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Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm: A Classic Grounded Theory Study of How Anxious Pupils Cope in Mainstream Education

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education

July, 2020

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my research supervisor, Dr Martin Hughes, for his calm and caring support, which has enabled me to remain focused throughout the research process, without creating undue pressure.

To the participants in my research, thank you for your passion, enthusiasm, and for taking the time to be involved in this piece of research. It was a pleasure to work with you all and your contributions have been invaluable.

I would also like to thank my mum and dad; for without your continuing love and support throughout my education, I would not be where I am today.

Last, but not least, to my partner Jon. Your love, support and encouragement throughout this process has been unwavering. I absolutely could not have done this without you. I am eternally grateful.

Abstract

The Green Paper, *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017), the media (BBC, 2020; Busby, 2018; Campbell, 2018; Weale, 2019, April) and anecdotal evidence, indicate increasing concerns about the emotional wellbeing or 'mental health' of children and young people in UK schools. Another current issue relates to competing government policies, regarding inclusion and educational achievement, and the impact of these on the inclusive practices of schools (Daniels et al., 2019). The present research links together the two, with a focus on anxious pupils' experiences of mainstream education. Classic Grounded Theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was utilised to explore the main concern of anxious pupils currently accessing medical education provision; having previously received their education in mainstream schools. The research presents a substantive grounded theory to explain pupils' main concern: *trying to cope in mainstream education*. The core category that explains how pupils manage this concern is *protecting oneself from emotional discomfort or harm*. Pupils protect themselves through engaging in three strategies: *Trying to Fit In*; *Rejecting School*; and *Avoiding and Escaping Stressors*. The substantive theory further explicates how the *School System Conditional Factors* of *Knowing the Environment: Enhancing Predictability*; *School Ethos*; and *Developing Positive Relationships*, impact upon anxious pupils' ability to cope in mainstream education and whether they need to utilise the aforementioned strategies to protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm. The substantive theory also presents the consequential concept of *Being 'Forced Out'* of mainstream education and an overarching concept of *Experiencing a Sense of Injustice*, which reflects how pupils feel whilst trying to cope in mainstream education and if they are eventually 'forced out'. The implications of the substantive theory for Educational Psychology practice are discussed, alongside limitations of the research and considerations for potential future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this short introductory chapter is twofold: firstly, to provide the reader with contextual information regarding initial development of the present doctoral research; and secondly, to present a brief discussion regarding the influence of my personal interests and experiences on the research.

1.1 Contextual Background Information

In my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) I am currently on placement within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Within the Local Authority (LA) area in which the EPS is based, medical education provision is available for children and young people (CYP) with physical-medical needs or mental health difficulties, which present as barriers to their access to mainstream education. This support is provided by a Medical Education Team (MET), which offers teaching within Medical Education Units (MEUs) and a home tutoring service. Pupils accessing this short-term medical education provision are not receiving full-time education from the MET and they remain on the roll of their mainstream schools, who retain overall responsibility for their education. In respect of the present research, the initial substantive area of interest was the reintegration process back into mainstream education, for pupils who are receiving their education in the MEUs; with the substantive population of interest being pupils within the MEUs who experience anxiety (Gray, 2019). However, as illustrated in Chapter Two, the focus of the research gravitated towards anxious pupils' experiences in mainstream education.

1.2 Positionality and Personal Interests in Research Area

Here I intend to offer transparency and clarity regarding the personal experiences, interests and motivations that have influenced the direction of the present thesis. My interest in mental health and emotional wellbeing is driven by personal experiences of these, especially in an educational context (Gray, 2019). I have a keen interest in the area of emotionally-based school avoidance, particularly at a practice-based level, such as working with pupils, schools and families to support pupils in their reintegration back into education. Another area I am particularly interested in is the use of therapeutic approaches, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, for supporting CYP's emotional wellbeing and the emotional wellbeing of the adults who work with CYP in

schools and settings (Gray, 2019). Despite the potentially 'within-child' nature of such approaches, I am firmly of the belief that CYP's emotional wellbeing must be considered contextually, taking a systemic perspective, which gives careful consideration to the environments in which the individual is situated.

1.3 Involvement with the Medical Education Team

Prior to commencing this research, with the aim of gathering contextual information about the MET and its units, I had brief discussions with key stakeholders, including the Lead MET Teacher, MET staff (teachers and teaching assistants) and the Principal Educational Psychologist of the EPS. Although these conversations were unplanned and unstructured, individuals often gravitated towards explaining what they considered to be the primary issues and concerns relating to the MET provision. I visited the MEUs to develop my understanding of the environment and so that staff and pupils in the units gained familiarity with me prior to potential involvement in the research.

1.4 Initial Research Question

Outlined below is the initial research question from my research proposal (Gray, 2019, p. 5):

"How is the process of reintegration of pupils from a MEU back into the educational setting at which they are on roll, experienced by those involved in the process?"

However, as will be discussed within Chapter Two, the research question evolved following modifications based upon the main concern of the pupil participants in this research.

1.5 Concluding Remarks

It is hoped that this chapter, though brief, will have provided the reader with a sense of the 'roots' from which the present research has grown. The next chapter includes a discussion regarding the nature of the literature review in Classic Grounded Theory (CGT) methodology (the methodological package utilised in this research) and presents relevant extant literature to acquaint the reader with the substantive area of interest in the present research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the following:

- A discussion regarding the purpose of the literature review in the context of CGT methodology and the nature of the literature review conducted in the present research.
- A discussion regarding the concept of *coping* and existing research literature pertaining to factors that may affect how pupils *cope* in mainstream education.
- The research questions to be answered.

2.1 The Literature Review in Classic Grounded Theory

It is critical that a brief discussion regarding the place of the literature review in CGT is provided; to orient the reader to the literature review presented within this research. Owing to CGT's primarily inductive and emergent nature (Glaser, 1998; Glaser, 2016; Holton, 2018; Kenny & Fourie, 2014; Walsh et al., 2015); unlike traditional research methods, a comprehensive review of the literature is not conducted during the initial stages of the research process in order to identify an aperture within the existing literature (Holton & Walsh, 2017), which would facilitate identification of the research 'problem' and the formulation of research questions and testable, a-priori hypotheses (Christiansen, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Holton & Walsh, 2017). A review of the literature is kept in abeyance to enable the researcher to enter the research with as few preconceptions as possible (Christiansen, 2011; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Simmons, 2010). The formulation of specific research questions, in the early stages of the research process, is also avoided and it is argued that relevant research questions will become apparent once the researcher enters the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Hallberg, 2006). In CGT, the researcher seeks to establish the primary concern of those within the substantive area of interest (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Walsh et al., 2015). It is postulated that conducting a literature review from the outset could lead to a 'forcing' of the researcher's pre-existing ideas and interests on the research, which may not enable the primary concern of those within the substantive research area to emerge (Christiansen, 2011; Holton, 2018). Furthermore, it would be futile for the researcher to conduct a review of the literature prior to commencement of the research, as the literature explored at this time may subsequently be considered irrelevant to the emerging theory (Christiansen, 2011; Glaser, 1998); thus, offering limited insight or elaboration on the theory. Indeed, Glaser and Strauss, in their original writings on CGT, contend that the

researcher should try to avoid any exploration of the research literature in the substantive area being studied or any associated areas (as cited in Dunne, 2011). However, Glaser (1978; 1998; 2005) does advocate examining the extant literature in other areas, perhaps in different disciplines, thereby sensitising and opening the researcher to theoretical and conceptual ideas that may not be within the researcher's existing cognisance.

2.1.1 The Nature and Positioning of the Literature Review in the Present Research

In the present research, a literature review was conducted only when the main concern and core category had emerged and once theoretical coding, to model relationships between the core category and emergent related concepts, had commenced. It was hoped that this would minimise researcher preconceptions from influencing the direction of the research. However, as posited by Cutcliffe (2000, p. 1480), "no potential researcher is an empty vessel", and I was acutely aware of the pre-existing knowledge that I held relating to school systems and my experiences of working with CYP, which could inadvertently influence the research and *force* it down a particular path. To ensure transparency, and also to act as a reflexive tool, I produced a reflective account prior to data collection (see Appendix 1). This account documents some of my pre-existing knowledge and potential biases, specifically relating to the MET provision and my previous involvement with this team. Irrespective of this effort to mitigate against pre-conceived ideas and knowledge influencing the direction of the research, I am under no illusion that it is impossible to wholly ignore or suspend (Glaser, 1998) one's pre-existing cognisance and assumptions. In this respect, I agree with the assertions of Cutcliffe (2000, p. 1480) as outlined above; that researchers do not approach the research as "an empty vessel" and that of Watts (2014); that any analysis of data will necessitate interpretation on the part of the researcher. Though, I do believe that by not reviewing the extant literature at the outset of the research, nor utilising the literature to identify a specific area or "gap in the literature" on which to focus my research (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 30), this enabled me to remain as open as possible to "what is actually happening" in the substantive area of interest (Glaser, 1978, p. 3).

It is important to remark on the positioning of the literature review within this thesis, relative to the stage in the research process at which the literature review was conducted. I have decided to position the literature review at the beginning of the present thesis, despite not having conducted this at the beginning of the research process, so as to offer the reader a

clear introduction, prior to detailing the research findings; in keeping with traditional research approaches (Dunne, 2011). As previously outlined, this literature review was conducted following identification of participants' main concern and only when the core category and other related concepts had emerged. As a result, the literature review detailed henceforth is focused around the ideas and concepts in the substantive grounded theory (SGT) developed in the present research (as outlined in Chapter Five), particularly regarding the main concern of participants: *trying to cope in mainstream education*. The extant literature regarding the concept of *coping*, alongside literature surrounding potential explanations as to why pupils may experience difficulties with coping in mainstream education, are explored.

2.2 Coping: Definitions, Conceptualisations and Theoretical Contributions

There is extensive published literature in respect of the general concept of *coping* and the reader is directed to detailed systematic literature reviews and extended texts, if seeking to gain a comprehensive picture (e.g. Carpenter, 1992; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Garcia, 2010), as unfortunately this is beyond the scope of the present thesis. *Coping* has varying definitions, conceptualisations and dimensions within the literature. Based on their knowledge of the extant literature, Carver and Connor-Smith (2010, p. 685) define *coping* broadly as "efforts to prevent or diminish threat, harm, and loss, or to reduce associated distress". This conceptualisation focuses on the process of what individuals *do*, whether behaviourally or cognitively, in order to protect themselves from the harm and discomfort associated with a problem or stressor. Indeed, Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 141) in their seminal text, *Stress, Appraisal and Coping,* highlight the cognitive and behavioural processes involved in coping in their definition of the concept: "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person".

Hunter and Boyle (2004) propose that *transactional theories* of coping, such as the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are most dominant in the coping literature. Lazarus and Folkman highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of *coping*, owing to the complex nature of reality; which results in different coping strategies being utilised under different circumstances. The function of, or reasons for using, particular coping strategies is highly specific to the context in which the individual is situated (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Consequently, Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 138) argue strongly for the inclusion of

context when evaluating a coping process; for instance, whether it is considered a "good or bad" coping strategy. Certainly, to comprehend and assess the efficacy of an individual's coping responses, one must be aware of the context regarding what it is they are attempting to *cope with* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The process of coping has a changing nature in response to not only the individual's environment, but also to how they perceive of and appraise the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) present a more current overview of the ways in which the extant literature conceptualises coping, underpinned by earlier works of Carver et al. (1989) (the reader is directed to this paper for further information). Carver and Connor-Smith outline four broad distinctions of coping, though they acknowledge that coping responses may in fact reflect elements of more than one of these distinctions. Problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping is one such distinction, which differentiates between coping responses that are aimed at the problem, such as reducing its impact or seeking to remove the stressor completely (problem-focused); compared with coping that aims to reduce the discomfort caused by the problem or stressor (emotion-focused) (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Engagement versus disengagement is a second distinction. Coping that is characterised by engagement involves the individual actively "dealing with the stressor" and the uncomfortable emotions related to this; compared with coping that is characterised by disengagement, which involves avoidance and escape behaviours (i.e. avoiding the stressor and/or its related uncomfortable emotions) (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010, p. 625). Accommodative and meaning-focused coping is another distinction of coping. Accommodative coping refers to making changes within oneself due to barriers that prevent other coping responses (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Examples of this coping response include acceptance of the stressor, changing how you think about the stressor, and distracting yourself from the problem (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). In contrast, meaning-focused coping refers to making positive meaning from the problem or stressor, such as identifying the positives associated with it (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Finally, proactive coping is a fourth distinction. This relates to taking action prior to the existence of the problem or stressor, with the aim of preventing it, or acting quickly to prevent a problem becoming increasingly more problematic and harder to cope with (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Carver and Connor-Smith further postulate that the resources that individuals perceive they possess in order to respond to the stressor, the contextual factors surrounding the stressor, the

extent to which the stressor can be controlled, and the length of time during which the stressor exists, also have an impact on the extent to which an individual feels they are able to cope (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010); thus emphasising the role of contextual and environmental factors on coping. However, coping responses are also influenced by personality characteristics (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010), which highlights the potentially idiosyncratic and heterogenous nature of the coping process.

It could be argued that the vast majority of the extant theoretical literature regarding *coping* is specific to the adult population, including the aforementioned works of Lazarus and Folkman. The degree of relevance to CYP is unclear, however it is conceivable that there may be distinctions between the coping processes of CYP and those of adults. Ryan-Wenger (1992) attempts to draw on the literature regarding children's coping, to initiate theoretical development in this area. Ryan-Wenger (1992, p. 261) outlines a taxonomy of children's coping strategies, identifying fifteen categories, each comprising several strategies. This work offers a conceptual contribution to understanding how children *cope* and further illustrates the wide range of coping strategies that children may employ. Two categories identified, which appear to reflect aspects of *coping* identified in the adult *coping* literature, include "*behavioral avoidance*" (i.e. behaviour that helps the child avoid being near the stressor) and "*cognitive distraction*" (i.e. cognitive efforts that the child engages in to avoid thinking about the stressor) (Ryan-Wenger, 1992, p. 261). In congruence with the adult *coping* literature, there is a clear distinction being made between coping efforts that are characterised by cognitive activities and a psychological approach to coping, and those that are behavioural in nature, with a physical response to coping.

2.3 What does the Existing Literature tell us about How Anxious Pupils Cope in Mainstream Education?

Given the highly contextualised nature of the education system, owing to differing policies and practices across varying jurisdictions, the present literature review seeks to address coping in mainstream education within England. Daniels et al. (2019) comment on differences in the education systems, policies and practices of the devolved nations within the United Kingdom (UK), which I believe could potentially lead to differing considerations when thinking about coping in mainstream education. The greater focus, in this literature review, on the education system in England enhances its relevance to the context of the

present research. A general search of the extant research literature (specifically published journal articles), in respect of how anxious pupils cope in mainstream school, indicates a paucity of research articles relating to general experiences of anxiety and coping in UK mainstream schools. Rather, the literature surrounding anxiety often pertains to coping with anxiety in specific domains, such as exam anxiety (i.e. McDonald, 2001; Putwain, 2007; Putwain et al., 2012; Putwain, et al. 2016) and highlights the coping strategies or difficulties coping in mainstream education for other specific pupil cohorts, including the Gypsy Traveller community (i.e. Derrington, 2007); pupils with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) (i.e. Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Humphrey & Symes, 2013); girls with an ASC diagnosis (i.e. social coping; Tierney et al., 2016); pupils who experience bullying (i.e. Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Naylor et al., 2001); pupils with an 'invisible' disability (i.e. incontinence; Cavet, 2000); or coping in relation to a particular transitional life experience (i.e. leaving school at post-16, for pupils with ASC, compared to pupils without ASC; Browning et al., 2009).

Regarding the transition from primary to secondary school, and how pupils may cope with this, research conducted by West et al. (2010) provides an insight into pupils' experiences of this transition and the impact upon their emotional wellbeing and school attainment. The authors report that some pupils retrospectively recognised that they had experienced difficulties in coping when transitioning to secondary school. This related to issues linked with the size of the school, how much work pupils were expected to do, and their peer relationships. The authors highlighted individual pupil characteristics that had a significant impact on pupils' experiences of this transition. For instance, poorer transition experiences occurred for pupils who were more highly anxious (according to teachers) and a better transition experience occurred for pupils with higher self-esteem. The authors also report that those pupils with very controlling parents experienced more issues related to both school and their peers, thus highlighting the multifactorial and systemic nature of coping in school. Though this research provides an insight into how pupils may cope with the transition from primary to secondary school, there appears to be a dearth of research exploring how pupils generally cope in mainstream secondary education. In my view, this further amplifies the utility of the present research. However, I am acutely aware of the fact that the focus of the present literature review is on peer-reviewed journal articles, and that there may be some highly relevant and excellent pieces of research within the existing dissertation and thesis

research literature. This could be an argument for encouraging Educational Psychology graduates to seek to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals; as I envisage that the majority of scholars and practitioners will access this section of the research literature. The remainder of this literature review explores coping in mainstream education from a systemic perspective; with consideration given to how pupils may try to cope in mainstream education, in conjunction with school system variables that influence how pupils interact with the school system and the extent to which they are able to cope in mainstream education.

2.3.1 Coping in Mainstream Education: Systemic Influences

Adopting an ecosystemic perspective, when considering CYP's coping in school and their emotional wellbeing, facilitates an environmental and contextualised understanding. This goes beyond merely considering the *microsystem*, which refers to the interactions between the individual and the immediate systems the individual is situated within (e.g. home and school environments) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Consideration is also given to the *mesosystem*, which relates to interactions between the individual and the environments that the individual "actively participates" within (e.g. school, home, friends outside of school), as well as the interactions between these settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The *exosystem* is a further level of consideration; which from an education perspective, includes wider societal influences and environments that the pupil is not actively participating within, but which can impact upon them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such as the wider education system, children's social services, and local healthcare services. These wider influences are likely to impact on the extent to which CYP experience difficulties in respect of their emotional wellbeing, how these difficulties are managed, and pupils' abilities to cope in mainstream education.

The parliamentary paper *Forgotten Children: alterative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions* (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018) appears to offer a useful systemic perspective and starting point for considering some of the issues that pupils may have to cope and contend with, prior to being implicitly or explicitly *forced out* of mainstream education. Though the parliamentary paper does not focus specifically upon the concepts of *coping,* or *not coping,* in mainstream education, one can assume that, if a pupil is excluded from a mainstream school, there is a likelihood of them having experienced difficulties coping in the mainstream education system. As such, key points from this report

are briefly discussed henceforth, alongside relevant existing literature pertaining to factors that may impact upon how pupils cope in mainstream education.

2.3.1.1 Mainstream School Exclusions, Rejections, and a Lack of Inclusion.

Taking together the existing literature and my recent experiences of working within educational settings as a TEP, there appears to be a growing issue, in the current educational climate, of a lack of inclusivity in educational settings and increasing instances of exclusion. Exclusion in this context pertains not only to formal fixed term and permanent exclusions, but also to the act of indirectly *excluding* a pupil as a result of not promoting their inclusion in the educational setting. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are at greater risk of receiving school exclusions than pupils without SEND (Institute for Public Policy and Research, as cited in House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). It is argued that, in England, current policies fail to adequately emphasise the importance of inclusion, with greater emphasis on, and ease of enacting, exclusions (Daniels et al., 2019).

The prevalence of pupils accessing or being wholly educated within Alternative Provision (AP) further highlights the difficulties arising for some pupils within the mainstream education system. AP is defined by the UK government (Department for Education; DfE, 2013, p. 3) as:

> education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

Data as of June, 2019 indicates there were 40, 694 CYP, between the ages of 0-17 years, being educated within either LA-maintained AP or Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) (Children's Commissioner, 2020). Seemingly, these data do not account for CYP being educated in non-LA maintained APs; further highlighting the significant number of CYP for whom mainstream education is not effectively meeting their needs. Issues surrounding a lack of early support and intervention are identified as one factor potentially contributing to exclusions and to pupils moving from mainstream education into AP (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). It may be that the principle of inclusion is not being implemented within some mainstream schools, thus resulting in the needs of pupils with SEND not being adequately met; perhaps as a result of competing policy incentives (Daniels et al., 2019). Daniels et al. (2019) argue that government policies in England regarding the

inclusion of CYP with SEND are inconsistent with educational policies that prioritise academic "excellence" (para. 1). Consequently, this results in "perverse incentives for schools to not meet the needs" of pupils with SEND (para. 18) and therein results in exclusions of SEND pupils.

Parker et al. (2016, p. 137) propose a model of pupils' exclusion from school, which encompasses a "*coping continuum*". The model serves to illustrate three themes identified in the research: "the *complex journey of exclusion*, a *continuum of coping* and *wider impacts*" (Parker et al., 2016, p. 136). The authors highlight the systemic nature of coping in school, explaining that a child's placement on the coping continuum is linked to several interacting factors, including the interactions between family factors, child-specific factors and school setting factors, with communication also identified as an important variable. In respect of child-specific factors, difficulties relating to emotional wellbeing and mental health were considered to influence pupils' coping ability in school. Indeed, Ford et al. (2017), representing The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, suggest that experiencing mental health difficulties may contribute to pupils having difficulty coping in school, both in mainstream schools and AP.

Parker et al. (2016) also identified school ethos as a school setting factor influencing pupils' abilities to cope in school and parents perceived that their children perhaps fitted in to some schools more successfully than others, which further suggests that differing mainstream school systems impact upon the extent to which pupils cope in school. Additional school factors, identified by Parker et al., which appear to influence pupil coping, included the school's behaviour policies and procedures, specifically, inflexible approaches to managing behaviour; the expectations placed on pupils and the priorities and focus of the school setting, which generally was perceived to be on achievement, targets and OFSTED gradings; the nature of the school environment, such as sizes of classes and support for pupils in school provided by teachers and teaching assistants, alongside the knowledge and skills held by adults in school; and, finally, communication between schools and families, including whether parents and children were actively listened to. The authors postulate a number of negative consequences for the pupil having faced exclusion, such as experiencing time out of education, experiencing "emotional distress", stigmatisation, and impacts on the family from

an economic perspective, such as job losses due to their child's non-attendance at school (Parker et al., 2016, p. 146).

The work of Parker et al. (2016) provides a comprehensive overview of the interacting factors that contribute to pupils having difficulty coping in mainstream education, however it does not address this from the perspective of those *doing* the coping in school: the pupils, and it does not consider *how* pupils may attempt to cope in mainstream education. Further to this, the research focuses on pupils between the ages of five and 12 (school years reception to year seven), where there is arguably lesser concern regarding exclusions comparative to secondary education; particularly the latter years of secondary education. Data submitted to the House of Commons Education Committee, as part of their investigation into AP, highlights that more than half of all exclusions were of young people in years nine and above (LKMco, 2017). Some suggest that primary schools may be able to more effectively support pupils' needs (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018; Parker et al., 2016). In addition, given that the academic and examination pressures on young people start to increase towards the later years of secondary education, this rising pressure could lead to some young people finding it increasingly difficult to meet expectations and to cope effectively; thus, resulting in increased potential for exclusions, particularly where there are unmet needs or needs are not identified (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

In contrast to school exclusions, which could be viewed as school rejecting a pupil, school refusal could be conceived of as a form of school rejection on the part of the pupil who is not attending school. School refusal has been considered in the literature for a number of years (see Elliot, 1999 for a practitioner review regarding conceptualisation, assessment and response to school refusal) and there are many functions of this response to school (i.e. school refusal behaviours, as discussed in Kearney, 2002; in the development of the *School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised*, Kearney & Albano, 2007). The extant literature indicates that school refusal, or school avoidance, is linked to emotional difficulties and is underpinned by several causal factors, thus denoting its heterogeneity (Elliot & Place, 2019; Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Heyne et al., 2019). School refusal can also potentially be construed in differing ways by various groups, including pupils, parents and schools (Pellegrini, 2007). The notion that some pupils may "self-exclude" from school, owing to mental health needs, has recently been proposed (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018, p. 15). Some

CYP can actively *reject* the school system, in that they stop attending school, perhaps owing to situations in the mainstream setting whereby they are placed in isolation for a significant period of time, either as a consequence of their behaviours, or sometimes because they have reportedly been bullied in the classroom (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

NHS Digital data indicates higher rates of school exclusion and school refusal (referred to as 'truancy' in the data) amongst CYP with mental health needs, relative to those without mental health needs (Sadler et al., 2018). The direction of this relationship is unclear; it could be a bi-directional relationship, or in some circumstances one may precipitate the other. Any such propositions are purely speculative, as one cannot determine causality from the data. Regardless of the nature of the relationship between CYP's exclusion from or avoidance of school, it is clear that difficulties in school exist for many CYP with mental health needs, which may consequently impact upon coping in school.

2.3.1.2 School Ethos: Accountability, Performance Measures, and Inflexibility.

As previously highlighted, in discussing the research of Parker et al. (2016), the culture and ethos of individual schools is recognised as contributing to difficulties that pupils with SEND may experience in school (Daniels et al., 2019). A recent discussion presented by Daniels et al. (2019) highlights how the ethos of a school may be driven by those leading the school and that this ethos and the direction of the school is likely to be heavily influenced by performance measures that are placed upon schools. Linked to accountability measures, is the perception that LAs may no longer be able to as successfully hold schools accountable for meeting the needs of vulnerable CYP and for reducing exclusions of these pupils (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018, as cited in Daniels et al., 2019). Accountability measures for mainstream schools in England, regarding performance and educational success, place pressure on schools and also promote a focus upon academic success above the social and emotional needs of CYP (Daniels et al., 2019). Inflexibility has also been recognised in respect of the curriculum in mainstream settings (Daniels et al., 2019). Daniels et al. (2019; line 20, under subheading, "Theme 4: Accountability, Performativity, and Marketization") reference a "narrowing of the curriculum", which is perhaps underpinned by the accountability schools have in relation to the Progress 8 measure. It is further argued that, currently, there is a lack of consideration within the curriculum for the development of pupils' *soft skills*, such as those that enhance their "social and economic capital", due to

academic skill development and school performance criteria being the focal point (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018, p. 40). Though such skills may be considered, by some, to be of lesser importance to academic success, it is likely that such skills may promote pupil coping within mainstream schools, particularly for pupils with SEND.

There is an increasingly held view that schools are implementing behaviour policies characterised by inflexibility and rigidity (Daniels et al., 2019). Behaviour policies considered to hold a zero-tolerance position, are argued to have a detrimental impact on pupils in terms of exclusions that are unwarranted or unnecessary (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). For pupils with SEND, it is further argued that there is limited flexibility in the system (Daulby, 2018) and, for those CYP with medical needs in respect of mental health, there is a failure to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure their inclusion in mainstream schools (Kitchen, 2018). The function of school systems and the measurement of the success of schools, as previously outlined, may also affect the support offered to CYP in mainstream schools in order to promote their emotional wellbeing. At present, where CYP make progress in relation to their emotional wellbeing, this is not easily measured (Kitchen, 2018). It is argued that, if it is communicated to schools that their central concern should be pupil progress, it is likely that schools will respond in a way that is about facilitating this outcome, with greater focus on the school as an institute than on individual pupils (Courtney, 2018). There are calls for OFSTED school inspections to include measures of wellbeing (The British Psychological Society; BPS, 2019, May 7) and for inclusion to be incentivised for educational settings (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). Fortunately, in January 2019, a consultation was opened by OFSTED regarding a draft education inspection framework and, since this time, a new education inspection framework has been developed; coming into force from September 2019. This new framework purports to be "built around factors that have the greatest protective effect for all children: good education, good pastoral care and a culture that promotes a strong connection between children and learners and their community" (OFSTED, 2019; lines 9-11, under sub-heading, "Mental health"). Further to this, aspects of the *personal development* and *leadership and management* elements of the inspection framework have reportedly been modified to promote the wellbeing and mental health of CYP in educational settings (OFSTED, 2019). Should it be the case that OFSTED successfully apply greater focus on pupils' emotional wellbeing, one would hope that this

could lead to positive outcomes in regard to CYP's emotional wellbeing; though how this is measured accurately and with validity remains to be seen.

2.4 Research Questions

Once the research had commenced and the iterative processes of data collection, coding and constant comparison were underway, there was a palpable shift in what pupils wished to discuss; from discussing the process of reintegrating back into mainstream school, to discussing their experiences in mainstream education that led to them receiving medical education provision. Consequently, the initial research question, as outlined within Chapter One, evolved to account for this change in focus. The overarching research question, once it became evident that I had perhaps 'forced' the professional concern of reintegration on to pupils, was changed, as outlined below, in order to be flexible with respect to the direction the research was to be taken in by participants:

'What is the main concern in respect of mainstream education, for pupils who self-identify as experiencing anxiety, and how is this concern processed, managed or resolved?'

The overarching research question was again subsequently refined to account for the changing direction and focus of the research, in line with the pupils' main concern, which was identified as: *Trying to Cope in Mainstream Education*. The question was modified as outlined below:

'How do pupils, who self-identify as experiencing anxiety in school, try to cope in mainstream education?'

An additional final research question was developed to consider future implications for the research, relative to the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs):

'How can EPs support those pupils who are experiencing anxiety to cope in mainstream education?'

2.5 Concluding Remarks

This review of the literature highlights a paucity of research directly exploring how anxious pupils cope in mainstream secondary schools. In particular, there appears to be a lack of research offering a theoretical perspective, that delineates how this 'coping' occurs, what it entails, and which identifies factors that may influence whether an anxious pupil is able to cope. It is hoped that, in answering the research questions outlined above, this will generate an improved understanding of how anxious pupils are attempting to cope in mainstream secondary schools. The next chapter provides the reader with an overview of the methodological considerations in the present research, including the methodological approach adopted.

<center>**Chapter 3: Methodology**</center>

This chapter outlines the research design implemented, including a brief discussion regarding differing approaches to Grounded Theory (GT) methodology; the key components of CGT methodology; and the philosophical stance underpinning the research. The chapter also includes information regarding the research methods, ethical considerations, potential alternative methodologies that could have been adopted, evaluation of the research, and the pilot study.

A review of the existing literature makes evident that terms such as research design, research methods and methodology may be differentially defined by different authors and that the terms may be used interchangeably. To provide clarity to the present methodology, I have adopted the following definitions, proposed by Crotty (1998, pp. 6-7), to structure the methodology:

- Research Methodology/Research Design: "strategy or plan of action... that shapes our choice and use of particular methods."
- Research Methods: "the concrete techniques or procedures we plan to use…so as to gather and analyse our data."

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Grounded Theory: The Debate

CGT is the methodological approach adopted in the present research. CGT can be defined as the "discovery of theory from data systematically collected and analysed without structured forcing through pre-determined theoretical frameworks" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 12). Specifically, CGT enables the generation of theory that explains complex social processes considered important within social settings (Suddaby, 2006). The focus of CGT is on the conceptual nature of the data collected (Glaser & Holton, 2004), rather than being concerned with accurate description (Holton & Walsh, 2017). The aim of CGT methodology is for the researcher to explore a substantive area of interest and to establish the primary issue/concern of the actors within this substantive area (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Walsh et al., 2015). The researcher then identifies the emergence of a core category, which explains this main concern (Walsh et al., 2015) and how this concern is "managed, processed, or resolved" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 88). The core category is a latent pattern of behaviour (Walsh et al., 2015),

which continually relates to the vast majority of other concepts identified by the researcher (Glaser, 1998). Subsequently, the researcher explicates the relationships amongst the core category and other emerging concepts (i.e. how they relate to one another as hypotheses) to develop the grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1998; Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) were original proponents of GT, with their approach now often referred to as CGT (Hallberg, 2006; Chun Tie et al., 2019). Since its initial conception, several variants of the methodology have arisen due to its philosophical flexibility and potential for use with qualitative and quantitative data (Walsh et al., 2015). Some scholars asseverate that these approaches to GT have changed the essence and criteria of GT to such an extent that they are not undertaking GT (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Walsh et al., 2015). Some authors express particular concerns regarding the use of GT by researchers working from within a qualitative research paradigm. It is postulated that this has potentially led to GT methodology being viewed as a solely qualitative methodology, with description and interpretative analysis at its core (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Indeed, when consulting the existing literature, there is discernible division between those who advocate strongly for the original, Glaserian GT, which is deemed to be a full package methodology with ontological and epistemological flexibility, and those who advocate for the qualitative analytic roots of the Straussian approach (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Adding further variation to GT, Charmaz (e.g. 2006) proposes a constructivist approach to GT, whereby the interaction between researcher and participants is of significance to data analysis, and "the researcher's interpretative understanding, rather than the researcher's explanation, of how the participant creates his or her understanding and meaning of reality is the result of the analysis" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 146). The researcher creates a story that reflects the social processes occurring and the people within the situation (Hallberg, 2006).

As previously outlined, CGT is considered by some to be a methodological full package (Glaser, 1998; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Walsh et al., 2015), with its clearly held positions on many aspects of the research process; for instance, the nature and purpose of the literature review and requirement for the researcher to adhere to the inductive and generative nature of the methodology, which underpins the coding processes and the subsequent development of a grounded theory. CGT deviates from what could be considered the traditional approach to research, as the researcher avoids formulating specific research questions in the early stages

of the research process (Glaser, 1967, as cited in Hallberg, 2006; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Delaying any review of the literature is also advocated to minimise the possibility of pre-existing theoretical frameworks being made to 'fit' and integrate the data (Glaser, 2005) and to discourage the researcher from investigating a professional concern (Glaser, 1998), rather than that of participants. Through remaining open to the data, as opposed to holding preconceived ideas about what you are hoping will emerge from the data or focusing on professional concerns, potentially based on the existing literature; the researcher seeks to describe social behaviour that is apparent within the substantive area of interest (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Walsh et al., 2015).

3.1.2 Grounded Theory: Key Processes

There are four central processes inherent within CGT: Theoretical Sampling, Constant Comparative Analysis, Theoretical Saturation and Theoretical Coding (Andrews et al., 2012; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Each is described below in order to provide a comprehensive overview of CGT methodology.

3.1.2.1 Theoretical Sampling.

Theoretical sampling informs the direction of data collection and the sources of data that should be utilised to facilitate development of the theory (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Oliver, 2012). Data is compared through the process of identifying similarities and differences (Walsh et al., 2015). This further informs decisions regarding the nature of additional data collection that is required in order to promote further development of the emerging grounded theory (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Suddaby, 2006; Walsh et al., 2015). Consequently, prior to commencement of the present research, I could not provide a precise and detailed account of where and from whom (e.g. a pre-defined population sample) data would be collected. Yet, for the purposes of ethical review it was necessary to make some assumptions as to potential sources of data and populations to be sampled (as detailed in Chapter Four).

3.1.2.2 Constant Comparative Analysis.

Constant comparative analysis is the process of comparing coded incidents in the data (that indicate concepts) against other incidents identified in previously sourced and coded data (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Comparisons are then made between concepts that have already

been identified, with new concepts that have emerged (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Suddaby, 2006; Hallberg, 2006; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Whether or not incidents within the data are deemed to indicate a particular concept is determined by its relevance to the emergent theory, rather than by the number of instances of an incident appearing in the data (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Suddaby, 2006).

3.1.2.3 Theoretical Saturation.

Theoretical saturation occurs when further data collection and analysis yields no new information or properties of the core category or related concepts (Holton & Walsh, 2017). There is acknowledgement within the CGT literature of the difficulties in determining precisely when theoretical saturation is achieved (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Suddaby, 2006). Some authors contest that if data collection ceases prematurely, the grounded theory may be 'thin', overly simplistic and fail to offer any new insights in relation to the already existing research literature (Suddaby, 2006).

3.1.2.4 Theoretical Coding.

Following iterative cycles of theoretical sampling and coding (during data analysis) and subsequent identification of the core category; the theory is constructed through "…modeling of the relationships between and among the core category and related concepts…" that have emerged (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 86).

3.1.3 Classic Grounded Theory in this Research

CGT was utilised in the present research to generate a theory that could promote understanding of a main concern for anxious pupils receiving their education through medical education provision. Furthermore, the theory could facilitate specific action to support pupils in resolving their main concern. Use of GT methodology in a "…piecemeal…" manner reduces the degree of conceptualisation and subsequent power of the theory to conceptually explain what is occurring within the substantive area (Glaser & Holton, 2004, para. 9). In the present research, I have endeavoured to adhere to CGT's key tenets, underpinned by the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), later writings by Glaser, and the works of other authors who explicitly subscribe to the original CGT. It is argued that of all the GT approaches, CGT is the one with the least explicit guidelines, with later iterations providing clearer guidance regarding data analysis and theory construction (Timonen et al., 2018). Hence, reading

extensively around CGT, both in the research literature and in textbooks, was critical to informing my actions throughout the research process. Texts that I referred to frequently throughout the process included, *Classic Grounded Theory: Applications with Qualitative and Quantitative Data* (Holton & Walsh, 2017); *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978); *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions* (Glaser, 1998); *The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding* (Glaser, 2005); and *Learning Classic Grounded Theory: An Account of the Journey and Advice for New Researchers* (Roderick, 2009).

3.2 Philosophical Stance: Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology are philosophical ideas that underpin our perceptions and how we conceive of reality and knowledge. Busse et al. (2015, p. 29) construe ontology as, "the science of being". Interestingly, Busse et al. (2015) further state that conceptualisations of ontology, and the language used in relation to this, vary between philosophers; thus, clearly illustrating how individuals will construe the world differently. Whereas ontology is about "the nature of reality", epistemology relates to "how we gain knowledge" regarding the nature of this reality (Danermark et al., 2005, p. 3).

3.2.1. Ontological Positioning in the Current Research: Critical Realism

Gorski (2013) highlights the issues associated with wholly positivist standpoints and with wholly interpretivist viewpoints, making the case for the more recent popularity of Critical Realist (CR) approaches. A CR perspective does not propose that all aspects of "reality are somehow self-evident or even directly observable" (Gorski, 2013, p. 659); instead proposing the existence of an objective reality that we may not be cognisant or conscious of (Danermark et al., 2005; Oliver, 2012). Regarding a CR stance, Hallberg (2006, p. 146) explains that "although a real reality exists to be uncovered by inquiry it is never perfectly apprehensible". There is a social contextual element to the CR perspective, in that it is assumed our understanding and knowledge of objective reality is influenced by the discourses and language we use to make sense of these realities (Danermark et al., 2005; Oliver, 2012). Therefore, despite there being only one reality, interpretation of this reality may be different across individuals (Kempster & Parry, 2011). In contrast, a social constructionist epistemology would suggest that both the social and natural aspects of life are constructed through discourse (Gorski, 2013), which is not something I would concur with. I believe that the natural aspects of the world, in particular, exist and that there is potential for measuring

these objectively, as opposed to them simply existing through our socially constructed discourses. However, in congruence with a CR stance, I do believe that the way in which we speak of phenomenon has an influence on our conceptualisations and understandings.

The notion of *abstraction* in CGT refers to the process of removing the focus from time, place and individuals during coding, to instead *transcend* the data in order to identify emerging concepts (Glaser 2002a, as cited in Holton, 2007). Kempster and Parry (2011, p. 107) highlight the similarity between this idea of abstraction and the CR assumption that "phenomena exist independent of an individual" and that they may exist at "a deeper level that may not be observable". Oliver (2012) presents an interesting discussion related to taking a CR philosophical stance to GT in an applied field - social work. One aspect of the discussion, which I consider particularly relevant to the context of applied Educational Psychology, is the idea of a multitude of factors interacting to produce our social reality, and the suggestion that this offers various potential opportunities for intervening and generating change. In the present research and the specific context of working with anxious pupils receiving medical education provision, generating positive change in respect of their main concern is a key aim; through the development of a theory that explains how the pupils attempt to manage their main concern.

I am of the view that a CR perspective and CGT are compatible; indeed, CGT is said to offer "philosophical flexibility" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. xii) and neutrality (Holton, 2007). Although, some contend that it is not necessary to hold a particular philosophical position when conducting GT research, due to its neutrality (i.e. Holton, 2007), I am keen to distance myself from the positivist leanings that are often linked to CGT methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Timonen et al., 2018) as I do not believe this accurately reflects my positioning. Instead, I would consider my positioning to reflect a CR stance. From my perspective there is a *truth* to be identified, in respect of the emerging main concern of pupils receiving medical education provision. However, consistent with a CR perspective, I recognise that individuals will hold differing perceptions and perspectives on this main concern, because reality is "multifaceted" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. xii) and because it may not be possible to fully recognise this reality (Kempster & Parry, 2011). Nevertheless, as Kempster and Parry (2011, p. 112) assert, from a pragmatic perspective, "a theory grasps enough of reality to allow us to do something with it."

3.3 Methods: Data Collection

Owing to its flexible ontological and epistemological nature, CGT allows the use of any data type, including both qualitative and quantitative data (Glaser, 1998; Holton, 2007; Holton & Walsh, 2017). CGT also permits both primary and secondary data to be utilised and coded to aid development of the emerging theory (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Participant interviews and researcher fieldnotes, written during participant interviews, were utilised to gather data in the present research (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4 for fieldnotes written based upon participant interviews). It was considered that interviews would elicit and generate the most information from participants over the shortest period of time. This was necessary in the present research, owing to restricted access to participants (i.e. due to pupil and MET teacher timetables). Researcher memos (see Appendix 5 for sample memos), made throughout the research process, were another form of data that contributed to theory development. Memos document researcher thoughts throughout the research, particularly relating to conceptualisation and theoretical development (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Additional research methods were planned and available to the researcher to use, should they have been considered necessary and appropriate. Alternative research methods are outlined below in Table 1, including the rationale behind their potential use and the reasons for not utilising each method.

Table 1

Potential Data Collection Methods: Rationale for Potential Use and Reasons for Non-Use (as cited in the researcher's initial research proposal, Gray, 2019)

Method	Rationale	Subsequent Reasons for Non-Use
Creative approaches could be used by pupils, including creating drawings or making a PowerPoint presentation	Creative activities could have offered an alternative communication approach for pupils anxious about communicating orally or for those with communication or learning needs that make such communication challenging.	Pupil participants in this research were either happy to share their views through an interview or preferred the idea of an individual interview.

	Due the flexible nature of CGT and its permittance of any type of data ("all is data", Glaser, 1998, p. 8), the researcher could analyse (i.e. code) the products of these creative approaches, using the same process as for interview data.	
Observations carried out in the MEUs	Observations of pupils and staff in the MEUs was considered as a potential data collection method (if initial data collection and coding indicated that this type of data would help to saturate the core category and related concepts).	Data gathered through interviews with participants did not indicate that observations conducted in the MEUs would offer additional information to further elaborate or saturate the core category or any other identified concepts. This is primarily due to the redirection of the research towards how pupils cope in mainstream education and away from the initial focus on the process of pupils reintegrating from medical education back to mainstream education (as outlined in Chapter Four).
Policies and other documents relating to the MEUs	Policies and other documents relating to the MEUs could have been utilised as data to be analysed to further develop the emerging theory. This would only have been permitted upon identification of the core category and, again, only if such	Policies and documents were not included as a form of data to be analysed, as they were not deemed to have earned relevance. Again, this was primarily due to the change in direction of the research.

	data would further elaborate the developing theory.	
Relevant research literature	Once the main concern had been established and the core category identified, the research literature was reviewed. At this point, relevant extant literature could be included as data to be analysed to further develop the emerging theory.	To avoid being overwhelmed with data (Roderick, 2009), and owing to time constraints, relevant research literature was not included as data for analysis (coding). However, relevant research literature was addressed in the literature review and is discussed in relation to this research within the discussion in Chapter Six.

3.4 Research Ethics

3.4.1 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Sheffield ethics committee prior to commencement of the research (see Appendix 6). Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic arising during the latter stages of the data collection process, additional ethical approval was granted (see Appendix 7) for interviews with EP colleagues to be conducted via Skype audio, rather than face-to-face, in order to comply with government guidelines regarding social distancing and avoiding unnecessary travel and social contact.

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

The *Code of Human Research Ethic*s for psychologists was carefully considered whilst conducting the present research (The BPS, 2014). The four key principles of the code are:
"Respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities.
Scientific integrity.
Social responsibility.

Maximising benefit and minimising harm." (p. 7).

Each principle is outlined below with information regarding how the present research adhered to these principles.

Respect for the Autonomy, Privacy and Dignity of Individuals and Communities
Information sheets (Appendix 8) and consent forms (Appendix 9) were developed and distributed to participants (including the Pilot Study participant) prior to their involvement in the research. Information sheets were differentiated for the differing participant groups to ensure all participants clearly understood the purpose of the research and what their participation would involve. As a result, participants could make an informed choice regarding their participation in the research. For pupil participants, it was necessary for parents to sign their consent form, to provide an additional safeguard regarding pupils' participation; which was particularly important given that most pupil participants would be under the age of 16. I visited each MEU informally on one occasion and subsequently conducted a presentation for potential pupil and MET staff participants. This presentation was supported by a visual aid in the form of a differentiated, illustrated PowerPoint presentation, based upon information within the participant information sheets. This afforded pupils and staff an opportunity to ask questions about the research. EP participants were contacted via email, which briefly outlined the purpose of the research, alongside distribution of the information sheet and consent form. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research and of the timescale for which they could request for their data to be destroyed, thus promoting their personal agency in relation to their involvement in the research.

As the researcher, I was acutely aware of potential perceived 'power' relationships, which consequently influenced my approach during data collection. I ensured that, whilst maintaining a professional approach, I was also approachable and friendly. The presentation delivered to pupils and MET staff, prior to commencement of the research, also helped to illustrate that I am an approachable individual and further helped to minimise any power differential that could have arisen between the researcher and participants. Additionally, the nature of CGT research, with its open, informal, conversational approach to participant

interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; as cited in Holton & Walsh, 2017) further helped to reduce the impact of any perceived power differential.

In respect of confidentiality and anonymity, participants' data were given a pseudonym and participants were informed of the actions that would be taken to ensure their anonymity (i.e. pseudonymised data, not using the names of places and people mentioned in their interview responses). As researcher, I ensured that the views and experiences shared by participants were respected, by adopting a reflexive approach to data analysis (coding) to ensure I was staying *true* to participants' responses. This reflects the notion of 'closeness', as described by Watts (2014, p. 3), whereby the researcher endeavours to "engage with and understand the words and viewpoints of a participant *on their own terms*." Furthermore, when returning to interview two previously interviewed pupil participants, I was able to clarify whether the emerging theory (i.e. identified core category and related concepts) was relevant to pupils and *fitted* their experiences in respect of their main concern and how this is resolved or managed.

Scientific Integrity

To ensure the scientific integrity of the research, I have been clear about the use of CGT as the research framework and have summarised the key processes involved to elucidate these for the reader. Further to this, maintaining a reflexive approach to the research, in particular during data analysis, has enhanced my ability to adhere to the fundamental facets of CGT. Within Chapter Seven of this thesis, the limitations of the research framework are also examined, so that the research can be evaluated in terms of its quality and in respect of its contribution to the extant literature (The BPS, 2014).

Social Responsibility

To minimise inconvenience, participants were interviewed at a mutually convenient time in either their place of work (i.e. MET staff), in their educational setting during the school day (i.e. MET pupils) or via Skype (i.e. EP colleagues); owing to restrictions surrounding COVID-19 at the time of interview in respect of the latter. Participants were interviewed for no longer than one hour at any one time, unless they so wished (i.e. adult participants, such as MET staff or EPs could continue sharing information for longer than one hour if they wished). Pupil participants were also interviewed during the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) component of their curriculum as it was agreed with the Lead MET Teacher that the present research area would correspond most closely with the PSHE

curriculum. Furthermore, this would ensure that pupils were not absent from core subject lessons (e.g. maths and English).

I believe that research with this substantive population (anxious pupils) will lead to the production of findings that are beneficial for those who work with and support anxious pupils in both mainstream settings and in APs. Moreover, CGT methodology aims to develop a theory based on the main concern of those within the substantive area, therefore the research findings are likely to be highly relevant to and helpful for those involved in the research.

Maximising Benefit and Minimising Harm
Some of the pupils who attend the MEUs have mental health needs, therefore there was a possibility of safeguarding concerns and disclosures occurring during the research process. In preparing for this, I ensured that I was acutely aware of the processes for communicating and recording any safeguarding concerns. Given my role as a TEP, I also felt it was important to utilise therapeutic skills in my discussions with CYP, when deemed necessary, in order to contain difficult emotions. This was particularly pertinent given that pupils talked about their difficult experiences in mainstream education, which included topics such as anxiety, bullying, and feeling different to others.

Another potential ethical dilemma related to the fact that the MET and MEUs, which I would be working closely with as part of the research process, are part of the wider company that I am on placement in as a TEP. Consequently, it was crucial that I remained impartial and that I was able to clearly delineate my role as a researcher from my role as a TEP. Being aware of this potential dilemma and engaging in a reflexive process mitigated any potential issues that could have arisen. For instance, the Lead MET Teacher hoped that I could offer a perspective as part of an on-going review of the MET provision that was underway during the time of my research. However, I was clear that I would be unable to offer a view until the point at which my research was completed and disseminated for public consumption. In my view, participants had shared their views and perceptions for the purpose of the research and not for the purposes of the MET review, so it would be unethical to utilise their data in order to offer a perspective on the MET provision. In contrast, once this information is in the public domain, the findings could be used for this purpose by those involved in the MET provision review, if deemed relevant.

3.5 Alternative Methodologies

A case study approach was considered as a potential methodological approach to the present research. A case study can be defined as an "in-depth description or analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40; as cited in Harrison et al., 2017, lines 13-14 under subheading "3.1 Definitions and descriptions"). I envisaged that the MEUs would be positioned as the 'case', as these are bounded in terms of their purpose and function within the defined area of the LA. Within the case study approach, I considered using Realistic Evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) to investigate the mainstream school reintegration process for pupils being educated in the MEUs. The purpose of the Realistic Evaluation would have been to explore which aspects of the process of reintegration work for which individuals and how this works (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). My initial view was that this approach could compliment the on-going review of the MET that is currently underway. In addition, it could have offered a very detailed and comprehensive picture of the process of reintegration, thus highlighting key areas for developing and perhaps improving the reintegration process. This is especially important for the MET as it is one of their Key Performance Indicators in respect of their commissioned work from the LA.

Notwithstanding the potential advantages of a case study approach, such as its pragmatism in terms of offering real-world applications, I feel that I would be making many assumptions about reintegration and would perhaps be exploring this in a manner that I perceive is beneficial. In contrast, CGT offers a discovery-based approach and the potential for providing a new insight into an area that is not pre-defined or pre-identified by the researcher (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Indeed, once data collection commenced, it became apparent that the main concern for pupil participants was *trying to cope in mainstream education*, rather than the reintegration process per se. Use of CGT ensured that pupils' key area of concern was identified rather than presupposed prior to the research process commencing.

A phenomenological research approach was also considered in the present research. Indeed, Glaser and Strauss suggest that their GT approach is phenomenological (as cited in Hallberg, 2006); indicating that there are similarities between the two. Or, perhaps one could argue that the researcher utilises aspects of the underpinning principles of phenomenology within the GT process, such as an initial interest in incidents, stories and experiences that indicate phenomenon or concepts (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Whilst this is of interest to me, I was also

keen for the research to have wider applications beyond the stories and experiences shared by individual participants. GT scholars contend that a substantive theory can be applied to other substantive areas which generate the same core category or its related properties (Holton, 2008), which suggests the findings could have wider applications.

3.6 Evaluation in Classic Grounded Theory: Fit, Work, Relevance, and Modifiability

The evaluation of GTs differs to that of positivist research (Kempster & Parry, 2011), with its measures of validity and reliability that determine the quality of the research. Likewise, the measures of transferability, confirmability, credibility, authenticity, and dependability that indicate the quality of qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011, as cited in Treharne & Riggs, 2014) are not considered applicable to CGT research. Rather, CGTs are evaluated in respect of their fit, work, relevance and modifiability (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1992, as cited in Hallberg, 2006; Holton, 2018), each of which is briefly outlined here.

Fit

The concept of *fit* resembles that of validity (Glaser, 1998; Holton & Walsh, 2017), in that it pertains to whether an identified concept sufficiently explains the data in "which it purports to conceptualize" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 155). Where there is *fit*, concepts and properties should emerge from the data, as opposed to the *forcing* of concepts on to the data by the researcher (Glaser, 1978). Forcing may occur where the researcher forces a preconceived concept or code on to the data, based on already existing theories (Holton, 2018). In reference to *fit*, Glaser (1998, p. 17) simply questions, "Does the theory fit the substantive area?"

Work

The notion of *work* suggests that the identified concepts and the subsequent theory should offer an explanation of the behaviour of actors within the substantive area (Glaser, 1998; Holton, 2018). More specifically, workability pertains to whether "the concepts and the way they are related into hypotheses sufficiently account for how the main concern of participants is resolved" (Glaser, 1992, pp.116-117, as cited in Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 155).

Relevance

A GT earns relevance where it explains a main concern of individuals in a substantive area (Holton, 2018; Holton & Walsh, 2017) and is deemed relevant by those in the substantive area (Glaser, 1998). It could be argued that "member checking" or "participant validation", whereby the researcher shares their analysis of the data with participants (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1802), may offer a means of determining the relevance of a GT.

Modifiability

Glaser (1998) asserts that GT has its own in-built process of verification, as the theory can be continually modified, through comparing incidents that exist in the data and concepts that have emerged through coding. In the presence of new data that is coded and which generates concepts and properties with earned relevance, it should be possible to modify the theory to account for these (Holton, 2018).

The reader is directed to Glaser (1998, pp. 16-19) and Holton and Walsh (2017, pp. 154-157) for further discussions of each concept.

3.7 Pilot Study

The pilot study, conducted prior to starting the main research, had two primary functions:

- to provide the researcher with the opportunity to practise fundamental aspects of CGT methodology, such as coding and the analysis process of constant comparison;
- to establish whether the broad questions that were to be asked during pupil interviews would facilitate pupils in sharing their views.

Having the opportunity to undertake elements of the data analysis process was essential given that I, as a novice grounded theorist, was extremely unfamiliar with these processes. Many prominent writers of CGT make reference to its delayed learning process (Glaser, 1978; Holton & Walsh, 2017) and the importance of experiential learning (Glaser, 2005; Holton & Walsh, 2017); thus, any opportunities to engage in data analysis would serve to develop my coding skill acquisition. Engagement in the coding process highlighted idiographic biases in my coding approach and the tendency to be detail focused (see researcher memo in Figure 1), which is counter to the concept-focused approach of CGT. This initial approach to coding could stem from my experiences as a TEP, wherein my approach to practice is substantially

pupil centred. In my practice, I seek to develop an in-depth understanding of an individual's experiences and their perceptions of the world in order to promote others' understandings of the individual and their responses to their environment.

Figure 1

Researcher Memo: Reflection on Initial Coding Approach

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Researcher Memo 5   21.02.2020

Having carried out further reading (Glaser, 2007; Holton, 2007) and having re-read elements of the Holton and Walsh (2017) text, I am of the view that I have perhaps focused too strongly upon specific details of participants' experiences and their thought processes (i.e. what they were thinking at a specific point in time), rather than identifying the social processes and actions that were occurring (as shared by the participant). This is especially important during this stage of the coding process (in vivo coding phase). I have also had to be aware of avoiding *overly* interpreting participants' experiences that were shared during interviews, to make sure the codes I am identifying are *grounded* in the data. However, given that the coding process involves "…the act of conceptual abstraction…" to theoretically explain behaviours, rather than to simply describe behaviour (Holton, 2007, p. 272), this in my view necessitates a degree of interpretation on the part of the researcher.

I do not believe that we can ever 'truly' know and explain why an individual has behaved in a particular way. The individual will have the best insight into the functions of their behaviours; and even then, individuals may not be consciously aware of why they have responded in a particular manner.

I am beginning to wonder whether *getting to grips with* this methodology is proving especially challenging at present due to the fact that I am constantly having to *wrestle* with, and *hold back*, my natural way of thinking as a psychologist (i.e. seeking explanations for behaviour and wondering about thought processes), whilst attempting to avoid making interpretations.

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At the time of conducting the pilot study, pupils being educated within the MEUs were only *potential* participants, rather than *certain* participants. Nevertheless, I believed it was important to recruit a pupil participant for the pilot study, to enable me to determine whether the research questions would be too open and broad for pupils to be able to respond to sufficiently. Three open questions, focused upon the process of reintegration (the initial focus of the research), were formulated to open up and elicit conversation with the participant:

1. What do you think about moving (reintegrating) back into your school?

2. Is there anything that might worry you about going back into school?

3. What could help with this process of moving back to school? (Is there anything anyone could do differently? Is there anything that needs to be changed to make moving back to school easier?)

The pilot study participant reported that they felt the interview approach for data collection and the prompt questions provided were appropriate (see Appendix 10). An alternative, creative approach had been offered to the participant to share their views, such as drawing or creating a PowerPoint presentation; however, the pupil had communicated their preference for participating in an interview and reported that, should they be involved in the research again, they would choose an interview approach. In response to the prompt questions, the participant primarily shared information pertaining to reintegration. Reflecting on the pilot study and re-reading literature around CGT, I considered that I may have been pursuing a professional interest or concern in respect of reintegration (see researcher memo in Figure 2). Further to this, I wondered whether the participant felt restricted by the questioning and its narrow reintegration focus, which could potentially have left the pupil unable to share their views more widely. Thus, for subsequent interviews, although I utilised the same three questions (until the point at which the main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education* was ascertained), I was mindful of affording pupil participants the opportunity to talk more freely about their experiences as they so wished. I asked additional questions based on the information pupils were choosing to share; encouraging the generation of further relevant information sharing and to seek clarification where necessary (Kirchoff & Lawrenz, 2011).

Figure 2

Researcher Reflective Memo: Forcing a Professional Concern?

> **Researcher Memo 2   17.02.2020**
>
> I wonder whether I engaged in too much 'directing' of the conversation with the participant during the interview, however at times I felt it was necessary to do so in order to elicit further information and to minimise any anxiety potentially experienced by the pupil.
>
> I also wonder whether I could potentially be 'forcing' a professional concern (i.e. reintegration), through my clear directing of the questions towards this topic, when this is not necessarily what pupils may wish to talk about.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

The overarching aims of this chapter were to provide the reader with a clear overview of CGT methodology, to highlight ethical considerations made by the researcher, and to present the researcher's philosophical positioning in relation to the research. The following chapter (Chapter Four) outlines the specific procedures conducted in this research, thus providing the necessary detail for the reader to assimilate the outcome of this research (a substantive grounded theory [SGT]), as outlined in Chapter Five.

Chapter 4: Procedures

Within this chapter the research procedures are outlined including participant recruitment, methods of data collection and the data analysis process. Given the iterative nature of the CGT process (Holton & Walsh, 2017), this chapter also makes reference to how the data gathered at each stage in the research process informed subsequent data collection. The CGT methodological approach is somewhat different to the traditional linear approach to research; thus, in endeavouring to assimilate the reader to CGT, Figure 3 provides an overview of the fundamental stages within the research. This begins with identifying the substantive area of interest, through to the final element of the process: developing a substantive grounded theory. Figure 3 is modified from the researcher's research proposal (Gray, 2019, p. 7).

Figure 3

The Classic Grounded Theory Process in the Present Research

Initial substantive area of interest (medical education provision and reintegration into mainstream education) and substantive population (self-identified anxious pupils)

Conducted initial interviews (including pilot study) with pupils educated in the MEUs to identify main concern, core category and emerging concepts. Main concern identified as *trying to cope in mainstream education*.

Engaged in the iterative processes of data collection, coding, constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Holton & Walsh, 2017)

Established saturation of the core category (and other identified concepts) and engaged in process of theoretical coding

Development of a SGT[a]

[a]The present research produced a SGT. A SGT "generates theory that fits the real world, works in predictions and explanations, is relevant to the people concerned and is readily modifiable." (Glaser, 1978, p. 142). In contrast, a formal grounded theory is abstract, in that it is not specific to, or only relevant to, the substantive area or substantive population being studied; it can be applicable to various substantive areas (Glaser, 2007).

4.1 From Pilot Study to Main Research

A pilot study was conducted prior to commencement of the main research, the reasons for which were outlined in Chapter Three. Following its completion, the decision was made to utilise data from the pilot study to inform the main research. I had initially intended to recruit staff members working in the MEUs at the outset of the research and to subsequently recruit pupil participants - if theoretical sampling indicated that collecting data from this participant group would help to further develop the emerging theory. However, reflecting on data gathered during the pilot study and the initial coding of this data, I was of the view that interviewing pupil participants at this stage could potentially offer richer information; particularly as pupils (who self-identify as experiencing anxiety) were the substantive population of interest. Interviewing pupils, prior to interviewing any professional participants (i.e. MET teacher, EPs), ensured that the main concern and the core category were highly relevant to pupils; rather than identifying the main concern of professionals, which could potentially have been significantly different.

4.2 Participants

Though the process of theoretical sampling guides data collection, in terms of what data to collect and from whom (Holton & Walsh, 2017); when data collection first commences, the researcher must determine the source. In the present study, purposive sampling was used to recruit initial participants. Purposive sampling refers to a sample of participants that has been specifically selected to partake in the research, as they represent a particular population of interest (Kothari, 2004). This approach is useful where a specific characteristic of a group is to be studied (Kothari, 2004); in this research, self-identified anxious pupils were the population of interest. Subsequent data collection and participant recruitment was guided by both the process of theoretical sampling and pragmatic considerations. For instance, recruitment of pupil participants was somewhat challenging, which led to recruitment of a MET teacher at a time in the process where another pupil participant might have been recruited instead. There is only a relatively small number of pupils attending the MEUs, with only a certain proportion of pupils who will self-identify as experiencing anxiety, which limited the population to be sampled from. Moreover, given the nature of anxiety it is quite possible that self-identifying anxious pupils may have been too anxious to participate in the research even though they may have wished to.

Tables 2 and 3 outline information regarding pupil and professional participants respectively. Each table also illustrates the number of interviews conducted with each individual participant. In total, seven participants were recruited: four pupils attending the MEUs, one MET teacher, and two EPs working in the LA area in which the MEUs are located. However, ten interviews were conducted overall, as detailed further in the next section.

Table 2

Participant Information – Pupils

Pupil Number	Key Stage	Number of Interviews Conducted
1	4	1
2	4	2
3	3	1
4	4	3

Table 3

Participant Information – Professionals

Professional Role	Number of Interviews Conducted
MET Teacher	1
Educational Psychologist 1	1
Educational Psychologist 2	1

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Individual Participant Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with four pupils, one MET teacher, and two EPs. Pupil participant number four was interviewed on three separate occasions. The first interview had to be terminated before the participant had finished sharing their views, as it was the end of the day and the pupil was returning home. The second interview was conducted to afford the pupil the opportunity to finish sharing any views and experiences they felt were relevant. Pupil participants two and four were interviewed again once the main concern, core category and related concepts had emerged. The aim of these subsequent interviews was to saturate the core category and other identified concepts and also to carry out a form of member check (Birt et al., 2016) to determine whether the emerging theory was deemed reasonable and

relevant and made sense to participants (Kempster & Parry, 2011; Larsson, 1993, as cited in Hallberg, 2006).

4.3.1.1 Initial Openness to Greater Specificity.

Despite some minor structuring, the interviews generally took the format of an informal conversation (Turner III, 2010), with use of open questions to allow participants to communicate more freely. Interviews were also relatively open-ended in that they were not scheduled to last for a specific length of time (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Holton & Walsh, 2017). However, for both ethical and pragmatic reasons, participants were interviewed for no longer than one hour, unless they so wished (i.e. in the case of the MET teacher and EP participants). As the research progressed, interviews were more highly structured and questions had greater specificity, with the aim of saturating concepts that had emerged during data analysis (Timonen et al., 2018). Probing questions were also asked to elicit further information from participants (Hallberg, 2006).

4.3.1.2 Emergence of the Main Concern: A Change in Direction for Interviews.

The purpose of conducting initial interviews with pupils at the outset of the research was to explore what is considered important to those who are most affected by the reintegration process (the initial area of interest) and to identify their primary concern and the core category, to further inform the direction of the research (Christiansen, 2011). The key questions presented within the pilot study and the first three pupil interviews in the main research were relatively broad and focused upon reintegration from medical education back into school (see Appendix 10). During data analysis (coding), it became apparent that pupils increasingly wished to discuss their experiences of being in mainstream school and spoke very little about reintegration, unless prompted through my questioning. I found myself often re-directing participants to consider reintegration back into their mainstream school, rather than permitting the pupils to speak openly about their concerns and experiences. Engaging in a reflexive process, I recognised that my professional interest in the reintegration process was confounding the research interviews and masking pupils' main concern, which was the issue of *trying to cope in mainstream education*. Hence, in line with CGT, I pursued participants' interests and concerns (Holton & Walsh, 2017); with subsequent interviews focusing upon the main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education*, the core category, and other related concepts that had begun to emerge through interviewing and coding of this data.

Throughout all interviews, additional impromptu questions were asked where particular concepts and ideas had emerged, for the purpose of saturating these emerging concepts. Later in the research process, once the main concern (*trying to cope in mainstream education*) and core category had emerged, prompt questions focused upon these ideas and related concepts, to fully saturate the core category and its related concepts.

4.3.2 Fieldnotes

When engaging in CGT, the researcher constructs fieldnotes during data collection and then codes these fieldnotes to identify incidents and emerging concepts (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Seasoned CGT researchers reiterate the importance of utilising fieldnotes in data analysis, as opposed to listening to and transcribing audio-recordings of interviews. Glaser (1998) advises that the researcher avoid recording interviews and transcribing these, as this may lead to data overwhelm, thus inhibiting the researcher from being able to establish the participants' main concern and the emerging related concepts. Moreover, many authors argue that when recording interviews, the researcher may not actively listen to participants to identify their concerns and potential concepts that are beginning to emerge, thereby inhibiting conceptual analysis (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Though keen to adhere to the advice of Glaser and other prominent CGT authors, given my status as a novice researcher (and a novice CGT researcher at that) I was somewhat anxious about relying solely upon the fieldnotes made during interviews. Furthermore, given the nature of this piece of research, an examined doctoral thesis, I was of the opinion that it may perhaps be necessary for my research supervisor and examiners to be able to access the recorded interviews, should this be deemed necessary. Consequently, all interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone and researcher fieldnotes were made concurrently, whilst 'in the field'. Owing to my naivety, I did indeed partially transcribe and code the interviews for the pilot study and the first participant of the main research. In consonance with warnings from established CGT researchers, I found myself overwhelmed with data and unable to *transcend* the data to identify incidents in the data that indicate particular concepts (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Rather, this initial attempt at analysis took on an idiographic tendency; with a descriptive focus on individual experiences and interpretation of these experiences, instead of identification of concepts. On identifying this 'error' in my analytic approach, I re-listened to the two interviews and made additional 'fieldnotes', ensuring that I actively listened for the

main concern and begun identifying emerging conceptual ideas. In my view it was necessary to make these fieldnotes, in addition to those made at the time of conducting the interviews, as I did not believe that I had effectively listened for the main concern at the time of the interview, as I was too reliant upon the interview recordings. In the present research, researcher fieldnotes include both abbreviated information shared by participants and verbatim quotes. See Appendices 2, 3 and 4 for participant interview data, which takes the form of researcher fieldnotes.

4.3.3 Memo Writing

Memo writing is an integral component of the CGT process; it is the process by which the researcher generates the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978). The primary purpose of memos is to aid the researcher, therefore they can be written in any format, such as diagrams, short notes and bullet points (Glaser, 1998). During the coding process, I immediately stopped to write memos whenever conceptual ideas arose, so as to limit the potential for forgetting these ideas. During the latter stages of the research process, memos were compiled and theoretically sorted to identify and explicate links between the core category and other related concepts and their properties (Glaser, 1978; Holton & Walsh, 2017), thus leading to the development of the substantive theory explaining *how pupils (with self-identified anxiety) try to cope in mainstream education*. See Appendix 5 for a sample of researcher memos.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Substantive Coding

Coding is the process of 'data analysis' in grounded theory methodology. In line with CGT coding, I utilised the following coding processes: substantive coding (in vivo and analytic codes); followed by selective coding; and, finally, theoretical coding (Holton, 2007). Figure 4 illustrates the structure of the substantive coding process in CGT. The researcher begins with open coding of the data whereby the aim is to "identify incidents in the data that appear to indicate one or more concepts" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 81). The first step of open coding is *in vivo* coding, which refers to identifying in the data (i.e. in the perspectives and experiences shared by the participant) what is happening (Holton & Walsh, 2017). This is followed by *analytic coding*, which involves "conceptualizing what is happening" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 87). Holton (2018, p. 272) presents the following example to illustrate the difference between the two: *in vivo* codes might include "…*boosting self-confidence,*

growing as a person, learning to trust…"; with the analytic code being "…empowerment, with the three descriptive codes serving as indicators". When the core category is established, the researcher moves to selective coding around this core category and other associated concepts, with the aim of *saturating* them (Holton, 2018).

Based upon what I had learned about the coding process in the pilot study; during in vivo coding I tried to capture the action in the data by using verbs to code the data, where possible, to raise the conceptual level of the coding (Holton & Walsh, 2017). In so doing, this helped me to focus more upon the social processes occurring in the data, as opposed to being drawn into individual experiences and emotions. Selective coding commenced once the main concern, core category and associated concepts were identified, thus enabling saturation of the core category and these related concepts. Saturation occurs where "no new properties or dimensions" of a category/concept are emerging when coding data (Holton, 2007, p. 265).

Figure 4

Structure of the Coding Process in Classic Grounded Theory
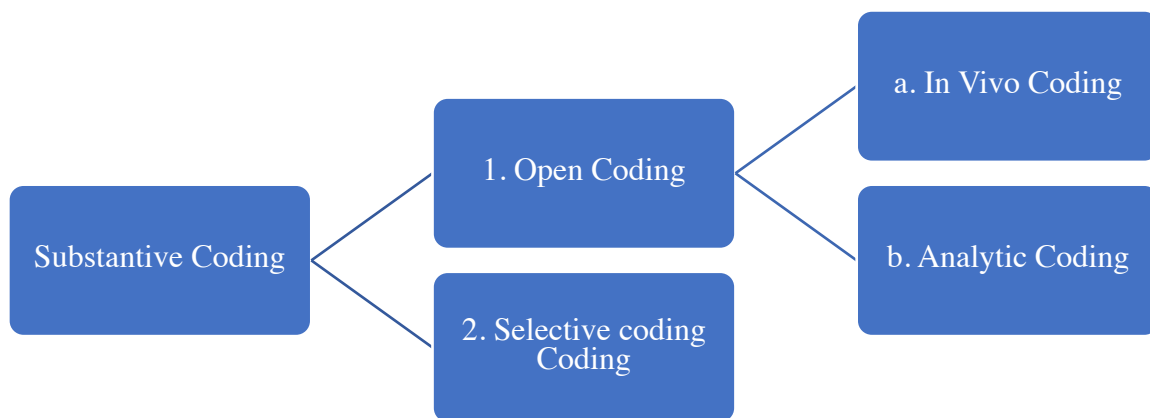
4.4.2 Theoretical Coding

According to Glaser (2005, p. 43), theoretical codes "are abstract general models that can be used from any discipline". Theoretical coding is the process through which the relationships amongst the core category and identified related concepts are explicated. Glaser (1978) makes reference to eighteen different *coding families,* which support the grounded theorist to

consider a wider range of potential theoretical relationships. It is possible that different coding families may overlap in theory development (Glaser, 1978), which is referred to as a "mixed" theoretical code (Glaser, 2005, p. 14). Some examples of theoretical codes include cultural factors (i.e. social norms), strategies, dimensions (Glaser, 1978), and social constraints (Glaser, 2005).

4.4.3 Theoretical Sorting

The process of memoing is central to theoretical sorting. The researcher sorts previously written memos about grounded concepts and writes new memos based on the emerging relationships between these, "to theoretically discriminate as to where each idea fits in the emerging theory" (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 109). The sorting of memos and the simultaneous writing of memos, which consider the relationships between concepts, ensures the researcher is able to link together concepts into a theory (Holton, 2007).

4.4.4 Saturation

Definitively determining the point at which saturation has been reached can be difficult, though many authors postulate that saturation occurs when the data gathered provides no further information or elaboration on the properties of a category (Hallberg, 2006). One could argue that if you continued to collect data indefinitely you could potentially obtain data that would offer some new insight into a category. Indeed, Hallberg (2006, p. 144) suggests "you can never know if further interviewing would give more information". However, in the context of the present research, there were constraints in respect of tight timescales and balancing a research project with a practice placement, which consequently limits the extent to which one can continue to collect and analyse data. Nevertheless, a point of saturation was considered as being reached, whilst selectively coding data, following interviews with two EPs. During coding, it became apparent that some of the same concepts and properties of concepts were emerging.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has provided the reader with an account of the data collection and analysis processes, including information about those involved in the research and how they were recruited. The next chapter, again, addresses the data analysis process, though there is greater focus upon the product of the analysis of data, in the form of a Substantive Grounded Theory (SGT).

Chapter 5: Theory Development

The present research proposes a SGT of how anxious pupils are *trying to cope in mainstream education*. The first part of this chapter provides an overview of theory development through the coding processes: open coding (in-vivo and analytic), selective coding, and theoretical coding. The second section of this chapter outlines the SGT in its entirety; with further interpretation and discussion of the theory located in the subsequent chapter.

5.1 An Overview of Conceptual Development: From Data to Conceptualisation

Theory development in CGT is an iterative process, which can span many months, and which is not easily demarcated with specific start and end points for the various processes inherent in the methodology. In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of conceptualisation and theory development in the present study, Figure 5 illustrates the structure of concepts and their properties and Table 4 provides an illustrative example of how a concept emerges through the coding of researcher fieldnotes and the construction of researcher memos.

Figure 5

Hierarchical Structure of Concepts, Properties and Sub-Properties
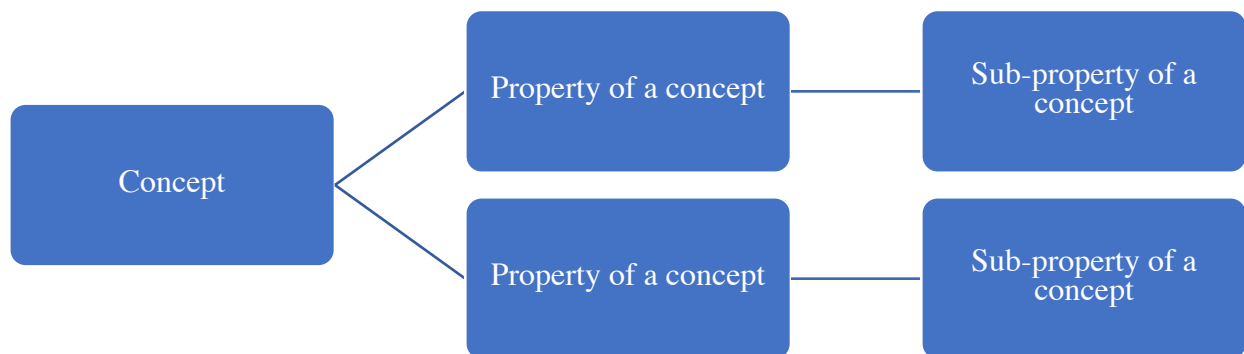
5.1.1 Development of Emerging Concepts: Illustrative Example

To provide the reader with an insight into how emerging concepts were identified and developed, through the processes of writing fieldnotes, coding, and memo writing; an illustrative example of the development of one concept, *Being 'Forced Out'*, is shown in Table 4. Table 4 does not display all fieldnotes and memos that relate to this concept; rather,

it provides a 'snapshot' of fieldnotes and memos underpinning the development of this concept. The reader is reminded, as outlined in Chapter Four, that interviews were not fully transcribed for the purposes of data analysis and theory development. Instead, researcher fieldnotes were made, which comprised a combination of direct quotes and shortened researcher fieldnotes (i.e. not verbatim).

Table 4

Concept Development: Being 'Forced Out'

Example Data *(Researcher fieldnotes from participant interviews)*	Code Assigned to Data
System must have failed pupils at some point. Why is pupil here [MET] if the provision here should have also been provided in mainstream school? Why do pupils arrive at MET when at 'crisis point'. Too late – terrible memories of school. Catch pupils earlier – when things start to "go wrong". Something must have happened sooner. Go in earlier. *(see fieldnotes in Appendix 3, para. 40, pp. 152-153)*	School failing to do what they should be *(In Vivo Code)* Implicitly rejecting pupil *(Analytic Code)*
"Pushed out is the right word for them not really helping and just trying to make their job easy". Pupil didn't want to go to school. Attendance Officer – trying to convince pupil to go back so it looked better on attendance. Absences/ non-attendance "looks bad" on schools. Was like they "pushed me out by not handling it properly but trying to keep me there because it looked good on them". *(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2b, Interview 2 with Pupil 2, para. 24, p. 129)*	Rejecting pupils *(Selective Code)*

Example Researcher Memos Relating to Emerging Concept
Researcher Memo – 16.03.2020 Being rejected by the system: System allowing pupil 'failure'/ difficulty coping System 'refusing' to meet needs Individual 'failing' in the system	Function: System equilibrium (system maintaining the way it is/ way it works) Action/control is being exerted on the individual by the system; individual has 'succumbed' to lack of control.
Researcher memo - 22.03.2020: The school system is failing to support these pupils or to effectively meet their needs. This is what essentially 'forces' the pupil out of the school. It does not always seem to be a case of the pupil being explicitly rejected or forced out of the school.

5.2 Theoretical Sorting and Coding: From Grounded Concepts to an Integrated Theory

The theoretical sorting process utilised in this research was very hands-on, with memos spread across the floor, thus aiding the researcher to *see* with greater ease how concepts *fit* together to form a coherent and parsimonious theory (e.g. Piko, 2014, as cited in Holton & Walsh, 2017). Theoretical memos were written as ideas emerged and were integrated into the sorting process. Figure 6 illustrates a theoretical memo written during theoretical sorting (see Appendix 5b for further sample theoretical memos).

Figure 6

Example Researcher Theoretical Memo

Researcher Theoretical Memo   09.05.2020 There are seemingly a number of 'if-then' possibilities/propositions (hypotheses) throughout this theory. For instance, if appropriate accommodations are made (i.e. the pupil's needs are being met) then the individual is less likely to experience difficulties in meeting expectations; thus, they are less likely to experience a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing and there is an increased likelihood of them being able to cope.

To aid the process of theoretical coding, I utilised three of Glaser's texts (1978; 1998; 2005), alongside reading existing published grounded theories, to establish how theoretical coding has been conducted by others to explicate their theories. The SGT presented in this research incorporates more than one theoretical code (see Table 5 below), which I have chosen to explicitly document to elucidate how theoretical coding was utilised to develop the theory.

Table 5

Theoretical Codes in the Present Theory

Theoretical Code	How is the code relevant in this theory?
Strategies: These are considered to be ways of "dealing with" or "managing" something (see "The Strategy Family"; Glaser, 1978, p. 76).	The concepts of *Trying to Fit In*, *Avoiding and Escaping Stressors*, and *Rejecting School* were identified as strategies used by pupils, with the aim of protecting themselves from emotional discomfort or harm, in order to manage their main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education*.
"The Six C's" theoretical coding family: this refers to, "causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions" (Glaser, 1978, p. 74).	The concepts and sub-concepts identified under the concept of *School System Conditional Factors* refer to school system factors that can vary across schools and would, therefore, be considered as both *contextual* and *conditional* factors.

	Potential *consequences* in the present theory include *being 'forced' out of mainstream education* and *experiencing injustice*. The *causes* leading to these potential *consequences* link to the *School System Conditional Factors* and the extent to which pupils are able to *protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm* (core category) and, thus, how well they are able to *cope in mainstream school*.

5.3 Presenting the Substantive Grounded Theory in the Present Research

Within this section, the proposed SGT in the present research is comprehensively delineated, in its full format, illustrating the product of theoretical coding and the integration of identified grounded concepts. This section builds upon the previous section in this chapter, which presented a brief overview of the progression from data to conceptual development. As previously outlined, in congruence with CGT, researcher fieldnotes were made during participant interviews, which comprised direct quotes and shortened researcher notes (i.e. not verbatim quotes). However, to provide the reader with a clearer picture of identified concepts in the present SGT, selected segments of recorded participant interviews were listened to and transcribed, thus enabling specific extracts from interviews (i.e. participant verbatim quotes) to be presented for a selection of the identified concepts. The aim of this is to explicate concepts in sufficient detail, through the presentation of purposively sampled illustrative extracts (Watts, 2014). Reference is also made to researcher fieldnotes in the appendices, which reflect these extracts.

5.3.1 Overview of the Substantive Grounded Theory

This research presents a SGT of how anxious pupils are *trying to cope in mainstream education*. The identified main concern was that of *Trying to Cope in Mainstream Education* and the core category, which helps to explain how this is managed, is *Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm*. Anxious pupils' actions and responses in mainstream education are directed towards *trying to cope* in that environment, primarily through *protecting themselves from emotional discomfort or harm*.

There are three emerging strategies that pupils use to protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm: *Trying to Fit In*; *Avoiding and Escaping Stressors; and Rejecting School*. The theory is multivariate and outlines several additional interrelated concepts that are defined as *School System Conditional Factors*, which influence the extent to which pupils must take action to utilise any, or all of, the aforementioned strategies to protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm. A finalising consequence of being unable to protect oneself from emotional harm, thus experiencing difficulty coping, is that the pupil is '*forced out*' of mainstream education. However, this in and of itself, can be viewed as a way in which the main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education* is resolved. Finally, an overarching concept is *Experiencing Injustice*, which reflects pupils' sense of the mainstream education system being unfair and lacking in equality. Figure 7 illustrates the structure of the theory to complement written delineation of the theory. This provides a simplified overview, with sub-properties of concepts omitted from the diagram, to enhance its utility as a visual overview of the theory.

Figure 7

Substantive Grounded Theory of Anxious Pupils Trying to Cope in Mainstream Education

School System Conditional Factors:

⇒ **Knowing the Environment: Enhancing Predictability**

⇒ **School Ethos**

⇒ **Developing Positive Relationships**

School System Conditional Factors influence the extent to which pupils must utilise strategies to protect themselves from emotional discomfort/harm to help them to cope in mainstream education

Pupil strategies used to protect oneself from emotional discomfort/harm

Trying to Fit In

Rejecting School

Avoiding and Escaping Stressors

If pupil is unable to cope in mainstream education

'Forced Out' of Mainstream Education

Experiencing a Sense of Injustice:

Pupils experience a sense of injustice throughout their time in mainstream education and due to the resulting '*forcing out*' of mainstream education.

5.4 Core Category: Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm

Pupils are finding mainstream school a difficult place to be and they are trying to cope. *Trying to cope* is a sub-conscious process in that pupils are not consciously aware or consciously considering that they are trying to cope. The underpinning need is to *protect oneself from emotional harm or discomfort*. Anxious pupils are experiencing negative emotions whilst in mainstream education, including heightened levels of anxiety and worry, which make it difficult for pupils to cope. The concept of *coping* in this theory is multifaceted. It relates to pupils being able to cope with the demands of mainstream education but also being able to avoid threats to their emotional wellbeing, which is managed through the core category of *Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm*. Extract one, below, serves to illustrate the perception of needing to 'survive' in mainstream education.

Extract One

> "…we're just surviving, we aren't enjoying it [mainstream school], we aren't living. We're just there because we have to be. We're doing what we can, but…we're on some desert island, school is that, and we're trying to survive, the water is salty as hell, we don't have distillation methods, it's going wrong. And, I think, the longer you try to survive with the wrong survival methods, the more you're gonna fall and fail. And, I think a lot of us really tried to do the surviving…"
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2d, Interview 3 with Pupil 4, paras. 8 & 9, p. 147)

Extract one suggests pupils are attempting to 'survive' the plights of mainstream education. The mainstream school is seen as a hostile environment, as illustrated in the analogy of school being a "*desert island*"; lacking in the resources and support to promote 'survival', and which certainly does not support anxious pupils to thrive. Not only is the school environment not conducive to supporting pupils to 'survive', pupils are not 'armed' with helpful "*survival methods*". The metaphor of pupils 'falling' is suggestive of a scenario in which the pupil is rapidly unable to cope in mainstream education and does not have any control over this, to prevent its occurrence.

5.5 Pupil Strategies

As previously outlined, pupils use *strategies* to protect themselves from emotional harm or discomfort, in order to manage their main concern: *trying to cope in mainstream education*. Not all pupils will use each strategy, some may use only one strategy, and some may use all three at different times or concurrently throughout their experience of *trying to cope in mainstream education*. These strategies provide at least some short-term or temporary protection from emotional discomfort or harm. Each strategy is discussed in further detail below.

5.5.1 Trying to Fit In (Strategy)

Trying to fit in is a strategy used by pupils to protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm, due to the potential negative consequences of not 'fitting in' to mainstream education. Through the process of *trying to fit in*, pupils subconsciously compare themselves to other pupils in mainstream education, which reflects the theoretical code of "reference groups", whereby the individual makes a "comparative" distinction regarding what they should not do and a "normative" distinction regarding what they should do (Glaser, 1998, p. 172). Pupils are attempting to comply with what is considered to be the 'way of being' in mainstream education (see "binary" theoretical code, Glaser, 2005, p. 22). Extract two below highlights the presence of socially constructed and accepted expectations of a "*normal*" presentation or way of 'being*'* in mainstream education. Where a pupil perceives that they do not "*fit into*" this socially constructed way of being, there is a risk of being noticed by others, as a consequence of being 'different'. There is a clear indication, in extract two, that 'fitting in' has a significant influence on how the pupil presents themself, which appears to be driven by a significant fear of showing one's authentic self and not meeting "*societal expectations of normal*". Not only does the individual feel the need to try to fit into a specific way of 'being' in mainstream education but it is also an expectation, on the part of the mainstream school, that pupils will conform to particular ways of being and of presenting oneself, as this is what pupils are "*meant to do*".

Extract Two

> "*I was always hyperactive and all of that, but then it would all build up 'cos I was scared to be myself 'cos of…it's the system innit… and it's like if you don't fit into societal expectations of normal, you stand out kinda thing and that used to be what*

you were meant to do…"

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2c, Interview with Pupil 3, para. 64, p. 135)

There are two properties identified within the concept *trying to fit in*: *Meeting Expectations* and *Portraying an Accepted Identity*, as outlined below.

5.5.1.1 Meeting Expectations (Property 1 of Trying to Fit In).

Pupils want to be able to meet the expectations within mainstream education and to be able to do what their peers are doing. Pupils endeavour to meet a wide range of expectations, including academic expectations, to protect themselves from the emotional discomfort or harm of not doing so. Extract three, below, suggests that the academic expectations of the adults in the mainstream school may not be compatible with the pupil's beliefs about their ability to be able to succeed in school. There is also a suggestion of self 'othering' on the part of the pupil, whereby they view that being a part of this 'other' group puts you at a disadvantage to those pupils whom mainstream school is 'designed' for. The pupil is experiencing an intense "*pressure*" to live up to the academic expectations of the adults in school, yet the responsibility to meet these high expectations has fallen solely on to the pupil, as accommodations are not made to the curriculum and teaching and learning approaches, which would facilitate the pupil's academic success. The extract further highlights the significant emotional discomfort that this generates in the pupil, including a sense of helplessness and lack of control, because the adults in school "*expect what you can't do and it's not your fault you can't do it*".

Extract Three

> *"Yeah, cos everyone's like, 'Oh, you're really, you're really clever, you're a genius, you can do it' but you can't, because it's [mainstream education system] not made for people like you. The pressure from those people who say, 'You absolutely can do it, you're really clever, you're gonna get the best in this school', I think that pressure, it can be either really encouraging, if you can do it, and you are capable of doing it, and it's taught the way that you can do it. Or, really like, the opposite of encouraging, discouraging, because you feel like they expect what you can't do and it's not your fault you can't do it."*

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2d, Interview 1 with Pupil 4, para. 54, p. 142)

5.5.1.2 Portraying an Accepted Identity (Property 2 of Trying to Fit In).

Pupils try to 'fit in' to mainstream education by *portraying an accepted identity*. Pupils may hide or 'mask' their difficulties, including any anxiety they may be experiencing, so that these are not visible or apparent to others. A seemingly paradoxical element of hiding their differences/difficulties is that, although pupils do not necessarily wish to be seen as different and they want to 'fit in', they do want their differences or difficulties to be recognised, accepted and appropriately supported in school. Extract four, below, further highlights the process of 'fitting in', which involves the pupil presenting themselves in a way that is considered socially acceptable to the peer group in which they are situated. This requires the pupil not only to hide their authentic self but also to actively portray themselves in an entirely different way by trying to be seen to "*enjoy what everyone else enjoyed*" and demonstrating behaviours reflective of those of the majority of the peer group. The extract suggests that the pupil deems being a distinct individual to simply not be acceptable within the peer group. This extract also makes clear the act of continually trying to "*fit in*"; indicating that these strategies were ultimately unsuccessful, yet, are perhaps seen by the pupil as being the only way for them to feel accepted by their peer group.

Extract Four

> *"I had to try and not be that [the way the pupil is] and I had to try and be someone I wasn't…I definitely tried to fit in, I tried to enjoy what everyone else enjoyed, I tried to do what they did. I tried so hard not to be different, to make …to use their methods because…that's how you fit in…"*
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2d, Interview 3 with Pupil 4, para. 20, p. 148)

5.5.2 Avoiding and Escaping Stressors (Strategy)

Avoiding and escaping stressors is a strategy which pupils use in response to stressors that would cause them to experience uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety, worry and fear; with the aim of *protecting themselves from emotional discomfort and harm*. Pupils may escape stressful situations or retreat to a 'safe place'. Pupils also do what they can to avoid being noticed or having attention drawn to themselves and may avoid having to engage in interactions with peers. For some, avoidance takes the form of avoiding school altogether by not attending. Extract five, below, highlights the desire of the pupil to be able to take themselves away from uncomfortable situations. The act of leaving the uncomfortable

situation provides an opportunity for the pupil to process things in their mind, independently, and in their own time. The extract also suggests that the pupil may be aware of the limited control and agency that they have in relation to being able to leave anxiety-provoking situations; with permission for doing so being granted by the adults in school.

Extract Five

> *"…they gave me a little card to say if I ever need to come out of lessons, erm I just show that to my teacher and then they'll let me go, and then go up to the like head of house place. And, I did use that like a couple of times and each time they would say like 'Why, what's happened?', like 'Why, why have you used it?' and I was like, you gave it to me to use and I don't have to say why you know."*
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2b, Interview 2 with Pupil 2, para. 4, p. 128)

5.5.3 Rejecting School (Strategy)

Rejecting school is another strategy used by anxious pupils to protect themselves from the *emotional discomfort or harm* associated with being in mainstream education. Pupils may reject school in different ways, including through questioning and rejecting (i.e. disagreeing with) the way things are in the mainstream school system. Certain inflexible expectations held by the mainstream school are questioned and are viewed as being illogical or non-sensical. The most significant rejection response to mainstream school is refusal to attend school at all – indicating a complete rejection of the school. Extract six, below, suggests that aspects of the curriculum in mainstream school are perceived by the pupil as having no real purpose or relevancy to their functioning in society later in life, so much so that there is an emphasis on being unable to remember what has been taught. A stark comparison is made to "*basic first aid*" which, in contrast, is viewed as being an important source of knowledge and understanding that has a highly significant benefit and purpose: to "*save thousands of lives*". By comparison, elements of the mainstream curriculum are seen as irrelevant, thus creating feelings of resentment and annoyance.

Extract Six

> *"It really annoys me because in year six, I was doing some like really stupid thing, I can't even remember, and I was thinking, 'Why are you teaching me this, and not basic first aid?', something that could literally save thousands of lives by giving*

people first aid knowledge…"

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2c, Interview with Pupil 3, para. 61, p. 135)

5.6 School System Conditional Factors

School System Conditional Factors are a significant element of this theory; they influence whether pupils engage in the aforementioned strategies and, consequentially, they influence whether pupils are able to cope in mainstream education. The extent to which pupils utilise strategies to protect themselves is related to these conditional factors, therefore pupil use of strategies is variable. There are three *School System Conditional Factors* identified: *Knowing the Environment: Enhancing Predictability; Developing Positive Relationships*; and *School Ethos*.

5.6.1 Knowing the Environment: Enhancing Predictability

The degree to which pupils *know their environment* impacts on the level of emotional discomfort they experience, particularly anxiety, worry and 'fear of the unknown'. To minimise their emotional discomfort, pupils want to reduce the extent of uncertainty they experience. Pupils want to be familiar with the adults in school, particularly those they are working with, such as subject teachers, and they want to know what to expect during the school day; thus, enabling them to feel as though they know what they are doing. Pupils want the environment to be structured, organised and consistent. The consistency of any adults designated to support them in school (i.e. Teaching Assistants, Learning Support Assistants) is also important, as well as the consistency in school routines and expectations. If pupils do not *know their environment*, this can lead to experiencing emotional discomfort (i.e. anxiety) and utilisation of strategies to *protect oneself from this emotional discomfort*, such as avoidance through non-attendance at school. Extract seven highlights the importance of pupils' expectations about school being consistent and clear. There is a suggestion that co-constructing expectations with pupils is key and that to change these expectations, without consulting pupils, leads to a perception that the pupil has been misled. The metaphor of 'changing the goalposts' suggests that making this unexpected change to what is expected of the pupil, is to their disadvantage and could, therefore, lead to the pupil being unable to meet those expectations that have been placed upon them.

Extract Seven

"…He [pupil] might have been asked to go into another lesson when he'd only

agreed to go into a certain one, or people changed the goalposts …things weren't set up properly where they'd been promised to..."

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 4b, Interview with Educational Psychologist 2, para. 13, p. 157)

5.6.2 Developing Positive Relationships

Pupils need to develop *positive relationships* with others in the mainstream school environment. Relationships with adults in school need to be positive and trusting to support the pupil to cope in school. This is a protective factor in that, where pupils have a positive and trusting relationship with an adult in school, this has a positive impact upon the pupil's emotional experience, thus reducing the need for pupils to engage in strategies to *protect themselves*.

Developing positive peer relationships in school is also important. Where pupils are struggling to cope in mainstream education, friendships can minimise the likelihood of a pupil utilising the strategies of *avoiding stressors* (i.e. avoiding coming into school) or *rejecting school* (i.e. a complete refusal to return to school), as a way of *protecting themselves from emotional discomfort or harm*. Having friendships in school results in pupils wanting to continue coming to school. Extract eight, below, highlights the 'protective function' of peer relationships. Friendships are not just about having a group of peers that you spend time with and that you can label as 'friends', it is about having a group or network of peers who 'work' and 'fit' together, very much like a system that has individual component parts that combine to carry out a process. Extract eight further highlights the importance of friendships for supporting the pupil to be able to cope in mainstream school and to be able to remain within this environment, to the extent that the pupil might consider that they do not belong in the school without this system in place.

Extract Eight

> *"…it does make a difference if you have that friendship system there, because that's something that can help you like stay and, you know, you've got your friends there to like have your back and stuff, but if you don't have that, that can be really difficult because it's like, why am I here if, you know…?"*

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2b, Interview 2 with Pupil 2, para. 36, p. 130)

5.6.3 School Ethos

This concept relates to the values and ideas that are central to the mainstream school and its running. Those who lead the school have a strong influence upon the ethos of the school and its guiding values and priorities. The concept of *School Ethos* has five properties: *Guiding Aims and Functions; Promoting Personal Agency Versus Controlling from the Top; Meeting Pupil Needs; Providing Care and Protection; and Accepting Diversity and Difference*. Each of these is addressed individually.

5.6.3.1 Guiding Aims and Functions (Property 1 of School Ethos).

The *guiding aims and functions* of the school system direct the action of those working within the system (i.e. school staff) (*see Appendix 4a, Interview with Educational Psychologist 1, paras. 19 & 21, p. 155*). Where the central function of the mainstream school system is to ensure that pupils leave school having acquired 'good' educational qualifications, this is potentially to the detriment of the emotional wellbeing of anxious pupils. Pupils consequently have difficulty coping and need to act to *protect themselves*. Indeed, extract nine below suggests there is a trade-off between meeting pupils' emotional needs and pupils achieving good exam results. There is a suggestion that a focus upon supporting pupils to experience positive emotional wellbeing, will inevitably harm educational outcomes (i.e. will lead to poorer educational qualifications being achieved). The metaphor of school being an "*exam factory*" is suggestive of schools aiming to 'produce' an end product, which is an individual who has achieved certain academic qualifications, as opposed to 'producing' an individual who experiences a positive emotional wellbeing. The extract further indicates there is a decision to be made, by those with greatest influence and power in the school, as to whether the school will prioritise pupils' educational qualifications or their emotional wellbeing; with schools seemingly perceiving that they are unable to support successful outcomes in respect of both. There is also a suggestion that the decision to focus upon ensuring that pupils attain good educational qualifications is something that is enforced upon the school, owing to some other external factor that is perhaps outside of its control.

Extract Nine

      "You've got to decide as a Head, or school or whatever… 'Are we going to be sort of

*an exam factory?' and I totally understand why that's got to happen, or 'Are we
going to look after the health and wellbeing of our young people at the expense of our
exam results?'…"*

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 3, Interview with MET Teacher, para. 43, p. 153)

5.6.3.1.1 Maintaining the Image and Identity of the System (Property of Guiding Aims and Functions).

The concept of *Guiding Aims and Functions* has one property: *Maintaining the Image and Identity of the System*. The school system seeks to *maintain its image and identity* according to its primary aims and functions (i.e. pupils achieving good educational qualifications/ educational outcomes) and attempts to protect the 'status quo' (i.e. the way things are). Hence, anxious pupils who are struggling to cope in school can become a 'problem' for the school and impact on its image in relation to its primary function but also in respect of other accountability measures, such as attendance. In order to maintain the image of the system, schools take action to adhere to accountability measures, such as providing a level of expected support to the pupil; though, this may not effectively serve to support the pupil's emotional wellbeing and minimise their experiences of *emotional discomfort or harm*.

5.6.3.2 Promoting Personal Agency Versus Controlling from the Top (Property 2 of School Ethos).

This concept reflects an "asymmetry" (see Glaser, 2005, p. 22), in that there is an unequal balance in terms of power, influence and personal agency between those 'at the top' of the hierarchy (i.e. school leaders, senior leaders) and those at the 'bottom' (i.e. the pupils). Pupils want to have *personal agency*, which enables them to make decisions that they believe will have a positive impact on their experience in mainstream education and will also protect them and their emotional wellbeing. The school system controls the extent to which pupils are afforded personal agency and whether they are given opportunities to share their views and for these views to be influential (i.e. to have these views acted upon). Where pupils do not experience *personal agency*, due to limited opportunities to 'have their say', they are left feeling helpless, controlled and as though they have no choices.

The hierarchical nature of the system results in *control from the top*, with those individuals at the top of the hierarchy controlling those lower in the hierarchy; this impacts upon both

pupils and teaching staff. The rules or expectations, regarding how teaching staff should respond to pupils, are imposed on teachers as opposed to teachers being able to use their own professional judgement. Staff are constrained by these rules/expectations and are prevented from responding to pupils in a manner that they see fit and which is in the best interests of the pupil. This is particularly the case where such responses would 'go against' the expectations of the system. As a result, pupils are not responded to in a way that is effective in meeting their needs. The notion of teachers lacking power and influence in the mainstream school system is particularly troublesome when this relates to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo). If the SENDCo possesses limited power and influence, this limits their ability to advocate for pupils and their wider needs. This further results in the pupils' needs being ignored, hence increasing the likelihood of the individual engaging in *strategies* to protect themselves to minimise emotional discomfort or harm.

5.6.3.3 Meeting Pupil Needs (Property 3 of School Ethos).

Meeting pupil needs is something that the mainstream setting must do to support anxious pupils to cope in mainstream education. Schools need to implement specific provision that individual pupils require. This may involve considering whether the expectations placed on a pupil are reasonable and realistic. Mainstream schools must make appropriate accommodations and implement necessary provision that supports pupils to develop the skills needed to cope effectively in mainstream education and to minimise any emotional discomfort or harm they are experiencing. This is in contrast to providing support for the pupil, with the aim being for the pupil to be able to meet specific expectations that help the mainstream setting to maintain its identity (i.e. in line with its primary aim of pupils achieving good educational qualifications). Where schools provide limited or inappropriate support, that is not meeting pupil needs, this leads to pupils being unable to cope in mainstream education and experiencing a significant degree of emotional discomfort. A property of *Meeting Pupil Needs* is the concept of *Understanding the Individual*.

5.6.3.3.1 Understanding the Individual (Property of Meeting Pupil Needs).

Understanding the individual is key to effectively *meeting pupil needs*. Pupils want to feel 'understood' by the adults in school. Understanding individual differences amongst pupils, especially in terms of their thinking, supports adults in school to understand the individual pupil's perspective. This is about adults 'getting to know' pupils. Where school staff do not understand and really 'know' individual pupils and their needs, this results in the adults in

school being unable to successfully support these pupils to mitigate their experiences of emotional discomfort. Extract 10 indicates that there are different levels at which an adult in school may 'understand' an individual pupil and that, for some pupils, this feeling of being "*understood*" may be a rare experience during their time in the mainstream school system. Indeed, there is a suggestion here that a 'deeper' understanding of individual pupils is not commonplace within the school system. Having an 'understanding' of a pupil on this 'deeper' level can be seen in the actions of the adult, for instance being aware of the pupil's interests and, perhaps their strengths, to build upon these.

Extract 10

> "*…my history teacher understood me on a level that not many people have in the system, not many people ever have. And, like same with my PE teacher, 'cos it's something that…I love playing football and stuff like that. It's something that I'm passionate about, like, I love PE. I was doing this trampolining thing and my PE teacher would always end up using me for an example or something like that. I just had a good bond with him.*"
>
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2c, Interview with Pupil 3, paras. 16 & 17, p. 132)

There are two sub-properties of *Understanding the Individual: Knowledge Building* and *Communicating Empathically,* both of which enhance adults' understanding of individual pupils and their needs.

5.6.3.3.1.1 Knowledge Building (Sub-property 1 of Understanding the Individual).

Where mainstream school staff engage in *knowledge building*, such as through training and skill development opportunities, this facilitates a growing understanding of specific areas of pupil need. With this enhanced knowledge, adults are in a better position to be able to understand individual pupils and to respond most effectively and appropriately. Extract 11 suggests that staff in mainstream schools should hold knowledge and expertise regarding a wide range of needs that may reflect "*neurodiversity*", "*biodiversity*" or underlying "*mental health*" needs. There is a further indication that knowing about a range of needs, in terms of possessing knowledge, is insufficient. It is also suggested that staff need to be able to respond effectively to different needs and to show "*care*" and compassion towards all pupils. The very act of caring involves providing what is needed for the individual, which can only

be carried out effectively where the adult has a good insight into a pupil's needs. This extract further highlights that, while it is important to 'know' about various needs, school staff must also be aware of what they can do to promote a pupil's success in mainstream school, in order to mitigate against any barriers. There is a suggestion in this extract that there should be specific guidelines or legislation regarding meeting pupils' needs and that schools should be held accountable for knowing about various special educational needs, understanding the specific needs of individual pupils, and implementing the necessary support for individual pupils.

Extract 11

> "…I think there should be things for mental health, there should be things for neurodiversity, for, maybe even biodiversity. 'Cos I know some schools have a lot of students with, say Downs Syndrome or things like that. I think there should be someone who knows what they're talking about on those subjects, who knows how to deal with various issues that they may have, knows how to care for people like that. That should be protocol in schools."

(see fieldnotes in Appendix 2d, Interview 1 with Pupil 4, para. 34, p. 140)

5.6.3.3.1.2 Communicating Empathically (Sub-property 2 of Understanding the Individual).

Communicating empathically with pupils involves adults actively talking and listening to pupils. Seeking to understand pupils' experiences, through exploration of difficulties and issues experienced by a pupil, to try to understand their thoughts and feelings, is central to this concept. This is in contrast to simply 'solving' any issues from the perspective of the adult and what they deem the issue to be (*see Appendix 4a, Interview with Educational Psychologist 1, para. 16, p. 155*). In extract 12, below, there is a suggestion that humans are perceived as being innately empathic and that we seek to understand other humans. The extract further suggests that a teacher may purposefully endeavour to understand a pupil's experiences, if they can see that a pupil is presenting differently to how they may typically present within the educational setting (i.e. showing quite different behavioural responses). This can be enacted through discreet and personal communication with the pupil to try to establish their underlying emotional experience. It is important to communicate with pupils in a way that shows you care enough to take notice of their emotional experience/state and

that you recognise that their behavioural presentation may in fact reflect an underlying difficult or uncomfortable emotional experience. In response to this, adults in school may then consider how they can actively help and support the pupil. There is an indication that the act of attempting to understand pupils' experiences is viewed as something pupils desperately want and that this is not an unreasonable expectation. The recognition of a pupil's uncomfortable emotional experience seems to be underpinned by the idea of 'sitting with them' in this experience and showing that you are trying to understand being in their position, or 'in their shoes'. After all, that is perhaps an innate human response to something that we all wish for: to feel understood.

Extract 12

> "…I'd like to think, as a human being, if somebody [a pupil] came in not acting a way that is normal for them, I would just have a quiet word, 'Are you okay today? I've noticed you're looking a bit…'. …why are you behaving like that, what is wrong and what can we do to help you? That's all they [pupils] want sometimes, is recognition that they've had a horrible day and they're not going to behave like they normally would…"
>
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 3, Interview with MET Teacher, para. 27, p. 152)

5.6.3.4 Providing Care and Protection (Property 4 of School Ethos).

Pupils believe that schools should not only provide an education, they should also be nurturing environments, which *provide care and protect* the pupil. Adults in school have a responsibility to care for pupils. Where the mainstream school does not have an ethos of *providing care and protection* for the 'whole' pupil, including their emotional wellbeing, this increases the likelihood of pupils using their own strategies to *protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm*, to enable them to cope in mainstream education. The school ethos and the promoted values, ideals and behaviours of those working within the school, influence whether the school is experienced by pupils as providing care and protection. Extract 13 suggests that pupils want to be cared for and they want the adults around them in school to pay attention to their emotional experiences. There is a further suggestion that there are individual differences in the way in which individual pupils may want the adults in school to attend to their experiences of anxiety and how they care for them. Some pupils may prefer to be "*left alone*" and have some time and space to themselves. In contrast, others may want the adult to recognise that they need to be offered care and comfort, perhaps

through being offered the opportunity to engage in an activity that brings them comfort, such as having "*a cup of tea*". Determining what this "*care*" for a pupil may 'look like' and how to provide this care, is underpinned by really 'knowing' the individual, including how aspects of their non-verbal communication, such as their facial expressions, may provide an indication of their underlying emotions.

The extract further suggests that pupils benefit from adults accepting their emotional needs and permitting them to not have to meet certain school expectations that could have a detrimental impact upon their emotional wellbeing (i.e. the anxiety they are experiencing). There is a perception that mainstream schools are constrained in their ability to be able to respond and care for pupils in a way that promotes positive emotional wellbeing, particularly through reducing the demands and expectations on pupils. That it is "*not the school's fault*", suggests that there may be an external pressure or 'force' acting on mainstream schools, which hinders "*care*" of this nature being provided.

Extract 13

> *"They often want a bit of TLC, or just to be left alone, with an understanding that, if you're feeling anxious this morning, 'cos obviously they still do come in and feel anxious, it's fine, we know you, we can see by your face, would you like a cup of tea? 'Don't worry about the homework today', that kind of care, cannot happen in a [mainstream] school; it's not the school's fault."*
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 3, Interview with MET Teacher, paras. 6 & 7, p. 150)

5.6.3.5 Accepting Diversity and Difference (Property 5 of School Ethos).
Accepting diversity and difference influences anxious pupils' responses in mainstream education. Here, the concept of *accepting diversity and difference* pertains to special educational/ additional needs, as opposed to the widely held understanding of diversity relating to race, religion, gender diversity and so on. Though, that is not to say that these factors are not very important, it is simply that they did not emerge as being significant in the context of this SGT. Anxious pupils self-identify as being or feeling different to others and as being an 'outsider'. Pupils recognise differences or experience specific difficulties relative to their peers. Pupils also perceive that they think differently to their peers. Where the mainstream school is not accepting of, or does not recognise and respond to these differences,

the greater the likelihood of the pupil experiencing a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing.

Extract 14 below suggests that, in mainstream education, pupils are not permitted to be different and that schools are unwilling to accept pupils presenting themselves in a way that does not align with the school's expectations of how a pupil should be. To be "*different*" is to be a distinct individual, with your own likes, dislikes, and ways of expressing and presenting oneself, in respect of behaviours, responses and appearance. There is a suggestion that the mainstream school is exerting control on pupils in such a way that attempts to actively 'mould' pupils into a different way of 'being' that is in conflict with their 'true' self. Repetition of the term "*same*" is suggestive of a 'push' towards all pupils presenting themselves in a uniform way, with little to no variation.

Extract 14

> "…there was no tolerance for people to be different; everyone had to wear their hair in the same way, have the same clothes…we weren't allowed to look different because of our uniforms and stuff, we weren't allowed to be different…"
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2d, Interview 3 with Pupil 4, para. 32, p. 149)

5.7 Consequential Concept: Being 'Forced Out'

A potential consequence of not coping in school is *being 'forced out'* of mainstream education. An interesting aspect of this concept is that it eventually resolves the pupils' main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education,* as they no longer have to try to do so. Pupils can either be implicitly or explicitly '*forced out'* of mainstream education. *Being 'forced out'* implicitly results from pupil needs not being met appropriately; a lack of accommodations being made; inflexible expectations, associated with *maintaining the image and identity of the system*; *a lack of acceptance in relation to diversity and difference*; and an overall lack of inclusivity. This leads to the pupil experiencing difficulty coping. Conversely, being '*forced out'* explicitly is evident where the school begins to question what else they can do to support the pupil to remain in the school, or, voices the opinion that the pupil needs to be educated elsewhere as they cannot meet their needs. There is one property of the concept *Being 'Forced Out'*: *Being in the 'Wrong' Place*.

5.7.1 Being in the 'Wrong' Place (Property of Being 'Forced Out')

There is a bi-directional relationship associated with the concept of *being in the 'wrong' place*. Pupils feel unwanted, lack a sense of belonging, and hold the perception that they are in the 'wrong' place, or that mainstream education is not 'right' and is not working for them. Likewise, schools hold the perception that the school is not the 'right' educational setting for the pupil. Extract 15 suggests that mainstream education is perceived as an 'exclusive', rather than 'inclusive' environment. The mainstream education system is viewed as only being 'right' for, or only 'working' for, some pupils and not all. A clear distinction is made between those pupils who may dislike school but can respond to the demands that the mainstream education system places on them; compared with pupils who experience the demands and expectations within a mainstream school as being beyond their ability to cope.

Extract 15

> "*Mainstream isn't for everyone, it's a very like specific way of teaching and treating everyone, and that's not for everyone. And, some people don't like it [mainstream education] but they can handle it. But, some people, it's just too much.*"
> (see fieldnotes in Appendix 2b, Interview 2 with Pupil 2, paras. 1 & 2, p. 128)

5.8 Overarching Concept: Experiencing Injustice

The concept of *experiencing injustice* links to several other concepts in the theory. This is due to the varying factors that can generate a *sense of injustice* for pupils, though the overall perception is that they have not received the education they are entitled to. Pupils perceive it to be unfair when their needs have not been met and where appropriate accommodations have not been made in order to facilitate their success in mainstream education: pupils have been 'allowed' to *not cope* in mainstream education. Experiencing injustice leads to emotional discomfort, including significant frustration and anger.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented a SGT of how anxious pupils *try to cope in mainstream education*; illustrating how this is managed through the process of *Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm*, and is further impacted by *School System Conditional Factors*. The next chapter re-visits the research questions presented in Chapter Two, whilst also addressing and integrating the existing relevant literature, with the present SGT.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Within this chapter, the initial research questions are addressed in respect of the SGT developed in the present study. As outlined within Chapter Five, the present research proposes a SGT of anxious pupils *trying to cope in mainstream education*, with the core category of *Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm*, and related concepts, explaining how pupils seek to manage and resolve this concern. A critical analysis of the SGT is also conducted, in conjunction with reference to the existing literature, and with consideration to the quality measures of CGT: fit, work, relevance, and modifiability. Finally, limitations of the research and potential directions for future research are discussed.

6.1 Re-Visiting the Research Questions

Congruent with CGT, the initial research question in the present research underwent gradual modification, and gained greater specificity, as the research progressed. As outlined in Chapter One (also documented within the researcher's initial research proposal; Gray, 2019, p. 5), the initial overarching research question was:

"How is the process of reintegration of pupils from a MEU back into the educational setting at which they are on roll, experienced by those involved in the process?"

When it became evident that I had potentially 'forced' the professional concern of reintegration upon pupil participants, the research question was modified to promote openness and to enable pupils' main concern to emerge. Pupils had taken the direction of the research towards concerns about their experiences within mainstream education, rather than specifically about the process of *reintegrating* into mainstream education. Consequently, the main research question evolved into:

'What is the main concern in respect of mainstream education, for pupils who self-identify as experiencing anxiety, and how is this concern processed, managed or resolved?'

Through interviewing participants and engaging in fundamental CGT processes, it became apparent that the main concern for pupils was the experience of *trying to cope in mainstream*

education, thus leading to generation of the final version of research question one, as discussed in the following section.

6.1.1 Addressing Research Question One: Trying to Cope in Mainstream Education

The final version of research question one was:

'How do pupils, who self-identify as experiencing anxiety, try to cope in mainstream education?'

In the present research, *trying to cope in mainstream education* is a latent pattern of behaviour in that, when recalling their experiences within mainstream education, pupils did not explicitly state or acknowledge that they were *trying to cope*. Rather, this hidden pattern of behaviour emerged through interview data and analysis of researcher fieldnotes and memos. It appears that some pupils who experience anxiety, may perceive they lack the necessary resources to promote their *survival* in mainstream education and, further to this, that there is a lack of support within the mainstream education system to enable them to cope. Bolger (1990, p. 525) defines stressful situations as those that "tax or exceed the person's available resources"; which, when applied to the context of this research, indicates that pupils are likely to be experiencing mainstream education as a stressful environment. The core category of *Protecting Oneself from Emotional Discomfort or Harm*, drives the action of pupils and helps to explain how they manage their main concern of *trying to cope in mainstream education*. The present SGT outlines three strategies pupils may utilise in order to *protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm*.

6.1.1.1 Pupil Coping Strategies.

The three key strategies that pupils may use to enable them to *cope* in mainstream education are *Trying to Fit In*, *Rejecting School*, and *Avoiding and Escaping Stressors*. The act of *trying to fit in* is characterised by pupils' attempts to present themselves in ways considered socially acceptable to the peer group and the mainstream school system. The extent to which an anxious pupil may modify their presenting behaviours in order to *fit in* with their peer group can be highly significant. For instance, pupils may actively try to hide their 'authentic self', in terms of their likes, dislikes, and things they enjoy. Pupils may pretend to enjoy or try and encourage themselves to enjoy things popular within the peer group, which appears to be at a cost to their own self-expression. *Trying to fit in* helps an anxious pupil avoid

appearing different to other pupils, in order to promote acceptance and affiliation within the peer group. As will be discussed later within this chapter, hiding one's 'authentic' or 'true' self can have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing. With regards to presenting oneself in such a way that is considered acceptable within the mainstream school system, this can relate to adherence to the school behaviour policy and also to a pupil's physical appearance, such as wearing the correct school uniform or wearing their hair in a certain way. *Trying to fit in* also involves striving to 'keep up with' academic expectations set by the mainstream school, in order to mitigate the pressure pupils are facing in the classroom and the associated feelings of anxiety and a lack of control.

The strategy of *Rejecting School* is twofold in nature. It appears that anxious pupils may either entirely reject the mainstream school system, perhaps through non-attendance, or they may reject aspects of the mainstream school system. Regarding non-attendance, this appears to be related to a refusal to attend, which is emotionally driven (i.e. experiencing uncomfortable emotions, such as anxiety). The rejection of elements of the school system can include questioning the relevancy and purpose of aspects of the curriculum. This is perhaps a 'protective mechanism', that is reflective of the notion of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance "occurs when people perceive that a pair of cognitions is inconsistent" (Cooper, 2012). By questioning and criticising aspects of the mainstream school system, pupils may minimise any dissonance they could be experiencing as a result of 'knowing' they are unable to meet curriculum/ academic expectations yet 'knowing' the importance of this and having the desire to be able to do so.

Avoiding or Escaping Stressors is a strategy that seems intuitive when considering how an anxious pupil may respond to a stressful situation or environment. Pupils are not only wishing to remove themselves from an uncomfortable situation, they may also be seeking a 'safe' place, that provides them with the space and time to process their emotions and to re-regulate (i.e. for anxiety levels to lower and to feel calmer). Analysis of data in the present research, during theory development, suggests that pupils want to be afforded personal agency, regarding when to use this strategy of *avoiding or escaping*. There is a suggestion that pupils feel frustrated at a perceived lack of control over determining when they are permitted to leave the classroom for example, which could further lead to feelings of helplessness and increasing anxiety.

Elements of this SGT can be understood in conjunction with the existing *coping* literature. In line with the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Folkman et al. (1986), who make reference to the cognitive and behavioural natures of the processes of coping; the notion of *protecting oneself from emotional discomfort or harm* reflects both cognitive and behavioural actions on the part of anxious pupils. From a cognition perspective, the pupil strategy of *trying to fit in* involves the pupil consciously considering how others are responding in the mainstream school environment, followed by recognition of how they themselves may not be meeting the expectations (i.e. academic, social) within this environment. There are also many behavioural components within the pupils' strategies, such as non-attendance (*rejecting school*), masking their difficulties (*portraying an accepted identity*) and physically *avoiding or escaping* particular situations in the school environment, that would otherwise lead to significant emotional discomfort.

In alignment with extant literature (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the present SGT illustrates *coping* processes that have various dimensions. In this research, pupils appear to use coping responses that are both problem-focused and emotion-focused (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) in response to the stressor of *trying to cope in mainstream education*. Pupils seek to actively cope (active coping; property of problem-focused coping, see Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Carver et al., 1989) in mainstream education, which takes the form of engaging in *avoidance and escape* behaviours, *rejecting school*, *trying to fit in*, and *trying to meet expectations*. Pupils engage in these strategies, with the aim of minimising the impact of the stressor (Carver et al., 1989) – mainstream education – which further serves to protect their emotional wellbeing. In respect of emotion-focused coping, the function of which is to reduce any emotional discomfort associated with a stressor (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010), this is key to all of the strategies utilised by pupils. Coping responses also have a heterogenous nature, owing to the influences of individual personality characteristics and environmental factors (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). This could go some way towards accounting for the various dimensions of coping (or strategy-use) evident in the present theory. Indeed, it is my understanding that pupils in the present research attended different mainstream schools. Therefore, although there will be a degree of homogeneity in their experiences of mainstream education, there will also be many differences.

The vast majority of the existing *coping* literature is specific to the adult population and the extent to which this has relevance to CYP is not clear, though ostensibly it seems that such literature does have at least some relevance to the present research. Ryan-Wenger (1992) developed a taxonomy of children's coping responses, thus offering a theoretical insight into *coping* that is specific to CYP. Those coping responses outlined by Ryan-Wenger that are particularly relevant to the coping strategies in the present SGT include *Behavioural Avoidance* (i.e. avoiding the stressor) and *Cognitive Restructuring* (i.e. adjusting your perception of the stressor). *Behavioural avoidance* is reflected in the concept of *Avoiding and Escaping Stressors* in the SGT, as pupils act to avoid and escape from those situations and circumstances in the mainstream school environment that are perceived as stressors. *Cognitive Restructuring* seems apparent in respect of the concept of *Rejecting School* in the SGT. Although *rejecting school* can involve *behavioural avoidance* (i.e. non-attendance), it also incorporates questioning of the nature of the school system (e.g. the relevancy of the curriculum). It could be argued that pupils are attempting to cognitively restructure their perceptions around the importance of school and what is expected, so as to cope with the fact they are finding it difficult to cope in school. This serves to further *protect oneself from emotional harm* (i.e. minimise any negative impact upon self-esteem), which is the underpinning driver behind pupils' coping strategies.

Additional coping strategies identified by Ryan-Wenger (1992) are relevant to the present SGT, in spite of the fact they did not emerge as coping strategies utilised by pupils. Rather, they emerged as concepts within the *School System Conditional Factors (SSCF)*, which impact upon how pupils cope in mainstream education. For instance, the coping strategy of *information seeking* (i.e. seeking information about the stressor; Ryan-Wenger, 1992), is apparent in the *SSCF* of *Knowing the Environment: Enhancing Predictability*. In this SGT, pupils want to know and understand what is happening in their environment, they want to know their teachers, they want consistency from the adults supporting them in school and they want to know what to expect day-to-day in school. Certainly, from a practice-based evidence perspective, one is acutely aware of the need for anxious pupils to be aware of the structure of the daily timetable and, where possible, for their expectations regarding what is going to occur in school to be followed through on. Data analysis and theory development in the present research suggests that unexpected changes may result in pupils being distrusting

of the adults in school and further highlights the importance of working with anxious pupils to jointly develop expectations, rather than imposing expectations on pupils.

6.1.1.2 Maladaptive Strategy Use.

Though failing to gain earned relevance within this SGT, it seems feasible that there may be maladaptive aspects inherent in the strategies used by anxious pupils to *protect themselves from emotional discomfort and harm*. The potential long-term consequences associated with some elements of the strategy use in the present research could have a detrimental impact on pupils' emotional wellbeing or later educational outcomes. Pupils *try to fit in* within mainstream education, by *portraying an accepted identity*, which can involve 'masking' difficulties and 'hiding' one's 'true' self. These concepts fit closely with the concept of social camouflaging which, in the literature, is synonymous with individuals with ASCs. Camouflaging can have negative consequences, such as preventing others from being able to recognise and respond to difficulties (Mandy, 2019). Mandy (2019) explains that there is also a link between camouflaging and experiencing mental health difficulties in individuals with an ASC, though whether the association is causal is unclear. Moreover, being able to show your 'true self' is considered important for mental health (Schlegel et al., 2009) and expressing your authentic self is associated with positive implications for self-esteem (Kernis & Goldman, as cited in Schlegel et al., 2009). Therefore, where pupils are using a coping strategy that involves restricting personal authenticity or hiding their 'true' self, as in the context of this SGT and the concept of *Trying to Fit In,* this could potentially have further negative implications for their emotional wellbeing. This pupil strategy is intended to *protect the pupil from emotional discomfort or harm*, which highlights the potentially paradoxical aspect of this strategy. Similar to the transactional model of coping, which makes no assumptions as to the success of coping strategies (Folkman et al., 1986), the present SGT offers no clear indication of the efficacy or outcomes of individual coping strategies, as this did not gain earned relevance. In my opinion, it is probable that the success of the strategies utilised by pupils (i.e. whether or not these facilitate positive outcomes) is highly dependent upon factors associated with the mainstream school system in which the pupils are situated, which in this SGT are termed *SSCF*.

6.1.1.3 Systemic Factors Affecting Coping in Mainstream Education.

According to Hunter and Boyle (2004, p. 84), transactional theories of coping, such as the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), propose that coping responses are "situation-specific". Transactional theories are interested in the contextual nature of coping (i.e. the combination of individual, person-specific factors and environmental factors), as opposed to a trait-only explanation of coping, which considers how an individual typically copes/responds (Folkman et al., 1986). In the present SGT, *SSCF* refer to factors within the school system that influence how pupils cope in mainstream education and the extent to which they need to utilise strategies to *protect themselves from experiencing emotional discomfort or harm*. *School Ethos* emerged as a *SSCF* in the SGT, which influences how anxious pupils cope in mainstream education. The notion of 'school ethos' appears to have been present within the research literature for many years, with the works of Reynolds often cited. An article by Reynolds et al., published in 1976, outlines an emerging view of the school environment, alongside the home environment, being seen to have an impact upon pupils' educational outcomes. It is also a term that one will often hear within the education arena, though it is perhaps not consciously or explicitly defined when used in everyday conversation. In the present SGT, school ethos is multifaceted, as evidenced by the properties comprised within the overarching concept of *School Ethos*: *Guiding Aims and Functions; Promoting Personal Agency Versus Controlling from the Top; Meeting Pupil Needs; Providing Care and Protection; and Accepting Diversity and Difference*. The property, *Guiding Aims and Functions* is an underpinning variable which influences the nature of a school's ethos. In comparison, the other properties of school ethos, could be argued to reflect characteristics of a school's ethos. School ethos often appears within the literature alongside terms such as school 'climate' and 'atmosphere' (Allder, 1993). Allder (1993) suggests that a school's ethos is unique or particular to the school and that it is something which is *experienced* by individuals. Indeed, this reflects school ethos in the present study, in that anxious pupils are able to cope more successfully where schools are *experienced* as caring and nurturing and as being accepting of diversity and difference.

As previously noted, the concept of *Providing Care and Protection* emerged as a property of *School Ethos*. The present research indicates that pupils believe school should be a place where they feel safe and are cared for. They perceive the teacher's role as being multifaceted; with providing care for their pupils being highly important. Research indicates

that caring teachers use a democratic style during interactions, develop trusting and respectful relationships with their pupils (Collinson et al., 1998; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Vogt, 2002), and get to know and understand pupils as individuals (Collinson et al., 1998; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001). In the present SGT, *developing positive relationships* also emerged as a *SSCF*, which when taken together with the research outlined above, could indicate that the concepts of *Providing Care and Protection* and *Developing Positive Relationships* with pupils are closely interlinked. For instance, can a teacher be perceived by a pupil as being caring if there is a very poor or negative relationship between the two? Likewise, will a pupil-teacher relationship be perceived by the pupil as being positive, if they feel that the teacher does not care about them? Research suggests that where pupils do perceive that their teachers care about them, there is greater likelihood of pupils having positive feelings about school (Hallinan, 2008); which could have a positive impact on the extent to which a pupil copes in school, as indicated in the present SGT.

6.1.2 Addressing Research Question Two: Educational Psychologist Support for Anxious Pupils in Mainstream Education

Research question two focuses upon EP practice and the specific role of the EP in supporting those pupils who are experiencing anxiety, to cope in mainstream education. According to 'The Currie Report' (Scottish Executive, 2002), EPs work at three levels: the individual pupil level, family level, and LA level; though, the current climate of increasing numbers of private and independent EPs could add a further dimension to the levels at which EPs work. I would argue that the functions of the EP role, as presented in 'The Currie report' (Scottish Executive, 2002), reflects a somewhat narrow perspective. In respect of EP work at the pupil level, this can take the form of individual work addressing specific pupil needs but can also be at a group level, in respect of certain cohorts of pupils or year groups. In addition, EPs engage in systems level and organisational work with educational settings (Fox, 2009) and are not restricted to working at the LA level; with some EPs contributing at national and international levels through engagement in research, conferences and training delivery. The nature of EP work is across five key functions: training, assessment, research, consultation and intervention (Scottish Executive, 2002), which highlights the wide-ranging activities that EPs may engage in to promote positive outcomes for CYP with SEND. EPs may need to work across different levels and utilise their skills and knowledge across the varying

functions of their role to support anxious pupils to cope in mainstream education, as discussed herein.

6.1.2.1 Supporting Pupils to Develop Adaptive Coping Strategies.

Supporting pupils to consider alternative coping strategies and ways of managing any emotional discomfort they experience, such as anxiety, may help pupils to cope where they are experiencing difficulties in mainstream education. Indeed, according to Folkman et al. (1986), an individual's perception or appraisal of the resources that they have for coping, in respect of the situation they find themselves in, will influence how they cope. In the present research, it is evident that some anxious pupils perceive that they lack the resources to be able to cope or *survive* in mainstream schools. If pupils are supported to develop coping strategies, which help them to cope with learning demands and the wider social and emotional aspects of education, this could result in pupils appraising the situation as being less threatening, because they would perceive that they have the necessary resources to meet the demands of this environment. Of course, this needs to take place alongside changes to the environment and accommodations being made to meet pupil needs, which will further support the pupil to cope. Indeed, my position on the origins of difficulties with emotional wellbeing (or 'mental health' difficulties, depending upon the reader's conceptualisation) is a systemic one. This encompasses an interactionist perspective, i.e., that the presence of such difficulties is predicated on an interaction between factors associated with the individual and environmental factors (Roffey, 2018).

6.1.2.2 Facilitating Systemic Change: Influencing the School Ethos.

The application of an ecosystemic lens (i.e. the works of Bronfenbrenner, 1979), when considering how anxious pupils *try to cope in mainstream education,* ensures a broad perspective and an interactionist focus (i.e. the interaction between individual pupil factors and environmental factors and interactions between the systems in which a pupil is situated; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is in contrast to a within-child perspective, which may place the majority of the responsibility for *trying to cope in mainstream education* upon the individual pupil. Throughout subsequent sections of this chapter, consideration is given to *micro-, meso-* and *exo- systems* in relation to how anxious pupils cope in mainstream education. With regard to the latter, reference is made to the education system and relevant legislation,

such as the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & Department of Health [DoH], 2015), which have implications for how anxious pupils cope in mainstream education.

The *SSCF* in the present SGT, emphasise the role of EPs in promoting positive systemic change, to support anxious pupils to cope in mainstream education. It is likely that this would benefit pupils across a range of SENDs, however the present SGT focuses upon the substantive population of interest: pupils who self-identify as experiencing anxiety. The present SGT emphasises the influence of the *school ethos* on how anxious pupils cope in mainstream education and on the extent to which pupils must *protect themselves from emotional discomfort or harm*. The concept of *School Ethos* reflects the values and ideals of the school, which guide how the school functions day-to-day and the way that the school is experienced by those within it. School climate, a term which may be used interchangeably with school ethos, is characterised by how connected a pupil feels to their school and how well they perceive that their learning and social-emotional needs are met (Kearney, 2008). In the present SGT, the concept of *Being in the 'Wrong' Place,* highlights that anxious pupils may indeed lack a sense of belonging to their school; perhaps further suggesting that they do not experience a feeling of connection with their school and those within it. The nature of a school's ethos also has important implications for the emotional wellbeing of anxious pupils. In their research with teachers and head teachers in Norway, Mælan et al. (2018) identified that school climate was important for the mental health of pupils. A school climate of inclusivity and a focus on promoting positive relationships amongst pupils, and between pupils and school staff, was deemed central to supporting the mental health of pupils within school. However, the authors note the "strong emphasis on pupils' well-being" in Norway's schools (Mælan et al., 2018, p. 25); suggesting that this could limit the relevance of the research to differing educational contexts. In the context of the UK, schools are reportedly feeling increasingly under pressure to provide support for pupils' mental health needs, with many citing a perceived lack of support from specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Weale, 2020). Regarding EP practice, this highlights the integral role EPs can play in assisting schools with supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing. The present research indicates that this can be facilitated at a whole-school level through generating a school ethos that is underpinned by actions that ensure pupils feel a sense of belonging to their schools.

In the present research, *school ethos* is mediated by the *guiding aims and functions* of the school system. Where the central aim of the school system is to 'produce' school leavers who attain good educational qualifications, this can be to the detriment of pupils' wider needs, namely their emotional needs. It appears that the *guiding aims and functions* of mainstream secondary schools are generally driven by policies at a central government level, which are harder for individual EPs to penetrate and influence. As Daniels et al. (2019) postulate, the current dominating policies surrounding academic excellence and achievement may be having a significantly detrimental impact on SEND pupils, as such policies do not easily fit with those of inclusion. Owing to the fact that EPs may typically be unable to generate change at a national policy level, the focus of EP practice may need to be on finding ways that schools can bring together these seemingly competing policies in respect of educational attainment and inclusion (Daniels et al., 2019). Indeed, systems generally have many objectives, some of which are conflicting, stressing the need for an overarching objective and a potential compromise (Jenkins, n.d., as cited in Burden, 1978). Daniels et al. also bring to the forefront, issues surrounding the depleting power of the LA to hold schools to account in respect of meeting the needs of SEND pupils and the use of exclusions. EPs, therefore, may be well placed to work with LA partners and schools to promote discourses and practices regarding inclusion and to strongly discourage exclusions and practices that effectively 'force' some pupils (in this research, anxious pupils) out of mainstream education.

In working with schools to generate change at a systemic level, it is critical that the wider context in which schools are currently functioning is understood; thus, enhancing one's awareness of potential barriers to such change. There is a current climate of funding issues, with many LA maintained secondary schools reportedly in deficit (Jack, 2019; Weale, 2019, December). Funding data for English schools in 2016-2017, showed that more LA maintained secondary schools were in deficit than primary schools, at 26.1% and 7.1% respectively (Andrews & Lawrence, 2018). This could have implications for how inclusive maintained secondary schools are relative to maintained primary schools. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the SEND funding systems across LAs (i.e. devolved or retained by the LA), this could have a significant impact on the level of inclusivity and support on offer to pupils with SEND across mainstream secondary schools; particularly where funding to support SEND pupils is not 'ringfenced'. Hence, for EPs supporting secondary schools, in particular, there may be a requirement for creative working, working cost-effectively, and

'building' the capacity of schools to meet the needs of many pupils; such as through staff training, as opposed to working with individual pupils.

Menzies and Baars (2015) also question whether mainstream schools can be wholly inclusive, owing to the restrictive and inflexible nature of the curriculum, the formal assessment systems, classroom set ups, and timetables. Indeed, some feel that although schools endeavour to provide sufficient support for pupils, such as those with SEND, the current nature of mainstream schools means they are unable to do so effectively (Menzies & Baars, 2015). An increasingly held view is that there is an inflexibility inherent in current behaviour policies and curricula across mainstream secondary schools. The concept of *controlling from the top* in this SGT illustrates how teachers are constrained by behaviour policies that are imposed within the school system. This can prevent teachers from responding to pupils in a way they deem appropriate, in line with a pupil's needs. This reflects how the school system enforces "…boundary maintaining conditions…", whereby there are certain behaviours, actions and responses that are expected by the system, and to cross these boundaries would be considered deviant in relation to the norm (Glaser, 2005, p. 23). I wonder whether this could account for exclusions in some mainstream schools: perhaps the system's inflexibility leads to pupils more easily crossing the boundaries of what the system expects. Some also argue that the mainstream education system is unable to cater for the substantial degree of diversity amongst pupils (Menzies & Baars, 2015). Indeed, in the present SGT, the concept of *accepting diversity and difference* emerged as a *SSCF*, thus emphasising the importance of this for pupils' emotional wellbeing and in enabling pupils to cope in mainstream education.

6.1.2.3 Promoting the Importance of Developing Positive Pupil-Staff Relationships.

The SGT in this research highlighted the importance of pupils having positive relationships with the adults in school. There is an emphasis on the quality of the relationships, as opposed to simply 'assigning' adults to work with pupils. Indeed, in respect of the impact on academic outcomes, research has shown that having a support member of staff with a pupil can actually have a negative impact upon their attainment and that this is not linked to other factors, such as pupil characteristics or their SENs (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2011). Based upon research evidence, it is important that EPs can help schools to consider exactly 'how' adults

in school work with particular pupils. Publications from the Education Endowment Foundation (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al., 2018) suggest that teaching assistants have the most positive impact on pupil outcomes when they are deployed effectively, are well-supported and prepared, and are given appropriate training. Regarding staff-pupil relationships in educational settings, the development of positive relationships is linked to factors such as there being trust (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Mælan et al., 2018; Merrick, 2020) and respect (Collinson et al., 1998; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001) in the relationship. It is also important that staff get to know pupils by taking an interest in them as individuals (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Mælan et al., 2019). Engaging in discussions that relate to the pupil's experiences inside and outside of the classroom, and which do not solely relate to the curriculum, are also considered to be of significance (Mælan et al., 2018). In congruence with these findings, the present SGT promotes the notion of 'getting to know' individual pupils, which serves to improve the extent to which a pupil's needs are understood. *Communicating empathically* with pupils, through talking, listening and seeking to understand their thoughts and feelings, is another concept that emerged in the SGT. This further promotes the importance of building positive relationships and communication approaches with anxious pupils to support them to cope in mainstream education. Merrick (2020, p. 110) highlights how talking to pupils can support teachers to understand their "needs, thoughts, feelings and priorities", which can further inform how to best meet their needs in respect of suitable teaching approaches and helpful responses to presenting pupil behaviours. EPs are well placed to engage in this type of work: eliciting pupils' views in such a way that can inform effective support for a pupil in the school setting, and which is underpinned by an understanding of the individual pupil's perspective. EPs are also in a position to educate schools on the importance of relational approaches within education settings, which focus upon the development of positive and trusting relationships between CYP and the adults in the setting, as being key to pupil success academically, socially and emotionally.

6.1.2.4 Facilitating Knowledge Building.

Knowledge building emerged as a concept within the present SGT. *Knowledge building* helps school staff to understand pupil needs. This research highlights the importance of school staff *knowing* about a range of SENDs (i.e. holding factual knowledge about what different needs may be), whilst also being aware of how to respond appropriately and

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effectively to a pupil's needs: it is not enough to simply be aware of what a pupil's needs may be or what these needs may 'look like'. EPs are in a prime position to promote the understandings of school staff in respect of SEND and one may consider this to be the 'bread and butter' of the EP role. There are a number of ways in which such *knowledge building* can take place, including through consultation with school staff and through dissemination of information in reports. However, to support knowledge building on a larger scale, EPs can disseminate information through training delivery and undertaking research followed by publication and/or dissemination to relevant stakeholders. I would argue that *knowledge building* and skill development need to occur alongside attempting to change the "…hearts and minds…" of school staff (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, p. 5). Whilst it is important that school staff have awareness and understanding of differing pupil needs, it is essential that EPs also work to promote compassion and empathy towards all pupils and that they clearly communicate the rights of all pupils to mainstream education, regardless of their SEND.

6.1.2.5 Advocating for and Promoting the Voices of Pupils

The "social world" (Glaser, 2005, p. 23) of mainstream education, is very hierarchical in nature within this theory. The present research illustrates the tendency for schools to *control from the top*, resulting in pupils experiencing a lack of agentic capacity. Pupils want to experience personal agency, thus enabling them to make decisions that will have a positive impact on their educational experiences and on their later life outcomes. Merrick (2020) found that SEND pupils' voices are most likely to be heard in respect of sharing their school experiences and explaining what helps them in school. In contrast, they are likely to have lesser involvement in decisions relating to what their educational provision will look like or considerations into how they will achieve personal outcomes (Merrick, 2020). It is important to note that these findings are from the perspective of teachers and not pupils with SEND. It would be interesting to hear SEND pupils' perceptions as to whether they perceive that their views are sought in this way. In my opinion, secondary-aged pupils, in particular, should be supported and encouraged to share their views on their educational provision and planning. This provision is being put in place *for* pupils; therefore we, as professionals, need to know whether this is deemed beneficial from their perspective. Barriers to pupil voice, and ultimately whether pupils are afforded decision-making capacity, include the extent to which pupil voice and participation are considered important within the school system and whether these are promoted by those in the school holding most 'power' i.e., senior leaders (Merrick,

2020). EPs should, therefore, endeavour to support pupils' personal agency through consulting with CYP and eliciting and promoting pupil voice (see Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Hobbs et al., 2000 for discussions regarding the complexities of this), alongside working with schools to promote the development of a school ethos that values pupil voice.

6.1.2.6 Abating the Negative Consequences of Difficulty Coping: Preventing Being 'Forced Out' of Mainstream Education.

Though the present SGT does not delineate the specific outcomes or efficacy of individual coping strategies, *being 'forced out'* of mainstream education emerged as an overall consequential concept, which could indicate that pupil strategies alone are not sufficient to ensure pupils are able to cope in mainstream education. Where anxious pupils experience significant difficulties *trying to cope in mainstream education*, the resultant consequence is that they are 'forced out'. The *SSCF*, alongside the coping *strategies* utilised by pupils, have causal implications for *being 'forced out'*, as they influence the extent to which pupils are able to cope in school. Menzies and Baars (2015) provide a discussion surrounding formal school exclusions and other means by which learners are 'pushed out'. Pupils can be 'pushed out' through "…managed moves and internal exclusion…" (Menzies & Baars, 2015, p. 11), use of isolation units within the school and off-site education (Power & Taylor, 2018). The overriding goal in respect of the EP role would be to aim to prevent such 'forcing out' and to facilitate all pupils, not only to cope in mainstream education but, to thrive, achieve their potential and to feel valued.

6.2 Practical Application of the Substantive Grounded Theory: A Tool for Practitioners

The previous section in this chapter addresses potential applications of the SGT to EP practice. However, here I present a guidance document (see Appendix 11) that practicing EPs can use with secondary schools. This document is intended for EPs to use as a tool for supporting their discussions with schools regarding universal approaches for supporting anxious pupils. Given the current circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and the degree of uncertainty and change that will have been experienced by CYP, this may have increased the anxiety levels of many CYP in our schools. Indeed, a very recent article published in The Guardian (June, 2020), written by Gavin Morgan, a practicing EP, highlights the risks to CYP's mental health due to being out of education for a sustained period of time. Hence, this guidance document, alongside COVID-19 specific school

guidance, may also be informative for schools when considering how to effectively support many of their pupils on their return to school following lifted restrictions. The guidance outlines seven key areas for consideration: School Ethos; Sharing views and making decisions; Understanding pupils' needs; Empathic Communication; Supporting pupils to develop helpful coping strategies; Positive and trusting relationships; and Enhancing predictability. Each area is *grounded* in the present research, in respect of the data gathered during the research process and the subsequently developed SGT. The document is not intended to be unwieldy, so as to be accessible to busy school leaders and staff. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the EP will provide further detail and advice, taking into account the contexts of the schools they are supporting.

6.3 What does the Present Substantive Grounded Theory Offer?

From an applied psychology perspective, this SGT offers a theoretical framework for schools, education professionals and EPs to inform their approaches to supporting anxious pupils in mainstream schools, particularly secondary schools, at a universal level. The research further highlights the systemic changes that may need to occur within the school in order to facilitate this. The present SGT has emerged from the pupils themselves and many aspects of the SGT promote pupils' social capital and power within a system that limits their personal agency. Consequently, I believe the research reflects an emancipatory approach to this research area and gives the young people a voice, rather than solely broaching the research area from the perspective of the adults who support these young people. However, I am acutely aware of the control that I, as the researcher, possessed in this research, particularly in respect of the processes of coding and conceptualisation. I am also aware that there are alternative approaches that could have afforded young people more influence and control within the research process (e.g. see Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation; Hart, 1992).

This SGT further offers a way of understanding and explaining what is, perhaps, the current picture for pupils who experience anxiety in UK mainstream secondary schools. I am of the view that the pupils engaged in "base lining" or "telling it as it is" (Glaser, 1998, p. 171), thus providing a 'true' and honest account of their experiences. This is critical given the growing issues surrounding the mental health of CYP in the UK. Indeed, deterioration in the mental health of CYP in UK schools has been increasingly widely reported across media outlets in

recent years (e.g., BBC, 2020; Busby, 2018; Campbell, 2018; Weale, 2019, April), with many referencing the negative impact on mental health associated with the pressures of high-stakes examinations, such as SATs, GCSEs and A-levels (Flanagan 2019; Turner, 2019), and the pressures of social media (Turner, 2019). As previously alluded to, there is a growing perception that educational settings are prioritising educational outcomes, such as academic performance, over CYP's emotional wellbeing (Morgan, 2019, as cited in The BPS, 2019, May 8). Though the Green Paper, *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (DoH & DfE, 2017) sets out plans for how educational settings can take a key role in early intervention support for pupils' mental health needs, the role of the EP in this initiative appears to have been neglected to some extent (Roffey, 2018). Moving forward, the profession will need to consider how to work alongside and in a complimentary manner to this initiative, perhaps utilising the EP knowledge and skillset related to working with school systems. One criticism of the Green Paper is the promotion of a "…within-child..." perspective (Roffey, 2018, line 18), which focuses on the individual child or young person being "…the 'problem'…" (Roffey, 2018, line 49). There is a suggestion here that something is 'wrong' with the individual pupil and, therefore, that the response to this problem should focus on the individual. The issue here is that there appears to be no significant consideration of a systemic approach to responding to CYP's mental health and emotional wellbeing. The present SGT reflects an ecosystemic perspective, specifically at the level of the *mesosystem*, regarding how anxious pupils *try to cope in mainstream education*. The 'conditions' within mainstream schools that have implications for how pupils cope in mainstream education are explicated through the *SSCF*. Finally, although context does not always gain earned relevance within SGTs, it does in respect of the present SGT. This SGT builds upon the extant coping literature by placing it within a context of *anxious pupils trying to cope in mainstream education*.   Therefore, a within-pupil focus, in terms of the coping strategies and resources that an individual pupil utilises, are not sufficient to facilitate coping in mainstream education. The school system and the school environment must also be modified and must adapt to support anxious pupils to cope in mainstream education.

6.3.1 Substantive Grounded Theory or Conceptual Framework?
The expected product of CGT is the emergence of a fully elaborated substantive or formal grounded theory, which explicates all relationships and interrelationships amongst the core

category, concepts and their properties (Glaser, 1998; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Timonen et al., 2018). Timonen et al. (2018), suggest that to be expectant of this product each time GT methodology is used is an unrealistic expectation given the realities of conducting research; a process which generates many factors that could act as barriers to producing a fully elaborated theory. Indeed, in the context of the present research, the time allocated to the research process was somewhat limited, thus resulting in time constraints that may have affected the full use of CGT processes and components, such as theoretical sampling. Reading existing CGT studies makes evident the substantial amount of time often afforded to the research process, with some researchers taking several years to complete it. I believe that the present research offers, as a minimum, a conceptual framework for understanding how anxious pupils *try to cope in mainstream education* and the systemic factors that inhibit or facilitate this. As a novice CGT researcher, it is difficult to determine whether the research offers a fully elaborated SGT given, what I understand to be, a lack of explicit, objective criteria upon which to make such an assertion. However, in the present research, the concepts that constitute the SGT and the theoretical codes that integrate the various concepts are explicitly outlined in Chapter Five, illustrating the careful consideration paid to full theoretical integration. Regardless, this SGT offers a starting point for further potential theoretical development, which could be facilitated through modifiability of the SGT.

6.4 Assessing the Quality of the Substantive Grounded Theory

The quality of a piece of research utilising CGT is assessed in terms of its work, relevance, fit and modifiability (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1992, as cited in Hallberg, 2006; Holton, 2018). Each was previously outlined in Chapter Three, which no doubt highlighted the extent to which these criteria are closely interlinked. The present SGT is evaluated here in respect of each criterion.

6.4.1 Fit

The idea of *fit* means that the concepts and properties comprised within the theory are grounded in the data, rather than the researcher *forcing* preconceived concepts on to the data (Holton & Walsh, 2017). This criterion seems somewhat subjective and does not appear to have a clear process for determining whether this has been met. Nevertheless, in my view the most effective way of ensuring that a SGT *fits*, is for the researcher to utilise memoing as a reflexive tool, particularly to address potential concerns surrounding *forcing* of ideas on to

the data, so that this can be addressed or avoided. In my role as a TEP I have gained knowledge about how school systems work and have become acutely aware of some of the key issues inherent in the mainstream education system, which could have potentially led to the 'emergence' of concepts linked to my already existing cognisance and understanding. To ensure I engaged in a reflexive process throughout the research process, reflective memos were written (see sample of researcher reflective memos located in Appendix 5c).

6.4.2 Work and Relevance

If a grounded theory has *workability,* the grounded concepts that emerged in the theory should explain what is occurring within the data (Glaser, 2005; Hallberg, 2006), the theory should explain the behaviour of those within the substantive area (Glaser, 1998; Holton, 2018) and it should be able to "…predict what will happen…" (Glaser, 2005, p. 4). Reflecting on interviews with pupil participants, I am of the opinion that pupils were honest and open when sharing their experiences and views about mainstream education. I did not feel that pupils were holding back or that they felt unable to share their views honestly, for fear of any negative consequences. Therefore, this *should* have led to yielding data that accurately reflects what was happening for pupils in mainstream education. Glaser (2005) argues that grounded theories have relevance as they allow the emergence of a main concern. Indeed, in the present research, the initial research question was modified to facilitate the emergence of pupils' main concern.

As briefly mentioned within Chapter Four, two pupil participants were presented with the emerging theory, to gauge its relevance and to determine whether it accurately explains their actions within mainstream education. These participants perceived that the emerging theory did accurately reflect their experiences and they were able to provide additional information to saturate the core category and related concepts. Participants were encouraged to highlight any areas of the emerging theory that they felt did not accurately reflect their experiences. One such concept was that of *thriving in mainstream education*. This concept was initially considered to be dichotomous to the concept of coping (or *surviving* as it was originally termed). Participants did not agree that this was accurate to their experiences of mainstream education, as they did not feel that they had been able to thrive in any way. On reflection, I was able to recognise this as "logical drift" (Glaser, 1998, p. 97), whereby I had identified *thriving in mainstream education* as a relevant concept despite this not being grounded in the

data. This clearly illustrates the importance of re-engaging with participants to seek their perspective on the emergent theory. The relevance of the SGT will be further evidenced when it is read by those in the substantive area. Glaser (1978) asserts that fit, workability and relevance of a grounded theory are apparent in how those in the substantive area assimilate this with their own experiences and understandings. In my mind, of most importance to this SGT will be how the theory is perceived by pupils in mainstream education (or those who have previously been educated in mainstream education), who self-identify as experiencing anxiety. My intention is to produce a short, accessible, written and visual (i.e. use of simple, colourful diagrams) summary of the research to share with pupil participants, once the research process is finalised (i.e. successful completion of the viva voce examination).

6.4.3 Modifiability

Modifiability appears to be integral to CGT methodology, for instance through constant comparative analysis, which enables the researcher to modify the theory throughout the coding process (Glaser, 1998). In addition to this, a grounded theory can be modified at any time, where new data offers new insights (Glaser, 1998). In relation to this, Glaser (1998) appears to deny that one can ever really question the accuracy of a grounded theory. Glaser suggests that the originator of the theory can simply declare that the theory is not 'wrong' or inaccurate but is grounded in the data that was available at that time and it can, therefore, be modified in light of additional data. Holton and Walsh (2017, p. 36) further propose that categories (i.e. concepts) "cannot be disproved, [however] they can be modified by further data collection". I can to some extent understand such perspectives, as one can only work with the data that has been obtained. However, the academic challenge and discussion around a piece of research, which any researcher should expect, surely only serves to enhance its credibility.

6.5 Limitations

Owing to the time constraints associated with completing this piece of research, it was not possible to integrate relevant existing literature into the present SGT (Glaser, 1998) through the coding process (i.e. using the literature as another form of data for analysis). Had it been possible to synthesise the extant literature, particularly existing relevant theories, with this SGT, this may have led to modifications to the latter. However, extant relevant literature has been addressed within this discussion, through critical analysis of the SGT. Due to time constraints, I was also unable to theoretically sample for pupils who self-identify as

experiencing anxiety and who are currently being educated in mainstream education. The pupil participants in the present research were being educated in medical education provision, meaning that retrospective accounts of mainstream education were being shared. This could result in potential biases within pupil accounts, or loss or misremembering of information.

Owing to my status as a novice CGT researcher, I briefly 'fell' into one of the 'traps' that CGT researchers warn against: 'forcing' a professional or preconceived concern (Glaser, 1998; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Thankfully, engaging in the reflexive process of memoing supported me to recognise this 'forcing' of the professional concern of reintegration that had initially occurred. This enabled me to modify the research questions, so as to allow the research to move in the direction of the participants' main concern: *trying to cope in mainstream education*. However, to be wholly 'true' to CGT methodology, this openness to emergence should have occurred from the outset, which may have taken the research in an entirely different direction. For instance, had reintegration into mainstream education not have been mentioned to participants from the outset of the research, pupils may potentially not have focused upon their experiences within mainstream education at all.

Due to time constraints and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to revisit pupil participants in the very final stages of the research, to share the final SGT with them to ensure its *work* and *relevance*. One would hope that because the concepts that constitute the theory were shared with two pupil participants earlier in the research process, albeit in an under-developed form, that any concerns regarding their *work* and *relevance* would have arisen at that time. Pupils felt that these emergent concepts accurately reflected their experiences and the one concept that was not grounded in the data (i.e. their experiences) was discarded. As previously outlined, this was the concept of *thriving in mainstream education*, which was not grounded in the data. Instead, it was a concept that I had unwittingly 'forced' on to the data as it seemed to work as a dichotomous concept to '*surviving*' or *coping* in mainstream education.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research
It would be interesting to establish whether the SGT in this research can be applied to how anxious pupils cope in mainstream primary education. Future research could take theoretical sampling further to explore whether the stage of education (i.e. primary school, secondary

school, post-16 education) gains earned relevance in relation to how anxious pupils try to cope in mainstream education. Based upon my experiences of working in both primary and secondary mainstream schools, I am of the view that there are often substantial differences in how these systems work. Primary schools appear to be better able to, or are perhaps more willing to, promote an inclusive approach to supporting pupils than secondary schools. However, one must also consider the differential pressures on, and expectations of, primary and secondary schools, which could influence the extent to which they perceive they are able to effectively promote inclusivity. One such issue relates to funding, which may differentially affect primary and secondary schools, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Theoretical sampling could also be extended to consider comparison groups (Holton & Walsh, 2017), such as anxious pupils currently being educated in mainstream education and non-anxious pupils being educated in mainstream education, to establish whether the severity of pupils' experiences of anxiety has implications for coping in mainstream education. Indeed, CGT's flexibility means that quantitative measures of anxiety for example, could be used to gather data for this purpose. It could also be the case that the coping strategies and the *SSCF* that emerged within this SGT, are also highly relevant for pupils with other SENDs, which is another potential comparison group and direction for future research.

The present research makes limited reference to the role of families in relation to how anxious pupils cope in mainstream education. Its omission from the present research was not intentional, rather it did not gain earned relevance. Pupils in this context seemed less likely to identify family factors as influencing their ability to cope in mainstream education, though this is not to dismiss the importance of factors at the family level. Given my role as a TEP and the importance of working with educational settings, children, and their families, I feel that this would be an important consideration for future research. The relationships between schools and parents when supporting anxious CYP to cope in school is likely to be of central importance. Certainly, Parker et al. (2016) highlight the importance of good communication between parents and schools for helping children to cope in school. Where there are difficulties in the lines of communication between parents and schools, this can lead to the child having further difficulties coping in school.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter re-visited the research questions to explore how anxious pupils try to cope in mainstream education and to consider how EPs can actively promote successful coping in mainstream education, both through support at the individual and group levels with pupils and at an organisational level, working with school systems. The next and final chapter (Chapter Seven) considers wider contextual issues relevant to the present research, such as the arguable lack of inclusivity across mainstream education settings and the subsequent increased necessity for alternative educational provision. The last section within Chapter Seven addresses my overall reflections on the research process and key learning points.

Chapter 7: Final Concluding Remarks

7.1 The Current Status of Inclusion

An overarching theme in the present research is that of inclusion, or perhaps a lack of inclusion, in the current mainstream education system. Allan and Youdell (2017, p. 75) note that the SEND Code of Practice, released in 2014 and updated in 2015, fails to use the term "inclusive education"; with use of the concept of "inclusion" in the code of practice being described by the authors as "a vague and mobile notion". The authors further discuss what they refer to as "ghostings" (p. 74) that they perceive are apparent in this code of practice. An interesting observation they make relates to the things that the code of practice specifies we must do, yet with a 'ghosting' of content, regarding the detail of what exactly this entails. For instance, they contend that the SEND code of practice states, "we must provide information and advice, we must inform, assess, consult, document, publish, plan and review", though fails to clearly specify what this means (Allan & Youdell, 2017, p. 76). The authors further argue that this leaves individuals (one would assume LA employees) to decipher the meaning and to act upon this appropriately. Likewise, the authors make the same point with regards to pedagogy and the curriculum, which no doubt makes it harder for education professionals to determine precisely the nature of teaching pedagogy and the curriculum that pupils with SEND are entitled to (Allan & Youdell, 2017). Based on the arguments propagated by Allan and Youdell, one could make the assumption that LAs and individuals supporting pupils with SEND may be lacking the specificity and detail needed to do so with greatest impact. This could perhaps go some way towards explaining the issues surrounding inclusion and potential disagreements amongst LAs, families and schools regarding support for pupils with SEND.

7.2 Alternative Education Provision: A Response to Mainstream Schools Increasingly Failing to Meet Pupil Needs?

As outlined within Chapter Two, in 2019 there were 40, 694 CYP, between the ages of 0-17 years, being educated within either LA AP or PRUs (Children's Commissioner, 2020). Anecdotally, there are also stories of CYP who are informally excluded from mainstream education or 'off-rolled', in the interests of the school. A report published by the House of Commons Education Committee (2018, p. 3) refers to the nature of access to AP, which tends not to be a choice made by CYP, rather it is the result of their "failure" in school or having been excluded. However, it is also recognised that the education system is failing some

pupils (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). The present research further illustrates the 'forcing out' of anxious pupils from mainstream education, where they are unable to cope within that system. It is argued that difficulties with mental health can negatively affect pupils' abilities to be able to cope in mainstream education and that pupils considered vulnerable may fluctuate between coping and failing in mainstream education (Ford et al., 2017). However, it could also be argued that the association is bi-directional, with pupils experiencing deterioration in their emotional wellbeing if their SENs are not being met appropriately or adequately.

I wonder whether an education system that is more diverse and which offers a wider curriculum, could mitigate this 'forcing out' of mainstream education and any associated negative impacts on pupils' emotional wellbeing and sense of self. Indeed, Menzies and Baars (2015) postulate that a transformation of the education system could serve to more effectively support pupils who are 'pushed out' of mainstream education, such as the existence of alternative pathways in education and routes that are linked closely to employment. The present research shines a light on how, at present, many pupils are trying to conform to the mainstream education system, by trying to fit in and meet the expectations of the system, potentially at the expense of being able to show personal authenticity. Although the creation of a diverse education system that provides a wider variety of educational experiences may seem preferable, it is highly unlikely that this could happen in the immediate future. Therefore, with regard to the role of the EP, it is my view that EPs need to be a driving force in promoting inclusive practices and challenging practices that 'force' pupils to 'fail' to cope in mainstream education, which I am in no doubt reflects the practice of the majority of EPs. However, I wonder whether, in some circumstances, EPs could become entangled in the difficulties that some schools seem to experience, or purport to have, in relation to inclusion. It is also critical that EPs can affect change more widely through contributions to policy initiatives. One recent policy initiative that comes to mind, whereby EPs appear to have been all but forgotten, despite the potentially critical role EPs could play (see Roffey, 2018), is the government Green Paper referenced earlier within this thesis: *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision* (DoH & DfE, 2017). I wonder whether this will serve as a stark reminder for EPs, of the need for the profession to be seen and heard.

7.3 Reflecting on the Research Process

The research process had its ups and downs, moments of insight, and many moments of confusion. I have certainly experienced the undertaking of this research as a "…delayed action learning…" process, as outlined by Glaser (1998, p. 2) in his book *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*. The frustrating element for me as a novice CGT researcher was wrestling with the feeling of not instinctively knowing *how* to successfully carry out the varying elements of CGT methodology. However, perhaps it was somewhat unhelpful and unnecessary that I experienced such worry about remaining *true* to the CGT methodology. Indeed, Watts (2014) asserts that central to producing good qualitative research is the skill and creativity on the part of the researcher.

Though I have perceived my novice researcher status to be a disadvantage in the research process, Glaser (2002, as cited in Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 41) proposes that this is an advantage in relation to CGT methodology, as the novice researcher is less likely to be "invested in a favored discipline perspective or theoretical code" and will be "motivated and open to learning." In spite of Glaser's assertions, in future, should I again carry out research using CGT, I hope to be able to utilise the cognisance gained and the experiential learning within this research, to experience a greater sense of self-efficacy during the process. Indeed, the key learning points I have identified, which I will carry with me into future research experiences are:

- Be careful not to restrict your creativity, owing to fears of doing something 'wrong'. This links to my earlier reference to Watts (2014).
- It is okay to experience moments of uncertainty and confusion and most certainly to draw on the advice of knowledgeable others. I found it particularly helpful, in the context of the present research, reading others' GT research and having conversations with an EP who had utilised CGT when carrying out their doctoral research.
- Trust that creative and helpful insights will arise when least expected, which will help you to further progress your research. I found that some of the key aspects of the SGT in the present research emerged whilst out driving in the car or when engaging in other regular daily tasks.

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Appendix 1: Reflective Account of Pre-Existing Knowledge and Potential Biases

Preconceptions from the Outset of the Research

It is important to outline my initial thoughts regarding this piece of research and to document any pre-existing hypotheses and professional concerns, as the CGT methodology makes clear that preconceptions and professional concerns should be avoided (Glaser, 1978; Holton & Walsh, 2017); owing to the inductive and emerging nature of the methodology (Glaser, 1978). In doing so, it is hoped that this supports me to recognise these, perhaps, subconscious biases and to minimise the potential for preconceived issues and expectations to influence the emerging theory. Discussions with the MET Lead Teacher indicate a significant issue of reintegration for pupils attending the units. The present view is that it is difficult for pupils to reintegrate back into the schools at which they are on roll. Linked to my personal interests in mental health and emotional wellbeing, I am focusing upon the experiences of young people for whom anxiety is something that they feel has affected their ability to attend school.

Based upon my initial conversations with the MET Lead Teacher, I have begun to question what will have changed that enables these young people to reintegrate back into their respective educational settings. It is my understanding that the Medical Education Units do not provide a specific, timetabled programme of therapeutic intervention or a specified emotional wellbeing programme. Further to this, I also understand that there is no specific reintegration contract or process for reintegration developed with schools, which outlines the responsibilities for the MET or schools as part of the reintegration process. In light of these two issues: a lack of any specific therapeutic intervention or emotional wellbeing programme and no clear contracting, it seems unsurprising that reintegration is not proving successful at the present time. Firstly, if pupils are not specifically supported to understand, manage and address their anxiety levels, it is unlikely that their experience of anxiety will be minimised, unless pupils are receiving input from another service (i.e. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). On the second issue of contracting, if all parties are not clear about their responsibilities relating to the reintegration process, this could result in important changes to a pupil's educational provision being ignored or misunderstood. If no changes take place within the educational setting, the school's understanding of a pupil's needs is not developed

or updated, and if the pupil has received no specific therapeutic input to support their anxiety levels, it is hard envisage how the pupil will be able to successfully reintegrate into school.

Having identified potential data collection methods and participants for this piece of research, it is important to acknowledge that these tentative ideas could reflect some preconceptions and assumptions I am making about the nature of this research. Therefore, it will be important to reflect on my role as researcher and to be aware of the influence of any preconceptions and assumptions that could result in a divergence from the underpinning principles of CGT.

Research Diary - Initial Involvement with the Medical Education Team (MET)

Note. Table copied from the researcher's initial research proposal (Gray, 2019, pp. 2-3)

Date	Action
02.10.2018	Meeting with Lead of the MET to discuss potential research ideas. • Arranged dates/times for visits to the MET bases.
15.10.2018	Visit to MET base 1 • Informal observations/looking around the building and classrooms. • Informal discussion with teaching assistant working in the base. Found out information regarding timetables (e.g. start/ finish times and the lessons covered).
17.10.2018	Visit to MET base 2 • Informal discussion with the lead member of staff at this base. • Informal observations/looking around the building and classrooms.
18.10.2018	Visit to MET base 3 • Informal observations/looking around the building and classrooms. • Informal discussion with Lead of the MET.
12.11.2018	Meeting with Principal Educational Psychologist and Lead of the MET. • Presented my initial research ideas based upon my visits to the bases. • Discussed next steps within the research process.

Appendix 2: Pupil Participant Interviews (Fieldnotes)

Appendix 2a: Typed up Fieldnotes (Interview with Pupil 1)

Fieldnotes made by the researcher are based upon information shared by participants. Fieldnotes include use of participants' verbatim quotes and short abbreviated notes (that are not a direct transcription).

This interview was initially minimally structured, using specific prompt questions (see Appendix 10). Additional prompt questions were asked in response to information shared by the pupil, with the aim of eliciting further detail. The main concern and core category had not been identified at this point; therefore, this data was open coded (i.e. in vivo and analytic coding).

Researcher Prompt Question 1
Tell me about your reintegration back into school. How have you felt when you have been back in school?

Pupil Response 1
I can't really remember because it was about a year ago now…about a year and a half I think. Sometimes there are good days and there are days when some things are just not great.

Researcher Prompt Question 2
Let's take the good days. What is it about those days that makes them 'good'?

Pupil Response 2
Those where I actually stay in for that lesson I'm in. Only go in for one lesson: computer science.

Researcher Prompt Question 3
On the 'not quite so good days', what's happening on those days that makes them 'not quite so good'?

Pupil Response 3
Not being able to actually stay in the lesson. There's something that happens [in the classroom/lesson] that makes me have to leave basically.

Researcher Prompt Question 4
What is it that makes you feel that you have to leave the lesson? On the days where you are not able to get into the lesson, what has happened on those days?

Pupil Response 4

Usually, it's not actually getting there before the lesson starts.

Want to leave before I even get in.

Usually like if the bell has already gone, there are people already in there. I can't go in because I don't know how many people are already in.

If it's only like three pupils I'll be fine.

Researcher Prompt Question 5

How about if it was a busy room?

Pupil Response 5

Wouldn't be able to just walk in.

I don't know if they'll actually notice me.

Researcher Prompt Question 6

What's happened on the good days that's made it easier?

Pupil Response 6

Don't really know.

If I get there before the bell there would be like the teacher or maybe just one person.

Researcher Prompt Question 7

Let's take a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 would be very worried and 1 would be not at all worried. How worried do you feel about moving back into your school; where would you put yourself on the scale now?

Pupil Response 7

About a six.

Researcher Prompt Question 8

Why would you say you've put yourself at a six?

Pupil Response 8

Because it's been like a transition I guess. So it's not just leaping in and going straight back into school.

Researcher Prompt Question 9
What could be helpful, that would bring you further down towards a 1, so that you're at less than 6? Like, what about the people?

Pupil Response 9
I can't like really think. If I had like a new teacher or different teacher or a new subject, or even the same subject, I think what helps most – meeting them before the lesson so I actually knew who they were. That would happen but sometimes at the main school they didn't because they would just go do something else. Sometimes there's like a TA that takes me down anyway. But it depends if they're actually there or not. Sometimes they're off doing other things.

Researcher Prompt Question 10
Is there anything about lessons that could change?

Pupil Response 10
Being like closer to the door so that I have like a straight way like out of the lesson. Or being closer to the teacher so I can ask if I can just walk out cos I'm too stressed.

Researcher Prompt Question 11
Could you circle [those emotions] that you think best explain and reflect how you've been feeling about this moving back into your school? *Note*. I wrote several emotion words down for the participant to select from as the participant found it difficult to think of his own emotions vocabulary. The words included *anxious, worried, nervous, happy, excited, scared, bored*.

Pupil Response 11
Anxious, Nervous

Researcher Prompt Question 12
What about other things at school… like breaktimes and lunchtimes?

Pupil Response 12
In school they have like an area that you can be in if you don't want to be with everyone else at break and lunch. It's what I did when I was there originally.

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Researcher Prompt Question 1
What do you think about the idea of going back to school?
Pupil Response 1
It would definitely be different if I was going back to my old school, compared to if I was going to a new school. But both would be really scary.

Researcher Prompt Question 2
Could you tell me a little bit more about what would be scary?
Pupil Response 2
If I was going back to my old school obviously people would recognise me so people would be asking questions. …and also the work and the homework and everything I would have to catch up.

Researcher Prompt Question 3
What would it be like if you were going to reintegrate back into a different school?
Pupil Response 3
I wouldn't know where anything is, I wouldn't know any of the teachers …who I can go to if there's a problem.

Researcher Prompt Question 4
Is there anything else it might be helpful for me to know?
Pupil Response 4
Well, I struggle with change. I really don't like it when things change, so going to a new school would mean that everything is different.

Researcher Prompt Question 5
Is there anything else that worries you about school and going back?

Pupil Response 5
There are some people that…I had a few friends. I was on a group of friends that wasn't very good; they weren't very nice. So seeing them would be really scary. But then even the people that I did like, that would be hard to see them as well because sometimes I wouldn't know how to tell them like, I don't… can you just leave me alone. …and I would probably, if I went back to school, probably just want to be on my own. Because I think that would just take out a whole problem

Researcher Prompt Question 6
Are there any other people that might make you worried about going back to school?

Pupil Response 6
Well, I think I would've forgotten a lot. Some of the teachers that didn't know that I'd left would just think I've been there the whole time. I think it was just the whole environment that wasn't right for me. …cos some of the teaching techniques just didn't work.

Researcher Prompt Question 7
Could you elaborate on that?

Pupil Response 7
There was one subject, it was history, and it was fine in year 7 and 8 because I had a different teacher. Then when I went into year 9 I had a new teacher for history and that in itself was difficult; but then because she was just so different to the other way that history was taught, she would give us sheets to fill out and stuff and it was so fast-paced because there was so much to fit in.   I just couldn't keep up.

Researcher Prompt Question 8
What was different about year 7 and 8 history?

Pupil Response 8
It was more like book work and like that, but a lot of the other students, especially in science, didn't like having a textbook and reading it and answering the questions. But I like that because I could work on my own and at my own pace.

I think also because other people liked that way of teaching so they were like flying at it and I would be like still struggling; so everyone on the table had already finished but I hadn't like started and that kinda thing.

Researcher Prompt 9
Imagine you were going to move back to a school, is there anything you can think of that anyone could do or something that could be different that would be helpful?

Pupil Response 9
If it was my old school, I would want to go back slowly. Have a reduced timetable for a bit, then build up. Before I left they put me on a reduced timetable, so it was like slowing everything down. But it just didn't really work very well.

Researcher Prompt Question 10
Can you think what it was about that which wasn't really working?

Pupil Response 10
I would have to walk in like during the middle of the day when everyone was around, so people could see me and everyone was asking questions like why aren't you in lessons fully and why do you keep leaving and stuff. It kind of felt like it was all over the place. If I was going back it would be, I would want them to do it more organised …and I think I would wanna pick which lessons I would go in for. I think also I would wanna be in different classes, cos there's two sides of the school and so one side you'd have lessons with these people and the other side you'd have like different people; and then if you're on a different side you wouldn't have lessons with those people.

Researcher Prompt Question 11
What would make you pick certain lessons to go back into?

Pupil Response 11
The lessons where I like the teacher. Lessons that I didn't really have to interact with anyone. If it was like PE, I wouldn't wanna go there because, you know, you're up and about doing stuff. But if it was like maths then I wouldn't mind that 'cos I could just do my own thing. You don't really have to talk to anyone.

Researcher Prompt Question 12
If you were going back to your old school, is there anything that could help with regard to people asking questions?

Pupil Response 12

Well, I think I would want, this is the same as if I was going back to a different school, I wouldn't want attention drawn to me so I wouldn't want to have like a teacher always asking me stuff – like am I okay – I wouldn't mind once or something but I wouldn't want the teacher to say anything about me or ask me questions to start with like just about the lesson.

I would just wanna not talk to anyone so I don't know if that would help because there are people that when I left, they would ask my brother why I've left. So if I go back they would ask me cos they're just nosey.

Researcher Prompt Question 13

Because your brother's at the school, does this make it a bit trickier?

Pupil Response 13

I think, when I was leaving, I didn't want to speak to anyone in my year, so I would just go to him and just stay with him a little bit; even though his friends didn't really like that, he didn't mind because I didn't want to go to anyone else.

But another thing I could mention is that, I had a friend at my old school who, she doesn't go there anymore, but she left and then she went back and it's not the same reasons as this, it's 'cos she moved house and then that didn't work. But she said that a lot of people… 'cos when she went back I wasn't there so I didn't know, I didn't watch that, but she said that a lot of people asked her why she left and everything.

Researcher Prompt Question 14

If you were to go to a different school, what would help you in that situation? What could make it a more positive experience?

Pupil Response 14

Well, I think I would want to definitely go and see it before I start and meet some of the teachers, not the students but the teachers.

Have someone to go to if I needed anything.

But I think, I don't think the same as before, I wouldn't want any attention on to me.
I would just wanna be like the new person 'cos obviously people wouldn't know that I'd been out of school, people would just think that I've been in my old school and then came straight there.

I wouldn't want any teachers to tell any kids like 'oh make sure you talk to her'…I think I'd just wanna be on my own.

Researcher Prompt Question 15

You want to have someone to go to - is that all the time?

Pupil Response 15
Like someone I would meet before and then if I need anything, just go to this person.

Researcher Prompt Question 16
What could the MET do to make reintegration better?

Pupil Response 16
I don't think I would want them to tell, obviously they would have to tell the school why I left my old school and stuff. But I wouldn't want them to like make it a big deal, just 'cos I wouldn't want the new school to think they have to be like wary around me or anything. I just wanna be like normal. I think with my old school, the MET and them were like really connected. My mum and dad would have meetings with [staff member] and school, so I think I would want, I don't know.

Researcher Prompt Question 17
Do you feel that your views have been taken into account?

Pupil Response 17
Yeah cos I did go to one of the meetings, so I got to say some things but erm – there was one – I don't know if this is relevant...there was one time, one situation, when I told my mum to tell them 'cos I didn't want to say anything. But then [staff member] and the school person that was doing the meeting, sort of made up a solution without really asking me, so it was just like 'we'll do this then', but I don't want that… …so I'm glad I was there so I could sort of say like can you do this instead. When I thought about, like imagine if I wasn't in there, it made me quite anxious 'cos if I wasn't in there and that happened, I'm just glad that I was so I could stop them from doing that. I sort of had to say 'can you do this instead?' instead of saying like 'no that's not going to work'.

Researcher Prompt Question 18
Is there anything else that you think other pupils who are reintegrating back into school might find helpful?

Pupil Response 18
Maybe like a key worker, so a member of staff that is with them like most of the time. Also, I think this could be quite helpful for me as well, when I was at my old school, before I left it, they gave me a little card.

It was like, basically it said, please basically let me leave and go to like the pad, which was the area where all the head of houses were and stuff like that. So I could just like go there and have some space.

Researcher Prompt Question 19
What makes the designated space a 'good space' to be in?
Pupil Response 19
Quiet. Quite small. Just so I can just be on my own.

Researcher Prompt Question 20
What about staff?
Pupil Response 20
Sometimes the staff would come in and start asking me questions, like what was making me anxious and stuff, but I didn't really wanna tell them or like talk about it. I just wanted to think about it to myself. I think another thing is that teachers if they come in they would think they had to do something about it. But sometimes, like for example, talk to – if someone said something to me, they would feel like they have to talk to that person but I wouldn't want that because that would just like cause attention to me.

Researcher Prompt Question 21
Would it be helpful to have the option of someone to talk to in school?
Pupil Response 21
I think I would like the option of it, but I wouldn't always use it. Like there would be times when I just wanna like process it by myself and not tell anyone, but I think if it was there then I would know that I could if I wanted to go to someone. I found it quite hard to concentrate in lessons when I had like butterflies in my tummy.

Typed up Fieldnotes (Interview 2 with Pupil 2)

The main concern and the core category had been tentatively identified at this point and so there was a move to selective coding. The emerging theory was shared with the pupil and the interview took the form of a discussion about specific aspects of the emerging theory. At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	Mainstream isn't for everyone. Very specific way of teaching and treating everyone. That's not for everyone.
2	Some don't like it [mainstream education] – but can handle it. For others it's "too much".
3	I wasn't getting any help. They gave me a counsellor – then took it off me – don't know why. Probably because it wasn't working, it was a waste of time. That's all they really did.
4	Had a card to leave the lesson and then would be asked by teachers why needing to leave? "why, what's happened?" You gave it to me…I don't have to say why. Made me feel worse.
5	Teachers are always busy and can't give you the support and full attention if you need it.
6	It's almost like trying to make the job easy for themselves [teachers].
7	Emotions – ignored. I was upset in a lesson. Teacher didn't do anything, didn't say "is there anything I can do?" They completely ignored me. That's so bad – like they don't even care.
8	'Run away' from difficulties in school. How can I fight it myself [the difficulties in mainstream school], you're not helping me so…
9	So many people at schools have problems. Have a friend going through a lot of stuff I was going through. One day they didn't go to into school, couldn't face it. School didn't deal with it very well. Punctuation point? – "Schools should be doing something if it gets to that point". Before that they knew he was having problems, but they let it get to that.
10	Pupils can't handle it. They do something – a "cry for help"/ "acting up" in a lesson. They tell you off/ punish you when actually they just need help.
11	It's [mainstream school] not all bad. There's always something good about it…relationship with a teacher, someone you can talk to, a lesson.
12	So many kids have needs – but they can't handle it all.

13	My brother's got a friend who's struggling. Can't concentrate at school – making them not wanna like go in.
14	For some people the problem is with school, for some people it's other things – maybe in their life, e.g. parents got divorced or something. Then they're having a hard time at school. That's a different thing to someone having a hard time at the school because of the school. Anxious to go into school because of that environment – it being big/busy. Or, problems at home, distracting them at school.
15	Parents were speaking to the school [this pupil's parents].
16	One pupil – didn't do any homework, skipped lessons, acting up. If they contacted his parents, they probably wouldn't care.
17	Different ways of treating it – if the problem's with the school, school need to speak to you about it and figure out what those problems are. Think about if they can fix that, or another school is better.
18	For everyone it's different. Some students might love the way school works now and are doing well. Others hate it, think it's all wrong. They can't please everyone. They can't make it good for everyone.
19	Wouldn't speak to many people, want to blend in, wouldn't want it to be a big deal if you go back to school or if you have problems in school. Don't want people to know you have problems.
20	There's so many students there [in mainstream school], they can't just change a lesson/teaching style for just one person – it might suit someone else.
21	They [teachers in mainstream school] hardly ever asked us what we wanted.
22	The majority [of pupils] weren't happy.
23	It's when you start to feel really bad – like you can't even go to that lesson – even if you really want to.
24	"Pushed out is the right word for them not really helping and just trying to make their job easy". Pupil didn't want to go to school. Attendance Officer – trying to convince pupil to go back so it looked better on attendance. Absences/ non-attendance "looks bad" on schools. Was like they "pushed me out by not handling it properly but trying to keep me there because it looked good on them".
25	Belonging – if you know some of the teachers. If you feel like you don't belong there, what can people do about that? Might not have friends [i.e. this affects whether you feel as though you belong]. Might have problems and think you're the only one that has that. People more likely to reject school if they feel they don't belong.

26	You might have problems with way they teach. New teacher – way they taught didn't suit me at all, couldn't get it. Most of the class found it fine, can feel like you don't fit in if everyone else is fine with it.
27	Injustice – I never thought about that really [i.e. the concept of injustice]. I've thought about it as a whole - it's not fair on all the kids that they are being really strict and pushing everyone to get good grades. Never thought about it not being fair on me. Maybe because I know other people struggling too.
28	I did sort of feel like I was putting on a mask. Came home – was so happy I was home. It's not just like going to school and thinking it's boring, it's more than that.
29	Upset in the lesson – would worry what people think of me. Didn't like to get upset in lessons.
30	Being yourself – [Pupils] feel like they can't be themselves and just get on with it. Felt like I had to work hard to fit in. Didn't want to show how I was feeling. Cover it up.
31	Teachers being a bit more caring – that little change of teachers. You can come back and work fine – it won't affect your learning, it will improve it. Some teachers might care but they are not allowed to. Teachers have to be the same and have the same rules. Those rules aren't helping anyone – just making people want to break them.
32	Here [MET] if you're upset, restless, need a walk around – can do this.
33	Things they are doing to prevent people messing around – ruining it [mainstream school] – not fair. They control everything pretty much (i.e. uniform, earrings, wearing jewellery etc.) Sometimes can't wear your coat when it's cold. It's control. Can't be yourself – they want everyone to be the same.
34	They want everyone to be the same. It was so strict. They would tell you off for everything. So strict that it was affecting the kids – not many people liked it [in mainstream school]. My brother wouldn't leave [the mainstream school] because his friends are there.
35	Not allowed water bottles in lessons, not allowed toilet – these rules are silly. Things they're doing to stop people messing around, it is unfair on kids that actually need it. They might be messing around because they need to go for a walk, have a break from work.
36	Makes a difference if you have that friendship system there. Friendship system can help you stay/have your back. If you don't have that it can be really difficult. If you have a friendship group you might tell them [i.e. how you are feeling, any problems you have]. Can hide behind your friends. For the people that don't, you just want to hide away. Boys and girls are different – girls speak about it, boys don't.

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		Moving back to mainstream school:
	1	Well, I've done it before. I had TA, she's not in at the moment. TA went in with me.
	2	But when I went back in it happened really quick, it was like literally like a week, week and a half that she came in and then I was back in and that was it.
	3	That was when I was in year 6, so that was like 3 years ago now. I'm in like year 9…and remembering that was rough that.
	4	I knew everybody, it's just how I am, I know everybody here. I know everybody…but then with me knowing everybody, school was really stressful
	5	That was year 6 and then I went to high school, I went to [*name of school*]…and I feel like if it was rough going back into primary…and primary is laid back as anything…
	6	I struggled in high school as it was because I've got a very short attention span with my ADHD.
	7	I draw on my hands; I'm medicated for my attention span.
	8	I would draw on my hands and I got an hour and half detention for that…I'm medicated for my attention span and stuff like that, so I've been given detention and with how high schools are, I would be doing an hour and half every day…
	9	If the homework makes sense and is actually going to help me, I will actually attempt it. But when you actually have to write something down, cover it, copy it out off of memory…it made no sense…
	10	…if I didn't do it, I'd be doing an hour and half every day. I'd be getting like 3 or 4 pieces of homework every single day. If I didn't go to that detention I'd be kept in; it would be isolation. I'd be there all day in the same room, until half 5....

11	I've been to two primaries, I've been to a high school as well and I feel like, with a lot of schools, if you don't jump through hoops for that teacher, they don't like you as much.
12	…if I think I don't understand something I'll say something and then if they say something, like they've said something wrong or something like that, I'll contradict it.
13	…like German for example, because I couldn't sit there and speak in fluent German for example, after the teacher just told me, I'd zone out and I'd completely forget. I was medicated for that and I'd get in trouble for that…
14	I can name on one hand the teachers that liked me…
15	I got in trouble at [*name of school*] cos I'd write on my books; I designed the back of one of my books once. It was the back of my book, nobody's gonna see it…I just designed it a bit. My handwriting was alright then, it's gone to trash now because I wasn't in school for like a year and a half.
16	…I got detention for that, and my art teacher got me out of that detention because that's how I express myself, through drawing....and my history teacher understood me on a level that not many people have in the system…not many people ever have.
17	Same with my PE teacher cos it's something that, I love playing football and stuff like that, it's something that I'm passionate about. I love PE. I was doing trampolining and PE teacher would always end up using me as an example or something like that because I had a good bond with him.
18	Same with my two RE teachers. One RE teacher, I always had a laugh with him - I'm interested in stuff like that as well – I think it's important.
19	…there was like a select few teachers. I've had it in every school, there's been like one or two. At [*name of school*] I was lucky, I had quite a few who I got along with; erm all of them were really nice.
20	But then you have like 60 teachers in two weeks… You can have 120 teachers in two weeks. Having five you actually get along with, that can actually take time in understanding you - ain't good enough.
21	… I know it would cost money to put them through the training but like here, it's happened over time where they know how to deal with people with anxiety, depression, Autism, ADHD, all of that. Mainstream, it should be a need…
22	The TA I had, he was class. I would speak to him all the time. He was with me every lesson as an extra TA or something like that.
23	…it took a week to get me back into primary. It was stressful and it was quick, but I went back and I knew loads of people so it was fine – relatively.

24	But going back to [*name of high school*] I knew people from [*name of primary school*] who I haven't spoken to for three or four years…and if I go I've no longer got my two best mates with me.
25	…it was hard for me to go back to primary cos of SATs and stuff like that…
26	I'm good with my hands, I can do anything, I'm funny, I'm great, I'll get by…. I know what I wanna do with my life, I wanna work with my dad. I wanna go plastering...
27	With it being like that with SATs, that was hard enough, but imagine going back…
28	… in year 8, I heard people saying they were already going on about GCSEs in year eight…that's for like another four years. I'm year nine, I'm doing year ten. So, I've still got GCSEs and that getting drilled into me already…but day one of year eight…you don't need that pressure.
29	… imagine reintegrating and going back in; being sat down and having everything so laid back and chilled here.
30	I don't know whether they've got school records - I come so much further when I come here.
31	I was quite behind in high school - now I'm year nine, I'm doing year ten GCSE work.
32	A place like this where teachers understand you and you can talk to [*name of TA*].
33	When my grandad died, I didn't go to his funeral, but I came in. Came in to take mind off of it. Broke down and I was sat out there with [*name of TA*] for two hours talking. [*Name of TA*] hasn't said anything to anybody.
34	Having somebody like that who understands you… I get it's harder with a class of 30-35 but teachers should take time to get to know and understand.
35	It's so hard to go back to primary and do that [reintegration].
36	I'm scared, I don't want to go back to mainstream again. Every mainstream school I've been to I've been really badly bullied… It's the hardest thing, when you're getting bullied… I got bullied so bad and it went on from September to January and then I finally stood up for myself. I got suspended for two weeks. I got suspended for two weeks, I came back and had isolation for two days. Mentally and verbally it's worse - it gets into your head. Getting bruised and getting hurt that can heal.
37	When I do go back into school, I won't be going back into mainstream, I'll be going back to something else.

38	Now in my generation, nobody's going to give you confidence; you've got to give it yourself…
39	I've got a really good outlook, good work ethic, outlook on life and that's just something I've learnt to get to. I've learnt to take stuff on the chin…
40	… going back into primary was rough, imagine going back into year 9, year 10.
41	I'm not on the books of any school - it won't ever happen - but if I got sent back to [*name of high school*], I can guarantee, within a week, I'd be back out. I'd get my mum to take me back out.
42	I'm comfortable here [at the MET] but if I went to a mainstream school I didn't know, I wouldn't be able to [talk to people].
43	I've learnt to take stuff on the chin…
44	You've got to take stuff on the chin and get over it - can't let things that happened hold you back in life. You can still let things that have happened worry you.
45	I got an hour and a half detention for drawing on my hand - something I'm medicated for - what's the logic in that.
46	How the school goes is based very heavily on the head. I've been very unlucky cos all my heads in mainstream have hated me…
47	I've got a good work ethic, I get on with so many people, it's just how I am, I'm likeable, and I found it rough to go back in [to primary school].
48	… that was really quick. So, whether it's slow or quick, I don't think it makes a difference. It's just fact: it's hard to go back in.
49	I can't go back, I won't be able to deal with it. If I did, my biggest issue would be getting bullied again.
50	I'd get into trouble.
51	I've only ever got into a fight in school once, that's when I ended up having to defend myself.
52	…if I did get bullied…I'd have to stand my own.
53	I'm not a follower, I won't follow a trend… I'll do a trend five years later, when its dead, and try and bring it back...
54	[Bullying] it's the worst thing in the world. Obviously worse things that happen in the world but people don't realise …it won't just impact them for then.
55	Going back into primary was hard enough and with all this stuff that happens in mainstream high schools, imagine just going back in.

56		The entire system needs rethinking…
57		Not only just having a TA there with you, but like, for instance give you a timetable and give you like, pick three lessons for one day or something like that… Going around and meeting all the teachers needs to happen.
58		…and you go in for those three lessons kinda thing – to start with – of course you can't do that forever. Time – letting you settle in. giving you enough time to settle in, meet new people and that. Yeah I get you can't be like that for months and months and months. Yeah, but a reasonable amount of time, it just needs to happen.
59		Meeting – like going around meeting all the teachers and that needs to happen.
60		And, again, it's never gonna happen cos it's the system and the systems broken, like, erm, teachers need to be trained in how to deal with anxiety, autism, ADHD and that.
61		It really annoys me because in year six, I was doing some like really stupid thing, I can't even remember, and I was thinking, 'Why are you teaching me this, and not basic first aid?', thing that could literally save thousands of lives by giving people first aid – knowledge…
62		I know it sounds like I'm playing on it, I'm not. People with depression, suicide rates are so up, but do you know why? Yeah you can go and see a therapist but rarely there's therapists actually qualified. Yeah they've got a PhD, yeah they've got A levels and all that but for a school therapist, that not enough.
63		Something that just needs to be fixed…and just having like basic training in Autism, ADHD, all these different things, ASD, ADD, all of these different things. Even if it's just basic common knowledge, just the simplest bit of training for it would make so much more difference.
64		I was always hyperactive and all of that, but then it would all build up cos I was scared to be myself cos of…it's the system innit…and it's like if you don't fit into societal expectations of 'normal', you stand out kinda thing and that used to be what you were meant to do…
65		Even just basic things like genuine, basic consideration…
66		Really, the system just does not work. It's got too many holes in it; it's too leaky.
67		To have a basic connect…the maths teacher here, I speak to so much…the teachers here, yeah I get there's likes what four, five, but still, if you went around, and even if it was just a two minute thing to have a quick conversation with each teacher, you have a bond.
68		And it's the system…it's so broken…

69	I hate seeing kids who like, when I was six, when I was diagnosed and put on medication and I hate seeing that, knowing that cos they've got ADHD and autism and all of this, I hate knowing that they're gonna have the same s**t as I did when they go to high school.
70	Nowadays in the school system, a kid with ADHD and autism doesn't stand a chance in it because nobody understands. Nobody in the system understands this now…
71	… I know I just said, yeah it's never gonna happen, but just basic training would literally be half the job you need in ADD, ADHD, ASD, Autism, epilepsy, depression, anxiety, all this simplest bit of training would do so much.
72	Nobody realises…and it's funny cos me now saying this nobody's gonna pay attention to it…no, not in this, but like if I went and said this about the system to somebody who was high up, nobody would listen to me. But the second one person who is high up in a system clicks on…
73	People like what you're doing now, if you said this now, people wouldn't pay attention, but like if somebody high up in like the government or something said it…done straight away…done. Guarantee it. And it's so bad…
74	It takes years – the experience here – but they haven't even had training on it [mental health and additional needs].
75	But imagine if it was a requirement for a teacher to go and work in in a mainstream school, to have, you need to have a basic understanding. Yeah, you don't have to go and have a PhD and your A levels and all of this for it; you just need basic understanding.
76	Because people don't understand my issues, they look down on it…and yeah, granted, not all teachers know I have it, yeah. But the point is, you should it's one of those where you just should know that stuff. You need to have a basic understanding.
77	With me not going back to mainstream, and I stand by that…
78	and if I do, I will be on a part-time timetable, I can't do full time; it would get…it would be too much.
79	*[Name of Teacher]*, I can talk to her about anything and I feel like why I've come so far in maths is because I've got a maths teacher that I like and it's a lesson that I like.
80	I feel like teachers who have an understanding…again I'll say it, basic training, even if it's like a one, hour and a half lesson but the thing is, it would make such a difference.

81	Everybody has one person who's said one thing, who makes a difference. Mine was my art teacher at [*name of high school*]. He's done so many things, he was a god send, he was a good person, a genuinely good person…
82	…and he said one thing that's stuck with me now, this was like maybe three years ago. He asked me what was up and I told him I'd had a long day. It makes no sense whatsoever, but it just stuck with me… 'there is no such thing as a long day, there's twenty-four hours in each day, no matter what'…and it just stuck with me, I don't know why.
83	It just made me realise that, I've always been a bit of an overthinker, it just made me realise that I've been wasting too much time trying to make people like me and worrying about things that…
84	I feel like, if I actually had a platform, like somewhere like politicians who aren't doing anything, who are making it worse. I feel like, if I had a platform, if I had a platform like they do, or if one good person had a platform like they do…like you or people that are doing your work now, instead of those having the platform and them using it so negatively.
85	…it just shows that, just anything, like the smallest things, like [*name of teacher*], a few more teachers like [*name of teacher*], it would help so much, because you can just talk to [*name of teacher*] about anything.
86	It's just, the system's broken innit…
87	If I actually had the platform to say this stuff with thousands, maybe millions of kids, with Autism and ADHD wouldn't have, wouldn't go through what I've…
88	People who know how, it's just body language as well…it's just body language and basically saying the right thing.

Fieldnotes made by the researcher are based upon information shared by participants. Fieldnotes include use of participants' verbatim quotes and short abbreviated notes (that are not a direct transcription).

This interview was initially minimally structured, using specific prompt questions (see Appendix 10). Additional prompt questions were asked in response to information shared by the pupil, with the aim of eliciting further detail. The main concern and core category had not been identified at this point; therefore, this data was open coded (i.e. in vivo and analytic coding). At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	I have no intention of reintegrating [into mainstream].
2	I have to do A-levels or something cos we have to be in education.
3	There's no MET unit for that unfortunately, so I have to reintegrate eventually at the end of this year. If it were my choice, I would not be doing it. Or at least there'd be an option to continue the MET into sixth form - not possible for funding and staffing reasons.
4	I think I'm going to go to my old school for sixth form. That was the plan… but I don't think I can face going back.
5	The only reason I wanna go back is cos that's where my friends are, but I recognise that that's the place where it all went wrong the first time. Don't know where I'm going next, probably there out of fear of other options.
6	That's the only one, sixth form, like [*name of high school*] is the only thing I know anything about, so out of fear it's likely I'll go back.
7	I've never been good with change - one of the reasons I'm here is because of it. It's such a big issue and to have to change school, again, cos it's first to middle, middle to high, high to here, and then here back to high, I wouldn't be able to do it.
8	The change would be a massive shock to my system and it would take my already fragile mental state pretty, pretty far down I think.
9	This is a small place, there are rooms when you can be alone. There are places you can go where there won't be anybody…where you can just wait - the people here understand that.
10	Very sensitive to noise, high pitches, loud noises. In a massive room, with a thousand screaming teenagers; I can't deal with my own sounds, so the stress of being around so many people, to combat my sensory issues so severely would be a big problem.

11	There's a large variety of people – a lot of differences. There are people who like sports, which I don't.
12	In mainstream people want to make friends, don't want to be lonely in such a big place. It's possible someone will want to talk to me, who I don't share interests with.
13	Awkwardness of meeting new people – it's one of the things I won't be able to deal with.
14	Friends – we grew up together, as we grew we developed different interests – we've changed. May not understand what they're going on about, but I like them as people.
15	I can't make a friend like that because we don't have anything in common, we [friends] just know we like each other. If none of them have your interests and you don't have those foundations, you're stuck.
16	I'm quite happy to not have friends. In such a big school you don't have choice – you've got to make friends – you'll be lonely surrounded by thousands of people.
17	Unspoken rule here – don't ask why other pupils are here. Can sort of tell when someone comes that they're similar to you. They'll understand your feelings. People who've not had similar experiences won't understand.
18	People here you trust – they're here and so are you. Don't think staff and kids are trained/taught to understand neurodiversion. Kids aren't taught about neurodiversity. Teachers don't know, aren't taught to understand how to help us.
19	Kids think it's normal [the way they feel when depressed]. Not taught about it – it doesn't occur to them.
20	People like me, we aren't just different, we work completely differently. It's so hard to explain to people who don't understand it.
21	Would teaching on ASD/ neurodiversity be taught properly and received well?
22	It's hell – school as a place isn't very nice. Not a nice building to be in. The first day I went there I thought 'I don't like this place' – but didn't have a choice. Didn't feel like there was anywhere else I could go. Didn't have a choice – there were other factors stopping me going to all the other ones [mainstream high schools].
23	There's the confusion and fear [going to mainstream college/ sixth form] of I don't know what I'm doing. Having to make yet more choices. I've never done it before [mainstream college/ sixth form] – new routine.
24	Experiencing curiosity and confusion that cannot have satiated because no one understands what I'm talking about. I wanna know what's going on but they never tell you that.

25	I try to think about it as little as possible [going into mainstream sixth form/ college], talking about it is stressful.
26	Other people's accounts of what happens at sixth form varies. Two very contrasting stories – don't know who to believe. You're both [friends] very different to me.
27	No one seems to understand the questions I ask about sixth form. This happens and that's how it is. I need to know the very specifics. I have no idea what's going on. Your experience of school is vastly different to mine. It's the confusion, the fear, not knowing what's happening. Don't know what to ask people so that I know what's going on. The whole parade of 'what?'
28	They [neurotypical students] know what to ask each other to get a certain answer. It's not my friends' fault but they think differently to me.
29	I didn't think I was particularly anxious until I left [mainstream]. When something is so constant you don't realise. Nothing to compare it to – didn't realise I was stressed. It suddenly makes a whole lot of sense – when CAMHS suggested it was stress. I can't really work things out on my own. Assume it's fine – until someone tells me it's not. Assume feeling same way as others. Didn't occur to me that wasn't the norm [having stress dreams] – pretended to be playing on video games the same as other kids who stay up late and are tired. That amount of stress and what it did to me – physically and mentally – wasn't normal. Kids don't realise it's not normal/ that it's a problem, don't realise that they're different.
30	Mental health needs should be taught and common knowledge that these aren't to be expected and who can support you.
31	People are different – some don't want to accept mental health difficulties, other people would think it's helpful/ makes sense.
32	Mainstream schools need experts in these kinds of things, or who at least know something. Base level, degree level – we know what's going on, we know how to help you.
33	Someone you can report to, anonymously perhaps. Have someone to go to if something is needed.
34	Neurodiversity, biodiversity, mental health – someone who knows what they're talking about, how to deal with problems they have, knows how to care for them.
35	Should be procedure to have someone who knows what they're talking about and knows how to help people. Someone who knows about neurodivergence – can teach staff/ kids about it and remove the stigma.
36	Looking after the young people is your duty – looking after the young people is pretty important.
37	Need trained professionals who know how to help us.

38	I'm not trying to revolutionise the education system but, it needs to be revolutionised. Teacher training – need to be taught, you are not the only four-mattered person. There are lots of different kinds of neurodivergent, you can't put us all under same banner.
39	Should be common knowledge and common training – being taught how to look after people.
40	Education should be changed to accommodate people like us, i.e. the way lessons are taught and exams are taken, which would have meant I wouldn't have ended up here in the first place. Option of a vocal exam, for those who find it difficult to write down answers. Exams in different formats. Some pupils are told 'no' to using overlays. It's just going to give an even playing field – make it easier.
41	A wider way of learning what you know. Not everyone can write and read a textbook and remember it. We have to be taught in different ways.
42	Broader range/ways of teaching to give everyone an equal advantage.
43	If taught in the optimal way, wouldn't have ended up here.
44	Stress of exams would still be there but exams would be formatted so pupil could do them.
45	Neurodivergence – means they can't express their intelligence in a certain way, don't get the grades. Examiners are looking for a certain way of thinking.
46	Some people can be really dirtied by this system. Clever pupils won't get chance to show off intelligence. System isn't designed for them, it's designed for this specific type of person. To get the best, you have to think that way. Doesn't matter if you're intelligent – if you don't think that way, later in life it affects higher education, jobs (i.e. getting high paid jobs).
47	Needs to be taught so everyone has equal chance – show your intelligence in way that's best suited for you and do your best, rather than wow them with disappointment.
48	People who can verbally answer but can't write it down – system is against those people because you have to write it down. Were they not forced to write it down, they would get nines.
49	No matter how intelligent you are, if you can't write it down, you get a four – something they deserve better than.
50	Should be a broader way of showing what you know.
51	It's a memory test, not intelligence.
52	Exams and lessons should be done in different ways to accommodate myself, my friends, people who think they way we do, or just not the neurotypical ways. Then

	would know I can do the things people say I can. There would be pressure but I would feel I'm capable of it.
53	Now, you can't, it's not made for people like you. If you can't write it down, it doesn't matter how clever you are.
54	Pressure can be really encouraging if you can do it and it's taught the way you can do it. Discouraging if they expect what you can't do and it's not your fault. Pressure can be a good thing or bad thing.
55	[Education] system is flawed. Need status to be able to make the changes – they're such big changes.
56	Being singled out, segregated between 'normal' and not – don't want this. We want to be around other people. Good to be around people who think differently. Being around people you can learn from.
57	I'm really good at remembering numbers, apparently this isn't 'normal'. It's not normal to have such good memory for numbers.
58	Need to understand each other and be able to accommodate each other.
59	Singling out kids wouldn't be good for them (i.e. sending them to a different school).
60	Can't leave kids like us to fend for ourselves. Should have a careworker with each individual kid who's reintegrated [into mainstream school]. Careworker helps them, helps educate others about the things they need makes sure they're thriving in mainstream. Someone there to understand you and guide you [in mainstream].
61	Gradual transition period, going across on a 'bridge'. Gradually transferring responsibility from MET to school.

The previous interview with Pupil 4 had to be cut short owing to time constraints and it was apparent that the participant had more to share. Consequently, I returned to interview Pupil 4 again, to continue from the point at which the previous interview finished.

1	There should definitely be someone that people get to know – a transition officer almost. Someone whose job is to know the student and make students feel safe – make students trust them.
2	Pupils should know who their care worker is – careworker can help them. Careworker would have to know a lot about schools and the children they're dealing with. They would need to know a lot about the school the kid was going back to. Someone here [MET] who knows all the students, whether or not they have any intentions of being reintegrated – just in case one of them ends up being reintegrated.
3	There would have to be careworkers from the school they were reintegrating into. Transition period – a gradual thing.
4	A lot of people here can't deal with change.
5	During that period [reintegrating] new careworker needs to get to know student. Once student is finally trusting of them, once relationship has been built, only then can old worker start to fade out, gradually leave the child.
6	There's more than just knowing what you're talking about, there's being educated and then there's understanding. I imagine that a lot of the careworkers who go into the profession they respect neurodivergent kids, but I don't think they are them – so it's a lot harder to understand them.
7	They need to get the kid and their mental blocks, what really troubles the child and how to deal with that. Careworker needs to be able to help in a way that is effective to the child, rather than way that would be effective to someone neurotypical - there is a massive difference.
8	Various subjects should definitely be optional. PE is a massive anxiety for loads of kids. One of the main problems for me at mainstream school was I couldn't do PE. I absolutely couldn't stand it. Would deliberately miss the days where I did PE. Physically couldn't do the lesson or mentally couldn't cope doing it. That's a really common thing, not just for neurodivergent kids but students of all kinds.
9	An option to do a private lesson during PE – cover things they've missed, go over things they don't understand rather than doing PE.
10	Trouble eating at regular times – lunchtimes. Hard to be around people and eat around people. Feels like everyone's watching you. Somewhere you can be alone at lunchtimes would help.

11	Going back into mainstream - Go into school for three lessons on regular timetable. Would help to not immediately have to go into lessons with loads of other people, just being in school is nerve-wracking enough. Just a teacher, teaching you content by yourself in separate room – would be helpful.
12	Can't even be in the same town as old school – gives me the shakes. Just being there [in mainstream school] is a big step. Just being in the room and not even doing the lesson – would be a massive step. Not standing in corner and watching – sitting down at desk, just not doing work because that's hard. Watching other people do work and just get on with it. There's not the added stress of actually doing the work – nice to just see what the classes are like.
13	Can be hard to accept wearing a uniform. For various reasons don't like wearing them. Didn't like being associated with the school – hated it. Uniform was uncomfortable – it was awful. Uniform – it's not just clothes. The clothes have connotations and there's mental links between the clothes and school. Being able to just wear the clothes is a struggle.
14	There are a lot of hurdles [to going back into mainstream school] – to other people, most of them are invisible.
15	Someone to answer all the questions we had – without judgment. At the moment no one I can ask about various things. They don't think same way I do. Can't answer the questions I have – to them it would never occur that that was something to think about. There's information I specifically want, that you wouldn't think is something I would want – won't understand why I'm asking for that. So I'll keep asking same question.
16	Someone who answers questions in a way we understood. Someone who knew the kind of thing people like me ask and kind of thing people like me need to know – would be helpful.
17	Be taught how other people understand things. Young kids with Autism and ADHD and things like that – don't realise people think differently to them. Be taught the neurotypical way to think and how to ask questions to a neurotypical person and have them answer the way you want them to.
18	Taught to not only integrate into a school but into a society surrounded by people who think differently, would be quite helpful. Would be helpful for typical people to be taught way divergent people think – it's a two-way thing to know how each other works.
19	Helpful if we were constantly surrounded by people who think differently.
20	Working with neurotypical people on projects – hard. What I need to do, what needs to be done – have no way of telling them. They don't seem to understand it same way I do. Want project work to be optional. Always found it impossible to do project work. Never paired up with anyone. If I was working with someone else – couldn't do it.

21	Working with someone else should not be compulsory – a teaching style that needs to be eradicated. Well, not eradicated because need to be able to work with others – teamwork. Some kids find it stressful or plain impossible to do.
22	Doesn't help that I never got on with any of the people I was put in group with.
23	Working in a class surrounded by people – a problem.
24	Smaller classes would help – that would help most kids to be honest. Would also help the teachers. Only problem with smaller class sizes – so many kids, not enough teachers.
25	Being in a room with 10 people is stressful for me. Being in room with 30 is hell. Gradually introduced to more and more people being in a room at once. Gradually get more comfortable with that.
26	I can't change the system – I know nothing I say right now is going to stop 30 people being in a room. I can't change that, I would if I could.
27	A lot of people have trouble writing in notebooks – relate them too much to school and schoolwork. If it's A4, some people won't touch it because of connotations to school.
28	[In mainstream school] you will have to write on lined paper whether you like it or not. You will have to write in exercise books. Writing in a specific way. Handwriting is something in mainstream school that everyone obsesses over. Loads of us have trouble with handwriting. Stop caring what our handwriting looks like – so long as it's readable. Would be better if that wasn't obsessed over.
29	Going though English books – it's all handwriting. "Get better at your handwriting" – too much priority put on that. It's something that kids are taught to stress over and not important.
30	Being taught to write readably is important. Once you get to point that it's readable/can tell what it says – stop caring about how it looks – after that it should be all about quality of writing, not how it looks – that's stupid.
31	If they have such awful handwriting, let them type it out. A lot of us stress about handwriting and not being able to write fast enough. Can type faster than I write. Would be a lot more comfortable typing essays. Exams – use laptops, would feel better typing it.
32	Handwriting – a load of kids get stressed about it and it's such a petty thing. Would be better if that wasn't something mainstream schools dwelled upon.
33	If I'm doing the work and doing it well – don't make me do it in your way.
34	In exams – certain ways to do things that will get more marks. Don't get why… if I get the answer – gimme the marks.

35	Schools to be broader with the methods they teach or methods they're accepting of.
36	Things you do certain ways because you always have and because you're good at them and because they work – let us do what we like. You're very pressed to do it in certain way.
37	New exam boards and mainstream schools in general – there are things you have to do in very specific method. Stray from that in any way, show any sort of divergence/diversity in method – don't get the marks.
38	Being allowed to do things in a way that it isn't the certain way – that would be good. Don't like being told to do it in a certain way when my way works perfectly well. Stop making me do it your way – my way works.

Typed up Fieldnotes (Interview 3 with Pupil 4)

The main concern and the core category had been tentatively identified at this point and so there was a move to selective coding. The emerging theory was shared with the pupil and the interview took the form of a discussion about specific aspects of the emerging theory. At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	To an extent we all tried [surviving/ coping in mainstream education]. We are pushed out. You can keep trying as much as you want. If you're not meant for mainstream, you're not.
2	'Pushed out' because if that situation gets so bad you just can't [cope].
3	Never had a good time in mainstream. I would always have been 'pushed out' at some point.
4	The trying [to cope] leads to the rejection of mainstream altogether. I got really sick. Even without that catalyst, it was always going to happen. Didn't have the support mechanisms.
5	I fell ill so couldn't go in anyway. Shouldn't be there – I was right to go. Even without the illness I shouldn't have been there. I realised I was rejecting it after having accidentally rejected it.
6	Most of us have that turning point – you're trying really hard then something happens that makes you reject it. Could be something small – a friendship goes sour, fail an assignment. Then you're like "I'm not doing it any more…I give up…"
7	I think most of us do both trying and rejecting. You can keep trying as long as you want – you're going to leave, because someone like me just can't cope. It might be, it just gets too much.
8	We're just surviving, we aren't enjoying it, not living. The longer you try to survive with wrong survival methods, the more you're gonna fail. A lot of us really tried to do the surviving. A lot of us did use those methods to cope [avoiding, escaping], but they don't always work and some of us don't have them in the first place. Desert island metaphor – lack of resources.
9	The surviving/coping – we are there because we have to be – we are doing what we can. It's going wrong.
10	I couldn't escape my lessons – that gave me anxiety. Wasn't allowed to leave the room.
11	Don't get on with someone – best way to avoid having a fight with them is just don't go near them.

12	Mainstream – didn't have any control over what happened, completely helpless. Had no control over the system or own life. This is what your life has to be. Had to lose every real aspiration I had because I didn't have any control over making it happen. Had no control over what I did, who I wanted to become.
13	It's only working for a specific type of person. People are different and it needs to be able to respect that and work with that – it just doesn't.
14	It really is just survival – it's not enjoying it.
15	Some people thrive in mainstream – I don't think it's us. We thrive in a situation that isn't that. A lot of us can definitely thrive in right situations – that [mainstream education] is not one of them. I don't think many of us thrive in mainstream.
16	Education is a right – but in a way feels like it's not. It's only working for a specific type of person.
17	People have always been different - people always will be. System is flawed because it's not made for people like us. It needs development and change because world is changing around it. It's stuck in the past.
18	One thing that kept me there so long was friends – was planning on going back because of them. There are definitely factors keeping you there. But definitely factors that push you away that school has no control over.
19	Have never fitted in because I am different. Tried to fit in. You need to fit in to be at a school – is what it feels like. Doing things the way we're told to, not the way it works. Did this method of multiplication I was told to, because I have to, to fit in, even if it's not right for me.
20	Feel like didn't really have a choice. Had to try and be someone I wasn't. Had to pretend to like things and not like things. The socially accepted behaviour was ridiculous – a terrible human being. Often told to do the socially accepted things. Seen as weird because I wasn't bullying people I liked.
21	We don't fit in. We try to, so people don't find us weird. We fail because we can't fit in because we're different. Tried so hard to not be different – that's how you fit in.
22	A lot of fitting in – pretty much every aspect of school – what you wore, what your name was. You can't fit in.
23	I'm sure I'm not the only one who doesn't belong in a place where they aren't wanted. Because I wasn't. The staff wanted me cos I made statistics look fantastic, the students didn't, because I'm a 'horrible' person – they didn't enjoy spending time with me.
24	My targets were all 9s – my school liked me a lot for this.

25	The more time I spent away [from school], the more I realised it's not me they care about, its completely my grades and statistics I'm going to give them. I didn't belong because they [school] didn't want me to. They wanted my grades – they don't want me. Only reason they [school] tried to support me was so I could give them their straight nines and boost their statistics.
26	Support mechanisms were for my education, which I wasn't getting, not for me. Weren't about my mental health. Never tried to do it for me – tried to do it for my grades.
27	Schools have specific way of saying everything should be the way it is. If you don't fit in you're punished – by system, by staff, by judgement from other pupils. Pupils refuse to talk to you, be in any way social with you.
28	At MET – for first time ever felt like I belonged.
29	Injustice – even between the students. It is ruining kids' mental health. Got punished for not doing homework, other students didn't get in as much trouble. It was unjust that they did exactly same, yet I got punished more.
30	School didn't try to hide the injustice – treating pupils differently. Just tried to make me do things because it would look good and reflect well on them.
31	What's that? Individuality - no that's banned. Not allowed any self-expression.
32	Being yourself is something you can't do at schools – we just want to be us. No tolerance for people to be different – weren't allowed to be. Had to wear hair in same way, same clothes. Not allowed to look different. Same answer but a different way of working it out – wasn't allowed it.

Appendix 3: Teacher (Medical Education Team) Participant Interview (Typed-up Fieldnotes)

Fieldnotes made by the researcher are based upon information shared by participants. Fieldnotes include use of participants' verbatim quotes and short abbreviated notes (that are not a direct transcription).

The main concern and the core category had been tentatively identified at this point and so there was a move to selective coding. The interview took the form of an open discussion, with reference to aspects of the emerging theory. At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	On paper, pupils might have 'extreme' problems – anxiety, violent, aggressive to teachers. Often, this doesn't materialise in MET. Pupils work out it's safe [in MET], smaller numbers, other kids quite friendly.
2	Reintegration – when it rears its ugly head, causes issues.
3	We'd love to exist as a long-term provision.
4	Supporting pupils' understanding – It's easier to understand maths here, there's not 30 other kids and you're explaining it, can sit by the pupil.
5	Relationships with other kids [in mainstream school] can be difficult. Pupils might have had difficult relationships with staff in mainstream.
6	Providing care: That kind of care [in the MET] cannot happen in a school. Pupils want TLC. Who wouldn't want to be looked after?
7	Can see how pupils are feeling from facial expressions for example.
8	Mainstream schools: Targets, head on your back, wouldn't have had time in mainstream – to provide the care. Under pressure.
9	How do we get them [pupils] back to exactly the same environment? Not enough time to support reintegration properly. Reintegration – it's got to be right. Works well when time to liaise with staff to see where problems are, check-in on students. Gradual transition back into mainstream is needed, with a lot of support. A member of staff responsible for transition, make the pupil feel at home. MET – getting the pupil's skills back up, develop confidence.
10	Go in for favourite lessons, time spent in the hub, getting there early, leaving early.
11	Consistency – staff member away, changing plans, nobody knew where the pupil was supposed to be.
12	Student was anxious – staff member's perception, 'oh they always say that'.
13	Some schools – don't want child back, attendance and exam results making school look bad. It's shocking, school say no. Schools have probably seen a different

	child. Special schools – "we're full". Some schools bend over backwards and are excellent.
14	There's kids, there's no way they could go back to mainstream school. I ask the students – what could schools do to make it easier?
15	One pupil – seated next to people she didn't know, doesn't understand the work.
16	Mainstream – fast-paced, lots of content to get through, aimed at the 5 that are keeping up, 'gotta keep up with the fastest kids'. Not the teacher's fault, you've got work to get through. For an anxious pupil, this has negative impact on self-esteem, "I'm thick, I can't do it".
17	MET – changing lessons to suit the pupils' needs. Bespoke approach. I don't come in with a plan for a lesson and stick to that no matter what. Teaching staff are flexible.
18	Meeting individual needs – Know a pupil has had a bad week, I'll give them something else to do, for confidence building.
19	Pupils know, "If I'm not feeling it, staff will give me something different…I'll still be learning, but it won't be that". Not forcing them to do the work – now is not the time.
20	Relaxed attitude – then they want to learn and cover more than they would have done.
21	Some pupils might have missed homework, leads to cycle of detentions, then refusing to go to school.
22	Pupils with ASD – the language might not suit them [i.e. language being used in mainstream classroom]. Here I'll see they obviously haven't understood it. With a big class, wouldn't have the time to do that. Here I do have the time - I will sit by them and draw it.
23	Pupils mask problems really well – act as though they've understood what we're saying to them, when they haven't.
24	Issues for pupils in mainstream school: noise, curriculum, 'naughtiness'. Here, the teacher might go out of classroom and no one says a word – pupils like that.
25	Looking after them – The kids we've got, I'm not gonna get upset about covering the topics. Some pupils might need, "We'll look after you today", get them a drink etc. One pupil with significant health needs – "We'll just look after him, it's fine". Pupil did art, hadn't done any maths, hadn't done any English. Can't do that in mainstream. That person was 'naughty' in mainstream, would have probably got sent home, argued with teacher, had a fight.
26	Pupils feel hard done by [experiences in mainstream].

27	'Bad'/ disruptive behaviour – stems from anxiety. Address what is wrong with the pupil - I've got to catch up with them and see what's wrong. In reality haven't got time [in mainstream]. I'd like to think, as a human being, if somebody came in, acting in a way that isn't normal for them, I would have a quiet word, "Are you okay, I noticed you're looking a bit…"
28	Communication with behaviours – If you're anxious, doesn't mean you're crying in a corner. 'Difficult' kids – underlying anxiety.
29	Recognition of pupil needs – Why are you behaving like that? What is wrong? What can we do to help you? That's all they [pupils] want sometimes. Recognition that they've had a bad day.
30	Behaviour policy – Head teacher imposed. If you've got a policy, you don't stick to that policy, you're in trouble with your managers, not sure what you can do about it.
31	Nurturing approach at the MET – these kids do need nurturing.
32	In mainstream there are large classes, but there should be a way of knowing them [pupils] well enough to see that that's happening – I'd like to think, even if my class was bigger, I'd still notice.
33	Knowing the kids well. Knowing how to deal with each individual – know about which football team they support.
34	I can't talk academically about ASD but would know how to deal with an individual – you just know them, you just know them well enough. In mainstream school, pupil with ASD couldn't tell the truth (i.e. something that is perceived by others as being rude) – this would be perceived as being 'naughty'.
35	Importance of sense of humour and patience.
36	In mainstream – battle between getting the job done and affording to care. If you're in a caring profession I don't see how you can separate the two really, but I get it.
37	Remember working in mainstream and thinking I could get my job done if the pupils weren't here. Wouldn't want to work in mainstream again, wouldn't get to know all the little individuals, what was going on and stuff.
38	Teacher [in mainstream] couldn't concern herself with the fact that pupil had been upset.
39	In MET, staff are permitted to respond to pupils' need in a way the staff member sees fit – won't get into trouble. In mainstream their "hands are tied".
40	System must have failed pupils at some point. Why is pupil here [MET] if the provision here should have also been provided in mainstream school? Why do pupils arrive at MET when at 'crisis point'. Too late – terrible memories of school.

	Catch pupils earlier – when things start to "go wrong". Something must have happened sooner. Go in earlier.
41	If I felt under pressure [teaching in mainstream education] I'd leave. Here [MET] have the patience and time to deal with it all.
42	'Crisis point' – Why do we get them [in the MET] when it's almost 'crisis point'. It's too late, memories of school terrible, been through some stuff at home, been violent. Would be better to 'catch' the student before it gets to 'crisis point' – at point where things start to go wrong for them. Prevention would be so much better – going in earlier.
43	Head [in mainstream school] has to decide – Exam factory or look after health and wellbeing at expense of exam results. Head will lose their job. I feel for heads.
44	All kids are so different – some will fit in with the crowd. Supporting pupils to develop their resilience and develop social skills.
45	Some anxious pupils present as hard working but struggling inside. Just because you're behaving well you've got to suffer?
46	It's difficult to strike a balance between being flexible and implementing boundaries. But know the kids well – know if they're taking the mick or if they're playing up.
47	Pupils should be mixing, should be in school doing activities the school offers.
48	If a pupil is stuck, we don't have that pressure from above, can teach them something easier. Who doesn't want to do well? External pressures [in mainstream school] – teacher can't slow down.
49	Pupils benefit from a kind face.
50	Pupils get upset about grades if grades are lower than they should be. Tell students, "life has happened, you're not a robot" (i.e. things have happened in their lives that have affected their grades). Pressures on students to get grades in mainstream school. Schools are data. Pupil might opt out of school – that's my excuse for not getting the grades.
51	I wouldn't want to be a school because we'd be 'OFSTEDed' and subject to all the targets I explained I don't want.
52	In the big scheme of things, when you've got anxiety/mental health issues, does it really matter that you only got 5 GCSEs.

Appendix 4: Educational Psychologist Participant Interviews (Fieldnotes)

Appendix 4a: Typed up Fieldnotes (Interview with Educational Psychologist 1)

Fieldnotes made by the researcher are based upon information shared by participants. Fieldnotes include use of participants' verbatim quotes and short abbreviated notes (that are not a direct transcription).

The main concern and the core category had been identified at this point and so there was a move to selective coding and saturating the core category and related concepts. The interview took the form of a discussion about specific aspects of the emerging theory. At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	EPs work with kids, parents, teachers, systems.
2	Systems: Working with systems is more difficult. Expectations of schools are more difficult to work with. More rigid. Easier to work with kid, teacher, pastoral staff, Head Teacher. Difficulties in achieving systemic change.
3	May hear comments like "Child couldn't possibly be educated in mainstream". Schools genuinely believe this. Not all schools are like this – but it's the majority.
4	Not necessarily trying to accommodate their [pupil's] needs. 'Babysitting' pupils until they can move them to another school. Put a TA with pupil who will 'jolly' them along – focus on the school-work. No differentiation – "my job is to get him through the curriculum". Some schools could accommodate this child and still follow the curriculum, so why can't others?
5	Or, could teach them [pupils] the skills needed to manage anxiety, the study skills needed to attempt work, concentration skills needed to increasingly concentrate for longer periods. Schools now less likely to go down this route.
6	Parents accept inevitability of school not being able to meet needs.
7	In the past, SENCo often senior member of staff and able to advocate for child.
8	Culture of one school – provision and resources i.e. for pupils with ASD. Teaching skills and setting up a quasi-friendship group for them.
9	Pupils getting into trouble – "Why can't you offer something else to do at break/lunchtimes?" might get response "We don't do that …"
10	SENCo – Focus of SENCo role has changed; how they define their role. Now more to do with admin, less to do with meeting needs of a wide range of kids. SENCOs focused on specific roles, reviews to do and teaching commitments. Nobody advocating for social needs of kids.

11	SENCo expertise – Decisions would often be made by a SENCo, qualified teacher – how do I educate child to give them the skills they need to survive in school?
12	SENCo – spent a lot of time doing exam dispensations. School want good exam results.
13	Some schools have good inclusive policies, other than putting TAs into classes.
14	These kids have not been spoken to – i.e. pastoral support/mentoring. Doesn't appear to be much talking to kids. Being offered a 'slot' – have a chat, opportunity to discuss anything you're having problems with.
15	For some pupils, no positive opportunity to talk to a member of staff.
16	Schools may use a problem-solving model – solve the issue, don't get to the bottom of 'why' they have an issue.
17	'Critical turning point' – it's not a sudden event, it's an event waiting to happen.
18	Pupil wasn't being listened to. Approach of staff member wasn't right.
19	The school as a system: Has a way of thinking, and a way of being and has knowledge and understandings as constructs. These constructs are shaped by the way in which school functions.
20	Person at top of academy chain saying, "This is how we do things, this is how many hours your SENCo gets, this is how we do it". "You shouldn't be educating these pupils".
21	Commodification of education: value of education in secondary schools is the value of the grades that the kids get. The function of schools is to deliver good education grades. Hasn't happened in all schools. Increasingly seeing schools who talk in those terms. School is a means of production.
22	Teachers were given a lot more agency. Increasing tendency to focus teachers on their function (good educational qualifications). Supporting the whole pupil – this is incidental.
23	Social discourse about schools has changed. It's an 'outstanding' school/ 'good' schools (OFSTED ratings).
24	Professional tension and dynamic between head teacher and SENCo – discussions. Head might say "These are the rules for the school" and SENCo would say "But we need to vary them for this child"

Fieldnotes made by the researcher are based upon information shared by participants. Fieldnotes include use of participants' verbatim quotes and short abbreviated notes (that are not a direct transcription).

The main concern and the core category had been identified at this point and so there was a move to selective coding and saturating the core category and related concepts. The interview took the form of a discussion about specific aspects of the emerging theory. At this stage in the research, I had also stopped fully transcribing interviews for coding, as detailed within Chapter Four.

1	Pupil – highly anxious but wants to stay at that school. Votes with her feet – stops going to school. Refuses to give up few friendships she's got, wants to stay at that school.
2	Stressful experience for parent and child [difficulties coping in mainstream education].
3	Being allowed to go into different lessons and have some choice about this [pupil choice] – depends on how bad it gets. Long periods of absence, people have to talk about her and start making reasonable adjustments.
4	Has some time out. Going into different lessons when she can, as many as she can manage, if she can't manage goes down to learning support.
5	We [school] need to do something about this pupil because it's a problem [for the school]. Reasonable adjustments – do you need someone to sit at front with you, go in with you, accompany you to lesson?
6	Schools will think - what can school do without spending too much money? They will make those allowances when it's got to the stage it's a proper concern (i.e. they've been away for weeks). People starting to say "What's going on?" Outside agencies asking questions, giving advice – school more willing to adapt curriculum. Can show everything they have done before applying for EHCP. Schools know they can't apply without putting in reasonable adjustments.
7	A pupil having a panic now and then, school don't give them an awful lot of leeway. It's more 'pull yourself together, come on in'. Only when it becomes problem – reasonable adjustments made.
8	Pupil didn't come back to school – hasn't come back at all.
9	Another pupil – school being uncooperative, want to get him off-roll. Not sending any work home. Pupil did really well in GCSEs, did it all at home on his own. Hasn't had any help from the school at all. Pupil is refusing to change schools – doesn't want to. Just wants what he considers reasonable adjustments to be made – pre-lesson preparation, don't spring tests on me without warning, need to know which tests are coming up, where I need to sit in class. School have refused.

10	It's not the teachers on the ground floor. It's from on high. Teachers are told – he's either in lessons or he's not.
11	[Pupil] not really asking for much, but whether they'll do it or not? Although it's their [pupils'] preferred option to stay at these schools, maybe they can't, even though they won't admit it to themselves. They've missed so much time. Might need smaller groupings, different, more specialist, it might be too much. Might not be able to manage it [being in mainstream] even should these provisions be made.
12	A TA there to pick them up and support them [something pupils may need].
13	School made changes of provision – people changed the goalposts. Asked by school to go into a different lesson when only agreed to go into certain one. Became angry people weren't sticking to their word, what was agreed, what he believed he was going into. Things weren't set up properly where they were promised. Straw that broke his back. Pupil now feels adults can't be trusted. Could have been supply teacher that didn't know him or understand the situation. Doesn't filter down to all other teachers he'll come across. People will expect things of you because they don't know you.
14	Things like that stopped him going to school completely. Refuses to go back. No trust – adults need to gain his trust. If they say they're going to do something, they need to do it.
15	Wasn't in control of everything that happened to him.
16	Can be incidences that tip pupils over the edge and that's the end – no going back from there.
17	Pupil really anxious and angry about walking into classroom. Teacher would tell him to take hoodie off but not tell somebody else. Would have complete breakdown in class because of the injustice. Couldn't get over that. Cause him to be sent out and have complete meltdown – things go really wrong, would be excluded. It was usually all about the injustice of teacher allowing something for one person but not another.
18	People will be getting in touch with school if child's out of school and start asking questions – EWOs, LA, EPs. "Well, what are you doing?" They have to be shown to be doing something.
19	Schools know they've got to do something - showing the LA they are doing something. Definitely an accountability. Someone will be saying to them, "here's the code of practice, you've got to make reasonable adjustments"
20	Schools are in loco parentis – what are the school doing to support this? What action have they taken? They can't just shrug their shoulders and say it's all within child.

21	Someone will be saying, "Well why is it the kid?" "What's going on at school that means they're not coming in?" "What are you doing to try and make it a bit better for them?" So they know they've got to do something.
22	Not sure it's just about the numbers [i.e. pupils getting good grades]. Don't think it's just about targets. Pupil is only one number in secondary school with a lot of numbers. One won't make that much difference to their percentages.
23	Accountability – people going to be saying to school, "Well what have you done, what adjustments have you made?" Can't do nothing. Adjustments: part-time timetable, let them go down to learning support, a safe place to go.
24	Schools are systems and systems are made up of people - depends who you come across as to how nurturing school is perceived to be. Decisions they make also influence this.
25	One head teacher – knew all the pupils, never turned anyone away. SENCO – really SEN focused. At that school you'd feel that the school cared – because of people who ran it.
26	The school isn't a person, it's an organisation. Whether you feel cared about depends on who you come across – how nurturing and empathetic they are.
27	Everyone's experiences will be different because schools are all different.
28	Can go to a school, then visit a few years later and management have changed – it would be a completely different feel. People running school set the standards of how caring they are and the values – this comes out through teaching, how they celebrate kids.
29	Schools will only say can't meet needs after conversations with kids and kids are saying "I don't wanna be here; I'm finding it really hard; I don't understand what's going on; I've got no friends."
30	School think – what else can we offer? Rare that schools will say they can't meet needs until the person says they don't want to be in the school – not coming back.
31	Schools not allowed to say "We can't meet needs" – schools will never say this because not allowed to.

Appendix 5: Sample of Researcher Memos

This appendix provides a sample of researcher memos. In total over 70 memos were written throughout the research process, ranging from an individual page to several pages in length. These were written throughout the research process, particularly during and after the process of substantive coding (i.e. open and selective coding processes) and during the theoretical coding process. The memos written during theoretical coding facilitated the 'linking together' of the core category and emerging concepts. Throughout the process, reflective researcher memos were also written, to facilitate a reflexive approach to the research. Within this appendix there are six sample memos in total: two written during the substantive coding process, two written during the theoretical coding process and two reflective memos.

Appendix 5a: Example Substantive Coding Memos

Memo 40   20.03.2020

Potential emerging concepts and their properties

Concept: *Trying to cope* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Increasing own understanding of what is happening around you

- Familiarising self with school (people, environment)

- Reducing uncertainty

- Knowing what to expect

- Not knowing what you are doing

Concept: *Fitting in* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Doing what is expected/meeting expectations

- Avoiding negative judgements/negative social evaluation

- Feeling different

- Not fitting in

- Trying to meet expectations (school expectations; socially accepted behaviour; maintaining social acceptance)

- Displaying an accepted identity

- Striving to belong – Seeking affiliation/belonging

Concept: *Cultivating relationships* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Trusting relationships with staff

- Social bonds

- Peer relationships

Concept: *Seeking agentic capacity* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Seeking power and influence (pupils want control so they can change the school system and make decisions that benefit them in school and help them to cope).

- Being controlled

- Lacking control

- Possessing control

Concept: *Protection and care* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Being looked after by adults in school

- Protective and nurturing staff

- Pupils are seeking care and protection

- Promoting safety

- Pupils protecting their self-identify

Concept: *Preserving the self* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Managing discomfort

- Protecting self

- Surviving in the educational environment

- Using survival strategies

- Escaping situations

- Avoiding stressors

Concept: *Experiencing injustice* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Feeling a sense of injustice

- Lack of equality of opportunity

Concept: *Coping/supporting mechanisms* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Influencing how well pupils cope

Concept: *Shared perspectivism* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Adults/pupils understanding others' perspectives

- Having empathy

- Understanding diversity and difference

Concept: *Self-development* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Becoming self-aware

- Growing as a person

- Developing confidence

Concept: *System Equilibrium* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Protecting the 'status quo'

- Maintaining system control

- Protecting system identity

- Prohibiting individual agency

- Discouraging diversity and difference

- System malfunctioning (failing)

- System not doing what it should be

- System will not change in response to pupil need

Concept: *Maximising/facilitating successful outcomes* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Seeking positive outcomes

- Limiting failure

- Promoting emotional wellbeing

- Meeting needs

- Experiencing self-efficacy

Opposite of this:

- Preventing positive outcomes

- Discriminatory practices

Concept: *Recognising difference* (higher level concept)

Properties of this concept:

- Being different

- Diversity of thinking

- Individual differences

Memo 53   25.03.2020

Constant comparative analysis: Concept to concept

Similarities	Differences
System *enforcing conformity and promoting uniformity* (everyone being the same). The process for achieving this is through rejecting, or not accepting difference and individuality. So, for those pupils who are different they feel as though they have to try and fit in.	*System rejection:* Rejecting has several facets: • Pupil implicitly rejected as they do not feel they are being supported • Pupil feels unwanted • Pupil being rejected by peers Rejecting the system: • Expectations of the school system (i.e. system is not meeting expectations of what pupils consider it should be doing) • Pupils giving up on mainstream school (including, pupils no longer trying to 'fit in' to the school system).
System Identity Maintenance – The school system is trying to maintain or cultivate a particular image. This drives the action of those within the system (i.e. staff) towards this goal. Maintaining the identity of the system is at the expense of meeting pupils' needs, showing care and compassion towards pupils, and seeing them as individuals.	*Control* – Not all pupils specify how teachers are also controlled by the school system. However, there is recognition of the control of the system and wider external controls on teachers.
The idea of *lacking agency* continues to arise, paired with the control being held by the system.	*Exclusivity* – The idea of the system only being 'right' for, or only working for some individuals. In contrast, the mainstream school system is not working for these pupils. The pupils feel that the mainstream school system cannot be changed or modified for just one individual (i.e. them). So, they are seeing their difficulties as being particular to them and perhaps do not think that others in the school are having a similar experience? (logical elaboration?)

Struggling/giving up, no longer coping in school. There may be a trigger point, catalyst, turning point whereby something happens in school, which results in the individual rejecting school or giving up on school and being no longer able to cope in their mainstream school. Where is the critical point for intervening?	

Theoretical Memo   02.05.2020

'Cultivating relationships' – This is *contextual* information; it does not really reflect how pupils cope in mainstream education or how they protect themselves (preserving/ protecting the self). Rather, it describes what would help them to cope.

'Seeking agentic capacity' – This is *conditional* – pupils may or may not experience having opportunities to make decisions. Pupils want personal agency.

'Experiencing injustice' – This is *contextual*; it is something that the pupils feel. Pupils do not seem to act on this. Though, this may lead to the subsequent rejection of mainstream school (e.g. a contributory factor).

'Coping/ supportive mechanisms' - These are *contextual/conditional* (i.e. can vary across schools). These affect pupils' responses. For instance, whether they need to use *strategies* to protect themselves and to cope in school.

Consequential concept – A final consequence of experiencing significant emotional discomfort, such as heightened anxiety levels and threats to self-worth, is being forced out of mainstream education.

Theoretical Memo   05.05.2020

'Preserving the self' – A latent pattern of behaviour. Participants did not explicitly mention this; however, it underpins much of what they shared in the interviews (i.e. explains how they manage the main concern of coping in mainstream education).

There are several factors that influence how effectively a pupil is able to preserve the self (protect themselves from harm).

Conditional/contextual factors can influence how well a pupil is protected from emotional harm. These also influence the extent to which anxious pupils have to protect themselves.

Conditional Factors/ Support Mechanisms:
- Adult support
- Being understood (adults possessing relevant knowledge; cultivating positive relationships)
- Safe space
- Being afforded personal agency (control of the system?)
- Peer relationships
- Caring/nurturing ethos
- Goals of the system

Strategies to protect oneself:
- Avoiding situations (social interactions; school avoidance)
- Rejecting school (questioning expectations – these are problematic)
- Trying to fit in (striving to meet expectations; hiding 'true' self)

Strategy: Rejecting School

- Pupils subconsciously rejecting mainstream school, i.e. non-attendance because of difficulty coping in school.
- There is a dual process of rejection that has emerged. The pupil rejects the school but some pupils also experience rejection from their schools (feel rejected or unwanted) – or are 'forced out'.

Memo 2   17.02.2020

Reflections on early data collection/analysis process:

I wonder whether I have engaged in too much directing of conversations with participants during interviews, however at times I felt it was necessary to do so in order to elicit information and to minimise any anxiety potentially experienced by some of the pupils I am working with.

I also wonder whether I could potentially be 'forcing' a professional concern (i.e. reintegration), when this is not necessarily what pupils are wishing to talk about without my clear directing of the questions towards this topic.

When typing up transcripts of interviews and coding these, I feel that I have been too detail-focused and have felt overwhelmed with the amount of information there is to analyse. When typing up incidents and in-vivo codes I have been able to recognise this and have attempted to be more conceptually focused rather than thinking about an individual participant's story.

Following further reading (i.e., Roderick, 2009), I have made the decision to abandon the transcribing and coding I have used thus far for data analysis. I am concerned that my coding approach has taken on a thematic analysis style. I also feel that I am becoming overwhelmed and effectively *drowning* in the sheer volume of data. Instead, I will listen back to the interviews recorded via Dictaphone and make field notes to code (initial open coding), rather than coding transcripts of the interviews. This is more closely aligned to the process that CGT researchers propose for data collection and analysis.

After further reading I recognise that initially when making field notes during interviews, I was perhaps not *really listening* to what participants were saying (i.e. to identify emerging concepts), as I was aware that I had the *fall back* of the recorded interviews to listen back to. Consequently, now when I listen back to interview recordings and make field notes (alongside the original fieldnotes made during interviews), I will aim to listen differently and to be more mindful of recognising pupils' main concern and emerging concepts within the data.

Memo 3   18.02.2020

Reflecting on pupil interviews

During this interview, and previous interviews, I have deemed it to be very important that participants feel listened to and understood, hence the use of reflecting back to participants what they have shared with me. This is particularly important given the nature of their self-identified experiences of anxiety. 'Reflecting back' also involved re-framing certain situations that may have been particularly difficult for participants, to offer an alternative way of viewing the situation. At times this involved explicitly considering other people's thoughts and intentions, which the pupil may not have previously considered.

In some respects, it felt as though the interviews had a therapeutic function, whereby participants are sharing their difficult experiences and are able to reflect upon these in a safe environment.

In my opinion, it would have been unethical not to use these therapeutic communication skills during interviews, even though this may have resulted in me not allowing participants to talk as freely and openly as I perhaps should have done according to CGT methodology (i.e. as I was joining in the conversation). At particular points during the interview, offering a therapeutic approach was more important than completely trying to avoid interpreting the information participants were sharing.

During future interviews I will continue to rely more heavily upon fieldnotes, rather than frequently listening back to recorded interviews. This will further develop my skills in identifying concepts during the interview process.

Appendix 6: Ethical Approval

Eleanor Gray
Registration number: 170109884
School of Education
Programme: Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DEdCPsy)

Dear Eleanor

PROJECT TITLE: The Reintegration of Anxious Pupils from a Medical Education Unit back into their Educational Settings: A Grounded Theory Study
APPLICATION: Reference Number 025732

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 31/05/2019 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 025732 (form submission date: 25/05/2019); (expected project end date: 20/05/2020).
Participant information sheet 1060505 version 2 (25/05/2019).
Participant information sheet 1060499 version 2 (25/05/2019).

Participant information sheet 1060502 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant information sheet 1060503 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant information sheet 1060504 version 3 (25/05/2019). Participant information sheet 1060680 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060511 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060510 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060509 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060508 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060507 version 2 (25/05/2019). Participant consent form 1060506 version 2 (25/05/2019).

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.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter. Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator School of Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy:

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure

The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy:

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf

The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.

The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Application number: 025732

——————————————

Proposed changes I wish to make:

Owing to the current circumstances (re COVID-19), I now need to interview some of my participants via Skype audio, rather than face-to-face, to follow government social distancing guidelines. In my original ethical review I explained the following (please see blue text below) regarding the interviews I would be conducting with 'professional' participants (my Educational Psychologist colleagues, in the Educational Psychology Service I am on placement in).

"1. To minimise the inconvenience caused to participants, I will carry out interviews with any professionals in their place of work, at a mutually convenient time. "

"What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to participate in the research, I will meet with you in your workplace, at a mutually convenient time, to carry out an interview. This interview will last no more than 1 hour. "

All changed approved by Ethics Lead Pat Sikes, please see email in edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk from 26.03.20 for further details.

Appendix 8a: Pupil Information Sheet

Information Sheet – Pupils

Research Title: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

I am a Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist, studying at the University of Sheffield.

As part of my training to become an Educational Psychologist, I am carrying out some research. I am interested in finding out what people think about pupils going from the Medical Education Units back into their schools.

Before deciding if you would like to take part in the research, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what you will be doing if you do decide to take part. Please take some time to read the information on this sheet very carefully and talk to others about it if that is helpful.

If there is anything that you aren't sure about or if you would like more information, please get in touch with me or ask an adult to contact me. My contact details are at the end of this information sheet.

Thank you for reading.

1. Why is this research being carried out? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• I am interested in people's views about pupils moving from the Medical Education Units back into their schools. • The aim is to develop a theory that helps to explain this reintegration process, which could help when thinking about how this might work best.
2. Why have I been asked to take part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• I presented my research ideas to pupils in the Medical Education Units. You are a pupil attending the Medical Education Unit and you think that feeling anxious and worried is

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	something that makes it difficult for you to go to school.
	• Because you attend the Medical Education Unit, you have really useful knowledge and experiences that I am interested in hearing about.
3. Do I have to take part? IMAGES INSERTED HERE	• It is up to you whether or not you would like to take part in the research.
	• If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form and so will your parent(s)/guardian(s).
	• If you decide to take part in the research, but then you change your mind, you can withdraw from the research up until the point that I start looking at and analysing the information you have shared with me.
	• You don't have to give a reason for why you don't want to take part anymore.
	• Let an adult know (parent/guardian or member of staff in the Medical Education Unit) so that they can send me an email letting me know. Or you can send me an email letting me know that you no longer want to take part (my email address is at the end of this information sheet).
4. What will happen if I take part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	If you choose to take part, depending on how you would like to share your views with me, you will either: • Meet with me in the Medical Education Unit during school time (for no more than 1 hour). You will take part in an interview (which will just be more like a conversation!) and I will ask you some questions about what you think about the process of moving from the Medical Education Unit back into school.

	• Or, I might give you some questions to think about and you will make a poster, drawing or PowerPoint presentation that shows your answers to these questions. After I have spoken to you or have looked at your PowerPoint presentation, poster or drawing (depending on how you share your views), I might decide that it would be really helpful to speak to you again to gather more information. But if you don't want to be involved again you don't have to and you don't have to give a reason why.
5. What do I have to do? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• If you would like to take part in the research, you will need to sign a Consent Form. Your parent(s)/guardian(s) will also need to sign the consent form. • Taking part in the research is completely voluntary and you can change your mind about taking part (as explained in number 3 above).
6. What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• The only disadvantage of taking part is the time taken to either be interviewed or to make a poster, PowerPoint presentation or drawing.
7. Will I be recorded and how will the recording be used? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• If I meet with you to talk (interview) in the Medical Education Unit, I will make notes about the things we discuss. • This interview will also be audio recorded (on a Dictaphone) so that I can listen to it again afterwards. This is helpful because useful information could be missed when I am writing notes. • Only myself and my research supervisors (at the University of Sheffield) will look at the

	handwritten notes and audio recording and these will be kept safe and secure. Anything you say will be pseudonymised (this means that you will choose a different name instead of your own – so people won't know it is you). • If you mention the names of any other people or places (like specific school names), these won't be written into any reports about the research (they will be given a different name or code).
8. What are the possible benefits of taking part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• The information you share with me will help to develop a theory about the process of reintegration (pupils moving back to their schools from the Medical Education Units). • It is hoped that, by working with pupils in the Medical Education Units, I can get a really clear picture of this process. • It might also help us to think about any changes that could be made to this process.
9. Will other people be able to find out that I have taken part in the research? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• Any personal information that is collected about you during this research will be kept strictly confidential. • If you are interviewed, the notes I make will be given a pseudonym (a different name rather than using your name), so that people wouldn't be able to know the notes relate to things you have talked about. • If you make a PowerPoint presentation, poster or drawing I will use a pseudonym (different name) instead of your name when making any notes about what you have created and the information you have shared.

	- No one will be able to personally identify you in any reports, because your real name won't be reported and no specific names of people or places (e.g. school names) will be reported (they will be given a different name or code). - Once I have written my thesis, the data will be destroyed (within 3 years) and it will not be used in any future research.
10. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	- You might have heard in the news about something called GDPR. This is new data protection law that helps to keep people's personal information safer. - As part of this new law, I have to let you know that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). - This means that the only personal information that is collected about you is that which is important for the research to be carried out.
11. Who is the data controller? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	Also as part of GDPR, I need to let you know who will be responsible for making sure your information is looked after properly. For this research it is the University of Sheffield (this is where I am studying).
12. What will happen to the findings of the research? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	- I will write a thesis, which I will hand in at the University of Sheffield (where I am studying). - The thesis will also be made available on an online database that university students and academics at the University of Leeds, The University of

	Sheffield and the University of York can look at. • The research findings will also be shared with all the people who have taken part in the research, the Educational Psychologists who I work with, and people I work with in the future. • The research might be published in a research journal in the future. This means that other academics and researchers will be able to read the research.
13. Who shall I get in touch with if I want to know more? **Eleanor Gray** **Researcher photograph inserted here**	If you have any questions or are worried about anything to do with the research, you (or an adult you know) can contact me via the email address below: egray2@sheffield.ac.uk IMAGE INSERTED HERE

If you still feel like your questions haven't been answered or you are worried about something to do with the research, you (or an adult) can contact my university research supervisor (Dr Martin Hughes) at this email address: m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk.

Or, you can contact the Academic Director, Dr Antony Williams, by email at anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk

If you do decide to take part in the research, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a copy of the signed consent form to keep.
Thank you for taking the time to read this! I really hope you would like to take part in my research.

Eleanor Gray

Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist
University of Sheffield

Extra Information relating to GDPR
(the new law for looking after personal information):

If you have any concerns about how your personal data has been handled, information about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University's Privacy Notice: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

Information Sheet – Professionals

Research Title: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

You have been invited to take part in my research, which aims to explore the process of reintegration of pupils from the Medical Education Units back into the educational settings at which they are on roll.

I am a Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist, studying on the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, at the University of Sheffield. This research is being overseen by my Research Supervisor, Dr Martin Hughes.

Before deciding whether or not you would like to take part in the research, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the information on this sheet carefully and discuss it with myself or others if you wish.

If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, my contact details are provided at the end of this information sheet.

Thank you for reading.

1. What is the purpose of the research?
The overarching aim of the research is to explore the process of reintegration of pupils from the Medical Education Units, back into the educational settings at which they are on roll. The research will endeavour to develop a theory that helps to explain the reintegration process. This will hopefully generate further understanding to inform any development of this process, so that it is as successful as possible.

2. Why have I been asked to participate?
You have been asked to take part in this research because you are a professional who works in or alongside the Medical Education Units, in some capacity; or, because a pupil attending the Medical Education Unit is on roll at the school you work in. Consequently, you are likely to have either first-hand knowledge and experiences related to the reintegration process or to have a view on this.

3. Do I have to take part?
It is your decision whether or not you would like to participate in the research. If you do decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part in the research, but subsequently change your mind, you can withdraw from the research up until the point at which data analysis has commenced. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing. If you do decide that you wish to withdraw, please could you state this in writing to me in an email (my contact details are at the end of this information sheet).

4. What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to participate in the research, I will meet with you in your workplace, at a mutually convenient time, to carry out an interview. This interview will last no more than 1 hour. During the interview we will talk about your knowledge, views and experiences of the reintegration process for pupils in the Medical Education Units back into their educational settings.

After the first interview, I may feel that it would be really helpful to speak to you again to gather more information to further develop the theory. However, you are under no obligation to be interviewed again and you can decline without having to give any reason.

5. What do I have to do?

If you are happy to be involved in the research, I ask that you sign a Consent Form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research without explanation (as explained in points 3 and 4 above).

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated disadvantages of taking part in the research, other than the time taken to be interviewed.

7. Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

During the interview I will make notes about the things we discuss. The interview will also be audio recorded on a Dictaphone so that I can listen to this again afterwards. This is helpful because useful information could be missed during note-taking.

Only myself and my research supervisors (at the University of Sheffield) will have access to these handwritten notes and audio recording. The recording and handwritten notes will be stored safely and securely in accordance with University of Sheffield data storage guidance. Any reporting of the discussion will be pseudonymised. This means that another randomly selected name will be linked with your data. Furthermore, any names of other people or places that are mentioned will not be reported (they will be given different names or codes).

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The valuable contributions you make to this research will help to develop a theory about the process of reintegration of pupils from the Medical Education Units back into the educational settings at which they are on roll. It is hoped that, by working with individuals who have knowledge, views or experiences related to this process, a really clear picture can be formed. Additionally, it is hoped that the research could provide further understanding to aid the development of this reintegration process and reintegration processes in other similar contexts.

9. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

It is not anticipated that the research will stop earlier than expected. However, if for any reason the research had to cease, you would be informed immediately and any data that had been collected about you would be destroyed.

10. What if something goes wrong?

It is unlikely that anything will go wrong during your involvement; however, if this is the case, the researcher will end the involvement and will cease data collection from you at that time.

11. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?
Any personal information that is collected about you during this research will be kept strictly confidential. Your interview data will be immediately pseudonymised to ensure that you are not personally identified. No specific names of individuals or places (e.g. specific names of schools) mentioned in your interview will be reported (they will be assigned different names or codes). Following completion and assessment of the research thesis, all data will be destroyed (within three years). The data will not be used in any future research.

12. What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the objectives of the research?
Personal information that will be collected about you includes your name and job title. Your name will be collected initially, but your data will be pseudonymised when it is analysed. Your job title is collected because other individuals who are not professionals may also be participants in the research. In this case, it will be useful to be aware of how different groups may view the reintegration process.

13. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?
You may be aware of new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) that have come into effect. According to this data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' *(Article 6(1)(e))*. This means that the only personal information collected about you, is that which is important for the research to be carried out.

14. What will happen to the findings of the research?
The research will be disseminated through a written thesis which is submitted to the University of Sheffield. The completed thesis will be made available on the White Rose eTheses Repository, which is accessible to university students and academics at the University of Leeds, The University of Sheffield and the University of York. The research findings will also be disseminated to participants in the research and my colleagues (Educational Psychologists in the Educational Psychology service I am currently working). In future, the research may also be shared with other colleagues, and could perhaps be published in an academic journal, which means that it would be shared with a wider audience of academics and researchers.

15. Who is organising and funding the research?
The University of Sheffield, Department of Education, Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology course is overseeing the research. The Principal Educational Psychologist (of the Educational Psychology service I am currently working in) and the Lead of the Medical Education Team will also be supporting the organisation of the research.

16. Who is the data controller (the organisation that determines the purposes and means of processing personal data)?
The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

17. Who has ethically reviewed the project?
This research has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield Education Department's ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

18. Contact for further information

Should you have any queries, or should you wish to raise a concern at any time, please contact Eleanor Gray (researcher) via the email address outlined below:

Eleanor Gray	egray2@sheffield.ac.uk

Should you feel that any concerns have not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact my Research Supervisor, Dr Martin Hughes, via email at: m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk

Alternatively, you can contact the Academic Director, Dr Antony Williams, via email at anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk

If any of your concerns relate to how your personal data has been handled, information about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University's Privacy Notice: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

As a participant in the research, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a copy of your signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I sincerely hope that you will consider participating in this research.

Eleanor Gray

Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist
University of Sheffield

Information Sheet – Pilot Study

Research Title: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

I am a Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist, studying at the University of Sheffield.

As part of my training to become an Educational Psychologist, I am carrying out some research. I am interested in finding out what people think about pupils going from the Medical Education Units back into their schools.

Before I start the research, I will be carrying out a 'pilot study'. This is a smaller piece of research that I do before the main research starts. This is so that I can see whether the questions that I ask people are too difficult to answer and also so that I can practise analysing the information that I collect.

Before deciding if you would like to take part in the pilot study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what you will be doing if you do decide to take part in the pilot study. Please take some time to read the information on this sheet very carefully and talk to others about it if that is helpful.

If there is anything that you aren't sure about or if you would like more information, please get in touch with me or ask an adult to contact me. My contact details are at the end of this information sheet.

Thank you for reading.

1. Why is this pilot study being carried out? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• I'm interested in people's views about pupils moving from the Medical Education Units back into their school. • The pilot study will help me to find out whether the questions I ask are suitable. • It will give me the chance to practise analysing the information I collect.

2. Why have I been asked to take part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• You attend the Medical Education Unit and you think that feeling anxious and worried is something that makes it difficult for you to attend school. • Because you attend the Medical Education Unit, you have really useful knowledge and experiences that I am really interested in hearing about.
3. Do I have to take part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• It's up to you whether or not you would like to take part in the pilot study. • If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form and so will your parent(s)/guardian(s). • If you decide to take part, but then you change your mind, you can withdraw from the pilot study up until the point that I start looking at and analysing the information you have shared with me. • You don't have to give a reason for why you don't want to take part anymore. • Let an adult know (parent/guardian or member of staff in the Medical Education Unit) so that they can send me an email letting me know. Or you can send me an email letting me know that you no longer want to take part (my email address is at the end of this information sheet).
4. What will happen if I take part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• I will meet you in the Medical Education Unit during school time (for no more than 1 hour). • You will take part in an interview (which will just be more like a conversation!). I will ask you some

	questions about what you think about the process of moving from the Medical Education Unit back into school.
5. What do I have to do? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• If you would like to take part in the pilot study, you will need to sign a Consent Form. • Your parent(s)/guardian(s) will also need to sign the consent form. • It is completely your choice whether or not you want to take part in the pilot study, and you can change your mind about taking part (as explained in number 3 above).
6. What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• The only disadvantage of taking part is the time taken to be interviewed.
7. Will I be recorded and how will the recording be used? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• When I meet with you in the Medical Education Unit, I will make notes about the things we discuss. • This interview will also be audio recorded (on a Dictaphone) so that I can listen to this again afterwards. • This is helpful because useful information could be missed when I am making notes! • Only myself and my research supervisors (at the University of Sheffield) will look at the handwritten notes and audio recording and these will be kept safe and secure. • Anything you say will be pseudonymised (this means that you will choose a different name instead of your own – so people won't know it is you).

	• If you mention the names of any other people or places (like specific school names), these won't be written into any reports about the research (they will be given a different name or code).
8. What are the possible benefits of taking part? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• Taking part in this pilot study will help me to make important changes to the research before I start, which will hopefully mean that the research is more successful. • The information you share as part of this research will help to develop a theory about the process of reintegration (pupils moving back to their schools from the Medical Education Units). • It is hoped that, by working with pupils in the Medical Education Units, I can get a really clear picture of this process. It might also help us to think about any changes that could be made to this process.
9. Will other people be able to find out that I have taken part in the research? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• Any personal information collected about you during this pilot study will be kept strictly confidential. • The notes I make will be given a pseudonym (a different name rather than using your name), so that people wouldn't be able to know the notes relate to things you have talked about. • No one will be able to personally identify you in any reports, because your real name won't be reported and no specific names of people or places (e.g. school names) will be reported (they will be given a different name or code).

	• Once I have written my thesis, the data will be destroyed (within 3 years) and it will not be used in any future research.
10. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• You might have heard in the news about something called GDPR. This is new data protection law that helps to keep people's personal information safer. • As part of this new law, I have to let you know that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' *(Article 6(1)(e))*. • This means that the only personal information collected about you is that which is important for the research to be carried out.
11. Who is the data controller? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• Also as part of GDPR, I need to let you know who will be responsible for making sure your information is looked after properly. For this research it is the University of Sheffield (this is where I am studying).
12. What will happen to the findings of the pilot study? IMAGE INSERTED HERE	• The information you share will help me to make important decisions about the main research study. • The information you share will also be included as part of the main research and as part of my thesis. • I will submit my thesis to the University of Sheffield (where I am studying). The thesis will also be made available on an online database that university students and academics at the University of Leeds, The University of Sheffield

	and the University of York can look at.
	• The research findings will also be shared with all the people who have taken part in the research, the Educational Psychologists who I work with, and people I work with in the future.
	• The research might be published in a research journal in the future. This means that other academics and researchers will be able to read the research.
13. Who shall I get in touch with if I want to know more? **Eleanor Gray** **Researcher photograph here**	If you have any questions or are worried about anything to do with the pilot study, you (or an adult you know) can contact me via the email address below: egray2@sheffield.ac.uk IMAGE INSERTED HERE

If you still feel like your questions haven't been answered or you are worried about something to do with the pilot study, you (or an adult) can contact my university research supervisor (Dr Martin Hughes) at this email address: m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk.

Or, you can contact the Academic Director, Dr Antony Williams, by email at anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk

If you do decide to take part in the pilot study, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for taking the time to read this! I really hope you will think about taking part in my pilot study!

Eleanor Gray

Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist

Extra Information relating to GDPR
(the new law for looking after personal information):

If you have any concerns about how your personal data has been handled, information about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University's Privacy Notice: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

Consent Form - Pupils

Title of Research Project: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

Name of Researcher: Eleanor Gray

Parent/Guardian: Please read and initial the information provided below. We have also provided an additional box for your child to provide their written consent to their taking part in the research.

Please initial box

	CHILD	PARENT
1. I confirm that my child and I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and that we have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.		
2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should my child not wish to answer any particular question(s), they are free to decline. I am aware that I can contact the researcher (Eleanor Gray) via email at egray2@sheffield.ac.uk, or, Dr Martin Hughes (Research Supervisor) via email at m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk at any time should I need to.		
3. I understand that the responses gathered from my child will be used only for the purpose of the research. I give permission for the researcher and research supervisors (University of Sheffield) to have access to my child's pseudonymised responses. I understand that my child's name will not be linked with the research materials, and they will not be identified in the thesis or any other reports that result from the research.		
4. I agree for my child to take part in the above research. I expect that you will ensure that my child is agreeable on the day to taking part by checking again with them.		
5. If my child is interviewed, I agree for this interview to be audio recorded for the purposes of the research.		

_____   _____   _____

Names of Person/s giving consent
(Parent/Guardian)   Date   Signature
(*or legal representative*)

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant (Child's name)   Date   Child's Signature
Attending the Medical Education Unit

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Consent Form (Professionals)

Title of Research Project: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

Name of Researcher: Eleanor Gray

Please read the information provided below. Print your initials in each box to show that you have read and understood the information.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline. I am aware that I can contact Eleanor Gray (researcher) via email at egray2@sheffield.ac.uk, or, Dr Martin Hughes (Research Supervisor) via email at m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk at any time should I need to.

3. I understand that my responses will be used only for the purposes of the research. I give permission for the researcher and research supervisors (at the University of Sheffield) to access my pseudonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in the thesis or any other reports that result from the research.

4. I agree to take part in the above research project. I expect that you will ensure that I am agreeable on the day to taking part by checking again with me.

5. I agree for my interview to be audio recorded for the purposes of the research.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant
(Your Name)   Date   Signature
(*or legal representative*)

Pilot Study Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Exploring people's views about reintegration from Medical Education back into school.

Name of Researcher: Eleanor Gray

Parent/Guardian: Please read and initial the information provided below. We have also provided an additional box for your child to provide their written consent to their taking part in the pilot study/research.

Please initial box

CHILD   PARENT

1. I confirm that my child and I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the pilot study for the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should my child not wish to answer any particular question(s), they are free to decline. I am aware that I can contact the researcher (Eleanor Gray) via email at egray2@sheffield.ac.uk, or, Dr Martin Hughes (Research Supervisor) via email at m.j.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk at any time should I need to.

3. I understand that the responses gathered from my child will be used only for the purposes of the pilot study and the main research study. I give permission for the researcher and research supervisors (University of Sheffield) to have access to my child's pseudonymised responses. I understand that my child's name will not be linked with the research materials, and that they will not be identified in the thesis or any other reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for my child to take part in the pilot study and above research. I expect that you will ensure that my child is agreeable on the day to taking part by checking again with them.

5. I agree for my child's interview to be audio recorded for the purposes of the pilot study (and the subsequent research).

_____   _____   _____

Names of Person/s giving consent
(Parent/Guardian)   Date   Signature
(*or legal representative*)

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant (Child's name)   Date   Child's Signature
Attending the Medical Education Unit

Research Questions

Here are some questions for you to think about.

1. What do you think about moving (reintegrating) back into your school?

IMAGES INSERTED HERE

2. Is there anything that might worry you about going back into school?

IMAGES INSERTED HERE

3. What could help with this process of moving back to school? (Is there anything anyone could do differently? Is there anything that needs to be changed to make moving back to school easier?)

IMAGES INSERTED HERE

I am looking forward to talking to you soon!

From Ellie

RESEARCHER PHOTOGRAPH INSERTED HERE

Appendix 11: Guidance Document: Supporting Anxious Pupils in Mainstream Secondary Education

Supporting Anxious Pupils in Mainstream Secondary Education

This guidance is intended to provide advice for schools about how to support anxious pupils. The recommendations within this document are based upon research conducted with young people who self-identify as experiencing anxiety and with professionals who support anxious pupils.

School Ethos

An inclusive school ethos is crucial to mitigating the negative impact of anxiety on pupils' overall emotional wellbeing and perceptions of school.

An ethos of inclusivity needs to be enacted and communicated by those at the 'top' of the school. School leaders should seek to ensure that all pupils feel valued and have a sense of belonging within the school.

The educational setting should be a caring and nurturing environment and staff should be encouraged to use their professional judgement in determining how to respond to pupils' difficulties.

School leaders should balance the need for pupils to achieve 'good' educational qualifications with meeting the emotional needs of pupils. Where pupils' emotional needs are not met, this has a detrimental impact upon their ability to cope in school and meet expectations.

Sharing Views and Making Decisions

Provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to share their views and to have these acted upon, thus promoting their personal agency. This means that pupils feel they are able to make decisions that will have a positive impact on their personal experiences and outcomes.

Pupils should be included in decision-making regarding any provision put in place to support their anxiety and emotional needs. For instance, pupils should be appropriately consulted about any specific strategies that will be used to support their anxiety. This will ensure that such strategies have the most positive impact.

If a pupil has been absent from school, owing to their anxiety, any reintegration meetings and planning should always involve consultation with the pupil.

Understanding Pupils' Needs

Staff should seek to develop a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs. This involves key staff 'getting to know' the individual pupil and not solely relying upon knowing the pupil 'on paper'. Staff will need to be afforded sufficient time to enable this.

Staff should be provided with training opportunities regarding emotional wellbeing and mental health, alongside a range of additional needs that may co-occur with anxiety.

Having an improved understanding of pupils' needs, enables staff to make appropriate accomodations, which has a positive impact on the emotional wellbeing of anxious pupils.

Empathic Communication

Adults should actively promote and seek out opportunities to talk to and listen to pupils.

This listening should be active, in that adults are really 'hearing' what the pupil is communicating. This will help to prevent such conversations from being 'tokenistic' and the pupil will feel heard and understood. Adults should endeavour to gain an understanding of pupils' experiences, thoughts and feelings.

Some pupils may benefit from a specific scheduled time for such conversations, whereas others may prefer a more organic approach to such conversations (i.e unplanned and natural).

Supporting pupils to develop helpful coping strategies

Support anxious pupils to identify and utilise helpful strategies for managing their anxiety. It is important that adults work jointly with young people to identify strategies they may find most helpful. Not all pupils will find the same strategies and techinques helpful.

Support pupils to develop specific skills that will enable them to manage the demands of the educational environment successfully. Such skills could include social skills, organisational skills and learning techniques. This will help to reduce the extent to which anxious pupils may engage in less helpful coping strategies, such as avoiding and escaping stressful situations in school and not attending school.