking.

Removing cognitive barriers such as writing or language can enable greater participation in the class discussion around strategies to support wellbeing (Liu et al., 2023).

At the start of this project, it was felt by school staff that an 'anxiety intervention' might provoke concern from parents due to the connotations related to the word. It was decided that 'worry' was a more palatable term that could be used. However, through discussion with the children, it was clear that they were aware of medicalised terminology such as anxiety. Charpentier et al. (2022) suggest that exposure to accessible, useful information can reduce aversive feelings when considering anxiety. This suggests that demystifying terminology and preparing children for the use of words such as anxiety which are commonly used might in fact reduce the 'power' that such words have and increase the confidence of young people in engaging well with these concepts.

McNicol & Brewster (2018) note that within cognitive behavioural therapy approaches related to self-help, there is often a lack of discussion. In this bibliotherapy intervention however, children were not only taught a variety of strategies, they were encouraged to engage in discussion around these strategies and their implementation. This is important, as it supports the children in seeing why, when and how these strategies could be useful.

Theme five: engagement with reading

This theme explored the enjoyment children found in reading and how they were able to use their imaginations to escape reality. It also reflected the importance of pictures in books to support understanding.

It is acknowledged that within the UK curriculum there is a lack of time to allow for creativity, or to complete lessons that do not lead to a national curriculum outcome (Atkinson, 2023). However, as shown in the children's responses in this study, the ability and time to use your imagination to escape reality can benefit broader 'soft skill' outcomes which are as important as academic outcomes in later life (Atkinson, 2023). It was shared that children found comfort and safety in escaping reality and bibliotherapists have suggested that this can have a positive impact on one's ability to cope better with life situations (Shah, 2024).

The use of pictures was supportive in helping children to understand key concepts such as how anxiety can increase and decrease over time. Abstract concepts such as these can be difficult to understand, but children were able to relate to and access the images (and visual metaphors e.g. the monster getting smaller as the child gains perspective of his jealousy) in a way that they may not have been able to if the book had been purely text. It is likely that, as suggested by Strouse et al. (2018), the conversation that was evoked by the pictures and took place between the teacher and pupils was the most helpful aspect of this. It should be noted that this intervention allowed the time in the curriculum for such conversations to take place, something that can be challenging with such a busy curriculum (Atkinson, 2023).

Many advantages were noted in relation to the group bibliotherapy intervention, utilised in the present study. Specifically, the intervention allowed for children to learn from group members, not just the text (McNicol, 2018). It also reduced the need for high literacy levels which are needed for

individual CBT based bibliotherapy (Tukhareli, 2018). This was achieved through teacher led reading of engaging picture books. Doidge (2012) notes that imagining an action engages the same parts of the brain as actually doing the activity, which was a supportive strategy utilised in this intervention through the exploration of character's experiences. Finally, the children highlighted that they were better able to understand others' anxious feelings through the exploration of the text and how to manage these feelings, another known benefit of bibliotherapy (Walworth, 2018).

Staff Experience

It was encouraging to hear from both of the intervention staff that they felt the experience of bibliotherapy was fun and engaging for them and the pupils. Staff looked forward to these sessions and felt that they had a sense of autonomy within this time to sit with the children and enjoy their time together which was a key aspect promoting the sense of wellbeing in the teachers.

Another key aspect that came through the focus groups was the time that was allowed to engage in a fun activity. The allotted time enabled teachers to create a safe space which meant children felt comfortable to open up about their values and experiences; this was an essential aspect to the effectiveness of the intervention. Teachers also enjoyed the sessions. They felt that the children were gaining from the sessions and realised that they were also relaxed in the sessions themselves. The concept behind emotional contagion (Frenzel et al., 2021) suggests that a teacher's enjoyment and engagement in a lesson can have a positive impact on the enjoyment and

engagement of the pupils being taught. This is also highlighted in Glazzard & Rose (2019) who found that children 'read' their teacher's feelings and responded to them, Frenzel et al. (2018) have also considered the reciprocal nature of this enjoyment and engagement, and this was noted in the focus groups. Both teachers and pupils found the sessions enjoyable and it is likely that this contributed to the engagement of all those involved. This enjoyment of the lesson content and of the pupils' engagement is an important aspect of developing relationships and a sense of belonging in the classroom (Finnis, 2021; Pierson, 2013). This sense of safety that was developed because of the time set aside for the lessons allowed the pupils and teachers to share something of their authentic selves, another key aspect in developing good teacher-student relationships.

It was reflected that the bibliotherapy lessons enabled everyone to be on a 'level playing field', which was important as the curriculum can often create a sense of pressure in the classroom. That there were no right or wrong answers was critical, as it ensured that everyone in the sessions had a chance to be heard, rather than just the more academic or confident pupils. The 'whole class' element of sharing strategies and ideas was crucial in ensuring voices from all areas were heard and enabled pupils to effectively share and offer support to one another.

It is important to note that, despite the research aiming to explore staff wellbeing, the teachers were more willing and able to talk about the wellbeing of the children. Staff wellbeing should be a high priority in every school as

'well' staff are more likely to be effective within the school, stay in teaching, contribute more to the school community and help pupils achieve greater outcomes (McCallum, 2021). It is suggested that teachers reporting higher levels of wellbeing have been found to be more likely to help children with their own mental wellbeing (Sisask et al., 2014). It has been said that "[...] the quickest way to promote pupil well-being in schools would be to promote high staff morale, enhance staff awareness of emotions, and provide high quality training and support for all the adults working in the school" (Coleman, 2009, p.290). If bibliotherapy were to become part of the overall school curriculum and ethos of a school, Coleman's suggestions might become a reality. One teacher noted that, if they were to move job, and the school prioritised and utilised bibliotherapy as in the intervention, they would be more likely to take that job. This shows the importance that staff can place on a genuine attempt to make staff and pupil wellbeing a key part of the ethos of the school.

It was also noted during the teacher focus group that the quantitative measures used were very long and the questions confusing for some pupils. This might have led to survey fatigue within the participant population which is a common problem with survey data, particularly when surveys are long and complex (O'Reilly-Shah, 2017). Upon reflection, utilising a shorter anxiety measure, such as aspects of the Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) (which is a revision of the SCAS) (Chorpita et al., 2005) and a shorter belonging measure such as The Belonging Scale (Frederickson et al., 2007) might have been more engaging and led to more sensitive responses from the participants.

3.5.2 Strengths and limitations

3.5.2.1 Strengths

A strength of this study is that it is the first in the UK to explore bibliotherapy (with the use of CBA) as a whole-class approach to support the mental wellbeing of children and staff, by developing a sense of belonging and decreasing feelings of anxiety. A sense of school belonging is known to produce many beneficial outcomes for children including both academic and social and emotional health benefits (Allen et al., 2021; Allen & Kern, 2017b; Riley et al., 2020). It also produces staff benefits, including greater ability to cope and increased retention (McCallum, 2021). With the increase in anxiety in school-aged children and the importance of early intervention, it is becoming more important that school staff are able to engage in effective prevention programmes (Manley et al., 2023). This is also highlighted by the rise of emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) (Hamilton, 2024). Whole class bibliotherapy has the potential to support an increased sense of belonging through the development of adult-student relationships, peer relationships, perceived control, community (membership) and curriculum opportunities in line with previous research (Raniti et al., 2022). Through the focus group, children consistently highlighted the enjoyment they found in the intervention and the usefulness of the discussion and strategies that were shared. This intervention also has the potential to support staff retention through creating a school culture that prioritises and values wellbeing.

The study's mixed method design allowed for the investigation of children's and staff's views on their wellbeing through quantitative data collection and

for an in-depth analysis of their views on bibliotherapy through the use of focus groups. Although the quantitative data did not yield statistical significance, it did show trends towards a decrease in anxiety. This is in line with previous research that suggests the importance of a trained interventionist to ensure effective implementation and results (Herzig-Anderson et al., 2012). However, the qualitative phase revealed that both children and teaching staff viewed the intervention as supportive in developing greater connection with staff and peers as well as a development in understanding regarding coping strategies and viewing different perspectives.

This study allowed time and space to be created in the curriculum for the development of relationships and a sense of belonging. The Teachers' Standards (Department for Education, 2011) state that teachers should 'maintain good relationships with pupils' (p.12). However, teacher training courses spend little time on developing this aspect of the role within their trainees, and, despite many teachers doing their best to build good relationships based on low conflict and high closeness (Fosen, 2016), the demands in the curriculum limit the time teachers can spend reflecting on how best to support the relational connection between themselves and their pupils. This intervention fitted in with the PSHE curriculum in the school, allowing for some of the standard PSHE lessons to be removed and for teachers to then focus specifically on relationship building through bibliotherapy. This was a key strength of the intervention as it added no additional work to the teacher workload. Staff were provided with thorough

lesson plans and resources, which enabled them to enjoy teaching the subject.

3.5.2.2 Limitations

This research is limited by its sample size. Originally, a sample of 57 children was anticipated for the intervention group and 60 for the control group. This would have allowed for a small effect size to be possible (Field, 2018).

However, due to incomplete data sets across both the intervention and control group only 32 participant's data was viable for pre/post comparison in the intervention and 55 participant's data was viable for pre/post comparison in the control group. Fewer participant's data was viable for follow up comparison. The use of QR codes to collect participant questionnaire data online, although well intentioned, led to a reduction in the data available for analysis. Other reasons for an incomplete data set include pupil absence, pupils not correctly attaching their name to the forms and pupils being in interventions and therefore missing the data collection slot. This limited the potential impact of the results leading to the suggestion of trends in the data rather than statistical significance. However, there was a representative balance of demographic data gathered based on the area in which the study took place.

There may also have been a risk of self-selection bias in the sampling for the focus groups which can impact upon the generalisability of the results (Kaźmierczak et al., 2023). Participants were given the option to participate (with the aim of reducing anxiety in pupils who did not want to participate)

and then six were recruited by their teachers. Non-random selection brings with it the inherent bias of gathering views of more vocal or opinionated participants which can impact representation. However, Krueger and Casey (2015) note that the purpose of a focus group is to understand views, determine the range of these views and provide insights into the views of the participants. The recruitment strategy can also be noted as a potential issue with the selection of the school as twelve schools were approached and only one agreed to participate in the intervention. This was, in part, because the school development plan had a focus on developing a love of reading. However, this highlights the importance of creating 'buy in' with schools so that they can see the added value of interventions being offered, rather than increasing concerns that they will add to the workload of an already pressurised staff team.

It should be noted that one child was particularly willing to share in the focus group. This may be due to their confidence, enjoyment of the intervention or that they felt more able to share within a group context. However, group consensus was regularly checked and the views of other children were sought throughout the focus group session.

It is acknowledged within research that self-report surveys can often lead to overreporting of normative behaviour (Brenner & DeLamater, 2016) either to give the researcher the impression that the participant is 'typical' or to convince the participant themselves that their behaviour or thoughts are 'typical'. Despite steps taken to reduce this (explaining that data collected

would be made unidentifiable) as the children completed the questionnaires in a whole-class setting, discussion around the questions might have led to perceived socially desirable responses. As highlighted by one of the teachers, some of the questions were confusing and the number of questions children completed across the pre, post and follow up data points may have led to survey fatigue which can also have an impact on the validity of the results (Singh & Sagar, 2021). Also, as the research did not focus on additional needs such as autism, the measures were not as sensitive or appropriate as they needed to be for a neurodivergent population (Carruthers et al., 2020) in order to assess anxiety accurately.

It is possible that the limited effect was impacted by the interventionist. Although teachers were introduced to the project and CBT informed principles, they were not trained as CBT practitioners. Research has found that universal (e.g., whole class) programmes are more effective when led by health professionals (those deemed to have sufficient psychological understanding or experience) (Stallard et al., 2014). If teachers had taken up the offer of weekly supervision to share their experiences and questions, this might have helped the intervention to be more effective as they would have been able to utilise the expertise of the researcher.

No data was collected regarding the children's physiological needs which precede the safety and love and belonging needs within Maslow's hierarchy. A recent article highlighted the food-poverty crisis within the UK and the impact this is having on the children's ability to access the curriculum, as well as on their behaviour and their anxiety levels (Murray, 2023). Unless this

information is understood as a necessary prerequisite, it is unlikely that systemic change to develop a sense of belonging and reduce anxiety will be possible.

3.5.3 Recommendations for future research

Future studies should consider the use of more appropriate, shorter measures that might increase the participant response rate. This was a key barrier to the results being as potentially significant as they might have been as the high level of attrition had an impact on the significance of the data. It is possible that, to reduce the likelihood of attrition through incorrect form filling, having a researcher present at data collection points to assist and check data would support this process.

In future research, considerations should be made regarding data collection methods to prevent high rates of attrition, as exemplified in this current study due to reasons as previously outlined. Within this research, several participants had the same name and, due to absences many participants were unable to complete the post or follow up data measures. To prevent issues with matching pre, post and follow up data related to names, the use of ID numbers may be beneficial as this would allow for accurate matching and an easy system in which children who have not completed measures could be identified, whilst still keeping personal data protected. Exploring an online system (e.g. the use of linked QR codes to Microsoft Forms) could still ensure ID number matching whilst reducing teacher workload so that staff are not required to hand out, collect and store paper versions of the

measures. The presence of the researcher at key data collection points could also be beneficial as they would be able to ensure data is being collected and matched accurately in real time, therefore being able to rectify any possible issues immediately.

Although focus groups can produce rich qualitative data, there are limitations to this. For example, the small number of participants (a convenience sample of volunteers) can limit the representation. It has also been noted that key, outspoken individuals can dominate the group narrative if this is not well managed by a trained focus group facilitator (Leung et al., 2009). One possible solution to this is the use of group/circular semi-structured interviews (SSIs). Newcomer et al., 2015 describes SSIs as an individual interview that utilises a blend of closed and open-ended questions which allows for the exploration of why and how an intervention worked (or did not work). Although time consuming, SSIs can allow participants to share their views with a high degree of honesty and without impacting the views of others (Newcomer et al., 2015).

Gathering data on anxiety in children is ethically complex. Considerations regarding if and how to share results of high anxiety need to be made as well as the most appropriate method for this. These considerations could include: Is one anxiety measure enough or appropriate to say a CYP is anxious? Does the information get shared with school staff, parents, or both? When collecting the data, complete anonymisation of participant information would remove the question of identifying individual children and could mean that general, whole class support can be offered. However, if children share a

safeguarding concern within the written responses of the measures used, this would not be able to be addressed as the individual could not be identified.

Pseudonymisation, processing personal data in a way it cannot lead to identification without additional information, is another possible consideration. This would allow for personal data to be protected and for key children to be identified, if necessary, for example for safeguarding concerns. However, considerations regarding how to share information and who to share it with need to be made in advance so that participants can make a fully informed decision to consent to the study. Providing participants with an option to see their data, such as a tick box in the consent form asking parents if they would like to know their child's results, may resolve this, or a whole class option in which results are not shared but a twilight staff session introducing the topics of anxiety and belonging and how to support children experiencing difficulties in these areas may be beneficial.

Prior research has shown the importance of the interventionist (Stallard et al., 2014) as well as the necessity of teachers being equipped to effectively support the social and emotional mental health needs of the children they teach (Byrne et al., 2015; Lowry et al., 2022). Therefore, further research which includes more in-depth training for staff and regular supervision should be considered as this will likely impact the effectiveness of the intervention for both children and staff.

Reports suggest that positive teacher-pupil relationships can impact on the rates of exclusions (Partridge et al., 2020). Due to the increasing level of

exclusions in primary and secondary settings, the use of bibliotherapy should be explored as a preventative measure to support in the development of more understanding relationships; this could lead to a CYP's greater involvement in school, and might also have a greater impact on rates of exclusion. This could be particularly impactful for CYP experiencing EBSNA as bibliotherapy not only allows for the development of relationships, but encourages the understanding and use of supportive coping strategies.

Finally, it should be noted that some children struggle to engage with reading, either because of struggles with the process of reading or because of a lack of pleasure found in the texts. This issue was mitigated in the study through the use of picture books read by a class teacher. However, future research could further explore the types of text used, for example poetry (Shah, 2024) or music. Listening to music can reduce levels of anxiety (Dingle et al., 2021) and be considered a helpful way to explore emotions and situations in a safe manner without the need for reading. The use of storytelling through musicals such as 'Dear Evan Hansen' (Platt, 2017) may support pupils in identifying with situations and aid with discussion. For example, in the song 'You Will Be Found' (Platt, 2017) it says: *"When you don't feel strong enough to stand; You can reach, reach out your hand; And oh, someone will come running; And I know, they'll take you home"*. Through these words, an exploration of *what 'home' means to you? How do you let lonely feelings 'wash away'? If you reach out your hand, who is your support network? What if they aren't the support you need, who do you turn to?* can all be asked and explored in a class context.

3.5.4 Implications for future practice

These findings have important implications for EPs who can be positioned to effectively support staff and children in supporting their wellbeing. Through bibliotherapy, there is the opportunity to bring the research regarding the importance of a sense of school belonging to the forefront of teachers' minds and to effectively equip staff to support both children and themselves with their emotional wellbeing.

EPs should consistently and constantly be promoting the development of teacher-student relationships through all contact they have with staff in a school setting. Due to time and curriculum constraints, there can be a fear that there is not enough time to prioritise relationship over the need for pupils to achieve academically. EPs are in a prime position to remind school staff that prioritising relationships has a positive impact on student motivation and academic levels (Allen & Kern, 2017b).

Through training, EPs can support in the implementation of bibliotherapy so that it becomes part of the whole school culture and allows for the continued development of skills for children as they progress through a spiral curriculum that builds on previously taught skills. It would also be possible for EPs to utilise bibliotherapy as part of supporting staff wellbeing support within a school. EPs could help the development of bibliotherapy groups and utilise consultation and supervision skills to help staff reflect on their wellbeing and develop greater coping strategies.

The Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) intervention trains teaching assistants to work with a range of children to support in the development of their emotional literacy. This is considered an effective intervention (Hills, 2016) in proactively supporting children. ELSAs would benefit greatly from training in bibliotherapy to add to the bank of resources that they can draw on when working with children. The level of distance and safety that can be afforded through working through situations in a text can support in the development of understanding and coping strategies without the feeling of judgement. This is particularly important for ELSAs considering the recommended length of an ELSA intervention is six weeks. Therefore, building positive relationships quickly is an important aspect of the process, something which bibliotherapy is able to support with.

3.5.5 Reflexivity

The use of a reflexive journal allowed for constant reflection through the research process. This enabled mindful consideration of additional reading and personal views that were developing throughout the course of the research. Additional reading and reflection enabled a fuller exploration and understanding of the qualitative findings through the experience of others, in particular, a bibliotherapist (Shah, 2024). Through consideration of the focus groups, the depth of the benefits of bibliotherapy were considered. It was expected that staff would benefit from the intervention, however, on further reflection, it was not anticipated that staff would relate so well to the intervention through enjoyment of the children's love of learning but also through their own enjoyment of the sessions. It was encouraging to be able

to utilise the expertise of other EPs and TEPs in the development of the intervention and to be spurred on by their enthusiasm for the project. This was initially unexpected as the work was considered an extension of what teachers already did in class. However, this led to further exploration of the time constraints within the curriculum which led to greater considerations around the importance of carving out regular time for such interventions to take place.

The publishing of 'Bibliotherapy: The Healing Power of Reading' (Shah, 2024) was timely as it allowed for an in depth exploration of why reading was so important and why it had been so influential to the author personally. This passion for reading was a driving factor for the development of this research into the intervention that it has become. It also enabled greater reflection on why staff wellbeing is such an important area, which was highlighted in the teacher focus group. Staff were passionate about ensuring wellbeing was not another tick box but something meaningful and substantial in their school. These reflections enabled consideration of personal bias that may be impacting the desired outcomes of the intervention. This encouraged the use of peer supervision and reflection spaces to ensure that the findings were a fair and accurate representation of what was offered by the CYP and staff. These reflections also allowed for the realisation that personal experience is not a barrier to good research, but can help shape impactful outcomes.

3.6 Conclusion

This research was the first of its kind to explore the use of whole-class bibliotherapy alongside CBA to support the development of a sense of school belonging and reduction of anxiety in a UK context. Quantitative findings suggest that there were trends of decreased anxiety.

Additionally, qualitative findings indicated that the intervention supported the emotional wellbeing of participants through the development of greater understanding of self and others and various coping strategies. Both staff and CYP benefitted from having dedicated, structured time that allowed for the safe exploration of various situations, emotions and possible strategies to help with these.

Overall, this study has made a unique contribution to the current literature around the development of a sense of school belonging and emotional wellbeing in schools through whole class, teacher-led intervention. These findings show the value and benefits of spending time in class exploring emotions, situations and strategies using texts which are engaging for both children and staff. It is hoped that this research will be a springboard for future work exploring the many benefits of bibliotherapy in the development of a sense of school belonging.

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Chapter Four: Dissemination and Impact

4.1 Introduction

As generators of research evidence (Kelly et al., 2017), educational psychologists are in a prime position to share current, relevant evidence regarding interventions and the usefulness of this in educational contexts. The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates et al., 2021) suggests that we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that we ‘seek to maximise the benefits of [our] work at all stages, from inception to dissemination’ (p.11). It is also argued that researchers have an ethical responsibility to disseminate research so that the full effects and advantages of the research can be recognised (DuBois & Prusaczyk, 2017). According to Sedgwick and Stothard (2021), dissemination is an important area to explore, especially as the full potential of academic research is not always recognised. This thesis shares important implications regarding the necessity of developing a sense of school belonging and the importance of this in the current context of the United Kingdom education system (particularly linked to high exclusion rates and an increase in EBSNA). The intervention in chapter three offers a useful, pragmatic approach to developing whole class belonging in a primary context. This research has been valuable for both the education and EP communities as the recommendations are current and pragmatic. Therefore, further dissemination has the potential to impact the lives of children and teachers for the better. The following chapter explores reflections on evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence, ways in which research can have an impact, implications for practice, policy and future research as well as a dissemination plan for the current research.

4.2 Evidence-based Practice

There are various definitions of Evidence Based Practice (EBP) and reasons for its prevalence in the role of educational psychology. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice in Psychology states that EBP is, “the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences” (American Psychological Association, 2006, p. 273). When considering best available research a hierarchy of evidence based on study design, with high internal validity ranked as the best, is often used. There are various hierarchies of evidence but a popular and well respected hierarchy is that of the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network depicted in Table 4.1 (2015, cited in Sedgwick & Stothard, 2021).

Table 4.1

Hierarchy of “levels” of Evidence

1 st	High-quality meta-analyses, systematic reviews of RCTs or RCTs with a very low risk of bias.
2 nd	Well-constructed meta-analysis, systematic reviews or RCTs with a low risk of bias.
3 rd	Meta-analysis, systematic reviews or RCTs with a high risk of bias.
4 th	High quality systematic reviews of case control or cohort studies. High quality case control or cohort studies with a very low risk of confounding or bias and a high probability that the relationship is causal.
5 th	Well conducted case control or cohort studies with a low risk or confounding or bias and a moderate probability that the relationship is causal.

6 th	Case control or cohort studies with a high risk of confounding or bias and a significant risk that the relationship is not causal.
7 th	Non-analytic studies (e.g., case reports, case series)
8 th	Expert opinion.

Note. Taken from Sedgwick and Stothard (2021, p.2).

EBP was developed in part to remove potential threats to internal validity which may be caused by user preference (Gulliford, 2015). EPs are also expected to use EBP as part of their standard practice according to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 11.1) (HCPC, 2023). However, the view of EPs as scientist-practitioners is an area of debate: Are EPs led by evidence alone or do EPs focus on the context-dependent situations they face each day as the starting point for research? (Birch et al., 2015).

Fox (2003) provides a detailed discussion regarding EP practice and their use of EBP, suggesting that the government recommend EBP to prevent inequality and a lack of consistency for the interventions and recommendations suggested to support CYP. However, it should be noted that EBP ‘gold standard’ recommendations, although often yielding positive results, are not suitable for all (David et al., 2018). RCTs, which are at the top of the hierarchy of evidence, are often considered the ‘gold standard’ (Barker, 2016). However, they can be reductionist, meaning that they can miss the nuance of individual difference (Hariton & Locascio, 2018).

It is important to understand the constructivist context, that the client’s EPs work with (and the EPs themselves) will bring their own construct of the world to the situation under discussion as well as the research evidence base.

Fox (2003) also suggests that the research hierarchy may be appropriate for medical professionals, but less appropriate for EPs, as EPs are constantly encouraged to utilise professional experience and reflect on what has worked through their practice.

It is suggested that a mixture of EBP and Practice-Based Evidence (PBE) are necessary for EPs to be effective, always considering what works best for each individual, acknowledging the CYP and their context (Sedgwick & Stothard, 2021).

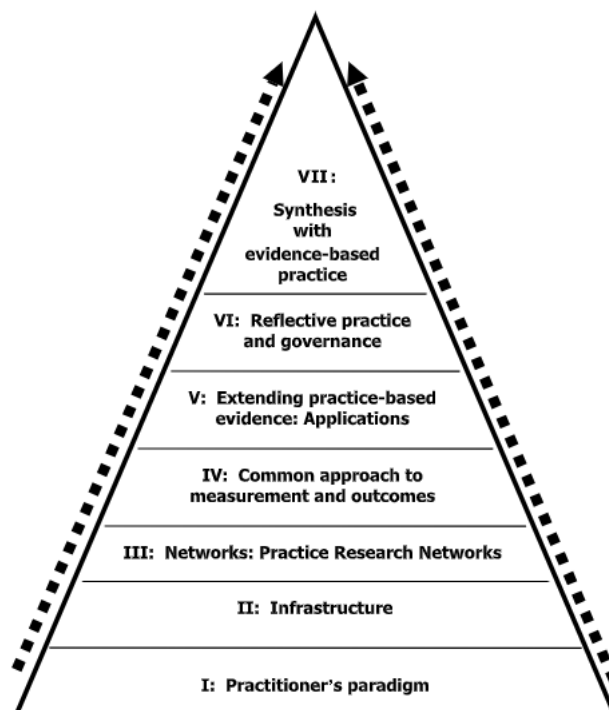
4.3 Practice-Based Evidence (PBE)

A clinical definition of PBE from Barkham and Margison states that, “Practice-based evidence is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current evidence drawn from practice settings in making decisions about the care of individual patients” (2007, p.446). It can be considered as relevance and rigour combined to produce the most useful support available at a current time. PBE is considered to be a ‘bottom-up’ approach to gathering evidence based on work in ecologically valid settings as shown in Figure 1 (Barkham & Margison, 2007). The PBE approach recognises the importance of evidence whilst also acknowledging three key areas; the context, individual differences and views of those the EP is serving. Due to the nature of education and the variety of individuals that EPs will work with on a daily basis, the use of EBP alone may not be the most appropriate approach as EBP aims to understand the effectiveness of an intervention based on a large overall group, without the recognition of the three areas mentioned above. Sedgwick and Stothard

(2021) argue that EPs are well placed to contribute to PBE, based on their case work and understanding of how learning occurs. It should be noted that evaluation of effectiveness of interventions (e.g., through a Target Monitoring Evaluation form) is still a key aspect of PBE (Birch et al., 2015). This is of particular importance when consideration is made to the EPs need to be relevant in their practice so that their suggestions are useful (Burnham, 2013). This is a key reason that a mixed-methods approach was used for this research; to respect the importance of a strong evidence base but to also recognise that understanding the personal impact that the intervention has on participants is as valuable as statistical data.

Figure 4.1

Building blocks of practice-based evidence



Note. Taken from Barkham and Margison (2007, p.451)

4.4 Impact of research

According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), research impact can be defined as the ‘demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’ (ESRC, 2022). The ESRC split impact into academic impact and economic and societal impact. The former contributes to a change in understanding and advancing science whilst the latter considers the contribution to a change on society and the economy, benefiting people at various levels from the individual to entire nations. They also recognise that the impact of research can be instrumental, conceptual or capacity building. These areas consider, in different ways, how research can contribute to or influence policy, practice and services or personal skills (ESRC, 2022). The challenge of impactful dissemination has been considered by Marabelli and Vaast (2020) who suggest two avenues to dissemination; academic and practical. The academic avenue ensures that work is shared through academic journals and conferences, whereas the practical avenue ensures that practitioners are effectively impacted by the research. The practical avenue is an important consideration as we have, ‘the duty to create and develop knowledge that crosses our professional boundaries and impacts the “real world”’ (Marabelli & Vaast, 2020, p. 2). In terms of academic dissemination, this research benefits those working in the areas of psychology, education and mental health and wellbeing. In terms of practical dissemination, this research is helpful for teachers, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), Educational Psychologists and other educational professionals. It also has potential implications for policy makers

when considering the curriculum and mental health, staff retention and cost-effective interventions.

4.4.1 Implications for policy

Early mental health difficulties have wide ranging impacts on individuals in society including; greater likelihood of school exclusion, lower income in adulthood and poorer employment chances (Palikara et al., 2021). Anxiety is one of the most common mental health difficulties experienced with 6.5% of children globally expected to meet the diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder (Williamson et al., 2022), many of these starting before children start secondary school (Kessler et al., 2007). In 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care committed to expanding mental health support through increased funding (£79 million) and support for nearly three million children (Department for Health and Social Care, 2021). A conservative estimate suggests that mental health conditions cost the UK economy £117.9 billion per year (McDaid & Park, 2022). Despite increased support, the rate of exclusions and suspensions in 2022/23 continue to rise, particularly for children classified as having SEND, with disruptive behaviour being cited as the most common reason for exclusion or suspension (National Statistics, 2023). Disruptive behaviour and anxiety often co-occur (Bubier & Drabick, 2009). Therefore, an intervention that supports an understanding of anxiety and strategies to reduce this is an important consideration when creating education policies. Mental health continues to be a priority in schools and a greater emphasis on the development of a sense of school belonging is also

recognised as an area that EPs should be able to support with on a whole school level (Whiteway, 2019). Working at a systemic level (e.g. school based interventions) has been a challenge in recent years for EPs due to the increase in statutory assessment requests and reduction in EPs available to complete these (Atfield et al., 2023). Issues with staffing are also impacting the ability of school staff to implement effective intervention. This research focuses on a whole class wellbeing intervention that equips teachers to meet the low-level needs of pupils as part of a universal offer within school. The low cost and time commitment and ease of training for EP services make this a prime example of an intervention that could be impactful as EPs begin to spend more time in school's post-pandemic.

Both the review paper (chapter two) and empirical paper (chapter three) have important considerations to the practical development of a sense of school belonging in a cost-effective and universal manner. Chapter two explores practical strategies based on pupils' experiences of how to impact a sense of school belonging whilst chapter three considers a whole class intervention that intended to lower anxiety and increase one's sense of school belonging. Chapter two considered six key ways belonging in an academic setting could be developed and has important implications, particularly related to teacher-pupil relationships, the curriculum and the development of behaviour policies in schools which, in recent years have focused on a 'zero tolerance' rather than relational approach (Millar, 2020). Chapter three explores a novel intervention utilising bibliotherapy through the lens of supportive cognitive behavioural techniques. This was considered cost effective for several

reasons, including: the texts used were easily accessible, non-specialist texts; the intervention was easily adopted into the PSHE curriculum, therefore not creating additional work for teachers or adding to their already challenging workloads; and the long-term implications of increased wellbeing (and the impact this can have on academic achievement) which, if not addressed, will continue to cost the UK economy 5% of GDP (NHS England, 2022). Staff highlighted their enjoyment of the intervention and how they learnt more about the children (important for the development of a sense of school belonging) which impacted the sense of overall wellbeing for the staff. This is an important consideration, particularly with the recruitment and retention problem of teaching staff within the UK at the moment. These benefits highlighted from both the review paper and the empirical research warrant consideration when developing behaviour policies and approaches to the development of strategies to support mental health and wellbeing in schools. Considering the teacher standards also state the importance of maintaining good relationships with pupils (Department for Education, 2011), it will also support policy makers to recognise that the development and maintenance of good relationships should be a key aspect of Initial Teacher Training courses within the UK, so that relationships start off as a key part of good teacher practice. Research recognises the benefits of developing a sense of school belonging including: higher emotional and behavioural engagement (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021); greater academic achievement (Hattie & Yates, 2014; Riley, 2022) and better behaviour (Allen et al., 2018). These are important goals for all teachers to be working towards.

4.4.2 Implication for practice

There are various important implications for practice across schools, the work of EPs and for policy makers. The findings from Chapter two support the idea that those involved in the education of children, from teachers to EPs, should be considering the best ways to support the development of a sense of school belonging. The potential long-term mental health benefits and the academic and consequential economic benefits will be of interest for policy makers.

4.4.2.1 Implications for schools

Concerns regarding student mental health and wellbeing continue to be an important priority for school leaders and teachers. Yet, tighter school budgets, providing effective, evidence-based support at the right time for students is a real challenge. Historically, mental health support has been cut in schools in order to balance budgets (Ross, 2017). The importance and benefits of a greater sense of school wellbeing, such as greater academic achievement, higher emotional and behavioural engagement in school and increased happiness, have also been well recognised in recent years (Allen et al., 2018; Allen & Kern, 2017; Gillen-O’Neel, 2021; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Public Health England, 2014; Riley, 2022; Waldinger, 2015). The golden thread throughout chapter two is the recognition of relationship in supporting a sense of school belonging, be that with people, the curriculum or the environment. Chapter three explores practically how a whole class bibliotherapy intervention (with a focus on cognitive behavioural techniques for coping strategies) can be used to develop a sense of school belonging

within a classroom. Schools are considered well placed for identifying potentially anxious pupils and supporting them through preventative programmes (Campbell, 2003). With the support of EPs, school staff can gain a greater awareness of anxiety in children and young people and how to support the development of a sense of school belonging. EPs will also be able to support the development of a whole school approach using a universal, preventative intervention such as bibliotherapy to support the mental health and wellbeing of both children and staff. For schools to gain confidence in the approach, ELSAs may have a beneficial role to play as they can implement the bibliotherapy intervention on a small scale and consider how it may best support children in their specific setting, ensuring the appropriateness and usefulness of the texts and strategies explored. ELSAs and teachers could also have a role in understanding the key issues that need to be addressed within a class to ensure that the intervention is useful and motivating (as children and staff see the relevance and the benefits of the sessions).

4.4.2.2 Implications for EPs

For professional practice, consideration needs to be made for the development and maintenance of effective relationships. There needs to be a broader consideration within school policies, practices and ethos about the implementation of policies to ensure that they go beyond the paper they are written on into something that is making a tangible difference. Ford et al (2021) note the limited, but important, influence schools can have on student mental health and wellbeing and acknowledge that universal and targeted

intervention within school have a place in promoting better wellbeing. EPs can support this narrative through planning meetings and offering tailored support to help school staff reflect on their policies and practices, to consider what is working and which areas may need further support. Through discussion with EPs, it is clear that developing a sense of school belonging through relational approaches is a regular recommendation due to the many social, emotional and mental health and academic benefits it can bring. However, how to practically achieve this can be a challenge. The recommendations in chapter two (summarised in Appendix U) give evidence based, practical strategies to achieve this. Training staff in bibliotherapy as part of a whole school approach can also be a route that EPs consider further, based on the initial evidence of its benefits found in chapter three. Both children and staff found that it enabled greater understanding of themselves, others and of beneficial coping strategies to support them in a variety of situations.

4.4.2.3 Implications for policy makers

Despite a lack of evidence supporting zero tolerance behaviour policies (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008) the prevalence of such policies seems to be increasing in the UK education system, to the detriment of some of the most vulnerable pupils in our care (Fazackerley & Savage, 2023). Whilst it is of paramount importance to ensure the safety of staff and pupils in schools, this is a basic need as highlighted by Maslow (1943), policy makers must acknowledge that relational approaches which allow time for positive relationships to develop

and for positive reinforcement are necessary. An approach which recognises the importance of boundaries and support for the children, that similar to an authoritative parent (high demand and high responsiveness) (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019), will be important to consider. The results across chapters two and three recognise the importance of relationship, autonomy and safety. Therefore, a bibliotherapeutic approach, which works to support relational understanding whilst running alongside school behavioural policies may support in striking the balance necessary to ensure that children are able to develop well both socially and emotionally.

4.4.3 Implications for research

The review paper highlighted the challenges that anxiety can cause for young people in educational settings, the importance of a SOSB and the key facilitators and barriers that support or inhibit the development of a SOSB in children and young people.

The empirical paper considered a novel approach to supporting pupil wellbeing with the intention of reducing anxiety and increasing a sense of school belonging through a whole class bibliotherapy intervention. A trend in anxiety reduction was noted, although there was not a difference in sense of school belonging between the intervention and control group. Considering the multi-factor understanding around belonging (Allen & Kern, 2017), it may be that further consideration is needed to fully understand the nuances of a sense of school belonging within a whole class. Qualitative data suggests that not only was the intervention enjoyable and useful in developing pupil awareness of themselves, others and coping strategies, but that it also

facilitated the development of key areas identified within chapter two that support the facilitation of a sense of school belonging. For example, the intervention allowed time for teacher-student relationships to develop, peer to peer relationships and understanding to develop and for children to recognise themselves in the curriculum through the use of stories that they could relate to. The intervention also facilitated a sense of staff wellbeing as the teachers looked forward to and enjoyed the sessions, despite the time restraints in the curriculum.

Ultimately, chapter three is the springboard for further research into the use of bibliotherapy to promote mental health and wellbeing within UK classrooms. Considering that pupils in primary settings often have a higher sense of school belonging, research considering bibliotherapy interventions in secondary settings, where sense of school belonging is often lower, would be a helpful avenue of research.

4.5 Pathways to impact

Boland et al. (2017) highlight the importance of an effective dissemination strategy which acknowledges the target audience and how best to ensure research is disseminated in a way that has the furthest reach. They recommend considering publishing in academic journals, presenting at conferences, and online. These areas will be explored below.

4.5.1 Academic Journals

Theses can be considered long and difficult to digest for a general audience, particularly when readers are limited by time (Barker, 2016). However, the process of turning a thesis into something ready for publication in an academic journal ensures that the review is up to date, readable and succinct with a clear narrative throughout (Boland et al., 2017). Publishing a journal article is a useful way to ensure that research findings are accessible to those in relevant fields such as psychology, education and mental health and wellbeing.

The systematic literature review and the empirical paper will be prepared for publication together as they support the overall narrative of the importance of school belonging (chapter two) and one way in which educational professionals may be able to support this through a whole class bibliotherapeutic intervention (chapter three).

Publication requirements vary for each journal. Therefore, careful consideration is necessary to ensure application to the most appropriate journal is made (Barker, 2016; Boland et al., 2017).

Another important consideration is that of a journal impact factor (IF). The IF is a calculation of the “average number of citations received per article published in that journal during the 2 preceding years” (Sharma et al., 2014, p1). Journals with a high IF are considered to have higher citation rates which may be due to higher quality research (Garfield, 2006), although this is not necessarily the case. It should be noted that a higher IF may lead to higher rejection rates due to the desirability of publishing in a journal with a higher IF (Barker, 2016). Journals considered for the publication of this

empirical paper have published research in a similar area linked to belonging and supporting the development of social, emotional and mental wellbeing within an educational setting. Several journals were identified based on the above considerations and are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Potential journals for publication of empirical paper

Journal	Impact Factor	Description
Educational and Child Psychology	0.235	Peer reviewed journal which publishes significant and original contributions that enhance the understanding and application of psychology in education.
Educational Psychology in Practice (EPiP)	0.8	Peer reviewed journal which publishes articles representing theory, research and practice which is of relevance to practising educational psychologists working primarily in UK contexts.
British Journal of Educational Psychology	3.74	Publishes psychological research that makes a significant contribution to the understanding and practice of education as well as advances the field in terms of theory related to educational psychology.
Educational Psychology Review	10.1	International journal publishing peer reviewed articles looking at all areas linked to educational psychology.

4.5.2 Research conferences and other presentations

The findings of chapter two have already been shared with an online EBSNA panel in a local authority in the South East of England. It was noted within the local authority that the EP Service regularly recommends the development of a sense of school belonging to support CYP experiencing EBSNA. However, there had been few practical recommendations to accompany this.

Therefore, a summary of chapter two was shared to support a group understanding of the evidence base for developing a sense of belonging and how to practically achieve this in an education setting. This panel involved a variety of professionals within children's services, the NHS and other organisations as well as parents whose families were experiencing EBSNA. The purpose of this panel is to create a connected approach to supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA within the local authority. A 10-minute summary of the research and findings were presented and a one-page summary of the practical, evidence and practice-based findings linked to the key themes was also shared via MS Teams (Appendix U).

Findings from chapter three have been discussed on BBC Radio by Tereza Hepburn during the promotion tour for her book on hedgehogs which utilises bibliotherapeutic questioning (Hepburn, 2023; 'Interview with Kirsty Leahy about the Importance of Reading with Kids', 2023).

The findings for both chapter two and three will be shared at research conferences in order to ensure that a range of Trainee EPs, EPs and educational professionals are reached. These conferences will include the University College London (UCL) Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DECPsy) trainee research conference, which is attended by

UCL trainees and tutors and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) conference 2025. The research and intervention will also be shared at an annual ELSA conference in a large local authority in the South East of England as well as at an ELSA training session in South London. The lead researcher will also explore the possibility of sharing this research at the annual British Psychological Society (BPS) DECP trainee conference and at an Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) online twilight session. The Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMHS) also host online training sessions for a variety of professionals and this will be an organisation that the researcher will contact to explore presenting with them. These conference opportunities, if pursued, will ensure that the research findings are shared with a broad range of audiences including EPs, TEPs and educational professionals.

At the end of third year placement, trainees are also asked to share their research with their local authority. Therefore, this research will be shared with a large team of EPs, TEPs and Assistant EPs. During this placement, as part of whole school support, certain year group teachers are also being trained in the bibliotherapy intervention to support them in helping identified cohorts with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The researcher intends to continue this work in a Local Authority in the East of England once qualified.

4.5.3 Online

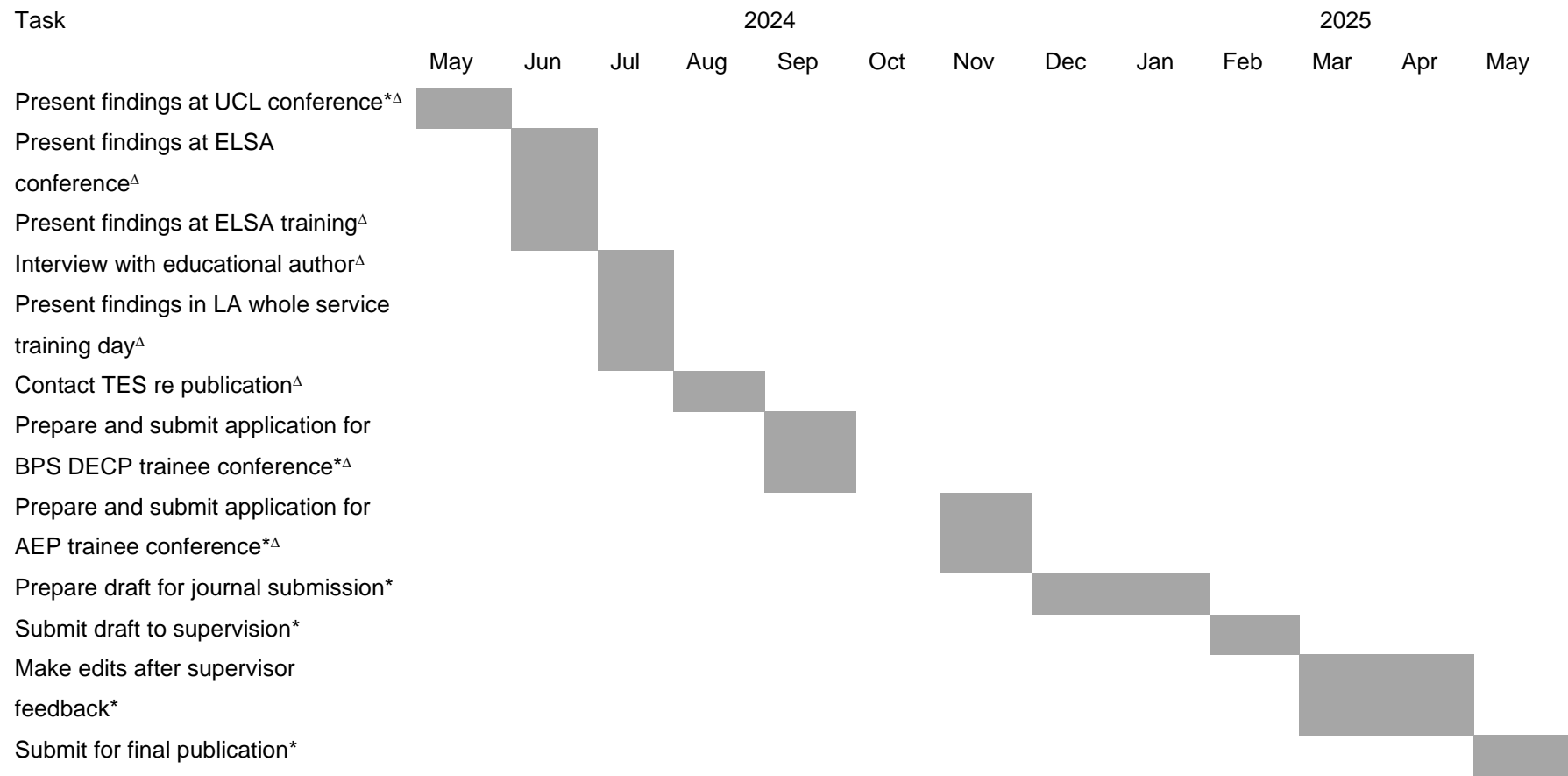
This research was initially inspired by an interview led by Cairns (2021) who explored the emotional and psychological benefits of reading with Dr Gavin Morgan. Cairns (2021), a teacher, noted the wellbeing value of reading to his pupils, particularly after the return to school post covid. He wanted to further understand the evidence base for bibliotherapy. An interview based on this research is intended to take place this academic year to support the dissemination of the research and ensure a wider audience of educational professionals has access to current evidence around the psychological and emotional benefits of reading through bibliotherapy. The researcher also intends to contact the Times Educational Supplement (TES) online team so that the research can be shared in an online and print form in a popular, weekly UK publication for educational professionals. This will ensure that the research reaches one of its target audiences, teachers, and that it does not get lost in an academic journal.

4.6 Dissemination timeline

It is recognised that dissemination can be a time consuming, lengthy process. Boland et al. (2017) share that a clear dissemination strategy not only supports the organisation of the dissemination process but allows the researcher to maintain motivation and commitment to good practice. With this in mind, a GAANT chart (Figure 4.2) has been created suggesting a provisional timeline of dissemination for both the academic and practical avenues.

Figure 4.2

Dissemination Schedule



Note. Academic avenues of dissemination are demarcated by a * and professional avenues for dissemination are demarcated by a ^Δ.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the difference between Evidence-Based Practice and Practice-Based Evidence and what impact they have on EPs in a local context. Considerations were also made on the impact of the review and empirical papers on policy, practice and future research. This was followed by a consideration of a dissemination pathway to ensure that the research is as beneficial as possible to the academic and professional communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A Studies excluded at full text screening

Excluded Study	Rationale for Exclusion
Alesech, J., & Nayar, S. (2021). Teacher Strategies for Promoting Acceptance and Belonging in the Classroom: A New Zealand Study. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 25(10), 1140–1156. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1600054	Exclusion Criteria: 4
Alesech, J., & Nayar, S. (2020). Acceptance and Belonging in New Zealand: Understanding Inclusion for Children with Special Education Needs. <i>International Journal of Whole Schooling</i> , 16(1), 84–116. http://www.wholeschooling.net/Journal_of_Whole_Schooling/IJWSIndex.html	Exclusion Criteria: 4
Anderson, V., Ortiz-Ayala, A., & Mostolizadeh, S. (2023). Schools and teachers as brokers of belonging for refugee-background young people. <i>International Journal of inclusive Education</i> , 0(0), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080.13603116.2023.2210519	Exclusion Criteria: 3
Booker, K. (2021). Rules without Relationships Lead to Rebellion: Secondary Teachers and School Belonging. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 31(1), 65–84. Rules Without Relationships Lead to Rebellion: Secondary Teachers and School Belonging (adi.org)	Exclusion Criteria: 4
Champine, K. E. (2017). Perceptions of School by Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Qualitative Investigation of School Connectedness within A Substantially Separate Classroom. In <i>ProQuest LLC</i> .	Exclusion Criteria: 4
Craggs, H., & Kelly, C. (2018). School belonging: Listening to the voices of secondary school students who have undergone managed moves. <i>School Psychology International</i> , 39(1), 56–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034317741936	Exclusion Criteria: 3
de Jong, E.J., Coulter, Z., & Tsai, M.-C. (2023). Two-way bilingual education programs and sense of belonging: Perspectives from middle school students. <i>International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism</i> , 26(1), 84-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1783635	Exclusion Criteria: 4
el Zaatari, W., & Ibrahim, A. (2021). What promotes adolescents' sense of school belonging? Students and teachers' convergent and divergent views. <i>Cogent education</i> , 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1984628	Exclusion Criteria: 5
McInerney, K. (2023). Perceptions from Newcomer Multilingual Adolescents: Predictors and Experiences of Sense of Belonging in High School. <i>Child and Youth Care Forum</i> , 52(5), 1041-1072. https://doi.10.1007/s10566-022-09723-8	Exclusion Criteria: 3

Appendix B Mapping the field

	Author (Year)	Aim(s)	Design	Methodology	Location	Participant Characteristics	Main Findings/ Themes	Relevant Research Question(s)
1	Bouchard and Berg (2017)	To explore late elementary school (grade 4-8) students' and their teachers' perceptions of student belonging	Individual semi structured interviews	Constructivist Framework (Inductive Analysis)	Canada	7 students in grades 4-8 (UK Reception to Year 3) aged between 4 and 8-years old.	Students foster a sense of belonging through reciprocal caring relationships with teachers, through peer friendships, and through participation in extra-curricular school-based activities	How do students define and develop a sense of belonging within the school context?
2	Cullinane (2016)	To explore the barriers and facilitators associated with sense of school belonging (SOSB)	Semi structured interviews	Thematic Analysis	Ireland	23 pupils in a post-primary (secondary) school. 12 pupils with SEN and 11 mainstream pupils	Five overarching themes were identified: teacher support and relationship with students; academic progress and curricular engagement; peer support and friendship, participation in extra-curricular activities, experience of agency and inclusion	What barriers and facilitators are associated with students' sense of belonging and connectedness?
3	Durand and Blackwell (2022)	To concretize the ways that students felt a sense of belonging in the school environment from both their peers and their teachers, as well	Individual semi-structured interviews	Several qualitative analysis approaches used (inductive and deductive) guided by the Immigrant Paradox Framework	United States of America	11 immigrant and Puerto Rican students aged between 12-15 years old. 5 YP had been in the US for less than 5 years and 6 had been	Three categories of belonging were identified: competence and contributions, positive peer regard and perceived equality.	What are salient aspects of immigrant and island-born Puerto Rican adolescents' school belonging experience?

		as the factors that undermined this				acculturated to US schools.		
4	Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	To understand children's perspectives about belonging in the five participating countries to gain knowledge about belonging as a holistic and dynamic proves in diverse settings	Individual conversations based on walking interviews and photo elicitation	Joint discussions utilising Yuval-Davis' three analytical facets of belonging	Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands	20 children between 4 and 8 years old in an Early Education Setting (ECE)	Three key themes were identified: friendship; caring authorities and membership to the ECE community	What is important for children regarding belonging in various educational settings?
5	Garrelts (2016)	To identify potential barriers and facilitators pertinent in developing a sense of belonging at school (SEBE)	Individual semi structured interviews	Thematic Analysis	United Kingdom	10 African Caribbean students in Years 5 and 6 and aged between 9 and 11 years old	Five overarching themes were recognised: positive relationships with school staff; positive relationships with peers; school systems and organisations; school quality and effectiveness and parental involvement and support.	What factors contribute to a sense of school belonging in African Caribbean pupils meeting national standards at school?
6	Jessup et al. (2018)	To explore the social inclusion in high school of Australian students with vision impairment (VI)	Semi structured interviews	Thematic Analysis	Australia	12 high school students with visual impairment (VI) aged between 13 and 17 years old	Five themes were identified: putting myself forward; knowing me; having control; having a place to shine and peer exclusion and rejection. The study suggests staff can impact social inclusion of pupils with VI.	Not provided

7	Keyes (2019)	To explore, using the voices of diverse high school students, the classroom factors that are important for promoting classroom belonging and engagement	Individual semi structured interviews	Constructivist Grounded Theory	United States of America	31 students from varying backgrounds in tenth grade aged between 15 and 16 years old	Two overarching themes were acknowledged based on how teachers can encourage a sense of belonging in pupils: fostering relationships with and between students and employing teaching practices that encouraged students to participate in the work for the class	What classroom factors are important for promoting high school students' sense of classroom belonging and behavioural engagement?
8	Martin et al. (2023)	To explore educational integration of refugee and migrant children in Irish schools	Focus Groups (similar to group semi structured interview).	Child-centred participatory approach	Ireland	35 children and young people from various backgrounds aged between 5 to 18 years old.	Eight themes were identified: Friendship and peer interactions, opportunities for socialisation with peers and participation in sports and leisure activities, bullying, racism and intolerance, relationships with teachers, language skills and language support, schools practices and, culture and ethos.	Not provided

9	Myles et al. (2019)	To capture the meaning and significance of 'sense of belonging' for adolescent females with autism and the impact that this has on their social experiences at school.	2 x Semi structured interviews	Thematic Analysis	United Kingdom	8 girls from mainstream secondary or middle schools aged between 12 and 17 years old. 3 pupils had EHCPs ¹	Facilitators to SOSB: reciprocal friendships; feeling safe and supported; encouragement and inclusion and establishing and adhering to social expectations. Barriers to SOSB: Being on the periphery and feeling devalued	What do adolescent females with autism feel about their social experiences in Mainstream secondary school? (a) In what ways do adolescent females with autism feel they belong? (b) In what ways do adolescent females with autism feel excluded?
10	Pesonen et al. (2016)	To examine conceptions associated with sense of belonging (SEBE) in Finnish general and special school placements for pupils with special educational needs	Individual semi structured interviews	Phenomenographic	Finland	5 pupils with varying SEN needs aged between 13 and 15 years old	Barriers to SEBE include: poor individualisation; victimization and rejection and stigma. Facilitators to SEBE include: pupils' relationships with various adults, equality among adults and a respectful and supportive school climate	What hinders the formation of SEBE in school for pupils with SEN? What can different educational placements do to help pupils feel an SEBE?
11	Shaw (2019)	To explore secondary aged pupils' perceptions of school belonging across the age range	Semi structured group interview	Thematic Analysis	United Kingdom	136 participants from a non-selective secondary school	Six themes were identified: familiarity, reciprocity, membership, inclusion, support and identification.	Not provided
12	Sobitan (2022)	To understand how secondary school refugee students'	Semi structured interviews	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	United Kingdom	7 participants (2 bilingual) aged between 11 and 16	Four superordinate themes were identified: Agency; participation;	What are the experiences of school belonging

		experience school belonging				years old. Participants either had refugee/ asylum seeker status or had parents with this status	safety and separation. These were then discussed as factors supporting or causing barriers to school belonging	amongst secondary school students with refugee backgrounds (UK)?
13	Drolet & Arcand (2013)	To explore the roles of non-family adults and peers in developing sense of school belonging	Qualitative interviews	Content Analysis	Canada	12 participants (6 male, 6 female) aged between 12-13 years in Grade 7.	Two key themes identified: importance of peers on their life & positive relationships with adults.	What roles can be played by school staff (or other adults outside the young teen's family, like youth workers) and peers-two components of the sense of belonging at school M in the lives of early adolescents? What adult attitudes and behaviours foster positive relationships with early adolescents?

Note. ¹An EHCP is an Education Health and Care Plan. This is a legal document that brings the child's needs in education, health and care into one plan (Packer, 2017).

Appendix C WoE Coding Protocols

Weight of Evidence A – Methodological Quality

The following coding protocol was adapted for the current review from the Mays and Pope (2000) guidelines on assessing quality in qualitative research. These guidelines are based on a series of questions that are useful to reflect upon when considering qualitative research. These criteria were slightly adapted to fit the purpose of this review. For example, numerical rankings were given to the 'Yes' (3), 'Can't decide' (2) and 'No' (1) review sections to make it easier to apply the Gough (2007) Weight of Evidence process. An overall score was added to make it easier to assess the overall methodological quality of a paper at a glance. The guidance questions from the Mays and Pope (2000) paper was used to create specific criteria to critically review the studies and give clarity as to why certain scores were given by the author or this review.

Table 1

Coding Protocol for Weight of Evidence A

Dimension 1: Worth or relevance	Criteria
Score of 3:	Comments on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched and how research adds to the current field of research.
Score of 2:	The 'gap' in the literature and the relevance has been commented on with minimal detail.
Score of 1:	Does not provide comment on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched or how this research adds to the current field of research.
Dimension 2: Clarity of research question	

Score of 3:	The research question(s) clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was clear.
Score of 2:	The research question(s) stated and justification for the question (s)was clear.
Score of 1:	The research questions(s) were not clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was not provided.
Dimension 3: Appropriateness of the design to the question	
Score of 3:	The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate and there is clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the data which is relevant to the research question.
Score of 2:	The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate but there is not clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the data which is relevant to the research question.
Score of 1:	A qualitative approach is not appropriate for the research question.
Dimension 4: Context	
Score of 3:	The setting is clearly described and justified.
Score of 2:	The setting is described and justified.
Score of 1:	The setting is not described and/or justified.
Dimension 5: Sampling	
Score of 3:	Sampling methods were clearly detailed and justified. The sample is relevant to the research question. Detailed participant characteristics were detailed. Contradictory data was present or recognised as important.
Score of 2:	Sampling methods were given. The sample is relevant to the research question. Participant characteristics were given (e.g. demographic data).
Score of 1:	There was no detail and/or justification of the sample. No participant characteristics were given.
Dimension 6: Data collection and analysis	
Score of 3:	There is a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis

	given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created. Researchers confirmed results with the participants.
Score of 2:	There is an explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created.
Score of 1:	There is an explanation of the data collection and analysis process. There is a link between the data and the themes created.
<hr/> Dimension 7: Reflexivity of the account <hr/>	
Score of 3:	There is a clear explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are clear limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis and shared ways to overcome this
Score of 2:	There is an explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.
Score of 1:	There is minimal/ no explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There is minimal/ no mention of limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has not acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.

Table 2*WoE A overall weighting scores for studies*

Author (year)	Worth or Relevance	Clarity of research questions	Appropriateness of the design to the question	Context	Sampling	Data collection and analysis	Reflexivity of the account	WoE A
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	2.3 (Medium)
Cullinane (2016)	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	2.3 (Medium)
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.1 (Medium)
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	2.1 (Medium)
Garrelts (2016)	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	2.3 (Medium)
Jessup et al. (2018)	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	1.6 (Medium)
Keyes (2019)	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.6 (High)
Martin et al. (2023)	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1.4 (Low)
Myles et al. (2019)	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	2.3 (Medium)
Pesonen et al. (2016)	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2.6 (High)
Shaw (2019)	2	1	3	3	1	2	1	1.9 (Medium)
Sobitan (2022)	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.9 (High)
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	2	3	3	1	2	2	1	2 (Medium)

Note. WoE A scores were derived by averaging the total scores (adding all scores for a paper and diving by 7). WoE A ratings are described as

‘Low’ ≤ 1.4 , ‘Medium’ for scores 1.5 – 2.4, and ‘High’ for scores ≥ 2.5 .

Weight of Evidence B

Weight of Evidence B (WoE B) is a judgement which considers the relevance of the methodology chosen for the research and is review specific (Gough, 2007b). The criteria used to give an overall WoE B score can be found in Table 1.

Table 3

Weight of Evidence B Criteria

WoE B rating	WoE B Criteria
3 (High)	Qualitative data is collected through gathering the individual views and lived experience of developing a sense of school belonging by the use of individual semi-structured interviews.
2 (Medium)	The research focussed on gathering the group views and lived experience of developing a sense of school belonging through the use of group semi-structured interviews.
1 (Low)	The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data through a mixed-methods design.

Table 4*WoE B overall weighting scores for studies*

Study	Overall WoE B
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	3 (High)
Cullinane (2016)	1 (Low)
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	3 (High)
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	3 (High)
Garrelts (2016)	1 (Low)
Jessup et al. (2018)	1 (Low)
Keyes (2019)	1 (Low)
Martin et al. (2023)	2 (Medium)
Myles et al. (2019)	3 (High)
Pesonen et al. (2016)	3 (High)
Shaw (2019)	1 (Low)
Sobitan (2022)	3 (High)
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	2 (Medium)

Note. WoE B ratings are described as 'Low' for a score of 1.0, 'Medium' for a score of 2.0, and 'High' for a score of 3.

Weight of Evidence C Criteria and Rationale

Weight of Evidence C (WoE C) considers the relevance of the research in relation to the review questions considered in this systematic literature review (Gough, 2007b). Due to this, WoE C is a review-specific judgement and the criteria for this judgement can be found in Table 1.

Table 5

Weight of Evidence C Criteria

Criteria	Scoring	Rationale
A: Setting	3 = The setting is a mainstream, non-specialist setting. 2= The setting is a mainstream setting with a specialist unit attached. 1 = The setting is a specialist provision.	The majority of schools in the UK are non-specialist, therefore settings that are non-specialist will produce data that is more transferable to a wider school population.
B: Participants	3 = Participants have no additional learning needs. 2= Participants have an additional learning need or there is both additional needs and mainstream pupils studied. 1 = No clear information is given regarding the learning needs of the participants.	The majority of school aged pupils in the UK are not accessing SEN support. Therefore, studies that focus on pupils with no additional needs will be more relevant to the reviews purpose of transferability.

C: Location	<p>3 = Conducted in OECD country with similar education systems/transition stages.</p> <p>2 = Conducted in OECD country with dissimilar education systems/transition stages in comparison to the UK.</p> <p>1 = Not conducted in an OECD member country</p>	<p>This review aims to make recommendations for what develops facilitates a sense of school belonging in UK school settings. Therefore, studies conducted in countries (including those that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2021) with similar education systems to the UK will be more relevant.</p>
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Table 6*WoE C overall weighting scores for studies*

Study	Setting	Participants	Location	Overall WoE C
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	3	3	3	3.0 (High)
Cullinane (2016)	3	2	3	2.7 (High)
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	3	2	3	2.7 (High)
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	3	1	2	2.0 (Medium)
Garrelts (2016)	3	3	3	3.0 (High)
Jessup et al. (2018)	3	2	3	2.7 (High)
Keyes (2019)	3	3	3	3.0 (High)
Martin et al. (2023)	3	1	3	2.3 (Medium)
Myles et al. (2019)	3	2	3	2.7 (High)
Pesonen et al. (2016)	1	2	2	1.7 (Medium)
Shaw (2019)	3	1	3	2.3 (Medium)
Sobitan (2022)	3	3	3	3.0 (High)
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	3	1	3	2.3 (Medium)

Note. WoE C scores were derived by averaging the total scores (adding all scores for a paper and dividing by 3). WoE C ratings are described as 'Low' ≤ 1.4 , 'Medium' for scores 1.5 – 2.4, and 'High' for scores ≥ 2.5 .

Appendix D

Table 1

Overall themes across the 13 studies reviewed

Study	Relationships					
	Adult-Student	Peer	Parental	Perceived Control	Community (Membership)	Curriculum (Extra)Curricular Activities
Bouchard and Berg (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reciprocated caring relationships with teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer friendships 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and extracurricular activities
Cullinane (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher support and relationships with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support and friendship 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of Agency and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of Agency and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic progress and curricular engagement; Participation in extracurricular activities
Durand and Blackwell (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competence and contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive peer regard 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competence and contributions Perceived equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competence and contributions
Einarsdottir et al. (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendship 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not excluding others & being in a group & spaces and materials 	

					(personal signs, name tags. This is mine)	
Garrelts (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships with school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement and support (helping with work at home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School systems and organisations (participating in decision making – school council, setting targets with teachers for maths and literacy, and rules and sanctions) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School quality and effectiveness (CYP felt they achieved)
Jessup et al. (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting myself forward, knowing me 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer exclusion and rejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a place to shine (in lessons of clubs)

Keyes (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering relationships with students (Characteristics of teacher, teacher student trust) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering relationships between students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employing teaching practices that encouraged students to participate in the work for the class (incorporates student ideas in class) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employing teaching practices that encouraged students to participate in the work for the class (Classroom management, support (part of being inclusive, consistent support to all pupils)) 	
Martin et al. (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendships and peer interactions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School practices, culture and ethos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for socialisation with peers and participation in sports and leisure activities • Language support and language skills • Relationships with teachers

Myles et al. (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling safe and supported • Feeling devalued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling safe and supported • Reciprocal friendships • Establishing and adhering to social expectations • Being on the periphery () • Feeling devalued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement and inclusion • Being on the periphery
Pesonen et al. (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil relationships with various adults • Equality among adults (all respected (reciprocity) • Respectful and supportive school climate (pupils felt heard and trusted adults) • Poor individualisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victimization and rejection • Stigma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful and supportive school climate (pupils felt heard and trusted adults) • Equality among adults – part of school community)

Shaw (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing people and environment (familiarity) • Reciprocity • Identification with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing people and environment (familiarity) • Reciprocity • Identification with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of a group (membership), knowing people and environment (familiarity) being part of something (inclusion) and identification with others and with school
Sobitan (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency (of self, environment and future) • Participation (being part), separation (being excluded)
Drolet & Arcand (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships with school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of inclusion <p>School and extracurricular activities</p>

Appendix E *Weight of Evidence A exemplar and completed coding protocols*

Paper for appraisal and reference:					Overall Score:
Criterion		Yes (3)	Mostly (2)	No (1)	Reviewer notes
Worth or relevance	<p>(3) Comments on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched and how research adds to the current field of research.</p> <p>(2) The 'gap' in the literature and the relevance has been commented on with minimal detail</p> <p>(1) Does not provide comment on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched or how this research adds to the current field of research.</p>				
Clarity of research question	<p>(3) The research question(s) clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was clear.</p> <p>(2) The research question(s) stated and justification for the question (s) was clear.</p> <p>(1) The research questions(s) were not clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was not provided.</p>				
Appropriateness of the design to the question	<p>(3) The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate and there is clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the data which is relevant to the research question.</p> <p>(2) The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate but there is not clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the</p>				

	<p>data which is relevant to the research question.</p> <p>(1) A qualitative approach is not appropriate for the research question.</p>				
Context	<p>(3) The setting is clearly described and justified.</p> <p>(2) The setting is described and justified.</p> <p>(1) The setting is not described and/or justified.</p>				
Sampling	<p>(3) Sampling methods were clearly detailed and justified. The sample is relevant to the research question. Detailed participant characteristics were detailed. Contradictory data was present or recognised as important.</p> <p>(2) Sampling methods were given. The sample is relevant to the research question. Participant characteristics were given (e.g. demographic data).</p> <p>(1) There was no detail and/or justification of the sample. No participant characteristics were given.</p>				
Data collection and analysis	<p>(3) There is a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created. Researchers confirmed results with the participants.</p>				

	<p>(2) There is an explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created.</p> <p>(1) There is an explanation of the data collection and analysis process. There is a link between the data and the themes created.</p>				
Reflexivity of the account	<p>(3) There is a clear explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are clear limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis and shared ways to overcome this.</p> <p>(2) There is an explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.</p> <p>(1) There is minimal/ no explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and</p>				

	negative impact). There is minimal/ no mention of limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has not acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.				
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Appendix G – Completed Weight of Evidence A Coding Protocols for 12 reviewed studies (Mays and Pope, 2000)

Paper for appraisal and reference: Bouchard and Berg (2017)					Overall Score: 16/21
Criterion		Yes (3)	Mostly (2)	No (1)	Reviewer notes
Worth or relevance	(3) Comments on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched and how research adds to the current field of research. (2) The 'gap' in the literature and the relevance has been commented on with minimal detail (1) Does not provide comment on the 'gap' in the current field of research which led to this question being researched or how this research adds to the current field of research.	✓			The research adds to the field by considering areas of contrasting belief to highlight potential factors that could be used to help teachers understand student belonging.
Clarity of research question	(3) The research question(s) clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was clear. (2) The research question(s) stated and justification for the question (s) was clear. (1) The research questions(s) were not clearly stated and justification for the question(s) was not provided.	✓			Research questions were clear and the literature review gave good reasoning for researching these questions generally. Research question(s) used in this review: 1. How do students define and develop a sense of belonging within the school context?
Appropriateness of the design to the question	(3) The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate and there is clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the data which is relevant to the research question. (2) The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate but there is not clear reasoning for using a qualitative approach to gather the data which is relevant to the research question. (1) A qualitative approach is not appropriate for the research question.		✓		Semi-structured interviews were utilised.
Context	(3) The setting is clearly described and justified.	✓			There is a section on the school setting which

	(2) The setting is described and justified. (1) The setting is not described and/or justified.				states details about the school and why this setting was particularly useful for understanding belonging (due to the transience of many of the pupils).
Sampling	(3) Sampling methods were clearly detailed and justified. The sample is relevant to the research question. Detailed participant characteristics were detailed. Contradictory data was present or recognised as important. (2) Sampling methods were given. The sample is relevant to the research question. Participant characteristics were given (e.g. demographic data). (1) There was no detail and/or justification of the sample. No participant characteristics were given.		✓		Convenience sampling was utilised. The age range was justified. No other specific data was shared regarding the child participants. Contradictory experiences do not appear to have been explicitly sought.
Data collection and analysis	(3) There is a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created. Researchers confirmed results with the participants. (2) There is an explanation of the data collection and analysis process with justification based on prior research. Peer collaboration was evident for confirmatory purposes. Quotes are used with researcher expansion for justification of the analysis given. There is a clear thread between the data and the themes created. (1) There is an explanation of the data		✓		Minimal detail was given regarding the data collection process. Some sample questions were shared. Peer collaboration was utilised. Quotes were used. Data analysis was explained and referenced. Results were not discussed with participants.

	collection and analysis process. There is a link between the data and the themes created.				
Reflexivity of the account	<p>(3) There is a clear explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are clear limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis and shared ways to overcome this.</p> <p>(2) There is an explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There are limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.</p> <p>(1) There is minimal/ no explanation of the impact of the methods used on the data obtained (positive and negative impact). There is minimal/ no mention of limitations and recommendations for future research. The researcher has not acknowledged the influence that their background may have on the development of the research questions, data collection and analysis.</p>			✓	<p>A brief overview of the constructivist framework was given with one reference. Limitations of this approach were not given. The researcher has not detailed the influence of their background but did utilise peer support to encourage credibility and dependability. Recommendations for future research were not clear.</p>

Appendix F Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Hi! My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I would like to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feeling a bit less anxious and helps them cope with different situations a bit better. I hope that this research will help lots of children in school feel better about their wellbeing.

This is [redacted] my supervisor

Teachers! We'd also love to find out how reading and exploring books with your class impacts your sense of wellbeing. This would involve you filling out a short questionnaire and then being a part of a brief focus group with any additional adults in your class and with Mike to discuss how you found it all.

Research title
Medicine for the soul: What are the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engaged in whole class bibliotherapy?

What will I need to do?
You will need to fill out some questionnaires and then read and talk about lots of different books with your class mates. Your teacher will help you with any reading and you will be able to complete lots of fun activities about the books you have read. Some of you will get to be part of a small group to talk about how you found the project.



Research is approved by the UCL Ethics Committee
Contact Information: Mike Straker - [redacted]
You can find the UCL Privacy Notice here: <https://tinyurl.com/2c4z2uxw>
You have the right to withdraw data contributed in the focus group by emailing Mike Straker within two weeks of the focus group taking place.



Appendix G Template emails for staff and parents and script for recruitment

Script for recruitment

Hi there. My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I am starting some research trying to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feelings of anxiety and ability to cope with different situations a bit better. This is called bibliotherapy, exploring texts to gain understanding and develop further skills. I hope that this research will help lots of children in school feel better about their wellbeing. So many teachers already use books really well to help children engage with their emotions and to explore a variety of situations. We want to see if we can develop this practice to really help target the improvement of both the well-being of children and the teaching staff in a cost effective and time efficient way. If you are interested in this research, please contact me on the details below.

Script for children

Hi there. My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I am starting some research trying to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feelings of anxiety and ability to cope with different situations a bit better. Being part of this project would mean filling out some questionnaires for me and then listening to and talking about lots of different books with your class over the next few weeks. There will also be different fun activities that you get to complete as a class. At the end of the project, some of you will have a chance to chat to me about what you liked (and didn't like!) and how you found the project.

I'm really looking forward to meeting you and working with your class!

Email for teachers

Dear ###,

My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I am starting some research trying to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feelings of anxiety and ability to cope with different situations a bit better. This is called bibliotherapy, exploring texts to gain understanding and develop further skills. I hope that this research will help lots of children in school feel better about their wellbeing. So many teachers already use books really well to help children engage with the emotions and to explore a variety of situations. We want to see if we can develop this practice to really help target the improvement of both the children's and the staff's wellbeing in a cost effective and time efficient way. If you are interested in this research or would like further information, please contact me on the details below.

Best wishes,

Mike (Trainee EP, )

Email for parents

Dear ###,

My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I am starting some research trying to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feelings of anxiety and ability to cope with different situations a bit better. This is called bibliotherapy, exploring texts to gain understanding and develop further skills.

There is lots of research that shows that having a strong sense of school belonging and a reduced sense of anxiety is helpful for academic progress and general wellbeing. I hope that this research will help lots of children in school feel better about their wellbeing. So many teachers already use books really well to help children engage with their emotions and to explore a variety of situations. We want to see if we can develop this practice to really help target the improvement of both the children's and the staff's wellbeing in a cost effective and time efficient way.

Your child's teacher is being asked to consent on your behalf for your child to take part in this project. It is a 6-week intervention which will take place as part of normal lesson time (during PSHE). During this time your child will explore and discuss a variety of age-appropriate books as part of a whole class. At the end of the intervention, some children will be randomly selected to take part in a focus group (a discussion) during school time so that they can explain how they found exploring the books, what was helpful and what they did (or didn't!) like.

If you would like further information, please contact me on the details below. If you are happy for your child to be part of this project, you don't need to do anything further. However, if you would prefer your child not to take part in this project, please email the school office at #### to inform them.

Best wishes,

Mike (Trainee EP, [REDACTED] and University College London)

Script for recruitment

Hi there. My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. An educational psychologist is someone who helps young people and teachers think about how we learn and grow.

I am starting a special project to try and find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feelings of worry and ability to cope with different situations a bit better.

Your teachers have been super helpful and shared that they would like to be part of this project with all of you too.

So, over the next six weeks, you are going to look at three of my favourite books and start exploring some of the thoughts, emotions and behaviours of the main characters in these books.

The first thing you are going to do is fill out some special questionnaires on the computer. Your teacher will read out the questions and help you if you are not sure what anything means (of where to click!). Make sure you answer the questions as honestly as possible. This is about how you feel, so there are no wrong answers, and you don't need to worry about what other people are putting for their answers. Over the next six weeks you are going to do lots of different activities linked to the special books I mentioned earlier. You will be given a special folder to keep all of your work safe too. I can't wait to see all the great work you get to do!

At the end of the project, you will fill out the same special questionnaires. This will help me to understand if the project has been useful. I will also be having a chat with a few of the children from each of the classes to find out how you found the project. I hope you all have a great time exploring these fantastic books! And thank you for all your help!

Being part of this project would mean filling out some questionnaires for me and then listening to and talking about lots of different books with your class over the next few weeks. There will also be different fun activities that you get to complete as a class. At the end of the project, some of you will have a chance to chat to me about what you liked (and didn't like!) and how you found the project.

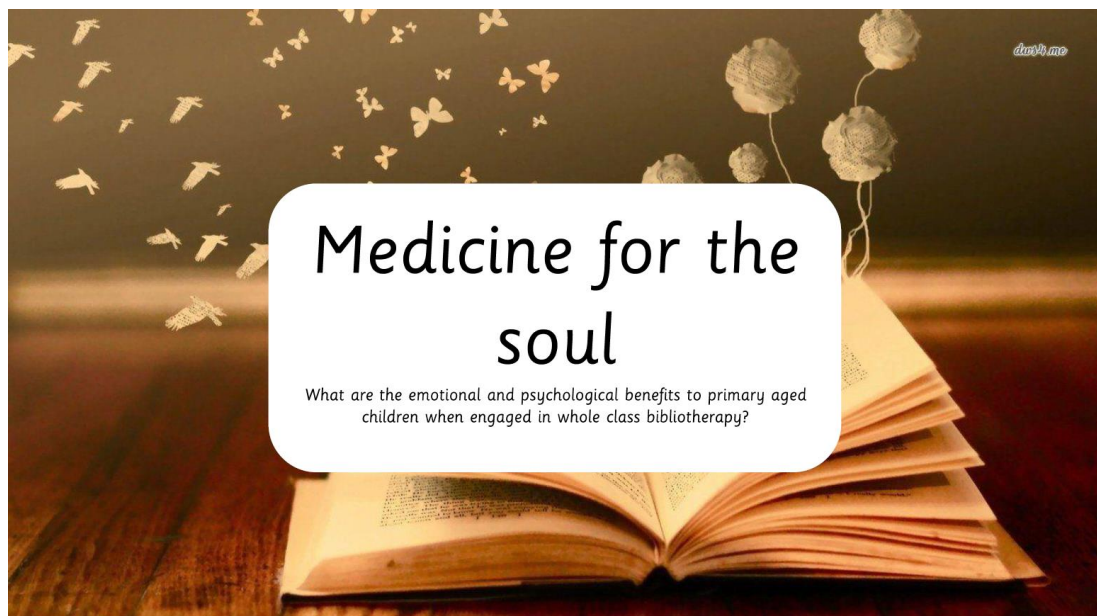
I'm really looking forward to meeting you and working with your class!



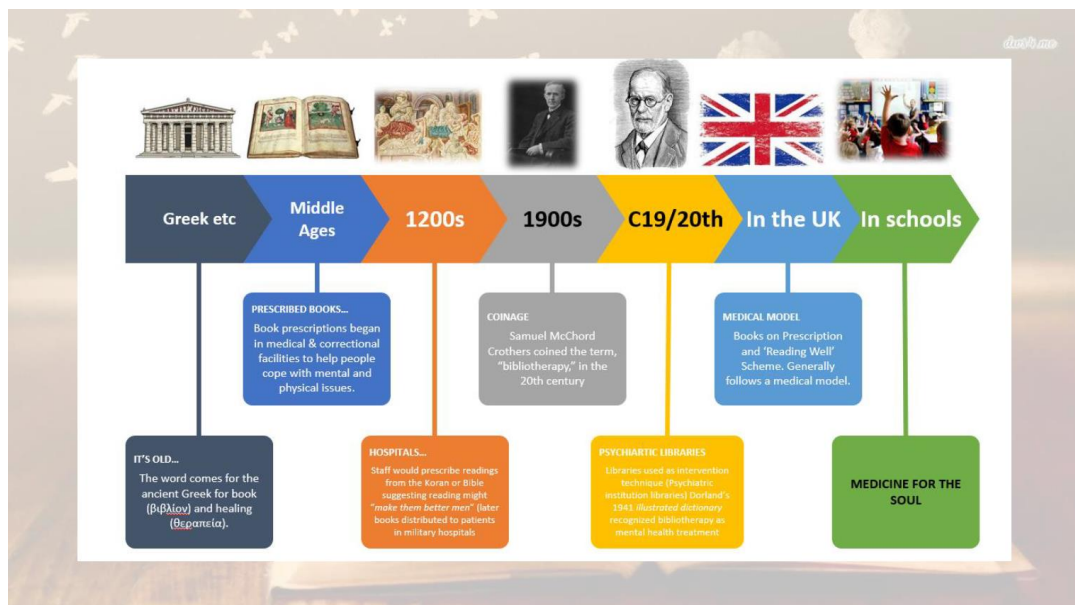
Watch the children's introduction to *Medicine for the Soul* by scanning the QR

Appendix H Twilight Training Session

Slide 1




Slide 2



Slide 3

Why now?

CYP Wellbeing



School staff witness an increase in pupil anxiety, low self-esteem and depression

Slide 4

Why now?

Teacher wellbeing and retention

77% experienced symptoms of poor mental health due to their work	72% are stressed (rising to 84% for senior leaders)	46% always go into work when unwell (rising to 54% for senior leaders)
42% think their organisation's culture has a negative impact on their wellbeing	54% have considered leaving the sector in the past two years due to pressures on their mental health	

Slide 5



Why now?

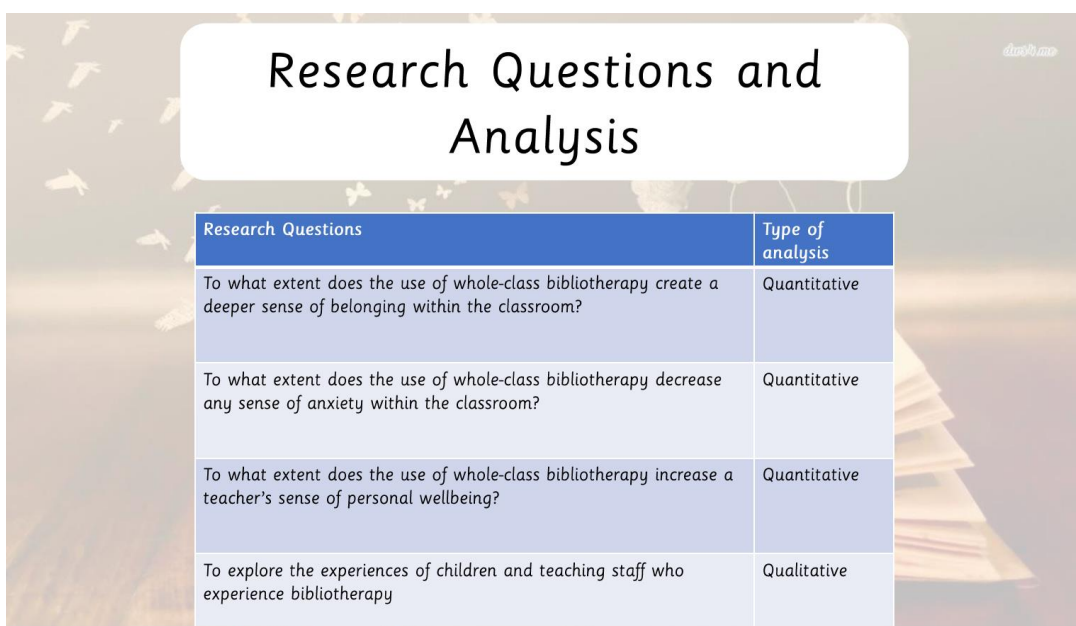
Cost of living crisis

Schools in England face funding crisis as costs soar, study warns

Institute for Fiscal Studies says spend per pupil set to be lower in 2025 than in 2010, with budgets already under strain from rises in food, energy and wage bills

The background image shows a classroom with students at desks, some raising their hands. A teacher is visible in the background. The slide has a decorative background with white birds and paper airplanes flying over a stack of papers.

Slide 6

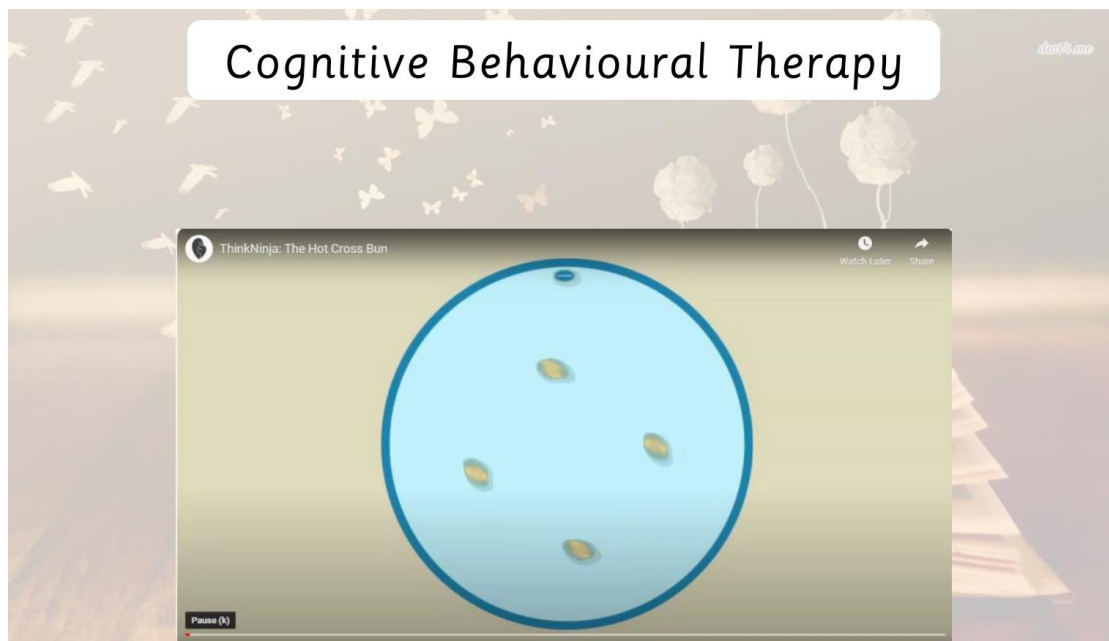


Research Questions and Analysis

Research Questions	Type of analysis
To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy create a deeper sense of belonging within the classroom?	Quantitative
To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy decrease any sense of anxiety within the classroom?	Quantitative
To what extent does the use of whole-class bibliotherapy increase a teacher's sense of personal wellbeing?	Quantitative
To explore the experiences of children and teaching staff who experience bibliotherapy	Qualitative

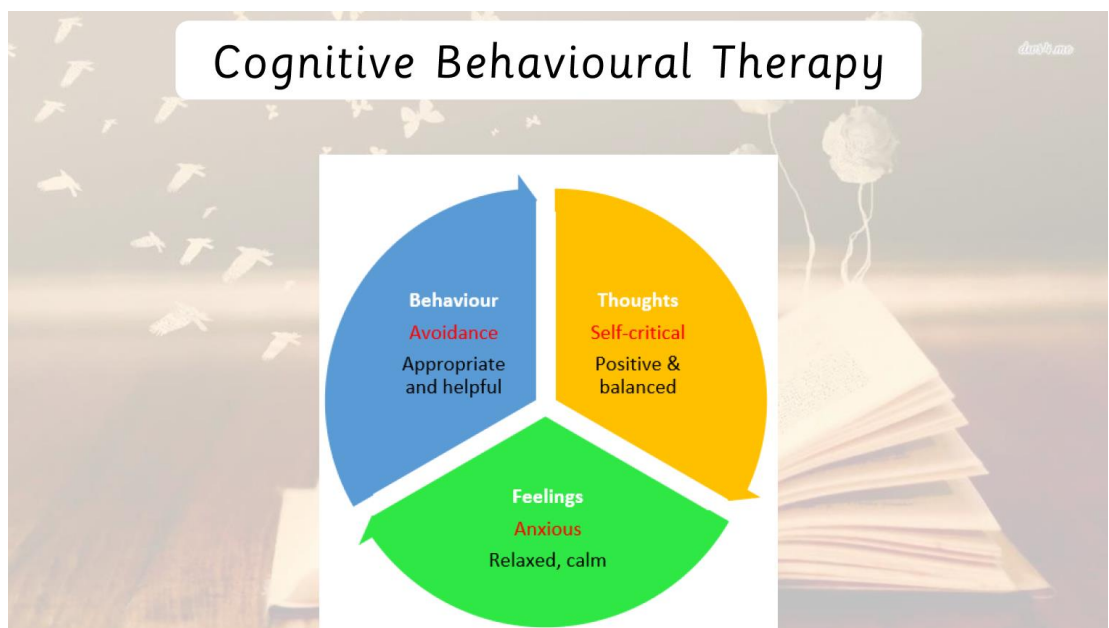
The background image is the same as Slide 5, showing a classroom scene. The slide has a decorative background with white birds and paper airplanes flying over a stack of papers.

Slide 7

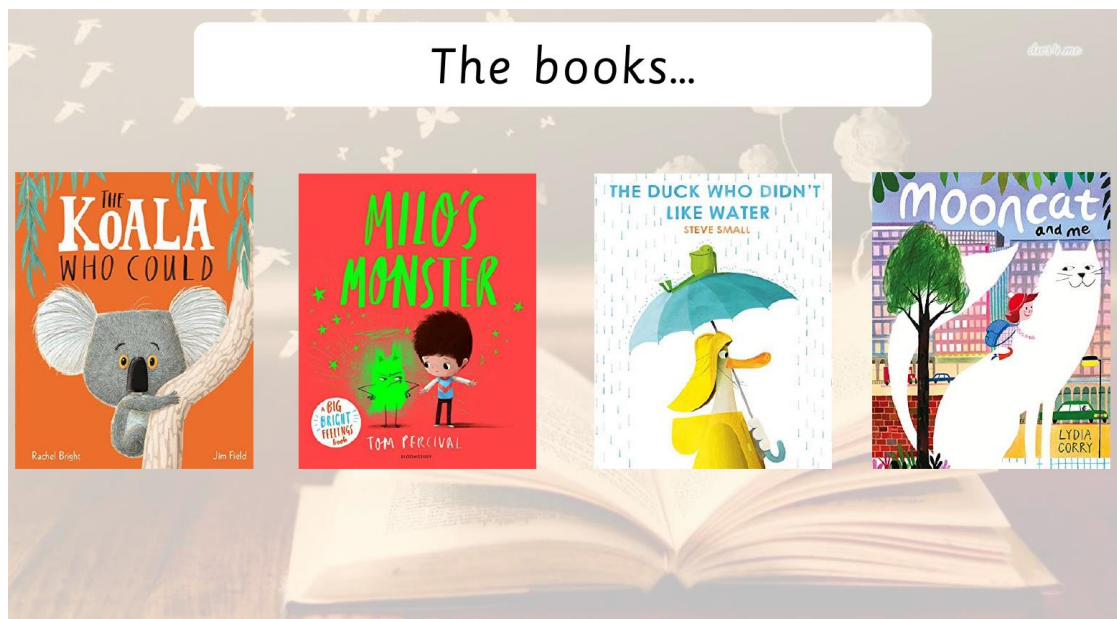


The video for this slide can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm-dmGBQ1pg>

Slide 8



Slide 9



Slide 10

The books...

Questions...

What do you know about Koala's?
Why didn't Kevin want to join in the games?
What was Kevin afraid of?

What's your favourite way to relax?
How do you know when you need to relax?
Where is your safe space? What makes you feel safe?
Where do you feel safe in school?
When did you try something new? How did it go?
What would you do differently?

Slide 11



Participant Information Sheet

Hi! My name is Mike and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at UCL. I would like to find out if reading and exploring different books helps children with their sense of school belonging, feeling a bit less anxious and helps them cope with different situations a bit better. I hope that this research will help lots of children in school feel better about their wellbeing.

Teacher! We'd also love to find out how reading and exploring books with your class impacts your sense of wellbeing. This would involve you filling out a short questionnaire and then being a part of a brief focus group with any additional adults in your class and with Mike to discuss how you found it all.

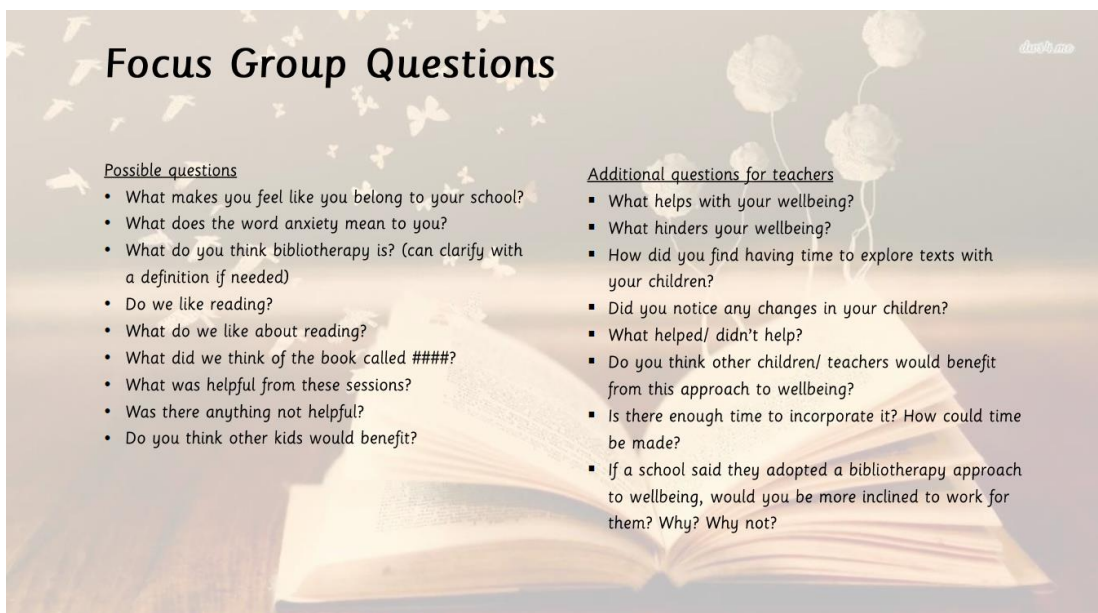
Research title
Medicine for the soul: What are the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engaged in whole class bibliotherapy?

What will I need to do?
You will need to fill out some questionnaires and then read and talk about lots of different books with your class mates. Your teacher will help you with any reading and you will be able to complete lots of fun activities about the books you have read. Some of you will get to be part of a small group to talk about how you found the project.

Research is approved by the UCL Ethics Committee
Contact Information Mike Straker
You can find the UCL Privacy Notice here: <https://tinyurl.com/2c7z2uww>

UCL

Slide 12



Focus Group Questions

Possible questions

- What makes you feel like you belong to your school?
- What does the word anxiety mean to you?
- What do you think bibliotherapy is? (can clarify with a definition if needed)
- Do we like reading?
- What do we like about reading?
- What did we think of the book called #####?
- What was helpful from these sessions?
- Was there anything not helpful?
- Do you think other kids would benefit?

Additional questions for teachers

- What helps with your wellbeing?
- What hinders your wellbeing?
- How did you find having time to explore texts with your children?
- Did you notice any changes in your children?
- What helped/ didn't help?
- Do you think other children/ teachers would benefit from this approach to wellbeing?
- Is there enough time to incorporate it? How could time be made?
- If a school said they adopted a bibliotherapy approach to wellbeing, would you be more inclined to work for them? Why? Why not?

Slide 13



Slide 14



Slide 15



Slide 16





Supervision

- Virtual supervision through teams or Google Meets
- Once a week for 6 weeks
- Up to 30 mins in total
- Group or individual check in



Appendix I Consent Form (online)



Bibliotherapy Whole Class Consent Form

Title of study: Medicine for the soul: What are the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engaged in whole class bibliotherapy?

Department: Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology

Name and contact details of the Researcher:

Name: Michael Straker (Trainee Educational Psychologist [redacted] and University College London)

Email: [redacted]

Name and contact details of the Principal Research:

Name: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer:

Name: Alexandra Potts

Email: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number: Z6364106/2022/09/49
health research

Thank you for considering allowing yourself and your class to take part in this research.

Before you start to answer the questions below, it is **very** important that you have read the **Teacher information Sheet**. You should have been emailed a copy of this but in case you need to review the information please do so using the link below:

https://liveuclac-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/ucjum59_ucl.ac.uk/Ecy3fWLy_hJkzifNaQai6lBUNAQIjJlnhJhyHHFnAkor3w?e=Mim5jm

If you have any questions arising from the information sheet(s) or explanation already given to you, please email Mike Straker at [redacted] to ask questions before you decide to join in the research. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

If you are happy to take part in the study, you now need to complete the following consent form.

1. I confirm that I understand that by ticking each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked boxes means that I **DO NOT** consent to that part of the study. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. I am happy to participate in an interview/focus group with additional adults that from my school that have taken part in the intervention.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. I am happy for a random selection of my children to participate in a small focus group for up to 45 minutes which includes the use of audio recording.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. I understand that I will be able to withdraw the data contributed to the focus group by emailing Mike Straker at [REDACTED] so long as this is up to two weeks after the focus group has taken place.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that my child cannot be identified. However, if during conversation the researcher hears anything which makes them worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I understand that they may need to inform relevant agencies of this following the school's usual procedures.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. I understand that if a child's response to the anxiety questions indicates that they have high levels of anxiety, this will be reported to the SENDCO of the school, as well as the child's name, so that the SENDCO can take necessary and appropriate action in line with the school's policies and procedures.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. I understand that the data gathered about the children in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. It will not be possible to identify the children in any publications.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

11. I understand that my children's participation is voluntary and that their parents are free to withdraw consent for their child to take part at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that parents can withdraw their child's data, as long as this is before the data is anonymised and collated with the data from other participants. Withdrawal of consent can occur by contacting the school office who will inform the research using the contact details at the top of this form. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. I consent to the processing of my children's' personal information (their sex and their questionnaire results) for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

13. I understand that the data will not be made available to any commercial organisations, but is solely the responsibility of the researchers undertaking this project.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. I understand that the information will be published within a report, and that my children will not be identifiable in any report.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. I confirm that I understand why my children have been invited to participate, as detailed in the Information Sheet.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. I am aware of who I should contact if I have any concerns or wish to lodge a complaint.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. I voluntarily agree to allow my children and to take part in this study.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. I (the class teacher) voluntarily agree to take part in this study in line with the information sheet provided.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

19. I (additional adult) voluntarily agree to take part in this study in line with the information sheet provided.

*

Please select N/A in the tick box if this is not applicable.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ N/A

20. Please provide your signature (class teacher, on behalf of yourself and the children) if you are happy to take part in the project by writing your first and second name in the box below. *

Please note that by typing your name in the box, you are providing written consent to taking part in this research project. If you do not consent to taking part, please write 'N/A' in the box below.

Enter your answer

21. Please provide your signature (additional adult(s)) if you are happy to take part in the project by writing your first and second name in the box below. *

Please note that by typing your name in the box, you are providing written consent to taking part in this research project. If you do not consent to taking part please write 'NO' in the box. If there are no additional adults in your class, please write 'N/A' in the box below.

Enter your answer

22. Please select the date today. *

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



23. Would you be happy for the researcher to contact you by email? *

If yes, please type your **school email address** in the box below.

Enter your answer

24. Would you be happy for the researcher to contact you by phone? *

If yes, please type the **school phone number** in the box below.

Enter your answer

25. Please write the name of your school below. *

Enter your answer

26. Please write the name of your class below. *

Enter your answer

Appendix J Focus Group Questions

Ground rules

- The discussion will take around 45 minutes.
- If you need the toilet, just let me know so I know where you are going.
- Try to chat to each other (rather than just me).
- This is all about how you felt the bibliotherapy sessions went, so there are no right or wrong answers. It's ok to agree with each other and it's ok to disagree with each other, but we make sure that we are kind and respectful in all our conversation.
- Try to make sure you don't speak over anyone.
- I may interrupt just to remind each other of the rules we set for our chat today.

Possible questions

What makes you feel like you belong to/in your class?

What makes you feel part of your class community?

What does the word worry mean to you?

What do you think of/ does it look like when you hear the word worry?

What do you think bibliotherapy is? (can clarify with a definition if needed)

What did you do with the books in lessons? What kind of learning? What was the focus?

How do you feel about reading?

What do we/ don't we like about reading?

What do we like about reading?

What did we think of the book called #####?

What was helpful from these sessions?

Was there anything not helpful?

Do you think other kids would benefit?

Additional questions for teachers

What helps with your wellbeing?

What hinders your wellbeing?

How did you find having time to explore texts with your children?

Did you notice any changes in your children?

What helped/ didn't help?

Do you think other children/ teachers would benefit from this approach to wellbeing?

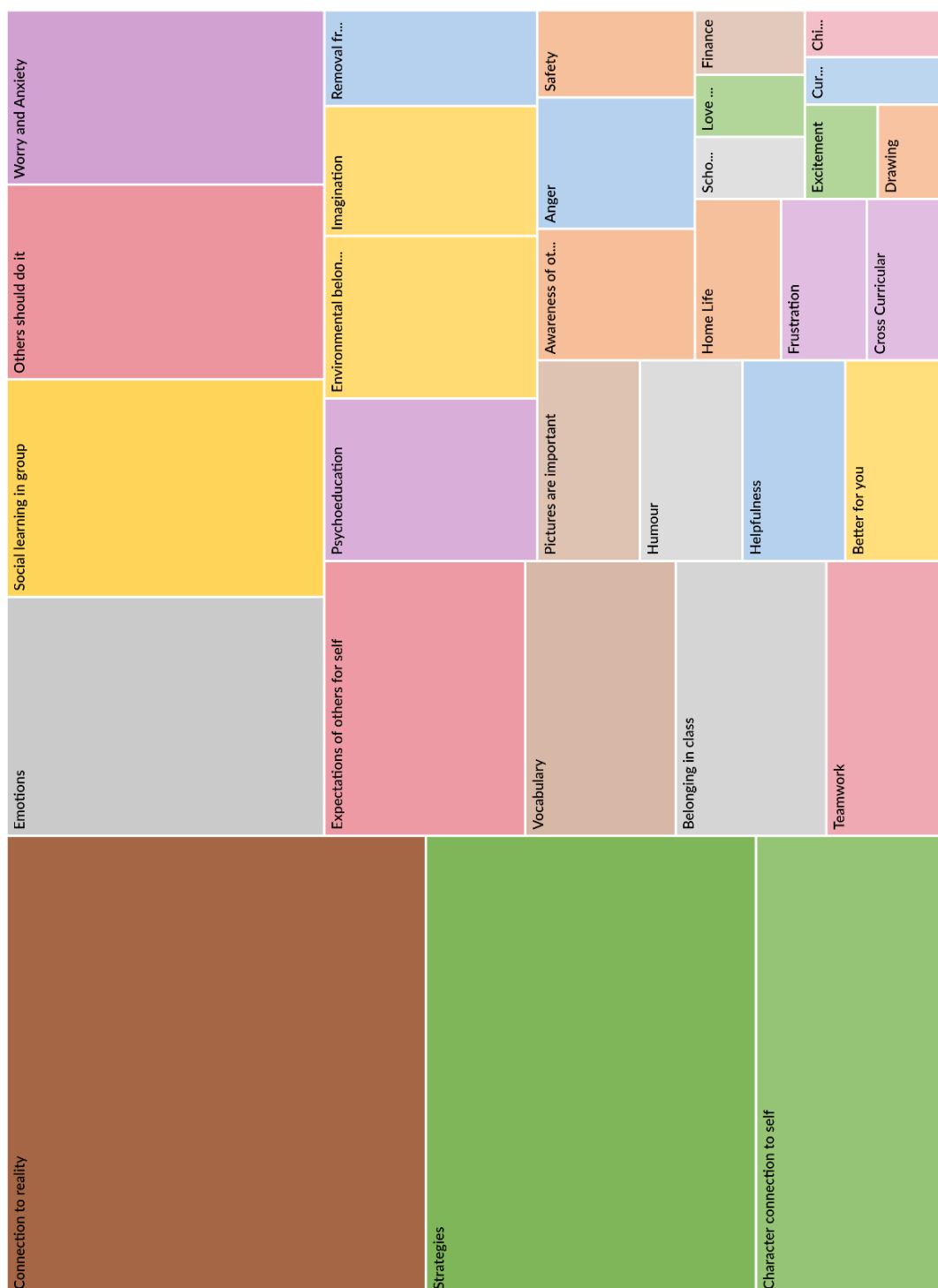
Is there enough time to incorporate it? How could time be made?

If a school said they adopted a bibliotherapy approach to wellbeing, would you be more inclined to work for them? Why? Why not?

Appendix K RTA Data Analysis Process

Step 1: Familiarising yourself with the data set

Step 2: Coding – Codes and Frequency



Step 3: Generation of initial themes

Second attempt at themes and Inter-coder reliability (Superordinate/guiding themes)

Teamwork	
Teamwork	<p>PHOEBE: So we all worked together to find out what it was.</p> <p>PHOEBE: So we all had one idea and then we combined it into the whole word and we found it.</p> <p>MONICA Everyone's got different talents so some people might be really good at one thing, and others might need a bit of help so people that have that talent can help the others, and then everyone can help each other to be better.</p> <p>ROSS: That when people feel sad and they don't know what to do and the teachers and the teacher was getting a bit angry when you weren't listening maybe it's someone else could help you because maybe the date or the LI or you can just look at the computer.</p>
Broader Learning	
Children Achieved	<p>TA: Thank you very much. That was really interesting cause, having not been in the lessons it was interesting see, I've picked, sort of walked in at points but actually yeh I think (inaudible)</p> <p><i>Comment on what the TA picked up on – being surprised at how much the children had picked up on.</i></p>
School Ethos	PHOEBE: I was gonna say love your neighbours as you love yourself.
Vocabulary	<p>ROSS: Yes, it makes you feel erm calm and umm nothing can penetrate through your mind.</p> <p>JOEY: Yeh. Matilda she she...</p> <p>PHOEBE: She can move stuff with her eyes</p> <p>JOEY: Yeh that's that I was gonna say</p> <p>ROSS: Telekinesis</p> <p>JOEY: Reading.</p> <p>PHOEBE: Therapy means like when you are doing something.</p> <p>RACHEL: A therapist is someone who makes you calm.</p> <p>MONICA: Umm, with therapy, it means like if someone's struggling with something it can help them relax and take their mind off it.</p>
Cross Curricular	<p>ROSS: I think about one like when like you do all your stuff all like your English. You could go and like and do some learning games or games.</p> <p>TEP: Yeh. OK, so lots of places to go and have a bit more fun with activities that you like to do, yeah. Phoebe you're going to burst. Go on.</p>
Engagement with reading	
Love of reading	<p>MONICA: Umm, I feel excited because umm if it's like a good, exciting part or a bad, exciting part it's very exciting because you want to know what happens next?</p> <p>PHOEBE: Because I probably spend most of the not watching the film, but most of the time reading, so I probably wouldn't get onto the film.</p> <p>I like reading because it's basically a film, but in words. And it's better for you.</p>
Curiosity	Sometimes you feel a bit like wondering what happens next.
Humour (Is there a way to merge this theme? I want to highlight it's	<p>Joey: There's, there's some called Dog Man. When they got funny words like, like, they're number 2.</p> <p>Umm. first, erm Tom Gates is just a bit funny.</p>

imp but there isn't a lot there- maybe add to love of reading? What adds to a love of reading?)	TEP: Yeah. OK. Do we all like books that are funny? Group: Yeah.
Imagination (Should this link with removal from reality?)	Umm, I really like reading because it makes my imagination go really well with books. I like reading before because I read before bed. And then I dream about the book that I read. And that after I've read a book um I go to sleep, I dream about me seeing Dog Man.
Remove all from reality	ROSS: Yes, it makes you feel erm calm and umm nothing can penetrate through your mind. Umm, I really like reading because when I feel angry or sad it just takes me away from it.
Pictures are important (they help you access the book and understand concepts)	MONICA: I liked when when he when he talks to them, the monster got smaller and smaller umm and then he finally got rid of it. TEP: Excellent. That links a little bit of what Ross was saying, wasn't it that when you face your fears, don't always get smaller, do they. It can still be scary and it didn't disappear straight away, did it? MONICA: No Well, it's not well sometimes it's hard to read the words. EMILY: I liked how, before, the way he started having his worries, got, the green got bigger and bigger. MONICA: I liked when when he when he talks to them, the monster got smaller and smaller umm and then he finally got rid of it.
Better for you	##: I like reading because it's basically a film, but in words. And it's better for you. Phoebe: Because all you need to do is, all you need to get into school and then at one point in school, you'll be able to do this and you'll feel much better, cause this really helped me.
Safety (Should this link to removal from reality?)	I feel relaxed because if you're feeling stressed in the outside world, you can just go into the book world. Yes, it makes you feel erm calm and umm nothing can penetrate through your mind.
Excitement	Monica: Umm, I feel excited because umm if it's like a good, exciting part or a bad, exciting part it's very exciting because you want to know what happens next?
Psychoeducation	
Others should do it	Rachel: It would help them. [...] Quite a lot, because some people need help. Phoebe: I think the teachers do like it because they can do it themselves. It's not just the children that are learning it, but also the teachers. And they can do it themselves.

	<p>Monica: I think they enjoy it because they know that at least one person in the class will use this and they know that they're gonna help someone.</p>
Helpfulness	<p>PHOEBE: Sometimes I felt like that and now I know what to do with how I feel like that.</p> <p>PHOEBE: Because all you need to do is, all you need to get into school and then at one point in school, you'll be able to do this and you'll feel much better, cause this really helped me.</p> <p>MONICA: Um, I really like it cause it helped other people understand what would help me if I'm feeling like worked up, angry or worried.</p> <p>MONICA: You should let people know that some people's minds work differently to yours, and they can think differently, work differently and some people worry much more than others, and some people just don't understand it. That's why it will be good to let people know.</p> <p>TEP: So, will this help them understand it a bit more do you think? Yeh? Amazing.</p> <p>PHOEBE: Because if that happens in real life you can do what the book says.</p> <p>PHOEBE: I'd say it would help quite a lot because some people in the country, they don't have the money to pay for things like relaxing things like my mum and dad don't have the money to pay for a toe massage or a finger massage, something like that. But you can you can, you can kind of give a massage on your fingers when tracing your hand and breathing in and out.</p>
Drawing	<p>PHOEBE: I really like that activity after all the other ones. Apart from all the other ones because all the other ones were like, writing, head down and you had to do it like how you were feeling, but this one was just go free, do whatever you want.</p>
Strategies	<p>ROSS: It really explains to me that if you don't face your fears, you will always be terrified of doing it. So, you need to do it once in your life and if you like it you can do it again.</p> <p>RACHEL: Mmm. Coz he he didn't want to go down the tree. And then because he felt left out, he wanted to go down.</p> <p>TEP: Was there anything there that you thought was a really good message?</p> <p>Rachel: That he tried.</p> <p>PHOEBE: [...] if it was different friends saying look Phoebe, we're coming and playing this. What you really like? And I would have said, OK, what are you playing? And then if they were playing my favourite game or if they were playing my favourite game next, then I'd play with them.</p> <p>MONICA: Umm. The koala was very overwhelmed, but when he when he got down, he actually really liked it because he</p>

	<p>tried it. It's cause he never tried it. He didn't know what it was going to be like.</p> <p>ROSS: This reminds me that you need to look for, look out for others because if someone is playing the game and you don't want to play it because they always play it and you get a bit fed up. You can tell them that I'm not going to play with you, you you're playing with everyone here but I don't like, want to play.</p> <p>ROSS: When I feel I'm sad or angry with someone whose done something to me, some people look at me and I don't like it.</p> <p>TEP: Yeah. OK. So is that one of the things that you realised from this? Yeah. OK. So it helps you to kind of think about what was going on for you yeh? OK, Monica?</p> <p>JOEY: So you so you... breathe round the...</p> <p>TEP: Yeah. Yeah. So you can do the hand one hand breathing one. Yeah. And then there was the one with the flower and candle and it says about when you breathe in slowly to smell the flower, and then you breathe out slowly to blow out the candle. Do you remember that one?</p> <p>JOEY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.</p> <p>TEP: Go on Monica.</p> <p>MONICA: At home I've got a it's like the finger one, but it's a little star. And then you go up breathe in, then when you get to the top, you hold for about four seconds and you go down.</p> <p>ROSS: That this reminds you to think of books you've read and if they help people, you can use the words or things and you can tell them to do that.</p> <p>MONICA: When I sometimes am worried about something I can try and talk to people to try and help it.</p> <p>EMILY: Always let people know to tell someone that you are worried and then it will feel better.</p> <p>ROSS: Yeh because we can learn from it and not to do it.</p> <p>ROSS: It reminds me that when you, you need to take a little bit of time each each time you think saying to your friend O I don't want to be your friend or I'm I'm not gonna play with you for a little bit or you need to be really careful with what you say with your words.</p>
Finance	<p>Phoebe: I'd say it would help quite a lot because some people in the country, they don't have the money to pay for things like relaxing things like my mum and dad don't have the money to pay for a toe massage or a finger massage, something like that. But you can you can, you can kind of give a massage on your fingers when tracing your hand and breathing in and out.</p>
Understanding of self (realisation/giving the child a voice)	<p>MONICA: You should let people know that some people's minds work differently to yours, and they can think differently, work differently and some people worry much more than others, and some people just don't understand it. That's why it will be good to let people know.</p>

<p>Understanding of others (please dyslexia)</p>	<p>ROSS: Or he just didn't know what they were gonna play. Like maybe he could get hide and seek and he could get lost and the crocodile could eat him. That's why he's why he's always clinging on and then the fall was gonna fall.</p> <p>MONICA: Umm. The koala was very overwhelmed, but when he when he got down, he actually really liked it because he tried it. It's cause he never tried it. He didn't know what it was going to be like.</p>
<p>Understanding/awareness of emotions</p>	
<p>Anger</p>	<p>Phoebe: But sometimes I get really angry because it might be like some, a person in a book is being really mean to another person in the book.</p> <p>Phoebe: And I feel like, why are they doing that? They should be treating each other kindly.</p>
<p>Emotions (expressions of)</p>	<p>You calm. You feel calm.</p> <p>Because you're not worrying about anything.</p> <p>I feel happy.</p> <p>I feel relaxed because if you're feeling stressed in the outside world, you can just go into the book world.</p> <p>Yes, it makes you feel erm calm and umm nothing can penetrate through your mind</p> <p>PHOEBE: But sometimes I get really angry because it might be like some, a person in a book is being really mean to another person in the book.</p> <p>PHOEBE: And I feel like, why are they doing that? They should be treating each other kindly.</p> <p>JOEY: He met a frog and he was happy because he was alone in all the other days.</p> <p>JOEY: Because the ending was really good because the the the frog went away, then the duck had to swim, swim on top of the water in a boat. And it was raining. And and next he found it. He found the frog.</p> <p>EMILY: I liked how, before, the way he started having his worries, got, the green got bigger and bigger.</p> <p>ROSS: That this reminds you to think of books you've read and if they help people, you can use the words or things and you can tell them to do that.</p>
<p>Worry and anxiety</p>	<p>PHOEBE: I think worry means to me as in like either sad, or feel anxious or distress.</p> <p>ROSS: Worry means to me if you feel sad, it means to me it really means to me that you can do things to help you, or that you just don't feel OK with what's happening. If you're going to France the next tomorrow, you feel really excited and then your mum or your someone changes it, you feel you feel worried that you're not going to go next year or this year?</p>

	<p>TEP: So a change in plans can make you feel worry, can't it? Yeah. So you've given this example there. Thank you. Go on Monica.</p> <p>MONICA: To me, worrying is when you think of something that you don't really like the sound of you think too much about it, and then you exaggerate it and think too much about the future what could happen, even though I'm not sure it's going to happen. And it also means that you're like if you kind of like can't find like if someone has been mean to you, you'll you'll get worried that they'll never really talk to you or they'll be, like not nice a lot.</p> <p>EMILY: Worry means to me that there's something that's happening small and it's always in the back of your head. And it keeps on getting in the back of the head and then you start to worry about it more and more.</p> <p>TEP: OK.</p> <p>EMILY: And it gets worse.</p> <p>JOEY: Worry means to me, so when I read a book and I feel alone because I can't really see if I got my mum or dad in my bedroom because my bed is high up.</p> <p>TEP: OK, so worry to you is about being alone.</p> <p>RACHEL: Worry means like like someone else might have it, and then you think of it for a long time, and then it just gets bigger.</p> <p>TEP: Yes. OK. So is that like you think about other people's worries and that can make you worried as well?</p> <p>RACHEL: Yeah.</p>
Emotional experience of books?	<p>PHOEBE: Umm, I feel stressed in some books sometimes. I'm not gonna list the actual ones.</p> <p>EMILY: Sometimes I don't like reading books because they have this bit in it , which I just find annoying like pirate bits.</p> <p>TEP: O OK, so certain themes in books or characters that you just don't like. Yeah, OK. And go on Phoebe.</p>
Belonging	
Being community (acceptance, peers and class teacher)	<p>ROSS: Because we're all unique and we have all special things like some people might have autism. Some people might have a disease which like dyslexia or something else and then you can help sort of words because you can listen to the words and then you can write it down.</p> <p>TEP: OK. So, we're all unique, but we should still help each other?</p> <p>ROSS: Yeah.</p> <p>ROSS: But if you don't like being helped you can, and if you like the teacher more the teacher can help you if you like your classmates more, your classmate, your classmates can help you.</p> <p>EMILY: Yeah, so we are all different but we can help each other a lot.</p> <p>MONICA: Everyone's got different talents so some people might be really good at one thing, and others might need a bit</p>

	<p>of help so people that have that talent can help the others, and then everyone can help each other to be better.</p> <p>ROSS: That when people feel sad and they don't know what to do and the teachers and the teacher was getting a bit angry when you weren't listening maybe it's someone else could help you because maybe the date or the LI or you can just look at the computer.</p> <p>PHOEBE: Yeh. I think that I really fit into my class because in my last school, as I was saying last time I I didn't have much friends but with this school, I have loads of friends and I feel like I really fit in because I've got, I've got my favourite teachers, yeah.</p> <p>TEP: So, getting on with your teachers and having your friends has helped you to feel like you belong. Excellent. You guys are wonderful at sharing. Thank you.</p>
Environmental belonging (where you are needs to connect to who you are)	<p>EMILY: I liked it when like its wet play and they're getting really stuck and putting it in your desk. I made, like, a little bit just for wet play [C was talking about a special place to keep activities to do during wet play which made her feel comfortable/safe].</p> <p>MONICA: I made a little room. Where if you're feeling worried or anxious you go in there and then there's a door from that room into a garden that with lots of flowers and space.</p> <p>ROSS: I think about one like when like you do all your stuff all like your English. You could go and like and do some learning games or games.</p> <p>EMILY: On the desk in my one it's quite old fashioned so you'd lift up the table and you'd have your own little draw of stuff.</p>
Relationships (maybe put team work here)	
Friendships	<p>MONICA: Umm, with therapy, it means like if someone's struggling with something it can help them relax and take their mind of it.</p> <p>JOEY: Because the ending was really good because the the the frog went away, then the duck had to swim, swim on top of the water in a boat. And it was raining. And and next he found it. He found the frog.</p> <p>MONICA: He did what he really hated just for a friend.</p> <p>MONICA: What? He just because he really missed the frog, he wanted to find him because and he did what he really didn't like to..</p> <p>TEP: What was that?</p> <p>MONICA: Which was going in the water to find his friend.</p> <p>MONICA: I like that it showed how good friendships can be and friends will do anything for you.</p> <p>ROSS: If you listen really well it can help you if you have some some of your friends. One of your friends finds a new friend and then you don't play with them. They like the new friend more than you and then you can just talk to them then they'll accept you as your best friend too.</p> <p>TEP: OK, brilliant. So it can be a bit tricky to begin with, can't it? But the situation might change.</p> <p>ROSS: And the more on it goes, yeah the less it does because then you can rejoin.</p>

	<p>EMILY: So after the tree his tree fell down, he could of quickly and went and found another one and climbed up it. But instead he chose because his friends were cheering the entire day. It wasn't so dangerous after all (inaudible).</p> <p>TEP: Yeah. That's a very good point. So, there's different ways that we can include people. Yeah, really good point.</p> <p>ROSS: Different ways we can be to people.</p> <p>MONICA: This morning I I needed a new book and I it took quite a long time to get it and they just put the LI away, so I had to look at my partners to see the LI & date.</p> <p>TEP: OK. Did your partner let you look?</p> <p>MONICA: Yeh</p> <p>TEP: So it's that initial scary bit, isn't it of not really knowing what's going to happen? What do you think helped him to know what was going to happen?</p> <p>MONICA: That his friends were telling him it was OK.</p> <p>JOEY: Because the ending was really good because the the the frog went away, then the duck had to swim, swim on top of the water in a boat. And it was raining. And and next he found it. He found the frog.</p> <p>TEP: So he went on the journey to find the frog didn't he? Go on Monica.</p> <p>MONICA: He did what he really hated just for a friend.</p> <p>TEP: Tell me more.</p> <p>MONICA: What? He just because he really missed the frog, he wanted to find him because and he did what he really didn't like to..</p> <p>TEP: What was that?</p> <p>MONICA: Which was going in the water to find his friend.</p> <p>PHOEBE: That even if you have one best friend, you can still have more than one best friend.</p> <p>TEP: So it's that initial scary bit, isn't it of not really knowing what's going to happen? What do you think helped him to know what was going to happen?</p> <p>MONICA: That his friends were telling him it was OK.</p> <p>PHOEBE: And also if your friend does something nice to you, then you should do something nice back because the duck, when what what he didn't like to do all just for a friend just because the frog was his friend and he loved him so much</p> <p>PHOEBE: And I think the friends were really really nice in that part because they and one of the friends tried to catch him, but he wouldn't. He still wouldn't. But when he fell to the floor, luckily the leaves saved him.</p> <p>PHOEBE: They didn't just say come down. Come down, come down, come down, over and over again.</p>
Family	<p>ROSS: Because me and my brother, we don't get on along good together, and some books remind me of it because Tom Gates first, Tom has a really annoying sister, and that reminds me of my brother.</p> <p>JOEY: The Twits because when I read it, it feels like my mum and dad, because they do argue a lot.</p>

<p>Self</p> <p>(Personal Connection?)</p>	<p>JOEY: I've got another one. Matilda because it because I am a little bit naughty.</p> <p>PHOEBE: Because if that happens in real life you can do what the book says.</p> <p>TEP: Yes you could or if you know that the book does something that's something really, really bad you know that's what to avoid.</p> <p>PHOEBE: You shouldn't do it.</p> <p>ROSS: And I face my fears once. And it was really scary going on the cable car.</p> <p>TEP: Yeah. Would you do it again?</p> <p>ROSS: I want to.</p> <p>TEP: But you noticed that it got a bit easier and a bit easier and a bit smaller and a bit smaller. That's really good. Do you think that's helpful to know for for you?</p> <p>MONICA: Yeah.</p> <p>PHOEBE: And then she left and I made friends with another person. And then a new person came in and played with my friend CYP and then they felt left out because nobody wanted to play with them because they already had loads of friends. And then I felt left out because my old friend didn't come back really so I played with the person who felt left out and yeh and then I didn't have enough friends so I came to this school and now I've got, well all of you are my friends and everyone's my friends.</p> <p>TEP: So, you made a little change, didn't you? Yeah.</p> <p>Excellent. Well done. And that's important as well because it shows there that you persisted because like like you said, things changed quite a lot, didn't they, different friends, but you carried on trying and it worked out. That's really good.</p> <p>PHOEBE: And I didn't give up.</p> <p>EMILY: One time, so I had a big friend group. And then one of my old friends he's joined. And I felt like that, he was taking me, but he wasn't. And then we were friends again.</p> <p>PHOEBE: But if I was him, I would have just jumped off.</p>
<p>Awareness of others, connections reality, home life</p>	<p>PHOEBE: Umm, I think because I like, I really like that because their friends didn't give up trying to get him down and the koala did it in his own time. He didn't. He didn't do it really, really slowly and never come down. But he just didn't just jump down saying watch out below. He took his time and said. And then when the tree fall, fell down, he kept on clinging on.</p>

Step 4: Developing and reviewing theme

Code		Subtheme
Teamwork		Attempt 3
Teamwork		Relationship – others?
Broader Learning (Guiding theme)/ Additional benefits		
Children Achieved (Code)	<i>Link to expectations</i>	Academic/ Understanding/ Awareness?
School Ethos		Ethos
Vocabulary		Academic (theme)
Cross Curricular		Academic
Engagement with reading		
Love of reading		
Curiosity		Imagination
Humour		
Imagination		Imagination
Remove all from reality		Imagination
Pictures are important (they help you access the book and understand concepts)		
Better for you		
Safety		
Excitement		
Psychoeducation		
Others should do it		Understanding of self & others
Helpfulness		Understanding of self & others
Drawing		Strategies
Strategies		Strategies
Finance		Finance
Understanding of self (realisation/giving the child a voice)		Understanding of self
Understanding of others (please dyslexia)		Understanding of others
Understanding/awareness of emotions		
Anger		Emotions
Emotions		Emotions
Worry and anxiety		Emotions
Emotional experience of books?		Emo exp of books
Belonging		
Being community (acceptance, peers and class teacher)		
Environmental belonging (where you are needs to connect to who you are)		
Relationships (maybe put team work here)		
Friendships		Others
Family		Others
Self		Self
Awareness of others, connections reality, home life		

Step 5: Refining, defining and naming themes

Step 5: Definitions of themes (not subtheme) – tabular

Appendix L UCL Ethics Approval

UCL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
OFFICE FOR THE VICE PROVOST RESEARCH



11th November 2022

Dr [REDACTED]
Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology
UCL

Cc: Michael Straker

Dear [REDACTED]

Notification of Ethics Approval with Provisos

Project ID/Title: 23561/001: Medicine for the soul: What are the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engaged in whole class bibliotherapy?

Further to your satisfactory responses to the Committee's comments, I am pleased to confirm in my capacity as Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee (REC) that your study has been ethically approved by the UCL REC until 11th November 2023.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

Notification of Amendments to the Research

You must seek Chair's approval for proposed amendments (to include extensions to the duration of the project) to the research for which this approval has been given. Each research project is reviewed separately and if there are significant changes to the research protocol you should seek confirmation of continued ethical approval by completing an 'Amendment Approval Request Form' <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/research-ethics/responsibilities-after-approval>

Adverse Event Reporting – Serious and Non-Serious

It is your responsibility to report to the Committee any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to participants or others. The Ethics Committee should be notified of all serious adverse events via the Ethics Committee Administrator (ethics@ucl.ac.uk) immediately the incident occurs. Where the adverse incident is unexpected and serious, the Joint Chairs will decide whether the study should be terminated pending the opinion of an independent expert. For non-serious adverse events the Joint Chairs of the Ethics Committee should again be notified via the Ethics Committee Administrator within ten days of the incident occurring and provide a full written report that should include any amendments to the participant information sheet and study protocol. The Joint Chairs will confirm that the incident is non-serious and report to the Committee at the next meeting. The final view of the Committee will be communicated to you.

Office of the Vice Provost Research, 2 Taviston Street
University College London
Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 8717
Email: ethics@ucl.ac.uk
<http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

Final Report

At the end of the data collection element of your research we ask that you submit a very brief report (1-2 paragraphs will suffice) which includes in particular issues relating to the ethical implications of the research i.e. issues obtaining consent, participants withdrawing from the research, confidentiality, protection of participants from physical and mental harm etc.

In addition, please:

- ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in UCL's Code of Conduct for Research;
- note that you are required to adhere to all research data/records management and storage procedures agreed as part of your application. This will be expected even after completion of the study.

With best wishes for the research.

Yours sincerely



Joint Chair, UCL Research Ethics Committee

Appendix M LA Ethics Approval

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Mike Straker
Trainee Educational Psychologist

[REDACTED]

19th October 2022

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your email requesting permission for you to undertake your thesis project on the emotional and psychological benefits to primary aged children when engage in whole class bibliotherapy.

I have read your thesis proposal and subject to Ethical Approval by UCL's Ethics Committee and to agreement from participating schools, children and their families, we are happy to support you in undertaking your work in [REDACTED].

Please keep me updated about how your work is proceeding and discuss any potential ethical issues with me as they arise so that we can ensure that we are managing the work within the context of [REDACTED] effectively and are providing you with appropriate support.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Principal Educational Psychologist

Appendix N Ethical Considerations

Ethical Considerations

Principle	Consideration
<i>Risk</i>	<p>Risk related to potential harm was carefully considered, particularly in light of discussions around worry and belonging. The participants were not considered to be vulnerable and measures were put in place to support children who were recognised as presenting as highly anxious (names of these pupils were shared with the SENCO and standard school support based on school policies was then put in place), therefore the project was considered to be a low risk venture. During the focus groups, it was shared that participants did not need to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. For the staff completing the wellbeing questionnaire, support was highlighted (a website and phone number for Education Support) at the end of the questionnaire should they have been affected by any of the questions or their reflections on their wellbeing. The texts used in the project were from major publishers and accessible via local bookshops and libraries (therefore not exposing children to any content not deemed appropriate for their age)</p>
<i>Valid Consent</i>	<p>As above, an opt-out form will be used instead of consent as the intervention and data collection is based upon whole class experience. The intervention will form part of what is a typical part of the school day (whole class reading and reflection on a text). The intervention will be led by the class teacher and teaching assistant (if appropriate/available). The researcher will be available if needed on the days for data collection via online measurements and during the focus group sessions.</p> <p>Parents/carers of all children in participating schools will be sent an information sheet about the research. Parents will have the opportunity to opt out of the research by contacting the school office to say that they do not want</p>

their child to take part. As this is a whole class intervention, parents can choose that their child works in another class for the duration of the intervention session or that their child can participate but that their data will not be collected. An opt out form will be used instead of consent because the intervention and data collection is on a whole class basis and is recognised as an area of work that the school would be doing (i.e. reading and discussing texts). The intervention will be run by the class teacher as loco parentis. If required, the researcher will be present on days the participants fill in the measures but will not be present each time the intervention is delivered. The researcher will offer a weekly meeting (in person or virtual) to enable the interventionist (the teacher) to reflect on the intervention session.

An information sheet (or video) will be shared with participants. If a sheet is shared, this will be read aloud to them by a member of school staff. To gain participant assent, participants will be told clearly what it means to partake in the research and that they have a choice as to whether or not they would like their data to be used as part of the final analysis.

Informed consent – focus groups: Staff will sign a consent form to participate in a focus group with additional adults in the school who have taken part in the intervention. As part of the information sheet for parents, I will detail that some children will be randomly selected for a one-hour focus group. If they do not wish for their child to be in the random allocation for the focus group, they will need to opt out by informing the school office.

Confidentiality

Minimal personal information was collected regarding the participants. Names were pseudonymised via a participant code. Codes were linked to a register that the class teacher kept to identify any pupils who show an elevated level of anxiety which needs to be reported to the school's SENCO. All questionnaire data completed online was downloaded and stored on the researcher's UCL OneDrive account. Consent forms were completed online and data stored on the researcher's OneDrive account. All focus group data

	<p>was pseudonymised by giving a numerical code to each participant. No names or school data were recorded on focus group transcripts. All focus group and measurement data were destroyed after data analysis. Exercise folders were kept by the class teacher. Any examples of reflection of completed tasks were be anonymised. Participants were asked if they were happy for their reflections/ tasks to be shared. This communication took place through the class teacher. Sex and ethnicity data were collected to describe the sample and discuss the generalisability of the sample. The email address of the teacher (their work email) was used to communicate with the class teacher.</p> <p>The lawful basis used to process <i>personal data</i> was performance of a task in the public interest and the lawful basis used to process <i>special category personal data</i> was for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.</p>
<i>Giving advice</i>	<p>Advice was not explicitly given during the intervention; however, Cognitive Behavioural approaches were explored within a whole-class context. Weekly supervision was offered to teaching staff running the intervention to explore questions or concerns rising from the sessions. Teachers were given information regarding wellbeing support as part of the wellbeing survey and SENCOs were contacted if children presented as highly anxious so that standard school procedure and support could be initiated if deemed necessary.</p>
<i>Deception</i>	<p>Transparency was at the heart of the recruitment process which helped to ensure there was no deception involved. Teachers were provided with participant sheets, email scripts for parents and a video for pupils explaining the project and what would be involved. This allowed for a consistent explanation of the project from the researcher. School staff shared the participant sheet with parents and carers via the school email system and a clear rationale for the project was shared with staff in a twilight training session (Appendix ##) in which staff were given the opportunity to ask any questions they had too. During focus groups, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw. Teachers were offered weekly online supervision with the researcher should they have any questions or</p>

reflections on the intervention and also had email contact details for the research in case the supervision time was not a viable option.

Debriefing

Teachers were debriefed at the end of their focus groups (as were participants in the pupil focus group). Teachers were also provided with a simple debrief video thanking the children for their participation which could be shared with the class.

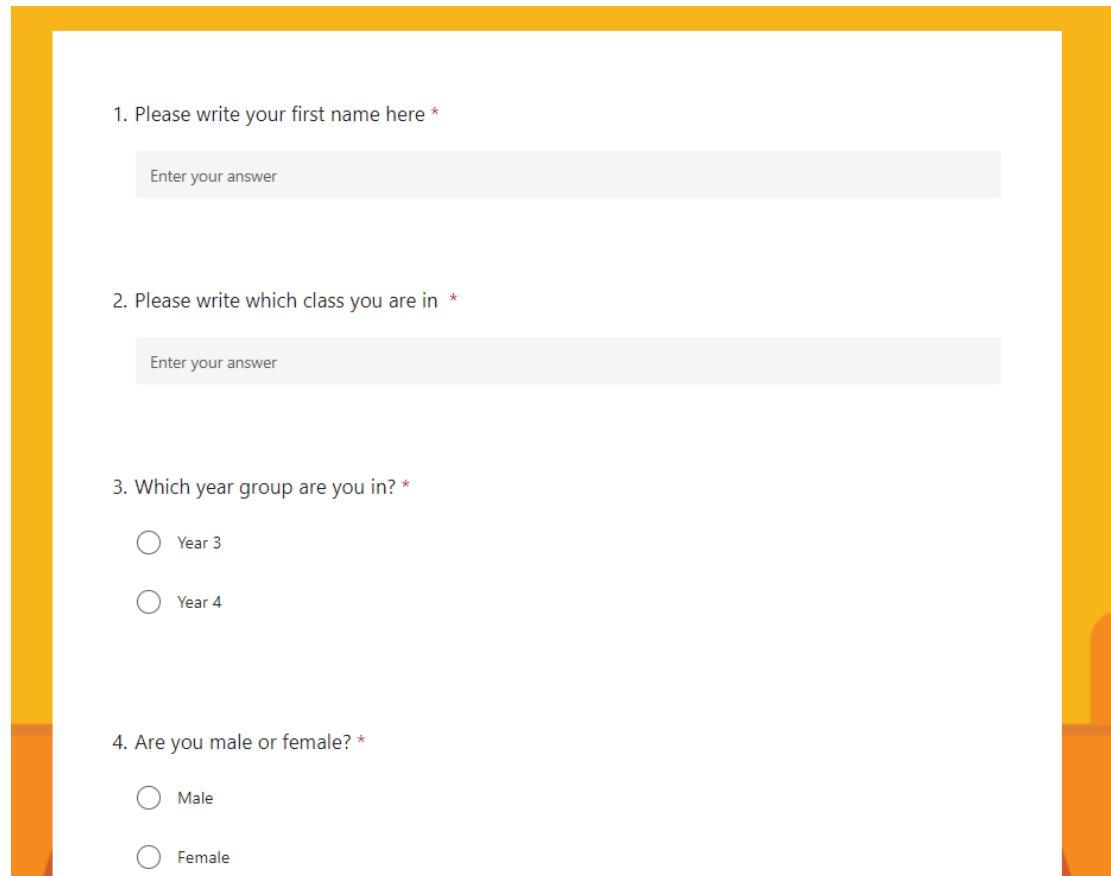
Appendix O SOSCS-P Online Form

The Sense of School Community Scale – Primary can be found using the following reference:

Frederickson, N., & Baxter, J. (2009). Measures of children's mental health & psychological wellbeing: Belonging. In *Measures of children's mental health & psychological wellbeing*.

Appendix P SCAS Online Form

Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)

The form is titled "Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)" and is enclosed in a yellow border. It contains four questions. Questions 1 and 2 are text input fields. Questions 3 and 4 are radio button selections. Question 1: "1. Please write your first name here *" with a text input field containing the placeholder "Enter your answer". Question 2: "2. Please write which class you are in *" with a text input field containing the placeholder "Enter your answer". Question 3: "3. Which year group are you in? *" with two radio button options: "Year 3" and "Year 4". Question 4: "4. Are you male or female? *" with two radio button options: "Male" and "Female".

1. Please write your first name here *

Enter your answer

2. Please write which class you are in *

Enter your answer

3. Which year group are you in? *

☐ Year 3

☐ Year 4

4. Are you male or female? *

☐ Male

☐ Female

5. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I worry about things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have a problem, I get a funny feeling in my stomach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would feel afraid of being on my own at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel scared when I have to take a test	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel afraid if I have to use public toilets or bathrooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about being away from my parents/carers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel afraid that I will make a fool of myself in front of people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that I will do badly at my school work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I am popular amongst other kids my own age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that something awful will happen to someone in my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I suddenly feel as if I can't breathe when there is no reason for this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel scared if I have to sleep on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I have trouble going to school in the mornings because I feel nervous or afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am good at sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have a problem, my heart beats really fast	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I suddenly start to tremble or shame when there is no reason for this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that something bad will happen to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have a problem, I feel shaky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I am a good person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel scared if I have to travel in the car, or on a bus or a train	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry what other people think of me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid of being in crowded places (like shopping centres, the cinema, buses, busy playgrounds)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All of a sudden I feel really scared for no reason at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I suddenly become dizzy or faint when there is no reason for this	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel afraid if I have to talk in front of my class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
My heart suddenly starts to beat too quickly for no reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that I will suddenly get a scared feeling when there is nothing to be afraid of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid of being in small closed places like tunnels or small rooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Please select the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There are no right or wrong answers. *

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I am proud of my school work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would feel scared if I had to stay away from home overnight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Is there something else that you are really afraid of? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. Please write down what it is in the box below

Enter your answer

16. How often are you afraid of this thing?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix Q The Duck Who Didn't Like Water Lesson Plan

Dear ##,

I hope you had a fantastic half term. Below is a link to all the lesson plans and resources for the bibliotherapy project. You should already have the books and the folders for the children.

[Lesson Plans](#)

Within this you will find the following:

1.Intro for CYP: This is a brief video explaining an overview of the project.


2.The Duck Who didn't like water: Within this folder you will see a PDF version and a Word version of the lesson plans as well as a PowerPoint to support the teaching.

3.Milo's monster: As above

4.The Koala That Could: As above.

Each unit has 2 lessons and there is an explanation of how to carry out each unit on the first page. Please ensure you follow the order of the lessons from 1 to 4. Number 1 and 2 can be started on the same day. There are suggested lesson timings within each plan to support you being able to get through all the activities.

Please ensure that you download the folders rather than individual items as this should prevent issues with watching any of the videos through the PowerPoints.

Before starting any of these plans please ensure that you **complete the consent form** for each class (<https://forms.office.com/r/>). The

intro video should be shared before starting the online questionnaires.

You will notice on the front page of each unit plan there is a space for reflection from the teacher. This can help facilitate discussion during the supervision sessions.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to pop me an email. I hope you find lessons on the project enjoyable.

Best wishes,

Mike

Trainee Educational Psychologist, University College London

The Duck Who Didn't Like Water by Steve Small

In the following table you will find suggested questions and linked activities for different pages

of the book. The writing in green is for possible responses. Any suggested videos have been embedded in the PowerPoints but also downloaded as separate videos (to prevent any issues with pop ups etc. on YouTube). Please watch any videos in advance to ensure you are happy they are suitable to use with your class. For the integrity of the research, **all the activities need to be completed within the lesson**, which is why you will see suggested timings on the right-hand side of the table to support planning for these activities. Timings in the lesson plans have been given for a 30min and 45min lesson depending on your class timetable.



Book Summary:

Have you ever heard of a Duck who doesn't like water? Duck is exactly that kind of Duck. That is, until he meets Frog, who loves water. This is the start of a very unlikely friendship. When Duck offers to help Frog find his way home, they form a bond which neither of them expected. But it's only when Frog is back home that Duck realises he's missing something... his new best friend Frog!

This is an adorable picture book about making friends in the most unlikely of places. With its beautiful illustrations, it's a book you will come back to time and time again.

(Taken from <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/book/t/the-Duck-who-didnt-like-water/> on 15.02.23)
The key theme that we will be focusing on in this book is **friendship**.

Throughout this mini unit, it would be helpful for you to reflect on the following:

- ★ Which activities worked well? Which would you change? How would you change them?
- ★ Did the children engage in the text and the activities?
- ★ Did you learn anything about yourself/ the children from this unit of work?
- ★ What surprised you, if anything, about the children's responses?
- ★ How will this impact the way you engage children in texts in the future?

Use the box below to jot down any reflections to discuss in supervision.

Lesson 1

In this lesson you will read up to page 21 (ending with 'so Duck set off').

Page(s)	Questions	Linked Activity	Suggested timings	
1	Read page one and ask: What are Ducks supposed to love? <i>Water, pond weed, insects etc</i> Is there an example of something that you think you are meant to love but don't/ find hard to love? <i>Vegetables, certain subjects, siblings etc.</i>	Activity 1: Draw thought bubbles around the picture and write down what the Duck is thinking. This could be completed as a whole class.	30 min lesson	45 min lesson
			3 mins	3 mins
2-3	Is there anything you like/ don't like that others like/don't like?	These ideas could be jotted down on the IWB or Flip Chart	2 mins	4 mins
4-5	How do you relax? How do others relax? Is it the same? How do you know in your body that you are feeling relaxed?	Activity 2: Body mapping. All pupils need to complete this as we will be referring back to it in another task.	7 mins	10 mins
8-9	Have you ever been lost before?	Activity 3: Complete the whole class hot cross bun	3 mins	8 mins
10-11	Frog was different to Duck, but they were still friends. How are we similar to our friends? How are we different to our friends? How do we live with the difference? <i>We talk about it, recognise it, learn from it and enjoy it. Sometimes it can be difficult to understand differences but this is where talking can be particularly helpful.</i>	These ideas could be jotted down on the IWB or Flip Chart	3 mins	5 mins
18-19	How do we say goodbye? How do we find saying goodbye? How do we remember people? Do we forget people? Is this ok? <i>Explain that it is ok to forget people at times, as we learn to live with the change, but that we can enjoy the times we do remember them. We shouldn't feel guilty for not constantly</i>		4 mins	5 mins

	<p>remembering people/things. The change can feel very sudden. How do we cope with change? We may talk to friends, write letters, create a memory box. This will be explored further in <i>The Koala Who Could</i>.</p>			
20-21	<p>Duck misses his friend when he goes home. Can you think of a time that you've missed someone or something? This could be a friend that has moved away (or you moved), a toy that you gave to charity etc. What do we do when we feel sad with someone or something? We can talk to them, talk about it, do an activity we know makes us happy etc What doesn't help? Often, people will disregard the sad feeling and tell us to 'cheer up'. It is important to acknowledge the sad feeling but also to consider how to live with a variety of feelings, including sadness. Sadness is not bad, it's part of our experience.</p>	<p>Activity 4: Create a whole class poster with top tips for when you are feeling sad Remember your support network (friends, family, adults in school) Sleep Eat Listen to music Watch your favourite TV show Go outside and play/walk Take a screen shot of this and print it for children to keep as part of their folders for this project. Children could then add to this in the next session if they have further ideas that they hadn't wanted to share with the class.</p>	8 mins	10 mins

Lesson 2

Recap the story so far, remind the children about the friendship that Duck and Frog had, but that Frog had gone home. Can anyone remember what Duck has decided to do?

You may also want to give the children some time to reflect on the whole class poster with 'Top Tips for when you are feeling sad' so that they can add further ideas to this.

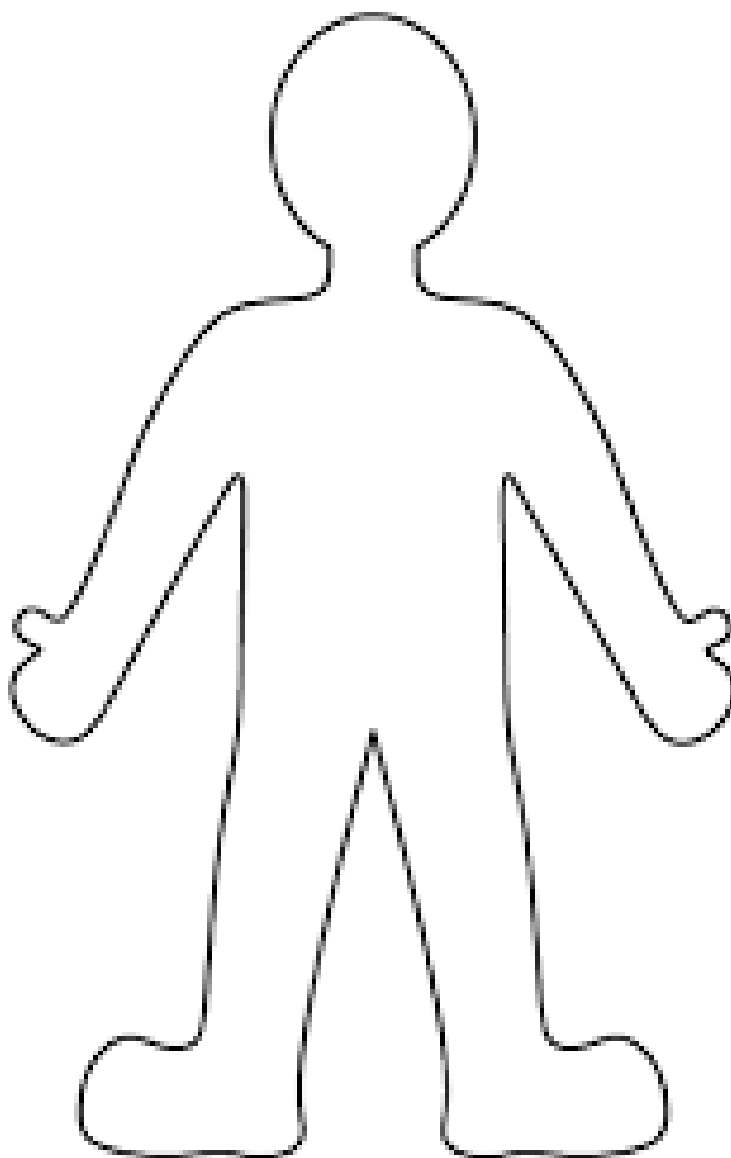
Page(s)	Questions	Linked Activity	Suggested timings	
22-23 24-25	<p>What is Duck thinking?</p> <p><i>This is a long journey! Will I make it? I can't wait to find frog! Will he have missed me?</i></p> <p>Why didn't Duck give up?</p> <p>Have we ever wanted to give up?</p> <p>How do we keep going?</p> <p><i>Remembering the goal/ end point, breaking things down into smaller, manageable steps, getting advice/ support from friends/ trusted adults.</i></p> <p>How can we be encouraging to our friends to persevere? – E.g. video the racer and the dad that led</p>	<p>Activity 5: As a whole class, look at and annotate the picture with Duck's thoughts</p>	30 min lesson	45 min lesson
			8 mins	13 mins
28-29	<p>Duck says, 'Home doesn't feel like home if you're not there!'. Home is clearly an important, safe place for Duck. What makes our classroom a safe space?</p> <p><i>Trusted adults, routine, knowing where things are, my friends are here etc.</i></p> <p>What do you notice about classroom pictures we drew? What was the same/different? Is it okay that different things make us feel safe in class? How do we still get on with people with different views?</p>	<p>Activity 6: Design a poster for your 'ideal classroom'. Once completed, perform an Art Gallery (where the children silently walk around the classroom and explore the pictures the class have drawn. To create the environment for this, you can play some quiet, classical music. Once the music stops, children silently go back to their chairs and then the teacher asks questions about similarities and differences in the pictures).</p>	20 mins	30 mins

Activity 1: Thought bubbles

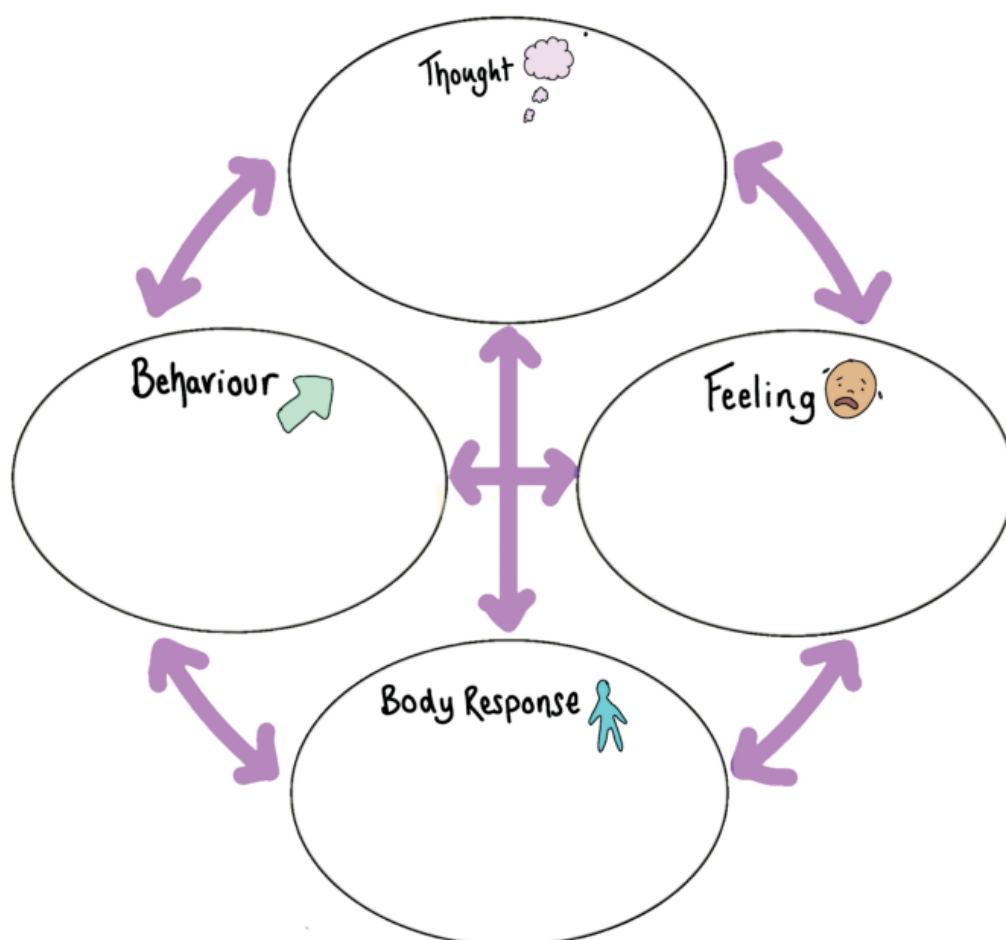


Activity 2: Body Mapping

How do you know you feel relaxed?



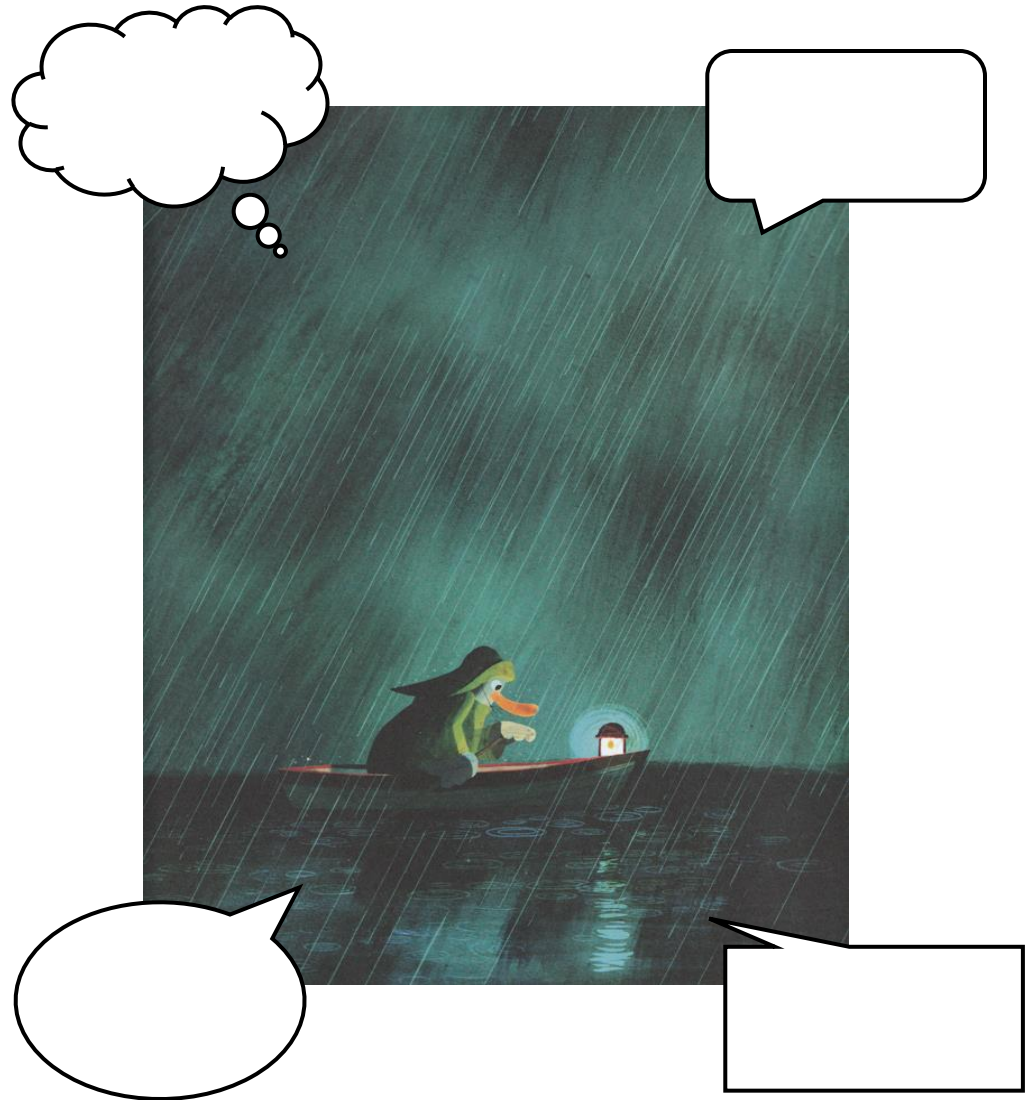
Activity 3: Whole Class Hot Cross Bun



Activity 4: Create a poster with top tips for when you are feeling sad



Activity 5: As a whole class, look at and annotate the picture with Duck's thoughts



Activity 6: Design a poster for your 'ideal classroom'.

Slides for 'The Duck Who Didn't Like Water'

Slide 1:

Our
book
this
week is...



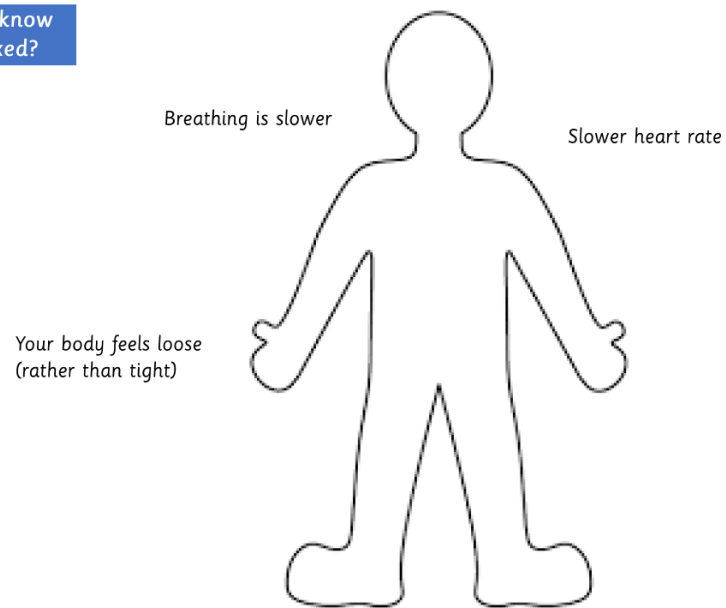
Slide 2:



Activity 1: Draw thought bubbles around the picture and write down what Duck is thinking.

Slide 3:

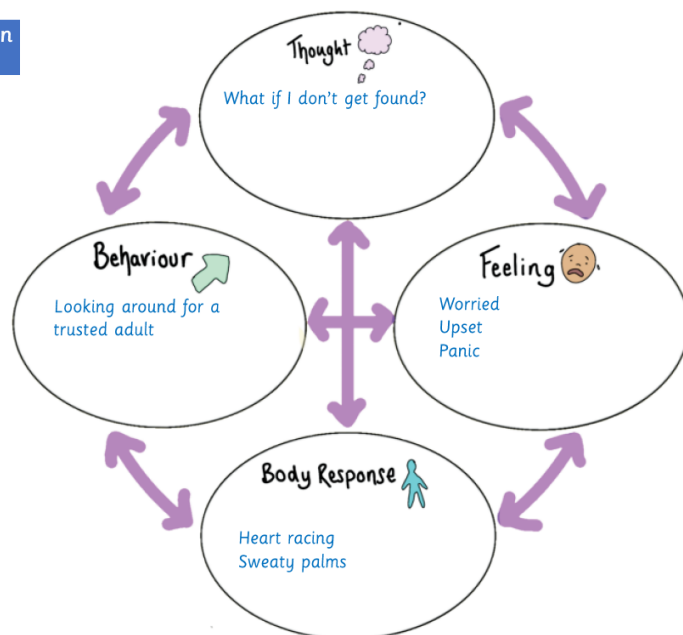
How do you know
you feel relaxed?



Activity 2: Body Mapping

Slide 4:

Have you ever been
lost before?



Activity 3: Whole Class
Hot Cross Bun

Slide 5:



Activity 4: Create a poster with top tips for when you are feeling sad

Slide 6:



Activity 5: As a whole class, look at and annotate the picture with Duck's thoughts

Slide 7:



Imagine you are walking around an art gallery.

As you walk around, think about **what you notice** in other people's pictures of the 'ideal classroom'. What is the **same**? What is **different**?

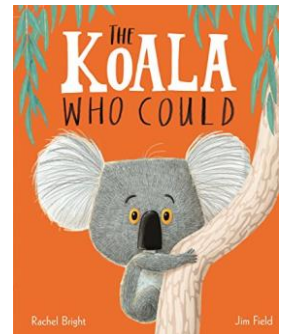
Remember to walk around silently as you appreciate and think about what others have drawn.

Activity 6: Design a poster for your 'ideal classroom'.

Appendix R The Koala Who Could Lesson Plan

The Koala Who Could by Rachel Bright

In the following table you will find questions and linked activities for different pages of the book. The writing in green is for possible responses. Any videos have been embedded in the PowerPoints but also downloaded as separate videos (to prevent any issues with pop ups etc. on YouTube). Please watch any videos in advance to ensure you are happy they are suitable to use with your class. For the integrity of the research, **all the activities need to be completed within the lesson**, which is why you will see timings on the right-hand side of the table to support planning for these activities. Timings in the lesson plans have been given for a 30min and 45min lesson depending on your class timetable.



Book Summary:

Anxious Kevin the Koala is faced with change despite doing everything he can to avoid it. He hates change as the consequences scare him. The koala spends time clinging to his gum tree in the Australian Outback. He watches the other animals play on the ground and secretly wishes he could join in. Kevin is scared because he sees danger in everything and can't bring himself to climb down from the safety of his tree. Kevin has no choice but to make a big change when a woodpecker disturbs his steady way of life. With the help of his friends, Kevin builds his courage to explore the ground and finds himself having fun.

(Taken from <https://childrenslibrarylady.com/the-koala-who-could/> on 15.02.23)

The key theme that we will be focusing on in this book is **change**.

Throughout this mini unit, it would be helpful for you to reflect on the following:

- ★ Which activities worked well? Which would you change? How would you change them?
- ★ Did the children engage in the text and the activities?
- ★ Did you learn anything about yourself/ the children from this unit of work?
- ★ What surprised you, if anything, about the children's responses?
- ★ How will this impact the way you engage children in texts in the future?

Use the box below to jot down any reflections to discuss in supervision.

Lesson 1

In this lesson you will read up to page 14 (ending with '... just couldn't let go).

Page(s)	Questions	Linked Activity	Suggested timings	
Before you start reading	<p>Can you think of an example of a good change? <i>You go home and find out you have a new pet!</i></p> <p>Can you think of an example of a bad change? <i>You have to eat broccoli soup forever!</i></p> <p>Recognise that the same change can be felt differently by different people.</p>		30 min lesson	45 min lesson
			3 mins	5 mins
1-2		Activity 1: As a whole class, add Kevin's feelings to the thought bubbles around the illustration.	3 mins	3 mins
3-4	Kevin is good at clinging, napping and leaf bun munching. What are you good at?	Activity 2: Complete the 'What are you good at?' activity. You can share ideas as a class for the children to magpie first.	4 mins	5 mins
5-6/ 7-8	<p>The wombat stopped by and shouted one day "Hey Kevin! Why don't you come down here and play?". Why do you think Kevin didn't want to come down to play? <i>Kevin was scared to try something new.</i></p> <p>How do we relax? <i>Play games, participate in sport, watch tv, read a book, sleep etc.</i></p>	<p>Activity 3: What makes us feel safe? Draw a space that makes you feel safe (e.g. home, the park, school, under your bed, sat on the sofa).</p> <p>Activity 4: As a class, create a hot cross bun as Kevin explaining why Kevin didn't want to come down and play</p>	10 mins	15 mins
9-10	<p>Do we ever give reasons for not doing something because this scares us? Can you think of an example? How do we face our fears? How do we know we are scared?</p> <p>Did Kevin have anything to fear? Did his friends understand? Do we all find the same things scary?</p>	Activity 5: Explain anxiety using the video. If you would rather not use the video because it uses the word anxiety, you can watch it yourself and use it to explain worries to the class. The key points to draw out are the physical responses to worries and that we can all be worried about different things (e.g. one person may worry about spiders whilst someone else does not).	5 mins	8 mins

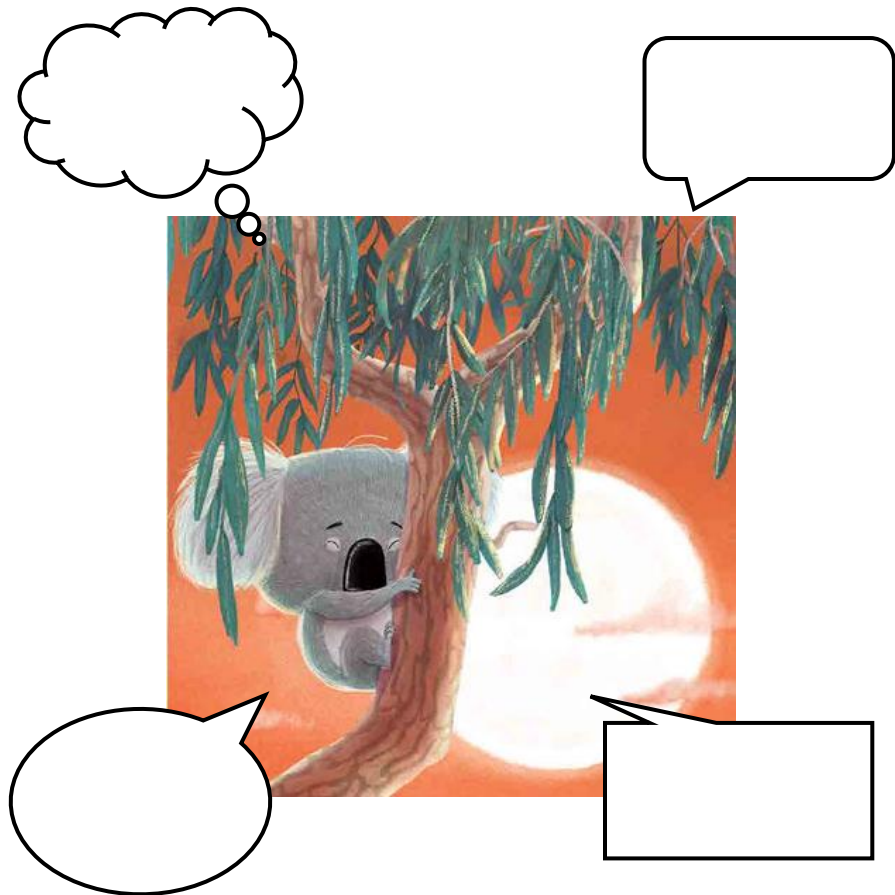
11-12	Have you ever felt like this? What do people do to exclude/include us? How do we feel when this happens?	Activity 6: I feel included when... I feel excluded when... I could include more people this week by...	5 mins	9 mins
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Lesson 2

Recap the story so far, remind the children about Kevin being scared to come down from the tree and that his friends wanted him to join in their games.

Page(s)	Questions	Linked Activity	Suggested timings	
15-16	Was Kevin happy? What needed to change? Does Kevin know this? Why is it hard to change? How could Kevin's friends help him?		5 mins	5 mins
21-22	Did Kevin have a choice about the tree collapsing? Do we always have a choice about change?	Activity 7: Write your top 3 tips for coping	3 mins	6 mins
23-24	Kevin was slow to change but that's okay. What did his friends do well? They were patient, encouraging and they went to him.	Activity 8: Draw and label what makes a good friend. Reflect on what makes a good friend. What is one thing that you can do to be a better friend? Big ears for listening Big heart for caring Big smile for kindness etc.	7 mins	12 mins
25-26	The worst thing Kevin thought could happen did, and he survived. Has this ever happened to you when you thought that something would be awful. How did you cope? Use the example of the class assembly. Some people think Class Assemblies are the worst, most scary thing ever. How did you find it? What helped you get through it?		5 mins	7 mins
29	What new thing would you like to try? How will you do it?	Activity 9: Make a plan	10 mins	15 mins

Activity 1: Thought bubbles



Activities 2, 3 & 6:

Activity 2: 'What are you good at?'

-
-
-
-



Activity 3: Draw a space that makes you feel safe



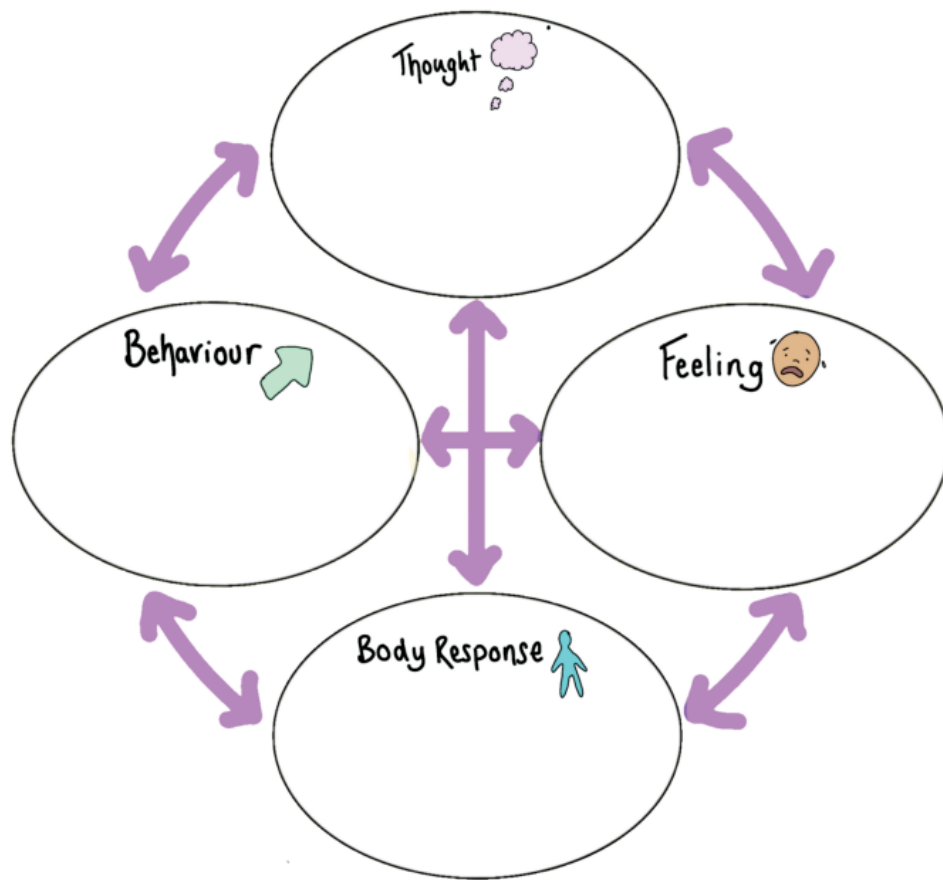
Activity 6: Complete the sentences

I feel included when _____

I feel excluded when _____

I could include more people this week by _____

Activity 4: Whole Class Hot Cross Bun




Activity 5: Explaining Anxiety Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

Explain anxiety using the video. If you would rather not use the video because it uses the word anxiety, you can watch it yourself and use it to explain worries to the class. The key points to draw out are the physical responses to worries and that we can all be worried about different things (e.g. one person may worry about spiders whilst someone else does not).

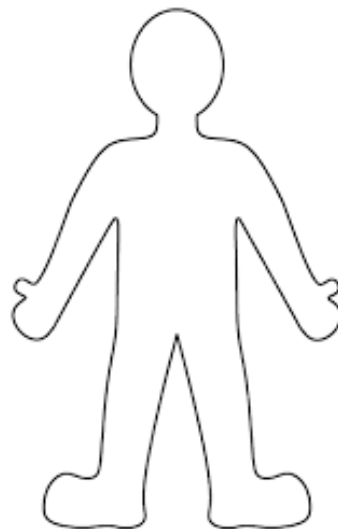
Activity 7: Top Tips for change



My 'Top Tips' for coping with change

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Activity 8: Label what a good friend is like



Activity 9: Making a plan



Small steps

Sometimes tasks or challenges seem too big. When this happens, we need to break them down into smaller steps. This will make each step more possible and will help you to be successful.

Write what you want to and the smaller steps that will take you towards your goal.

My goal – what I want to do

Break your goal into smaller steps and write or draw them here

Arrange your steps in order of difficulty. Put the hardest at the top (1) and the easiest at the bottom (5).

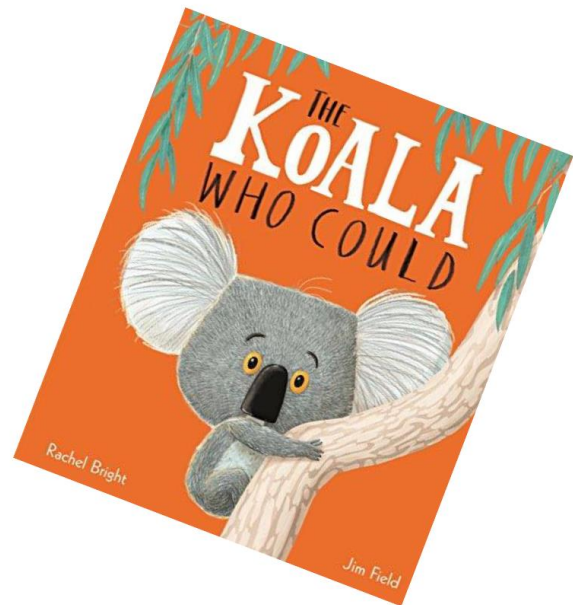
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Start with the easiest step. Once you have been successful, move on to the next.

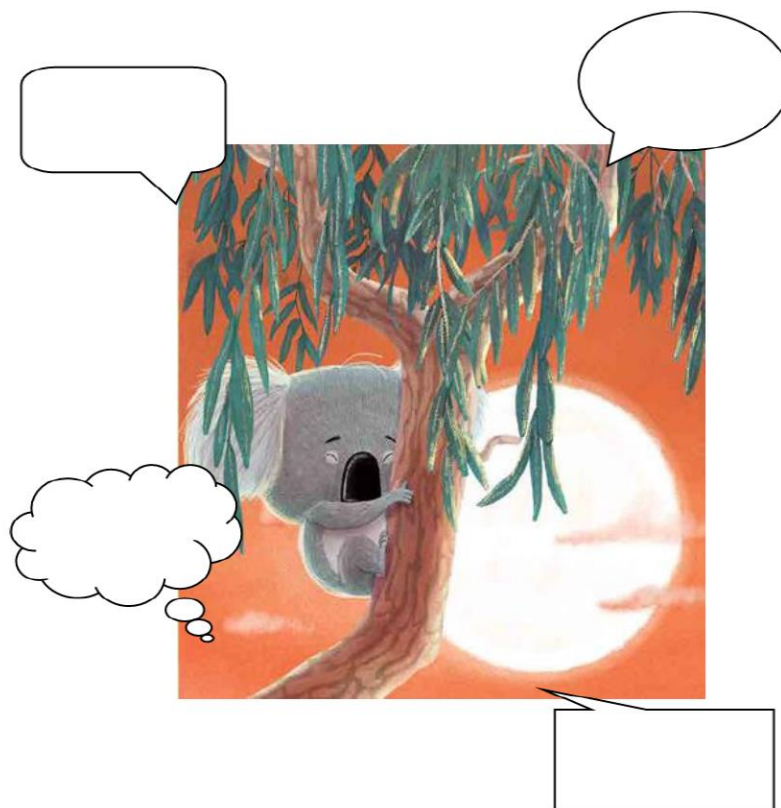
From Think Good Feel Good by Paul Stallard

Slide 1:

Our
book
this
week is...



Slide 2:



Activity 1: Write down what Kevin is thinking.

Slide 3:



-
-
-
-
-



Activity 2: 'What are you good at'

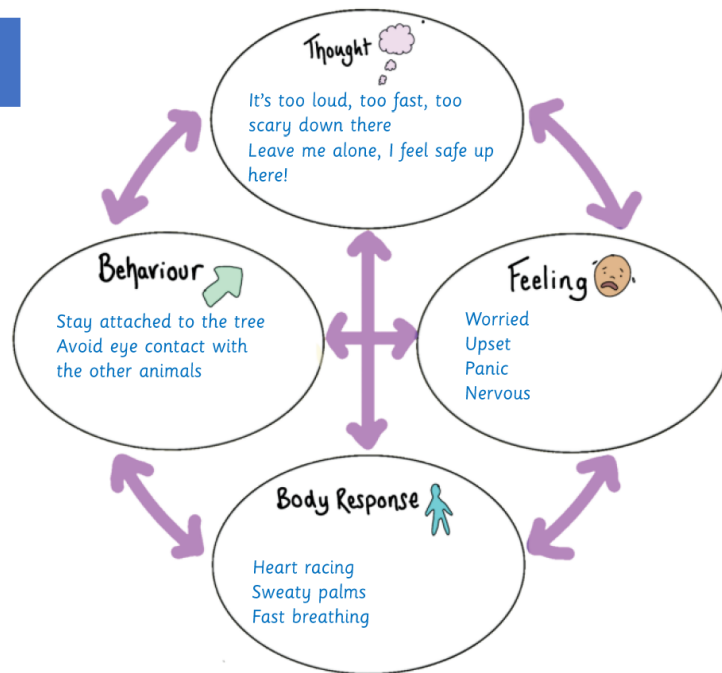
Slide 4:



Activity 3: Draw a space that makes you feel safe

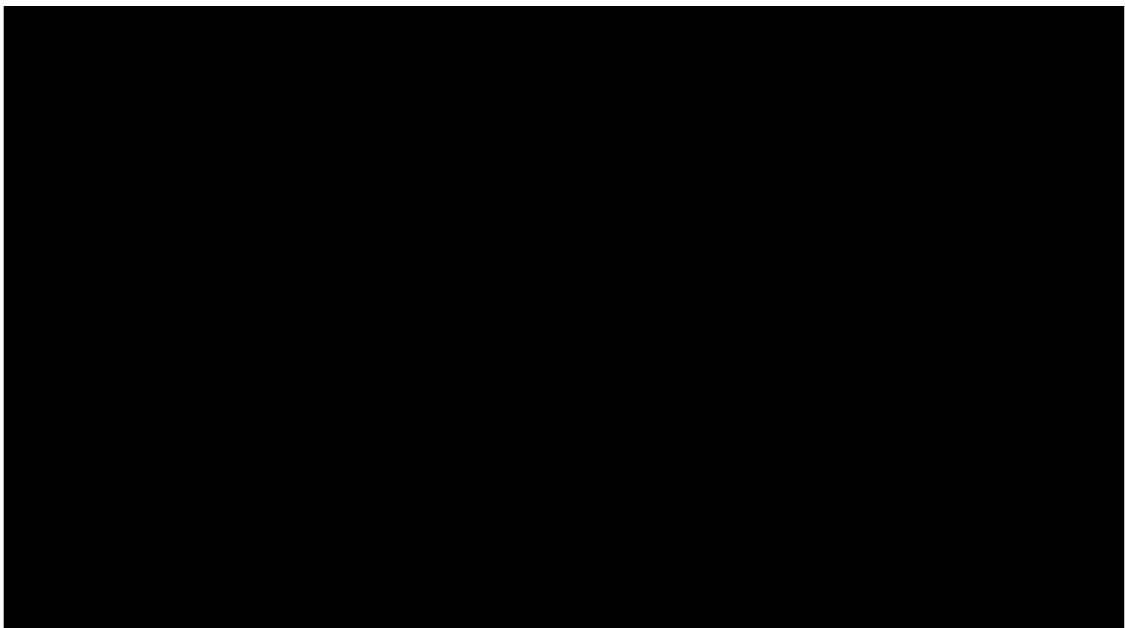
Slide 5:

Why didn't Kevin want to come down and play?



Activity 4: Whole Class
Hot Cross Bun

Slide 6:



Activity 5: Video
explaining worries

The video used in this slide can be found at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

Slide 7:



I feel **included** when _____


I feel **excluded** when _____

I could **include more people this week** by _____



Activity 5: Complete the sentences

Slide 8:




'Top Tips' for coping with change

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

8 WAYS TO COPE WITH CHANGE

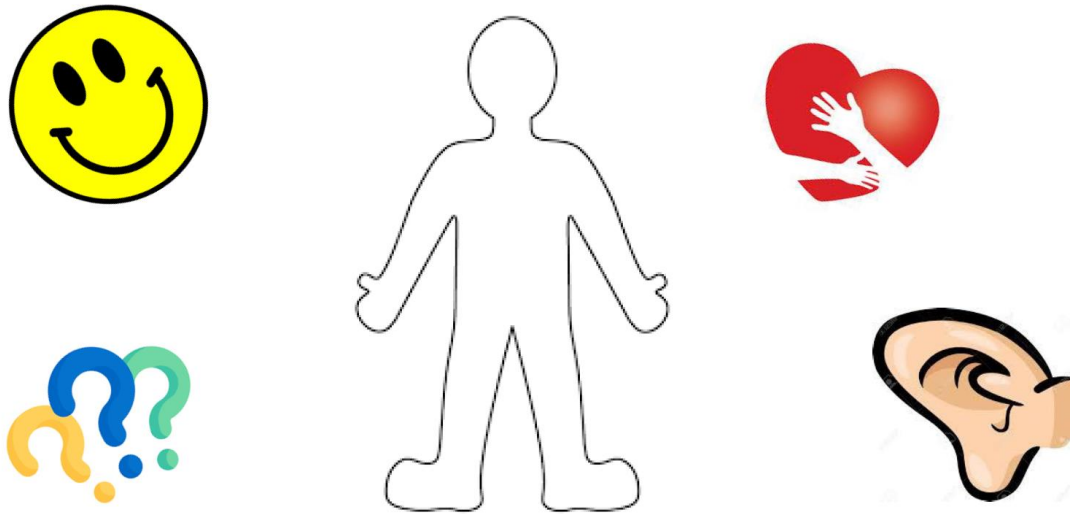
by @inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk

- 1 GET INFORMATION**
Uncertainty and ambiguity causes stress
- 2 DIP YOUR TOE IN THE WATER**
Get a taster of what you are about to do
- 3 ASK FOR HELP**
Who can you turn to for support and advice?
- 4 BE PATIENT**
It takes time to adapt
- 5 BELIEVE IN YOURSELF**
Know that you can develop skills needed to adapt
- 6 TEST YOURSELF**
Stepping slightly out of your comfort zone helps you learn and improve
- 7 KEEP A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE**
Know what's important and what really matters
- 8 REMEMBER YOUR GOAL**
Seeing the bigger picture will boost motivation



Activity 7: Write your top 3 tips for change

Slide 9:



Activity 8: Label what a good friend is like

Slide 10:

My goal – what I want to do

To invite more people to join in my games.

Break your goal into smaller steps and write or draw them here

Think about who to ask.
Think of games they can play.
Ask them if they want to join in.

Arrange your steps in order of difficulty. Put the hardest at the top (1) and the easiest at the bottom (5).

1. Ask them if they want to join in.
2. Think of games they can play.
3. Think about who to ask.
- 4.
- 5.

Start with the easiest step. Once you have been successful, move on to the next.

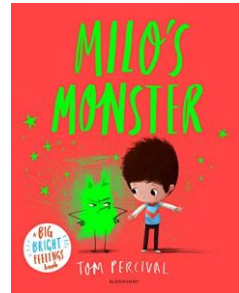
Activity 9: Make a plan for change



Appendix S Milo's Monster Lesson Plan

Milo's Monster by Tom Percival

In the following table you will find questions and linked activities for different pages of the book. The writing in green is for possible responses. Any videos have been embedded in the PowerPoints but also downloaded as separate videos (to prevent any issues with pop ups etc. on YouTube). Please watch any videos in advance to ensure you are happy they are suitable to use with your class. For the integrity of the research, **all the activities need to be completed within the lesson**, which is why you will see timings on the right-hand side of the table to support planning for these activities. Timings in the lesson plans have been given for a 30min and 45min lesson depending on your class timetable.



Book Summary:

Milo loves spending time with his best friend, Jay. But when a new girl called Suzi moves in next door, Milo starts to feel left out. The jealous feeling gets stronger and stronger – until suddenly, a GREEN-EYED MONSTER pops up beside him! Soon, the monster is poisoning Milo's thoughts. It won't leave him alone! Can Milo find a way to free himself from the monster and repair his friendship?

(Taken from <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/milos-monster-9781526613035/> on 17.02.23)

The key theme that we will be focusing on in this book is **jealousy**.

Throughout this mini unit, it would be helpful for you to reflect on the following:

- ★ Which activities worked well? Which would you change? How would you change them?
- ★ Did the children engage in the text and the activities?
- ★ Did you learn anything about yourself/ the children from this unit of work?
- ★ What surprised you, if anything, about the children's responses?
- ★ How will this impact the way you engage children in texts in the future?

Use the box below to jot down any reflections to discuss in supervision.

Lesson 1

In this lesson you will read up to page 16 (ending with 'having more fun without him').

Page(s)	Questions	Linked Activity	Suggested timings	
3-4		Activity 1: As a whole class write a list on the IWB considering what makes a good friend and what makes a bad friend? (Remind the children not to name anyone in particular!)	30 min lesson	45 min lesson
			4 mins	5 mins
7-8	<p>How do we feel if we don't have a best friend? <i>Some of us may not mind, but for some it may feel important to say we have a best friend. Adults can share their experience of this too.</i></p> <p>What makes it difficult to say we don't have many friends? <i>Some may feel embarrassed or upset if they think they don't have many friends.</i></p> <p>How do we feel when our friends play with others? <i>It might make us happy that they have other people to play with, or angry/upset etc that we weren't included.</i></p> <p>How can we involve others in our games? Should we have to? <i>It may be helpful to reflect that we don't have to include others, but that it is nice to. Reflect further on how we feel if we are not included, and link this to how others may feel.</i></p>		5 mins	7 mins
9-10	Have you ever felt jealous? Why? How did it feel? What happened?	Activity 2: As a whole class, complete the hot cross bun activity to think about how Jay is feeling.	3 mins	5 mins
11-12	<p><i>What if Jay didn't want to be friends with him anymore?</i></p> <p><i>Jay asked a really important question starting 'What if...?'</i></p>		6 mins	10 mins

	<p>Sometimes these questions lead to more question. What if Jay didn't want to be friends anymore? What if no one wants to be friends with me anymore? What if everyone else has friends and feels happy and I am alone? Where will I go at playtime? In psychology, we call this snowballing. A small question can lead to lots of big thoughts. Normally, these thoughts aren't true. It's more likely that Jay does want to be friends with Milo. So, to stop these thoughts, it's important to find out the truth, the facts. Go back to that first question and try to get an answer to it. Asking for help from an adult with this can often help.</p>			
15-16	<p>Have you ever experienced the 'monster'? It's a bit like a voice in our head. Explain that it's okay feel/think these things and our reaction is what is important.</p> <p>Are Jay and Susie actually having more fun without Milo?</p> <p>What could Milo do differently? What could Jay and Susie do differently?</p>	<p>Activity 3: Watch the video 'Managing Feelings and emotions Coping Skills') https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs-MyQgfH3A). Then complete the 'What Coping skills can I use when I am...?' activity. You can pause the video at 3 mins 7 secs for lots of coping strategies.</p>	12 mins	18 mins

Lesson 2

Recap the story so far, remind the children that Milo had a best friend who he is worried he has lost because a new person (Suzi) has moved in nearby. Milo was feeling jealous that Jay and Suzi were having fun without him (this is when the green eyed-monster popped up!).

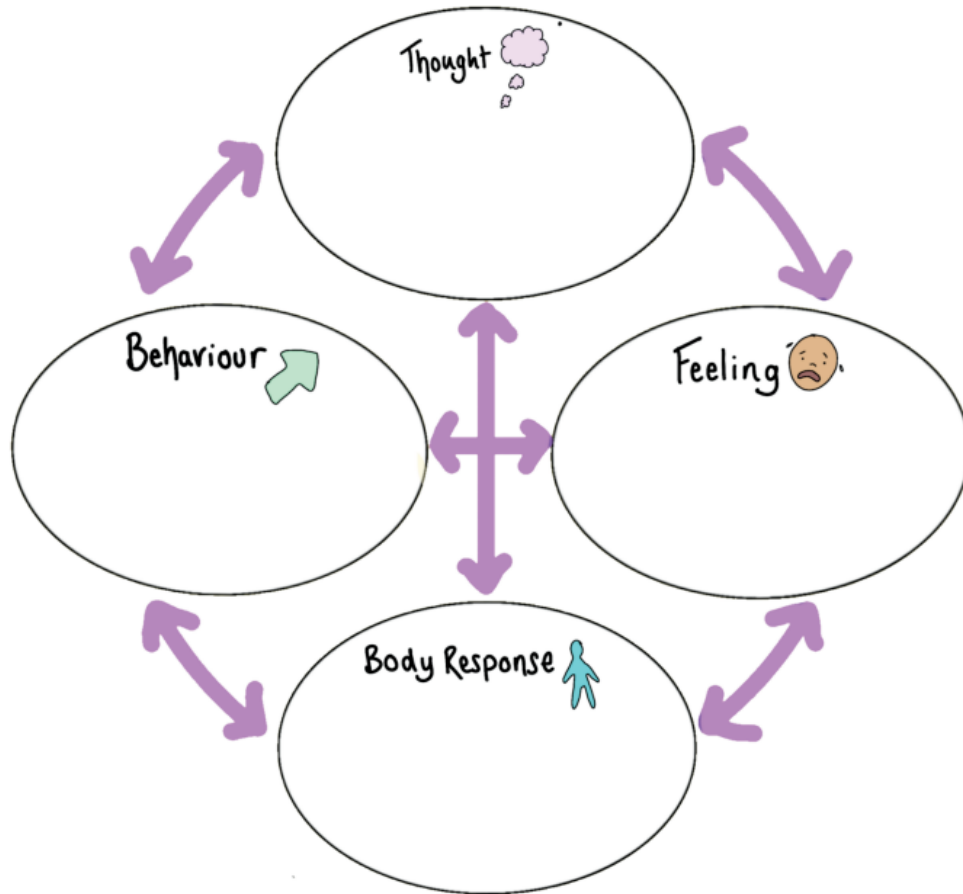
17-18	Have we ever ignored our friends? How did we feel? How did they feel? Why did Milo say 'nothing' when it wasn't true? How else could he have responded?		3 mins	5 mins
21-22	Why did Susie ask the question, "why aren't you and Jay friends anymore?" What do you think Susie was thinking? She was being brave. Susie was upset, it wasn't just Milo who was upset. Our feelings impact those around us.		4 mins	5 mins
23-24	Milo is trying to find a way to calm down and feel better. We are going to think about different ways that we can calm down and feel better. First, we will watch a video to learn about body scanning. Then we will look at some other calming techniques. Which did you find most helpful? Why? What did you like about them?	Activity 4: Watch the body scan video and complete the body scan together. Activity 5: Look at the other calming techniques and practice these as a class. Each child could have a copy of this to go in their folder. Go back to Activity 2 in The Duck who didn't like water (body mapping). In a different colour, add other ways that you now know you feel relaxed.	15 mins	23 mins
25-26	It is easy to say sorry? What does sorry actually mean? Will everything be perfect now? Probably not. But that's ok, it can take time and patience for things to get better.		3 mins	4 mins
29	Can you have more than one best friend? How do we include others? What if it doesn't work out perfectly? The purpose of these questions is to gain an overview of the children's learning for this mini unit. Hopefully they will recognise that you can have lots of friends, and include lots of people in what we do and recognise strategies to help when things aren't going to plan.		5 mins	8 mins

Activity 1: As a whole class write a list on the IWB considering what makes a good friend and what makes a bad friend?

What makes a good friend?	What makes a bad friend?

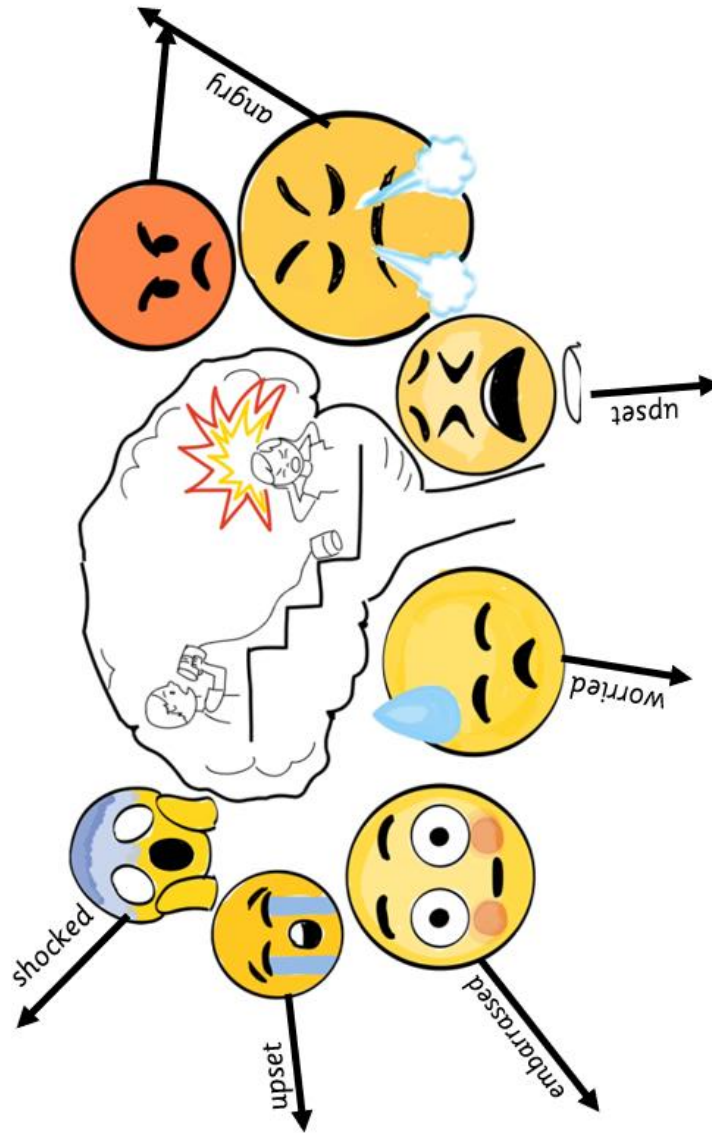
Activity 2: Whole Class How Cross Bun

As a whole class, complete the hot cross bun activity to think about how Jay is feeling.



Activity 3: What coping skills can I use when I am....?

At the end of each arrow, write down different ideas that you would find helpful in coping with the different emotions.




“All feelings are ok. It’s what you do with them that matters.”

1. Notice and identify your feelings
2. Think about coping skills you can use to feel better
3. Take action by practicing one or more coping skills

Activity 5: Calming techniques

Slides for 'Milo's Monster'



The 'Flower and Candle' is a simple relaxation technique that encourages deep breathing. Pretend you have a nice smelling flower in one hand and a slow burning candle in the other.

- Breathe in slowly through your nose as you smell the flower.
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth as you blow out the candle.
- Repeat a few times.


From <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/easy-at-home-relaxation-activities-to-help-calm-kids>

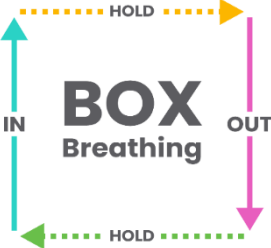
The 'Take 5 Finger Breathing Technique' is an easy to use technique to ground us so that we can feel calmer.

Spread the fingers of your hand out like a star. With your other hand, pretend your index finger is a pencil and that you are going to trace around the star.

Start at the bottom of your thumb and slowly slide your finger up your thumb, across the top and down the other side. Do this for each finger.

Breathe in slowly as you slide up, breathe out slowly as you slide down. By the end, you will have taken 5 slow breaths. Do you feel calm? Or do you need to take another five?





'Box Breathing' is a great technique for calming you down as you can do it anywhere. You can use the white board in the classroom, or imagine a box in your head.

Breathe in for 4 seconds.
Hold the breath for 4 seconds.
Breathe out for 4 seconds.
Hold for 4 seconds.
Repeat this for one minute.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique

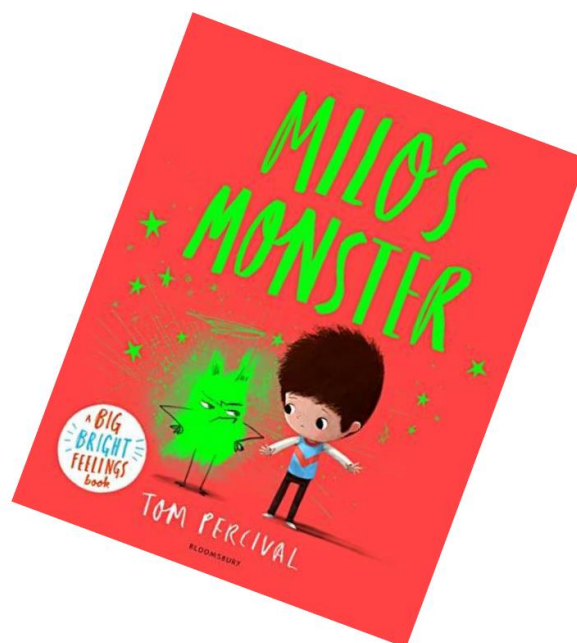
Take a deep breath in before you start. Breathe out slowly. Look for **5 things you can see** and say them out loud. Think of **4 things you can feel** in your body and say them out loud (e.g. my feet feel warm in my socks, the chair I am sitting on is hard). **Listen for 3 sounds** and say them out loud (e.g. I can hear my tummy rumbling or the ticking of the clock). Say in your head **two things that you can smell**. You may want to smell your hands for the scent of soap or walk around until you find something nice to smell. Say **one thing you can taste** (e.g. your lunch! Or your toothpaste from this morning. If you can't taste anything, think of your favourite flavour and imagine you can taste that.

54321 Grounding Exercise

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👄	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Slide 1

Our
book
this
week is...



Slide 2:



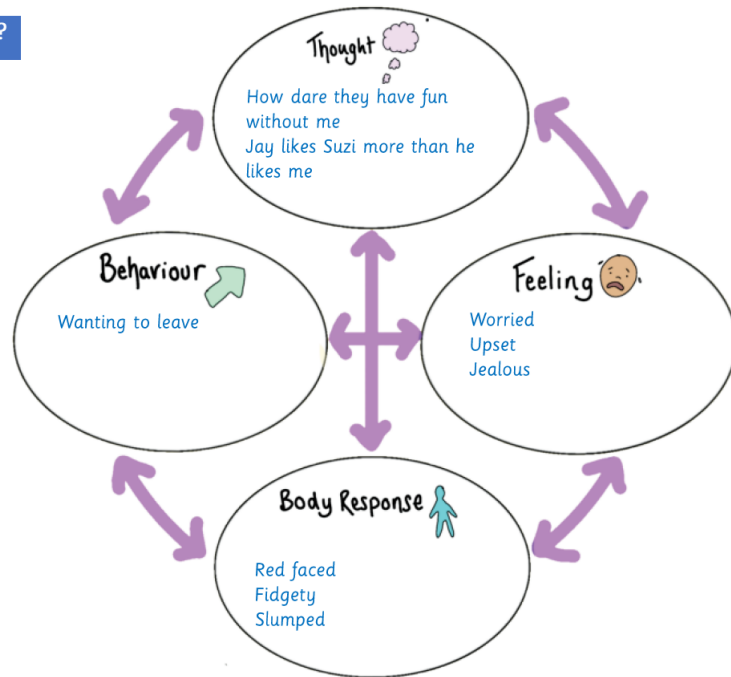
What makes a good friend?	What makes a bad friend?



Activity 1: As a whole class write a list on the IWB considering what makes a good friend and what makes a bad friend?

Slide 3:

How is Jay feeling?



Activity 2: Whole Class
Hot Cross Bun

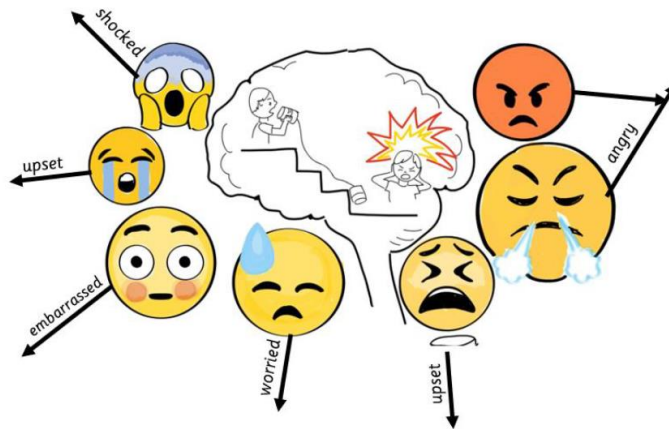
Slide 4:



Activity 3: Managing feelings and
emotions_Coping Skills

The video used in this slide can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs-MyQgfH3A>

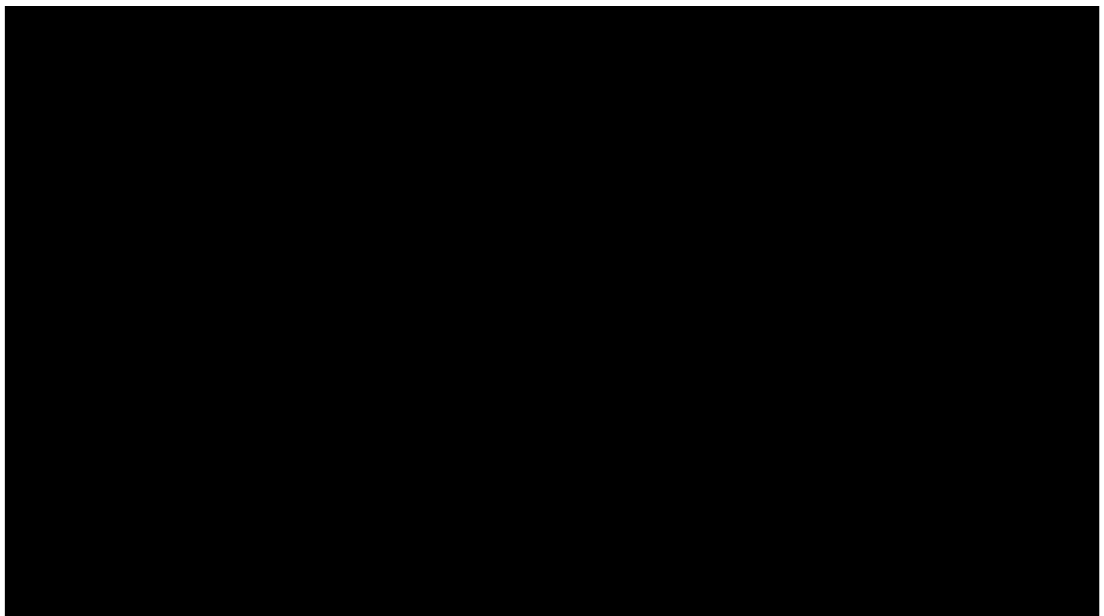
Slide 5:



1. Notice and identify your feelings
2. Think about coping skills you can use to feel better
3. Take action by practicing one or more coping skills

Activity 3: What coping skills
can I use when I am....?

Slide 6:




Activity 4: Body Scan

The video used in this slide can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLoK5rOI8Qk>

Slide 7:



The 'Flower and Candle' is a simple relaxation technique that encourages deep breathing. Pretend you have a nice smelling flower in one hand and a slow burning candle in the other.

- Breathe in slowly through your nose as you smell the flower.
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth as you blow out the candle.
- Repeat a few times.

From <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/easy-at-home-relaxation-activities-to-help-calm-kids>

Activity 5: Calming techniques

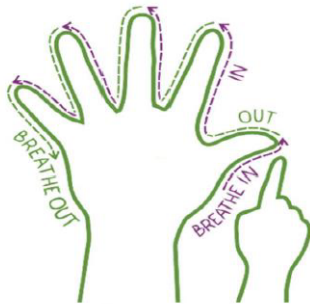
Slide 8:

The 'Take 5 Finger Breathing Technique' is an easy to use technique to ground us so that we can feel calmer.

Spread the fingers of your hand out like a star. With your other hand, pretend your index finger is a pencil and that you are going to trace around the star.

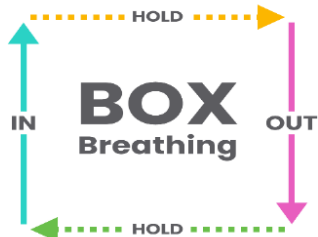
Start at the bottom of your thumb and slowly slide your finger up your thumb, across the top and down the other side. Do this for each finger.

Breathe in slowly as you slide up, breathe out slowly as you slide down. By the end, you will have taken 5 slow breaths. Do you feel calm? Or do you need to take another five?



Activity 5: Calming techniques

Slide 9:



'Box Breathing' is a great technique for calming you down as you can do it anywhere. You can use the white board in the classroom, or imagine a box in your head.

Breathe in for 4 seconds.
Hold the breath for 4 seconds.
Breathe out for 4 seconds.
Hold for 4 seconds.

Repeat this for one minute.

Activity 5: Calming techniques

Slide 10:

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique
Take a deep breath in before you start. Breathe out slowly.

Look for **5 things you can see** and say them out loud.


Think of **4 things you can feel** in your body and say them out loud (e.g. my feet feel warm in my socks, the chair I am sitting on is hard).


Listen for 3 sounds and say them out loud (e.g. I can hear my tummy rumbling or the ticking of the clock)


Say in your head **two things that you can smell**. You may want to smell your hands for the scent of soap or walk around until you find something nice to smell.


Say one thing you can taste (e.g. your lunch! Or your toothpaste from this morning. If you can't taste anything, think of your favourite flavour and imagine you can taste that.


54321 Grounding Exercise









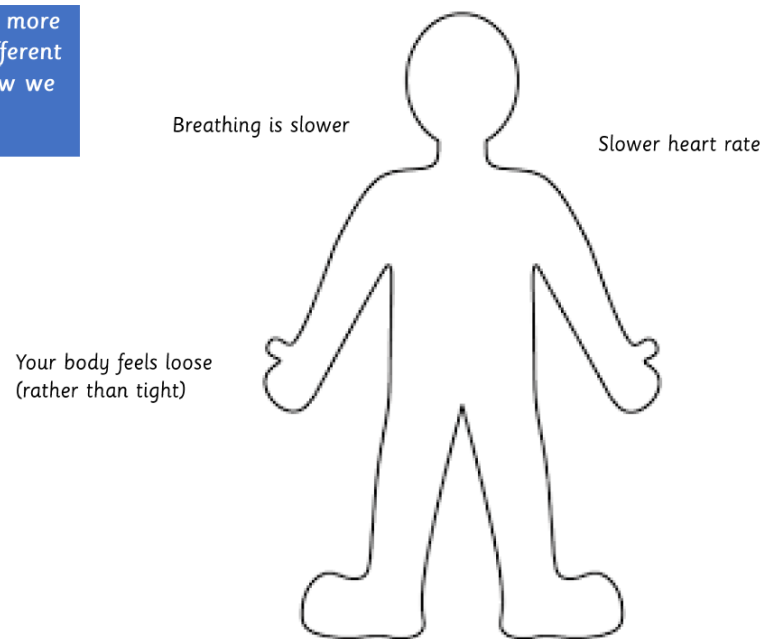


Activity 5: Calming techniques

358

Slide 11:

Can you add more ideas in a different colour for how we know we are relaxed?



Activity 5: Body Mapping

Appendix T CA Data Analysis Process

Transcription starts 4:02 into recording as we were waiting for a CT to join.

Key:

Highlights in **blue** represent the question asked by the TEP

Text in **red** indicates thoughts for discussion etc.

Text in **green** are linked to initial codes

Stage 1: Read/ listen to transcript repeatedly

Stage 2: Begin noting codes (text in **green**)

Stage 3: Start naming codes

Stage 4: Link codes into final **themes**

Transcription	Code	Theme?
TEP: Thank you so much for giving me a bit of time today and I wanted to say a huge thank you as well for actually just doing the intervention and being part of the project. I know a lot of people on my course really struggled to get anyone to do it, so I'm very, very grateful that you guys said yes so quickly. So, thank you for that. The main name for today very quickly is just to gather your thoughts on how you thought the actual intervention went, what went well. Any improvement suggestions? And I speak quite fast, so if I'm going too fast, tell me and I'll slow down and then just yeah, feel free to share at any point. I've got a few questions. I'll probably just run through this. I know we've only got about 15 minutes, but if you've got anything else that you wanna say, please do. If any of the questions that I ask are too personal because there will be a bit around like well-being as well and you don't want to answer just say I don't want to answer or you can pop me an e-mail about it at a separate time if that's a better way to respond. Is that alright?	No code but link to ethics.	
Mrs Bing: Yeah, no worries.		
Mr Geller: Sure		
TEP: Yeah, brilliant stuff. OK, I know Mrs Bing said yes. It's OK to be filmed. Are you OK with just being recorded as well, Mr Geller?		
Mr Geller: Yeah, yeah, sure.		
TEP: Thank you very much. Alright. So, the first question then was.		
Mr Geller: I'm fully [inaudible].		
TEP: [Laughter] That's good to hear. The first question was around having how did you find having, I guess the time to explore the books in a bit more detail with the with the kids?		
Mrs Bing: Umm, I think it went well. I think having the two weeks was good to look through it 'cause I think otherwise, especially	Benefits of having time	Time

a book it's a lot to take in. So, I think it was good to have it spaced out over the two weeks and they remembered a lot like when we did a recap...		
Mr Geller: Also, they were good stories. Yeah. And also, beautiful illustrations.	Quality of text/illustrations	Engagement
Mrs Bing: Yeah. And they did remember we got the second lesson and we were like right what's happened so far? They were so good at being like all the koala wouldn't leave his tree. And you know, some of my greater depth were like, I think the tree symbolizes change and he doesn't like it. So, I think they had that, that remembering. So yeah, it was good.	Depth of understanding/Quality of conversation/Engagement	Engagement
TEP: Crumbs. That is very good. OK, so they they they've properly got engaged with the books and and...	Engagement	Engagement
Mr Geller: Definitely, definitely		
Mrs Bing: They loved the books. Yeah, they still read it now.	Love the books/ Engagement	Enjoyment
Mr Geller: All good stories. All of them.		
Mrs Bing: Yeah. I put them in the book corner.	Continued use of books	
TEP: You did?! Excellent, well done. Make sure they are safe for next year. And Mr Geller, what did you think made them particularly good stories?		
Mr Geller: I think the message was was pretty important in all the stories and and they're also very easy to read for the teacher and that made it easier for the kids to engage.	Core message of text Easy to read/ Simplicity	Relevance and accessibility
Mrs Bing: I think it's nice to know that they were picture books, I think especially getting key stage two such a thing of right, let's get big books now and read like, you know, just the adult ones. So it's quite nice to have that coloured picture book...	Love the books/ Quality of texts/ Picture books	Engagement
Mr Geller: And also because the pictures are so good. There was lots of talk about because I I walked around the class and showed them all the pictures like this [modelled this] and so it gave them lots to engage with, yeah.	Pictures led to discussion/ Engaging	Engagement
TEP: OK, brilliant. So do you think that worked for children of kind of different levels as well?	Accessibility of texts	Relevance and accessibility
Both: Yeah, definitely.	Worked for all levels/ Pupil have opportunity for personal success?	Relevance and accessibility
TEP: Brilliant. OK, lovely. Did you guys have a particular favourite story from the books? And also any stories from what the children shared with you as well?		
Mrs Bing: I think my favourite was probably Milo's monster about the jealousy, because I don't like, especially my class, they are all just so like me, me, me. So I think they always are thinking like, oh, that person's got that and we related. It's not even friendship.	Books messages were relatable to current situations CYP were facing.	Relevance and accessibility (relatability) Engagement

Also that was the theme of the book. Then we spoke about jealousy as like a whole and that I think I'm saying to you popped in that brought the conversation a little girl who's only got a mum. She said well, I'm jealous of my cousin. She's got a mum and a dad and like she's never had conversations like that before.	Opens up opportunity for conversation/ connection (to life, self) Relatable	
TEP: Yeah		
Mrs Bing: I think that's my favourite one. Just cause the conversations that we're getting from it.	Quality of conversations (useful, honest)	Engagement
Mr Geller: I like the the koala one. Ohh, I'd like the one the the koala one that was. That was a nice. I like. I liked all of them to tell you the truth		
[HD walked in]. [Conversations with HD then restarted]		
TEP: Were there any stories from the children from your class Mr Geller: that you wanted to highlight as good examples or something that kind of surprised you from what they shared?		
Mr Geller: Sorry again if you say it again.		
TEP: Any stories on what the children shared? So I know Mrs Bing: mentioned about the child with the kind of jealousy. Are there any kind of examples that you would like to share? You can say no if there aren't any.		
Mr Geller: I can't remember to tell you the truth.	<i>Didn't use supervision</i>	
TEP: Thank you for your honesty. Did either you notice any changes in the children over those six weeks at all?		

Mrs Bing: I think they were a bit more open to chat about things like that like the jealousy side of it like they were a bit more willing to talk about it and especially I know in mine when we talk about the koala who could, it was that he scared of like loud noises and he didn't want to go down there. I've got a couple of children who wear ear defenders. They don't like loud noises and they'll be like, oh, I have that. So it's just more opening conversations up.	Quality of conversations (useful, honest) Relatable to current situations (ear defenders) Opening up conversations?	Engagement Relevance and accessibility
TEP: OK. Brilliant. How about you Mr Geller?		
Mr Geller: Yeah, like my favorite story, actually, because it was about change. Yeah. And some of them don't always handle change very well. So we had lots of chats about situations like where something happens that's new and you don't necessarily take to it immediately. So we had a good chat about about changing how you deal with change.	Relatable to current situations Link to psychoeducation and coping techniques	
TEP: Brilliant. Good. OK, I know you said that the three books as a whole were good books. Were there any particular activities or discussion questions within the lesson plans that were really helpful or that were kind of didn't work at all?		
Mrs Bing: Not really. I think the lesson plans were really helpful because I know I just had it on my desk and I was just going through and making sure I kind of covered all the questions. I would say it's obviously where we weren't noting it down as much. It was just a memory thing because obviously on the lesson plan I had it, but I wasn't the saying, oh, this child said this to me, so it was more of like could check in then obviously we remembered ones that stand out to us. If anything flagged up we would remember that. But no, I think the questions on there a good little prompt and if I accidentally missed one, it was always quite easy then to chuck it in on the next page. Like I just kind of just fitted it in in wherever you can.	Usefulness/helpfulness of lesson plans (simplicity)	Accessible Content and plans/ flexibility of plans
TEP: Yeah. OK. How about you Mr Geller?		
Mr Geller: Now that the the kids like the the activities also. That there wasn't so much writing to do, so there was more talking. Which is probably what the subject should be really should be about sharing, sharing your thoughts so there wasn't writing. But yeah, the the activities were quite, quite simple, straightforward and they enjoyed them	Realisation about the subject purpose? Enjoyment of activities Minimal writing/more talking	Accessible plans/ staff views

as well. And they involve things like, you know, coloring in and etcetera, etcetera. They enjoyed that while they were actually talking about it.		
TEP: Good. OK. I know they said to me that they wanted a few more drawing exercises for next time.		
Mr Geller: Well, the things like that, they like to draw anyway. I mean the it's it's a way for them to relax.	Coping strategy (woven into lesson)	Strategies for pupils and staff
Mrs Bing: Yeh.		
TEP: Yeah, that's a very good point. I guess that in itself is relaxing. I hadn't thought about that. I like that. Thank you. That will go into the thesis. How did you? I know you've mentioned a little bit already, Mrs Bing about the lesson plans. How did you guys find using them? Were they too stringent? Were you able to adapt them? Yeah.		
Mr Geller: Well, when time, time permitting cause not, I can tell you not all the lessons were the same length in terms of because we just didn't have the time. So some of them we we we had to rush them a bit but that was just because of time constraints.	Time challenges	Time/ Staff views
Mrs Bing: I like that the question one wasn't too in depth. Like where it had the page number and what question you could ask I like how that was just one page because yeah I literally just had in my hand with the book and I was just like that page stop there like could ask this question about it and I just like it was a bit of a resource you could just use it from the front.	Usefulness of lesson plans Accessible for staff	Accessible plans/ staff views
TEP: OK, OK. I guess this links in a bit with a question that I've got a bit later on. Just gonna try and find it if you were to do it again, is there anything that would help you, I guess to make make make sure it isn't something, just kind of rush through because of running out of time or it would make it more easy for you to just deliver.		
Mrs Bing: I don't think. I think it's just how busy the curriculum is. Yeah, I think it's just you got swimming, you get class workshops. It's just...	Time constraints	Time/ Staff views
Mr Geller: I mean, when when you're doing somebody else's plan, you just want it to be user friendly. Yeah. So I I read through it once and basically I got it. Yeah. So	Requirements of/usefulness of lesson plan	Accessible plans/ staff views
Mrs Bing: We didn't sit there and think I don't get that like it's very black and white. This is what you do. It's very straightforward. So yeah.	Requirements of/usefulness of lesson plan	Accessible plans/ staff views

TEP: OK, so I can say that they were user friendly. This is good. Amazing. Thank you. Do you think that other children or teachers would benefit from this kind of approach to well-being in the classroom?		
Mrs Bing: Definitely our cohort in year four are really jealous and friendship problems all the time. So when we were doing it, I think I said to the year 4 teacher like these books would be good for your class because they always have your own playground duty and you have Y4s coming up to you saying so and so won't play with me. And I think they're a year group that's most affected by COVID and our school. They're just to really just quite young. So, I think they would definitely be one that would benefit from that intervention.	Usefulness of bibliotherapy for others/ link to others in their setting	Wellbeing/ Usefulness
TEP: Yeah. OK. Have you got any thoughts on that Mr Geller?		
Mr Geller: Yeah. So I know Y4 quite well and yeah, they're basically a lot of babies		
Mrs Bing: Yeah, they just really immature year group.		
Mr Geller: So yeah things like change, things like jealousy, things like friendships	Variety of useful topics in the books	
Mrs Bing: They will still now in the summertime crying cause they missed their parents in school. They'll cry during the day they miss their mum. So you know how last year when I was in year four, so it just shows they're a bit a bit younger.		
TEP: Yeah, OK. Alright then. And then from your own perspective as a teacher, do you think you benefited from kind of exploring those strategies yourself or is that all stuff that you already knew about?		
Mrs Bing: I like the breathing one and we still do that now. The five finger breathing technique	Useful strategies/ integration to daily practice	Coping Strategies
Mr Geller: O yeh, that was good...		
Mrs Bing: We do that when we calm them down now. I get them to sit down and like the tidied up. It's been chaotic. We sit in our chairs and we do that together now and they're really good. We don't need to say it now. We just do it. So that's good. That's nice. And I like just the chats like I literally put mine on the floor with me and I'll sit on the floor with them, have the book out. And it's like you feel like there wasn't as much marking pressure and obviously like it	Integration to daily classroom practice Conversations Relaxing CT wellbeing	Coping strategies Wellbeing/ staff views

was just one to have because even health for life lessons that we do, they have health for life books and its marking. You're still thinking I've got to get this in books, I've got to get done, come on!		
TEP: Evidence!		
Mrs Bing: This was a lot more chilled. And they love the fingers.	CT Wellbeing/ Class Wellbeing. Coping strategies	Coping Strategies
TEP. OK. How about you Mr Geller?		
Mr Geller: Yeah. Well, obviously it's nice not having to mark.	CT Wellbeing	Wellbeing/ Staff views
TEP: Yeah, that was one of the key things I wanted it's why a lot of the activities to kind of whole class.		
Mr Geller: Yeah, you didn't. You didn't. You didn't give us lots of extra work to do.	CT Wellbeing	Wellbeing/ Staff views
Mrs Bing: They loved it. It felt like their folders like it was there work. Like they aren't just doing it in the book for us to look at and then say well done. Like it was their folder. And I think they liked that.	Autonomy? 'Theirs' Link to belonging SLR?	Autonomy for CYP
TEP: So do you think them having a better ownership over it helped as well, yeah.	Autonomy? 'Theirs' Link to belonging SLR?	Autonomy for CYP
Mrs Bing: Yeah, 100%, yeah.	Autonomy? 'Theirs' Link to belonging SLR?	Autonomy for CYP (link to CYP using strategies independently?)
TEP: OK, brilliant.		
Mr Geller: They didn't. They didn't really see it as, as as a, as a lesson.	Enjoyment/ thoughts on lessons	Enjoyment
Mrs Bing: No, they just loved it.	Enjoyment/ thoughts on lessons	Enjoyment
Mr Geller: So it was just a bit of fun. So the fact that they didn't see it is a lesson they they they enjoyed it more.	Enjoyment/ thoughts on lessons	Enjoyment
TEP: Brilliant. OK, this is good. And do you think that?		
Mr Geller: It wasn't like doing an English lesson, or grammar or maths. It's like doing a bit of art as well. Yeah, they, like art. Anything creative they enjoy.	Creativity being removed from curriculum? Enjoyment/ thoughts on lessons	Engagement
TEP: Yeah. OK. So it allowed that side a bit more. OK. And this is a bit of a random question. If a school said that they adopted a kind of a bibliotherapy approach to some of their learning, would that make you now you know about bibliotherapy a bit more, would that make you more inclined to work for them?		
Mrs Bing: If it was very similar, if they said you know our health for life is bibliotherapy, they've got like the same layout. Yeah. I think the expectations	Trust/autonomy CT wellbeing CT recruitment and retention?	Autonomy for staff Wellbeing/staff views

are work. How it wasn't that policy. And it has to be this three times in, in books, and it was just their, like, collected all their work definitely, definitely. Because I know our deputy head walked in. We all sat on the floor and, like, she didn't really question it , because she knew that we were having that book time and looking through the book and she just kind of, you know, just left and that's quite nice . Not that I thought that was mid maths lesson and I'm sat on the floor.		
TEP: They're the best lessons, but yeah, OK, that's good to know. How about you Mr Geller:?		
Mr Geller: Yeah, it was fun . I'll tell you the truth truth though. I mean, I I won't be looking for any jobs anywhere else.	CT enjoyment/wellbeing	Wellbeing/staff views
TEP: That's a fair point. Thank you again for your honesty.		
Mr Geller: I'm a bit long in the tooth to be looking for new ...		
TEP: I think you've got a good 30-40 years in you yet...		
Mr Geller: Uh, yeah. On the beach in Greece. Not not in school.		
TEP: It's a fair point. OK, last couple of questions for you. Are there any strategies from the sessions so like the finger breathing and stuff that you would consider using yourselves?		
Mr Geller: Umm for me TEP? for me.		
TEP: For you rather than for the children. Or even just like the thinking around the hot cross bun like so not necessarily filling it out, but using that thinking about like feelings, behaviours, bodily responses, that kind of thing.		
Mrs Bing: I would say that like because obviously when you think something like irrational and you think oh you know straight away you're thinking and uh what's gonna happen and then remembering that is cause we spoke about the kids that you have that fear almost and you think right that's my natural response like you know even like an observation like you think that panic like Oh no that went wrong and then you get all hot that's just the way that think about what can you fix what solution rather than just sit there and panic . Definitely works . I'm a bit of an overthinker sometimes. My classrooms not spotless.	CT strategies Usefulness of strategies	Wellbeing/ Psychoeducation/staff views
Mr Geller: I I'll be honest. I don't generally do that kind of thing . Mrs Bing: I don't think. Hahaha.	Preference for personal strategies	

Mr Geller: Uh, I have my own sort of relaxation methods.		
TEP: OK, am I allowed to ask about them. Or is that best kept to yourself?		
Mr Geller: I don't know. I sit in the bath, listen to podcasts, listen to music and and drink.	Preference for personal strategies	
Mr Geller: More at the the weekends. Then more of the weekends.		
TEP: Of course. Yeah. So do you think those kind of strategies, would you share those ideas with other members of staff or like just when you're having conversations with them about looking after each other?	Strategies useful for others	Strategies for staff – self and others Wellbeing/ Psychoeducation/staff views
Mrs Bing: Yeh, I'm part of the well-being team that we have here. So a few of us meet together once a term and have a bit of a chat about things. Definitely something I put forward. I know we had like a yoga teacher that came into school and like did things before like with the staff. So so it's harder with staff, isn't it? So it's such a personal thing like you. Everyone's such a different approach to it, but it's definitely something I know we spoke about bibliotherapy and our last well-being meeting and our head teacher said you know could be something we look at doing in other year groups or with teachers and things I think people would be open to it. Because it is such a thing in schools, so I don't see why not.	Strategies useful for others Personal preference	Wellbeing/ Psychoeducation/staff views
TEP: Fab. OK, brilliant. And then last question, I think, last few questions. So I know we said do you think other children would benefit from it? Do you think other teachers would benefit from having time to teach these kind of lessons?	Time	Time/ Staff wellbeing
Mr Geller: Yes, yes.		
Mrs Bing: I think so, yeah. Definitely takes the pressure off. When we had bibliotherapy we knew it was gonna be a nice morning. We always started our day with it. So it's just that nice chill time. Almost. It just happens.	CT and pupils looked forward to lesson/ enjoyment	Enjoyment
Mr Geller: It's something. It's something to look forward to.	CT and pupils looked forward to lesson/ enjoyment	Enjoyment Accessibility Strategies
Mrs Bing: Yeah		
Mr Geller: For the kids. And that makes you. Yeah.	CT and pupils looked forward to lesson/ enjoyment	Enjoyment
TEP: I love that. Brilliant that make you look forward to it too?		
Mrs Bing: Yeh		

TEP: Good. OK, is there anything else that you'd like to share or like me to know about how it all went before we say goodbye.		
Mr Geller: Can I just make a point about the questionnaire they did. It took a very long time and also some of the questions they were like, almost like double negatives. The kids didn't know if they were being asked to agree or being asked to disagree because of the wording of some of the questions was confusing.	Suitability of measures for CYP	
TEP: Ok.		
Mr Geller: So I think maybe some, there's some of those questions could be simplified. So it's yes or a no. TEP: OK.		
Mrs Bing: I had a I had one little boy. I don't think this comes down to the intervention. I think that was just him. But he's very I don't know if CYP was the same because very particular and like the duck and the frog, he couldn't get out his head. That he's like, where's the duck? And where's the frog like he was so set on, like, thinking it's a real thing. He's like, where's the house? And he was just so set on that. But we did take time with him to go through it and he was fine afterwards. But he just got so fixated on where's this duck and where's the frog? And where's the boat? Where's it live? Like he wasn't thinking about the message as such. He was just so....	Literal thinking in some CYP	
TEP: Like actual, literal.		
Mrs Bing: [inaudible].		
TEP: Yeah. OK.		
Mrs Bing: I think they all enjoyed it definitely. And I think like you said, it's really suitable across the abilities. So unlike the other lessons where you know you've got your your top table and the ones who think they're a bit weaker and things like that, I just think in that one it was just completely neutral and you know, you get those ones are greater depth, but aren't as great at talking about how they feel and getting their emotions out. And then you get the one who'll sit there and tell you their life story.	Level playing field so all can succeed? Bit like Spanish!	Accessibility
TEP: Yeah. So it kind of flipped rolls a bit.		
Mrs Bing: Yeah. So that was nice that they just were all very on par. There's no, you know, all look at this work, it was just your own take on it, which is nice.	Level playing field. Accessibility	

TEP: Amazing. Brilliant. Thank you. And thank you for the feedback about the questionnaires as well. I would, I would agree if I. Yeah. Yeah. There's lots of different ones out there, but I probably would pick a different one for next time. That was a lot shorter as well.		
Mr Geller: Yeah.		
TEP: Yeah. OK. Brilliant. Thank you again so much. I know I've mentioned to Mrs Bing that there's a couple more questionnaires coming your way, but once they're all done, that is it. You do not need to answer any more questions for me at all.		
TEP: Is that all OK?		
Mrs Bing: Yeah, amazing		
Mr Geller: Cheers mate.		

Theme	Subtheme
Engagement	Time
	Relevance and accessibility
	relatability
	Strategies for pupils and staff/ Coping strategies/Wellbeing/ Usefulness (engaged because of usefulness)
Enjoyment	Wellbeing/ Psychoeducation/staff views/ Wellbeing staff/ Autonomy for CYP and Staff (free to be self-etc.). Skills to do it by themselves – empowerment , educating, self sufficient
	Accessibility of plans and books

Appendix U Books removed and exclusion criteria

Title	Author & Illustrator	ISBN	Rationale for Exclusion
The Sweetest Fig	Chris Van Allsburg	9780395673461	Exclusion Criteria 3
We're All Wonders	R.J. Palacio	9780141386416	Exclusion Criteria 1
The Diddle That Dummed	Kes Gray & Fred Blunt	9781444953688	Exclusion Criteria 5
Giraffes Can't Dance	Giles Andreae & Guy Parker-Rees	9781408354414	Exclusion Criteria 5
The Lion Inside	Rachel Bright & Jim Field	9781408331606	Exclusion Criteria 5
The Worrysaurus	Rachel Bright & Chris Chatterton	9781408356128	Exclusion Criteria 5
The Huge Bag of Worries	Virginia Ironside & Frank Rodger	9780340903179	Exclusion Criteria 4
Katie and the Sunflowers	James Mayhew	9781841216348	Exclusion Criteria 5
Perfectly Norman	Tom Percival	9781408880975	Exclusion Criteria 5
I Am Enough	Grace Byers & Keturah A. Bobo	9780063080683	Exclusion Criteria 5
While We Can't Hug	Eoin McLaughlin & Polly Dunbar	9780571365609	Exclusion Criteria 1
A Bear is a Bear (except when he's not)	Karl Newson & Anuska Allepuz	9781788000994	Exclusion Criteria 1
Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth	Oliver Jeffers	9780008354749	Exclusion Criteria 1
The Music in Me	Sophy Henn	9781471194252	Exclusion Criteria 5
Bear Shaped	Dawn Coulter-Cruttenden	9780192772114	Exclusion Criteria 1
Big Feelings: A story about big emotions and the power of empathy	Alexandra Penfold & Suzanne Kaufman	9781526639776	Exclusion Criteria 5
Mooncat and me	Lydia Corry	9781529048698	Exclusion Criteria 5
Badger's Parting Gift	Susan Varley	9781849395144	Exclusion Criteria 4
Michael Rosen's Sad Book	Michael Rosen & Quentin Blake	9781406317848	Exclusion Criteria 5
The Duck Who Didn't Like Water	Steve Small	9781471192357	Selected
Milo's Monster	Tom Percival	9781562613011	Selected
The Koala Who Could	Rachel Bright	9781408331644	Selected

Note. Exclusion Criteria: 1. Age appropriateness 2. Cost 3. Availability 4. Illustrations and attractiveness 5. Overall message

Appendix V EBSNA Panel: Belonging Training

The importance of a sense of school belonging

A sense of belonging is a vital aspect of what it means to be human, Brown (2021) suggests we will do our best to gain this sense by any means possible. Benefits of a greater sense of belonging include:

- Greater academic achievement
- Better behaviour
- Less absenteeism
- Greater life satisfaction
- Protective factor for those who have experienced social deprivation
- Increased happiness
- Better physical health (linking to life longevity)

In the United Kingdom

- 38% of respondents felt like they did not belong in their school
 - 25% felt like outsiders
 - 24% felt awkward and out of place at school (OECD, 2019)
- “[...] sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the academic classroom setting”

Table 5
Initial Guiding Framework for Analysis based on Allen et al. (2018)

Theme	Definition
Academic motivation	The expectancy of academic success through goal setting and future aspirations (p.4).
Emotional Stability	These include coping skills, positive affect and hope (the inverse was also used as markers for emotional instability) (p.4).
Personal Characteristics	Positive and negative aspects of a student, including their personal qualities, attributes, abilities, temperament and nature (p.4).
Parent Support	The ability for parents/ caregivers to provide academic support as well as social support, open communication and supportive behaviour (p.5).
Peer Support	Trust and closeness with friends and peers (p.5).
Teacher Support	Teachers who promote mutual respect, care, encouragement, friendliness, fairness and autonomy (p.5).
Demographic characteristics	This includes gender and race and ethnicity (p.4).
Extracurricular activities	This can include anything beyond the general curriculum such as play, sports clubs, leadership positions, music clubs etc (p.5).
Environmental/school safety	This links to discipline procedures, fairness and safety policies (p.5).

What is it?	Why is it important?	How do we do it?
Adult-student relationships This theme focuses on the importance of relationships between all adults (e.g. teachers, counsellors, teaching assistants, head teachers) and students.	These are key interactions that YP experience each day in a school setting. If they are positive, nurturing and allow for YP to grow, they can be beneficial in developing belonging, increasing motivation and academic success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know YP by name. • Know something about your YP. • Check in with YP regularly. • Adults should appropriately share something of themselves (e.g. hobbies, what they are reading etc) and use this to connect with YP. • Make time for YP so that you can listen to them (prioritise people over paperwork)
Peer relationships This theme focuses more on the individualised experience of peer relationships.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give opportunities for peer relationships to develop (break times should not be reduced or taken away as punishment) • Ensure the curriculum helps YP understand positive peer relationships, how to work with people they do not naturally get along with and how to start/end a friendship.

What is it?	Why is it important?	How do we do it?
Parental involvement This theme focuses on the impact of parent attitudes towards education and their support of the student in learning.	Parents can have an influence on their YP's perception of school and learning. The encouragement of a parents and support in learning may motivate YP in their schooling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective transition from Primary to Secondary. This could start from Y5. • Ensure opportunities for parents to be part of the school (e.g. PTA) • Ensure clear communication with parents. • Ensure parents are aware of school/ community support for families • Share good news with parents (are apps enough?)
Perceived control This theme focuses on students being able to share their views and feel valued and recognised in the decision-making process.	YP are taught that schools are 'communities' or 'families'. For this to be true, they need to have a valuable voice that is heard and that shapes their community. This increases a sense of belonging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil parliaments • Gather pupil voice, act on it and share how it has been acted upon

In report writing...

- From the 1:1 work I completed with Child A (see Appendices A, B, C, D) it is clear that they struggle with anxiety and lack a sense of overall belonging within the school. A sense of school belonging, and meeting Child A's safety needs are key components to increasing their ability to flourish in the school environment. They were able to share that they have key adults within the school that they trust (for Child A, this means that they listen to them and understand their anxiety). A variety of strategies have been used by the school to support them, but these have had varying success and do not seem to last (such as sitting near the classroom door etc).
- For Child A, relationship is key to their success and willingness to attempt to go into lessons. We discussed how it would be important for all of Child A's teachers to be aware of this, to have fair expectations (for example, marking Child A in on the register even if they stay in the doorway) and to find appropriate ways to check in with Child A in lessons that they are able to attend so that Child A develops a relationship with the teacher(s). This could include verbally checking in, utilising non-verbal cues such as eye contact and a nod etc. It will be important to talk these through with Child A so that they are aware what to expect and finds these strategies helpful.