

*Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and
Adolescent Psychology*

Programme Director: Vivian Hill



Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

UCL Institute of Education

Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and
Adolescent Psychology

**Emotional Based School Avoidance: Exploring Staff and Pupil Voices on Provision in
Mainstream Schools**

Leet Sern Chian, Jeremy

DECLARATION

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



Word count: 35, 965 words

(Excluding abstract, impact statement, references, and appendices)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my participants for trusting me with your stories. Your support and enthusiasm have led to the completion of this research.

To my research supervisors, Dr Andrew Holliman and Dr Cynthia Pinto, thank you for your dedication and wisdom. I have learned so much from you two; words cannot describe my gratitude.

To my EP supervisors, Hannah, Karen, and Frances, thank you for inspiring me throughout this training.

To my friends and colleagues who have seen me through the many ups and downs, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To God and my family, thank you for being my rock and reason.

ABSTRACT

Persistent school absences in England have been on an upwards trend since 2018 (an approximate 1.3% increase, not counting pupils missing due to Covid-19). Current government data on absenteeism do not differentiate between the types of school refusers (DfE, 2011; UK Government, 2022c), leading to the view that pupils are truanting or missing school by choice. Given the recently increased attendance expectations for schools in England by the DfE (2022), a lack of understanding of emotional-based school avoidance (EBSA) may lead to a less caring ethos and more punitive punishments. Detrimentially, research has shown that when pupils' anxieties go unsupported, they are more likely to experience significant school difficulties (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Long-term, these can lead to higher risks of developing psychiatric disorders, alcohol and drug dependency, and social isolation in adulthood (Chou et al., 2006; Jaafar et al., 2013).

Recognising the importance of the environmental aspect surrounding pupils' lives, including school and adults (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), this study explores the views of school staff and pupils on EBSA provisions available in mainstream schools in Borough A (pseudonym). With the intent to form a more profound understanding of EBSA identification, assessment, and intervention practices, this study's findings directly support my employing local authority in developing policy and guidance for schools. In addition, the research extends existing knowledge on educational psychologists' current and prospective roles in supporting mainstream school EBSA initiatives. By adopting a qualitative research design, views of six mainstream school staff and seven school-aged pupils who are experiencing or have experienced EBSA were successfully elicited. School staff participants shared the facilitators and barriers to good mainstream school EBSA initiatives, and pupils shared what made a difference to or hindered their school experiences.

Findings were analysed using two methods: school staff interviews using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to capture common themes across schools, and pupil interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to capture lived experiences. Findings highlight the importance for schools to establish clear processes around EBSA, including those to identify, assess, and support pupils, alongside the importance of collaborative working with families and external partners. Furthermore, it reiterates pupils' desires for a positive school climate, and the impact of positive social relationships on their school experiences. Further implications of these findings for schools and educational psychologists are also discussed, to ensure that EBSA is managed well.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This research explores school-based EBSA provisions available in mainstream schools in a North London borough. Currently, there is a rich body of literature exploring EBSA from a medicalised perspective, with most research exploring the use of interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and its effectiveness in supporting children and young people (CYP) missing school due to anxiety and emotional factors (Maynard et al., 2015). However, few studies in England have explored the school-based EBSA practices, particularly in mainstream education supporting this group of CYP. Studies that have examined school-based practice have shown great success in understanding the facilitators and barriers to good practice; however, most have adopted a single-informant approach (exploring one perspective, e.g., pupil) or examined school practices in non-mainstream schools, such as alternative provisions or home education.

Whilst recognising that individual factors may serve as predisposing factors to the increased likelihood of developing EBSA in mainstream schools, this study focuses on the role and impact of schools and external agencies such as the educational psychology service (EPS) on CYP's school experiences. With the ongoing pandemic, it is even more essential for schools and adults working with CYP to understand their perspectives and find what can help them have better school experiences. Studies exploring the anxiety levels of CYP due to Covid-19 have shown that all pupil backgrounds in England are at increased risk of developing mental health difficulties when unsupported. Thus, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of preventative measures available in mainstream schools to mitigate the potential school difficulties that pupils may face.

This study found that mainstream schools have benefitted and enjoyed the collaborative work with the EPS, highlighting the responsibility and the impact of EPs in supporting CYP experiencing EBSA can grow in resilience to stay and reintegrate into school. As previous research has found, this research reiterates the contribution of EPs in supporting schools via consultation, training, and assessments. Furthermore, this research suggests that EPs are well-placed to advocate for systemic changes, using research to highlight areas of development that can contribute to the development of educational policies. To demonstrate the role of EPs, this paper includes a section highlighting the immediate next steps my employing EPS can take to make a difference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii-iv
Impact Statement	v-vi
Table of Contents	vii-xiii
List of Abbreviations	xiv-xvi
List of Tables and Diagrams	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research Topic.....	1
1.3 Reasons for Using the Term ‘EBSA’	2
1.4 School Attendance in England.....	3
1.5 EBSA and School Attendance.....	5
1.6 Research Context and Rationale.....	7
1.7 The Local Context.....	9
1.8 Contribution as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and Researcher.....	11

1.9 TEP Research in England on EBSA.....	13
1.10 Research Aims.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review	
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 How is EBSA Conceptualised in Research?	15
2.2.1 <i>History and Terminology</i>	15
2.2.2 <i>Definition and Conceptualisation of ‘EBSA’</i>	17
2.3 What EBSA Protective and Risk Factors are Found in Literature?	20
2.3.1 <i>Individual Factors</i>	20
2.3.2 <i>Family Factors</i>	25
2.3.3 <i>School Factors</i>	28
2.4 What are Current Identification Methods for EBSA?	33
2.4.1. <i>School assessments</i>	34
2.4.2 <i>Medical assessments</i>	34
2.4.3 <i>Educational and psychological assessments</i>	34
2.4.4 <i>Collaborative mental health assessments</i>	34
2.5 What Interventions are Found in EBSA Research?	34
2.5.1 <i>Individual and group approaches</i>	35
2.5.2 <i>School-based approaches</i>	36
2.6 Literature Impact on Research Questions.....	40
Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1 Introduction.....	42

3.2 Research Design and Philosophy	42
3.3 Impact of research philosophy on research features.....	44
3.3.1 <i>Research Design</i>	44
3.3.2 <i>Research Questions</i>	45
3.3.3 <i>Sample size, participant selection, and sampling method</i>	46
3.3.4 <i>Data Collection</i>	47
3.4 Recruitment process.....	49
3.5 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).....	51
3.6 Pilot Study.....	52
3.7 Data Analysis.....	53
3.7.1 <i>RTA to analyse school staff voices</i>	53
3.7.2 <i>IPA to analyse pupil voices</i>	54
3.8 Participant Introduction.....	56
3.8.1 <i>School staff participants descriptions</i>	56
3.8.2 <i>Pupil participants</i>	58
3.9 Quality Assessment of the Qualitative Research.....	69
3.9.1 <i>Researchers must be ‘sensitive to context’</i>	69
3.9.2 <i>Researchers must ensure ‘coherence and transparency’</i>	70
3.9.3 <i>Researchers must show ‘commitment and rigour’</i>	73
3.9.4 <i>Researchers must use findings to promote ‘impact and importance’</i>	73
3.10 Obtaining ethical consent	74

3.10.1	<i>Anonymity and confidentiality</i>	74
3.10.2	<i>Consent and Withdrawal</i>	74
3.10.3	<i>Safeguarding measures</i>	75
3.11	Conclusion.....	75

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1	Introduction.....	76
4.2	Findings that address RQ1: <i>How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?</i>	76
4.2.1	<i>Theme 1 – School identification methods</i>	77
4.2.2	<i>Theme 2 – School assessment methods</i>	79
4.2.3	<i>Reflections on findings for RQ1</i>	80
4.3	Findings to address RQ2: <i>What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?</i>	81
4.3.1	<i>EBSA practices supporting pupils to stay and reintegrate back to school (school staff views)</i>	82
4.3.2	<i>EBSA practices that made a difference to pupils (pupil views)</i>	87
4.4	Findings to address RQ3 – <i>What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?</i>	92
4.4.1	<i>Barriers encountered by school staff</i>	93
4.4.2	<i>Barriers encountered by pupils</i>	97

4.5 Chapter Summary.....	101
--------------------------	-----

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction.....	103
-----------------------	-----

5.2 <i>Research Question One: How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?</i>	103
--	-----

5.2.1 <i>Key Findings on Identification Methods</i>	103
---	-----

5.2.2 <i>Key Findings on Assessment Methods</i>	104
---	-----

5.2.3 <i>Reflections on RQ1 findings</i>	105
--	-----

5.3 <i>Research Question Two: What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?</i>	106
---	-----

5.3.1 <i>Schools embedding a whole-school approach in EBSA practices</i>	106
--	-----

5.3.2 <i>The importance of an inclusive school climate in EBSA initiatives</i>	108
--	-----

5.3.3 <i>Reflections on RQ2 findings</i>	110
--	-----

5.4 <i>Research Question Three: What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?</i>	110
---	-----

5.4.1 <i>Barriers at a systemic level</i>	110
---	-----

5.4.2 <i>Unprecedented barriers faced by schools (school staff views)</i>	112
---	-----

5.4.3 <i>Pupils finding the nature of the mainstream school environment difficult</i>	113
---	-----

5.4.4 <i>Impact of bullying and a lack of teacher mediation</i>	114
---	-----

5.4.5 <i>Reflections on RQ3 findings</i>	115
--	-----

5.5 Implications of Findings for EBSA Practices.....	115
--	-----

5.6 Conclusion.....	120
---------------------	-----

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction.....	121
6.2 Research Challenges Faced.....	121
6.3 Research Strengths.....	122
6.4 Research Limitations.....	123
6.5 Areas for Further Research.....	125
6.6 Next Steps.....	126
6.7 Conclusion comments.....	127
References.....	127-156
 Appendices	
Appendix A: Literature Search Process.....	157
Appendix B: Data Protection Registration.....	160
Appendix C: Ethical Approval Confirmation.....	162
Appendix D: Title Change Confirmation.....	163
Appendix E: School Invitation Email.....	165
Appendix F: Staff Information Sheet.....	166
Appendix G: Staff Consent Form.....	168
Appendix H: Parent Consent Email.....	170
Appendix I: Parent Information Sheet.....	171

Appendix J: Parent Consent.....	174
Appendix K: Pupil Information Sheet.....	176
Appendix L: Pupil Consent Form.....	180
Appendix M: Interview Schedule for School Staff.....	181
Appendix N: Interview Schedule for Pupil.....	184
Appendix O: Reflections Brought to Supervision.....	187
Appendix P: Data Analysis Steps for RTA and IPA.....	188
Appendix Q: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Scores.....	190
Appendix R: Staff Transcript Excerpt and Thematic Development.....	194
Appendix S: Pupil Transcript Excerpt.....	196
Appendix T: Thematic Associations to Participants.....	197
Appendix U: Research Timeline.....	206

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO	Attendance Officer
AP	Alternative Provision
APA	American Psychiatric Association
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BPS	British Psychological Society
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CYP	Children and Young people
DA	Discourse Analysis
DfE	Department for Education
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4 th edition
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5 th edition
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
EWS	Education Welfare Service
EBSA	Emotional Based School Avoidance
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education

GT	Grounded Theory
ICD-11	International Classification of Diseases, 11th revision
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IOE	Institute of Education
LA/LAs	Local Authority/Local Authorities
MHSTs	Mental Health Support Teams
NHS	National Health Service
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
RTA	Reflective Thematic Analysis
SR	School Refusal
SRB	School Refusal Behaviour
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SENDCO	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator
SA	Separation Anxiety
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SEND CoP	Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SAFE	Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UCL	University College London

UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

LIST OF TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

Tables

Table 1: *Background of school staff participants*

Table 2: *Background profile of pupil participants*

Table 3: *Literature list extract*

Diagrams

Diagram 1: *Thematic map for RQ1*

Diagram 2: *Thematic Map for RQ2*

Diagram 3: *Thematic Map for RQ3*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive outline of the research study. First, Section 1.2 introduces the research topic: ‘Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)’. Section 1.3 then explains why ‘EBSA’ was chosen as an object of study. Section 1.4 provides an overview of school attendance statistics in England, and Section 1.5 discuss the relationship between school attendance and EBSA. Section 1.6 states the rationale and context for this research. Section 1.7 provides further information on the local context of this research. In Section 1.8, I reflect upon my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and researcher. Section 1.9 will share current TEP literature on ESBA. Finally, Section 1.9 will state the research aims.

1.2 Research Topic

This research investigates the subject of EBSA, commonly referred to as ‘School Refusal (SR)’ in the literature. Educators and professionals working with children and young people (CYP) have used varied terminologies associated with EBSA (Torrens-Salemi, 2006, p. 56). Kearney (2003) asserts that the terminology is dependent on the user’s theoretical standpoint, which indicates their conceptualisation of SR.

In this research, EBSA refers to situations wherein pupils report high anxiety and emotional difficulties when asked to attend school. EBSA is not a diagnosable condition under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th revision (DSM-V) or the International Classification of Diseases, 11th revision (ICD-11). Thus, the label ‘EBSA’ and all associated terminologies should be used cautiously. Harpin (2015) states that labelling of this kind can lead to debilitating and adverse long-term impacts, as it can stigmatise pupils and

limits their opportunities. For this research, the term EBSA will not be used or regarded as a diagnosis, following recommendations by Sewell (2008). For this reason, descriptions such as ‘EBSA pupils’ or ‘Pupils with EBSA’ were rejected as they imply that EBSA is an innate, permanent, and non-separable condition. Instead, this research uses the phrase ‘Pupils experiencing EBSA’, indicating its temporary nature, which can improve with support.

1.3 Reasons for Using the Term ‘EBSA’

Introduced by the West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2022), the term ‘EBSA’ is one of many related terminologies of SR. Some other examples found in the literature are:

- ‘School avoidance’ (Berg et al., 1969)
- ‘School avoidance behaviour’ (Kearney & Silverman, 1990)
- ‘Chronic non-attendance’ (Lauchlan, 2003)
- ‘Extended school non-attendance’ (Pellegrini, 2007)
- ‘Anxiety-based school avoidance’ (Maric et al., 2013)

There are two reasons why EBSA is preferred. Firstly, it brings the ‘emotional’ factor to the fore of the discussion. The West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2022, p. 5) is careful to differentiate EBSA from truancy, defining it “as a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school” (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service, 2022, p. 3). Therefore, the term explicitly highlights the key aspect of ‘emotion’ affecting school attendance.

Secondly, this study explores the views of school staff and pupils within Borough A (pseudonym). In Borough A, the term EBSA refers to pupils who have poor attendance due to emotional factors, and this is the term used by the agencies within Local Authority A

(pseudonym), such as the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Therefore, EBSA was chosen to ensure consistency and familiarity.

1.4 School Attendance in England

This section provides an overview of school attendance requirements for pupils in England. CYP in England must stay in full-time education from the ages of five to 18 (United Kingdom (UK) Government, 2022a) since the introduction of the Education Act 1996 that entrusts parents with the legal duty to send their children to school, while failure to do so without authorised reasons can lead to legal sanctions (Department for Education (DfE), 2021). Whilst pupils are registered in school, they are expected to attend at least 90% of the academic year (DfE, 2021). Pupils who fail to meet these attendance requirements are regarded as ‘persistent absentees’ (DfE, 2015).

The latest data on pupil absences for the autumn of 2020-2021, published by the Office for National Statistics, showed that approximately 4.7% of pupils in England (all types of provision) are persistently missing school, showing a rising trend of 1.3% since 2018 (UK Government, 2022b). This data is exclusive of the absences due to Covid-19, where schools had strict quarantine measures in place (Covid-19 has led to a 7% increase in Autumn 2021 for overall absenteeism, but this has now dropped to 1.6%) (UK Government, 2022b).

To tackle this increase, the DfE (2021) has introduced new measures in the UK, aiming to motivate via raising awareness of the long-term impact of missing school. This report (DfE, 2021) highlights how missing even a few days a year can be detrimental to academic attainment (e.g., poorer general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades). Findings from the National Association of School Psychologists also suggest that pupils who miss school for extended periods are at higher risk of lower educational attainment (Wimmer, 2013).

Broadly, research has shown the impact of school absenteeism on life outcomes (e.g., Balfanz & Brynes, 2012; Kallio et al., 2016; Maeda & Heyne, 2019). For example, a longitudinal study in England that was carried out in two phases between 2004 and 2014, involving over 9,000 participants aged 13 (when the study began), found that CYP who persistently missed school were, by the age of 15, were more likely to claim state benefits when they were 18 (DfE, 2016). In addition, CYP are more vulnerable to developing psychiatric disorders, alcohol and drug dependency, and social isolation in adulthood (Chou et al., 2006; Jaafar et al., 2013).

In view of the increase of absenteeism in the UK, coupled with the adverse consequences of Covid-19, the DfE (2021) has introduced new protective measures to mitigate school absenteeism:

1. The government will provide funding to schools to support their most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and families.
2. The government has pledged to invest in two new programmes designed to support pupils at risk of joining gangs or committing crimes. For example, additional funding of £45 million assists the Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed (SAFE) programme to support pupils facing entrenched school attendance difficulties and school exclusion.
3. The government has extended support to the ongoing Virtual School initiative. A virtual school is not a physical school but a care and supervision system that provides care to pupils who are 'looked after' (pupils under the supervision and care of the LA).
4. The government pledged to increase its outreach to families, by investing in programmes such as 'Supporting Families', which aims to work preventatively with parents and pupils, at their homes before attendance difficulties emerge.

5. The government pledged to increase funding for mental health and well-being initiatives in schools and colleges to ensure there are adequate resources to support pupils experiencing social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs.

1.5 EBSA and School Attendance

Notably, while governmental agencies such as the DfE (2021) publish figures on pupil absences across the UK, there is currently no information on how EBSA is represented in the data. This is a complex task for several reasons. Firstly, schools across the UK have different definitions and thresholds for understanding school attendance, and this depends on the school's level of acceptance and tolerance towards factors related to SEMH (Wilson, 2012, p. 6). Context is vital to understanding EBSA, and the various local authorities (LA) and provisions have individual criteria for school attendance, making it difficult to precisely track its prevalence in schools (Witts & Houlihan, 2007, p. 384).

For example, many provisions across the UK allow for flexi-schooling, or access to a part-time schedule, to support pupils' school attendance (Elliot & Place, 2019; Maynard et al., 2015). Here, pupils agree to follow a set plan and are granted days off, which are considered authorised absences (DfE, 2021, p. 12). Moreover, in certain boroughs, such as Borough A, pupils may transfer to a 'medical' alternative provision (AP) where pupils can access learning temporarily until they are ready to return to their previous provider. The DfE (2013) defines APs as educational settings that provide education to CYP, who find it difficult to access mainstream education. Currently, data on the number of pupils granted such arrangements in the UK, who experience EBSA, is unavailable.

Secondly, in the UK, parents may opt for 'elective home education', meaning they take responsibility for educating their children at home (DfE, 2019). Parents report many reasons

for withdrawing their children, including SR. Once pupils are off the LA's school register, they no longer appear in school attendance data (DfE, 2019). At present, the data also does not reveal the number of pupils withdrawn due to EBSA difficulties. Finally, the unpredictable nature of the pandemic (e.g., school closures) has increased the complexity for schools to track attendance and has changed school processes for managing school attendance in some cases.

Despite the complexity of investigating the prevalence of EBSA, previous research has estimated that within the current national student population, 1-2% of pupils who miss school are experiencing emotional difficulties (Egger et al., 2003; Elliot, 1999; Gulliford & Miller, 2015; Heyne et al., 2004). Recent reports show that approximately 2-5% of school-aged pupils meet SR criteria (Kawsar et al., 2022).

Global studies exploring the age group for EBSA prevalence have found that secondary school pupils are at the highest risk (e.g., Gulliford & Miller, 2015; Havik et al., 2015; Kearney, 2008; Stickney & Miltenberger, 1998). González et al.'s (2016) study examined 1,685 pupils in Spain to find that anxiety-related school avoidance was more common in high school (secondary) pupils, in comparison to lower school (primary). In Stickney and Miltenberger's (1998) study of 288 American schools, with a mix of 13-grade levels (all primary and secondary levels), sample participants for pupils missing school due to emotional difficulties were between the ages of 13 to 17. Similarly, a large-scale Norwegian study (N=5465) carried out by Havik et al. (2015) also suggested that at least one pupil per class of secondary school pupils (aged 11 to 15) avoided school due to emotional difficulties.

The reason for this prevalence in older age groups may be due to increased academic demands (Harter et al., 1992; Pascoe et al., 2020), social and peer pressure (Malcolm et al., 2003), and changes in school climate and environment (Battisich et al., 1995) leading to higher anxiety and stress in secondary school pupils. Furthermore, Malcolm's (2003) study examined 14

secondary schools and found that bullying and social exclusion occurred more often in secondary education and is a predictor of EBSA. Studies on secondary school transition have also pointed out the detrimental effects of poor transitions, leading to low school motivation and poor engagement (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Evans et al., 2018).

The relation between EBSA and gender is still an area ripe for further research. Kearney (1995) contends that female students are more likely to miss school due to emotional difficulties than male students. However, more recent literature has debunked Kearney's (1995) claim, suggesting it affects both male and female students equally (King et al., 1997; King & Bernstein, 2001; Witts & Houlihan, 2007). González et al.'s (2016) study found no significant differences between male and female students regarding anxiety levels. Overall, it is clear that finding the prevalence of EBSA in England's school community is a complex issue and can occur to any pupil. Further research on EBSA prevalence would lead to a better understanding of the associated demographic factors.

1.6 Research Context and Rationale

As a TEP, one of my first casework at my employing LA involved an EBSA case. I was curious to understand EBSA better and the role educational psychologists (EPs) play in mainstream schools to support EBSA. I, therefore, expressed interest to my placement supervisor and principal educational psychologist (PEP) in joining the local authority's EBSA working group, which consisted of a network of professionals (e.g., nurses, clinical psychologists, attendance officers (AO), well-being leads). This professional network group meets every six weeks to discuss and update EBSA developments across the LA. My employing LA's vision is consistent with recommendations by the West Sussex EPS (2022), which values multi-agency collaboration in supporting schools with EBSA, which Heyne et al. (2019) have highlighted as a critical feature of effective practice to reduce EBSA.

Following in-depth conversations with members of the working group, it was decided that research to promote the 'voices' of relevant stakeholders would align with and support the LA's ethos and initiatives. Broader literature on school absenteeism suggests the impact of stakeholder voices. For example, Wilkins (2008) interviewed pupils with school absenteeism issues and found that eliciting their voices allowed for an increased understanding of their needs in school. Similarly, Gregory and Purcell (2014) found that pupils' voices and their families helped their EPS identify any protective and risk factors. Recently, Dannow et al. (2020) elicited the views of pupils and their parents, and found that school factors played a prominent role in SR. Other EP research has also shared positive outcomes from obtaining the views and voices of stakeholders, such as gaining a deeper understanding of the facilitators and barriers to school outcomes (Finning et al., 2020; Kljakovic & Kelly, 2019; Preece & Howley, 2018).

In my LA, the aim is to adopt a preventative approach to EBSA. The professionals I met valued an increased understanding of current school-based systems within the LA. However, the LA has not yet developed an EBSA guidance document for schools due to a lack of information on the current support practices. From reading the literature on EBSA in England, only Archer et al.'s (2003) research explored the methods of identification to a large-scale extent. As this study takes a holistic view and approach, EBSA is not regarded as a within-child condition. Instead, it explores the ecosystem's stakeholders and factors that shape pupil experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that a pupil's experience is shaped by the interrelated influences surrounding them. School staff voices are valued as literature has suggested the crucial role of schools on pupil school experiences (Thambirajah et al., 2008; Waters et al., 2021).

With the ongoing pandemic, it is even more essential for schools and adults working with CYP to understand their perspectives and find what can help them have better school experiences.

Waters et al.'s (2021) study examined 404 pupils, aged 13 to 18, and found that even during the pandemic, pupils could cope with stressful situations and develop stress-related growth if they had good school support.

Currently, much intervention has approached EBSA from a medicalised perspective, with the most common intervention being cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (Maynard et al., 2015). Evidence supports the positive effects of individual and family therapy using CBT to reduce school refusal (Elliot & Place, 2019; Ingul et al., 2019), but little research has explored how the fundamentals of CBT can be integrated into whole-school practice. This research acknowledges the positives of using a medical model but rejects the idea that EBSA experiences can be changed without considering the 'environmental' factor surrounding CYP. In the next section, I will first consider the role of EPs using the bio-ecological model.

1.7 The Local Context

Participants of this study are pupils, and school staff from schools in a North London borough referred to as Borough A (pseudonym). According to the latest state of equalities report published by Local Authority A (pseudonym), the borough prides itself on being a diverse community, with people from all ethnic, cultural, religious, and SES backgrounds (Local Authority A, 2021). This report also documented survey findings, which show 91% of residents voted that they enjoyed living in Borough A, and 92% of people from different ethnicities and backgrounds voted that they get along with one another (Local Authority A, 2021). Approximately half of the borough's population is 'White British', with 'Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)' coming second to make up one-third of the total population (Local Authority A, 2021).

The land area is ranked as one of London's smallest, and the population is large in relation to other London boroughs, making it one of the most densely populated boroughs in England (Local Authority A, 2021). Data from the DfE (2022a) shows that 44% of pupils in primary education and 64% in secondary education in Borough A meet the threshold to receive the Pupil Premium. Statistics relating to CYP show that a high percentage (almost 30%) of individuals under the age of 16 live in economically disadvantaged homes (Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, 2019). Regarding special educational needs, data on pupils identified with SEND is approximately 4% higher than the national average (Local Authority A, 2021).

As of 2019, the borough offers a range of primary and secondary mainstream schools, special schools, and pupil referral units (UK Government, 2022c). A unique feature of this borough is the 'medical' AP which temporarily supports pupils with SEMH needs until they are ready to return to their previous provider. Based on a school review by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee in 2018/2019 (Local Authority A, 2020), no pupils were excluded during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, data shows that while the number of pupils who received permanent exclusions in secondary schools was reduced by one-tenth (Local Authority A, 2020), the percentage of pupils excluded in Borough A is two times greater than the national average (UK Government, 2022b).

Concerning school attendance, Local Authority A can impose a monetary penalty on parents who fail to ensure that their child regularly attends and is on time, without the opportunity to appeal (UK Government, 2022b). School attendance data is undifferentiated, with no available reference to EBSA.

The national average of persistent absenteeism in mainstream schools in England for the academic year 2018/2019 was 8.2% of primary and 13.7% of secondary pupils (UK

Government, 2022c). In Borough A, 11.1% of mainstream primary pupils and 12.5% of mainstream secondary pupils are persistently absent from school (UK Government, 2022c). Based on this data, Borough A's data for persistent primary school absences is poorer than the national average. While the data for persistent secondary absences shows that Borough A is better than the national average, it is worth noting that this does not include special schools and specialist/alternative provisions, which many pupils currently attend. Several boroughs across the country may not have these provisions; thus, pupils who refuse school may not be reflected in the data for mainstream persistent absentees.

1.8 Contribution as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and Researcher

With Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) bioecological systems theory, I can reflect on my responsibility as a TEP and researcher on multiple levels. The implications are discussed below:

1.8.1 *Microsystem* (most immediate environment): TEPs work with all the stakeholders around CYP, and these involve school staff, professionals, families, and pupils themselves. TEPs have a statutory duty to consider the views, experiences, desires, and hopes of CYP under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SEND CoP) (DfE, 2015). This research promotes 'pupil voices', and this has been associated with benefits such as an increased sense of connectedness, belonging, and relatedness, which are all vital for school reintegration (e.g., Dickins & Williams, 2017; Karlsen & Ohna, 2021; Woolfson et al., 2006; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007).

Since school practices and systems are designed for pupils, their views and experiences must be at the forefront. Pupils have statutory rights to be heard under Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children and Families Act 2014 (DfE, 2015, p. 12). As the causes and experiences of EBSA are individual to each CYP, it is

crucial to consider their narratives and the root of their emotional difficulties when supporting them. This research will also allow CYP to be heard without simply assuming their teachers' and parents' views as a proxy for theirs (DfE, 2015, p. 22).

Another significant element of this research is to elicit the views of school staff. Akin to the benefits of raising 'pupil voices', the literature has shown the advantages of increasing 'school staff voices'. For example, when school staff are included in educational research, their views and experiences have enabled in-depth reflection on their personal and professional practices, which are pivotal for professional competence and development (Leat et al., 2015; Timperley & Parr, 2007).

1.8.2 Mesosystem: This layer involves the connections between the microsystems. TEPs can use this research to help pupils and those working with them to gather a holistic understanding of EBSA and its impacts on learning and development. I will adopt a scientist-practitioner approach to report the study's findings, whereby literature will inform the data interpretation. All participants will receive a research brief that outlines the essential findings and how their input will be used. Readers (including educational practitioners, schools, pupils, and their parents) will have access to this thesis, provided it meets the required publication standard.

1.8.3 Exosystem: According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the exosystem involves settings that do not involve pupils directly, such as the LA. EPs, including TEPs in LAs, work in a multi-agency model; professionals collaborate to ensure that the support given to schools, pupils, and their families is fit for purpose and of a high standard. Research findings may inform the LA and schools of current knowledge on mainstream school systems, thus adding value to future initiatives and plans to support pupils experiencing EBSA in mainstream education. As an active member of a multi-professional EBSA working group, my findings will directly support and bring value to developing an early-identification referral pathway for schools within the

borough. Other TEPs (e.g., Browne, 2018; Shilvock, 2010) have used their theses on SR to add to EP literature.

1.8.4 Macrosystem: This layer involves broader aspects, such as culture, laws, and values (Berk, 2000). The research aims to increase understanding of pupils experiencing EBSA and the mainstream school systems that support or hinder them from attending school. EPs are well-placed to advocate for systemic changes, such as contributing to and developing educational policies (Farrell et al., 2006; Yavuz, 2016), which is also one of this study's aims.

1.9 TEP Research in England on EBSA

When reading previous TEP research on this subject, it emerged that many qualitative researchers adopted a single-informant approach (exploring one perspective, e.g., pupil) (e.g., Myhill, 2017; Shilvock, 2010). Across these studies, a key takeaway is the importance of capturing the voices of stakeholders (e.g., parents, pupils) to best understand EBSA in mainstream education.

Literature that examined school practices in non-mainstream schools, such as alternative provisions or home education (e.g., Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Kljakovic & Kelly, 2019; Preece & Howley, 2018), has also found success in eliciting the views and experiences of pupils refusing school, as well as those of the stakeholders working with them which Flutter and Ruddock (2004) describe as an intervention in its own stead. While being critical of the sampling methods, the recommendations suggested by these studies provide valuable insight as to how to support EBSA, while also iterating the importance of preventative work in school reintegration.

1.10 Research Aims

This research hopes to develop a deeper understanding of mainstream school processes, including methods of identification and assessment of EBSA. In addition, it aims to understand the facilitators and barriers to good mainstream EBSA practices to ensure my employing LA can plan 'fit for purpose' EBSA initiatives. As with previous TEP research that has found success in promoting stakeholder voices around EBSA, this research hopes to increase pupil and staff voices, which fulfils the remit of EPs. Finally, this research aims to understand educational psychologists' current and potential role supporting schools with EBSA.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Mertens (1998, p. 90), a literature review provides the foundation of a thesis, as it provides context and rationale for the study. For a detailed overview of the literature search process and criteria taken for this research, refer to Appendix A. Sections 2.2 through to 2.5 will explore four main questions, to provide an overview of EBSA:

1. How is EBSA conceptualised in research?
2. What are the protective and risk factors of EBSA found in literature?
3. What are the current identification methods for EBSA?
4. What EBSA interventions are found in literature?

Finally, Section 2.6 will state the impact of the literature on the research questions.

2.2 How is EBSA Conceptualised in Research?

2.2.1 *History and Terminology*

In the early 1930s, Broadwin referred to pupils who persistently miss school as “school refusers” (Broadwin, 1932, p. 253). Using a psychodynamic lens, Broadwin was interested in children’s experiences at the ‘psychosexual’ stage, and he later reported that difficulties during that stage were a key predictor of school attendance (Broadwin, 1932). In the early 1940s, Johnson et al. (1941) established links between phobic related behaviours and separation anxiety and their impact on school attendance (Johnson et al., 1941, p. 708; Johnson, 1957; Kearney & Silverman, 1990).

Studies in the late 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Hersov, 1960; Sperling, 1967) posited associations between school refusers and psychosomatic experiences. For example, Hersov’s (1960) study

found that pupils who refused to attend school experienced bodily discomforts, such as episodes of vomiting, nausea, headaches, and stomach pain. Similarly, Sperling's (1967) 'school phobic' patients experienced significant breathing problems when attending school. This inability to attend school was considered an inherent problem until Waldfogel et al. (1957) highlighted the role of 'school' in precipitating and perpetuating school phobic symptoms. Kennedy (1965) raised the complexity of school absenteeism by suggesting that there are two types: Type 1 has an 'acute' onset, which does not occur due to the home environment, whereas Type 2 with a 'chronic' onset, may be caused or exacerbated by familial difficulties. Kennedy's research puts the role of the family in school absenteeism in the foreground.

Wilson et al. (2008, p. 3) submit that since Tylerman proposed the term "truants" in 1968 to refer to pupils who miss school without parental consent, many researchers have viewed SR as 'truancy behaviour' (e.g., Galloway, 1983; Reid, 2002), and this truancy is closely associated with delinquency (e.g., Berg et al., 1969; Elliot, 1999; Galloway, 1983; Lauchlan, 2003). Galloway (1983) believes that some truants exhibit 'anti-social behaviour', and their parents do not know of their school absences, further arguing that truancy occurs on a continuum and can either be short or long-term.

In the 1990s, Kearney was keen to discover children's motivation for missing school and used the term 'school refusal behaviour (SRB)' to describe these pupils (Kearney, 1995; King et al., 1997; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991). Kearney et al. (1995) introduced a behaviourist model for understanding school avoidance, suggesting that school phobia was the culmination of learned behaviour. This behaviourist stance is rooted in identifying the causes of school attendance issues (Kearney & Silverman, 1995). Kearney et al. (1995) identified four possible reasons for SR:

- Pupils may miss school if it brings up negative and uncomfortable feelings.

- Pupils may avoid school if they cannot cope with its demands (e.g., academic, social, physical space). Missing school alleviates the stresses it induces.
- Pupils may have a history of separation anxiety, making it difficult to detach from their caregivers.
- Pupils may be missing school to gain attention from others or access a preferred activity (e.g., staying at home to play games).

It is worth noting that these suggestions do not distinguish between different types of school refusers (Egger et al., 2003; Heyne et al., 2016). In the 2000s, literature changed focus to the ‘emotional’ aspect of pupils missing school, which is not covered by earlier truancy conceptualisations (Lauchlan, 2003). Kearney et al. (2010) suggest that SR can be differentiated from ‘truancy’. While Berg et al. (1996) posit that SR and truancy can co-exist, this is rare. Studies covering the aetiology of SR or ‘school avoidance’ emphasise that anxiety and emotional stress around school experiences play a primary role (Elliot, 1999; Maynard et al., 2015).

2.2.2. Definition and Conceptualisation of ‘EBSA’

As highlighted in Sections 1.2 and 1.3, EBSA is not a diagnosable condition under the DSM-V and ICD-11. There is no singular cause for SR or EBSA in this research. West Sussex EPS (2022) suggests the causes of EBSA is usually multi-factored and varies for every pupil. Thus, the use of the term SR or EBSA can be ambiguous due to the extent of homogeneity between pupils.

While recognising the varying factors leading to SR for each child, Thambirajah et al. (2008) stress the importance of finding key commonalities of pupils identified with SR to ensure that all stakeholders can support pupils by establishing systemic and direct and targeted preventative approaches and interventions. In this research, while EBSA is the term chosen to

describe a homogenous group with the ‘emotional’ aspect being its core, it is based on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of current SR literature. Pivotaly, it does not imply that the causes for EBSA are the same; instead, it regards all lived experiences as personal. Section 2.3 explores the literature on the potential risk and protective factors associated with EBSA.

Based on the literature found, the operationalisation and conceptualisation of EBSA and related terminologies have mainly been adapted from Berg et al.’s (1969) conceptualisation of ‘School Phobia’, as a differentiation to truancy. Berg et al. (1969) propose five criteria that pupils with School Phobia meet:

- The pupil is reluctant or refuses to attend school. This can be temporary but more often occurs for an extended period.
- The pupil stays home during school hours, not concealing their absence; their parents are aware.
- The pupil experiences emotional distress and displays highly elevated emotions. For example, they may feel extreme unhappiness, mood disturbances, fearfulness, etc., and can also experience unexplained physical discomfort.
- The above symptoms alongside SR are commonly seen in pupils with anti-social tendencies.
- Parents must have invested ‘reasonable’ efforts to help their child to attend school since noticing the issue.

More recent operationalisation of SR has also drawn upon Berg et al.’s (1969) selection criteria. For example, Heyne et al. (2011) and Maric et al. (2013) suggest the following criteria:

- Pupil displays attendance difficulties for at least two weeks (attendance record below 80%). This does not include legitimate and valid reasons for absences.

- Pupil has an anxiety disorder recognised in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 1994). However, this does not include trauma-related (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder) and obsessive-compulsive disorders.
- As in Berg's (1969) criteria, a pupil's parents must know about their whereabouts when they miss school.
- Pupil does not have severe conduct disorder, which is associated with truancy and is therefore clearly differentiated from SR.
- Parents must demonstrate that they are committed to helping their child reintegrate into school to full attendance.

The West Sussex EPS (2022) offers comprehensive advice for professionals, schools, and parents in a guidance document titled 'EBSA: Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies'. This lists the following signs and indicators for parents and professionals to observe:

- Persistent and prolonged school absences
- A reluctance to leave home for school
- Low participation in school activities
- Showing high levels of anxiety and excessive worrying
- Signs of physical changes (e.g., feeling sick) and cognitive difficulties (e.g., poor attention and concentration)

When comparing previous operationalisation of EBSA in literature, commonalities include:

- Low school attendance
- Signs of emotional and psychological distress when asked to attend school
- Poor participation in school
- High levels of anxiety leading to somatic physical challenges

However, criteria pertaining to mental health diagnoses were included differently. For this research, EBSA refers to situations wherein pupils report high anxiety and emotional difficulties when asked to attend school and the inclusion criteria will be highlighted in Section 3.3.

2.3 What EBSA Protective and Risk Factors are Found in Literature?

Malcolm et al. (2003) carried out research involving interviews and questionnaires with over 750 pupils, families, school staff, and professionals in local authorities in England. Varying reasons for pupil absenteeism were found; families and pupils attributed absenteeism to school-related factors, while schools and professionals attributed it to familial factors (Malcolm et al., 2003). The majority stance in EBSA literature is that school absenteeism does not occur in isolation but rather has interrelating factors (Berends & Diest, 2014; Ingul et al., 2012; Kearney, 2008; Thambirajah et al., 2008; West Sussex EPS, 2022). Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) bioecological systems theory asserts that the key to better understanding these experiences is to explore how the different systems and factors interact. This section discusses the individual, family, and school elements that act as protective and risk factors for EBSA.

2.3.1 Individual Factors

The bioecological systems theory suggests that personal and individual-level characteristics such as age and gender can influence their experiences with the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Individual factors refer to pupils' attributes, attitudes, and characteristics (Kearney, 2008).

a. Gender, social class, and ethnicity

Research suggests that male and female pupils are equally susceptible to school absenteeism (Berg, 1996; Kawsar et al., 2022). Regarding social class, some studies contend that a family's socioeconomic status (SES) is a predictor of school attendance (e.g., Devenney & O'Toole,

2021; Kallio et al., 2016; Ready, 2010; Smerillo et al., 2018). Sosu et al.'s (2021) systematic review examined 55 international journal articles and found a small positive correlation between SES and school absenteeism. In addition, the study suggested that data points that measure SES are usually derived from school-level criteria (e.g., child on free school meals) and that SES is a more significant predictor in low- to middle-income countries.

The latest data published by the UK Government (2022b) on race and absences suggest that Irish traveller pupils are the largest segment to miss school, at 18%, with the lowest being of Chinese ethnicity, at 0.4%. However, as pointed out in Section 1.5, government data does not reveal whether pupil absences were related to truancy or EBSA. Studies in the United States (US) found race to be an explicit predictor for SR; for example, Randa and Wilcox's (2010) study reported that US pupils of non-White ethnicities have a higher likelihood of 'school avoidance'.

b. Associated Psychiatric Disorders

i. Anxiety

Thambirajah et al. (2008) point out the spiral effect of anxiety causing pupils to get into a cycle of feeling anxious, thereby missing more and more school. Knight and Depue (2019, p. 2) define anxiety as a “prolonged state of apprehension”, which occurs when an individual is faced with unpredictability and uncertainty. Adwas et al. (2019) discuss the aetiology of anxiety and its impact on the central nervous system, as it can cause restlessness, fatigue, inattention, and tension in the body. Anxiety is a familiar feeling for many pupils, especially during phases of heightened academic demands (West Sussex EPS, 2022). However, prolonged high anxiety levels can affect a pupil's functioning at school (Heyne, 2006).

Research has found links between anxiety disorders and SR (Inglés et al., 2015; Kawsar et al., 2022). Studies estimate that anxiety occurs in approximately 7-28% of children aged 6 to 12 (Reilly, 2015; Thompson et al., 2013). This percentage may now be higher; an ongoing longitudinal large-scale study (N=3570) in England, begun in 2017 by the National Health Service (NHS), found that participants of all ages (2-19 years old at the start of the study) gave questionnaire results indicating an increase in mental health difficulties (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021). In addition, female pupils have reported feeling more anxious when in school (Bakhla et al., 2013; Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2013).

Anxiety may precipitate and/or perpetuate school difficulties (West Sussex EPS, 2022). When pupils cannot cope with school anxiety, their natural response is to avoid school, which lessens their emotional, psychological, and physiological discomfort (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Finning et al.'s (2020) study discovered that most pupils who identified as school refusing had also reported anxiety. Similarly, other researchers (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Chorpita et al., 1996; Egger et al., 2003) have foregrounded anxiety's role in school attendance.

To find the root of anxiety around school, some studies have suggested possible causes. For example, research (e.g., Bernal-Morales et al., 2015; Pascoe et al., 2020) has shown that pupils' anxiety increases with academic-related stressors they may be exposed to. Elevated pressure makes pupils more likely to avoid tasks that induce more stress, such as attending school (Mychailyszyn et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2013). Uncontrollable anxiety can lead to low self-confidence (Pickering et al., 2019) and can even impair day-to-day life (e.g., sleep) (Owens et al., 2014).

ii. Separation Anxiety (SA)

SR has historically been associated with separation anxiety (SA) (Atkinson et al., 1999; Doobay, 2008; Hannah et al., 1999; Kahn & Nursten, 1962; Pini et al., 2014). Children with

SA experience intense fear and panic attacks when separated from their caregivers (Hannah et al., 1999). Berstein and Feriante (2020) state that SA is different from normal anxiety in that it occurs when the child anticipates and experiences a separation from an individual with whom they have formed a strong attachment. In a study by Reilly (2015), approximately 75% of pupils identified as having SA showed signs of refusing school. Similarly, Masi et al.'s (2001) findings reported that about 70-80% of pupils with SA miss school. Likewise, Egger et al.'s (2003) US study examined children aged 9 to 16 for over eight years and suggested SA as a predictor of EBSA.

iii. Other associated depressive disorders

Depression is another risk factor for SR (Kearney, 2008a), and studies have shown that pupils with depressive disorders, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), can display SRB (Fremont, 2003; Kawsar et al., 2022; McShane & Walter, 2001).

As early as the 1950s, Campbell (1955) publicised links between SR and depression, his studies showing that approximately 75% of the children who exhibited SR also showed symptoms of depression (e.g., crying, inability to function in school). These results align with those of Davidson (1961), who found that of the 30 pupils in the sample who chronically missed school, 77% met the criteria of that era for depression. Kearney (1993, p. 271) reviewed seven studies that examined the associations between depression and SR behaviour and found a comorbidity rate of approximately 31.4%. Over eight years, Egger et al. (2003) analysed the profiles of 1422 pupils identified with SR aged 9 to 16 and found that 13.95% met the criteria for depression. Finning et al. (2018) carried out a more recent systematic review, which examined 19 cross-sectional studies, including two meta-analyses across six countries, and found a small to moderately positive correlation between school absenteeism and depression.

iv. Association with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Research has pointed out the associations between special educational needs (SEN) and EBSA (Finning et al., 2020), and more specifically, one developmental condition that has been referenced in EBSA literature is the Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). ASC, also commonly referred to in the literature as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), refers to a “heterogeneous group” of pupils born with a neuro-developmental condition, which has the core characteristics associated with difficulties such as social communication and interaction (Munkhaugen et al., 2017, p. 32). The APA (2013) stated that the severity of ASD in pupils might vary, but common behaviours displayed are repetitive and restrictive patterns in their everyday lives. Pupils with ASC experience difficulties with sensory processing (e.g., busy corridors, large buildings), making the school environment ‘unpredictable’ and overwhelming (West Sussex EPS, 2022, p. 4).

Bouchard and Berg (2017) found that literature often reports that SEN pupils have poorer mainstream school experiences. Furthermore, Krezmien et al. (2017) suggest that pupils with ASC are at higher risk of missing school due to difficulty meeting their school’s expectations. In line with this, Adams (2021) reported that pupils with ASC are approximately three times more likely to develop school non-attendance difficulties. To support these pupils, it is essential to understand what challenges the school environment presents for this group of learners (West Sussex EPS, 2022).

Munkhaugen et al. (2017, p. 36) observed teacher-rated assessments of 216 pupils aged 9 to 16, of which 78 were ASC; it was found that the pupils with ASC are 35.5% more likely to experience SRB. The age of onset of SR in ASC pupils remains unclear (Munkhaugen et al., 2017). Ingles et al.’s (2015) research suggest that SRB can present in ASC pupils of all ages.

However, in Japan, Ochi et al. (2020) found that in children diagnosed with ASC, the onset of SR tends to be between the age of 11 to 14, which is earlier than that of typical pupils.

While the study's geographical and cultural differences must be taken into consideration alongside potential individual/environmental factors, research has evidenced that ASC pupils may have anxieties surrounding learning if they are poorly supported by their network and caregivers (Gaus, 2011; McLeod et al., 2015; Ozsivadjian & Knott, 2011; Ting & Weiss, 2017). While the comorbidity between EBSA and ASC is still unclear, the literature emphasises the need for stakeholders to consider ways to support neuro-divergent pupils to stay in and thrive in school. Having outlined the research on all these individual factors, it is clear that schools and stakeholders must be aware of their pupils' traits to ensure that additional preventative measures are taken to support groups of learners with higher vulnerability to EBSA (West Sussex EPS, 2022).

2.3.2 Family Factors

Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) bioecological systems theory emphasises the role of CYP's environment, among other factors. Families exist within pupils' microsystem, directly shaping their school experiences (West Sussex EPS, 2022). Families form the core of socio-demographic factors, certain kinds of which have also been linked to higher school absenteeism (Egger, 2003; Ferrell, 2009; Sommer & Nagel, 1991). For example, Ferrell (2009) and Fraser (2004) suggest that children in single parenthood families may receive less time from their parents, leading to poorer schooling outcomes. Other variables include parental employment and income (Fernando & Perera, 2012), parental educational levels (Klockner et al., 2012), and parental mental health (Adams, 2021; Kahn & Nursten, 1962).

To explore varying family dynamics in greater detail, Kearney and Silverman (1995) outlined five different types:

- ***'The enmeshed family'*** – Caregivers in this type of family often show characteristics of being overprotective (Kearney, 2001). Parents typically have dysfunctional relationships with others, and fathers may be withdrawn (Kearney & Silverman, 1995). Hersov (1960) proposes that children in an enmeshed family may develop high anxiety levels due to an over-reliance on their parents. Parents may also be reliant on their children, exhibiting difficulties separating from them (Berg & Mcquire, 1971; Kahn & Nursten, 1962).
- ***'The conflictive family'*** – Studies have also investigated the impact of home 'conflict' on SR (Kearney & Silverman, 1995; Makihara et al., 1985; Waldron et al., 1975). Mihara and Ichikawa's (1986) studied over 100 families with children identified as school refusers and found that approximately 45% experienced violence at home. Likewise, Kearney and Silverman (1995) suggest that children who experience negative home experiences can develop SR. Similarly, Makihara et al. (1985) found that witnessing violence was enough to lead to emotional unrest and SR.

More recently, Schafer (2011) explored the role of the family environment for 215 school refusers aged between 11 and 17, and their findings support previous data on the correlation between SR and conflictive families. Although experiencing conflict in the home environment may not directly correlate with SR, if it goes unsupported, it can contribute to school disengagement (Patterson, 1982). Furthermore, pupils who witness familial changes, such as divorce, can also suffer trauma that leads to SR (Hovens et al., 2010; Lähdepuro et al., 2019).

- ***'The detached family'*** – Rooted in psychodynamics, this family type outlines the effects of parental withdrawal on children (Schafer, 2011). Kearney and Silverman (1995) consider a 'detached family' to be different to an 'enmeshed family' in that detached

parents are not involved in their child's life. From this psychodynamic perspective, Weiss and Cain (1964) posited that parental withdrawal might stem from their desire to be independent of their families when they were young, resulting in a 'hands-off' parenting style. In their small-scale study, mothers reported feeling overwhelmed by the needs of their children. In detached families, caregivers or parents are mostly unaware of their child's feelings, thoughts, and any school refusing symptoms (Bernstein et al., 1990; Weiss & Cain, 1964). These parents only realise there is an issue when their children are already in the midst of a 'crisis' (Kearney & Silverman, 1995). In some SR studies, poor parental supervision (e.g., lack of monitoring or interest in their child's educational progress, neglectful parenting) has been associated with school avoidance (Gase et al., 2014; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016).

- ***'The isolated family'*** – Often bound to the home, these families have little contact with others in their community. According to Kearney and Silverman (1995), isolated family parents try to resolve issues alone without relying on others for help. Engaging with such parents can be tricky, as they may reject professional support and intervention. Sutherland (2006) urges professionals to build their knowledge of isolated families, as the effects of these dynamics can lead to mental health difficulties in children.
- ***'The healthy family'*** – Children in 'healthy' families usually have supportive parents and cohesive households (York & Kearney, 1993). These families are sensitive to each other's feelings and will problem-solve together (Moos & Moos, 1986; Schafer, 2011). While children in 'healthy' families may still experience EBSA, this may be down to other factors.

Kearney and Silverman (1995) state that children in 'enmeshed' families are more likely to develop SA but do not rule out overlaps between the subtypes. Other family risk factors identified in the literature are loss, grief, and bereavement (West Sussex EPS, 2022). Studies

have also documented a correlation between parental ill health and SR (Hendron & Kearney, 2016; McShane et al., 2001), as pupils may worry excessively about their parents' safety/protection when they are not around (Derbyshire County Council, 2020). Dalziel and Henthorne's (2005) survey found that pupils with ill parents missed school more (16% increase) compared to the general population, suggesting parental health to be a crucial factor.

By understanding family dynamics, professionals can recognise the role of families and the home environment in a pupil's school attendance. This also emphasises the importance of schools and all stakeholders working together to support CYP, especially when there are pre-existing vulnerabilities (Brand & O'Conner, 2004; Havik & Ingul, 2021).

2.3.3 School Factors

School can be an exciting yet stressful place for pupils. Research has underscored the role of schools in early intervention to support their pupils' emotional well-being (Bond et al., 2013; Carroll & Hurry, 2018; Havik et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2017). Knollman et al. (2010) point out an increased awareness of the role of schools in supporting SR. Devenney and O'Toole (2021) list several factors that can lead to SR, as pupils who are anxious and face ongoing adversity can find their school to be another challenging place. Thambirajah et al. (2008) suggest that when pupils are unsupported, their anxieties increase, leading to SR. Thus, this section will outline various school factors that have been listed in EBSA literature.

i. Physical environment, academic expectations, and lack of support

Archer et al.'s (2003, p. 13) research explore factors that precipitate SR, which involve: difficulties coping with the physical environment, school and academic expectations, complex relationships with peers and teachers, and school transition. In addition, Archer et al. (2003, p. 14) mention the "knock-on effect of repeated absence", which can amplify any initial school difficulties.

Lauchlan (2003) reviewed interventions to support school non-attendance and found that the onset of SR can stem from pupils' difficulties in coping with their physical environment and the many changes they experience in school (e.g., timetabling and staffing changes, strict behaviour policies). This aligns with previous research on pupils who experience sensory sensitivities and find their school participation affected (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Malcolm et al., 2003; Van Eck et al., 2017).

Regarding the physical structure of schools, Knollman et al. (2010) suggest that some pupils may struggle with the large populations of mainstream schools (mainly secondary), which can lead to increased anxiety. Moreover, long lesson hours can also precipitate school anxiety (West Sussex EPS, 2022). In large schools, staffing is stretched, which can be difficult for pupils who require close support (Blagg, 1987; Havik et al., 2014; Kearney, 2008; Kearney & Hugelshofer, 2000; King et al., 1997; Putwain, 2007). Other factors linked to school difficulties include inadequate support during key academic moments, such as examinations (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005; Putwain, 2007). During Covid-19's peak, when schools went through significant and various changes, researchers highlighted the risk of neuro-divergent pupils experiencing emotional and mental distress due to the disruption of routine and structure (e.g., Cortese et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2020).

ii. Sense of belonging and acceptance

Research on the sense of belonging and acceptance suggests that CYPs' relationships with their peers can either increase school attendance or avoidance (Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Kidger et al., 2012; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Peer acceptance has been found to predict school experiences (Buhs et al., 2006; Egger et al., 2003; Havik et al., 2014; Moses & Villodas, 2017), Finning et al. (2018) specifically discuss the impact that a sense of belonging to the school community has on CYP, with poor facilitation leading to social exclusion, and thus damaging

a CYP's self-esteem and confidence. Likewise, Perry et al.'s (2018) study suggest that pupils' sense of belonging predicts self-esteem.

Friendships were also a significant theme mentioned by CYP as a protective factor supporting school attendance (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Moses & Villodas, 2017). However, if CYP does not receive adequate support in building peer relationships, they may experience a loss of identity, leading to losing their trust in the school (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Carter et al., 2018).

Within a sense of belonging and social connectedness, a strong predictor of school attendance is a pupil's relationship with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Greenberg et al., 2016; Pianta, 1999; West Sussex EPS, 2022). CYP who have complex social relationships with their teachers and peers are at higher risk of difficult school experiences; a study by Wilson (2012) explored the view of school refusing pupils, who reported that relationships with teachers defined their school experiences. More research has emphasised the role of teachers and the effects that positive teacher-pupil relationships can have on school attendance (Havik et al., 2015; Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Kennedy, 2008; Wang & Holcombe, 2010).

iii. Bullying

Bullying can occur in many forms: verbal, physical, and even online (Sobba, 2019). Literature outlines the impact of bullying and suggests a correlation to school avoidance (Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Randa & Wilcox, 2010; Sobba, 2019; Swahn et al., 2013). According to the West Sussex EPS (2022), schools play a vital role in protecting pupils from peer harassment, and the extent of this is a known contributor to SR. Smith et al.'s (2008) paper discusses the common association documented in the literature that suggests poorer school experiences for victims of bullying.

Havik et al.'s (2014) Norwegian study interviewed 17 parents of school refusing pupils and found that approximately 33% reported their children being bullied at school. The fear of being victimised has been linked to SR, as pupils will avoid school to evade potential situations where they might be harassed again (Astor et al., 2002; Buhs et al., 2006; Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Ingul et al., 2012; McShane et al., 2001). Linked to this, while bullying can at times be a one-off incident, pupils may altogether avoid school due to immense fear (Randa & Wilcox, 2010). Idsoe et al.'s (2012) study revealed that approximately 28% of boys and 41% of girls who experienced bullying and had school attendance difficulties met the PTSD criteria. Regarding bullying and SEND, research has shown that pupils with ASC are at higher risk of bullying (Hwang et al., 2017; Maiano et al., 2016; Zeedyk et al., 2014). Moreover, Ochi et al.'s (2020) study involving 237 ASC pupils found that pupils who experienced bullying also reported higher SR.

iv. Transition

Polat et al. (2001, p. 20) define transition as a “passage from one stage to another”. During such times, pupils face increasing pressure and demands. Transitioning may appear straightforward, though pupils can be apprehensive of these experiences, especially when undergoing physical and emotional developmental changes (Newman & Blackburn, 2002). Research has shown that SR can occur at any point in a pupil's education, yet phases relating to transitions (e.g., entry into primary and secondary school) raise the likelihood of this (Fremont, 2003; King & Bernstein, 2001).

Literature has discussed the role of school transitions in increasing pupils' anxiety (Nuttall & Woods, 2013). When CYP are unsupported, transitions have proven to increase anxiety levels and reduce motivation (Hopwood et al., 2016; Rice, 2015; West et al., 2010). While not directly investigating EBSA, Curson et al.'s (2019) qualitative study raised the importance of ensuring

transitions are adequately supported, with early intervention crucial to preventing school difficulties, including high anxiety and low motivation in pupils. The study observed nine secondary school pupils in the UK and found transition stressors such as adapting to a larger campus size, greater responsibility to be independent, and increasing academic demands. In addition, friendships and family support played a significant role in inducing or mitigating the transition stresses; participants with more supportive parents and teachers had lower anxieties about transition (Curson et al., 2019, p. 37). The APA (2013) suggests that transition can be especially difficult for pupils with SEND, as they require additional time to adapt to new changes.

Considering all these factors, it is clear that schools play a key role in pupil experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that school environments shape pupil experiences, while Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory (SDT) highlights the importance of schools providing opportunities for their pupils to have autonomy, relatedness, and a sense of competence in their learning and development. Guay et al. (2020) believe that school systems and structures, including collaborative practices, must all serve their purpose and adopt a relational model to encourage pupils to stay in school. Regarding the role of schools in mitigating EBSA, the West Sussex EPS (2022) points out that schools can be both a protective and risk factor. From this, Gubbels et al. (2019) urge educational professionals to work closely with schools to understand what preventative systems can tackle SR.

2.4 What are Current Identification Methods for EBSA?

By identifying EBSA early on, educators can better implement preventative approaches and prompt intervention (Elliot & Place, 2019). As described in Section 1.2, EBSA is not a diagnosable condition under the DSM-V and ICD-11; therefore, its definition and conceptualisation depend largely on context. Archer et al.'s (2003) large-scale study (N= 150

LAs) examined the understanding of EBSA in English LAs and schools. The study found that the distinction between the types of school refusers is still not widely used, with 74% of schools and 47% of professionals in LAs not knowing the difference between truancy and SR (Archer et al., 2003). Unfortunately, this study has not been replicated yet; therefore, it remains to be seen if the knowledge and understanding of EBSA have increased in schools and LAs across England.

Archer et al. (2003) also found that schools mainly identify SR signs via attendance registers, followed by assessments by their LA's Education Welfare Service (EWS), which handles attendance related matters. Other methods include teacher and parental nomination, other forms of in-school identification, psychological assessments (undertaken by CAMHs or EPS), assessments by SEND services, and pupil nomination (Archer et al., 2003, p. 7). This literature search has not found evidence of any studies, especially ones carried out in the UK, that have suggested systems to identify EBSA. As understanding EBSA is still dependent on context, studies may have focused mainly on assessment methods rather than identification. Thus, below are methods of EBSA assessment found in the literature search, not limited to school practices:

2.4.1 School assessments: The West Sussex EPS (2022) provides schools and external agencies with checklists and forms to identify EBSA risk factors. This includes resources on whole school audits, which enable schools to examine their own EBSA systems and practices.

2.4.2 Medical assessments: Medical evaluations can provide valuable information, as pupils with EBSA often experience somatic discomfort/changes (e.g., breathing difficulties, abdominal pain) when asked to go to school (Elliot & Place, 2019). Ingul et al. (2019) urged professionals to carry out medical assessments early on, as intervention delays can cause prolonged adverse effects.

2.4.3 Educational and psychological assessments: Elliot and Place (2019) documented the use of cognitive, speech, and anxiety assessments, citing Fernando and Perea's (2012) assertions that cognitive assessments can help provide professionals with a better understanding of a child's current cognitive functioning level, thereby being a potential contributor to discovering school difficulties. Elliot and Place (2019) note that Kearney's (2002) SR Assessment Scale is used worldwide and has been translated into many languages (e.g., González et al., 2020; Heyne et al., 2016; Walter et al., 2017) to help professionals understand behavioural reasons for non-attendance. Elliot and Place (2019) also point out that scales such as the Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale (Lyneham et al., 2013), which examines the impact of anxiety on daily functioning, can be used to understand EBSA.

2.4.4 Collaborative mental health assessments: Collaborative work and exploring environmental factors are recommended practices when assessing EBSA (Elliot & Place, 2019). Knollman et al. (2010) pointed out that as SR occurs in school, professionals should examine all levels of their practices (e.g., systemic and direct) serving as facilitators and barriers to school attendance. This can be done via interviews with pupils, schools, and families to gain a complete understanding, which is pivotal for intervention planning. Another valuable asset is the experiences of school staff in recognising mental health difficulties in their pupils (Armstrong et al., 2011). Overall, there is still a lack of research on methods to identify EBSA in England. The listed assessment methods are currently used independently of one another, which leads to the conclusion that there is a need to develop a better understanding of the roles played by individual external stakeholders in supporting EBSA.

2.5 What Interventions are Found in EBSA Literature?

Fremont (2003) believes that interventions to support SR should be designed to reintegrate pupils back into school and improve school attendance. Elliot and Place (2019) place greater

value on the effectiveness of interventions, and these must be evaluated to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate support. To ensure the given support is ‘fit for purpose’, Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) proposed that educators first find out the root of the SR and then construct a plan based on this. For example, educators could offer the CYP a social skills intervention if they refuse school due to peer relationship difficulties (Kearney & Silverman, 1999). Pellegrini (2007) outlines different types of interventions that can be offered individually, in a group, or systemically.

2.5.1 Individual and group approaches

Literature suggests that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been the most common intervention used with pupils experiencing SR (Elliot & Place, 2019; Heyne et al., 2002; Lauchlan, 2003; Maynard et al., 2015; Pina et al., 2009). CBT is a therapeutic method aiming to restructure and reframe negative thoughts and assumptions pupils experience (Wilson, 2012). Maynard et al. (2015) reported that CBT studies had the most significant effect size compared to other therapies; however, the authors raised doubts about the effectiveness of CBT as a standalone therapy. This is due to the studies’ small sample sizes and lack of clarity on whether interventions targeted general anxiety or children’s specific anxiety around school. Elliot and Place (2019, p. 7) also discussed how research (e.g., Beidas et al., 2010; Heyne & Sauter, 2013) suggests that SR may stem from many factors and not solely due to depressive disorders, a lack of adaptation of ‘standard CBT’ may explain its reduced efficacy. While involving parent involvement in CBT intervention for their children has not seen significant changes in SR (Heyne et al., 2002), it is still crucial to integrate parents whom themselves experience high anxiety (Cresswell & Cartwright-Hatton, 2007).

Lauchlan (2003) lists other commonly researched interventions, such as meditation and relaxation training, and group treatments, like parent training and group counselling, to help

families understand their child's needs. EBSA literature also suggests other interventions, such as structured desensitisation, which targets school phobias (i.e., targeting a pupil's fear of the physical school environment) (Blagg & Yule, 1984; Roth et al., 1996).). However, these kinds of interventions proved to have mixed responses, as exposing a child to their fears may increase anxiety levels, thus deterring their willingness to engage in more interventions (Elliot, 1999).

2.5.2 School-based approaches

Elliot (1999) argued that if SR's root and perpetuating factors are not addressed, then individual treatments that use cognitive, behavioural, and even pharmacological methods might only provide short-term outcomes. Elliot and Place (2019, p. 12) recommend a multisystemic model for tackling EBSA as current direct interventions still require further research to prove their efficacy. Ekstrand (2015) urged educators to move away from a within-child perspective on intervention and consider school-related approaches.

i. Systemic whole-school support

It has proved beneficial for schools to adopt a more positive school climate (Devenney & O'Toole, 2021; Oehlberg, 2006; Thomas et al., 2019), and Hansberry (2016, p. 28) explains that this kind of positive school climate allows children to feel a sense of safety, acceptance, and respect, which can direct whole-school approaches. Devenney and O'Toole's (2021) research collected views from 17 school staff on SR provisions to find that schools with a positive and restorative ethos were more willing to invest in staff development and were more open to taking a whole-school trauma-informed approach. On the same note, Thomas et al. (2019) suggest that schools with a good ethos are more equipped to support pupils with attendance challenges. A welcoming climate and ethos allow pupils to regain their emotional well-being and rebuild their faith in schools (Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Thambirajah et al., 2008; Watson et al., 2012). Furthermore, Havik et al. (2014) found that schools could facilitate better

reintegration by creating a sense of belonging for pupils. Goldberg et al. (2019) carried out a meta-analysis of 45 studies worldwide. They found a significant correlation between whole-school interventions and pupil SEMH outcomes, indicating how crucial it is for schools to consider this approach in intervention planning.

This positive ethos has the further benefit of schools being more willing to review their policies and practices for supporting vulnerable pupils (Blagg, 1987; Pellegrini, 2007). The West Sussex EPS (2022) recommends that schools promptly review their EBSA practices while also advocating for the following recommendations:

- Schools are advised to develop clear procedures for identifying and supporting EBSA
- Schools are advised to nominate a key member of staff for pupils at risk of EBSA
- Schools are advised to take up training to equip staff on ways to support pupils at risk of EBSA
- Schools are advised to communicate clearly with all stakeholders (e.g., parents, external agencies). Multi-professional collaboration and partnerships are protective factors supporting SR (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Havik et al., 2014). By working as a team, pupils' aspirations, abilities, and needs can be streamlined to ensure they are paired with the appropriate interventions (DfE, 2011).

To add on the point of staff receiving training, research has also shown that a positive school ethos for staff development and training can ensure that all staff fully understand the chosen support plans for pupils (Newton & Wilson, 1999; Nuttall & Woods, 2013).

ii. Bespoke support for pupils

Another predictor of educational success is the willingness of school staff to create bespoke support plans for their pupils (Kljakovic & Kelly, 2019; Preece & Howley, 2018). Using a person-centred approach to create bespoke and individual plans, school staff can understand

what areas pupils may require further support (Dickins & Williams, 2017; West Sussex EPS, 2022; Woolfson et al., 2006; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007).

For example, pupils that require support with social skills can be offered targeted training (Newton et al., 1996; Spence et al., 1999), or peer-mentoring groups (e.g., circle of friends) can be set up to encourage and foster social interaction and relationships between pupils, which also provides emotional and psychological benefits (Newton & Wilson, 1999). If the pupil in question lacks motivation, rewards and incentives may give them hope and spur them to attend school despite their emotional challenges (Hall et al., 2019).

Reintegration after missing school for long periods can be difficult; thus, Hallam and Rogers (2008) urge schools to adopt a graduated plan approach, such as providing time-tabling and curriculum flexibility to those affected until they feel resilient enough to go it alone. Derbyshire County Council (2020) suggests that when pupils are asked to return to school, they naturally go through a habituation cycle, as their anxiety levels are expected to rise again. However, a graduated response slowly increases pupils' tolerance without stressing them too much (Derbyshire County Council, 2020). To ensure they are not overwhelmed, Kearney and Bates (2005) propose that pupils may be more likely to return to school if the academic demands are reduced, such as temporarily decreasing the amount of homework. Archer et al. (2003) also recommend school staff support, as this ensures pupils can access content taught in class to catch up after absences. Head and Jamieson's (2006) study lent insight into the positives of providing pupils with a safe space, such as the pupil support base.

iii. Relationship building

Schools that have made active efforts to build supportive relationships with their pupils and then mediate those complex relationships have shown that school attendance can be increased in this way (Archer et al., 2003; Hallam et al., 2006). Place et al. (2000) reviewed literature

which examined school-based interventions, emphasising the need to increase the social capital of pupils, for example, by improving and facilitating the social relationships of pupils with peers and teachers. Toplis' (2004) research studied school attendance facilitators and found it essential for schools to build rapport between teachers and pupils. Another way to increase pupils' social capital is to build peer relationships at school (Hodges et al., 1999; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Strong peer friendships may decrease pupils' chances of being bullied (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). In Reza-Nakhaie's (2007) research, increasing support for peer closeness resulted in pupils' feeling lower levels of fear around school, suggesting that social networks are also a protective factor.

iv. Supporting families

Previous research has shown the benefits of involving parents in their children's educational journeys, with more involvement leading to added motivation for parents to support their children (Lovitt & Cushing, 1999; Turnbull et al., 1999). Researchers have further identified that parental involvement in school leads to their children benefiting from increased confidence there (Ames et al., 1993). Since families may also experience anxiety around their child's SR, it is key that professional and school support extends to them (Cresswell & Cartwright-Hatton, 2007; Guare & Cooper, 2003; West Sussex EPS, 2022).

Elsherbiny's (2017) research noted the importance of providing parents with social support and how this can drive their children to attend school. The literature points out the value of family therapeutic work (Bryce & Baird, 1986). In addition, if parents feel overwhelmed and are unaware of ways to help their children, schools can provide them with training or courses to better their understanding of their children's needs (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005; Kearney & Albano, 2004).

The West Sussex EPS (2022, p. 6) has a list of recommendations for schools to consider when working with families on the topic of EBSA. Firstly, schools should elicit the voices of families to acknowledge and understand their concerns. Secondly, a school can provide support by maintaining close contact via a nominated key person; research has found that selecting a key person of contact ensures smoother communication with parents and can lead to positive school attendance outcomes (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Kearney & Bates, 2005). Thirdly, schools can schedule regular meetings to co-create intervention plans.

The selected EBSA literature emphasises the importance of providing individualised and systemic support for pupils. Currently, while CBT is the only evidence-based intervention tool for EBSA, there is an increased interest in exploring intervention that involves the ‘environmental’ factors (Elliot & Place, 2019; Lauchlan, 2003). Maynard et al. (2015) highlight the need to review school-based systems, contributing to the available professional knowledge on EBSA.

2.6 Literature Impact on Research Questions

The literature has pinpointed factors associated with EBSA, including individual, school, and family stressors. Elliot (1999) states that SR is not a ‘unitary syndrome’: it does not occur alone. This means that when pupils miss school, it is an indicator that anxiety and stress at school outweigh the support given by adults. Of course, there is no singular cause for EBSA development, as it is not a diagnosis. However, the preventative work carried out by schools and external agencies is crucial to tackling EBSA. This is especially important during these times affected by the pandemic, in light of the NHS study by Newlove-Delgado et al. (2021) that found that 39.2% of CYP in the study experienced increased mental health risks since 2017.

Within the borough where I am employed as a TEP, there is currently limited information on the systems in place in mainstream schools to support pupils experiencing EBSA. Furthermore, there is no formal guidance or set policy around EBSA to support schools. This research aims to understand the methods of identification and assessment and explore the factors that facilitate and hinder good mainstream school EBSA practices. In addition, it aims to add academic literature on the subject of EBSA, specifically regarding good mainstream school-based approaches in English mainstream schools. By investigating how schools operate to support this vulnerable group of learners, this research can inspire future planning, adaptations in schools, and understanding of the role of EPs.

Flutter and Ruddock (2004) state that by eliciting participant voices, ‘transformational’ changes can be wrought. This study successfully interviewed six school staff and seven pupils, offering great insight into EBSA experiences for future planning. This research also advocates for the increased acknowledgement of pupil and school staff voices. This also aligns with a TEP’s statutory duty to ensure pupils’ views, and those of the stakeholders working with them are sought out and remain at the forefront of intervention. Previous TEP research has enjoyed the benefits of eliciting the stakeholder voices; thus, this informs my current work.

The three research questions (RQ) of this study are:

- a. How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?
- b. What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?
- c. What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological principles underpinning this study. Section 3.2 provides an overview of the research philosophy. Section 3.3 describes the research philosophy's impact on this study's features, including its design, the research questions, sampling, and data collection processes. Section 3.4 describes the recruitment process. Section 3.5 details the use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Section 3.6 discusses the pilot study conducted beforehand, and Section 3.7 illustrates the data analysis process. Next, Section 3.8 introduces the backgrounds of the participants. Section 3.9 details all the ethical considerations, and Section 3.10 discusses the steps to participant ethical consent. Finally, Section 3.11 provides concluding comments to the chapter. For an overview of this study's research timeline, refer to Appendix U.

3.2 Research Philosophy

a. Ontology and Epistemology

Literature has shown that developing a philosophical ideology directs a study's theoretical perspective and research methodology (Cohen et al., 2011; Mills et al., 2006; Scott & Usher, 1996; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Considering philosophical approaches should take place early in the research process and is a vital criterion of a robust study (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108).

Ontology seeks to understand "what reality is" and the nature of existence (Crotty, 1998, p.10). On this, Madill et al. (2000) suggest that reality is a spectrum rather than distinct categories: on one end, realism assumes that an objective truth (objectivism) exists, while on the other end, relativism proposes that truth is subjective (subjectivism). My ontological stance lies closer to

relativism, which Moon and Blackman (2014) posit means that individuals have their own version of reality. Some aspects of bounded relativism fit well into this research, suggesting that while the concept of reality is subjective, it may change over time and in different contexts (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Therefore, change depends on personal, historical, and cultural contexts (Schwandt, 2003).

Epistemology refers to how individuals acquire knowledge (Crotty, 1998, p. 3; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 183; Moon & Blackman, 2014). My epistemological position lies within interpretivism. Interpretivism rejects the ideas of positivism, which assert that there is an 'objective truth' in how knowledge is created (Myers, 2008; Robson, 2002). Instead, my stance when evaluating these research findings is to understand the participants' lived experiences. Although patterns and similarities may emerge in the results, each participant's experience cannot be objectively measured. Guba and Lincoln (1989) believe that interpretivism is closer to a relativist stance, which is compatible with my ontological viewpoint. Overall, the role of an interpretive researcher is to consider the participants' accounts as personal and to discover meanings by capturing the rich, complex information embedded in what they choose to share (Creswell, 2009; Robson, 2011).

b. Phenomenological Underpinnings

Interpretivism adopts the works of phenomenology, which integrates the study of humans and how they make sense of their lived experiences (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). Edmund Husserl constructed phenomenology in the early 1900s as a philosophical movement rejecting research exploring an objective truth to understand human experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 362). The unique feature of phenomenological studies is the commitment to go beyond investigating and describing the phenomenon statically and objectively (e.g., predetermining categories), but rather take an idiographic (stance that experiences are personal and individual)

approach, using eidetic methods to elicit and understand lived experiences (Orbe, 2009). To accurately capture experiences, Husserl's follower Martin Heidegger emphasised the pivotal aspects of hermeneutic, which involves bracketing researcher preconceptions on the phenomena that may influence the perception and interpretation of participant experiences (Moustakas, 1994, Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Section 3.9 documents the reflexive practices for this research.

3.3 Impact of research philosophy on research features

In this section, I highlight the methodological considerations made to ensure that this research aligns with the fundamentals of my research philosophy.

3.3.1 Research design

As this study explores the lived experiences of participants, a qualitative approach was chosen. Other approaches were considered before deciding on a qualitative method for this research. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) point out that the research paradigm is dependent on the research philosophy; for example, the quantitative method is a scientific approach rooted in positivist philosophy, which allows for a generalisation of findings, and makes for simple and accessible replication (Bryman, 2001, p. 20; Maxwell, 2010, p. 479). However, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 14) suggest that a drawback of this approach is the role of the researcher, as they are relegated to being an observer and are detached from the phenomena studied. Similarly, a mixed-method approach was deemed unsuitable as it embeds quantitative fundamentals into its research design (Frost, 2011).

Over the past decade, researchers who value exploratory work have utilised qualitative research to explore human experiences (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman et al., 2008; Elliot et al., 1999; Saunders et al., 2012; Willig, 2001; Yardley & Bishop, 2015), and this kind of research goes

beyond the “surface level” to generate a rich account of participant experiences, exploring the how, what, and why of a particular phenomenon (Draper, 2004, p. 642).

Of course, there are certain disadvantages to this approach. Firstly, qualitative studies usually adopt a small sample size, meaning that findings are not easily generalisable to the broader population (Shank & Brown, 2007, p. 27). Secondly, this approach's 'subjective' nature may raise questions about its replicability (Cohen, 2011, p. 21). Thirdly, the finding interpretations rely heavily on the researcher (De Vaus, 2014, p. 6).

While the study's findings aim to provide knowledge on EBSA, the participants' voices are not assumed to be a proxy for the wider population. Having acknowledged the subjective nature of qualitative research, steps are taken to ensure the results' trustworthiness and validity (refer to Section 3.9.2).

3.3.2 Research questions

The goal of phenomenological studies stems from the action of what Heidegger considers to be unpicking of the hidden layers of an individual's experience (Frechette et al., 2020, p. 2). This research took an idiographic stance, which believed that each individual has personal and lived experiences. Thus, questions were exploratory and not constructed to test a pre-existing hypothesis. The three research questions in this research are:

- a. *How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?*
- b. *What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?*
- c. *What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices*

As highlighted in Chapter 2 on EBSA literature, the cause of EBSA varies and is usually multi-factored. It was vital that the research questions were open and balanced. Question (a) is created not to compare practices between mainstream schools but to use this study as an opportunity

to develop an initial idea from school staff experiences on the identification and assessment processes currently available. Research questions (b) and (c) aimed to answer questions about mainstream school EBSA practices, utilising the sharing of lived experiences by participants to do so. For example, pupil participants were allowed to freely share events (e.g., strict behaviour policy) that led to their lack of trust in the school system, which provided a more profound understanding of facilitators and barriers.

3.3.3 Sample size, participant selection, and sampling method

a. Sample size

Qualitative studies tend to involve a smaller participant group, focusing on in-depth subject exploration and the associated nuances of participants' unique experiences (Creswell, 2009; Reid et al., 2005). This allows researchers to ensure a micro-level exploration of participant views and experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41). Findings from qualitative studies are not used to test a hypothesis but rather to make sense of "lived experiences", so the success of the research is not measured by the sample size (Smith et al. 2009, p. 51). Frechette et al.'s paper suggest that the average number of participants in phenomenological studies is around ten data points. In addition, based on Hefferon and Gil-Rodrigue's (2011) article published on The British Psychological Society's (BPS) website, professional doctorates should have four to ten data points per sample group. This present work will adhere to this recommendation.

b. Participant Selection

Single informant studies suggest that this approach can be problematic as it increases the risk of biases and random errors (Pagell & Krause, 2005; Wagner et al., 2010). Thus, this study integrates the views and experiences of school staff and pupils (multi-informant) in order to understand mainstream school-based systems that support EBSA. Kelliher (2005) suggests that

an ‘integrated approach’ allows for triangulation of findings to make sense of the phenomenon, which Alexander et al. (2017) suggest can increase the validity of results. Thus, this study sought two participant groups: school staff and pupils. As persistent absentees can refer to both pupils truanting and those experiencing EBSA, the inclusion criteria below ensure pupil participants are the latter. As highlighted in Section 2.2.2, while recognising that the factors leading to EBSA vary, pupils experiencing EBSA in this research are homogenous in that they meet the criteria of research conceptualising SR (Berg et al., 1969; Thambirajah et al., 2008; West Sussex EPS, 2022). The inclusion criteria below are set to ensure participants share homogenous characteristics, which Smith and Osborn (2007) state as essential in phenomenological studies.

The inclusion criteria for participants are:

i. School staff

At least one year of work experience in a mainstream school (primary or secondary) supporting pupils experiencing EBSA.

ii. Pupils (participants must meet all the criteria below)

- Attendance: Has/had a history of ‘persistent absences’ (over two weeks and attendance falling below 90%) when attending a mainstream school in Borough A.
- Emotional factor: When the pupil was persistently absent, they reported anxiety or emotional difficulties when asked to attend school.
- Parental knowledge: The pupil’s parents know the child’s location when they miss school. For example, they remain at home with their parents’ knowledge, which would cover absence for medical reasons such as Covid-19.

- Absence of conduct and antisocial disorders: Pupils' school difficulties are not associated with these conditions (such as juvenile delinquency, disruptiveness, and sexual activity).

To ensure that the above criteria were up to date, school attendance requirements were checked against UK Government's (2022b) advice on persistent absences and with Borough A's EWS.

3.3.4 Data collection

As it was important that participants choose a method in which they felt most comfortable to share their experiences, they were given a choice to interview in person or via an electronic platform of their preference. There are benefits to both options, with face-to-face allowing for easier rapport building (Busetto et al., 2020), and online interviews making it possible to reach participants that may be harder to access (e.g., pupils who are missing school) (Parvaresh-Masoud & Varaei, 2018), thus this was offered. In the end, all six school staff were interviewed virtually due to Covid-19 school restrictions, and all seven pupils were interviewed in person when schools resumed with reduced Covid-19 protocols.

The primary concern of qualitative studies is to elicit first-person accounts of experiences (Moustakas, 1994, Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). To best elicit participant views and experiences, this research utilised an in-depth interview method, which allows for a thorough exploration of qualitative insights to answer research questions involving participants' accounts (Mack et al., 2005, p. 30). School staff and pupil interview schedules were organised to answer the research questions. Questions were framed in a semi-structured format (refer to Appendices H & I), which Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012, p. 364) suggest is a useful phenomenological study method and can give participants context. In addition, this form of semi-structured questioning helps researchers gather in-depth findings in an open and time-efficient way (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Given, 2008).

To ensure that participants could share openly, questions were open and balanced. Recognising that conversations about school for pupils can evoke difficult feelings and memories for participants, Murphy et al. (1998) recommend that researchers consider alternative ways to elicit participants' views from vulnerable groups to ensure they can speak comfortably and safely. This advice mirrors Nind and Hewett's (1994) recommendations for additional support for participants to access the study and complex topics. For this reason, I adopted a multi-modal approach to elicit participant views, using various resources to encourage sharing, including drawing, colouring, and emotional charts (e.g., blob pictures) to support their expression (see Appendix N). Using a visual elicitation method helps participants reflect on their experiences through visual art, relieving the stress and pressure to use verbal language alone to express themselves (Bagnoli, 2009).

It was helpful to use a multi-modal approach to elicit pupil participant views, as the creative drawing task was presented as a warm-up task to build rapport and as a starting point for them to share their school experiences. While there is a pre-planned research schedule, the sessions were led mainly by pupils, with follow-up questions or prompts focused on exploring their memories, associations, fears, and thoughts. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012, p. 365), IPA studies can utilise questions to explore “sensory perceptions and mental phenomena”. To ensure that pupils were not rushed and had an opportunity to reflect, I allowed for periods of silence and offered probes intermittently. Finally, I observed pupils' body language and non-verbal/communicative cues during interviews to inform data analysis.

3.4 Recruitment process

This research used a purposive sampling method to recruit participants. Cohen et al. (2011) explain that purposive sampling allows researchers to look for homogenous participants with specific and targeted characteristics. As Cohen et al. (2011, p. 114) indicated, purposive

sampling involves “handpicking of cases based on particular characteristics”. This sampling method is commonly used for research taking an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) model (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 48).

To recruit school staff, I relied upon contacts at mainstream schools in my LA’s educational psychology database. Before reaching out to them, I contacted the EPs seconded to the various schools to request to be directly connected. In addition, I also discussed this research with the Head of EWS at my employing LA to ensure the study would not conflict with current EBSA initiatives. Introductory emails (see Appendix E) and invitations were sent to all mainstream schools at Borough A, alongside a succinct information sheet (see Appendix F), which outlined the research scope and aims. Alongside this, an informed consent form was attached (see Appendix G, which those who wished to participate had to complete ahead of our meeting.

To recruit pupil participants, I used a snowballing method where researchers utilise their social networks to identify a targeted group of participants (Mack et al., 2011, p. 5). I asked colleagues at the EPS to introduce me to mainstream school pupils who fit the initial inclusion criteria. It was challenging to recruit pupil participants, as many of them are not attending school.

Until January 2022, interest was indicated by schools and parents for their children to participate in this research. However, it was challenging to get pupil consent, and this issue was discussed with my research supervisors. We agreed to expand the inclusion criteria to allow for ‘pupils in alternative provisions who were in mainstream school when they experienced EBSA’, which would support my recruitment efforts. Cutrer et al. (2013) state that supporting pupil reflections is valuable and can help make sense of past experiences. Having made this adaptation, I contacted the parents of the targeted pupils (see Appendix H) and provided them with an information sheet (see Appendix I). Once they had agreed and returned

the consent forms (Appendix J), I then met up with them via video call or in-person at school to explain the purpose (see Appendix K) and to ask for their consent (see Appendix L).

Eventually, seven pupils (three currently attending mainstream schools and four concurrently on roll at mainstream and an AP due to EBSA) (refer to Section 3.7 for more information on participants' backgrounds). For information on APs, the DfE (2013) defines APs as educational settings that provide education to CYP, who find it difficult to access mainstream education.

3.5 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

To better understand the emotional well-being of pupil participants, they were asked to respond to a SDQ. This is a brief psychological tool (5-10 minutes) developed by Goodman and Goodman (2009) to understand the mental and emotional strengths and difficulties experienced by CYPs (Keilow et al., 2019). According to Stokholm and Lykke (2020), the SDQ can be used virtually and allows medical practitioners to understand the mental health profiles of pupils. As a psychological tool, the validity of SDQ has been evidenced in various educational psychology research (e.g., Hall et al., 2019; Vugteveen et al., 2021).

The SDQ is a widely used assessment tool to determine the strengths and difficulties of CYP experienced in the following five areas (Keilow et al., 2019):

- CYP's emotions
- CYP's conduct at school/home
- CYP's attention and hyperactivity
- CYP's social relationship with peers

To administer the SDQ to the pupil participants aged 11-17, I met with them to complete a self-rating form on the interview day. As for younger participants (below 11 years old), the teacher forms were completed by school staff that have worked closely with them.

The SDQ results were not used to provide inferential quantitative data analysis or to differentiate between participants. Instead, using the SDQ contributed to capturing the perspectives of school staff and pupils, which informed Section 3.8.

Besides providing context for the qualitative data and seeing if any nuanced findings could be associated with the measured strengths and difficulties, the findings supported thinking around the implications of schools and professionals in ensuring pupil emotional wellbeing is better supported. For example, scores from the SDQ suggest that all seven pupil participants are still at high risk of developing emotional problems, leading to recommendations for continued staff development on SEMH and for relevant services such as the Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), which run on a cognitive-behavioural model to take a more prominent role in EBSA initiatives (refer to Section 5.5 for implications of research).

3.6 Pilot Study

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) outline the benefits of carrying out a pilot study, as it offers a systematic opportunity to evaluate research methods before the actual interviews (e.g., content, time allocated, and atmosphere). For this study, two pilot interviews were carried out: One in July 2021 with a school staff participant and the other in February 2022 with a pupil participant.

These pilot studies aimed to ascertain and evaluate if the interviews' methods, questions, and delivery were appropriate and sensitive to the context. Minor improvements were made in both pilot studies; for example, in the pupil interview schedule (see Appendix N), P3 (blob images to support pupils with describing their feelings around school) was moved from P1 to ensure that the visuals would not influence the participants' initial drawings. Additional prompts were also created to reassure participants they could share more comfortably. For example, P9 in the interview schedule for school staff was rephrased to prompt participants to reflect on methods of identification, assessment, and intervention. No significant changes were required for pupil

and school staff pilot interviews; therefore, these two interviews were added to the primary dataset.

3.7 Data Analysis

Two types of qualitative methods were applied for the data analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to analyse school staff findings and IPA to analyse pupil findings. In this section, I will outline the rationale for the choice of methodology as well as the way the analysis was conducted.

3.7.1 RTA to analyse school staff voices

School staff interviews were analysed using RTA, which does not stem from specific epistemological or ontological approaches. Its fundamentals involve a ‘rich and detailed’ examination of qualitative data, which aligns with the study’s interpretive stance (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Initially, I considered analysing school staff data using IPA as there is a small degree of homogeneity in samples. However, as the interviews centred around understanding school-level systems and practices supporting EBSA initiatives, using RTA allowed for codes and frequency within the data to be identified before generating group trends to be searched and observed (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Research on thematic analysis has recommended that it is a suitable choice when the views and experiences investigated are not first-person accounts (Guest et al., 2020; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this case, the discussions with school staff were about pupils experiencing EBSA in their schools, which may be more of whole-school systems instead of their personal lived experiences; thus, RTA was preferred over IPA to analyse the findings for this participant group.

As with many other methods for qualitative analysis, the validity of thematic analysis has been criticised, with researchers using it variedly and with low consistency (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Thus, this study follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis six-phase framework (now renamed by the authors to RTA in Braun and Clarke (2019), and cited in this paper), which involves familiarising myself with the data, generating codes, searching, reviewing, defining, and report writing, to ensure the utmost trustworthiness and coherence. Refer to Appendix P for a step-by-step process taken using RTA to analyse data from school staff interviews.

3.7.2 IPA to analyse pupil voices

Pupil interviews were analysed using IPA, developed by Smith et al. (1995). This approach is frequently used in psychology research (e.g., Biggerstaff, 2003; Chapman et al., 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Wagstaff et al., 2014). As this study's pupil participants are homogenous through EBSA, IPA is a suitable method (Larkin & Thompson, 2011, p. 103) for two main reasons:

Firstly, the research aims align with the idiographic aspect of IPA, in which participants' lived experiences are explored individually to support meaning-making (Moses & Knutsen, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). Secondly, this research adopts a 'hermeneutic phenomenology' stance, using exploratory and inductive methods, and experiences should be absent of preconceptions about participant perceptions (Cassidy et al., 2011; Gray, 2013, p. 18).

IPA's epistemological perspective emphasises the interpretative and 'double-hermeneutic' aspects (i.e., how the researcher makes sense of participant experiences), which fits with my research philosophy. In other words, my role as a researcher is to narrate and amplify participant experiences by placing myself in their shoes (Alase, 2017, p. 10; Smith et al., 2009,

p. 3). The participant experiences must be organically examined to achieve this, with no preconceptions about the phenomenon (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 1995, 2009; Thackery & Eatough, 2015).

Before choosing IPA to analyse pupil interviews, other approaches were compared. For example, RTA was another approach that was considered. However, Brocki and Wearden (2014, p. 34) suggest that IPA allows for an interpretative analysis that goes beyond just examining the text, making it suitable for a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of my pupil participants. In addition, Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2007, p. 1373) compare IPA with other qualitative approaches (e.g., grounded theory (GT) and discourse analysis (DA)), and their key points are:

- The three approaches stem from different ‘intellectual traditions’, with phenomenology seeking to examine lived experiences within a phenomenon; this fits my ontological and epistemological stance. DA stems from linguistic and semiotic studies, and while eliciting views is central to its principles, it focuses on the role of language in knowledge and meaning. On the other hand, GT examines processes and symbolic interactions, the end goal being to develop a theory to describe the findings (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007, p. 1373).
- Depending on the approach taken, there are varying goals, sampling, data collection methods, analytical methods, and researcher roles. The remit of phenomenological researchers is to be “faithful witnesses” to participants’ shared experiences (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007, p. 1376).

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the benefit of GT is that it offers the opportunity to approach the research openly with no preconceived theoretical framework. This allows for a

theory to be developed to understand the phenomenon. However, the aims of this study do not include creating a theory to understand EBSA experiences. Instead, it is to understand participants' lived experiences. Thus, IPA offers greater advantages, allowing my involvement as an interpreter to explore the participant experiences at all stages of the research study (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2012).

Data analysis followed the structured guidance by Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 67) that consists of a four-stage process. Appendix P documents the step-by-step IPA process taken to analyse pupil interviews. Critics of IPA point out that the researcher's interpretative role, alongside possible biases and pre-existing assumptions, may skew the interpretation of participant experiences (e.g., Clare, 2002; Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001). Therefore, the literature (e.g., Moustakas, 1994, p. 85; Sokolowski, 2000; Van Manen, 1990) has advised IPA researchers to ensure reflexivity by "bracketing their biases or preconceptions" of the topic at every research stage. In line with this, the study incorporates and applies bracketing practices throughout by bringing any assumptions to supervision. Data analysis was checked by independent colleagues that could give an objective view of my data (TEP colleague and my placement supervisor).

3.8 Participant Introduction

This section introduces the backgrounds of the 13 participants who took part in this study, of which six were school staff and seven were pupils.

3.8.1 School staff participant descriptions

Six school staff (five female and one male) participated. All participants work in mainstream schools and have worked with pupils experiencing EBSA for over a year. The participant profiles, including their pseudonyms (assigned based on the chronological dates of their interviews), are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Background of school staff participants

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Role	Description of role	Type of school
SS1	Female	Year 7 Maths Teacher and Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO)	SS1 manages all SEND related work in her school. This includes supporting EBSA initiatives and working closely with her school's AO to identify and support pupils missing school due to emotional factors. Alongside this, SS1 is a Year 7 maths teacher.	Mainstream secondary
SS2	Female	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO)	SS2 is involved in all SEMH-related work in her school. This includes working with parents and external agencies to support pupils with emotional needs. In addition, alongside pupils with SEMH needs, she manages all SEND cases in her school, providing pastoral support.	Mainstream secondary
SS3	Male	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) & Inclusion Lead	SS3 takes up a joint role as the school's SENDCO and Inclusion Lead. He manages all inclusion initiatives, including SEND and EBSA, and is also involved in the team that supports secondary school transition.	Mainstream primary
SS4	Female	Assistant Head of Inclusion	SS4 is the Assistant Head of Inclusion at her school, where she is involved in all SEND cases and those with SEMH needs (including EBSA). She also supervises a pastoral room in her school, providing counselling-related work to parents, teachers, and pupils.	Mainstream primary

SS5	Female	Well-being Coordinator	SS4 is the Assistant Head of Inclusion at her school, where she is involved in all SEND cases and those with SEMH needs (including EBSA). She also supervises a pastoral room in her school, providing counselling-related work to parents, teachers, and pupils.	Mainstream secondary
SS6	Female	Primary School Teaching Assistant	SS6 works as a Primary School TA and offers daily support to two pupils experiencing EBSA. This includes supporting them during arrival, class, break time, and departure. In addition, she works closely with her school's SENDCO, so she is aware of the initiatives in place to support her cases. Finally, she also works with parents, providing daily updates and target settings.	Mainstream primary

School staff participants hold a range of roles at their respective schools, supporting EBSA initiatives in various capacities. Participants come from mainstream primary and secondary schools at Borough A, with none working at the same school.

3.8.2. Pupil participant descriptions

Seven pupils (five males and two females) participated in this research study, and all met the inclusion criteria outlined in Section 3.3. The participant profiles, including their pseudonyms chosen by the pupil, are presented in Table 2 below:

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Year group	Special educational need (if any)	Type of school
Gunnersaurus	Male	Year 3	ASC	Mainstream primary
Sloth King	Male	Year 4	ASC	Mainstream primary
Monstrae	Male	Year 8	ASC	Mainstream secondary
Pencil	Male	Year 10 (started at AP in Year 8)	ASC	AP / Mainstream secondary
Watch	Male	Year 10 (started at AP in Year 8)	Non- specified	AP / Mainstream secondary
Angel	Female	Year 11 (started at AP in Year 10)	ASC	AP / Mainstream secondary
Ariel	Female	Year 11 (started at AP in Year 10)	ASC	AP / Mainstream secondary

Table 2: *Background profile of pupil participants*

Table 2 shows that two pupil participants are of primary school age and five of secondary school age. Six out of seven have a diagnosis of ASC. Regarding their provision types, whilst all seven pupils are registered in mainstream schools, only three currently attend. The other four participants temporarily access education in an AP at Borough A due to SEMH needs.

The pupil participants must be regarded as ‘whole beings’, and Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this is a good practice for researchers to ensure that their interpretation can fully capture the views, perceptions, and experiences of this homogenous group of learners. Thus, this section provides short descriptions of each pupil participant (gathered from meetings with pupils, parents, and teachers) and a summary of their drawings. In addition, a summary of the scores of the SDQ findings can be found under each pupil write-up, and individual scores and the descriptors of the assessment can be found in Appendix Q. SDQ scores do not interfere with the interview questions posed; they are solely given to provide context.

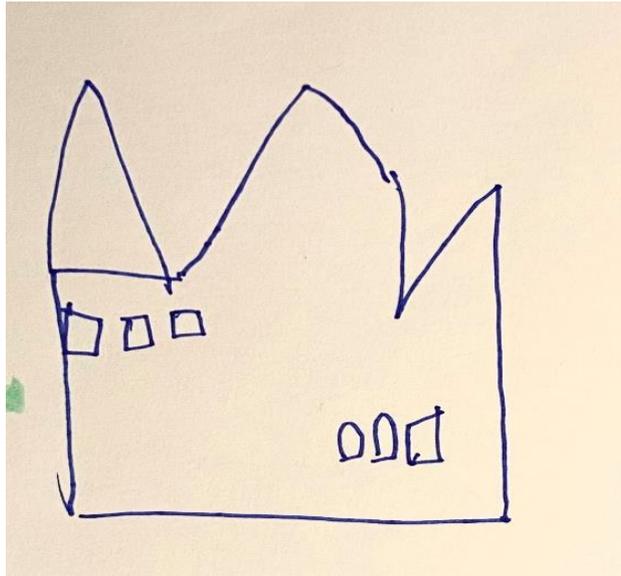
Gunnersaurus (Year 3, Male, Mainstream Primary School)

Gunnersaurus is a Year 3 male pupil attending a mainstream primary school in Borough A. He is of mixed heritage and communicates proficiently in English at school and home. He is an only child and lives with his mum, dad and a pet dog, Milo. Gunnersaurus has a diagnosis of ASC. He does not have an education health care plan (EHCP).



Picture 1: *Gunnersaurus's drawing*

When asked about things he loves (see Picture 1), Gunnersaurus talked about football and his favourite team, Arsenal. When he grows up, he hopes to become like Emile Smith-Rowe, an Arsenal player. When asked what traits he admired about Emile, he said, *"I like his speed, defending, and attitude"*. Gunnersaurus plays with his uncle in his spare time and likes using the iPad. He said his friends would describe him as *"sensitive, fragile, and playful"*. Currently, Gunnersaurus is on a reduced timetable after missing school for a long time.



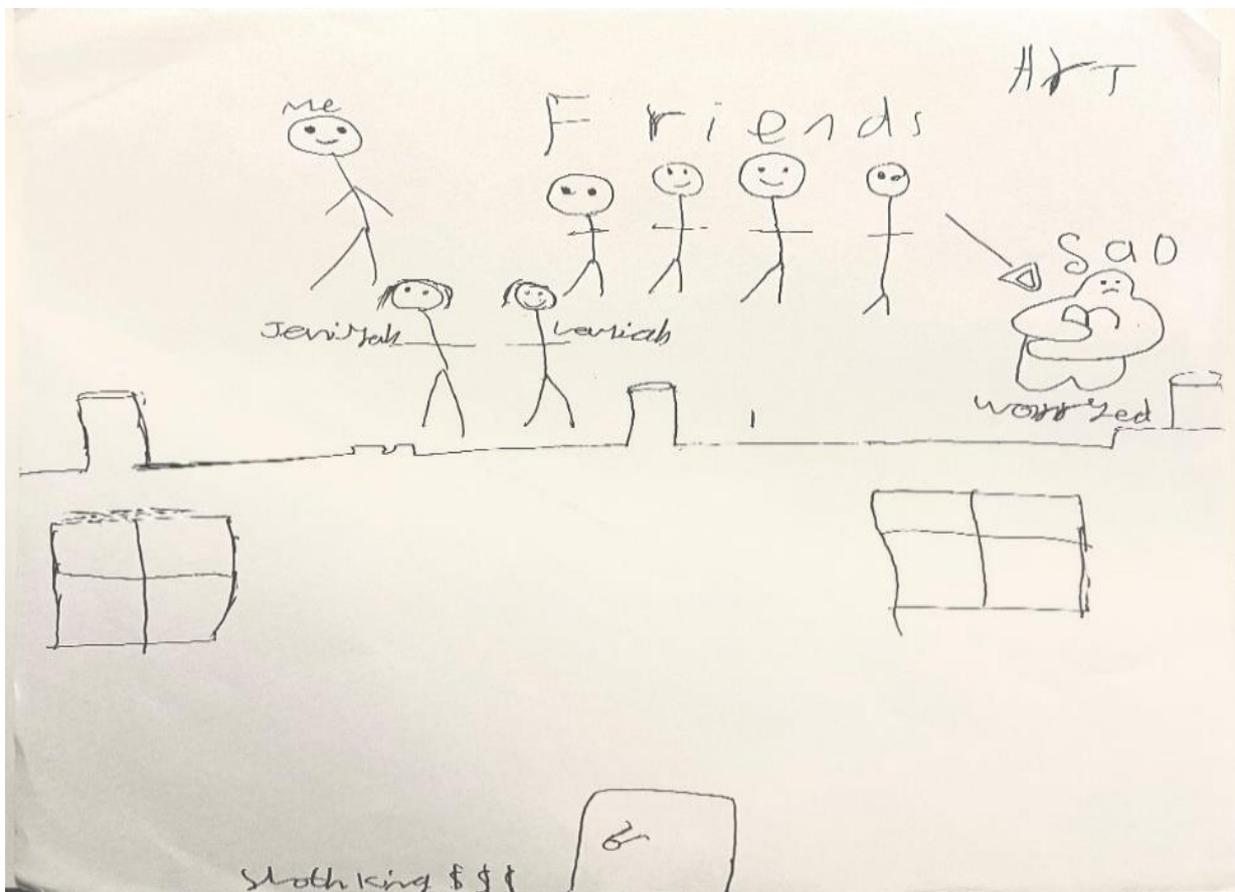
Picture 2: *Gunnersaurus's drawing*

Gunnersaurus shared that his school looks like a castle, with a pointy roof and small windows (see Picture 2). When encouraged to draw more, Gunnersaurus asked if we could talk about it instead of drawing. He said that this school gives him anxiety, especially the people who go there, saying, “*because I don't like the sort of things that someone has to ruin someone's day*”, referring to his peers. Gunnersaurus shared that he tries his best to go to this school, but peers made fun of his autism, making him “*very sad*”. Summary from Gunnersaurus's SDQ scores suggests that he is only at a ‘very high’ risk of developing emotional problems. From meeting with him, Gunnersaurus shared that he would benefit from adults supporting his friendships and peer interactions.

Sloth King (Year 4, Male, Mainstream Primary School)

Sloth King is a Year 4 male pupil attending a mainstream primary school in Borough A. He is of Black Caribbean ethnicity and communicates in English at school and home. He lives with his dad, mum, and elder sister. Sloth King was diagnosed with ASC when he was in reception. He does not have an EHCP. When asked about what he does in his free time, he said he likes

basketball and mentioned Kobe Bryant, whom he looks up to as a role model. Besides that, Sloth King shared his interests in art activities and playing with two of his cousins at school. His ambition is to one day become a designer, as it allows him to display his artistic talents. Currently, Sloth King's attendance is sporadic, and he attends only from Monday to Wednesday. He refuses to enter school on Thursdays and Fridays when he arrives at the doorstep. Occasionally, he will agree to go in, with teacher encouragement, allowing him to do art for 30 minutes.



Picture 3: Sloth King's drawing

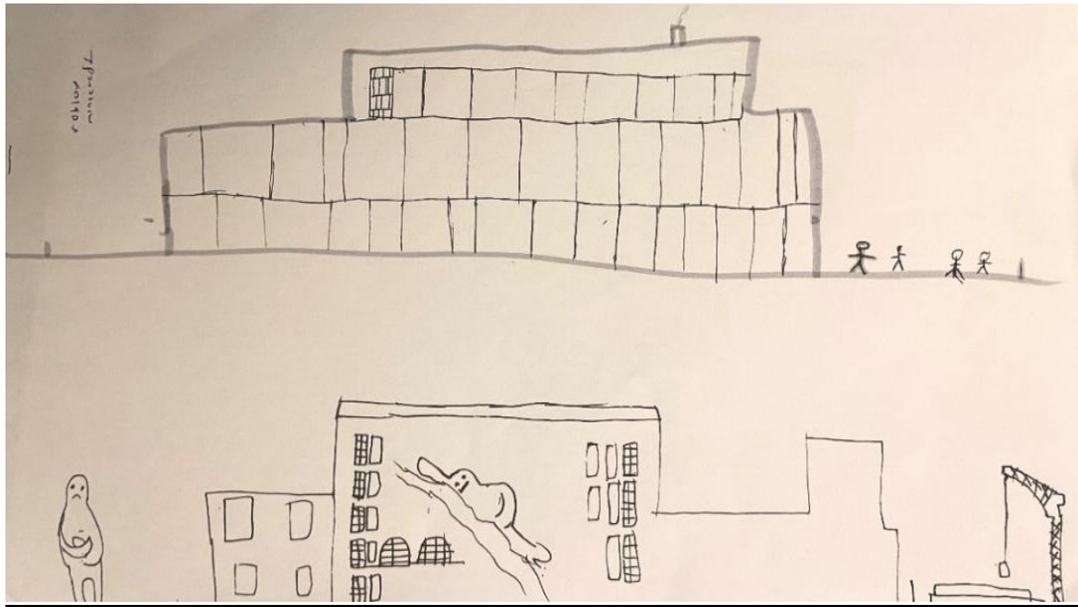
Sloth King drew how his mainstream school experience is (see Picture 3) and shared that school makes him anxious. When asked how he feels about school, he said, “*My body feels sad ... I feel sad inside. Do you see this person [refers to the above blob drawing with crossed arm], this is me before and when I am in school*”. Sloth King also said that while he has friends at

school, none of them is happy [points at sad faces drawn] and that the only fun thing is the “playground”. Sloth King finds it hard to separate from his mum, sharing that he ‘misses mum’ and ‘worries for her’ while in school.

Sloth King’s SDQ scores suggest that he is at a ‘very high’ risk for these four domains: emotional, peer, conduct, and hyperactivity problems. From my meeting with him, it seems that Sloth King feels unsettled in school, impacting his emotions and behaviours. In addition, from his drawing, it seems that he requires adult support with his peer interactions.

Monstrae (Year 8, Male, Mainstream Secondary School)

Monstrae is a Year 8 pupil attending a mainstream secondary school in Borough A. He is of Black Caribbean ethnicity and communicates in English at school and home. He lives with his mother and two elder siblings at home. Monstrae received a diagnosis of ASC when he was in Year 6 and currently does not have an EHCP. Monstrae likes reading maps and has an interest in trains. In addition, he enjoys drawing and mentioned that he has good handwriting. When asked how he describes himself, he said, “*quiet, short, and a slow learner*”. According to Monstrae’s mother, Monstrae attended school for approximately 30% of the last year due to anxiety and emotional difficulties. Monstrae also has sensory sensitivities toward noises and shared his physical challenges (sleep, bowel, and mobility).



Picture 4: *Monstrae's drawing*

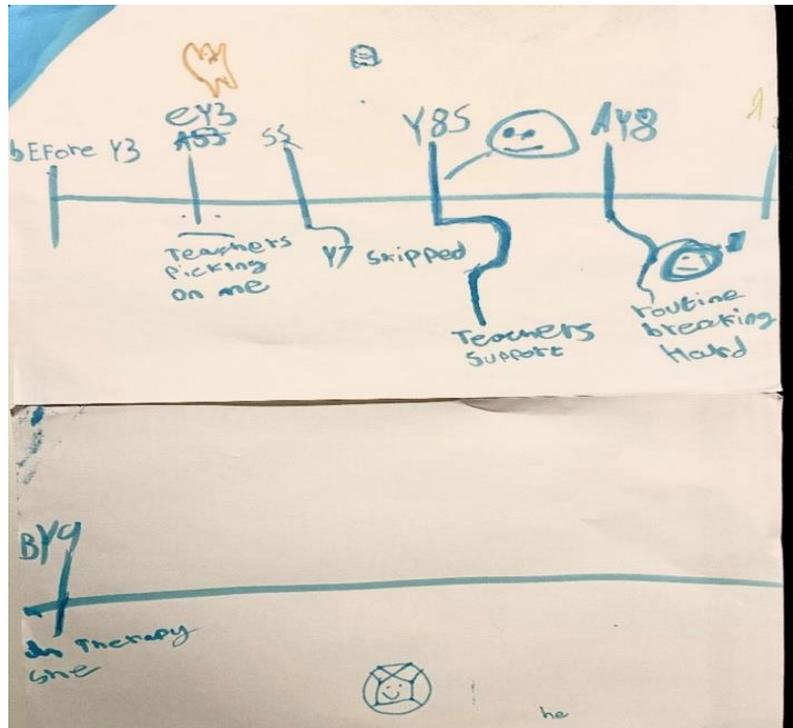
Monstrae drew his current school (see Picture 4), a big building with many windows. He explained that construction work has been ongoing for the past year, which increases his anxiety due to the loud noise. Monstrae said, *"I might not go sometimes; it really fluctuates; I stay away because I get depressed"*. When asked more about his drawing, Monstrae said that the blob pictures display his negative feelings toward school.

Monstrae's SDQ scores suggest he is at a 'very high risk' of developing emotional and peer problems. From meeting with him, he shared his fluctuating anxiety in school, impacting his school experiences. From his drawing, it may be helpful if he receives adult mediation to support his peer relationships.

Pencil (Year 10, Male, Temporary placed at an AP in Borough A)

Pencil is a Year 10 pupil temporarily accessing education at an AP in Borough A. He is of Turkish descent and communicates in English at school and home. He lives with his mother and an elder sister at home. Pencil has a long history of anxiety difficulties after witnessing a

traumatic event involving his father in Year 3. He has an ASC diagnosis and an EHCP. When I met with Pencil, he shared that he enjoys art and hopes to be an architect when he is older. He also hopes to get a driving licence when he leaves secondary school.



Picture 5: Pencil's drawing

Since Pencil started school, he has experienced a series of transitions, including four primary schools, two secondary schools, and being home-schooled for some time. Pencil drew to describe his school experience after Year 3 (see Picture 5). He stated that the school was “too big” and that he met with “rude teachers”. In Year 7, Pencil experienced high anxiety levels around school, leading to him being home schooled. Once he felt better, his mum convinced him to return to a mainstream school. However, Pencil admitted that he found it extremely difficult there, especially following routines. He also found sensory inputs overwhelming, making it difficult to learn. Pencil’s SDQ scores suggest he is at a ‘very high risk’ of developing emotional problems. He transferred to his current AP in Year 8, and his attendance at the AP is gradually improving.

Watch (Year 10, Male, Temporary placement at an AP in Borough A)

Watch is a Year 10 pupil temporarily placed at an AP in Borough A. He is of White British ethnicity. He communicates in English, both at school and home. Watch has an EHCP. Watch enjoys mathematics and sports. When he is older, he hopes to pursue a mathematics degree at university. According to Watch's mother, he has had a difficult transition to secondary education, where school led to mental health difficulties (low mood, anxiety, and sleep issues). This contrasted with Watch's time in primary school, which was described as smooth, where he achieved good attendance and excelled in sports. However, he developed school attendance difficulties after a series of bullying incidents.



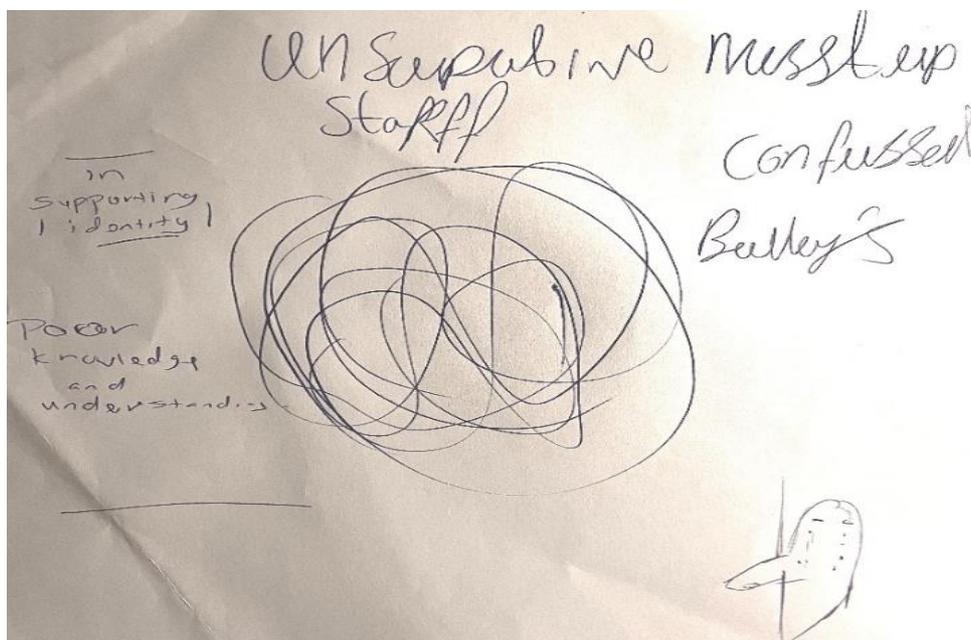
Picture 6: *Watch's drawing*

Watch drew a building representing his mainstream school (the school he attended before transferring to AP, see Picture 6), describing the long walkway to the entrance as “scary”. When asked about his feelings, he drew the blob image (grey blob) with a frowning expression. To describe his current feelings, he drew the blob image in blue with a smiling face. Watch shared that he feels “good” in his current provision, citing good teachers and no bullying.

Watch SDQ scores suggest that he is at a ‘very high risk’ of developing emotional problems. While he shared that his school experiences have improved, his past trauma that happened in school may still lead to emotional vulnerabilities, thus requiring close monitoring and teachers that facilitate his peer interactions and grow in rapport with him.

Angel (Year 11, Female, Temporary placement at an AP in Borough A)

Angel is a Year 11 pupil temporarily attending an AP in Borough A. She is of White British ethnicity. She communicates in English, both at home and at school. Angel is an only child and lives with her mother and father at home. Angel was diagnosed with ASC in Year 3 and has an EHCP. When the interview was conducted, Angel still finds it difficult to attend school consistently due to anxiety. Currently, Angel enjoys art therapy in school and meeting with her friends. In the future, Angel wants to become a plumber or optician.



Picture 7: *Angel's drawing*

When asked to reflect on her experience in mainstream school, she drew tangled lines. She shared how she was excluded from school and “*judged by peers and teachers*” for her weight.

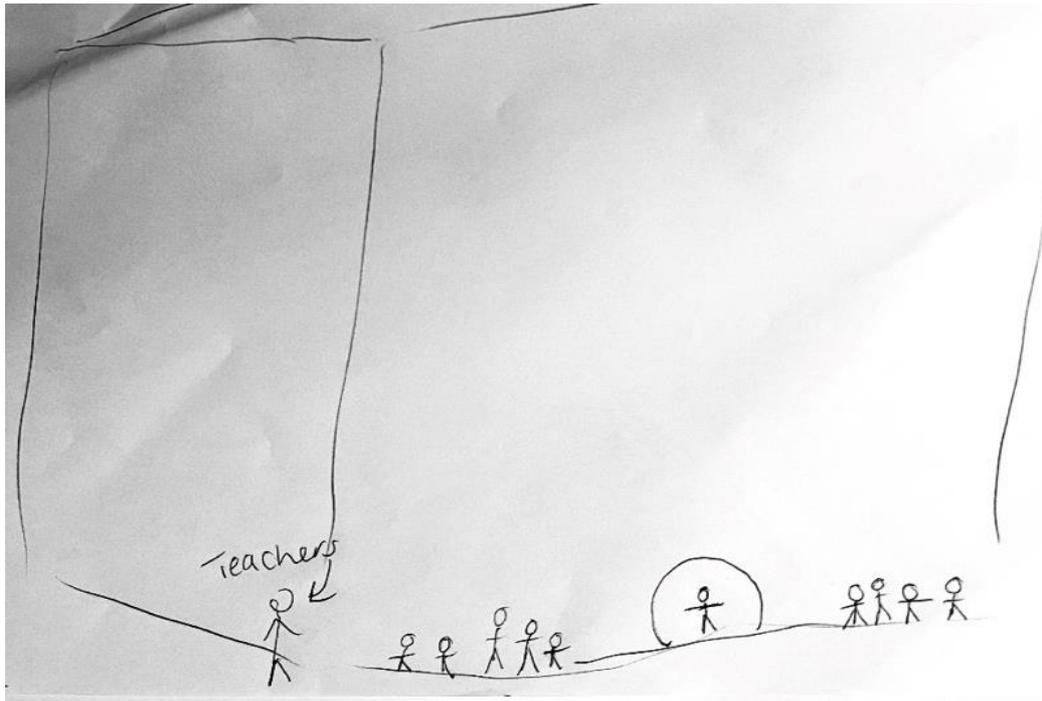
Words that came into her head about school were “*messed up*”, “*unsupportive staff*”, “*confused*” and “*bullies*”. The blob image on the bottom right of Angel’s drawing represents how she feels about school (blob hanging onto the tree with a sad expression). When asked how her difficulties affect her school attendance, she said, “*I have really bad anxiety, to the point where I take medication, and it doesn’t help at all*”. Angel also said she had “*really bad sickening stomach pain*” when asked to attend school.

Angel’s SDQ scores suggest she is at a ‘very high risk’ of developing emotional problems. She shared that she still experiences ‘*bad anxiety*’ and sometimes requires medication, suggesting that she requires continued support to ensure she is safe in school.

Ariel (Year 11, Female, Temporary placement at an AP in Borough A)

Ariel is a Year 11 pupil temporarily attending an AP at Borough A. She is of mixed-heritage descent (White British and Black British). She communicates in English at home and school. Ariel has an ASC diagnosis and has an EHCP. In the future, Ariel hopes to become a baker. According to Ariel’s SENDCO, she transferred to the AP in Year 9 after experiencing severe anxiety. She did not experience this anxiety in primary school, as she describes this time as good. In the interview, Ariel explained that her transition from primary to secondary school was “*really hard as the responsibilities and demands increased*”.

Ariel drew her mainstream secondary school (the school she attended before transferring to the AP, see Picture 8). She said that the school size was overwhelming and that she was “*singled out*” by school staff. As Ariel drew, she said, “*I felt very left out, and I was often singled out ... so I drew my teachers far away*”. Ariel also drew a bubble over herself in the drawing as she felt “*trapped*’ and ‘*judged*”.



Picture 8: *Ariel's drawing*

Ariel's SDQ scores suggest that she is at a 'very high risk' of developing emotional problems. Her drawing suggests that she had an emotionally challenging time with her social relationships in her previous school, which may still require further support to reduce her emotional distress.

3.9 Quality Assessment of the Qualitative Research

Procedural ethics are vital in determining the quality of research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Therefore, this study refers to Yardley's (2008) qualitative research framework (sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance) to ensure that it is trustworthy, reliable, and valid. Based on Yardley's (2000, 2008) framework, this study's considerations are listed below:

3.9.1 Researchers must be 'sensitive to context' (be equipped with the literature on the topic, consider ethical issues that may emerge, and seek perspectives of relevant stakeholders). To comply with this, the following steps were taken:

- A literature search (see Appendix A) following Cooper et al.'s (2018) eight-step framework was conducted to inform the research questions and methodology.
- This study's methods ensured that participants could easily participate in the interview. Interview questions and planned activities were discussed with my supervisors. In addition, a pilot study was conducted beforehand to ensure that interview questions and methods were sensitive to the context.
- It was recognised that pupil participants might find it hard to verbalise challenging school experiences; therefore, this research used various supporting materials (e.g., drawings, emotion charts, and blob pictures) as a conversation starter and to help them share non-verbally. According to Kaplun (2019), using materials such as drawing and visuals with young people are suitable to support conversations, allowing for deeper reflection on experiences, views, and beliefs.
- Booth et al. (2019) state it is vital to consider the context of a study, such as the geographical location. To gain a more in-depth understanding of Borough A's local context, I met with my PEP and the Head of the EWS team. In addition, I joined an EBSA working group made up of a range of professionals in the local authority, whom all have experience in supporting EBSA initiatives. Finally, research on the types of provision offered and pupil backgrounds in the borough's schools were carried out (see Section 3.8).

3.9.2 Researchers must ensure 'coherence and transparency' (e.g., ensuring reflexivity)

Yardley (2008) emphasised that researchers must be reflexive to ensure the study's credibility. Reflexivity can best be described as "researcher awareness", wherein they consider their role in the research study (Cutcliffe, 2003, p. 985). This urges researchers to actively examine their

involvement and any possible influences that may impact the research (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2012). In particular, I reflected upon Haynes's (2011) recommendations for researchers to reflect on questions relating to:

a. their motivation

b. if they have any preconceived assumptions on the topic

c. their role as a researcher and how that affects the research approach

Qualitative analysis methods have been criticised for their high dependence on subjective researchers' interpretation (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). For example, literature has raised questions about IPA's consistency of use (Alase, 2017; Giorgi, 2010; Willig, 2001). As IPA involves the researcher taking an active role in interpreting data, it is pivotal that regular and structured reflexivity practices are in place to ensure the validity of findings (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 66). Likewise, RTA researchers also play an interpretative role in understanding the data found. Since RTA has been used by many researchers inconsistently, this has led to critiques of low trustworthiness by academics, especially those who take a positivist stance (Braun, 2006, 2019). Thus, rigorous reflexive practices increase data trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, the reflexive techniques below were carried out to ensure valid results:

i. Bracketing

Bracketing is a process in which researchers are encouraged to be self-aware of any potential preconceptions (Glaser, 1992), values and beliefs (Beech, 1999), theories and hypotheses (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007), assumptions and presumptions (Crotty, 1998), that they may have of the phenomenon/topic. Creswell (2014, p. 193) recommends using a journal to document reflections on this, listing any significant statements that may create a researcher

bias. Another effective strategy to mitigate research bias is to audit findings using memos or notes, and to consult with supervisors on these (Cutcliffe, 2003; Finlay, 2002). Taking on board these methods, I wrote down any pre-bias I had in a journal and bracketed any personal assumptions that may affect how I carried out and interpreted the research, which Ortlipp (2008) states as good practice. In addition, personal assumptions were discussed in research supervision, and my supervisors checked documents such as my interview schedules.

Secondly, to manage the expectations of school, parents, and pupils, they were informed before the interview that participation is anonymous and that implications from findings would be discussed as a whole, as well as the fact that their research participation would not interfere with the current/ongoing TEP involvement or work with my EP colleagues. Furthermore, participants were given my supervisors' emails as a point of contact if they had any further questions. Throughout the research, any unclear expectations or difficulties were discussed regularly in supervision. Refer to Appendix O documenting the reflections made.

ii. Peer review for data analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage qualitative researchers to nominate a peer who can support the debriefing of the data analysis and findings. In other words, these are 'additional eyes' to help spot potential unclear and biased reflections. In line with this, my supervisors reviewed and vetted the analysed data, with any comments given addressed accordingly. Additionally, to ensure coding was accurately done, my placement supervisor and a TEP colleague helped double-check the coded themes (see Appendix R & S for extract). In addition, my two research supervisors reviewed my thesis draft on three occasions, along with my EP Tutor, who proofread my thesis draft. Furthermore, I participated in four university thesis tutorials over the academic year, where my TEP colleagues queried my position as a researcher, methods, data analysis, and findings.

3.9.3 Researchers must show 'commitment and rigour'

This study followed all the university's ethics guidelines. From the literature gathering to data reporting at each research stage, it was agreed that every Friday (the study day assigned by the university) would be committed to research work. Supervision occurred regularly, according to course recommendations, and I kept thorough supervision records. All decisions relating to this research (e.g., selecting title for study, data analysis) were consulted with supervisors promptly and in advance. The title changed (refer to Appendix D) was discussed with my supervisors and granted by UCL IOE's research degree department.

3.9.4 Researchers must use findings to promote 'impact and importance'

This research aims to provide valuable information for my employing local authority to develop an EBSA early identification referral pathway. No study has specifically explored Borough A's mainstream school-based systems for supporting EBSA. Finding the facilitators and barriers to help EBSA pupils stay and reintegrate into school may provide valuable information for EP practice and future EBSA initiatives. Essentially, this study advocate for 'staff and pupil voices', thus aligning with the statutory duty of professionals (DfE, 2015).

3.10 Obtaining ethical consent

Data protection was registered on April 23rd 2021, by UCL Legal Services (refer to Appendix B). Subsequently, UCL's IOE Research Ethics Committee (granted ethical approval on May 10th, 2021 (refer to Appendix C). This research follows the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021).

3.10.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

The identities of all participants are kept anonymous. Anonymity extends to their names and the schools they originate from. Pupil participants were asked to form their preferred pseudonym, which is used in all their statements' references. Likewise, school staff were offered the opportunity to form a preferred pseudonym, or they could accept a generic suggestion (e.g., SS1, SS2). In addition, all references to the borough and local authority use a pseudonym (e.g., Borough A, Local Authority A).

Crow et al. (2006, p. 83) advised researchers to be clear on the limits of confidentiality they can provide. It was agreed and communicated to participants that sharing that put them or others at risk would be signposted to the safeguarding officers and leads in their respective schools. Concerning any recordings (e.g., video and/or audio), these are used for transcription purposes only and will be kept and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (UK Government, 2022d). Any recordings will be destroyed in accordance with the UCL IOE's requirements on anonymised data, set as a period of ten years.

3.10.2 Consent and Withdrawal

Participants were asked to sign and return informed consent forms before the interviews could commence (refer to Appendix G & L). Parental consent forms were also required for pupil participants before participating (refer to Appendix H & J). At the start of the interviews, participants were reminded that they could withdraw during the session if they felt uncomfortable, without issues or reasons. Furthermore, participants were also informed that they could withdraw their data for up to one month after taking part, and they were given contact details to do so.

3.10.3 Safeguarding measures

This research does not present foreseeable risks for participants. When planning and carrying out this research, these considerations were made:

- An information sheet stating the aims and purpose of this research was given to participants.
- An introduction and debrief were incorporated into the interview.
- For pupil interviews, a consultation with key adults in school was carried out beforehand. This was to understand the pupil's history and if they required special attention. In addition, relevant child protection procedures, including signposting of pastoral support, were discussed.
- Gatekeepers for this research were identified as the PEP at Borough A, head teachers of participants, and parents of pupils.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research philosophy, design, and methods. In addition, it introduced participants' backgrounds and discussed the ethical considerations made throughout this research. The next chapter will report the research findings for this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The study sample was made up of six school staff and seven pupils. RTA was used for school staff interviews and IPA for pupil interviews to analyse findings. This section of the study discusses themes that emerged from the analysis, based on the depth of information and relevance to the research questions. To provide readers with the core of the findings, further information on the themes reflected upon by individual participants can be found in Appendices T. Sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 share findings that answer the given research questions:

1. How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?
2. What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?
3. What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?

4.2 Findings to address RQ1: *How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?*

School staff were interviewed, and two main themes emerged from the data: ‘School identification methods’ and ‘School assessment methods’. These will be reported in turn, with further analysis of individual sub-themes. In addition, direct quotations will be presented from the data to support the discussion. Refer to Diagram 1 for a thematic map showing the themes that emerged from the analysis.

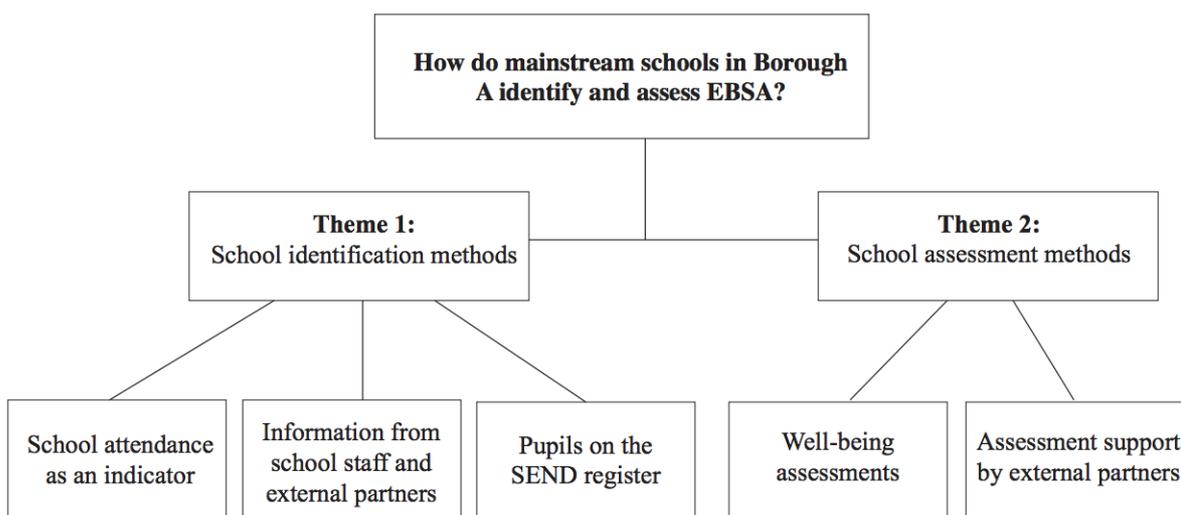


Diagram 1: *Thematic map for RQ1*

4.2.1 Theme 1: School identification methods

This theme refers to methods in which schools identify EBSA. The results have shown that three main methods are employed to identify EBSA: ‘School attendance as an indicator’, ‘Information from school staff and external partners’, and ‘Pupils on the SEND register’, see Diagram 1.

i. Sub-theme 1: School attendance as an indicator

All school staff working in primary and secondary schools shared the use of attendance registers/data to identify EBSA. SS2 stated, “*We look at the school attendance data. It is beneficial and we know why they are not attending and how we as a school can support them*”. Participants (SS1, SS6) who work in academies shared details about their in-school AO and their role in keeping track of absences and observing attendance patterns. SS6 said, “*Our AO, even slight decreasing patterns, she would flag this up in our weekly meetings*”. Similarly, participants (SS2, SS3, and SS4) who work in maintained schools referred to their linked Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as their remit of being “*gatekeepers*” to reduce

absenteeism. For example, SS3 shared that his school relies on the “*attendance key worker*” to inform him if “*attendance has gotten a little sporadic*”, which they would inform relevant stakeholders, including making “*calls to parents to see what is going on*”.

ii. Sub-theme 2: Information from school staff and external partners

Participants also identified EBSA via teacher nomination. This includes observations of behavioural changes in pupils that may indicate difficulties. SS5 said, “*I think when attendance issues come up, they are already experiencing a full-blown EBSA. Their anxieties might have already been present for a long time, so teachers need to share the signs of behavioural changes*”. The classroom role of teachers in identification was also mentioned. SS2 said, “*Well, the job of teachers is to ensure they are picking up signs of changes in behaviour, which might warrant support*”. SS4 describes her teachers as “*trained observers in being aware of things around body language when a child appears to be finding school difficult or stressful*”.

Two participants mentioned that such referrals were also made via external agencies. For example, SS3 stated that he had received direct referrals from the EPS, Virtual Schools and CAMHS, especially whenever it involved an incoming pupil. SS3 said, “*All the transition cases to our school are handled quite well, and the relevant professionals would get in contact, so we know that this pupil might be at risk of missing school due to emotional reasons*”. SS1 shared that the EPS had informed them of a pupil with a history of EBSA in primary school, so the staff could put preventative measures in place to support the pupil.

iii. Sub-theme 3: Pupils on the SEND register

Participants shared those pupils with SEND were monitored closely for EBSA due to an increasing trend within their schools of pupils with comorbidity of ASC and EBSA. SS4 explained, “*Those children we worked with on SR all have a diagnosis of autism*”. SS6 also shared similar observations stating, “*The highest need is working with pupils who find school*

challenging is autism". For pupils experiencing EBSA on the 'SEND register', SS1 said, "*If it is a SEND child, we will know their attendance and the signs of SR. We will carry out home visits*". Likewise, SS5 also shared that if the pupil has a "*SEND plan*", they would "*help them*" accordingly.

4.2.2 Theme 2: School assessment methods

Theme 2 refers to the assessment methods used by school staff to identify EBSA. The results have shown that participants used two main methods to assess EBSA: 'Well-being assessments' and 'Assessment support by external partners'.

i. Sub-theme 1: Well-being assessments

Participants shared the use of well-being assessments. SS5 recounted their school's success with using "*questionnaires and surveys*" to reduce pupil stress, as this method validates what they are going through and challenges them to "*verbalise their feelings and emotions using words*". SS5 stated, "*The types of scales we use could be like 1-10 sort of rating scales, we've used one called the Children Hope Scale and the SDQ*". SS2 stated that their school assesses EBSA on a case-by-case basis, beginning the assessment process by inviting the identified pupil to the "*pupil department*", then utilising "*well-being questionnaires*", such as the '*resiliency scales*', to understand the situation better. SS2 explained that these assessments are also accompanied by school staff, who observe the pupil's "*body language and non-verbal behaviour*". In addition, SS2 explained that their school offers daily debriefs for "*5-10 minutes with a staff member to talk through what has happened*". SS2 added that this ensures pupils "*don't go home with anything that's a problem*". SS4 followed up by saying that when pupils share their feelings, this helps school staff to "*put things in place*", referring to additional support if necessary.

ii. Sub-theme 2: Assessment support by external partners

Participants collaborate and rely on external agencies, such as the EPS, CAMHS, and other medical practitioners, to help them assess their pupils. SS2 shared that their school has developed a “*centralised system: a triage*”, through which she invites the school’s linked “*CAMHS clinician and school well-being team*”. SS6 echoed this approach, explaining her collaboration with the NHS to assess a pupil: “*There is one particular child, we are working with the NHS so her psychiatrist*”. The involvement of EPs was also mentioned by one participant, SS1, who said, “*I work with the EP working here; they sometimes carry out assessments for me*”.

4.2.3 Reflections on findings for RQ1

Findings suggest a shared consensus by participants on the importance of early intervention. SS3 recounted that their school had seen the success of early and intensive intervention. Using the identification and assessment methods reported in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 allowed SS6’s school to “*pick up those signs early so that we can support or refer*”. In addition, participants also shared the importance of working collaboratively with external partners to identify and assess EBSA. SS2 said working in a multi-agency model allows for a deeper investigation of things that “*trigger anxiety, and this might be school-related or home-related*”.

Interestingly, findings also suggest that while participants in their respective schools have EBSA initiatives that are currently in place, these practices are not supported or documented in formal guidance or a set policy. SS2 said, “*We do not have a formal guidance that can probably relate to that we have to follow*”, and SS6 admitted she feels her school is “*a bit inefficient*’ as there is ‘*no concrete approach for schools to follow*’”. In addition, findings show that even internally, school staff across the various departments, such as the attendance office or the SEND department, may employ differing models. SS4 said, “*No, I would not say there*

is one [policy]; I think there is one that my AO follows, but this is not for the whole-school. We work on a very loose model”. The importance of an EBSA policy and guidance will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 Findings to address RQ2: What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?

In this research, ‘facilitators’ refers to ‘push factors’, which the West Sussex EPS (2022) describe as factors drawing pupils to attend school. Diagram 2 provides an overview of themes from the analysis that both participants groups shared as push factors to good mainstream EBSA practices. This section will first report the findings from school staff before the pupils.

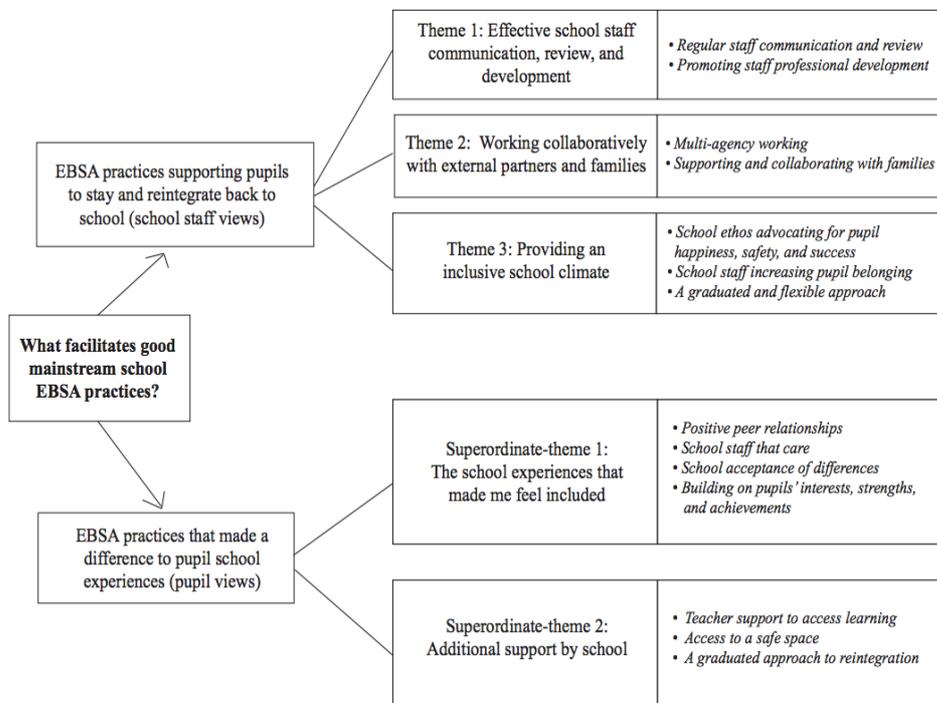


Diagram 2: Thematic Map for RQ2

4.3.1 EBSA practices supporting pupils to stay and reintegrate back to school (school staff views)

Three themes emerged from the interviews that were considered facilitators to school staff participants: ‘Effective school staff communication, review, and development’, ‘Working

collaboratively with external partners and families’, and ‘Providing an inclusive school climate’, see Diagram 2. These will be reported in turn, with further analysis of individual sub-themes. In addition, direct quotations will be presented from the data to support the discussion.

1. Theme 1: Effective school staff communication, review, and development

This theme refers to schools' communication, review, and development practices in their EBSA initiatives.

i. Sub-theme 1: Regular staff communication and review

Participants shared about regular staff communication and review; SS1 stated that their school’s internal staff team communicates regularly: *“So, we call them pastoral support meetings here. In those meetings, the AO brings his concerns and the names, and then from that point, we will discuss what we’re going to do next”*. SS3 shared that communication between staff provides a clear path to corresponding with the key person *“who is going to be involved”* to support the pupil. Likewise, SS4 said, *“A good practice is to pass information from the AO to the EWS, to the deputy’s head, all the way down to the managers, and then to us. I guess it is a team effort”*. To SS5, it is pivotal for a clear communication process and said, *“Because sometimes you get from a different form, you know... teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) or whatever it might be, they might have seen something that’s very different”*.

Participants also discussed the importance of prompt and regular review/evaluation. For example, SS2 noted, *“We review promptly with parents to ensure they come in. It depends; we wanted to review for two weeks in this case. However, the child could not come in, so we contacted her to ask”*. SS3 echoed that prompt and regular reviews help staff recognise progress, but if things are not going as planned, the school can *“try and dig a little deeper to find out why it’s not happening”*. Likewise, SS1’s school meet *“fortnightly to provide updates”* to ensure the intervention is on track. For SS6, regular reviews allow for an assessment on

whether further intervention is needed to support the pupil: “*And I have thought; actually, this piece of work is not finished. There needs to be some more work or more intervention*”.

ii. Sub-theme 2: Promoting staff professional development

Participants described their interests and the steps they have taken to gain a deeper understanding of SEMH. For example, SS2 said, “*It is about the training about anxiety given by the council and other training mentioned that will help us use our skills to show compassion to the young people*”. SS3 also found staff development significant, highlighting how continued staff development via training such as “*inclusion, safeguarding, and mental health training*” have supported their understanding of pupil anxiety, stress, and worry.

2. Theme 2: Working collaboratively with external partners and families

This theme refers to the collaborative efforts’ schools developed with external partners and families in their EBSA initiatives.

i. Sub-theme 1: Multi-agency working

Participants shared about their collaboration with other external partners. SS1 described the systemic work undertaken in their school around EBSA: “*I sit in a team around child meetings, as it is always helpful to sit with other professionals to think together about pupils with persistent absenteeism*”. Moreover, participants shared their successes in working with external agencies around EBSA. SS2 notes, “*We have two brilliant educational psychologists that support us, we have regular planning meetings, and we discuss the students that present with these challenges, and we work together to give them support*”. Similarly, SS1 spoke of their collaboration with EPs in providing pupils with opportunities, such as being part of “*resilience groups*”. Aside from working with the EPS, SS3 said, “*We tap into those services, like targeted youth services, family services, and many other services to help us get them back*”. As highlighted, SS2’s school works collaboratively around EBSA by having a “*centralised*

system: a triage” designed to discuss SEMH and EBSA initiatives and cases. Finally, SS4 mentioned working with a psychiatrist from the NHS to support pupils in high-level cases.

ii. Sub-theme 2: *Supporting and collaborating with families*

Participants recognised the importance of supporting and collaborating with families. On this, SS6 said, *“Well, parents are so important, and for pupils to get back, they have a big role in the support process”*, highlighting the crucial role of families in pupil reintegration. Providing *“open communication with families”* was described by SS3 as a way to *“foster the relationship”*. SS3 fulfilled this role in their school, explaining, *“When I know things have gone bad, I call her [parent] before the child gets home if I can. They call me at the school, and it’s the constant communication with some parents. One the parent, I speak to them maybe three or four times a week”*. Participants also discussed the importance of involving parents in the intervention process. SS2 gave an example of how involving parents in intervention is essential: *“Just talking to the parents and letting them know the level of support”*. SS1 also believes the views of parents to be significant: *“It might be that we talk about doing a reduced timetable for some students, to see if we can slowly reintegrate them back to school”*.

Participants also acknowledged that social support given to parents is a key element of their EBSA initiatives. To support families, SS2 said that school staff *“are very welcoming to parents, and they can come in with the children to eat in class or stay in the building in the staff room, or wherever and have a cup of tea”*. SS3 shared that their school supports parents by *“pointing out support groups and parenting classes, and, like, direct them to the right support agencies for families who require additional support and advice”*. In addition, participants recognised the need to support the SEMH needs of families. SS1 said, *“There seems to be a need to support the SEMH needs of parents first, and their child’s experiences will naturally improve too”*. To achieve this, SS4’s school runs in-house parental support

groups for those who require emotional and psychological support. SS4 continued, “*We try to support them in a community to share their feelings and what they hope to be supported with. They can share their ideas and direct each other to the parent support network*”.

3. Theme 3: Providing an inclusive school climate

This theme refers to school practices that were shared successfully in ensuring pupils experiencing EBSA feel included and accepted.

i. Sub-theme 1: School ethos advocating for pupil happiness, safety, and success

School staff used words such as ‘*happy*’, ‘*included*’ and ‘*thrive*’ when asked about their school ethos around EBSA. SS2 said, “*I think to ensure pupils feel safe, included and happy*”. Similarly, SS4 said, “*Children achieving and thriving and flourishing and mental health and well-being is hugely important for us and ensuring that our children feel safe, happy*”. Recognising the importance of a school climate that promotes happiness, safety, and success, SS5 said, “*As a school, we try...we can only make it a good environment, so pupils can thrive and enjoy school despite their situations*”.

ii. Sub-theme 2: School staff increasing pupil belonging

SS4 stated the importance of “*community cohesion around friendships, forgiveness, and inclusion*”. SS6 brought up the importance of relationship building between teacher and pupil. SS6 said, “*We want pupils to be close to their friends and us*”. For SS3, inclusion is ensuring “*equal treatment*”, and shared about a pupil who “*barked*”, adding, “*So we do an intervention to understand and appreciate your diagnosis and not be negative*”. SS5 concurred with SS3’s views that inclusion means being “*open and accepting of differences and not regard EBSA as a negative condition*”.

Recognising that pupils have talents beyond just academic achievement, SS5 said, *“I think we’re all about aspiring to support all children, including all children, to achieve the best they possibly can. Furthermore, that might be academic achievement, but it might be other ways of achieving”*. Other ways include *“finding their sporting or creative talents”* (SS5). In SS4’s school, to help build pupil sense of belonging and achievement, she recounted a particular EBSA case where she allowed the pupil the opportunity to do *“baking or hairdressing, when she has lessons that make her anxious ... which takes her away from the stress of the extremely challenging or tough subjects, for her to learn through different methods”*. This was a successful strategy sharing that the *“starting with pupil interests piques her [a case] interest”*, leading to an increased school attendance. SS6 shared that the subtle tweaks in the daily routine of pupils such as introducing opportunities for creative activities like art helped pupils attend school. SS6 said, *“We would organise for them to come in for a specific lesson we know they enjoy, like a big lesson or an art lesson”*.

iii. Sub-theme 3: A graduated and flexible approach

School staff shared about adopting a flexible and graduated approach to ensure that pupils’ emotional well-being is supported. SS5 said *“It varies on the needs and is very individual to the child”*. School staff shared some successful strategies which include *“adopting a timetable that takes a gentle approach for pupils who cannot attend”* (SS1). To ensure pupils are not overwhelmed after missing school for long periods, SS4’s school organised for pupils *“to come in for a specific lesson we know they enjoy, like a big lesson or an art lesson. This would rebuild their trust and motivation”*.

SS1 shared that pupils must be *“given time to stop, take a breath, and, like, to wait a minute. It is okay to be not okay”*. SS6 shared that pupils in her school have access to a physical space where they can be calm: *“So they can use the sensory circuits and calming spaces. We also*

had children with high anxiety who have gone to the art room for one-to-one pastoral support in school". SS3 shared that he has had to be accommodating to the needs of pupils, for example, by allowing a pupil to spend lunchtime in the nursery, as the child *"finds it calming"*. SS5 also shared that staff has 'to be aware when the *"child needs a break"* and to provide them with access to a space where they are *"free of worry and stress"*.

For pupils with high anxieties about returning, SS2 explained that her colleagues *"have taken a whole class to the park to meet the child with the parent to try to get the relationship back"*. Similarly, SS3 shared that transition can be difficult and said, *"I think it is important, if pupils can get to know their teacher and be comfortable with the situation, then it reduces that worry about school"*. During the pandemic, SS4 shared that her school wanted to ensure pupils were included and used a 'virtual model' to foster peer relationships whereby pupils were paired with their peers for support. SS1 shared that whilst the gradual reintegration is ongoing, his school offers extra learning opportunities, such as *"small group online learning so they don't feel behind"*.

4.3.2 EBSA practices that made a difference to pupils (pupil views)

Through a series of interviews, pupils were asked what support they received from schools that helped their school experiences. While some references made by pupils were about their current provision (e.g., AP), their sharing allows for an understanding of the areas that mainstream schools can emulate or take forward in their future EBSA practices. For a sample of a pupil interview transcript, please see Appendix S. Two superordinate themes emerged from this analysis: 'The school experiences that made me feel belonged' and 'Additional support received from my school', see Diagram 2. Superordinate-themes will be reported in turn, with further analysis of individual subordinate-themes. Direct quotations will be presented from the data to support the discussion.

1. Superordinate-theme 1: The school experiences that made me feel included

This theme refers to pupils' desire to be included, accepted, and belong in school.

i. Subordinate-theme 1: Positive peer relationships

Pupils spoke about peer relationships and what it meant to them. Gunnersaurus shared that although school was difficult, attending allowed him to meet with a peer: “*Maybe to see J [friend], I get a bit happy sometimes*”. Monstrae shared that despite having high levels of social anxiety, his friends were the ‘push’ (West Sussex EPS, 2022) that helped him attend school. Monstrae said, “*I don’t want to be here... but the only thing keeping me here is my friends in this school*”. Watch shared that, over the past year, having “*nice friends*” at school has increased his self-confidence and motivation, which were once low, making school a more accessible place. From pupil drawings (see Section 3.8) participants such as Sloth King, Pencil, and Ariel drawn friends and it appears that the longing for positive peer relationships is clear and has impacted their school experiences. The importance of stakeholders around pupil to foster positive peer relationships will be discussed in Chapter 5.

ii. Subordinate-theme 2: School staff that care

Participants affirmed that having school staff that cared for them helped them attend school. Speaking on his new provision, Pencil said, “*Teachers are nice; they understand when I say I am anxious or not feeling it*”. It seemed that Pencil’s school experience has improved, as he now has caring teachers who understand his difficulties. Likewise, Angel shared that her school experiences improved, as she “*feels less alone*” now, crediting her teachers’ efforts in supporting her emotional needs.

To illustrate what her teachers meant to her, Angel said, “*When I was going through my traumatic stuff, I felt alone. But what helped was that there’s always teachers to talk to*”.

Angel's trust in the presence of teachers when she needed support shows their importance in her life. Watch, a victim of bullying at his previous school, was asked about teachers, and used the phrase, "*build a relationship, when I feel stuck*", making it evident that relationships require adult consistency, longevity, and patience. Pencil also echoed the positive language of his teachers: "*Teachers that was nice, who talked to my mum and stuff, and my mum was like, oh yeah, they said something nice about me*". Pencil's sharing also highlighted the importance of ensuring pupils feel a sense of achievement.

iii. Subordinate-theme 3: School acceptance of differences

Being accepted in school despite their differences was mentioned by participants. Monstrae has difficulty with mobility and shared that his school allows him to wear sneakers to feel less pain: "*I have a pass from Mrs D to wear sneakers*". By understanding Monstrae's needs, his school was able to support his emotions. At Ariel's new provision, she said she feels "*at place*", a phrase which I probed further. She explained that her current school (AP) offers "*a variety of clubs, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) society*", and the school also gives her the flexibility to "*bring in food*" as she is "*particular about the food that she eats*".

Referring to Angel's drawing (see Section 3.8), she expressed that she felt "*confused*" and "*messed up*" during her time in mainstream school. When probed further, she shared that her peers ostracised her in her previous provision for her body weight. This made her self-conscious about her size, and thus school became a difficult place to attend. She attributed the success of raising her confidence to her current provision: "*Where I am now (AP), we are a home. They do not mind my size at all*".

iv. Subordinate-theme 4: Building on pupils' interests, strengths, and achievements

Participants shared about their interests, strengths, and achievements that made their school experiences better verbally and through their drawings (see Section 3.8). Sloth King particularly enjoys art, for example, and shared what supported his anxiety when in school: “*Art will help me a tiny bit and make me feel less anxious and think less about my Mum. There is a very good drawing [points to the wall]. I drew it for five hours*”.

By the same method, Gunnersaurus explained that he is motivated to attend school so he could have access to football practice, which gives him the “*momentum to achieve*” his dream of becoming a footballer. Watch and Angel stated that, in their current provision, the differentiating factor is that teachers give them opportunities to try new things, such as art therapy. Angel used the phrase, “*If this continues, things would be okay*”, indicating that art therapy has had a colossal and positive impact on her. Findings suggest that whilst school is still a difficult place for many pupil participants, they did not lack aspiration or dreams, suggesting room for stakeholders to continue increasing their interests, strengths, and achievements.

2. Superordinate-theme 2: Additional support by school

This theme refers to the additional support given to pupils that made school easier for them.

i. Subordinate-theme 1: Teacher support to access learning

Gunnersaurus explained that, at times, his anxiety can be uncontrollable, affecting his daily functioning. At such times, he required TAs to support him in attending school: “*I don't usually go into class, but I would go straight if she [TA] would help me*”. When he cannot regulate his emotions, he is allowed to work one-to-one with his TA: “*I do things with him sometimes in a*

certain office and do some work there. When he does not come, I have nobody to go into class with, which makes me not want to go”.

Likewise, Monstrae shared that he benefited from the “*extra help*” offered to him to access his curriculum better. He stated, “*teachers helped me to get ahead lessons*” and allowed for “*additional time to ask about homework*”. Monstrae evidently wanted to engage, and the additional support given by his teachers reduced his anxiety around school. Ariel also shared how her teachers' guidance and advice about the college transition have helped her tremendously.

ii. Subordinate-theme 2: Access to a safe space

Participants shared about the safe spaces they had access to. Monstrae said that he is often “*anxious*” and would “*feel awful*” in school, however, going to an assigned physical space allowed him to soothe himself. Angel’s current provision also gives her access to a safe and comfortable physical space: “*This space, no one can get it, like, people can get in, yes. But you can just, like, chill out here. Or you can dim the lights, and you can just like make yourself more comfortable*”. In the calming room, Ariel, a classmate of Angel’s, said, “*This room helps me reflect and breathe, especially when I am frustrated or upset*”.

iii. Subordinate-theme 3: A graduated approach to reintegration

Pencil and Monstrae both stated that being granted a flexible timetable helped them feel less pressured. Pencil added, “*Well, flexible timetable maybe...so I can come when I feel less anxious. Now I come in five days, but I was coming, like, two when I first found it hard*”. Similarly, Monstrae, a secondary pupil, shared that this flexibility helped him: “*Like when I am very anxious and cannot continue, sometimes they let me go home earlier. That helps!*”. In Gunnersaurus’ case, instead of him being immediately expected to stay in school, his school allowed him to gradually reintegrate after a long time away: “*So what I do is start easy, like, I*

get picked up earlier, and from three instead of one o'clock, and it helps, and now I feel pretty calm about it".

On the other hand, Ariel's school gave her the leeway to take breaks if she was anxious: *"Lots of times I have kind of stopped feeling good enough to go to lessons. I can just go to another one or something like that—sort of flexibility. Here we can take breaks when we need to".*

Angel explained that the difficult aspect for her was the actual journey to school, and her school responded supportively by getting a key worker to pick her up from home and accompany her to school.

4.4 Findings to address RQ3: What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?

This question explores barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices. In this research, barriers refer to the 'pull factors', which the West Sussex EPS (2022) describe as the factors that hinder pupils from attending school. As with the previous research question (Section 4.3), findings from school staff interviews will be recounted before those of pupil participants. Diagram 3 provides an overview of themes from the analysis that were regarded as pull factors to good mainstream school EBSA practices.

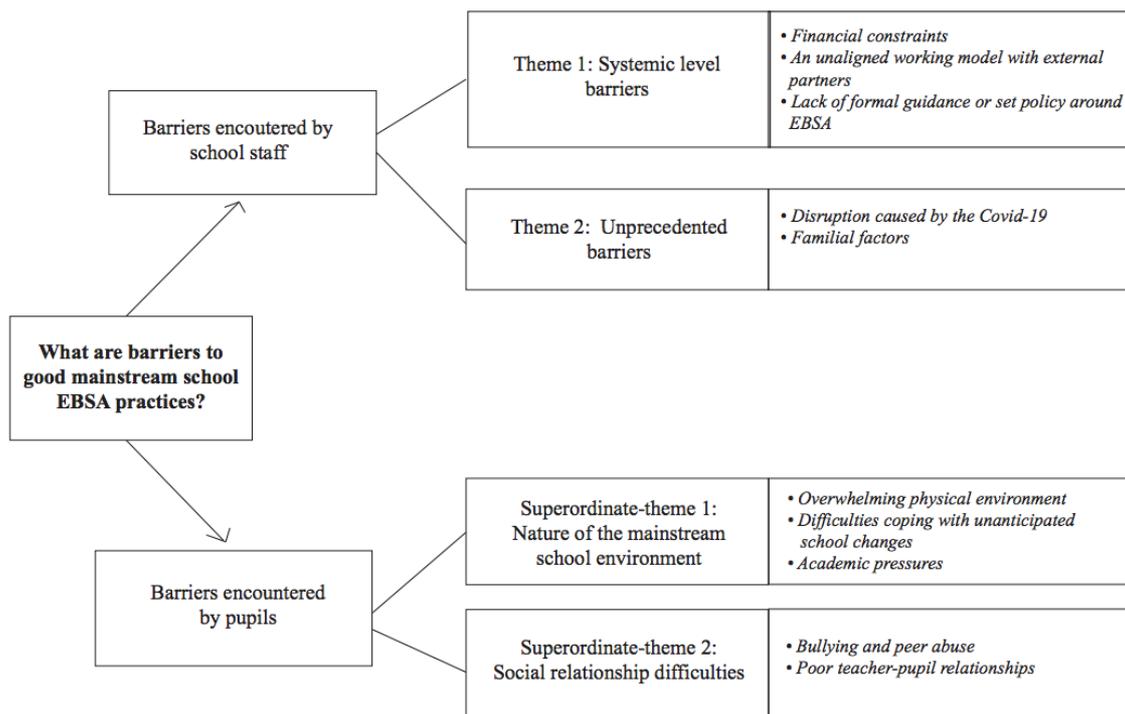


Diagram 3: Thematic Map for RQ3

4.4.1 Barriers encountered by school staff

Two themes emerged from school staff interviews, which they regarded as pull factors: ‘Systemic level barriers’ and ‘Unprecedented barriers’. These will be reported in turn, with further analysis of individual sub-themes. In addition, direct quotations will be presented from the data to support the discussion.

1. Theme 1: Systemic level barriers

This theme refers to the systemic barriers that school staff experienced that hindered good mainstream school EBSA initiatives.

i. Sub-theme 1: Financial constraints

School staff participants explicitly mention the financial constraints of their schools as hindering EBSA initiatives. SS2 detailed that her school has had to cope with staffing

shortages, due to financial constraints: *“We could not afford funding for him. He [pupil] only had half a day of TA support, which he found challenging, and became highly anxious”*. This was also a difficulty faced by SS1 and SS4. SS1 said, *“The team here is tiny ... They’re not able to spend that time with pupils. I feel that my current school is missing this out”*.

Financial constraints also prevent expansion to physical school buildings. SS6 explained, *“We want to have a calming room for pupils with anxiety, but, you know, money is an issue”*. Alongside these space issues, participants also recounted difficulties in securing trade services (i.e., not offered free, requiring purchase using school money) such as EP time. According to SS3, lack of money also means a lack of preventative intervention from beneficial EPs. SS3 added, *“Limited-time is paid for, you know, and we will push at the moment for implementing EHCPs. Well, the EP we are linked to, I think she’s brilliant ... but there’s just not enough money, there’s not enough resources to secure her services to discuss EBSA”*. Likewise, SS4 stated that her school has not been able to fund EP time to support EBSA: *“But there are frustrations around the fact that we just don’t have the money to buy in for anything other than assessments of children”*.

ii. Sub-theme 2: An unaligned working model with external partners

Participants shared that working with external partners who function according to different working models can sometimes be challenging. SS1 said, *“So, you know, we’ve all got bits we need to bring together, but it does not quite come together. Because we are not clear on who is doing what action if that makes sense. I think where the issues lie – so, I think the roles aren’t defined well enough”*. When discussing which services, he found most challenging regarding the alignment of working styles, SS3 said, *“I found CAMHS. I do not know if it is relevant. I am not trying to be rude about anything, but I find it quite difficult to use. We need emotional assessments and advice. We need tips on how to work with children”*.

SS4 shared that as pupils experiencing EBSA are often at home, they are not able to access in-person therapy offered by external partners: *“So intervention is carried out virtually because pupils are not present, so when online, pupils they are there, but their attention is not there. They are on their phones and stuff, so that was a real challenge”*. The speed with which intervention is given was mentioned by SS6: *“But there are occasions where I cannot reach any of them. The pupil might have already been entrenched by then”*. When explaining such communication difficulties, SS5 said, *“Everyone is so busy; it’s tough to contact people. And if you do not know them, it is harder”*.

iii. Sub-theme 3: Lack of formal guidance or set policy around EBSA

There is a consensus that none of the participants’ schools had developed or received formal guidance or policy around EBSA from the LA. SS2 said, *“We do not have a formal guidance that can probably relate to that we have to follow”*. SS4 echoed this, *“No, I would not say there is one; I think there is one in terms of – for the AO, he follows his policy. We work on a very loose model”*. On the other hand, SS3 recognised the benefits of having a school EBSA policy: *“Actually having some – some strict guidelines with, kind of, the things we should all look out for, like not every child, SEND or not, should not be treated the same. We cannot say that every case is the same, but a document would be good for us to work off, and formalising practices to help us deal with is a little bit better”*. In the same vein, SS6 stated that she feels her school is *“a bit inefficient”* as there is *“no concrete approach for schools to follow”*.

2. Theme 2: Unprecedented barriers

This theme refers to the unprecedented barriers school staff encountered that disrupted their EBSA practices.

i. Sub-theme 1: Disruption caused by Covid-19

Participants all agreed that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted their EBSA initiatives, and “*undone all the efforts*” (SS3) that schools have implemented to support pupils to stay in school. Participants expressed difficulties caused by school staff being away due to contracting Covid-19 and suffering from its after-effects, as articulated by SS1: “*Some of our staff have been away with long-COVID, so we are unable to tell pupils in advance, leading to difficulties with communication. Pupils were not doing anything. It’s just gotten worse, and now they don’t want to be in school*”.

For many pupils experiencing EBSA, the demands of remote learning made circumstances more difficult. SS6 said, “*In the past, pupils could come in when they were feeling better, but schools were closed, so learning was all remote*”. SS5 recounted that there was “*low engagement over lockdown in online learning*”. At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, SS6 pointed out that, in her school, pupils from underprivileged families had to wait for long periods to receive laptops, leading to poor access. SS6 added, “*We’ve let some children down there, probably the most vulnerable*”. For SS3, those pupils who were school refusing and also have an ASC diagnosis encountered “*difficulties returning and adapting to the routine, where it gives them anxiety*”.

Transition initiatives were also disrupted due to the pandemic. SS6 said, “*School trips were all cancelled due to the pandemic. Parents and pupils are already highly anxious, so having these transitions cancelled has left big gaps*”.

ii. Sub-theme 2: Familial factors

Participants shared that most families are cooperative, but they do encounter parents who are resistant to working together. SS5 said, “*Well, home is important. Parents need to work hand in hand; if not, we cannot pull off the intervention*”. SS1 said, “*Some of it is to do with the*

parents as well, you know, I'm afraid, and sometimes putting that pressure on will get them to become more proactive about getting their children in school. I feel it does have to come from both angles as well". The reasons for parental resistance can vary depending on the family, but as SS6 explained, parents fear working with agencies such as "CAMHS" due to the *'stigma around mental health'*.

On parental mental health, SS1 shared that she has observed difficulties in attendance for children with parents who have mental health issues, suspecting that children may stay home to *"protect and maybe care for them"*. SS4 had similar experiences, referring to an EBSA case where the pupil refuses to *"separate from them [the parent]"* due to excessive worrying for their health. When schools reopened after the national lockdown, SS3 noted a general increase in parental anxiety: *"Reopening was tough because anxiety was everywhere, not just pupils, but parents, and even some of our staff were going crazy"*.

4.4.2 Barriers encountered by pupils

The participating pupils shared their experiences of barriers they encountered that hindered school enjoyment and attendance. From the analysis, two superordinate-themes, 'Nature of a mainstream school environment', and 'Social Relationship difficulties', see Diagram 3.

1. Superordinate-theme 1: Nature of the mainstream school environment

This theme refers to the features of the mainstream school environment that made pupils attending school difficult.

i. Subordinate-theme 1: Overwhelming physical environment

Participants stated that they found the school's physical environment to be a challenge. Gunnersaurus explained that he is sensitive to loud noises, which makes coming to school challenging: *"Basically, because sometimes I wouldn't even take it anymore"*. Similarly,

Watch described that school was “*too crowded*”, and regarding factors that had stressed him at his previous school, he said, “*It has loads of people, but I don’t know how to describe it, it is a noisy place, and I get stressed even speaking about my previous [school]*”. Pencil stated that aside from the loud environment at school, the vast number of pupils also makes it a “*scary place to be in*”. He said, “*Things that I dislike.... There are tons of people*”. In line with this, Monstrae articulated it this way when describing his difficulties with navigating the building: “*Primary school is easy to navigate, maybe if it is easier ... you can’t bring that here. If I knew where to go, here, there are so many classrooms. Since there is an English classroom in this building, in another, all the way*”.

ii. Subordinate-theme 2: *Difficulties coping with unanticipated school changes*

Being in mainstream education can be stressful for various factors, and the pupil participants elaborated on this in detail. Gunnersaurus shared that any unanticipated changes, such as a departure of a key worker with whom he had a good rapport, posed a great challenge to him: “*Well, I used to have a TA, but she left the school, obviously went on holiday, but then they left the school. It was sudden because, well, by the time loads on holiday I didn’t realise that they were not coming back, then they told me that she would not come back, which made me very sad*”. In this case, Gunnersaurus had not been pre-empted and prepared for the transition, and this also indicates the school’s heavy reliance on a single TA to support him.

Monstrae shared that due to EBSA and the pandemic, he only attended school for a few months last year: “*I forgot a lot of things; I didn’t even get proper learning that year, and I also had to change in September*”. When asked how he felt about this, Monstrae admitted he experienced bouts of “*crying*” as he “*forgot a lot of things*”, making him “*sad*”. Clearly, the sudden changes caused by school closures due to Covid-19 regulations had a significant impact. For Angel, daily flux, such as teacher changes or her school contracting more supply

teachers were complex to deal with: *“I hate, like, supply teachers, okay. And if I, like, had a teacher change, I would just act crazy. Like, scream, like, I hate change. Like, I’m not really good with it”*, suggesting Angel’s desire for relationship consistency. When prompted on what was most difficult for him, Pencil explained that returning from summer break was extremely hard: *“It’s, like, because, you know, when there’s, like, summer break, that’s when I don’t want to go back. Okay. So, I got, like, out of a routine. Well, a lot to do about anxiety and, like, it is difficult to get back into the sleep pattern”*.

iii. Subordinate-theme 3: Academic pressures

Participants spoke about academic demands at school, and how these fuelled their school difficulties. Monstrae missed a considerable amount of school due to EBSA and admitted that he does *“not understand anything”* he is taught in school now, adding, *“Lesson, lessons, what about the lesson is even worse, and I’m not getting any help ... It got worse, I was lost and unsure, well just awful”*. Ariel reflected on her previous experiences at a mainstream school and how demanding the academic expectations were: *“Well, previously, I went to a mainstream school, and it was really strict. And I just felt so trapped there and, like, I got in a lot of trouble for, like, it wouldn’t even be like behaviour, it would be like for not bringing my homework or being late to school. Things like that, which I think – so, but I tried my best”*.

2. Superordinate-theme 2: Social relationship difficulties

This theme refers to the relationship difficulties pupils experienced with peers and teachers in mainstream schools. Section 4.3.2 delved into how participants viewed their peer and teacher relationships, which were push factors that helped school attendance. However, the opposite is true, with difficult social relationships pulling pupils away from school.

i. Subordinate 1: Bullying and peer abuse

Participants shared that whenever they experienced difficulties with peer relationships, this resulted in school difficulties. Sloth King recounted an incident that occurred in Year 2, in a science class, where a peer “*pushed him away*”, which led to him having to get stitches. Since then, he admitted that he felt different about school. Bullying was a general theme with the participants: Watch, Angel, and Gunnersaurus all shared incidents of bullying, sparked by aspects such as their appearance or their diagnosis.

Gunnersaurus elaborated on the bullying he experienced: “*Like peop-people being rude and weird things, actually even in the classroom when teachers are not in class, people are saying things about my autism and, like, there are people in the playground that annoy me sometimes. A few people annoy me*”. Angel described an incident of physical bullying: “*I was bullied a lot. Like, I’ve had bullying throughout my school time, and it was horrible to the point where I got beaten up. Oh, yeah, I got in a fight. I have gotten into a lot of fights and many detentions*”.

While Monstrae did not share experiences of specific bullying events, he stated that he felt “*left out*” and “*a bit lonely*” when asked about his school friendships: “*The experience was a bit lonely ... It was not because it was hard to be friends, but my friends made friends with other friends, and they became a group ... And there was me*”. Similarly, Angel recounted that when she was in her previous mainstream school, she did not know how to make friends: “*I didn’t know how to react to, like, I didn’t, like, know how to make friends*”. Likewise, when Pencil was away from school due to high anxiety, he expressed disappointment in his relationships: “*None of my friends was asked to speak to me. I’ve lost contact with them all now*”.

ii. Subordinate 2: Poor teacher-pupil relationships

Participants also shared the impact poor relationships with teachers had on their school experiences. Sloth King shared his frustration about teachers not helping him, even when he

feels anxious: *“No teacher helps me get to school”*. Like Sloth King, Angel described how her teachers in her previous mainstream school did not help her when she needed them. As a result, she was subject to bullying and *“made enemies”*, highlighting the importance of appropriate adult intervention when required. Watch also opened up about his experience of being bullied in a mainstream school: *“No teachers, they did not support me, and they noticed but yet they didn’t do anything”*.

Regarding Pencil’s relationship with teachers at his last mainstream school, he spoke of an incident where he was *“blamed”* by a teacher for something he did not do. Since then, he has been unable to trust any teacher, and questions how genuine their care or concern is, stating *“But, like, I know when they are fake”*. Ariel also stated that she felt *“judged”* by her teachers in her previous school, leading to increased anxiety around attending school. Her drawing (see Section 3.8) where she drew herself in far proximity with her teachers confirming her feelings about the detachment from her teachers.

Angel, too, related an incident that she regarded as *“horrible”*: *“And my – my old school thought it would be a good idea if I just stayed inside. So, the whole time of years seven and eight, I was just in a classroom for the lunch break. And I wasn’t allowed to go outside. Not even allowed to, like, go outside with anyone else. I just had to stay in a classroom; even if it were sunny, rainy, or anything. It was not discussed, and they were like, it will be best for you if you do that”*.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported this study’s findings in relation to the given research questions. The voices of both groups of participants were captured to understand the identification, assessment, and intervention practices currently in place to support pupils to stay in school and

reintegrate back into school. Findings highlighted themes about facilitators and barriers, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, Sections 5.2 through to 5.4 summarise and discuss this study's key findings. Section 5.5 will then reflect upon these findings and discuss the implications for schools and the EPS.

5.2 Research Question One: How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA?

5.2.1 Key findings on identification methods

Results show that three main methods are employed to identify EBSA: 'School attendance as an indicator', 'Information shared from school staff and external partners', and 'Pupils on the SEND register'. This is consistent with methods reported in Archer et al.'s (2003) large-scale study, investigating how schools (mainstream and specialist) identify SR. Pupils shared that these identification methods have supported their understanding of EBSA, but they cannot be mechanistic, or be assumed from a single source (e.g., school attendance data). Also, they must be considered holistically during the identification phase.

School staff agreed that early identification is pivotal, allowing for prompt targeted responses to pupil needs, in line with recommendations by Stirling and Emery (2016, p. 2). Using the mentioned methods, school staff can quickly "*pick up those signs early so that we can support or refer*" (SS6). For effective identification, 'team effort' was cited as a requirement, starting from the AOs or EWOs attached to their schools.

Of particular note was the mention of increased understanding of EBSA in their schools, and awareness of subtle pupil behavioural changes in the classroom. This is an important finding,

as literature has shown that the onset of pupil SEMH difficulties can be subtle, with early classroom identification crucial to pupil wellbeing (e.g., Devenney & O'Toole, 2021). For example, SS4 showed pride in her fellow staff as “*trained observers*” who are “*aware of things around body language*”, crediting this to SEMH training given by external agencies, such as the EPS and via the individual work with EPs linked to their schools.

School staff also observed an increasing trend of pupils with an ASC diagnosis within their EBSA referrals, leading to close monitoring of pupils on their school’s ‘SEND registers’. Whilst the literature has pointed out the comorbidity between ASC and difficulties in mainstream school (e.g., Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Goodall, 2018; West Sussex EPS, 2022), these findings further raise the importance for stakeholders to revisit current measures in place to support this group of learners, ensuring they feel included and integrated into mainstream settings. Coincidentally, in this study, six out of seven pupil participants have an ASC diagnosis, reiterating school staff observations. The implications of these findings are discussed in Section 5.5.

5.2.2 Key findings on assessment methods

The results show that varying approaches shared by school staff, such as internal ‘well-being assessments’, and ‘assessment support by external partners’ mirror findings from the existing literature (Elliot & Place, 2019; Lauchlan, 2003). Of interest is the rationale given by school staff made for using well-being assessments, beyond simple diagnostic purposes. Rather, their purpose is to ensure that pupils with high anxiety can share their feelings without the pressure of expressing them verbally. This shows how participating school staff truly value pupil voices. Not only is this a statutory duty for educators (DfE, 2015), but it also indicates that schools are committed to viewing EBSA empathetically, despite current government pressure and

expectations to increase school attendance targets, with failure leading to punitive punishments and legal sanctions (DfE, 2022b).

School staff also emphasised the importance of collaborating with external agencies, such as EPS, CAMHS, and other medical practitioners, to identify and assess EBSA. This is affirmed by literature recommending a more holistic understanding of the causes for pupils' difficulties (e.g., Guay et al., 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; West Sussex EPS, 2022). SS2's sharing was especially prominent here, as she described her school's success in developing an EBSA "*centralised system: a triage*", where professionals across the LA, such as the school's "*CAMHS clinician and school well-being team*" can discuss EBSA cases. This differs to findings from other school staff, who assessed EBSA on an ad-hoc basis.

Analysis of the found assessment methods has shown that whilst it is good practice to involve parents during the assessment phase via consultation (Elliot & Place, 2019), school staff made no mention of involving parents at this stage. Whilst it is premature to claim that parental voices are not elicited at the assessment phase, further research is recommended, to explore how parents/families can contribute at this stage.

5.2.3 Reflection of RQ1 findings

Whilst staff participants described their school's processes around identifying, assessing, and supporting EBSA initiatives, it was mentioned that these are not protected and supported by any formal guidance or set policy. Moreover, whilst external agencies have supported schools via training or direct work, school staff stated that they have not been provided with a published formal guidance/set policy by the LA to support their understanding of how EBSA is conceptualised in the borough. This was noted as a barrier to good mainstream school practices (discussed in Section 5.4.1) and may explain the overrepresentation of a particular group of

learners – in this study’s case, pupils with an ASC diagnosis. Implications of this for the LA and EPS are discussed in Section 5.5.

5.3 Research Question Two: What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices?

While school staff were asked what ‘push factors’ facilitate their EBSA practices, pupils were asked what support was effective for them to attend school. The key facilitators found are discussed below:

5.3.1 Schools embedding a whole-school approach in EBSA practices

School staff stated that good EBSA practices consist of ‘Effective school staff communication, review, and development’, ‘Working collaboratively with external partners and families’, and ‘Providing an inclusive school climate’, suggesting an ethos around taking a whole-school approach to their EBSA initiatives. A whole-school approach has proven to be an effective practice in raising school attendance (e.g., Devenney & O’Toole, 2021; Hansberry, 2016; Havik & Ingul, 2021; Kearney, 2016; West Sussex EPS, 2022).

i. Ensuring an effective staff communication, review, and development

The results show that schools align with Brina et al.’s belief (2022, p. 1) that a key element and ‘driving force’ to effective school practices is to ensure clear communication and work processes within staff teams. In this study, school staff acknowledged the importance of good communication at all intervention phases, as the West Sussex EPS (2022) advised. SS4 mentioned that good intervention starts internally with staff facilitating clear roles, responsibilities, and purpose. In addition, it was deemed good practice to ensure intervention is regularly and appropriately reviewed, so it is fit for purpose.

Another insightful finding is the ethos of school staff around professional development, and how this has led to increased participation in SEMH training to identify and support pupils experiencing EBSA. As stated in existing literature, staff development is crucial (Glazzard &

Bostwick, 2018; Newton & Wilson, 1999; Nuttal & Woods, 2014), and Devenney and O’Toole (2021) suggest that schools who support staff development are more likely to carry out whole-school approaches that embed and value pupils’ emotional well-being.

ii. The importance of working collaboratively with external partners and families

This study emphasises the importance of collaboration with external partners and families, as found in existing literature (Creswell & Cartwright-Hatton, 2007; Guare & Cooper, 2003; Elsherbiny’s, 2017). School staff shared that support extends beyond the practical (e.g., directing and connecting families to agencies that can provide emotional and psychological support, or involving them in intervention planning and delivery), but acknowledges the role of schools in supporting families with their mental health. This relational ethos was described by school staff as an indirect facilitator to pupil reintegration. In addition, school staff agreed with research that parental mental health can be a risk factor to school attendance (Adams, 2021; Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005; Elsherbiny, 2017; Kearney & Albano, 2004). SS4 noted a method of “*in-house parental network group*” delivered by their school, to help parents connect with one another, providing a space for them to share information and support.

As highlighted in Section 5.2.2, school staff prioritised collaborative working with external agencies in the identification and assessment phase, which extends to intervention delivery, as mentioned by other EBSA research (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Havik et al., 2014; Heyne et al., 2019). In particular, school staff participants spoke of their positive experiences with the EPS and the EPs, with whom they work closely, stating that preventative perspectives and intervention (e.g., running resilience groups for vulnerable pupils) could mitigate EBSA risks in their schools.

5.3.2 The importance of an inclusive school climate in EBSA initiatives

This study has found that an inclusive school climate is a key facilitator to good mainstream EBSA practices, in line with previous research (Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Thambirajah et al., 2008; Watson et al., 2012). School staff mentioned practices that embedded the promotion of pupils' senses of belonging and acceptance, such as allowing for reasonable adjustments when required, and ensuring relationship building is placed at the fore of their initiatives. Crucially, as direct beneficiaries of these initiatives, pupil participants shared that having staff who cared for their needs supported their school experiences. This included staff who were sensitive to their needs and difficulties; for example, Monstrae struggles with physical mobility and shared that staff who allowed him to '*wear sneakers*' made him feel understood. Pupils also shared that their school experiences improved when they stopped "*feeling judged*" (Angel) or "*trapped*" (Ariel), suggesting that an accepting and inclusive climate is a key facilitator.

i. The power of friendships

In the stages of psychosocial development, Erikson (1963) proposed that during the school age phase, pupils develop their identities by membership of a social group, and this study's findings align with this. Pupils discussed how important friendships are to them, and their desire for positive relationships with their peers. For example, Gunnersaurus and Monstrae, who both still feel highly anxious about school, explained that opportunities to meet with their friends are a 'push factor' to attending school, despite their ongoing emotional difficulties. School staff acknowledged the importance of peer relationships and their role in fostering them (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Moses & Villodas, 2017; Slaten et al., 2016; Stirling & Emery, 2016). For example, SS2 brought the whole class to meet a pupil who has missed school for a prolonged period to reconnect them, proving effective.

This finding reminds stakeholders to think collaboratively on methods to increase the social capital of pupils by building their friendships, encouraging their sense of belonging in the community (Hodges et al., 1999; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997).

ii. Building pupils' interests, strengths, and competences

Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory (SDT) provides insight into pupils' motivation when they are given relevant opportunities to exercise their autonomy and strengthen their competence, thereby directing positive school changes. Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development model also lends understanding of the key desire for pupils to feel a sense of competence.

In this study, both school staff and pupils highlighted the importance for schools to build pupils' interests, strengths, and competences to encourage attendance. Pupils outlined that despite feeling anxious, a motivating factor to attend school is the access to things they enjoy doing, reducing their stress levels. In the same vein, school staff noted that they can reintegrate pupils to school by providing them with opportunities to engage with activities that help them feel a sense of achievement and enjoyment (e.g., SS4 described how to "*pique the interest*" of a pupil who is highly anxious in school, opportunities for baking and hairdressing were introduced, which she enjoyed).

iii. The importance of graduated reintegration

Derbyshire County Council (2020) discusses the importance of a graduated response to intervention, as pupils can experience a surge in anxiety levels when asked to return. A natural habituation process is crucial, as when handled poorly, it can exacerbate pupils' negative feelings around the school. Pupils stated that being supported to return to school gradually helped them. Methods included being given a reduced school timetable, having additional breaks, having access to a physical space when feeling overwhelmed in school, and there being

additional staff to share concerns with and for learning support. School staff mirrored this sentiment, and spoke of the leeway they allowed pupils, such as coming in for a “*few specific lessons they enjoy, like art to rebuild their trust and motivation*” (SS4).

5.3.3 Reflections of RQ2 findings

All findings reiterate the importance for schools to take a whole-school approach in their intervention delivery, alongside themes on collaborative school practices when working with families and external partners to support pupils. Pupils shared the following factors as important to improving their school experiences: positive friendships, having staff that care, opportunities to build their interests and strengths, and being allowed to return to school gradually. In turn, absence of these factors contributed to poor school experiences, which are discussed in RQ3. Implications of findings for schools and the EPS are discussed in Section 5.5.

5.4 Research Question Three: *What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?*

Interviews with school staff revealed barriers to smooth delivery of EBSA practices. The West Sussex EPS (2022) refers to barriers that pull pupils away from school as ‘pull factors’, which are discussed in detail throughout this section.

5.4.1 *Barriers at a Systemic Level (school staff views)*

School staff highlighted that funding limitations are a steep barrier to efficacious EBSA practices. Ofsted and Spielman (2020) investigated schools across England, finding that the majority had reported funding cuts, in turn leading to inevitable cuts to their SEND provisions. Sadly, this study mirrors these results. School staff explained that lack of staffing has been an ongoing issue. Recognising the need for pupils experiencing EBSA to have access to support workers, as recommended by the West Sussex EPS (2022), school staff described what a challenge this has posed. According to SS6, the lack of funding to her SEND department has

impeded her school's initial building expansion plan, which would allow access to a safe physical space where pupils can find emotional respite. Moreover, as services, such as the EPS, have moved to a traded-delivery model (needing to pay from school budget), EP involvement now must be purchased by schools (Islam, 2013), which SS3 and SS4 noted as a further barrier to effective EBSA support.

Such funding barriers and the impact on multi-agency working has been an issue for some time; for example, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) reported that financial issues restricted collaborative working partnerships in schools (Kendal et al., 2006). Although in 2021, the UK government pledged increased funding to tackle school absentees (DfE, 2021) (Chapter 1, Section 1.4), considering the rising absentee rate and the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is unclear in how far this will mitigate the challenges faced by schools and pupils in the short- or long-term. Parker and Conversano (2021) describe more systemic barriers in schools, pointing out the grave detrimental effects to vulnerable pupils if schools cannot support their needs, leading to lower academic and life outcomes. Overall, this is an important area that merits further exploration.

Aside from funding limitations, school staff cited unaligned working models with external partners as barriers to good practice. SS4 recognised that pupils experiencing EBSA may miss school for long periods, meaning that some external partners will solely carry out their intervention models virtually; however, this can negatively impact pupil engagement. A report by People for Education (2020) stated that, while technology has been an effective tool to engage with pupils, it can be more challenging to build a crucial emotional connection, as highlighted by this study's participants. In addition, different agencies work according to varying timelines, which can be challenging to follow. As Cheminais (2009) suggests, this is a

long-standing drawback of multi-agency working, and people within these systems should establish clear expectations beforehand.

As highlighted in earlier sections (e.g., Section 5.2.3), another key barrier acknowledged by school staff is the lack of formal guidance or a set policy on EBSA regarding identification, assessment, and intervention methods. The West Sussex EPS (2022) recommends that clearly defined processes around EBSA can serve as a protective factor; therefore, this area requires further development.

5.4.2 *Unprecedented barriers faced by schools (school staff views)*

Section 5.3.1 (ii) highlights how supporting families provides benefits such as parental involvement; however, the findings suggest that parents may be resistant to receiving school support, presenting another barrier. Previous research, most notably by Kearney and Silverman (1995), describes the various family types, and ‘enmeshed families’ (see Section 2.4.2) have shown a higher likelihood of developing SR due to overprotective parenting styles, cultivating children who develop an over-reliance on their parents. This study’s findings propose that resistance to support comes from the parental fear of accepting that their children have an issue that could cause schools to place a stigma on them, in line with Kearney and Silverman (1995) description of the overprotective family. Additionally, school staff interviews also pointed out how parental mental health difficulties may increase their anxieties over their child’s progress. Acknowledging the importance of parental involvement and collaboration reinforces the need for schools to continue finding effective ways to support them.

Alongside familial barriers, school staff shared that Covid-19 has disrupted critical initiatives designed to support pupils, especially those with SEMH and SEND. This includes disruptions to school transition initiatives which, as highlighted in Section 2.4.3, is a challenging phase that requires time and support (West Sussex EPS, 2022). The pandemic has affected staff

levels, with teachers being absent due to illness. In addition, with schools intermittently closed, school staff cited difficulties with virtual learning, and that some families had poor access to technology, exacerbating pupil learning gaps. All these factors impacted school staff delivery of EBSA practices according to plan, and the findings reassert the importance for schools and external agencies to co-develop a formal policy around EBSA, thereby ensuring a clear process on responsibilities, actions, and next steps if such disruptions reoccur.

5.4.3 Pupils finding the nature of the mainstream school environment difficult

Pupils listed their difficulties in coping with the physical environment of mainstream schools; according to research, this is a factor for pupils to refuse school (Archer et al., 2003; Lauchlan, 2003). Six out of seven participating pupils have an ASC diagnosis, which may explain high anxieties in busy mainstream schools resulting in sensory overload, supporting previous research findings (Knollman et al., 2011; Malcolm et al., 2003; Van Eck et al., 2017). In addition, pupils noted finding it difficult to cope with academic demands and expectations, as well as lack of teacher support, which the literature cites as a factor that can lead to SR (Harter et al., 1992; Pascoe et al., 2020; Putwain, 2007). Pivotaly, these findings highlight points mentioned in Section 5.5.5.C, in which the fundamentals of the SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017) place importance on pupils' stakeholders to ensure that support and adjustments are provided. In this way, pupils can feel a sense of relatedness, autonomy, and competence when being in school.

5.4.4 Impact of bullying and a lack of teacher mediation

Various pupils shared difficulties with peer relationships, describing experiences of being bullied when attending a mainstream school, having a traumatising effect on them. The West Sussex EPS (2022) lists bullying as a factor impacting pupil well-being and school attendance, while research examining the correlation between bullying and SR also suggests a positive

correlation (e.g., Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Randa & Wilcox, 2010; Sobba, 2019; Swahn et al., 2013).

Schools play a key role in mediating friendships and relationship building (see Section 5.3.2), and pupil participants shared experiences in which teachers did not intervene, even when they had been informed of the bullying. Alongside a lack of mediation in complex peer relationships, pupils spoke of a lack of teachers to support them when they feel anxious (e.g., Angel said that her teachers were not there when she 'needed them'). At Angel's new provision, an AP, her teachers now are present, giving her a feeling of 'home'. In addition, Angel raised an important point when she shared about 'supply teachers', which implies a short-term and ad-hoc basis. This could lead to difficulties for fewer opportunities for teacher-pupil relationship building. More detrimentally if they do and pupils need to cope with the many endings. This reiterates the pivotal role teachers play in the school experiences of pupils and that consistency is required (Toplis, 2004). Poor support can have a debilitating impact on pupil's SEMH outcomes, leading to permanent fear of being victimised (Astor et al., 2002; Buhs et al., 2006; Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Ingul et al., 2012; McShane et al., 2001; Randa & Wilcox, 2010). This is a stark reminder to stakeholders to develop practices mitigating the risks of bullying, and to improve the trust and relationships between pupils and teachers (Watson et al., 2012).

5.4.5 Reflections on RQ3 findings

This study's findings reflect systemic barriers, such as funding constraints, and unprecedented barriers, such as disruptions to usual EBSA practices due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results also indicate that stakeholders must ensure EBSA initiatives reduce these risk factors, especially in light of recent research that has shown Covid-19 to have increased CYP's anxiety levels (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021). Pupil voices were an essential resource, as they shared

their difficulties in coping with mainstream school environments, and experiences of traumatic bullying, leading to EBSA.

5.5 Implications of Findings for EBSA Practices

This section reflects on the implications of the study's findings on real-world practice. The results have shown the 'environmental' factor of EBSA to be crucial, and support given to pupils can make a vast difference in their school experiences. This is in line with Thambirajah et al. (2008), who state that school attendance improves when support outweighs the stressors. The implications are discussed within the framework of the bioecological systems theory (see Section 1.8) on the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-levels (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

i. Micro-level (most immediate environment of pupil):

Psychoanalytic theorists have established the importance of the environment (schools) to children, and the role of the adults (staff) existing within it; thus, schools are the "holders" (Winnicott, 1965) and staff are the "containers" (Bion & Green, 1992) in ensuring psychological and physical safety of CYP. This provides a fresh perspective on the insights presented by pupil participants.

School staff participants recognised their role in EBSA, beginning with pupil identification, all the way to intervention delivery. It is evident that school staff found success in taking a whole-school approach to their EBSA initiatives, including developing clear communication and review processes, and an ethos around developing staff knowledge on SEMH. School staff spoke of their commitment to support the emotional needs of pupils, and did so by implementing gradual, flexible, and reasonable adjustments for pupils to reintegrate without feeling overwhelmed.

Pupil voices were pivotal for this study, as they described what specific support has drawn them back to or kept them at school. Social relationships, including friendships and teacher-pupil relationships, were prominent factors, raising the need for schools and stakeholders to ensure pupil social capital is increased. This can be done by facilitating and mediating their friendships, and spurring their talents and strengths, so they can feel accepted in their environment, which is vital as the absence of a sense of belonging and competence can lead to poor motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In turn, poor support and a lack of mediation in their experiences can lead to a self-defeating mindset, detrimental to their self-worth (Skinner et al., 2009), and the adverse effects of self-fulfilling prophecy when CYP hold a certain negative belief about themselves (e.g., I get bullied; therefore, I am not accepted) have been noted in literature (e.g., Biggs, 2009). Thus, schools must continue to build on these relationships consistently and find ways to increase pupils' sense of competence in school (e.g., finding their interests, talents, and strengths).

The implications of these findings also extend to the role played by EPs, who work with a wide range of pupils, including those with emotional and psychological difficulties, and SEND. This study has found an increasing trend in ASC pupils experiencing EBSA, which opens up the scope for direct work with pupils, using personal construct activities (e.g., ideal school, circle of friends) to support schools in finding the root causes of EBSA (Newton et al., 1996; Spence et al., 1999). In addition, EPs can support schools with relationship building initiatives such as offering training on social skills and peer-mentoring. From this research, it is clear that EPs can act as pupil advocates, identifying their interests, strengths, and aspirations and passing these on to schools alongside recommendations. This is key, as Sobba's (2019) review points out that when schools increase pupil participation through developing their strengths and interests, they also increase school motivation and attendance.

EPs benefit from direct links to other agencies within the LA, meaning there is greater scope to open a 'space' for pupils experiencing EBSA to meet and share their views and experiences, so that stakeholders can gain access to their lived experiences for future planning and delivery of EBSA initiatives. This meets the remit of professionals to ensure pupils' voices are heard (DfE, 2015), which, as the literature suggests, can be transformational in improving school outcomes (Dickins & Williams, 2017; Woolfson et al., 2006; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007).

ii. Meso-level (This layer involves the connections between the microsystems):

Findings reemphasise the importance for schools to work collaboratively with families and external agencies, as school staff shared their success when doing so at all stages of EBSA delivery. One particular insight was regarding the benefits from EPS input on EBSA, leading to preventative interventions in a participant's school, such as resilience groups for vulnerable pupils, and staff training on SEMH. The potential contribution of the EPS is that the work is rooted in psychological perspectives within a school context; this offers schools a better understanding of EBSA, explaining the participant experiencing the benefits of increased knowledge regarding recognising and understanding SEMH classroom needs.

The implications extend to EPs; a notable facilitator mentioned by participants was the value added by EPs, for example, in transition, family work, and friendships. This should be explored further via planning meetings, consultations, etc., so that schools know the types of support available from the EPS and EPs. Staff require opportunities to reflect on and share their views, and EPs are excellent at providing such reflective opportunities. A final point given by these findings is that pupils currently in APs have had improved school experiences, suggesting a possibility for mainstream schools and APs to work together to support reintegration.

iii. Exo-level (Factors that do not involve pupils directly, e.g., media):

The results show that some schools in Borough A and the Local Authority A have no formal guidance or policy on EBSA practices, which might explain the overrepresentation of specific groups of learners (e.g., ASC). Literature has evidenced that EBSA – and more specifically, anxiety – can be experienced by any pupil (e.g., Kawsar et al., 2022; Thambirajah et al., 2008). Without clear guidance on what EBSA is and how it may manifest (both overtly and covertly), schools may conceptualise EBSA inconsistently, leading to certain pupils 'falling between the cracks' during the early identification and assessment phase. This topic warrants further exploration by the EPS, as school staff explicitly stated that a formal guidance/policy would strengthen their practices. The EPS works with schools and school-supporting agencies; thus, there is room for further development.

During the literature review, it was noted that the Pan London Autism Schools Network – Research Group (PLASN-R) offers support to special schools in London (Crane et al., 2021). Perhaps there is scope for my employing LA to develop a similar network group, specifically first to discuss the rise in referrals of ASC and EBSA. At present, there is an outreach network specifically for ASC, but these professionals are not present in EBSA working group meetings. Therefore, this is a topic in which I could provide valuable feedback; this is increasingly important, as research on the impact of the pandemic on ASC pupils evidenced that recovery from a loss of learning opportunities and peer interactions, as well as disruptions to once established routines requires intervention and gradual rebuilding (Crane et al., 2021; Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020).

Additionally, when reflecting on next steps, the only evidence-based intervention to date for EBSA is CBT (see Section 2.5.1). This highlights the importance for professionals who are part of the Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), taking a CBT-model to support pupil

SEMH needs in school, to join the EBSA working group. This is also an area where the EPS can encourage schools to add to the current evidence of using a CBT approach in EBSA.

iv. Macro-level (This layer involves broader aspects, such as culture, laws, and values): This layer involves broader aspects, such as culture, laws, and values (Berk, 2000). Research findings indicate that when schools take an empathetic and inclusive ethos, and value supporting pupil SEMH needs, their initiatives significantly impact pupils' lives. Farrell's (2004, p. 8) inclusion model suggest the core importance for schools is to embed acceptance towards pupil differences.

However, it must be recognised that new regulations have set higher expectations for schools to ensure pupils attend (DfE, 2022b), indicating that schools may be pressured into implementing stricter attendance regulations, in the form of punitive punishments for pupils, and legal implications for families. Currently, data on school attendance in England (see Sections 1.4 and 1.5) is given in clusters and does not distinguish between the causes of persistent absenteeism. This potentially leads to schools not knowing what EBSA is, and therefore caring less to support the needs of this group of learners. Literature has shown that this exacerbates their difficulties, impacting their life outcomes. Whilst this study found the school staff participants to show care and commitment to supporting pupils experiencing EBSA to return to mainstream school, it is worth noting that the interviews were conducted before the new regulations came into force. The selected staff also knew what EBSA is; thus, it would be worthwhile to find out if staff perceptions have changed since.

Since the pressure for attendance targets for schools has increased from the recent DfE (2022b) report, it is yet to know if the pledge by the DfE (2021) to counter the rising data of persistent absences by increasing funding would be honoured. The findings also show schools reporting financial constraints and reduced staffing, impacting their EBSA initiatives. School staff noted

this has limited their opportunities to work with external agencies, such as the EPS, acknowledging its benefits. As pupils shared the importance of consistent teacher-pupil relationship, the staffing difficulties (e.g., meaning more supply teachers being hired) may explain the reasons why pupils may develop a mistrust in schools and their teachers (e.g., having to deal with new relationships but quickly needing to cope with endings).

Research has found that EPs are well-placed to advocate for systemic changes, such as contributing to and developing educational policies (Farrell et al., 2006; Yavuz, 2016), so perhaps the findings from this study may spur my employing LA to explore avenues of additional support/guidance, with perhaps even funding given to schools to expand and carry out their EBSA initiatives. This is extremely important, in light of research showing a rise in anxiety in CYP (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has thoroughly analysed the study's findings, which answered the given research questions, using current literature on EBSA. Implications of these findings on real-life practice were also discussed. In the next and final chapter, difficulties with the research are charted, alongside strengths and limitations of the study, before concluding comments are provided.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a conclusion to this study, with Section 6.2 sharing the challenges faced during this research. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 discuss the study's strengths and limitations, while Section 6.5 explores areas ripe for further research. Section 6.6 outlines the next steps, and Section 6.7 provides concluding comments.

6.2 Research Challenges Faced

Several challenges were encountered along the course of this research. First, pupil recruitment was complex due to an initial lack of pupil interest and difficulties in organising interview dates, as the chosen pupils with EBSA were naturally missing school. In addition, three pupils initially agreed to meet, only to pull out of the study later. This led to a rushed timeline, and the pilot study only took place in February 2022, six months behind my initial plan. Given these challenges, my research supervisors discussed and agreed to a minor expansion to the inclusion criteria to ensure that the voices of pupils experiencing EBSA could be fully captured. This enabled recruitment of participants currently co-registered with the AP and who have had EBSA experiences when previously attending a mainstream school, meaning that the study could benefit from the pupils' retrospective experiences, which are valuable in meaning-making (Mortari, 2015).

Another consideration faced was whether interviews should be offered in-person or remotely. Both forms were offered to pupils, who could select their preferred method. Recognising that pupils experiencing EBSA find school stressful, I initially considered meeting them in their home environment, but later decided that this would be inappropriate due to safeguarding

concerns. Despite the challenges encountered throughout the study, this was a fulfilling experience for me as a researcher.

6.3 Research Strengths

Some strengths of the study can be noted. Firstly, the chosen method of interviewing school staff and pupils allowed for multiple viewpoints to be heard, in line with evidence on the importance of considering all stakeholder perspectives when exploring school absenteeism (Finning et al., 2020; Kljakovic & Kelly, 2019; Preece & Howley, 2018; Wilkins, 2008). A preeminent strength was that pupil voices were elicited, allowing them to be heard without assuming their schools' views as a proxy (DfE, 2015, p. 22), giving pupils a reflective space in which they could express themselves freely. Participating in this research gave school staff a reflective space to consider their EBSA initiatives alongside any facilitators and barriers to good practice. Literature has shown how participating in educational research can increase staff professional development and competence (Leat et al., 2015; Timperley & Parr, 2007).

The qualitative research design allowed for findings beyond the surface of what typically facilitates good mainstream EBSA initiatives. For example, offering pupils the multi-modal method of drawing and using blob charts encouraged them to share thoughts inclusively, as school can be a difficult topic for pupils experiencing EBSA. Murphy et al. (1998) suggest that participants from vulnerable groups, usually unheard, should be reminded that they can speak comfortably and safely, which this study did successfully.

Currently, persistent absences across English schools have increased (UK Government, 2022a). Coupled with the effects of the pandemic on pupil anxiety (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021), research on EBSA is a timely necessity, ensuring that educators can identify current practice methods and areas for further development. For my employing LA, the research findings will directly support future EBSA initiatives, such as the potential development of a

formal EBSA guidance/set policy for schools. Finally, another strength of this study is that participants came from a variety of provisions; thus, the findings have a broader representation of current EBSA practices in place within Borough A.

6.4 Research Limitations

This study's limitations must also be noted, and the first is that the term EBSA was chosen for practical reasons (see Section 1.3) without consulting my participants. Whilst EBSA focuses on the word 'emotional', the word 'avoidance' may imply that missing school is a choice. In hindsight, a more inclusive word in place of 'avoidance' could be used, or participants could have been asked what terms they are comfortable with. As Baker and Bishop (2015) found, pupils experiencing EBSA can feel wrongly judged when their low school attendance is assumed to be a choice, making the choice of term an important factor.

Secondly, the research timeline prevented the capture of parent voices, even though their involvement presents a crucial aspect in supporting their children (Lumby, 2007). The importance and positive effects of eliciting parental voices have been evidenced (Resch et al., 2010; Ting & Weiss, 2017). For example, Resch et al.'s (2010) study exploring 40 parent caregivers of children with disabilities found that such an opportunity allowed for a deeper understanding of familial needs and if the resources offered to align with one another. Specific to EBSA, previous studies on this subject exploring parental views have noted how findings can garner key implications for EPs when supporting pupils to reintegrate back into school (e.g., Havik et al., 2014; Myhill, 2017). This is a missed opportunity but an area in which my employing EPS can do further research.

Thirdly, while this research was a multi-informant study exploring two participant groups on EBSA in mainstream education, it was challenging to triangulate both participant group findings as many came from different schools. As such, it may have been better if a different

methodological approach, such as a case study which Cohen et al. (2011) regards as an advantageous method to ensure triangulation between participant groups to understand a complex phenomenon, was considered.

A fourth limitation was the study's localisation to Borough A, meaning the findings may not have a high transferability, even though the aim was to elicit participant views to make sense of wider pupil experiences. Moreover, as this study is small-scale, the pupils who took part might have already built-up resilience and coping strategies to attend school better. Views of pupils who are completely non-attending have not been captured.

Further, this study aimed to understand the identification and assessment methods of EBSA in mainstream schools, yet the age range of pupil participants (both primary and secondary) may be too broad. Additionally, examining EBSA processes in only six schools within a borough with 31 schools (all mainstream schools) only provides limited information.

A final limitation is that qualitative research involves a researcher's subjective interpretation of phenomena, especially the embedded double hermeneutical approach within IPA. Wagstaff et al. (2014) urge researchers to remind readers that their interpretations may not fully represent participant views. To ensure that my personal beliefs and values did not influence interpretations, reflexive practices were taken. My research supervisors and EP tutor vetted my coding to increase reliability; however, if time had not been a constraint, I would have liked to engage in member-checking, meeting with participants and sharing codes that emerged to confirm whether my findings are accurate interpretations of their experiences.

6.5 Areas for Further Research

There are a few suggestions for further research:

- Findings suggest that schools have various EBSA initiatives without formal guidance or set policy. It remains unclear how schools in Borough A conceptualise EBSA, which would provide further insight to inform the development of a borough-wide formal guidance/policy.
- This study was carried out during Covid-19 (see Appendix U for research timeline), leading firstly to disrupted EBSA initiatives, as shared by school staff, and school closures that may have exacerbated EBSA tendencies. Further research in a year when the effects of the pandemic have lessened will provide further evidence of the validity of this study's findings.
- School staff noted the high comorbidity between ASC and EBSA, and it is noted that six out of seven pupil participants have an ASC diagnosis. It is recommended for my employing LA to undertake further research, exploring mainstream school preventative practices/measures specific to supporting pupils with ASC to stay in school.
- As highlighted, parental voices were not obtained due to time constraints. Finding parent views on what facilitates good mainstream EBSA school practices would give further insight, and it would be fascinating to gain findings from families in Borough A on what EBSA support they have received and if this has made a difference to them and their children's experiences. A case study method may be suitable to ensure triangulation between participant groups.
- Four pupil participants are currently in temporary placement at an AP. The findings suggest that their school experiences have improved; thus, conducting a deeper

exploration of AP-specific practices would be beneficial to see if recommendations can be shared with mainstream schools. As the medical AP in Borough A is meant to be a temporary provision for pupils, with its long-term goal being to reintegrate them into mainstream school, it is key that effective practice is shared to ensure smooth transitions.

6.6 Next Steps

Following this research, a university presentation will be given in June 2022 and a session to feedback findings to my employing LA in July 2022. Upon passing the VIVA examinations, I plan to disseminate a jargon-free research brief to both participant groups to ensure their clear understanding of the findings. If deemed appropriate and valuable, I plan to also work with my research supervisors to share findings on a wider scale, such as publication or presentation at future EP conferences.

6.7 Concluding Comments

This study explored the views and experiences of six school staff and seven pupils regarding EBSA. School staff were asked about the current mainstream EBSA school identification and assessment methods, alongside the facilitators and barriers to good mainstream EBSA practices. On the other hand, pupils were asked about their lived experiences and what supported and hindered their school experiences in mainstream education. This research topic grew from my involvement in the EBSA working group in Local Authority A, where efforts to develop a 'fit for purpose' referral pathway to support schools with identification and assessment are underway. The study seeks to provide the LA with a more profound understanding of which mainstream school current practices are successful, and areas where further support is needed. The research findings suggest that school staff participants adopted an inclusive ethos around SEMH and EBSA, which directed their EBSA initiatives. This

includes taking a whole-school approach to intervention and a commitment to providing pupils with a positive school climate that promotes a sense of belonging and competence. This study also highlighted the power of relationships for pupils, and how good relationships are a protective factor to their school attendance, reiterating the importance for stakeholders, such as schools and the EPS, to collaborate to support and raise pupils' social capital.

Ultimately, the results of this study also provide an opportunity for the EPS to champion the development of an EBSA policy or guidance (such as the West Sussex EPS, 2022) by collaborating with all stakeholders around pupils. In this way, schools can better understand what EBSA is and how best to tackle it in light of increasing pressure from the DfE (2022b) to increase school attendance. In a nutshell, EPs must develop their understanding and practice around EBSA so that they are fully equipped to inspire pupils and stakeholders and, most importantly, make a difference.

REFERENCES

- Adams, D. (2021). Child and Parental Mental Health as Correlates of School Non-Attendance and School Refusal in Children on the Autism Spectrum. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05211-5>
- Adwas, A. A., Jbireal, J. M., & Azab, A. E. (2019). Anxiety: Insights into Signs, Symptoms, Etiology, Pathophysiology, and Treatment. *The South African Journal of medical sciences*, 2(10), 80-91.
- Alase, A. (2017). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A Guide to a Good Qualitative Research Approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 52(2), 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>
- Alexander, L. A., Disabato, D., Kashdan, T. D., & Mcknight, P. (2017). When and How to use Multiple Informants to Improve Clinical Assessments. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioural Assessment*, 39(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-017-9607-9>
- Archer, T., Filmer-Sankey, C., & Fletcher-Campbell, F. (2003). *School Phobia and School Refusal: research into causes and remedies*. Local Government Association Research Report 46. Slough: NFER. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/2078/pho01.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association (APA). (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing.
- Ames, C., Tanaka, J. S., Khoju, M., & Watkins, T. (1993). *Effects of parent involvement strategies on parents' perceptions and the development of children's motivation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta.
- Anderman, E. M., & Maehr, M. L. (1994). Motivation and Schooling in the Middle Grades. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(2), 287–309. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1170696>
- Armstrong, T., Anna, M., Brown, M., Kelli, R., Brindley, R., Coreil, J., & McDermott, R. J. (2011). Frequent Fliers, School Phobias, and the Sick Student: School Health Personnel's Perceptions of Students Who Refuse School. *The Journal of School Health*, 81(9), 552–559. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00626.x>
- Astor, R. A., Benbenishty, R., Zeira, A., & Vinokur, A. (2002). School Climate, Observed Risky Behaviors, and Victimization as Predictors of High School Students' Fear and Judgments of School Violence as a Problem. *Health Education & Behavior*, 29(6), 716–736. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019802237940>
- Atkinson, L., Chisholm, V. C., Scott, B., Goldberg, S., Blackwell, J., Dickens, S., & Tam, F. (1999). Developmental functioning, maternal sensitivity, and attachment in Down Syndrome. In J. Vondra and D. Barnett (Eds.), *Atypical attachment in infancy and early childhood*

among children at developmental risk. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 64(258), 45-66. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3181558?sid=primo>

- Bagnall, C. L., Skipper, Y., & Fox, C. L. (2022). Primary-secondary school transition under Covid-19: Exploring the perceptions and experiences of children, parents/guardians, and teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 12485. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12485>
- Bagnoli, A. (2009). Beyond the standard interview: the use of graphic elicitation and arts-based methods. *Qualitative Research*, 9(5), 547. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109343625>
- Beidas, R. S., Sarah, A., Mychailyszyn, M. P., Comer, J. S., & Kendall, P. C. (2010). Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Anxious Youth with Comorbid School Refusal: Clinical Presentatand Treatment Response. *Psychological Topics*, 19(2), 255-271.
- Baker, M., & Bishop, F. (2015). Out of school: A phenomenological exploration of extended non-attendance. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 31(4), 354-368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2015.1065473>
- Bakhla, A. K., Sinha, P., Sharan, R., Binay, Y., Verma, V., & Chaudhury, S. (2013). Anxiety in school students: Role of parenting and gender. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 22(2), 131–137. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-6748.132927>
- Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools. *Education Digest*, 78(2), 4.
- Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and students' attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 627-658. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1163326>
- Berends, I., & Van Diest, H. (2014). *School absenteeism explained: an overview of protective and risk factors*. PI Research. <https://www.piresearch.nl/files/2413/naar+een+verklaaringsmodel+voor+schoolverzuim+juni+2014.pdf>.
- Berg, I. (1969). *School avoidance school phobia and truancy*. Williams and Wilkins.
- Berg, I., & McGuire, R. (1971). Are School Phobic Adolescents Overdependent? *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 119(549), 167–168. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.119.549.167>
- Berg, I., Nichols, K., & Pritchard, C. (1969). School Phobia-Its Classification and Relationship to Dependency. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 10(2), 123-141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1969.tb02074.x>
- Berk, L. (2000). *Child Development* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bernal-Morales, B. (2015). *Impact of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms on Scholar Performance in High School and University Students*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/60711>

- Bernstein, B., & Feriante, J. (2020). *Separation Anxiety*. Open Access Publications by UMMS Authors. <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/oapubs/4574>
- Bernstein, G. A., Warren, S. L., Massie, E. D., & Thuras, P. D. (1999). Family dimensions in anxious–depressed school refusers. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 13*(5), 513-528. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0887-6185\(99\)00021-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0887-6185(99)00021-3)
- Bethel, A., & Rogers, M. (2014). A checklist to assess database-hosting platforms for designing and running searches for systematic reviews. *Health Information and Libraries Journal, 31*(1), 43-53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hir.12054>
- Bethel, A., & Rogers, M. (2018). *Search methods in environmental systematic reviews: which databases have been searched?* Collaboration for Environmental Evidence. <http://iaibojonegoro.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Systematic-searching-review.pdf>
- Biggerstaff, D. L. (2003). *Empowerment and self-help: a phenomenological methodology in research in the first year after childbirth*. In J. Henry (Ed) *European Positive Psychology Proceedings 2002* (pp 15 – 24). Leicester: British Psychological Society. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802314304>
- Biggs, M. (2009). *Self-fulfilling prophecies*. The Oxford handbook of analytical sociology. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199215362.013.13>
- Bion, W. R., & Green, A. (1992). Cogitations [Review of *Cogitations*]. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 73*(3), 585–585. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429473111>
- Birch, S., & Ladd, G. (1998). Children's Interpersonal Behaviors and the Teacher-Child Relationship. *Developmental Psychology, 34*(5), 934-946. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.34.5.934>
- Blagg, N. (1987). *School phobia and its treatment / Nigel Blagg*. London: Croom Helm.
- Blagg, N. R., & Yule, W. (1984). The behavioural treatment of school refusal: A comparative study. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 22*(2), 119–127. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967\(84\)90100-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(84)90100-1)
- Booth, A., Moore, G., Flemming, K., Garside, R., Rollins, N., Tunçalp, Ö., & Noyes, J. (2019). Taking account of context in systematic reviews and guidelines considering a complexity perspective. *BMJ Global Health, 4*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2018-000840>
- Bouchard, K. L., & Berg, D. H. (2017). Students' school belonging: Juxtaposing the perspectives of teachers and students in the late elementary school years (grades 4–8). *The School Community Journal, 27*(1), 107–136. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1146469.pdf>
- Bowman, C., & Ambrosini, V. (1997). Perceptions of Strategic Priorities, Consensus and Firm Performance. *Journal of Management Studies, 34*(2), 241–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00050>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publications, Inc.

- British Psychological Society (BPS) (2021). *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics*. The British Psychological Society. <https://york.citycollege.eu/files4users/files/BPS-Code-of-Human-Research-Ethics-2021.pdf>
- Brand, C., & O’Conner, L. (2004). School Refusal: It Takes a Team. *Children & Schools*, 26(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/26.1.54>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Brinia, V., Selimi, P., Dimos, A., & Kondea, A. (2022). The Impact of Communication on the Effectiveness of Educational Organizations. *Educ. Sci*, 12(170). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030170>
- Broadwin, I. T. (1932). A contribution to the study of truancy. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2, 253-259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1932.tb05183.x>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: *Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). *The Bioecological Model of Human Development*. In R. M. Lerner & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development*. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Browne, R. (2018). *An exploration into the parental experience of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance in young people: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* [Doctoral thesis, The University of Essex and Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust]. <http://repository.essex.ac.uk/23477/>
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A., Becker, S., & Sempik, J. (2008). Quality Criteria for Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research: A View from Social Policy. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 261-276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401644>
- Bryman, A., & Burgess, R. G. (1994). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203413081>
- Buhs, E. S., Ladd, G. W., & Herald, S. L. (2006). Peer Exclusion and Victimization: Processes That Mediate the Relation Between Peer Group Rejection and Children’s Classroom Engagement and Achievement? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.1>
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(14). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>

- Campbell, C. (2011). *How to involve hard-to-reach parents: encouraging meaningful parental involvement with schools*. National College for School Leadership.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340372/how-to-involve-hard-to-reach-parents-summary.pdf
- Campbell, P. (1955). An Early Defence of Party. *Political Studies*, 3(2), 166–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1955.tb01032.x>
- Carroll, C., & Hurry, J. (2018). Supporting pupils in school with social, emotional and mental health needs: a scoping review of the literature. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 23(3), 310–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2018.1452590>
- Carter, R., Halawah, A., & Trinh, S. L. (2018). Peer Exclusion During the Pubertal Transition: The Role of Social Competence. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 47(1), 121–134.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0682-8>
- Cassidy, E., Reynolds, F., Naylor, S., & De Souza, L. (2011). Using interpretative phenomenological analysis to inform physiotherapy practice: an introduction with reference to the lived experience of cerebellar ataxia. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*, 27(4), 263–277.
<https://doi.org/10.3109/09593985.2010.488278>
- Chapman, E., Parameshwar, J., Jenkins, D., & Large, R. S. (2007). Psychosocial issues for patients with ventricular assist devices. *American Journal of Critical Care*, 16, 72–81.
<https://doi.org/10.4037/ajcc2007.16.1.72>
- Cheminais, R. (2009). In *Effective Multi-Agency Partnerships: Putting Every Child Matters into Practice*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288269>
- Chorpita, B. F., Albano, A. M., Heimberg, R. G., & Barlow, D. H. (1996). A systematic replication of the prescriptive treatment of school refusal behaviour in a single subject. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 27(3), 281–290.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7916\(96\)00023-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7916(96)00023-7)
- Chou, L. C., Ho, C. Y., Chen, C. Y., & Chen, W. J. (2006). Truancy and illicit drug use among adolescents surveyed via street outreach. *Addictive Behaviours*, 31, 149–154.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2005.04.011>
- Clare, L. (2002). We'll fight it as long as we can: coping with the onset of Alzheimer's disease. *Aging and Mental Health*, 6, 139–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607860220126826>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Cooper, C., Booth, A., Varley-Campbell, J., Britten, N., & Garside, R. (2018). Defining the process to literature searching in systematic reviews: A literature review of guidance and supporting studies. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1), 85. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0545-3>
- Cortese, S., Asherson, P., Sonuga-Barke, E., Banaschewski, T., Brandeis, D., Buitelaar, J., Coghill, D., Daley, D., Danckaerts, M., Dittmann, R., Doepfner, M., Ferrin, M., Hollis, C., Holtmann,

- M., Konofal, E., Lecendreux, M., Santosh, P., Rothenberger, A., Soutullo, C., ... European ADHD Guidelines Group. (2020). *ADHD management during the COVID-19 pandemic: guidance from the European ADHD Guidelines Group*. [https://doi.org/ 10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30110-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30110-3)
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2016). *The mediated construction of reality. / Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp*. Polity Press.
- Crane, L., Adu, F., Arocas, F., Carli, R., Eccles, S., Harris, S., Jardine, J., Phillips, C., Piper, S., Santi, L., Sartin, M., Shepherd, C., Sternstein, K., Taylor, G., & Wright, A. (2021). *Vulnerable and forgotten: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on autism special schools in England*. *Front. Educ.* <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.629203>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches / John W. Creswell* (4th ed.). London: SAGE.
- Creswell, C., & Cartwright-Hatton, S. (2007). Family treatment of child anxiety: outcomes, limitations and future directions. *Child Fam Psychol Rev*, *10*(3), 232-252. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1007/s10567-007-0019-3>
- Cromby, J., & Nightingale, D. (1999). *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice / edited by David J. Nightingale and John Cromby*. Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2006). Research Ethics and Data Quality: The Implications of Informed Consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *9*(2), 83-95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600595231>
- Curson, S., Wilson-Smith, K., & Holliman, A. (2019). Exploring the experience of students making the transition from primary school to secondary school: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the role of friendship and family support. *Psychology Teaching Review*, *25*(1), 30-41.
- Cutcliffe, J. (2003). Reconsidering Reflexivity: Introducing the Case for Intellectual Entrepreneurship. *Qualitative Health Research*, *13*(1), 136-148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732302239416>
- Cutrer, W. B., Sullivan, W. M., & Fleming, A. E. (2013). Educational Strategies for Improving Clinical Reasoning. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*, *43*(9), 248–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cppeds.2013.07.005>
- Dalziel, H., & Henthorne, K. (2005). *Parents'/carers' attitudes towards school attendance / Douglas Dalziel and Kirsty Henthorne*. Department for Education and Skills 618. Nottingham: DfES. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5548/1/RR618.pdf>
- Dannow, M. C., Esbjørn, B. H., & Risom, S. W. (2020). The Perceptions of Anxiety-related School Absenteeism in Youth: A Qualitative Study Involving Youth, Mother, and

Father. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(1), 22–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1479302>

Davidson, S. (1961). School phobia as a manifestation of family disturbance: its structure and treatment. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 1(4), 270.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, S. Y. (1995). Transforming Qualitative Research Methods: Is it a Revolution? *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 24 (3), 349-358.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/089124195024003006>

Department for Education (DfE). (2011). *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability: A Consultation*. Norwich, UK: The Stationery Office.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/198141/Support_and_Aspiration_Green-Paper-SEN.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2013). *Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for local authorities*. Crown copyright.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942014/alternative_provision_statutory_guidance_accessible.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2015). *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*. Crown copyright. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sendcode-of-practice-0-to-25>

Department for Education (DfE). (2016). *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England cohort 2: health and wellbeing at wave 2*. TNS BMRB.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599871/LSYPE2_w2-research_report.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2019). *Elective home education Departmental guidance for local authorities*. Crown copyright.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791527/Elective_home_education_guidance_for_LAv2.0.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2021). *School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*. Crown copyright.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073591/School_attendance_guidance_May-2022.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2022a). *Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders*. Crown copyright.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1066915/Using_pupil_premium_guidance_for_school_leaders.pdf

Department for Education (DfE). (2022b). *Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*. Crown copyright.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1076127/School_attendance_guidance_May-2022_.pdf

- Derbyshire County Council. (2020). *Emotionally Based School Refusal: A guide for primary and secondary schools*. https://schoolrefuserfamilies.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/derbyshire-eps-emotionally-based-school-refusal-guide_tcm44-233526.pdf
- De Vaus, D., Petri, P. A., Kidd, S., & Shaw, D. (2013). Surveys In Social Research. In *Surveys in social research* (pp. xviii–xviii). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203519196>
- Devenney, R., & O’Toole, C. (2021). ‘What Kind of Education System are We Offering’: The Views of Education Professionals on School Refusal. *International Journal of Educational Psychology, 10*(1), 27–47. <https://doi.org/10.17583/ijep.2021.7304>
- Dickins, M., & Williams, L. (2017). *Listening as a way of life*. National Children’s Bureau. https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/NO17%2520-%2520listening_to_young_disabled_children.pdf
- Doobay, A. (2008). School Refusal Behavior Associated with separation anxiety disorder: A Cognitive behavioural approach to treatment, *Psychology in the Schools, 45*, 261-272. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20299>
- Draper, A. K. (2004). The principles and application of qualitative research. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, 63*(4), 641-646. <https://doi.org/10.1079/PNS2004397>
- Egger, H., Costello, J., & Angold, A. (2003). School refusal and psychiatric disorders: A community study. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 42*(7), 797-807. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.CHI.0000046865.56865.79>
- Ekstrand, B. (2015). What it takes to keep children in school: a research review. *Educational Review (Birmingham), 67*(4), 459–482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2015.1008406>
- Elliott, J. G. (1999). School refusal: Issues of conceptualisation, assessment, and treatment. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 40*, 1001–1012. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00519>
- Elliott, J. G., & Place, M. (2019). Practitioner Review: School refusal: Developments in conceptualisation and treatment since 2000. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 60*(1), 4-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12848>
- Elsherbiny, M. (2017). Using a Preventive Social Work Program for Reducing School Refusal. *Children & Schools, 39*(2), 81–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdx005>
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research, 95*(5), 308–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670209596604>
- Evangelou, M. (2008). *What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?* Department for Children, Schools and Families. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8618/1/DCSF-RR019.pdf>
- Evans, D., Borriello, G. A., & Field, A. P. (2018). A review of the academic and psychological impact of the transition to secondary education. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*(82)(9). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01482>

- Farrell, P. (2004). School Psychologists: Making Inclusion a Reality for All. *School Psychology International*, 25(1), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034304041500>
- Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Connor, M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists in England and Wales in the light of 'Every child matters: Change for children'*. Nottingham: DfES Publications. https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/33806264/FULL_TEXT.PDF
- Fernando, S. M., & Perera, H. (2012). School Refusal: behavioural and diagnostic profiles of a clinical sample. *Sri Lanka Journal of Psychiatry*, 3(1), 10–13. <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljspx.v3i1.4453>
- Ferrell, R. T. (2009). *The effects of single -parent households versus two -parent households on student academic success, attendance, and suspensions*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Finlay, L. (2002). “Outing” the Researcher: The Provenance, Process, and Practice of Reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), 531-545. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129120052>
- Finning, K., Harvey, K., Moore, D., Ford, T., Davis, B., & Waite, P. (2018). Secondary school educational practitioners’ experiences of school attendance problems and interventions to address them: a qualitative study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 23(2), 213-225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1414442>
- Finning, K., Waite, P., Harvey, K., Moore, D., Davis, B., & Ford, T. (2020). Secondary school practitioners’ beliefs about risk factors for school attendance problems: *a qualitative study*, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 25(1), 15-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2019.1647684>
- Flutter, J., & Rudduck, J. (2004). *Consulting pupils: What’s in it for schools?* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K., & Lavoie-Tremblay, M. (2020). Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 160940692090725–. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254>
- Fremont, W. P. (2003). School refusal in children and adolescents. *American Family Physician*, 68, 1555-1561. <https://www.aafp.org/dam/brand/aafp/pubs/afp/issues/2003/1015/p1555.pdf>
- Frost, N. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in psychology: combining core approaches*. Open University Press.
- Galloway, D. (1983). Truants and other absentees. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24, 607–611. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1983.tb00136.x>
- Gase, L., Kuo, T., Coller, K., Guerrero, L., & Wong, M. (2014). Assessing the connection between health and education: Identifying potential leverage points for public health to improve

- school attendance. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(9), 47-54.
<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.301977>
- Gaus, V. (2011). Cognitive behavioural therapy for adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities*, 5(5), 15-25.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/20441281111180628>
- Giangreco, M. F., & Broer, S. M. (2005). Questionable Utilization of Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools: Are We Addressing Symptoms or Causes? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20(1), 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576050200010201>
- Giorgi, A. (2010). Phenomenology and the practice of science. *Existential Analysis*, 21(1), 3-22.
<https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v11.30682>
- Given, L. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods / Lisa M. Given, editor*. London: Sage.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Emergence Vs Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: TheSociology Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992) *Emergence Vs Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.
- Glazzard, J., & Bostwick, R. (2018). *Positive mental health. A whole school approach / Jonathan Glazzard and Rachel Bostwick*. Critical Publishing.
- Goldberg, J. M., Sklad, M., Elfrink, T. R., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2018). Effectiveness of interventions adopting a whole school approach to enhancing social and emotional development: a meta-analysis. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 34(4), 755–782. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-018-0406-9>
- Golsworthy, R., & Coyle, A. (2001). Practitioners' accounts of religious and spiritual dimensions in bereavement therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 14, 183-202.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070110037993>
- González, C., Inglés, C.J., Kearney, C.A., Vicent, M., Sanmartín, R., & García-Fernandez, J.M. (2016). School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised: Factorial invariance and latent means differences across gender and age in Spanish children. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02011>
- González, C., Inglés, C. J., Vicent, M., Calderón Guevara, C. M., Lagos San Martín, N., Sanmartín, R., & García Fernández, J. M. (2020). Perfiles de rechazo escolar: Identificación y comparación entre adolescentes ecuatorianos y chilenos. *Interdisciplinaria*, 37(1), 191–203.
<https://doi.org/10.16888/interd.2020.37.1.12>

- Goodall, C. (2018). "I felt closed in and like I couldn't breathe": A qualitative study exploring the mainstream educational experiences of autistic young people. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*, 3, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2396941518804407>
- Goodman, A., & Goodman, R. (2009). Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as a Dimensional Measure of Child Mental Health. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 48(4), 400-403.
- Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), 105-112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001>
- Gray, D. E. (2013). *Doing research in the real world*. Sage.
- Greenberg, L., Doi Fick, L., & Schnider, H. (2016). Catching Them Before Too Much Damage is Done: Early Intervention with Resistance-Refusal Dynamics. *Family Court Review*, 54(4), 548-563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12242>
- Gregory, I. R., & Purcell, A. (2014). Extended school non-attenders' views: developing best practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 30(1), 37-50.
- Guare, R. E., & Cooper, B. S. (2003). *Truancy revisited students as school consumers / Rita E. Guare, Bruce S. Cooper*. Scarecrow P.
- Guay, F., Gilbert, W., Falardeau, E., Bradet, R., & Boulet, J. (2020). Fostering the use of pedagogical practices among teachers to support elementary students' motivation to write. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 63, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Gubbels, J., van der Put, C., & Assink, M. (2019). Risk Factors for School Absenteeism and Dropout: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(9), 1637-1667. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01072-5>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PloS One*, 15(5), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076>
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261-280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Gulliford, A., & Miller, A. (2015). *Raising educational achievement: What can instructional psychology contribute?* In T. Cline, A. Gulliford, & S. Birch (Eds.), *Educational psychology* (pp. 83-107). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hall, C. H., Guo, B., Valentine, A. Z., Groom, M. J., Daley, D., Sayal, K., & Hollis, C. (2019). The validity of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for children with ADHD symptoms. *PloS One*, 14(6), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218518>

- Hallam, S., & Rogers, L. (2008). *Improving behaviour and attendance at school / Susan Hallam and Lynne Rogers*. Open UP. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2008.00393_2.x
- Hannah, G. L., Fluent, D. E., & Fischer, D. J. (1999). Separation anxiety in children and adolescents treated with risperidone. *J Child Adolesc Psychopharmacol*, 9, 277-283. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cap.1999.9.277>
- Hansberry, B., & Thorsborne, M. (2016). *A practical introduction to restorative practice in schools: theory, skills and guidance / Bill Hansberry; foreword by Margaret Thorsborne*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Harpin, V. A. (2005). The effect of ADHD on the life of an individual, their family, and community from preschool to adult life. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 90(1), i2-i7. <https://doi.org/10.1136/adsc.2004.059006>
- Harter, S., Whitesell, N. R., & Kowalski, P. (1992). Individual differences in the effects of educational transitions on young adolescent's perceptions of competence and motivational orientation. *American educational research journal*, 29(4), 777-807. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312029004777>
- Hausner, E., Waffenschmidt, S., Kaiser, T. & Simon, M. (2012). *Routine development of objectively derived search strategies*, 1(19), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2046-4053-1-19>
- Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvåg, S. (2014). Parental perspectives of the role of school factors in school refusal. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 19(2), 131-153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2013.816199>
- Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvag, S.K. (2015). School factors associated with school refusal- and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance. *Social Psychology of Education*, 18, 221-240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-015-9293-y>
- Havik, T., & Ingul, J. M. (2021). How to Understand School Refusal. *Frontiers in Education (Lausanne)*, 6, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.715177>
- Haynes, K. (2011). Tensions in representing the self in reflexive autoethnographical research. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, 6(2), 134-149. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17465641111159125>
- Head, G., & Jamieson, S. (2006). Taking a Line for a Walk: Including School Refusers. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 24 (3), 32-40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0122.2006.00377.x>
- Hefferon, K., & Gil-Rodriguez, E. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *The Psychologist*, 24(10), 756-759.
- Hendron, M., & Kearney, C. (2016). School Climate and Student Absenteeism and Internalizing and Externalizing Behavioral Problems. *Children & Schools*, 38(2), 109-116. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdw009>

- Henry, K., & Huizinga, D. (2007). Truancy's Effect on the Onset of Drug Use among Urban Adolescents Placed at Risk. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 40*(4), 358. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.11.138>
- Hersov, L. A. (1960). Refusal to go to school. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 1*, 137-145. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1960.tb01988.x>
- Heyne, D. (2006). *School refusal: Practitioner's Guide to Evidence-Based Psychotherapy*. New York: Springer.
- Heyne, D. A., & Sauter, F. M. (2013). School refusal. In C. A. Essau & T. H. Ollendick (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the treatment of childhood and adolescent anxiety* (pp. 471–517). Wiley Blackwell.
- Heyne, D. A., Sauter, F.M., van Widenfelt, B.M., Vermeiren, R., & Westenberg, P.M. (2011). School refusal and anxiety in adolescence: Non-randomized trial of a developmentally sensitive cognitive behavioral therapy. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 25*, 870–878. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2011.04.006>
- Heyne, D. A., Vreeke, L. J., Maric, M. M., Boelens, H., & van Widenfelt, B. M. (2016). Functional assessment of school attendance problems: An adapted version of the School Refusal Assessment Scale – Revised. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 25*(3). 178–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426616661701>
- Heyne, D., Gentle-Genitty, C., Landell, M. G., Melvin, G., Chu, B., Gallé-Tessonneau, M., Askeland, K. G., González, C., Havik, T., Ingul, M. J., Johnsen, B. D., Keppens, G., Knollman, M., R.Lyon, A., Maeda, N., Reissner, V., Sauter, F., Silverman, K. W., Thastum, M., Tonge, K. B., & Kearney, A. C. (2019). Improving school attendance by enhancing communication among stakeholders: establishment of the International Network for School Attendance (INSA). *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 29*(7), 1023-1030. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01380-y>
- Heyne, D., King, N. J., & Tonge, B. (2004). *School refusal: A clinician's guide to effective psychosocial and pharmacological interventions*. Oxford University Press.
- Heyne, D., King, N. J., Tonge, B. J., Rollings, S., Young, D., Pritchard, M., & Ollendick, T. (2002). Evaluation of child therapy and caregiver training in the treatment of school refusal. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 41*(6), 687-695. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00004583-200206000-00008>
- Heyne, D., Landell, G. M., Melvin, G., & Gentle-Genitty, C. (2019). Differentiation between school attendance problems: Why and how? *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 26*, 8–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2018.03.006>
- Hodges, E. V., Boivin, M., Vitaro, F., & Bukowski, W. M. (1999). The Power of Friendship: Protection Against an Escalating Cycle of Peer Victimization. *Developmental Psychology, 35*(1), 94–101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.35.1.94>

- Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The Status of Method: Flexibility, Consistency and Coherence. *Qualitative Research: QR*, 3(3), 345–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794103033004>
- Hopwood, B., Hay, I., & Dymont, J. (2016). The transition from primary to secondary school: Teachers' perspectives. *The Australian. Educational*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-016-0200-0>
- Hovens, J. G. F. M., Wiersma, J. E., Giltay, E. J., van Oppen, P., Spinhoven, P., Penninx, B. W. J. H., & Zitman, F. G. (2010). Childhood life events and childhood trauma in adult patients with depressive, anxiety and comorbid disorders vs. controls. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 122(1), 66–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0447.2009.01491.x>
- Hutzell, K. L., & Payne, A. A. (2012). The Impact of Bullying Victimization on School Avoidance. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 10(4), 370–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204012438926>
- Hwang, S., Kim, Y. S., Koh, Y.-J., & Leventhal, B. L. (2017). Autism Spectrum Disorder and School Bullying: Who is the Victim? Who is the Perpetrator? *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(1), 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3285-z>
- Idsoe, T., Dyregrov, A., & Idsoe, E. C. (2012). Bullying and PTSD Symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 40(6), 901–911. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-012-9620-0>
- Inglés, C. J., González-Maciá, C., García-Fernández, J. M., Vicent, M., & Martínez-Monteagudo, M. C. (2015). Current status of research on school refusal. *European Journal of Education and Psychology*, 8(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejeps.2015.10.00>
- Ingul, J., Klöckner, C., Silverman, W., & Nordahl, H. (2012). Adolescent school absenteeism: Modelling social and individual risk factors. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 17(2), 93–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-3588.2011.00615.x>
- Ingul, J. M., Havik, T., & Heyne, D. (2019). Emerging School Refusal: A School-Based Framework for Identifying Early Signs and Risk Factors. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 26(1), 46–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2018.03.005>
- Islam, S. N. (2013). *An investigation into educational psychologists' perceptions of traded service delivery, using soft systems methodology* [Doctoral thesis, The University of Birmingham]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/4540/1/Islam13AppEdChildPsy_1.pdf?gathStatIcon=true
- Jaafar, N., Iryani, M. D., Wan-Salwina, W. I., Nazri, A. R. F., Kamal, N. A., Prakash, R. J., & Shah, S. A. (2013). Externalizing and internalizing syndromes in relation to school truancy among adolescents in high-risk urban schools. *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 5(1), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/appy.12072>
- Jalali, R., & Morgan, G. (2018). “They won’t let me back.’ Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 23(1), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1347364>

- Johnson, A. M. (1957). School phobia. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 27(2), 307-309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1957.tb05494.x>
- Johnson, A. M., Falstein, E. I., Szurek, S. A., & Svendsen, M. (1941). School phobia. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11(4), 702-711. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1941.tb05860.x>
- Kahn, J., & Nursten, J. (1962). School refusal: A comprehensive view of school phobia and other failures of school attendance. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 32(4), 707–718. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1962.tb00320.x>
- Kallio, J. M., Kauppinen, T. M. & Erola, J. (2016). Cumulative socio-economic disadvantage and secondary education in Finland. *European Sociological Review*, 32(5), 649–661. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw021>
- Kaplun, C. (2019). Children’s drawings speak a thousand words in their transition to school. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 44(4), 392–407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1836939119870887>
- Karlsen, A. M. F., & Ohna, S. E. (2021). Pupils’ voices in teachers’ collaborative professional learning in Lesson Study. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 110, 101877–. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101877>
- Kawsar, M. D., Yilanli, M., & Marwaha, R. (2022). *School Refusal*. StatPearls Publishing LLC.
- Kearney, C. A. (1995). *School refusal behaviour*. In A. R. Eisen, C. A. Kearney, & C. E. Schaefer (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents* (pp. 19–52.). Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Kearney, C. A. (2003). Bridging the gap among professionals who address youths with school absenteeism: Overview and suggestions for consensus. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34(1), 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.34.1.57>
- Kearney, C.A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(3), 451-471. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2007.07.012>
- Kearney, C. A. (2016). *Managing school absenteeism at multiple tiers: An evidence-based and practical guide for professionals*. Oxford university Press.
- Kearney, C.A., & Albano, A. M. (2004). The Functional Profiles of School Refusal Behavior: Diagnostic Aspects. *Behavior Modification*, 28(1), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445503259263>
- Kearney, C. A., & Bates, M. (2005). Addressing School Refusal Behavior: Suggestions for Frontline Professionals. *Children & Schools*, 27(4), 207-216. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/27.4.207>
- Kearney, C. A., & Bensaheb, A. (2006). School Absenteeism and School Refusal Behavior: A Review and Suggestions for School-Based Health Professionals. *The Journal of School Health*, 76(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2006.00060.x>

- Kearney, C.A., & Hugelshofer, D. (2000). Systemic and Clinical Strategies for Preventing School Refusal Behavior in Youth. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 14(1), 51-65. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0889-8391.14.1.51>
- Kearney, C. A., & Silverman, W. K. (1990). A preliminary analysis of a functional model of assessment and treatment of school refusal behaviour. *Behavior Modification*, 14(3), 340–366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01454455900143007>
- Kearney, C. A., & Silverman, W. K. (1995). Family environment of youngsters with school refusal behavior: A synopsis with implications for assessment and treatment. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 23(1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926189508251336>
- Kearney, C. A. (2001). *School refusal behavior in youth: A functional approach to assessment and treatment*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10426-000>
- Kearney, C. A., Turner, D., & Gauger, M. (2010). *School refusal behaviour*. *Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/97804740479216.corpsy0827>
- Keilow, M., Sievertesen, H., Niclasen, J., & Obel, C. (2019). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Standardized academic tests: Reliability across respondent type and age. *PLoS ONE*, 14(7), 1-12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0220193>
- Kelliher, F. (2005). Interpretivism and the pursuit of research legitimisation: An integrated approach to single case design. *Electronic Journal on Business Research Methods*, 3(2), 123-132. <https://academic-publishing.org/index.php/ejbrm/article/view/1197/1160>
- Kendal, S., Murfield, J., Dillon, J., & Wilkin, A. (2006). *Education Outside the Classroom: Research to Identify What Training is Offered by Initial Teacher Training Institutions*. Department for Education and Skills. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/EOT01/EOT01.pdf>
- Kennedy, W. A. (1965). School phobia: Rapid treatment of fifty cases. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 70(4), 285-289. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0022440>
- Kennedy, B. (2008). Educating students with insecure attachment histories: toward an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 26(4), 211- 230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643940802472148>
- Kidger, J., Araya, R., Donovan, J., & Gunnell, D. (2012). The effect of the school environment on the emotional health of adolescents: a systematic review. *Pediatrics*, 129(5), 925–949. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-224>
- King, N. J., & Bernstein G. A. (2001). School Refusal in Children and Adolescents: A Review of the Past 10 Years. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40(2), 197–205. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00004583-200102000-00014>
- King, N., Ollendick, T. H., & Tonge, B. J. (1997). *School refusal: Assessment and treatment*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- King, N., Ollendick, T., Tonge, B. J., & Oswald, D. P. (1997). School Refusal: Assessment and Treatment [Review of *School Refusal: Assessment and Treatment*]. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 7(3), 393–395. Human Sciences Press, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022835924766>
- Kljakovic, M., & Kelly, A. (2019). Working with school-refusing young people in Tower Hamlets, London. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24(4), 921–933.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104519855426>
- Knight, L. K., & Depue, B. E. (2019). New frontiers in anxiety research: The translational potential of the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 10, 510–510.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00510>
- Knollman, M., Knoll, S., Reissner, V., Metzelaars, J., & Hebebrand, J. (2010). School Avoidance from the point of view of child and adolescent psychiatry. *Dtsch Arztebl International*, 107(4), 43–49. <https://doi.org/10.3238/arztebl.2010.0043>
- Ochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviors associated with reduced versus continued victimization. *Development and Psychopathology*, 9(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579497001065>
- Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Achilles, G. M. (2006). Suspension, Race, and Disability: Analysis of Statewide Practices and Reporting. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 14(4), 217–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266060140040501>
- Kugley, S., Wade, A., Thomas, J., Mahood, Q., Jørgensen, A. K., Hammerstrøm, K., & Sathe, N. (2017). Searching for studies: a guide to information retrieval for Campbell systematic reviews. *Campbell Systematic Review*, 13(1), 1–73. <https://doi.org/10.4073/cm.2016.1>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkman, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Lähdepuro, A., Savolainen, K., Lahti-Pulkkinen, M., Eriksson, J., Lahti, J., Tuovinen, S., & Räikkönen, K. (2019). The Impact of Early Life Stress on Anxiety Symptoms in Late Adulthood. *Scientific Reports*, 9(1), 4395. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-40698-0>
- Larkin, M., & Thompson, A. R. (2011). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Mental Health and Psychotherapy Research*. In *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy* (pp. 99–116). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119973249.ch8>
- Lauchlan, F. (2003). Responding to Chronic Non-attendance: A review of intervention approaches. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 19(2), 133–146.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360303236>
- Leat, D., Reid, A., & Lofthouse, R. (2015). Teachers' experiences of engagement with and in educational research: What can be learned from teachers' views? *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(2), 270–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1021193>
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Local Authority A*. (2020). *Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusion from School – 12 Month Update*. <https://democracy.localauthorityx.gov.uk/documents/s22204/Exclusion>
- Local Authority A*. (2021). *State of Equalities in Borough A* Annual Report 2020*. <https://www.localauthority.gov.uk/~media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/communications/information/adviceandinformation/20192020/20200131stateofequalitystateofequ20201.pdf>
- Lovitt, T. C., & Cushing, S. (1999). Parents of youth and disabilities: Their perceptions of school programs. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*(3), 134.
- Lumby, J. (2007). Parent voice: knowledge, values and viewpoint. *University of Southampton, 10*(3), 220-232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480207077842>
- Lyneham, H. J., Sbrulati, E. S., Abbott, M. J., Rapee, R. M., Hudson, J. L., Tolin, D. F., & Carlson, S. E. (2013). Psychometric properties of the Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale (CALIS). *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 27*(7), 711–719. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2013.09.008>
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., & MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. North Carolina, NC: Family Health International. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/reference/59503>
- Madill, A., Jordan, A., & Shirley, C. (2000). Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies. *The British Journal of Psychology, 91*(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000712600161646>
- Maeda, N., & Heyne, D. (2019). Rapid Return for School Refusal: A School-Based Approach Applied With Japanese Adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 2862–2862. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02862>
- Maïano, C., Normand, C. L., Salvas, M.-C., Moullec, G., & Aimé, A. (2016). Prevalence of School Bullying Among Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Autism Research, 9*(6), 601–615. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.1568>
- Makihara, H., Nagaya, M., & Nakajima, M. (1985). An investigation of neurotic school refusal in one-parent families. *Japanese Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 26*, 303-315. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/10912.pdf>
- Malcolm, H., Wilson, V., Davidson, J., & Kirk, S. (2003). *Absence from Schools: A Study of Its Causes and Effects in Seven LEAs*. Department for Education and Skills. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8655/1/RR424.pdf>
- Maric, M., Heyne, D. A., MacKinnon, D. P., van Widenfelt, B. M., & Westenberg, P. M. (2013). Cognitive mediation of cognitive-behavioural therapy outcomes for anxiety-based school refusal. *Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapy, 41*, 549-564. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352465812000756>
- Marshall, L., Wishart, R., Dunatchik, A., & Smith, N. (2017). *Supporting Mental Health in Schools and Colleges*. Department for Education.

- Marques de Miranda, D., da Silva Athanasio, B., Sena Oliveira, A. C., & Simoes-e-Silva, A. C. (2020). How is COVID-19 pandemic impacting mental health of children and adolescents? *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, *51*, 101845–101845. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101845>
- Masi, G., Mucci, M., & Millepiedi, S. (2001). Separation Anxiety Disorder in Children and Adolescents: Epidemiology, Diagnosis and Management. *CNS Drugs*, *15*(2), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.2165/00023210-200115020-00002>
- Mason, A. R., & Hurley, E. (2020). Advocating for Children During the COVID-19 School Closures, *Pediatrics Perspectives*, *146*(3), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-1440>
- Maynard, B. R., Brendel, K. E., Bulanda, J. J., Heyne, D., Thompsom, A. & Pigott, T. D. (2015). Psychosocial interventions for school refusal with primary and secondary students: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *11*(1), 1-76. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2015.12>
- McCambridge, J., de Bruin, M., & Witton, J. (2012). The effects of demand characteristics on research participant behaviours in non-laboratory settings: a systematic review. *PLoS One*, *7*(6), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0039116>
- McLaughlin, C., & Clarke, B. (2010). Relational matters: A review of the impact of school experience on mental health in early adolescence. *Educational and Child Psychology*, *27*(1), 91–103. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/McLaughlin-Clarke-relational-matters-2010.pdf>
- McLeod, B. D., Wood, J. J., & Klebanoff, S. (2015). Advances in evidence-based intervention and assessment practices for youth with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Behavior Therapy*, *46*(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2014.07.004>
- McShane, G., Walter, G., & Rey, J. (2001). Characteristics of adolescents with school refusal. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *35*(6), 822-826. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2001.00955.x>
- Mertens, D. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.
- Mihara, R., & Ichikawa, M. (1986). A clinical study of school refusal: With special reference to the classification of family violence. *Japanese Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *27*(2), 110-131.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook / Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman*. (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, *12*(1), 8–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-172X.2006.00543.x>

- Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government. (2019). *The English Indices of Deprivation 2019*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/IoD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf
- Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2014). A Guide to Understanding Social Science Research for Natural Scientists. *Conservation Biology*, 28(5), 1167-1177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12326>
- Moos, R. H., & Moos, R. S. (1986). *Family Environment Scale manual* (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Mortari, L. (2015). Reflectivity in Research Practice: An Overview of Different Perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 160940691561804–. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915618045>
- Moses, J. O., & Villodas, M. T. (2017). The Potential Protective Role of Peer Relationships on School Engagement in At-Risk Adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(11), 2255–2272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0644-1>
- Moses, J. W., & Knutsen, T. L. (2012). *Ways of knowing: competing methodologies in social and political research / Jonathon W. Moses and Torbjørn L. Knutsen* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Munkhaugen, E. K., Gjevik, E., Pripp, A. H., Sponheim, E., & Diseth, T. H. (2017). School refusal behaviour: Are children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder at a higher risk? *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 41, 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2017.07.001>
- Murphy, E., Dingwall, R., Greatbatch, D., Parker, S., & Watson, P. (1998). Qualitative research methods in health technology assessment: a review of the literature. *Health Technology Assess*, 2(16), 1-274. <https://doi.org/10.3310/hta2160>
- Mychailyszyn, M. P., Mendez, J. L., & Kendall, P. C. (2010). Anxiety disorders and school functioning in youth: Comparisons by diagnosis and comorbidity. *School Psychology Review*, 39, 106–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2010.12087793>
- Myhill, A. (2017). *Parents' views of their involvement during extended school non-attendance* [Doctoral thesis, Cardiff University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/105163/>
- Newlove-Delgado, T., Williams, T., Robertson, K., McManus, S., Sadler., K, Vizard, T., Cartwright, C., Mathews, F., Norman, S., Marcheselli, F., & Ford, T. (2021). *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021*. NHS Digital, Leeds. https://files.digital.nhs.uk/97/B09EF8/mhcyp_2021_rep.pdf
- Newman, T., & Blackburn, S. (2002). *Transitions in the Lives of Children and Young People: Resilience Factors*, 78. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED472541>

- Newton, C., & Wilson, D. (2003). *Creating circles of friends: a peer support and inclusion workbook / by Colin Newton and Derek Wilson* (2nd ed.). Inclusive Solutions UK.
- Nind, M., & Hewett, D. (2005). *Access to communication: Developing basic communication with people who have severe learning difficulties / Melanie Nind and Dave Hewett*. (2nd ed.). London: D. Fulton.
- Nuttall, C., & Woods, K. (2013). Effective intervention for school refusal behaviour, *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 29 (4), 347-366.
<https://www.aafp.org/dam/brand/aafp/pubs/afp/issues/2003/1015/p1555.pdf>
- Ochi, M., Kawabe, K., Ochi, S., Miyama, T., Horiuchi, F., & Ueno, S. I. (2020). School refusal and bullying in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 14(1), 17–17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-020-00325-7>
- Oehlberg, B. (2006). *Reaching and Teaching Stressed and Anxious Learners in Grades 4-8: Strategies for Relieving Distress and Trauma in Schools and Classrooms*. Corwin Press.
- Ofsted., & Spielman, A. (2020). *Amanda Spielman launches Ofsted's Annual Report 2019/20*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielman-launches-ofsteds-annual-report-201920>
- Orbe, M. P. (2009). Phenomenology. In S. Littlejohn, & K. Foss (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. (pp. 750-752). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc
- Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 695-705. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1579>
- Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' Need for Belonging in the School Community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323–367. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070003323>
- Owens, M., & Stevenson, J., Hadwin, J. A., & Norgate, R. (2014). When does anxiety help or hinder cognitive test performance? The role of working memory capacity. *The British Journal of Psychology*, 105(1), 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12009>
- Ozsivadjian, A., & Knott, F. (2011). Anxiety problems in young people with autism spectrum disorder: A case series. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 16(2), 203-214.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104511404749>
- Pagell, M., & Krause, D. R. (2005). Determining when multiple respondents are needed in supply chain management research: The case of purchasing and operations. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 8(1), B1–B5. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2005.18781969>
- Parker, D. C., & Conversano, P. (2021). Narratives of Systemic Barriers and Accessibility: Poverty, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and the Call for a Post-Pandemic New Normal. *Frontiers in Education (Lausanne)*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.704663>
- Parvaresh-Masoud, M., & Varaei, S. (2018). “Letter to Editor”. *Electronic Interview in Qualitative Research*, (31)112. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijn.31.112.1>

- Pascoe, M. C., & Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 104–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1596823>
- Patterson, J. (1982). What Brain-Stage Theory Has to Say to Teachers. *The High School Journal*, 66(2), 100-103.
- Pellegrini, D. W. (2007) School Non-attendance: definitions, meanings, responses, interventions. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23(1), 63-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360601154691>
- People for Education. (2020). *Technology in Schools – A Tool and a Strategy*. <https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Technology-In-Schools-Final-May-5.pdf>.
- Perry, J. C., & Lavins-Merillat, B. D. (2018). Self-Esteem and School Belongingness: A Cross-Lagged Panel Study Among Urban Youth. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19826575>
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences a practical guide / Mark Petticrew and Helen Roberts*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub.
- Pianta, R. (1999). *Enhancing relationships between children and teachers / Robert C. Pianta* (1st ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Pickering, L., Hadwin, J. A., & Kovshoff, H. (2019). The Role of Peers in the Development of Social Anxiety in Adolescent Girls: A Systematic Review. *Adolescent Research Review*, 5(4), 341–362. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00117-x>
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J.A. (2012). A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, 18(2), 361-369.
- Pilkington, C., & Piersel, W. C. (1991). School phobia: A critical analysis of the separation anxiety theory and an alternative conceptualization. *Psychology in the Schools*, 28, 290–303. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6807>
- Pina, A. A., Zerr, A. A., Gonzles, N. A & Oritz, C. D. (2009) Psychosocial Interventions for School Refusal Behaviour in Children and Adolescents. *Child Development Perspectives*, 3(1), 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2008.00070.x>
- Pini, S., Abelli, M., Troisi, A., Siracusano, A., Cassano, G., Shear, K., & Baldwin, D. (2014). The relationships among separation anxiety disorder, adult attachment style and agoraphobia in patients with panic disorder. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 28(8), 741-746. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2014.06.010>
- Polat, F., Kalambouka, A., Boyle, W. F., & Nelson, N. (2001). *Post-16 Transitions of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. Department for education and skills. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4590/1/RR315.PDF>

- Preece, D., & Howley, M. (2018). An approach to supporting young people with autism spectrum disorder and high anxiety to re-engage with formal education – the impact on young people and their families. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 23(4), 468–481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2018.1433695>
- Putwain, D. (2007). Researching academic stress and anxiety in students: some methodological considerations. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701208258>
- Radford, L. (2011). *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*. London: NSPCC. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/pre-2013/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today>
- Randa, R., & Wilcox, P. (2010). School disorder, victimization, and general v. place-specific student avoidance. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(5), 854–861. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2010.05.009>
- Ready, D. (2010). Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The Differential Effects of School Exposure. *Sociology of Education*, 83(4), 271–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040710383520>
- Reid, K. (2002). *Truancy: Short and Long-term Solutions*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203018019>
- Reid, K. (2005). The Causes, Views and Traits of School Absenteeism and Truancy: An Analytical Review. *Research in Education (Manchester)*, 74(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.7227/RIE.74.6>
- Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived Experience. *The Psychologist*, 18(1), 20–23. <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-18/edition-1/exploring-lived-experience>
- Reilly, N. (2015). *Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Resch, J. A., Mireles, G., Benz, M. R., Grenwelge, C., Peterson, R., & Zhang, D. (2010). Giving Parents a Voice: A Qualitative Study of the Challenges Experienced by Parents of Children with Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 55(2), 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019473>
- Reza-Nakhaie, M., Smylie, L. K., & Arnold, R. (2007). Social Inequalities, Social Capital, and Health of Canadians. *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, 39(4), 562–585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613407306823>
- Rice, F., Frederickson, N., Shelton, K. H., McManus, I. C., Riglin, L., & Ng-Knight, T., (2015). *Identifying factors that predict successful and difficult transitions to secondary school*. https://nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/STARS_report.pdf
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: A resource for social-scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Roth, A., Fonagy, P., Parry, G., Target, M., et al. (1996). *What works for whom? A critical review of psychotherapy research*. Guilford Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. The Guilford Press. <https://doi.org/10.1521/978.14625/28806>
- Saunders, M. N., Thornhill, K., Philip, A., & Lewis, Philip. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited.
- Schafer, R. (2011). *The Relationship between the Functions of School Refusal Behavior and Family Environment* [Masters dissertation, University of Nevada]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/926959159/fulltextPDF/A7DC2636BC5944C9PQ/1?accountid=14511>
- Schwandt, T. A. (2003). *Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D., (2020). Interpretivism, In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scott, D., & Usher, R. (1996). *Understanding educational research / edited by David Scott and Robin Usher*. London: Routledge.
- Sewell, W.H. (2008). The temporalities of capitalism. *Socio-Economic Review*, 6(3), 517–537. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwn007>
- Shank, G. D., & Brown, L. (2007). *Exploring educational research literacy / Gary Shank, Launcelot Brown*. New York: Routledge.
- Shilvock, G. G. (2010). *Investigating the factors associated with emotionally based non-attendance at school from young people's perspective* [Doctoral thesis, The University of Birmingham]. <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1142/1/Shilvock10ApEdPsyD1.pdf>
- Skinner, E. A., Kindermann, T. A., & Furrer, C. J. (2009). A Motivational Perspective on Engagement and Disaffection: Conceptualization and Assessment of Children's Behavioral and Emotional Participation in Academic Activities in the Classroom. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 69(3), 493–525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164408323233>
- Slaten. C. D., Ferguson, J. K., Allen, K.-A., Brodrick, D.-V., & Waters, L. (2016). School Belonging: A Review of the History, Current Trends, and Future Directions. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.6>
- Smerillo, N. E., Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., & Ou, S. R. (2018). Chronic absence, eighth-grade achievement, and high school attainment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study. *Journal of School Psychology*, 67, 163–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.11.001>
- Smith, J. A. (1995). *Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis in J.A Smith, R Harre, R, and L. Van Langenhove (eds), Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage.

- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2007). Pain as an assault on the self: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the psychological impact of chronic benign low back pain. *Psychology and Health, 22*(5), 517-534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14768320600941756>
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. In J.A. Smith (Ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 53-80). London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. *British Journal of Pain, 9*(1), 41-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642>
- Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 49*(4), 376–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01846.x>
- Snape, D., & Spencer, L. (2003). *The foundations of qualitative research* In J. Richie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 1-23). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Sobba, K. N. (2019). Correlates and buffers of school avoidance: a review of school avoidance literature and applying social capital as a potential safeguard. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 24*(3), 380–394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2018.1524772>
- Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology / Robert Sokolowski*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sommer, B., & Nagel, S. (1991). Ecological and Typological Characteristics in Early Adolescent Truancy. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 11*(3), 379-392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431691113005>
- Sosu, E. M., Dare, S., Goodfellow, C., & Klein, M. (2021). Socioeconomic status and school absenteeism: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Review of Education (Oxford), 9*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3291>
- Spence, S. H., Donovan, C., & Brechman-Toussaint, M. (1999). Social Skills, Social Outcomes, and Cognitive Features of Childhood Social Phobia. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 108*(2), 211–221. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.108.2.211>
- Sperling, M. (1967). School Phobias. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 22*(1), 375-401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1967.11822605>
- Starks, H., & Brown-Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose Your Method: A Comparison of Phenomenology, Discourse Analysis, and Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(10), 1372-1380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031>
- Stickney, M., & Miltenberger, R. (1998). School Refusal Behavior: Prevalence, Characteristics, and the Schools' Response. *Education and Treatment of Children, 21*(2), 160-170. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42899527>

- Stirling, S., & Emery, H. (2016). *A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health*. National Children's Bureau.
https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Resources_0.pdf
- Stokholm, J. V., & Lykke, K. (2020). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a usable way to address mental health at well-child visits in general practice - a qualitative study of feasibility. *BMC Family Practice*, *21*(126). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12875-020-01156-3>
- Strand, J. M. (2020). Supporting the transition to secondary school: The voices of lower secondary leaders and teachers. *Educational Research (Windsor)*, *62*(2), 129–145.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1750305>
- Sutherland, G. (2006). *Faith, duty, and the power of mind: The Cloughs and their circle, 1820-1960 / Gillian Sutherland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swahn, M. H., Bossarte, R. M., Palmier, J. B., & Yao, H. (2013). Co-Occurring Physical Fighting and Suicide Attempts among U.S. High School Students: Examining Patterns of Early Alcohol Use Initiation and Current Binge Drinking. *The Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, *14*(4), 341–346. <https://doi.org/10.5811/westjem.2013.3.15705>
- Teichert, J. (2021). Mediating Close Friendship Intimacy in Times of (Social) Distance. *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*, *14*(1), 51–66.
<https://doi.org/10.31165/nk.2021.141.648>
- Thackery, L., & Eatough, V. (2015). 'Well the Future, that is Difficult': A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis Exploring the Maternal Experience of Parenting a Young Adult with a Developmental Disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, *28*(4), 265-275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12126>
- Thambirajah, M. S., Grandison, K. J., & De-Hayes, L. (2008). *Understanding School Refusal: A Handbook for Professionals in Education, Health and Social Care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Thomas, K. J., Santo, J. B., & da Cunha, J. M. (2019). The predictive value of school climate and teacher techniques on students' just world beliefs: a comprehensive Brazilian sample. *Social Psychology of Education*, *22*(5), 1239–1257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09524-3>
- Thompson, E. H., Robertson, P., Curtis, R., & Frick, M. (2013). Students with Anxiety: Implications for Professional School Counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(4), 222–234.
<https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2013-16.222>
- Timperley, H. S., & Parr, J. M. (2007) Closing the Achievement Gap through Evidence-based Inquiry at Multiple Levels. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *19*(1), 99-115.
<https://doi.org/10.4219/jaa-2007-706>
- Ting, V., & Weiss, J. (2017). Emotion Regulation and Parent Co-Regulation in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *47*(3), 680-689.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-3009-9>

- Torrens-Salemi, A. M. (2006). The social construction of school refusal: An exploratory study of school personnel's perceptions [Doctoral thesis, University of South Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/305280167>
- Turnbull, A. P., Blue-Banning, M., Turbiville, V., & Park, J. (1999). From Parent Education to Partnership Education: A Call for a Transformed Focus. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 19*(3), 164–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/027112149901900308>
- UK Government. (2022a). *School Admissions*. <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/school-starting-age>
- UK Government. (2022b). *Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn term*. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term/data>
- UK Government. (2022c). *All schools and colleges in Borough A**. <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>
- UK Government. (2022d). *Data protection*. <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>
- Van Eck, K., Johnson, S., Bettencourt, A., & Johnson, S. (2017). How school climate relates to chronic absence: A multi-level latent profile analysis. *Journal of School Psychology, 61*, 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2016.10.001>
- Van Manen, M. (2018). Rebuttal Rejoinder: Present IPA For What It Is—Interpretative Psychological Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 28*(12), 1959–1968. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318795474>
- Vugteveen, J., de Bildt, A., Theunissen, M., Reijneveld, M., & Timmerman, M. (2021). Validity Aspects of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Adolescent Self-Report and Parent-Report Versions Among Dutch Adolescents. *28*(2), 601–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191119858416>
- Wagner, J. I. J., Cummings, G., Smith, D. L., Olson, J., Anderson, L., & Warren, S. (2010). The relationship between structural empowerment and psychological empowerment for nurses: a systematic review. *Journal of Nursing Management, 18*(4), 448–462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2010.01088.x>
- Wagstaff, C., Jeong, H., Nolan, M., Wilson, T., Tweedlie, J., Phillips, E., Senu, H., & Holland, F. (2014). The Accordion and the Deep Bowl of Spaghetti: Eight Researchers' Experiences of Using IPA as a Methodology. *Qualitative Report, Qualitative report, 19*, 24. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1216>
- Waldfoegel, S., Coolidge, J. C., & Hahn, P. (1957). The development, meaning and management of school phobia. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 24*, 754–776. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1957.tb05543.x>
- Waldron, S., Shrier, D. K., Stone, B., & Tobin, F. (1975). School phobia and other childhood neuroses: A systematic study of the children and their families. *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 132*(8), 802–808. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.132.8.802>

- Walter, D., von Bialy, J., von Wirth, E., & Doepfner, M. (2018). Psychometric Properties of the German School Refusal Assessment Scale–Revised. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 36(6), 644–648. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282916689641>
- Wang, M., & Holcombe, R. (2010). Adolescents' Perceptions of School Environment, Engagement, and Academic Achievement in Middle School. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(3), 633-662. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209361209>
- Waters, L., Allen, K. A., & Arslan, G. (2021). Stress-Related Growth in Adolescents Returning to School After COVID-19 School Closure. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.643443>
- Watson, D., Emery, C., Bayliss, P., McInnes, K., & Boushel, M. (2012). *Children's social and emotional wellbeing in schools: a critical perspective / Debby Watson, Carl Emery and Phil Bayliss ; with Margaret Boushel and Karen McInnes*. Policy Press.
- Weiss, M., & Cain, B. (1964). The residential treatment of children and adolescents and with school phobia. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 34(1), 103-114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1964.tb02198.x>
- West Sussex Educational Psychology Service. (2022). *Emotionally based School Refusal: guidance for schools and support agencies*. West Sussex County Council EP. <https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483>
- West, P., Sweeting, H., & Young, R. (2010) Transition matters: Pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research Papers in Education*, 25(1), 21-50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520802308677>
- Wilkins, J. (2008). School Characteristics That Influence Student Attendance: Experiences of Students in a School Avoidance Program. *The High School Journal*, 91(3), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2008.0005>
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Willig, C., & Stainton-Rogers, W. (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Wilson, M. (2012). School Refusal Behaviour: *How can we support pupils back to school?* [Doctoral thesis, Newcastle University]. <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/1609>
- Wilson, V., Malcolm, H., Edward, S., & Davidson, J. (2008). “Bunking off”: The impact of truancy on pupils and teachers. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701492191>
- Wimmer, M. B. (2013). *Evidence-Based practices for school refusal and truancy*. *National Association of School Psychologists*, 42(4), 18. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1510296187?pq-origsite=primo>

- Winnicott, D. W. (1965). *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: studies in the theory of emotional development* / by D.W. Winnicott. Hogarth Press.
- Witts, B., & Houlihan, D. (2007). Recent Perspectives Concerning School Refusal Behavior. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 5(2), 381-398.
https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/psyc_fac_pubs/
- Woolfson, R., Harker, M., Lowe, D., Shields, M., Banks, M., Campbell, L., & Ferguson, E. (2006). Consulting About Consulting: Young people's views of consultation. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 22(4), 337-353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360600999468>
- Wright, L., Steptoe, A., & Fancourt, D.(2020). Are we all in this together? Longitudinal assessment of cumulative adversities by socioeconomic position in the first 3 weeks of lockdown in the UK. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 74, 683–688. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech-2020-214475>.
- Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology & Health*, 15(2), 215–228.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08870440008400302>
- Yardley, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 235–251). London: Sage.
- Yardley, L., & Bishop, F. (2015). Using mixed methods in health research: Benefits and challenges. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 20(1), 1-4.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12126>
- Yavuz, C. (2016). Gender variance and educational psychology: Implications for practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 20, 1–15.
- York, T., & Kearney, C. A. (1993, April). Familial factors and the function of school refusal behavior in children and adolescents [Conference presentation]. Western Psychological Association Symposium, Phoenix, AZ. <https://ckearney.faculty.unlv.edu/symposia/>
- Youth in Mind. (2012). *Information for researchers and professionals about the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires*.
<https://www.sdqinfo.org/>
- Zeedyk, S., Rodriguez, G., Tipton, L., Baker, B., & Blacher, J. (2014). Bullying of youth with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, or typical development: Victim and parent perspectives. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 8(9), 1173–1183.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2014.06.001>
- Zimmerman, B., & Schunk, D. (2008). *Motivation and self-regulated learning: Theory, research, and applications*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

APPENDIX A: LITERATURE SEARCH PROCESS

Cooper et al.'s (2018) eight-step guide provides an overall framework for this literature search, lending a structured and systematic approach. These eight steps are as follows:

Step 1: *'Decide on the individual who will carry out the search'*. As this thesis requires an individual piece of empirical research, it is my responsibility to carry out the literature search, with the aid of advice and recommendations from my research supervisors.

Step 2: *'Set the aim and purpose for carrying this literature search'*. Cooper et al. (2018) state it is critical to ensure that the literature is thorough and provides transparency, so it can reduce research bias and ensure high-quality information. In this case, the main aim is to deepen my understanding of EBSA, to make better sense of my findings.

Step 3: This is the *'preparation'* stage, for which six documents are highlighted (e.g., Lefebvre et al., 2011; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), which advocate for researchers to ensure they consult an expert (with specific research skills) before embarking on the literature search. At the start of my research, I consulted my supervisors to present my literature search strategy and what I had already found. I also met with a newly qualified EP from an institution in the West of England, who had completed her EBSA thesis. She advised me on how she carried out her literature search and recommended a list of peer-reviewed EBSA articles.

Stage 4: This involves *'designing'* the literature search. To find relevant literature, I followed Hausner et al.'s (2012) recommendation of creating a list of keywords based on subject synonyms (e.g., school avoidance, school refusers, school non-attendance, and emotional-based school avoidance).

Stage 5: *'Decide on where to search the literature'*. I followed Bethel and Rogers' (2018) recommendation to ensure my database of choice considers and provides a variety of studies, while also noting down where the studies were identified (Bethel & Rogers, 2014). I searched for literature via University College London's (UCL) Library Services, Explore UCL. This search engine was chosen as it allows for targeted searches (narrow or broad) with helpful filters to find relevant resources (e.g., 'school avoidance' AND/OR 'pupil voice').

Stage 6: *'Determine the process and sequence'* of the literature search. The initial search led me to a variety of resources (e.g., articles, books, dissertations) published across several online databases (e.g., Education Resources Information Centre, British Education Index, Psych Info, Medline, Taylor and Francis, and SAGE). The literature was selected based on the following criteria:

- The resource has been published.
- The resource is in English (to avoid misinterpretation of findings due to language barriers)
- Peer-reviewed journal articles are preferred

Stage 7: *'Manage the references'*. All resources read that met the literature criteria were recorded. In total, 86 peer reviewed articles and four systematic reviews were found using the search terms. It was decided that a literature review would allow me to gather themes in EBSA literature to best inform this study's research questions. Although a systematic review was considered, I discovered large-scale reviews (e.g., Elliot & Place, 2019; Lauchlan, 2003; Maynard et al., 2015) that covered an extensive coverage of EBSA conceptualisation and current evidence-based interventions. Regarding methods of identification in England, only Archer et al.'s (2003) study examined the identification process in the UK. As EBSA currently

conceptualised differently depending on the context, as discussed in chapter 1, section 1.5, I chose to carry out a literature review to provide readers with an overview of EBSA.

Step 8: ‘*Document the literature found*’. Cooper et al. (2018) discussed six articles (e.g., Kugley et al., 2017; Lefebvre, 2011) that advise how to document literature. All six guidelines recommend that researchers keep track of the author, dates, and sources of each piece of literature found. I followed this recommendation and documented the literature found in a document (see extract below).

Reviews exploring definition, assessment, and intervention

No.	Title	Author & Citation	Type of source	Source
1	Psychosocial Interventions for School Refusal with Primary and Secondary School Students: A Systematic Review	Maynard, B. R., Brendel, K. E., Bulanda, J. J., Heyne, D., Thompsom, A. & Pigott, T. D. (2015). Psychosocial interventions for school refusal with primary and secondary students: A systematic review. <i>Campbell Systematic Reviews</i> , 11(1), 1-76. https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2015.12	Systematic review Peer reviewed	<i>Campbell Systematic Reviews</i> Access: ProQuest Central
2	Practitioner Review: School refusal: developments in conceptualisation and treatment since 2000 Keywords	Elliot, J. G., & Place, M. (2019). Practitioner Review: School refusal: Developments in conceptualisation and treatment since 2000. <i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> , 60(1), 4-15. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12848	Practitioner Review Peer reviewed	<i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> Access: KB+ Jisc Collections Wiley Online Library
3	Responding to Chronic Non-attendance: A review of intervention approaches	Lauchlan, F. (2003). Responding to Chronic Non-attendance: A review of intervention approaches. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 19(2), 133-146. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360303236	Literature Review Peer reviewed	<i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> Access: Taylor and Francis Online

Table 3: Literature list extract

APPENDIX B: DATA PROTECTION REGISTRATION

From: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk
To: leet.chian.19@ucl.ac.uk

23 April 2021

Hi,

Thank you for your application to register with the Data Protection Office. Please note that the Data Protection Act 1998 was superseded by the UK Data Protection Act 2018. Please amended all references and return accordingly.

By way of assistance, please consider, update and return for our records the following amendments to privacy notice within the attached participant information sheets.

Notice:

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

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, [click here](#)

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data.

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

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

With this action in mind, I am pleased to confirm that this project is now registered under, reference No **Z6364106/2021/04/73 social research** in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

You may quote this reference on your Ethics Application Form, or any other related forms.

For data protection enquiries, please contact the data protection team at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. For ethics enquiries, please contact the ethics team at ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

Regards,

Spenser Crouch

Data Protection & Freedom of Information Administrator & Chief Web Editor

Legal Services, UCL | Gower Street | London | WC1E 6BT

Email: s.crouch@ucl.ac.uk Data Protection: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk FOI: foi@ucl.ac.uk.

Telephone: 0203 108 8764 (internal 58764)

I am currently working from home and best contacted via email.

Please protect the Environment. Print only if necessary.



APPENDIX C: ETHICAL APPROVAL CONFIRMATION

From: ioe.DEdPsy@ucl.ac.uk

To: leet.chian.19@ucl.ac.uk

10 May 2021

Dear Jeremy,

I am very pleased to inform you that your research project 'A qualitative study exploring school-based systems supporting primary and secondary school pupils with Emotional Based School Refusal (EBSR)' for the year 2 research project on the Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, has been given ethical approval. If you have any further queries in this regard, please contact your supervisor.

Please note that if your proposed study and methodology changes markedly from what you have outlined in your ethics review application, you may need to complete and submit a new or revised application. Should this possibility arise, please discuss with your supervisor in the first instance before you proceed with a new/revised application.

Your ethical approval form has been logged and will be uploaded to the UCL IOE database.

Very best of luck with your data collection!

Many thanks,

Will

Will Matthews
Programme Administrator

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology
UCL Institute of Education
☐ ☐ +44 (0) 203 108 6190 (internal: 56190)
☐ ioe.DEdPsy@ucl.ac.uk

DEdPsy Programme Webpage

APPENDIX D: TITLE CHANGE CONFIRMATION

From: leet.chian.19@ucl.ac.uk
To: researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk

31 May 2022

Dear Research degrees,

I wish to inform you that I am changing my thesis title from

"A qualitative study exploring mainstream school-based systems supporting primary and secondary school pupils experiencing Emotional-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)"

to

Emotional Based School Avoidance: Exploring Staff and Pupil voices on Provision in Mainstream Schools

This has been agreed by my research supervisors, Dr Andrew Holliman and Dr Cynthia Pinto (I've cc-ed them in this email).

Let me know if you need further information, thank you.

Regards,
Leet Sern Chian, Jeremy

From: researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk
To: leet.chian.19@ucl.ac.uk

1 June 2022

Dear Jeremy

Thank you for confirming this. I have updated your record. You'll be able to see the updated title on your record if you log into Portico.

Student Summary - Research Degree Examination

Details	
Student Name	Leet Sern Chian
Number	14076267
UPI	LCHIA24
Course/Programme	DDYEDUSCAP01 - Doctor In Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) In Profe
Route	DDYEDUSCAP01 - DEdPsy Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology
Intended award	Doctor in Educational Psychology
Examination events	
Date	Event
4/Feb/2022	Entry to Examination
Title of thesis	Emotional Based School Avoidance: Exploring Staff and Pupil voices on Provision in Mainstream Schools

Best wishes

Helen

Helen Notter

Research Degrees Manager
Student and Registry Services
UCL

APPENDIX E: SCHOOL INVITATION EMAIL

Dear [Staff Name],

I hope you are well, and great connecting with you. I am Jeremy Chian, a trainee educational psychologist from the educational psychology service in Local Authority A. *[Name of educational psychologist]* passed me your contact details and mentioned that you might be interested in participating in my doctoral research. To be clear, your participation is voluntary and does not interfere with the work you have agreed with your link EP.

This research explores mainstream school staff's views on the topic of Emotional-based School Avoidance, also commonly referred to in this borough as EBSA. I am keen to understand the provision and practices currently in place to support pupils non-attending due to anxiety and emotional difficulties. The research aims and purpose are highlighted in the information sheet attached. Do let me know if you have any questions. I am happy to speak with you more about this research if you would find that helpful.

Given the ongoing Covid-19 situation, I am offering the opportunity to meet virtually (dates can be found in the consent form) for approximately 50 minutes. If you would like to participate, would you kindly return the consent form to me at your soonest convenience!

A big thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Jeremy Chian

Trainee Educational Psychologist

APPENDIX F: STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

Information sheet for School Staff

Emotional Based School Avoidance: Exploring Staff and Pupil Voices on Provision in Mainstream Schools

My name is Jeremy Chian, and I am a trainee educational psychologist training at UCL Institute of Education. I am supervised by Dr Andrew Holliman and Dr Cynthia Pinto to undertake this research. I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Please take your time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have persistent difficulty attending school due to anxiety and emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. It is vital that professionals working with EBSA pupils provide timely and appropriate support to mitigate the potential short and long-term effects on the child's social, emotional, and educational development.

There is a lack of research exploring school-based approaches and practices in mainstream schools to support pupils with EBSA. While there has been significant progress in professional knowledge of EBSA in school-aged pupils, the complexity with the definition and conceptualisation of EBSA remains.

Therefore, this research aims to:

1. Develop a deeper understanding of school processes, in order to identify pupils experiencing EBSA in mainstream education.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of the facilitators and barriers to good mainstream school practices.
3. To elicit staff views to ensure your voice is heard through this research.
4. To understand the current and potential role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting schools on the topic of EBSA.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form attached.

What does this involve?

I will meet you remotely over one session via a digital platform of your choice (please indicate your preference in the consent form). The session will last for approximately 50 minutes, where we will explore your views on the systems supporting EBSA pupils at your school.

You will be given opportunities to ask questions at any time. To ensure that I capture everything you have shared fully and accurately, I will audio-record or video-record the session for transcription purposes only (please indicate choice in consent form).

Research process

There are no foreseen discomforts associated with participation in this study. If you require support, you can let me know, and we will end the session immediately. We can also take short break if preferred. If you need further help, you will be signposted to your school's pastoral care.

Rights to withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw for any reason, at any point during or up until one month after data collection.

Confidentiality

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, you will be asked to choose a nickname or code number, and all references to your data will use that name/code. All information will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be discussed with my research supervisors. If this research is published, there will be no information identified with you and your school.

Data protection privacy notice

The data collected will be stored safely and be kept in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR, 2018). If you do need any information with regards to data protection, please email: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

How will the information be recorded?

The interview will be audio- or video-recorded for data analysis. The audio-recording will be stored on a password-protected device. Once the interview has completed, the audio-recording will be transcribed and deleted according to the university's guidelines. You will be able to access a video link that is password protected to view the key findings at a later time.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A summary of the findings will be written up and shared with you and your school on request.

Any questions?

If you have further questions or concerns about the research, please contact me in the first instance (qtnvl58@ucl.ac.uk). If I am unable to support you then please contact my Supervisors Dr Andy Holliman or Dr Cynthia Pinto, at a.holliman@ucl.ac.uk and c.pinto.14@ucl.ac.uk respectively.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for consideration of this research study.

APPENDIX G: STAFF CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Please read the attached information sheet and tick all boxes before completing this form.

If you **do not** give consent to participate, please skip to the bottom of this page.

I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the information sheet attached

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research
- I have been allowed to ask the researcher any questions regarding the research and my participation
- I fully understand that I can withdraw my data for up to one month after data collection without explanation, and there will be no further implications
- I understand that my identity and school will be kept anonymous, and all reference to my data will be associated with a nickname or code of my choice
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded or video-recorded, but this will not be shared with anyone else apart from the researcher and his research supervisors
- I understand that the researcher will destroy audio and video recordings according to the UCL IOE's requirements on anonymised data which is set as 10 years
- I have been given information on the UCL IOE's data protection privacy notice
- I have received consent from my Head Teacher to participate in this study

Please tick the box as appropriate: <input type="checkbox"/> I give consent to participate in this research	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not give consent to participate in this research
---	---

Name of Participant:	Date: _____
----------------------	-------------

_____ Signature: _____		E-mail: _____
I am available on the:		I am willing to be:
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday, 18 June 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 pm <input type="checkbox"/> 3 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Audio-recorded <input type="checkbox"/> Video-recorded
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday, 25 June 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> 9 am · <input type="checkbox"/> 11 am <input type="checkbox"/> 1 pm · <input type="checkbox"/> 3 pm	I would like to have the session via:
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday, 2 July 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> 9 am <input type="checkbox"/> 11 am <input type="checkbox"/> 1 pm <input type="checkbox"/> 3 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Zoom: _____(e-mail) <input type="checkbox"/> Skype: _____ (ID) <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Teams _____ (e-mail)
Others: _____ _____	Time: _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____

Thank you for reading this information sheet, and do get in touch with me at qtnvl58@ucl.ac.uk if you have any queries.

APPENDIX H: PARENT CONSENT EMAIL

Dear [Parent's name],

Thank you for speaking with me. I enjoyed our phone call to explain my research and why your [Child's name] child's participation would benefit educators with future planning around EBSA.

Please find the information sheets (parental and pupil) to aid further understanding of this research. Have a read, and if you are keen for your child [Child's Name] to participate (of course, if he/she agrees), I would appreciate it if you could return the consent form (parental and pupil) to me. After that, I will personally contact your child to explain this research and if he is keen to participate. If he is willing, I will liaise with [Staff name] and arrange a date and time for me to meet him at school. As shared, the session will involve games and activities, so I hope your child won't feel too stressed and enjoy the session.

Thank you once again, and I appreciate your consideration. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Chian

Trainee Educational Psychologist

APPENDIX I: PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENT

Emotional Based School Avoidance: Exploring Staff and Pupil Voices on Provision in Mainstream Schools

My name is Jeremy Chian, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist training at UCL Institute of Education. I am supervised by Dr Andrew Holliman and Dr Cynthia Pinto to undertake this research. I would like to invite your child to take part in this research. Please take your time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have persistent difficulty attending school due to anxiety and emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. It is vital that professionals working with pupils with school attendance difficulties provide timely and appropriate support to mitigate the potential short and long-term effects on the child's social, emotional, and educational development.

There is a lack of research exploring school-based approaches and practices in mainstream schools to support this group of learners. While there has been significant progress in professional knowledge of EBSA in school-aged pupils, the complexity with the definition and conceptualisation of EBSA remains. Findings from this research will be used to inform local authority and school initiatives to support EBSA.

The aims of the research are:

1. Develop a deeper understanding of school processes, in order to identify pupils experiencing EBSA in mainstream education.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of the facilitators and barriers to good mainstream school practices.

3. To elicit your child's voices to ensure they are heard.
4. To understand the current and potential role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting schools on the topic of EBSA.

Do you have to take part?

Your child's participation is voluntary. If you agree to for them participate, please sign the consent form attached.

What does this involve?

I will meet with your child over one session in person or via a digital platform of your choice (please indicate your preference in the consent form). The session will last for approximately 1 hour, where I will elicit their views and experiences.

You and your child will be given opportunities to ask questions at any time. To ensure that I capture everything your child has shared fully and accurately, I will audio-record or video-record the session for transcription purposes only (please indicate choice in consent form).

Research process

There are no foreseen discomforts. If your child requires support, they can let me know at any point, and I will end the session immediately. If your child needs further help, they will be signposted to their school's pastoral care.

Rights to withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your child for any reason, at any point. Data can also be withdrawn for up to one month after data collection.

Confidentiality

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, your child will be asked to choose a nickname or code number, and all references to their data will use that name. All information will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be discussed with my research supervisors. If this research is published, there will be no information identified with you, your child, and their school.

Data protection privacy notice

The data collected will be stored safely and be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR, 2018). If you do need any information with regards to data protection, please email: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

How will the information be recorded?

The interview will be audio-recorded for data analysis. The audio-recording will be stored on a password-protected device. Once the interview has completed, the audio-recording will be transcribed and deleted according to the university's guidelines (10 years). You and your child will be able to access a video link that is password protected to view the key findings at a later time.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A summary of the findings will be written up and shared with you, your child, and their school on request.

Any questions?

If you have further questions or concerns about the research, please contact me in the first instance (qtnvl58@ucl.ac.uk or Jeremy.chian@islington.gov.uk). If I am unable to support you then you may contact my Supervisors Dr Andy Holliman or Dr Cynthia Pinto, at a.holliman@ucl.ac.uk and c.pinto.14@ucl.ac.uk respectively.

Note: This research is unrelated to any work previously conducted by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect your child's support from the EPS (if any). Personal information gathered from this research will not be shared with the service. Thank you for reading this information sheet and for consideration of this research study. Your child will be given a separate information sheet with an informed consent form to ensure they understand the research process and purpose.

APPENDIX J: PARENT CONSENT FORM

PARENT CONSENT FORM

This research is unrelated to any work previously conducted by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect your child's support from the EPS (if any). Personal information gathered from this research will not be shared with the service.

Please read the attached information sheet and tick all boxes before completing this form.

If you **do not** give consent for your child to participate, please skip to the bottom of this page.

- I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the information sheet attached
- I voluntarily agree for my child to participate in this research
- I have been allowed to ask the researcher any questions regarding the research and my child's participation
- I fully understand that I can withdraw my child's data for up to one month after data collection without explanation, and there will be no further implications
- I understand that my child's identity will be kept anonymous, and all reference to their sharing will use a nickname or code of their choice
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded or video-recorded, but this will not be shared with anyone else apart from the researcher and his research supervisors
- I understand that the researcher will destroy audio and video recordings according to the UCL IOE's requirements on anonymised data which is set as 10 years.
- I have been given information on the UCL IOE's data protection privacy notice

Please tick the box as appropriate:	
-------------------------------------	--

<input type="checkbox"/> I give consent for my child to participate in this research	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not give consent for my child to participate in this research
---	--

Name of Parent: _____	Name of Child: _____
Signature: _____	Date: _____
E-mail: _____	I am willing for my child to be: <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-recorded

Information Sheet for Children and Young People



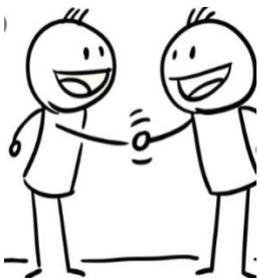
Hi there, my name is Jeremy. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist.



You must be wondering what a Trainee Educational Psychologist does? Basically, I work with young people just **like you** to help them learn and understand what they like or do not like at school.

You can use a computer and watch an introduction video of me at <https://vimeo.com/566108868> If you have any questions about the research and wish to speak with me, please let your parents know and we can meet altogether virtually.

Why are we meeting up?



I am interested to learn more about you and your school experiences. I know that attending school can be difficult sometimes; therefore, I want to give you a chance to tell me how you feel. Your sharing will allow me and your school to know how to best support pupils like you in future.

What are we going to do?



We will meet once this term, and the session will last for about 1 hour, where we will do some fun activities together (including games) and talk about your school experiences.



How will our discussion be recorded?



I will use my recorder to record the session. Everything you share with me is important to me, and I hope I do not miss out on anything!

I will delete the recordings after I have typed down everything you have said on my computer. My recorder is password-protected also, so it is safe.

Data Protection Privacy Notice



If you are worried about how your personal information is being used, please ask your parents to contact UCL or email them at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Do I have to take part?



It is entirely up to you to decide to take part or not.

I have asked your parents and your school, and they have said OK, but you should make up your own mind! Making your own choice is something you should always do. If you wish to be part of my research, please sign the last page of this form.

What if I change my mind?



We all change our mind sometimes, so if you wish to withdraw from the study, all you need to do is to let me know! You can withdraw your data for up to one month after taking part. At any point in the session, you can ask me questions. Also, if you do not wish to answer any questions I ask, just let me know.

What will I get from taking part?



You will get a chance to share your views and ideas if you participate in this research. Whatever you share is valuable as it will help schools plan and support students like you better next year.

Any questions?



If you have any questions, feel free to email me at

██████████ or ██████████

Note: This research is unrelated to any work previously conducted by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect your support from the EPS (if any). Personal information gathered from this research will not be shared with the service.

Thank You

APPENDIX L: PUPIL CONSENT FORM

Informed consent form for pupils

If you have read the information sheet, well done! Please read this form carefully and tick the boxes next to each statement you agree with.

- I have read the information sheet and understand what the research is about.
- I understand that I can change my mind about taking part at any time. All I need to do is to inform Jeremy.
- I understand that my identity will be kept a secret, and Jeremy will use my nickname to refer to anything I say in the session.
- I understand that the session will be audio-recorded so that Jeremy does not miss anything I say. Everything I say is important to Jeremy!
- I understand that my recording will only be listened by Jeremy and his supervisor, and will be destroyed within 10 years, based on Jeremy's University's requirement.
- I have been given a chance to ask any questions about the research. I will also be allowed to ask questions before, during, and after the session. I can ask Jeremy in person or email him.
- I have read the data protection privacy notice stated in the information sheet.

Finally, please let me know whether you wish to take part or not by ticking one of the boxes below.

- I confirm that I have read this form carefully and **wish to participate** in this research.
- I **do not wish** to participate in this research.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Preparatory Scripts

General check-in with the participant. Once ready to start:

Hello 'name', thank you for meeting with me. I'm Jeremy Chian, a Trainee EP at the IoE. I hope you have read the information sheet I have sent to you and thanks for getting the consent form back to me. If for any reason during the interview, you'd like to stop, or you don't feel able to go on, then please do let me know, and we can stop.

I'll be recording this interview, and I have seen that you have given me consent to audio/video record the session, just to reassure you that the audio/video will only be for transcribing purposes, and only I will watch/listen to it. Are you ok to go ahead?

This research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the systems in place to support pupils with Emotional Based School Avoidance, EBSA, also known as school refusal. To give you some context, EBSA is a term ascribed to the group of young people who do not attend school for reasons of fear, anxiety and misery (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service, 2022).

It can affect all young people irrespective of school, age, ability, gender, and social background. Young people who present with EBSA show a heightened sensitivity to school experiences of which they cannot maintain personal control. Their anxiety can affect performance, attendance and social contact within school and can develop into fear of social activities out of school and to isolation, even within the family. The two main components of EBSA are an emotional and a behavioural response: • Emotional distress surrounding attendance at school. • Behavioural response of not attending school.

The aims of the research are as follows:

1. To develop a deeper understanding of school processes identifying and supporting EBSA pupils within mainstream education.
2. To elicit the views and experiences of school staff and pupils with EBSA, to find out the facilitators and barriers in supporting school experiences for this group of learners.
3. To understand the current and potential role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting schools with EBSA.

As stated in the information sheet, all the information you share will not be identifiable to you or your school. Are there any nicknames you prefer, or would you like me to create one for you? Ok, shall we make a start, and please do let me know if you feel comfortable at any point; we will stop and, if needed, will refer you to the appropriate pastoral care.

Interview Questions

Note: responses to all questions may be further probed as necessary (e.g., can you tell me more about that, how did that make you feel, etc.).

- Please start by telling me a bit about you and your role.
 - **P1** What is your current **role**?
 - **P2** **How long** have you been in your role?
 - **P3** How long have you been working in this school? Prior to this, were you also in a role where you have supported pupils with EBSA?
 - **P4** In your role, **how are you involved** in supporting pupils with EBSA?
- ✓ Thank you for sharing about yourself and your role in supporting pupils with EBSA.

Moving forward, I am interested in exploring the whole-school systems in place at your current school in identifying and supporting pupils with EBSA. I understand that the pandemic has changed processes, especially when it is more challenging to track pupil attendance. It would be great if you could share with me the usual process first, I will have a few questions towards the end about coronavirus.

- **P5** Firstly, what is your school's ethos and values on supporting pupils with EBSA?
- **P6** Can you describe how does your school identify pupils with EBSA?
- **P7** Are there any whole-school approaches by which school staffs are guided by? What are the indicators and signs your school look at? (i.e. school attendance, anxiety in school)
- **P5** How does your school assess if pupils school refusal is due to emotional difficulties or truancy?
- **P6** Does your school involve parents and external agencies to support your identification and assessment of EBSA?
- **P7** Does school staff follow a framework or have a guidance/policy on identifying and assessing EBSA? If yes, please elaborate. If not, in that case, are there any challenges or successes in the way your school approach EBSA?
- **P8** As a staff, how does this identification and assessment process support or pose a challenge to you supporting pupils with EBSA?

Now, I would like to have a little chat on the interventions and school initiatives to support pupils with EBSA stay, engage, and reintegrate back to school.

- **P9** Could you tell me once your school has identified and assessed pupils with EBSA? How does your school support them? (Researcher to ask- 'pupils still

attending school', 'completely refusing school', 'currently on a short-term placement at the AP and aiming to make a return to your school').

- **P10** How successful are these initiatives and intervention? Are these pupils involved, and if they were here today, what do you think they would say about these interventions?
- **P11** Are there any barriers or challenges? If yes, what are they?
- **P12** Are there any other external agencies or professionals who support these initiatives and intervention?
- **P13** Does your school seek the support of educational psychologists (EPs) when supporting EBSA pupils? If yes, how and at what stage? (Was it helpful?) If no, do you think it would be helpful for EP involvement? (How do you think EPs work and how can they support your school in a systemic and individual level when working with EBSA pupils?)
- **P14** Are parents involved in the interventions and support plans? If so, how.

In light of the current pandemic,

- **P15** Has this changed your school's approaches in supporting EBSA? Identification, assessment, and intervention
- **P16** Has the changes in approaches been a success or a challenge?
- **P17** As we're in an unprecedented and ever-changing time to be living, if schools close and reopen again, are there any approaches to ensure these identified EBSA pupils can reintegrate back smoothly?

To our final question, while I left it to the last, I think it's the most important one.

'P15- If you could make a change to your school's system on supporting EBSA (could be anything), would you? What would you do differently or continue?'

Thank you for all of your responses. As this interview draws to a close, is there anything else you'd like to share about your role in supporting pupils with EBSA at your school?

Closing statement

That brings us to the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and your really thoughtful answers. How was the interview for you? (Discussion about any emotive topics, and acknowledging the hard work they are doing under extraordinary circumstances, signposting if necessary and checking self-care is in place, as discussed)

You have my email address in the meantime if you want to get in touch for any reason between now and then.

Thanks again for your time today!

APPENDIX N: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PUPIL

Session plan

Note: Before the session with individual pupils, the researcher will contact their parents to check if any additional needs further require thinking and planning (e.g., the child is non-verbal, the researcher will find ways such as expressive writing to elicit their views and experiences).

The session with pupils will be broken into three parts (target for the session is 1 hour):

1. Icebreaker and, e.g., card games, online games (15 minutes)- To help pupils feel comfortable before talking about their school experiences.
2. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (10 minutes) - The researcher will administer this questionnaire for participants aged 11-17 on the interview day. For pupils in younger age groups, the researcher will administer the parent and teacher SDQ by the parent or teacher. The purpose for this is for the researcher to learn more about participants to help make sense [complement] the qualitative findings).
3. Semi-structured questions, with the support of pictures, drawing activities, and ‘The Bear Cards: Feelings’ and ‘Blob images for feelings’.

Interview Questions

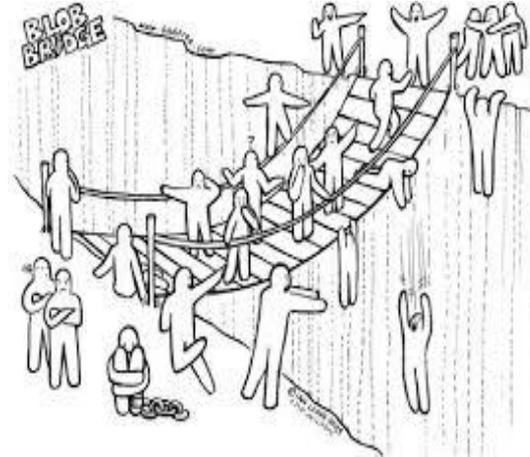
Note: responses to all questions may be further probed as necessary (e.g., can you tell me more about that, how they make you feel, etc.).

- Shows participant a picture of a school or asks the child to draw a picture of their school on a blank paper piece. If the pupil is not keen, the researcher will ask them to visualise in their minds. Could you draw a picture of your school on this paper (don't worry, nobody will judge or know that you drew this)?

Present and experiences

- Start with general questions about their interests. E.g., what do they like? What do they do during their free time?
- **P1** Tell me about your school experiences (probe on current/previous mainstream school experiences). If the child or young person is not attending school now, ask how their previous experience at school was?
- **P2** How do/did you feel/think about school? How do you think/feel about school? Was/Is there anything you like or dislike about school? If the child or young person is describing current school (e.g., Pupil referral unit) and has talked about positives- probe- what is different from their mainstream school experience?

- **P3** Tell me what a typical day is like for you? Before the journey to school, and when you are at school (researcher to explore further using the 'blob bridge' and 'blob tree' to help the child to reflect on their feelings). *If the child/young person is describing their current experience, the researcher to ask how was it different to when attending mainstream school?*



- **P4** When did you first feel that attending school makes you feel uncomfortable or anxious? -- Could you tell me how attending school made you feel? (e.g., bodily, anxiety?).

- Were your teachers aware? How did they support you?

- Are there any other adults or anyone (e.g., friends) who have or are currently helping you feel better at school?

- **P5** *Evaluate what has been shared.* Was the support is given to you (specific ones) helpful? In what ways did they help to make you feel safe at school and to attend school better?
- **P6** Have you met with an Educational Psychologists before? Do you know what they do? How do you think EPs can help your school experience better?

Future and hopes

Acknowledge their feelings and thank pupils for sharing and how it will be valuable to schools and professionals. The next part asks them for their recommendations from a pupil perspective.

- **P6** How do you think your school and teachers can/could have do/done better to support you or pupils who find attending school difficult?
- **P7** Magic question- what are your goals for the future? How do you think your school and teachers can help you achieve them?
- **P8** If you could change anything in your school, what would that be? Describe to me your dream school environment, how does it look like?

In light of the current pandemic,

- **P9** Has the pandemic made it more difficult emotionally for you to attend school? In what ways?
- **P10** How have your school and teachers supported you when schools were closed and when you were returning to school?

Reaffirm participants that their schools and teachers do their best to support them. The findings from this research will help schools/professionals ensure pupils with similar difficulties get the deserved support. Thank you for all of your responses.

Closing statement

That brings us to the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and your thoughtful answers. How was the interview for you? (Discussion about any emotive topics, and acknowledging the hard work they are doing under extraordinary circumstances, signposting if necessary and checking self-care is in place, as discussed)

You and your parents have my email address in the meantime if you want to get in touch for any reason between now and then.

Thanks again for your time today!

APPENDIX O: REFLECTIONS BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION

Role as a TEP and IOE researcher: Having dual roles may lead to pressure from schools and the local authority for this study to be emancipatory. Some participants have links to individuals whom I had previously or regularly worked with (e.g., SENDCO at a school that I am linked to). While this can be positive, with rapport being established beforehand to encourage open sharing, on the other hand, it could create ‘participant bias’, wherein both participants and researchers can shape their responses based on their relationship (McCambridge et al., 2012).

Member of Local Authority A’s EBSA Working Group: As a member of my local authority’s multi-professional working group, there was an expectation for my findings to inform the current EBSA initiatives supporting schools. To manage this expectation, members were informed that this is not a commissioned piece of research; thus, if they wished to see any feedback, it would have to follow the university’s timeline, and would have to align with the Institute of Education (IOE) (e.g., research brief). Finally, while participants are working or studying in Borough A, their confidentiality and anonymity are kept safe, and all audio and/or video recordings and transcripts will not be shared, as these are owned by the IOE.

The clarity in terminologies used in this research: In early supervision meetings, there were discussions on using the term ‘EBSA’ in comparison to others (e.g., school non-attendance), along with the impact of words such as ‘refusal’. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it was decided that using the term ‘EBSA’ emphasises the ‘emotional’ aspect of school avoidance, and would ensure familiarity and consistency as this is the term used in Borough A.

In addition, it was decided that the label ‘EBSA pupils’ may impact readers’ understanding of the topic. Thus, pupil participants are referred to as ‘pupils experiencing EBSA’, as this does not assume EBSA to be an inherent and permanent difficulty. Instead, EBSA experiences can change when pupils are provided with appropriate support and intervention.

Finally, in the Year 2 progress review, the examiner raised the use of the phrase ‘unique experiences’ in differentiating pupils from one another. While their experiences may be different, using the word shows little consideration to the commonalities and similarities they may have. Hence, as my definition of what ‘unique’ refers to may be personal, it would be considered a personal assumption; thus, I have chosen not to use words that may be inappropriate.

APPENDIX P: DATA ANALYSIS STEPS FOR RTA AND IPA

Steps for RTA

This study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) RTA framework to analyse school staff findings. The steps taken are (in descending order):

1. Transcripts were read thoroughly before coding
2. Coding began with an inductive (bottom-up) approach. Generation of codes was started.
3. Codes were checked and refined. Transcripts were reviewed again to ensure there were no missing extractions.
4. Themes were searched for via examining patterns across findings. Basic themes were created from them.
5. Basic themes were grouped to form main themes.

Steps for IPA

IPA analysis followed the structured guidance by Smith and Osborn's (2008, p. 67) that consists of a four-stage process:

The first stage of "looking for themes in the first case" involved comprehensive reading of the interview text, noting my own reflections and observations, as well as emotions, words or phrases used by participants. At this stage, initial themes were identified and recorded. To ensure that these did not overlap, I followed Smith et al.'s (1995) recommendation to revisit previous information, thereby ensuring that the themes made sense.

The second phase involved "connecting the themes", and this was done by 'analytically or theoretically ordering' the initial themes to find connections between them (Smith & Osborne,

2008, p. 72). In this way, relevant themes were clustered into groups, and themes were checked against the transcript once more to ensure the text was consistent with the actual meaning that was shared by participants.

The third phase involved “continuing the analysis with other cases”; I reviewed the next participant transcript, using themes that had emerged from the earlier case as a reference point (Smith & Osborne, 2008, p. 73). Once all transcripts were analysed, a master list of themes was created. The final stage involved “writing up” the findings, which Smith and Osborne (2008, p. 76) define as a process of translating and narrating the recorded themes into writing.

APPENDIX Q: STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE (SDQ) SCORES

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

SDQ Scale	Close to Average (80% pop)	Slightly raised (/lowered) (10% pop)	High (/Low) (5% pop)	Very high (/very low) (5% pop)
Parent/Carer completed SDQ				
Emotional problems score	0-3	4	5-6	7-10
Conduct problems score	0-2	3	4-5	6-10
Hyperactivity score	0-5	6-7	8	9-10
Peer problems score	0-2	3	4	5-10
Prosocial score	8-10	7	6	0-5
<i>Externalising score</i>	0-7	8-10	11-13	14-20
<i>Internalising score</i>	0-3	4-7	8-10	11-20
Total difficulties score	0-13	14-16	17-19	20-40
Teacher completed SDQ				
Emotional problems score	0-3	4	5	6-10
Conduct problems score	0-2	3	4	5-10
Hyperactivity score	0-5	6-7	8	9-10
Peer problems score	0-2	3-4	5	6-10
Prosocial score	6-10	5	4	0-3
<i>Externalising score</i>	0-5	6-10	11-12	13-20
<i>Internalising score</i>	0-3	4-8	9-10	11-20
Total difficulties score	0-11	12-15	16-18	19-40
Self-completed SDQ				
Emotional problems score	0-4	5	6	7-10
Conduct problems score	0-3	4	5	6-10
Hyperactivity score	0-5	6	7	8-10
Peer problems score	0-2	3	4	5-10
Prosocial score	7-10	6	5	0-4
<i>Externalising score</i>	0-5	6-10	11-12	13-20
<i>Internalising score</i>	0-4	5-8	9-10	11-20
Total difficulties score	0-14	15-17	18-19	20-40

Table SDQ: Descriptor of SDQ scores

Sources:

Youth in Mind. (2012). *Information for researchers and professionals about the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires*. <https://www.sdqinfo.org/>

Goodman, A., & Goodman, R. (2009). Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as a Dimensional Measure of Child Mental Health. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 48(4), 400-403.

Gunnersaurus's SDQ scores (Teacher 4-17 form completed by Assistant Head of Inclusion)

Domain	Score	Categorisation of risk level
Emotional problems score	8	Very High
Conduct problems score	4	High
Hyperactivity score	6	Slightly raised
Peer problems score	4	Slightly raised
Prosocial score	8	Close to Average
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	30	Very High

Sloth King's SDQ scores (Teacher 4-17 form completed by Learning Support Assistant)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	9	Very High
Conduct problems score	6	High
Hyperactivity score	7	Slightly raised
Peer problems score	5	Very High
Prosocial score	3	Very High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	30	Very High

Monstrae's SDQ scores (Self-rated pupil form, 11-17 years old completed by Monstrae)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	8	Very High
Conduct problems score	2	Close to Average
Hyperactivity score	5	Close to Average
Peer problems score	5	Very High

Prosocial score	5	Very High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	25	Very High

Pencil's SDQ scores (Teacher rated form 4-17 years old completed by Pencil's SENDCO)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	8	Very High
Conduct problems score	4	High
Hyperactivity score	2	Close to Average
Peer problems score	4	Slightly raised
Prosocial score	3	Very High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	21	Very High

Watch's SDQ scores (Teacher rated form 4-17 years old completed by Watch's SENDCO)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	7	Very High
Conduct problems score	2	Close to Average
Hyperactivity score	1	Close to Average
Peer problems score	1	Close to Average
Prosocial score	2	Very High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	13	Slightly raised

Angel's SDQ scores (Self-rated student form 11-17 years old completed by Angel)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	7	Very High
Conduct problems score	5	High
Hyperactivity score	7	High
Peer problems score	3	Slightly raised
Prosocial score	5	High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	27	Very High

Ariel's SDQ scores (Self-rated student form 11-17 years old completed by Ariel)

Domain	Score	Risk level
Emotional problems score	9	Very High
Conduct problems score	2	Close to Average
Hyperactivity score	5	Close to Average
Peer problems score	2	Close to Average
Prosocial score	1	Very High
Total difficulties score <i>(Sum of all the domains above)</i>	19	High

**APPENDIX R: STAFF TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT
AND THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT**

Staff Transcript Excerpt

	Excerpt	Initial codes
Interviewer:	What would you say is your school's ethos on supporting EBSA?	
SS3:	<p><i>I think the general idea is, again, safe, happy you know, children who feel comfortable in this space and, and not, we know it's not about just forcing them in, it's about trying to get to the bottom of what the issue is and why they don't want to come in and what we can put in place to support them. We do it quickly so the child gets the support as quick as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Well every case has to be looked at differently you know...and it is about us being open with the possible difficulties they might be facing.</i></p>	<p>Pupil safety Happiness Listening to pupils Getting to the bottom Prompt intervention Early identification Accepting towards needs</p>
Interviewer:	If you don't mind sharing about how you would approach it differently in your practice?	
SS3:	<p><i>Well, we have a process but it starts with kind of noticing, or just anything where it is our office staff who look into it in communication with me. So like we've got CAMHS practitioner who comes in once every two weeks. So I'd maybe refer them to her. Clear communication in school is what we have been sticking to. We also work with parents. A big part of it was supporting the parents and talking to them and pointing out support groups and parenting classes and going, like directing them to the right support agencies. We cannot support a child in school, but actually tapping into those services, like targeted youth service, family services and lots of other services to use them to help us to get them back. Talking to the parents and letting them know that that's going to be level of support. We have a child who barked, they got the diagnosis was quite concerned about that, and that led to a bit of issue about being in school and embarrassment, things of that. So we do an</i></p>	<p>Staff noticing changes Communication between staff Working with external partners Referral to other agencies Clear communication with external partners Working with parents Involving parents in intervention Tapping into other services Supporting parents Embracing differences</p>

	intervention on kind of understanding and appreciating your diagnosis and not being like as negative.	
--	---	--

Sample theme development

Initial codes	Codes	Sub-theme	Theme
Getting to the bottom Prompt intervention Early identification Accepting towards needs Referral to partner Clear communication with external partners Working with parents Communication between staff Working with external partners Referral to other agencies Clear communication Working with parents Involving parents in intervention Tapping into other services Supporting parents Embracing differences	Involvement of other agencies Working with families Supporting families Referral from other agencies Clear communication	Multi-agency working Supporting and collaborating with families	<i>Working collaboratively with external partners and families</i>

APPENDIX S: PUPIL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT

Excerpt from Angel’s Transcript

Exploratory Comments		Original Transcript	Emergent Themes
<p>Impact of bullying on school experience? It seems like bullying has affected Angel’s self-esteem and self-worth. Also, her friendships. Moving to AP is a positive experience for the pupil. Angel getting detentions may signal difficulties adapting to strict regulations set in mainstream schools.</p>	<p>200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211</p>	<p>Interview: So Angel, tell me about your mainstream school experience? <i>Angel: When I was in mainstream, there was a lot of bullying going on with the way I looked, the way I looked. And the my weight and stuff. I came here in Year 9 and things I think I am at a better place. I was bullied a lot. Like, I’ve had bullying throughout my school time, and it was horrible to the point where I got beaten up. Oh, yeah, I got in a fight. I have gotten into a lot of fights and many detentions.</i></p>	<p>Peer abuse Bullying Lack of teacher support and mediation with social relationships</p>
<p>Pupil mentioned, “I didn’t have a good time at all,” but referred to current provision AP as a “better place” (line 208) - it seems like current practices there has supported Angel.</p>	<p>212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220</p>	<p>Interviewer: Was this in primary or secondary school? <i>Angel: Okay, so my old Secondary School was horrible. I didn't have a good time there at all. I got kicked out of the playground. I didn't know how to react to, like, I didn't, like, know how to make friend. So I like to scare people. And my, my old school thought, it would be a good idea if I just stayed inside. So the whole time of year seven, and year eight, I was just in a classroom for lunch break, okay.</i></p>	<p>Lack of Teacher support to make friends Being excluded and left out Feeling alone</p>
<p>Emphasis on “didn’t know how to make friends” suggests a lack of teacher mediation and support. It seemed that the decision made for the child to be in the classroom for lunch break excluded and reduced her opportunities for social interaction.</p>	<p>221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229</p>	<p>Interviewer: How was your relationship with teachers? <i>Angel: No teacher helps me to get to school. I absolutely hate, like supply teachers, okay. And if I like had a teacher change, I would just act crazy. Like, scream, like, I hate change. Like, I'm not really good at with it. So I would like change the way I would be.</i></p>	<p>Difficulties with changes</p>
<p>Pupil mentioned, ‘no teacher helps me’, could it be because supply teachers are usually temporary and that is why trust difficulties due to previous endings?</p>	<p>230 231 232 233 234 235</p>	<p><i>Angel: No teacher helps me to get to school. I absolutely hate, like supply teachers, okay. And if I like had a teacher change, I would just act crazy. Like, scream, like, I hate change. Like, I'm not really good at with it. So I would like change the way I would be.</i></p>	<p></p>

APPENDIX T: THEMATIC ASSOCIATIONS TO PARTICIPANTS

This section shows the association between the themes and participants.

RQ1: How do mainstream schools in Borough A identify and assess EBSA? (School staff views only)

Main themes associated with school staff

Main themes	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Theme 1: <i>School identification methods</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Theme 2: <i>School assessment methods</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Theme 1 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 1 Sub-themes (School identification methods)	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 1: <i>School attendance as an indicator</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sub-theme 2: <i>Information from school staff and</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	

<i>external partners</i>						
Sub-theme 3: Pupils on the SEND register	✓				✓	✓

Theme 2 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 2 Sub-themes	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 1: (School assessment methods)						
Sub-theme 2: Well-being assessments		✓		✓	✓	
Sub-theme 3: Assessment support by external partners	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

RQ2: What facilitates good mainstream school EBSA practices? (School staff and pupils)

Main themes associated with school staff

Main themes	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Theme 1: Effective school staff communication, review, and development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Theme 2: <i>Working collaboratively with external partners and families</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Theme 3: <i>Providing an inclusive school climate</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Theme 1 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 1 sub-themes (Effective school staff communication, review, and development)	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 1: <i>Regular staff communication and review</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sub-theme 2: <i>Promoting staff professional development</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓

Theme 2 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 2 sub-themes (Working collaboratively with external	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6

partners and families)						
Sub-theme 1: <i>Multi-agency working</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sub-theme 2: <i>Supporting and collaborating with families</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Theme 3 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 3 sub-themes (Providing an inclusive school climate)	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 1: <i>School ethos around pupil happiness, safety, and success</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Sub-theme 2: <i>School staff increasing pupil belonging</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sub-theme 3: <i>A graduated and flexible approach</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Themes associated with pupils

Superordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate Theme	Gunnerraurus	Sloth King	Monstrae	Pencil	Watch	Angel	Ariel
Superordinate-theme 1: The school experiences that made me feel belonged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Superordinate-theme 2: Additional support received from my school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Superordinate-theme 1 subordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate 1 subordinate themes (The school experiences that made me feel belonged)	Gunnerraurus	Sloth King	Monstrae	Pencil	Watch	Angel	Ariel
Subordinate-theme 1: <i>Positive peer relationships</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Subordinate-theme 2: <i>School staff that cared</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Subordinate-theme 3:	✓		✓			✓	✓

<i>School acknowledging and accepting my differences</i>							
Subordinate-theme 4: <i>Building on my interests, strengths, and achievements</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	

Superordinate-theme 2 subordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate 2 subordinate themes (Additional support received from my school)	Gunnersaurus	Sloth King	Monstrae	Pencil	Watch	Angel	Ariel
Subordinate-theme 1: <i>Adult support to access learning</i>	✓		✓		✓		✓
Subordinate-theme 2: <i>Access to a safe space</i>			✓	✓✓		✓	✓
Subordinate-theme 3: <i>A graduated approach to reintegration</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

RQ3: What are barriers to good mainstream school EBSA practices?

Themes associated with school staff

Main themes associated with school staff

Main themes	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Theme 1: Systemic level barriers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Theme 2: Unprecedented barriers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Theme 1 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 1 Sub-themes Sub-theme 1: (Systemic level barriers)	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 1: <i>Financial constraints</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sub-theme 2: <i>An unaligned working model with external partners</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Sub-theme 3: Lack of formal guidance around EBSA		✓	✓	✓		✓
---	--	---	---	---	--	---

Theme 2 sub-themes associated with school staff

Theme 2 Sub-themes	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5	SS6
Sub-theme 2: (Unprecedented barriers)						
Sub-theme 1: <i>Disruption caused by the pandemic</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
Sub-theme 2: <i>Familial factors</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Themes associated with pupils

Superordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate-theme 1 subordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate 1 subordinate themes (Nature of a mainstream school environment)	Gunners aurus	Sloth King	Monstrae	Pencil	Watch	Angel	Ariel
Subordinate-theme 1:	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<i>Overwhelming physical environment</i>							
Subordinate-theme 2: <i>Accepting unanticipated school changes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Subordinate-theme 3: <i>Difficulties coping with academic pressures</i>			✓		✓		✓

Superordinate-theme 2 subordinate themes associated with pupils

Superordinate 2 subordinate themes (Relationship difficulties with peers and teachers)	Gunnersaurus	Sloth King	Monstrae	Pencil	Watch	Angel	Ariel
Subordinate 1: <i>Bullying and peer abuse</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Subordinate 2: <i>Difficult relationships with teachers</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓

APPENDIX U: RESEARCH TIMELINE

September-December 2020

- EBSA literature was reviewed (refer to Appendix A)
- Discussion with professionals in Local Authority A to understand current EBSA developments
- Research proposal submitted to research supervisors

January- July 2021

- Data protection registered (refer to Appendix B)
- Ethics approval granted (May 2021) (refer to Appendix C)
- A pilot study with school staff participant (July 2021) (refer to Section 3.6)
- A pilot study with pupil participant (Feb 2022) (refer to Section 3.6)
- Year-2 review progress assessment (passed on September 2021)

August 2021 -April 2022

- Collection of data from school staff and pupil participants (refer to Chapter 4 for findings)

May-August 2022

- Data analysis and writing up of thesis for submission on 10 June 2022
- University research presentation on 30 June 2022
- Presentation to employing EPS on 19 July 2022
- VIVA examination on 22 July 2022
- Thesis corrections due on 27 August 2022
- Publication