Inclusion of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in two mainstream secondary schools within a London Borough: exploring the perspectives of pupils and educational staff

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

The current action research project aimed to explore perceptions of Sense of Belonging (SOB) for male young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in two mainstream secondary schools with the aim of facilitating discussions within the school community. SOB is considered to be a central part of successful inclusion.

Twelve male pupils aged between 12-14 years and aware of their diagnosis of ASD were interviewed. The young people chose to take part in the research using a range of methodology including photography and an adaptation of the 'Drawing the Ideal Self' technique. Each interview was transcribed and qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis. A focus group in each of the two schools enabled findings to be discussed. Staff reflected on the aspects of the school which were supporting and constraining the pupils' SOB. Focus group participants were school staff who held a variety of roles.

Themes emerged from the pupil interviews relating to factors which facilitate and inhibit SOB for male secondary school aged pupils. These included the physical school environment, social environment and effective learning conditions. Further factors which support SOB relate to the educational support and school ethos.

A model relating to fostering of SOB by school staff was created, based on the key themes from the school staff focus groups including placement/resources, attitudes, pupil knowledge, collaboration, role of management/leadership and flexible curriculum. Further promotion of SOB was discussed within the focus group and focused on collaboration at different levels within the school and increased staff awareness around meeting the needs of pupils with ASD.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis and includes the background, commissioning of the research and rationale alongside details of the research questions and methodology. The last section provides an organisational structure of the overall thesis.

The study approaches inclusion of pupils through the concept of a SOB. These two concepts alongside the third, ASD, will be explored in detail to include their inter-connections. Engendering a sense of community and SOB is considered vital for successful learning and general well being (Warnock, 2005). The views of key stakeholders are intended to contribute to enabling two school communities to develop more inclusive cultures.

1.2. The Current Study

1.2.1 Background of the Study

> "The effective inclusion of pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASDs) in mainstream schools is acknowledged as one of the most complex and poorly understood areas of education"

> (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b, p.82).

In recent years increasing numbers of young people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who have average or high intellectual and linguistic ability are being educated within mainstream secondary schools in the United Kingdom (Emam & Farrell, 2009). Worryingly, research has reported that schools are less equipped to meet their needs in comparison to other Special Educational Needs (Davis & Florian, 2004) which is concerning as around 60% of young people with ASD are being educated in mainstream schools (Reed, Osborne & Waddington, 2011).

There are many differences between primary and secondary school facing all pupils (Graetz, 2004). These changes are reflected socially, academically

and environmentally and can create barriers to learning and wellbeing. Secondary school can be a particularly challenging environment for pupils with ASD. There is often an assumption that because a pupil is academically able (this often includes pupils with ASD) the pupil should be able to 'cope' in a mainstream school (Moore, 2007). School staff frequently struggle to reconcile the academic talents of pupils with ASD with their often severe difficulties in navigating the social world (Humphrey & Symes, 2010a). Recently there has been an increase in studies of the school experience for pupils with ASD, although focused upon negative outcomes.

This research aims firstly, through speaking with young people themselves to explore the concept of sense of belonging (SOB), which is an important aspect of inclusion. An inclusive approach aims to empower members in a school community to identify and dismantle actual and potential sources of exclusion that limit opportunities and outcomes for all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Through the young people voicing their perspectives, opportunities for a dialogue with school staff will be created. The second aim of the research is to enable school staff to reflect on the aspects of school which are supporting and constraining the pupils' SOB.

1.2.2 The Commissioning of the Research

Two Special Educational Needs Co-coordinators (SENCOs) from different male single sex secondary schools approached the local authority (LA) interested in promoting the inclusion of pupils with ASD. The schools were concerned that anecdotal information suggested that some of the pupils with ASD in their schools appeared withdrawn, disengaged, exhibiting challenging behaviour, frequently anxious or depressed and suffering from low self esteem. Pupils entering at Year 7 appeared to adjust well with transitional support in place but started to struggle in Year 8. The schools were interested in exploring early intervention, before greater difficulties frequently occurred in Year 9.

A steering group was formed 'ASD Research Group' to discuss and support the development of the intended research. Different professionals were invited and agreed to participate after discussions within the Educational

Psychology Service (EPS). The group consisted of two Social Communication Advisory Teachers, a Family Service Manager from a voluntary organisation specialising in support for families of children with ASD, Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist with an ASD specialism, myself as a Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement within the Borough and the two school SENCOs. One SENCO retired during the research, leaving one school SENCO and one Learning Support Manager with day to day management of SEN. Most of the group knew each other and all agreed to contribute their professional knowledge with the aim of including a wide range of perspectives (Jones & Stanley, 2008).

Regular meetings were held. The group was united by a common interest in understanding more about school experiences for pupils with ASD and building on this knowledge. All believed in the values of equity, respect for others and participation (Booth, 2005) which underpins this study. All wished a deeper understanding as to how inclusive practices can be fostered. The starting point was therefore, 'How do we enhance the school experience for pupils with ASD? The key principle underpinning the research was democratic implying the active participation of practitioners in the research process with the aim of trying to change practice. The 'ASD Research Group' discussed that more information was needed from the young people about their school experiences, enhancing the 'authenticity' and 'trustworthiness' of the research (Jones & Stanley, 2008).

1.3. Local Research Context

The research context will be considered as there are variations in ethos, structures and practices in different UK local authorities (Armstrong & Barton, 1999). Government policies can be widely interpreted in deciding how schools operate. Differing ideologies and practices underpinning services and cultures of local communities, including levels of acceptance of difference also play a role. 'Constructions' of human rights around differences and exclusions have consequences for the rights of individuals and groups. Connections should be made between them, the social contexts and associated value systems.

The context for the research is a Local Authority (LA) in an outer London Borough. The LA has a notable number of children attending schools with a statement of SEN. There is an established advisory teaching service for children with social communication difficulties within the borough. There are Special Opportunities units within local mainstream schools. At a primary level, two are particularly aimed at pupils with ASD and at secondary level one school has an additionally resourced ASD provision. This opened following a move towards inclusive schooling with the aim of catering for the vast majority of pupils in mainstream settings, alongside their peers, part of the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).

The aforementioned secondary school is part of this research. The Learning Support Manager of this school described the resource as a dedicated 'safe haven' where pupils with ASD can receive extra support for school work, spend time at breaktimes and take part in organised social skills groups. The use of this resource and the amount of time spent here is looked at on an individual basis for pupils with ASD.

A multi professional panel following discuss which two pupils a year going into Year 7 are considered the most vulnerable. These are named pupils for the provision although other pupils with ASD also access the resource from within the school. The criteria for these places include:

- Being subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs
- Underlying average ability enabling them to be capable of working at age appropriate stages of the National Curriculum
- Inability to understand more implicit codes of language
- Difficulties in establishing relationships with other children of the same age
- Patterns of obsessional behaviour which interrupt their ability to communicate effectively or to learn
- Advice and input of other outside agencies such as the Social Communication Difficulties Advisory Service and the Educational Psychology Service

When this research was being undertaken, there were a number of parents taking the LA to tribunal as this school was not named for their child at

secondary transition. Conversely, a small number of parents elect to send their children to attend their local schools, despite a place being offered within this school.

1.4. Professional Research Context

The current study was undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology and was determined partly by the requirements of this professional qualification as well as by LA priorities. The Professional Doctorate at the Institute of Education is underpinned by various psychological models. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecoystemic Model reconceptualized environments and development by focusing on the nature of individuals and environments. The four layers of the system were: 'microsystem', 'mesosystem', 'exosystem' and 'macrosystem' with each additional layer representing systems further removed from the individual than the preceding one. This theoretical model influenced the research as it prioritised a focus on the experiences of the individual within the current national and local context. The evolving interaction between the individual and these multiple and nested environments (Farmer & Farmer, 1999) was considered at all stages.

This research is relevant to the profession of Educational Psychology. There is an increasing prevalence of pupils with ASD within the mainstream classroom and also a call for evidence based practices. Furthermore, EPs are likely to be approached by schools to advise on the successful inclusion of pupils with ASD (Williams, Johnson & Sukhodolsky, 2005). The findings from this study will enable EPs to support schools in promoting SOB for this group. The processes within the research could also be applied by EPs to help other schools examine barriers to inclusion and to consider next steps in tackling these.

1.5. Research Questions and Methodology

The study was triggered by an initial problem concerning how a school experience could be enhanced for pupils with ASD. This initial problem led to a broader set of research questions which were:

1. What are the perspectives of adolescent boys with ASD in relation to sense of belonging within the secondary school environment?

2. What are the perspectives of school staff in relation to ensuring pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment?

3. How can sense of belonging be further promoted for pupils with ASD?

The current research is appropriately described as action research, as it is the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it (Elliot, 1991).

Action research is a design frame. It describes actions but does not make predictions about the specific outcomes of a study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). There is an acknowledgement that there will be a 'cycle of changes' as it is part of a complex organisation. There are two strands running through it: the pursuit of change (action) and the growth of understanding (research). The cyclical manner and the questioning of the direction of the study, aims to reduce inequalities and exclusion in education (Armstrong & Moore, 2004). Action research can benefit the individual researcher, leading to personal development and learning, which in turn, benefits others as the researcher's professional practice is enhanced (McNiff, 2002; Whitehead, 1989). This is very relevant as an EP, who is an active agent of change.

The three conditions according to (Goodley & Clough, 2004) that are necessary for action research and evident in this research are:

1. A project takes as its subject matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement.

2. The project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting with each of these being systematically and self critically implemented and interrelated.

3. Those responsible for the practice accessed, widening participation in the research gradually to include others affected by the practice and maintaining collaborative control of process.

The research design was qualitative and undertaken in two stages. The first involved collecting experiential data from pupils about their school experiences in the form of semi structured interviews. The analysis of the first stage then informed the second stage. This involved presenting information to school staff from the pupil interviews through focus groups, in order to examine the inclusion of this group of pupils in more detail and to consider next steps.

1.6. Terminology and Definitions

There are differences in terminology, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) which should be considered within research. The term ASD will be utilised due to the use of this discourse within the Borough in which the research has taken place. This study will examine a range of literature, some drawing on ASD as a deficit; some viewing ASD as a culture. It is acknowledged that most of the literature is informed by the dominant deficit discourse, which has been drawn on where relevant. However, the current study provides a voice to young people with ASD which is often not heard, aiming to advance a more positive image (Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008) as well as providing a lens through which to view the school environment. Other terminology and its use will be discussed throughout the chapters as appropriate.

1.7. Thesis Structure

Following the introduction, there is a detailed account of the complex research processes used to investigate the research questions.

Chapter Two outlines literature related to education, inclusive school development and pupils with ASD before finishing with a rationale for the current research.

Chapter Three provides an account of the methodological considerations within the study and the methods used to obtain and analyse the data.

Chapter Four presents the outcome of the thematic analysis using supporting quotes from the pupil interviews and school staff focus groups.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study and considers possible directions for future research and professional implications of the research.

Chapter 2.   Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will commence with an exploration of inclusion including relevant legislation, the concept of SOB, inclusion and school development and the practice of consulting with pupils around their school experiences. The second part will examine definitions and prevalence of ASD and the importance of consulting this group of pupils. The third part will examine previous research. This relates to the views and experiences of inclusion from the perspective of pupils and educational staff. The final part will highlight the gaps in the literature and the aims of the current research.

2.2. Inclusion

The core aims of education in Western civilisation have traditionally been to promote intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic and cultural development (Rioux, 1999). A key part of this is relates to the principle of inclusion viewed as instrumental in countering prejudice and bias in school and society. This is embodied within The Salamanca World Statement of 1994 which states:

> *"The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, where possible, and that ordinary schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students"*

(United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1994,

p.11).

For the last few decades, international governments have expressed commitment to the development of an inclusive education system. The above human rights position has been accepted and increasingly incorporated into policy and practice internationally. In the UK policies including Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997) supports inclusion. The powerful arguments underpinning the principle were further strengthened in the SEN Strategy document Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004a), mandating schools to promote inclusion. However, the recent special educational needs Green Paper

Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability (DfE, 2011) indicates that the government wishes to remove the bias towards inclusion.

Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of integration. There is a shift in emphasis from the needs of individual pupils towards the skills and resources available in mainstream schools. Integration focuses on helping students with disabilities 'fit in' to the regular classroom. There is an emphasis on teachers considering modifications to meet the individual pupil needs. Integration does not challenge the organisation and provision or curriculum for students, which is a fundamental difference to inclusion. Inclusion involves changing values, attitudes, policies and practices within a school (Polat, 2011). 'Inclusion' is an ambiguous concept and must be operationalised as part of the research process. Definitions of inclusion vary (Booth, Ainscow & Dyson, 2006). The following meaning will be utilised within this research:

> *"Inclusion is seen to involve the identification and minimising of barriers to learning and participation and the maximising of resources to support learning participation"*

(Booth & Ainscow, 2000, p. 13).

Researching inclusion involves analysis of barriers to participation and learning (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). A conceptual model of inclusion has been proposed by Kinsella & Senior (2008). Three interrelated core constructs of inclusion exist which are Expertise, Structures and Processes. Policy and procedural changes should derive from a meaningful consultative process where all school personnel have explored, discussed and made sense of organisational change to foster inclusive practices (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). Schools should reflect that all children are different ((Nilholm, 2006). According to Fielding (2006), young people are agents in this school development, creating a more democratic narrative. Young people should more routinely lead dialogue with their peers and school staff with the aim of engaging as equals for the greater good of the school and the individuals within it. The question of democracy should be considered before more inclusive practices can be achieved (Nilholm, 2006). This involves fundamental discussions between social groups about the type of desired

society, including the role of inclusion in a democratic society (Nilholm, 2006).

The meaning of inclusion is not clear and questions occur about practices, values and the criteria through which its success is judged. It must be underpinned by social change and within the context of the school community, involve all members including teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents, pupils themselves. The involvement of all of these stakeholders is important if traditional educational practices are to be changed (Soresi, Nota & Wehmeyer, 2011). The current research considers that inclusion concerns the whole school community.

Values of equity, compassion, respect for diversity, human rights, participation and community (Booth, 2005) have formed the basis of the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2000). The materials support schools in developing cultures, policies and practices in inclusive ways. It involves detailed analysis of the views and experiences of key stakeholders within a school to support the processes of self review and development. The analysis includes reduction or elimination of barriers to learning and achievement (Polat, 2011). This universal research approach contributes to a more inclusive school culture. However, inclusion can meet with resistance, as despite agreeing in principal, people may adhere to very different value positions in their deep beliefs (Booth, 2005).

Inclusion, has evolved into a broader consideration of the quality of learner experiences (Humphrey & Symes, 2010a). A central characteristic of inclusion is the concept of belonging, although little attention has been paid to it within the UK (Frederickson et al., 2007). Belonging refers to the extent to which pupils feel socially connected and perceive themselves as being integrated in the class and school community (Brutsaert & Van Houtte, 2004). In the current research, belonging will be examined from the perspective of pupils with ASD. In the UK Warnock argues that:

> *"The concept of inclusion must embrace the feeling of belonging, since such a feeling appears to be necessary both for successful learning and for more general wellbeing"*

(Warnock, 2005, p.15).

The government has noted the importance of belonging in the achievement of positive outcomes for children and young people, with key initiatives focusing on the central role of schools (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). Social outcomes of inclusion should be examined (Avramidis & Norwich, 2012) and inclusion should not be advanced solely on socio-political arguments (Lindsay, 2007).

2.2.1 Inclusion and Sense of Belonging

Different researchers operationalise and study SOB in various ways. Early definitions relate to the extent to which individuals feel accepted, respected, included and supported by others in their social environment (Maslow, 1943; Goodenow & Grady 1993). According to Anderman (2003) SOB is influenced by several aspects of the school experience, including academic and social factors. This is not a surprise as academic and social dimensions are intertwined. The definition used within this research is:

> *"Belonging is a powerful human psychological concept, incorporating cognitive, behavioural and socio-emotional experience within a single domain of connectedness to place, to culture and to others"*

> (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009 p.2).

It is generally agreed that belonging is a key concept throughout life and is a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When SOB is achieved, positive emotional and cognitive outcomes occur (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The psychological SOB within a classroom and school community is viewed as a necessary antecedent to a successful learning experience (Beck & Malley, 1998). Goodenow (1993) found that when pupils felt that they belonged, they were more motivated, had higher expectations of success and believed in the value of their academic work. All classroom practices do not engender a sense of belonging and can exacerbate feelings of rejection. According to Beck & Malley (1998) many children fail in school, not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills but because they feel detached, alienated and isolated from others, as well as from the educational process. Pupils in the lower secondary years are often increasingly self conscious, sensitive to social comparison and have increased need for positive and

supportive relationships with peers and non-parental adults (Anderman, 2003).

SOB has positive outcomes including academic, psychological, behavioural and social (Bond et al., 2007 & Goodenow, 1993). Pupils who reported low school connectedness (belonging) in the lower years of secondary school were more likely to have mental health problems, drop out of school and have substance misuse problems later in school life (Bond et al., 2007). A school environment perceived as supportive emphasises individual effort and improvement. This is associated with a more adaptive pattern of cognition, affect and behaviour.

The sociological as well as individual positions to SOB should also be taken into account. This involves reflecting upon what we are seeking to include (Graham & Slee, 2003) hence in relation to SOB, 'belonging to what' needs to be considered. A review of the recent government stances towards inclusion concluded that inclusive education can encompass a range of provision (Armstrong, 2005). However, it was elaborated that children with special educational needs should be included within mainstream schools wherever possible. Crucially though, inclusion does not necessarily guarantee inclusiveness (Graham & Slee, 2003). To include is not necessarily aligned with being inclusive due to assumptions that drive policy and practices relating to identity, difference and academic trajectories. These need to be examined within a school to reduce the beliefs of 'otherness' and designation of marginal positions (Graham & Slee, 2003). In this regard SOB can be explored in relation to a particular educational environment and community.

Most research regarding SOB has addressed this at a school level, with less relating to specific populations. An exception involved thirty seven pupils with learning difficulties from one secondary school in America completing measures including Goodenow's (1993) Psychological Sense of School Membership. This is an questionnaire including items assessing pupil perceptions of acceptance, feelings of inclusion and encouragement for participation in school life. Reported levels of membership were roughly equivalent for this group as for the sample from the wider school population.

The characteristics of the pupils within this other sample were unclear as random sampling was used. A major criticism of this research involves the school context and the interaction of this with SOB not being considered. Further research was needed to clarify the origins of school membership and important pupil and school characteristics contributing to school membership were considered missed.

Perceptions of SOB were studied by Williams & Downing (1998). The reasonable time period compared to the current research should be considered. The applicability of the American school system with differing legislation and inclusion practices could potentially limit the generalisability. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with a sample of pupils with severe learning difficulties and typical school pupils. From a total of 51 pupils, only four were pupils with severe learning difficulties. The needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties could be very different to those of the current sample. The qualitative data analysis appeared rigorous, using recognised procedures. Three major themes related to membership which were pupil characteristics, teacher behaviour and characteristics associated with class activities were reported. Conclusions were made that teachers play a central role in making pupils feel a part of the class and helping to achieve a SOB for all. Teachers newly entering the profession should be aware of the importance of promoting SOB, including fairness to all pupils and avoiding favouritism.

2.2.2 Inclusion and School Development

Inclusion requires engagement with different views of a school's policies, practices and cultures (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). Spaces can be created for reappraisal by interrupting existing discourses. This focuses attention on overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward. Self questioning, creativity and action can be stimulated, to move a school in an inclusive direction. Colleagues should share experiences meaning that taken for granted assumptions about particular groups of pupils can be subjected to mutual critique (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). Although inclusion is viewed as crucial for human rights, this does not reduce the need for empirical evidence looking at its effect on children (Lindsay, 2007).

Schools can introduce inclusive ways of working even within a context of extensive external pressures, by 'raising standards' (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). The two concepts of 'raising standards' and 'social inclusion' frequently appear in the UK Government's agenda for educational reform. However, it is complex to move towards more inclusive forms of teaching and factors external to a school can complicate the agenda. According to Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004 the two concepts operate in opposition to each other. There is a lot of support amongst professionals, parents and pupils for moves towards more inclusive education system. But, policies for raising standards such as the emphasis on competition, choice and league tables discourage teaching approaches which are responsive to differing pupil needs (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). Alternatively, it has been put forward that strategies which promote the inclusion of marginalised groups can also improve outcomes for all learners (Skrtic, 1991).

Inclusion may be affected by the Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability (DfE, 2011). Providing the best opportunities in school for all children, teachers and other staff should aim to overcome a range of barriers to learning and intervene early when problems emerge. A basic tension within SEN however, is the desire to treat all children as the same, whilst treating them as different. This is the 'dilemma of difference':

> *'The more educational responses emphasise what learners have in common, the more they tend to overlook what separates them; the more they emphasise what separates them and distinguishes each learner, the more they tend to overlook what learners have in common'*

(Dyson 2001, p.25).

Recognising difference can lead to different provision that might be poor quality, stigmatised and devalued. Conversely, not recognising difference can lead to inadequately providing for individual needs. The dilemma of difference centres on three aspects of education: identification, curricula and location (Norwich, 2008). Common and different aspects of the curriculum should be balanced as well as looking beyond labels (Norwich, 2008). Treating pupils with social communication difficulties the same as others may mean that atypical social behaviour is perceived negatively, leading to further

social isolation (Jones & Frederickson, 2010). Consulting with young people to find a balance in relation to the dilemmas is vital (Norwich, 2008).

2.2.3 Consultation Involving Pupils

To make progress in the field of inclusion, closely aligned to children's well-being, children must be asked about their school experiences (Messiou, 2002). Projects where young people have a voice can break down traditional assumptions about pupils and promote dialogic relationships between teachers and students (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). This is necessary for pupil perspectives to be considered, to aid change (Carrington, Brady & Bland, 2010). Pupil views about teaching, learning and schooling can provide an important foundation for improving schools (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Students' perspectives, cultures and experiences can shape the curriculum. Interest in listening to children's voices has been stimulated by legal and political initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Article 12 specifies the right of the child to express an opinion on any matter concerning their welfare and to have that opinion taken seriously. The revised SEN Code of Practice (DFES, 2001) stressed the importance of hearing the views of children with SEN to build a school 'listening culture'.

Pupils' accounts of their learner experiences may promote change and enable a stronger sense of identity as a learner and of commitment to the school (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Commitment can lead to enhanced effort and attainment which is positively correlated to the degree of the degree of change introduced. This research was conducted over a decade ago however and not specifically regarding pupils with ASD. Researchers need to consider their motivation for speaking to pupils and ensure it is to 'empower' them by offering a more active role in their school (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). This is different to anticipating greater overall school achievement and potentially a better league table position (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Social constructions of children and childhood should be considered. Recent sociological perspectives on childhood outline that children are more than 'becomings', but are 'beings' whose ideas, experiences, choice and

relationships are interesting in their own right (Tangen, 2009). I agree with the perspective of Thomas & O'Kane (1998) who approached the children in their study as social actors with their own distinctive abilities to understand and explain their world. Alternative methodologies are developing to involve children in the research process. Researchers should maintain rigorous practices that increase confidence in the ethical, valid and reliable dimensions of the research (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Participatory techniques can allow children to discuss decision making matters relevant to their own lives (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

Rudduck & Flutter (2000) state that there are limitations in directly eliciting pupils' views of some aspects of schooling, such as their views of 'the curriculum' (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Pupils readily comment on engaging and disengaging aspects of the curriculum content, although they are unable to compare the present with earlier versions of the curriculum. Crucially, pupils have little overall sense of how differently learning might be structured and what alternative approaches might represent (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

A particularly interesting piece of research involved pupils taking photographs within their school (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). The aim was to utilise this approach to gain insights into the perspectives of pupils within a deprived secondary school which had rapidly changed over a five year period. Secondly, the gathered views could be used to stimulate further developments amongst the members of school staff. Although this study was utilising a novel approach to examine pupil perspectives there was little discussion of the methodology and further detail was required to ensure appropriate evaluation. It was explained that the pupils made posters based on the photographs and were probed about their experiences. However the 'visual availability of the phenomena has to be unpacked' (Ball, 1998, p.37) which did not appear to be a rigorous step within this research.

2.3. Background to ASD

The exponential growth of research into ASD reinforces the need for a selective presentation and critique of relevant literature. Research

specifically addressing ASD is mainly presented and where possible, research referring to early secondary school aged pupils prioritised.

ASD is currently seen as a spectrum of difficulties (Humphrey, 2008). 'Classic autism' is characterised as failing to develop functional speech and often having additional learning difficulties. Conversely, Asperger Syndrome and those with high functioning autism often develop adequate linguistic and intellectual skills. All individuals on the autistic spectrum share a common difficulty in making sense of the world. The 'triad of impairments' (Wing, 1996) relates to atypical communication, interaction and imaginative development. The American Psychiatric Association (2000) describes this further as communication problems (e.g. delay in or lack of language development); atypical social development (e.g. failure to develop peer relationships); impairments in non-verbal behaviours such as eye gaze; ritualistic and stereotyped behaviour and resistance to change (e.g. rigid reliance upon routine). People with Asperger Syndrome have no significant impairment in general understanding or in language ability.

Green et al. (2005) states that 1 in 100 pupils aged 5 to 16 years are affected by ASD within the UK. Prevalence rates differ across studies and according to a range of factors. Furthermore, 97% of these pupils were reported to have SEN (Green et al., 2005). The ratio of males and females affected by ASD is around 3:1 (Hill and Frith, 2003). The mean age for diagnosis in a mainstream school is 6.5 years (Keen & Ward, 2004).

A drawback of medical diagnoses of children is that they can sustain medically based categories and impairment led attitudes (Armstrong & Barton, 1999). Attaching resources to particular named impairments obscures the socially constructed nature of disability, potentially denying their human rights (Armstrong & Barton, 1999). Rigid adherence to simplistic interpretations of the 'triad of impairments' can lead to services and professional practices which are unable to meet the needs of the identified children and their families. School systems can be burdened by deficit discourse and disadvantage, manifested in categories to sort children. Cultural constructions of difference, school success and failure are represented in personal beliefs, attitudes and values and shape how

educators interact with pupils (Carrington & Robinson, 2006).Inclusive education assumes a different set of beliefs and assumptions that demand different practices in schools.

There are numerous detailed autobiographical accounts of growing up with ASD written by adults, for example Lawson (2011) & Sainsbury (2001). There is the advantage of further insight to provide a coherent narrative of the past. An illuminating quote explores how people without ASD would feel if they were transported to Mars:

> *"Many people with Asperger's syndrome like me, spontaneously compare themselves to extraterrestrials-one woman on the internet brilliantly describes autism as 'Oops-wrong-planet' syndrome-or to humans on an alien planet (as in Temple Grandin's famous self-description as an 'anthropologist on Mars'). Others find a kindred spirit in Star Trek's Mr Spock: pereptually baffled by the illogical behaviour of humans, or his successor in Star Trek: The Next Generation, the literal-minded android Data."*   *(Sainsbury, 2001 p19)*

This account uses allegory to help us understand the experience of ASD.

Lawson (2011) is a psychologist who is autistic and has written through her personal experiences that ASD does not appear to have one connecting thread. She is critical of current traditional theories which she feels contain gaps and do not accommodate the whole clinical picture. Although cognitive theories of ASD have tried to explain why it exists and interventions attempted relating to these it is felt that this is based on a deficit model suggesting ASD is a triad of impairments. This can lead onto considerations that ASD is a disease to be cured rather than enabling a discussion of strengths which enable it to thrive and that it is possibly of value to humans.

Lawson (2011) elaborates that ASD presents itself in different ways. For example, sensory issues are the biggest issue for some whilst others have lots of language problems. One commonality though is the ability to focus intensely on a particular interest. This ability has been encompassed within a proposed model called single attention and associated cognition in autism (SAACA). Through this model ASD is viewed as an important learning style.

2.4. Secondary Schooling for Pupils with ASD

Secondary school is characterised by learning within different locations, which is interwoven with student interactions (Graetz, 2004). Opportunities for socialisation are highly structured, occur throughout the school and are the result of active participation by pupils. Concurrently pupils in secondary school become more autonomous as their friendship base outside the family expands. Pupils also become more dependent on friendships with peers, feel more pressure to succeed academically and prepare for life beyond school (Graetz, 2004). Teacher expectations increase, alongside the need for greater organisational skills managing and successfully completing homework. Pupils are introduced to departmentalised teaching and are expected to move around areas for lessons; it is therefore much harder to form the close relationships with teachers as in primary school. All these changes can result in higher levels of stress and success relies upon coping strategies. This includes relying on family, friends and specific members of staff. Schools should be familiar with different coping strategies to help pupils adjust to the many demands made on them (Graetz, 2004).

Challenges facing pupils within secondary school are even greater for those with ASD. Skills required by pupils to experience success, namely communication, socialisation and organisation are often the areas of greatest difficulty for these young people. The characteristics of ASD and the secondary school environment make opportunities for success much harder. Schools often report difficulties in effectively meeting the needs of these pupils, which is thought to be related to the complex developmental profile and atypical behavioural functioning which is often evident (Keen & Ward, 2004). There are marked discrepancies between measured ability and classroom functioning making ASD children stand out from those with less complex needs. Some children underachieve and others appear to cope despite considerable learning deficits (Keen & Ward, 2004). Promoting success for all learners with ASD is essential due to an increasing number within mainstream secondary schools. This could be partly related to research indicting improved quality of life, educational performance and

social development for this group in mainstream school (Osborne & Reed, 2011).

Looking in particular at theories which explore the cognitive nature and observable difficulties associated with ASD can provide explanations to some of the particular difficulties faced. Difficulties with mentalising (Baron-Cohen, 1995) could mean a mismatch of expectation between staff and pupils with ASD. Difficulties understanding and interpreting the view of others, considered a lack of theory of mind, presents challenges in a busy secondary school environment as does difficulties in emotional understanding. These difficulties are assumed to affect relationships with their teachers and peers (National Autistic Society (NAS) 2006). The pupils may struggle to follow class rules which do not fit with their own perception and beliefs. Difficulties with executive functions such as inhibiting impulses and switching attention could be challenging with differing teaching approaches and locations. Problems recognising complex emotions may mean they may not recognise emotions when being disciplined by teachers possibly leading to further confrontation (Boleman, 2008).

Weak central coherence can offer explanations of some of the behaviours typical of ASD (Frith, 2003). A lack of preference for global processing could make it hard attending to general themes within lessons. Possible resulting difficulties with generalising may mean that is hard to apply learning from one area of the curriculum to another (Rutter, 2005).

With this knowledge, it is understandable that often pupils with ASD prefer routine, predictability and low sensory stimulation which is very different to the often noisy, chaotic environment of secondary mainstream schools (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b). On top of a confusing learning environment, pupils with ASD are likely to experience higher degrees of bullying and social isolation (NAS, 2006). Pupils are consequently at an increased risk of developing mental health problems (Barnhill & Myles, 2001). Social exclusion for this vulnerable group could lead to the non-realisation of civil, political and social rights of citizenship (Armstrong and Barton, 1999). Discourses and practices within society may mean groups are marginalised in society as they transgress socially constructed ideas of 'the norm.' Frequently a

disempowering needs discourse is adopted, suggesting that difficulties are belonging to people rather than being created by the social, economic and political relations in society (Armstrong & Barton, 1999). A large proportion of research related to ASD is based on a deficit model or normative interpretations of disability. One study did examine an alternative viewpoint indicating that autistic narratives of autism have been marginalised (Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008). It was suggested that benefits and neutral differences as well as difficulties for people with ASD should be heard. If this was the more culturally dominant metaphor, it was thought that more common place misinformation and discrimination would be reduced and the goals of inclusive education would be better supported. A related study reported that young people with ASD will achieve the best psychological outcomes if they are taught to live successfully in the mainstream world whilst still being able to explore and embrace their autistic identities (Myers, Ladner & Koger, 2011).

Pupils with higher functioning ASD with stronger verbal skills can frequently cope with the academic demands of mainstream schooling (Wainscot et al., 2008). Conversely, social demands such as interactions with peers and breaktimes cause more difficulties. This is an increasing concern with social inclusion as more ASD pupils are being educated in the mainstream (Wainscot et al., 2008). Ochs et al. (2001) state 'physical placement of children [on the autistic spectrum] ... in inclusive educational settings alone is not sufficient' (p. 400). Clearly, there is a need for research on how such problematic issues can be best addressed in practice. Government guidance exists to support the transition of pupils with ASD from primary to secondary (DfES, 2004b), thus recognising that secondary school is challenging for pupils with ASD. Despite an understanding of the processes involved in relationships and their interdependence and notions of reciprocity, it is more difficult to understand the experience of school relationships for individual pupils. Skills in social interaction are seen as an important part of school success for pupils with ASD (MacKay, Knott & Dunlop, 2007). However, few studies have closely examined the views of individuals with ASD. I think the poor understanding that exists of facilitating the learning and participation of

pupils with ASD (Humphrey & Parkinson, 2006) can be partly addressed by consulting pupils.

2.5. Views and Experiences of Inclusion for Young People with ASD

A literature review of research from the last five years relating to the inclusion of young people with ASD through the exploration of their views and perceptions was examined. Older research was also included, due to the paucity of studies (Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007). This possibly correlates to the research challenges associated with ASD (Preece, 2002). The research was read and critiqued utilising guides from a qualitative and a quantitative perspective, as appropriate.

Previous research of the views of pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools utilised semi-structured interviews and diaries (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b). Less than half the pupil sample utilised a diary, although there was no explanation related to this. One pupil drew pictures of school life, which was felt to be a powerful insight into his feelings. However, this approach was not offered to others which could have provided more in depth data. Non-verbal methods were utilised by Beresford et al. (2004) in their social care research project with children with ASD. This was in response to careful consideration towards accessing children's views on abstract concepts, such as views about their lives. There was a wide age range within the sample (11-17 years). Twenty young people participated from four mainstream schools, thus some schools may only have had a couple of pupils taking part. The researchers recognised that the interview may cause anxiety; therefore time was spent with the young people as preparation. Social validity was improved through comments being offered in response to the draft results. However, little wider cultural change was discussed to address the emerging challenges and views. The 'alarming regularity' with which peer abuse occurred was noted (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b, p.34), although there was not a lengthy discussion about pupils' understanding and experiences of bullying. It was concluded that further research was needed into this and

schools would benefit from resulting knowledge transfer. This will be considered within the current research.

Some recent studies have examined the social inclusion of pupils with ASD. The research focus was frequently and typically regarding the acceptance by classmates of pupils with ASD (Koster et al., 2009). A quantitative study into the social inclusion of pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools compared pupils with dyslexia and pupils with no identified SEN (Humphrey & Symes, 2010b). Pupils with ASD experienced higher frequency of bullying and lower levels of social support from parents, classmates and friends than the other two groups. Due to the research being of a quantitative nature, it was not clear how different sources and levels of social support relate to bullying. Humphrey & Symes (2010a) extended this research through interviewing pupils with ASD around their views and experiences of bullying within and outside of school. Difficulties with social cognition may have made this a difficult area to explore, possibly compounded through a semi structured interview. Interviews are moving away from talking at length about abstract concepts to a dialogue with additional material such as pictures and cue cards to support a child's understanding and access to the interview (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). These can break down imbalances of power, by giving children greater control over the agenda and allowing more time and space within an atmosphere with no right or wrong answers. Unfortunately, there was no indication that these types of additional materials had been utilised.

Tobias (2009) examined parent and pupil perspectives of the support available at secondary school for pupils with ASD. Pupil activity based focus groups involved the drawing of imaginary students. The questions utilised ideas and principles of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). Children with ASD have difficulties with social interaction, leading to questions around the focus group approach and the ease that the pupils (7 in one group), would be able to contribute. Limited theory of mind is another feature of ASD, possibly causing difficulties for pupils to consider feelings, wishes and perspectives of an imaginary person. There were also few details around the school context. Gudmungsdottir & Brock-Utne (2010) indicated that the more accurate the description, the higher the ecological validity.

Furthermore, the higher the ecological validity, the more likely that teachers, senior management, policy makers and pupils can learn from the experiences and information gained. Tobias (2009) indicated that the study could be viewed as action research, although there were few elements of reflection or the reasoning behind decisions.

A further use of PCP was within research conducted by Williams & Hanke (2007). The 'Drawing the Ideal Self' Technique (Moran, 2001) sought the views of mainstream pupils with ASD around school provision. The researchers explained that many conventional methods for gaining the views of young people rely upon adult interpretation or the use of a tool which does not enable meaningful construing. The pupils expressed their views using a mixture of writing, drawing and talking. Fifteen pupils took part, although only three were within Year 8 and Year 9, the age range for the current research. It was felt that the technique was an accessible and open ended tool. Unfortunately, the pupils were not asked about the playground, which could be particularly challenging with the varied social interactions.

Although these studies inform the current research, only one recent study directly examined SOB within pupils with ASD. This investigated school factors associated with success for pupils with ASD and found that a SOB was vital (Osborne & Reid, 2011). The research highlighted that SOB is related to school exclusion (Goodenow, 1993). The Psychological Sense of School Membership (Goodenow, 1993) alongside other measures was used to assess a pupil's sense of belonging to the school. The construct validity of this measure has been demonstrated (Goodenow, 1993). However, two factors could have impacted on the SOB findings, firstly, the pupils completed the measure with the help of their parent and secondly, high level of behavioural difficulties were noted within the research. It was found that good staff training and time in the school improved SOB.

2.6. Views of School Staff

When conducting the literature review examining the views of school staff around the inclusion of pupils with ASD, I also looked at wider literature around SEN. Relevant literature within both of these areas will be outlined.

The previous governments' ambitious SEN Strategy, Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004a) states that every teacher should expect to teach children with SEN and must be equipped with the skills to do this. A tiered approach was proposed where all teachers have core skills, some teachers in all schools have specialist skills and some teachers in some local schools have advanced skills.

Further understanding about how best to support pupils with ASD is vitally important as they are subject to a greatly increased risk of negative outcomes in mainstream education. Pupils with ASD are being integrated into the mainstream, but 21% of pupils with ASD are excluded from school at least once (NAS, 2003). The increased risk of exclusion and disaffection is felt to be the result of the lack of capacity of schools to address the specific group needs for pupils with ASD, arising from their developmental difficulties (Jordan, 2005). The significantly higher rate of exclusion is greater than for pupils with other SEN and 20 times that of pupils without SEN (Department for Children, School and Families, 2006). Mainstream teachers report that they are missing necessary skills, training and support to provide adequately for these pupils (Robertson, Chamberlain & Kasari, 2003). Pupils with ASD are also considered more difficult to include effectively than those with other SEN (House of Commons Education & Skills Committee, 2006). The typical cognitive profile and preferred learning style of pupils with ASD challenge professional assumptions about teaching and learning more than any other group of learners (Jordan, 2005).

Teacher attitudes can be influenced by numerous factors, including the availability of resources, teacher skills and knowledge or the level of exposure to pupils with differences and difficulties. A lack of confidence and uncertainty are part of negative views around inclusion (McGregor & Campbell, 2001). Only half the specialist and mainstream teachers had experience working with pupils with ASD. Increased experience of working with pupils had a positive impact on staff views about inclusion. I agree with Emam & Farrell (2009) that attitudinal barriers can be dismantled through staff gaining further understanding of the thoughts and feelings of pupils with ASD, leading to teacher acceptance, a vital part of successful inclusion for pupils with ASD. Leadership is vital to staff being supported and more able to

meet the needs of their students (Wing, 2007 in Cigman). School leaders play a pivotal role in the development of an inclusive ethos and a true commitment to inclusive principles that seemed to make a difference in translating policy into practice (Fox, Farrell & Davis, 2004).

Research collected in-depth data through staff interviews at four secondary schools in the north-west of England (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a). This socio-economic profile was different to the current research and the interview question themes were not indicated. It was concluded that the ethos of a school and the way 'inclusion' is understood is crucial in determining the extent that government policy and guidance is followed. Governmental goals of personalising learning, making education more innovative and raising achievement are not being met (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a). According to Norwich & Lewis (2005) the gap between inclusion and classroom reality can be very wide and there should be further consideration of a 'distinct needs' position in mainstream educational provision for pupils with ASD (Norwich & Lewis, 2005).

When consulting the literature, I found that most of the research focused on teachers rather than other members within the school community. Schools are trying to support positive outcomes for pupils with ASD utilising Teaching Assistants (TAs). Increasing numbers of TAs are being deployed within schools to support pupils with ASD throughout the school day (Symes & Humphrey, 2011). Although not supported by research, teachers feel that TAs are critical to successful inclusion for pupils with ASD. TAs can support the typical ASD pupil preference for routine and predictability by transitioning with them between lessons (Alston & Kilham, 2004). It is also thought that TAs may have a more positive attitude towards the pupils than teachers who report tensions with this particular group of learners (Emam & Farrell, 2009). There are concerns around TA support to SEN pupils, centred on more support leading to less progress (Blatchford et al., 2009), reduced attention from the class teacher (Blatchford et al., 2009) and pupils feeling socially excluded (Alston & Kilham, 2004). Issues relating to deployment, training and relationship with class teachers are thought to contribute to the negative impact of TAs. There is a gap within the literature as school factors such as inclusive school culture and teacher training have been overlooked. Factors

perceived as facilitating or hindering the ability of TAs to effectively include pupils with ASD included access to expertise, communication within school and teaching staff awareness of ASD. Notably, the four schools that took part in the research were chosen as they were seen to be particularly inclusive for pupils with ASD. However, the data upon which this was based did not include pupil views around perceived levels of inclusiveness but rather for example, levels of bullying or self esteem. Disappointingly there was no discussion of research limitations or implications for practice within this under researched area.

2.7. Research Rationale

The current practices in mainstream schools may contribute to disaffection and social exclusion in pupils with ASD (Osler & Osler, 2002). A large proportion of previous research has focused on negative outcomes such as bullying, anxiety and social isolation (Jones & Frederickson, 2010). Exploration around the more positive construct of belonging could contribute to increased understanding of how to successfully include this group of young people in mainstream secondary schools. Notably, SOB has been considered vital for pupils with ASD and worthy of further research (Osborne & Reed, 2011). SOB is influenced by both academic and social factors (Anderman, 2003). This is thought to be salient for pupils in lower secondary years but no previous research has examined the factors important for pupils with ASD. There is research utilising quantitative design methodology (Lindsay, 2007) around SOB but little from qualitative design, exploring pupils' perceptions of the construct, suggesting a gap in the literature. Recent calls for research based evidence for inclusion suggests a place for both qualitative and quantitative design methods (Lindsay, 2007). Qualitative exploration of pupils' views would allow for analysis of the processes within schools which contribute to pupils' SOB and successful inclusion.

Research into the views and experiences of school staff with this group focuses mainly on teachers, a smaller amount raising questions over the effectiveness of TA support. Engaging with research into perceptions of

SOB, a vital part of inclusion, can provide space to reflect on current practices and consider how hindrances can be overcome.

The initial focus of SOB within the current research is explored in relation to two very specific contexts which are both mainstream secondary schools although one also has an additionally resourced ASD provision. When operationalising the construct of belonging, it should be considered that school is a holistic experience for young people (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). This includes time within and outside lessons, relationships with others and the messages the school gives defining who and what matters to the school. These areas will be a part of the everyday school experience for pupils and will be discussed in the pupil interviews. In particular with regards to SOB, research has shown that dimensions of student-teacher relations, peer relations and involvement in school activities are all vital areas, giving important starting points (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). These dimensions will be investigated with regard to pupils with ASD as well as topics raised by the pupils.

Chapter 3.   Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology. This will consist of the rationale for the research design, processes and procedures, underlying paradigms and epistemological standpoints as well as ethical considerations.

This chapter will be written in the first person i.e. the use of 'I' instead of 'we'. This decision was made even though the research is collaborative as I am speaking on behalf of others (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). I will be reporting the learning through the action 'we' took. My learning will, as a consequence, be grounded in my interactions with others.

3.2. Research Design and Assumptions

In considering an inquiry into a SOB in secondary school pupils with ASD, I am faced with two opposing options about the nature of my research. I can make assumptions about the world being divisible into quantifiable elements that can be measured and manipulated. For example, the distribution of scales to a large number of pupils which could measure different aspects of what could be deemed to be 'sense of belonging' e.g. Goodenow's (1993) Psychological Sense of School Membership. The results of the questionnaires could be collated and statistically analysed with appropriate conclusions. Conversely, rejecting the validity of the ontological assumptions on which this division is based, I note the social world is constructed by individuals and does not lend itself to quantifiable divisions. The focus would therefore be centred on how the world is constructed for this particular small group of individuals and the rich everyday experiences of attending secondary school. It would also include an exploration into how these views have been formed and what others can understand from these.

The research is ground in a strong constructionist theoretical framework, which enables researchers to strive towards a social justice ethic:

"[All] knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context"

(Crotty, 1998, p.42).

Qualitative research methods relate to the constructionist approach. A qualitative approach means mediation by the intersubjective relationship of the researcher and the participant. There is scarce research into SOB for pupils with ASD and qualitative research enables new theory to be generated. The social and communication difficulties of this group of learners could impact on the ease of eliciting their subjective experiences but could also limit information gained though reductionist frameworks, for example through understanding of questions being unable to be verified.

3.2.1 Action Research

Action research insists that practitioners are participants, not just in taking part in the research, but being partners (Denscombe, 2003). To enhance the 'authenticity and trustworthiness' (Jones & Stanley, 2008) of the research it was necessary to recognise the 'validity of the subjective viewpoint'. This included the perspectives of those at the heart of the research, the pupils. These insights aim to enhance the school's ability to engage in dialogues to bring change. It was also hoped an increased understanding would result from taking part in this exploratory learning journey, both within the ASD Research Group and the wider school. This democratization of the research process and respect for practitioner knowledge has been termed 'emancipatory action research' (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). The fundamental framework within which school inclusion takes place is challenged as well as practitioner's thinking.

Inclusion is transformative which requires better use of available resources to improve policies and practices (Ainscow et al., 2003). Sustainable inclusive practice requires engagement with barriers for learners. These exist at all levels within the educational system, including outside the LA and school control. The transformative paradigm provides a philosophical framework which addresses issues of power and justice. There is a move from a deficit

/medical model of difference to a social-cultural model as a framework for understanding personal experiences. This model challenges the medical perspective within the current research by looking beyond 'within child' explanations of ASD to the relationship of the child with the wider school environment. I think that a collaborative action research design can support these understandings particularly through its characteristic strong democratic dimension of involving pupils themselves (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Action research is also an appropriate design frame within which different methods can be utilised.

Five validation principles have been proposed relating to action research and considered at every step of the research process: historical continuity, reflexivity, dialectics, workability and ethics and evocativeness (Heikkinen et al., 2012). For instance, the current research focuses on one group of learners and provides not only a voice to the young people but empowerment. The research report also aims to present the events as a logical sequence.

The starting point is an analysis of current practice within a school (Ainscow et al., 2003) and examined primarily through the eyes of pupils themselves. Adjusting existing arrangements requires school staff to respond to different types of feedback from members of the school community that forms the second part of the research. Pupils who do not fit into existing arrangements can be seen as offering 'surprises' which is feedback that invites further change. This implies a more positive view of difference.

Action research starts with small cycles of planning, action, observing and reflecting; this emphasises the importance of a systematic and planned approach to data collection and analysis (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

The study is viewed as representing three turns of the action research cycle. There were not discrete time periods of *action* , *monitoring* and *observing* due to the time constraints of the research and being adaptive to other people's timescales. Certain research activities were more aligned to particular parts of the action research cycle as has aimed to be represented. The different elements of this study are outlined below in Figure 1.

Monitor / Observe — Evaluate Outcomes of Action
- Consult with working party
- Reflect on pupil interviews
- School Observation

Act — In Direction of Solution
- Pupil Observation
- Pupil Interviews (Pilots)

Development-Problem awareness that negates values:
- Speak to SENCOs
- School Observation

Evaluate — Modify Ideas in Actions
- Sense of Belonging (SOB): Lens to look at inclusion

Plan — Establish Solution
- Local and National Level (Literature Review)
- Plan Pupil Interviews (Pilots)

Monitor / Observe
- Transcribe and analyse data from pupil interviews through thematic analysis

Act
- Pupil Observation
- Pupil Interviews

Plan
- Review pupil interviews focusing on SOB

Evaluate — Modify Ideas in Actions
- Feedback around pupil interview themes
- Evaluate choice of lens (SOB)

Monitor / Observe
- Transcribe and analyse data from school staff focus groups through thematic analysis

Act
- School Staff Focus Groups

Plan
- School staff focus groups to test validity of SOB findings and provide opportunity to reflect on findings.

Evaluate — Further Research

FIGURE 1: ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES WITHIN CURRENT STUDY (ADAPTED FROM WHITEHEAD, 1989 AND 2009)

3.2.2 My Role Within the Research

The researcher, is active within the research process. For example, my position affects the nature of the observations and the interpretations (Thomas 2009). A positive aspect of participation by outsiders including university colleagues in a schools' action research is to provide support whilst also helping to overcome limitations such as a lack of explanation as to how new insights are generated through the research process. The main approach was 'research into school practices and the practices of researchers in relation to the agendas of practitioners and researchers' (Ainscow et al., 2003, p.229). This involved ongoing mutual dialogue between 'outsiders to the school' and 'insiders within the school' as information was collected. Progress and priorities were discussed and engagement with the thinking and actions of researchers and practitioners within a critically reflective environment. I aimed to position myself alongside the school and other LEA partners to enable all the participants to develop a deeper understanding of how inclusive practices could be fostered for a particular group of learners. I therefore could be termed an 'insider' within the inclusive school community although at other times, for example when working with the pupils I was an 'outsider' to the school which was emphasised to help build rapport.

I was aware of the importance of defining my position, within the borough and as a university student to the group partners and research participants. I adopted a leading role within the coordination and day to day management of the research whilst keeping in mind democratic action research principles (Jones & Stanley, 2008). This manifested as a shared expectation that all members of the group would play an active role in the construction of knowledge to bring about change and improvement in practice (Elliot, 1991). Large parts of the research process, such as gaining ethical approval, the literature review and the actual undertaking of the interviews were my sole responsibility as the work formed part of my doctoral programme. However, compliance with the relevant requirements applied to the whole research team.

I was aware of potential professional clashes as well as different interests and expectations. This could result in ethical and practical dilemmas for

which there is no ideal solution (Jones & Stanley, 2008). This is an inherent issue in all multi agency working, for example due to varied professional training routines or values. As discussed within prominent texts within the field, collaboration is vital (Elliot, 1991). Ethical research dilemmas will be explored on an ongoing basis throughout the research process.

Further parts of my role were to aid the schools in developing their capacity to generate meaningful data through research and to support the schools in recognising the processes in speaking to the young people about their experiences.

3.2.3 Research Reflections-Researcher's role

Due to the theoretical underpinnings of an action research project, it was crucial to reflect at stages of the research. This reflection included successes, hurdles and setbacks. The ASD Research Group and research supervisors were involved throughout. They were asked to provide feedback on each stage of the process to enable us to make appropriate combined decisions for what to do next (Kellock, 2011).

One of my key roles was to provide an opportunity for school staff to step outside authoritarian roles and critically analyse interaction with pupils. Throughout the research I was cautious of my differences from the participants which could impact on what they chose to share as well as my interpretation of their accounts. My experiences and motivations were reflected on and their potential impact carefully monitored with a reflective journal. Crucially, reflexivity is pivotal within action research and meant I considered the impact of personal experiences whilst interacting with the other participants (Heikkinen et al., 2012). I aimed to use my professional training as an EP and experiences prior to the course working with pupils with ASD to inform the interviews and analysis of the transcripts.

3.3. Profile of Schools

The profiles of the two schools including information from their latest Ofsted inspection are described below. Both of the schools were single sex schools for boys, except for having mixed gender sixth forms.

3.3.1 School X

The school is an 11-18 boys' comprehensive with a large mixed gender sixth form. Nearly all the students live within a one mile radius. It has an excellent reputation in the local area and is heavily oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average, although an above average proportion have a statement of SEN. There is a facility on site for pupils with ASD. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and around 5 per cent have English as an additional language. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing and Artsmark and Sportsmark Gold Awards. Currently, there are 48 pupils across the school diagnosed with ASD.

School X has the specialist provision, to be referred to as the 'R-Centre'.

3.3.2 School Y

The school is a boy's technology college with a mixed gender Sixth Form. The school is a comprehensive. The majority of the pupils come from White heritage backgrounds, although there are small numbers from Mixed, Asian, Black, Chinese and other backgrounds. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is low and only four students are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils having learning difficulties and disability as is broadly average. The current free school meals entitlement is below the national average. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds although the surrounding areas are generally more advantaged than average. The school population is relatively settled, with fewer pupils joining after Year 7 than the national average. Currently, there are 30 pupils across the school diagnosed with ASD.

The area within School Y where the SENCO was located and an adjoining room are referred to as the 'T-Room.'

3.4. Developing Research Focus

The overall research question underpinning the research was aiming to enhance the school experience for pupils with ASD. Activities were undertaken at the start of the research to narrow down the focus. Initially this was seeking pupil perspectives of the secondary school environment.

The schools that agreed to take part in the research were visited to explore the contexts and liaise with key members of staff. I posed questions to the school to gain background information and to help form the research focus. Former knowledge gained by my experience in the field of enquiry was utilised, helpful in understanding events and actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The piloting process developed the interviewing technique and informed the design of the interview guide. A reflective pilot study has meaningful influence on the focus, design, validity and reliability although they are rarely used in research with qualitative methodology (Gudmungsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010). A piloting phase fits within action research.

The design, sample, methods, procedures and data analysis will now be outlined in turn for the two main parts of the research project. Research question 1 will be explored within part 1 and research questions 2 and 3 explored within part 2.

3.5. Part 1-Pupil Voice

Research Question 1-What factors facilitate or inhibit a SOB within a mainstream secondary school for pupils with ASD?

3.5.1 Design

Listening to pupils' voices is an active process of the exchange of meanings (Tangen, 2009). It can lead to pupils being more valued and respected as partners within the school community. Semi structured interviews and within this participatory techniques enabled the pupils to take part on their own terms (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). The extent of pupil participation in research can vary (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). This research could be said to be 'part participatory' (Kellock, 2011) as participation began after the research aims and design. However areas to research were discussed with the pupils to help shape the research questions. They also made decisions about the information they were comfortable disseminating to others.

Accessing pupils' experiences and views is not straightforward (Tangen, 2009). The issues surrounding this were even more pertinent with the current group of learners who may struggle to express themselves verbally and maybe reluctant to participate (Beresford et al., 2004). However, the language expressed by this group of young people still holds important information about their subjective reality. These learners also have rights for their experiences to be explained using their own language (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a; 2008b). The features of ASD might impact on the research process through concrete thought processes, difficulties looking to the future, lack of personal insight and dislike of change (Preece, 2002). Any approach needs to accommodate potentially high levels of social anxiety and the individualised way ASD manifests itself. The ASD Research Group reflected on these traits and considered the impact of these on information presentation, interview organisation and approach.

An implication of the 'social child' perspective is that children's own understandings of their situation are as valid as any other (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). To support the pupils in exploring their own understandings I wanted to give them choice over the research techniques. I also wanted to

allow them to direct the course of their interviews, within the overall themes of the research. I noted the 'Mosaic approach' (Clark & Moss, 2001) for listening to young children. This approach uses a variety of tools to grasp the meaning of children's experiences and views, including conversation and interviews, observation of and participation in children's activities and asking children to draw or take photos of people and things important to them. I wanted the pupils to participate in direct work which was enjoyable, non-threatening, involving methods that can work with their interests and strengths and flexible in terms of different abilities.

3.5.1.1.   Development of the Interview Guide

An interview guide (see Appendix 8) was developed. The importance of acclimatising the pupil to the interview process and accommodating their communication difficulties, including eye contact was considered. Open questions were used to keep the dialogue as child focused as possible (Jones, 2005).

Throughout the pilot interviews, literature review, ontological and epistemological perspectives of the research design an emphasis for the interview guide was to explore salient issues for the pupils and their understandings of a SOB within their school. No predetermined definitions relating to SOB were provided to the pupils. It still felt important to cover similar broad areas, thus these were raised at the end of the interviews if they did not arise. Questions were asked relating to aspects of school including the classroom, breaktime/lunchtime, relationships with school staff and relationships with peers. A wider ranging question was asked about the school generally as children are likely to have their own questions which they may want to explore (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

3.5.2 Sample

3.5.2.1.   Identification of Participants

The key criteria for inclusion in the research were:

- Individuals with a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Year 8 or 9 pupil on the SEN register

- Pupil awareness of ASD diagnosis (prevented 1 pupil in School X being invited to take part).

Further details about the number of pupils in each school meeting the key criteria for inclusion in the research can be seen within Appendix 1.

3.5.2.2.   Recruitment of Participants

All pupils who self selected were included. Qualitative methods do not aim for empirical generalisation so a large and random sample was not necessary. A returned consent forms signed by both pupil and parent/guardian indicated agreement to take part. If no response was received, a member of the school staff followed this up with a non-pressuring phonecall home to ascertain a desire or not to take part. This was undertaken in both schools. The SENCOs felt this could be for a number of reasons, for example home organisation. It was not felt in either school to be related to unwillingness to take part, although it was commented that in School X two pupils outwardly do not accept their diagnosis. This may have prevented them wanting to take part.

3.5.2.3.   Resulting Participants

Further details about the participants can be seen within Appendix 2

	Year 8	Year 9	Total
School X	5	2	7
School Y	2	3	5

TABLE 1: PUPIL PARTICPANTS IN SCHOOL X AND Y

3.5.2.4.   Research Reflections-Participants

Initially it was discussed whether pupils solely with a diagnosis of ASD only should take part. Co-morbidity occurs when two or more disorders occur together more often than predicted by chance alone. The increased identification of ASD in children with co-morbid disorders could be an additional factor in explaining the increased prevalence (Keen & Ward, 2004). A recent study found that 53% of an ASD sample demonstrated a sufficient number of ADHD symptoms to warrant a Co-morbid diagnosis of ADHD. (Sinzig, Walter & Doepfner, 2009). It was decided after discussions

with my research supervisors and school consultations that all pupils with a diagnosis of ASD could take part. This was felt to be more inclusive.

3.5.3 Methods

3.5.3.1.   Research Tool Considerations

A varied repertoire of verbal and non-verbal techniques were available. The success of participatory tools depends on the quality of adaptation of concepts being explored to match the abilities of the participants. For example, not all pupils would want to draw to convey their views.

Key concerns included alleviating social anxiety and ensuring that the questions asked were meaningful (Beresford et al., 2004). Strategies to address these issues included; restricting the conversation to concrete here and now experiences and the use of photography. Social anxiety was also reduced by the researcher and young person sitting side by side (Beresford et al., 2004).

3.5.3.2.   Informal Observation

Once the pupils agreed to take part in the research, I conducted an observation within their typical learning environment. I noted the activities of the child during the observation, nature of any interactions with peers or staff. I also considered the role of the staff in respect of the pupils (Fox, Farrell & Davis, 2004).

After a period of observation I interacted with the pupil through a pre organised discussion. This helped build rapport, thus the pupil would not be entering into the interview with a stranger, supportive to the interview process (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b). It also aimed to reduce anxiety levels. This initial meeting enabled the research to be discussed and to ensure the research aims were relevant. The research methodology was explained to the pupil and if they wished to take part by taking photographs this was arranged within the school before the interview. The observations were not treated as a data collection approach. Therefore they are not formally analysed but drawn on as appropriate to enhance context specific discussions and interpretations.

3.5.3.3. Pupil Interviews

It was important to consider the pupils' difficulties in the pragmatic use of language. It is not possible to replicate the results seen with positivist approaches as the interviews were related to the perceptions of the participants at that particular time. Examining previous research within the field was undertaken to ensure that good practice was identified and followed.

Visual Methodology.

Images have the potential within research processes to represent, engage and influence in a way that traditional research methods are not able to always manage (Kaplan et al., 2011). Through intertwining the visual and the narrative, a richer, deeper comprehension may be gained. Insight and reflection may result through taking images of things taken for granted as well as through discussions around the collection of images. Photography can engage different stakeholder groups and is accessible as it is not dependent on traditional literacy skills (Ewald, 2011).

Participatory photography uses action research principles to support students to represent and develop their perspectives on issues such as inclusion and diversity (Kaplan , Miles & Howes, 2011). Issues of validity and interpretation have been raised in relation to the use of visual methodology (Kellock, 2011) and were considered. The issues include, the importance of the interpretation in matching participant's voices and verbal accounts.

Ideal Self

An adaptation of the 'Drawing the Ideal Self' technique (Moran, 2001), utilised previously by Williams and Hanke (2007) generated pupil views of what they perceived to be optimum aspects of their school creating SOB. This included consideration of the pupil's experience of the current school and desires for the future, held within their views of what would be 'ideal' for them. This is achieved without pre-empting what the pupil views might be. Changes were made to the original approach though, the inclusion of a prompt around an ideal breaktime and lunchtime, a difficult part of the school day for pupils with ASD. Drawings were not essential if this was not the chosen methodology.

The philosophy of 'Drawing the Ideal Self' is based upon Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). The theory of PCP suggests that an individual tests out theories about real life and modifies them accordingly. PCP has three key features reported by Moran (2006) making it especially suitable to gaining the views of young people with ASD around inclusion. PCP focuses on the way an individual construes their own experiences, thus idiosyncrasies do not create a problem. The adult speaking to the pupils will use the child's language making the experience accessible. It does not judge and accepts a child's perspective that what they do makes sense to them in how they construe the world. Once it is understood how parts of school are construed, changes could be made. Attwood (2006) describes PCP as being appropriate to the mindset of people with Asperger's Syndrome therefore a method based on this established theory would add rigour to the research.

Sentence Completion

Questionnaires and structured interviews elicit responses on topics selected by researchers. Sentence completion tasks allow more open responses, in the pupils' own language (Wade & Moore, 1993). I devised this using a sentence completion task from research into the views of young people with SEN relating to special provision (Wade & Moore, 1993). In addition, the start of the sentences was related to the broad question areas within the PCP activities.

3.5.4 Procedure

To preserve anonymity, the school invited the pupils to take part. This was achieved through following of a flowchart which had been previously outlined to the school (see Appendix 3). The school posted home a parental information sheet (see Appendix 4), young person information sheet (see Appendix 5) and parental/young person consent form (see Appendix 6). The first two positive responses in School Y formed the pilot study.

The schools were asked for suitable dates for the observations of the pupils in class and interviews, to avoid periods of school examinations. The interviews in School Y took place within the Summer term 2011 and the interviews in School X took place within the Autumn term 2012.

Guidelines for a staff member to support pupils in taking photographs were available (see Appendix 5). This was based on information from Moss et al.'s (2007) visual research aimed at giving pupils a voice. The adult was asked not to seek to influence the choice of photo or their opinions (Carrington, Allen & Osmolowski, 2007). It was suggested that the pupil may like to discuss in advance with the adult what they would like to say to anyone who asks what they are doing.

The school printed the photographs and ensured I had a copy. The pupil discussed their reflections regarding their school and the relative importance of the photographs. Copies of the photographs are not included within the research as permission from the young people nor the schools was initially sought for them to be utilised for this purpose.

Guidelines around the drawing of the ideal school were written (see Appendix 8) and worked through during the interview for pupils that wished to participate orally.

Pupils were reminded at the start of the interview that the information they provided would be anonymised and discussed with school staff and senior management to help the school meet their needs more effectively. It has been reported that a participant's primary concern is of what will happen to their interview and that what they say matters (Miller & Glassner, 2002).

The interviews took place in a pre-arranged familiar environment to reduce anxiety about having to go to an unfamiliar part of the school. The school decided with their pupil knowledge how much notice should be given of the interview. Each pupil who took part through visual means was asked whether they wanted a copy of their photographs to take away with them.

3.5.4.1.   Research Reflections: Pilot Data Collection

The first two positive responses in School Y formed the pilot study. The information helped form the research questions and the parts to be focused on within the individual interviews. The pupils influenced the direction of the research (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). The pilot study also helped to better understand the differences between the school contexts which was helpful in the following interviews.

The pilot interview highlighted the importance of the following with regards to the interview format:

- Providing a range of interview approaches. One pupil chose to talk verbally with some prompts and the other took photographs.

- Neither pupil wanted to take part through drawings although this approach was still retained in case other pupils may find it difficult to explain themselves verbally. I am also aware that a child's drawing can highlight aspects of knowing which are at lower levels of awareness.

- The use of photography enabled questions and discussions to be kept within the 'here and now,' rather than around abstract concepts which could have been more challenging for pupils with ASD. Photography can help to investigate more abstract concepts such as inclusion, which is hard to express (Moss et al., 2007). The pupil seemed at ease to explain the narrative of the photographs which stimulated powerful discussions around inclusion and exclusion.

- The pupil who took photographs did not take any of classrooms and only two of his peers. The prompts given prior to the photographs being taken were reviewed accordingly in case this was part of the reason these aspects were not photographed.

The pilot interview also highlighted the following developmental areas in the interviewing technique:

- Taking the interview at the pupil's pace. One of the pupils appeared apprehensive at the start of the initial discussion although indicated that he was keen to take part. More time was spent explaining the research to this pupil which was an area he wanted to know more about.

- Greater exploration behind the meaning of the pupil's language. It was important to suspend my own construing to not place meaning on the words articulated by the pupil (Dalton, 1996).

- Avoidance of intervening too quickly. On reflection I think I interjected too early at points with prompts. Therefore I possibly did not give the pupil the opportunity to lead the conversation.

3.5.5 Data Analysis

Field notes were written during and shortly after the interviews. These focused on the emotional tone of the interview, non-verbal communication and any salient issues. The interviews and focus groups were recorded using a digital dictaphone. I personally transcribed all of the data to ensure familiarity and that the original recordings were accurate. The transcription process involved seeking to retain the information that was needed from the verbal account, whilst remaining true to its original nature.

With both parts of the research, the views of the two groups i.e. pupils and school staff were analysed as an individual group and then compared to identify any similarities or differences across that particular group.

The resulting transcriptions were analyzed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is a method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) which is particularly suitable for use in psychological research. It also goes further by interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). The research aimed to explore participants' perceptions of SOB within their school. Thematic analysis is also suitable as it is flexible, provides rich and detailed, yet complex accounts of data. It is particularly suitable for exploratory research where participants' views are unknown (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding was largely data driven which meant it was not aiming to be fitted within a pre-existing coding frame (see Appendix 9). A bottom up process was pursued with codes emerging from the participant interviews. This was due to the scarcity of research within this area although data is not coded within an 'epistemological vacuum' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) therefore some theoretically informed coding was also included. Transcripts were coded in 'units of meaningful text' rather than being analyzed line by line due to the language and communication difficulties of the pupils. After discussing different aspects of school, the pupils were then sometimes able to offer further exploration of an earlier topic area.

The research was not aiming for generalisability, but sought to uncover possible group trends that could be explored in further research whilst not losing sight of individual perspectives. Thematic analysis enables the

exploration of themes across a whole data set, as well as allowing salient idiographic issues to be considered and represented (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p,86). The sample was not homogenous as is required within Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Grounded theory involves selecting research sites based on theoretical sampling and in particular their relevance to emerging categories and concepts (Denscombe, 2003) which was not the process employed within the current research.

The process of the analysis involved a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that are being analysed and the analysis of the data that has been produced. Validity was considered as theme development was discussed within research supervision. One pupil transcript from each school was presented to supervisors to ensure that the reasoning behind the analysis was understood.

3.5.5.1. Research Reflections-Thematic Analysis

Whilst efforts were made to remain true to the individual pupil views, some minimal adult interpretation was needed in order to highlight what seemed for the wider group to be the most relevant features of the school that created a SOB and the impact of these on their everyday school lives. It was acknowledged that I would conduct the research with a 'neurotypical' perspective.

It was discussed in supervision that the occurrence of each code was not being recorded within the findings. This was because it was not felt to be accurate information, due to the communication difficulties of the pupils. Instead, it was decided that the number of pupils within each theme would be highlighted to provide an idea about prevalence.

After the thematic analysis had been conducted the lenses through which the data was examined through was re-examined (i.e. SOB). This was to ensure it was still relevant which it was felt to be. The pupils were provided with anonymous feedback from the interviews at the end of the research. The information was discussed with their key worker.

3.6. Part 2-Engagement with Pupil Interview Data

Research Question 2-What are the perspectives of school staff in relation to ensuring pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment?

Research Question 3-How can SOB be further promoted for pupils with ASD?

3.6.1 Design

I was keen to cause deeper cultural change within the school community, promoting discussions and reflections on interactions with pupils with ASD and the ways in which they are perceived. New meanings are more likely when evidence creates 'surprises' (Timperley & Robinson, 2001). Traditional power relationships between some teachers and pupils can create barriers to inclusion. Power relationships and hierarchies in education systems can reinforce authoritarian teacher-student relationships. The aim was to facilitate school staff to step outside authoritarian roles and critically analyse how they interact with pupils.

I also felt it important within the research design for educational difficulties not to be pathologised as inherent within students (Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008). Furthermore, to develop the capacity of those within schools to reveal and challenge deficit views of 'difference.' It was necessary to consider how deficit assumptions may be influencing perceptions of certain students and the teaching methods employed.

The views of students can be a powerful force for change (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). The development of an inclusive culture requires a shared commitment by staff to processes that produce an overall enhancement in participation among all participants (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). An important aspect of this culture is thought to be the values and attitudes of school staff. Pupil participation is related to the extent that staff within schools accept and celebrate difference and their commitment to offering educational opportunities to all pupils.

Within the research, information gained from the pupil interviews was shared with school staff through focus groups. The intention was to stimulate 'self-questioning, creativity and action'. Pupil views can help mobilise staff in favour of meaningful reform (Carrington Bland & Brady, 2010). However, Ainscow & Kaplan (2005) noted that although engagement with evidence can create space for reviewing thinking and practice, it is not in itself a straightforward mechanism for the development of more inclusive practices. The space that is created may be filled according to conflicting agendas. In this way, deeply held beliefs may prevent analysis and experimentation in order to foster the development of more inclusive ways of working (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). This needed to be considered within the focus groups which also provided opportunities to draw attention to aspects of school which were seen as positive and therefore to discuss maintaining these.

The first part of the focus group enabled discussions about the findings and perceptions of the school practice which impact on SOB for pupils with ASD. The second part addressed how the information helped to understand the pupils needs and to consider next steps both in terms of a response to the information provided and the school engagement with the research processes.

3.6.2 Sample

3.6.2.1. Identification and Recruitment of Participants

The research contact within each school considered the most appropriate staff members to take part in the focus groups after discussion at the ASD Research Group. One focus group took place in each school. A range of different staff personnel were invited to take part, for example heads of year, form tutors, pastoral staff and members of the senior management team. Staff personnel but could have contradictory, but equally valuable perspectives which are relevant for the development of practice (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell & Frankham, 2003). Senior management are crucial in creating re-thinking amongst colleagues (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). Particular staff roles mentioned by the young people were invited to take part, for example Individual Support Assistants (ISAs). Between 6 and 8

individuals were invited to take part in the focus group (Wilkinson, cited in Breakwell et al., 2006).

3.6.2.2.   Participants

The position of each of the participants within the two focus groups is outlined below. The participants are presented within the order they completed a table of attendance at the focus group. Further details about the participants are contained within Appendix 10 (School X) and Appendix 11 (School Y).

	School X	School Y
1	Additional Educational Needs Coordinator (AENCO) / English Teacher	Head of Year 7
2	Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	Drama Teacher / Year 11 Form Tutor
3	Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
4	Team Leader / Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	Learning Support Assistant
5	P.E. Teacher	ICT Teacher / Year 9 Form Tutor
6	Deputy Headteacher	Deputy Head of Year 9 / Higher Level Teaching Assistant
7	Head of Sixth Form / SENCO	Vice Principal
8	Head of Year 7	

TABLE 2: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS IN SCHOOL X AND Y

3.6.2.3.   Research Reflections-Participants

It felt important that the senior management team were part of the focus groups. School staff may have not been able to discuss school policy and to consider how the information could be taken forward within the school.

3.6.3 Methods

Focus groups are structured discussion groups where the ideas and perceptions of individuals about a focus topic can be discussed (Tobias. 2009). This approach was felt to be appropriate as it is underpinned by the assumption that there are multiple perspectives about any reality.

I considered that the focus group had two aims, which were as a prompt for school staff to consider their practice and as a debrief of the pupil interviews.

A traditional group consists of up to a two hour discussion, in this case it was planned to be up to 1 hour. I acted as a moderator, facilitating the discussion, through a series of open ended questions (Smith, 2003).

It is thought that through skilful managing of a group dynamic, it is possible to cultivate 'natural' conversation and discussion (Breakwell et al., 2006). People's attitudes can not necessarily be obtained through reasoned responses to direct questions, they are more likely to be constructed through discussion and interaction (Breakwell et al., 2006). The 'reality' itself is of less interest, but the way the reality is 'constructed, defended and modified (Wilkinson, 2003). Two interrelated forms of evidence are derived from focus groups which are the group process (way in which people interact and communicate with each other) and the content around which the group process is organised (focal stimuli and meanings arising from it). This method can provide insights into the complex processes through which group norms and meanings are shaped and applied. Ideas given by others can help develop individual's own thoughts and views, therefore richer data can be gathered.

3.6.4 Procedure

For the purposes of time and high quality discussions it has been suggested that it is useful to scene-set. It was therefore decided to give the participants hand outs before the focus group with a summary of the key information gained from the pupil interviews within their particular school.

Prior to the focus group a series of questions were prepared. A focus group schedule was drawn up in advance which also contained a clear statement of purpose and a guide for facilitating discussion. Prompts were planned which could be drawn on if necessary to help participants develop their answers. It is suggested that question wording should facilitate openness, invite a disclosure and elaboration (such as 'what are your thoughts about....').

The philosophy behind the focus group was to create a situation where the participants naturally directed their conversations to each other. Therefore,

group members were empowered to direct, flow and direction of the dialogue. The 'interaction' process was of interest.

3.6.4.1.   Moderator style

After consulting the literature the approach which would be utilised would involve low content control with regards to what was discussed but high process control, aiming to maximise involvement (Breakwell et al., 2006). I was required to demonstrate sensitivity and empathy on one hand, alongside objectivity and detachment on the other. I felt it important that there was not too much external control otherwise participants could have been led into certain areas of discussion to provide validation of work. This approach increases the external validity of the information.

The conditions of the room were considered, to ensure they were conducive to a smooth flowing discussion and were comfortable, such as suitable seating and table arrangements. Name tags were supplied. The session was planned to be one hour, with 20 minutes at the start to look over the key findings from the pupil interviews. The focus group was taped, supplemented by moderator observations of the process and a silent participant within each focus group who was transcribing the discussions.

The focus groups took place in the Spring term 2012. This was later than originally planned due to the amount of time that was spent analysing the pupil interviews. The focus groups could not be undertaken until this was completed, to ensure a summary of the main findings could be presented to school staff in each school.

3.6.4.2.   Research reflections-Focus group procedure

The 'Summary of Information from Pupil Interviews' sheets were discussed within supervision and within the ASD Research Group. The number of pupils within a theme was not be recorded on this sheet to avoid influencing the discussion, a particular theme being discussed, due to a high number of pupils having referred to it.

Discussions took place about the wording of some of the themes, for example the theme 'bullying' and the large size of this paragraph. It was explained that this was the term utilised by the pupil and lots of information

was included within this theme to make it clear to staff what the pupil meant by bullying and how it could be tackled.

3.6.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was again felt to be an appropriate tool for data analysis as it is flexible and can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. A similar approach was undertaken as previously, however more theoretically informed coding was included. In order to communicate the different perspectives gained from the focus, an adapted theoretical framework for analysis was utilised (Tarr, Tsokova, Maija Takkunen, 2011). A similar framework was applied by Barnardos to identify the barriers to inclusion and it refers to four different aspects which are physical, communicative, attitudinal and resources. Initially the data was examined using the four areas but as this was not felt to completely reflect all the information, additional aspects were considered.

The decision was made that the focus groups would not be coded in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the staff members. This was because the focus groups were aiming more for awareness raising and enabling discussions about specific transformative action which may take place.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

At all stages of this research it was crucial to consider ethical implications. I was guided by the Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2006). The ethical principles of autonomy, beneficience and justice were adhered to. Ethical approval was gained from the university before data collection commenced. Particular considerations with regards to the pupil interviews are outlined below and further ethical considerations outlined throughout the research.

3.7.1 Sampling

It was important in considering the sample that the pupils were aware of their diagnosis of ASD. Pupils without this awareness were initially screened out by the school and letters not sent home about the research. It was requested within the letters that parents did not discuss the research with their child if they were unaware of their diagnosis.

3.7.2 Pupil Interviews

Data may become skewed when children are not used to being asked for opinions and analysis or because they may have misinterpreted questions (Mahbub, 2008). Therefore, the pupil comments were recapped as the interview proceeded and confirmation requested.

In order to address power relations which exist between an adult researcher and a child participant, I spent time with the pupils before their interview (Mahbub, 2008). I also explained that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions.

3.7.3 Informed Consent

Children have a right to take part in research but to also withdraw their involvement (Greig, Taylor & Mackay, 2007). As previously mentioned, pupil and parent information sheets were sent home (see Appendices 2 and 3) as well as consent forms (see Appendix 4). It was explained what would happen to the data gained from the research. Parents were asked to discuss the research with their children. Contact details of the researcher were given for any additional questions. It was indicated that the interview would be tape recorded. The pupils practiced having their voice recorded and hearing it back to feel more at ease with this procedure. The pupils were in charge of the tape recorder within the interview and could turn it off if they wished (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Any indicators both verbal and non-verbal that the young person did not want the interview to continue were acted on promptly and the interview brought to a close (Beresford et al., 2004).

3.7.4 The right to withdraw

The participants were told that they could withdraw not just within the interview but up until the stage of final write up. Within the interviews the pupils were told they did not have to answer anything they did not want to and could leave at any time.

3.7.5 Deception

There was no deception involved in the research. All participants were kept informed at all stages of the research.

3.7.6 Anonymity and confidentiality

The room the interviews took place in were carefully selected. The setting was comfortable and safe for the pupil (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007). Factors such as when and where interviews took place and who would be told are all thought to have an effect on the topic areas pupils will discuss (O'Kane & Thomas, 1998).

The pupils were informed that anonymous information they discussed would be pooled together with comments by other young people and shared with the school. The data was stored in a locked cupboard and destroyed when the research was been finished. I conducted the transcription to maintain anonymity and pseudonyms created for each participant. Interview transcripts and recordings were deleted from the computer.

3.7.7 Recognition and feedback

The pupils were informed that they should speak to the SENCO if they were upset about anything after the interview. It was explained that the findings would be outlined to the pupils and there was opportunities to provide feedback about these.

3.7.8 Communication

The difficulties the pupils have with social interaction and communication have been considered very carefully within this research and data collection designed accordingly.

I was aware that the research could be intrusive. It was suggested to the schools that the data was collected during form group time, free periods and other appropriate contexts such as lunchtime and breaktime.

3.7.9 Research Methods

There are further considerations when utilising visual research, including issues such as consent and ownership. Local, contextual circumstances should be considered (Kaplan, Miles & Howes, 2011). Certain ethical issues arise when cameras are used in research. Firstly, the use of a camera will highlight the photographer, making them more visible within the school. Secondly, images can make available aspects of life that pupils may want to keep hidden. A discussion about ethical considerations took place with the pupils utilising visual media.

3.7.9.1. Research Reflections-Ethics Pupil Interviews

Within one of the ASD Research Group meetings the research design, information sheets, consent forms and research methodology were discussed. Discussions took place around the importance of providing clear, concise and unambiguous information. For example, instead of saying 'My name will not be given so they will not know who I am' was felt to be too ambiguous for a literal mind, as the link staff member within each school knew who was taking part. This was therefore changed to 'My name will not be given so they will not know who I am.' A further consideration was that the language within the pupil information sheet was age appropriate.

One pupil within his interview become emotionally distressed and indicated using an agreed hand signal that he wanted to stop the recording. He explained that he feels he is regularly bullied within the school, both verbally and physically. He commented that he found it difficult to explain what he wanted to say orally but would consider taking part using another approach, therefore he agreed to the suggestion of writing down his ideas. This incident made me reflect on my dual roles, as a researcher as well as an adult the pupil had confided in, with concerning safeguarding issues. The pupil wanted me to raise the issues with school staff. This was undertaken swiftly with the SENCO, who was also the research contact.

The SENCO shared the information with key staff he has constant and supportive relationships with including the head of year and counsellor. The SENCO asked staff to let her know how the pupil was coping so specific issues he raises could be followed up. Parents were also contacted. Most of his peers were deemed by the SENCO to be supportive of him, including talking to him if he appears upset, whereas another pupil was in a sense 'baiting' the pupil, possibly to see a reaction.

Chapter 4.   Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings separately for each school as the information is context dependent. Initially the themes are presented that emerged from the interviews with the pupils, in response to research question 1, specifically factors which facilitate SOB followed by factors which inhibit SOB. The themes from the school staff focus groups then follow, separately for research questions 2 and 3. At .the end of this chapter commonalities and differences will be discussed within a summary with regards to each research question.

The choice of methodology utilised within the pupil interviews is presented within Appendix 13. Decisions had to be made about particular aspects to be closely examined due to the amount of rich data from the pupil interviews. This was based upon the data explored by the school staff within the focus groups. In addition, the literature considers relationships within the school context, both with peers and other school staff as central parts of SOB, therefore these sections are highlighted. A visual representation of some data is presented and further details found within the appendices.

In order to support the reader to critically evaluate the thematic analysis, participants' statements are presented as transcribed. The quotes are aligned as close as possible to the verbal accounts, in line with the principle of dialectics (Heikkinen et al., (2012). Small changes were occasionally made to help ensure readability and pseudonyms used within the pupil data.

4.2. Research Question 1 (School X: Facilitating Factors)

Theme	Subtheme	Pupils (Total: 7)
Educational Support	Individual Support	4
	Group Support (R-Centre)	7
Physical School Environment	Maintenance of School Surroundings	4
	Finding your way around the School	3
	Space for Reflection	1
	Familiar Faces	2
	New School Building	4
Social Environment	Understanding of Friendships	4
	Building Friendships	3
School Ethos	Recognition of Efforts	1
	Pupil Responsibilities	1
	School Reputation	2
	School Philosophy	4
	Discipline Systems	2
Effective Learning Conditions	Pupil Characteristics	5
	Teacher Understanding of Need	4
	Curriculum Delivery	5
	Ergonomics	2
	Learning Sets	3

TABLE 3: FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE SOB WITHIN SCHOOL X

4.2.1 Theme 1: Educational Support

4.2.1.1.   Subtheme: Individual support

Four out of the seven pupils discussed the individual support they receive in school. One pupil took a photograph of the photograph display in the school of all the Individual Support Assistants (ISAs) but explained that you are designated a particular person. The majority of the comments were related to academic support through the ISA which consisted of assistance within lessons if you were struggling to understand or help with homework. One pupil considered that the amount of support was related to the 'severity of autism':

> *George: Normally they would sit next to you and tell you some of the things if you don't understand, just keep an eye on you.*

> *Interviewer: Does that help you?*

> *George: Yeah I think it helps me. Normally I don't have one, mine sits at the back of the room as I am one of those people whose condition is a lot weaker than other people.*

Three pupils explained that emotional support would be provided through the ISA, for example to help sort out particular difficulties that are being experienced with peers. The ISAs were also seen to provide practical support, for example when one pupil lost a special watch in Year 7. His ISA found it for him which he was very pleased about. Two pupils talked about the communication book. It appeared to be valued as it supports communication between home and school.

A number of pupils discussed the characteristics which they liked within the individual support. One pupil commented that the ISAs are helpful and that he would prefer to speak to them first about something rather than a teacher. This is due to his perception that they will understand his needs relating to ASD better. A second pupil made reference to the ISA being an adult who was seen to have specialist knowledge relating to ASD:

> *George: Its somebody that specialises with working with young people with ASD. You know people like me and (...). Most of the people who are part of this department have ASD or a form or ASD. Some other cases might be dyslexia and that sort. People who need help with their conditions. It's a really good environment to be in. They specialise with helping you with your work and help you cope with class, they work with you in the lessons.*

4.2.1.2.   Subtheme: Group support

All pupils referred to the R-Centre. Two pupils explained that you can have your lunch outside within the R-Centre garden rather than going to the playground or lunch hall. This area is not too crowded and is welcoming. One pupil explained:

> *Ben: The way it is like being cut off from the world in that, it's just you and your friends..*

> *Interviewer: I can see there are hedges which are quite high so it is quite a contained area?*

> *Ben: I wouldn't actually say it is separate, it is still part of the school. It's quite nice to be just you and your friends there, no trouble makers, or anything like that.*

Interviewer: So it sounds like people you would get on with, would be in that area and it works well for you.

Three pupils discussed another room in which you can choose to eat your lunch which many utilised when they were in Year 7. The rules around this room were raised, for example, that it is simply for eating lunch. The positive environmental features of this area were noted, including that it is less noisy than the lunch hall and contains less pupils than the playground which reduces the risk of injury.

However, one pupil explained that he chooses to spend breaktime in the playground as he likes the fresh air and this is where his friends can be found. He still chooses to be on the periphery of the playground where it is not too crowded, again highlighting areas attracting fewer pupils.

Two pupils discussed the 'interact club' where pupils are supported to learn about topics including personal hygiene and safety in a supportive environment with familiar pupils and staff. The games and homework club were raised. Opinion was divided over accessing the homework club, depending on whether pupils felt able to work independently or felt they needed support due to organisational difficulties. One pupil utilised the interview to ask on behalf of some Year 7 pupils if a chess club could be started which many wanted.

One pupil welcomed the transition into secondary school offered by the R-Centre. This offered the opportunity to become more familiar with the school through taster sessions and a tour. Two pupils described extra support they are offered within this part of the school, such as practice examination sessions and the use of a laptop to help with handwriting difficulties.

A minority of pupils (two) explained that they do not really access the R-Centre, although thought it worked well for other pupils. One felt its features such as being quiet was good for pupils 'who have SEN needs, sometimes they might not want to mix with normal people.'

4.2.2 Theme 2: Physical School Environment
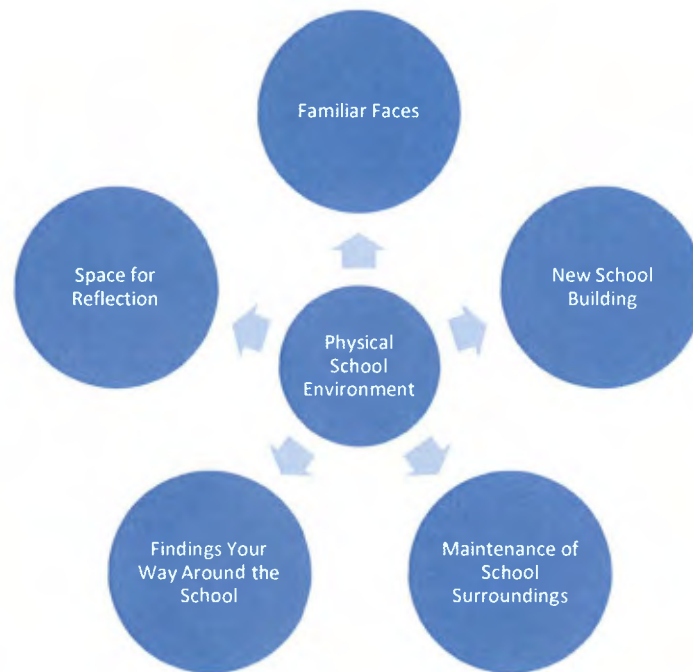
FIGURE 2: THEME 2: PHYSICAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT (SCHOOL X)

Comments were made about the school environment and the messages this gives (Figure 2). Almost half of the participants discussed difficulties getting used to the new environment in Year 7. One pupil referred to the concourse being an inviting meeting point within the school with familiar adults and pupils. Numerous pupils were enthusiastic about moving to the new school building.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Social Environment

4.2.3.1.   Subtheme: Understanding of friendships

The pupils explained the importance of friends and appealing characteristics in a friend such as being nice and respecting each other. One pupil commented that his friends make him feel a part of the school. Good friends understand that each other have help and know each other really well:

> James: My friends like me for who I am. I don't have to change to be how they are. I don't like to be friends with people who are really annoying. No one really likes an annoying person, but sometimes you put up with it, that's what friends do. You can be around my friends and feel comfortable. Most of my friends I do stuff outside school with them,

I do football with them. I am quite confident but I have a couple of shy friends as well. The reason they are friends with me is that they respect that about me and I respect that about them.

The pupil in another interview explained that one of his friends who he considers has more severe autism, worries a lot which he is mindful of, but doesn't raise this in case this annoys him.

4.2.3.2.   Subtheme: Building friendships

Only one pupil explicitly commented that he is friends with the other pupils who use the R-Centre garden area. Another pupil discussed another garden area where you can make friends. This is because this area is open to all and if you are there with others they must like it too. This means you have something in common which he acknowledges is important for making friends. He felt along with another pupil that he would not necessarily make friends with pupils who access the R-Centre as:

> *James: Not necessarily as it is an area for a selected bunch of people. There might be someone I don't like going there but they have been chosen to go there. You have to respect that they have been chosen to go there but this area and other open space areas, you choose to go there.*

The other pupil who does not use the R-Centre very much commented that he instead stays in the playground. He explained that he has friends within the R-Centre who he shares school transport with but then chooses to spend time with pupils who do have access the R-Centre at breaktimes within the playground.

4.2.4 Theme 4: School Ethos

4.2.4.1.   Subtheme: School philosophy

One pupil referred to the purpose of school, which for him is to effectively learn. Another discussed in detail the key messages he feels are given out by the school which are based on feeling welcomed and the importance of being focused on work. These messages are shown through the artwork, for example a heart symbolising that everyone is welcome within the school community. This pupil also explained that the school artwork symbolises respect to different cultures:

James: These are ones which show respect to different cultures. This one is a picture of totem poles with different Vikings on it or Indians (photo 5). Different people's bodies. This one is mars (photo 6). They are all around the school so you can't stick all the people who are more intelligent in one area and those who are less intelligent in another area. That would not be fair. You have to let all the cultures mingle together.

Another pupil explained that his school has a unique code of conduct, referred to as the three C's (courtesy, common sense and cooperation). These are within his contact diary and underpin everything within his school day.

4.2.4.2.   Subtheme: Discipline systems

One pupil explained that the discipline system ensures that the school rules are upheld. The school has to reach a balance in providing freedom to pupils and allowing them to grow, whilst ensuring rules are still enforced through a discipline system:

James: Yeah it is. There is also the discipline aspect. If you stood up in assembly and said you could be who you want to be, no bad ideas as soon as someone came up with an idea that I would say is not as good as someone else's like I want to break a window or something you have to set that right. You couldn't say it was a great idea.

Interviewer; So there is freedom with ideas and showing what you want to be which is shown from these murals but you can't take that as much as you want.

James: Yeah, you can't push it. The school are giving you a huge bubble; you can't expect too much otherwise they will just take it all away. If you keep making it bigger and bigger they can keep giving you more. Eventually they will just say no and they will pop the bubble and it will all go away.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Effective Learning Conditions
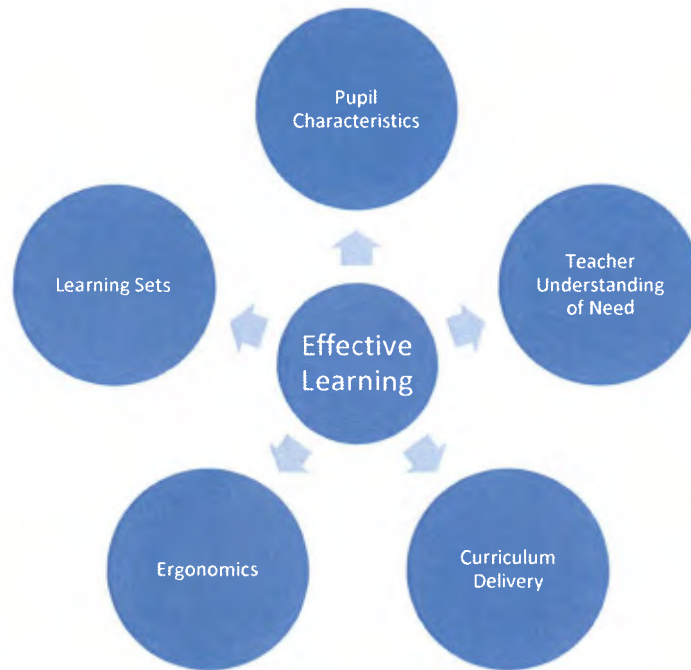
FIGURE 3: THEME 5: EFFECTIVE LEARNING CONDITIONS (SCHOOL X)

Five pupils referred to pupils adhering to school rules. A minority of pupils discussed the importance of a variety of teaching approaches. There was awareness amongst a few of the pupils about their subject sets.

4.3. Research Question 1 (School X: Inhibiting Factors)

Theme	Subtheme	Pupils (Total: 7)
Non-Ideal Physical School Environment	Non-Maintenance of School Surroundings	-
	Unpredictability	1
	Difficulty with Lunchtime Locations	2
Difficulties with Social Environment	Stigma	2
	Perceived Bullying	-
Non-Effective Learning Conditions	Pupil Characteristics	3
	Teacher Lack of Understanding of Need	2
	Curriculum Delivery	2
	Ergonomics	1

TABLE 4: FACTORS WHICH INHIBIT SOB WITHIN SCHOOL X

4.3.1 Theme 6: Non-Ideal Physical School Environment

4.3.1.1.   Subtheme: Unpredictability

One pupil discussed aspects of the playground which made it unappealing for him at lunchtime which particularly appeared related to unpredictability. These factors were its size (due to building work), crowdedness and number of children playing different games at the same time. He elaborated that this meant that you had to be consistently aware as anything could happen.

4.3.1.2.   Subtheme: Difficulties with lunchtime locations

One pupil who likes to go into the playground explained that he has to stay near the edges due to it being quite crowded. He was unable to explain the impact of crowded areas for him. Another pupil explained that sometimes it is not always possible to go into room 60 as lots of pupils want to use this area. This may put him off trying to access this area. Another pupil commented that he would not like a school without a garden. This would mean that you would have to go into the playground where you could be knocked, which was seen as dangerous.

4.3.2 Theme 7: Difficulties with Social Environment

4.3.2.1.   Subtheme: Stigma

There was a low reported incidence of being made fun of for utilising the R-Centre by another pupil who also uses this area. This consists of being called names which makes him feel annoyed, even if it was a joke.

One pupil explained that previously he did not use his provided laptop. He acknowledged that it helped his recording but also explained the reasons he did not use it, including his friends making fun of him. He also commented that he was concerned about potentially being bullied which would put him off accessing the R-Centre:

> *Ian: Well sometimes people notice me in there, like if I am printing off something. As I use the notebook (laptop) I sometimes go in there to print some work off.*

> *Interviewer: What does it feel like when people notice you in there?*

Ian: I feel like they are going to call me a retard like the other person does.

One pupil commented on features of the garden which he does not like. This includes that the garden is near a loud, busy playground and that other pupils could look into the garden. Although being concerned that other pupils may look at him in a strange way he did not think a solution was for the area to be more enclosed. Another pupil expressed the opposing view that having taller fences would stop pupils being able to look in.

4.3.3 Theme 8: Non-Effective Learning Conditions

4.3.3.1. Subtheme: Pupil characteristics

Three pupils explained what they wouldn't like the pupils to be doing within a non-ideal school. Comments were based around peers being disobedient and impacting on others learning:

> *David: Messing around and not listening. Making weird noises and distracting other people.*
>
> *Interviewer: ...What do you mean by messing around?*
>
> *David: I don't know, throwing bits of rubber at other people and paper.*

One of the pupils described others shouting and being too loud impacting on his ability to concentrate in lessons. He explained that voices clashing together gives him a headache.

4.3.3.2. Subtheme: Teacher lack of understanding of need

One pupil described not liking teachers that shouted a lot or who are not helpful. One pupil commented that he does not like it when the teacher doesn't clearly explain the work to be completed:

> *David: If they can't explain what you are doing properly because sometimes it has happened before when they don't really explain what you should be doing that well.*
>
> *Interviewer: What might be the result?*
>
> *David: If they can't do that I won't be able to do the actual work.*

4.3.3.3. Subtheme: Curriculum delivery

For one pupil his learning is not very effective when the teacher simply writes information on the board. Another pupil explained that he did not always attend social skills group last year and the reasons behind this:

> *Ian: I felt like... I went for like a term or something. For the term that I was in there I was learning new stuff but in the second and third term we just like doing things like we had already known about. I was bored. I would rather have a lunchtime.*

4.3.3.4. Subtheme: Ergonomics

One pupil commented that he wouldn't like a bad seating plan in the classroom, an unattractive environment with chewing gum on the floor or a risk of getting hurt, for example, through tripping over a chair or loose computer wires. He elaborated that broken chairs may affect his work:

> *Henry: What would be a bad thing would be if the chairs were all broken not like in a new school.*

> *Interviewer: What would it mean if the chairs were broken?*

> *Henry: It would mean they would be really uncomfortable to sit on if there was a crack in the plastic chair. If it was uncomfortable I would tell the teacher to change the chair.*

4.4. Research Question 2 (School X)

The themes and subthemes for each school are displayed separately as the perspectives of school staff in ensuring pupils feel a SOB within the school environment, in light of the information from the pupil interviews. The number of participants from each focus group who indicated a particular response is not included. It was considered that not all the participants from the focus group would always make their opinions known thereby not making figures valid.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Placement/Resources

4.4.1.1. Subtheme: Different options available within school

Comments were made early on within the focus group that pupils are not all the same and they feel a SOB in different ways with the photographs indicating that different aspects are valued:

> *Participant: I see two categories, the kids who really want to be down here, in the garden, want to be with their ISAs and there are those who don't want to be seen to have anything to do with the place.*

It was felt by some participants that it should be recognised that some pupils do not necessarily want to be a part of the R-Centre due to this being provided for particular groups:

> *Participant: 'It's interesting that some of those areas and services provided specifically for pupils with SEN or specifically ASD, are not necessarily the ones for very good reason that make them feel they belong.'*

Pupils not wanting to be a part of this resource concerned some participants in terms of how they could obtain this elsewhere. However, a senior member of staff commented that there are options available to these pupils within the wider school.

A couple of staff members considered that some pupils may feel they belong through having a particular area to access away from the rest of the school, although this was felt to represent exclusion:

> *Participant: To a certain extent some students may feel they belong through not belonging. They are going to feel included through exclusion. They feel calm and secure because they go to the R-Centre garden or they come down here. In a strange sort of way that to a certain extent excludes them from the wider school.*

> *Participant: This one is the same, they always welcome you here no matter what I have done, it's helpful for my condition. They feel they belong here but if they are thinking do they belong to the wider school they don't.*

4.4.1.2.   Subtheme: R-Centre

The use of the R-Centre was discussed, for example in enabling pupils to have their extra time within exams:

> *Participant: They will take it down here but they won't take it if it's in the hall and they need a reader.*

It was seen as positive by many members of staff that some pupils feel able to leave the lunchtime provision behind within the R-Centre as they progress through the school. However it was considered vital that pupils know they can access this resource at any time in the future, for example if they have a crisis.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Attitudes: A whole school issue

4.4.2.1.   Subtheme: Pupils-wanting to blend in with peers

The school staff noted the comments that had been made with regards to the subtheme of 'stigma' and discussed how this might prevent pupils from engaging with some support including the use of extra time in exams and the use of a laptop:

> *Participant: We do get quite a bit of resistance at times. They don't want to use a laptop or an alpha smart because the other kids pick up on that they are doing something different. They don't want to be different, they just want to blend in but it helps them if they do.*

It felt positive that the room number system had changed within the school building. This meant that the R-Centre was not allocated the abbreviation 'SN' for special needs anymore which was thought by the pupils to emphasise difference when written on individual timetables. The R-Centre now in line with other rooms was simply a number, meaning other pupils would not associate it with that particular area.

4.4.2.2.   Subtheme: Peers-supportive of differences

In response to the pupil comments indicating a desire to blend in with peers, the focus groups considered that other pupils may note the use of laptops within lessons but understand this is needed by particular pupils. The focus group also thought that peers are often really supportive of each other, especially pupils with ASD.

4.4.2.3. Subtheme: Wider school staff-school culture

School staff reflected on the opportunities within the school, being available to pupils with ASD including school trips. At times the pupils might be worried about going, with lots of preparation required. The interest school staff demonstrate to pupils with ASD through discussions and the resulting positive messages are important:

> *Participant: One thing I've noticed a lot around this school is the way teachers always take the time to take an interest in ASD boys and what they are doing. They will frequently have a conversation about what they are interested in. You might be thinking you haven't got time for this but you do. I think taking the time and showing interest really gives them a sense of belonging.*

However, an ex pupil through a recent inset session had made the school staff consider the importance of not 'mollycoddling' and promoting independence. Interestingly this change in attitude with this participant had occurred through a similar activity of giving a voice to individuals.

One member of staff considered whether belonging could be re-conceptualised as being a wider consideration for all school staff/school culture:

> *Participant: They are all belonging but different boys belong in different ways. Some belong to the whole school.*

4.4.3 Theme 3: Pupil Knowledge/To create opportunities to engage with and get to know pupils

4.4.3.1. Subtheme: Physical School Environment

Initial comments about the photos were that there is a real contrast with the same places and different feelings about them. The physical school environment was considered in a new light by a couple of participants:

> *Participant: That's great; the art department have no idea what they are doing.'*

4.4.3.2. Subtheme: Pupils with ASD

School staff referred to the pupils considering others feelings in relation to the move to the new school:

Participant: That it was better, leaving their familiar surroundings was scary but they knew it would be better for other people, not just themselves. I thought that was quite nice making sure everyone else is ok.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Collaboration

4.4.4.1.   Subtheme: Between staff-sharing information

One of the ISAs within the focus group felt strongly that part of their role was to make staff aware of which pupils are on the SEN register and their support needs. Another participant gave a further example of a particular pupil who indicated that he does not want to receive extra support. This was felt to be demonstrated by him not wanting to attend social-skills groups. A staff member commented that overt and compulsory support can add to anxiety levels. The AENCO had liaised with subject teachers to ensure the pupil was well supported through strategies, thought to be beneficial to him.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Role of Management/Leadership

4.4.5.1.   Subtheme: Providing safety

A number of staff members found the concourse photographs interesting and was not what they were expecting. It was felt on reflection that the management being located here could be calming and create feelings of safety which other participants in the focus group agreed with:

Participant: I find K fascinating, a picture of the concourse up to the main hall. I thought this was an intimidating space, the Head's office, the Deputy Head's office, but on reflection it is a space for a pupil with ASD that is anonymous, they are not easily recognisable, not immediately related to the R-Centre and I suppose it presents a different kind of calm with authority which a lot of our ASD pupils really value.

4.4.5.2.   Subtheme: Knowledge of location

Through the focus group a space was provided to consider how the new building could be impacting on the pupils in light of the information that had been gained:

Participant: That's one thing I think they are finding difficult here, they don't know where everybody is ... Down here they do but I don't know where the Heads of Year offices are.

4.5. Research Question 3 (School X)

4.5.1 Theme 1: Changing Placement/Resources: Dilemma associated with pupil support

4.5.1.1. Subtheme: Pupils not wanting to be supported through R-Centre

Although considering that many pupils are supported, one participant in particular felt there were a group of pupils who are not. This might be demonstrated for example, through the pupils choosing not to access homework club but finding themselves in trouble for not completing it. Supporting these pupils was seen as challenging for staff:

Participant: I do worry about boys out there that we are not doing enough for but I don't know how we can. They don't want anything to do with us.

Another participant questioned whether it could be accepted that they did not want support and a further staff member thought that this might be the result of the school having this specialist resource.

On reflection it was felt that these were probably pupils with ASD who do not have a statement and therefore did not have specific individual support. One participant described what he felt was needed:

Participant: I think it is a particular problem of targeting a particular group for a certain type of support whilst making it invisible.

4.5.1.2. Subtheme: Different location of R-Centre

One staff member commented that pupils liked the location of the R-Centre within the new school. It is thought to be more out of sight so other pupils do not see you going to the area.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Changing Attitudes: Fostering understanding and celebrating difference

4.5.2.1.   Subtheme: Greater teacher responsibility for pupils with ASD

The focus group discussed a greater awareness amongst subject teachers into pupils with ASD would lead to them taking on more responsibility for these pupils. However, one participant felt that staff do already have this awareness and should take the responsibility for the pupil's wellbeing.

Another participant felt it was more than an increased awareness that is needed. He felt that information should be conveyed more regularly about effectively meeting the needs of pupils with ASD. More staff training on ASD would be helpful so that teachers would feel they had the skills to support pupils more themselves:

> *Participant: I don't think we have enough general training as staff so that boys who don't want the specialist help, you can then help them yourself but just having the basic skills for dealing with them. Coupled with being aware of who is ASD.*

4.5.3 Theme 3: Further collaboration: Opportunities for inclusive working

4.5.3.1.   Subtheme: Between pupils-through mentoring

The wider implementation of a sixth form mentoring scheme was considered as a response to someone 'looking out' for particular pupils who do not want support from adults or to access other support opportunities. However, not all participants felt that this would achieve its intended aim.

4.5.3.2.   Subtheme: Between staff-ensure all pupils are well supported

One suggestion about meeting the needs of all pupils with ASD was through a greater awareness of which pupils are on the SEN register. A limitation of the register was that individual staff had to take the initiative to check it and information may be forgotten.

A frequent reminder system that could be updated about the needs of particular pupils was a further suggestion.

4.5.3.3. Subtheme: Between staff and pupils-monitor pupil wellbeing/learning

An idea by one participant for pupils who do not have individual ISA support was proposed:

> *Participant: Maybe we could work something out whereby the ASD specialists could go in for a short time to see these boys and how they are getting on? They haven't got statements and the funding is not there. But maybe we could organise something for them to be seen half termly so maybe we have more of a grip on them.*

4.5.4 Theme 4: Importance of Gathering Pupil Views

4.5.4.1. Subtheme: Increased understanding for staff

The participants discussed how the processes had helped them to further understand the school from the pupil's themselves:

> *Participant: I think there was reassurance not just in the areas we might expect but in the general areas like the corridor and other features around the school. This one mentions the three Cs which shows they are taking comfort from structures that exist within the general environment of the school not just the R Centre garden which is the place our boys go to feel comfortable.*

4.6. Research Question 1: (School Y: Facilitating Factors)

Theme	Subtheme	Pupils (Total: 5)
Educational Support	Individual Support	1
	Group Support (T-Room)	4
Physical School Environment	Maintenance of School Surroundings	-
	Finding your way around the School	-
	Space for Reflection	3
	Familiar Faces	2
	New School Building	-
Social Environment	Understanding of Friendships	4
	Building Friendships	4
School Ethos	Recognition of Efforts	-
	Pupil Responsibilities	1
	School Reputation	1
	School Philosophy	2
	Discipline Systems	2
Effective Learning Conditions	Pupil Characteristics	-
	Teacher Understanding of Need	3
	Curriculum Delivery	3
	Ergonomics	1
	Learning Sets	3

TABLE 5: FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE SOB WITHIN SCHOOL Y

4.6.1 Theme 1: Educational Support

4.6.1.1.   Subtheme: Individual Support

Only one pupil discussed individual support they would receive which would be in the form of a mentor. This was someone that could be sought out when facing a difficult situation and information would be acted on. Sometimes simply being in the presence of this person was enough, without even communicating. A mentor was deemed important if you did not have many friends:

> *Michael: I used to sit in his classroom a lot before he became my mentor cos yeah, I can't remember why but yeah. Now I don't see him as much.*
>
> *Interviewer: What makes you not see him as much now?*
>
> *Michael: Dunno.... come more popular I guess.*

4.6.1.2.   Subtheme: Group Support

Four out of the five pupils who took part mentioned 'T-Room' which was utilised for many purposes, including where break and lunchtime could be spent. Two pupils commented that this room was friendly as it contained familiar teachers and their friends. Rules around this space were discussed, including who was able to access this area (pupils from years 7, 8 and 9).

Two pupils do not use the T-Room for lunch but it is utilised for practical purposes. One explained that his P.E. bag could be picked up and collected from here. This area was seen to provide peace and quiet, although he did not feel he needed this, meaning that this room was not accessed by him. Instead he explained he uses the library or computer room.

Two pupils made reference to homework club. Access to teachers appeared to be the most helpful aspect at these times alongside having the homework completed before going home. Only one pupil referred to the social skills club.

4.6.2 Theme 2: Physical School Environment

FIGURE 4: THEME 2: PHYSICAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT (SCHOOL Y)

Over half the pupils needing 'reflection time' which could be found within the library (Figure 4). The garden was described as offering 'safety' for one pupil.

4.6.3 Theme 3: Social Environment

4.6.3.1.   Subtheme: Understanding of Friendships

Only one pupil discussed the construct of 'popularity.' The number of friends you have and the characteristics of these other pupils would impact on how popular you were in the school, according to this pupil.

Another pupil explained that areas were appealing because of pupil groups. Only two pupils discussed the characteristics of good friends. One explained that this was 'someone who is friendly, not mean and helpful'. The other pupil was unable to identify the particular characteristics, beyond that they should be fun and 'just normal'.

Two pupils discussed support that can be given in friendship. For one pupil this was helpful in facing up to other pupils he did not like or get on with in the school. One other pupil appeared to describe wanting to fit in as an incentive to form new friendships. He elaborated this with what it would be like without any friends which was seen as a negative:

> *Michael: Nothing to do and what it used to be like for me, having no mates, except for a few. If your mates are doing something else you are alone the whole of break or lunch.*

4.6.3.2.   Subtheme: Building Friendships

New friendships can be made with the people who you spend time with in your set, which was acknowledged as positive by one pupil. This led him to explain that he took on a different persona within this new group of peers which was as a 'joker.' However there was also a realisation of the negative affect that some friendships can have which was termed being 'led astray'. He felt that through winning fights he had built friendships. Fights also served other purposes, including that they are fun to take part in. However, there was awareness that you could be excluded for fighting.

Three pupils referred to accessing areas due to friends being there, for one pupil this was T-Room and for another pupil this was playing tennis against the wall in the playground. The third pupil spends time on the roof terrace at lunchtime as this was where his friends would be.

4.6.4 Theme 4: School Ethos

4.6.4.1.   Subtheme: Pupil Responsibilities

One pupil spoke about responsibilities that can be given to some pupils. He appeared proud when discussing this. The pupil explained that he used to help in the reprographics room where the photocopying is completed and now he helps in the library. This is due to him feeling that he could not do both jobs and therefore chose to carry on helping within the library.

4.6.4.2.   Subtheme: School Philosophy

Two out of the five pupils discussed the purpose of school. One pupil discussed that he likes to learn within school. The other pupil commented that he likes attending school, the social aspects of school and learning within some subjects.

4.6.4.3.   Subtheme: Discipline System

One pupil commented on the exclusion system within the school and how exclusions may be given out, for example through fighting. Knowledge of this system can be an incentive not to fight. This is related to not wanting to have this information on his school record.

Another pupil discussed the discipline system, more specifically detentions. He explained that detentions are after school and are given out for not working hard enough in class. This pupils felt though that some teachers give out too many detentions whereas his favourite teacher would use other strategies, such as calmly telling the people to stop.

4.6.5 Theme 5: Effective Learning Conditions

FIGURE 5: THEME 5: EFFECTIVE LEARNING CONDITIONS (SCHOOL Y)

Figure 5 presents the subthemes for this theme. Three pupils discussed the qualities of a good teacher including that they are helpful and make lessons enjoyable. A number of pupils discussed lesson presentation including a range of activities being provided. An awareness of learning sets was also evident.

4.7. Research Question 1: (School Y: Inhibiting Factors)

Theme	Subtheme	Pupils (Total: 5)
Non-Ideal Physical School Environment	Non-Maintenance of School Surroundings	-
	Unpredictability	3
	Difficulty with Lunchtime Locations	3
Difficulties with Social Environment	Stigma	-
	Perceived Bullying	2
Non-Effective Learning Conditions	Pupil Characteristics	2
	Teacher Lack of Understanding of Need	2
	Curriculum Delivery	1
	Ergonomics	-

TABLE 6: FACTORS WHICH INHIBIT SOB WITHIN SCHOOL Y

4.7.1 Theme 6: Non-Ideal Physical School Environment

4.7.1.1.   Subtheme: Unpredictability

One pupil took photographs of the P.E. office and changing rooms which he doesn't like. This appeared to be one of the main reasons that he did not want to do P.E. lessons and would use a medical explanation to be excused. He then explained the issues with the changing rooms for him:

> *Jamie: I don't really like the changing room as all your clothes get mucked up and people take others. Before someone has turned on the showers and all your clothes get wet. I don't like wet.*

Rules around the T-Room were discussed. One rule did not seem to be consistently enforced relating to the eating of lunch in this room which was allowed by some teachers but not others. This was mentioned by two pupils and was something they wanted to be able to do with the unpredictability being a central issue for them.

4.7.1.2.   Subtheme: Difficulties with lunchtime locations

One pupil commented on not liking the playground for 3 reasons. The main reason was due to football being on offer. He explained that nets are in this area but they can't be used unless it is a lesson. An improvement was felt to be wider ranging activities on offer. The second reason he did not like this area was that it is quite busy with lots of pupils. Lastly, his friends did not go to this area which would not make him want to spend time there. He felt that older pupils may stop him from accessing areas at lunchtime, for example, the HIT-Room. Also, although liking the canteen he did not like sitting with the older pupils. For this reason he prefers eating in the T-Room when allowed. The older pupils, particularly year 11 were thought to throw food and shout which was alleviated to some extent with teachers being on duty. One pupil explained that he likes the idea of the garden being a quiet place but finds it not to be like this with lots of older pupils running around and throwing things. He felt an improvement would be to let different year groups access the area on different days. He explained his different thoughts about the garden:

Jamie: That's the calm place, like if someone has died from our school that is the calm area but you still get a lot of the older ones running around throwing stuff.

One pupil commented on the garden being available at lunchtime. This area includes a vegetable patch but is not utilised as pupils are not allowed into it.

Another pupil commented that he does not like the library as a lunchtime location as it is always full of pupils. This means that it is difficult to be able to go on the computer as everyone rushes to be able to go on them.

4.7.2 Theme 7: Difficulties with Social Environment

4.7.2.1.   Subtheme: Perceived Bullying

Two pupils discussed what they themselves termed bullying. One pupil was very upset in his interview and could not discuss anything he likes about school apart from the garden area, where he can escape bullies.

One of the pupils described the features of bullying as being both physical and verbal. He explained that it went on over a long period of time and he feels threatened by their presence:

Interviewer: What do you mean by bully?

Simon: The ones that hit you, push you around, call you names, being racist to the country and things like that. Hate them all.

Interviewer: Does it happen to you a bit in school?

Simon: It happens to me every day at school (emphatic), it doesn't stop.

In considering the impact, the pupil explained that the bullying makes him mad. When asked what this meant, he described its features. This included his voice changing, shouting and lashing out. After this, he would be unable to recall the incident. Later in the interview he commented that he could not remember the last time this had happened to him. This made me question whether the bullying is still current.

The pupil explained various strategies that he had used to stop the bullying, although all were seen to have been unsuccessful. This included individual strategies such as ignoring the bullies and involving adults such as the head of year, although this did not stop it from happening. He explained that he

had talked to two familiar adults. At times this made him happier, although at other times this resulted in him feeling 'mad' again. It was unclear whether this was because of what they said or because he was relieving the experience through talking about it with them. This pupil hoped that the adults would still be able to intervene to stop the bullying, for example through more shouting than was currently happening. A further strategy was trying to keep his friends close to him to keep the bullies at a further distance. A further idea to tackle the bullying was to make the rules stricter within the T-Room, including a warning, followed by a 10 minute detention and then a 3o minute detention for any pupils involved in bullying incidents.

The second pupil discussed that the older pupils can sometimes hurt the younger pupils in Years 7 and 8. This consisted of being kicked, pushed down the stairs or being pushed in front of in the dinner queue. He explained that he used to get bullied and therefore did not want to come to school. However, the bullying had stopped, which he felt was related to being more respected from having won carefully chosen fights with other pupils. When reflecting on the previous bullying within the interview, he felt he might have been targeted as he was in the bottom set and did not have many friends. However, he considered that bullying was to be expected, happened in most schools and nothing could be done about it.

4.7.3 Theme 8: Non-Effective Learning Conditions

4.7.3.1.   Subtheme: Pupil characteristics
One pupil commented that a school with pupils who misbehave and prevent learning was seen as a school that he would not want to attend.

Another pupil explained that some pupils in the school are rude which he does not like, although he was unable to expand on what he meant by this.

4.7.3.2.   Subtheme: Teacher lack of understanding of need
Teachers who are not thought to make the effort to make good lessons were seen as bad attributes. Another negative quality would be if the teacher did not listen to you.

It was considered that teachers can reduce the likelihood of you fitting in by drawing attention to you, possibly by singling you out. This was seen to be embarrassing.

Another pupil explained that he only likes one teacher as all the others are strict, have lots of writing within their lessons and give out lots of detentions.

4.7.3.3.   Subtheme: Curriculum delivery

Subjects which are not thought to be needed in life, such as R.S were not liked by one pupil. He also does not enjoy the type of learning which is always writing or looking in books. This pupil thought that school trips would make this subject more fun and appealing to him.

The same pupil then commented that he does not like acting and therefore does not like drama lessons. He was pleased that he was able to stop doing this subject in Year 10.

4.8. Research Question 2 (School Y)

4.8.1 Theme 1: Placement/Resources

4.8.1.1.   Subtheme: School areas promoting safety

The group felt that the findings demonstrated several places that the pupils felt calm, happy and safe.

> *Participant: I think the school has worked very hard over that to make sure that there are places to go like reprographics, the library and obviously the PD area which is under development this year as it has moved to a different area.*

4.8.1.2.   Subtheme: T-Room

Staff discussed the importance of the availability of the T-Room, particularly for Year 7 pupils within the school. It was thought that this resource provided confidence to the pupils to be able to move out into the playground with their friends at a later stage.

The T-Room was seen to encourage friendships between pupils who would not have previously known each other and it enabled pupils to develop their social skills through games.

A number of participants explained that the T-Room can be accessed by any pupil, not just those with SEN. It had been created this way as it was thought if it was only for pupils with SEN then other boys might view it in a negative way and may be unkind to pupils who utilise the area. A senior member of staff commented:

> *Participant: There should be no places within school which are specifically for groups of pupils.*

However, it was also discussed that the T-Room was not as it used to be for some pupils who may want to utilise this area as it is thought to be quiet. This area has become busier with lessons and tutorials. Other participants discussed that some pupils are able to ignore the noise and still read a book.

4.8.2 Theme 2: Attitudes: A whole school issue

4.8.2.1.   Subtheme: Peers: supporting each other

The value of pupils having an understanding of a particular pupils' difficulties was explored and the positive impact this can have. However it was noted that care had to be taken over how much information is provided:

> *Participant: In Year 7 this pupil volunteered for sports day but everyone got behind him. As long as he finished we knew we could be in the running of the form tutor award. It's important to give the class (tutor group) some knowledge and ownership to help them get behind the boy when it matters – enough information but not too much – finding that line is hard.*

A further positive outcome of this was that the other boys were seen to take greater responsibility for him, for example protecting him if he is picked on by other pupils. It was thought that this would impact positively on his self esteem.

4.8.2.2.   Subtheme: Wider school staff: school culture

The staff within the focus group noted the characteristics of teachers felt to be important by the pupils, for example being calm and not shouting.

When exploring the value of curriculum options available to the pupils, the staff were pleased that the pupils see these opportunities as a privilege.

4.8.3 Theme 3: Pupil Knowledge/Creating opportunities to engage with and get to know pupils

4.8.3.1.   Subtheme: Individual Pupils

A number of staff expressed surprise that the pupils like science and also that this is due to its practical nature. They also found it interesting that reprographics was liked. It was thought that this is because of an adult being there, that it is not too busy and it is possible to be a monitor within this area.

The staff felt that most of the information was positive in terms of SOB within school areas. The exceptions to this were felt to be the playground and changing rooms.

4.8.3.2.   Subtheme: Pupils with ASD

A number of participants discussed the comments that were not all positive about P.E. It was felt that the changing rooms were at the root of these difficulties. Through discussion it was raised that some of the pupils take time to get unchanged which could be difficult as the other pupils all have to wait due to health and safety purposes. The reasons that the playground may not be liked by all pupils with ASD were also discussed, including that it is loud, busy and has little structure.

One member of the focus group commented that sometimes you do not get an overt response from pupils with ASD after support is put in place for them which should be kept in mind:

> *Participant: And with children with ASD sometimes you don't always get much response from them. It's remembering not to give up and just keep going. It's surprising that they are learning, are responding even though they are not showing it and you don't know but they are actually listening.*

4.8.4 Theme 4: Collaboration

4.8.4.1. Subtheme: Between pupils-through relationships with older pupils

Older pupils are encouraged to spend time with the young pupils with the T-Room. This is considered to be beneficial to the young pupils who have access to role models but also for the older pupils:

> *Participant: It also helps them, one pupil said 'some people do some strange things' and then he went over and explained the game to them. He realised and it was a real learning curve for them that we are not all the same.*

4.8.4.2. Subtheme: Between staff-sharing information

A relationship between a pupil and a form tutor or mentor is beneficial. Through this relationship, information or particularly helpful strategies can then be disseminated more widely between the school staff.

A 'Care and Concern' bulletin is issued on a weekly basis to school staff and is a whole school approach to effectively supporting pupils. It aims to ensure that any information which is felt to be important is known by all relevant staff members. It covers incidents such as the death of a family member and a school staff contact is highlighted who can be referred to for further information.

4.8.4.3. Subtheme: Between staff and pupils-building a relationship

One of the ISAs explained that she felt that part of their role was to know the pupils well. She explained that they mentor the boys at School Action Plus or with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and try to quickly form a relationship with them. Through this relationship the cause of any difficulties could be discovered and addressed:

> *Participant: So if we are doing our jobs, looking and asking what the problems are we can help. It's a step in the right direction. We have one boy who could not do PE because he could not put on his green socks so when we knew this we arranged that he put his green socks on and wore them all day.*

Knowledge about the strengths of individual pupils can be utilised to further develop their confidence. An example was given relating to sensitively

encouraging pupils to communicate more with others. This could be achieved through seeking out opportunities for responsibility. Increased pupil knowledge can also be utilised to support their inclusion with peers, for them to be seen in a new light. This could be achieved in a variety of ways, for example suggesting them for a writing activity in group work or through giving them a reward for good work, noted by other pupils.

The form tutor role was felt to be crucial in enabling a relationship to be built with a particular pupil which could be more difficult for subject teachers to achieve. The number of opportunities for meeting within the week was a key part of this. The form tutors were felt to be supportive of pupils, for example allowing pupils to stay in the classroom at break time if this is felt to be helpful.

4.8.5 Theme 5: Flexible Curriculum

4.8.5.1.   Subtheme: Community work course
The focus group explored curriculum options available to the pupils, including community work courses. A charity is chosen and the pupils raise funds for this charity over the course of the year.

4.8.5.2.   Subtheme: Outside school trips
The value of opportunities to engage in external trips such as visits to museums and outdoor learning was noted after looking at the pupil comments. The group felt these experiences were positive for the pupils possibly due to the perceived characteristics of pupil with ASD:

> *Participant: They tend to be more immature than other boys and maybe they don't do it with parents. They realise they have to take a step that they are not comfortable with but then they realise as part of the group that they can take part and they can manage that.*

Through engaging in these opportunities which might be initially difficult for the pupils, the focus group felt that it promoted personal growth. Part of this was felt to be the strength inherent through being part of a group. The focus group also felt that these trips provided opportunities for the pupils to take themselves out of the normal school environment which was seen as challenging for some pupils.

4.9. Research Question 3 (School Y)

4.9.1 Theme 1: Changing Placement/Resources: Dilemma associated with pupil support

4.9.1.1. Subtheme: T-Room environment

One of the participants felt there were changes which could immediately be implemented within the T-Room addressing raised inconsistency issues. These included fairer computer systems and agreeing the rules of the room with staff. These rules could be displayed on the wall so they would be clear for the benefit of all pupils. A further change was responsibilities within the T-Room which was noted as positive by pupils:

> Participant: I have 3 things here I can put into action sooner. Systems fairer around computers, room more comfortable, consistency of rules – and the giving of jobs.

4.9.1.2. Subtheme: Breaktime

The pupils discussed the garden not being accessible due to it being busy and attracting lots of older pupils. It was suggested that a rotation system could be used whereby pupils in different year groups access the garden at different times.

It was recognised that although pupils may not like football being on offer within the playground this was difficult to address as many pupils like this activity. The staff recognised the importance of having alternatives.

4.9.2 Theme 2: Changing Attitudes: Fostering understanding and celebrating difference

4.9.2.1. Subtheme: Staff awareness around meeting needs of pupils with ASD

It was discussed that it is important for staff to understand the difficulties pupils may have in particular situations. Staff can explore ways to address

these, for example putting on part of a PE kit at the start of the day to reduce anxiety about having to quickly get changed prior to a PE lesson.

4.9.3 Theme 3: Further Collaboration

4.9.3.1.   Subtheme: Between staff-ensure all pupils are well supported

The mentor for a particular pupil has an important job to share information with staff. This is achieved by email but is also two way with staff emailing mentors. It was noted that there had been improvement in the sharing of information recently within the school but that this should continue.

4.9.3.2.   Subtheme: Between staff and pupils-monitor pupil wellbeing/learning

School staff need to be able to identify pupils who do not like the busy playgrounds. It was recognised that this might not necessarily be pupils with ASD and could include other pupils. This communication with pupils was felt to be vital.

> *Participant: So long as we make sure that all those who need know where to go – and that we can identify them as time goes on. Sometimes there are some new to the school or we don't have a diagnosis who need somewhere to go.*

4.9.4 Theme 4: Importance of Gathering Pupil Views

4.9.4.1.   Subtheme: Increased understanding for staff

The focus group discussed that sometimes it is not known the reasons that the pupils don't feel they belong, the thought being that sometimes it is the individual pupil perception. However, this was important information which could be shared with wider school staff.

It was raised that similar information may be gained if the research was conducted with a different group of learners. However, the information was felt to be useful and most importantly how it translated into a change in action.

4.9.4.2.   Subtheme: Insightful for pupils

The focus group referred to the act of taking part in the research being informative for the pupils themselves.

> *Participant: I think it's quite useful for the students, a lot of them would have a lot of negative thoughts about the school but when you broke it down, the negative part is very small. They realise that it is not all of school that gets on top of them it might just be getting changed within the changing room, for example.*

4.10. Summary of Factors Facilitating SOB

Over half the pupils within School X discussed individual support. The home-school communication book was discussed and could be important particularly for young people who have communication difficulties. A minority of pupils emphasised the importance of the ISA specialist ASD knowledge. Conversely only one pupil discussed this support at School Y, it was important when he did not have many friends.

The R-Centre within School X was discussed by all the pupils, particularly being able to utilise this area during the less structured times of day, such as lunchtime. The equivalent resource within School Y, the T-Room was mentioned by almost all of the pupils. Similarly the use of this resource at lunchtime was emphasised. The pupils who do not use this resource discussed the positive environmental features relating to it being quiet.

Just over half the young people discussed pupils they termed 'friends' within School X, although most struggled to explain what makes a good friend. Common ground appeared important within 'building friendships', for some this was within those that would go to the R-Centre. A greater proportion of pupils within School Y discussed friendships, both in terms of comments relating to an understanding of friendship and others relating to building friendships. Interestingly, three differences from School Y revealed a deeper personal perception of friendship. These included that support was a benefit, for example, when around older pupils; friendship meant spending less time

alone and the number of friends you have which led onto a discussion about the construct of popularity.

Most of the pupils within School X referred to wider messages from the school. The adherence to school rules through a code of conduct was emphasised by one pupil whereas another focused on messages from the physical environment in the form of artwork Fewer pupils at School Y referred to the purposes of school, whereas a greater proportion referred to the discipline system.

A model of the main themes which support a SOB across the two schools is presented below (Figure 6). This is an adapted ecological model based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptualisation where no event can be viewed in isolation, but is a product of a system of interrelated factors. Although there is an awareness of the wider context of education, the emphasis of the current research is on the individual within the school as an ecosystem. The individual pupil is an active agent at the centre influencing as well as being influenced by the activities, roles and interpersonal relationships of the social environment, learning environment, educational support and physical school environment. This is encased within the school ethos which includes the way the school is viewed from the outside.
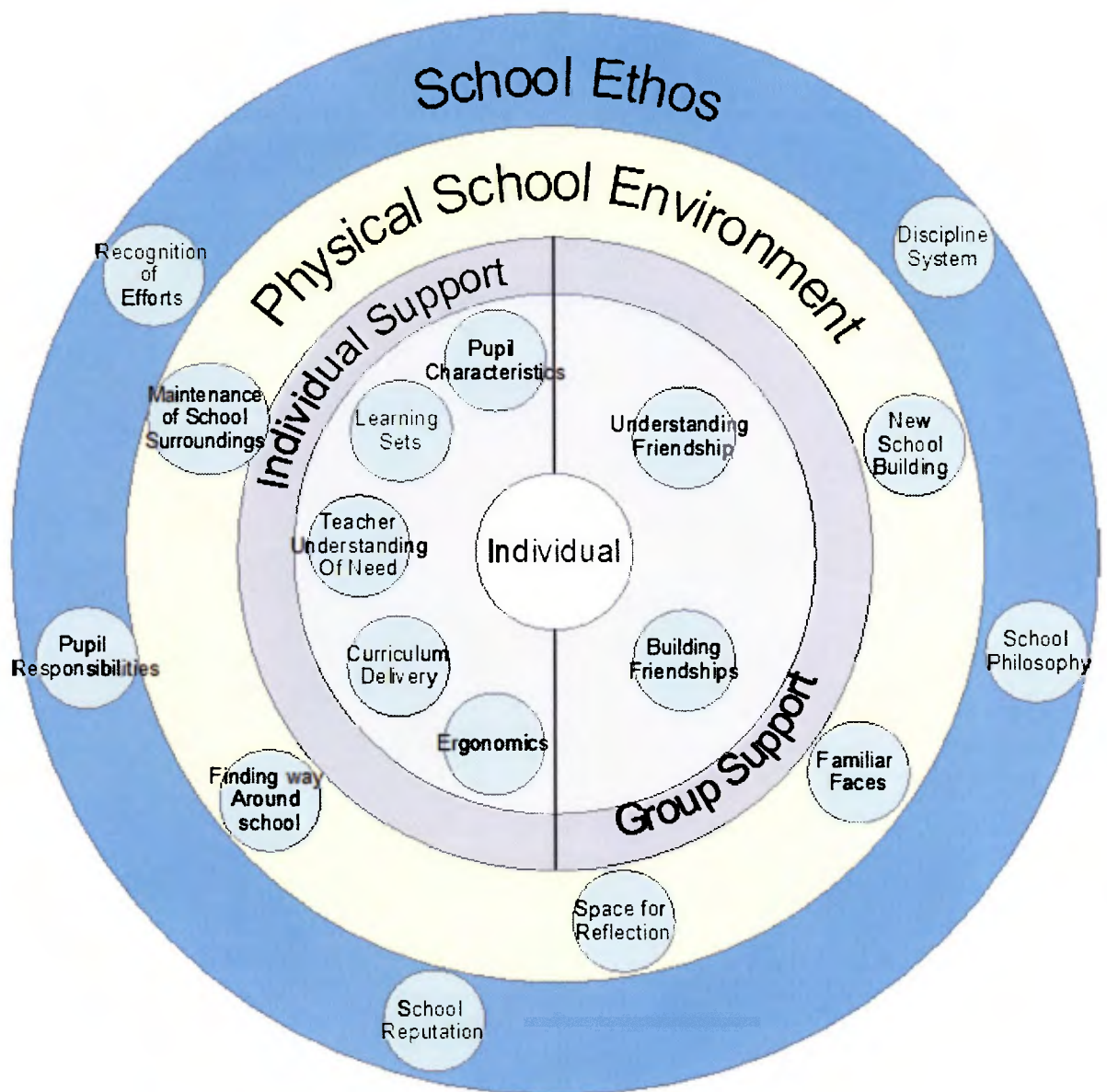
FIGURE 6: MODEL OF FACTORS FACILITATING SOB WITHIN SCHOOL X AND Y

4.11.   Summary of Inhibiting Factors in SOB

A minority of pupils in School X explored factors relating to the physical school environment which inhibited SOB. One pupil referred to unpredictability within the playground. The environment within the R-Centre was also referred to in terms of it not being positive if there was no garden area, the concern related to busyness and resulting perceived lack of safety within the playground.

A greater number of pupils within School Y discussed physical environment barriers to SOB, encompassed within the subtheme of unpredictability. This

prevented one pupil wanting to go to the changing rooms and taking part in PE. Further comments were based around inconsistent rules within the T-Room. Relations with older pupils within the garden area and the canteen were difficult at times.

A couple of pupils at School X referred to aspects of school which appeared to be related to looking or feeling different. The comments were about being made fun of for utilising the R-Centre and using a laptop. Comments were also made about potentially being called names if noticed. Although none of the pupils within School Y discussed comments relating to 'stigma,' two referred to what they termed to be 'bullying.'

The greatest incidence of barriers to SOB in School X concerned non-effective learning conditions, specifically behaviour of other pupils. The prevention of being able to learn by other pupils was similarly raised within School Y. With regards to the curriculum, a few pupils discussed not liking particular subjects within School Y which were not seen to be useful within life.

4.12.   Summary of School Staff Perceptions Ensuring Pupils with ASD Feel a Sense of Belonging

Staff within School X felt that there were two distinct groups of pupils from the pupil interview data; those who want to be a part of the R-Centre and those that choose not to be. It was found surprising that aspects of school especially for pupils with ASD are the parts that don't necessarily make them feel they belong. In contrast, School Y explained that the T-Room was open to all pupils and promoted friendship, confirmed through the pupil data. The T-Room is busier than it used to be with lessons taking place, which could impact negatively on pupil wanting a quiet environment.

School staff considered that pupils want to blend in and not look different to others which could sometimes lead to resistance with regards to support. However it was considered that peers are supportive of pupils with ASD as was discussed at School Y.

Opportunities within the school are open to all pupils, although preparation was vital to the success within School X and peers having knowledge of particular pupils' difficulties within School Y. In both focus groups, numerous staff were not aware of the impact of parts of the school environment, for example that the concourse possibly provided safety through authority. The research offered reassurance about wider school systems creating a SOB as well as from the R-Centre. With regards to School Y, difficulties relating to the playground were considered in new ways through discussion and the pupil summary.

A noticeable difference between the two focus groups related to discussions about existing collaboration between different members of the school community. This was discussed in detail within School Y's focus group and was thought to contribute to SOB. Contact between pupils who do not normally spend time together was felt to promote understanding of differences. Collaboration between staff for information dissemination was considered beneficial. A third type of collaboration was the building of a relationship between staff and pupils, a key part of an ISA role. It was discussed to a lesser extent at School X, relating to collaboration between staff to share information about pupil needs especially if overt support was not wanted.

A nested theme visual model (Figure 7) was created of the perceptions of the school staff around their school practice of supporting pupils to feel a SOB. The model is made up of three different levels which were individual, peer and school.
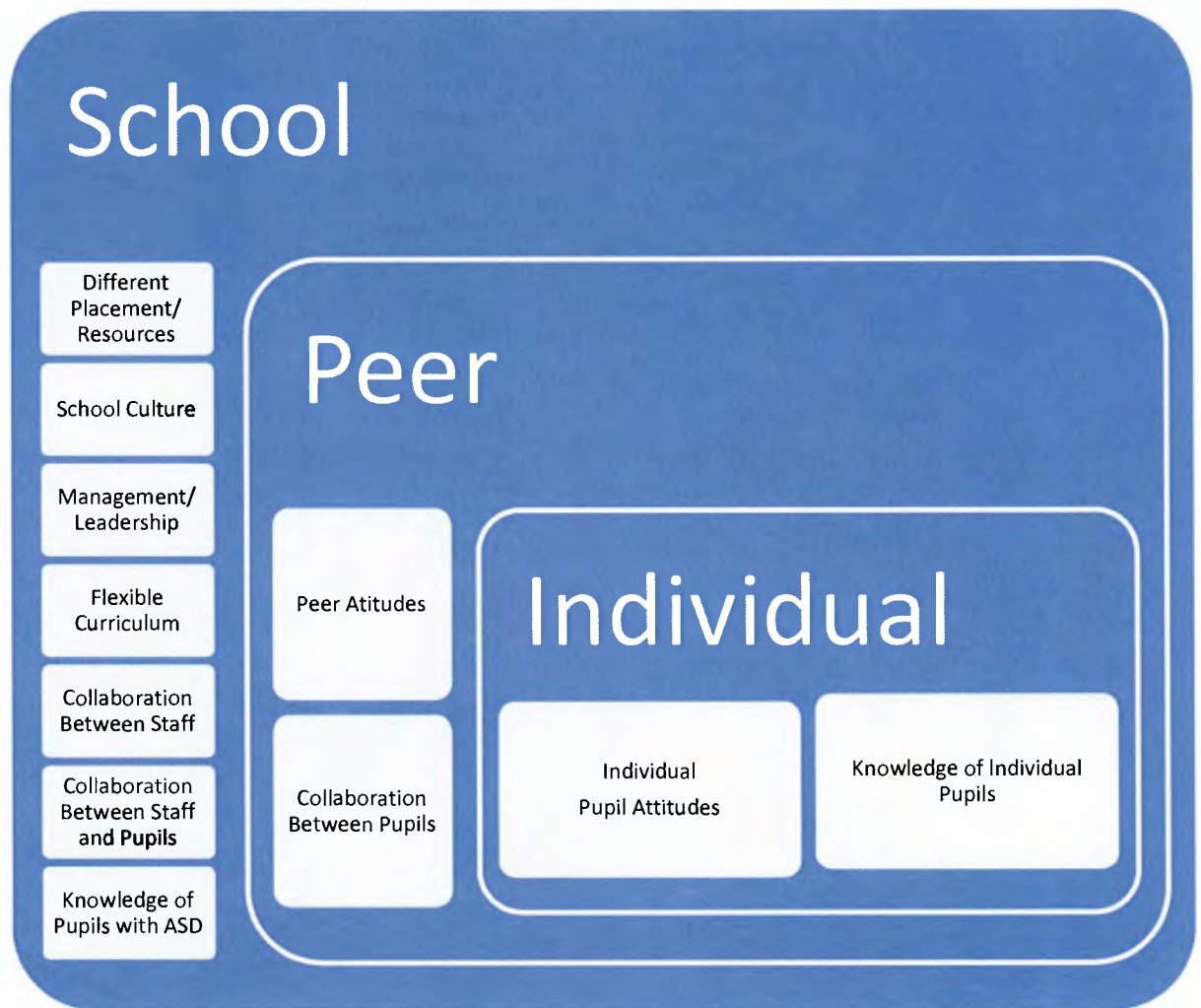
FIGURE 7: MODEL DEPICTING FACILITATION OF SOB FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL STAFF WITHIN SCHOOL X AND Y (ADAPTED FROM TARR, TSOKOVA & TAKKUNEN, 2009).

4.13. Summary of Further Promotion of SOB for Pupils with ASD

There were concerns within School X that some pupils are not being adequately supported. It was considered that these pupils were probably those without a statement of SEN and therefore no individual support. Opinion was divided over whether it should be accepted that they do not want support or whether less overt support could be offered.

Immediate changes to address inconsistency issues raised by pupils were to be made. Other barriers to SOB were raised and changes discussed, for example a rotation system organised by year group within the garden. It was also recognised that although there are quieter areas available apart from the playground, these should be brought to the attention of all pupils.

Both school staff focus groups felt that increased staff awareness around meeting the needs of pupils with ASD would be beneficial. Opinion was divided within School X around the current levels of awareness amongst subject staff. Further collaboration was considered important. One idea for the pupils not wanting overt adult support at School X was a wider implementation sixth form mentoring scheme. A further idea was based on a frequently updated reminder system of pupils on the SEN register. One of the ISAs felt that their role could be extended to 'checking in' with pupils without individual support half termly within lessons. Continued sharing of information was discussed, for example, through email updates and mentors.

Comments were made in both schools about the importance of gathering the pupil views. Staff within School X considered that the focus group had helped them to further understand the pupil perspectives. This revealed SOB from the R-Centre and the wider school systems. Taking part in an interview could be enlightening for pupils who may perceive that they are unhappy with many parts of school.

Chapter 5.   Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This research provides a fascinating insight into the perceptions of twelve male adolescents regarding factors which facilitate and inhibit their SOB within two single-sex mainstream secondary schools within a London Borough.

The findings for each theme are further discussed and related to existing literature. Implications for practice are outlined. The limitations of the research are considered and areas for further research identified.

5.2. Research Question 1:

What are the perspectives of adolescent boys with ASD in relation to SOB within the secondary school environment?

A model of factors which facilitate SOB for pupils with ASD has been proposed. The findings revealed five major themes which include educational support, physical school environment, social environment, school ethos and effective learning conditions. Factors which facilitate SOB will be firstly explored, followed by factors which inhibit SOB.

5.2.1 Facilitating Factors

Just over half of the pupils within School X referred to individual support and this was seen in a positive light. Previous research reveals a mixed picture, where greater numbers of support staff adversely affected SOB, specifically improving behavioural and emotional problems but reducing socialisation (Osborne & Reed, 2011). The current research comments were based around the nature of the support and important characteristics. This support appeared to provide reassurance to the pupils within lessons: help if they were struggling to understand something and supporting peer interaction. Sometimes support was not felt to be needed if a pupil understood a task. It was noted by the pupils that the adult let them proceed without intervention,

suggested as good practice (Boutot, 2007). Pupils valued communication between home and school through the contact book. Communication between home and school is thought to make pupils feel part of their class (Boutot, 2007).

Individual support offered was related to the personal views about the severity of their difficulties. Support would naturally be expected to vary, for example, where pupils were judged to be on the Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) framework. The majority of pupils in both schools had a Statement of SEN, but the amount and type of individual support received varied through an analysis of particular needs and response to intervention. Pupils referred to individual adult support having specialist knowledge of ASD. This seemed aligned to the concept of group specific needs relating to ASD being important rather than knowledge based on the pupils as individuals.

Many of the pupils liked taking their breaks in the R-Centre and T-Room. A noticeable difference within the two schools is a garden area encompassed within the R-Centre, which according to the pupil comments, provided security away from the busy playground whilst still providing an outdoor option. Half of the pupils accessing the R-Centre did not appear to want to assimilate themselves into the wider school community at breaktime. A minority discussed academic support for homework or test practice. Boutot (2007) found that pupils tend to spend time with those with similar strengths and difficulties as themselves. Mesibov & Shea (1996) identified pupils with ASD often having difficulties which may prohibit successful social interactions and they may feel more comfortable being around pupils with similar difficulties. The R-Centre may therefore promote greater feelings of acceptance.

There appeared to be greater tensions for pupils who did not want to be part of the special opportunities within the R-Centre or the T-Room. These pupils although a minority, possibly wanted to distance themselves from other pupils with ASD, within the school environment at School X. It appeared more within School Y to be related to not feeling the desire to spend time in a calm environment. The pupils could be trying to assimilate themselves into

the wider mainstream environment, evidenced by one comment that the R-Centre is good for pupils: 'who have SEN needs, sometimes they might not want to mix with normal people.' One pupil chooses to go to the playground at School X, although this could be seen to not be a perfect fit as he commented on the crowdedness. The pupil overcame this be spending time on the periphery, possibly providing acceptance through being friends with non-ASD pupils. At the same time this pupil sees others with ASD who he shares transport with as his friends and will happily spend time with them outside of school, possibly when not being seen by others. This perceived difference from others mirrors the 'dilemma of difference', relating to tensions between pedagogy and SEN (Norwich, 2008) arising due to pupils being different and because of wider social and political issues (Nilholm 2006).

Peer relationships were both enabling and inhibiting factors in relation to SOB. Many pupils were eager to discuss friendships, a finding noted by Humphrey & Lewis (2008b). One pupil discussed friends making him feel part of the school, however, many of the pupils who discussed friendship with peers appeared to have a fairly limited understanding of this concept, for example, simply saying that it is important that 'friends are nice'. This could be expected as an inherent part of an ASD diagnosis is difficulties understanding social relationships. One pupil when asked about pupils within the school discussed the importance of following school rules. This could raise questions about his close peer relationships although it could also be due to his understanding of the question. However this pupil appeared relaxed and not outwardly appearing upset. A lack of close peer relationships can sometimes lead to loneliness and depression (Pijl et al., 2008). A greater number of pupils in School Y referring to friendships could be for a number of reasons, including the pupils at School not terming peer interactions as 'friendship.' Both schools offered social skill groups which were mentioned, although more so within School X. This could be valuable to pupils with ASD and the importance of teachers' ability to teach skills or remediate behaviours that could negatively affect a pupil within peer relationships (Boutot, 2007).

All pupils identified the recognised resource for pupils with ASD within School X. Different amounts of time are spent in the R-Centre. It appeared

that an organised environment, alongside others with similar difficulties with social interaction, was the most important part of this resource. It was possible that 'progressive inclusive opportunities' matched individual pupil needs (Frederickson, Jones & Lang (2010). The pupils when in Year 7 particularly liked accessing parts of the R-Centre. The provision of a quieter space seemed to provide a sense of security and enabled them to manage the school day, a finding in line with Tobias (2009). The social clubs were mentioned at both schools. However accessing this area was unappealing for a minority of pupils who considered that it was for a selected group of pupils and those who have 'more severe autism.' Pupils with ASD, despite their social impairments are aware of their differences, making them especially susceptible to low self-esteem (Williamson et al., 2008). It could be that one of the pupils as a protective mechanism, distances himself psychologically from other pupils with ASD, whom he attributes a greater severity of ASD. This suggests that it is important to look at pupils as individuals and not to make assumptions about those with a similar group need, wanting to spend time together. This however creates tensions for schools in knowing how much to broach it with pupils. There are further implications for practice as pupils with ASD are taught to act more like their peers, with the ideal pupil with ASD appearing to not have ASD at all (Myers, Lader & Koger, 2011). Recent research concerning deaf pupils in mainstream schools has parallels to the education of pupils with ASD. This indicates that those who embrace both their deafness, alongside their place in the hearing world have better self esteem and general psychological outcomes (Myers, Lader & Koger, 2011). It has suggested that schools consider encouraging pupils with ASD to be open about their difficulties whilst still teaching them important skills to live in the modern world.

5.2.2 Inhibiting factors

Findings from the pupil interviews revealed that the inhibiting factors related to SOB were related to facilitating factors. The present study also has implications for educational practice as some of the hindering factors represent pupil perceptions of school over which staff have control.

Order and predictability appeared important, possibly aiming to reduce anxiety levels from difficulties with social reasoning (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a; 2008b). A number of inhibiting factors for SOB appeared related to pupils finding some aspects of school challenging due to a lack of predictability, namely within the changing rooms and playground. The availability of a specific outdoor area within School X, separate from the main playground appeared to provide this much needed consistency and order at a typically less structured time of the day. The library was accessed within School Y for this purpose, although changes relating to the general garden areas to support this need were considered within the focus groups.

Although individual support was viewed positively within one school in particular, one pupil felt that 'overt' signs of difference such using a laptop was undesirable, even though he noted the benefit to notetaking. This may possibly be a sign of the pupil minimising any barriers to learning which he experiences (Norwich & Kelly, 2004). These views create a tension for school staff between effectively addressing a pupil's needs whilst ensuring that curriculum modifications or supports are not too noticeable to others (Boutot, 2007 & Nilholm, 2006). It has been suggested that educating peers about ASD could reduce associated stigma (Myers, Ladner & Koger, 2011) and an extension is proposed from the current research that this could make pupils with ASD feel more comfortable about utilising supports which they perceive as beneficial. Making the school environment more accepting for pupils with ASD is thought to aid self acceptance and provide both a sense of autistic identity as well as mainstream identity (Myers, Ladner & Koger, 2011).

Only two pupils overall discussed physical and verbal forms of being bullied which was described as long standing by one particular pupil. This is in contrast to Humphrey & Lewis (2008b) who found in their related study that bullying and teasing were experienced by almost all of the sample of 20 pupils. It is recognised that pupils with SEN are more likely to be bullied than others (Norwich & Kelly, 2004), with the difficulties in communication and interaction for pupils with ASD thought to place them at an even greater risk. However, it is not clear whether this incidence would be greater or less than a sample of pupils without ASD. It could be that the social difficulties

associated with ASD could interfere with the young peoples' understanding and recognition of bullying. A tentative conclusion is that school staff should be aware that the social naivety of many of the pupils makes them vulnerable to bullies and they may lack the resilience to help them overcome the problems associated with it, although this did not seem to be a widespread issue at either school. Social stories (Gray, 2005) can be a useful resource to help pupils understand social situations and could be used to help pupils understand the characteristics of bullying. In addition, previous research reflects that positive peer relationships facilitate a positive sense of self; therefore interventions promoting peer support and understanding are vital, for example 'circle of friends' which challenges attitudes and stereotypes held by others (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a).

Almost half of the pupils within both schools referred to difficulties with pupils not keeping to school rules and being disruptive within class. This revealed rigidity of thinking around the following of rules which has implications for school staff, namely that pupils are not likely to feel a strong SOB to a class which is loud with pupils unfocused. Although the pupils did not comment that these pupils are not members of the class, as was found by Williams & Downing (1998), there was recognition that this environment is not conducive to learning. One pupil who briefly was in a lower set referred to this in detail. He considered that although he made new friendships, he felt he was unable to learn within this environment. Another pupil referred to loud voices within lessons giving him a headache and affecting his ability to concentrate which could be a sensory related issue. This should be brought to the attention of school staff (Myers, Ladner & Koger, 2011).

Interestingly it appeared that rigidity of thinking was revealed in a different way when considering the qualities of teachers. It was felt that strict teachers was a facilitating factor in terms of enforcing school rules but these had to be fair and the discipline system utilised appropriately. Teachers seen as too strict were inhibiting factors, possibly referred to as 'getting mad at them' by Williams & Downing (1998). It could be perceived that it would be challenging for schools to reach a balance with regards to this, although one possibility is for a group of pupils to be part of any future reviews of the behaviour management policy. School staff could also be made aware of how they can

achieve a SOB for pupils with ASD within their class, a 'pedagogy of belonging' (Beck & Malley, 1998). This aforementioned research stresses the centrality of human relationships to connect pupils with the school community, which can become eroded by a continual focus on grades and league tables. The current research supports this conclusion.

5.3. Research Question 2:
What are the perspectives of school staff in relation to ensuring pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment?

It proved helpful when looking at how SOB is achieved for pupils within the two different schools to distinguish between the individual, peer and the school levels. A model was created based on the key themes which were: placement/resources, attitudes, pupil knowledge, collaboration, role of management/leadership and flexible curriculum.

The staff focus groups provided an opportunity for collaborative critical reflection. This is a precondition for inclusive change in a democratic process (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005). Initially it appeared that within School X, school staff were linking SOB and inclusion to location. This was shown by a comment relating to some pupils feeling a SOB to the R-Centre but the very act of coming to this area would exclude them from the wider school. After further discussion, members of staff considered that there are two groups of pupils within the school in terms of those wanting to access this area and those that don't. There was concern amongst the focus group about the pupil comments within the subtheme of stigma and it was questioned whether this could be a possible reason behind pupils not wanting to access the R-Centre. There appeared to be a tension between meeting individual needs versus avoiding feelings of rejection/stigma, for example in ensuring pupils had extra time in exams which they would only take within the R-Centre so as not to appear different. This tension was named the placement dilemma of difference by Norwich (2008). Within the current research this seemed to be resolved by having the R-Centre on offer as well as considering how pupils could effectively be supported without them having to utilise this

resource. A senior member of staff suggested that these pupils feel a SOB through other aspects of school and re-conceptualised SOB as being related to the wider school for this group of learners. The initial and subsequent discussion orientation towards learner differences could be said to be located within the 'differentiation stance' where significant difficulties are focused upon and underpin appropriate teaching adaptations (Norwich, 2011). This stance has associated risks, including separation, devaluation and stigma. However the 'after discussion' stance could have elements of the 'commonality stance' which calls for appropriate ordinary school and teaching adaptations in response to significant difficulties (Norwich, 2011).

In contrast School Y's approach to individual needs appeared to be more aligned with a typical 'commonality stance'. A senior member of staff commented that 'there should be no places within school which are specifically for groups of pupils. ' Although the T-Room should by design be accessible by all pupils, this stance also has associated risks. These include overlooking individual needs and inadequate provision being on offer (Norwich, 2010). An element of individual needs possibly being overlooked was discussed in relation to the T-Room currently being noisier than it used to be with more pupils accessing the area and lessons taking place. This did not appear to be a problem for some pupils who still sat quietly reading a book, but for others it was no longer valued as a calm, quiet area. This creates tensions between inclusivity for all pupils whilst meeting the individual needs of some, who find that the stress and anxiety from busy, chaotic places overwhelms them. Since the pupil interviews took place, the T-Room has moved location and is now a bigger resource containing different areas separated by screens. The impact of this change is unclear, but the focus groups have raised awareness about the important environmental features.

A discussion within both focus groups revealed key parts of the school culture. School staff took the time to speak to pupils with ASD outside lessons, even when busy within School X and the form tutor role within School Y. This teacher-pupil relationship could be described as promoting respect, related to pupils' belonging or alienation from school (Anderman, 2003). Teachers treating pupils respectfully could have a positive impact on

how a pupil is viewed by their peers. Middle school pupils' perceptions that their teachers promote mutual respect amongst classmates, predicts their levels of academic self efficacy and self regulation (Anderman, 2003). These perceptions would be expected to contribute to their feelings of psychological safety, comfort and therefore SOB. This could be examined in more depth within further research.

Most of the above findings could be thought of as good practice for all rather than particularly for pupils with ASD. However, consistent with the 'distinct needs' position (Norwich & Lewis, 2005) there were some findings with implications relating to the group needs of pupils with ASD. The focus groups reflected on how patterns of interactions with others could be recognised, for example that pupils with ASD are learning in particular situations even though it might not be shown overtly. This appears to be making reference to characteristic differences with non-verbal social communication. This information should be shared amongst staff who may not have such a firm understanding of this 'transactional disorder' and that the presenting behaviour is not simply attributes of the child (Jordan, 2005). It is thought that how the individual is thinking, feeling, learning and making sense of the environment is where the ASD is really located. This is the level of understanding underling the special practice to work with those with ASD (Jordan, 2005).

In School Y there is value in pupils having an understanding of particular pupils' difficulties and this knowledge is helpful for both pupils and peers. This strengthens existing research that the development of strategies promoting peer support and understanding should be a key consideration helping to integrate the pupil within the wider peer network (Humphrey, 2008). This is important as relationships with peers for pupils with ASD may have greater influence on the success or failure of inclusion than teachers (Humphrey, 2008. Research has suggested that a supportive strategy to educate other pupils about what it means to have ASD can provide options for increased socialising, leading to greater self esteem and long term positive psychological outcomes (Myers, Ladnam & Koger, 2011). Further related research would be helpful to support school staff in undertaking this in a sensitive, thoughtful manner.

In this study, inclusive practices appeared to be collaborative which was at different levels amongst pupils, staff and staff/pupils at School Y. Collaboration between staff was mainly related to communication, in particular efficiently sharing information. Communication between mentors/ LSAs and subject staff entailed teaching and learning to be better tailored to pupils' individual needs. A confidential 'care and concern' e-bulletin was referred to which is issued on a weekly basis to support key information exchange to key members of staff, a strategy, referred to favourably (Humphrey, 2008). People react to a label, treating people in a certain way relating to their assumptions or pre- conceived beliefs linked to this label (Murray, 2006). To prevent that happening, it is important to pay attention to unique individual needs as well as specific group needs relating to ASD (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008b). Sharing of vital information about individual pupils could support this focus as even the core characteristics of ASD vary between individuals and therefore the pattern of strengths and difficulties.

Participation for pupils was supported to varying degrees at both schools through Individual Support Assistants (ISAs). This is a widespread response to educational difficulty which is often a result of a school thinking that a pupil has SEN (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Classroom observations focusing particularly on pupils with ASD revealed that the ISA would provide differing amounts of support to a particular child or sometimes a group of children. This is aligned to the recommendation to provide just enough support for each individual to negotiate their own schooling effectively, and no more (Tobias, 2009). Some studies report that the more support a child receives, the less progress they make (Blatchford et al., 2009). I think this underpinned wider practice within both schools, evidenced through discussions that a key part of the SENCO/Inclusion Manager role is to oversee and regularly review the amount and type of support. The individual support aimed to facilitate lesson participation, both through clarification of tasks and to ensure pupils remained focused. However I observed the teacher still communicating with the pupil, rather than through the ISA, as previously found (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a.). This is positive and is in contrast to a recently worrying published comment that unfortunately in some circumstances teaching

assistants can impede relationships with other children and adults (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

One of the biggest differences to previous research such as Symes & Humphrey (2011) is that the majority of the ISAs had taken part in accredited training run by a LA Social Communication Advisory Teacher. The perceptions of the ISAs within focus groups were that a key part of their role is to build a relationship with a particular pupil. School Y felt that this relationship would reveal pupil strengths to support peer inclusion and lead to the use of effective support strategies. Difficulties were thought to be sensitively addressed, for example, building confidence in communication by the organising of responsibility within the reprographics room. This supports pupils to be independent, a key role of TAs (Audit Commission, 1992) which is encouraging as TAs can find this difficult to implement (Emam & Farrell, 2009). It also possibly reflects the importance placed on developing social skills of the pupils, contrasting previous research indicating that this is often not achieved (Symes & Humphrey, 2011).

Although the use of individual support appears to benefit SOB within these schools, particular practices could benefit from in-depth analysis for pupils with ASD within further research. This could focus on the relationship between TA support and peer group relationships, an indicator of successful inclusion (Ochs et al., 2001; Symes & Humphrey, 2011). As already noted, skills in social interaction are seen as an important part of school success for pupils with ASD (MacKay, Knott & Dunlop, 2007). However, the teaching of splinter skills around social relationships can be unhelpful in terms of generalisation for pupils with ASD and benefits from social skills groups can be short lived (MacKay, Knott & Dunlop, 2007). It is thought that skills and understanding developed and practised in meaningful everyday contexts can be positively helpful (Mackay, Knott & Dunlop, 2007). Generalisaiblity of skills from social groups could be a key role for TAs, particularly for this group of pupils where learning is often context bound and the flexibility of thinking and capacity to read the social situation enabling an individual to employ strategies across social situations is often lacking. It could also support the pupil's desire to fit in with their peers more seamlessly.

Prior to the focus group, School Y considered an important part of creating SOB for pupils with ASD was through mentoring for each pupil on the SEN register. It was felt that a consistent person, not necessarily a TA, with whom to build a relationship was a central part, due to awareness that a lack of social understanding is typical for pupils with ASD. The importance of this mentoring was discussed by one of the pupils from this school, particularly when he did not feel he had many friends. The focus group created an opportunity to engage with pupils' perspectives and voices, confirming this activity. Tobias (2009) found within focus groups for secondary school pupils that a mentoring system enabled discussion about particular incidents such as difficulties with peers, preventing escalations into arguments.

Many of the school staff were surprised by the number of photographs of the concourse area within School X and the comments made in relation to this area. The focus group allowed the staff to reconsider their norms and expectations of pupils with ASD through a section of the innovative thinking framework (Hart, 2000). This section is termed contradicting: 'challenging existing interpretations by looking for different ways of interpreting the same evidence which casts the meaning in a new light.' (Hart, 2000). Comments made by one particular member of staff reflected a belief that senior members, through their position make important decisions that impacts the wider school. It was assumed that this environment would be intimidating for pupils with ASD. Alternatively it was considered that security is provided, which could be investigated further within an action research study into the impact of school layout on pupils.

5.4. Research Question 3-How can SOB be further promoted for pupils with ASD?

The potential benefits of a process of collaborative inquiry through which an open dialogue can develop are wide ranging (Frankham & Howes, 2006). Changes to thinking were evident within the focus group discussions and the feedback following these.

The aspiration of collaborative inquiry is where critical appraisal leads to understandings with immediate and direct impact on the development of

thinking and practice in the field (Frankham &Howes, 2006). A positive response to the emerging information from the pupil interviews was reflected in immediate changes to practice, following discussions within the ASD Research Group. It was enlightening to see findings from the research being quickly raised within schools and changing practice. An example related to the plans for the R-Centre garden within the new school building. Numerous pupils discussed the existing R-Centre garden and the perceived benefit, including that it was a quiet place with smaller numbers of pupils accessing it. The pupil views around this resource were not only heard but practice altered. It was initially considered that the R-Centre garden would not feature within the first phase of moving to the new building. Information coming to light from the pupils about the importance of this resource, led to the decision of earlier installation, in time for the pupils making the transition. It could be hypothesised that this would be supportive for pupils possibly already being anxious about the new building.

Through the findings from the pupil interviews and shared understandings of pupil needs through discussion, immediate changes within School Y were proposed to address inconsistencies around the rules governing the T-Room and a new system concerning playground activities. It was felt that these changes would facilitate SOB by meeting recognised preferences for order and predictability within busy secondary school environments.

The school staff within the focus groups discussed the value of gaining pupil perspectives and felt the information had increased their awareness of the needs of the pupils and how to promote SOB. Disappointingly, they did not suggest utilising the processes to carry on the piece of work or to transfer the learning to find out more about other related aspects of school, which could be as the learning was not made overt. This is not to say that they are not interested as feedback from one school in particular since the focus groups indicates that the senior management would like further involvement in the research and are open to next steps being discussed. Although the focus group had enabled assumptions of this group of learners to be explored and was helpful in an awareness raising capacity, it did not appear to have empowered the staff to personally consider engagement in further cycles of the action research process. A tentative hypothesis could be that because

these staff had not directly shared in the learning from the research processes from the beginning this may potentially have lead to a feeling of insufficient knowledge or confidence.

A further consideration is that the staff may not have felt full ownership of the research, due to external professionals from outside the school being part of the processes. Further support from outside professionals may have been sought by a suggestion that more training was needed by a member of the school staff within one of the focus groups. Training aimed to address basic skills of effectively interacting with pupils with ASD, however it was not clear whether this was to be delivered from school staff or outside professionals. A good knowledge of the underlying social communication difficulties enables school staff to examine behaviours with greater clarity and also how to appropriately address them (Tobias, 2009). This knowledge would differ to that gained within the research and without ASD specific knowledge bringing an understanding of additional support needs, successful mainstream educational inclusion for pupils with ASD is unlikely to become a reality (MacKay, Knott & Dunlop, 2007). Teacher training increases levels of perceived SOB for pupils through increased feelings of competency (Osborne & Reed, 2011).

Many teachers feel they lack 'specialist knowledge' (Robertson, Chamberlain & Kasari, 2003) to most effectively support pupils. School staff would therefore possibly benefit from further opportunities to consider how the wealth of information gained through the research could be applied in practice, supporting them in feeling more ownership of the findings from their school. Alternatively, further training could be thought of as the focus group providing the impetus for a change in attitudes through staff taking a greater responsibility for these pupils within their classes. Previous research indicates that SENCOs can feel that the onus is placed on them from class teachers to teach some pupils (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a) or it can be felt to be placed on TAs (Humphrey & Lewis, 200b). Training teachers to work with pupils with ASD makes them feel more confident (Glashan et al., 2004).

A couple of the pupils valued specialist knowledge which was felt to be provided by TAs and one commented that he would approach these adults

first if he had a problem. If learning activities are designed to support the participation of all children, the need for individual support is reduced (Booth & Ainscow, 2011) which could be beneficial for the group of pupils not subject to a Statement of SEN who the focus groups felt may not be sufficiently supported. This involves teachers planning lessons with all children in mind, recognising different starting points and approaches to learning which could 'target a particular group for a certain type of support whilst making it invisible' as discussed within the focus group. This would also align with Government policy which asserts that 'all teachers should expect to teach children with SEN' (DfES, 2004a, p.7). The SEN policy of the schools reflects this, indicating that provision for pupils with SEN concerns the whole school with all staff having important responsibilities.

An alternative suggestion from the focus group within School X is that the specialist ISAs could spend some time every half term within the classes of these pupils to monitor progress and to facilitate a relationship with a member of staff. Research indicates that individual support should be given to encourage greater independence, increasing a child's capacity to learn and the capacity of others to include them within activities (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Tobias, 2009). This could be achieved by this proposal. Further collaboration to promote inclusive working was a central finding mirroring previous research for example, Kinsella & Senior (2008).

The interest in further knowledge of the needs of pupils with ASD within the current research could indicate a change in values and beliefs through involvement in the focus group. This is positive, particularly as many reforms within schools often only occur at the surface structure level, leaving the attitudes and the culture of the school relatively unchanged (McDonnell, 2003). Further ownership of the research within their own schools could be achieved through regular focus group discussions as without a shift in the whole organisation's attitudes and approach, inclusion will fail children with ASD (Barnard et al., 2000). These could focus on particular facilitating and inhibiting factors in achieving SOB revealed through this research. This planning phase could lead to changes within their practice, with a review through observations or consultations within an evaluation phase.

5.5. Implications for Practice

This section considers the implications of the current findings for educational practice, especially for EPs. A key role of an EP is as an agent of pro-social change. This is aligned with the assumptions of a transformative paradigm which indicates that social justice and human rights are vital within ethical research (Mertens, 2010). The values of equity, respect for others and participation underpinning the involvement of the participants in the ASD Research Group were lived in practice through empowering the young people to share their views. The processes involved were highlighted therefore process validity can be claimed (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The current research perceives multiple versions of what is real but enabled school staff to reflect on their practices and their role in potentially perpetuating oppressive social structures, in this regard, the inhibiting factors to a SOB for pupils with ASD in two mainstream secondary schools. Democratic validity can be claimed through the views of all participants having been presented (Bruce, Flynn & Stagg-Peterson, 2011). Improvement has been influenced through further steps in enhancing the school experience for pupils with ASD being considered therefore outcome validity can also be claimed (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

The pupils were encouraged to contribute in an accessible, meaningful way, an important step in building an inclusive school community (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). The majority of the young people in both schools chose to utilise a visual methodology. The medium itself provided a vehicle for the young people to have their views heard, possibly reducing anxiety around the interview by enabling the pupil to have control over some content. Many of the young people themselves at the end of their interviews commented that they enjoyed taking part in the process, looking at their school differently. An overwhelming sense of place and attachment to parts of the school were demonstrated through the photographs as previously noted (Kellock, 2011). Aspects of the physical environment appeared strongly associated with SOB, including the R Centre, T room and garden area. Features including perceived calm and a separate place to go to at lunchtime appeared important and have implications for inclusion within these schools.

These include the schools choosing to keep these aspects within their schools as well as furthering their understanding of the relationship between the schools' physical environment and the pupils' sense of inclusion within these. It should be noted though that it is unclear whether this response would be similar or different if other groups of learners were part of the research.

Both of the schools although initially unsure about the potential success of a visual methodology were positive about trying it out within the current research. They found it informative and fascinating to see the different ways pupils viewed aspects of their school and were often surprised by the accompanying words. One school in particular indicated a plan to use this approach in the future in pupil consultation, especially with those with social communication difficulties. The promotion of the use of visual methodology as well as the processes needed to effectively engage with this medium is a role which could be effectively undertaken by EPs. This research has shown the importance of ensuring guidelines about the photography are discussed in advance, possibly through a briefing session to all and adequate time is allowed for this activity. One pupil mentioned that he did not have a very long period of time to take the photographs and that the session was abruptly ended. The implication was that he had not finished and possibly would have taken more.

Professionally developed psychological skills such as Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) were utilised within the interviews. As Kelly (1955) noted, the best way to find out about someone's problems is to ask that person, meaning within this study that unknown barriers to SOB were raised and therefore could be addressed. EPs can use these skills to enable conceptualisations and the meanings behind vocabulary to be explored. This approach has contributed to increased professional understanding of the perspectives of these young people as well as providing specific areas to consider when promoting SOB. It is recognised that EPs are professionals who are familiar and trained around sensitive consultation with pupils. Children and young people themselves identify the importance of adults facilitating their participation and being skilled in helping them to take part (Hall, 2010). This was found within the current research when one pupil

became upset discussing his school experiences. The careful designing of the interview process enabled this pupil to take part in a sensitive environment which was responsive to his presentation at different points during the interview. EPs are well placed to be involved in aspects of pupils participation and consultation as they are often involved in accessing pupil voice in a range of contexts, for example as part of the statutory assessment process, individual interventions, group and whole school work. In addition, EPs can ensure that the views are taken seriously through the promotion of them with school staff, which is a concern raised by children when participating (Todd, 2007).

I think it is important to note though that: 'Consultation and other kinds of involvement may need to be seen as a multi-layered process, to develop organisational enthusiasm and not to be confined to one-off events' (Todd, 2007, p.38). The current research supported this view as the pupil views were part of an approach which involved many different members of the school community in close interaction with data over the 18 months of the study. The short timeline of the research meant that although an action research design frame was utilised there was more emphasis on evaluative action rather than re- organisation. The long term impact of the research will be how the schools utilise the information to change practice. For example the next step will be supporting the school in the pupils' participation being incorporated into planning at the whole school level by the views being gathered within school planning documents (Watts & Youens, 2007).

The use of school staff focus groups to explore the pupils' perspectives may have helped to overcome traditional power relationships between teachers and pupils by providing time and space to discuss implications of current practice. This is seen to be vital to enable a respectful culture within schools (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). The information being discussed with school staff may itself have made the pupils feel more valued and respected as members of the school community, thereby strengthening feelings of SOB. EPs could support the school in enabling the pupils to participate in further review, planning and action (Carrington & Holm, 2005). EPs themselves may not always carry out the work but the steps taken within this research could be applied in other schools alongside school staff. EPs could therefore be

described as being in a good position to intervene at an individual, group and/or systemic level in relation to SOB and young people with ASD. It is not easy to take an innovative professional role in an organisation as a community may not necessarily expect changes (Heikkinen et al., 2012). It is easy to adapt to prevailing work cultures than to remain a critical thinker and be a change agent which is a key part of the EP role.

Whilst adult support is to be recommended, the current study also indicated the importance of peer relationships for these young people which should continue to be promoted. The provision of lunch clubs where young people with ASD can develop connections in a less overwhelming context, a 'buddy system' with peers who occupy a positive and secure social status and peer mentoring with an older pupil, may all serve to provide the young person with important peer connections. EPs can be instrumental in supporting the implementation of these within schools, particularly as they have experience of working within a range of settings. This experience can inform practice, ensuring that these interventions are delivered effectively, for example, supporting school staff with rigorous evaluation to make the school experience as positive as possible for all pupils.

5.6. Limitations and areas for further research

This section considers the limitations of the study and how external variables may have influenced the pupils' and school staff accounts. Possible implications for the study's findings and areas for further research are discussed.

The initial limitation is the research's small sample size which although providing rich and in depth data, prevents generalisation to the wider population of secondary school pupils with ASD. It should be noted though that the research was not aiming to provide generalisable information as the issues were being studied within specific contexts. The sample also only included male pupils with ASD and Year 8 and 9 pupils. It is possible that the similarities and differences in perceptions of SOB for pupils with ASD in other year groups within these schools could be examined. The findings could be the starting point of further research in other schools, for example within

single sex female schools. The current research also does not provide illumination of SOB for other groups of pupils within the school, for example pupils without identified or perceived learning difficulties. The schools could utilise the steps from the current research to understand how to promote SOB for other groups of pupils or indeed for all pupils within the school.

A further limitation is that the pupil interviews in one school took place in the summer term whereas they took place in the following Autumn term in the other school. It was considered within the research group that this may have impacted on the information gained from the pupils. This is particularly the case when the finding is considered that as pupils' length of time in secondary school increased, their sense of acceptance in and connectedness to the setting decreased (Anderman, 2003). Anxiety of starting in a new school year with concerns over harder work and new teachers to familiarise themselves with could cause pupils interviewed in the summer term to perceive different factors influencing their SOB.

It has been identified for a considerable period of time that the eliciting of accurate information is crucial within research processes involving children (Norwich & Kelly, 2004), particularly due to the inherent power imbalances. Although every effort was made within the current research to support this aim, two significant factors have been identified which could impact on the findings. These are 'pleasing the interviewer' and 'presenting an ideal self' (Begley, 2000). These findings were noted when working with children with Down Syndrome and therefore their impact with pupils with ASD is uncertain. Within the current research, the pupils were consistently asked about perceptions of SOB, although many pupils appeared to reflect what they most like or do not like about school. A similar comment was made in relation to previous research around this important consideration with regards to inclusion (Williams & Downing, 1998). It could be as previously discussed that this is how young people define SOB. Alternatively, the pupils may have been influenced by what they thought an adult may want to hear rather than portraying a true reflection of their perceptions of SOB.

Children can find it difficult to honestly articulate their views and be open when the interviewer is part of the problem (Norwich & Kelly, 2004), reduced

within the research design. Within the interviews the pupils who chose to take part without taking photographs largely communicated their views through the interviewer using the technique of PCP. Therefore this focused on pupil's experiences of the current school and desires for the future, held within their views of what would be 'ideal' for them. This means that some information is not necessarily the current situation, but rather 'ideal' or 'non-ideal'.

A potential limitation of the current research is that pupils who feel less of a SOB to their schools may not have wanted to take part in the research. The impact of this is that these voices were not heard and other potential facilitating or inhibiting factors contributing to SOB not considered. Eleven pupils within School X and four pupils within School Y did not respond to the invitation to take part. Although discussions took place within the ASD Research Group into possible reasons for this, for example, that these particular pupils did not want to meet an unfamiliar adult from outside the school, the profile of these pupils was not explored in detail. Alternatively the set criteria that parents alongside pupils gave consent for pupil involvement may have prevented pupils being able to be involved if parental consent was not forthcoming. This raises both ethical issues around these voices not being heard whilst raising epistemological and methodological tensions (Jones & Stanley, 2008). Further research could aim to explore the views of these pupils, commencing with more in depth discussions with school staff about the possible reasons these pupils may not have taken part.

The decision was made within the data analysis of the pupil interviews that because the concept of SOB is an under researched area and little is known about views on the topic that it was important to provide a rich thematic analysis of the entire data set, enabling the reader to have a sense of the range of themes. This meant that the themes which were identified, coded and analysed needed to be an accurate reflection of the entire data set. A limitation of this approach is that some of the depth and complexity may have been lost.

The current research did not include the gathering of views of parents either as an additional part of the research or through an exploration of the

emerging findings. School leaders have been called on to facilitate staff to engage in constructive and critical learning related to their beliefs and practice in order to meet the needs of diverse learners within an inclusive school culture (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). One of the suggested guided principles to support the development of a more inclusive school community is through valuing and collaborating with parents. This could be an extension to the current research, for example through sessions to communicate the findings a well as to explore parental perceptions of these.

5.7. Conclusion

This exploratory study highlighted factors which facilitate and inhibit SOB for male secondary school aged pupils. These include the physical school environment, social environment and effective learning conditions. Further factors which support SOB relate to the educational support and school ethos.

The pupils were encouraged through this piece of research to contribute in a meaningful way to their school community. The use of photography as a choice of research approach enabled the pupils with ASD who may often be the subject of others' research in taking and interpreting their own photographs. Individual differences were explored providing a picture of SOB for these pupils within their school environment. This and other approaches provided an opportunity for the pupils to address and share important aspects of their lives and experiences.

The focus groups to discuss the findings enabled school staff to consider pre-conceived notions and expectations of pupils with ASD. These revealed that needs of all pupils and knowledge of the individual appeared to be as important as a good understanding of ASD. It was considered essential that school staff know pupils as individuals for appropriate support to be given and to help ensure that important information to support learning and emotional wellbeing is shared with key staff. The focus group also encouraged staff to consider in more detail the interaction between the individual and the environment. A model was created based on the key

themes which were: placement/resources, attitudes, pupil knowledge, collaboration, role of management/leadership and flexible curriculum.

Further collaboration was viewed as important in promoting SOB. Increased staff awareness around meeting the needs of pupils with ASD was also thought to be beneficial. Both schools felt that it had been illuminating gathering the pupil views and the focus groups had helped them to understand the pupil perspectives.

Chapter 6.   References

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APPENDIX 1: THE NUMBER OF PUPILS IN SCHOOL X AND Y WHO MET THE KEY CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE RESEARCH

	Year 8	Year 9	Total Number of Pupils
School X	7	11	18
School Y	3	6	9

APPENDIX 2: DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT PUPIL SAMPLE IN SCHOOL X AND Y

School X

Participant	Year Group	SEN Stage	Diagnosis	Ethnicity	Chosen Methodology
Henry	8	Facility	ASD	White British	Verbal PCP
Ben	8	Matrix Level 6	ASD	English/ Other Mixed Background	Photography
David	8	Matrix Level 6	ASD	White British	Verbal PCP
Ian	8	Facility	ASD		Photography
George	9	School Action Plus	ASD	White British	Photography
James	9		ASD	White British	Photography
Andrew	8	Facility	ASD	White British	Verbal PCP

School Y

Participant	Year Group	SEN Stage	Diagnosis	Ethnicity	Chosen Methodology
Michael	9	Statement	ASD/ ADHD	White British	Verbal PCP
Jamie	9	Statement	ASD/ SpLD	White British	Photography
Robert	8	Statement	ASD	White British	Photography
William	9	Statement	ADHD	White British	Photography
Simon	8	School Action Plus	ASD	White British	Photography/ Written Information

APPENDIX 3: FLOWCHART OF PUPIL SAMPLE

Flowchart of pupil sample

AIM	ACTION

Identify Population

> Identify Year 8 and Year 9 pupils on Special Educational Needs register.

> Identify pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis in selected year groups.

Identify Sample

> Identify pupils with an awareness of their diagnosis of ASD.

Send Home Documentation

> Post home in a sealed envelope addressed to the parents of identified sample: School letter to Introduce Research, Parental Information Sheet, Young Person Information Sheet and Parental and Young Person Consent to Take Part in the Project.

APPENDIX 4: PARENTAL INFORMATION SHEET

<u>Project around the school experiences of young people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (Parental Information Sheet)</u>

This information sheet gives information about a project taking place in your child's school. Please can you discuss the project with your child and both sign the consent form if your child is happy to be involved.

YOUR CHILD WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO TAKE PART IF THEY ARE AWARE OF THEIR DIAGNOSIS OF AN AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD). IF THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF THEIR DIAGNOSIS PLEASE DO NOT DISCUSS THIS PROJECT WITH THEM.

Research team
Educational Psychology Service/ ...... University:
Assistant Educational Psychologist   Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist

Social Communication Difficulty Service: Autistic Trust:
 Advisory Teachers   Family Service Manager

Contact: [Removed]

Background
There are an increasing number of children and young people being diagnosed with ASD. It is important to give young people with ASD a voice into what is successful for them at school and any barriers to their full participation, achievement and enjoyment.

Main aims of this project
1. Find out about the experiences of pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools.
2. Identify the key concerns and priorities for pupils with ASD in relation to their experiences of education.
3. Identify the way school staff ensure pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment.
4. Identify how barriers to learning and participation for pupils with ASD could be overcome.

Sample – pupil views
- Pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder who are aware of their diagnosis.
- Pupils whose parents give consent to take part and who also wish to take part themselves.

Methods – pupil/student views
Before working with your child they may be met in class or the playground to help build up rapport. The pupils will be introduced to the project rationale, given an opportunity to ask questions and told that they can withdraw from the project at any time. Different strategies will be utilised in a one to one conversation between a researcher and your child about their school experiences. It is likely that only one conversation will take place, depending on how much information your child wishes to discuss. It will take place within agreed lesson time or at lunchtime. The strategies the pupils could choose from include the taking of photographs, cue cards and drawing to supplement and facilitate the conversation.

Time scale
The project started in December 2011 and will finish by summer 2012. If your child would like to take part this will probably take place in the Summer Term 2011.

Ethical issues
The ethical codes of the British Psychological Society and the British Education Research Association will be followed. Informed consent will be gained from each pupil taking part. Feedback about the findings and the opportunity to comment on them will be given to all pupils who take part. Direct quotes will be anonymised in related reports.

APPENDIX 5: YOUNG PERSON INFORMATION SHEET

<u>Project around the school experiences of young people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (Young Person Information Sheet)</u>

Who's doing the project?

Sarah Leck, who will be a visitor to your school.

[Email Address Removed]

What is the project about?

The project is about your school experiences.

How will I take part?

If you and your parents are happy for you to take part, I will come into school to get your views. There are a number of ways we can do this, for example, by taking photographs, talking or drawing. Before we meet up to do this I may come into class or the playground to get to know you.

Who will be asked to take part?

There are young people from different schools in [Removed] taking part. The teachers will also be taking part in the project.

What happens next?

The project started in December 2011 and will finish by summer 2012. If you would like to take part I will probably talk to you in the Summer Term 2011. There will be a chance to ask questions about the project and people do not have to take part if they do not want to.

Ethics

There are certain ways of doing projects that makes them **ethical**. The project has to carefully consider the people taking part and includes things like making sure people understand why they are doing the project and that they can stop at any time. It also means that we will tell people about what we found out in the project, when it is finished. The information is always anonymous, that means that no one's name is ever used.

APPENDIX 6: PARENTAL AND YOUNG PERSON CONSENT FORM

<u>Parental and Young Person Consent to Take Part in the Project</u>

Information

❖ I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can choose to withdraw at any time.

❖ I understand before meeting with the researcher they may come and talk to me in class or the playground to get to know me.

❖ I don't have to answer a question if I don't want to.

❖ My parents and I have read the information sheets that accompany this form.

❖ I understand my comments will be listened to and recorded, to help me remember your views accurately. All recordings will be destroyed when the project is finished.

❖ The information will be presented in a report. This will be used by my school and [Removed] to help support me and other pupils. My name will not be given so they will not know what I have said.

I have signed and printed my name underneath and so have my parents as I am happy to be a part of this project. I can choose to leave the project anytime, even after I have signed this.

BOTH THE YOUNG PERSON AND PARENTS MUST SIGN TO GIVE THEIR CONSENT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Young Person (please print your name and sign below)

Printed Name: _____

Signed Name:_____

Parent/ Guardian (please print your name and sign below)

Printed Name: _____

Signed Name:_____

Thank you for completing this form. Please return it to school reception by 5th May.

APPENDIX 7: PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

Inclusion of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in two mainstream secondary schools within a London Borough: exploring the perspectives of pupils and educational staff

Research Aims

The aims of the research are firstly, to enable pupils with ASD to have their voice heard and to shape their experiences within school and secondly, to enable school staff to reflect on the aspects of school which are supporting the pupils' learning and the barriers constraining them.

The Use of Photographs within Inclusive Education

Pupils taking part in the research have been asked how they would like to take part. If they choose to take part by taking photographs, these need to be taken before the organised interview with the researcher.

Individual pupils should walk around the school accompanied by an adult. The walk does not take longer than about 30 minutes. Pupils should be invited to take photographs of their choosing using a school digital camera. However, please ensure that the pupils do not take photographs of anyone not allowed to appear in photography.

Explanations to Pupils

Pupils should be asked to use the camera to create a picture story about the school through their own eyes. They should be asked to depict aspects of school that they feel are:

- Best and worst
- Comfortable and uncomfortable
- Welcome and unwelcome
- Creating a sense of belonging and not belonging

Further Information

Pupils should be allowed to take as few or as many photographs as they want, although 20 is around the maximum number required. Discussions do not need to be had with the pupils around the photographs they choose to take, this will take place in the interview with the researcher.

After the photographs have been taken they need to be printed. The school should keep hold of them privately to prevent them getting lost. The pupil needs to bring these to their interview.

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Information

1. Remind the pupil what the purpose is of the interview.

2. Ethics- explain that the pupil can raise their hand or say 'stop' it they want to discontinue the interview at any time.

3. Remind the pupil that the interview will be recorded but that the recording will be destroyed when the project is finished. Practice recording voice by asking the pupil to indicate their first name and what they did at the weekend. Play the recording back to the pupil.

4. If taking part through photography- how did the pupil find the experience of taking the photos?

5. As the interview progresses comments should be recapped and confirmation as to the information requested. At the end of the interview a summary should be given to ensure the pupil is happy with everything that was said and to check if there are any further comments.

6. If taking part not through photography- how did the pupil find the experience of taking part this way?

7. Ask the pupil to complete the consent form for photograph sharing or to indicate if there is any information they would not like to have shared with school staff.

8. The pupil should speak to the SENCO if they are upset about anything after the interview. The findings will be outlined to them and there will be opportunities to provide feedback about these.

Guidelines for the 'Drawing the Ideal School' technique (Williams & Hanke, 2007)

1. Equipment needed: a black pen and answer booklet
2. Allow about an hour to complete the activity, perhaps with a short break if required.
3. Explain that I am going to be doing the writing today, acting as scribe.
4. Ask the pupil to make quick drawings or sketches (rather than detailed drawings) on the presented piece of paper. Reassure the pupil that it does not matter if an error is made.
5. Record exactly what the pupil says using their words.
6. If the pupil is anxious about drawing, either model stick people drawings first or just record the pupil's verbal responses.

7. Allow time for the pupil to process the requests- repeat/ reword/ simplify the questions if not understood.
8. Provide reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers or responses.
9. Provide encouragement and praise for the pupil's involvement with the activity.
10. Be sensitive about sharing the drawings with others, ask the child's permission and ensure that other adults understand that the child has trusted you in revealing such views, which must be respected.

Part 1: Drawing the kind of school you would like

Instructions:

Think about the kind of .... which would create a sense of belonging. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this................in the school. Tell me three things about this.

1. The school
2. The classroom
3. Breaktime
4. The children
5. The adults

Part 2: Drawing the kind of school you would not like

Instructions:

Think about the kind of .... which would not create a sense of belonging. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this................in the school. Tell me three things about this.

1. The school
2. The classroom
3. Breaktime
4. The children
5. The adults

Photography Interview

- Recap taking the photographs and the words that were given

- Spread photos onto the table and ask pupil to look over them

- Take out any that no longer want to discuss

- Which are the aspects of school that make you feel you belong here the most?

- What would you call these?

- Shall we talk about these in turn?

- What is it about these photos in particular?

- How do you feel when you see these photos?

- Which ones would you like to speak about next?

- What order would you put them in terms of aspects that make you feel you belong to school the most and aspects that make you feel you belong to school the least

- How could we change the aspects which aren't working so well?

- Is there anything you wish you had taken a picture of that you haven't?

- There are aspects of school I have noticed you haven't taken a picture of…….(Raise any broad areas from 'drawing the ideal school' technique not discussed).

APPENDIX 9: PROCESS OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS OUTLINED BY BRAUN & CLARKE (2006)

Phase of Analysis	Outline of Process	Outcome Criteria
1) Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcription of data as soon as possible after interview- initial thoughts noted, interesting aspects of data, ideas for potential codes. Reading and re- reading of each data to become familiar with depth and breadth of content, listening to interviews with above aims. Re- reading of entire data set before encoding started.	Verbatim transcripts of each interview which has been checked against tapes for accuracy. Initial thoughts from data noted. Familiarity with individual transcripts and the entire data set.
2) Generating initial codes	Breaking the text down to features that appear interesting. A code refers to 'the most basic segment or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.' (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). All data extracts coded and then collated together within each code.	Production of initial codes from the data. All codes in data set formed into a master list.
3) Searching for themes	Sort the different codes into potential themes and collate all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. Consider relationships between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes (e.g. main overarching themes and sub themes). Create a visual map of how the themes relate to each other and to support the analytical process. Create a 'miscellaneous' file for extracts that do not seem to fit with other codes or themes. Collate all the data extracts relevant to each potential theme.	Mind map of themes and sub themes. All extracts of data coded in relation to these.
4) Reviewing themes	Level 1: Read all collated data extracts for each theme and consider whether they form a coherent pattern. If not, consider whether the theme itself is problematic or whether	Data that coheres together meaningfully whilst there should be

		some of the data extracts do not fit there- in which case rework the theme, creating a new theme, add them to an existing theme or discard them from the analysis. Consider whether themes might collapse into each other or whether they need to be broken down into separate themes (think about Patton, 1990's dual criteria for judging categories- internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity) Level 2: Reread entire data set to explore a) whether the thematic map accurately reflects the meanings evident in the whole data set. Check validity of individual themes in relation to the data set. b) Code any additional data within themes that has been missed in earlier coding stages. If point a) not achieved, review and refine coding until satisfactory thematic map achieved. c) If identify potential new themes, start coding for these as well. These should be of interest and relevant (Steps 2-4 should be followed). Formulate a refined thematic map of the data set.	clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. Themes that are consistent with original data set. Reviewed and refined coding and thematic map. An understanding of the different themes, how they fit together and the overall story they tell about the data.
5)	Defining and naming themes	'Define and refine'- Further refine the themes that are to be presented for analysis and analyse the data within them. Identify any sub themes which are useful for giving structure to large and complex themes and demonstrating hierarchy of meaning within the data. Identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall). Determine what aspect of the data each theme captures. Revisit the collated data extracts for each theme and organise them into a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative. Consider how each theme fits into the broader overall 'story' that is being told about the data, in relation to the research question or questions to ensure not too much overlap between themes. Formulations of names which are concise, punchy and provide a sense of what the theme encapsulates.	Organised collated data extracts for each theme into accounts which identifies what is of interest about them and why. Ability to describe the scope and content of what each theme encapsulates.

| 6) Producing the report | Write up of the thematic analysis which tells the story of the data in a way which shows the strength and validity of the analysis.

Write up providing sufficient evidence of the themes within the data i.e. enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme.

Vivid examples or extracts which capture the essence of what is being written and are easily identifiable as an example of the issue.

Extracts embedded within analytic narrative and illustrates the story being told as well as going beyond description to make an argument in relation to research question. | The analysis (write up, including data extracts) provides "A concise, coherent, logical, non repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell- within and across themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.93) |

APPENDIX 10: ADDITIONAL THEMES AND SUBTHEMES WITHIN SCHOOL X AND Y

<u>Theme 2: Physical School Environment (School X)</u>

Subtheme: Maintenance of school surroundings

It was explained by a pupil that each class is involved in keeping the school tidy and picking up litter. Another pupil made reference in his interview to the school quickly fixing things within the school environment which appeared to provide reassurance to him. This pupil gave an example of this when he was cut and bruised running through a gap between a wall and some trees in the school grounds. The pupil did not realise he had injured himself to start with until he took his top off at top. He told his parents who recorded it within the communication book. This led to the area being boarded up until it was fixed.

Another pupil noted the importance of a clean, well painted classroom. Two pupils made reference to an attractive environment and the messages this provides, for example:

James: All these three..... These two are in the sixth form study centre. They are 3D so they come out at you. They are clay things that pupils made. I like them as they are really colourful, really nice, really nice design and also quite friendly. Nobody ones to be in a place just white wall, white wall, really blank, It shows creative spark in people. It's also good to admire people. If you see someone else achieving well you think why can't I do that? If everyone is kept in their own cage they can't express themselves, they can only be who other people want them to do.

Subtheme: Finding your way around school

Nearly half of the pupils commented that it was hard to remember all the new information in Year 7 and to be able to find your way around. One pupil felt that the reception area had helped him with this, recalling one time in particular he had gone there for help in finding the location of his lesson. Another felt the map which had been provided by the school in Year 7 was helpful.

Subtheme: Space for Reflection

One pupil liked having some areas within the school available for anyone to go to. One of these areas was a garden which provided quiet reflection:

James: Probably these two together. They are like quite quiet- the garden areas where you can sit down and relax. This one makes you feel quite nice and there are not a lot of people there (photo 8).

Interviewer: Who uses that area?

James: It's really an area for everyone, anyone can mingle there which is what I quite like.

Subtheme: Familiar Faces

One pupil referred to the concourse as 'the main meeting point of the school.' He explained the function of this area, including it is used on open evening, tuck shop and that it connects up different parts of the school. Although he noted it could get busy, this was not an issue for him. Another pupil felt this was a good area for mingling with all years particularly at wet playtimes.

Subtheme: New school building

The interviews were carried out prior to the pupils moving to a new school building on the site which was in the process of being built. One pupil seemed to be prepared for the move by the availability of plans of the new building. The pupils appeared excited about the new building, discussing a competition on offer which involved a prize of being able to see around the new school building:

James: The new school... the new school build. I like that, it makes me feel part of the school. It is always looking for new things, as much as the old school is very nice, it has artwork and everything. The new school will be a lot better for other people. I don't want to leave the old school but you have to accept that some people will want to go to the new school. You have to respect other people's decisions. You have to give, to receive. You have to give something back.

James: Yeah I won a tour to go around it. We did a competition in year 9 and I was one of the selected.

Interviewer: What's it like?

James: Really nice, really big, well set out. There are a lot more green areas as well. I think there will definitely be a lot more art within it as there is lots of space. There is lots of empty walls in there. Out with the old, in with the new although some should stay. That's the good thing about it, change can be for the better a lot of the time, but always keep something behind.

Theme 5: Effective Learning Conditions (School X)

Subtheme: Pupil characteristics

Almost all of the pupils (five) referred to the importance of adherence to school rules. These rules include pupils being obedient, working quietly in lessons, concentrating well to be able to learn, not making marks on furniture and not placing chewing gum under desks.

Subtheme: Teacher understanding of need

Four pupils referred to qualities which they liked within an ideal teacher, such as giving work advice and being able to keep control of the class. One pupil explained:

David: You need it to be strict but not too strict otherwise everyone well get in trouble for even just talking to a partner like I said back there. You need to be quite strict though otherwise the boys are just going to mess around so there is a balance.

Subtheme: Curriculum delivery

The use of technology within lessons was seen as engaging for two pupils, with one pupil looking forward to more of this within the new school building.

One pupil explained the best way for work to be presented for him is through lots of examples. Another pupil liked the experience of learning that was possible through school trips, for example to a cathedral when studying medieval history.

One pupil explained that for him to effectively learn, it was important for information to be presented in different ways:

James: Yeah….. you should see the religious education classroom... there is stuff everywhere. There are posters and other pupil's work, so if you don't understand the information you may understand it from this. Your friend might be able to explain it better than the teacher. You can see things through different people's eyes which helps you come to a conclusion of your own.

Interviewer: So it sounds like they give you information in lots of different ways in this school to help you understand.

James: Yeah for some people images are better than words or words are better than images. For others a text gives them all the information they need.

Interviewer: Which do you think works well for you?

James: Probably images or videos.

Interviewer: What do you think it is in particular about this type of learning?

James: It is basically the practical side of things I find interesting like drama and even D.T.

Subtheme: Ergonomics

One pupil explained that is important that the classroom plan is carefully considered, meaning that everyone is facing the teacher. One pupil took a photograph of his glasses and commented:

Ben: This one, these are my glasses. I am not saying it is affecting me now as I have an appointment now but whenever it is getting near the next test, I am always starting to get worse. If that becomes more of a problem I may need to sit at the front instead.

Subtheme: Learning sets

There was awareness amongst a few of the pupils about their subject sets. The focus was frequently on the possibility of moving between the sets which was possible through working hard. One pupil explained that, although one of his friends has autism which is more serious than his, it was still possible to be 'clever'. He felt this was evidenced by this pupil being in set 1 for most subjects, whereas he is mostly in set 2.

Theme 2: Physical School Environment (School Y)

Subtheme: Space for Reflection

Three pupils discussed needing 'reflection time' which could be found within the library. The act of being able to read and rest here was particularly highlighted:

Robert: 'I sometimes do that when I just don't want to speak to no one but I just read my book don't I.'

Subtheme: Familiar Faces

One pupil utilised the word 'comfortable', 'happy' and 'safe' in relation to certain photographs he had taken and how these areas made him feel. This included areas such as the library, reprographics, reception and the SENCO office. These areas, particularly the library and T room were frequented as the boys going there were seen to be 'nice', their friends were to be found her, the teachers were familiar and due to the functions that each of these rooms served.

Another pupil made reference to the garden as providing 'safety', away from bullies. He considered in his interview that this was the only part of the school that he liked.

Theme 5: Effective Learning Conditions (School Y)

Subtheme: Teacher understanding of need

Over half the pupils (three) discussed the qualities of a good teacher within lessons. For one pupil, the teacher makes it a good subject. The characteristics of the teacher would be that they are helpful and they would make lessons which are fun and enjoyable. Another pupil commented that his favourite teacher is always nice and doesn't shout. A third pupil noted that good teachers are kind and deal with pupils misbehaving strictly.

One of these pupils also felt that teachers could support you socially and it was acknowledged that adults may be doing this without you knowing:

Interviewer: Did the adults do anything, in terms of helping you to fit in?

Michael: They probably did but I just didn't realise they were doing it. You can't really stop bullying or nothing can you.

Interviewer: So sometimes the adults might be doing things that you don't' realise?

Michael: Yeah when you don't fit in, you don't fit in anymore, I am pretty lucky really.

Subtheme: Curriculum delivery

One pupil discussed liking the interactive parts of the classroom such as a smart board and speakers to play videos. These are useful in supporting his learning and are more engaging than listening to a teacher all the time. This pupil felt that these aspects were not used as much as they used to be.

A number of pupils discussed the importance of how the lesson is presented. One pupil explained that it was important to do a range of activities within a lesson, including talking, watching videos and writing. He acknowledged that he would put more effort into lessons that are more enjoyable.

Another commented that he enjoys more active lessons such as DT and science where things can be made and there is less writing. This same pupil also likes going on school trips such as to museums with one particular teacher. He elaborated that next year he will be doing more of the subjects he enjoys as he had been offered the opportunity to ASDAN. Although not knowing much about it yet, he was looking forward to finding out more.

One pupil discussed having the opportunity to learn outdoors within the school grounds was important to him. This consists of activities such as cleaning out the pond and planting seeds. There were opportunities to ask to go out of lessons into this area.

Subtheme: Ergonomics

Only 1 pupil discussed that it is important for the seats within the classroom to be comfortable.

Subtheme: Learning Sets

Three pupil discussed sets within his year for different subjects. One pupil explained that by achieving higher grades then it was possible to move up sets. Another pupil focused much more on how thinking he was in the bottom set formed part of his identity:

William: They are just people who ever are thick like me do that.

Interviewer: Thick like you?

William: I am in set 4 for everything, that's the worst set.

Interviewer: So you think you are with people in your groups for these subjects that you are saying 'thick.'

William: Some of them are smarter than me, but I am quite thick.

APPENDIX 11:SAMPLE PUPIL INTERVIEW CODING

Interviewer: You've been and taken pictures around the school, we have got your pictures.

Child: Yeah.

I: Which are the aspects of school that make you feel you belong here the most?

C: Quite a few of them are good.

I: This is the one you picked up first.

C: DT (photo 2).

I: What makes this good for you?

C: Just being able to make stuff and not always being in writing and being able to do stuff.

> Effective Learning Conditions- Different Learning Styles (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

I: Ok I see. So this is like a working, doing area.

C: Yeah.

I: And that's something that you quite like.

C: Yeah.

I: What have you been working on recently?

C: I made a headphone holder.

I: This is a successful area for you, we will come back to it in a bit. You also picked up this one second, 'welcome to the music department' (photo 3).

> Effective Learning Conditions- Different Learning Styles (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

C: I like music, because it's got all like apple mac's and you can make whatever you want. It's not writing, it's like playing whatever song you want. ......

> Effective Learning Conditions- Different Learning Styles (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

C: Yeah. That's one of my favourite teachers, Mr C. (photo 1) he does asc with us, we go out for different activities, we go camping, to the beach, to the royal air force museum, just getting out of the school.

> Effective Learning Conditions- Outdoor Learning (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

I: I haven't heard anything about that, no one else has talked about it with me

C: That's because only certain people can do it, Mr I chooses who does it.

I: How often do you go to these activities?

I: What makes him your favourite?

| Effective Learning Conditions- No shouting (Subtheme- Teacher Qualities) |

C: He is always nice, he doesn't shout at you when you do something wrong.

I: It sounds like he is quite approachable and isn't going to yell if you don't do things quite as you should have done them.

C: Yeah....

I: Which one would you like to talk about next?

C: That one, that's the garden (photo 8).

| Effective Learning- Outdoor Learning (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery) |

I: What's happening here?

C: There is a pond there, we are always cleaning it out, planting seeds, watering and just stuff like that. It's just somewhere to go in lessons instead of maths or something.....

I: There is nobody here at the moment in this picture

C: I think that was on sports day so everyone else was in a lesson or on the field.

I: How does it feel, is this quite typical of what it would look like?

C: Yeah.

I: So it is usually quite quiet anyway.

| Physical School Environment- Choice of lunchtime environment (Subtheme- Lunchtime Activities) |

C: During lunch and break, year 10 go there.

I: They can choose to come out here if they want?

C: Yeah.

I: What other photos are here?

| Physical School Environment- Recreational clubs (Subtheme- Extra Curricular Activities) |

C: That is a weights room down in P.E. which I can go to every Tuesday lunchtime if I want.

I: Is it a club or something?

C: Yeah it's a little club which only really year 10's can go to but because Mr C runs it on a Tuesday he lets us come.

I: So some of these things are slightly for older pupils. What's that like then?

C: I get someone in my year to come with me so I am not there on my own....

I: So we have talked about 5..... what about these ones around the outside?

C: That's RS. I don't like R.S. (photo 11) It's just so boring and the fact you have to take that instead of other subjects in Year 10. R.S. we won't really need in life unless you join in another religion and then it might come in handy.

I: It sounds to me that you are telling me that in a way it is not very useful or helpful.

C: Yeah.

I: You said you have to do that subject next year?

C: Yeah you have to do it.

I: The actual subject you feel is not necessarily very helpful or relevant to you. What about the way you learn?

C: Its always writing or looking in books, never anything fun as you can't really do anything fun with R.S.

I: So you feel like its writing, book reading all the time.

C: Yeah.

I: Could that be changed or made any more successful for you?

C: I don't think so because that's all it is. You can't really do that much.

I: These ones we have talked about. Which ones..

C: The library, I don't like the library (photo 9). It's always full of people and you can never go on the computers or anything...

I: There are computers but you are not able to go on them

C: You can go on them but its first come, first served and people rush to get there.

I: People rush to get to them so that means there might not be enough is it?

C: Yeah.

I: What would be a bit better if we could do something about it?

C: I don't know.

I: We can think about it a bit more later if there is anything else.

Educational Support- Choice of lunchtime environment (Subtheme- Group Support)

C: The P.D. room (photo 5), this is somewhere you can go at lunch.

I: This is somewhere you can go to…

C: My mates just go and sit down there at lunch and break and eat.

I: Do you choose to go there quite a lot?

C: Yeah.

Social Environment- Interest in area (Subtheme- Building Friendships)

I: What makes this area work for you?

C: Just being able to have my mates there.

Social Environment- Interest in area (Subtheme- Building Friendships)

I: Is there anything else that makes this a success?

C: Not really, nothing apart from that.

I: This has got lots of pupils in from different years? Are there any adults?

C: Yeah there is always a person who will sit there and watch what we are doing.

I: Is that ok with you?

C: Yeah I am fine with that.

Educational Environment- Good environment (Subtheme- Group Support: T-Room)

I: Could this be any better and work any more successfully?

C: Sometimes you eat in there but something there are some strict teachers that don't let you. There are some computers along the right there, but they never let you on them.

Non-Ideal Physical School Environment- Lunchtime Rules (Subtheme- Difficulties with lunchtime locations)

I: Sometimes you can't necessarily eat in there and sometimes you can't necessarily go on the computer.

C: You can sometimes eat depending on the teacher in there but you can never go on the computer.

Non Ideal Physical School Environment- Lunchtime Rules (Subtheme- Difficulties with lunchtime locations)

C: This one is science (photo 6). I like that as again it's not just sitting down and doing all writing. We do experiments and you can move around a bit.

I: It sounds like you are talking about having more variety in what you do... writing and experiments?

C: Yeah.

Effective Learning Conditions- Different Learning Styles (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

I: If we could compare science and R.S.....

C: With R.S. there isn't much you can do, it's just about learning about something, unless they take you out on trips or something which they never do.

Non Effective Learning Conditions- No school trips (Subtheme- Curriculum Delivery)

I: Overall, what do you think about coming to school?

C: I like going to it and seeing all my friends and doing certain subjects, but that's about all I like about school.

School Ethos- School purpose (Subtheme- School Philosophy)

I: Coming here, seeing your friends and doing some of these subjects here that we have talked about here.....you like that?

C: Yeah.

I: You have said that some things are working well for you and some things are making you feel.... We have said these are active, fun, whereas these ones are feeling a bit not so successful. What order would you put them in, in terms of aspects that make you feel you belong to school the most and aspects that make you feel you belong to school the least?

C:That would be the one I like the most (photo 1) then probably DT (photo 2). (puts them in a line)

C: These are the 3 I don't like (photos 9, 10, 11)....

I: If we were to add them to make most positive to the least...

C: Then it would be the library (photo 9) and drama (photo 10) then R.S. (photo 11)

I: Is there anything you wish you had taken a picture of that you haven't?

C: No.

I: There are aspects of school I have noticed you haven't taken a photo of.....

C: What?

I: There is 1 teacher...

C: Yeah and the rest are places.

I: Yeah. Had you thought about that?

C: Yeah there is only 1 teacher I actually like in this school. It's just the way I wanted to take them, like the library.

I: This is the best teacher for you?

C: Yeah.

I: And the others you don't?

> Non Effective Learning Conditions- Strict Teachers (Subtheme- Teacher qualities)

C: The others are all strict, make you do writing and are always giving out detentions.

I: What do detentions mean in this school?

C: You can have half an hour detention after school or anything.

I: So something after school you have to stay for.

C: Yeah.

I: What might mean you get a detention here?

> School Ethos- Characteristics of discipline (Subtheme- Discipline systems)

C: Like if you were missing around in class or didn't do any work in class you would get a detention.

I: Not doing work and messing around. If you messed around with this teacher here….

C: He wouldn't be so worried about it.

I: He would carry on would he?

> School Ethos- Characteristics of discipline (Subtheme- Discipline system)

C: No he wouldn't carry on, he would tell you to stop but he wouldn't give you a detention.

> School Ethos- Discipline use by teachers (Subtheme- Discipline system)

I: How could we change this which isn't working so well for you?

C: Well most teachers don't say stop, they just give you a detention...

I: Quite quickly?

C: Yeah.

I: Detention seems quite fast for some things?

C: Yeah.

> School Ethos- Discipline use by teachers (Subtheme- Discipline system)

I: If these other teachers could make things better, most successful and less like that.... What might they do?

C: Just not give out as many detentions, be easier.

School Ethos- Discipline use by teachers (Subtheme- Discipline system)

I: And the other points I have noticed..... we haven't got teachers, apart from the teacher at the end....and we haven't got any pupils either.

C: No. Many were at sports day so I wouldn't have really seen anyone or be able to find them.

I: In your ideal school, if you could change things, you are saying that teachers that aren't so strict, teachers that don't give out detentions would work well for you...

C: Yeah.

I: What about the pupils in your ideal school? What would they be like?

C: Don't know, my friends are normal people.

Social Environment- Characteristics of good friends (Subtheme- Understanding of Friendships)

I: Do you feel ok with the pupils that come here?

C: Yeah, most of them.

I: Some that aren't so... successful for you?

C: Yeah.

I: What are they doing?

Non Effective Learning Conditions- not getting on with some pupils (Subtheme- Pupil characteristics)

C: Just like always being annoying.... Just don't get along with them.

I: They might be annoying and you don't get along with them...

C: Yeah.

I: But then some of them, is that many?

C: No, it's not many,

I: Is there things they have done to you?

Non Effective Learning Conditions- not getting on with some pupils (Subtheme- Pupil characteristics)

C: No, no one has ever really said anything to me. They are just rude.

I: Rude about.....

C: I don't know.

I: That's not so good for you but there are some things that are working....So there are some children you do get on with?

C: Yeah.

I: What are they like?

C: My friends are just normal, they are just fun.

I: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about or anything you would like to say?

C: No, not really.

I: Are you happy with me to share the information with staff without saying which parts you said?

C: Yes I am.

I: If you have anything else that you want to talk about, or anything that has bothered you about this do talk to......................... about it in the office. Are you happy with everything we have done?

C: Yes.

I: Shall we stop the recording?

C: Ok.

APPENDIX 12: FOCUS GROUP SCHOOL STAFF INFORMATION (SCHOOL X)

School Role	Main Responsibilities (Including for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder)	Length of Time Worked in School
Additional Educational Needs Coordinator (AENCO)/English Teacher	Sorting out Interventions for SA and SA+ boys with ASD, MLD- particularly literacy tuition	12 years
Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	In class support for pupils particularly ASD, ADHD, Learning Difficulties	3.5 years
Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	In and out of class working with boys on the Autistic Spectrum and ADHD	15 years
Team Leader/Specialist ASD Teaching Assistant	Time divided between office work and in class support for a Year 11 student with Aspergers Syndrome	13 years
P.E. Teacher	Teaching PE and Games	6 years
Deputy Headteacher	School leadership, pupil pastoral care and teaching	30 years
Head of Sixth Form/SENCO	Strategic leadership of SEN, pastoral care for Yr 12 and 13 and teaching	11 years
Head of Year 7	Pastoral care for Year 7 boys, English teaching	6.5 years

APPENDIX 13: FOCUS GROUP SCHOOL STAFF INFORMATION(SCHOOL Y)

School Role	Main Responsibilities (Including for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder)	Length of Time Worked in School
Head of Year 7	Look after the wellbeing of Year 7 pupils and ensure they academically achieve	4 years
Drama Teacher/Year 11 Form Tutor	Teaching all Key Stage 3 pupils drama, technical theatre clubs including some ASD pupils	3.5 years
Higher Level Teaching Assistant	In and out of class working with boys on the Autistic Spectrum, ADHD etc.	6.5 years
Learning Support Assistant	Time divided between office work and in class support for a Year 11 student with Aspergers Syndrome	2 years
ICT Teacher/Year 9 Form Tutor	Teaching students in ICT and in tutor group (one with ASD)	2.5 years
Deputy Head of Year 9/Higher Level Teaching Assistant	Support in class and mentor students with ASD. Head of year duties for pupils with ASD	11 years
Vice Principal	Pastoral care for vulnerable students, health and safety and child protection	15 + years

APPENDIX 14: SCHOOL STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

'Inclusion of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in mainstream secondary schools within a London Borough: exploring the perspectives of pupils and educational staff' (School Staff Information Sheet)

This information sheet gives information about a project taking place in your school. Please can you read and sign the consent form if you are happy to be involved.

Research team
Educational Psychology Service/ ...... University:
Assistant Educational Psychologist   Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist

Social Communication Difficulty Service: Autistic Trust:
 Advisory Teachers   Family Service Manager

Contact: [Removed]

Background
There are an increasing number of children and young people being diagnosed with ASD. It is important to give young people with ASD a voice into what is successful for them at school and any barriers to their full participation, achievement and enjoyment.

Main aims of this project
1. Find out about the experiences of pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools.
2. Identify the key concerns and priorities for pupils with ASD in relation to their experiences of education.
3. Identify the way school staff ensure pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment.
4. Identify how barriers to learning and participation for pupils with ASD could be overcome.

Methods – pupil/student views

Different strategies were utilised in a one to one conversation between a researcher and an identified pupil about their school experiences. The strategies the pupils chose from included the taking of photographs, writing and drawing to supplement and facilitate the conversation.

Sample – staff views

- Range of staff members from within the school.
- Staff who give consent to take part.

Methods- staff views

The pupil interviews have been transcribed and analysed. A summary of the main points from the interviews are included on an accompanying sheet for you to look at just before the focus group. Staff members are being invited to take part in a focus group on 20th February at 10.30am in room 505. This will consist of discussing and reflecting on the findings as a group and to consider any potential ways forward in light of the information and discussions.

Time scale

The project started in December 2011 and will finish by summer 2012.

Ethical issues

The ethical codes of the British Psychological Society and the British Education Research Association have been followed throughout the research. Informed consent will be gained from each staff member taking part. Feedback about the findings and the opportunity to comment on them will be given to all pupils and staff members who take part. Dissemination will take place within the school at their discretion. Direct quotes will be anonymised in related reports.

APPENDIX 15: CONSENT FORM (SCHOOL STAFF)

Research Title

'Inclusion of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in mainstream secondary schools within a London Borough: exploring the perspectives of pupils and educational staff.'

Information

- ❖ I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can choose to withdraw at any time.

- ❖ I can refuse to answer a question.

- ❖ I have read the information sheet that accompanies this form.

- ❖ I understand my comments will be listened to and recorded. All recordings will be destroyed when the research is finished.

- ❖ The information will be presented in a report. This will be used within [Removed] to help support pupils with ASD. The name of the school will not be revealed and all information will be anonymised.

I have signed and printed my name underneath because I am happy to be a part of this project and all my questions have been answered. I can choose to leave the group anytime, even after I have signed this.

Staff Member (please print below)

Staff Member (please sign below)

APPENDIX 16: PLAN FOR FOCUS GROUP

Preparation- photos and statements, board to display them on, plain name badges, marker pen, highlighter pens, copies of consent forms and information sheets, staff sample information sheet to be completed, flip chart paper, biros, blu- tack, dictaphone and spare battery

Morning- get consent forms, pupil photos on memory stick, write ground rule headings on big piece of paper, stick up photos randomly, put blu tack on belonging and not belonging signs.

Introductions

- Good morning, thank you for coming.
- Personal Introduction- clarify my role which is as an Assistant Educational Psychologist in [Removed] and as a researcher conducting research as part of my doctorate in Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education, London.
- Others Introductions- name and position in school. Write name on badge. Include silent transcriber.
- Has everyone read information sheet in advance? If not, give out copies. Re- read section on ethics.
- Confirm consent forms signed by all and I have a copy.
- Explain that the staff sample information sheet will be coming around during quiet reflection time. Would appreciate this being completed by all. Please note your names will not appear within the research report.
- Explain that a report will be written based on pupil interview and the focus group. Quotes maybe used but will be anonymous. At the end on reflection if there are any parts you do not want appearing within the report, please let me know. Otherwise can email me within the next few weeks.

Plan for session

- 10.30- 10.50am Quiet reflection time. Look over summary of comments made by pupils. Individuals can make notes/ highlight comments if they want to.
- 10.50-11.50am Focused discussion as a group on a particular topic which is the definition of a focus group. Finish within this time, as appropriate. Please note the focus group is being recorded for the purposes of creating an anonymous transcript of the session. This will be destroyed after the research has been completed. Any quotes utilised will be anonymised within the research report.
- Do those timings work for everyone i.e. does anyone have to leave early?

Aims for the session
Explain background to the research and that there are 2 aims:
1. Identify the way school staff ensure pupils with ASD feel a sense of belonging within the school environment.
2. Identify how barriers to learning and participation for pupils with ASD could be overcome.

Summary of Pupil Interview Data

- Sample of pupils with ASD were identified who were on SEN register. These pupils were invited to take part in an individual semi structured interview which took place last term. Eight interviews took place in total- 1 pupil took part in 2 interviews. The interviews were open ended and did not pre-empt what the pupil vies should be. The interviews were transcribed and resulting data analysed into overarching themes (which are the subheadings) and then subthemes are within each of these (bullet points).
- Things to keep in mind- some information considers pupil's experiences of the current school and desires for the future, held within their views of what would be 'ideal' for them. This means that some information is not necessarily the current situation, but rather 'ideal' or 'non ideal'. Also information is what has been gained as a snap shot in time and could vary depending on the day that was chosen, pupils mood etc., nature of the sample- pupils with communication difficulties which may

affect the information gained although pupils chose methodology they felt comfortable with to reduce the chances of this.

- Benefits of this approach- rich data, in depth information from each pupil, pupils were able to raise the aspects they wanted to discuss e.g. through having chosen to take photographs around school,
- Limitations of the approach- small number of pupils, results cannot be generalised to all young people with ASD or even the wider school population of pupils with ASD.
- Give out pupil summary sheets- please note these are anonymised. Pupils gave consent for their comments to be feedback to school, with the proviso that names would not be attached to particular comments.

<u>Ground rules</u>

It is important for ground rules to be in place for a safe environment to be created. This allows people to feel comfortable to take part:

1. RESPECT e.g. Consider body language. Not necessary to raise hand to speak, but don't speak over each other. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
2. CONFIDENTIALITY e.g. individual pupils will not be named, do not discuss information or discussions with others after the group, pupil information sheets will be collected at end.
3. LISTEN e.g. listen actively, goal not to agree but to gainer a deeper understanding of the perspectives of pupils with ASD that come to school.
4. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE e.g. speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you"). Be careful not to invalidate somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience. Instead share your own story. Participate to the fullest of your ability

Is everyone in agreement with these rules?

Does anyone have any additional ground rules? (If someone proposes a ground rule, ask the others if they agree to it. If most do, add it to the list.

If we had more time together I would have preferred the group to generate the list.

(Once discussed, post where they can be seen on a wall so they are visible during the session)

Challenge the participants on the ground rules as necessary.

Consider that the ground rules are not maintaining the status quo by providing safety and comfort and therefore reducing learning taking place/ moving things forward.

<u>My role</u>

- To facilitate the discussion.

- I have prompt questions but there will also be an opportunity to bring things up yourselves.

<u>Format</u>

Part 1- stick up belonging and not belonging signs

a) Photographs- separate into aspects of school you feel will provide a sense of belonging for pupils and those that don't provide a sense of belonging. This activity to be completed as a group (5 minutes)

b) Photographs and comments- attach comments under the photographs and assign to the correct pile.

Part 2- Considering the photographs and summary of pupil information,

- What did you think about the findings?

  - o Prompt: What was as expected?

  - o Prompt: What surprised you?

- How did you feel about the findings?

  - o Prompt: What made you pleased?

  - o Prompt: What made you unhappy?

- What do you perceive as elements of your own or the school's practice which impact on the sense of belonging in school for pupils with ASD?

  - o Prompt: What promotes successful outcomes?

  - o Prompt: What is unhelpful practice?

- How has the information helped you understand the pupil needs?

  - o Prompt: What has been helpful?

  - o Prompt: What has been unhelpful?

- How do you think the information/ processes could be used by the school to enhance the school experience for pupils with ASD?

  - o Prompt: What particular aspects would you like to continue promoting due to this information?

  - o Prompt: What particular aspects would you like to change due to this information?

    - ▪ 'Who, what, where, when, why, how' of any changes.

- Do you want to raise any issues not already addressed?

- How did you find the process/ discussion?

<u>End</u>

- Thank everyone for coming and contributing.

- Remind group not to repeat information.

- Collect pupil information sheets.

APPENDIX 17: PUPIL CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY WITHIN EACH SCHOOL

	Photography	Photography/ Written Information	Verbal PCP Activity	Verbal PCP Activity with Drawing	Sentence Completion	Total
School X	4	0	3	0	0	7
School Y	3	1	1	0	0	5

Most of the pupils chose to utilise a visual medium to take part in the research, namely photography. Interestingly none of the pupils wanted to draw to convey their views within the PCP activity nor undertake the sentence completion task.