

Listening to the Unheard Voices of Children who
present with SEBD through Journal Writing and
Drawing

I dedicate this work:

To all children and young people who had their voice silenced or
unheard;

To all educators who made and who continue to make their profession
a vocation to support children in the best possible manner;

To all children I had to pleasure to work with, teach and support.

Throughout my journey in writing my thesis, I met a number of persons who by a word of advice, encouragement or support helped me to manage to arrive to this point.

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Abstract

This thesis presented the narratives of six children and two nurture group educators. It also discussed the challenges faced by children who present with SEBD (social, emotional and behaviour difficulties) and discussed the need for practices and educators that promote the inclusion of learners who exhibit SEBD. The study explored a support service, a nurture group, and a strategy, journaling, which were used to support children who exhibited SEBD. Through the use of case studies, this research shed light on the importance of listening to the child's voice through journaling. It explored how children made sense of experiences through journal writing and drawing and how these activities were followed by conversations they had with a trusted educator during a nurture group programme in a primary state school in Malta. This study compared and discussed the journal entries and conversations between the child and educator through four theoretical frameworks (Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Fonagy's Mentalisation). Findings highlighted the different themes that emerged from the children's drawings, writings and conversations. Outcomes also presented the work and approaches the educators used to support the children who were experiencing the nurture approach. Findings presented ways in which journal writing and drawing could be used as a tool to facilitate voice in children who present with SEBD. Implications support the importance of listening to the unheard voices of children to ensure a holistic manner of support. Suggestions for supporting children who exhibit SEBD were also advocated.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“There is something delicious about writing the first words of a story. You never quite know where they’ll take you.”

Beatrix Potter

1.1 Introduction

I decided to start my Ed.D thesis with the above quotation by Beatrix Potter not only because she was one of my favourite authors as a child, but also because this excerpt describes the journey an author takes when writing a particular piece of work – be it a fictional narrative, a non-fiction story or a piece of research. In reality, when a person starts a writing, it is like an unplanned journey. One never knows where that writing will take them. It is as if you are embarking on an adventure: you have your motivations, and because of that you are going to take certain routes that will perhaps finally lead you to a certain point in the journey. You might reach a point and decide that it is the peak of your journey, or you might accomplish a goal and decide to continue searching for other adventures. In each chapter of this thesis, I am going to ask you, the reader, to imagine a room. I am going to ask you to first focus on a side table that is placed in this room. This is covered with photos of me living different experiences and contexts in my life. By means of this side table and photos, I am going to describe my roots, my positionality and my motivations for carrying out this research.

1.2 My Positionality

Roegman et al. (2014, pp. 4-5) state that positionality is not fixed, nor is it located in a physical space where research occurs. Rather it travels with us within and across multiple social, geographic locations and communities, and this involves enacting varied experiences with research and research participants. Every person’s experience of learning is different; each individual encounters new knowledge or new approaches to knowing (Seymour, 2015, p. 278). An activity I always conducted with my students as

an introduction to the nurture group sessions is known as Coat of Arms. I got to know about this activity from the book *The Freedom Writers Diary: Teacher's Guide* by Gruwell (2009, p. 25). It entails that the children and I create our personal coat of arms. I used to prepare a coat of arms sample before the lesson as a guide for the children. The coat of arms that we would create in class would be divided into six parts. I am going to describe a coat of arms I produced very recently, which I will then link to my positionality as researcher and educator.

Colyar (2009, p. 429) states that writing could be a form of communication that looks outwards and locates meaning, but writing also provides a means of connecting with ourselves. This is what I will try to do in the next few lines, looking inwards and communicating my positionality to you, the reader of my thesis. In the middle part of the coat of arms, I put a photo of myself and the people I consider as my family. I am the elder daughter in a family of four people. I come from a middle-class background. My mother is a midwife and my father is a senior clerk. My sister is five years younger than me and works as a primary school teacher. From a very young age, I was always very protective of my sister; being the older sibling presumably made me that way. I have been in a relationship with my boyfriend for the past thirteen years. My boyfriend is also a teacher at a Secondary School where he currently teaches Ethics. I was raised and live in Malta. I am Roman Catholic and I feel that my faith and beliefs instil in me certain values. My political views are geared towards centre left.

I spent the first eight years of my career as a primary teacher. After I obtained my first Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education, I taught in a mainstream primary classroom for three years. In my second year of teaching, I started a Master's Degree in Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, and after three years of teaching in a primary classroom and two years into my Master's degree, I went on to teach in a Nurture Group (which is a classroom in a mainstream school that supports children who present with SEBD) for five years. Syrnyk (2012, p. 147) states that while there remains much to uncover about our understanding of the nurture teacher, many of these professionals learn their craft by first gaining a general teaching qualification, and later by gaining

relevant expertise through job experiences and extra special postgraduate study. Papantuono, Portelli & Gibson (2014, p. 16) state that a practitioner is continually seeking better and more effective ways of resolving social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in their students with minimum difficulty. Through this research I have tried to link my professional practice to my research, and have sought effective ways to support children to find solutions for their difficulties. Last year, I was assigned the role of Education Officer in Inclusive Education. My responsibility is to support educators and children while ensuring that inclusive education practices are in line with inclusive education policy in Maltese schools.

In the top left part of the coat of arms, I put pictures of four women whom I admire. These are Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Torey Hayden, Erin Gruwell and Malala Yousafzai. Mother Teresa is an inspiration to me for the work she did with the poorest of the poor – not only in Calcutta, but around the world through the society of the Missionaries of Charity, which she founded. When I was sixteen years old, a friend of my mother invited me to volunteer with the Missionaries of Charity in Malta, assisting children from poor social backgrounds and who exhibit challenging behaviours. At the young age of sixteen, I never thought that in Malta there were people who were suffering poverty and social exclusion. Nor did I know what the term SEBD (Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties) meant, but during that summer camp with the Missionaries of Charity I met a number of children who manifested social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, were living in poverty, and in a number of ways were being excluded from society.

I got to know about Torey Hayden and her books as a student teacher, while working on a report on *One Child* (Hayden, 2004). After I read this particular story, I went through the other stories about her experiences with different children whom she had taught, and how she helped them in their own individual ways. One Saturday evening, my boyfriend brought a film called *Freedom Writers* (DeVito et al., 2007). This film is about a newly-appointed teacher, Erin Gruwell, who radically changed the lives of her adolescent students through her teaching. One of the methods she used was journal writing, as she encouraged her students to write about the experiences that they were

going through in their diary. She established a set of guidelines that required each of her students to write something every day. The journal was not to be graded, but Gruwell would leave one closet open during lessons, allowing those students who wished her to read their diary entries to place their diaries inside. In 1999, the *Freedom Writers' Diary* (Gruwell, 2006) was published, and when I bought a copy of it around four years ago, I was immediately hooked and read the whole book in just three days. Another woman who recently became an inspiration for me is Malala Yousafzai, who was ready to fight for the rights of girls' education rather than be silenced.

In the top right part of the coat of arms, I wrote words about what makes me unique as a person and as an individual. During the Coat of Arms activity, I would also ask the children to write words that described what made them unique. At times, I observed that the children seemed stuck in this part of the activity. This might have been caused by the negative experiences these children might have gone through in life. I wrote words like *caring, kind, positive, unique* and *panic station*. I feel that I am a caring person and try to be kind towards the people I meet. I also try to be positive, especially at work and at home, as I feel that if I share positive energy with other people, I am able to put forward the message that being helpful contributes to greater success in one's actions. I also feel that I am unique in my own way. I often try to go against the current trend as I want to be a special person. I also tend to panic when I am under stress, and I feel that my body visibly indicates when I am anxious.

The right bottom section of the coat of arms reveals my hobbies and what I like to do. Here I put a picture of a ball, since I enjoy football. I also placed an image of a swimmer, since when I was young I used to practise this sport, which I was very good at. I also put a picture of a violin – an instrument I used to play when I was younger – and music. I stopped playing it a few years ago; recently however, I began to consider the idea of taking up violin lessons again in my free time. I also featured books to represent my love of reading. Whenever I am immersed in reading, I feel that I become part of the story. I also put a picture of different hand crafts as I also like doing different hand craft projects.

The bottom left of the coat of arms is more applicable to children and young people who tend to dream more about their future and what they wish to become in their future lives. However, I feel that a person needs to continue dreaming and working hard to pursue those dreams all their life. My dreams consist of both personal and professional ones. I dream that very soon I will start my own family. I wish to continue to support and help children through my profession. I also dream of finishing my doctorate, and that through my research I can become an advocate for children, especially those whose voices are unheard within the education system. The last section of the coat of arms requires a personal life motto. My motto is taken from two of my favourite songs: *I believe in You* by Il Divo (Elofsson et al., 2006) and *Lead with your Heart* by The Tenors (Skarbek, 2013), and reads *Follow your heart, lead with your heart, and let your love lead through the darkness*. I feel that this is especially important to me since I often tend to and feel the need to lead with my heart and with my love in trying to help others who might be going through challenges in their lives.

Bignold & Su (2013, p. 402) ask: “What is the researcher interested in within the object of his/her research?”, which question will then influence whether the researcher takes the role of narrator or whether he assigns it to the research participant. Whilst acknowledging that in society there are positions of inequality, Zamudio et al. (2009, p. 461) claim that a researcher’s positionality requires a degree of clarity that can potentially be transformed into critical knowledge and understanding of social formations. In my research, I was interested in the lived experiences of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and in the educators who support them. I was also concerned with giving these children a voice which at times might have been unheard. I also assumed the role of narrator and co-participant in this research.

1.3 My Motivation for Doing this Research

I believe that research necessitates inspiration and passion. As an educator, I am passionate about my work with children with SEBD who, as research suggests, are the

most excluded children in schools. My motivation for this research is an event that occurred in a school where I happened to be teaching some years back. For anonymity and confidentiality purposes, circumstances will be changed; and the event occurrences, the people concerned, and circumstantial facts have been changed. This story is about Samuel, a nine-year-old boy who used to attend the nurture group I used to teach in, and who has built a very good relationship with me since. In one particular year, Samuel was placed in a class where he was continuously causing his teacher and his learning support assistant a lot of trouble.

His teacher did not include him in class, and punished him mostly by not allowing him to play with his peers during break time. His learning support assistant saw Samuel as a challenging boy, and did not make an effort to at least get to know him. The boy spent most of the first month-and-a-half running out of class, running around the school, throwing tantrums, and at times coming to the nurture group to speak to me or my colleague. Many educators in the school were tired of the boy's behaviour. Samuel also hated it when people used to come to the nurture group and speak to us – the nurture group team – about him in his presence. One thing that he really enjoyed was writing and drawing in his nurture group journal. There were times when Samuel seemed not to want to talk to anyone, especially when his emotions were boiling up, but he was able to express himself by writing and/or drawing in his journal. He lost all his friends in the classroom because all the other children were afraid of him. Basically Samuel was labelled as a challenging boy, and very few professionals at school saw him as a child or a child. Most of the adults in the school wanted the boy to be expelled, and so did his classmates.

Then many people started to blame Samuel's family background. This boy lived in a small house together with his young mother who had him when she was still a teenager. He did not know who his father was. So many people at school wanted to blame something or someone for Samuel's behaviour, and this at times shifted onto Samuel's family. By the end of the second month of the scholastic year, Samuel had already been suspended from school twice, and as a result arrangements were made for him to be

transferred to a SEBD special school. When I expressed my thoughts that what Samuel needed was someone he could speak to, many professionals contested me, claiming that what Samuel was doing occurred out of pure disrespect for the school. They even went as far as to state that Samuel knew what he was doing, and that I would always side with the children no matter what.

The last straw came one Friday afternoon, when Samuel had a session with the nurture group. During these sessions he was never defiant, participated during the session, and always worked with and helped other children. It was soon break time and Samuel asked me if he could take a ball to spend ten minutes in the yard playing football after his break. I allowed him to do so and explained that he should then come back to class and take his things to his classroom. Samuel went out in the yard and after about two minutes, I heard someone screaming. I went out of my classroom and saw Samuel crying in front of an audience of five educators, who were all shouting at him. An assistant head of school came and told him that his mother was soon coming to pick him up. Samuel was defiant and said that he had a right to stay at school.

Then he ran towards the school toilets and locked himself in. I went after Samuel and told him that I was the only person there. I asked him what had happened. Samuel said that two educators had grabbed him by the neck and took the ball from his hands. Then he told me that he was excluded from school without even being given the chance to give his version of events. I asked Samuel to calm down, after which he got out of the toilet and came with me to class. As he was calming himself down, two members of staff came to the nurture group to shout at Samuel and blame me and my colleague for siding with Samuel. When the boy's mother came for him, Samuel kept saying that "Some people do not know what happened. They did not listen to me. It was only they (pointing a finger at my colleague and myself) who listened to me." Samuel was sent to a SEBD special school the following Monday, and he was never given a chance to speak about what had really happened.

1.4 Synthesis of the Thesis

In the above sections, my positionality and motivation for doing this research were made explicit. In the next chapter, which is the literature review chapter, I will be defining SEBD (social, emotional, behavioural difficulties) and discuss those definitions I best support. I will be discussing the inclusion of children who exhibit SEBD and also the need to give these children a voice. I will then proceed to present interventions that enhance the voice of children with SEBD which are also backed up by theory. I will also be presenting four theoretical frameworks that are going to support my research. By the end of review of literature chapter, the research questions that are at the core of my research will be presented. The methodology chapter will describe the methodology chosen, the research methods and research tools adopted, the setting in which the study took place, and most importantly the participants of the study. The ethical considerations that have been taken in order to carry out this study will also be discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter, which I consider closest to my heart, I will present six narratives by six children and the conversations they had with me and a colleague of mine regarding their journal writings and drawings. Chapter 5 will discuss these six narratives vis-à-vis the research questions asked in Chapter 2. This will be followed by the final section of my thesis, where a summary of my research will be followed with my conclusion, recommendations and limitations.

Before proceeding to the next chapter of this thesis, I would also like to inform, you, the reader of my work about how I made use of language throughout my writing. Firstly in the beginning of each chapter I used the idea of a room as a metaphor for formulating the different processes that occurred to me whilst I was writing this thesis. Also when you are reading my work you might observe that at times I am speaking about a theory, frameworks or definitions, I might move on to write about one of my experiences and link that incident to a particular theoretical framework. I did this because for me my practice is central and important. For me relating experiences and linking them to theory was a way of making sense of my work to then communicate it to others. I do not wish that my work be reduced to its description and relation to the theory I drew upon but rather it is presented in this way so as to illustrate the complexity of using

relationships to have a therapeutic effect upon young people while working in an educational context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

From *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

2.1 Introduction

Just like in the quotation above, upon starting this chapter I had many questions and uncertainties about where my research was heading. Again I am going to invite you, the reader, to re-visit the room I described in the previous chapter and have a better picture of how I worked on the dilemmas I had, and the choices and selections that I made. In the room, I am going to ask you to focus on a shelf filled with books and journal articles. Looking at all those journal articles and books was a trying time for me, as they were all in some way linked to what I wanted to write in my thesis. All the works seemed to have had an impact on me and as I started to read, I felt as if I was never going to be able to finish reading them, have time to reflect and start writing. In this room there was also a table upon which were a pencil, a highlighter pen and sticky notes.

I started selecting the articles, books, studies and reviews that would make it to the pages of my thesis. On the table there were also some blank sheets of paper and a laptop that helped me during this particular stage of my thesis write-up. It was on these blank sheets of papers that I drew mind maps to explore and discuss topics related to my research interests, namely the child’s voice, the development and definitions of the term *Social, Emotional, Behaviour Difficulties* (SEBD), the inclusion of children with SEBD, the Nurture Approach and the theoretical frameworks underpinning it, and activities that enhance voice in children. As I finished this part of my research, I held a clearer picture of where I wanted my research to go. Towards the end of this chapter, I will proceed to ask three research questions that guided me through this research journey.

2.2 Giving a Voice to the Child

Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011, p. 6 & p. 71) claim that childhood is a social construction, and that development refers to the process by which an organism grows and changes through its lifespan. In humans, they maintain, the most crucial developmental changes occur in prenatal development, infancy and childhood, as the new born develops into a young adult capable of becoming a parent. Holliday et al. (2009), Sellman (2009), and Lambert and Glacken (2011) point out that Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children states that listening to children is a legal duty, and that children should express their views rather than be passive observers. Meehan (2015, p. 389) states that children can communicate in many ways, and mentions three possible methods through which children can express themselves: talking, drawing and/or creating artefacts.

McKay-Jackson (2014, p. 293) believes that initiatives to promote the student's voice should be more than just planning school dances and fundraisers. Many people across the world are concerned about 'pupil voice' and there have been attempts to 'voice' pupils through different research studies (Leach & Lewis, 2013, p. 51). Syrnyk (2014, p. 157) puts forward the following questions: "What do we know of the younger pupil's voice, particularly of those who are experiencing the nurture approach?" and "How can we effectively hear the voice of these young children?" Flynn (2014, p. 162) deems that by listening to the pupils' expert insights on their own experiences, teachers and researchers may be in a better position to provide appropriate pedagogical and social awareness of the learning experiences of children with SEBD.

With regard to pupil voice, Billington (2006, p. 8) articulates five questions that critically evaluate educators' and researchers' work with children:

- How do we speak of children?
- How do we speak with children?
- How do we write of children?
- How do we listen to children?

- How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children)?

These questions are crucial when speaking about the child's voice as they provide practitioners with guidelines on how to reflect on their practice and give a voice to children whose voices are unheard within the educational system.

Students experiencing SEBD have expressed and continue to express their voice in ways which present a challenge to daily management and teaching (Sellman, 2009, p. 35). Flynn (2014, p. 168) observes that children who were silenced on important issues in their lives feel that their voice has little impact, and that it is difficult to convince a young person that their voice can make an important contribution. McKay-Jackson (2014, p. 293) states that social and emotional learning instruction empowers and promotes students' voices, and is a method that engages young people in participatory decision-making and experiential learning. Sellman (2009, pp. 34-35) argues that students who exhibit signs of SEBD should be listened to, as teaching and learning are transactional processes and children who present with SEBD might provide challenging messages about what constitutes effective teaching.

In a study by Flynn (2014, p. 173), it was concluded that the students who had participated in the study and who had been given a number of negative labels were responsible for positively affecting changes in attitudes towards themselves. The researcher suggests that a student voice approach to supporting young people is important for the development of an inclusive learning environment for the benefit of all students. In a study on pupil voice carried out by Sellman (2009, p. 42), it was noted by the participants that they connected 'voice' with physical power rather than with articulation. Layard & Dunn (2009) note from their study conducted among children that when these were asked about what mattered to them, they mentioned family, friends, a positive lifestyle, solid values, good schools, good mental health and access to help.

In Meehan's study (2015, pp. 392-393) on what matters to children, through the words and works of the children, five themes emerged. These were emotions, children's worlds, health, safety and learning. Sargeant (2014, p. 195) asked a number of students what factors hindered them from having a positive school experience. The participants noted a number of influences, namely distractions, teachers, school pressure, attitude, peer pressure, concentration, attention-seeking behaviours, home/family issues, bullying, personal issues, boredom and tiredness. In a study by Prunty, Dupont and McDaid (2012, p. 30) on the voices of children with special educational needs and their views on schooling, the following themes emerged: the support from educators and peers, friendships and bullying, and dual enrolment into educational settings.

In another study conducted by Syrnyk (2014, pp. 172-173), where drawing and interviews were used to view the perceptions of children who experienced SEBD, it was noted that the insights gained from asking the children to provide verbal and representational reflections on their experiences proved helpful to understand the children's external behaviours and their internal affective states. Ndofirepi and Cross (2015, p. 227) state that when children are given a voice, there is the creation of opportunities for the said children, and through that voice they will grow up into open-minded equipped citizens. If a child can be helped to think about experience as a process and not simply as content, they will remarkably enhance their problem-solving capabilities. This will allow them to put affective intensity into perspective and create a way to regulate and balance affective life through the verbalisation of experiences (Tuber, 2015, p. 289).

2.3 History of SEBD

A state education system, by definition, is created in the image of the society that it serves, even if this image is one which society itself abhors (Copper, 2010, p. 8). Schools have always been sites for the playing out of power dynamics, power discourses and disciplinary processes (Liasidou, 2016, p. 228). Traditional approaches to teaching always viewed the child's academic achievements as central (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p. 791), and this type of schooling in reading, writing and arithmetic alone will not fully

prepare students to lead with integrity, govern fairly, analyse problems, and work collectively with people different from themselves (McKay-Jackson, 2014, p. 293). Recent decades have marked a subtle shift in the focus of schooling, from a traditional type which focused on academic instruction to one that tries to educate the *whole child* through social and emotional learning (Brackett et al., 2012, p. 219).

Squires (2012, in Armstrong, 2014) states that the supra category of SEBD emerged in the UK within the 1990s, but had recognisable roots stretching back to the nineteenth century. O'Connor et al. (2011, p. 290) state that the concept of SEBD is by no means a new phenomenon, and quote a report that goes back to 1944 which describes pupils in a way that suggests that they show signs of SEBD. Cooper (2010, p. 8) puts forward that in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasis was being placed on exploring the power of the educational context to socially construct deviant identities among students from low socio-economic status backgrounds and vulnerable minority groups. Later on in 1978, a UK report known as the Warnock Report used the term *integration* for the first time (Pillay et al., 2013, p. 311).

On the other hand, in American education, social and emotional learning has emerged as a major thematic and programmatic emphasis since the early 1990s, as concerns over the vulnerability of children owing to various social and psychological problems and the potential roles of schools have helped fuel the growing popularity of efforts to help children (Hoffman, 2009, p. 533). Copper (2010, p. 9) states that SEBD is a construct that provides a useful metaphor for understanding the experience of marginalisation, helplessness and experiences of despair by people who find themselves cut off from the comforts and rewards that come with relative educational success, stable employment and forming part of an aspirational community. Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014, p. 38) observe that even though students attend the same school, go to the same premises, have the same teachers, follow the same lessons, and carry out the same tasks, they often do not share the same opinion about their school. They note that there are students who just like going to school, others who attend because they have to, and others who just hate it. Also since the 1990s, social emotional learning (SEL) has been

considered one of the missing links in academic education, since it integrates the relational skills needed to successfully manage life tasks (Mc-Kay Jackson, 2014, p. 293).

2.4 Defining SEBD

The term *SEBD* stands for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, and is considered to be “a broad term, open to many interpretations” (Macnab, Visser & Daniels, 2008, p. 241). Some practitioners view SEBD among pupils as a representation of a unique problem within the education system, with no other educational problem connected with such a level of frustration, fear, anger, guilt and blame (Cooper, 2010, p. 4). Hackett et al. (2010, p. 148) note that there continues to be a lack of clarity around the term. MacLeod (2010, p. 97) states that labels such as ‘disaffected’, ‘disengaged’, ‘disruptive’, ‘delinquent’, ‘challenging’, ‘troubled and troubling’ and disorders including ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD) all have a degree of overlap with SEBD in terms of external behaviour. While Macnab, Visser and Daniels (2008, p. 241) perceive that the term is mainly used “in the education services to refer to pupils’ difficulties in behaviour, emotions and relationships that are of such severity and persistence that they interfere with individual learning and development”, Cooper (2010, p. 6) suggests that “the term SEBD often ripples across the whole field of social policy, involving social welfare, mental health, criminal justice and educational issues.”

Some people often associate SEBD with only behavioural difficulties (MacLure et al., 2012, p. 448). However, Ewen & Topping (2012, p. 221) acknowledge that SEBD is more than just behavioural difficulties, stating that it is diverse in its nature and content. When speaking about the nature of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, according to Cooper (2008, p. 13; 2010, p. 4), SEBD is not only manifested in outwardly disruptive terms, but it can be also internalised. Brown Hajdukova, Hornby and Cushman (2014, p. 147) support Cooper’s view (2008, 2010) that externalising problems are manifested in outwardly disruptive terms whilst internalising problems are often a threat to an individual’s own safety and well-being. MacLure et al. (2012, p. 448) claim that “problem behaviour has been associated with poor impulse control,

motivation and concentration, the inability to cooperate and deficiencies in emotional literacy.”

Cooper (2008, p. 13) enlists signs that children with SEBD may experience, namely “conduct disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, emotional disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders, deliberate self-harm and/or suicidal behaviour and ASD.” Fovet (2011, p. 250) points out that when giving a definition of SEBD we need to be aware of the length of time during which social, emotional and behavioural difficulties manifest themselves. Visser, Daniels and Macnab (2005, p. 45) argue that there are children who exhibit SEBD “who are missing from the education system because they have chosen to ‘flight’ rather than ‘fight’ from their education, and these missing children have chosen not to engage with what is offered by society and education.” Brown Hajdukova, Hornby & Cushman’s (2016, p. 217) study on SEBD, victimisation and engagement in bullying behaviour notes that “students identified as having SEBD were at a higher risk of being bullied and are likely to experience an exacerbation of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties when they are involved in bullying as victims, perpetrators or both.”

When trying to define the term *SEBD*, Papantuano, Portelli and Gibson (2014, p. 59) point out that the term “*psychological difficulty* is not a linguistic choice but used deliberately to imply a function-oriented perspective towards solutions, and it contrasts with a category-oriented perspective pre-supposing *syndromes*, *disorders* and *diseases* as these diagnostic categories are a descriptive collection of signs and symptoms.” Mowat (2010a, p. 203) maintains that behaviour is “a social construct, embedded within culture, and what might be construed by one individual as unacceptable behaviour might be construed by another as perfectly acceptable; and behaviour which might be acceptable in one context might not be acceptable within another.” Fovet (2011) argues that SEBD is a reflection of the individual’s perception of the world and one’s place in it.

Mowat (2015, p. 154) states that it is very simplistic to locate the problem of SEBD as residing in inadequacies, either within the child or in parenting, without examining the

wider social and political context in which the child and family operate. MacLeod (2010, p. 96) describes SEBD as the study of behaviour of young people which causes adults concern. Building on MacLeod's definition, Armstrong (2014, p. 734) terms SEBD "the study of the behaviour of young people and children which causes adults concern." Moreover Papantuano, Portelli and Gibson (2014, p. 59) feel that there are as many realities of SEBD as there are people who perceive it, and they consider it impossible to discover the true nature of things.

Many articles that I have read usually mention the term *SEBD* in conjunction linked to children with SEBD. However, in this thesis, I will be referring to "children perceived as *having SEBD*", "children at risk of developing SEBD" (Mowat, 2012) and "children who exhibit and/or present with SEBD" (Armstrong, 2014). The choice of such phrases in my writing stems from my feeling that the term *children with SEBD* sees the difficulty within the child and views SEBD through the lens of the medical model of SEBD. I tend to agree with Fovet's (2011, p. 250) statement that SEBD does not encompass pathological disorders and psychiatric issues, but rather covers a spectrum of difficulties. Moreover, the phrases *children perceived as having SEBD*, *children at risk of developing SEBD*, and *children who exhibit and/or present with SEBD* place the difficulty beyond the child and upon the social constructs around SEBD.

Looking at these definitions of SEBD, I agree there are certain manifestations of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. I also feel that such difficulties are exhibited at a certain time and within a specific space. This thesis is also in full agreement with Mowat's (2010b) view of SEBD as a social construct, as well as with Fovet's (2011) account of an individual's perception of SEBD. MacLeod (2010) and Armstrong's (2014) definition of SEBD as "the behaviour of children and young people which causes adults concern" is also endorsed. From my professional experience, a child might present certain behaviours in a particular time and space, but whether this behaviour is augmented or diminished depends on the adult's understanding and responsiveness to that particular situation.

2.5 The Inclusion of Children who Exhibit SEBD

Inclusion refers to the process of maximum participation of all children, notwithstanding SEN, race, gender, religion and sexual orientation within the mainstream education placements. As a term *inclusion* is different from *integration*, with the first being an active participant in the learning process and the latter being set within the learning environment (Pillay et al., 2013, p. 312). Inclusion is embedded in a range of political, social, psychological and educational contexts (Prince & Hadwin, 2013, p. 250). Laluevein (2010, as cited in Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p. 785) states that inclusion is about the need of a whole school approach, rather than a mechanism for relocating children and young people in mainstream rather than special schools. Mowat (2015, p. 153) claims that many teachers tend to be ironic when mentioning the word *inclusion* with regard to children who exhibit SEBD.

According to Daniels (2006, p. 106), in order for inclusion to take place in schools there needs to be a change in the culture of schooling. Nel's (2013, as cited in Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p. 785) definition of inclusion entails that everyone in any community is respected, accommodated and valued. Visser, Daniels and Macnab (2005, p. 43) note that there are children who are just not engaged with education. Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014, p. 35) note that teachers do not know how to go about managing behavioural difficulties in their students, even though they might be experts in their field (for example, they are experts in teaching a particular subject). Moreover, they observe, most teachers claim that they feel disarmed and frustrated when they see that they cannot manage those students' behavioural, social or emotional difficulties which obstruct the learning process.

The challenge to the teacher, then, is to engage the child who presents with SEBD while minimising disruption and providing effective education to all the other students present in the classroom (Goodman & Burton, 2010, p. 224). Botha & Kourkoutas (2016, pp. 790-791) mention four factors that hinder the inclusion of children and young people with SEBD, which are:

- The development and implementation of intervention programmes are often ineffective because different professionals do not work collaboratively.
- The teacher might build negative stereotypes of children who exhibit SEBD.
- Ineffective teacher training in managing SEBD might occur.
- School practices are not informed by research findings.

Sellman (2009, p. 224) states that students who present with SEBD are less likely to experience democratic schooling in comparison to others, while Flynn (2014, p. 162) maintains that these children are often misunderstood within schools. Botha & Kourkutas (2016, p. 789) observe that children who present with SEBD are often alienated from friends, experience negative repercussions on their academic achievement, are subjected to exclusionary practices which often infringe on their rights, are prone to develop various psychological symptoms, struggle to establish and maintain effective relationships, and are vulnerable to exclusion, isolation and rejection as a result of their behaviour. Sergeant (2014, p. 192) remarks that the exclusion of the student voice is critically exemplified in issues relating to behaviour management.

Adults cannot repeatedly keep telling children to “calm down” or “pay attention” without providing them with practical guidelines on how to do so (Lantieri, 2012, p. 30). Meehan (2015, p. 392) stresses that not only is it important to ensure that every child matters, but it is also essential that institutions get to know about things that matter to children. Without the appropriate assessment, students who exhibit SEBD are unlikely to be assigned appropriate provision. This unavoidably leaves classroom teachers unsupported, creating a scenario in which teachers are under pressure to focus the majority of their attention on minimising disruption (Goodman & Burton, 2010, p. 235). Papantuono, Portelli & Gibson (2014, p. 51) state that teachers often find themselves trapped in rigid complementary¹ or symmetrical², non-productive patterns of relationships with their students, which they find difficult to break free from.

¹ focusing on the differences in the relationship between the teacher and the student

² which emphasise the minimisation of differences, and through which the partners in a communicative situation tend to mirror one another’s behaviours leading to a sort of tug of war

O'Connor et al. (2011, p. 290) note teachers' tendencies to attach labels to pupils who present with challenging behaviour based on their notions of sensibility. In Cooper's (2010, p. 11) study, teachers point out that students who present with SEBD are the most difficult to accommodate in mainstream schools because of their impact on the wider community of students. Tellis-James & Fox (2016) note that such students' positive and trusting relationships with educators, learning opportunities related to their future, positive role models, family support, strengths in self, and a sense of agency were a number of things that helped children with SEBD overcome challenges in their lives. However, in a study carried out by Sellman (2009, pp. 42-43), the participants of the study – who were students who exhibited SEBD – put forward the notion they had learned that overt challenging behaviour results in the power to distract or subvert a classroom environment, but ultimately leads to rejection and exclusion by adults.

In a small-scale study by Goodman & Burton (2010, p. 234) about a teacher's views on the inclusion of children who exhibited SEBD, it resulted that in spite of the former's lack of training, through a combination of creativity, trial and error, and commitment to teaching, the teacher found ways to engage with these students. D'Souza & Jament (2015, pp. 245-246) agree with Goodman & Burton (2010) that good classroom management; motivational skills; good listening, social and communication skills; sensitising children to the awareness of how to avoid confrontation and be kind and understanding towards other students; as well as reinforcing and modelling positive behaviour are all strategies which assist in the inclusion of children who present with SEBD.

From my own experiences, I feel that at times teachers tend to feel trapped when faced with children who present with SEBD. There might be a lack of training and, owing to the vast curriculum, teachers have to keep up with academic educational standards while simultaneously trying to find ways to juggle academic work and social emotional learning. The next part of this chapter will regard nurture groups. There have been debates on whether nurture groups are a means of inclusion or a method of child segregation. I feel that the answer to this question depends on how the nurture group is

regarded within the educational setting, as well as on how the people (educators, parents and children) perceive the nurture group to be.

2.6 Nurture Groups: Nurturing Children to Reach Their Potential

Nurture groups are one of the options head teachers can consider in supporting pupils who experience social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014, p. 2). The nurture group is a special class that runs within a mainstream school and is generally intended for children whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion (Syrnyk, 2012, p. 147). A nurture group is a specific intervention for children who exhibit SEBD, and was developed for children who were disruptive or withdrawn, experienced difficulties relating to concentration, and/or struggled to make and maintain relationships (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014, pp. 2-3). Nurture groups were first introduced in London, England by Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s to help children in the early stages of primary school to improve developmentally inappropriate behaviours (Scott & Lee, 2009, p. 5).

Marjorie Boxall established nurture groups as she noted that a number of children had not been exposed to important formative experiences of early childhood, which she felt were crucial in developing the skills to meet the demands of school (Garner & Thomas, 2011, p. 208). Billington (2012, p. 319) acknowledges that there are over 1000 nurture groups in the UK, with Couture, Cooper and Royer (2011, p. 20) observing that nurture groups gained popularity in countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Malta in recent years. Nurture groups were specifically conceived as an alternative intervention for young children who were exhibiting a range of complex social and emotional – and in particular attachment – difficulties (Billington, 2012, p. 319).

There are two types of nurture group models: the class nurture group and the part-time nurture group. A 'classic' nurture group operates for nine out of ten half-day sessions while a part-time nurture group operates on a part-time basis, with pupils spending more time in the mainstream classroom (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, pp. 66-68). A nurture

group is staffed by a teacher and a teacher assistant (in Malta, the teacher assistant is known as a learning support assistant) (Couture, Cooper & Royer, 2011, p. 20). These two adults should offer a safe base to the children, which should enable the latter to rewrite their lives (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014, p. 3). Billington (2012, p. 320) states that the staff in nurture groups are encouraged to accord the lives and experiences of the children who are supported by a nurture group and the more usual focus on cognitive approaches to learning shifts towards a sensitivity to their emotional lives.

Kourmoulaki (2013, pp. 66-67) is in agreement with Hughes and Schlösser (2014) and Billington (2012) on the fact that nurture group teams “were at the heart of the groups; on the emotional level they were consistently there for young people, were attentive and tuned in to the students’ needs, and encouraged them to seek help and resolve situations in an assertive manner.” Before a child can start attending a nurture group, two measures – the Boxall Profile and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, or SDQ – are scored to reflect the individual concerned (Garner & Thomas, 2011, p. 207; Couture, Cooper & Royer, 2011, p. 22; Cefai et al. 2011, p. 6). The Boxall Profile and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire have similarities as they indicate whether a particular child is exhibiting SEBD (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014, p. 13), and both scores measure comparable features in children in a quantitative manner (Couture, Cooper & Royer, 2011, p. 28). Also, the educators that run the nurture group carry out observations on the child in different scenarios, mainly the classroom and the school yard, at different times during their school day. This process serves to gather qualitative information on the child rather than just quantitative data.

Hughes & Schlösser (2014, p. 3) argue that nurture groups provide a structured intervention involving curriculum-based tasks, social learning and emotional literacy activities, opportunities for play, and the possibility to interact with an adult as well as the other children. Upon asking a number of children about their views on nurture groups, Shaver & McClatchey (2013, p. 100) note that within this educational setting, “they take part in activities related to the nurture group ethos and they attended a nurture group for a variety of reasons namely social, emotional and behaviour

difficulties such as to help with confidence or bullying and to improve behaviour". When reviewing the effectiveness of nurture groups through a systematic review of literature, Hughes and Schlösser (2014, p. 14 & p. 22) maintain that the introduction of nurture groups in a school has a number of benefits. The teachers become more nurturing, and those children benefiting from the nurture group provision become more secure and get along better with their peers, thus concluding that nurture groups are an effective intervention in improving the emotional well-being of children who exhibit SEBD.

According to Kourmoulaki (2013, p. 61), nurture groups promote and develop the young people's self-awareness and social skills, self-confidence, self-regulation, social and emotional learning and self-awareness, whilst at the same time there is a decrease in peer and behaviour difficulties and an increase in pro-social behaviours. In a narrative study by Billington (2012, p. 328), the educator participants in the study felt that by working in a nurture group, they had more time and space to talk with and listen to the children, as well as more opportunities to get to know the parents and work with them. The educators were very motivated in their work, having built a positive ethos and a positive relationship with the rest of the mainstream staff. Syrnyk's (2012, p. 148) study with nurture group educators suggests that these viewed themselves as a vehicle for positive change, and that the nurture groups provided the pupils with the opportunities and tools required to fulfil their academic potential.

Billington (2012, p. 239) probes the participants of his study on the relationship between the educators working in the nurture group and other educators. Here it is suggested that the participants in the study believed that the kinds of relationships they are able to develop with the children and their parents can be fundamentally different from those which they perceive to be possible outside the nurture group. When writing about teachers who participated in her study, Syrnyk (2012, p. 149) identifies a number of qualities and characteristics that nurture group educators tend to exhibit. These include inner strengths, calmness, empathetic nature, self-awareness, objectivity, and the ability to maintain a relaxed and reasoned demeanour, to attune to the internal states of others, and to be an effective manager of their own states. Garner and Thomas

(2011, p. 209) note that nurture groups can have a significant positive impact on a child who presents with SEBD.

I have worked in a nurture group for five years, and have also been assigned the role of supporting nurture group educators as part of my duties as an Education Officer. My experience indicates that, with the nurture class being different from the other classes within the educational setting, it can help children who present with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in socio-emotional learning. Moreover, through this educational setting, children are being offered a place where they are able to voice concerns. The school classroom context does not allow them to do so because of situations such as larger groups of children, a vast syllabus and lack of discussions. It also appears that children tend to become attached to the educators in the nurture group. This bond can be very beneficial for instilling a positive change in the child, and aligns with Syrnyk's (2012) observation that nurture group educators see themselves as vehicles for positive change.

2.6.1 Nurture Groups: Theoretical Frameworks

Historically, there are five main psychological 'families' of approaches to understanding, preventing and intervening in SEBD, these being psychodynamic, humanistic, behaviourist, cognitive and systemic (Cefai & Cooper, 2013, p. 87). The upcoming sections in this literature review will cover a number of theoretical frameworks that stem from some of the approaches mentioned above, and which underpin the nurture group setting –specifically Bronfenbrenner's systems theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Bowlby's attachment theory and Fonagy's mentalisation. In my thesis I chose to speak about four theoretical frameworks. My inclusion of these four frameworks is due to my belief that there is no one theoretical framework that truly captures one child's development. I chose to include four theoretical frameworks that are related to the child's social experiences that mention the child's needs both intrinsic and extrinsic as well as observing the trusting relationships between teacher and child. It is my emergent understanding that these relationships can bring about a holistic picture of the child whilst as the educator is potentially positioned to listen and understand the

unheard voice of the child. I feel that these theories are important when discussing nurture groups and are relevant to my research, as they point out different ways of understanding the external and internal world of the child. After the chapter will go on to describe a number of interventions made in my role as nurture group teacher with the aim of enhancing the voice of the children attending the nurture group.

2.6.1.1 Nurture Groups and Systems Theory

A theoretical framework that I feel is crucial when speaking about nurture groups is Bronfenbrenner's system or ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of studying the child's behaviour within a context or environment (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011, p. 10). This ecological framework describes systems that influence the child's development and functioning in both direct and indirect manners (Romano et al., 2015, p. 420). According to Bronfenbrenner's perspective, individuals develop within multiple interacting systems and these systems shape the child's developmental processes (Merril & Fivush, 2016, p. 74). This theory stems from the systemic approaches that focus on the ways in which an individual's functioning can be understood as a function of the social systems in which they are embedded (Cefai & Cooper, 2013, p. 87).

Leonard (2011, p. 990) states that Bronfenbrenner proposed that the developing child is surrounded by layers of relationships like a set of nested Russian dolls, and that these layers form the microsystem (each setting in which the child has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people such as parents, friends and teachers), the mesosystem (the cross-relationships between these small settings), the exosystem (the outer circle of people who are indirectly involved in the child's development), the macrosystem (the prevailing cultural and economic conditions of the society) and the chronosystem (reminding the reader that this system of nested relationships is situated in time, and shifts accordingly). According to Rowe, Zimmer-Gemback & Hood (2016, p. 219) Bronfenbrenner's framework acknowledges that individual factors of the child, environmental influences, neighbourhood, and beliefs and values of society are

influential in the development of the child and in how that child reacts to different settings they happen to be in.

Bronfenbrenner's systems theory is often conceptualised through the use of the following diagram as cited in Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011, p. 11):

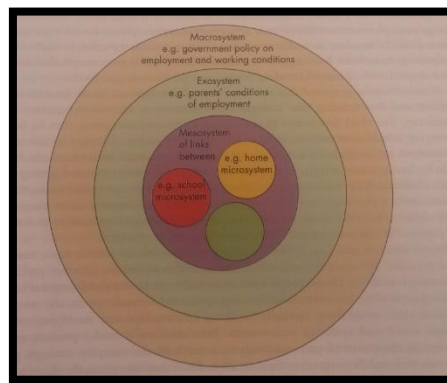


Diagram 1: Diagram illustrating Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory

Darling (2007, p. 204) explains that the centre of diagram encompasses a series of concentric circles representing microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. O'Riordan (2015, p. 417) identifies the important factors in systems theory as being the process, the person, the context and time. Keegan Eamon (2001, p. 257) states that Bronfenbrenner conceptualises the context in which human development occurs as a set of "nested structures", with the developmental outcomes being influenced by interactions within microsystems. As developing individuals interact with their environment, they receive feedback that informs their self-views; and this information helps them determine how to change to make themselves the people they want to be (Merrill & Fivush, 2016, p. 77).

Bronfenbrenner asserts that "the supportive links between systems around the child determine the extent to which the child is able to fulfil his potential; however, if schools do not reflect the contexts in which children are situated this may lead to isolation from the child's context" (Garner & Thomas, 2011, p. 221). Daniels (2006, p. 107) describes how Bronfenbrenner sees the culture of a school as something which is shaped and

made by the persons within that same educational establishment. Bronfenbrenner's later work is seen by Darling (2007, p. 205) to focus on the social and historical context and the active person, deeming it impossible to understand the individual developmental processes in isolation.

Hart (2013, p. 199) observes that when discussing systems theory, Bronfenbrenner suggests that this theory may help shed light on why some children display resilient behaviours when faced with adversity and why others may not. This is due to the fact that, as stated by Darling (2007, p. 204), ecological systems theory is presented as a theory of human development in which everything is seen as interrelated and where our knowledge of development is bounded by context, culture and history. Botha & Kourkoutas (2016, p. 790) regard systems theory as an influential approach in the inclusion of children who present with SEBD since it focuses on the interplay between different interacting systems and embraces the individual, family, community and society, through which processes it promotes an inclusive culture and ethos in schools. Romano et al. (2015) note that a school can offer some form of stability and continuity for children while professionals inside the institution can serve as role models and supportive figures.

2.6.1.2 Nurture Groups and the Hierarchy of Needs

It has long been discussed that children who are content at school are less likely to experience subsequent mental health issues or involvement in health risk behaviours, and are more likely to have positive educational outcomes (Prince & Hadwin, 2013, p. 239). In 1943, Abraham Maslow discussed the hierarchy of needs, which provides a helpful way of conceptualising people's needs (Solomon & Thomas, 2011, p. 45). Maslow put forward a theory of human motivation which suggests that all human beings have five basic needs that can be arranged on a hierarchy according to their importance of human survival, from the lowest level (essential for human survival) to the highest level of needs (which encapsulates the psychological desire to be ultimately happy) (Prince & Hadwin, 2013, p. 241). Through this conceptual framework, Abraham Maslow notes that basic needs such as food, shelter and care have to be met in order for

higher order needs to be present and to motivate the person (Garner & Thomas, 2011, p. 209).

Cooper and Whitebread (2007, p. 172) maintain that nurture groups establish a nurturing environment that helps children meet their basic needs in ways that are attuned with the needs of others. Such needs are physiological in nature, such as hunger that could be satisfied by the provision of breakfast. Cefai & Cooper (2011, p. 66) establish that according to Maslow, “children can only achieve self-reliance, autonomy, self-esteem and other higher needs once their basic physical and emotional needs have been adequately addressed.” In a study by Garner and Thomas (2011, p. 216), it was noted that a core element of the nurture group intervention was the provision of security through a secure base and safe haven which helped the children cope inside and outside of school. The figure below presents Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs as cited in McLeod (2007):

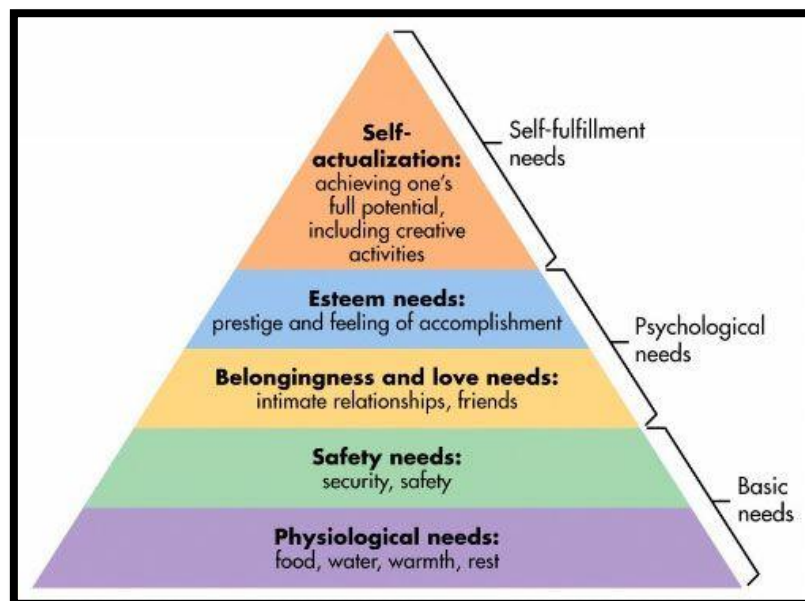


Diagram 2: Diagram labelling Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Another link between the nurture group and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is owing to the fact that when children are benefiting from nurture group support, there is a sense of belonging within that nurture group that can be defined as the extent to which

individuals feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in a social setting (Prince & Hadwin, 2013, p. 238). In relation to this sense of belonging, Garner and Thomas (2011, p. 216) state that in their study, the participant children reported that they could gain access to the nurture group as and when needed. In Main and Whatman's (2016, p. 1822) study on how to capture the children's voices, the participants noted that they felt and embraced a sense of self-control – one of the key issues explored by the said researchers. This led them to suggest that higher order needs are important for learning to take place at school.

2.6.1.3 Nurture Groups and Attachment Theory

Another theory which is often associated with the relationship of the nurture group team and their relationship with children who experience the nurture approach is attachment theory. This theory originated from the work of John Bowlby in 1969, and became highly influential in developmental psychology, clinical psychology and social work practice – but not in psychoanalysis, despite Bowlby's own status as a psychoanalyst (Frosh, 2012, p. 118). The theory was developed as a result of Bowlby's work with young people (Cooke et al., 2008, p. 292), and it is linked to the psychodynamic approaches that focus on the ways in which early interpersonal relationships influence personality development and social-emotional engagement with others (Cefai & Cooper, 2013, p. 86). Attachment is assumed to be an innate propensity arising from the evolutionary process for humans to seek closeness to others, in response to the dangers of the external world and the resulting need for protection (Frosh, 2012, p. 118).

Bowlby described attachment as the quality of an individual's bonding tie to a caregiver (Solomon & Thomas, 2011, p. 53). According to Bowlby, at the beginning of life the infant experiences the family system in their relationship with the primary caregiver; and it is this internal biological drive to attach to the caregiver which allows the infant to elicit responses from the caregiver that are essential for the infant's own needs (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 166). Attachment theory seeks to explain individual differences in social, behaviour and emotional development in terms of the security of early

relationships (Prince & Hadwin, 2013, p. 242). The attachment theory notes that infants seek proximity to their caregivers: for example, babies cry to elicit a reaction from their caregiver – one that would be necessary to ensure the infant’s survival (Frosh, 2012, p. 118).

Bowlby’s work was operationalised by Mary Ainsworth in a series of experiments, where she set up a room for mother and infant with some play activities and identified four types of attachment: secure attachment, ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment and disorganised attachment (Cooke et al., 2008, p. 292). Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011, p. 127) report that one thing that attachment theory is criticised for is that it places a lot of emphasis on the mother; and whilst it is true that 1- and 2-year olds tend to form strong attachments with a few persons, characterised by proximity seeking and separation protest, bonds can be formed later. Frosh (2012, p. 118) states that attachment theory takes the social orientation of the human subject as a given, and argues that the infant is ‘hardwired’ to pursue social connection as fully as possible. Attachment has become a life-span construct, with corresponding attempts to measure it at different developmental stages.

Attachment relationships become less dependent on physical proximity and overt behaviour, and more dependent on abstract qualities of the relationship such as affection, trust and approval, which are internalised in the child and in the adult (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011, p. 118). Margenat et al. (2016, p. 26) note that what is crucial in attachment patterns is not the kind of attachment established between the parents and the child, but rather the emergence of a dynamic perspective which is open to change and positive interaction qualities. Through early experiences, Bowlby claims, we develop an internal working model (Solomon & Thomas, 2011, p. 53) that is, as Garner and Thomas (2011, p. 208) state, “the child’s mental representations of themselves in relation to their caregiver.”

According to Bowlby, for children with disrupted or insecure attachment patterns and experiences, education can have the potential to be the first to offer them the

opportunity to have a repeated experience of a “secure base” (Solomon & Thomas, 2011, p. 50). Although I tend to agree with Solomon and Thomas (2011), I do not think that all educators offer this sense of security to children. It is of utmost importance for nurture group educators to offer a sense of security to the children that attend the nurture group. Meyer et al. (2013, p. 166) believe that a crucial part of attachment is attunement, whereby the caregiver’s responses to certain emotions become the way in which the child creates personal connections and understands which expressions are allowed and are shareable. Nurture group educators need to develop this attunement in order to support and be receptive to the children and their needs.

2.6.1.4 Nurture Groups and Mentalisation

There are a number of researchers who were critical of attachment theory. For example, Fonagy and Target (2007, p. 411) and Frosh (2012, p. 120) declare that “this theory focuses on observable behaviour rather than on drives and unconscious fantasy, and that it drastically reduces the explanatory power of psychoanalytic observations and misses the point of its theory.” Fonagy (2002, p. 27) determines that the child’s experience of the environment is what counts while Fonagy and Target (2007, p. 417) emphasise the need for an emergence of mental functions such as emotional regulation, the capacity for symbolisation and empathy. In this regard, Peter Fonagy came up with a theoretical framework known as mentalisation which is “a human psychological process, central to understanding and interpreting the behaviours and actions of ourselves and others” (Fonagy & Target, 1998, as cited in Warshaw, 2015, p. 211).

This process appears to be closely linked to the method of listening utilised in this research. Mentalisation addresses relational issues through developing on the child’s reflective capabilities that can impact the child’s experience of themselves and of others in the world (Conway, 2015, p. 283). The framework of mentalisation is defined by Fonagy (in Frosh, 2012, p. 123) as “a form of mostly preconscious imaginative mental activity, namely interpreting human behaviour in terms of intentional mental states (for example needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, goals, purposes and reasons).” According to Fonagy et al. (2005, as cited in Haymaker, 2015, p. 312), infants develop the capacity to

mentalise through the process of marked mirroring. The caretakers contain their infant's emotions by accurately reflecting the infant's expressed emotion (contingency) and by signalling to the infant, via facial expression and vocal tone and pattern, that they are expressing not their own but the infant's emotion (markedness). Thus, marked mirroring interactions give the infant a chance to externalise their emotions – including feelings of distress such as fear and anger – without negatively impacting their connection with the caregiver (Haymaker, 2015, p. 312).

Warshaw (2015, p. 212) describes that mentalisation emerges over the course of a child's development, and is best facilitated by healthy and supportive attachment relationships. Auchincloss & Samberg (2012, as cited in Hoffman, 2015, p. 271) state that “reflective functioning is the ability to understand the behaviour of others in terms of mental states such as beliefs, desires, feelings, and memories; the ability to reflect on one's own mental states; and the ability to understand that one's own states of mind may influence the behaviour of others.” Tuber (2015, p. 288) develops a link between mentalisation and play therapy, claiming that “if children are capable of play, they are often able to use the therapy space and the therapist to tell the story of their struggle to make sense of their triumphs and downfalls, loves and fears, angers and sadnesses and longings and anxieties.” Through this process, the course of reflective functioning emerges, which is defined as:

“the capacity to observe and think about mental states, in oneself and in others, in building realistic models of why people behave, think, and feel as they do and to give meaning to our own psychological experiences develops as a result of our discovery that minds typically operate behind human actions, and are influenced by actions of the other” (Steele, Murphy & Steele, 2015, p. 217).

Conway (2015, p. 285) perceives psychoanalysis to offer a useful context which helps the child to remember past experiences in the framework of a stable and empathic analytic relationship, and thereby to rebuild the capacity for mentalisation. I feel that educators who work in a nurture group also have this potential, as they too observe and discuss the children's experiences and are able, through empathy, to build trusting

relationships and restore the capacity to discover and offer support. Hoffman (2015, p. 263) notes that when using mentalisation-based therapy, it is important not to be drawn into countertransference. The therapist needs to follow the child's lead to be able to understand their motivation, or in order to try to communicate to the child the therapist's understanding of why the child is acting in that particular way. Therefore, when using mentalisation, the therapist needs to be aware to not ask leading questions and to regulate one's own emotions.

2.6.1.5 Nurture Groups: Linking Theory with Practice

In a study by Kourmoulaki (2013, p. 65), it is stated that nurture groups were used to ease transition in children, as well as to physically and emotionally prepare them to learn; and the classroom provided a safe refuge. With regard to Bronfenbrenner's systems theory, I feel that schools tend to be places where some children find it difficult to fit in. However, I also believe that a nurture group can establish links between home and school for the child. From my experiences both as a classroom and nurture group teacher, I tend to agree with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs because I believe that for a child to be ready to learn, they require that having certain needs met. A nurture group could provide certain needs for these children. Such experiences can give a sense of security: the child would know that they are in a safe place within the school. Another example would be the need for nutrition, which a nurture group, can provide through breakfast and lunch clubs, especially if the child is undernourished.

I also feel that a child within a small unit such as a nurture group, owing to a number of factors such as the size of the group and the character of the educators, a child can feel a sense of belonging. With regard to attachment theory, this study aligns with Frosh's (2012) statement that human beings want to seek closeness with others because of the dangers of the external world. In the context of a nurture group, children tend to seek closeness with their educators as sometimes they feel a lack of safety within different groups such as the classroom, during break and other groups outside of school. Frosh (2012)'s argument greatly relates to the story which motivated me to carry out this research, as narrated in the first chapter.

Samuel felt attached to the nurture group team because he felt safe, and his sense of security stemmed from the bond he had built with us. Samuel had built trust in my colleague and myself because he knew that we were not only available physically on school premises when he needed to talk, but that we sought to offer support and strategies for him to try and make the right choices. The only difference between my colleague and I and other educators was that we were differentiating between Samuel and his behaviour, while the others were seeing the behaviour before considering the child. Samuel, on the other hand, could sense and observe the way he was being treated by the nurture group team in contrast with the other educators' treatment. While he felt a sense of safety within the nurture group because of us, he did not feel the same in the presence of other educators.

With regard to Fonagy's mentalisation theory, this can work in a nurture group context through activities such as journaling. Such activities can help the children to open up more and speak about things which are implicit. Journaling is the first step to make these implicit things explicit. The following table summarises the links which this thesis makes between these four theoretical frameworks and nurture groups:

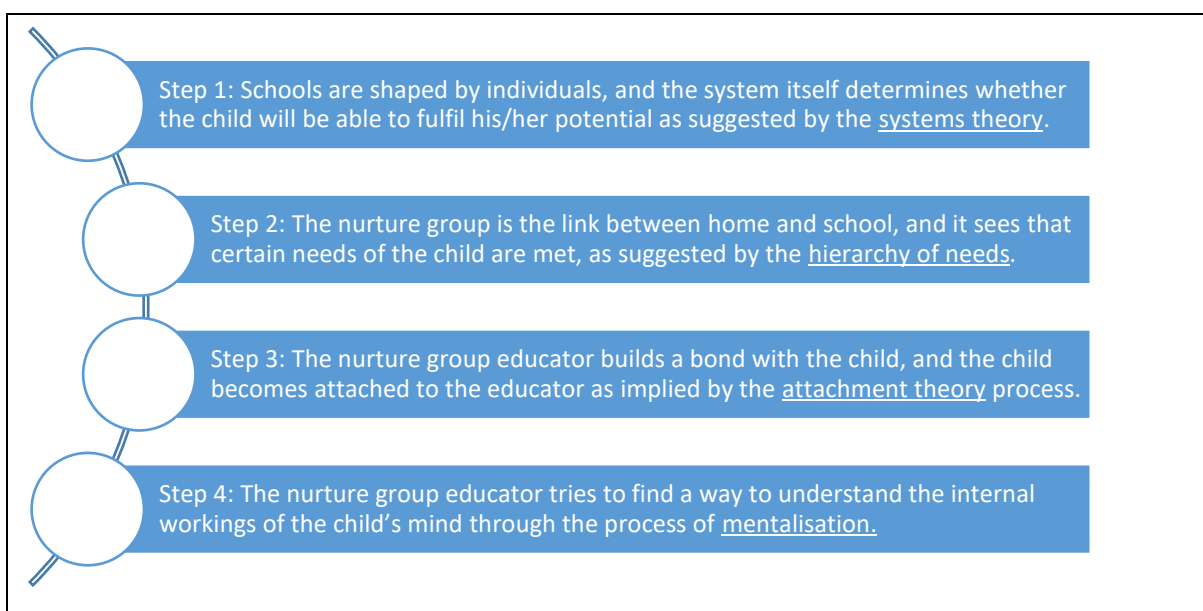


Table 1: Table summarising links between study and four theoretical frameworks

There are a number of links between schools, nurture groups and the relationships made between children and nurture group educators. Systems Theory suggests that social systems such as the school are key systems that have an important influence on regulating how a child functions. From my experiences as a nurture group teacher, I used to observe that many children who were referred to the nurture group had struggles within one or more of the social systems they were part of, for example at school they could not understand and follow certain school routines. Due to these difficulties, certain needs of these learners were not usually met. Since the needs at the bottom of the triangle, illustrated by Maslow (see page 28), were not met, the upper needs of that same triangle could not be met and that in itself could result in learners being unable to engage in their learning. In this study's context, children who lacked basic needs such as security, did not have friends and generally saw themselves in a negative way, were usually the ones who were referred to the nurture group.

The nurture group setting was constructed to provide children with the necessary experiences that they had missed out on, or not had enough of in their lives. A nurture group is different from a classroom as the latter caters for the learner's curricular needs whilst the former supports children in their social and emotional learning needs. Whilst I acknowledge that there are teachers who teach a mainstream classroom who have made it a goal for themselves to build a trusting bond with the children, the nurture group setting in itself and the activities within the nurture group make the bond easier to establish. One way of setting up this secure bond is for the nurture group educator to understand better what is going on in the child's mind and to make what is implicit and unknown to others, explicit and acknowledged to the educator, so that the latter can work on strategies to support the child in a better manner.

2.7 Activities that Enhance Social and Emotional Learning and Voice

To support children, I believe that teachers need to equip themselves to teach not only the curriculum, but the whole child. Conway (2015, p. 285) deems empathy as a

necessary intervention for children who have experienced trauma. Cheney et al. (2014, p. 412) believe that ensuring the emotional well-being of children and adolescents is a crucial aim for all involved in their care. A way of doing so is through the teaching and learning of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which is an area where educational research is particularly well placed to champion freedom, education and development for students at risk for example children who present with SEBD (Sheard, Ross & Cheung, 2013, p. 2). According to Zhai, Raver & Jones (2015, p. 42), SEL is the process of acquiring and effectively applying knowledge, attitudes and skills in five major areas of social-emotional competence, namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

As part of the nurture group programme, I would create activities that enhanced social and emotional learning through open discussions such as circle time, journaling, games and play, drawing and storytelling. In relation to SEL, this thesis is in agreement with Mowat's (2011, p. 227) claim that when doing an activity or programme of activities that enhance social and emotional learning, educators must ensure that such programmes are sufficient and effective if they are to bring about a lasting change in children. In the next sections, about the chapter will outline circle time, Drawing and Talking, and journaling – three activities which, in their own way, can give a voice to the child and enhance the child's social and emotional well-being.

2.7.1 Circle Time: Opening Up and Discussing in a Safe Circle

Circle time is an activity that is commonly carried out in nurture groups, and it is one of the most widely used universal interventions in the promotion of social and emotional learning in schools (Cefai et al., 2014, p. 116). The use of circle time has grown rapidly since the early 1990s, especially in primary schools (Pryce, 2007, p. 1). If one were to visit a nursery school on any day of the week, it would most probably be possible to observe groups of children from age three upwards forming a circle into which they will be invited to share their most personal experiences with the teacher, a teacher assistant and with one another (Leach & Lewis, 2013, p. 44). Circle time brings together teacher and children in an enjoyable atmosphere of cooperation (Bliss & Tetley, 2006, p. 1). It

also provides the ideal group listening system for enhancing children's self-esteem, promoting moral values, building a sense of team and developing social skills (Mosley, 2010, p.33).

Zaghlawan and Ostrosky (2011, p. 439& 442) describe "circle time as "a teacher-directed structured activity that usually lasts not more than 30 minutes and includes activities such as academic topics, conversations about the date, transition activity, discussion, reading a book, roll call, discussion, social emotional learning and songs." During circle time, teachers take a more facilitative role while students take a more active role in their learning, which becomes experiential through the use of games, role play, group work and physical activities (Cefai et al., 2014, p. 116). Pryce (2007, p. 10) views circle time as an ideal setting for carrying out activities, as it offers a supportive and nurturing environment where the children can readily explore issues that affect them, as well as making them feel special and respected.

Cefai et al. (2014, p. 125) states that in a study where circle time took place, the circle time session contributed to students' social and emotional learning and reduced social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Additionally, children showed less internalised problems and the session had an overall positive impact on the students' social and learning behaviours. As the other end of the spectrum, however, in a study on circle time by Zaghlawan and Ostrosky (2011, p. 445), it was noted that early childhood teachers usually devoted a portion of circle time to engage in conversation with children, with the result that these youngsters became restless and started exhibiting more challenging behaviours. Leach and Lewis (2013, p. 47 & 48) note that their findings suggest challenging behaviour from certain children during circle time, which offered the opportunity for these children felt safe to share their secrets with others.

I conducted circle time sessions as a mainstream school teacher and as a nurture group teacher. From my experience, I believe that circle time could be a tool for children to voice their concerns. I feel that since certain issues that happen in class are discussed within, certain difficulties can be tackled during circle time. In agreement with Cefai et

al. (2014), circle time could be a tool to enhance SEL and reduce any difficulties that may come up. I also think that certain personal issues – for example family conflict or loss of a family member – cannot be voiced during circle time. These are best discussed with the individual child rather than as a group. In conclusion, it would be better to use circle time as a discussion around certain topics such as feelings, self-esteem, good and bad choices rather than as an intervention to listen to individual children.

2.7.2 Journaling: Children's Voice through Writing and Drawing

Communication goes beyond the content of the message as it involves the relationship between the speaker and listener (Papantuono, Portelli & Gibson, 2014, p. 44). Tellis-James & Fox (2016, p. 10) observe that when children who present with SEBD are asked the right questions, they are able to identify a range of strengths and resources in themselves, their schools, their family and their community. Children have and tell stories, which they do in many different ways (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013, p. 81). Porter (2009, p. 357) states that drawing has an advantage over other types of visual methods as the attention focuses on thinking about a particular event of the child's choosing. Educators are all the time looking for ways to listen to the unheard voices of the child, and drawing could be a tool for doing so as children "are capable of developing well-articulated thoughts but they may not be able to say what they are thinking intelligibly or easily" (Holliday et al., 2009, p. 253). Coates and Coates (2006, p. 221) remark that the drawings of young children offer a freshness, boldness and a sense of purpose which adults might struggle to emulate.

A programme used in the UK to elicit the child's voice is Drawing and Talking. This programme is used with pupils of all ages to help with underlying emotional difficulties that may be affecting their learning and behaviour (Beagley, 2009, p. 28). Drawing and Talking is a twelve-week process for the child to express certain emotions and experiences that happen, and is divided in three stages: the initial stage, the middle stage and the resolution stage. Holliday et al. (2009, p. 245) deem it important for educators to explore alternative methods of 'talking' with children, and drawing offers an appropriate, child-friendly method for doing so. Collecting the views of children can

be seen as an extended conversation (Porter, 2009, p 358). Holliday et al. (2009, p. 248) mention three different approaches to analysing children's drawing: developmental approaches (to determine the development level of the child), psychological content (with the purpose of assessing and providing intervention for children in need), and meaning-making approaches (to understand the children's views on a topic and to assist adults to understand the children's perceptions, thoughts and experiences).

Initially I was very sceptical about implementing Drawing and Talking; however, when I used the programme with particular children, I could see how the process was very relevant. The children built a good relationship with me as the adult, and Drawing and Talking led the children to express themselves. Although, as stated, I am in favour of this intervention, I feel that it is important for the child to start the metaphor and let the child discuss through that metaphor what s/he wants to bring out. Through this programme I discovered that, as they grow older, some children tend to move away from the metaphor and want to speak about things that happen in their lives. I also believe that when giving a voice to a child, the child should be presented with choices as to how to express themselves, as it may very well be the case that some children prefer to express themselves through writing rather than drawing.

An educator who used journaling to encourage the students to open up was Erin Gruwell. When Erin Gruwell walked into her first classroom, she was unaware that many considered the class a warzone. No one had advised her about, nor prepared her for the situation she was to encounter. Several of her students had been written off by the education system (Mitchell & Jacob, 2011, p. 26). Gruwell wanted to give her students a voice, and her teaching and learning became the main factors in developing independent children (Tanase, 2013, p. 10). Choi (2009, p. 245) observes that Erin Gruwell managed to create four important things in her classroom: a rewritten curriculum, treating students as creators of knowledge, the creation of knowledge and a self-realisation process of learning. One of the activities that Erin Gruwell asked her students to carry out was to keep a journal for journal writing. In *The Freedom Writers' Diary*, which Gruwell published in 1999 together with her students, she writes that the

greatest lesson that she and her students learnt was to see that everyone has a story which needs to be shared, and together they all learned to use their voices to learn and to empower others (Gruwell, 2009, p. 283).

2.8 Conclusion and the Research Questions

Since the child participants in this study were children aged 7 to 11, the researcher incorporated the ideas taken from *Drawing and Talking* and Erin Gruwell's book and gave the children a diary. When they came to the nurture group, they wrote and/or drew in their journal anything they wished to. This chapter began by providing a self-reflection on the process that I went through when carrying out my research, that is, during the reading for and writing of my literature review. The chapter went on to discuss why it is important to give a voice to children, and was followed by an account of how the term *SEBD* evolved and an evaluation of its different definitions. A discussion of the inclusion of children perceived as having SEBD was followed by an explanation of nurture groups and some theoretical frameworks behind them. The chapter also included a mention of particular interventions that are used with children to enhance voice, and presented an argument on the importance of giving a voice to students.

After reading a number of books, articles and studies, I strongly felt the need, as both educator and researcher, to listen to the unheard voices of children who present with SEBD through journal writing and drawing. I wished for the voices of the children to be listened to, and as an educator I sought to enter the world of the child to make what is implicit more explicit and to listen to what the child wanted to communicate. I also wanted to present and implement a strategy for other educators to consider as a tool to allow them to listen to the voice of the child. After reading the literature presented in this chapter, the following research questions arose:

- In what ways, if any, can journal writing/drawing facilitate voice for children who present with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD)?
- How can journal writing/drawing promote educators' understanding of the needs of children who exhibit social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

(SEBD) and inform therapeutic work in the nurture group and classroom context?

- What actions, if any, does an educator take when a child is concerned about something that happened in his/her life?

There was a process which led to the above research questions. The first research question came about as I wanted to get to know more about the experiences of children that came to the nurture group. I wanted to give them a voice so that they will be able to express their implicit thoughts verbally through the journaling and then speak about their drawing or writing with a trusted educator. This led me to my second research question where I was interested in what the nurture group educators did when a child opened up with them whilst talking about his or her drawings, in other words how the educator engaged in conversation with the child so to bring out situations that were implicit by making them explicit. Whilst I was undertaking the research, there were a number of instances where the participant educators could not only act as mentors to the child but also guided them through the conversation and encouraged the young people to speak. There were instances in the research where the educators had to support the children, rather than guide them. That brought about the third research question of the study which asks whether and what educators need to do with the information presented to them by the children.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“Joy: Do you ever look at someone and wonder, what is going on inside their head?”

Inside Out, Disney Pixar

3.1 Introduction

In the first and second chapter, I started by asking you, the reader, to imagine yourself in the room which I wrote about previously. One thing that you can see in this room is a notice board. Attached to this notice board are three sticky notes containing the research questions. There are also photographs of the eight participants in the research: two educators (including myself) and six children. In this room is a shelf with eight individually labelled drawers. The headings on these labels are taken from an article by Tracy (2010) and are titled as follows: Worthy Topic, Ethical Procedures, Rich Rigor, Sincerity, Credibility, Resonance, Significant Contribution, and Meaningful Coherence. As you, the reader, continue to read this chapter, it is as if you are going to open each drawer and read in detail about how I reflected upon and included these topics in my research.

Also inside this room, the table – which has taken the form of a desk – displays six empty diaries, pencils, pens and crayons, and a voice recorder. These tools are all going to be used to narrate the story of the six children and two educators. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the theoretical orientation of my research and what type of knowledge this research generated. I will discuss the epistemology of this research and the assumptions of the knowledge gained. I will provide details on the process of my research, and explain my choice of the narrative methodology for this research as well as my decision to deploy the research tools in question. I am also going to discuss the ethical procedures I had to follow to ensure the ethical correctness of my research. I will also elucidate my position: rather than just a researcher, I was, am and still will be the protector of the participants involved in my research – especially the children.

3.2 My Epistemology and the Research Topic that I Chose

At the beginning of the chapter, I quoted a line from the popular Disney Pixar film *Inside Out* to emphasise what I had in my mind and how this research process eventually happened. Willig (2013, p. 49) discusses how the researcher's epistemological position flows from their chosen research question to underpin the research design and strategy that they adopt. After looking at the research questions and design for my thesis, I feel that the epistemological position that I am taking in this research is that of a social constructionist. Lock & Strong (2012, p. 5) state that a social constructionist approach assumes that as 'social beings, we go through a remarkable process of constructing our inherent immersion in a shared experiential world with other people'. This line of thought better supports my choice of research as I was interested in the getting a better understanding of the experiences of the children through journal writing and drawing. Social constructionism draws attention to the fact that human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically, that is, what we perceive and experience is never a direct reflection of environmental conditions but must be understood as a specific reading of these conditions (Willig, 2013, p. 7). As an individual and also as a researcher, I was interested in exploring how reality would be constructed through my research. I wished to explore the human experiences that my participants have encountered, and I wanted this research to be a source of empowerment for those who were willing to take part in this project.

As discussed in my introduction to this thesis and in the literature review chapter, there has always been a need to listen to the voice of children. In Malta, the Ministry for Education and Employment very recently issued policy documents such as *Respect for All Framework* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014) and *Education for All* (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014), which speak about how fundamental it is for policy makers, educators and other professionals working with children to listen to the child. However, there are still missing links between policy and practice. Although the policies mentioned are relevant, timely and significant in Malta, there is the urgent need for these policies to be implemented.

As Tracy (2010, p. 840) states, “good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting or evocative, and, a worthy topic often emerges from disciplinary priorities and therefore, are theoretically or conceptually compelling.” This is why I feel that the topic that I chose for my research makes for a timely discussion in Malta and elsewhere, since there is a great need for educators to give a voice to children. It is significant and relevant as a voice gives a child the opportunity to change and to engage in active participation in their life. I feel that my research is motivating in this regard, since it has presented the participant children with the opportunity to speak out about their lives.

3.3 Theoretical Construct that Informed My Research

Qualitative Methodology is as much an art as it is an effort, piles of data, and time spent in the field (Tracy, 2011, p. 814). Through my EdD I discovered something about myself and about my style of writing. It was in my second EdD assignment that I tried something new in my writing by attempting to link theory with my professional practice along with the stories of children that I teach. Thus, when I was reflecting on which theoretical construct to use in this research, it came as no surprise that I would opt for narrative. Mateos Blanco & Cubero (2012, p. 112) state that narrative is one of the characteristic ways of constructing reality in as much as it expresses, represents and puts into order the dynamic experience of human action. It is about people telling their stories about their lives (be they real or imaginary, exceptional or ordinary), and is concerned with self and identity (Tellis-James & Fox, 2016, p. 1). Willig (2013, p. 143) claims that narrative researchers are interested in the ways in which people organise their understandings and therefore bring order to experience.

Additionally, she observes that through constructing narratives about their lives, people make connections between events and interpret them. Tellis-James and Fox (2016, p. 13) describe that narrative researchers suggest that a primary way in which people make sense of their experiences is by telling their ‘story’. McNamara (2013, p. 138) observes that narrative research privileges the voices of participants and the dissemination of lived experiences through thick description and storytelling. Billington (2012, p. 319) states that he chose a narrative methodology for his study with nurture

group staff in England as this type of methodology was attuned to the context of the intervention model being applied in the context of the research. Additionally it considered meaning and experience, which have always proved elusive to more customary positive research methods. I chose a narrative methodology as I was interested in the lived experiences of children who present with SEBD. I also wanted to observe how these children make connections in their lives, how they interpret these connections, and how educators working with these children interpret the connections that the children make.

3.4 Research Tools, Research Approach and Data Collection

This project came about and functioned the way it did for a number of persons and situations. Nurture groups in Malta function in a different manner than those in the UK. Children come to the nurture group for a short period of time for about two hours each week. The project in this research took place at the end of every session. This project would not have taken place or would have functioned in a different manner if the relationship that I had with my colleague Philippa was different. I had a solid relationship with my colleague and we were a united team who worked together to support the children in the best possible manner. Also for the purpose of this research, I followed and conversed with four child participants (Amber, James, Lara and Trevor) whilst Philippa used to build a conversation with Cristiano and Lionel during journaling.

Philippa and I shared this project amongst ourselves so that other children who were not participating in the study would still have either Philippa or myself when either one of us was speaking to the child participants on their drawing and/or writing. There were instances when two child participants were present for the same nurture group session. So Philippa used to speak to one child participant and I would speak with another child on his drawings and/or writings. Due to our close bond Philippa and I would always discuss all the children's diary entires following the nurture group sessions. At the time of the study, more than six children used to attend the nurture group and each child that used to attend the nurture group had his/her own journal. This diary used to saty at the nurture group, so that if a child disclosed something in his/her diary, Philippa and I

would either support him/her ourselves or advice the school counsellor on the disclosure so that she could support the child herself.

We used to introduce the diary to the children at the closure of their first session in the nurture group. At first some children found it hard to draw or write in their journal and we used to guide them through leading statements such as “you can draw or write about how you are feeling, your hobbies, your friends, school, your family, your toys or the nurture group session we had today”. By the third or fourth lesson in the nurture group the children would have understood the scope of the journaling activity as a means of self-expression. Also they would understand that after a nurture group session, they would get their diary, find a place they feel comfortable in the nurture room and write and/or draw in their journal. My choice of child participants in this research was discussed with Philippa and was based on two matters. Firstly that Philippa and I had built a good bond with the child and the child trusted us. Also the six participants were eager to use journaling to express themselves and they used this tool to do so.

When conducting a research project, the researcher should reflect on the research tools that she is going to use and make sure that “the tools and instruments are to be at least as complex, flexible, and multifaceted as the phenomena being studied” (Tracy, 2011, p. 841). For my research I chose to give the participant children a diary in which to write and/or draw, on a weekly basis, anything that they wished to. After a nurture group session, all the children would be given their journal for them to write and/or draw in. Afterwards they would individually come up to me or my colleague Philippa to discuss what they had written and/or drawn. As Silver in Willig (2013, pp. 159–160) states, drawings are a useful way of communicating with people who are unable to express themselves by using language alone.

My reason for deploying writing and drawing with the participant children is in line with the second reason that Silver in Willig (2013, pp. 159-160) puts forward, this being that it is a way for children to communicate and voice their views about their lives which facilitates their means of expression. In a similar study, where drawing and

building up a conversation with the child were used by Cappella et al. (2015, p. 143), it was noted that drawing was used to facilitate the child narrative. The child expressed content verbally or through drawings while the interviewer asked other open-ended questions to explore different topics. When Philippa and I were asking questions to the children about their drawings, we tried to ask open-ended questions so as to get the children to think and talk about their drawings.

Open-ended questions on the drawings and/or writings were important, since through these types of questions the children gave longer answers. At times, as they gave newer information through these conversations, Philippa and I were in a better position to understand the child in question. I wanted to make sure that Philippa and I were really listening to each child's voice to try to get in-depth answers, as children might have been unaware that they were not making themselves clear. Philippa and I also kept a diary to document our work and how we were listening to the voice of these children (Appendix 8). As in the research carried out by Billington (2012, p. 324), I decided to ask Philippa to keep a diary so that, with the notes made in our journals, we could reflect upon events or feelings that we experienced. For example, in the diary we used to mention anything that happened to a particular child during a particular day or week, or make observations on the location the child preferred while writing or drawing in their diary.

A researcher who is also a member of a research organisation may have the advantage of intimately knowing the systems and structures which guide the institutions, and as such have a deeper insight into the more subtle nuances of relationships and agency that may inform and affect the data collection process (McGinity, 2012, p. 763). In my role as researcher, there was never an instance in which a child attending the nurture group did not build a good rapport with me or with Philippa. However, for the purposes of this research I did not want to put any extra pressure on the child participants. At the same time, I did not want them to feel superior to the other nurture group attendees, just because they happened to be participating in this research. To include everyone in

this project, I made sure that all the children in the nurture group were given a diary in which they could write and/or draw at the conclusion of every session.

Additionally, during the scholastic year prior to the one in which the study took place, I gave all the children in the nurture group a diary and identified those who were keen on doing this activity. All the six child participants chosen for this research had appeared very keen on diary writing and/or drawing the previous year. When it was time to begin my study I decided to contact the parents of each child to seek their permission. Waller & Bitou (2011, p. 8) view diary writing and/or drawing and the conversation about the diary entry as a learning story, a structured narrative documentation where the child and the practitioner discuss the child's drawing. The learning story is then used to inform planning. This interaction often takes place between the educator and the child, where the child gives an account of and enhances their voice.

Also as part of this research, Philippa and I discussed our experiences with the children through informal discussions. Prior to the start of the study, we both reflected on how we knew the child before the research, and discussed the following questions together:

- Why this particular child?
- Why was the child referred to the nurture group?
- What are the child's strengths?
- What are the child's needs?
- What areas of concern are we going to work on in the nurture group with this particular child?
- What are the child's interests?

As a researcher who adopted a narrative approach as a way of looking at and making sense of the data obtained, I chose to reflect on these questions and write them in my journal, as did Philippa:

- What did the story/picture mean to the young person that produced it?
- What associations was the child making in the picture?

- Who might the characters in the story/picture represent?
- How did we (the educators) gain insight into the meaning and connections that the child was making?

I reflected on these questions in order to be in a better position to really know and understand what each child wanted to say through their drawings and/or writings when recounting the narratives of the six children in the following chapter.

3.5 Ethical Procedures in My Research

Tracy (2010, pp. 846-848) divides the ethical process into four parts, these being procedural ethics (which refers to ethical actions dictated as universally necessary by larger organisations, institutions or governing bodies), situational and culturally specific ethics (which refer to the ethical practices that emerge from a reasoned consideration of a context's specific circumstances), relational ethics (which involves an ethical self-consciousness in which researchers are mindful of their character, actions and consequences on others), and exiting ethics (which are concerned with how the ethical considerations continue beyond the data collection phase to the manner in which researchers leave the scene and share the results).

When I was first thinking about doing my EdD thesis, one of my fears was that of involving children in my research. This was for two main reasons. Firstly, for my B.Ed. and M.Ed. dissertation research, I involved child participants on whose behalf I had to undergo challenging ethical processes to ensure their safety and protection at all times. McNamara (2013, p. 141) states that the challenges faced by researchers still include the over-zealous gate-keeping by ethicists, other professionals, and sometimes even parents/caregivers. With regard to the procedural ethics and the work carried out in my ethics application, I was very much concerned when I was writing my application to the University of Sheffield Ethics Board and the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta. These applications can be found in the Appendices section listed as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

I wanted to send a clear message to the reviewers of my ethics application, for which purpose I included a vast range of information to render my thoughts on my research and the ethical process to follow understandable and unambiguous. The process that I considered when writing my ethics application and which I used in my research was the following:

- I reflected on the aims and research questions of my research.
- I reflected on the participants who were taking part in the research.
- As my research was going to involve children, I made sure that both my colleague and I established a good, trusting relationship with the children.
- I observed the children who could benefit from the approach I had adopted, as I believed that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to listening to the voice of the child.
- I planned the research consent letters for parents in both Maltese and English (Appendices 3 & 4).
- I planned the research assent letters for children in Maltese and English, making sure that these were child-friendly and age appropriate (Appendices 5 & 6).
- I planned the research consent letter for my colleague (Appendix 7).
- I prepared the consent and assent letters and forms to submit to the University of Sheffield Ethics Board. I also handed in the consent and assent letters and forms to the Ethics Board at the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta. (Appendices 1 & 2)

When I sent the ethics application to the University of Sheffield Board of Ethics, I was required to make a number of amendments. Focusing on these changes led me to realise that this process had made me reflect more on the research process, and had also helped me ease my researcher's concerns with regard to ethics. After focusing on the procedural ethics in my research, I proceeded to work on the situational and culturally specific ethics component. Although this was a simple procedure, as I had direct experience of the situation and culture I was going to do my research in, I felt that from this part of my research onwards, I had to safeguard my participants. The first way in which I did this was by changing all the names of the participants (the names of all the child participants and the name of my colleague). Additionally I was aware that since I

was conducting my research in Malta – a small country, I felt that it would be best to also change the name of the school where I taught at the time. When the participants spoke about specific people, I also made sure to change the latter's names to protect the children further. Although not all the children who attended the nurture group were chosen to participate in the study, I did not want the readers of my thesis to surmise the identity of the six child participants.

Although I had already spoken with Philippa, the nurture group learning support assistant I was to work with in my research, I held a meeting with her to explain the aims of the study once I had received ethical clearance. During this meeting, which was held on the 29th of September 2015, I also explained anonymity and confidentiality issues, as well as why I was carrying out this study. Philippa was free to decide whether or not to participate in this research. I also explained to her that the role she needed to take in the study was to build a conversation with the child participants about their journal writing and/or drawing. That way she could try to understand what the child had drawn and/or had written about.

I then set up individual meetings with the parents of the children, with the term *parent* implying the adult who was a primary caregiver and had legal custody of the participant child. The meetings with the parents were held between the 6th and 9th of October 2015. I explained to the parents that they could choose not to give their consent for their children's participation in the research. However, once I had explained the nature and purposes of my study, the parents of all six children gave their consent. I assigned to them the information and consent letters in Maltese, as they felt more comfortable with the Maltese version of each document (Appendix 4).

I then met up with the children, during which exchanges a member of the school senior management team would be present. These meetings were held between the 6th and 12th of October 2015, and all took place within the nurture group. This had been planned to enable the children to feel comfortable and more at ease in a familiar setup. I invited a member of the senior management team to be present during the meetings to

ensure that I explained myself in a way that the children could understand the aims of the study, anonymity and confidentiality issues, and why I was doing my research. I emphasised that the children were free to choose whether to take part in the research or otherwise, and that it was also possible for them to stop attending the sessions during the course of the research. As I was preparing and conducting my research with children, two main issues were kept in mind. These included the issues of assent and consent as well as the question of how fundamental the children's participation was in this research.

McNamara (2013, p. 141) states that it is important to differentiate between *assent* and *consent* in inclusive, participatory and empowering research with children. I deemed it important to necessitate that even if the parent had given their consent for their child to participate in the research, if for some reason the child did not wish to do so at the beginning or during the course of the research, the latter could opt out at any point in time. As I previously stated, I chose the six children on the basis of their enjoyment of the journal writing and/or drawing activity during the nurture group sessions. I could observe that such activity appeared to help them open up more. During the meeting with each individual child, all six children said that they wanted to participate in the research.

Initially, two of the children could not comprehend why they needed to change their name. However, after further explanation, they understood the reason behind the name change and each suggested another name I could use to refer to them in my research. Another point discussed during the meetings with the children was that if the children were to choose not to take part in the research, they could still come to the nurture group, where both Philippa and I would still be there for them regardless of whether or not they wished to participate. All the children were eager to participate, and three of the children even mentioned that they felt *special* about being involved in this research. I also mentioned twice if later on they decided not to continue the journal writing activity, this would bear no consequences whatsoever. Five out of the six children wanted their information and consent letters in Maltese, whilst one child preferred the

English versions. Up until the end of the research, none of the children expressed a wish to opt out.

I feel that I tried to be ethically correct with regard to relational and situational ethics by first observing and reflecting on the context and setting I was working in. Apart from the University of Sheffield's ethical clearance, I sought ethical clearance from the Research Department within the Maltese Ministry of Education, as I felt that this department would be more aware of the research situation and context in question. Most of the child participants and their parents communicated with me in Maltese during the research. One participant used English to reply to my questions about her drawings and/or writings. Another participant code-switched between Maltese and English. The other four children showed a preference for speaking Maltese. I got to know which language the children preferred to speak to me in, initially through observing which language they chose to communicate with me in prior to the research.

Once the research was underway, I would take note of each child's language of preference when in conversation with me, and employed that same language in my exchanges. With regard to exiting research, I felt that it was important to speak to the participants and their parents when the research period was nearly over. When the children attended their last nurture group session before the Christmas holidays, I spoke to each participant individually, informing them that this would be their last journal entry to be interpreted in my research. Knowing how much the children perceived journal writing and/or drawing as a listening process, they were reassured that they would still be able to write and/or draw in their diary, and to speak to either Philippa or myself, even though the diary entries would no longer form part of my research. I felt that in this particular way I could still listen to the unheard voices of the children, and at the same time encourage them to continue to use journal writing and/or drawing as a listening tool. I also held a meeting with the parents of each child on the 11th of December 2015.

3.6 Timing of My Research

Tracy (2010, p. 841) states that researchers should evidence their due diligence, exercising appropriate time, effort, care and thoroughness in their research. One of the issues I had to face while carrying out my study was timing. While I could have conducted my research between April and June 2015, I decided to do this at a later period: October to December 2015. The reason behind this was that in Malta, the first scholastic term is the longest one of the year, while the third term is the shortest. I chose a longer span of time to allow me more time to gather more data, and to give the participant children ample opportunity to voice their ideas, thoughts, stories, feelings, or whatever they wished to express in course of this research.

3.7 Context Where the Research Was Set

Education in Malta is compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen, with six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary school (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p. 67). The Maltese national education system has historically been divided between the private (Catholic and independent schools) and state schools (Darmanin, 2003, p. 143). State schools cater for approximately two-thirds of the Maltese school population, while the other third goes to Church and independent schools (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p. 67). Melita Primary School (the name of the primary school was changed for anonymity and confidentiality purposes) is part of St Mark's College, and the school population is of around 500 children. The school is made up of the senior management team, teachers, support teachers, learning support assistants, inclusion coordinator and the psychosocial team.

Like a number of other schools in Malta, Melita Primary School observes a number of school policies, namely the Behaviour Policy, the Support Policy, the Homework Policy and the Anti-Bullying Policy. Although my research is set here, it took place specifically in the nurture group held at the said school. One of the struggles faced by the Maltese education system is the inclusion and education of pupils perceived as having and/or manifesting symptoms of SEBD. It is for this reason that local schools started

introducing nurture groups and learning support zones in Malta in 2008 (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009, p. 11). In the Maltese context, therefore, nurture groups were construed as an early intervention strategy located in mainstream schools, operating in line with the inclusive education system in the country on a part-time basis (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p. 67). At the time of the study there were 29 nurture groups in 31 state schools in Malta. The research is set in one nurture group in Malta. At the time of the study, although the nurture group team worked on a full-time basis in the school, the nurture group was operating on a part-time basis owing to the relatively large number of children enrolled in the group, which they attended for only two to three hours per week.

3.8 Participants in the Research

When thinking about the participants in the study, I had one important characteristic that I wanted to clarify that is I wanted to ascertain that the children's voice would be enhanced through my research. I therefore made sure that the educators taking part in this study exhibited characteristics that would enhance their pupils' voices. The two educator participants were namely myself in the role of nurture group teacher and Philippa as the learning support assistant working in the same nurture group at Melita Primary School. At the time of the study, I had been working as a teacher for the past eight years as well as having taught in the nurture group for five years. Philippa had held the role of learning support assistant for the past seventeen years and had been working in the nurture group for four years. In this research, I held both the roles of researcher and participant. McGinity (2012, p. 762) observes that sometimes researchers take multiple identities which are neither fixed nor static.

At the heart of my research and the core of this study were the six children –two girls and four boys aged between seven and eleven. The two girls wished for their names to be changed to Amber and Lara while the four boys opted for Lionel, Trevor, James and Cristiano. At the time of the study Amber was nine, Cristiano and James were ten, Lara and Lionel were seven years old, and Trevor was eight. This was a child-initiated research, which Main and Whatman (2016, pp. 1816-1817) claim that from the child's

initiative and such research rests on the process of co-constructing learning experiences between the children, the adults and the environment. When discussing the role of children as researchers, Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011, p. 567) state that children in a study they cited in their book responded very positively to their new roles as researchers. Moreover, children quickly adapted to the active inquiry expected of them and worked productively during the course of the research.

Main and Whatman (2016, p. 1818) also suggest that research with children, rather than on children, should include children's thoughts, opinions, feelings and perceptions. All the children that took part in this study attended the nurture group at Melita Primary School at the time. Although only the drawings and writings of these six children are presented, analysed and linked with the research, all those who attended the nurture group were encouraged to write and/or draw in their diaries. This was done because as an educator, I wanted to consider all the children's thoughts and opinions; however, as a researcher I had to limit my in-depth observations and analyses to six participants.

3.9 Sincerity in My Research

Sincerity can be achieved through self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing. This implies that the research is marked by honesty and clearness about the researcher's biases, goals, weaknesses, and how these played a role in the research process (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). According to Willig (2013, p. 25), reflexivity is important in qualitative research because it encourages us to foreground, and reflect upon, the ways in which the participant of the research is implicated in the research and its findings. As a researcher participant in this research, I reflected on my biases by writing two different journals during the data collection phase. This was achieved by writing about myself as both the researcher and as one of the participants.

As I was conducting the research, I tried to detach my two roles by focusing on my role of research participant at school. I used to listen to the children's voices through their

journal entries. I used to ask questions about their drawings and wrote my own diary reflections as a participant in the research. Once I arrived home after work, I would focus on my researcher's role and transcribe all the conversations that had taken place, reflect on all the journals, and process all the information explored on that particular day. To detach myself from the research, I held the role of research participant within the school context and that of researcher in the home setting.

Tracy (2010, p. 843) differentiates between three processes in research: triangulation (which in qualitative research assumes that if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected or researchers converge on the same conclusion, the research becomes more credible), crystallisation (which encourages the researchers to gather multiple types of data and employ various methods, multiple researchers, and numerous theoretical frameworks in order not to provide the researchers with a more valid singular truth, but to open a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial understanding of the issue), and multivocality (which is closely linked to crystallisation but shows rather than tells, and includes varied voices in the qualitative report and analysis).

In my research, I used multivocality as I employed various methods of data collection. Rather than obtaining a single truth and one conclusion, I drew more than one valid truth and a more complex, in-depth consideration of the subject. This approach also resulted in varied voices in the qualitative report, which included the participant children and educators' reflections on the subject. During the course of this research, I let the children decide what they wanted to write and/or draw in their journal. There were instances when the children would start conversations with other children while they were writing and/or drawing in their journal. There were other times when the children wanted to include me and/or Philippa while writing and/or drawing in their journal by initiating a conversation with us.

Again, when this happened, both Philippa and I went along with the conversation. On other occasions the children wanted to write and/or draw on their own and in different

spots in the nurture room (for example on the sofa, on the mat or inside the tent). When this happened, Philippa and I would give the children a choice, and it was up to them to decide where they felt most comfortable writing and/or drawing in their journal. When I began the research with all the participants, I could really understand how crucial multivocality was in my research. Every time the children came to the nurture group and wrote and/or drew in their journals, they illustrated and narrated different themes ranging from events happening in their daily lives to feelings, friendships, education and stories.

3.10 Resonance and Significant Contribution in My Research

Tracy (2010, pp. 844-845) identifies resonance as when researchers engage in practices that will promote empathy, identification and reverberation of the research from readers who have no direct experience of the topic discussed, since qualitative methods can still transfer to and be used in other settings, populations or circumstances. I wanted to be resonant in my research as the aim was for the children to have their voice heard. At the same time I also wished for other educators, both practitioners and researchers, to establish projects that enhance the child's voice. To be resonant in my research, I tried to give in-depth descriptions of the children's journal drawings and/or writings while linking the descriptions to previous research done. I also sought to be very practical, seeking to write in a manner that was direct and easy to read for other professionals and academics.

One who carries out a particular research study will obviously wish for their work to contribute significantly to both the educational and academic fields. My research aimed to provide insight into the child's world so that academics and practitioners alike may better "empathise, guide and support the child's emotional, social, behavioural and educational well-being and development" (Syrnyk, 2014, p. 173). I believe that the significant contribution of my research lies in the fact that as a social constructivist narrative approach, its interests and scope concern the reflections of the participants in the research, as suggested by Tracy (2010, p. 848). Through the child's stories and the manner in which my colleague and I dealt with these narratives, this dissertation aims

to especially benefit children who present with SEBD. Following the research period, I also felt that my study could be appreciated as a valid example of journal writing and/or drawing. This should serve to demonstrate to other educators working in nurture groups as well as mainstream classes how journal writing and/or drawing may be deployed as a tool for listening to the unheard voices of children.

3.11 Meaningful Coherence in My Research

When discussing *meaningful coherence*, Tracy (2010, p. 840) observes that it questions whether the research has achieved its purpose, whether it used methods and procedures that fit its stated goals, and whether it meaningfully interconnected the literature, research questions, findings and interpretations. I feel that my research has achieved its purpose of giving a voice to the children through journal writing and/or drawing. The methods and procedures used fitted the context where the research was set and were in line with the goals I set for my research. Through this research I also tried to link the literature, research questions, findings and interpretations, which connections I will present in the coming chapters.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reflected on what gave rise to my research and how I undertook the research project in this thesis. Throughout this chapter I redirected on how this study came to be. I decided to assess this research project using the eight criteria by Tracy (2010), and I first discussed why I felt it was important to choose this particular topic for my research. I stated the epistemology of this research and why I chose that particular epistemological focus. The chapter went on to discuss the ethical procedures and the process involved to ensure an ethically sound approach in my research. The narrative approach utilised and the reasons for its choice were also discussed. The timing and context, the participants and the research tools were also identified. Issues such as sincerity and how I tried to be sincere throughout this study and after that I discussed how my research could give a significant contribution in the fields of education and the academic field.

In the next chapter, I presented the case studies of the participant children in my research. I started this chapter again describing a room with certain objects in it. A few things that I mentioned were six diaries, a voice recorder, and some pencils, pens and crayons. The diaries were empty, the voice recorder was also without any recording in it and the pencils, pens and crayons were new. Now they are used, the diaries are filled by with the children's stories and the recorder is also full of conversations that communicated the voices of six children on their diary entries.

Chapter 4: The Case Studies

“It is the time that you wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.”

From *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery

4.1 Introduction

I decided to start this chapter with the above quotation not because I consider anything I do in my profession or what I have done in this research as a waste of time. Rather, the connection serves to liken the rose, which was so precious to the Little Prince, with this chapter, being the one closest to my heart. This is so because it is time for me to go to the room again and sit down on the chair in front of the desk. With the voice recorder on one side of the table, the diaries on the other, and a pen and some paper in front of me, it is time for me to listen to the voices, stories and experiences of six children: Amber, Cristiano, James, Lara, Lionel and Trevor. I wish that you, the reader, would also listen to the way these six children opened up through journal writing and/or drawing, and how they communicated their own life experiences and stories in the pages of their diary.

Billington (2006, p. 8) stresses that two of the questions that educators need to be ask when evaluating their work with children is *How do we listen to children?* and *How do we speak with children?* This chapter is very much about listening to the voices of the six child participants through discussions that both my colleague and I had with them. It is also about how we (Philippa and I) spoke with the children. The stories that the children related were special in their own way. The children wrote and/or drew about different topics ranging from their likes and dislikes, feelings and experiences to stories, school, relationships with educators and the nurture group itself. In these pages more information will be related on how my colleague and I understood the needs of the children through their writing and/or drawing, and how such interpretations helped us

to be better prepared in our role as educators in the school and in the nurture group, as well as to know how to support the children in the best way possible.

Another question that Billington (2006, p. 8) puts forward is *How do we write of children?* My colleague and I chose to write about these six children in a realistic and positive manner, in order to portray a real image of each child through our own views. In this research, as in the study conducted by Cappella (2015 et al., p. 144), drawing and/or writing served to elicit conversations with the child. These interviews were then transcribed and the analyses performed during the transcription phase. One child, Trevor, preferred to code-switch from Maltese to English during the conversations that I had with him. Only one girl, Amber, preferred to use English as the main language of communication. All the other conversations with Cristiano, James, Lara and Lionel were transcribed in Maltese and then translated into English for the purpose of this research.

Three different research tools were used: the children's diaries, conversations with the children about their diary entries, and my own and my colleague's diaries, which focused on our interaction with and thoughts about the children we worked with. In view of word limit constraints, the children's diaries and transcripts of the conversations with the children will be presented in this chapter, while my diary entries and those of my colleague can be found in Appendix 8. My colleague, Philippa, will be introduced to you, the reader, through the coat of arms activity I used to present myself in the introduction. I will then go on to introduce the child participants, relate how my colleague or I knew them before the research, present each child's diary entries, and finally address the conversations my colleague and I had with each participant during and/or after their journal exercise. Although I have aimed to present each and every diary entry that the child wished to, I have had to crop and erase certain elements that the children wrote to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

4.2 Working in a Team: My Colleague in the Nurture Group

Philippa and I have been working in the nurture group at Melita Primary School for four years. Like all people working in a team, we have had our share of challenges; however, we have always worked very well together. If I were to analyse Philippa's characteristics and relate them to the requirements for the role of nurture group educator as expounded by Syrnyk (2012), I can clearly see in her a trustworthy person and a secure role model for the children. Philippa is slightly older than me and has worked as a learning support assistant for seventeen years. She sees herself as a complex person who is caring, happy with the simple things in life, and who tends to think a lot especially when faced with a challenging scenario. Unlike me, Philippa does not admire particular people, but she values certain characteristics people have, such as the tendency to enjoy the simple things in life, being genuine, and the ability to still remain positive against all odds.

When I asked Philippa about her hopes and dreams, she stated that she wished to continue to help people in need. Although Philippa is a very busy person, who helps people in need in her spare time, she tries to make time for herself and enjoys cooking and doing crafts, especially needlecraft. Her motto is "Live life day by day." Something positive that I see in Philippa is that she is able to forget her worries as soon as she enters the classroom. She is hardworking and prepares a number of activities that the children enjoy doing. Moreover, when a child comes to class to speak to us, she has the ability to remain calm and to give advice without demoralising the child, always seeking to make them smile before leaving the room. Goodman and Burton (2010) note that in spite of a lack of formal training in the area of SEBD, people working in nurture groups still manage to engage with students. Having observed my colleague and the work she does with the students in the nurture group, I feel that she is able to engage with children in a positive way.

4.3 Who is Amber?

An extract taken from my diary written on 12th October 2015

“Amber is a nine-year old girl. I first met Amber in my second year as a nurture group teacher some five years ago. She was a quiet girl who rarely ever participated in class. In Year 1, due to her struggles in literacy, it was suggested to her mother that she repeats Year 1. As a repeater, she was referred to the nurture group for a self-esteem programme. Amber came for the mentioned programme and was phased out of it as soon as she started to participate more in class. In Year 2, she clashed with her teacher who shouted at her and called her names like ‘clumsy’ and ‘baby’. This took its toll on Amber, who often cried as a result. Once I was walking in the school corridor in front of Amber’s class. She had just been punished because she had not done her homework as she did not know how to do it. She ran up to me, hugged me and asked “Ms Maria, could you please help?”

“She started crying, and while I pleaded with her to calm down, I promised that I would call her mother to see what we could do. Consequently, Amber re-joined a nurture group programme, and to thank me for listening to her plea, she would always come up to me and hug me, whispering “thank you” after every session. In Year 3, Amber was provided with shared support from a learning support assistant. Amber was happy again at school. Her Year 3 teacher also praised her for her work. While Amber felt safe at school, she still had a very sensitive nature and lacked self-confidence. She continued to attend the nurture group in Year 3, during which one of the programmes she attended concerned emotional literacy and self-esteem. The sessions involved narrating stories to the children, among which *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck*. Amber really liked this story, and after this particular storytelling session she came up to me and told me: “Jemima is like myself. However, I am better than Jemima as I did not let people hurt me. I found you.”

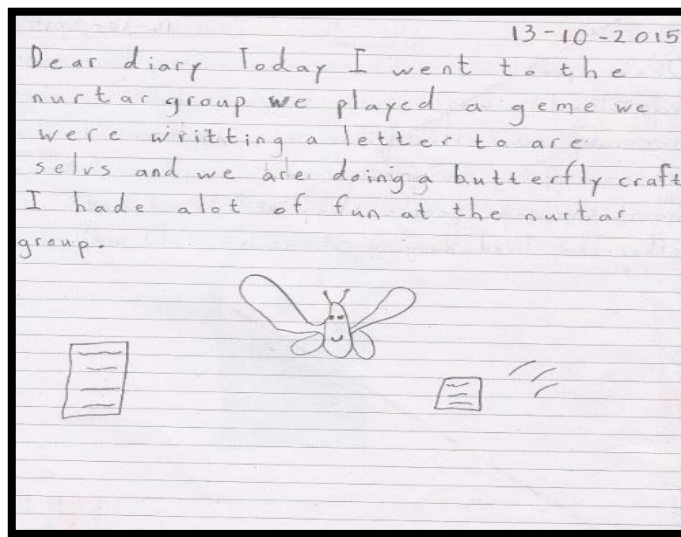
“A nurture group activity that Amber used to enjoy was drawing and writing in her diary. When I was thinking of doing my research, I thought of Amber and how she could be one of the children that could contribute to the study. I also considered how I could

give a voice to Amber through my research. If I were to describe Amber, I would say that she is a sensitive, quiet girl with a warm smile and a heart of gold. She is very well-mannered and motivated to learn, a good friend and loving towards other people.”

4.3.1 Listening to Amber’s Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

Throughout this research, Amber produced nine diary entries, the majority of which were written in the form of stories. Amber would also draw illustrations to explain her writings. When she used to come to the nurture group, either for a nurture group session or to do some journal writing, Amber normally preferred to sit inside the nurture group tent or on the nurture room sofa to write her stories. When she finished writing, she would often come up to me to explain her stories and drawings. At times I would initiate a conversation with her about that particular day’s writing and drawings. The following are Amber’s diary entries and the conversations that I had with Amber during the course of this research:

Amber's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her first diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary Amber?

Amber (*reading from her journal*): Dear diary, today, I went to the Nurture Group. We played a game. We were writing a letter to ourselves and we are doing a butterfly craft. I had a lot of fun at the Nurture Group.

Maria: Ok good. And what did you draw on this page?

Amber: I drew the letter...Can I go a draw a butterfly?

Maria: Sure you can.

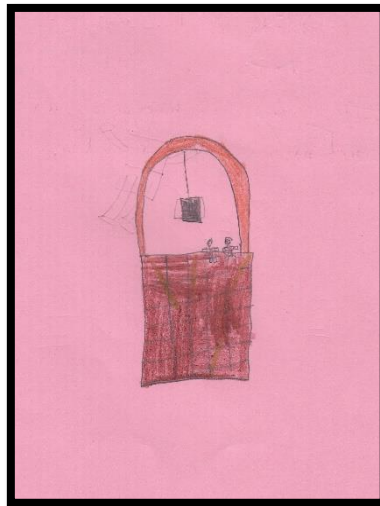
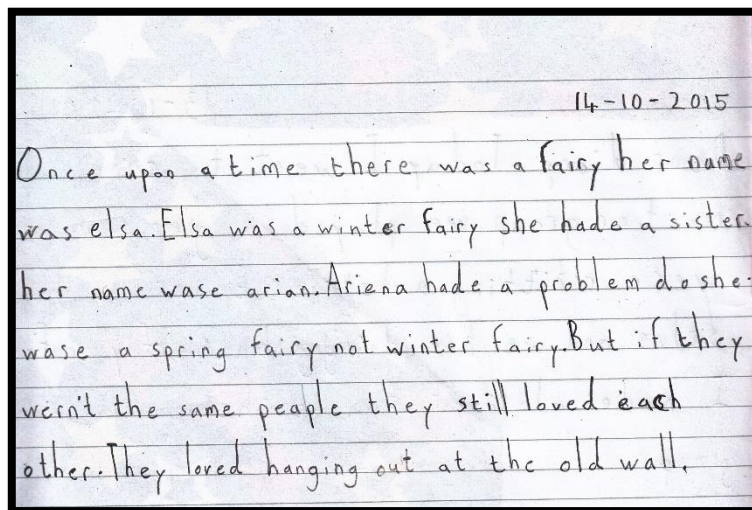
Amber took her pencil to draw the butterfly.

Maria: So you are going to draw a butterfly also?

Amber nodded. Then she started to draw in her journal again. When she was ready, Amber came up to me and she showed me her journal.

Amber: I drew a butterfly and I drew a letter. I drew the butterfly because, I like butterflies.

Amber's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her second diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Amber: I drew two fairies and a well.

Maria: And what did you write here?

Amber: I wrote their story here.

Maria: Ok. Their story?

Amber: Do you want to read it?

Maria: Yes sure. (*Reading from the diary*)...Once upon a time there was a fairy...and her name was Elsa and she was a winter fairy. She had a sister and her name was...Aran.

Amber: Anna.

Maria: Ok sorry about that. Anna...(*Reading from the diary*)Anna had a problem. She

was a spring fairy not a winter fairy. But if there weren't the same people, they still loved each other. They loved hanging out at an old well.

Amber: Did you like my story?

Maria: Yes, very much!...And what happened when it was spring time? What will the winter fairy do in spring time?

Amber: She would not go out but they still would meet each other on the well...I read a story about these two fairies.

Maria: Ok. That is good.

Amber: They were still friends even if they were a spring fairy and a winter fairy.

Maria: Ok...

Amber: Like me and my friend. Though we are not in the same class, we are still friends.

Maria: Oh, I see.

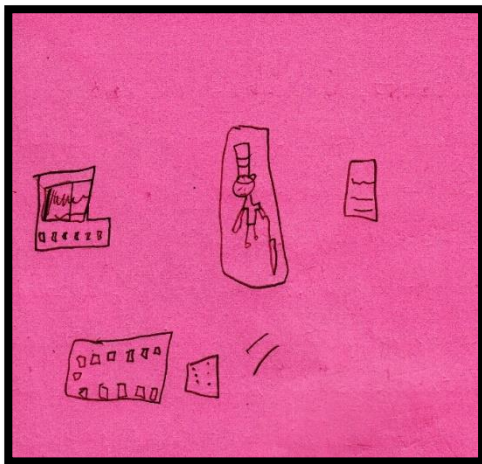
Amber: And we wish to play with each other during break time, but unlike the fairies we can't.

Maria: The fairies meet near the well...

Amber: Yes, at break time, I see my friend but I cannot play with her. I have to play with my classmates.

Maria: Oh! I see.

Amber's third diary entry:



Tuesday 20th October 2015
Today at nuteregoop we were watching a video about respecting others. Then we did a paper about writing about respect. Then we watched a video about a cat in a hat and we also played a game we wrote about the cat.

Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her third diary entry:

Amber: I finished my diary.

Maria: Ok and what did you write about in your diary?

Amber: I wrote about what...about the lesson.

Maria: Ok. And what did we learn today?

Amber: We learnt about respect...and we learnt that we need to do good for others, like, respecting them.

Maria: Yes, that's true...and what did you draw here?

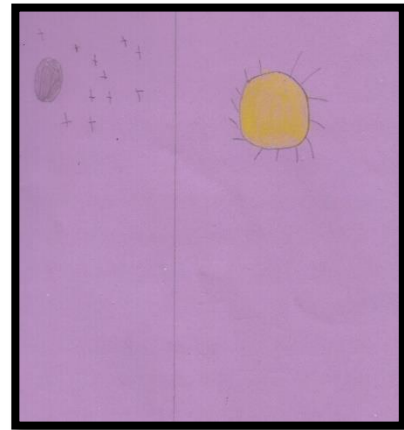
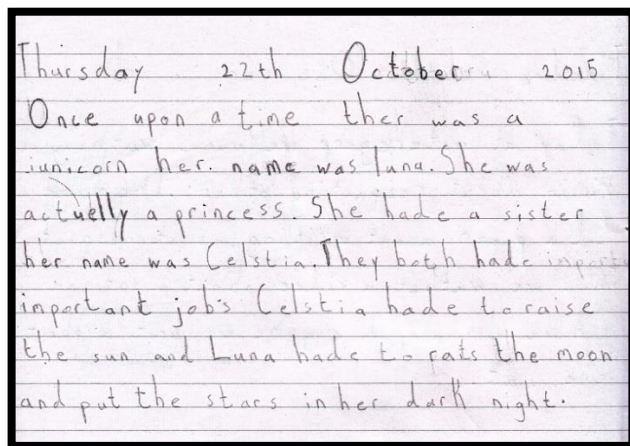
Amber: This is cat in the hat and this is the game and this is the paper.

Maria: Ok good.

Amber: Bye, Ms. Maria. See you.

Maria: See you Amber.

Amber's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her fourth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today?

Amber: About unicorns.

Maria: About unicorns!...Ok...And what happens in the story?

Amber: Nothing. They, they...once upon...can I read it?

Maria: Yes, yes you can read it.

Amber: Once upon a time there was a unicorn. Her name was Luna. She was actually a princess. She had a sister. Her name was Celestia. They both had important jobs. Celestia had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon and put the stars in her dark night.

Maria: Ok, so these unicorns, were princesses right? Both of them?

Amber: Ehe. (Yes)

Maria: Ok, right...And one had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon. Ok and would they quarrel because one of them had to raise the sun and the other had to raise the moon?

Amber: Hmmm. One time Luna did get jealous.

Maria: Luna got jealous? And what happened when she got jealous?

Amber: She became like evil for a little while.

Maria: She became...

Amber: But this was a film cartoon.

Maria: Ok. It was a film?

Amber: Yes

Maria: She became evil and then what happened?

Amber: She, Celestia, had a student and she made them friends again.

Maria: Ok, they became friends again.

Amber: When Luna was evil Celestia had to banish her because she had to save her people.

Maria: And then what happens?

Amber: She had to banish her into the moon.

Maria: Ok.

Amber: This was a film cartoon but?

Maria: Ok it was a film cartoon.

Amber: Ok.

Maria: And did something happen like this story in real life?

Amber: Yes. I think stories like this happen.

Maria: When?

Amber: My friend and I, we never have time to play at school.

Maria: Why is that?

Amber: Because my friend's teacher, you know my friend...I never get to meet her.

Maria: But you play together.

Amber: No, we don't. They (her friend's teacher and classmates) come out after us and we can never play together.

Maria: And how do you feel about this?

Amber: Sad but I am trying to make new friends....I am like Luna, but I like her sister Celestia...because my friend is like Celestia. I like Luna because I like the night because I like to see the stars at night.

Maria: I see. You like the stars at night. Ok. I see.

Amber: But I love them both...both me and my friend do. And when we meet...you know...at break...we play with each other. We play *My little pony* sometimes.

Maria: Luna and Celestia are from *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Yes. Do you know about *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes....the unicorns, they have different colours right?

Amber: Ehe (Yes). Did you watch *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes, I know about *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Celestia was white and her hair was blue....and...and....her sister same but she had...her hair was black.

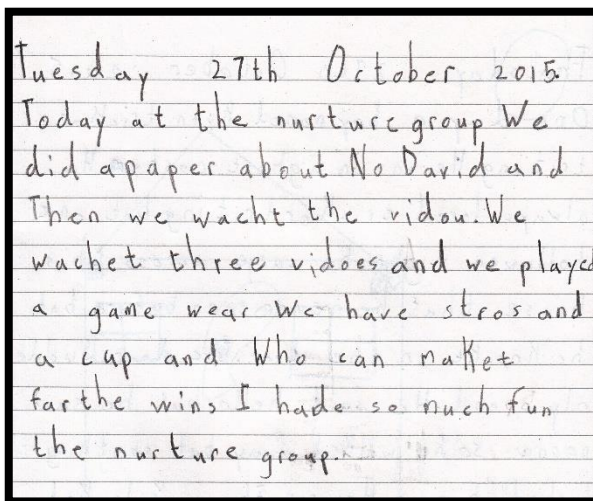
Maria: So both Celestia and Luna are white?

Amber: No Celestia is white and Luna....well...Luna is black but not that dark black, she is more of a dark blue.

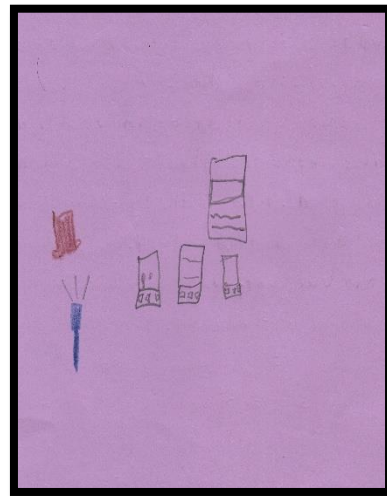
Maria: Ok. Thank you Amber.

Amber: Bye, See you.

Amber's fifth diary entry:



Tuesday 27th October 2015
Today at the nurture group we did a paper about No David and then we watched the video. We watched three videos and we played a game where we have straws and a cup and who can make the farthest wins. I had so much fun at the nurture group.



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Amber: I drew the straws....for the game that we did today.

Maria: Ok. And what else did you draw?

Amber: I drew the video and the paper.

Maria: Yes. The video and the paper. And, here, what did you write?

Amber: Today in the nurture group, we did a paper about *No David!*...And then we watched the video.

Maria: Ok.

Amber: And we...we played a game, where we had two straws and a cup and who could insert them in the cup wins...I had so much fun.

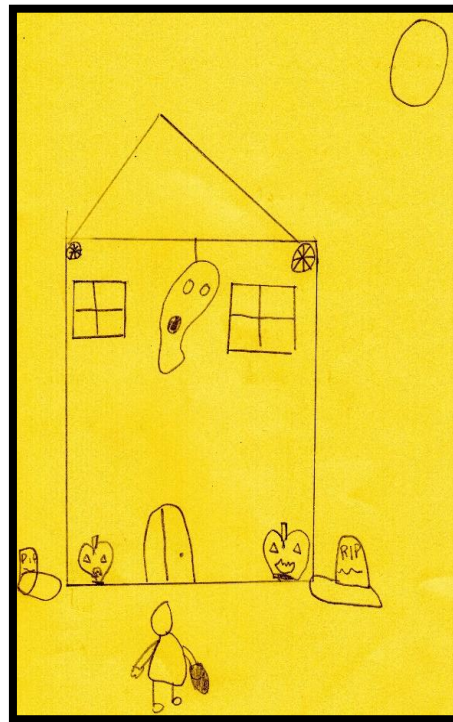
Maria: Very good Amber.

Amber: Thank you. Bye. See you.

Maria. Bye. See you soon.

Amber's sixth diary entry:

Thursday 29th October 2015
One day a boy named Ryan trick or treating. He was in a ghost costume. He always loved trick or treating but one halloween night he came across this house that he never seen before but he knocke on the door. The door suddenly opened. He said hello but he saw noone so he walked away but something pushed him in. He was there was locked when he tried to open it he adventured the house to see if there was a exit but then he saw a girl he said hello but she came closer he was he rained a skap but when he opened his and it was just a dream



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her sixth diary entry:

Amber: I'm ready.

Maria: What can you tell me about your writing and drawings?

Amber: Here, this is the house, these are the pumpkins, these are the ghosts, this is the moon and this is the boy.

Maria: Ok the boy, pumpkins, ghosts. Why did you draw these things? I think it is about Halloween.

Amber: Yes.

Maria: So the story is about Halloween....because it is soon Halloween, right?

Amber: Yes

Maria: And so what is the story about?

Amber: About a boy, called Ryan, who loves Halloween, but one day he came across this house and he...he opened the door but it opened by itself...he heard a noise but no one was there and something pushed him in there and then he was locked.

Maria: Ok and how did he feel?

Amber: Scared.

Maria: Scared?

Amber: And then he came to this garden and he saw this girl and he said 'hello' but he

came closer and closer.

Maria: Did she speak to him?

Amber: No, he...he was afraid. He might be wrong but there was no way out...then...then he opened his eyes. It was only just a dream.

Maria: Ok it was a dream...It was a good dream or a bad dream?

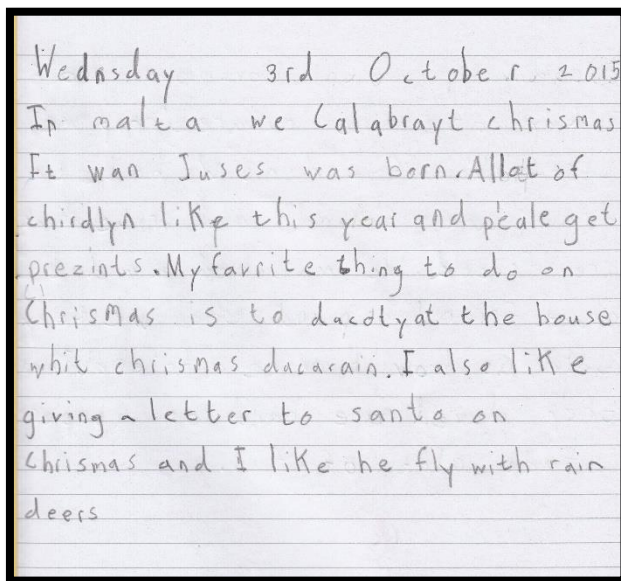
Amber: A bad dream.

Maria: Ok a bad dream. Ok, thanks Amber.

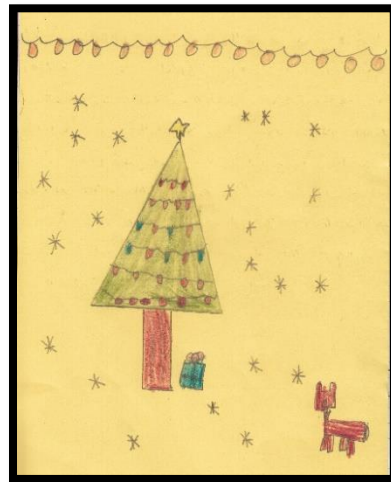
Amber: Bye, see you soon.

Maria: See you.

Amber's seventh diary entry:



Wednesday 3rd October 2015
In the morning we celebrated Christmas.
It was Jesus was born. All of
children like this year and people get
presents. My favorite thing to do on
Christmas is to decorate the house
with Christmas decorations. I also like
giving a letter to Santa on
Christmas and I like to fly with rein-
deers.



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her seventh diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw here Amber?

Amber: Things about Christmas.

Maria: I see Christmas...and why did you draw and write about Christmas.

Amber: Because it is soon Christmas.

Maria: And here, what (what) did you write?

Amber: I wrote about Christmas too here.

Maria: And how do you feel at Christmas?

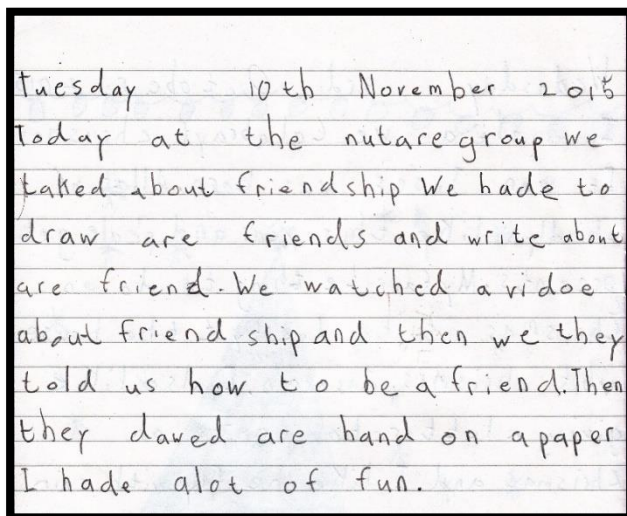
Amber: Ok, I guess. Happy when I get lots of presents.

Maria: Ok. Good. Very good.

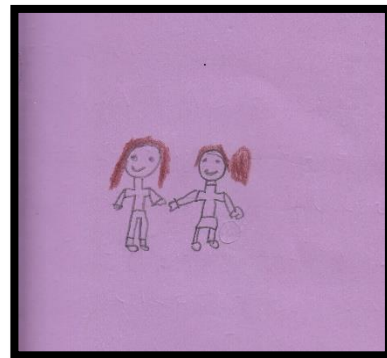
Amber: Bye, Miss. See you.

Maria: See you Amber.

Amber's eighth diary entry:



Tuesday 10th November 2015
Today at the nutare group we talked about friendship. We had to draw our friends and write about our friend. We watched a video about friendship and then we they told us how to be a friend. Then they gave us hand on a paper. I had a lot of fun.



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her eighth diary entry:

Amber: I am ready.

Maria: Ok, you're ready. What did you write about today?

Amber: Friendship.

Maria: You wrote about friendship. Right.

Amber: I wrote about my friend.

Maria: Oh! Your friend. What is her name?

Amber: I have a lot.

Maria: Ok. But this friend what is her name?

Amber: Natasha.

Maria: Natasha...Natasha is not in the same class as you are right?

Amber: No, no she goes to another school.

Maria: Ok she goes to another school. And how do you feel that she goes to a different school. How do you feel? During break time...for example...how do you feel that you can't play with her.

Amber: Ok, I think. I have other friends, I can play with during break.

Maria: And who do you play with during break?

Amber: With Daniel...with Leah...and those children that love to play catch.

Maria: Ok, and how do you feel?

Amber: I feel happy and I do not feel alone.

Maria: Ok

Amber: But Natasha, I cannot see her a lot...because she, her father...they took the

divorce and she went to live with her father and her mother (her mother) she is...she is the cousin of my grandfather.

Maria: I see.

Amber: And I cannot see her as much now but I still love her.

Maria: I am sure you do.

Amber: Yes very much.

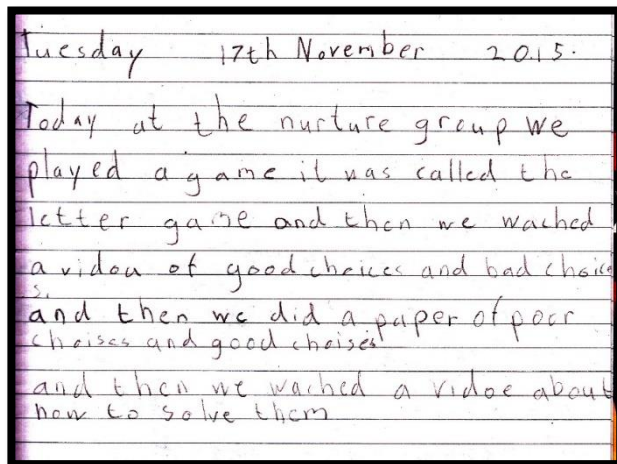
Maria: And you still think of her.

Amber: Yes. Bye Ms. Maria. Bye Ms. Philippa.

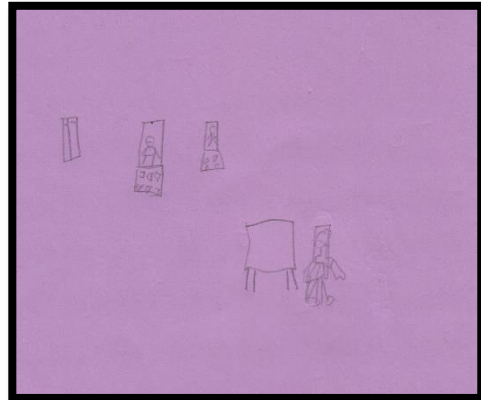
Maria: Bye.

Philippa: Bye.

Amber's ninth diary entry:



Tuesday 17th November 2015.
Today at the nurture group we played a game it was called the letter game and then we watched a video of good choices and bad choices, and then we did a paper of poor choices and good choices and then we watched a video about how to solve them.



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her ninth diary entry:

Maria: What did you do in your diary today Amber?

Amber: I did a summary of the lesson.

Maria: A summary of the lesson?

Amber: Yes.

Maria: And what did we learn in the lesson today?

Amber: We spoke about choices...good and bad ones.

Maria: Ok, very good. And what did you draw here?

Amber: I drew children making a good choice by playing with one another.

4.4 Who is Cristiano?

An extract taken from Philippa's diary written on 14th October 2015:

"I first met Cristiano about four years ago, when I was asked to go and observe him in class. I started my observation when it was nearly break time. In class, I observed that day that Cristiano wanted to learn and participated during the lessons. However, when he went out in the yard for break time, he hit other children and fought with his peers. A few days later we had parents' day at our school and Cristiano's mother came to speak to Maria and I. She told us that when Cristiano was only three years old, his behaviour was very challenging and the head of school had suggested to her that it would be best if the child received an assessment. Cristiano was assessed and it was noted that the child exhibited SEBD. Cristiano was given the full time one-to-one support of a learning support assistant."

"When Cristiano joined the nurture group, it was noted that he fully engaged in the sessions. He participated and waited his turn. In Year 4, Cristiano did not get along with his LSA and ended up answering back when his LSA would tell him to do something. He exhibited defiant behaviour towards his LSA and regularly fought with his classmates during break time. He liked his teacher, and whenever his teacher explained to him what he should and should not do, he tried his best to follow his teacher's advice. In Year 4, there was a new boy in Cristiano's class. He had arrived in the middle of the school year. This boy had passed through a lot of challenges in his life. I never thought that Cristiano would be the boy in class to help the new boy, knowing that he had a history of fighting and hitting children in class. But Cristiano and this boy built a very close friendship, and it was Cristiano who made this boy feel welcome at school."

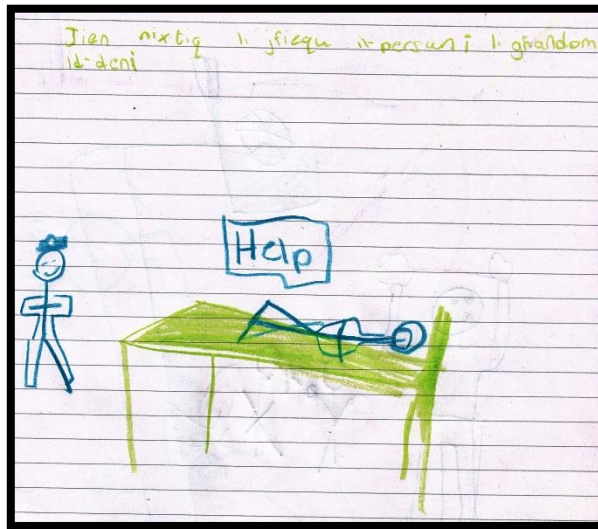
"In Year 5, Cristiano was looking forward for the scholastic year to end, because his mother was pregnant and he was going to become a brother. He spoke about how he was going to help his mother take care of the baby. Although the break time incidents continued, I felt that Cristiano had a caring side to him. He showed acceptance when there was a new boy at school, and his caring side was also shown when there was

going to be a new sibling at home. A few days ago I was at Cristiano's IEP meeting. Apart from myself, present at the meeting were Cristiano's mother, the school INCO, his class teacher and the LSA that supports him. During this meeting the class teacher was very negative. The LSA supported Cristiano's teacher and was also very critical of Cristiano. Whenever I tried to speak, Cristiano's teacher said that I was not realistic and that I only see the positive in the boy, while for her Cristiano does not have any strengths. I fear that unless the teacher gets to know Cristiano better and is more positive towards him, it is going to be a long, miserable year for Cristiano, his teacher and the LSA that supports him."

4.4.1 Listening to Cristiano's Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

Cristiano chose to include five diary entries. When I asked Cristiano's mother whether she approved my inclusion of the following entries, she seconded Cristiano's choice. Usually when writing in his diary, Cristiano preferred to sit in the tent. Then he used to go next to Philippa and explain further what he had written in his journal. There was one instance when he decided to go on the sofa in the nurture room to draw in his diary. While he usually preferred to draw, Cristiano would also write titles and label the things he had drawn using writing. The following section presents Cristiano's diary entries and the transcript of a conversation that took place between Philippa and Cristiano after he had drawn and written in his journal:

Cristiano's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his first diary entry:

Philippa: What did you write and draw in the diary today?

Cristiano: I wrote the following sentence: I wish for all the sick people to be cured and then I drew a doctor and myself at hospital.

Philippa: Why did you draw yourself in a hospital?

Cristiano: Because this summer I went to hospital.

Philippa: You were in hospital this summer? What happened?

Cristiano: I had...I was swimming in the sea (and sea) and when I was swimming there was a rock and then...

Philippa: Hmmm (Sigh)

Cristiano: And I hit my foot with this rock and I felt dizzy. I think I felt dizzy also because of the heat.

Philippa: From the heat...

Cristiano: I did not want to jump when I hit the rock.

Philippa: But did you jump?

Cristiano: No.

Philippa: And then what happened then?

Cristiano: I had to go to hospital. The doctor at hospital was very kind.

Philippa: And so you want to help others like the doctor has helped you, right?

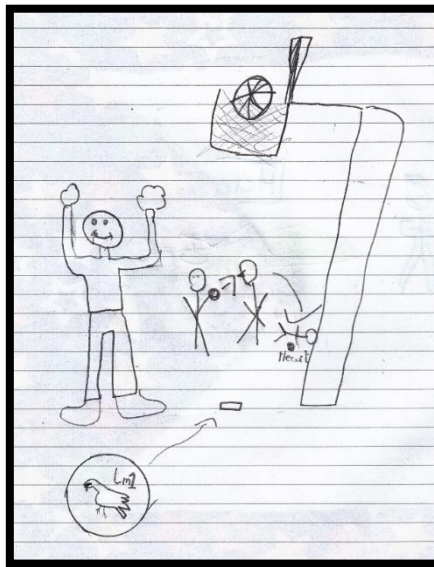
Cristiano: Yes, that's right.

Philippa: That is very kind indeed.

Cristiano: I want to help other people.

Philippa: Ok. Thanks for your drawing and thoughts.

Cristiano's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his second diary entry:

Philippa: You're ready from your diary?

Cristiano: Yes.

Philippa: What did you draw in your diary today?

Cristiano: I drew the children, well I drew my friends in the yard. We, before coming here, we had PE.

Philippa: Ok and what did you do in PE?

Cristiano: We were playing basketball and, then, you see these boys...

Philippa: Yes, I was going to ask you about that?

Cristiano: These boys, they are Noel and Johan, they, well Johan hit Noel with the ball in his head, and, Noel hit him back. They started to fight and Noel fell on the floor.

Philippa: Ok and then was happened?

Cristiano: The PE teacher, went, took them to the head of school.

Philippa: And how to you think they felt?

Cristiano: Sad for sure, and, I think, they were angry...

Philippa: Ok.

Cristiano: ...and hurt.

Philippa: And who is this boy standing here.

Cristiano: That is me.

Philippa: Ok and what are you doing there?

Cristiano: I feel happy, because, well before, whenever I saw someone fighting, I used to fight too, but, I didn't fight today.

Philippa: Ok and here what did you draw?

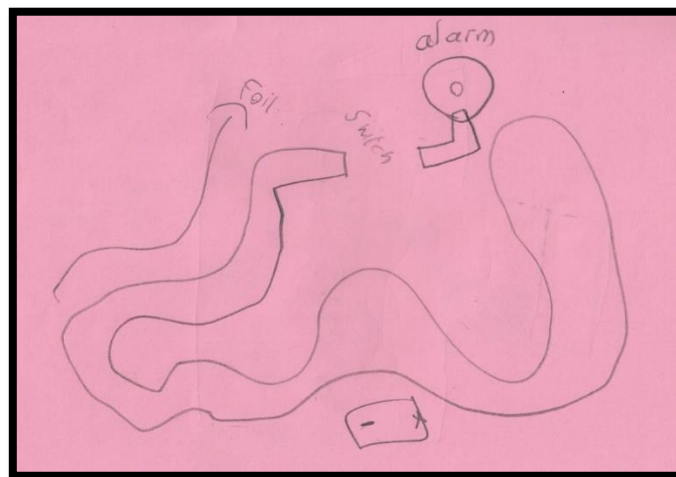
Cristiano: I drew, today I got this box from home. I have old coins in it and I drew the old lira.

Philippa: Ok good.

Cristiano: I go back to class now.

Philippa: Yes sure.

Cristiano's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano following his third diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw in the diary today?

Cristiano: This is the coil, because, this is the switch, and when, when, we pressed, these, and we did a battery here and then the alarm started, like this titttt.

Philippa: When you did all this system? And so where did you learn all this?

Cristiano: This...this is the circuit. Look for example here.

Philippa: And in which lesson did you learn to do this?

Cristiano: In science.

Philippa: Ok and do you like science?

Cristiano: Yes, I like doing these like this. I am going to do this at home.

Philippa: Ok that's good.

Cristiano: Do you like science?

Philippa: Yes, I do. Did you do the experiment yourself or did the teacher do it?

Cristiano: No, we did it.

Philippa: With whom did you do the experiment?

Cristiano: We were in a group work, in a group. Everyone, we had the instructions, we built the circuit and we did the circuit.

Philippa: Ok. Good and how did you feel?

Cristiano: Happy, I guess. Because we managed to do the circuit.

Cristiano's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his fourth diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over there?

Cristiano: Whiskey.

Philippa: And why did you draw whiskey.

Cristiano: Because there are a lot of people who drink and I did it so they don't drink.

Philippa: And when do they drink whiskey? When do they drink whiskey but?

Cristiano: When they drink.

Philippa: Ok, when they drink and you why did you draw that?

Cristiano: I do not think it is a good idea to drink whiskey.

Philippa: Why do you think that?

Cristiano: It is not good for me. For no one.

Philippa: Ok. So whiskey is not good for us. And why did you draw parts of the whiskey green?

Cristiano: That is like poison.

Philippa: Ok...

Cristiano: When you drink whiskey you are, you take poison. We had a lesson about alcohol today before I came here.

Philippa: I see...Do you wish to tell me anything else about this picture?

Cristiano: No, that was all.

Cristiano's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano following his fifth diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw in your diary today?

Cristiano: What do you think?

Philippa: I don't know you have to tell me?

Cristiano: I drew the pizza that we did today here.

Philippa: Ok. And why did you draw yourself that way?

Cristiano: I love cooking, and I love, like, pizza and when I grow up I want to cook, to wish to become a chef.

Philippa: Ok. So how did you feel today?

Cristiano: Very happy...excited.

Philippa: That's good, I am glad you enjoyed making and eating the pizza.

4.5 Who is James?

An extract taken from my diary on 11th October 2015:

“James is a ten-year-old boy and is currently in Year 6. I first got to know James when he was in Year 3. Once I was supervising James’ class and he came up to me and asked me if it would be possible to go and get a book from his sister. I asked him in which class his sister was and he said that she was in his same class. I realised that James is a twin. I also could see that he is very protective towards his twin sister Katya and his younger sister Amy. In fact, I have often observed him helping his sister Amy by holding her satchel. Being in the same class as his sister Katya did not help James at first because he was a bit dependent on her, especially when he forgot his book and could not do his homework. In Year 4 and Year 5, James was placed in a different class so as to encourage more independence in James. However, James struggled in class. He was forgetting his homework, was always talking and chatting with his peers, and he was not finishing his tasks at school. His teacher was concerned about this and referred him to the nurture group.”

“When James first came to the nurture group, I could easily notice that he likes animals and loves to go and help his father on the farm. In fact, when he grows up he wishes to become a vet. In his spare time, he also goes to help his grandfather at his bakery. When he first came to the nurture group, I noticed that James was a very technical child. He did not go with the flow, but rather used to say and do what he felt was the right thing to say and do. I observed that he was also very assertive in the decisions that he took. In the nurture group he formed a positive friendship with a classmate of his, and they enjoyed doing activities and tasks together. Although James seemed to have settled in the nurture group, he was still having difficulties in class. He felt that at times, he was blamed by his teacher, other children picked on him and he was always given the blame. At times, he used to come to the nurture group to speak to me, and once I suggested to him that he should write about the matter that was concerning him in his journal. On that particular day, he really opened up and after that, whenever I gave James his diary, he used to really enjoy writing and/or drawing in it.”

4.5.1 Listening to James's Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

When James used to come to the nurture group, he usually chose to go to different places to write in his diary. However, the most common place where he would write was a desk. James chose to include six of his diary entries for this research project, which his mother also approved of. James usually used to write in point form in his journal. However, there were two instances when he decided to accompany the writing with drawings. This section presents James' diary entries and the transcript of the conversations James and I had after he wrote in his journal on these six occasions:

James's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his first journal entry:

Maria: What did you write and draw in your diary today?

James: This is what I wrote...In the nurture group, in my diary I wrote (reading from his diary), today, I am feeling very good. Mr. White also makes sure that I am happy in class and I am playing (football) with Melita Stars and doing a good sport.

Maria: You look very happy that you are in Mr. White's class this year?

James: Yes, very. In fact this weekend Mr. White is coming to the bread market that my grandfather does every year. Are you coming Ms.?

Maria: No, sorry but I cannot. I will be abroad. I will be studying at Sheffield.

James: Oh. I see...Did you pack your bag already?

Maria: No not yet. So Mr. White will be coming to the bread market?

James: Yes and Kurt, you know my friend in my class...

Maria: Yes, I know him.

James:...he is coming to do the bread pudding with me.

Maria: That's good.

James: And Mr. White, he wants a baguette for free.

Maria: Ok. That's good. I wish I could come but I cannot.

James: No problem Ms. You will come next year.

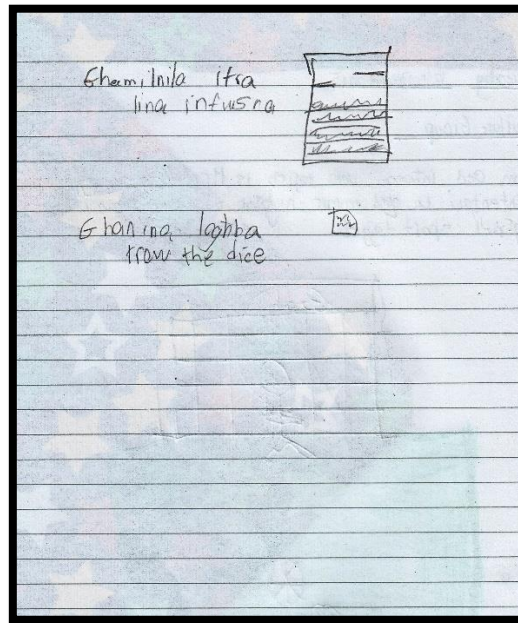
Maria: Yes sure. And you wrote that you are playing football with the Melita Stars

right?

James: I am enjoying going to football practice, I, I miss training, I am very happy going there and I love coming here as well.

Maria: Good James. I am glad you like it here!

James's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his second diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today James?

James: I drew a letter that I wrote to myself today in the Nurture Group. Can you take a picture of the letter.

Maria: Yes sure. Why?

James: Because you told us that we are going to put this letter in an envelope, seal it and then read it when school is about to finish.

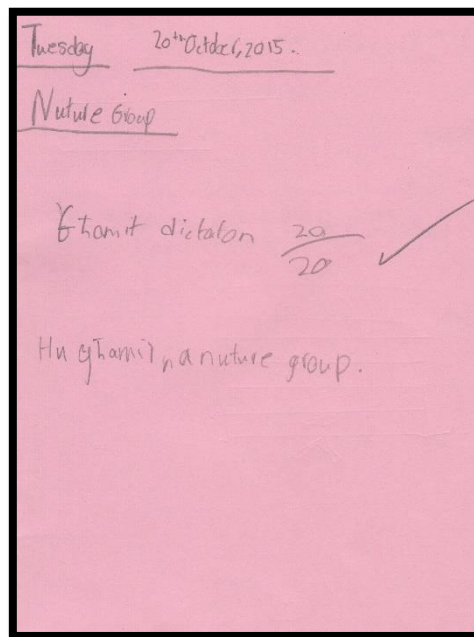
Maria: Ok.

James: And I wish to keep a copy of the letter in my diary as I do not wish to write the letter again in my diary.

Maria: No problem. (I took a photo with my mobile phone).

James: This is what I wrote in the letter. Dear James, We have just started a new school year. This is your last year because you are in Year 6 and next year you will be in Form 1. You will make new friends and you will be in a new year. Never give up! You have to always try your best like what you learn in the nurture group. This year you also started a new sport. You started to play football with the Melita Stars, however, you also need to study this year. Yours, James.

James's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his third journal entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today James?

James: That I did, that I did a dictation and I got everything right.

Maria: Ok. And how did you feel about that?

James: Good. Well at first, my teacher started to give the copybook of the children who had to do corrections in their dictation, and I said how long will it take for my teacher to give me the copybook, and then he told us that myself, my sister, Frank and Sophie, I think, he told us, we have got everything right. And when my teacher gave me the copybook, you know, I was overjoyed.

Maria: Ok. That's great.

James: And I also wrote that we came to the nurture group and we saw a video of Charlie...

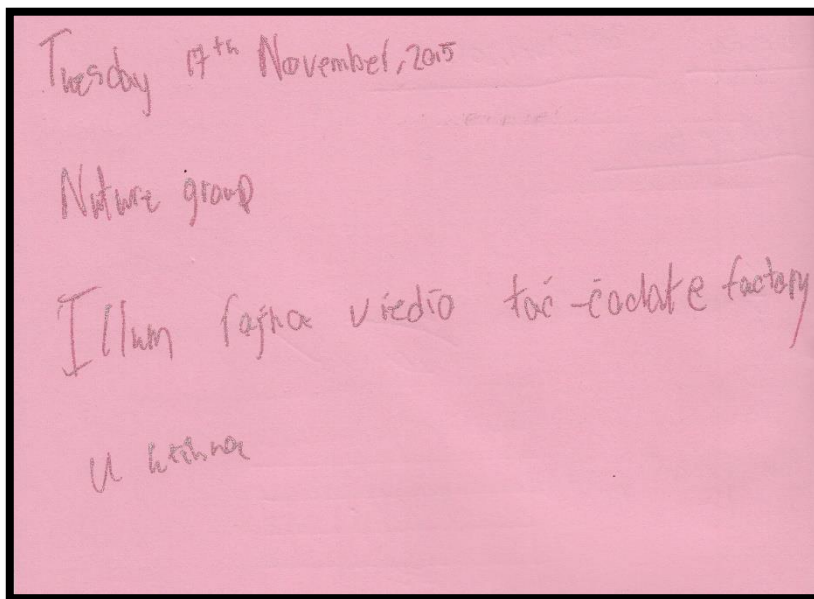
Maria: ...Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

James: Yes...and we spoke about Charlie and how he never gave up.

Maria: Yes Charlie had difficulties in his life but, like you said, he never gave up.

James: Yes and I wrote that in my diary to remember the story of Charlie.

James's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his fourth journal entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today?

James: That we saw a film on the Chocolate Factory, and (and), I wrote on the Chocolate Factory.

Maria: Ok and if you were to choose to be a friend to one of those children, which one would you choose? Who do you choose to be a friend with?

James: Eh, the most that I would want to be a friend with is with Charlie?

Maria: Ok, with Charlie and why is that?

James: Charlie is the one that owns the chocolate factory?

Maria: No, that is Willy Wonka.

James: Yes, with him.

Maria: Why do you want to be a friend with Willy Wonka?

James: Because, he lives in the factory. And I later on, I might own my grandfather's bakery so I would be like him.

Maria: Ok, is there any other reason why you would be friends with Willy Wonka?

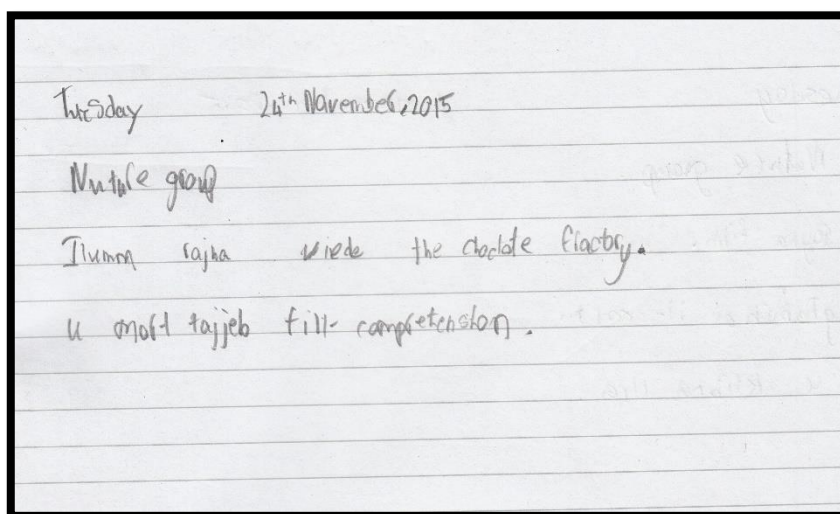
James: He is creative. And I think he has a lot of money and it is good if you are rich.

Maria: Ok, that would be good, true. Do you wish to tell me anything else?

James: No. Bye Miss.

Maria: Bye, James.

James's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today, James?

James: We continued to watch Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and that I did well in a composition.

Maria: Ok and what was the composition about?

James: My toys.

Maria: And what did you write about?

James: That I have a pet, because you could write about a pet not a toy. And I spoke about my parrot, his colour, what he can do, whether he loves me or not, whether he love me the most or who he loves the most.

Maria: Ok.

James: He loves my mum the most. A parrot loves whom he spend the most of the time with. He loves my mum the most, because we don't spend a lot of time (at home). He doesn't like my dad.

Maria: I see.

James: Whom he loves the most. My mum. And then I wrote why I love my pet and why. I love my pet because we bought him when he was a baby. When he was a baby, he used to play a lot with me, but now, he loves my mum the most.

Maria: Ok.

James: You know what he has learned to do now. I will be watching something, a

video on my tablet and he comes and he would want to watch it with me.

Maria: Ok.

James: And even if I touch the screen of my tablet, he isn't angry at me. But my sisters?

Maria: Ehe.

James: When they do to have their dance lessons, he is very calm, but when they are there, Katya and Amy, he attacks them.

Maria: I think he knows who loves animals, because, you love animals.

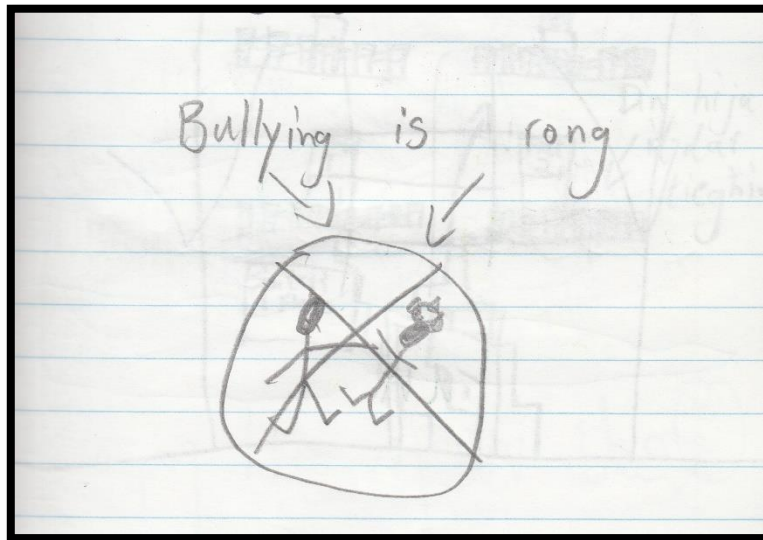
James: Yes, true

Maria: Do you want to tell me anything else about your writing?

James: That was all that I wrote.

Maria: Ok, bye James.

James's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his sixth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write and draw over there James?

James: I wrote 'bullying is wrong'. Then I drew a boy hitting another boy.

Maria: Why did he hit him?

James: He was calling him names.

Maria: James did anything happen at school today? You look quiet.

James: No, nothing!

Maria: What was he calling him?

James: He, the boy, that was being hit, had called the other boy warden.

Maria: Why?

James: Miss, do you promise not to tell anyone?

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If by telling someone, I can help you.

James: I'm afraid.

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If, if I do not know what's (happen) happening, I cannot do anything about it.

James: Francesco, you know, the boy that is in my class...

Maria: Yes, what about him?

James: He, and Karl, and Jake are calling me warden. I am very angry about it. I wish I can hit them and make them stop.

Maria: And why are they calling you that, warden, I mean?

James: Last week, Katya, forgot her Maths at home and I, I told the Sir what happened.

Maria: Ok.

James: And then, he told me warden, because, he (he) wanted my sister to tell him.

Maria: And how did you feel about that?

James: I help my sister. My sister is not like me. I mean, I didn't want her to get into trouble, that's why I told him.

Maria: Ok and how did you feel when your teacher told you warden?

James: I didn't like it. I shut up and didn't speak.

Maria: Ok and then what's happened?

James: Then in break, Francesco, Karl and Jake started to call me warden. All the boys are calling me that. All except Kurt, whenever I speak they say "warden" or "shut up warden".

Maria: It is not nice to have people call you names.

James: I really wish to make it stop.

Maria: Can I speak to your teacher?

James: Miss, I don't want them to make more fun of me.

Maria: James that is bullying. People shouldn't give you names. No one. Not even a teacher. I am here to help you.

James: Thanks miss.

Maria: Would you allow me to speak to your teacher?

James: Yes but tell him to not make fun of me.

Maria: If someone makes fun of you, I will then speak to the head of school. This calling of names has to stop.

James: I know.

Maria: And you, you have to be assertive. When they call you warden, when Francesco or Karl or Jake tell you warden, you look at them and tell them Stop.

James: I try but I feel so small when this happens.

Maria: I know. How are you feeling now?

James: Better, much better.

Maria: I am glad. I will speak to your teacher tomorrow.

James: Ok. Bye, miss and thank you.

Maria: Bye, James.

4.6 Who is Lara?

An extract taken from my diary on 12th October 2015:

“If there was a child who I can see myself in at her age, it would be Lara. Perhaps that is why I asked her and her mother whether she could be a participant in this study. Lara is a seven-year-old girl. This year she is in Year 3. Last year, Lara was referred to the nurture group because she was exhibiting a lack of self-worth and low self-esteem. At the same time, she was acting defiant, wanted to get all her answers right, and if she got an answer wrong she would start crying. At home Lara is an only child. When she was younger, her parents were concerned because she would not speak and was continuously having tantrums. Her parents took her for a psychological assessment and were told that the girl might have ASD. However, when she started to speak and her tantrums were reduced, this was discarded.”

“At school, Lara always comes to me with a smile on her face, and whenever we have a nurture group session, she usually wants to sit next to me. At first I did not know why, but I saw a lot of Lara in myself. Like Lara, I too was an only child for the first five-and-a-half years of my life. I also had low self-esteem and a lack of self-worth. Last year, while observing Lara in her class, I noticed that whenever the teacher asked the children a question, she would put up her hand to give the answer. However, she would not speak out loud; if she got her answer right, she would smile, while a wrong answer would cause her to stamp her feet or hide her face.”

“I also always wanted to get all my answers right, I would often cry my eyes out when I didn't; however, I was never defiant. It was a must to get all the words right in my weekly dictation. One other example was when in Year 2, I failed to score an A in one of three tests, gaining a B+ instead. Once Lara's mother told me that her main priority when she arrives home after school is to finish her homework. On one particular Friday last year, she was given a lot of homework and did not manage to finish it all by the end of the day. Lara had a nightmare that night and woke up crying in mid-sleep, worried that she would not be able to finish her work by Monday. Like Lara, as a child I always

made sure to finish my work on time. Once, my family went on a trip to Gozo. On the way back, a storm broke out and the ferry did not work. I was not worried about the ferry, but that I was going to miss school.”

4.6.1 Listening to Lara’s Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

This section presents Lara’s diary entries and the transcript of the conversations I had with Lara after she would write in her journal during the course of my research. Lara drew five times in her diary. After speaking to Lara and to her mother, they both gave their consent for me to include all five diary entries. When Lara used to come to the nurture group either for a nurture group session or to write in her journal, she preferred to sit next to me. When she was drawing in her journal, she used to prefer to focus on the drawing, and would later explain to me what she had drawn once her work had been finished.

Lara's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her first diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Lara: A princess.

Maria: And what is the princess' name?

Lara: Daisy

Maria: Daisy?

Lara: Yes. Daisy is a beautiful name for a princess right?

Maria: Yes, it is and where does this princess, Daisy, I mean, live?

Lara: In a big palace.

Maria: In a palace...And do you want to visit this palace someday? To meet her...to meet Daisy?

Lara: Yes, that is my wish.

Maria: And when did you find out about Daisy?

Lara: I don't know but a long time ago.

Maria: How is Daisy feeling today?

Lara: She is ok, I guess, calm.

Maria: What does Daisy like to do?

Lara: She likes to play with her toys.

Maria: Ok and what is her favourite toy?

Lara: A doll.

Maria: And her dislikes?

Lara: I don't know, she likes to do everything. Sometimes she complains that she has a lot of homework but she still does it.

Maria: Ok...and does Daisy have any friends?

Lara: No, because she lives in a palace and the other children, the children of the kingdom, they cannot go into the palace.

Maria: She plays alone then?

Lara: Yes, but she has many toys, so she doesn't mind it.

Maria: Ok good.

Lara: Bye Ms. Maria.

Lara's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her second diary entry:

Lara: Miss, do you know tomorrow is Saturday?

Maria: Yes, it is and what are you going to do tomorrow?

Lara: Tomorrow, I am going to draw.

Maria: Ok and what are you going to draw?

Lara: I have drawing lesson. I go to an art teacher.

Maria: Ok that great!

Lara: And then I draw these (Lara points to her diary. Lara was drawing a butterfly).

Maria: And what do you draw when you have your drawing lesson?

Lara: Butterflies because they have beautiful colours.

Maria: And which is your favourite colour?

Lara: All of them.

Maria: Why all of them?

Lara: Because all the colours are beautiful together.

Lara continues to draw.

Maria: And what is this?

Lara: This is the house with different shapes.

Maria: Ok

Lara continues to draw.

Lara: I drew it.

Maria: Ok. What else did you draw?

Lara: A butterfly.

Maria: And what is the name of the butterfly?

Lara: I don't know.

Maria: You don't know. And where is the butterfly so?

Lara: In a garden.

Maria: In a garden. Ok and what are these?

Lara: Flowers.

Maria: They are beautiful flowers indeed. Ok. And how is he feeling? The butterfly?

Lara: Ok, I guess. Happy.

Maria: Why is he feeling happy?

Lara: Because he is in the garden and there's flowers. So he is in a safe place.

Maria: Oh! I see so the flowers are his friends?

Lara: Yes.

Maria: Do you want to tell me something more about your picture?

Lara: No that is all.

Maria: Ok. Good. See you Lara.

Lara: See you.

Lara's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her third diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw today?

Lara: I drew Joy.

Maria: Ok you drew Joy and why did you draw Joy?

Lara: Because Joy is happy and she makes me feel happy.

Maria: And who is Joy?

Lara: Joy is a girl. She lives inside the head of a girl. She is an emotion.

Maria: Ok. Can you tell me about this girl?

Lara: The girl's name is Riley.

Maria: Ok.

Lara: And Riley likes Joy because she wants to feel happy.

Maria: So Riley doesn't like the other emotions?

Lara: Yes she loves them as well.

Maria: Ok she loves them as well. Do you know that Riley needs to use all her emotions?

Lara: Yes, I know. I, too, need to use all my emotions.

Maria: Ok. Do you need to tell me anything else about Riley or Joy?

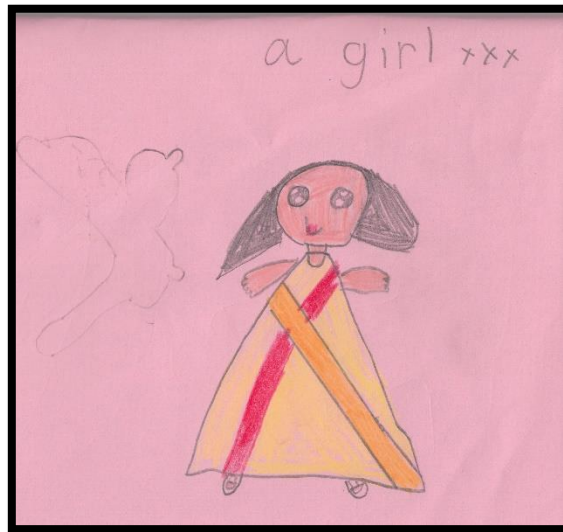
Lara: No, I told you everything I know.

Maria: Ok Lara. Thank you.

Lara: Bye, Ms. Maria

Maria: Bye Lara.

Lara's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her fourth diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw over here dear?

Lara: A girl.

Maria: A girl and what is her name?

Lara: Rose.

Maria: And how old is Rose?

Lara: Seven, like me.

Maria: Ok, like you. And how is Rose feeling today?

Lara: Happy.

Maria: And what does she like to do?

Lara: She likes to dance.

Maria: She likes to dance, ok and what are the things that she doesn't like to do?

Lara: Football.

Maria: Football, ok.

Lara: And she doesn't like rainy days.

Maria: Why is that?

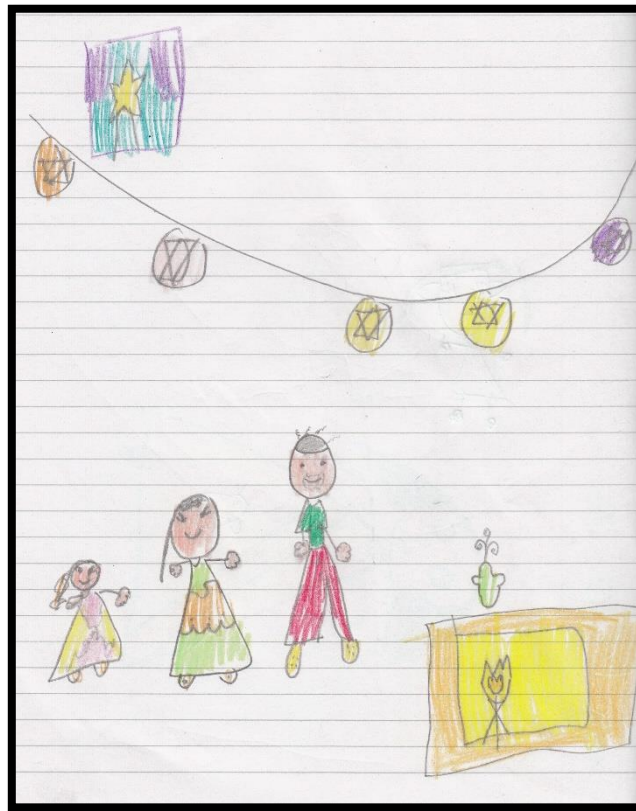
Lara: Because she has no raincoat. She forgot it at home.

Maria: And she get wet so. Ok. But I am sure the rain will stop soon, so I do not think Rose will get wet today. Her mother will bring the raincoat for her. Is there anything else you would like to say about Rose?

Lara: No that's all.

Maria: Ok, thank you.

Lara's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you do over here?

Lara: That, that of Christmas.

Maria: Christmas decorations?

Lara: Yes, we did it, me mummy and daddy.

Maria: Em, you did the Christmas decorations over here, ehe. And what is this?

Lara: That is the curtain.

Maria: The curtains are Christmas ones. And here what is this?

Lara: That is of the fireplace.

Maria: Eh, you did a decorated fireplace as well.

Lara: And the vase. We decorated the vase.

Maria: Yes, I see the vase decorated. Waw. It is very nice and Christmassy. And how are you feeling that you did the decorations with your parents.

Lara: Beautiful.

Maria: Eh, Beautiful.

Lara: Content.

Maria: Ok, I see.

Lara: I love Christmas.

Maria: Me too.

Lara: Bye, Ms. Maria.

Maria: Bye Lara.

4.7 Who is Lionel?

An extract taken from Philippa's diary written on 14th October 2015:

“Two years ago, the head of school phoned in the nurture group and asked us to go and observe a particular Year 1 class in our school, as the children in this particular class were resorting to a number of challenging behaviours. The first observation was done by Maria, and later I went to observe this class myself. One of the boys I observed was Lionel, then a five-year-old who was always with a smile on his face. He was also energetic and always on the go. During my observation of the class, I remember him coming up to me to ask me who I was. He then went back to his seat, and about two minutes later he came up to me again and asked me why I was there. Very soon after the observation, Maria and I went to speak to the head of school. She suggested that we speak to some parents, Lionel's mother included, to request their consent for a number of these children to be referred for different nurture group programmes.”

“When Lionel's mother came to speak to us, she was very worried about him. He was also exhibiting challenging behaviour at home, and she did not wish for this behaviour to hinder Lionel from learning. His mother readily accepted that Lionel comes to the nurture group and from then on, Lionel started to attend on a regular basis. Since his first day, he gladly participated in the activities. He really liked to listen to stories, and whenever we told the children a story and we asked them about it, Lionel would surely discuss what he had learnt from it. He also used to enjoy drawing part of the story in his journal. Once, when he was in Year 2, I asked him why he had made a drawing of Hansel and Gretel, to which he replied that he wanted to remember the story and what he had learnt from it as a result”.

4.7.1 Listening to Lionel's Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

When Lionel came to the nurture group, he preferred to stay close to a friend of his. While I was conducting my research, Lionel preferred to draw in his journal in different places. He drew six times in his diary during the course of my research, and when asked

about their inclusion in my research, both he and his mother agreed to feature all six entries:

Lionel's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this first diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over here Lionel?

Lionel: Hmm, I drew the alligator. Am I saying the word right? I meant the small crocodile.

Philippa: Yes, the alligator is a small crocodile.

Lionel: Ok.

Philippa: Ok this is the alligator. And who is this?

Lionel: Louis the Lion.

Philippa: Ok. So this is Alfred Alligator and this is Louis the Lion.

Lionel: Yes because Louis the Lion is holding Alfred Alligator's tail.

Philippa: And why is he holding his tail?

Lionel. Because, you know, in the story Louis Lion helped Alfred Alligator.

Philippa: Ok to help him. And here what did you draw?

Lionel: Here, is the car. He (*Alfred Alligator*) is playing with the car and Louis Lion is making sure that nobody hits his car, and, and his tail also.

Philippa: Why is he helping Alfred Alligator?

Lionel: He is being gentle towards him, because, you know, he hurt his tail.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this second entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over here Lionel?

Lionel: The Heroes.

Philippa: The Heroes. Oh, I see.

Lionel: Yes, first I drew, the heroes that I love. This is Thor. This is Spiderman and this is Captain America.

Philippa: Ok Thor, Spiderman and Captain America. And what are these heroes doing?

Lionel: They are checking a garden.

Philippa: And why are they checking a garden?

Lionel: So that if they find a monster or a villain, they kill it.

Philippa: Oh! I see. And who are these villains also afraid of?

Lionel: Thor, Spiderman and Captain America, they are searching for the other heroes.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And the other heroes are soon coming.

Philippa: And why are the other heroes coming to his garden?

Lionel: So that they find other monsters, they can come and save the other heroes.

Philippa: Ok. And who are the monsters that they are afraid of?

Lionel: The monsters of Scooby Doo.

Philippa: Why are they afraid of these monsters?

Lionel: Because they come at night and when it is dark.

Philippa: Oh! I see.

Lionel: But the heroes they can save us from the monsters, so I won't be afraid anymore. I am not afraid of the Scooby Doo monsters.

Philippa: You shouldn't be. No monster is coming for you.

Lionel: Sure.

Philippa: Yes sure. Thank you, Lionel. See you soon.

Lionel: Bye.

Lionel's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this third entry:

Philippa: What did you drawing in your diary today Lionel?

Lionel: I drew Louis and Alfred.

Philippa: Ok, and what are Louis the Lion and Alfred the Alligator doing.

Lionel: They are talking. The lion, Louis, is saying sorry.

Philippa: Why is that?

Lionel: Because Alfred brought a box with him, a box to school to show it to the children.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And Louis the lion, he was talking and not obeying the teacher.

Philippa: Ok and then what happened?

Lionel: The alligator, Alfred, I mean couldn't tell, the other children, he couldn't do the show and tell, because, Louis was wasting time.

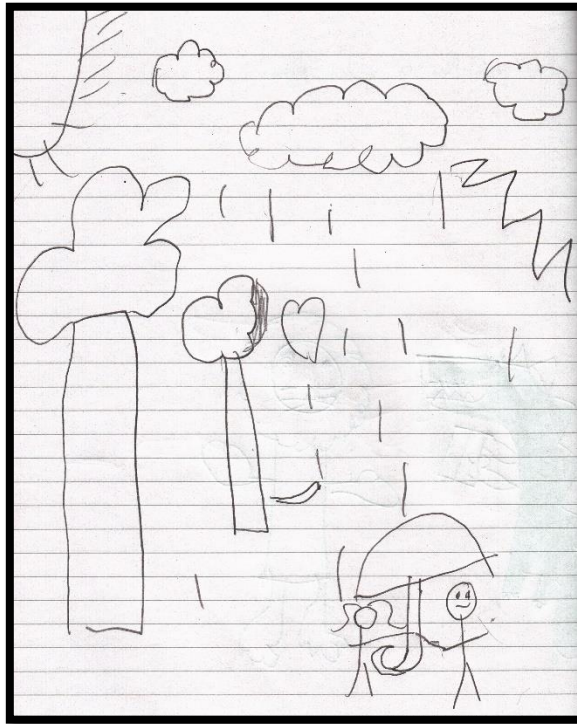
Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And when Louis realised he was wrong, he said sorry to Alfred.

Philippa: Ok. Did you like the story?

Lionel: Yes, very.

Lionel's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this fourth entry:

Philippa: What did you drawing over there?

Lionel: This is a tree, it is broken, because, there was a storm. This is the part of the tree that broke, look. And this is a boy and a girl. The boy is lending the girl an umbrella as she doesn't have one.

Philippa: Oh, I see. She doesn't have one. That is nice of the boy. And the boy and the girl they are close to the broken tree, right?

Lionel: Yes, they are. But not as close. So if the tree fall, or if, they won't get hurt. Even branches from the tree could fall. They do not want to get hurt.

Philippa: And what are their names?

Lionel: The boy is Mark and she is Emily.

Philippa: Ok, good.

Lionel: Is it a good drawing?

Philippa: Yes, it is. I like it very much.

Lionel: You know, they are afraid of the thunder.

Philippa: Oh, I see.

Lionel: And the storm is not letting the sun come out.

Philippa: Ok. Are you afraid of storms?

Lionel: No, but Emily is.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: But the boy, Mark, no.

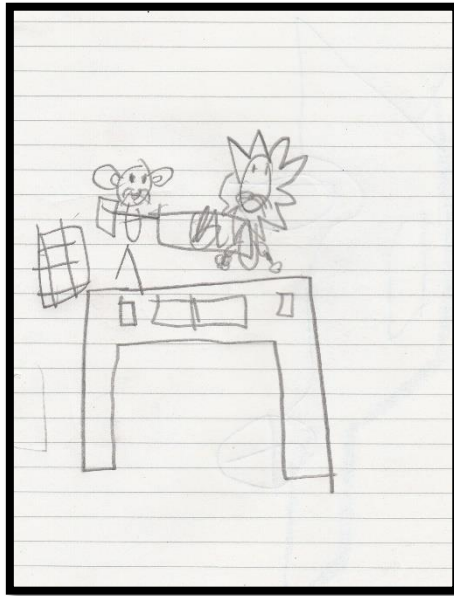
Philippa: Ok, Mark is not afraid of storms. Do you wish to tell me anything else about this drawing?

Lionel: No, that is all.

Philippa: Ok, the storm will soon pass. Tell Emily that so she won't get, be, worried anymore.

Lionel: Ok, I will.

Lionel's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this fifth entry:

Philippa: Who is this?

Lionel: This is the lion, he is taking things from here and putting them in the dustbin. And the monkey...

Philippa: Ehe.

Lionel: took all the bottles, Mona the Monkey, took the bottles of those and threw them in there.

Philippa: She threw them in the dustbin as well.

Lionel: Yes.

Philippa: And Miss Beanie, did she like it that they threw everything in the dustbin?

Lionel: No

Philippa: And we when we are in class, when we start doing the same as the lion and the monkey, when we break things and throw them away, do we do the right thing?

Lionel: No we should do that.

Philippa: And what should we do instead?

Lionel: We throw away the paper and we do not throw away the scissors.

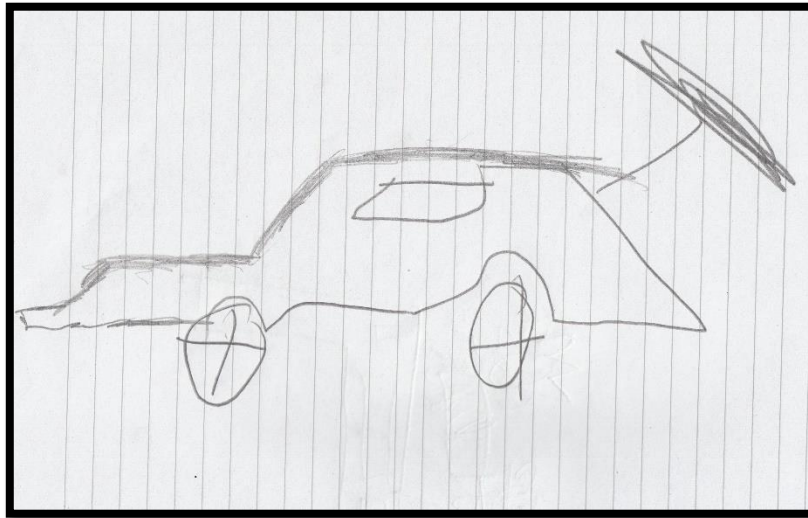
Philippa: Exactly. We throw away things that we cannot use anymore. Right?

Lionel: Yes, I try, I try not to waste.

Philippa: Ok that is very good. Did you like the story?

Lionel: Yes.

Lionel's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this sixth entry:

Philippa: What did you draw today Lionel?

Lionel: I drew a car that speeds with fire.

Philippa: That speeds with fire?

Lionel: Ehe.

Philippa: And why did you draw this car?

Lionel: Because I love them.

Philippa: You love it? Do you have one?

Lionel nodding.

Philippa: No.

Lionel: But I wish to have one?

Philippa: Ok. You wish to have one?

Lionel: Yes, for Christmas. I want one with a remote control.

Philippa: Ok with a remote control.

Lionel: I am going to ask Father Christmas for it.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: I am going to post a drawing like this in the letter box.

Philippa: Ok. Make sure that you are nice when you write the letter.

Lionel: Yes, I know.

Philippa: Ok. Good. I hope you get this remote control car.

Lionel: Me too.

4.8 Who is Trevor?

An extract taken from my diary on the 11th of October 2015:

“Trevor is an eight-year old boy and now he is in Year 4. In Year 2, he was referred to the nurture group because he was exhibiting challenging behaviour in class. Since he started coming to the nurture group, I could notice that Trevor is a very positive boy and always has a smile on his face. By the end of Year 2, I could notice that Trevor had settled in class, and we (Philippa and I) were thinking that it would be best for Trevor to be phased out of the nurture group. However, last year (when Trevor was in Year 3), he started to exhibit challenging behaviour in class once again. Whenever he disobeyed and had a temper tantrum, he would be taken to the assistant head of school in charge of his year group. Unfortunately, instead of calming the boy down, the assistant head used to shout at him, and the situation used to get worse.”

“At times, Trevor used to get really angry and used words like *I hate you!* A bit later he would calm down and hug you, because what he really meant by *I hate you* was that he hated the action you were doing to him. One example was time-out. I could also see that whenever he was angry with a situation, he used to blank out and could use the right words to express how he was feeling and why he was feeling that way. Seeing this situation, I made a pact with Trevor that whenever he felt angry and wanted to come to the nurture group, he could do so. He used to come to the nurture group, ask for the anger management box, and do an activity from the box such as sorting beads into colours, playing Jenga or blow bubbles. Then one day, Trevor came to the nurture group again to use one of the tools to calm down.”

“However, on that particular day, he did not ask for the anger management box, because he had brought a copybook. He said that this was his memory book and that lately, whenever he felt alone and angry, he would write in it. He started to show me this book, and at that point I realised how little I knew about Trevor. From his drawings and writings, I got to know more about his life and daily activities. I also found out that through his memory book, Trevor had devised strategies that he could use to calm

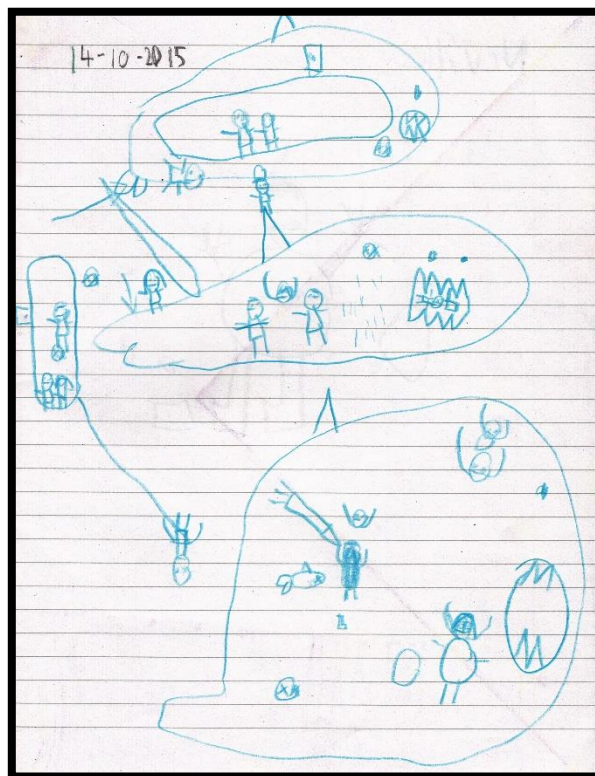
down whenever he felt angry – such as doing some gardening, counting to ten or eating something. At that point, I realised that it could be beneficial for Trevor if he was to be given the opportunity to open up more through journal writing and drawing. I also understood that if I wanted to listen more to the unheard voice of this boy, journal writing and/or drawing could be a useful tool that I could use.”

“This year Trevor’s mother has told me that Trevor has been assessed and diagnosed as having ADHD, ODD and ASD. When reflecting upon the journey that I started with Trevor two years ago, I can relate to the definition of SEBD by Armstrong (2014) as ‘the behaviour of children and young people that causes adults concern’. As previously stated, I feel comfortable with associating myself with the claim that SEBD is about perception, that is, how the adult views the behaviour of the child. Trevor was easily labelled as a boy with challenging behaviour; however, little did the educators around him understand how something such as a simple diary could help Trevor in his social, emotional and behavioural needs.”

4.8.1 Listening to Trevor’s Voice through Journal Writing and Drawing

When I asked Trevor and his mother, they both gave their consent to include all his diary entries. Trevor used two different methods: journaling and conversing with me about his diary entries. For the first seven entries, Trevor used to come and sit next to me and narrate to me the story he was drawing. While drawing he would build a conversation with me. In the last two diary entries, he chose to first draw and write on his diary and then to speak to me about what he had written and drawn. There was one instance when Trevor got so angry that to calm down I used Jenga – another tool that usually calmed him down. On that occasion, Trevor was able to calm down and continue his conversation with me about the drawing:

Trevor's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his first diary entry:

Trevor starts his drawing.

Maria: Can you tell me what is that?

Trevor: Great white.

Maria: Great white shark?

Trevor nodding.

Maria: And why did you draw a great white shark.

Trevor: Because I love it, that's why.

Maria: Ok, you love it.

Trevor: What do you think this is?

Trevor points to the figure in the great white shark.

Maria: I think it is a person.

Trevor: Yes, can you guess who this is?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: Someone who I do not like very much.

Maria: I do not know. Who is this?

Trevor: I do not know either. No you don't know. I am letting you guess.

Maria: I am going to guess myself. Ok...

Trevor points to another figure he is drawing.

Trevor: And this is Amber.

Maria: That is Amber?

Trevor: Yes because I like Amber. Who do you think is trapped between the shark's teeth?

Maria: I don't know sorry.

Trevor: This is like a riddle...Amber, my teacher...and who else?

Maria: Ok...a riddle. Can I ask you a question?

Trevor: Yes

Maria: Why did you put that person in there?

Trevor: Because he is making me laugh.

Maria: He is making you laugh.

Trevor: Yes, he is making me laugh.

Maria: So you put him in the shark's mouth because he makes you laugh.

Trevor: Yes. So that I put him inside the shark now.

Maria: Why did you put his inside the shark now? What did he do?

Trevor: I want to put him inside his stomach.

Maria: You want to put him inside his stomach, ok. Why?

Trevor: Cos, I don't like him. He bugs me.

Maria: And why does he bug you?

Trevor: He bugs me because when I speak to my teacher he always comes to see what I am telling my teacher.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: And here is a ship for all Duncans (*Duncan is a boy in Trevor's class*) is coming....sorry a submarine.

Maria: Ok a submarine and what is the submarine going to do?

Trevor: He is going to put two more Duncans in the sea.

Maria: How does Duncan feel about this?

Trevor: He doesn't like it....And then I come with teacher....

Maria: And where are you in the drawing?

Trevor: Me?

Maria: Yes you.

Trevor: Wait a minute. This is a story. I am soon coming...The great white shark ate all the Duncans submarine.

Maria: And then?

Trevor: There was an earthquake...This is Duncan, my teacher and Amber.

Maria: And what happens next. Where do you come in?

Trevor: I am coming now. Then I come with my submarine and I save Amber.

Maria: And you don't save your teacher and Duncan?

Trevor: For now I cannot save them because they are dead. They were eaten by the great white shark.

Maria: So they are dead...You could not save them before?

Trevor: I wanted to save Amber first and I could not save them all at once.

Maria: Ok...and what will happen now?

Trevor: I will come with a magic submarine, which is invisible and I will get into the shark's stomach and save my teacher first and then Duncan.

Maria: Ok so you saved them all, even if Duncan bugs you sometimes.

Trevor: Yes...I love them that's why.

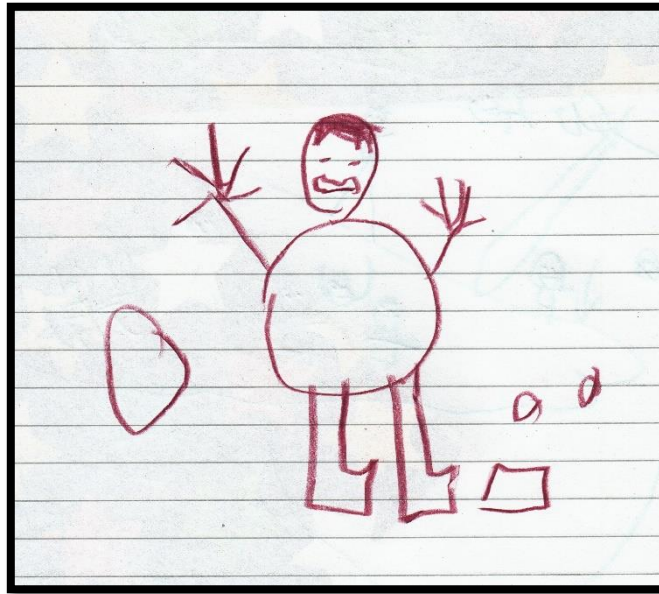
Maria: How does the story continue?

Trevor: You have to wait till next time.

Maria: Ok so the story did not end today?

Trevor: No you have to wait till next time.

Trevor's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his second diary entry:

Maria: What are you going to draw in the diary today?

Trevor: I am going to write Trevor on the top first and then I am going to draw someone.

Maria: Ok that's good.

Trevor drawing.

Trevor: This is Ms. Philippa...and this is Ms. Philippa's car.

Maria: Ok. Why did you draw Ms. Philippa's car?

Trevor: Because her car was not working properly.

Maria: Why was it not working properly?

Trevor: Because her car is old.

Maria: Then what happened?

Trevor: I went and helped her mend the car.

Maria: And why did you decide to draw Ms. Philippa today?

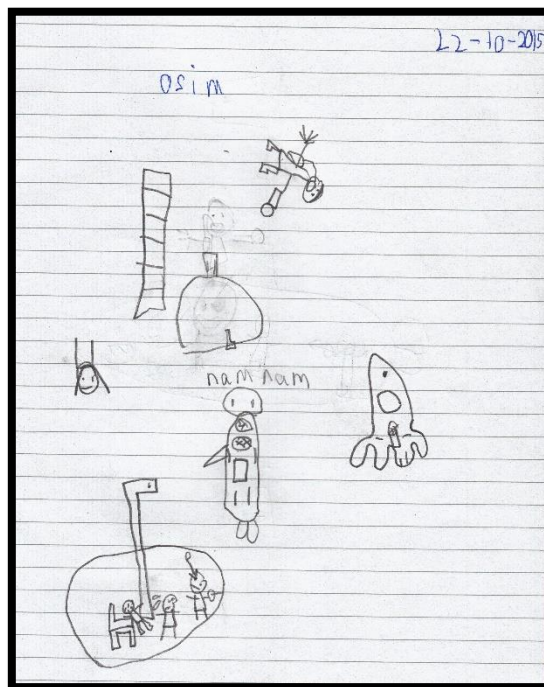
Trevor: Because I love her.

Maria: Why do you love her?

Trevor: Because whenever I come here (*in the nurture group*) and I am feeling angry, she helps me.

Maria: Ok Trevor. Thank you.

Trevor's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his third diary entry:

Trevor: Today' title of the story is Awesome

Maria: Awesome?

Trevor: Yes. Can I have a pencil please?

Maria: Sure.

Trevor: I am going to draw my teacher again.

Trevor humming as he is drawing.

Trevor: This is the sir. He's scuba diving. Look...

Maria: What are you drawing there? What are you drawing?

Trevor: It's the sir and there is Duncan with him scuba diving. I love Duncan.

Maria: Ok

Trevor: Look.

Maria: What's that?

Trevor: That's a tiger shark, no a hammer-head, a hammer-head shark...A hammer-head is better because it doesn't eat them.

Maria: Ok...

Trevor continued drawing.

Maria: What is happening there?

Trevor: You do not know what that is?

Maria: You told me that this is a hammer shark.

Trevor: Yes and it bit the sir.

Maria: It bit the sir and what happens then?

Trevor: You are not seeing this?

Maria: It looks like a foot?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And then?

Trevor: It(*shark*) ate it (*foot*). You know who this is?

Maria: No.

Trevor: This is Amber scuba diving, then.

Maria: Hmmm.

Trevor: Amber is driving the submarine and I have an arrow and I am trying to attack the hammer shark.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I am trying to help Duncan.

Maria: But you..ok you are trying to help Duncan?

Trevor: Yes and if the mission is completed I will then save the sir.

Maria: Do you love your teacher?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Then why did you let a hammer shark bite him?

Trevor: Because he went next to the shark. It's his fault.

Maria: So after you save Duncan, you are going to save your teacher right?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: How?

Trevor: We are going to clip his leg again and nothing will happen. A squid is going to try and catch Duncan.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: But then I saved him. And a lot of water is coming out of the squid.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: You aren't seeing...The crew was saved but the sir died.

Maria: But you told me that you are going to save the sir.

Trevor: I had to help Duncan and then Duncan wanted to save the sir.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I told him not to go but he still wanted to go, so the squid ate him.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: This story continues from the previous story (*first diary entry*).

Trevor turned the page of the first diary entry.

Trevor: You remember this.

Maria: Yes of course I remember.

Trevor continues to draw on the page of today's diary entry.

Maria: Who is this?

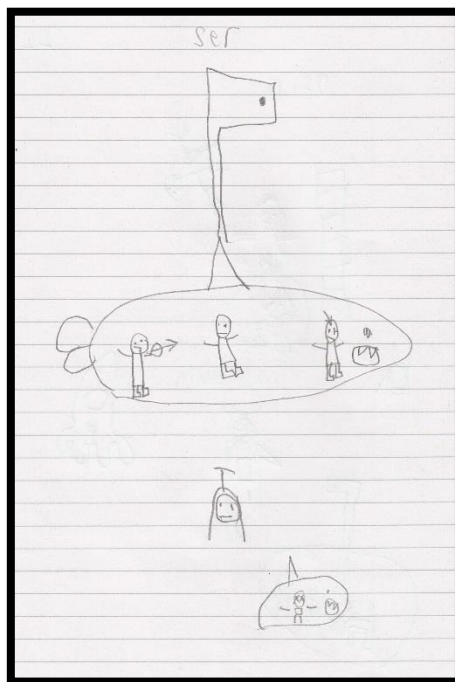
Trevor: This is Ms. Philippa. She became a helicopter head.

Maria: Ok and how does this story end.

Trevor: To find out the ending of the story you have to wait till next time.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his fourth diary entry:

Trevor: Miss, are you coming to see it?

Maria: Yes sure I am coming. What are you drawing over there?

Trevor: I am drawing a man, who is seeing with a scope. From the other story. As we already know them, there is Amber riding...

Maria: And what is this, so?

Trevor: Eh...That's what we drew a submarine.

Maria: A submarine?

Trevor: We changed it...(Trevor continues to draw). And this is me.

Maria: I see.

Trevor: With a bow and arrow.

Maria: Ok with a bow and arrow. And what did you draw here?

Trevor: As you remember that is helicopter head and her name is Ms. Philippa.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: We have to do this story tomorrow. As you may already know the Sir is dead.

Maria: Can he come back to life?

Trevor: He is dead. He can't get alive, if he's dead. He's all in pieces. Broke. Look. And that is all the story for today. We will continue it next time.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I will be coming tomorrow right?

Maria: Yes. I hope so.

Trevor: Then I will continue the story tomorrow.

Trevor's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor whilst he drew his fifth diary entry:

Trevor: Miss, can you please give me something to drink as I am really thirsty.

Maria: Ok, I will pour you a glass of water and you go and get your diary.

Trevor: Ok....I do not know what I am going to draw today.

Maria: You could draw about anything. Maybe you wish to draw how you are feeling today?

Trevor: No, I don't think so. Let me think. I am going to draw about myself.

Maria: Ok that's good!

Trevor: I am going to become a GTA character. So I am going to get into the television and I am playing GTA and then I get into the game.

Maria: Ok so you are going to go inside the game, ok.

Trevor: It's true! I become one of the characters.

Maria: Ok you went into the television and you became the game. And then what happened?

Trevor: Then I start my mission...and my mission is to save Micheal.

Maria: Ok and who are you in the game?

Trevor: In the game I am Trevor.

Maria: Ok you are Trevor.

Trevor: And I am going to free Micheal. He has been taken by the police and I need to free him.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: When I freed Micheal, do you know who Micheal is?

Maria: No you have to tell me.

Trevor: Micheal is the bad guy.

Maria: Ok. And what happened when you freed, Micheal.

Trevor: I couldn't free Micheal at first because police wouldn't let me but then he slipped and then I freed him and then police came after us.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: Then we took the police to jail....And then me as myself and Micheal went on a mission to save all the other characters who were under the spell of the police...but I wasn't happy about it.

Maria: Why weren't you happy?

Trevor: Because I hurt the police that why.

Maria: Why did you choose to hurt the police?

Trevor: I do not know because I am angry that's why.

Trevor stops drawing.

Maria: How were you feeling when you were drawing this drawing? Happy? Angry? Sad?

Trevor: Nothing. I felt nothing.

Maria: Nothing.

Trevor: I felt angry. Ok. With everyone.

Maria: And now that you have drawn the story, how are you feeling?

Trevor: Angry still. With this game I am always angry.

Maria: So you want to be always angry?

Trevor: Yes, I must.

Maria: Why do you have to be always angry?

Trevor: Because if I am not angry I get kicked out.

Maria: Kicked out where?

Trevor: Eh.

Maria: Kicked out from where?

Trevor: From GTA.

Maria: From GTA?

Trevor: Yes, I makes me feel great that I do not love anyone and that I am able to

shout.

Maria: You don't love anyone then?

Trevor: No I do not love anyone.

Maria: So even me. You don't love me?

Trevor: No, I don't. If I love someone I get kicked out of the game.

Maria: Even, if you don't love me, I love you and respect you Trevor. You are a special boy. However, I worry if you say that you have to be always angry because of a game, because life, life is not a game. And I believe, that, that if there is something that makes me angry, sad, if there is something that make me not love others, I do not play that game anymore. I find better use of my time.

Trevor: But I love playing the game. I do not want to get kicked out of the game.

Maria: But the game, Trevor, there are many games you can play, choose other games...GTA is not a game for children your age Trevor.

Trevor: It's a game. Children play games.

Maria: It's not for children.

Trevor: But children play games?

Maria: Ok, children play games. But GTA is a game for older people. I wouldn't give you a writing task which is for example twenty thousand words long.

Trevor: What? I will not do it?

Maria: I know you won't, because it is not good for you at your age. I, if, I were to give you a writing it will be fifty words because you would be able to do that. By the way when today, I came for you in class, you hugged me. When you were Trevor, in class, before you left class, you even hugged your teacher. That hug meant that you love both your teacher and me.

Trevor: You don't want to see Micheal crying.

Maria: But you are Trevor, you aren't one of the characters in the game.

Trevor: But Micheal needs to cry sometimes.

Maria: That's good for him. If he needs to cry, he has to cry. But you, as Trevor, as Trevor, who do you love?

Trevor: I love my friends...And I love Princess, my dog.

Maria: Ok what a beautiful name for a dog. I am sure you love her. Who are the children that you love in your class?

Trevor: I do not know.

Maria: But do you love someone from your class?

Trevor: Karl.

Maria: Ok good. Can I ask you another question?

Trevor: Yes, sure.

Maria: If this game makes you angry all the time, why play it?

Trevor: When I have to be part of the game, I need to be angry.

Maria: But in life, there are times when we feel angry but not always.

Trevor: Yes, I have to be angry all the time.

Maria: Ok, during the game you are angry, but at school, when you are at school there is no need to be angry.

Trevor: Yes, there is. I am angry at school because children make fun of me.

Maria: Ok, when children make fun of you, you should be angry. And what do you do when this happens?

Trevor: When this happens, I shout.

Maria: Do you know that people who are angry all the time, they, they cannot be calm you know that.

Trevor: Yes, I know. That's why you brought me here in the nurture, to bug me.

Maria: No, not because of that. But let me remind you that you can choose to be happy, you can choose to be angry, you can choose to be sad and (you) you can choose to be calm. There is no need to feel angry all the time.

Trevor: Shut it, shut it forever.

Maria: I am not telling you not to play the game. I just want you to go through other emotions not just feeling angry.

Trevor: I do not agree with you.

Maria: You sometimes need to feel angry. I am sometimes angry myself, but when I am angry, and I feel angry, I do not shout, I find ways to calm down.

Trevor: How?

Maria: There are ways to calm down. In class we have an anger management box. There is Jenga and fortune cookies. I am not saying that you sometimes do not feel angry. Sometimes you need to feel angry, ok.

Trevor: Can I do a craft and I be joyful?

Maria: Yes, sometimes you need to do a craft and you feel joyful. That's a good way to calm down and feel positive about yourself.

Trevor: Can we play Jenga?

Maria: Yes, sure.

Trevor and I started to play Jenga.

Maria: How are you feeling now?

Trevor: Better than before. I feel calmer now and happy.

Trevor and I finish the game. I lost the game.

Maria: I am pleased you are feeling better, Trevor.

Trevor: Me too.

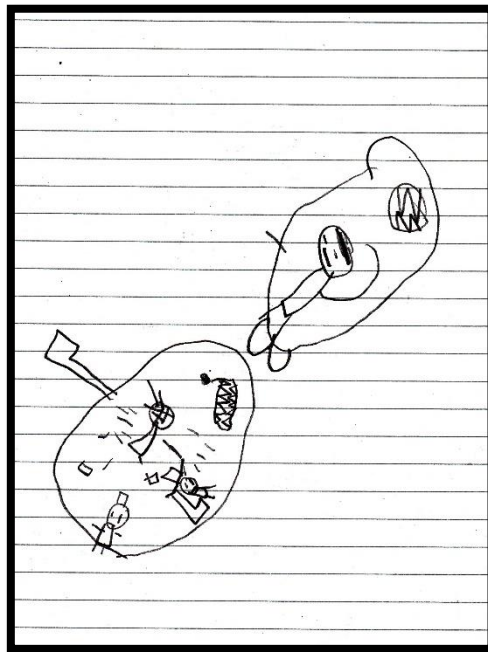
Maria: I think that now is time to go back to class?

Trevor: Thank you for talking and playing with me.

Maria: You're welcome. And I wanted was to see you smile. You have a beautiful smile.

Trevor hugs me and leaves to go to class.

Trevor's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor whilst he drew in his journal:

Maria: What did you draw over here Trevor?

Trevor: I drew that Amber died. There is an arrow in her. And a shark ate Duncan.

Maria: And why did you draw this picture?

Trevor: I am angry at Duncan because he did not save Amber and Amber died.

Maria: But why, why didn't you go and save them yourself?

Trevor: I couldn't. I was working.

Maria: Ok. And then what happened next?

Trevor: Then the Sir came and saved them.

Maria: And what about you? Did your teacher save you?

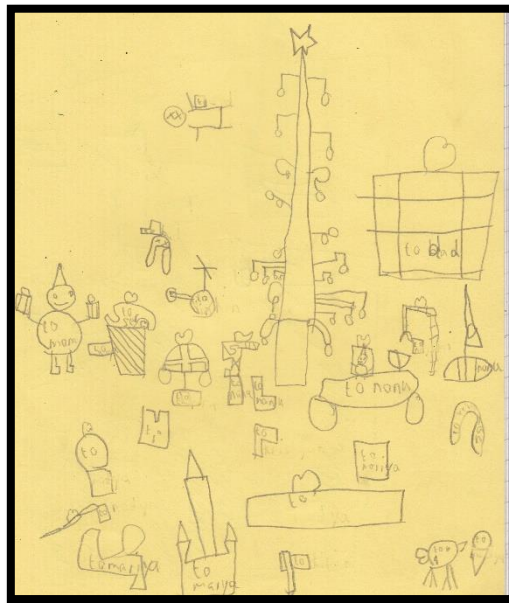
Trevor: He didn't need to save me this time. I was doing my homework.

Maria: Ok and what did you do when you saw Amber and Duncan. Were you still angry at Duncan for not saving her, Amber I mean?

Trevor: Yes a bit, but I forgave him. I was happy to see them both.

Maria: Ok good.

Trevor's seventh diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after drawing in his journal:

Trevor: Do you know what I am going to draw today?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: Guess...

Maria: Could you give me a clue?

Trevor: We are soon going to celebrate this.

Maria: Can it be Christmas?

Trevor: Yes, you guessed. How did you guess?

Maria: Well, I don't know, wait, last week there was Halloween and now the next holidays would be the Christmas holidays. I think that is why I guessed. You helped me with the clue you gave me.

Trevor starts to draw.

Trevor: How do you draw a tree?

Maria: You draw the trunk first, then the branches and the leaves.

Trevor draws the tree.

Trevor: Do you like my tree?

Maria: Yes it is beautiful.

Trevor: I am going to draw a star now....and a present.

Maria: Is it for me? The present?

Trevor: No, it's obvious. It is not for you.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: What are you drawing over there?

Trevor: What?...Some presents.

Maria: Ok good, good...And who are you thinking of giving the presents to?

Trevor: Amber, the Sir...

Trevor continues with his drawing.

Trevor: Can you please give me a rubber, coz it is not fitting....Are you ready over here?

Maria: Yes. To Sir....Love

Trevor: To Amber...This, I tell you what it is?

Maria: Yes sure...Why did you write to Sir and to Amber? You are going to give them the same present.

Trevor: Yes...this is chocolate.

Maria: Ok. I see.

Trevor: This is chocolate. Because they are top of each other.

Maria: Ok. Now I understood.

Trevor: Do you see it over there?

Maria: Ok the presents are on top of each other. Ok you are going to give chocolates to Amber and the Sir as well.

Trevor: No, the Sir is going to take chocolates.

Maria: Ok and what are you going to give Amber?

Trevor: Think...

Maria: I don't know.

Trevor: Think. You have five chances.

Maria: Ok. Hearts.

Trevor nodding.

Maria: A game that she likes?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Perfume?

Trevor: I hate perfume. I am not going to give perfume to Amber, if I hate it.

Maria: A beautiful soft toy?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Ok, that's nice.

Trevor: Do you think she will like it?

Maria: I am sure she does. Who is this?

Trevor: Give me a minute.

Trevor writes the name of the present.

Trevor: Ms. Smith.

Maria: Ok. You are going to give a present to your teacher as well. That's very kind of you Trevor, thinking of the people who love you.

Trevor: Yes, I know.

Maria: What are you going to give to Ms. Smith.

Trevor: Think.

Maria: Chocolate?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Perfume?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Soft toy?

Trevor: No.

Maria: A reading book?

Trevor: Yes. A book of cars.

Maria: And whose is this present?

Trevor: Wait a bit, I need to draw more.

Trevor continues to draw.

Trevor: Let's start from the beginning. What is Amber's present?

Maria: Teddy bear.

Trevor: Yes.

Trevor continues to draw the presents.

Trevor I want to buy a present for everyone. I want the people to be happy.

Maria: That is good! Very thoughtful I think.

Trevor continues with his drawing.

Trevor: Can you please tell me if I am done?

Maria: It depends on who are you going to give a present to.

Trevor: Ok let's start writing the names. To Amber.

Maria: Ok, Amber, you're going to give her as soft toy.

Trevor: The Sir.

Maria: Yes, you're going to give him chocolates. And Ms. Smith you are going to give her a reading book about cars.

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Now.

Trevor: My grandpa...

Maria: What are you going to give him?

Trevor: Think...

Maria: Yes, let me think. You have three presents for your grandfather.

Trevor: Yes, I know. No for one. Those are for my grandfathers and my great-grandfather. My grandfather I am going to give him a remote, a car remote.

Maria: Now, what are you going to give to Louis?

Trevor: Yes to Louis now. A helicopter....To daddy?

Maria: For your dad you drew a big present.

Trevor: Yes, it is big. A television. Now to grandpa?

Maria: A car?

Trevor nodding.

Maria: I do not know then.

Trevor: It starts with a 'm'.

Maria: Motorcycle.

Trevor nods in approval.

Maria: Ok, and for your other grandfather (your great-grand father), a fishing rod...no that is not his present, that is Nadine's present.

Trevor: Yes Nadine, I am going to give her a crane.

Maria: Your great-grandfather you are going to give him a boat, I think?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: This is Carl's present, I think.

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And, and what are you going to give to Carl?

Trevor: It's starts with a 'h' and ends with a 't'.

Maria: I don't know. It looks like...yes, I know a helmet.

Trevor: Yes, that's right.

Maria: And your mum. What are you going to give to your mum?

Trevor: My mum...I am going to give her the present that brings presents.

Maria: So you are not going to give your mum a present?

Trevor: No, I am going to give her a present. I am going to give her someone that brings presents.

Maria: A Christmas Father then?

Trevor: Yes, I am going to give her a Christmas Father. He brings presents, so I am going to buy her one....And you are missing someone.

Maria: Who? Your great-grandmother?

Trevor: No, my grandmother..."To nanna"

Maria: Ok, and what are you going to give your nanna. What are your going to give to nanna?

Trevor starts to draw again.

Trevor: Cause, I needed to give my grandfather some socks.

Maria: So everyone is ready?

Trevor: No, there is my grandmother as well. And four other persons too.

Maria: That's a lot of presents that you are going to give this Christmas.

Trevor: Only four are left.

Maria: That's my name over there.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And Ms. Philippa's name as well. Now, do not tell me or Ms. Philippa. Give us a surprise.

Trevor: I hope I have enough money to buy all these people a present. I want to cheer them up at Christmas.

Trevor continues drawing.

Trevor: Did I draw Mario's Christmas present?

Maria: Yes, you did it. It is over here.

Trevor: I am going to draw another one for him.

Maria: Do you like Christmas, Trevor?

Trevor: It's obvious.

Maria: What do you like the most about Christmas?

Trevor: To Ms. Maria.

Maria: You are going to give me two presents?

Trevor: Yes. I like you that's why. You have to think what they are?

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And what is the thing you like the most about Christmas?

Trevor: People feeling happy...Can you guess what I will be giving you?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: It hangs on the wall.

Maria: Still not a clue.

Trevor: A painting. You can hang it on the wall...And Ms. Philippa. Do you know?

Maria: Could it be an ice-cream.

Trevor: Yes, that's right. Do you think she likes it?

Maria: Yes, I am sure she likes to have ice-cream.

Trevor: Ok good. And I am going to give her a cupcake as well.

Maria: She would like that too.

Trevor: And what is this?

Maria: That's my present.

Trevor: Yes, what do you think it is?

Maria: Are they sweets?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And when you give all these presents, how would you feel?

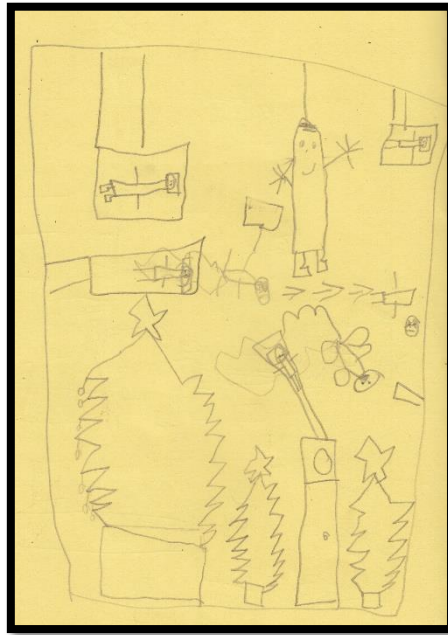
Trevor: Greatful. I mean, great.

Maria: That's good.

Trevor: I am going to class now.

Maria: Ok, good. See you around.

Trevor's eighth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after drawing in his journal:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today? I can see that you gave your drawing a title.

Trevor: Yes, read it.

Maria: Trevor's Christmas. Ok.

Trevor: It is funny.

Maria: Funny. Alright.

Trevor: Here you are sleeping. Ms. Philippa is sleep over there. We are having a sleep over.

Maria: But there are more people who are sleeping?

Trevor: Yes, let me draw something more because I forgot.

Maria: Ok. And where are we sleeping?

Trevor: At school. We are having a sleep over at school.

Trevor draw.

Trevor: Let's start the funny story. Those who are sleeping are you, me, Ms. Philippa, and Mr. Jason.

Maria: Ok good.

Trevor: And Amber is also sleeping.

Maria: Ok. And then what happens? They are other people who are not asleep.

Trevor: No not everyone is sleeping. There is Duncan and Colin who are awake.

Maria: Ok. Duncan and Colin are awake. And you are asleep?

Trevor: I am dreaming about you.

Maria: Ok and is it a good or bad dream?

Trevor: Good I think.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: And there is Jesus.

Maria: Ehe.

Trevor: It is only a statue.

Maria: Ok. A statue of Jesus. Alright.

Trevor: And there is Ms. Philippa. And there is Ms. Philippa. There me, there you. This is Duncan, trying to wake you up. Then Duncan and Colin started to run around and.

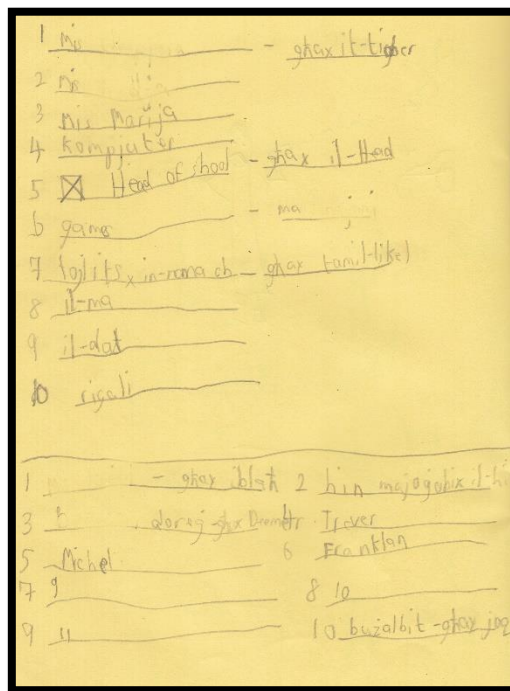
Maria: And what happened?

Trevor: And then (*Trevor laughing*) Colin fell on the Christmas Tree. That is all that happened.

Maria: Ok that is all.

Trevor: Yes, that's all.

Trevor's ninth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after writing his ninth entry in his journal:

Maria: I can see that you didn't draw a story in your diary today?

Trevor: No, I did a list.

Maria: A list? Of what?

Trevor: Of things I like and hate.

Maria: What are the things that you like?

Trevor: My teacher.

Maria: And why do you like your teacher?

Trevor: Because she's my teacher.

Maria: And what else did you write?

Trevor: You, Ms. Philippa, the Sir, the computer, Mum, Dad, Grandma's house, because she cooks food for me and presents.

Maria: Ok. I see. And what are the things that you do not like.

Trevor: Duncan dorange, time, I don't like time, Micheal, Trevor and Franklin, from GTA and the Head.

Maria: You know you cannot play GTA.

Trevor: I know. That's why I don't like it.

Maria: Ok. That game is not for children your age.

Trevor: I know. I do not play it. Mum doesn't want to buy it for me. But my cousin has it.

Maria: Ok I hope he doesn't let you play it.

Trevor: No, I hate them because, when I am at grandma and he is there, he plays, he locks himself in the room and he doesn't play with me.

Maria: Oh. I see. And why you don't like the head?

Trevor: You know what happened yesterday?

Maria: Yes, I know. You were sent home.

Trevor: That was unfair. I didn't do anything.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: She told me "you need to go home and relax". When I am angry, I come here and I play Jenga and calm down.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: And yesterday, I wasn't angry. Duncan made me angry when he hit me.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: I don't like Duncan. He thinks he is cool!

Maria: Sometimes there are people that we do not like.

Trevor: Yes, and I don't like Duncan dorange.

Maria: Ok. Do you wish to write someone something else in your list?

Trevor: No that's all. Bye.

Maria: Bye Trevor.

4.9 Conclusion

I started this chapter by stating that it was the most important chapter from the whole thesis. This is because it is not only the most special to me as an educator, but as a researcher it is also the heart of my research. Without this chapter, I would not be able to analyse the different drawings and writings of the children, as well as the conversations that both my colleague and I had with the participants of this research. I realised the children's diversity of thoughts throughout the project. I also realised how important an educator is for a child, enabling them to open up to a trusted person about things which sometimes are private, sad or worrying. Now that the desk contains all the different transcripts along with the images, it is time to attach all the transcripts and diary entries on a blank noticeboard.

The next chapter will first attempt to answer my first research questions by presenting and discussing the themes that came out in this study. An analysis of the children's works and conversations will then be attempted through the four theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner, Maslow, Bowlby and Fonagy, through which I will also be answering the second research question asked in this study. The third research question will be addressed by stating the practices used by the educators in this study with the aim of better supporting the children.

Chapter 5: Discussion

“Just living is not enough,” said the butterfly, “one must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.”

From *The Complete Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Andersen

5.1 Introduction

In the above quotation, it feels as if the butterfly needed something more to dwell upon in its life. Just like the butterfly, my students’ drawings, stories and words that were presented in the previous chapter were not enough for me. Main and Whatman (2016, p. 1819) claim that while listening is important, so is interpreting. In agreement with this statement, I feel that in order for my research to be comprehensive, I needed to reflect on and evaluate the diary entries presented in the previous chapter. Once again, I am going to ask you to join me in entering the room, inside which there now are six boards placed around the desk. On each of these boards is the name of each child participant in this study. This chapter will discuss each child’s works and words in the light of the literature and theories presented in the literature review earlier. The chapter will also seek to answer three research questions that were put forward in my research.

5.2 Themes Identified by the Children in the Research

Thornberg and Elvstrand (2012) maintain that children construct their social knowledge in three different domains: moral, conventional and personal. In this particular study the children drew, wrote and spoke about personal stories which concerned their daily meaningful experiences through a number of topics and ideas. There were some drawings and writings by each child participant perspective which also expressed right and wrong. When looking at children’s drawings, Holliday et al. (2009) mention three different approaches to analysing these, namely the developmental, psychological and meaning-making approaches. As I analysed the

children's drawings, I could see these three developmental approaches fitting my research.

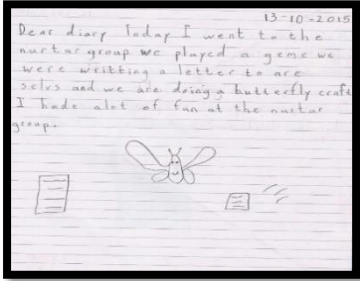
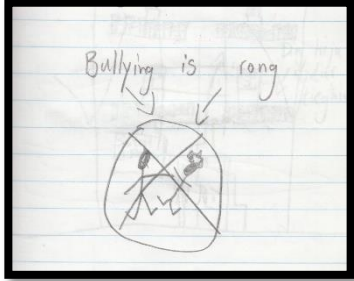

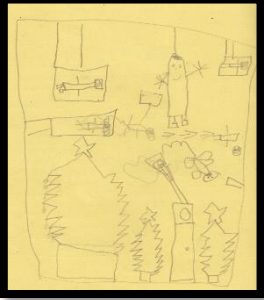
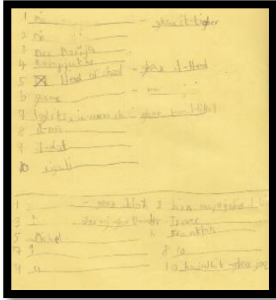

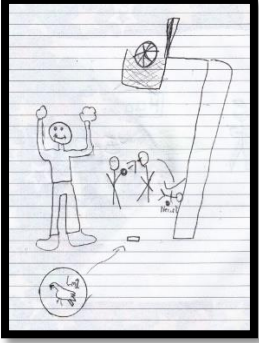



With regard to child development, I could see that themes which related to exams were usually drawn, written and spoken about by the older children, while themes such as fear of the weather were usually brought up by younger children. This could have been due to the fact that developmentally, things that worried the older children were different from the concerns of the younger child participants in this study. As regards the psychological approaches, I feel that the drawings and writings of the children usually concerned how they felt about a particular situation that they were going through, had experienced or thought they would go through. The issue of meaning-making was also very evident as the children gave a particular meaning as to why they had chosen to draw or to write about a particular theme or experience.

Five themes that emerged in a study by Meehan (2015) were emotions, children's worlds, health, safety and learning. Similarly in this study, the participants spoke about their emotions, as well as places and settings they spend time in (home, school and nurture group). The children also mentioned learning, both directly and indirectly, in the research. However, unlike Meehan's study, the themes of health and safety were not spoken about in my research. In a study by Layard and Dunn (2009), which regarded what matters to the participants, the conversations centred on families, friends, a positive lifestyle, solid values, good schools, good mental health and access to help. Again, there are similarities between this study and my research, whose participants also mentioned the themes of families, friends, positive aspects of their lives, as well as values, schools and well-being.

Moreover, in a study by Prunty, Dupont and McDaid (2012) on the voices of children regarding their views on education provision, the themes that emerged included the support from educators and peers, friendships and bullying, and dual enrolment into educational settings. The themes of support from educators and/or the lack of it, peers, friendships and bullying also were present in the participants' communication

throughout my research. Similarly, in a study by Sargeant (2014) regarding the factors which hinder children from having a positive school experience, the participants mentioned the negative attitudes of teachers, peer pressure and bullying. The participants in my study, however, did not mention distractions, concentration, attention-seeking behaviours, personal issues, boredom and tiredness as issues that hinder them from having a positive school experience. The themes spoken about in this study will be highlighted in the table on the next page:

Table 2: Initial themes identified in the research

<p><u>Nurture Group</u></p> <p><i>From Amber's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Friendship/Lack of Friendship</u></p> <p><i>From James' Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Feelings and Emotions</u></p> <p><i>From Lara's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Family</u></p> <p><i>From Trevor's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>School</u></p> <p><i>From Trevor's Diary</i></p> 
<p><u>Celebrations</u></p> <p><i>From Amber's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Learning, Ambition & Achievements</u></p> <p><i>From Cristiano's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Substance Abuse</u></p> <p><i>From Cristiano's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Fear of Weather Patterns</u></p> <p><i>From Lionel's Diary</i></p> 	<p><u>Characters from Popular Culture</u></p> <p><i>From Lionel's Diary</i></p> 

5.2.1 Nurture Group Theme

The nurture group theme was mentioned by all the children who took part in this study. Shaver and McClatchey (2013) note that the children who took part in their study expressed their views on the nurture ethos. Similarly, in this research all children who mentioned the nurture group and activities held within the nurture group context. For example, Cristiano's fifth diary entry mentions the nurture group through an activity that took place during such a session. Amber directly mentioned the group four times in her drawings and writings as she spoke about things she had done while attending the nurture group. She later linked the nurture group and a theme that was discussed during a particular session in her eighth diary entry. Leonard (2011) mentions Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory and how it proposes that the developing child is surrounded by layers of relationships through a number of systems. The nurture group in this study was projected by the children as a system within which they felt safe.

Garner and Thomas (2011) note that a nurture group provides a base and safe haven which helps children cope inside and outside of the school. Such was the case in this study, where, for example, through journal writing and drawing Amber was able to express her concerns about something that was troubling her at school: a time when she could not play with a friend of hers during break time. James also mentioned the nurture group four times, and like Cristiano and Amber, he mentioned activities that had happened in the nurture group. Lara mentioned the nurture group once during one of her conversations with me, which regarded a particular session we had carried out in the nurture group. Likewise, Lionel indirectly mentioned the nurture group three times by drawing about three stories we had discussed in the nurture group. Trevor mentioned the nurture group five times during the course of the research. In line with the perspectives of the other child participants, Trevor's view of the nurture group is a positive one. He saw the nurture group as a place at school where he could open up about things that were happening to him, and he also viewed the nurture group educators as people who could guide him.

5.2.2 Friendship or Lack of Friendship Theme

Another theme that the children spoke about was friendship, or the lack of it. According to Prince and Hadwin (2013), Maslow put forward a theory of human motivation which suggests that all human beings have five basic needs – starting from the lowest level of needs and rising up to the highest level of needs. Another important theme that came up in my study was that children need friends. Amber spoke about friendship in three diary entries (the second, fourth and eighth), during which period she was missing a close friend of hers. Cristiano also mentioned the theme of friendship twice during the course of the study. In the second diary entry, he recounted how he refused to fight with two peers, while his third diary entry indicates group work in class through the child's mention that he had to work in a team to achieve a certain goal. The theme of friendship was also very evident in Lionel's drawings, although in an indirect manner. In four diary entries (the first, third, fourth and fifth), Lionel drew two characters who at some point in the story were friends. In his second diary entry, he drew a group of superheroes working together as a team to defeat monsters. James mentioned his best friend in his first and sixth diary entries, portraying him as a true friend in the latter entry since he had been the only person to stand up for him when others were teasing and bullying him.

In James' sixth diary entry, the theme of friendship took a rather negative turn. Here he drew and spoke about the bullying that he was experiencing – first through a teacher and then through some of his peers. Brown Hajdukova, Hornby and Cushman (2016) note that students with SEBD are at a higher risk of being bullied. Trevor mentioned his friends and the children he fought with, indicating a lack of friendships with a number of children, in five diary entries. Through his stories, Trevor projected how he felt on a friendship level with other children in his school. Amber was usually perceived as a friend of Trevor; however, Colin and especially Duncan were portrayed as children whom Trevor often fought with. Lara mentioned the theme of friendship twice in her diary entries and conversations. In her first diary conversation she wrote about a princess who did not have any friends, while her second diary entry was about a

butterfly who had a group of flowers as friends, but who still felt different from its companions.

5.2.3 Feelings and Emotions Theme

In this study, there were a number of feelings and emotions that the children spoke about. A reason why these were brought up could be the setting in which the research took place: the nurture group. Hughes and Schlösser (2014) as well as Billington (2012) observe that nurture group teams were attentive and tuned to the children's needs on an emotional level. Lara mentioned a number of feelings and emotions in the conversations she had with me. The feelings she spoke about were basic feelings such as fear, worry and happiness. However, she was able to express how important it is to have different feelings in life, not just positive ones such as happiness. Lionel also mentioned two basic feelings during the conversations he had with Philippa. Following his second diary entry, in conversation Lionel spoke about his fear of monsters. Like Lara had done, through a drawing in his fourth diary entry he projected his fear and worry because of a thunder storm.

Trevor mentioned feeling angry twice throughout this research: once when he spoke about a video game he used to watch, and a second time when he spoke about his anger towards people at school whom he felt were unfair towards him. Trevor also mentioned empathy towards others in two diary entries, and suggested ways how he could be empathic towards others. Likewise, Cristiano mentioned his wish to be empathic towards others in his first and second diary entries. In James' diary entries, this theme was not always made implicit. However, there was a shift from the portrayal of positive events that brought out positive emotions in the first five diary entries to the feelings of fear and worry as expressed by James in the conversation I had with him after his sixth diary entry.

5.2.4 Family Theme

Darling (2007) notes that according to Bronfenbrenner, the family is a microsystem in the child's life. The theme of family was mentioned by some of the participants in this study. James referred to this theme twice and projected his family in a positive light. He also once mentioned a pet while talking about his family, suggesting that he considered his pet to be a member of the family. Lara wrote about her family once during the period of the research. Like James, she portrayed her family in a positive manner. Trevor mentioned his family twice during the research. Like James and Lara, he also viewed members of this family and family life favourably. Trevor also spoke about his extended family, whose members he also portrayed in a positive light. The children drew and spoke about a number of attachments with some family members, rather than merely implying the family system. As Frosh (2012) states, attachment is an innate inclination for people to seek closeness with others. A reason why the children might have drawn and spoken about their families in a positive light is because they felt this need to be close to their primary caregivers.

5.2.5 School Theme

The school theme was also a topic that the children drew, wrote and conversed in this research. Bronfenbrenner views the culture of an education setting as something which is shaped and made by persons working within that same setting (Daniels, 2006). Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014) note that even if they happen to be in the same school, children have different views on and experiences of it. The participant children in this research also held different perceptions of their school and the people working there. James mentioned his school in all six diary entries as he recounted the experiences he was going through at school. Lara indirectly mentioned school in her second conversation, when she likened it to a garden with flowers and a butterfly. Amber indirectly mentioned school in two diary entries, when through a story, she expressed that she could not meet her best friend during break time as they had not been placed in the same class that year. Trevor also referred to his school through his drawings, a list he made up in his ninth diary entry, and in his conversations. He did not

always portray it in a positive light, especially in instances where he expressed his experience of unfair treatment and when he claimed that some educators within the school did not listen to his version of events. Thus, the children who spoke about their school in this study all had different views on and experiences within it.

5.2.6 Celebrations Theme

Tuber (2015) states that a child needs to be helped to think about experience as a process, and not simply as content. An emergent theme of this study was that of celebrations which they experienced or were about to experience during the course of the study that were during first term of school namely Christmas and Halloween. Through the drawings, writings and discussions on the drawings, the children were not simply putting the content of the experiences out there, but rather they were reflecting on the process they were going through because of their own experiences of the celebration. The four younger children that took part in this study mentioned celebrations being held around the time in which the study was taking place. In this study, Christmas was a dominant theme that the children drew and/or wrote about. Amber made explicit her thoughts about two celebrations that were going to happen, Halloween and Christmas, in two different diary entries. Lara spoke about her family decorating their house for Christmas in her last diary entry. Lionel also spoke about the gift that he wanted for Christmas in his last diary entry, when it was soon going to be Christmas. Trevor also spoke about the theme of Christmas in two diary entries (the seventh and eighth), where he drew a Christmas tree with the presents he wanted to give to people. He also drew a story about Christmas which featured educators and children whom Trevor knew at school.

5.2.7 Learning, Ambition and Achievement Theme

Botha and Kourkutas (2016) note that children who exhibit SEBD experience negative outcomes at school such as alienation, negative academic achievement and exclusionary practices. Contrary to this observation, two child participants in this study who also happened to be the oldest mentioned the themes of learning, ambition and

achievement. In his third diary entry, Cristiano expressed how in the science lesson he was motivated to learn because the lesson interested him. In his fifth diary entry he revealed his ambition to become a chef when he grows up. In his third and fifth diary entry, James mentioned that he was very pleased that he had spelled all the words of his dictation right and that he wrote in very good creative writing. One reason why it was only these two children who spoke about these themes might have been because they were already in Year 6. In Malta, all Year 6 students sit for their benchmark examination, which is an important, national assessment.

However, James and Cristiano could have also potentially mentioned achievements in their journaling and within the nurture group setting, for the reason that while at school they were usually given negative messages about their achievements, they were open about the fact that they felt they could open up about their hopes, dreams, achievements and ambitions during the nurture group sessions. Garner and Thomas (2011) highlight Bronfenbrenner's claim that supportive links between systems could determine whether the child might reach their full potential at school. When the children spoke about their ambitions, hopes, dreams and achievements, they were indirectly reflecting how different settings within the school, family and other environments they formed part of were helping them achieve their full potential.

5.2.8 Substance Abuse Theme

In one diary entry, Cristiano also implied the theme of substance abuse when he expressed that he considered whisky to be like poison. Cristiano drew this drawing after a lesson on substance abuse. Philippa then asked him why she drew that picture and Cristiano noted that he had engaged in a discussion with his peers on substance abuse directly before the nurture group. Porter (2007) notes that drawing focuses on a particular event of the child's choosing. At that point in time, Cristiano decided to create this particular drawing to keep in mind the damaging effects of alcohol, as a reflective process following the session he was previously engaged in during class.

5.2.9 Fear of Weather Patterns Theme

On one particular day during the course of this research, Lara and Lionel attended a nurture group session during a thunderstorm, which resulted in both of them creating a story to show that they were concerned about the rain. Lionel drew a boy helping a girl out by inviting her to shelter from the rain under his umbrella, while Lara spoke about a character who was worried about getting wet because of the rain. Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011) maintain that through development, a child experiences growth and changes. These participants' reference to their fear of the weather shows how emotional development is a crucial feature that educators need to keep in mind when they are working with children. What matters to a seven-year-old might be different to how an eleven-year old child, who has just started to move towards adolescence, might feel about the same thing.

5.2.10 Characters from Popular Culture Theme

Four children (Amber, Lara, Lionel and Trevor) mentioned popular fictional characters. Amber spoke about My Little Pony (fourth diary), Lara spoke about a princess (first diary), Lionel spoke about Marvel superheroes (second diary), and Trevor spoke about a game called GTA (fifth diary). While the first three children spoke about film and cartoon characters that are usually watched by children their age, Trevor drew and spoke about a game which should be played by adults. Cooper (2010) notes that the term SEBD is diverse, and suggests a sense of diversity in children and their present needs. Armstrong (2014) claims that SEBD is the behaviour of children and young people which causes concern among adults. As I let Trevor voice his story, I felt the need to voice my concerns to his mother. This will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.

5.3 Narratives of Children's Voices and the Educators' Understanding

In the previous part of this chapter, I spoke about the different themes that emerged from the discussions on the drawings and writings that the children presented in my

research. Syrnyk (2014) expresses that it is fundamental for educators to get to know more about the children's voice, especially those children who are supported through a nurture group. Merrill and Fivush (2016, p. 76) state that individuals do not construct narratives in isolation, but rather constantly share their stories with others. This next part of the thesis will present six narratives regarding Philippa's and my own appreciation of the children's discussions and creations throughout this research. This part will also focus on two other questions that Billington (2006) ask, these being "How do we speak with children?" and "How do we listen to children?"

With regard to our attitude towards the children, my colleague and I tried to be positive and calm when speaking with them– not only during the research, but at all times in our role of nurture group educators. Additionally, throughout this research my colleague and I distinguished between hearing and listening by hearing the children out and reflecting on their words, both during the conversations and after they had taken place. In the next part of the chapter, the case studies will be presented using the four-step theoretical framework outlined in the literature review chapter. While the first two theoretical frameworks (Bronfenbrenner's systems theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs) focus on the school setting, the latter two (Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Fonagy's mentalisation) are mainly concerned with the relationships built between a child and a trusting adult – who in this research happen to be the six child participants, and Philippa and myself respectively

5.3.1 Amber's Voice and My Understanding of It

Although I already knew some things about Amber, this research gave me a better understanding of her identity. From the approaches discussed by Holliday et al. (2009), Amber aligned with all three in her drawings and writings. Some of her diary entries were linked to each other (developmental approach), and were also psychological and meaning-making in approach as she presented stories that were linked to her life. When looking at the themes presented by Meehan (2015), Layard and Dunn (2009), and Prunty and McDaid (2012), it can be observed that the themes of children's worlds and

emotions (Meehan, 2015), as well as of friends and friendships (Layard & Dunn, 2009; and Prunty, Dupont & McDaid, 2012) were also emergent in Amber's case study in this research.

Since she started school, Amber went through a number of experiences that shaped her understanding of education. At one point, she had to repeat a particular year. Then she struggled with a lack of self-worth and consequently joined the nurture group. After that, she had a teacher whom she did not get along with. She was then provided with the support of an LSA and re-joined the nurture group. She also eventually found educators who helped and supported her. Cefai and Cooper (2013) note that a child's functions can be understood according to how that same child behaves in a system. This can be seen to relate to Amber's school culture, since Amber's school experiences shaped her feelings and perceptions towards her school and the individuals within that same educational setting.

Bronfenbrenner mentions the mesosystem (the cross-relationships between small settings) as one of the systems within the theoretical framework he discusses (Leonard, 2011). Both before and during the study, Amber exhibited some confusion with regard to this system. Firstly, this might have been so because the different educators she met imparted different messages and meanings. For example, there were educators whom she felt comfortable with (the nurture group team) as opposed to a teacher whom she did not get along with. In eight out of nine diary entries, Amber wrote the words *see you* before she left the nurture group to go to class, very possibly implying that she regarded the nurture group as a safe place where she could feel secure, and that she wanted that security to stay in place.

In her stories written as part of her second and fourth diary entries, Amber projected that the system was not recognising her own needs and that different cross-relationships were disconnected. She felt she was not able to tell her teacher how she felt during break time without her friend; however, through her stories and drawings,

she was able to open up with me about it. During the course of this research, Amber's view of the nurture group remained a positive one, seeing that it helped her focus on her strengths and work on her needs. This is evident in the conversations that Amber had with me. When Amber was referred to the nurture group as a microsystem within a school, this was not done because she manifested outwardly disruptive difficulties, but rather because she was experiencing internalised difficulties. As stated by Cooper (2008, 2010), Brown Hajdukova and Cushman (2014), and Ewen and Topping (2012), SEBD does not encompass only externalised behaviours, and is different and diverse in character and description. When Amber came up to me and asked me to help her, I felt that I had to give her my full support.

The second step out of the four theoretical frameworks to be employed in this research was Maslow's hierarchy of needs. When Amber came up to me, begging me to help her, I was worried about Amber not being engaged with education. Visser, Daniels and Macnab (2005) ask "Why should an adult worry about a child's engagement?" I feel that it is part of the educator's role to be concerned if a child is not engaged at school. Unlike her teacher, I was alarmed with Amber's behaviour because I knew that she had a number of needs that were not being met at school. I was also aware of the fact, that at the time she was not engaged in learning because she was worried that something might happen in class, which rendered it very difficult for learning to take place. Cefai and Cooper (2011) state that children who are under some sort of pressure lack independence, self-worth and self-assurance. Around the time of this research, Amber was going through difficult experiences, such as not being able to play with a friend of hers during break time and losing a friend outside of school.

With regard to the first scenario, which Amber presented in her second and fourth diary entries, I was able to support the child by approaching her class teacher about the matter. On the day when Amber wrote her eighth diary entry, I could observe that she was quiet and withdrawn upon arrival at the nurture group, but that she left the session in a less anxious state. In their discussion on nurture groups, Hughes and Schlösser (2014) suggest that such settings help children become more confident in themselves.

Similarly, the nurture group helped Amber enhance her sense of self-worth. She participated during sessions and interacted more with her peers. Additionally she was able to open up about her concerns through the stories that she wrote in her journal.

For a child to feel safe at school, it is best if an educator builds a bond with the child, leading the child to become attached to that educator. When I wrote about how I knew Amber, I mentioned two incidents during which Amber saw me as a person who could help her. Firstly, Amber came up to me and told me to help her. Frosh (2012) notes how Bowlby states that the person seeks closeness to others, especially when there are harmful situations in the environment around them and need protection. Amber needed protection from the harmful situation that was created in her class. Secondly, during a storytelling activity, Amber compared the character of Jemima Puddle Duck to herself and told me that she was better off than Jemima because she had found me. Nel (2013, as cited in Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016) explains that inclusion in schools means that everyone is respected, accommodated and valued.

I felt that Amber was able to build a trusting relationship with me because I respected her, accommodated her needs when she needed my support, and valued her. As I analysed the transcripts of the conversations that I had had with Amber, I could observe how Amber felt pleased whenever I knew about something that she liked. Such an instance occurred when we had a conversation about *My Little Pony* following her fourth diary entry. I felt that when I told her that I knew the characters, Amber realised that I was familiar and could understand what she was relaying to me, which helped her continue to build a good bond with me. Eight out of nine times during the conversations, Amber uttered the phrase *see you*, as if she wanted reassurance from my part that she would come again to the nurture group. As previously suggested, Amber now felt safer at school than before; however, she still needed to maintain the bond she had established with me as an educator who helped and supported her.

Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014) suggest that an interaction such as communication has to involve a deeper relationship. I felt that the communication between Amber and I went beyond the content of the message. They entailed a relationship between the speaker (Amber) and the listener (myself), as through these conversations I would try to ask open-ended questions to encourage her to open up more. I did this to be able to understand the things that were implicit in Amber's mind, encouraging her to make them explicit. Frosh (2012) states that in mentalisation, the therapist – or in this case, I as the educator – had to observe the child's preconscious imaginative mental activity to be able to analyse the purposeful mental states.

I first interpreted Amber's preconscious imaginative mental activity by asking her about her stories, following which I was in a position to get to know more about Amber's intentional conceptual and emotional position through the in-depth questions that I asked her and through my observations. For example, in the second and fourth diary entries, Amber mentioned two stories where the main characters were friends but never met. At face value these were just two stories; however, through the conversations I had with Amber, I realised that she needed to share something that was worrying her. Then through these conversations, I understood her worries and was able to help her by encouraging my colleagues to try as much as possible to take the children out for their break at the same time.

Zhai, Raver and Jones (2015) state that activities revolving around social and emotional learning could help a child open up more. Through the social and emotional learning activity of journaling followed by a conversation, Amber was able to open herself up to relationships evolving around her. In her eighth diary entry, she wrote about what she had just done in the nurture group and also drew a picture with two children. Before I spoke to Amber that day, I thought that her drawing was a representation of friendship. When I later spoke to Amber, however, she told me a completely different story. I then realised that Amber was not only reflecting friendship, but also loss. She remembered the friend she could not meet anymore. This time Amber did not, like at other times, speak out of her own will, but she was reminded of her friendship with Natasha during

the nurture group session. Hoffman (2015) insists that the adult working with the child needs to follow the child’s lead. In her sixth and seventh diary entries, Amber wrote about events happening or about to occur at the time of the research: Halloween and Christmas. I felt that by questioning and elaborating on Amber’s journal entries through further discussion with her , I was helping her get to know more about her internal states.

The following diagram links the four theoretical frameworks and describes how each of these frameworks were related to Amber’s case study in this research:

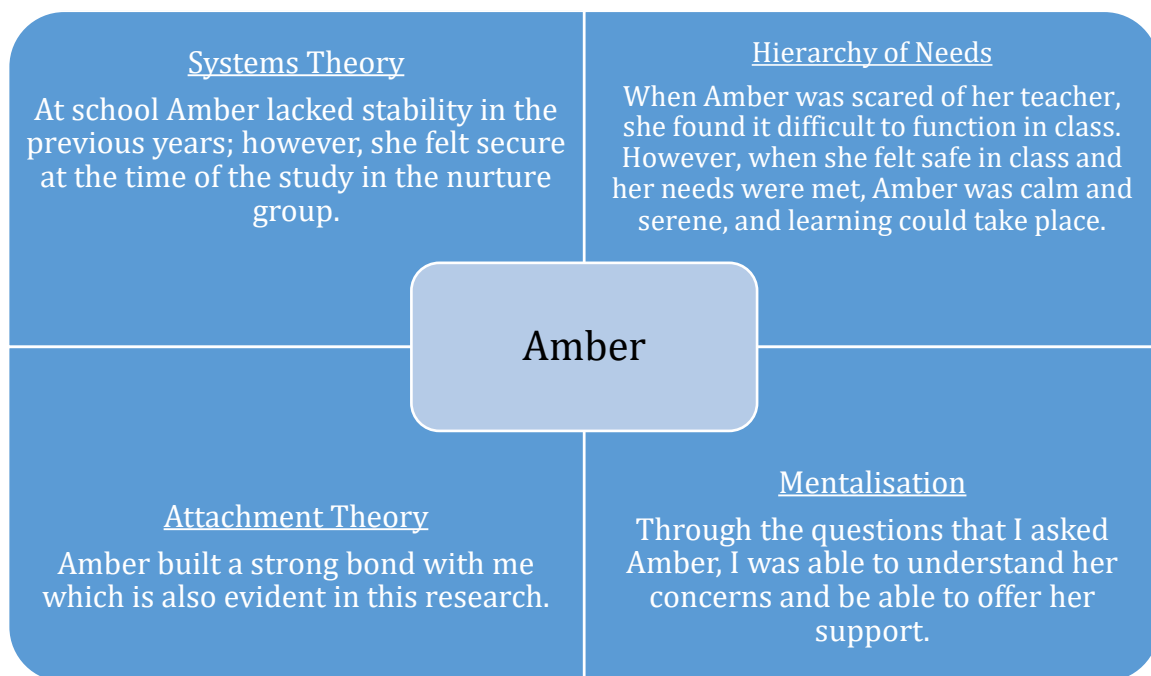


Figure 1: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to my work with Amber

To conclude my analysis of Amber’s drawings and writings, it can be said that the theme of friendship was highly emergent in this case study. It also transpires that Amber used journaling as a tool to open up about her experiences.

5.3.2 Cristiano's Voice and Philippa's Understanding of It

As a researcher and educator, through this research, I obtained a better picture of who Cristiano was, especially in relation to him wanting to make the right choices. Cristiano's diary entries in this research were mostly meaning-making in terms of the three approaches suggested by Holliday et al. (2009). Cristiano's diary entries can be linked to Meehan's (2015) themes of emotions, health, safety and learning. They also align with Layard & Dunn's (2009) study, in which the themes of friendship, positive lifestyle and social values emerged. Throughout the years that he has been at school, Cristiano passed through a number of different experiences. These experiences have shaped Cristiano's views of education and the actions and behaviours that he exhibited.

At the tender age of three, Cristiano was assessed and diagnosed as having SEBD. MacLeod (2010) states that SEBD is a label, not a diagnosis. Similarly, Cooper (2010) and Mowat (2010) suggest that SEBD is a construct given by society. In Cristiano's situation, the educational system labelled him. In a way, this label could have helped Cristiano since he was given one-to-one LSA support. However, it may well have been the case that this actually hindered him from developing as a child, owing to the fact that every time something happened at school, which saw Cristiano's involvement, the school would not see the child but rather the behaviour before the child. Throughout his educational journey, there were educators who communicated different messages to Cristiano and viewed him in different ways. This was apparent in Philippa's diary entry, in the way she explained how she knew Cristiano, and in the light in which his teacher perceived him during the IEP meeting.

Bortha and Kourkoutas (2016) identify four factors that hinder the inclusion of children who present with SEBD, namely ineffective intervention programmes, negative stereotypes towards children, ineffective teacher training and lack of information based on research findings. Mowat (2015) mentions that there are educators who are ironic towards children who exhibit with SEBD. In Cristiano's situation the school employed both effective and ineffective support systems towards Cristiano. Ineffective support

came from those educators who saw Cristiano's behaviour before they could consider him. Effective support came in the form of the nurture group, within which the educators supported Cristiano and saw beyond his behaviour. Moreover, as observed in this research, journaling was an effective strategy for Cristiano to use in order to thrive and grow as a child and as a child.

Before the research, when Philippa wrote her testimonial about how she knew Cristiano, she mentioned the IEP meeting and how his teacher had reacted during the meeting. This is in agreement with Bortha and Kourkoutas (2016), who suggest that children like Cristiano tend to be perceived in a negative light by educators owing to a lack of training as well as insufficient information regarding the children concerned. There was a huge difference between the words Cristiano's teacher spoke to refer to Cristiano during the meeting and what Philippa wrote about him as well as the way Cristiano portrayed the things he was experiencing. While Cristiano's teacher saw the behaviour before the child, Philippa wrote factual information about a child who showed both strengths and needs. Cristiano, in agreement to what Philippa wrote about him, projected himself as a helper and a resilient child who was motivated to learn (in his first, second and third diary entries).

Syrnyk (2012) states that nurture group educators see themselves as catalysts for positive change in children. While Philippa acknowledged that Cristiano sometimes had difficulties with peers during break time, she still saw his strengths, and first and foremost saw Cristiano as a child. In her diary, Philippa wrote that Cristiano eagerly supported a new boy in his class – once again showing a positive aspect of Cristiano's character. Furthermore, MacLeod (2010) deems that educators must have a good understanding of who the child is. This appears to contrast greatly with Cristiano's teacher's views about her student, and relates to a great extent to Philippa's understanding of Cristiano.

In this research, Cristiano also provided his personal views about his role at school. Hart (2013) questions why some children have the skills to become resilient when faced with adversity and others do not. In his second diary entry, Cristiano drew three children, two of whom appeared to be engaged in a fight. The third boy (Cristiano himself) was drawn on a larger scale and his hand posture revealing him as a winner. What the incident portrayed seems to indicate is that in that particular moment, Cristiano was resilient and took pride in what he had achieved. I also think that it was important at that point to not only let Cristiano declare his achievement, but that it was also necessary for the educators at the school to acknowledge Cristiano's resilience – which Philippa achieved during her conversation with him. It is the educator's duty to not be stuck in the past, but to acknowledge the achievement made by the child in such instances.

Prince and Hadwin (2013) observe how Maslow's hierarchy of needs talks about how certain needs have to be addressed in order for learning to take place. In the second journal entry, Cristiano drew a picture of a circuit. Through the conversation that took place afterwards, Philippa got to know that Cristiano was referring to a science lesson. Flynn (2014) states that educators need to listen to the pupils' experts insights on their own learning. While conversing with Cristiano, Philippa listened to his insights on the science lesson. There was, however, another educator who prior to the lesson understood that a number of needs, particularly motivation, need to be addressed for learning to take place. Sellman (2009) claims that teachers need to bring about effective teaching. In his third day entry, Cristiano drew and spoke about a particular lesson which he deemed effective. This was so because a particular teacher had made sure to render the lesson interesting and appealing for Cristiano. Also when Cristiano found the session on substance abuse interesting, he reflected on it and drew in his diary about it (fourth diary entry).

Cefai and Cooper (2013) state that according to Bowlby's attachment theory, interpersonal relationships influence personality development and social-emotional engagement with others. Before and during this research, there were educators who

built bonds with Cristiano and others who refused to. For example, prior to this research, in Year 4 Philippa observed that while Cristiano's teacher was intent on guiding him, he did not get along with the LSA assigned to him. This led Cristiano to resort to a number of challenging behaviours. During the IEP meeting, it was noted that Cristiano's teacher and LSA were not trying to build a bond with Cristiano. His teacher was very negative towards him. On the other hand, Philippa built a bond with Cristiano, as observed through the conversations that she had with him. Throughout this research it was evident that Cristiano trusted Philippa.

There was another teacher whom Cristiano spoke positively about after drawing the circuit in his third diary entry. This happened to be his science teacher, who had encouraged group work during this particular lesson which Cristiano spoke positively about. It could be suggested that Cristiano had a good bond with his science teacher. Syrnyk (2012) writes about a number of qualities that nurture group educators should have. After observing Cristiano's diaries and conversations, I feel that every educator should be a nurturing educator. Although I as a researcher did not observe Cristiano or the bond he had built with his science teacher, the fact that this teacher encouraged him to do tasks with and like other children made Cristiano see her in a positive light.

The dominant theoretical framework in Cristiano's narrative appears to be mentalisation. Conway (2015) discusses that mentalisation takes on diverse characteristics related to specific situations. This is clearly seen in Cristiano's diary entries and the themes that the boy brought out from journaling his thoughts. For example in his first diary entry, Cristiano drew and spoke about empathy, explaining how he wished to help others in the same way that the doctor had helped him. Tuber (2015) states that mentalisation is a complete awareness of the child's mental states. Through her conversation with Cristiano, Philippa was in a better situation to understand his mental state in a holistic manner. This also enabled her to interpret why in his second drawing he had drawn himself with his hands up, implying that he was a winner.

The conversation that Cristiano had with Philippa about his lesson, relating how the science teacher had encouraged group work, brings out the fact that Cristiano felt the need to be regarded and treated like other children. Group work encouraged such practice and independence as opposed to labelling. Steele, Murphy and Steele (2015) write about intentional mental state. In conversation with Philippa about his fifth diary entry, when Cristiano spoke about his ambition to become a chef, he was helping Philippa understand his desires and dreams better. Holliday et al. (2009) deem it crucial for educators to explore alternative methods of speaking with children, suggesting that drawings offer a good, child-centred method for doing so.

Cristiano's fourth diary entry spoke about alcohol as being poisonous. The act of drawing in this situation provided Cristiano with a way to voice his views on alcohol. It also gave Philippa the opportunity to explore the topic further as she refrained from making assumptions and judgements before speaking with the child. Steele, Murphy and Steele (2015) emphasises the need for the adult speaking with the child to understand the individual's psychological understandings. In this particular instance, my colleague was able to understand why the child drew the whisky bottle through a conversation she later had with Cristiano, where she asked him what the drawing was about and why he had chosen to draw that particular drawing. As in Amber's case study, Cristiano's internal thoughts were brought out through drawings and the conversations he had with Philippa. Once again, such efforts proved useful and effective in enabling Philippa to get to know more about Cristiano and what he was thinking about.

Below is a diagram that presents how Cristiano’s diary entries were linked to the four theoretical frameworks:

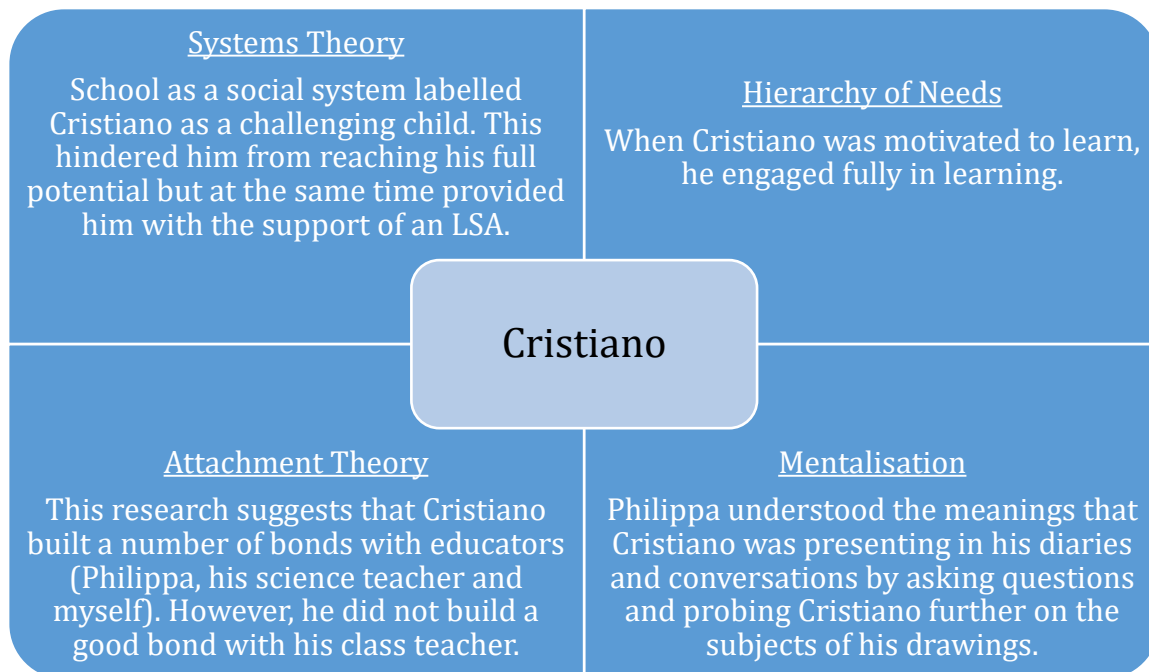


Figure 2: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to Philippa’s work with Cristiano

To conclude Cristiano’s case study and diary entries, it can be claimed that Cristiano expressed how important it was for him to make the right choices. Moreover, through his diary entries he looked at his past experiences as lessons learnt, at his present as an opportunity to learn, and at his future in a positive light.

5.3.3 James’ Voice and My Understanding of It

James’ drawings and writings were psychological and meaning-making approaches as suggested by Holliday et al. (2009). Among the themes that emerged from his diary entries were family and friends, which were also present in the study by Layard and Dunn (2009). Other themes included support from educators, friendships and bullying – which were also popular themes in the study by Prunty, Dupont and McDaid (2012); and negative attitudes of teachers, peer pressure and bullying – which also came out in

a study by Sargeant (2014). During our conversations about James' drawings and writings, we discussed different contexts in his life.

Bronfenbrenner's system theory focuses on the ways in which a child and their actions are understood within the social systems they are in (Cefai and Cooper, 2013). During the research, James and I spoke about his reference to school in all six diary entries; his life at home with his family mentioned in the first, fifth and sixth diary entries; football practice in his first diary entry; the nurture group in the second and fourth diary entries; and an event that was going to be organised by his grandfather in one instance. Through these conversations I obtained a better understanding of James and how he functioned in these systems. Whenever James spoke about his family members and his pets, he always spoke of them in a positive manner. This suggests that James felt a sense of belonging and love at home.

In my account of how I knew James, I recalled how James was at times praised and at other times blamed for actions he did at school. I also mentioned a lack of self-worth that I felt he suffered from. However, I also mentioned that James felt safe to open up and speak about his troubles with me in the nurture group. Botha and Koukutas (2016) state that children who present with SEBD are often alienated from friends and experience exclusionary practices. During this research, this pattern could be observed in the way James perceived his classroom environment in the first and fifth diary entries, when he spoke about how happy he was in class. This is in direct contrast with the way he perceived his classroom in the conversation he had with me regarding the bullying-themed drawing in his sixth diary entry, when he mentioned that he felt intimidated by his teacher and his peers.

Romano et al. (2015) note that schools can offer stability and continuity to children. In James' situation, this did not happen for two reasons. When he was in the same class as his sister, this James enjoyed a sense of stability and dependency. However, when his sister was placed in a different class without any form of transition, the boy started to

lack the stability that his sister provided. Secondly, the continuity, progress and stability that James felt that he had through his sister, and which he voiced in his first five diary entries, was no longer present by the time he wrote his sixth diary entry. James felt that the school system gave him different messages. Brown Hajdukova, Hornby and Cushman (2016) observe that students identified as having SEBD were at a higher risk of being bullied.

In this study, however, at first James showed positive feelings towards his teacher and his classmates, and only changed his views when he became a victim of verbal teasing and bullying. There was one instance in the research when James read out the letter to his future self to me (an activity that we carried out in the nurture group on that day, and which he referred to in his second diary entry). I observed that James was very positive when speaking about his future self in this activity. In his letter he also mentioned that he was certain he would make new friends at his new school the following year. He also wrote that he had started playing football with a youth nursery. The letter indicated that James regarded the nurture group as a setting where he was able to learn more about himself.

In his sixth diary entry, he saw the nurture group as a place within the school where he could open up about the verbal bullying that was troubling him. In a study by Shaver and McClatchey (2013), when participant children were asked for their views about the nurture group, it emerged that the group helped them enhance their self-confidence, deal with bullying and improve their behaviour. Likewise, in this study, when James opened up about a number of things, he revealed that he felt a sense of belonging in the nurture group, which he viewed as a setting where he could be supported in his self-confidence and where he also managed to speak out about a bullying situation that he was experiencing at the time with support.

Prince and Hadwin (2013) hold that children who are content at school are less likely to experience mental health difficulties and will be more resilient. I believe that it is very

important for a child to feel content at school, by which term I perceive a child feeling happy and having a sense of pride in themselves, a child who knows he is loved, and a keen child who is motivated to achieve more. When writing about how I knew James at the beginning of the research, I noted that James had built different attachments with educators at school through the years. Although he was protective towards his sisters, at times felt that he himself needed their support. In my conversations with James, I could observe that he was feeling happy and positive about his school, namely when he expressed that he was happy to be in Mr White's class in his first diary entry; when he mentioned different activities he carried out in the nurture group in his second, third, fourth and fifth diary entries; and when recounted how he accomplished tasks in his class in his third and fifth diary entries.

As Cefai and Cooper (2011) maintain, children can only achieve self-reliance, autonomy, self-esteem and other needs when their emotional needs are addressed in the best possible manner. In his first five diary entries James showed a sense of pride in himself, even though at times I felt that James lacked a sense of self-confidence and needed someone who could guide him. Flynn (2014) points out that when children are silenced on crucial things in their lives, they feel that their voice has a lesser impact. Between the fifth and sixth diary entry, James was in some way silenced. In his last diary entry, a shift occurred when he spoke about how some children in his class were teasing him by calling him "warden". At that point, it was evident that James was not feeling content or happy at school, and this was influencing that sense of autonomy and pride he had expressed in the earlier diary entries.

From a boy who felt content at school, he changed into this boy who did not want to speak out because he thought it would get worse for him if he were to talk about the situation. Garner and Thomas (2011) observe that the children who participated in their study noted that they could feel a sense of belonging in the nurture group. In my research, it was also evident that James felt like he belonged in the nurture group in a number of ways. However, I could also immediately sense his initial reluctance to speak during our conversation following his sixth diary entry. This happened because he was

scared that the situation in class might worsen if he spoke with someone else, even if he confided in a person he trusted.

Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011) state that attachment has become a lifelong construct. I tend to agree with this as I also feel attachment throughout life is crucial, and not just during early experiences. In the first five diary entries, James wrote about a bond he had built with his class teacher and about how he felt appreciated that his class teacher was praising him. In the conversation about his sixth diary entry, James mentioned how his teacher had told him that he was a warden, which in Maltese culture implies a nosey person. O'Connor et al. (2011) note that educators tend to attach labels to students who exhibit challenging behaviour based on their notions of sensibility. Through this particular incident, James' teacher had attached a label which ended up damaging the bond James had built with him. It was not only the bond with his teacher that was broken, but also the relationship that he had nurtured with his classmates up until then. This suggests how crucial it is for educators to choose their words and actions wisely, because it can make or break a child.

On the other hand, James built a strong bond with the nurture group team. Kourmoulaki's (2013) study observes how the nurture group team was always there for young people, and its members were attentive and attuned to student needs. Similarly, through my observation in the nurture group, I could sense that something was worrying James long before he drew the bullying entry on that day. I was aware that one word could make or break James in an instant. Not only did I offer him support at that present moment, but I spoke out in order that the verbal intimidations would stop. When James expressed his feelings about this incident in his last diary entry for this study, and due to the fact that I was genuine and supportive, it helped him build an even better attachment with me. The verbal teasing and bullying also stopped after I informed a member of the senior management team as well as James' teacher about how James was feeling.

I observed that James' sixth drawing did not include the entry date as he had done for four previous entries. I could also perceive that the drawing represented physical bullying rather than verbal bullying. However, the drawing also showed something that James wanted to do. He wanted to overcome bullying by hitting his classmates. On the other hand I explained to James that there is another way to stop the teasing. In my diary I noted that James was initially reluctant to speak about what was happening. By not writing the date, James probably wanted to forget the incident.

In all the conversations I had with James, I always started by asking that same question *What did you write/draw in your diary today?*, which would eventually lead to James opening up during the session. Fonagy (2012) mentions a four-step procedure that takes place during mentalisation. I feel that in the conversation I had with James following his sixth diary entry, I was able to use this four-step procedure. I helped him regulate his worries about the verbal intimidations by assuring him that the name calling was going to stop. I also assured him that he should not be scared about his teacher continuing to make fun of him by also mentioning that I would speak to the head of school about the matter if this persisted. Long before this incident happened, I had created a safe environment for James. This can be seen in the way James opened up in his sixth diary entry as well as in previous writings. During our last conversation, James was able to open up about his concerns and difficulties in overcoming such worries once I had provided him with an alternative perspective. Having observed his facial expressions, I immediately noticed that he needed to tell me something. By asking him the right questions and showing concern for him, I was able to understand what James was going through and to support him in the right manner.

The following is a diagram that summarises how the four theoretical frameworks were evident in James' case study:

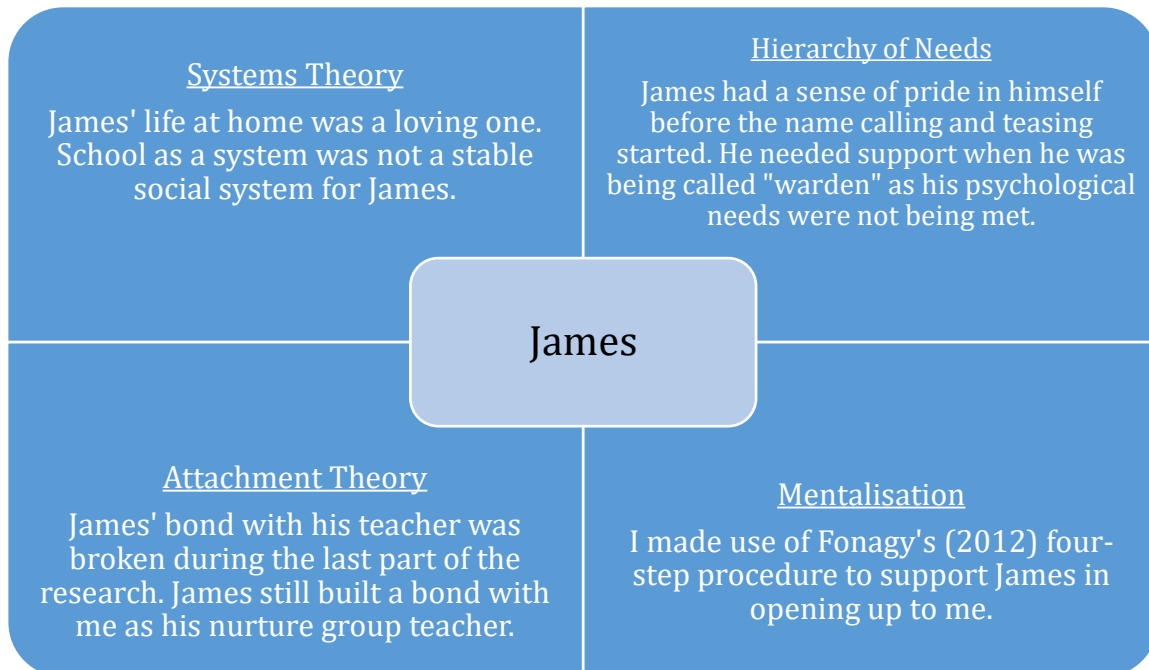


Figure 3: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to my work with James

To summarise James' case study, it can be said that James had his unheard voice heard by me through this research. James' writings and drawings also suggest transitions and growing up, with all the good and challenging experiences that the latter brings with it.

5.3.4 Lara's Voice and My Understanding of It

In Lara's drawings I could see the application of both developmental and psychological approaches as suggested by Holliday et al. (2009). When compared to the findings in Meehan's (2015) study, Lara's drawings elicited themes of emotions and children's worlds. Lara also implied the themes of family and friends in her drawings – two themes that were also mentioned as emerging themes in the study by Layard and Dunn (2009). In this research, drawing for Lara was a tool that enabled her to speak out about things she could not express verbally. Holliday et al. (2009) state that children have the

aptitude to develop expressive thoughts, but they may not be able to say what they are thinking logically or plainly.

When I first observed Lara's drawings in her diary, I noticed that she always portrayed one main character. Any other characters would all assume a secondary role in the drawing and story, as opposed to the protagonist of the drawing who would always occupy a central role. Darling (2007) cites Bronfenbrenner's suggestion that when discussing the systems theory and when analysing the child and the development of the child, we need to look at the child in a holistic manner rather than reflect on just one characteristic. O'Riordan (2015) mentions four important factors that are discussed in Bronfenbrenner's systems theory, which are the process, the person, the context and time. I linked these four factors to Lara's drawings to better understand the child through this theory. In her first and fourth diary entries, Lara drew a princess. Only the princess was featured in both drawings. These drawings can be linked to Lara's family experience of being an only child.

In her second drawing, Lara drew a butterfly surrounded by flowers in a garden. Although the butterfly and the flowers were friends, the butterfly was unique. This drawing can be linked to another microsystem that Lara formed part of: the school. I could observe that although Lara had friends at school, she still wanted to feel special in her own way, just like the only butterfly in the drawing. In her fifth diary entry, Lara drew herself and her parents decorating their home for Christmas. This not only reflected the person and the context, but also the time when the drawing took place. Lara's drawing of Joy (her third diary entry) presents her internal processes and how, like Riley in *Inside Out*, she knew that she needed to use all her emotions but preferred happiness most of all.

In their study, Hughes and Schlösser (2014) note that nurture group educators tend to offer a safe base for children who attend such a group. In my testimonial of how I knew Lara before the research, I wrote how she would always hold my hand every time I went

for her in class to take her to the nurture group. Lara always sat next to me in the nurture group and perceived me as a person who was linked to a safe base at the school, this being the nurture group. Hughes and Schlösser (2014) state that nurture group provision supports children to build a sense of security in themselves, especially at school. Lara's second diary entry shows a sense of belonging at school. The butterfly in the drawing represents Lara while the flowers portray her friends. Although the butterfly and the flowers are friends, the butterfly and the flowers are different. This implies that although Lara felt that she had friends at school, she felt different.

Her fifth diary entry shows Lara revealing a sense of security and safety in her home. When asked to comment about this, Lara used the positive word *beautiful* to describe not only the decorations, but also how she and her parents felt. In the drawing all the characters (Lara, her mother and her father) are smiling. This represents happiness, warmth and serenity in Lara's family environment at that point. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) believe that a nurturing environment such as the nurture group helps meet the basic needs of children if the nurture group educators are attuned to those needs. On the day when Lara drew her fourth diary entry, there was a thunderstorm. In the conversation I had with Lara, we discussed how in her diary she had drawn a girl who was worried about getting wet because she did not have a raincoat. I immediately saw that Lara might be worried about the rain and quickly reassured her that after school, Rose was not going to get wet – and neither was she.

This is linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Lara needed reassurance when there was a storm in order to feel less anxious and to prevent her fear of the storm from getting in the way of learning. There were two other instances that made me reflect on Lara's worries. These included the time when Lara's mother told me that she had had a nightmare because she had not finished her homework on Friday, as well as the story of the princess who did not like to have lots of homework. I realised that Lara was worried that she was being given a lot of homework and that she would not be able to finish it. Together with Lara and her mother, after journaling I used another strategy that could

help support Lara. We came up with a homework timetable to reduce Lara's anxiety with regard to the completion of her homework.

Meyer et al. (2013) claim that one important point in attachment is that the caregivers' responses to certain emotions become the way in which the child creates personal connections and understands which expressions are allowed and deemed shareable. Lara built a strong bond with her parents and this is evident in the Christmas drawing in her fifth diary entry. Although Lara had friends at school, she felt different from them, as portrayed in her drawing of the butterfly and the flowers. Also in her first and fourth diary entries, she drew a single individual in her drawing (Princess Daisy in her first diary entry and Rose in her fourth diary entry). This suggests that Lara preferred to bond with adults rather than with children her age. In her first diary, Lara even mentioned that Princess Daisy could not play with other children as they were not allowed to go to the palace. Again this suggests that Lara tended to play alone at home.

Although Lara mentioned the nurture group only once in her diary entries during the course of the study, through my observations I could notice that she had built a good bond with me. Billington (2012) states that nurture group educators are able to develop a positive and strong relationship with the children that is dissimilar to relationships formed outside of the nurture group with other educators. In my writing I also noted that when I was Lara's age, I was similar to her in many ways. I think that this helped me understand Lara better and empathise more with her. Additionally, Lara always held my hand when I picked her up from class to go to the nurture group. The bond that I built with Lara is documented in my diary notes (Appendix 8), which describe that whenever Lara was drawing in her journal or attended the nurture group, she liked to take a seat next to me. She also used to conclude her conversation with me by uttering "See you" (second diary entry) or "See you next time" (fourth diary entry), as well as asking "When will I come to the nurture group again?" (third diary entry). This shows that, like Amber, Lara needed reassurance that she would see me again, indicating the bond that she had built with me and did not want to lose.

In my testimony of how I knew Lara, I noted that out of all the child participants, Lara who most closely resembled me as a child. Thus, as an educator and researcher, I kept in mind Hoffman's (2015) advice not to counter-transfer my feelings when I conversing with Lara. I did this by offering support as an educator rather than seeing how I would have acted as a child. Still, offering Lara my support turned out to be less challenging than envisaged, as empathising with her was easy for me to achieve. Auchincloss and Samberg (2012) define mentalisation as the ability to understand the behaviour of others in terms of mental states. I felt that through the conversations that I had with Lara and my observations of her drawings, I was in a better position to understand and support the child.

Through the characters of Princess Daisy and Rose in her first and fourth diary entries, Lara was able to describe her feeling, likes, dislikes and concerns. There are many characteristics in Princess Daisy and Rose that are similar to Lara's. For example, Lara was afraid that she would not be able to finish her homework in time while Princess Daisy complained that she had a lot of homework, but still did it. Daisy liked to play with her toys, in the same way that Lara enjoyed playing with puppets and would delve into imaginary worlds during the free play sessions in the nurture group. I regularly observed Lara playing alone, just like Daisy did in her palace. The other character, Rose, was the same age as Lara. Rose liked to dance but did not like football, just like Lara. Moreover, Rose was worried because of the rain and Lara was also worried because of the bad weather. This made me get to know Lara not only as a child at a school where I was a teacher, but as a child in a more in-depth manner.

Conway (2015) observes that through mentalisation the child develops reflective skills, and that through the said skills the child will reflect on their own and others' experiences. There was a link between Lara' drawing in her second diary entry and her personal life, which entailed Lara's positive feeling towards her friends while at the same time wanting to maintain her individuality. I arrived at this connection by

following the information that Lara had provided to me during the conversation that I had with her. Warshaw (2015) maintains that mentalisation is central to the understanding and interpretation of our own behaviours and actions and those of others. In the conversation that I had with Lara regarding her third diary entry, we talked about feelings and emotions. The conversation started through a metaphor, through which Lara was able to interpret emotions that she was experiencing.

The following table summarises how I linked Lara’s drawings and conversations to the four theoretical frameworks:

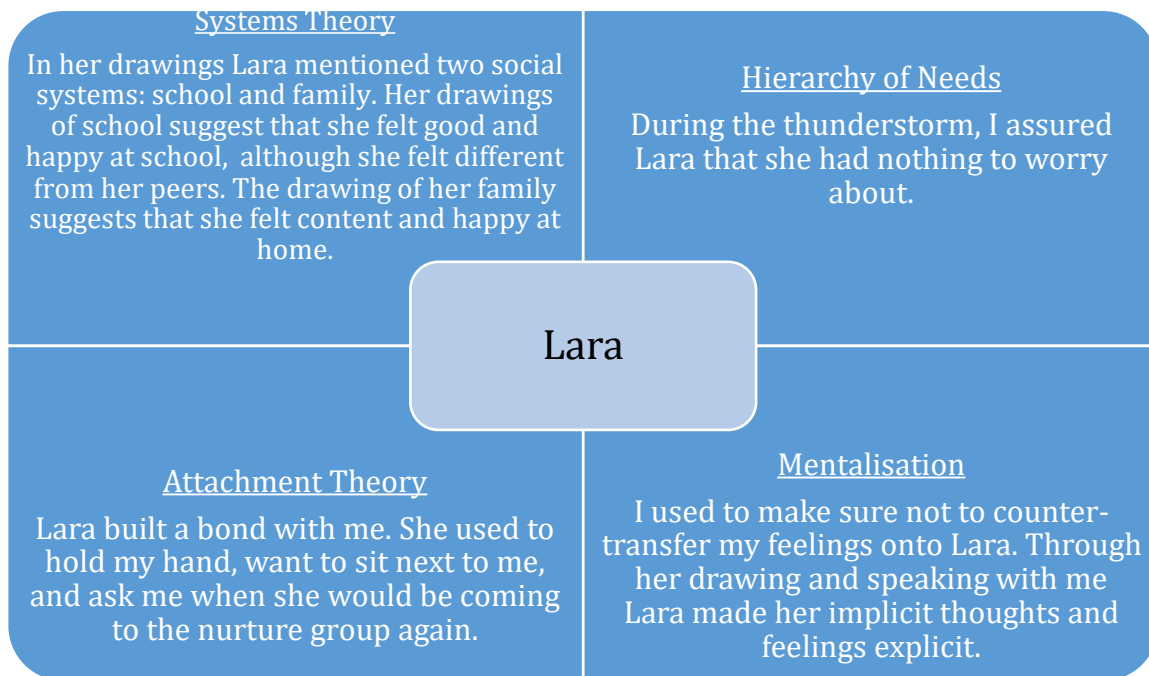


Figure 4: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to my work with Lara

If I were to summarise Lara’s drawings and conversations, it could be concluded that her diary entries positively imply difference between herself and her peers at school, as well as allowing her to create fictional stories mixed with reality and opening up a window onto her family life.

5.3.5 Lionel's Voice and Philippa's Understanding of It

Out of the three approaches that Holliday et al. (2009) mentions, meaning-making and developmental was the most applicable to Lionel in this research. When Lionel's drawings were compared to those from other research studies, namely Meehan (2015) and Layard and Dunn (2009), similar themes relating to children's worlds, learning and friends emerged. Philippa described Lionel as positive, lively and energetic. However, like Cristiano, Lionel was given a label that he exhibited challenging behaviour, and often that label came before Lionel himself. Mowat (2015) deems it inadequate and simplistic to locate the problem of SEBD within the child and/or family background without examining the wider social context where the child operates. In her description of how she knew Lionel, Philippa mentioned how some years ago she had to observe a group of children with unruly behaviour.

Rowe, Zimmer-Gemback and Hood (2016) Bronfenbrenner's framework acknowledges that individual factors of the child (such as environmental influences, neighbourhood and beliefs and values of society) are influential in their development and also affects how that child reacts to different settings they happen to be in. It is important for an educator to not only observe the child's behaviour, but to also monitor the child's actions within a particular context. Unlike other educators who had already labelled a number of children, Philippa looked at Lionel as a child who had strengths and needs. In their review of studies on nurture groups, Hughes and Schlösser (2014) note that these settings provide a structural intervention to target social learning, emotional literacy and opportunities to interact with an adult as well as with other children. It was through the belief and encouragement of people like Philippa that Lionel's positive qualities were brought out, equipping him with the tools to work on his needs and to improve his strengths.

In his first diary entry, Lionel drew two characters from a story that discussed ways of being gentle. In his third diary entry, he depicted a lion and an alligator – again two characters from a story he had heard in the nurture group. This time, the theme of the

story was how to listen effectively. In his fourth diary entry, he drew two friends sharing an umbrella. Although this was not taken from a story in the nurture group, Lionel noted how important it is to share with others. His fifth diary entry featured a drawing of a monkey throwing away things which were good – another story he had heard in the nurture group.

Keegan Eamon (2001) notes how Bronfenbrenner intellectualised the context in which human development occurs as a set of nest-like structures, suggesting that developmental outcomes are influenced by interactions with these structures. In this study, through the conversation that Philippa had with Lionel about his drawings inspired by stories, Lionel was also processing positive messages on how he should act in different microsystems. Through storytelling the nurture group was supporting Lionel in getting to know more about different structures within microsystems and learning how he should act within these structures. The nurture group setting encouraged Lionel to grow and become more aware of good and bad choices.

Garner and Thomas (2011) observe how through his conceptual framework, Maslow noted that basic needs such as food, shelter and care have to be met in order for higher order needs to be present and to motivate the individual. There were two instances when Lionel illustrated two important emotions that were of concern to him. In his second diary entry, Lionel drew a picture of a group of superheroes that were fighting monsters, of which Lionel was afraid. During the conversation she had with him, Philippa told Lionel that he should not be afraid as no monster was coming for him. The fourth diary entry happened on the same day of the thunderstorm which Lara also mentioned in her fourth diary entry.

Lionel was also afraid of the storm, but he did not want to externalise that fear. He therefore projected his fear onto Emily, a character he had created in the story. To ease his worry, Philippa told Lionel to reassure Emily that she should not worry about the storm. Prince and Hadwin (2013) observe that children in a nurture group feel

accepted, respected, included and supported by and with others. It appears that since Philippa respected what Lionel was telling her and supported him by encouraging him, she was able to calm him down and help him let go of his worries and fears, as well as to be more engaged in his school learning.

Solomon and Thomas (2011) claim that education has the potential to offer bonding experiences to the child. Philippa gave this experience to Lionel by firstly perceiving him as a child with strengths and needs, as expressed in her own writing. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) regard positive and trusting relationships with educators as a form of support for children who present with SEBD, enabling them to overcome challenges. Philippa was attuned to Lionel's own needs by getting into the stories that he was drawing and narrating. She asked Lionel questions such as "Why is he holding his tail?" (first diary entry) and "Oh, I see, She doesn't have one. That is nice of the boy. And the boy and the girl – they are close to the broken tree, right?" (fourth diary entry).

In the study, Philippa not only listened to, but valued Lionel's insights on his own drawings. Philippa also noted in her diary that Lionel treasured friendship (Appendix 8). Margenat et al. (2016) maintain that what is crucial in attachment patterns is not the kind of attachment established between the primary caregiver and the child, but rather the presentation of a vibrant perspective which is exposed to transformation and progressive interactions. Philippa's bond with Lionel grew, enabling Lionel to trust Philippa and open up more. Through my own observations of Lionel in the nurture group, I realised that he liked to have friends. In the first, third and fifth drawings, Lionel drew two characters from the Golden Rules stories. The second drawing describes how the heroes were working together to defeat the monsters. In the fourth diary entry, Lionel once again drew a boy and a girl sheltering from a storm under an umbrella. These drawings clearly indicate that Lionel was about to build positive relationships not only with adults in the nurture group, but also with his peers.

Fonagy (2002) and Fonagy and Target (2007) believe that the child's experience of the environment is crucial and necessitates the emergence of mental functions such as emotional regulation, empathy and the capacity for symbolisation. In his second diary entry, Lionel expressed his fear of monsters in his drawing. In his fourth diary entry he drew about his worries because of a thunderstorm. The sixth diary entry features a drawing of a car he wished to receive as a Christmas gift. Syrnyk's (2014) study with children led her to observe that asking the children to provide verbal and representational reflections on their experiences was an effective tool to help the children think about their experiences and enhance problem-solving capabilities. Philippa also gained insights about Lionel through his drawings and the conversations she had with him.

These insights were transcribed in the conversations and recorded in the diary entries that Philippa wrote. For example, in the fourth diary entry conversation, Philippa notes that she had sensed that Lionel might have been afraid of the thunderstorm. She did not directly tell him not to be afraid, but instead asked him to tell Emily not to be afraid. The drawing of the car would have also been considered as just a drawing had Philippa not realised, upon further probing, that Lionel was not just drawing a car, but a Christmas present he wished he could receive. In the drawing of the superheroes, Philippa was aware of the fact that this was an indication of fear in Lionel. Upon realising this, she supported him by offering him alternative scenarios.

When I linked Lionel’s diary entries and conversations he had had with Philippa to the four theoretical frameworks, the following comparisons were made:

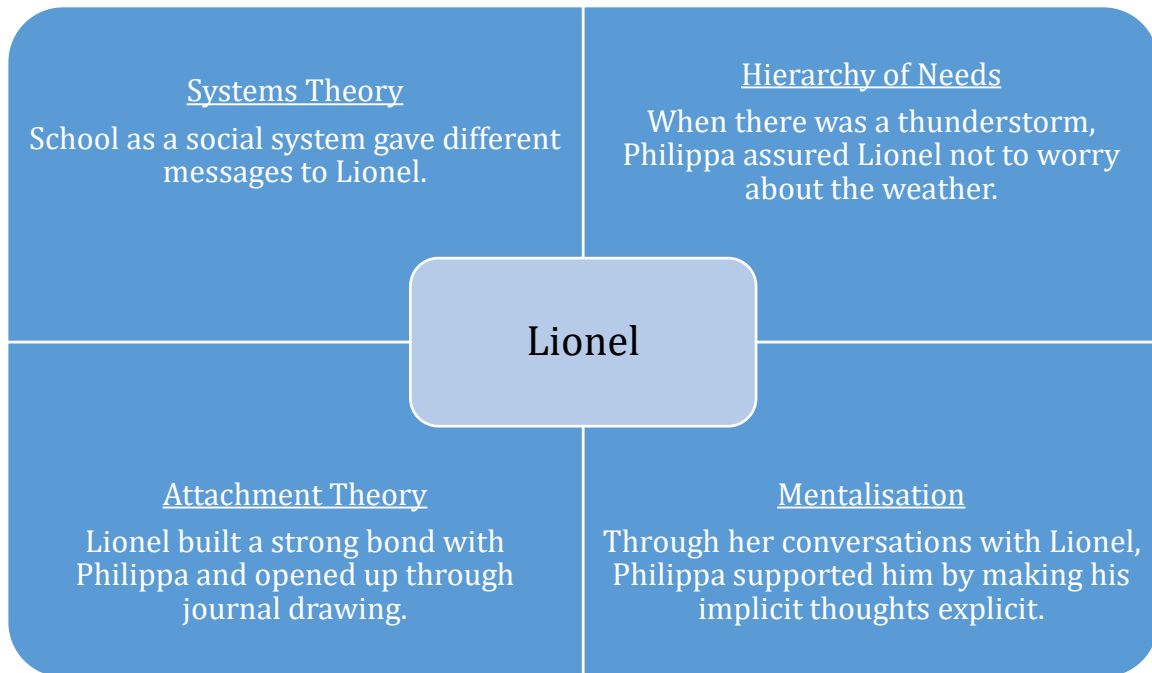


Figure 5: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to Philippa’s work with Lionel

For Lionel, journaling was a tool to draw stories with characters who chose to make the right choices. Lionel’s drawings in his diary and conversations suggest that in this research through storytelling and characters that he heard about, Lionel expressed a want in making the right choices.

5.3.6 Trevor’s Voice and My Understanding of It

From the three approaches by Holliday et al. (2009), the most dominant approach that could be applied to Trevor was the psychological approach, as he tended to associate stories and real-life persons with his emotions and feelings. However Trevor also adhered to the developmental approach in some of his diary entries, as he seemed to move on with the same story from one diary entry to another. For him, journal writing and drawing was a tool to express feelings and emotions. Trevor’s diary entries could be

classified into two themes: emotions and children's worlds, which are similar to the findings of the study by Meehan (2015).

Romano et al. (2015) mention how Bronfenbrenner's systems theory describes how different systems influence the child's development and functioning in both direct and indirect ways. In his drawings and stories Trevor described a number of systems, namely his school, his life at home, his classroom and the nurture group. In his first, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth diary entries, he mentioned particular persons – including children and educators – from school, his classroom as well as the nurture group. These persons were sometimes seen in a positive light. For example, in his sixth diary entry, Trevor drew an educator saving two children from a shark attack. The educator mentioned in this story used to support these two children at school. While one child could not save another, the educator portrayed was there for them and able to save them both.

In his eighth diary entry, Trevor drew a number of children and educators who were sleeping and waiting for Santa Claus while two children, Duncan and Colin, were running around. In his seventh diary entry, Trevor drew a picture with four different settings: his classroom, his home, his extended family's home and the nurture group. He drew a Christmas tree, which connected all four settings, and the presents he wished to give to the people in each of the four places. Bortha and Kourkoutas (2016) name two factors that hinder the inclusion of children who exhibit SEBD, these being a lack of teacher training in managing social and emotional behaviour difficulties as well as teachers attributing negative stereotypes to children who present with SEBD.

In his last diary entry, Trevor made a list of people he liked and disliked. The list included Philippa and myself, his teacher, an LSA in his class and the head of school. He also mentioned that he liked all of these persons, except the head of school. The reason he gave for disliking the latter was that he felt that the head of school had unfairly given him a day's exclusion from school because a boy had hit him and hurt him. Through the

conversations I had with Trevor and through my observations of the boy, I felt that not everyone at school understood Trevor. The incident, which occurred before the ninth diary entry, clearly brought this out. Daniels (2006) states that for inclusion to take place in schools, there needs to be a change in the culture of schooling.

Through his drawings and conversations Trevor also implied other children he did not have a good relationship with, such as Duncan and Colin. In his ninth diary entry, he mentioned that Duncan had hit him and that everyone blamed Trevor for it. For such reasons, I feel that in order for all children to be part of the school, certain initiatives such as peer preparation programmes and Circle Time sessions need to be set to make children like Trevor feel more included. At times Trevor also felt that he was not being heard by certain educators in the school. In his last diary entry, Trevor also mentioned that he was once treated unfairly at school and sent home for no reason.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) argue that nurture groups provide a nurturing context that helps children even in their basic needs. Before starting his drawing as part of his fifth diary entry, Trevor wanted to get a drink. I gave him a glass of water. From my observations, I frequently noticed that whenever Trevor got angry, drinking some water seemed to calm him down. Trevor was angry before starting this particular drawing, as evidenced by the drawing itself and the conversation I had with Trevor upon its completion. Additionally, whenever Trevor felt angry, I would usually ask him whether he wanted to drink some water, which to him became a calming down strategy. While I had gotten to know about this calming strategy through experience, the discovery enabled me to become more attuned to Trevor's needs.

According to Hughes and Schlösser (2014), nurture group attendance has a number of benefits for children making use of this service. Such children are seen to become more secure and to get along better with their peers while also developing their emotional literacy. When Trevor mentioned a video game that he had viewed on a particular internet site, which I felt was not appropriate for children his age, I did not judge him

but offered him support instead. On that day, Trevor became really angry over the fact that I was disagreeing with his views. In that situation, I suggested a tool for him to calm down. Billington (2012) states that the staff in the nurture group are encouraged to accord their lives with the experiences of the children, respect the latter, and direct the more usual focus on cognitive approaches to learning towards a sensitivity to the emotional lives of the children involved. Although this thesis looks at journal writing and drawing as a way of providing support for children who present with SEBD, I believe that there are other alternatives that an educator could apply to that same purpose. In this situation I chose the game Jenga which Trevor could use to calm down.

Solomon and Thomas (2011) view Maslow's hierarchy of needs as one that provides a helpful way of conceptualising people's needs. It was observed that by watching a particular game online, Trevor was not actualising certain needs for himself as the game was not age-appropriate for him. Moreover, the fact that Trevor said that this game was making him feel angry all the time was something I was concerned about. Thus, I made it my duty to inform his mother about the video game matter. We had a meeting and worked together so that Trevor would stop playing or watching this game as he was too young to be exposed to it. The video game situation was resolved even before this research came to an end, as Trevor added three characters from the game to the list of people he disliked. At this stage I had to make sure not to break the bond I had managed to establish with Trevor. I approached him calmly and told him what my views about the game were, adding that I trusted him to make the right choice. I also informed him straightaway when I met and spoke with his mother.

Smith, Cowie and Blades (2011) maintain that as the child grows older, they form attachments not on the basis of physical proximity and overt behaviour, but they also form attachments which are more dependent on certain abstract qualities of the relationship – such as affection, trust and approval. In his drawings and writings, Trevor pointed out a group of people with whom he had built a positive bond, namely family members, his teacher and an LSA in his class, Philippa, other children and even myself. In his drawings Trevor showed care and altruism towards these people. For example, in

his second diary entry, he indicated that he wanted to help Philippa because her car was not working.

In his first, third, fourth and fifth diary entries, Trevor wanted to save his teacher, the LSA, Philippa, Amber and myself from dangerous situations. His Christmas Tree drawing featured all the presents that he wished to give to the people that he loved as a sign of his love for them. The individuals whom Trevor mentioned ranged from family members, to children in his class, to educators working at the school. After going through this experience with Trevor, I came to the conclusion that if an educator only looks only at a child's negative behaviour, they would not be able to view the positive characteristics that this child possesses. As was made evident throughout this research, Trevor possessed and exhibited a number of positive characteristics. Educators should therefore always look at such positive characteristics before judging the child on the basis of any negative or unruly behaviour.

Tuber (2015) notes that if children are capable of play, they are often able to use that space to tell the story of their struggle in order to make sense of their triumphs and downfalls, loves and fears, anger and sadness, longings and anxieties. In this research Trevor made use of stories about different people at school. These individuals were not always portrayed in a positive light. At times Trevor felt that he needed to help save certain characters from difficult predicaments, while at other times he portrayed conflicting situations. He was a helper when he saved Amber in his fifth diary entry and when he helped Philippa repair her car. In this same entry, Trevor also mentioned the video game and the anger it provoked in him. We had a discussion about anger, during which I offered guidance by providing him with an alternative. This would not have been possible if I had not already established a good bond with the child, and if he did not feel he was in a safe environment. By encouraging Trevor to reflect on his feelings and his drawing, I kept a firm focus on the child concerned, who at that moment needed my help and support to resolve the issues he was struggling with.

When I linked Trevor’s diary entries and conversations to the four theoretical frameworks, I came up with the following diagram:

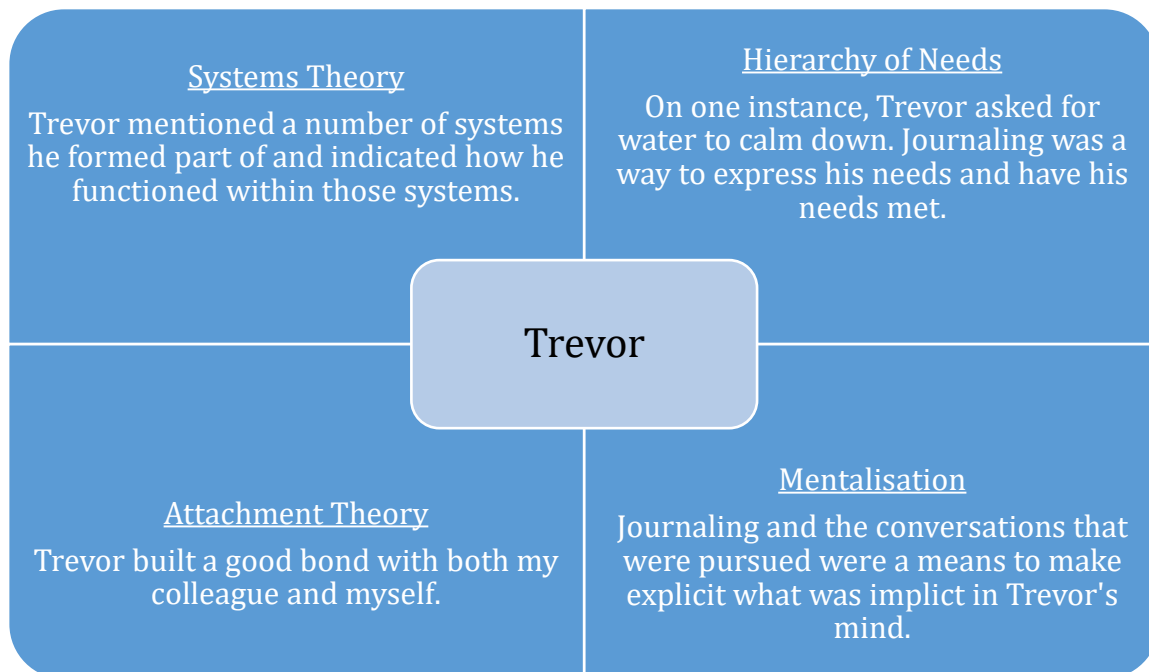


Figure 6: A summarised illustration of the theories applied to my work with Trevor

Journaling was a tool with which Trevor expressed himself. For me it was a tool to discover something which was of concern to him, and to then support him in overcoming certain difficulties. To conclude Trevor’s case study, I think that reality, imagination and emotional literacy were at the heart of his diary entries in this research.

5.4 Discussion on the first Research Question

If I were to think of what topics and themes, the children would draw or write about prior to my research, I might have been mistaken, because the children constructed their own experiences, situations, thoughts, feelings and emotions in an individual manner. As I look at the first research question that I asked in this research which was: “*In what ways, if any, can journal writing/drawing facilitate voice for children who present with Social, Emotional, Behaviour Difficulties?*” I can say that journaling did in

fact facilitate voice for the child participants. This was done because the children were in a safe place, with educators (Philippa and myself) who they trusted and they could open up through the use of journaling as a strategy and through the use of a conversation that was done during or after the child drew and/or wrote in his/her journal. Thus, in this research journaling facilitated voices as it gave the child the guidance to express himself/herself through drawing and/or writing and then finding a trusted adult to whom the child could speak to about what she/he had just drew.

5.5 The Educators' Narratives and Actions

Syrnyk (2012) puts forward a number of qualities that a nurture group educator should have, including inner strengths, calmness, an empathetic nature, self-awareness, objectivity; and the ability to maintain a relaxed and reasoned demeanour, to attune to the internal states of others, and to be an effective manager of their own states. I think that this study would not have been implemented in this manner if my colleague and I did not possess these qualities as educators. There were a number of actions that both my colleague and I performed to support the child in the nurture group – not only during the course of the research, but also over the years in our work together as a nurture group team. Some of our achievements, especially in this study, included listening to the unheard voices of the children and understanding their concerns, supporting the children and guiding them, establishing good communication practices between parents and other staff members, being inclusive towards children, and also being reflective on our role as educators. The following sections will describe how these strategies were put into practice during the course of this study.

5.5.1 Listening to the Unheard Voices of Children

Various researchers point out that listening to children is a legal duty that all educators should abide by, and that children should express their views rather than assume the role of passive observers (Holliday et al., 2009; Sellman, 2009; Lambert & Glacken, 2011). My colleague and I did not merely listen to the unheard voices of children because it was our duty to do so as educators, but because we wanted to give these

children the opportunity to voice their thoughts. One instance during this study saw Trevor ask for a glass of water before starting on his fifth diary entry. Drinking water was a way of calming himself down. At that point we listened to and addressed Trevor's need to drink water. In the study, the participant children used the research as an opportunity to speak out by discussing a number of issues with us.

Amber's second and fourth diary entries centred on not being able to spend time with a peer during break time; James' sixth diary entry regarded matters of bullying; conflicts were noted in Trevor's fifth, sixth and ninth diary entries, as well as in Cristiano's second diary entry; while Lara's and Lionel's fourth diary entries both concerned issues associated with fear. As Meehan (2015) notes, when given the opportunity children communicate in many ways. Throughout this research, communication was elicited through drawings, writings and the use of conversations. Syrnyk (2014) asks "How effectively can educators hear the voice of children?" Through this study, I realised that effectiveness is not a question of results but a question of process: that is, how an educator can be open and able to give children the opportunity to voice concerns they might find difficult to talk about unless given the right opportunity by the right people.

5.5.2 Supporting and Guiding the Children

Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014) state that teachers often find themselves trapped in confrontational arguments with children who exhibit SEBD. In this study, Trevor brought up a similar issue in his ninth diary entry where he felt that the head of school had treated him unfairly by excluding him from school for one day. In that particular situation, the educator had entered a confrontation with the child and would not listen to the message that the child was trying to communicate. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) deem positive and trusting relationships with educators as one of the things that help children with SEBD overcome challenges in their lives. Through the support and guidance given by my colleague and myself in this research, the children were also able to overcome a number of challenges that they were facing.

Amber was able to conquer her worries related to issues associated with friendships. James was able to open up about the teasing he was being subjected to, and I supported him by providing strategies to face the situation in a positive manner and by speaking out on his behalf. Both my colleague and I succeeded in calming Lara and Lionel down when they were worried about a thunderstorm. I also guided Trevor to make the right choice when choosing what type of video games he should play. D'Souza and Jament (2015, pp. 245-246) state that strategies assist in the inclusion of children who present with SEBD. The two main strategies used in this study were journaling followed by conversations. Through the drawings, writings and conversations the children voiced a number of issues and concerns. In return, both my colleague and I were able to offer them guidance and support through the teaching of strategies they could apply both at school and in other environments to deal with their challenges in a positive manner. For example, a strategy that was used with James after the teasing and bullying incident (sixth diary entry) consisted of role-play that enabled him to deal with hurtful name-calling.

5.5.3 Establishing Cooperative Work with Parents and Co-Workers

In Billington's (2012) study, nurture group educators had the opportunity to get to know the parents and work collaboratively with them for the benefit of the children. Similarly in this research, the parents were also key stakeholders – not only when they gave their consent for their child to participate in this research, but throughout the study. Apart from coming to speak to us about their children and the research, one parent was also contacted when there was something which we were concerned about. When Trevor discussed with us the knowledge that he had about a game that was not age-appropriate for him, my colleague and I decided that it would be best to contact Trevor's mother. A meeting was held during which we discussed the matter and worked collaboratively with Trevor's parent to make sure that Trevor would engage in age-appropriate games.

As the nurture group is a classroom in a mainstream school, there is the need for educators to work together with other teachers in the school. Papantuono, Portelli and Gibson (2014) note that some teachers do not know how to go about managing challenging behaviours, while Goodman & Burton (2010) observe that teachers feel unsupported at times when faced with challenging behaviours. Additionally, Mowat (2015) claims that there are some teachers who tend to be ironic towards children who exhibit SEBD. For this reason, in my role as nurture group teacher as well as during this study, I felt the need to work with other educators who were involved with the children. For example, when James opened up about his classroom teacher and classmates calling him “warden”, I felt that it my duty to speak with and ask the class teacher to try and put a stop to the matter as it was hurting James. When Amber was finding it difficult to play with her friend during break time, I also spoke with the teacher to try and solve the matter and support Amber in finding new friends she could play with.

5.5.4 Practising Inclusion with Children

A number of researchers note the challenges that exist in the inclusion of children who present with SEBD. Among these difficulties are management skills (Papantuono, Portelli & Gibson, 2014), classroom challenges (Goodman & Burton, 2010), alienation (Bortha & Kourkoutas, 2016), a lack of democratic schooling (Sellman, 2009), the feeling of being misunderstood (Flynn, 2014), exclusion (Sergeant, 2014), the lack of practical guidelines for children (Lantieri, 2012) and labels (O’Connor et al., 2011). Similarly in this study, there were times when prior to and during this research, challenges towards the inclusion of the children who were participants in this study had to be faced.

Amber felt that she was alone during break time, and she also felt the loss of a friend whom she cared for. Cristiano was immediately labelled as a child who exhibited challenging behaviour before educators even tried to get to know him. James also went through a period of being teased because he always wanted to help others. Lionel, like Cristiano, was labelled as a boy who exhibited difficulties related to SEBD for the reason

that he was a lively and energetic boy. Trevor experienced a lack of democratic schooling and a day's exclusion from school, and with these came the feeling of being misunderstood. During this research, both my colleague and I tried to be inclusive towards all the children in our nurture group by providing them with a tool to be used as a voice to explain how they felt about their need for inclusive practices at school. We also suggested ways of how they could feel more included within the school environment through positive strategies and practices.

5.5.5 Being Reflective as an Educator

Billington (2006) puts forward another question to educators who are working with children: "How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children)?" During the course of this research, I have come to acknowledge that it is important for an educator to reflect both during work and about their career outside working hours. As I was taking certain decisions in this research, I always kept in mind both my roles of educator and researcher. My main concern has always been the safety of the child participants in the study and that of my colleague. As mentioned in the previous sections, I always had the holistic well-being of the participants in mind and at heart throughout this study. As an educator, I was constantly trying to understand what a particular child might be telling me through a particular drawing and writing. I also needed to fully understand what type of meaning the child was communicating to me. I especially tried to empathise with and effectively listen to the unheard voices of children by being supportive and positive, even when there were challenging situations that the children might have been facing and experiencing.

5.6 Discussion on the second and third Research Questions

The second research question in this study addressed: "*How can journal writing/drawing promote educators' understanding of the needs of children who exhibit SEBD and inform therapeutic work in the nurture group and classroom context?*" In this study journaling was not only a tool for self-expression for the children but also a tool for myself and my colleague to understand the internal world of the child that is usually

suppressed inside the child. In this study we (Philippa & I) were given insight on a number of situations, through the drawings and writings that the children were producing during the time of the study. We, as educators, were in a position to give the children the opportunity to open up in a positive manner. My colleague and I, could support the child by encouraging an alternative to things which the children expressed that were troubling them.

An educator needs to act when a child draws, writes and/or speaks about something which might be presenting challenging implications and outcomes. The third research question asked: *“What actions, if any, does an education take when a child is concerned about something that has happened in his/her life?”* There were four types of actions that my colleague and I took to support children in this study. There were instances when we encouraged the children to speak out in an assertive manner to people that were hurting them. We even coached the children how to speak up in these situations. There was another action that we also encouraged in this study, which focused on giving the child guidance to internally work out a worrying situation. Another action that was taken was to support children by asking the educators at school to change certain practices that might have been worrying or hurting the children, thus, discouraging them from reaching their full potential. Lastly, another action that was taken in this research was to inform a parent of a child about a situation of concern that was happening within the family environment. Also, throughout the research, it was my colleague and I who always took the lead in voicing the concerns (both those related to school and those related to home) that the children said to us.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research questions previously set. I also presented my work, relating it to four major theoretical frameworks and other research studies similar to my own. The end product of the six noticeboards in the room is now four larger noticeboards in the form of a mind map, linking all the drawings, writings and words to previous research and theory. Looking at these six noticeboards brought a sense of

nostalgia. In a way, I knew that after considerable input from several people, the small but enriching project would come to its completion. During the course of this research, I have come to realise how a small project can lead to countless reflections and abundant experiences that I as a researcher and practitioner have learnt greatly from, especially through answering the questions which were presented during the first stages of my research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Winds in the east, mist coming in,
Like something is brewing about to begin,
Can’t put my fingers on what lies in store,
But I fear what’s to happen has happened before”

P.L. Travers from *Mary Poppins*

6.1 Summary of the Thesis

As I have now reached the final pages of my thesis, I am going to go back to the room, gather all the chapters that I previously wrote, summarise my words and then reflect on my work. I will present recommendations in two manners, which in a way presents me as both a research and an educator. Firstly, I will reflect on recommendations for further research that could be carried out to enhance voice in children and young people. I will then proceed to reflect on recommendations that could be considered by educators to make children and young people feel safe at school, ensure that their holistic needs are met, build an affirmative trusting relationship with the children concerned, and most importantly look for strategies to listen to the child’s or young person’s voice.

My choice of poem by P.L. Travers from the story *Mary Poppins* stems from the fact that I do not want this thesis to be just the conclusion of a research study, but to be a driving force in bringing about change. I encourage other educators and researchers to create spaces such as the one achieved through this research, so that they may be able to find ways to listen to the unheard voices of children. I started this thesis by introducing myself as a person, as a teacher and as a researcher. In the introductory chapter I also presented my roles of researcher and participant in this research. I then went on to review different research studies associated with SEBD, nurture groups, theoretical

frameworks associated with nurture groups, and theory associated with listening to the child's voice.

The literature review chapter ended with three research questions. These research questions led me to think about the research methodology, research tools, and ethical procedures that I used to conduct my research. Following the methodology chapter, I presented seven other participants in this research: my colleague Philippa and six students of mine, namely Amber, Cristiano, James, Lara, Lionel and Trevor. I also displayed the children's journal entries and the conversations that which Philippa and I had with the children, discussing how these linked to different studies and theoretical frameworks presented earlier in the literature review section and answering the research questions raised in the literature review chapter. The current chapter brings closure to this particular study, but it is also written in the hope that it may open doors for further research on and support towards children and young people, especially those who present with SEBD.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

In this research, I used a narrative methodology, interviews and diaries as research tools. Since I was able to answer my research questions, I feel that my research was reliable and valid, and adopted a methodology and research tools that helped enhance the child participants' voices. I feel there is a need for interpretive methodologies that focus on research with and for children who present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Such research should not focus on deficit models, but rather on social and inclusive models that support children and young people who present with SEBD. There is also a need for further research related to nurture groups, which should ideally focus on the roles of educators working within a nurture group.

I also feel that there is a need for research that focuses on the benefits of such nurturing settings, and an even greater need for studies that focus on the children's behaviour on both a school and classroom level. Such research should question why some children

might not be welcomed at school and/or in their classroom, what opportunities there are for educational institutions to be more inclusive towards children who present with SEBD, and what hinders schools from being and/or becoming inclusive settings for such children. I believe that there is a need for research that, apart from focusing on nurture group educators, should also regard the other educators – mainly class teachers – and their actions towards and treatment of children who present with SEBD. Such research might wish to ask whether educators support or hinder a child – especially one who exhibits SEBD – from reaching his/her potential at school.

6.3 Recommendations for Practice

Four theoretical frameworks were outlined in the literature review. From the research I carried out, I realised how fundamental it is for an educator to work on and build a positive trusting relationship with the child. This would ensure that the child is not at a loss within the school environment, and allows the educator to get to know the child in a manner that enables the former to ascertain that the child's needs are being met. I recommend that educators work on these matters before they start teaching. I feel that in our world, the role of educator is not only a profession, but a profession of care; and educators therefore need to show their students that they care for them. The journal writing and drawing exercise proved to be an effective tool for this research, and can be used in other educational settings to enhance voice in children. On the question of whether journal writing and drawing works with everyone, during the course of the study I made sure that all the children in the nurture group were given a journal. The purpose of this was to include everyone in the project.

However, it was observed that there were children who felt more comfortable expressing themselves and their experiences in a different manner. My strong belief as an educator is that professionals in this role should work for and support the individual child. When looking for strategies, educators should not only focus on what works for everyone, but must identify a strategy that works for each child. A number of strategies that could be used apart from journal writing and drawing were mentioned at the

beginning of my thesis. While it is certain that there are others strategies that could also be deployed to ensure that the child's voice is heard, I feel that it is the educator's duty and ultimate goal to encourage this to occur as much as possible, whatever the manner employed. It came out in a number of instances throughout this study that children who exhibit challenging behaviours are not wholly or consistently supported in schools. Another recommendation for practice would be that educators need to look beyond the child's challenging SEBD-related behaviour, get to know them, and look for learning experiences that would help support their development.

6.4 Conclusion

I invite you once again to come with me to the room, where the desk now holds a compiled piece of work – my thesis. When I am on a journey, I normally take photos to keep in a photo album. In this case I've decided to not only take a photo of my thesis, but to keep a visual memory of all the other things that formed part of my journey during the course of this thesis. After four years of reflecting, writing, erasing, re-writing, observing, evaluating, researching, interpreting and revising, I have come to the end of this journey. This is why I feel it is important to not only remember the end product, but to also cherish the process itself in its entirety, with all its hardships and continued determination that led me to the destination I was headed for. Now the difficulty is letting go of something I have worked so hard on, but I am hopeful and aware that if other researchers and educators create projects and awareness to enhance the child's voice, my work will have become a section of a greater piece of work, a larger photo album.

Last year, in one of my first tasks in my new role as an education officer in inclusive education, I was asked to visit a state primary school. As I greeted the head of school in his office, I found a wrapped parcel with Samuel's name on it. I asked the head of school about Samuel, and he informed me that the boy had been transferred from the SEBD special school to his school only just that year. The head also informed me that the wrapped parcel contained a diary – a present and a tool that he was going to give

Samuel. He relayed to me how educators in Samuel's previous school were informed about an ex-teacher of the boy of how she used to ask him to express himself through journal writing and drawing. Through this incident, I realised how the tool I had used in my research – and which led to this whole study – has made a positive difference in Samuel's life, just as it has in Amber, Cristiano, James, Lara, Lionel and Trevor's. It also left an impact on me as an educator and as a researcher. My one wish is that it will continue to positively affect and give a voice to children, especially those who present with SEBD.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance from the University of Sheffield



Downloaded: 25/07/2017
Approved: 02/04/2015

Maria Pace
Registration number: 120119327
School of Education
Programme: Ed.D in Children, School & Families

Dear Maria

PROJECT TITLE: Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing
APPLICATION: Reference Number 002024

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 02/04/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 002024 (dated 18/03/2015).
- Participant information sheet 003400 version 1 (09/11/2014).
- Participant information sheet 003401 version 1 (09/11/2014).
- Participant information sheet 003403 version 1 (09/11/2014).
- Participant information sheet 003405 version 1 (09/11/2014).
- Participant information sheet 003432 version 1 (11/11/2014).
- Participant consent form 003437 version 1 (11/11/2014).
- Participant consent form 003438 version 1 (11/11/2014).
- Participant consent form 003439 version 1 (11/11/2014).
- Participant consent form 003441 version 1 (11/11/2014).
- Participant consent form 003442 version 1 (11/11/2014).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

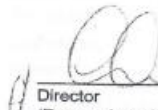
David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance from the MEDE Malta

C. Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education - Official Approval

The above request for permission to carry out research in State Schools is hereby approved according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the University of Malta Ethics Committee.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT
Ministry for Education and Employment
Floriana VLT 2000



Director
(Research and Development Department)

Date: 17, 04, 2015

Official Stamp

Louis Scerri
Assistant Director
Research and Development
Department

Conditions for the approval of a request by a student to carry out research work in State Schools

Permission for research in State Schools is subject to the following conditions:

1. The official request form is to be accompanied by a copy of the questionnaire and / or any relevant material intended for use in schools during research work.
2. The original request form, showing the relevant signatures and approval, must be presented to the Head of School.
3. All research work is carried out at the discretion of the relative Head of School and subject to their conditions.
4. Researchers are to observe strict confidentiality at all times.
5. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to withdraw permission to carry out research in State Schools at any time and without prior notice.
6. Students are expected to restrict their research to a minimum of students / teachers / administrators / schools, and to avoid any waste of time during their visits to schools.
7. As soon as the research in question is completed, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education assumes the right to a full copy (in print/on C.D.) of the research work carried out in State Schools. **Researchers are to forward the copies to the Assistant Director, International Research, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.**
8. Researchers are to hand a copy of their Research in print or on C.D. to the relative School/s.
9. In the case of video recordings, researchers have to obtain prior permission from the Head of School and the teacher of the class concerned. Any adults recognisable in the video are to give their explicit consent. Parents of students recognisable in the video are also to be requested to approve that their siblings may be video-recorded. Two copies of the consent forms are necessary, one copy is to be deposited with the Head of School, and the other copy is to accompany the Request Form for Research in State Schools. Once the video recording is completed, one copy of the videotape is to be forwarded to the Head of School. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to request another copy.
10. The video recording's use is to be limited to this sole research and may not be used for other research without the full consent of interested parties including the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

Appendix 3: Information Letter and Consent Form for Parents in English

Ms. Maria Pace

St. Rita

Triq il-Kuccard

Safi SFI 1611

Mobile Number – 99488672

Dear Parent,

I am an Ed.D student at the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. The Ed.D course involves the writing of a thesis and the title of my thesis is *'Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing'*. The aim of the study is to analyse whether journal writing/drawing facilitates voice for children with SEBD and whether journal writing/drawing promote educators' understanding of the needs of children with SEBD and inform therapeutic work in the classroom context.

My research involves giving children a journal and they will write/draw in their journal about two times every week. It then involves asking the children about their journal entries through an individual informal interview that will be done with me at the very end of the research project. It also involves asking an educator, who is taking care of your child at school, through an informal interview to discuss the needs of children with SEBD and to how it is best to promote therapeutic work in a classroom context.

In order to be able to do my research study, I will need your child's participation. I would like to assure you that all the information collected will be used solely and for the purpose of the study. Total confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. I would like to point out that anything your child says will be treated in confidence. Your child's name or your name will not be written down anywhere and the child will be given a pseudonym. You have the right to give/not give your consent for your children participation at any stage throughout the project and this will not have any negative repercussions. You have a right to see the children's diary entries at a later stage before the informal interview.

Thanks and Regards,

Ms. Maria Pace

Title of Reseach Project: *Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing.*

Name of Researcher: Maria Pace

Parent/Guardian Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child from the research at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, I am aware that if my child does not wish to answer any particular question(s), s/he is free to decline.

2. I understand that my child's responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission to the research to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my child's name will not be linked with the research materials, and s/he will not be identified or identifiable in the report that results from the research.

3. I give my consent for my child to take part in the above research project.

Name of Parent

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies: _____

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and the information letter. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in secure place.

Appendix 4: Information Letter and Consent Form for Parents in Maltese

Ms. Maria Pace

St. Rita

Triq il-Kuccard

Safi SFI 1611

Numru tal-Mowbajl – 99488672

Għażiż Ġenitur,

Jien studenta fl-Iskola tal-Edukazzjoni go l-Universita' ta' Sheffield u bhala qiegħda nagħmel kors magħruf bhala Ed.D. Dan il-kors jinvolvi li jien nagħmel tezi u t-titlu ta' din it-tezi hu *'Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing'* (Nisimgħu l-vuċijiet li mhumiex mismugħa ta' tfal b'*SEBD* permezz ta' kitba u tpenġija fi djarju). L-ewwel għan ta' din ir-riċerka huma li jiena nagħmel analiżi ta' kitba/tpenġija fid-djarji tat-tfal biex jiffaċilita l-vuċi u l-espressjoni ta' dawn it-tfal. It-tieni għan ta' din ir-riċerka u li nsaqsi edukaturi li jieħdu ħsieb it-tfal biex nara b'liema modi huma qegħdin jifhmu l-bżonnijiet ta' tfal b'*SEBD* u kif huma jistgħu ngħinnu lit-tfal permezz tax-xogħol tagħhom.

Ir-riċerka tiegħi tinvolvi li jien nagħti djarju lit-tfal u huma jiktbu/jpenġu fih madwar darbtejn fil-ġimgħa. Wara jien se nsaqsi lit-tfal permezz ta' intervista' informali dwar il-kitbiet u tpenġija tagħhom f'dan id-djarju. Din l-intervista' se ssir lejn l-aħħar ta' proġett. Din ir-riċerka tinvolvi wkoll intervista' ma' edukatur/edukatriċi, li qiegħed/qiegħda j/tieħu ħsieb it-tfal tagħkom l-iskola u f'din l-intervista' se niddiskutu l-bżonnijiet ta' tfal li għandhom l-*SEBD* u kif l-edukaturi jistgħu jipprovwu xogħol terapewtiku f'ambjent ta' klassi lil dawn it-tfal.

Biex jien nkun nista' nagħmel ir-riċerka għandi bżonn il-partecipazzjoni tat-tifel/tifla tiegħek. Nixtieq nassigurak li l-informazzjoni kollha li se niġbor se tkun biss użata għal fini ta' dan l-istudju u kull haġa li t-tifel/tifla tiegħek jiddiskuti miegħi se jibqa' kunfidenza u anonimu. L-isem ta' tifel/tifla mhux se jiġi miktub imkien u lit-tifel/tifla se j/tingħata isem fittizju. Inti għandek id-dritt li taċċetta jew tirrifjuta li t-tifel/tifla j/tieħu sehem f'dan l-istudju f'kull stadju tal-istudji u jekk tħoss li t-tifel/tifla m'għandux/ m'għandiex j/tirrateċipa mhux se jkun hemm effetti negattivi fuq t-tifel/tifla. Int se jkollok dritt li tara d-djarju tat-tifel/tifla aktar tard fil-perjodu tal-istudju f'tit qabel ma' ssir l-intervista' mat-tifel/tifla.

Grazzi u tisljiet,

Ms. Maria Pace

Titlu tal-Proġett tar-Riċerka: *Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing.* (Nisimgħu l-vuċijiet li mhumiex mismugħa ta' tfal b'*SEBD* permezz ta' kitba u tpenġija fi djarju)

Isem tar-Riċerkatriċi: Maria Pace

Numru ta' Identifikazzjoni għal-Ġenituri tat-Tfal Parteċipanti:

1. Jien nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt l-ittra ta' informazzjoni li titkellem dwar il-proġett ta' riċerka u kelli l-opportunita' li nsaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar dan il-proġett.	
2. Jien nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi hi volontarja u jien qiegħda/qiegħed fil-liberta' li ma nħallix jew inwaqqaf lil binti/ibni milli jieħu sehem f'din ir-riċerka bla ma nagħti raġuni għaliex u mingħajr ma jkun hemm konsegwenzi negattivi. Jien naf ukoll li jekk binti/ibni ma t/jridx iwieġeb xi mistoqsijiet partikolari hi/hu t/jista' t/jagħmel dan.	
2. Jien nifhem li t-twegibiet tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi se jkunu kunfidenzjali. Jien nifhem li l-istem tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi mhux se jkunu mqabbla ma' materjal fir-riċerka u hu/hi mhux se jiġu identifikati fir-rizultati tar-riċerka.	
3. Jien nagħti l-kunsens biex it-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tipparteċipa fir-riċerka.	

Isem ta' Ġenitur

Data

Firma

Isem tar-Riċerkatriċi

Data

Firma

Koppji: _____

Meta li kunsens ikun iffirmit mill-persuni konċernati, l-ġenitur se t/jirċievi koppja ta' dan il-kunsens iffirmita mill-ġenituri u l-ittra bl-informazzjoni. Koppji tal-ittra u l-kunsens se jkunu merfġuħa f'post sikur.

Appendix 5: Information Letter and Assent Form for Children in English



Ms. Maria Pace

St. Rita

Triq il-Kuccard

Safi SFI 1611

Dear _____,

In the Nurture Group, I sometimes ask you to write/draw in your journal. At present I am studying and I need to write a really long essay that some people call a thesis. The title of this thesis is '*Listening to the unheard voices of Children with SEBD through Journal Writing and Drawing*'

As part of the study I will give you a journal and you will have to write/draw in this journal. Then later on I will ask you some questions about your writings/drawings in your journal.

You have a choice whether or not to participate in the study. You will be given another name if you wish to participate and you can chose not to participate at any time. What you write/draw in your journal and what you say about your writings/drawings will be used only for the purpose of the study.

Thanks and Regards,

Ms. Maria



Title of Reseach Project: *Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing.*

Name of Researcher: Maria Pace

Child Participant Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter explaining the above research project.



2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.



3. I understand that my participation is voluntary.



4. I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.



5. I understand that what I say in the research will be strictly confidential.



6. I understand that for the research I will be given another name.



7. I give my consent to take part in the above research project.



Name of Child

Date

Signature/Finger Print

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature / Finger Print

Copies: _____

When we sign the form you will get a copy of this sheet with the information letter and you and your parents can keep the sheets in a safe place at home. Another copy of the sheet will be kept in a locked cupboard that only I can open.

Appendix 6: Information Letter and Assent Form for Children in Maltese



Ms. Maria Pace

St. Rita

Triq il-Kuccard

Safi SFI 1611

Għażiż/a _____,

F'Nurture Group, jien għali nsaqsikom biex intom tiktbu jew tpenġu fid-djarju tagħkom. Bħalissa jiena qiegħda nistudja u għandi bzonn nitkeb kitba twila ħafna li jgħidulha teži. It-titlu ta' din it-teži hu *'Listening to the unheard voices of Children with SEBD through Journal Writing and Drawing'* (Nisimgħu l-vuċijiet li mhumiex mismugħa ta' tfal b'SEBD permezz ta' kitba u tpenġija fi djarju).

Bħala parti minn din it-teži nixtieq li nagħtik djarju u int fuqu tikteb u tpenġi affarijiet li tixtieq. Aktar tard jien se nsaqsik mistoqsjet dwar dak li penġejt u ktibt fid-djarju.

Int tista' tagħzel jekk trid jew ma tridx tipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju. Int se tingħata wkoll isem differenti u tista' tagħzel li ma tipparteċipax anke aktar tard. Dak li tikteb/tpenġi fid-djarju se jintuża' biss għal dan l-istudju.

Grazzi u tisljiet,

Ms. Maria





© Mystic Arts, LLC

Titlu tal-Proġett tar-Riċerka: *Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing.* (Nisingħu l-vuċijiet li mhumiex mismugħa ta' tfal b' SEBD permezz ta' kitba u tpenġija fi djarju)



Isem tar-Riċerkatriċi: Maria Pace

Numru ta' Identifikazzjoni għal-Ġenituri tat-Tfal Partecipanti

1. Jien nikkonferma li qrat u fhimt l-ittra bl-informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka t'hawn fuq.

	
---	---

2. Jien nikkonferma li kelli l-opportunita' nsaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar il-proġett.

	
---	---

3. Jien nifhem il-partecipazzjoni tiegħi fil-proġett hi waħda voluntarja.

	
---	---


4. Jien nista' nieqaf milli nipparteċipa milli nieħdu sehem f'dan il-proġett mingħajr ma nagħti raguni meta nixtieq u mingħajr konsegwenzi negattivi.

	
---	---

5. Jien nifhem li dak li ngħid fir-riċerka se jkun b'mod kunfidenzjali.

	
---	---

6. Jien nifhem li fir-riċerka se ningħata isem ieħor u mhux l-isem li għandi.

	
---	---

7. Jien nagħti l-kunsens biex nipparteċipa f'dan il-proġett.

	
---	---

Isem tat-tifel/tifla

Data

Firma/Print

Isem tar-riċertakriċi

Data

Firma/Print

Koppji: _____

Meta tiffirma int se tingħata koppja ta' din il-karta flimkien mal-ittra bl-informazzjoni dwar il-proġett. Dawn il-karti għandek tħallihom f'post sikur fid-dar tiegħek li int u l-ġenituri tkunu tafu bih. Jien se nħalli l-koppja tiegħi go kexxun. Dan il-kexxun se nsakkru u nkun nista' nifthu jiena biss.

Appendix 7: Information Letter and Consent Form for Educator

Maria Pace

St. Rita

Triq il-Kuccard

Safi SFI 1611

Mobile Number – 99488672

Dear Colleague,

As you are aware, I am an Ed.D student at the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. The Ed.D course involves the writing of a thesis and the title of my thesis is '*Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing*'. The aim of the study is to analyse whether journal writing/drawing facilitates voice for children with SEBD and whether journal writing/drawing promote educators' understanding of the needs of children with SEBD and inform therapeutic work in the classroom context.

My research involves giving children a journal and they will write/draw in their journal about two times every week. From your part it then involves asking the children about their journal entries through an individual informal interview that will be done with me at the very end of the research project. It also involves asking the child participants at school, through an informal interview to discuss the needs of children with SEBD and to how it is best to promote therapeutic work in a classroom context. It also involves you as a participant keeping a diary with information on the children.

In order to be able to do my research study, I will need your participation. I would like to assure you that all the information collected will be used solely and for the purpose of the study. Total confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.

Thanks and Regards,

Ms. Maria Pace

Title of Research Project: *Listening to the unheard voices of children with SEBD through journal writing and drawing.*

Name of Researcher: Maria Pace

Participant Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission to the research to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report that results from the research.

3. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies: _____

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and the information letter. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in secure place.

Appendix 8: Educators' Diaries

Amber – My Diary Notes

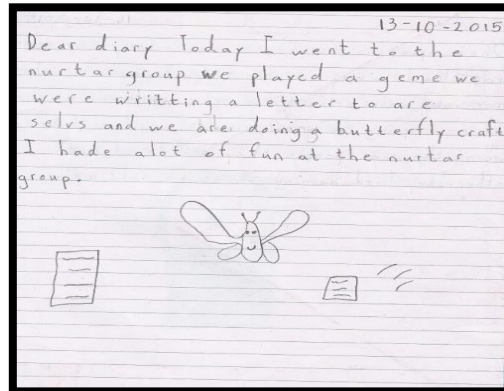
12th October 2015

Amber is a nine-year old girl. I first met Amber in my second year as a nurture group teacher some five years ago. She was a quiet girl who rarely ever participated in class. In Year 1, due to her struggles in literacy, it was suggested to her mother that she repeat Year 1. As a repeater, she was referred to the nurture group for a self-esteem programme. Amber came for the mentioned programme and was phased out of it as soon as she started to participate more in class. In Year 2, she clashed with her teacher who shouted at her and called her names like 'clumsy' and 'baby'. This took its toll on Amber, who often cried as a result. Once I was walking in the school corridor in front of Amber's class. She had just been punished because she had not done her homework as she did not know how to do it. She ran up to me, hugged me and asked "Ms Maria, could you please help?" She started crying, and while I pleaded with her to calm down, I promised that I would call her mother to see what we could do. Consequently, Amber re-joined a nurture group programme, and to thank me for listening to her plea, she would always come up to me and hug me, whispering "thank you" after every session. In Year 3, Amber was provided with shared support from a learning support assistant. Amber was happy again at school. Her Year 3 teacher also praised her for her work. While Amber felt safe at school, she still had a very sensitive nature and lacked self-confidence. She continued to attend the nurture group in Year 3, during which one of the programmes she attended concerned emotional literacy and self-esteem. The sessions involved narrating stories to the children, among which *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck*. Amber really liked this story, and after this particular storytelling session she came up to me and told me: "Jemima is like myself. However, I am better than Jemima as I did not let people hurt me. I found you." A nurture group activity that Amber used to enjoy was drawing and writing in her diary. When I was thinking of doing my research, I thought of Amber and how she could be one of the children that could contribute to the study. I also considered how I could give a voice to Amber

through my research. If I were to describe Amber, I would say that she is a sensitive, quiet girl with a warm smile and a heart of gold. She is very well-mannered and motivated to learn, a good friend and loving towards other people.

Today is the first time since that Amber came to the Nurture Group since the start of my research. She asked me if it is today that she is going to start writing in her new diary. After the session in which I asked the children to write a letter to their future self, she then went on the sofa and wrote in her diary. After she came up to me and we had a conversation on what she wrote.

Amber's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her first diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary Amber?

Amber (*reading from her journal*): Dear diary, today, I went to the Nurture Group. We played a game. We were writing a letter to ourselves and we are doing a butterfly craft. I had a lot of fun at the Nurture Group.

Maria: Ok good. And what did you draw on this page?

Amber: I drew the letter...Can I go a draw a butterfly?

Maria: Sure you can.

Amber took her pencil to draw the butterfly.

Maria: So you are going to draw a butterfly also?

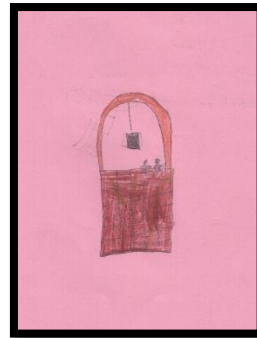
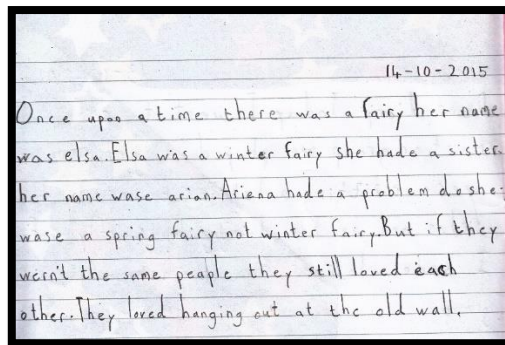
Amber nodded. Then she started to draw in her journal again. When she was ready, Amber came up to me and she showed me her journal.

Amber: I drew a butterfly and I drew a letter. I drew the butterfly because, I like butterflies.

My Diary:

Today Amber came to the Nurture Group for a Journaling Session. She wrote her journal in the tent. She then came up to me and showed me her diary. In it was a story about two friends who could not meet but are best friends still.

Amber's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her second diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Amber: I drew two fairies and a well.

Maria: And what did you write here?

Amber: I wrote their story here.

Maria: Ok. Their story?

Amber: Do you want to read it?

Maria: Yes sure. (*Reading from the diary*)...Once upon a time there was a fairy...and her name was Elsa and she was a winter fairy. She had a sister and her name was...Aran.

Amber: Anna.

Maria: Ok sorry about that. Anna...(*Reading from the diary*)Anna had a problem. She was a spring fairy not a winter fairy. But if there weren't the same people, they still loved each other. They loved hanging out at an old well.

Amber: Did you like my story?

Maria: Yes, very much!...And what happened when it was spring time? What will the winter fairy do in spring time?

Amber: She would not go out but they still would meet each other on the well...I read a story about these two fairies.

Maria: Ok. That is good.

Amber: They were still friends even if they were a spring fairy and a winter fairy.

Maria: Ok...

Amber: Like me and my friend. Though we are not in the same class, we are still friends.

Maria: Oh, I see.

Amber: And we wish to play with each other during break time, but unlike the fairies we can't.

Maria: The fairies meet near the well...

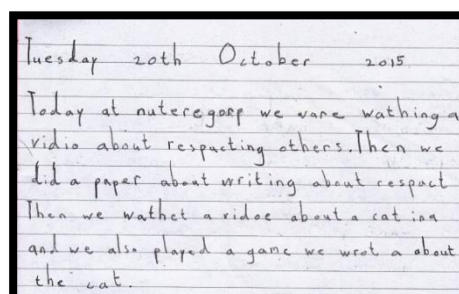
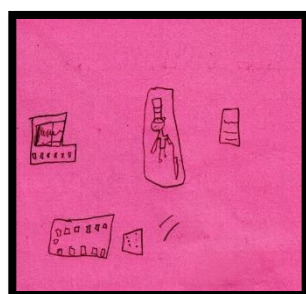
Amber: Yes, at break time, I see my friend but I cannot play with her. I have to play with my classmates.

Maria: Oh! I see.

My Diary:

Today Amber came to the nurture group with other children in her group. We discussed the theme of respect through the story 'The Cat in the Hat'. She was well-mannered, waited her turn and participated in the session. After the lesson, Amber with all other children wrote and drew in her diary. Amber took the diary, she asked me if she could go in the tent where she wrote in her diary and then came up to me to tell me what she wrote. When Amber drew and wrote in her diary, she came up to me to tell me what she wrote and drew. Amber wrote about today's session in her diary today.

Amber's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her third diary entry:

Amber: I finished my diary.

Maria: Ok and what did you write about in your diary?

Amber: I wrote about what...about the lesson.

Maria: Ok. And what did we learn today?

Amber: We learnt about respect...and we learnt that we need to do good for others, like, respecting them.

Maria: Yes, that's true...and what did you draw here?

Amber: This is cat in the hat and this is the game and this is the paper.

Maria: Ok good.

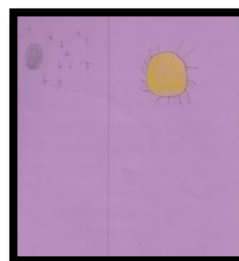
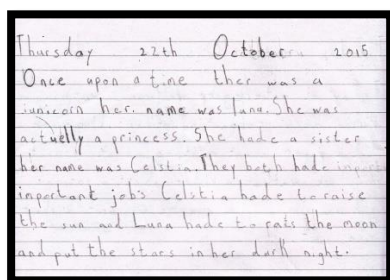
Amber: Bye, Ms. Maria. See you.

Maria: See you Amber.

My Diary:

After break Amber came to the Nurture Group with her LSA. She asked if we were going to watch *Cat in a Hat* again today. I told her that we aren't. Amber took her diary and told me that she was going to write a story. She sat on the sofa and started to write.

Amber's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her fourth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today?

Amber: About unicorns.

Maria: About unicorns!...Ok...And what happens in the story?

Amber: Nothing. They, they...once upon...can I read it?

Maria: Yes, yes you can read it.

Amber: Once upon a time there was a unicorn. Her name was Luna. She was actually a princess. She had a sister. Her names was Celestia. They both had important jobs. Celestia had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon and put the stars in her dark night.

Maria: Ok, so these unicorns, were princesses right? Both of them?

Amber: Ehe. (Yes)

Maria: Ok, right...And one had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon. Ok and would they quarrel because one of them had to raise the sun and the other had to raise the moon?

Amber: Hmmm. One time Luna did get jealous.

Maria: Luna got jealous? And what happened when she got jealous?

Amber: She became like evil for a little while.

Maria: She became...

Amber: But this was a film cartoon.

Maria: Ok. It was a film?

Amber: Yes

Maria: She became evil and then what happened?

Amber: She, Celestia, had a student and she made them friends again.

Maria: Ok, they became friends again.

Amber: When Luna was evil Celestia had to banish her because she had to save her people.

Maria: And then what happens?

Amber: She had to banish her into the moon.

Maria: Ok.

Amber: This was a film cartoon but?

Maria: Ok it was a film cartoon.

Amber: Ok.

Maria: And did something happen like this story in real life?

Amber: Yes. I think stories like this happen.

Maria: When?

Amber: My friend and I, we never have time to play at school.

Maria: Why is that?

Amber: Because my friend's teacher, you know my friend...I never get to meet her.

Maria: But you play together.

Amber: No, we don't. They (her friend's teacher and classmates) come out after us and we can never play together.

Maria: And how do you feel about this?

Amber: Sad but I am trying to make new friends....I am like Luna, but I like her sister Celestia...because my friend is like Celestia. I like Luna because I like the night because I like to see the stars at night.

Maria: I see. You like the stars at night. Ok. I see.

Amber: But I love them both...both me and my friend do. And when we meet...you know...at break...we play with each other. We play *My little pony* sometimes.

Maria: Luna and Celestia are from *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Yes. Do you know about *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes....the unicorns, they have different colours right?

Amber: Ehe (Yes). Did you watch *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes, I know about *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Celestia was white and her hair was blue....and...and....her sister same but she had...her hair was black.

Maria: So both Celestia and Luna are white?

Amber: No Celestia is white and Luna....well...Luna is black but not that dark black, she is more of a dark blue.

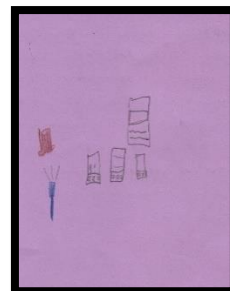
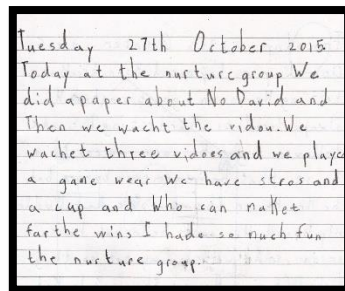
Maria: Ok. Thank you Amber.

Amber: Bye, See you.

My Diary:

This morning Amber came to the Nurture Group for a session on good manners. She was eager to come for the session and participated, shared her ideas and waited her turn.

Amber's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Amber: I drew the straws....for the game that we did today.

Maria: Ok. And what else did you draw?

Amber: I drew the video and the paper.

Maria: Yes. The video and the paper. And, here, what did you write?

Amber: Today in the nurture group, we did a paper about *No David!*...And then we watched the video.

Maria: Ok.

Amber: And we...we played a game, where we had two straws and a cup and who could insert them in the cup wins...I had so much fun.

Maria: Very good Amber.

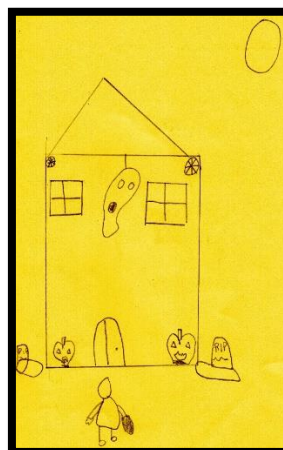
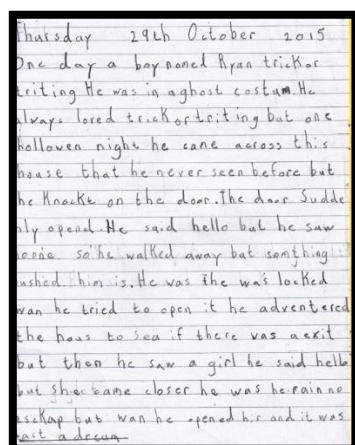
Amber: Thank you. Bye. See you.

Maria. Bye. See you soon.

My Diary:

Today after break Amber came to write in her diary. She took her diary and went to write on the sofa. After she and sat next to me and explained to me what she wrote.

Amber's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her sixth diary entry:

Amber: I'm ready.

Maria: What can you tell me about your writing and drawings?

Amber: Here, this is the house, these are the pumpkins, these are the ghosts, this is the moon and this is the boy.

Maria: Ok the boy, pumpkins, ghosts. Why did you draw these things? I think it is about Halloween.

Amber: Yes.

Maria: So the story is about Halloween....because it is soon Halloween, right?

Amber: Yes

Maria: And so what is the story about?

Amber: About a boy, called Ryan, who loves Halloween, but one day he came across this house and he...he opened the door but it opened by itself...he heard a noise but no one was there and something pushed him in there and then he was locked.

Maria: Ok and how did he feel?

Amber: Scared.

Maria: Scared?

Amber: And then he came to this garden and he saw this girl and he said 'hello' but he

came closer and closer.

Maria: Did she speak to him?

Amber: No, he...he was afraid. He might be wrong but there was no way out...then...then he opened his eyes. It was only just a dream.

Maria: Ok it was a dream...It was a good dream or a bad dream?

Amber: A bad dream.

Maria: Ok a bad dream. Ok, thanks Amber.

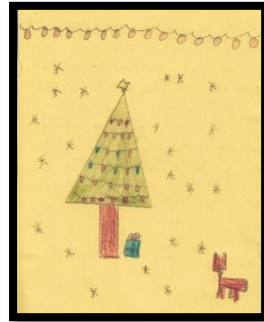
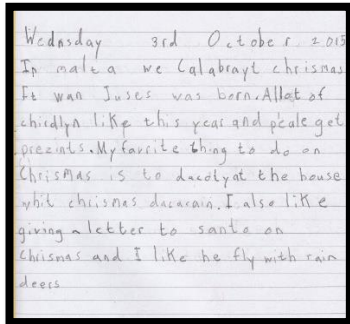
Amber: Bye, see you soon.

Maria: See you.

My Diary:

Today Amber came to the Nurture Group for a Journaling session. She looked calm. She wrote and drew a story about Christmas.

Amber's seventh diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her seventh diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw here Amber?

Amber: Things about Christmas.

Maria. I see Christmas...and why did you draw and write about Christmas.

Amber: Because it is soon Christmas.

Maria: And here, what (what) did you write?

Amber: I wrote about Christmas too here.

Maria: And how do you feel at Christmas?

Amber: Ok, I guess. Happy when I get lots of presents.

Maria: Ok. Good. Very good.

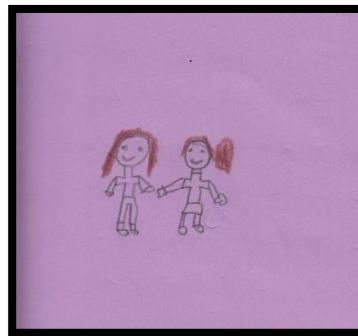
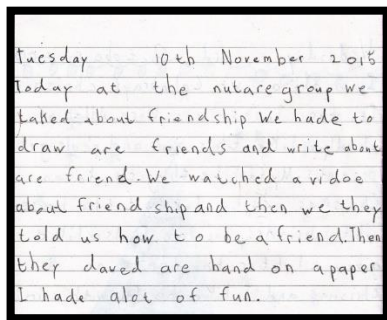
Amber: Bye, Miss. See you.

Maria: See you Amber.

My Diary:

Today Amber came for a session which focused on friendship in the Nurture Group. She looked withdrawn in the session today however, she really liked the short video clip that was shown on friendship and she said: "It is the best film I saw." In her diary entry Amber reflected on the things she was worried about which linked to the nurture group session.

Amber's eighth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her eighth diary entry:

Amber: I am ready.

Maria: Ok, you're ready. What did you write about today?

Amber: Friendship.

Maria: You wrote about friendship. Right.

Amber: I wrote about my friend.

Maria: Oh! Your friend. What is her name?

Amber: I have a lot.

Maria: Ok. But this friend what is her name?

Amber: Natasha.

Maria: Natasha...Natasha is not in the same class as you are right?

Amber: No, no she goes to another school.

Maria: Ok she goes to another school. And how do you feel that she goes to a different school. How do you feel? During break time...for example...how do you feel that you can't play with her.

Amber: Ok, I think. I have other friends, I can play with during break.

Maria: And who do you play with during break?

Amber: With Daniel...with Leah...and those children that love to play catch.

Maria: Ok, and how do you feel?

Amber: I feel happy and I do not feel alone.

Maria: Ok

Amber: But Natasha, I cannot see her a lot...because she, her father...they took the divorce and she went to live with her father and her mother (her mother) she is...she is the cousin of my grandfather.

Maria: I see.

Amber: And I cannot see her as much now but I still love her.

Maria: I am sure you do.

Amber: Yes very much.

Maria: And you still think of her.

Amber: Yes. Bye Ms. Maria. Bye Ms. Philippa.

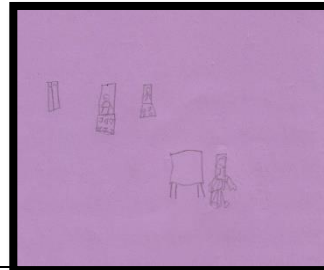
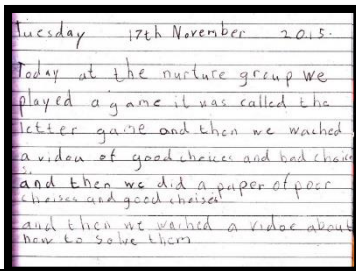
Maria: Bye.

Philippa: Bye.

My Diary:

Amber came to the nurture group for a nurture group session on choices. After the lesson Amber chose to go and sit on a sofa and write in her diary.

Amber's ninth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her ninth diary entry:

Maria: What did you do in your diary today Amber?

Amber: I did a summary of the lesson.

Maria: A summary of the lesson?

Amber: Yes.

Maria: And what did we learn in the lesson today?

Amber: We spoke about choices...good and bad ones.

Maria: Ok, very good. And what did you draw here?

Amber: I drew children making a good choice by playing with one another.

Cristiano – Philippa’s Diary Notes

14th October 2015

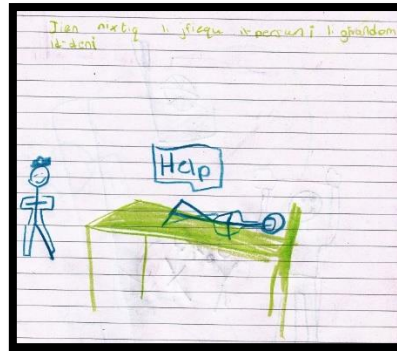
I first met Cristiano about four years ago, when I was asked to go and observe him in class. I started my observation when it was nearly break time. In class, I observed that day that Cristiano wanted to learn and participated during the lessons. However, when he went out in the yard for break time, he hit other children and fought with his peers. A few days later we had parents’ day at our school and Cristiano’s mother came to speak to Maria and I. She told us that when Cristiano was only three years old, his behaviour was very challenging and the head of school had suggested to her that it would be best if the child received an assessment. Cristiano was assessed and it was noted that the child exhibited SEBD. Cristiano was given the full time one-to-one support of a learning support assistant. When Cristiano joined the nurture group, it was noted that he fully engaged in the sessions. He participated and waited his turn. In Year 4, Cristiano did not get along with his LSA and ended up answering back when his LSA would tell him to do something. He exhibited defiant behaviour towards his LSA and regularly fought with his classmates during break time. He liked his teacher, and whenever his teacher explained to him what he should and should not do, he tried his best to follow his teacher’s advice. In Year 4, there was a new boy in Cristiano’s class. He had arrived in the middle of the school year. This boy had passed through a lot of challenges in his life. I never thought that Cristiano would be the boy in class to help the new boy, knowing that he had a history of fighting and hitting children in class. But Cristiano and this boy built a very close friendship, and it was Cristiano who made this boy feel welcome at school. In Year 5, Cristiano was looking forward for the scholastic year to end, because his mother was pregnant and he was going to become a brother. He spoke about how he was going to help his mother take care of the baby. Although the break time incidents continued, I felt that Cristiano had a caring side to him. He showed acceptance when there was a new boy at school, and his caring side was also shown when there was going to be a new sibling at home. A few days ago I was at Cristiano’s IEP meeting. Apart from myself, present at the meeting were Cristiano’s mother, the school INCO, his class teacher and the LSA that supports him. During this meeting the class teacher was very negative. The LSA supported Cristiano’s teacher and was also very critical of Cristiano.

Whenever I tried to speak, Cristiano's teacher said that I was not realistic and that I only see the positive in the boy, while for her Cristiano does not have any strengths. I fear that unless the teacher gets to know Cristiano better and is more positive towards him, it is going to be a long, miserable year for Cristiano, his teacher and the LSA that supports him.

Philippa's Diary:

Today I was Cristiano's first time that Cristiano came to the nurture group since the start of Maria's research. He did not question why he was going to write in a new diary and he asked Maria for his diary and went inside the tent to do his drawing.

Cristiano's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his first diary entry:

Philippa: What did you write and draw in the diary today?

Cristiano: I wrote the following sentence: I wish for all the sick people to be cured and then I drew a doctor and myself at hospital.

Philippa: Why did you draw yourself in a hospital?

Cristiano: Because this summer I went to hospital.

Philippa: You were in hospital this summer? What happened?

Cristiano: I had...I was swimming in the sea (and sea) and when I was swimming there was a rock and then...

Philippa: Hmmm (Sigh)

Cristiano: And I hit my foot with this rock and I felt dizzy. I think I felt dizzy also because of the heat.

Philippa: From the heat...

Cristiano: I did not want to jump when I hit the rock.

Philippa: But did you jump?

Cristiano: No.

Philippa: And then what happened then?

Cristiano: I had to go to hospital. The doctor at hospital was very kind.

Philippa: And so you want to help others like the doctor has helped you, right?

Cristiano: Yes, that's right.

Philippa: That is very kind indeed.

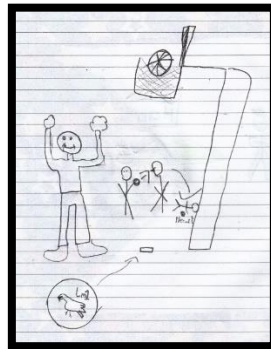
Cristiano: I want to help other people.

Philippa: Ok. Thanks for your drawing and thoughts.

Philippa's Diary:

Today all the year 6 children that came to the nurture group, came to do journaling. Before the lesson had a PE lesson. Cristiano also brought with him a box filled with old coins for the session. He wrote his diary next to his classmate, who has just had a fight with another classmate. After he finished his drawing he came up to me to explain what he drew.

Cristiano's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his second diary entry:

Philippa: You're ready from your diary?

Cristiano: Yes.

Philippa: What did you draw in your diary today?

Cristiano: I drew the children, well I drew my friends in the yard. We, before coming here, we had PE.

Philippa: Ok and what did you do in PE?

Cristiano: We were playing basketball and, then, you see these boys...

Philippa: Yes, I was going to ask you about that?

Cristiano: These boys, they are Noel and Johan, they, well Johan hit Noel with the ball in his head, and, Noel hit him back. They started to fight and Noel fell on the floor.

Philippa: Ok and then was happened?

Cristiano: The PE teacher, went, took them to the head of school.

Philippa: And how to you think they felt?

Cristiano: Sad for sure, and, I think, they were angry...

Philippa: Ok.

Cristiano: ...and hurt.

Philippa: And who is this boy standing here.

Cristiano: That is me.

Philippa: Ok and what are you doing there?

Cristiano: I feel happy, because, well before, whenever I saw someone fighting, I used to fight too, but, I didn't fight today.

Philippa: Ok and here what did you draw?

Cristiano: I drew, today I got this box from home. I have old coins in it and I drew the old lira.

Philippa: Ok good.

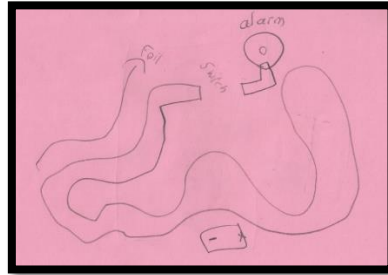
Cristiano: I go back to class now.

Philippa: Yes sure.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Cristiano came to the Nurture Group for a session on Conflict Resolution. The session was based on the story *The Day the Crayons Quit*. Cristiano participated during the lesson, however, he drew about a totally different lesson that he had today: a science experiment.

Cristiano's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano following his third diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw in the diary today?

Cristiano: This is the coil, because, this is the switch, and when, when, we pressed, these, and we did a battery here and then the alarm started, like this titttt.

Philippa: When you did all this system? And so where did you learn all this?

Cristiano: This...this is the circuit. Look for example here.

Philippa: And in which lesson did you learn to do this?

Cristiano: In science.

Philippa: Ok and do you like science?

Cristiano: Yes, I like doing these like this. I am going to do this at home.

Philippa: Ok that's good.

Cristiano: Do you like science?

Philippa: Yes, I do. Did you do the experiment yourself or did the teacher do it?

Cristiano: No, we did it.

Philippa: With whom did you do the experiment?

Cristiano: We were in a group work, in a group. Everyone, we had the instructions, we built the circuit and we did the circuit.

Philippa: Ok. Good and how did you feel?

Cristiano: Happy, I guess. Because we managed to do the circuit.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Cristiano came to the nurture group for a journaling session. He looked calm and he drew a whiskey bottle. For me it was a bit hard to understand why he drew a whiskey bottle, however, when I spoke with him, I understood the message Cristiano wanted to give through the picture of the whiskey bottle.

Cristiano's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his fourth diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over there?

Cristiano: Whiskey.

Philippa: And why did you draw whiskey.

Cristiano: Because there are a lot of people who drink and I did it so they don't drink.

Philippa: And when do they drink whiskey? When do they drink whiskey but?

Cristiano: When they drink.

Philippa: Ok, when they drink and you why did you draw that?

Cristiano: I do not think it is a good idea to drink whiskey.

Philippa: Why do you think that?

Cristiano: It is not good for me. For no one.

Philippa: Ok. So whiskey is not good for us. And why did you draw parts of the whiskey green?

Cristiano: That is like poison.

Philippa: Ok...

Cristiano: When you drink whiskey you are, you take poison.

Philippa: I see...Do you wish to tell me anything else about this picture?

Cristiano: No, that was all.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Cristiano and his nurture group friends had a cooking session in the nurture group. Cristiano was overjoyed and participated eagerly during the cooking activity whilst at the same time worked well in a team and practised turn taking.

Cristiano's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano following his fifth diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw in your diary today?

Cristiano: What do you think?

Philippa: I don't know you have to tell me?

Cristiano: I drew the pizza that we did today here.

Philippa: Ok. And why did you draw yourself that way?

Cristiano: I love cooking, and I love, like, pizza and when I grow up I want to cook, to wish to become a chef.

Philippa: Ok. So how did you feel today?

Cristiano: Very happy...excited.

Philippa: That's good, I am glad you enjoyed making and eating the pizza.

James – My Diary Notes

11th October 2015

James is a ten-year-old boy and is currently in Year 6. I first got to know James when he was in Year 3. Once I was supervising James' class and he came up to me and asked me if it would be possible to go and get a book from his sister. I asked him in which class his sister was and he said that she was in his same class. I realised that James is a twin. I also could see that he is very protective towards his twin sister Katya and his younger sister Amy. In fact, I have often observed him helping his sister Amy by holding her satchel. Being in the same class as his sister Katya did not help James at first because he was a bit dependent on her, especially when he forgot his book and could not do his homework. In Year 4 and Year 5, James was placed in a different class so as to encourage more independence in James. However, James struggled in class. He was forgetting his homework, was always talking and chatting with his peers, and he was not finishing his tasks at school. His teacher was concerned about this and referred him to the nurture group. When James first came to the nurture group, I could easily notice that he likes animals and loves to go and help his father on the farm. In fact, when he grows up he wishes to become a vet. In his spare time, he also goes to help his grandfather at his bakery. When he first came to the nurture group, I noticed that James was a very technical child. He did not go with the flow, but rather used to say and do what he felt was the right thing to say and do. I observed that he was also very assertive in the decisions that he took. In the nurture group he formed a positive friendship with a classmate of his, and they enjoyed doing activities and tasks together. Although James seemed to have settled in the nurture group, he was still having difficulties in class. He felt that at times, he was blamed by his teacher, other children picked on him and he was always given the blame. At times, he used to come to the nurture group to speak to me, and once I suggested to him that he should write about the matter that was concerning him in his journal. On that particular day, he really opened up and after that, whenever I gave James his diary, he used to really enjoy writing and/or drawing in it.

My Diary:

Today James came to the nurture group since the start of my research. He was calm and he wrote football. However the conversation that James had with me was not only about football but rather about other interests of his. He also spoke about his teacher and how he feels that his teacher is supporting him in a good manner this year.

James's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his first journal entry:

Maria: What did you write and draw in your diary today?

James: This is what I wrote...In the nurture group, in my diary I wrote (reading from his diary), today, I am feeling very good. Mr. White also makes sure that I am happy in class and I am playing (football) with Melita Stars and doing a good sport.

Maria: You look very happy that you are in Mr. White's class this year?

James: Yes, very. In fact this weekend Mr. White is coming to the bread market that my grandfather does every year. Are you coming Ms.?

Maria: No, sorry but I cannot. I will be abroad. I will be studying at Sheffield.

James: Oh. I see...Did you pack your bag already?

Maria: No not yet. So Mr. White will be coming to the bread market?

James: Yes and Kurt, you know my friend in my class...

Maria: Yes, I know him.

James:...he is coming to do the bread pudding with me.

Maria: That's good.

James: And Mr. White, he wants a baguette for free.

Maria: Ok. That's good. I wish I could come but I cannot.

James: No problem Ms. You will come next year.

Maria: Yes sure. And you wrote that you are playing football with the Melita Stars right?

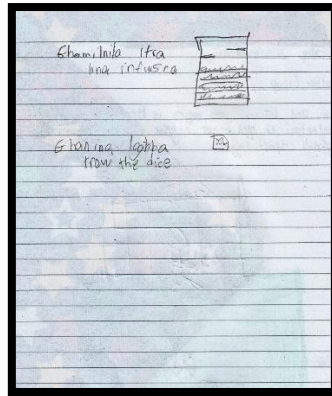
James: I am enjoying going to football practice, I, I miss training, I am very happy going there and I love coming here as well.

Maria: Good James. I am glad you like it here!

My Diary:

James came to the nurture room for a session. In the session I asked each of the children to write a letter to his/her future self. James was calm. He decided to write points about what he did in the nurture group session.

James's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his second diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today James?

James: I drew a letter that I wrote to myself today in the Nurture Group. Can you take a picture of the letter.

Maria: Yes sure. Why?

James: Because you told us that we are going to put this letter in an envelope, seal it and then read it when school is about to finish.

Maria: Ok.

James: And I wish to keep a copy of the letter in my diary as I do not wish to write the letter again in my diary.

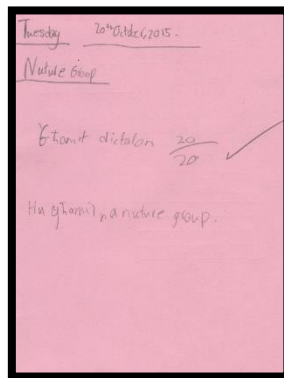
Maria: No problem. (I took a photo with my mobile phone).

James: This is what I wrote in the letter. Dear James, We have just started a new school year. This is your last year because you are in Year 6 and next year you will be in Form 1. You will make new friends and you will be in a new year. Never give up! You have to always try your best like what you learn in the nurture group. This year you also started a new sport. You started to play football with the Melita Stars, however, you also need to study this year. Yours, James.

My Diary:

Today James came to the nurture group for a session after break. He seemed happy and calm. He participated in the nurture group and waited his turn. We started watching the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and we then discussed about the character of Charlie Bucket. However James decided to write about an achievement he did in class apart from the story.

James's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his third journal entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today James?

James: That I did, that I did a dictation and I got everything right.

Maria: Ok. And how did you feel about that?

James: Good. Well at first, my teacher started to give the copybook of the children who had to do corrections in their dictation, and I said how long will it take for my teacher to give me the copybook, and then he told us that myself, my sister, Frank and Sophie, I think, he told us, we have got everything right. And when my teacher gave me the copybook, you know, I was overjoyed.

Maria: Ok. That's great.

James: And I also wrote that we came to the nurture group and we saw a video of Charlie...

Maria: ...Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

James: Yes...and we spoke about Charlie and how he never gave up.

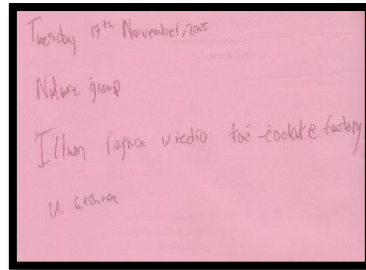
Maria: Yes Charlie had difficulties in his life but, like you said, he never gave up.

James: Yes and I wrote that in my diary to remember the story of Charlie.

My Diary:

Today James came for a nurture group session which was about healthy lifestyles taken from the story *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. James participated eagerly during the session.

James's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his fourth journal entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today?

James: That we saw a film on the Chocolate Factory, and (and), I wrote on the Chocolate Factory.

Maria: Ok and if you were to choose to be a friend to one of those children, which one would you choose? Who do you choose to be a friend with?

James: Eh, the most that I would want to be a friend with is with Charlie?

Maria: Ok, with Charlie and why is that?

James: Charlie is the one that owns the chocolate factory?

Maria: No, that is Willy Wonka.

James: Yes, with him.

Maria: Why do you want to be a friend with Willy Wonka?

James: Because, he lives in the factory. And I later on, I might own my grandfather's bakery so I would be like him.

Maria: Ok, is there any other reason why you would be friends with Willy Wonka?

James: He is creative. And I think he has a lot of money and it is good if you are rich.

Maria: Ok, that would be good, true. Do you wish to tell me anything else?

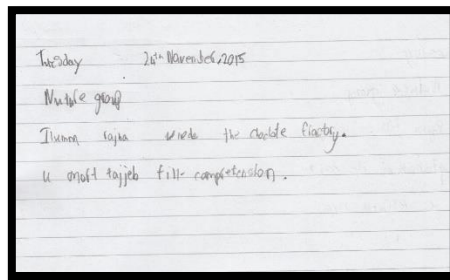
James: No. Bye Miss.

Maria: Bye, James.

My Diary:

Today James came to the nurture group. Though we continued the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and discussed the need to plan our time, James chose to write about another achievement that he achieved. James was happy and calm today and fully participated in the lesson.

James's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today, James?

James: We continued to watch Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and that I did well in a composition.

Maria: Ok and what was the composition about?

James: My toys.

Maria: And what did you write about?

James: That I have a pet, because you could write about a pet not a toy. And I spoke about my parrot, his colour, what he can do, whether he loves me or not, whether he love me the most or who he loves the most.

Maria: Ok.

James: He loves my mum the most. A parrot loves whom he spend the most of the time with. He loves my mum the most, because we don't spend a lot of time (at home). He doesn't like my dad.

Maria: I see.

James: Whom he loves the most. My mum. And then I wrote why I love my pet and why. I love my pet because we bought him when he was a baby. When he was a baby, he used to play a lot with me, but now, he loves my mum the most.

Maria: Ok.

James: You know what he has learned to do now. I will be watching something, a video on my tablet and he comes and he would want to watch it with me.

Maria: Ok.

James: And even if I touch the screen of my tablet, he isn't angry at me. But my sisters?

Maria: Ehe.

James: When they do to have their dance lessons, he is very calm, but when they are there, Katya and Amy, he attacks them.

Maria: I think he knows who loves animals, because, you love animals.

James: Yes, true

Maria: Do you want to tell me anything else about your writing?

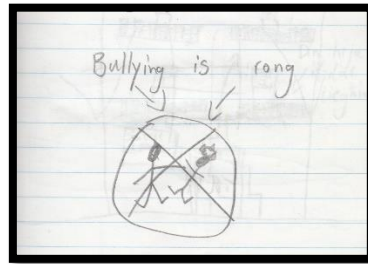
James: That was all that I wrote.

Maria: Ok, bye James.

My Diary:

Today James came for a nurture group session. I could see that James today was very withdrawn and not his normal self. Whilst he was writing his diary and I could see that many of the children had left, I went to sit close to James and enquired what was the matter. James opened up with me about a situation that happened to him and about which he was very hurt.

James's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his sixth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write and draw over there James?

James: I wrote 'bullying is wrong'. Then I drew a boy hitting another boy.

Maria: Why did he hit him?

James: He was calling him names.

Maria: James did anything happen at school today? You look quiet.

James: No, nothing!

Maria: What was he calling him?

James: He, the boy, that was being hit, had called the other boy warden.

Maria: Why?

James: Miss, do you promise not to tell anyone?

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If by telling someone, I can help you.

James: I'm afraid.

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If, if I do not know what's (happen) happening, I cannot do anything about it.

James: Francesco, you know, the boy that is in my class...

Maria: Yes, what about him?

James: He, and Karl, and Jake are calling me warden. I am very angry about it. I wish I

can hit them and make them stop.

Maria: And why are they calling you that, warden, I mean?

James: Last week, Katya, forgot her Maths at home and I, I told the Sir what happened.

Maria: Ok.

James: And then, he told me warden, because, he (he) wanted my sister to tell him.

Maria: And how did you feel about that?

James: I help my sister. My sister is not like me. I mean, I didn't want her to get into trouble, that's why I told him.

Maria: Ok and how did you feel when your teacher told you warden?

James: I didn't like it. I shut up and didn't speak.

Maria: Ok and then what's happened?

James: Then in break, Francesco, Karl and Jake started to call me warden. All the boys are calling me that. All except Kurt, whenever I speak they say "warden" or "shut up warden".

Maria: It is not nice to have people call you names.

James: I really wish to make it stop.

Maria: Can I speak to your teacher?

James: Miss, I don't want them to make more fun of me.

Maria: James that is bullying. People shouldn't give you names. No one. Not even a teacher. I am here to help you.

James: Thanks miss.

Maria: Would you allow me to speak to your teacher?

James: Yes but tell him to not make fun of me.

Maria: If someone makes fun of you, I will then speak to the head of school. This calling of names has to stop.

James: I know.

Maria: And you, you have to be assertive. When they call you warden, when Francesco or Karl or Jake tell you warden, you look at them and tell them Stop.

James: I try but I feel so small when this happens.

Maria: I know. How are you feeling now?

James: Better, much better.

Maria: I am glad. I will speak to your teacher tomorrow.

James: Ok. Bye, miss and thank you.

Maria: Bye, James.

Lara – My Diary Notes

12th October 2015

If there was a child who I can see myself in at her age, it would be Lara. Perhaps that is why I asked her and her mother whether she could be a participant in this study. Lara is a seven-year-old girl. This year she is in Year 3. Last year, Lara was referred to the nurture group because she was exhibiting a lack of self-worth and low self-esteem. At the same time, she was acting defiant, wanted to get all her answers right, and if she got an answer wrong she would start crying. At home Lara is an only child. When she was younger, her parents were concerned because she would not speak and was continuously having tantrums. Her parents took her for a psychological assessment and were told that the girl might have ASD. However, when she started to speak and her tantrums were reduced, this was discarded. At school, Lara always comes to me with a smile on her face, and whenever we have a nurture group session, she usually wants to sit next to me. At first I did not know why, but I saw a lot of Lara in myself. Like Lara, I too was an only child for the first five-and-a-half years of my life. I also had low self-esteem and a lack of self-worth. Last year, while observing Lara in her class, I noticed that whenever the teacher asked the children a question, she would put up her hand to give the answer. However, she would not speak out loud; if she got her answer right, she would smile, while a wrong answer would cause her to stamp her feet or hide her face. I also always wanted to get all my answers right, I would often cry my eyes out when I didn't; however, I was never defiant. It was a must to get all the words right in my weekly dictation. One other example was when in Year 2, I failed to score an A in one of three tests, gaining a B+ instead. Once Lara's mother told me that her main priority when she arrives home after school is to finish her homework. On one particular Friday last year, she was given a lot of homework and did not manage to finish it all by the end of the day. Lara had a nightmare that night and woke up crying in mid-sleep, worried that she would not be able to finish her work by Monday. Like Lara, as a child I always made sure to finish my work on time. Once, my family went on a trip to Gozo. On the way back, a storm broke out and the ferry did not work. I was not worried about the ferry, but that I was going to miss school.

My Diary:

On our way to the nurture group, later held my hand and she asked me if today she was going to start the project, I spoke to her about. I said yes and she smiled. Today Lara sat next to me. She drew in her diary and then when she had finished she told me that she was ready and we started our conversation on a princess that she called Daisy.

Lara's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her first diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Lara: A princess.

Maria: And what is the princess' name?

Lara: Daisy

Maria: Daisy?

Lara: Yes. Daisy is a beautiful name for a princess right?

Maria: Yes, it is and where does this princess, Daisy, I mean, live?

Lara: In a big palace.

Maria: In a palace...And do you want to visit this palace someday? To meet her...to meet Daisy?

Lara: Yes, that is my wish.

Maria: And when did you find out about Daisy?

Lara: I don't know but a long time ago.

Maria: How is Daisy feeling today?

Lara: She is ok, I guess, calm.

Maria: What does Daisy like to do?

Lara: She likes to play with her toys.

Maria: Ok and what is her favourite toy?

Lara: A doll.

Maria: And her dislikes?

Lara: I don't know, she likes to do everything. Sometimes she complains that she has a lot of homework but she still does it.

Maria: Ok...and does Daisy have any friends?

Lara: No, because she lives in a palace and the other children, the children of the kingdom, they cannot go into the palace.

Maria: She plays alone then?

Lara: Yes, but she has many toys, so she doesn't mind it.

Maria: Ok good.

Lara: Bye Ms. Maria.

My Diary:

Today Lara came to the nurture group to write in her journal. As she entered the room she quickly came up to me and asked me if she could come and sit next to me. I said yes and told her to get her diary from the shelf. She drew in her diary and when she was ready she spoke to me about her drawing.

Lara's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her second diary entry:

Lara: Miss, do you know tomorrow is Saturday?

Maria: Yes, it is and what are you going to do tomorrow?

Lara: Tomorrow, I am going to draw.

Maria: Ok and what are you going to draw?

Lara: I have drawing lesson. I go to an art teacher.

Maria: Ok that great!

Lara: And then I draw these (Lara points to her diary. Lara was drawing a butterfly).

Maria: And what do you draw when you have your drawing lesson?

Lara: Butterflies because they have beautiful colours.

Maria: And which is your favourite colour?

Lara: All of them.

Maria: Why all of them?

Lara: Because all the colours are beautiful together.

Lara continues to draw.

Maria: And what is this?

Lara: This is the house with different shapes.

Maria: Ok

Lara continues to draw.

Lara: I drew it.

Maria: Ok. What else did you draw?

Lara: A butterfly.

Maria: And what is the name of the butterfly?

Lara: I don't know.

Maria: You don't know. And where is the butterfly so?

Lara: In a garden.

Maria: In a garden. Ok and what are these?

Lara: Flowers.

Maria: They are beautiful flowers indeed. Ok. And how is he feeling? The butterfly?

Lara: Ok, I guess. Happy.

Maria: Why is he feeling happy?

Lara: Because he is in the garden and there's flowers. So he is in a safe place.

Maria: Oh! I see so the flowers are his friends?

Lara: Yes.

Maria: Do you want to tell me something more about your picture?

Lara: No that is all.

Maria: Ok. Good. See you Lara.

Lara: See you.

My Diary:

Lara came for a nurture group session today. The session dealt with the character of Fear from *Inside Out*. After the session Lara came up to me and asked me if she can get her diary. On her diary however she drew the character of Joy.

Lara's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her third diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw today?

Lara: I drew Joy.

Maria: Ok you drew Joy and why did you draw Joy?

Lara: Because Joy is happy and she makes me feel happy.

Maria: And who is Joy?

Lara: Joy is a girl. She lives inside the head of a girl. She is an emotion.

Maria: Ok. Can you tell me about this girl?

Lara: The girl's name is Riley.

Maria: Ok.

Lara: And Riley likes Joy because she wants to feel happy.

Maria: So Riley doesn't like the other emotions?

Lara: Yes she loves them as well.

Maria: Ok she loves them as well. Do you know that Riley needs to use all her emotions?

Lara: Yes, I know. I, too, need to use all my emotions.

Maria: Ok. Do you need to tell me anything else about Riley or Joy?

Lara: No, I told you everything I know.

Maria: Ok Lara. Thank you.

Lara: Bye, Ms. Maria

Maria: Bye Lara.

My Diary:

Today when I went for Lara, she looked a bit scared. She quickly held my hand and on our way to the nurture room she told me that she does not like rain and is afraid of thunder. This also reflected in her diary entry as she drew a girl who is afraid of the rain and thunder.

Lara's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her fourth diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw over here dear?

Lara: A girl.

Maria: A girl and what is her name?

Lara: Rose.

Maria: And how old is Rose?

Lara: Seven, like me.

Maria: Ok, like you. And how is Rose feeling today?

Lara: Happy.

Maria: And what does she like to do?

Lara: She likes to dance.

Maria: She likes to dance, ok and what are the things that she doesn't like to do?

Lara: Football.

Maria: Football, ok.

Lara: And she doesn't like rainy days.

Maria: Why is that?

Lara: Because she has no raincoat. She forgot it at home.

Maria: And she get wet so. Ok. But I am sure the rain will stop soon, so I do not think Rose will get wet today. Her mother will bring the raincoat for her. Is there anything else you would like to say about Rose?

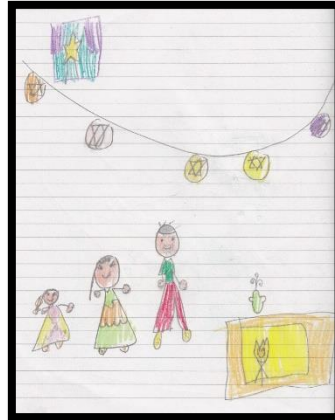
Lara: No that's all.

Maria: Ok, thank you.

My Diary:

Lara came to the nurture group for a session on Emotional Literacy based on the character of Disgust from *Inside Out*. However Lara did not choose to draw about the session today but rather about her family decorating their house for Christmas.

Lara's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Lara after her fifth diary entry:

Maria: What did you do over here?

Lara: That, that of Christmas.

Maria: Christmas decorations?

Lara: Yes, we did it, me mummy and daddy.

Maria: Em, you did the Christmas decorations over here, ehe. And what is this?

Lara: That is the curtain.

Maria: The curtains are Christmas ones. And here what is this?

Lara: That is of the fireplace.

Maria: Eh, you did a decorated fireplace as well.

Lara: And the vase. We decorated the vase.

Maria: Yes, I see the vase decorated. Waw. It is very nice and Christmasy. And how are you feeling that you did the decorations with your parents.

Lara: Beautiful.

Maria: Eh, Beautiful.

Lara: Content.

Maria: Ok, I see.

Lara: I love Christmas.

Maria: Me too.

Lara: Bye, Ms. Maria.

Maria: Bye Lara.

Lionel – Philippa’s Diary Notes

14th October 2015

Two years ago, the head of school phoned in the nurture group and asked us to go and observe a particular Year 1 class in our school, as the children in this particular class were resorting to a number of challenging behaviours. The first observation was done by Maria, and later I went to observe this class myself. One of the boys I observed was Lionel, then a five-year-old who was always with a smile on his face. He was also energetic and always on the go. During my observation of the class, I remember him coming up to me to ask me who I was. He then went back to his seat, and about two minutes later he came up to me again and asked me why I was there. Very soon after the observation, Maria and I went to speak to the head of school. She suggested that we speak to some parents, Lionel’s mother included, to request their consent for a number of these children to be referred for different nurture group programmes. When Lionel’s mother came to speak to us, she was very worried about him. He was also exhibiting challenging behaviour at home, and she did not wish for this behaviour to hinder Lionel from learning. His mother readily accepted that Lionel comes to the nurture group and from then on, Lionel started to attend on a regular basis. Since his first day, he gladly participated in the activities. He really liked to listen to stories, and whenever we told the children a story and we asked them about it, Lionel would surely discuss what he had learnt from it. He also used to enjoy drawing part of the story in his journal. Once, when he was in Year 2, I asked him why he had made a drawing of Hansel and Gretel, to which he replied that he wanted to remember the story and what he had learnt from it as a result.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Lionel came for a nurture group session. He followed instructions and eagerly participated in the session. The session was about the golden rule 'We are Gentle'. Lionel decided to draw Louis the Lion helping Alfred Alligator by being gentle on his journal.

Lionel's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this first diary entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over here Lionel?

Lionel: Hmm, I drew the alligator. Am I saying the word right? I meant the small crocodile.

Philippa: Yes, the alligator is a small crocodile.

Lionel: Ok.

Philippa: Ok this is the alligator. And who is this?

Lionel: Louis the Lion.

Philippa: Ok. So this is Alfred Alligator and this is Louis the Lion.

Lionel: Yes because Louis the Lion is holding Alfred Alligator's tail.

Philippa: And why is he holding his tail?

Lionel. Because, you know, in the story Louis Lion helped Alfred Alligator.

Philippa: Ok to help him. And here what did you draw?

Lionel: Here, is the car. He (*Alfred Alligator*) is playing with the car and Louis Lion is making sure that nobody hits his car, and, and his tail also.

Philippa: Why is he helping Alfred Alligator?

Lionel: He is being gentle towards him, because, you know, he hurt his tail.

Philippa: Ok.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Lionel came to the Nurture Group to draw in his journal. He was calm and happy. In his diary he drew three superheroes: Spiderman, Thor and Captain America and built a story around them.

Lionel's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this second entry:

Philippa: What did you draw over here Lionel?

Lionel: The Heroes.

Philippa: The Heroes. Oh, I see.

Lionel: Yes, first I drew, the heroes that I love. This is Thor. This is Spiderman and this is Captain America.

Philippa: Ok Thor, Spiderman and Captain America. And what are these heroes doing?

Lionel: They are checking a garden.

Philippa: And why are they checking a garden?

Lionel: So that if they find a monster or a villain, they kill it.

Philippa: Oh! I see. And who are these villains also afraid of?

Lionel: Thor, Spiderman and Captain America, they are searching for the other heroes.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And the other heroes are soon coming.

Philippa: And why are the other heroes coming to his garden?

Lionel: So that they find other monsters, they can come and save the other heroes.

Philippa: Ok. And who are the monsters that they are afraid of?

Lionel: The monsters of Scooby Doo.

Philippa: Why are they afraid of these monsters?

Lionel: Because they come at night and when it is dark.

Philippa: Oh! I see.

Lionel: But the heroes they can save us from the monsters, so I won't be afraid anymore. I am not afraid of the Scooby Doo monsters.

Philippa: You shouldn't be. No monster is coming for you.

Lionel: Sure.

Philippa: Yes sure. Thank you, Lionel. See you soon.

Lionel: Bye.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Lionel came to the nurture room for a session. The session was on the golden rule *We listen, We don't interrupt*. In his diary Danrick drew two characters from the story.

Lionel's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this third entry:

Philippa: What did you drawing in your diary today Lionel?

Lionel: I drew Louis and Alfred.

Philippa: Ok, and what are Louis the Lion and Alfred the Alligator doing.

Lionel: They are talking. The lion, Louis, is saying sorry.

Philippa: Why is that?

Lionel: Because Alfred brought a box with him, a box to school to show it to the children.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And Louis the lion, he was talking and not obeying the teacher.

Philippa: Ok and then what happened?

Lionel: The alligator, Alfred, I mean couldn't tell, the other children, he couldn't do the show and tell, because, Louis was wasting time.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: And when Louis realised he was wrong, he said sorry to Alfred.

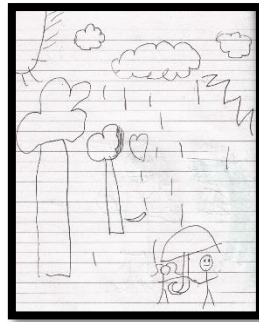
Philippa: Ok. Did you like the story?

Lionel: Yes, very.

Philippa's Diary:

Today when Lionel came to the nurture group there was a thunder storm. He decided to go and draw his journal in the tent. His story was about rain and how a boy helped a girl by giving her an umbrella.

Lionel's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this fourth entry:

Philippa: What did you drawing over there?

Lionel: This is a tree, it is broken, because, there was a storm. This is the part of the tree that broke, look. And this is a boy and a girl. The boy is lending the girl an umbrella as she doesn't have one.

Philippa: Oh, I see. She doesn't have one. That is nice of the boy. And the boy and the girl they are close to the broken tree, right?

Lionel: Yes, they are. But not as close. So if the tree fall, or if, they won't get hurt. Even branches from the tree could fall. They do not want to get hurt.

Philippa: And what are their names?

Lionel: The boy is Mark and she is Emily.

Philippa: Ok, good.

Lionel: Is it a good drawing?

Philippa: Yes, it is. I like it very much.

Lionel: You know, they are afraid of the thunder.

Philippa: Oh, I see.

Lionel: And the storm is not letting the sun come out.

Philippa: Ok. Are you afraid of storms?

Lionel: No, but Emily is.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: But the boy, Mark, no.

Philippa: Ok, Mark is not afraid of storms. Do you wish to tell me anything else about this drawing?

Lionel: No, that is all.

Philippa: Ok, the storm will soon pass. Tell Emily that so she won't get, be, worried anymore.

Lionel: Ok, I will.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Lionel came for a nurture group session. The session was about the golden rule *We look after property*. After the session, Lionel asked for his diary and drew two characters from the story: Louis the Lion and Mona Monkey.

Lionel's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this fifth entry:

Philippa: Who is this?

Lionel: This is the lion, he is taking things from here and putting them in the dustbin. And the monkey...

Philippa: Ehe.

Lionel: took all the bottles, Mona the Monkey, took the bottles of those and threw them in there.

Philippa: She threw them in the dustbin as well.

Lionel: Yes.

Philippa: And Miss Beanie, did she like it that they threw everything in the dustbin?

Lionel: No

Philippa: And we when we are in class, when we start doing the same as the lion and the monkey, when we break things and throw them away, do we do the right thing?

Lionel: No we should do that.

Philippa: And what should we do instead?

Lionel: We throw away the paper and we do not throw away the scissors.

Philippa: Exactly. We throw away things that we cannot use anymore. Right?

Lionel: Yes, I try, I try not to waste.

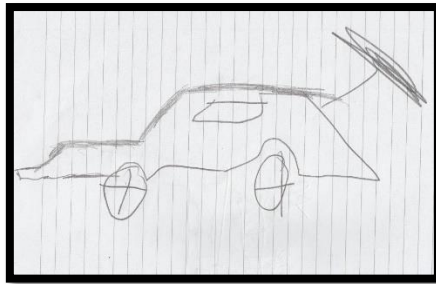
Philippa: Ok that is very good. Did you like the story?

Lionel: Yes.

Philippa's Diary:

Today Lionel came to write in his diary. He sat next to a friend and drew a car. In my conversation with him after, Lionel told me that the car is the present that he wishes to have for Christmas.

Lionel's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Lionel had with Philippa after this sixth entry:

Philippa: What did you draw today Lionel?

Lionel: I drew a car that speeds with fire.

Philippa: That speeds with fire?

Lionel: Ehe.

Philippa: And why did you draw this car?

Lionel: Because I love them.

Philippa: You love it? Do you have one?

Lionel nodding.

Philippa: No.

Lionel: But I wish to have one?

Philippa: Ok. You wish to have one?

Lionel: Yes, for Christmas. I want one with a remote control.

Philippa: Ok with a remote control.

Lionel: I am going to ask Father Christmas for it.

Philippa: Ok.

Lionel: I am going to post a drawing like this in the letter box.

Philippa: Ok. Make sure that you are nice when you write the letter.

Lionel: Yes, I know.

Philippa: Ok. Good. I hope you get this remote control car.

Lionel: Me too.

Trevor – My Diary Notes

11th October 2015

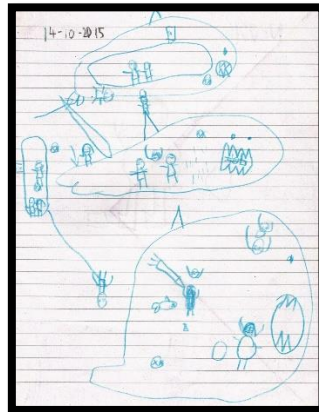
Trevor is an eight-year old boy and now he is in Year 4. In Year 2, he was referred to the nurture group because he was exhibiting challenging behaviour in class. Since he started coming to the nurture group, I could notice that Trevor is a very positive boy and always has a smile on his face. By the end of Year 2, I could notice that Trevor had settled in class, and we (Philippa and I) were thinking that it would be best for Trevor to be phased out of the nurture group. However, last year (when Trevor was in Year 3), he started to exhibit challenging behaviour in class once again. Whenever he disobeyed and had a temper tantrum, he would be taken to the assistant head of school in charge of his year group. Unfortunately, instead of calming the boy down, the assistant head used to shout at him, and the situation used to get worse. At times, Trevor used to get really angry and used words like *I hate you!* A bit later he would calm down and hug you, because what he really meant by *I hate you* was that he hated the action you were doing to him. One example was time-out. I could also see that whenever he was angry with a situation, he used to blank out and could use the right words to express how he was feeling and why he was feeling that way. Seeing this situation, I made a pact with Trevor that whenever he felt angry and wanted to come to the nurture group, he could do so. He used to come to the nurture group, ask for the anger management box, and do an activity from the box such as sorting beads into colours, playing Jenga or blow bubbles. Then one day, Trevor came to the nurture group again to use one of the tools to calm down. However, on that particular day, he did not ask for the anger management box, because he had brought a copybook. He said that this was his memory book and that lately, whenever he felt alone and angry, he would write in it. He started to show me this book, and at that point I realised how little I knew about Trevor. From his drawings and writings, I got to know more about his life and daily activities. I also found out that through his memory book, Trevor had devised strategies that he could use to calm down whenever he felt angry – such as doing some gardening, counting to ten or eating something. At that point, I realised that it could be beneficial for Trevor if he was to be given the opportunity to open up more through journal writing and drawing. I also understood that if I wanted to listen more to the unheard voice of this boy, journal

writing and/or drawing could be a useful tool that I could use. This year Trevor's mother has told me that Trevor has been assessed and diagnosed as having ADHD, ODD and ASD. When reflecting upon the journey that I started with Trevor two years ago, I can relate to the definition of SEBD by Armstrong (2014) as 'the behaviour of children and young people that causes adults concern'. As previously stated, I feel comfortable with associating myself with the claim that SEBD is about perception, that is, how the adult views the behaviour of the child. Trevor was easily labelled as a boy with challenging behaviour; however, little did the educators around him understand how something such as a simple diary could help Trevor in his social, emotional and behavioural needs."

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture room for the first time since the start of the research. I had already observed Trevor drawing in his journal and one thing that he usually does is starting to narrate what he is drawing, so I sat next to him and asked him what the story he was drawing is about.

Trevor's first diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his first diary entry:

Trevor starts his drawing.

Maria: Can you tell me what is that?

Trevor: Great white.

Maria: Great white shark?

Trevor nodding.

Maria: And why did you draw a great white shark.

Trevor: Because I love it, that's why.

Maria: Ok, you love it.

Trevor: What do you think this is?

Trevor points to the figure in the great white shark.

Maria: I think it is a person.

Trevor: Yes, can you guess who this is?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: Someone who I do not like very much.

Maria: I do not know. Who is this?

Trevor: I do not know either. No you don't know. I am letting you guess.

Maria: I am going to guess myself. Ok...

Trevor points to another figure he is drawing.

Trevor: And this is Amber.

Maria: That is Amber?

Trevor: Yes because I like Amber. Who do you think is trapped between the shark's teeth?

Maria: I don't know sorry.

Trevor: This is like a riddle...Amber, my teacher...and who else?

Maria: Ok...a riddle. Can I ask you a question?

Trevor: Yes

Maria: Why did you put that person in there?

Trevor: Because he is making me laugh.

Maria: He is making you laugh.

Trevor: Yes, he is making me laugh.

Maria: So you put him in the shark's mouth because he makes you laugh.

Trevor: Yes. So that I put him inside the shark now.

Maria: Why did you put his inside the shark now? What did he do?

Trevor: I want to put him inside his stomach.

Maria: You want to put him inside his stomach, ok. Why?

Trevor: Cos, I don't like him. He bugs me.

Maria: And why does he bug you?

Trevor: He bugs me because when I speak to my teacher he always comes to see what I am telling my teacher.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: And here is a ship for all Duncans (*Duncan is a boy in Trevor's class*) is coming....sorry a submarine.

Maria: Ok a submarine and what is the submarine going to do?

Trevor: He is going to put two more Duncans in the sea.

Maria: How does Duncan feel about this?

Trevor: He doesn't like it....And then I come with teacher....

Maria: And where are you in the drawing?

Trevor: Me?

Maria: Yes you.

Trevor: Wait a minute. This is a story. I am soon coming...The great white shark ate all the Duncans submarine.

Maria: And then?

Trevor: There was an earthquake...This is Duncan, my teacher and Amber.

Maria: And what happens next. Where do you come in?

Trevor: I am coming now. Then I come with my submarine and I save Amber.

Maria: And you don't save your teacher and Duncan?

Trevor: For now I cannot save them because they are dead. They were eaten by the great white shark.

Maria: So they are dead...You could not save them before?

Trevor: I wanted to save Amber first and I could not save them all at once.

Maria: Ok...and what will happen now?

Trevor: I will come with a magic submarine, which is invisible and I will get into the shark's stomach and save my teacher first and then Duncan.

Maria: Ok so you saved them all, even if Duncan bugs you sometimes.

Trevor: Yes...I love them that's why.

Maria: How does the story continue?

Trevor: You have to wait till next time.

Maria: Ok so the story did not end today?

Trevor: No you have to wait till next time.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture group to draw in his diary. He was calm and happy. He drew a picture of Philippa.

Trevor's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his second diary entry:

Maria: What are you going to draw in the diary today?

Trevor: I am going to write Trevor on the top first and then I am going to draw someone.

Maria: Ok that's good.

Trevor drawing.

Trevor: This is Ms. Philippa...and this is Ms. Philippa's car.

Maria: Ok. Why did you draw Ms. Philippa's car?

Trevor: Because her car was not working properly.

Maria: Why was it not working properly?

Trevor: Because her car is old.

Maria: Then what happened?

Trevor: I went and helped her mend the car.

Maria: And why did you decide to draw Ms. Philippa today?

Trevor: Because I love her.

Maria: Why do you love her?

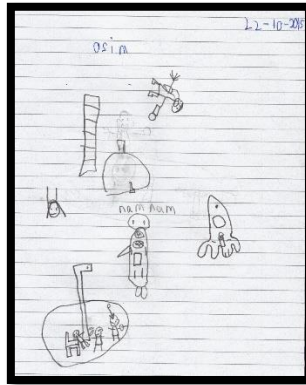
Trevor: Because whenever I come here (*in the nurture group*) and I am feeling angry, she helps me.

Maria: Ok Trevor. Thank you.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture group was a journaling session. He came with a smile on his face and he titled this diary entry today *Awesome*.

Trevor's third diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his third diary entry:

Trevor: Today' title of the story is Awesome

Maria: Awesome?

Trevor: Yes. Can I have a pencil please?

Maria: Sure.

Trevor: I am going to draw my teacher again.

Trevor humming as he is drawing.

Trevor: This is the sir. He's scuba diving. Look...

Maria: What are you drawing there? What are you drawing?

Trevor: It's the sir and there is Duncan with him scuba diving. I love Duncan.

Maria: Ok

Trevor: Look.

Maria: What's that?

Trevor: That's a tiger shark, no a hammer-head, a hammer-head shark...A hammer-head is better because it doesn't eat them.

Maria: Ok...

Trevor continued drawing.

Maria: What is happening there?

Trevor: You do not know what that is?

Maria: You told me that this is a hammer shark.

Trevor: Yes and it bit the sir.

Maria: It bit the sir and what happens then?

Trevor: You are not seeing this?

Maria: It looks like a foot?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And then?

Trevor: It(*shark*) ate it (*foot*). You know who this is?

Maria: No.

Trevor: This is Amber scuba diving, then.

Maria: Hmmm.

Trevor: Amber is driving the submarine and I have an arrow and I am trying to attack the hammer shark.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I am trying to help Duncan.

Maria: But you..ok you are trying to help Duncan?

Trevor: Yes and if the mission is completed I will then save the sir.

Maria: Do you love your teacher?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Then why did you let a hammer shark bite him?

Trevor: Because he went next to the shark. It's his fault.

Maria: So after you save Duncan, you are going to save your teacher right?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: How?

Trevor: We are going to clip his leg again and nothing will happen. A squid is going to try and catch Duncan.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: But then I saved him. And a lot of water is coming out of the squid.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: You aren't seeing...The crew was saved but the sir died.

Maria: But you told me that you are going to save the sir.

Trevor: I had to help Duncan and then Duncan wanted to save the sir.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I told him not to go but he still wanted to go, so the squid ate him.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: This story continues from the previous story (*first diary entry*).

Trevor turned the page of the first diary entry.

Trevor: You remember this.

Maria: Yes of course I remember.

Trevor continues to draw on the page of today's diary entry.

Maria: Who is this?

Trevor: This is Ms. Philippa. She became a helicopter head.

Maria: Ok and how does this story end.

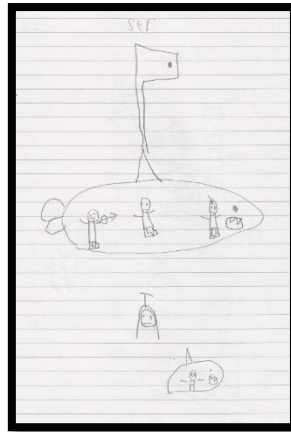
Trevor: To find out the ending of the story you have to wait till next time.

Maria: Ok.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture group for a session on Emotional Literacy and we discussed the different feelings of *Inside Out*. However, in his diary Trevor chose to continue to draw on the story he started yesterday in his journal.

Trevor's fourth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor during his fourth diary entry:

Trevor: Miss, are you coming to see it?

Maria: Yes sure I am coming. What are you drawing over there?

Trevor: I am drawing a man, who is seeing with a scope. From the other story. As we already know them, there is Amber riding...

Maria: And what is this, so?

Trevor: Eh...That's what we drew a submarine.

Maria: A submarine?

Trevor: We changed it...(Trevor continues to draw). And this is me.

Maria: I see.

Trevor: With a bow and arrow.

Maria: Ok with a bow and arrow. And what did you draw here?

Trevor: As you remember that is helicopter head and her name is Ms. Philippa.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: We have to do this story tomorrow. As you may already know the Sir is dead.

Maria: Can he come back to life?

Trevor: He is dead. He can't get alive, if he's dead. He's all in pieces. Broke. Look. And

that is all the story for today. We will continue it next time.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: I will be coming tomorrow right?

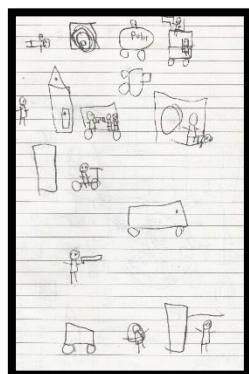
Maria: Yes. I hope so.

Trevor: Then I will continue the story tomorrow.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came for a journaling session. He looked as if he was angry. When I asked him if he wanted to talk about if he said no and then asked me for a drink. In his drawing, however, he expressed what his was feeling. Also apart from journaling, I used another strategy that helped Trevor calm down.

Trevor's fifth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor whilst he drew his fifth diary entry:

Trevor: Miss, can you please give me something to drink as I am really thirsty.

Maria: Ok, I will pour you a glass of water and you go and get your diary.

Trevor: Ok....I do not know what I am going to draw today.

Maria: You could draw about anything. Maybe you wish to draw how you are feeling today?

Trevor: No, I don't think so. Let me think. I am going to draw about myself.

Maria: Ok that's good!

Trevor: I am going to become a GTA character. So I am going to get into the television and I am playing GTA and then I get into the game.

Maria: Ok so you are going to go inside the game, ok.

Trevor: It's true! I become one of the characters.

Maria: Ok you went into the television and you became the game. And then what happened?

Trevor: Then I start my mission...and my mission is to save Micheal.

Maria: Ok and who are you in the game?

Trevor: In the game I am Trevor.

Maria: Ok you are Trevor.

Trevor: And I am going to free Micheal. He has been taken by the police and I need to free him.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: When I freed Micheal, do you know who Micheal is?

Maria: No you have to tell me.

Trevor: Micheal is the bad guy.

Maria: Ok. And what happened when you freed, Micheal.

Trevor: I couldn't free Micheal at first because police wouldn't let me but then he slipped and then I freed him and then police came after us.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: Then we took the police to jail....And then me as myself and Micheal went on a mission to save all the other characters who were under the spell of the police...but I wasn't happy about it.

Maria: Why weren't you happy?

Trevor: Because I hurt the police that why.

Maria: Why did you choose to hurt the police?

Trevor: I do not know because I am angry that's why.

Trevor stops drawing.

Maria: How were you feeling when you were drawing this drawing? Happy? Angry? Sad?

Trevor: Nothing. I felt nothing.

Maria: Nothing.

Trevor: I felt angry. Ok. With everyone.

Maria: And now that you have drawn the story, how are you feeling?

Trevor: Angry still. With this game I am always angry.

Maria: So you want to be always angry?

Trevor: Yes, I must.

Maria: Why do you have to be always angry?

Trevor: Because if I am not angry I get kicked out.

Maria: Kicked out where?

Trevor: Eh.

Maria: Kicked out from where?

Trevor: From GTA.

Maria: From GTA?

Trevor: Yes, I makes me feel great that I do not love anyone and that I am able to shout.

Maria: You don't love anyone then?

Trevor: No I do not love anyone.

Maria: So even me. You don't love me?

Trevor: No, I don't. If I love someone I get kicked out of the game.

Maria: Even, if you don't love me, I love you and respect you Trevor. You are a special boy. However, I worry if you say that you have to be always angry because of a game, because life, life is not a game. And I believe, that, that if there is something that makes me angry, sad, if there is something that make me not love others, I do not play that game anymore. I find better use of my time.

Trevor: But I love playing the game. I do not want to get kicked out of the game.

Maria: But the game, Trevor, there are many games you can play, choose other games...GTA is not a game for children your age Trevor.

Trevor: It's a game. Children play games.

Maria: It's not for children.

Trevor: But children play games?

Maria: Ok, children play games. But GTA is a game for older people. I wouldn't give you a writing task which is for example twenty thousand words long.

Trevor: What? I will not do it?

Maria: I know you won't, because it is not good for you at your age. I, if, I were to give you a writing it will be fifty words because you would be able to do that. By the way when today, I came for you in class, you hugged me. When you were Trevor, in class, before you left class, you even hugged your teacher. That hug meant that you love both your teacher and me.

Trevor: You don't want to see Micheal crying.

Maria: But you are Trevor, you aren't one of the characters in the game.

Trevor: But Micheal needs to cry sometimes.

Maria: That's good for him. If he needs to cry, he has to cry. But you, as Trevor, as

Trevor, who do you love?

Trevor: I love my friends...And I love Princess, my dog.

Maria: Ok what a beautiful name for a dog. I am sure you love her. Who are the children that you love in your class?

Trevor: I do not know.

Maria: But do you love someone from your class?

Trevor: Karl.

Maria: Ok good. Can I ask you another question?

Trevor: Yes, sure.

Maria: If this game makes you angry all the time, why play it?

Trevor: When I have to be part of the game, I need to be angry.

Maria: But in life, there are times when we feel angry but not always.

Trevor: Yes, I have to be angry all the time.

Maria: Ok, during the game you are angry, but at school, when you are at school there is no need to be angry.

Trevor: Yes, there is. I am angry at school because children make fun of me.

Maria: Ok, when children make fun of you, you should be angry. And what do you do when this happens?

Trevor: When this happens, I shout.

Maria: Do you know that people who are angry all the time, they, they cannot be calm you know that.

Trevor: Yes, I know. That's why you brought me here in the nurture, to bug me.

Maria: No, not because of that. But let me remind you that you can choose to be happy, you can choose to be angry, you can choose to be sad and (you) you can choose to be calm. There is no need to feel angry all the time.

Trevor: Shut it, shut it forever.

Maria: I am not telling you not to play the game. I just want you to go through other emotions not just feeling angry.

Trevor: I do not agree with you.

Maria: You sometimes need to feel angry. I am sometimes angry myself, but when I am angry, and I feel angry, I do not shout, I find ways to calm down.

Trevor: How?

Maria: There are ways to calm down. In class we have an anger management box. There is Jenga and fortune cookies. I am not saying that you sometimes do not feel angry. Sometimes you need to feel angry, ok.

Trevor: Can I do a craft and I be joyful?

Maria: Yes, sometimes you need to do a craft and you feel joyful. That's a good way to calm down and feel positive about yourself.

Trevor: Can we play Jenga?

Maria: Yes, sure.

Trevor and I started to play Jenga.

Maria: How are you feeling now?

Trevor: Better than before. I feel calmer now and happy.

Trevor and I finish the game. I lost the game.

Maria: I am pleased you are feeling better, Trevor.

Trevor: Me too.

Maria: I think that now is time to go back to class?

Trevor: Thank you for talking and playing with me.

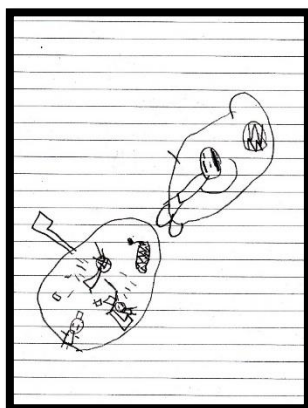
Maria: You're welcome. And I wanted was to see you smile. You have a beautiful smile.

Trevor hugs me and leaves to go to class.

My Diary:

Today Trevor was calmer than the previous time he came to the nurture group. Since last time I had also spoken with his mother. Today he sat next to me and just like the other times told me the story he was drawing, whilst I asked him questions on the drawing.

Trevor's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor whilst he drew in his journal:

Maria: What did you draw over here Trevor?

Trevor: I drew that Amber died. There is an arrow in her. And a shark ate Duncan.

Maria: And why did you draw this picture?

Trevor: I am angry at Duncan because he did not save Amber and Amber died.

Maria: But why, why didn't you go and save them yourself?

Trevor: I couldn't. I was working.

Maria: Ok. And then what happened next?

Trevor: Then the Sir came and saved them.

Maria: And what about you? Did your teacher save you?

Trevor: He didn't need to save me this time. I was doing my homework.

Maria: Ok and what did you do when you saw Amber and Duncan. Were you still angry at Duncan for not saving her, Amber I mean?

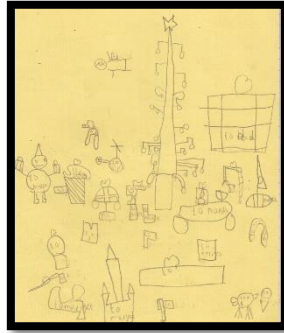
Trevor: Yes a bit, but I forgave him. I was happy to see them both.

Maria: Ok good.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture group to draw in his diary. He was calm and happy. This is also reflected in his drawing.

Trevor's seventh diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after drawing in his journal:

Trevor: Do you know what I am going to draw today?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: Guess...

Maria: Could you give me a clue?

Trevor: We are soon going to celebrate this.

Maria: Can it be Christmas?

Trevor: Yes, you guessed. How did you guess?

Maria: Well, I don't know, wait, last week there was Halloween and now the next holidays would be the Christmas holidays. I think that is why I guessed. You helped me with the clue you gave me.

Trevor starts to draw.

Trevor: How do you draw a tree?

Maria: You draw the trunk first, then the branches and the leaves.

Trevor draws the tree.

Trevor: Do you like my tree?

Maria: Yes it is beautiful.

Trevor: I am going to draw a star now....and a present.

Maria: Is it for me? The present?

Trevor: No, it's obvious. It is not for you.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: What are you drawing over there?

Trevor: What?...Some presents.

Maria: Ok good, good...And who are you thinking of giving the presents to?

Trevor: Amber, the Sir...

Trevor continues with his drawing.

Trevor: Can you please give me a rubber, coz it is not fitting....Are you ready over here?

Maria: Yes. To Sir....Love

Trevor: To Amber...This, I tell you what it is?

Maria: Yes sure...Why did you write to Sir and to Amber? You are going to give them the same present.

Trevor: Yes...this is chocolate.

Maria: Ok. I see.

Trevor: This is chocolate. Because they are top of each other.

Maria: Ok. Now I understood.

Trevor: Do you see it over there?

Maria: Ok the presents are on top of each other. Ok you are going to give chocolates to Amber and the Sir as well.

Trevor: No, the Sir is going to take chocolates.

Maria: Ok and what are you going to give Amber?

Trevor: Think...

Maria: I don't know.

Trevor: Think. You have five chances.

Maria: Ok. Hearts.

Trevor nodding.

Maria: A game that she likes?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Perfume?

Trevor: I hate perfume. I am not going to give perfume to Amber, if I hate it.

Maria: A beautiful soft toy?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Ok, that's nice.

Trevor: Do you think she will like it?

Maria: I am sure she does. Who is this?

Trevor: Give me a minute.

Trevor writes the name of the present.

Trevor: Ms. Smith.

Maria: Ok. You are going to give a present to your teacher as well. That's very kind of you Trevor, thinking of the people who love you.

Trevor: Yes, I know.

Maria: What are you going to give to Ms. Smith.

Trevor: Think.

Maria: Chocolate?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Perfume?

Trevor: No.

Maria: Soft toy?

Trevor: No.

Maria: A reading book?

Trevor: Yes. A book of cars.

Maria: And whose is this present?

Trevor: Wait a bit, I need to draw more.

Trevor continues to draw.

Trevor: Let's start from the beginning. What is Amber's present?

Maria: Teddy bear.

Trevor: Yes.

Trevor continues to draw the presents.

Trevor I want to buy a present for everyone. I want the people to be happy.

Maria: That is good! Very thoughtful I think.

Trevor continues with his drawing.

Trevor: Can you please tell me if I am done?

Maria: It depends on who are you going to give a present to.

Trevor: Ok let's start writing the names. To Amber.

Maria: Ok, Amber, you're going to give her a soft toy.

Trevor: The Sir.

Maria: Yes, you're going to give him chocolates. And Ms. Smith you are going to give her a reading book about cars.

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: Now.

Trevor: My grandpa...

Maria: What are you going to give him?

Trevor: Think...

Maria: Yes, let me think. You have three presents for your grandfather.

Trevor: Yes, I know. No for one. Those are for my grandfathers and my great-grandfather. My grandfather I am going to give him a remote, a car remote.

Maria: Now, what are you going to give to Louis?

Trevor: Yes to Louis now. A helicopter....To daddy?

Maria: For your dad you drew a big present.

Trevor: Yes, it is big. A television. Now to grandpa?

Maria: A car?

Trevor nodding.

Maria: I do not know then.

Trevor: It starts with a 'm'.

Maria: Motorcycle.

Trevor nods in approval.

Maria: Ok, and for your other grandfather (your great-grand father), a fishing rod...no that is not his present, that is Nadine's present.

Trevor: Yes Nadine, I am going to give her a crane.

Maria: Your great-grandfather you are going to give him a boat, I think?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: This is Carl's present, I think.

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And, and what are you going to give to Carl?

Trevor: It's starts with a 'h' and ends with a 't'.

Maria: I don't know. It looks like...yes, I know a helmet.

Trevor: Yes, that's right.

Maria: And your mum. What are you going to give to your mum?

Trevor: My mum...I am going to give her the present that brings presents.

Maria: So you are not going to give your mum a present?

Trevor: No, I am going to give her a present. I am going to give her someone that brings presents.

Maria: A Christmas Father then?

Trevor: Yes, I am going to give her a Christmas Father. He brings presents, so I am going to buy her one....And you are missing someone.

Maria: Who? Your great-grandmother?

Trevor: No, my grandmother..."To nanna"

Maria: Ok, and what are you going to give your nanna. What are you going to give to nanna?

Trevor starts to draw again.

Trevor: Cause, I needed to give my grandfather some socks.

Maria: So everyone is ready?

Trevor: No, there is my grandmother as well. And four other persons too.

Maria: That's a lot of presents that you are going to give this Christmas.

Trevor: Only four are left.

Maria: That's my name over there.

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And Ms. Philippa's name as well. Now, do not tell me or Ms. Philippa. Give us a surprise.

Trevor: I hope I have enough money to buy all these people a present. I want to cheer them up at Christmas.

Trevor continues drawing.

Trevor: Did I draw Mario's Christmas present?

Maria: Yes, you did it. It is over here.

Trevor: I am going to draw another one for him.

Maria: Do you like Christmas, Trevor?

Trevor: It's obvious.

Maria: What do you like the most about Christmas?

Trevor: To Ms. Maria.

Maria: You are going to give me two presents?

Trevor: Yes. I like you that's why. You have to think what they are?

Trevor continues to draw.

Maria: And what is the thing you like the most about Christmas?

Trevor: People feeling happy...Can you guess what I will be giving you?

Maria: I do not know.

Trevor: It hangs on the wall.

Maria: Still not a clue.

Trevor: A painting. You can hang it on the wall...And Ms. Philippa. Do you know?

Maria: Could it be an ice-cream.

Trevor: Yes, that's right. Do you think she likes it?

Maria: Yes, I am sure she likes to have ice-cream.

Trevor: Ok good. And I am going to give her a cupcake as well.

Maria: She would like that too.

Trevor: And what is this?

Maria: That's my present.

Trevor: Yes, what do you think it is?

Maria: Are they sweets?

Trevor: Yes.

Maria: And when you give all these presents, how would you feel?

Trevor: Greatful. I mean, great.

Maria: That's good.

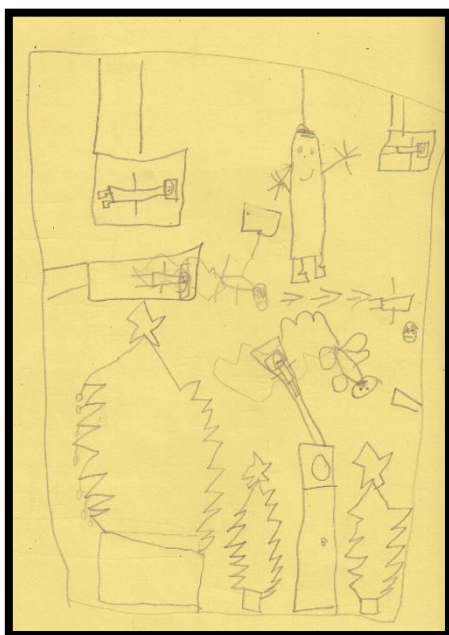
Trevor: I am going to class now.

Maria: Ok, good. See you around.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came to the nurture group to write in his diary. He was excited to open as it was his turn to open two Christmas cards sent to us by two different schools from Europe. He also helped me attach the decorations to the windows and noticeboards that were sent to us. After that he drew in his diary a story about Christmas.

Trevor's eighth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after drawing in his journal:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today? I can see that you gave your drawing a title.

Trevor: Yes, read it.

Maria: Trevor's Christmas. Ok.

Trevor: It is funny.

Maria: Funny. Alright.

Trevor: Here you are sleeping. Ms. Philippa is sleep over there. We are having a sleep over.

Maria: But there are more people who are sleeping?

Trevor: Yes, let me draw something more because I forgot.

Maria: Ok. And where are we sleeping?

Trevor: At school. We are having a sleep over at school.

Trevor draw.

Trevor: Let's start the funny story. Those who are sleeping are you, me, Ms. Philippa, and Mr. Jason.

Maria: Ok good.

Trevor: And Amber is also sleeping.

Maria: Ok. And then what happens? They are other people who are not asleep.

Trevor: No not everyone is sleeping. There is Duncan and Colin who are awake.

Maria: Ok. Duncan and Colin are awake. And you are asleep?

Trevor: I am dreaming about you.

Maria: Ok and is it a good or bad dream?

Trevor: Good I think.

Maria: And then what happens?

Trevor: And there is Jesus.

Maria: Ehe.

Trevor: It is only a statue.

Maria: Ok. A statue of Jesus. Alright.

Trevor: And there is Ms. Philippa. And there is Ms. Philippa. There me, there you. This is Duncan, trying to wake you up. Then Duncan and Colin started to run around and.

Maria: And what happened?

Trevor: And then (*Trevor laughing*) Colin fell on the Christmas Tree. That is all that happened.

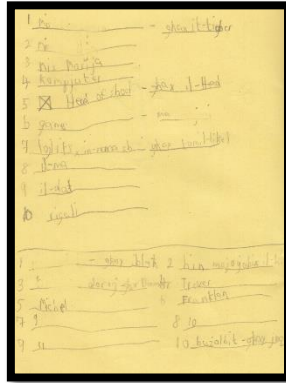
Maria: Ok that is all.

Trevor: Yes, that's all.

My Diary:

Today Trevor came for journaling. He was hurt as yesterday, he was given a suspension from school for a day which he thought was unfair. Today, Trevor chose to write two lists one with things and people he likes and the other with things and people he does not like.

Trevor's ninth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after writing his ninth entry in his journal:

Maria: I can see that you didn't draw a story in your diary today?

Trevor: No, I did a list.

Maria: A list? Of what?

Trevor: Of things I like and hate.

Maria: What are the things that you like?

Trevor: My teacher.

Maria: And why do you like your teacher?

Trevor: Because she's my teacher.

Maria: And what else did you write?

Trevor: You, Ms. Philippa, the Sir, the computer, Mum, Dad, Grandma's house, because she cooks food for me and presents.

Maria: Ok. I see. And what are the things that you do not like.

Trevor: Duncan dorange, time, I don't like time, Micheal, Trevor and Franklin, from GTA and the Head.

Maria: You know you cannot play GTA.

Trevor: I know. That's why I don't like it.

Maria: Ok. That game is not for children your age.

Trevor: I know. I do not play it. Mum doesn't want to buy it for me. But my cousin has it.

Maria: Ok I hope he doesn't let you play it.

Trevor: No, I hate them because, when I am at grandma and he is there, he plays, he locks himself in the room and he doesn't play with me.

Maria: Oh. I see. And why you don't like the head?

Trevor: You know what happened yesterday?

Maria: Yes, I know. You were sent home.

Trevor: That was unfair. I didn't do anything.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: She told me "you need to go home and relax". When I am angry, I come here and I play Jenga and calm down.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: And yesterday, I wasn't angry. Duncan made me angry when he hit me.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: I don't like Duncan. He thinks he is cool!

Maria: Sometimes there are people that we do not like.

Trevor: Yes, and I don't like Duncan dorange.

Maria: Ok. Do you wish to write someone something else in your list?

Trevor: No that's all. Bye.

Maria: Bye Trevor.