

**Applying an ecological perspective to variations in school
exclusion levels**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Education

February, 2013

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Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my father, Derek Collins (1925-2009)

I would like to thank Eileen Sparks for encouraging me to embark on this study. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Doctor Sue Pearson and Professor David Sugden for broadening my thinking, and guiding and advising me throughout the research process.

My gratitude also goes to my family for their support especially my mother, Barbara Collins, whose encouragement and hospitality was invaluable in the latter stages of writing up. I would also like to thank Marilyn Collins and Maggie Woods for their help in proof-reading.

Finally I would like to thank all the school staff, parents and, above all, the children who have given their time freely to help me in this work.

Abstract

The aim of this research is to further understanding of the reasons for variations in school exclusion rates within secondary schools in one Local Authority (LA). The practice of school exclusion is used widely but unevenly, giving cause for concern to both policy makers and educationalists. The far-reaching effects of exclusion from school are well-documented, significantly reducing the well-being and aspirations of the young people involved.

The research is structured using an ecosystemic framework, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original model, but adapted to take into account the complexity of factors impacting on behaviour in schools. Using a mixed methodology, it focuses on variations in fixed-term exclusions. Initially, quantitative methods were used for the descriptive quantitative analysis of the LA historical data. From this analysis three schools with different rates of exclusion were selected for further study.

The next part of the data collection employed qualitative methods to explore the perspectives of stakeholders in schools. Interviews were conducted with three school staff, six pupils including four at risk of exclusion, and a parent from each school, using a hierarchical focusing technique (Tomlinson, 1989). The elicitation of pupil perspectives was facilitated by the 'Talking Stones' technique developed by Wearmouth (2004).

An ecosystemic approach to school exclusion reveals how a complex series of factors, from both outside and within school, impact on variations in school exclusion rate. Findings indicate that variations in rates of exclusion in schools cannot be tied to a single factor but are a reflection of a complex dynamic. At macrosystem level the role of government initiatives, legislation and individual LAs in providing equitable education for all children is called into question. Although school intake has a significant impact on variations in exclusion rate it is also the individual school ethos, influenced by cultural attitudes in the macrosystem, that lead to variations in provisions at exosystem level. School ethos also impacts on the quality of relationships in the mesosystem level influencing staff and home/school communication, and at microsystem level where staff responses are instrumental in preventing or escalating conflict leading to exclusions.

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Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
BESD	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
BU	Bullying
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DA	Drugs and alcohol
DB	Persistent disruptive behaviour
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills.
DM	Damage
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
FSM	Free School Meals
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological approach
JAR	Joint area review
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LSOA	Lower layer super output areas
LSU	Learning Support Unit
OT	Other
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PA	Physical assault on adult
PDC	Pupil Development Centre
PLASC	Pupil level annual school census
PP	Physical assault on pupil
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSP	Pastoral Support Plan
RA	Racial abuse
SEAL	Social and emotional aspects of learning
SEBD	Social, emotional, behavioural difficulties
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator
SIMS	Schools Information Management System
SM	Sexual misconduct
SMT	Senior Management Team
TH	Theft
VA	Verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour against an adult
VP	Verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour against a pupil
Y	Year
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Part I

1 Introduction

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I explain my interest in the topic of school exclusion and present a literature review focusing on perspectives on the causes of school exclusions and how the incidence of exclusion varies between schools.

As a teacher working in a KS3 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) I am interested in both the rise in school exclusion rates and the variations between schools. My professional experience, coupled with an academic interest in the antecedents of school exclusion and the provision for pupils excluded from school, has led me to look more closely at the secondary education in my area. My aim is to identify my perceptions of the increases in the use of exclusion. In this study I examine the occurrence and variations of exclusions from secondary schools in one Local Authority (LA).

I work in Watermill Valley LA, located in the industrial north of England, and comprising a large main town and several smaller towns that have all suffered from economic decline following the demise of the textiles industry. This is a small LA with 15 secondary schools including two selective grammar schools: Overbeck and Birchden, and two denominational voluntary-aided schools: Archangel and St. Gabriel's. There are also two private schools in the area and a popular private school in the adjoining area. The outcome of this situation is that a large proportion of high-achieving pupils are diverted to selective schools at secondary level, leaving the remaining 11 secondary schools with a high proportion of underachieving pupils. These schools are very diverse in size and character; some drawing their populations from economically disadvantaged areas and others from more affluent ones. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities varies widely, as does the proportion of

pupils entitled to Free School Meals and pupils with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Appendix 1).

1.1 Terminology

Pupils at risk of school exclusion are referred to in many ways: disaffected (Furlong, 1991; Klein, 2001; Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Riley and Docking, 2004; Wearmouth, 2004; Hilton, 2006); disengaged (McFadden and Munns, 2002); disruptive (Olsen and Cooper (2003); as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) (Cole *et al.*, 1999) ; and more recently as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (Cooper, 2008) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) (Goodman and Burton, 2010). While it is necessary to have a term that distinguishes these pupils from those for who experience school as a positive time, leading to academic and social success, in my view, the terms often identify the child as the problem rather than considering the context. They also present the children as a homogenous group rather than recognising the diversity of their experiences. For this reason I have used the terms ‘experiencing difficulties/problems’ and ‘at risk of exclusion’ when referring these pupils. However, I retain the terminology of authors and researchers when referring to their work. I have adopted McCluskey’s (2008) term, ‘included pupils’ to describe those children who are not at risk of exclusion.

In this study I have chosen to use the first person rather than the passive tense usually adopted in scientific research. In defence of this approach, I argue that qualitative research involves a process of interaction between the researcher’s own perceptions and their subject. In support of my approach I have followed Silverman’s (2000) suggestion that taking a ‘natural history’ approach to writing about methodology not only engages the reader, but also avoids the situation in which the writer becomes an ‘outsider’ to their own text (p.237). Likewise, Denscombe (1998) argues that ‘the researcher’s self plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data’ (p.208). Writing in an impersonal way implies that the researcher is remote from the process, whereas the use of the first person acknowledges their active role in research. This not only fits in with my subject matter but also my own approach to research.

In order to facilitate navigation and clarify the structure of the document, I include an overview below with a brief outline of the contents of each chapter below.

1.2 Thesis Overview

I have created a navigation pane at the start of each chapter. The headings in the pane are explained below.

Part 1

The first part of my thesis concerns an overview on the reasons for, and impact of, school exclusion and how I arrived at my research design.

Chapter 1 Introduction

I explain the processes that have led me to research my chosen field. I include an overview of the research.

Chapter 2 Exclusion from school

I review the literature on exclusion from school. This section is divided into school intake factors and school process factors. I include a description of the ecological framework that I have adapted for the present study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

A review of research methods with an explanation of how I chose a mixed methodology and the design of my data-collection methods.

Part 2

Part 2 of my thesis is concerned with the results of my data collection.

Chapter 4 Analysis of Local Authority data

I analyse the exclusions data from the Local Authority for 2004/5 and 2005/6. I then explain how I selected three schools for my interviews.

Chapter 5 The interviews

In this chapter I focus on the selection of respondents for interview and how the interviews were conducted. Included is a table of interviewees, containing information about the duration of the interview, followed by a summary of each interview.

The following five chapters focus on the analysis of data collected in the interviews

Chapter 6 The microsystem

In this chapter I begin by examining how the variables of age, gender and ethnicity in relate to school exclusion. I then focus on face-to-face relationships involving pupils. Starting with the relationships within the school, I examine staff/pupil and pupil/peer relationships and how they impact on exclusions. I then focus on

relationships outside school, including those in the child's immediate family, followed by those in the home neighbourhood.

Chapter 7 The mesosystem

In this chapter I examine the relationships that connect those in the microsystem, these being staff communication and home/school communication.

Chapter 8 The exosystem

In this chapter I focus on the school structures impacting on the microsystems and mesosystem, these being behaviour management; curriculum; alternative provisions; special educational needs; setting; and recent developments and ideas for the future.

Chapter 9 The macrosystem

In this chapter I focus on the variables that impact on the structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school: the duration of exclusions; school characteristics and location; and socio-economic factors.

Part 3

Part 3 of my thesis is concerned with discussion and conclusion of my research.

Chapter 10 Discussion

In this chapter I use the ecosystemic framework to structure a discussion of the implications of my research for processes and systems. I also discuss the methodology and the limitations of the study; the study's contribution to existing knowledge; and considerations for future research.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

In this chapter make my concluding remarks.

2 Exclusion from school

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter, I review the literature on school exclusions, considering how both school intake factors and school process factors impact on exclusions. At the end of the chapter I introduce an ecosystemic framework that I will use throughout the study.

The rise in school exclusion in England in recent years is an issue with a high public profile. Parsons (1999) comments that ‘exclusion was a rare occurrence at the beginning of the 1990s’ (p.23). However, since then the number of formal school exclusions has risen considerably. The number of permanent exclusions escalated, from 2,900 in 1990/1, to a peak of 12,664 in 1996/7 (Sellman *et al.*, 2002). Figure 2.1 shows how the national number of permanent exclusions has remained at between 8,000 and 10,000 since 1999/2000, until 2008/9 when the figure dropped to 6,550 (DfE, 2010a). The DfE (2010a) suggests that the recent reduction in permanent exclusions is partly due to under-reporting in School Census returns, but also reflects the efforts of schools to focus on improving behaviour and to apply alternatives to exclusion such as ‘managed moves’ where pupils are moved to another school to prevent exclusion.

The practice of school exclusion continues to be used widely but unevenly, continuing to give cause for concern to both policy makers and educationalists. The literature indicates that there is a wide variation between exclusion rates in different schools. Hallam and Rogers (2008) comment that ‘...schools vary in the extent to which they exclude pupils, even for the same kinds of behaviour’ (p.9). Guidelines for exclusions are open to interpretation and rely on the decision of the individual headteacher (DfES, 2006a). Reasons for variations in exclusion rate between schools

are not always evident or clear. Reed (2005a) identifies a range of variables that impact on school exclusion rate, commenting that ‘There are considerable number of schools with high risk factors who are low excluders and a considerable number of schools with low risk factors who are high excluders’ (p.9).

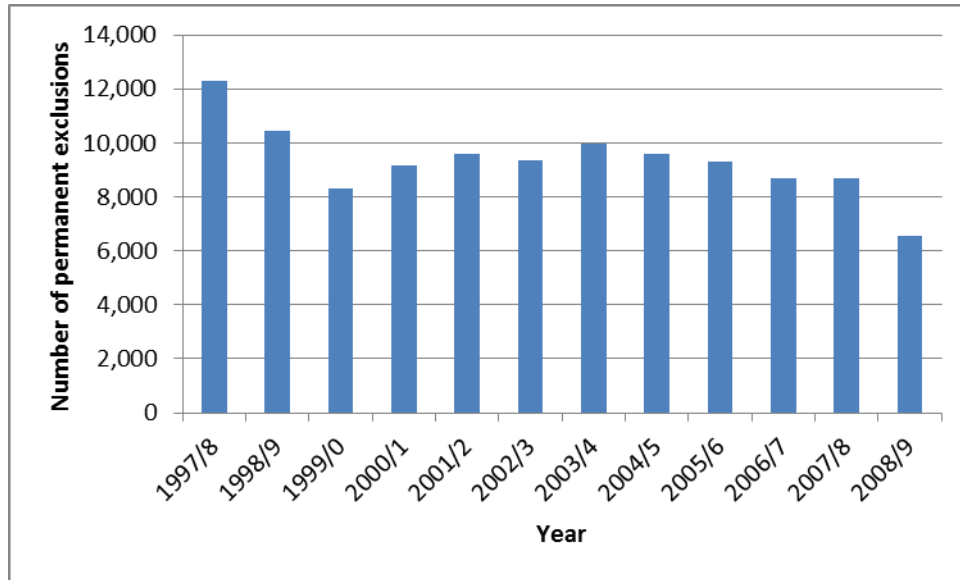


Figure 2.1 Permanent exclusions in all schools in England 1997/8-2008/9¹

The far-reaching effects of school exclusion on pupils’ lives have been well-documented. According to the literature school exclusion can herald the beginning of a chain of events, leading to multiple disadvantages for the young people involved. These can include low-academic achievement; unemployment; social isolation; substance abuse; and involvement in criminal activities (Munn *et al.*, 2001). In a similar vein, Daniels and Cole (2011), in their study of young people excluded from school, describe a process of social exclusion starting with social isolation as a result of loss of contact from their mainstream school friends and the structures of school that support employment. Many of the young people studied had low self-esteem and self-confidence accompanied by diminished aspirations and expectations. School exclusion has been associated with involvement in criminal activities. In his study on school experience and delinquency in Edinburgh, Smith (2006) highlights the role effective behaviour management in schools plays in preventing involvement in crime. He suggests that ‘controlling misbehaviour in school is important not only for its own sake—to create a better learning environment—but also because misbehaviour in school, along with a range of other factors, tends to lead to later criminal conduct.’(p.18). McAra (2004), working on

¹ Source: DfE (2010a). The figure shows permanent exclusions from all types of school.

the same project, found links between school exclusion and substance abuse, commenting that ‘Pupils who have been excluded from school report a significantly higher incidence of illegal drug use, underage drinking and smoking than their non-excluded counterparts’ (p.3).

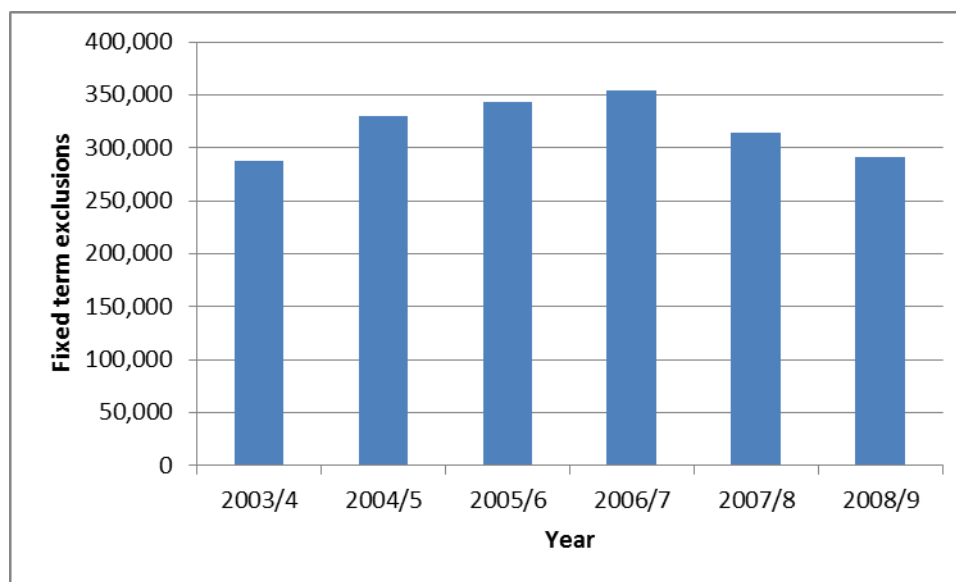


Figure 2.2 Fixed-term exclusions in state-maintained secondary schools in England: 2003/4-2008/9²

School exclusions can either take the form of permanent exclusion, where the child is formally expelled from school and their name is removed from the school role, or fixed-term exclusions where the child is formally excluded on a temporary basis. Until the academic year of 2003/4, government statistics focused on permanent exclusions. However, since those figures were released (DfES, 2005) statistics in following years include fixed-term exclusions. Figure 2.2 shows a rise in the incidence of fixed-term exclusions from 288,040 in 2003/4 to 329,680 in 2004/5. In subsequent years the fixed-term exclusion rate has remained at around 300,000, peaking at 353,910 in 2006/7 (DfE, 2010a). There has been a growing concern about the number of school days lost from exclusions, with the DfES (2007a) suggestion that fixed-term exclusion is an ineffective sanction as it may be perceived as an extra holiday. In response to this situation, there is now a requirement that schools will provide full-time education for pupils from the sixth day of fixed-term exclusions (DfES, 2007a). A third type of exclusion is an informal exclusion. This is when pupils are sent home with the agreement of their parents in order to avoid a formal exclusion. Government guidance on exclusions stresses that this type of exclusion is

² Source: DfE (2010a) I have chosen to only show figures from state-maintained secondary schools because there are some omissions from available data across all schools for this period.

illegal, commenting that 'Informal or unofficial exclusions are illegal regardless of whether they are done with the agreement of parents or carers' (DCFS, 2008a, p.15).

When examining factors impacting on school exclusions, Reed (2005a) found that most studies focused on either school intake factors or school process factors to explain variation. School intake varies between and within local authorities depending on the socio-economic character of the school catchment area. School process factors included direct processes such as behaviour policies, exclusions procedures and mechanisms for prevention or indirect processes such as school culture and characteristics. While recognising that research does not fall exclusively into these categories I have chosen to use the headings of 'school intake factors' and 'school process factors' to compare the following complex and disparate ideas.

2.1 The role of school intake factors in exclusions

In this section I review the literature and evidence for the impact of school intake factors on exclusions, focusing on the age, ethnicity and gender of pupils; their socio-economic status; the influences of peer relationships; and the impact of some child care practices.

2.1.1 Age

Exclusion rate varies considerably depending on the age of the pupil. The DfES (2006b, 2007b) found that 85% of exclusions were in secondary schools. The most common age for exclusion was 13 and 14 years, with boys being more likely to be excluded at an earlier age and with very few girls being excluded at primary schools. The exclusion rate at primary level is low, comprising of 11% of all national exclusions in 2003/4 and 12% of all exclusions in 2004/5 (DfES, 2006b, 2007b). Parsons (1999) speculates about the rise in girls' exclusions in the early teenage years, suggesting that 'Either their explicit oppositional behaviour arises later and/or schools' tolerance of it diminishes for 13-14-year-old girls' (p.25).

2.1.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity has also been associated with high exclusion rates. The DfES (2007b) show that during the period 2005/6, while the overall rate for permanent exclusion for all pupils was 14 in 10,000, the ethnic minorities experiencing the highest permanent exclusion rates were the Traveller of Irish Heritage (78 in 10,000) and White and Black Caribbean (41 in 10,000) groups.

In the case of fixed-term exclusions, 8 in every 100 pupils of mixed ethnic origin and Black pupils were excluded, compared to 6 in 100 for White pupils and 2 in 100 for Asian pupils. The DCFS (2008a) Guidance on Exclusion requires schools to monitor and analyse exclusions by ethnicity, to ensure that they do not discriminate against ethnic minorities. However, the data for 2008/9 continues to show disproportionate exclusion rates for pupils from Traveller; and White and Black Caribbean ethnic backgrounds (DfE, 2010a).

2.1.3 Gender

The data also shows that gender is a significant factor in exclusion. In 2004/5 and 2005/6 around 80% of all permanent and fixed-term exclusions were boys (DfES, 2006b, 2007b). These figures, when linked with evidence of a gender gap in academic achievement have resulted in widespread speculation about gender differences in learning styles.

There has been considerable concern about the high level of exclusions in boys. Some research has focused on how constructs of masculinity and femininity are achieved and their effects on children at school. The idea of disaffection as a means of asserting gender is cited by Willis (1977) who argues that participants in his study actively chose to resist schooling to reinforce maleness. This idea was developed by Mac an Ghaill (1996) who suggests that rather than rejecting the concept of education, many pupils, particularly males, reject the authoritarian stance of teachers and both the content and delivery of the curriculum. Similarly, Jordan (1995) suggests that boys, in the early years, define masculinity as avoiding 'girls' activities. Rowan *et al.* (2002) describe how prior experiences and attitudes shape the behaviour of all school children.

As a result of their high rates of exclusion many behaviour strategies are directed at boys. Girls are less likely to demand attention or seek help from adults. Cruddas and Haddock (2003) observed that the young women they talked to felt that boys' behavioural difficulties were targeted at the expense of girls. In the opinion of Osler and Vincent (2003), 'Although girls form a substantial minority of students subject to disciplinary exclusion, they have been largely overlooked in school exclusion prevention strategies' (p.1). The literature indicates that girls' behaviour is either different from that of boys, or that staff view it in a different light (Cruddas and Haddock, 2003; Berridge *et al.*, 2001) found that girls' behaviour attracted different responses from teachers than that of boys. Soles *et al.* (2008) found that when asked to evaluate girls' disruptive behaviour, teachers noticed more severely acting-out behaviours in girls than boys. They conclude that either girls' behaviour

must be more severe than boys before they are noticed, or that teachers are more sensitive to gender-contrary behaviour.

Girls may reject education because they do not perceive it to be relevant to them. Osler and Vincent (2003) suggest that some girls engage in a form of 'self-exclusion' where they either truant or remain in school but do not attend lessons. In 2002 one in four permanent exclusions were girls, yet the 'concern has continued to focus on 'underachieving' boys' (p.12).

2.1.4 Government legislation

Past Government legislation has impacted on the characteristics of school in-takes. In 1965 the DES introduced Circular 10/65 with the aim of parity in education. The circular states that 'It is the Government's declared objective to end selection at eleven plus and to eliminate separatism in secondary education' (DES, 1965, p.1). The directive of the circular was to abolish the tripartite system of grammar, secondary modern and secondary technical schools and provide comprehensive for all. Although local authorities were required to plan for the change, this was not fully implemented in all areas by the time the Conservative Party gained power in 1970. Due to Margaret Thatcher's (the then Minister of Education) opposition to comprehensive schools, the compulsion on local authorities to convert to comprehensive education ended. This has particular relevance for the present study as the LA involved retains two grammar schools. A further factor impacting on school intake is related to the Education Act 1980 which introduced parental choice of schools, a consequence of which has resulted in schools entering a marketing culture. This was followed by a sharp rise in exclusion rates during the 1990s and has been related to the privileging of parental choice and diversity over addressing inequalities in the education system (Parsons, 1999). Parental choice has also been identified as a powerful influence in the characteristics of school populations, resulting in increased social segregation. In their report on fair admissions in schools, Smithers and Robinson (2010) observed that 'The social make-up of a school partly reflects where it is located, but is mainly due to which pupils apply and are accepted' (p.i).

2.1.5 Socio-economic factors

Family socio-economic status has been identified as a significant factor in school exclusion (Lloyd *et al.*, 2003; DfES, 2006b and 2007b). The concept of 'Social Exclusion' was introduced to describe how lives are affected by exclusion in more than one domain. Social exclusion is defined by Levitas *et al.* (2007) as a complex

and multi-dimensional process where a high level of deprivation on many levels, renders the individual unable to participate in normal relationships and activities. They comment that social exclusion has far reaching effects on both the individual and society: 'It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole' (p.9).

The Social Exclusion Unit was set up by the New Labour government in 1997 to help the disadvantaged with an aim to shift the focus of anti-poverty schemes towards that of prevention. These include the 'Welfare to Work' programme and a focus on improving standards in schools. One of the initial focuses for the Social Exclusion Unit was to address the increasing number of pupils who were permanently excluded from school (DfES, 2006c). However, Araujo (2005) identifies a tension between the Social Inclusion Unit and educational practice that privileges academic attainment. She comments that 'there is a contradiction between New Labour's move towards social inclusion and current policies in education that promote competition, selection and exclusion' (p.242). She suggests that New Labour's approach to education is a continuation of that of the previous Conservative Government with the focus on choice and diversity to the detriment of tackling structural inequalities in the education system.

It has been suggested that the socially excluded pupil sees school as irrelevant to their experience and of little value in their adult lives. The findings of Sellman *et al.* (2002) indicate that this is particularly evident with boys nearing the end of their school lives. Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000) link this with the reduction in opportunities for unskilled labour, commenting that '...there is a growing recognition in the UK that less able and non-conforming individuals are in danger of becoming more and more marginalized in a system built on the operation of market forces' (p.59).

2.1.6 Child/Peer relationships

Peer relationships have long been recognised as influencing the choices made by young people. Feeling accepted as part of a group is often a powerful pressure. As an example of this, Willis (1977) described how disaffected students rejected education in favour of the cultural solidarity of their peer group. They suggest that this is a major factor in the difficulty in engaging boys in learning. In the same vein, Kinder *et al.* (1997) identify 'colluders and disputants' who, although they had difficulties in on-going relationships, were focused on peer relationships to the extent of following pupils who displayed disruptive behaviour. The pupils explained peer relationships and status were the pivotal impetus for their behaviour,

commenting that “you feel left out so you do what they do” (p.18). Similarly Barth *et al.*'s (2004) study on the impact of classroom environments on behaviour indicated that peers are reinforcers of behaviour. They found that poor behaviour was promoted in classrooms where there were high numbers of pupils with behaviour problems. This finding is supported by Cooper and Jacobs (2011) who highlight the potential negative influence of peers, observing that ‘The student peer group performs a powerful role influencing the quality of student behaviour in schools that, if not harnessed effectively, can have a negative impact’ (p.5). In the case of girls, Cruddas and Haddock (2003), identify an even greater pressure to conform to peer behaviour. They suggest that ‘Girls can feel that they have no choice but to comply with their peer group through fear of becoming an outsider’ (p.60). Likewise, Ostler and Vincent (2003) emphasise the importance of girls’ friendships, indicating that they tended to be more intimate than boys’ friendships. They explain that the emotional commitment that girls invest in their friendships leads them to avoid rejection, commenting that ‘the effects of name-calling or social exclusion may be more severe for girls than they are for boys’ (p.93).

However, peer influence can also have a positive effect on attitudes (Boxall, 2002; Barth *et al.*, 2004). Cruddas and Haddock (2003) document the affirmative reactions that girls had to group work, showing how discussions with peers can lessen feelings of isolation and increase self-confidence. Similarly, Cooper and Jacobs (2011) show the positive impact of peer assisted learning schemes and class wide peer tutoring on achievement and successful peer relationships.

2.2 The role of school process factors in exclusion

In this section I focus on the impact of school process factors on school exclusion including: behaviour management; curriculum and pedagogy; parental involvement; pupil voice; special educational needs; and staff/pupil relationships.

Opinions about the purposes of formal exclusion from school vary. Government guidance on exclusion is explicit in recommending that exclusions should not be used routinely to control disaffected students (DfES, 2006a). They advise that the decision to exclude a pupil for a fixed period should only occur for two reasons: in response to a serious breach of school rules or when the pupil’s behaviour would ‘seriously harm the education or welfare of others in the school’ (DfES, 2006a, paragraph 9). The notion of using exclusion to safeguard others is open to interpretation. Reed (2005b) regards exclusion as a way of maintaining the equanimity of the school, ‘directly motivated by an institutional desire, and

obligation, to protect and advance the well-being and achievement of other members of the school community' (p.6). However, Kinder *et al.* (1997), while endorsing the idea of exclusion as a way of protecting the school from behavioural difficulties that are detrimental to teaching and learning, also view exclusion as a form of reprisal in which it is seen as a deterrent to other pupils. In addition, they suggest that exclusion may be considered as a remedy, being in the best interests of the pupil with behavioural difficulties. Recent government views on exclusion are somewhat contradictory. It appears that attitudes to exclusion can vary depending on government focus. Osler and Vincent (2003) show how an increase in the school exclusion rate in 2001 was perceived by the government to be the result of a shift of focus from education to crime reduction. The complexity and range of these factors have influenced my thinking as they play out in my professional setting.

2.2.1 Behaviour management

Problem behaviours have been attributed to school organisation. Jull (2008) suggests that problem behaviours are not random but rather responses to external factors including environmental factors within the school. He suggests that by observing patterns in behaviour and making changes to identified environmental triggers such as transitions between lessons these problems can be minimised. Similarly Jones and Smith (2004) indicate that effective discipline depends on context and is not always transferable. They suggest that schools have their own unique cultures that have evolved and that a review of how schools operate their disciplinary system can be revealing. In their opinion, '[w]hat is appropriate in one school will not necessarily be appropriate in another' (p.116). To address organisational problems, Munn and Lloyd (2005) advocate that schools should look for patterns emerging from exclusions that could inform practice, particularly if exclusions are linked to subject, teachers or particular classes. They suggest that a more holistic approach may be achieved by merging behaviour support and learning support departments, leading to a reduction in exclusions when schools recognise and meet the complex needs of each pupil.

Rules are formalised within school behaviour policies. Opinions differ on the structure and implementation of behaviour policies. Schools often state that their aim is for consistency and have highly defined schemes of rewards and sanctions to address this. Pupils are very aware of the consistency and fairness with which a system is implemented (Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Hilton, 2006; Sellman, 2009). However research indicates that there is a need for differentiation and flexibility within a system (Grossman (2005). Some studies argue that resistance to change comes from teaching staff who find it difficult to meet the needs of pupils whose

behaviour is outside the norm. Hilton (2006) found that excluded pupils believed that their teachers had been overly strict. They felt that the systems were used too rigidly and that sanctions were used in a mechanistic way, taking little account of individual circumstances. Little (2005), who also holds this view, advocates the use of a flexible system in which interventions are graduated in response to the severity of the behaviour.

In teachers' opinions, low-level disruption is the most frequent behaviour requiring intervention in the classroom. In her study of teachers' perceptions of classroom behaviour, Little (2005) identified 'talking out of turn' and 'hindering others' as the most troublesome problem behaviours experienced by teachers in the years up to Y11. Infantino and Little (2005) found that both pupils and staff believe that an excessive amount of time is spent on managing behaviour in the classroom. They suggest that teachers should focus on the methods that pupils perceive to be most effective and that pupils should recognise that teachers have a limited range of incentives available.

Some opinions indicate that the causes of exclusion may lie in problems in society's expectations of the school system (Epp, 1996; Clark *et al.*, 1999; Sproson, 2004; Thomas and Loxley, 2004; Hilton, 2006). There is a tension between the aims of inclusive education that meets the needs of all of its pupils and the pressure to 'market' schools through league tables of academic achievements. Pressure on schools to maintain high academic and discipline standards can impact on inclusion in the classroom. Clark *et al.* (1999) detected dissonances between the espoused policies of schools, the practices through which these policies were supposedly realised and the understandings of diversity which teachers within the schools had. They argue that pressure to cater for all pupils leads to class teachers identifying increasing numbers of pupils with behavioural difficulties who require an alternative provision within the school. This view is echoed by Sproson (2004) who suggests that some staff are resistant to differentiating both the curriculum and their behaviour management strategies to accommodate the needs of disaffected pupils.

In a similar vein, Epp (1996) suggests that the education system perpetuates stratification, in that it teaches all to compete for top places and conditions some pupils to accept failure. They define 'systemic violence' as any practice or procedure that prevents students from learning. In this model exclusion is used to maintain harmony within the institution. 'Systemic violence' is a no-blame approach in that the people applying sanctions are part of a larger process. They are following protocol rather than acting independently. Similarly, in their study of the components of 'inclusive schools', Clark *et al.* (1999) stress the complexity of the roles of schools, indicating that conflicts exist between different interests that are

both internal and external. They conclude that schools cannot be defined as 'inclusive' or 'not inclusive' but sites where 'complex processes intersect' (p.170). Thomas and Loxley (2004) also view behavioural problems to be a result of the ways schools are organised. They suggest that 'Misbehaviour seems to be an endemic part of institutions that organise themselves in particular ways' (p.44).

Thornberg's (2008) study of children's reasoning about rules supports this opinion. He identified four types of rule: relational, structural, protecting and etiquette, and concluded that there was a hierarchy in the way pupils regarded school rules. Thornberg considered social conventions a mixture of structural rules and etiquette rules, and the pupils in his study felt justified in transgressing both types of rule. Pupils would transgress structural rules (aimed at structuring and maintaining the activities that take place in school) if they could take part in a preferred activity. Similarly, they felt justified in transgressing etiquette rules (manifesting customs and traditions in school) as they could not see any adverse consequences of breaking them and viewed them as arbitrary.

2.2.2 Curriculum and pedagogy

The literature indicates that changes to the academic curriculum and pedagogy can contribute to meeting the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. In this section I review three strategies that have been identified as effective in engaging pupils: curriculum content; addressing different learning styles; and the enhancement of social skills.

Curriculum content has been identified as a key factor in school disaffection. Hallam *et al.* (2010) found that making changes in the curriculum can increase pupil engagement. They evaluated the impact of vocational qualifications on the motivation and aspirations of pupils at risk of exclusion, studying the effect of the introduction of an alternative provision run by a charitable trust, Skill Force, had on disaffected pupils, and concluded that the experience helped re-engagement in learning. Similarly the Lamb Inquiry (DCFS, 2009a) recommends the introduction of more practical activities in the curriculum to support pupils' learning and reduce school exclusions.

In addition to curriculum content, styles of pedagogy have also been identified as important in meeting the needs of all pupils. The literature demonstrates that teacher-centred strategies do not meet the needs of pupils with more active learning styles. Catering for variations in learning styles has also been identified as an important element in both pupils' engagement and effective learning. Reid (2005) identifies five types of learner: auditory; visual; kinaesthetic; social/emotional; and

metacognitive, advising that inclusive education needs to take account of the needs of all children. Although Reid highlights the need for teacher to be aware of individual pupils' variations in learning style, he stresses the need for giving children opportunities to practice using all styles, emphasising the importance of the emotional security of the learner.

The enhancement of social skills is a third strategy that has been implemented to address problem behaviour in schools. Soles *et al.* (2008) question whether a social skills deficit may be central in the problems experienced by the pupils. In their view '...a child may become aggressive when his social skills fail him and do not provide strategies for effectively interacting with peers' (p.285). Similarly Wright *et al.* (2004) suggest that children need a high level of understanding to cope with the various and sometimes conflicting ways in which teachers interact with them.

A whole school approach to the specific teaching of social skills has been the focus of some initiatives for addressing behaviour in schools. The SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) initiative takes a holistic approach to learning with emphasis on emotional awareness, empathy, anger management and social problem solving (DCSF, 2007a). Hallam and Rogers (2008) observe that the programme has a dual outcome of improving behaviour by helping children to reflect on their behaviour and enabling teachers, as good role models, to reflect on the way they approach behaviour issues.

The DSFC's (2008b) evaluation of small group work in the SEAL programme found that successful results are dependent on factors including the skills and experience of the staff and the availability of space for the sessions to take place. A similar approach to SEAL has also been taken by the 'Over to You' initiative in which Y8 pupils at risk of exclusion were supported through a group work that focused on self-reflection, personal motivation and empowerment with a view to enabling the children to learn to self-regulate their behaviour. Evaluation by Burton (2006) revealed that behavioural improvements continued several months after in the intervention. This approach is recommended by Cooper (2008) when he describes how, through the use of circle time pupils can learn to articulate their feelings, develop ways of solving problems and respond appropriately to challenging situations.

A more targeted approach is also described by Cooper (2008) who explains how pupils can develop the skills they need to function in a mainstream class through withdrawal to 'nurture groups'. These are small groups of pupils with identified social and developmental deficits. Originating in London in the 1960s, nurture groups aim to address the needs of young (primary age) children who have

not experienced the conditions in their infancy to develop the independence and autonomy required for classroom learning (Boxall, 2002). Staff facilitate progress in social skills and learning by responding to their pupils' needs in a developmentally appropriate way. A further strategy described by Klein (2001) outlines how social skills developed by pupils involved in community work can be transferred to their behaviour and performance in schools.

2.2.3 Parental involvement in schools

Consistent with earlier policies, the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009a) stresses the importance of good communication between schools and parents, particularly where there are identified SEN. This report identifies parental involvement both with schools and with other agencies as having a profound impact on pupils' progress. It advocates consulting with and involving parents at all stages of SEN intervention as a means of addressing behaviour issues.

2.2.4 Pupil voice

I am a firm believer in the importance of pupil voice, as demonstrated in my methodology and discussion. At the same time I am aware of the barriers to achieving this. Several studies conclude that the hierarchical structure of schools is problematic, advocating that change should come from inside the system, by listening and responding to the views of pupils. Klein (2001) describes a high school in which staff and students collaborated on timetables, work rate and success criteria. This approach is shared by Sellman (2009) who suggests that pupil involvement in decision-making is a key factor in increasing motivation and making them feel part of the school. In a similar vein, Fisher (2001) emphasises the value of making pupils agents in the process of reintegration, recognising and taking responsibility for their actions, and identifying areas for change.

Some researchers view the degree of control exercised by school systems as detrimental to a harmonious organisation. Thomas and Loxley (2004) suggest that 'If children misbehave at school, educational professionals are encouraged to look at the background, motivations and supposed traumas of the students rather than the simple humanity of the school's operation' (p.28-29). In their view, children's misdemeanours are less to do with their emotional make-up and more to do with the school's need to control and keep order. Watkinson (1996) echoes this opinion, focusing on an authoritarian, paternalistic view of the school organisation. She suggests that school hierarchies promote the need to control and have control over personal behaviour and that this becomes an obsession. Similarly, Epp (1996)

describes how arbitrary school rules, such as wearing hats, can become serious disciplinary issues. They suggest that pupils should only be asked to comply with rules that are reasoned and reasonable. They advocate ‘systemic justice’ involving a critical examination of the values and interpretations of everything that happens in school.

Sellman (2009) suggests that the hierarchical structure of schools does not lend itself to promoting pupil voice, particularly that of pupils at risk of exclusion, in anything other than a tokenistic way, warning that opportunities for pupil voice are often based on models from the adult world which are not empowering to pupils. Similarly, Fielding (2010) highlights the problems involved in eliciting the authentic views of pupils, problematising how and from who views are drawn. He comments that ‘There are some voices we wish to hear and others we do not and in dismissing those that seem to us as too strident, too offensive or too irresponsible we may often miss things of importance and of a deeper seriousness than our first impressions allow’ (P.303).

2.2.5 Special Educational Needs

The prevalence of pupils with SEN is also a significant factor in exclusion. There is concern about how some SEN are addressed in schools. Special Educational Needs Select Committee (DfES, 2006d) reported that 60% of permanent exclusions in secondary schools involved pupils with SEN, stating that: ‘There is a strong correlation between exclusions and children with SEN – particularly those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and Autistic behaviour’ (p.31). The same report (DfES, 2006d) also expressed concern about the high level of exclusion of pupils with SEN suggesting that schools are not meeting their needs, commenting that: ‘We see a close link between poor behaviour and previous failure to deal with a pupil’s special needs properly’ (p.55). In a similar vein the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009a) recommends that schools reduce the number of exclusions of pupils with SEN, commenting that ‘...exclusions are symptoms of underlying difficulties that have not been addressed’ (p.36). MacLeod (2001) suggests that some mainstream schools appear to have an anti-inclusive agenda. This is manifested in an unwillingness to address the needs of pupils with behavioural problems.

Some researchers are critical of the practice of *statementing*³ children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), suggesting that this approach locates the difficulty in the disposition of the individual child, and calls for treatment

³ A **Statement of Special Educational Needs** is where there is a legal document, reviewed annually, stating the criteria that must be achieved to meet the needs of the pupil.

for the child, rather than looking for solutions within the school (Epp, 1996; Thomas and Loxley, 2004; DCSF, 2009a). In a similar vein, Munn and Lloyd (2005) argue that the increasing numbers of diagnoses of ADHD and conduct disorders associated with challenging behaviour, not only locates behaviour difficulties within the child but, at the same time, removes the responsibility of addressing these difficulties from the child, family and school. Raphael Reed (1999) suggests that there is an increasing tendency to syndromatise challenging behaviour in boys, with greater numbers of boys than girls being diagnosed with both Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD. In her opinion the SEN resources are dominated by boys' needs with girls' needs remaining unidentified. Wearmouth *et al.* (2005) echo this opinion when they compare medical and biological explanations of behaviour with those that take a more holistic view of humanity. In their opinion the context of the behaviour is as powerful as an underlying condition. In a similar vein, Furlong (1991) stresses the importance of recognising the psychological impact school has on disaffected pupils. Cassidy *et al.* (2001) develop this theme, suggesting that a child's experiences in school shape not only their self-image as learners but also as people, with a higher proportion of pupils in EBD schools having psychiatric difficulties than those in mainstream schools.

The DfES (2006a) advises that schools should avoid excluding pupils with statements or those supported at School Action or School Action Plus, pointing out that the school should be aware of difficulties in managing these pupils' behaviour before the situation escalates. However, the DfES (2006b) found that, in the period 2005/6, pupils with SEN were around 6 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than the rest of the school population. There is a tension between schools' aims of inclusivity and their responses to pupils with identified social and emotional difficulties (EBD). Jull (2008) views pupils who are at risk of exclusion as 'representing a unique dilemma' (p.13) because the very behaviours identified as problematic increase their risk of punitive disciplinary measures including exclusion. The Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009a), finding that many instances of exclusion were linked with identified SEN, views the practice as a staff training issue. They recommend that 'The focus needs to be on developing staff skills' P36.

Reed (2005a) stresses the need for a holistic perspective on the factors impacting on school exclusion. In her view education should meet the diverse needs of all pupils and removal from school by means of exclusion is not fulfilling this aim. Parsons (2009) shares this view suggesting that rather than make pupils fit the system the whole education community should cater for all pupils. In his view the practice of school exclusion is 'individually and socially damaging' (p.3).

This holistic approach is echoed by Parsons (2009). In his study of high and low-excluding Local Authorities (LA) Parsons identifies six areas that are crucial to reducing exclusion within an LA: a shared commitment to reducing exclusions across schools; broadening the school provision; the use of managed moves and school clusters; development of alternative provisions; multi-agency working; and shared ethos and attitudes. The pivotal drive behind all of these measures is to provide education that meets the needs of all pupils.

2.2.6 Staff/ Pupil Relationships

Research into the extent that schools are inclusive has identified staff/pupil relationships as an important influence in pupils' responses to school (Cole *et al.*, 1999; Pomeroy, 1999; McFadden and Munns, 2002; Williamson and Cullingford, 2003; Riley and Docking, 2004; Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Hilton, 2006; Smith, 2006; Cooper, 2008; McCluskey, 2008).

Teacher responses to challenging behaviour have been identified as a pivotal aspect of the staff/pupil relationship. The literature shows that pupils feel undervalued and humiliated by authoritarian, insensitive teaching styles. Riley and Docking's (2004) study of pupils experiencing problems at school found that most pupils held specific grievances against staff, resenting those who shouted at them; talked down to them; punished them without listening to their views; and punished the whole class rather than individuals. Furthermore, older pupils felt that they had limited opportunities to express their point of view. Riley and Docking (2004) describe how some teacher reactions to problematic behaviour contribute to disaffection and alienation. This finding is reinforced by Williamson and Cullingford's (2003) study of young offenders who had been excluded from school. They report that some of their interviewees felt undervalued by teachers who had no interest in them or their opinions. Their participants felt that teaching staff did not treat them with respect and also underestimated their maturity. Hilton's (2006) study also indicates excluded pupils were resentful of the lack of respect they felt they were given by staff. Pupils also felt that they were targeted or picked on because of previous behaviour. A further variable identified by Solomon and Rogers (2001) was that accounts of excluded pupils were all similar in that they largely blamed their behaviour on teachers and/or uncontrollable aspects of themselves (ADHD, having a temper, getting in a mood, being stressed). They explain that the excluded pupils "tended to portray themselves as people to whom things happen which are largely out of their control" (p.341). This view is reiterated in Verkuyten's (2002) study of pupils in the Netherlands. Pupils argued that the teachers were responsible for disruptive behaviour because they were unable to maintain order in the classroom.

Teacher expectations can play an important role in how they react to and relate to their pupils. Soles *et al.*, (2008) suggest that teacher views of disruptive pupils are often negative. In a study on teachers' perceptions of emotional and behaviour difficulties they asked mainstream teachers to nominate those pupils that they believed had BESDs. They found that teachers tend to ascribe excessively extreme behaviours to those pupils who they perceived as having BESD. Soles *et al.* warn that there is a danger that pupil behaviour could become consistent with teacher expectations.

The past experiences of teachers can also influence their behaviour. In his study on teachers' responses to disruptive pupil behaviour Weiss (2002a) suggests that teachers' past experiences can result in adverse reactions to problem behaviour, advocating that self-reflection is an essential tool for management of pupils that experience problems at school. He suggests that 'Teachers need to understand the emotions aroused in themselves by children's behaviour' (p.125).

It is important to recognise the role emotions play in classroom interactions. Furlong (1991) stresses the importance of considering the strong emotional feelings when pupils and staff come into conflict in the classroom, suggesting that any study of school disaffection should start with an exploration of why some pupils react in such a negative way to school. Furlong explains this process in terms of a power struggle, taking the view that the predominantly working class children who resist schooling are not challenging an abstract social structure but are challenging real people who have the power to constrain their freedom.

The idea of a power struggle has also been explored by McFadden and Munns (2002) who identify a tension between the cultural expectations of teaching staff and pupils. They use the term 'culturally supported school resistance' to describe how some disadvantaged children define themselves in terms belonging to a group for whom school is irrelevant (p.360). The resulting classroom interactions between teachers and pupils reveal that power in the classroom is not solely the teachers' domain, but interplay between the teacher's directions and the pupil's decision whether to comply with or resist instructions. In their opinion 'Whereas the teachers have control of content, the pupils can decide what work they want to do and at what pace' (p.361). This finding is echoed by Sellman (2009), in his study of pupils in a special school for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, where he found that some students felt empowered by challenging staff, explaining that '...some students experienced greater voice/power when they exhibited more challenging behaviour' (p.42).

In response to these ideas, there have been various suggestions to improve staff/pupil relationships and address disaffection in the classroom. One proposal is

that teachers should have a greater understanding of the lives and backgrounds of their pupils. McFadden and Munns (2002) argue that educators need to consider the mismatch between pupil and teacher cultures and interpretations. Similarly, Munn and Lloyd (2005) suggest that knowledge of the complexities of pupils' lives outside the classroom may both promote understanding and reduce teacher stress. They suggest that it 'might promote greater sensitivity and understanding towards challenging behaviour and depersonalise it so that teachers feel less 'got at' by pupils' display of such behaviour' (p.216). In Daniels' (2006) view greater understanding of classroom interactions can be promoted through collaboration between teachers and the establishment of peer support groups. In his opinion, teaching is a very individual profession and this is reinforced by the teacher training practices that discourage cultures of professional interaction and knowledge sharing. He describes how peer support systems have been established where expertise is shared among colleagues rather than some teachers acting as experts to others. Participants found that the support groups gave the space to distance themselves from problems and re-examine their activities, develop new approaches, and discuss policy development.

The literature describes how teacher pupil relationships can be improved, indicating that pupils value teachers who make time to talk to students, and build relationships based on a friendly approach and a sense of humour (Hilton, 2006; McCluskey, 2008). Listening to pupils is also identified as an important aspect of staff/pupil interaction. Sproson's (2004) considers this to be a core factor in building relationships. In Riley and Docking's (2004) view, pupils responded positively to staff who treated them fairly, and helped them individually with their work, and listened to their problems. Older pupils appreciated being treated in a more adult way and being encouraged to voice their opinions. In addition, Hilton (2006) suggests that respondents appreciated teachers who not only built a relationship with them but also acted as an advocate for them, taking their side against other adults.

'Insecure attachment' in early life, has been related to subsequent difficulties in forming relationships. In his study of school experience and delinquency, Smith (2006) describes 'school attachment', and in particular attachment to teachers, as an important factor in behaviour. In a similar vein, Bombèr (2009) explains that the formation of positive relationships with supportive adults increases the ability of vulnerable pupils to meet the demands of secondary schools.

Early intervention is recognised as a key factor in addressing social deficits. The Improvement Development Programme for pupils experiencing problems in early years stresses the importance of all practitioners in developing children's understanding of interpersonal relations (DCSF, 2010a). Advocating a reflective

approach, they suggest that the sense of wellbeing of children will be increased by experiencing positive and responsive relationships. This idea is also seen in the work of Cole *et al.* (1999) who found that good practice in the education of children experiencing problems depends on ‘strong and appropriate staff value systems which shape the ethos of a school, making the latter responsive and flexible to the wide diversity of pupils’ (p.13). The model they describe relies on the dominance of staff who observe and plan before acting, maintain a dialogue, and learn from their mistakes. A reflective approach is also advocated by Cooper and Upton (1991) who emphasise the differences in perceptions of individuals. They recommend a ‘no-blame’ approach to conflict in schools, where staff reflect on the reasons for their own reactions and recognise that each individual has a rational basis for their behaviour. Similarly, Sellman *et al.* (2002) found that effective provision for pupils experiencing difficulties depends on a strong leadership supported by a majority of teachers who are actively involved in developing and implementing an inclusive ethos.

2.3 An ecosystemic approach to school exclusion

The literature associated with school exclusion highlights the complexity and range of variables that impact on behaviour in schools. To address this complexity I have chosen to approach this study using an ecosystemic framework: a tool that will be used throughout the research with the advantage that it takes into account the wide range of influences that impact on the individual’s development and behaviour. The ecosystemic approach was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an innovative way of explaining how individuals develop, beyond simple child development, described by Bronfenbrenner as ‘...a new theoretical perspective into human development’ (p.3). This framework helps to explain individual differences in reaction to environmental influences or contexts. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) original model consisted of a series of ‘nested structures’, starting, at the centre, with the microsystem of face-to-face relationships formed in the individual’s immediate environment. In 1992 Bronfenbrenner revised the microsystem to acknowledge the impact that the individual characteristics of others in the microsystem have on the developing child, emphasising the importance of a long-term mutual interaction with an adult. Bronfenbrenner stressed the role that the quality of early relationships have in a child’s ability to engage in subsequent relationships and activities, emphasising the importance of two-way interactions and mutual compromise. The next layer, the mesosystem, involved the interconnections between these settings, which, in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) opinion, ‘can be as decisive for development as events

taking place within a given setting' (p.3). In this layer there was an acknowledgement of the impact of events occurring within the settings in the absence of the individual. The third layer, the exosystem examined the structures that influence what happens within the micro- and mesosystem. These included the way the immediate environment of the child is structured. Finally the outer layer, the macrosystem looked at the influence of systems in the wider society or culture, highlighting the role of public policies in supporting nurturing relationships in a child's life.

Bronfenbrenner (1992) emphasised the influence of the belief systems available to the developing child, including those in the macrosystem. He also introduced the third dimension of the 'chronosystem' to explain the development of a child over time. The chronosystem relates to changes that take place in a child's environments. These can include external events in the life of the child, such as family breakdown, or internal physiological changes that take place with maturation. In the present study, I have used the framework to give a 'snap-shot' view of the factors associated with school exclusion, with no particular emphasis on the chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) proposed that children are influenced by the interactions at every level of the framework, and they in turn influence others. Each player within the framework has different experiences and reactions to the same situations. Likewise every individual has a rational reason for their behaviour.

An ecosystemic approach to behavioural issues in schools has been embraced by several researchers. Cooper and Upton (1991) recommended it as a way for educationalists to focus on the processes involved in problem behaviour rather than view behaviour as a deficit within the individual child. This approach was further developed by Cole (1996) who refocused Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original layers by emphasising the relationship between context and behaviour. Focusing on an interaction as a central point, he made a distinction between context that surrounds and context that weaves together, stressing the dynamic nature of interchanges and the effect each part has on the individual. He introduced arrows into his representation of the ecosystemic framework to denote that the concentric circles of Bronfenbrenner's model may be transformed by the varying roles that individuals adopt in different contexts.

The ecosystemic approach is reflected in the structure of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), the Green Paper prompted by failings highlighted by the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, followed by The Children Act (DfES, 2004a) and the initiative that followed this: Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004b). This initiative takes a multi-faceted approach to child protection, identifying five

outcomes to be addressed to protect children and for each child to reach their potential, including 'be healthy'; 'stay safe'; 'enjoy and achieve'; 'make a positive contribution' and 'achieve economic well-being' (p.9). It emphasises the impact each outcome has on the how children and young people function in education, a deficit in one area affecting all the others. The utilisation of an ecosystemic framework ensures that all variables, and their impact on each other, are involved in analysing a situation and is fit for purpose for the present study where my focus is on the occurrence and antecedents of school exclusions.

I have adapted Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original ecosystemic framework to fit the purpose of this study (Figure 2.3). The present study has its focus on school exclusions and therefore school takes a dominant position in my ecosystemic framework. In constructing my framework, I have been influenced by Cole's (1996) emphasis on the relationship between context and behaviour, using the framework to focus on how the processes both at home and at school impact on pupil behaviour. At the heart of the framework I have placed the individual attributes of the child. The attributes identified as being located within the child are gender, age and ethnicity. It could be argued that ethnicity and gender are variables that could occur elsewhere in the framework. They impact on relationships as a reflection of the wider cultural climate and could equally well be placed in the micro- or macrosystem. However, because they are innate attributes of the individual, the decision was made to place it in the sphere of the individual child in this instance.

Following Bronfenbrenner's original framework, I have placed relationships directly influencing the child in the microsystem. I have chosen to place the face-to-face relationships formed at school and home within this sphere.

The next layer is the mesosystem, where I have placed interconnections between the child's face-to-face relationships that can impact on the microsystem. Whereas Bronfenbrenner positioned school within the microsystem, I have placed school relationships in this system. These are identified as home/school communication; staff communication; and communication between outside agencies, school and home.

Beyond the mesosystem are the social structures impacting on the microsystem and mesosystem: the exosystem. It is here that I have positioned the school structures that impact on the behaviour of the child. These include the behaviour management systems and their implementation (including how exclusions are used in individual schools), the curriculum, alternative provisions, SEN, setting⁴, and on-site units.

⁴ I have used the term 'setting' for ability grouping as this was the term used in the schools.



Figure 2.3 An ecosystemic framework for school exclusion

The outer layer of the framework, the macrosystem, includes political, social and cultural attitudes, and government initiatives and legislation that affect structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school. It includes influences beyond the control of the school such as location, catchment area, socio-economic factors, intake and size of school and LA.

It is important to recognise that the ecosystem framework is a dynamic tool for an approach to analysing the factors relating to school exclusions. The layers are not discrete or static but rather are interwoven as interactions take place. Although I have used separate layers in order to structure my study, I emphasise the bi-directional nature of influences between the layers. I have indicated this fluidity by placing arrows across the boundaries of the systems.

In the following chapter I explain how, based on the literature review and the factors identified in the ecosystemic framework, I designed the methodology of the research.

3 Methodology

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I have located my research questions and an account of how I arrived at a mixed methodology. I explain how I initially analysed the schools exclusions data using qualitative methods the results of which informed my choice of schools for further study. I then document how I researched qualitative elicitation techniques concerned with exploring the perspectives of my respondents. This chapter includes an account of my sampling techniques and the ethical considerations related to the research.

3.1 Research Questions

In the light of the literature I have arrived at three main research questions concerning the variations in school exclusions. I have framed the questions using the systems identified in my ecological framework (Figure 2.3).

3.1.1 Research question 1

What is the variation in exclusion rates in secondary schools in one Local Authority?

Research Question 1 sub questions

1. How do school exclusions vary in terms of gender, age and SEN?
2. What are the triggers for schools excluding pupils and do they vary between schools?

3. How do patterns of exclusion in schools differ in terms of length of exclusions?
4. How do patterns of exclusion in schools differ in terms of multiple exclusions?
5. How does the socio-economic status of the school population relate to exclusion?
6. How does school size relate to exclusion?

3.1.2 Research Question 2

What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?

Research Question 2 sub questions

1. How do the 'within child' factors of age, gender and ethnicity relate to school exclusion?
2. How do relationships in the home, neighbourhood and at school, relate to exclusion?
3. What is the impact of home and school location on school exclusion rate?
4. How do the links within the microsystem impact on school exclusion?
5. How do the links between the social structures associated with the mesosystem and microsystem impact on school exclusions?
6. How do school policies, structures and systems impact on exclusion?
7. How do social and political attitudes impact on school exclusion?

3.1.3 Research Question 3

What are the implications of the research for processes and systems?

3.2 Choosing a methodology

In the following discussion, I show how I arrived at a mixed methodology, using methods from both the quantitative and qualitative approaches, to conduct my research.

The importance of the process of selecting a methodology is a pivotal component in the process of research. Scott and Usher (1999) regard this as a philosophical issue 'integral to the research process' (p.10). This opinion is also held by Denscombe (1998) who emphasises the importance of fitting the methodology, not only to the specific problem, but also to the perspectives of the researcher. Silverman (2000) echoes this opinion, suggesting that the overall research strategy should be reflected in the choice of method as the methodology shapes not only the methods used but also how they are implemented. Following this advice, when selecting a methodology for research into variations in school exclusion rates, I took care to consider not only its fitness for purpose but also how it related to my own perspectives.

My thinking has been influenced by a wide range of ideas about the nature of knowledge, how it is acquired and how it is interpreted. Scott and Usher (1999) describe how the positivist paradigm originated during the Enlightenment, its roots lying in empirical research and traditional epistemology with its emphasis on rules and testability. The applicability of the qualities of measurement, testability and the use of reason in scientific investigations resulted in a domination and privilege of quantitative approaches. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) chronicle how, the nineteenth century philosopher, Comte, believed that it was possible to have a science of society in which the laws and theories of social phenomena could be investigated empirically in the same way as physical phenomena. This has given rise to a school of thought that believes that it is only through quantitative analysis that a statement is given meaning.

There has been a tension between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, favouring quantitative as being the legitimate methodology, with qualitative methods being regarded as subjective and lacking in rigour. In practice the boundaries between the two paradigms are blurred. Methodologies can appear to be qualitative, but may be quantified. Scott and Usher (1999) argue that qualitative methodology is now more accepted and can be compatible with quantitative methodologies. Although applicable to both qualitative and quantitative methods, positivism has been primarily associated with quantitative methodology. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2001) describe the positivist approach as one in which knowledge is a physical entity with a detached, objective observer striving for objectivity, measurability and the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, leading to ascription of causality. In contrast, the qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory and ethnographical techniques, view knowledge concerned with human behaviour as personal, subjective and unique. Post-positivists believe that, while one reality exists, knowledge of it is intrinsically imperfect

because of the limitations of the researcher who brings their own perspectives to the collection and interpretations of data.

A third approach is to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) view using mixed methodologies makes it possible to both identify trends and to explore ideas in the same study. They comment that 'A major advantage of mixed methodologies is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and therefore verify and generate theory at the same time' (p.15). They describe how mixed methods can occur either simultaneously or sequentially to answer research questions. In the following sections I show how I arrived at a sequential, mixed methodology. I describe how I used quantitative methods to answer my first research question: 'What is the variation in exclusion rates in secondary schools in one Local Authority?' by identifying trends in school exclusions data, through which I selected a sample of three schools for further study. I then describe how I used both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer my second research question: 'What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?' by using interviews to explore respondents' perceptions and opinions concerning school exclusions. Finally I show how I drew the quantitative and qualitative data together to answer my third research question: 'What are the implications of the research for processes and systems?'

3.2.1 Research Question 1

'What is the variation in exclusion rate in secondary schools in one Local Authority?'

In order to answer my first research question I used quantitative methods to work with numerical data from data archives. The answer to this question required an investigation into historical exclusions in each school and how they differed. Since 2003/4, the DfES (2005) has collected exclusion data from each LA documenting each incident of fixed-term and permanent exclusion. They analyse this information and publish it in the form of tables and charts recording exclusion statistics for England. I had access to the information provided by Watermill Valley for the DfES for 2004/5 and 2005/6, that includes a detailed record of each instance of exclusion at every school in the LA. The information recorded included the age, gender and SEN status of each excluded child; the trigger for the exclusion; and the date of, and the duration of, each exclusion. Also included was the child's identification number from which I was able to determine the number of exclusions each child was given in each period. Information that I was unable to access included the individual

children's names and ethnicity both of which were encoded in the identification number. The quantitative nature of this data lends it to descriptive statistical analysis, used to summarise data.

Using the LA data I was able to compare details of exclusions for each school. I began the analysis process by comparing the permanent exclusion rates of the schools in the LA. It emerged that the number of permanent exclusions during the two periods was very low, but in line with national figures, amounting to under 100 pupils over 2004/5 and 2005/6, 88 of which were from secondary schools. The variation in permanent exclusion rates within each school over the two periods was high and influenced by isolated incidents [Figure 4.1]. This led me to consider the incidence of fixed-term exclusions, the frequency of which was far higher, making comparisons between the schools more possible.

I used the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) to structure the analysis of the variables relating to each case of exclusion, starting with comparisons of the ages and genders of each child, both between schools and across the LA. In this section I also included information concerning the proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities in each school in order to enhance comparability. I then used the LA data to examine the variations in reasons given for exclusions schools, locating this data in the realm of the micro system as it related strongly with interactions taking place within the child's face-to-face relationships. I located the variables of SEN status and number of exclusions within the exosystem as these factors appeared to depend on how the individual school addressed behaviour issues. I located the variable of the duration of exclusions within the macrosystem, as government guidelines and legislation relate to this issue (DfES, 2006a and 2007a). Within the macrosystem I also located information concerning the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in each school, as this is an indication of socio-economic status.

The utilisation of frequency tables in the form of bar charts allowed for comparison of the recorded variables involved in school exclusions and informed me of patterns of exclusion both across the LA and within individual schools for both 2004/5 and 2005/6. This data was then compared to DfES (2006b, 2007b) national data for 2004/5 and 2005/6, to identify any regional trends. It was also used, in conjunction with demographic information from the English Indices for Deprivation (ODPM, 2004), to select schools for research. In my view, for the initial processing of this data, quantitative analysis was fit for purpose, as it enabled me to describe the variance in school exclusions in Watermill Valley and identify schools for further study.

3.2.2 Research Question 2

‘What are the factors leading to the variations in school exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?’

In order to answer my second research question I chose to work within the qualitative paradigm.

When considering the most appropriate approach for my second research question, I was aware that it was individual perspectives that interested me, rather than quantifiable facts. I was looking for each individual’s discourses, their impressions and interpretations of factors impacting on school exclusion. To achieve this end I explored how qualitative methods within the interpretivist paradigm would answer my question on the factors leading to variation in school exclusion.

Scott and Usher (1999) show how qualitative methods of inquiry are used to investigate the nature and meaning of social phenomena. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) echo this view when they suggest that ‘The interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its own actors’ (p.28). It is this humanistic approach that I considered to be appropriate to my present research. The process of school exclusion is dependent on interactions between the many elements identified in the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3), and an interpretive approach to this research would aid the understanding of this process, generating the data that I required.

It is in the interpretivist paradigm that the hard facts of incidents of exclusion can be illuminated by individuals’ perspectives on behavioural problems. These perspectives are by nature, not only subjective but also problematic to quantify. Individual views and opinions are likely to be diverse and highly complex. This approach is supported by Watkins *et al.* (2007) in their comparative study of violence in schools. They suggest that ‘A focus solely on practices could portray schools as mechanical systems with interchangeable practices designed for maximum efficiency’ (p.68). By interviewing a ‘family sample’ of school staff, they identified two significant strands affecting the incidence of violence in schools:

- The degree of connectedness between the organisation and school practice
- Differences between school discourses about violence (a factor that emerged during the interviews)

This is the approach that is fit for purpose for my second research question. The ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) takes into account both the organisational and human elements of the school system. Any tensions between the two should be revealed in an interpretivist approach.

The interpretivist paradigm also fits in with my personal approach to education which is a pedagogy involving the individual development of each child, following the thinking of Rogers (1967) and his concern with the development of the whole child's potential. This is congruent, not only with ecosystemic framework, taking account of the wide range of influences bearing on child development, but also with a qualitative methodology. From my own philosophical viewpoint I choose to work within the interpretivist paradigm to answer my second research question.

To answer my question on the reasons for variations in exclusions, I needed to understand how the children and adults involved construct school disaffection and perceive the process of exclusion. I therefore explored the investigative approaches within the interpretivist paradigm to select one fit for purpose to answer my question. I rejected the ethnographic approach of participant observation because this involves becoming part of a system in order to make accurate observations. I argue that this is not fit for purpose as the present study focuses on individuals' perspectives on exclusions and would not be advanced by making observations.

I then considered using semi-structured questionnaires. Denscombe (2001) suggests that an advantage of this method is that it enables the collection of data in a format that lends itself to systematic analysis. However, Tomlinson (1989) queries the validity of using questionnaires in the elicitation of attitudes. In his opinion, 'In human valuing...there is likely to be great variation and idiosyncrasy' (p.157). Rubin and Rubin (2005) identify a further problem that 'A questionnaire presupposes that the questions asked make uniform sense to the people being surveyed and that the answers make sense' (p.21). I agree that a limitation of the use of questionnaires in the present study is one of semantics. There is no mechanism to ensure that the respondent has the same understanding of a question as the researcher, and no way that the researcher can form a deep understanding of the respondent's viewpoint. If there is a face-to-face dialogue between two people the researcher can use both verbal, non-verbal cues and probing to ascertain whether both parties have a similar understanding of what is being asked, and a mutual understanding of responses. For this reason, I then considered the use of interviews as an interactional method of inquiry, which is openly acknowledged by all involved.

In Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) view the advantage of interviewing is that it recognises that knowledge is generated between humans. It demonstrates the interest of both the researcher and the respondent in terms of time and effort invested. In addition, Eder and Fingerson (2003) consider that the interview has special value when researching young people. They comment that 'One reason for interviewing youthful respondents is to allow them to give voice to their own

interpretations rather than rely solely on our adult interpretations of their lives' (p.33).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe four types of interview, ranging from the highly structured to informal conversational. Highly structured interviews are useful for generating specific data and testing hypotheses and have the advantage of ease of analysis, but do not allow for probing or for the inclusion of unanticipated data, whereas exploratory studies need little structure, relying instead on the strategies and skills of the interviewer to understand the thought processes and constructs of the respondent. In the present study, it is the individual perspectives of the respondents that I am interested in. I therefore choose to work within the more open, less structured end of the continuum.

In the present context, the most appropriate method for identifying the factors leading to school exclusion is through interviews with those who are involved in the identified layers of the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3). Because my focus was on schools I selected respondents who had direct involvement with schools, and therefore experience of the antecedents and processes of exclusion. These comprised pupils at risk of exclusion and included pupils and their parents who experience exclusions at the micro- and mesosystem levels; teaching staff and LSU managers who experienced exclusions at the micro-, meso- and exo-system levels; and school managers whose implementation of exclusions bridged the ecosystem at all levels. In Chapter 5.1 I explain how, in my pilot interviews, my initial approach was to include interviews with Youth Workers and members of the Youth Offending Team who would give a multi-agency view of school exclusions. This proved to be impractical because of variations in the way schools use non-teaching staff and outside agencies.

Structured interviews and surveys are useful for generating specific data but do not allow for probing or for the inclusion of unanticipated data. However, in a semi-structured interview, although a framework of questions is used, the technique gives scope for the interviewer to match individuals and circumstances. This is particularly relevant when considering individual staff, pupils and parents, who each have their unique perspectives on the process of exclusion.

I argue that the semi-structured interview is fit for the purpose of understanding how the children and adults involved perceive the process of exclusion, as it is only through questioning, listening to, exploring and analysing individual viewpoints that this can be achieved.

3.2.2.1 Choosing an interview technique

In this section I explain how I designed the interviews with reference to a reflective and responsive interviewer approach; and the extent to which the interviews were focused.

In contrast to interviews on the quantitative end of the spectrum, semi-structured interviews are influenced by decisions made by the interviewer within the context of each interview. The literature stresses the impact decisions taken by the interviewer during the interview has on the content of interviews. Kvale's (1996) highlights the role the interviewer takes in conducting the interview. He acknowledges that interviews are dynamic and that the judgement of the interviewer to some extent determines the content of the interview, commenting that 'Interviewing is a craft: It does not follow content- and context-free rules of method, but rests on the judgements of a qualified researcher' (p.105).

The quality of interviewer response has been identified as an important aspect in the outcome of semi-structured interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stress the importance of intensive listening; a respectful and reflective approach; and the use of probing to clarify meaning. They comment that '...qualitative interviewing requires more intense listening than normal conversations, a respect for and curiosity about what people say, a willingness to acknowledge what is not understood and the ability to ask about what is not yet known' (p.14). The reflective nature of the process is further highlighted by Kvale (1996) who describes how the interviewer's understanding of the interview topic can be transformed through an open-minded attitude. This view is echoed by Rubin and Rubin (2005) who acknowledge that interviewers will come into the situation with their own biases and that they need to continually examine their own reactions and understandings. From their experience it appears that by adopting a flexible and reflective approach, the interviewer can tailor each interview to the needs of the respondent. In order to facilitate a reflective and responsive I decided to use an interview guide, rather than a predetermined list of questions, as this gives scope for the interviewer to match individuals and circumstances.

Tomlinson (1989) describes a system of hierarchical focusing designed to elicit the perspectives of respondents without the interviewer influencing their responses. The technique aims to draw out the respondent's interpretations and understandings through open-ended questioning and minimal interviewer interventions. This involves setting up a hierarchical map from the more general to the more specific aspects of the topic, so that the interview can commence with the posing of a global or minimally-framed question. The respondent is invited to develop their responses in their own terms, which could in principle lead them to

covering the whole of the researcher's agenda. However, to the extent that this does not happen, and only to that extent, the terms of the hierarchical structure may be introduced and used as further prompts and guidance, moving from more global to more specific, with the interviewer only raising topics if they are not covered spontaneously by the respondent. Thus the researcher is able to address their topic using a strategy designed to influence the respondent as little as possible.

Responses can be coded during the interview to indicate whether they were prompted or spontaneous. In a personal conversation with Tomlinson (2007), he informed me that in subsequent interviews he did not use the 'spontaneous' and 'prompt' tick boxes as this information can be added at the transcription stage. During the same personal conversation he stressed the importance of listening carefully to responses and checking that the interviewer has understood the respondent's lexicon. This lexicon can then be adopted by the interviewer and reflected back in subsequent questions. Using this method the responses reflect more closely the constructs and perceptions of the interviewee rather than being influenced by those of the researcher. This approach is fit for purpose in the present study as my focus is to elicit the views and perspectives of the respondents, I therefore designed a hierarchical focusing guide based on Tomlinson's method.

3.2.2.2 Construction of the interview guides

Tomlinson's (1989) suggests that, when designing a hierarchical focusing guide, the first task of a researcher is to develop a clear conception of their domain of interest. The advantage of this is two-fold: it gives the researcher a broader understanding of the respondents' perceptions and construals; and it is an aid to deciding on interview foci. In the present study, the development of the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) gave me an over-view of the domain. I drew on this framework to structure the questions in my hierarchical focusing guides.

In the staff interviews I focused on four aspects of school exclusion: the respondents' views on behaviour; the school approach to behaviour; effective strategies; and communication (Appendix 4). In order to elicit the respondent's construals, Tomlinson (1989) suggests that a 'top-down' approach is taken to constructing an interview guide, with the initial question being at the highest level of generality and subsequent questions relating to more specific issues. Following this guidance I commenced by inviting the respondents to talk freely about their views of behaviour problems (Appendix 6). Prior to the interview I explained to the respondents that, in addition to audio-recording the interview, I would make notes during the process for my own guidance. During the interview I noted topics that the

respondent covered and the key words they used to convey their thoughts and ideas. I then probed, using the respondents' own language, to allow them to elaborate or develop emerging themes. In principle it was possible at this point for the respondent to cover all of the remaining questions in the hierarchical focusing guide. If the responses did not touch on the areas that I had identified I probed using open questions, for example: 'Have you noticed any patterns?' and followed up with more specific questions regarding patterns if this did not elicit a response.

The order of the following three questions was entirely dependent on the initial response of the interviewee and whether this led to or covered subsequent questions. I completed all interviews with the same two questions, 'Are there any other strategies you would like to use?' and 'Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?'

Parental interviews followed a similar structure, focusing on the parents' experiences of their child's behaviour, however, in the pupil interviews, although I used a hierarchical focusing guide, I took a different approach to starting the interview. I initiated dialogue using the technique of 'Talking Stones' described below (3.2.2.3) in order to maximise accessibility for the younger respondents. I also modified the hierarchical focusing guide by asking for specific examples of problems rather than generalised views. In the following section I discuss how I strived to provide optimum conditions to elicit responses in the interviews.

3.2.2.3 Eliciting responses

A major concern in qualitative research interviews is that the responses elicited represent the authentic views of the respondent. Kvale (1996) suggests that 'The outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity and empathy of the interviewer' (p.105). Kvale (1996) advises that the interviewer must establish an atmosphere in which 'the subject feels safe enough to talk freely about his or her experiences and feelings' (p.125).

According to Adler and Adler (2003), the location and atmosphere of the interview is of primary concern as this sets the scene for the outcome of the interview. In a supportive non-threatening setting, respondents can be assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the value the researcher puts on material generated from the interview process. They advise that the location for emotional or sensitive topics should be as secluded as possible, giving the example of the respondent's home: 'Interviewing in the respondent's home casts a guest ambience over the researcher's presence and imbues the researcher with an aura of friendship' (p.166). I believe that the use of Rogers' (1967) core conditions of empathy,

congruence and unconditional positive regard establish the role of the interviewer as an interested but non-threatening, non-judgemental researcher. I consider this to be an essential requisite for interviewing both adults and children. However, because of the perceived power imbalance between adults and children in the school context, it is more difficult to create this situation when interviewing pupils.

Opinions differ about how a supportive non-threatening setting is best established. Adler and Adler (2003) describe two opposing views on how much a respondent is likely to disclose. Initially they suggest that one-off interviews are likely to elicit more disclosure as the result of 'an ironic security in detachment' (p.161), explaining that anonymity can lead to more disclosure, respondents finding easier to disclose to people uninvolved in their lives. However, they contrast this view with the more personal relationship built up in multiple interviews where trust can be used to introduce more sensitive issues. They argue that interactive interviews in which both interviewer and respondent share experiences can facilitate the depth of disclosure, citing the example of when they disclosed their own pattern of drug use to gain the trust of upper-level drug dealers and smugglers. This view is shared by, Oakley (1981), described above, who challenges the received advice for interviewers to 'be friendly but not too friendly' (p.33). She argues that establishing 'rapport' does not result in a sympathetic relationship. Oakley ascribes the desire to achieve objectivity, detachment and hierarchy in the interview situation to a masculine social viewpoint, arguing that a 'scientific' approach takes priority over 'people's more individualised concerns' (p.38). In her research into motherhood she decided during the pilot interviews to answer questions from her respondents 'as fully as was required' (p.47). She explains that she made this decision for two reasons: a direct question requires an answer; and from previous experience she had found that an attitude of not answering questions did not promote rapport. Drawing on Oakley's example I chose to answer direct questions from both adults and children as fully as necessary in order to maintain rapport.

There is a tension between facilitating disclosure by establishing rapport, addressing the power balance, and avoiding contaminating data with the researcher's own perspectives. I suggest that the hierarchical focusing approach gives scope for all of these conditions to be met. The technique requires the researcher to listen carefully, taking note, not only of the content of responses, but also the words used to describe issues. These words are then used to frame subsequent questions, giving the respondent the space to talk about issues from their own perspective. When used in conjunction with Rogers' (1967) core conditions, the close attention given by the interviewer acknowledges that the respondent's views are valued and respected. This is the approach I adopted in my interviews. In my opinion, the issue of

researcher responses to questions from the respondent will be dealt with as they occur.

The positioning of the interviewer is an important consideration in interview design. The quality of interaction between the interviewer and interviewee is a key factor in the interviewing process. Kvale (1996) has described interviews as ‘an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest’ (p.125). However, the research interview differs from a conversation because there is an imbalance of power, with the interviewer initiating the exchange, choosing the focus and asking for information. The interviewer holds the power in the situation because it is they who have initiated the situation and are controlling the subject matter and directing the proceedings. To address this issue I decided to inform the respondents of my role in the PRU. I do not consider informing respondents about the nature of my employment as a threat to the validity of the research, as this information was given with an assurance that the research was not connected to the PRU.

I was aware that the sensitive nature of my research had the potential to make some respondents reluctant to answer questions fully. Addressing behaviour difficulties can be a sensitive topic for school staff, especially when several schools in the same authority are involved in the data collection. Adler and Adler (2003) have written extensively about how to access the reluctant respondent. In their opinion, respondents are sensitive to the perceived threats of research. They explain ‘Whenever respondents sense that that the research might be threatening to them, they are likely to be cautious about allowing the inquiry to continue’ (p.160). To avoid this situation I gained trust by explaining my position; the beneficence of the research; and with assurances of the confidentiality of data (3.3).

I was also aware that children may be reluctant respondents, due to unfamiliarity with both the interview process and the interviewer. It is in interviews with young people in school that the power imbalance between the interviewer and respondent is most evident. Responses may be affected by the pupils’ desire to give a ‘correct’ answer. Dockrell et al. (2000) suggest that a repeated question may be interpreted as indicative of a wrong answer in the classroom situation. They also warn that incessant probing may elicit ‘invented’ responses. For this reason I explored elicitation techniques specifically designed for children.

My previous experience of interviewing pupils was in PRUs. Because of the small setting I was able to initiate contact by asking the pupils to show me round the school (Collins, 2004). This gave them a degree of responsibility and control of the situation and provided a point of contact to open the interview. In a mainstream

school setting this approach is unsuitable because of the number of pupils and range of ongoing activities.

Eder and Fingerson (2003) argue for group interviews with children, explaining that children construct meanings collectively with peers and that group interviews elicit more accurate data as participants must defend their viewpoints. In the present study I believe that group interviews may inhibit responses because of the sensitive nature of young people with behaviour difficulties. In my experience, disaffected young people often experience difficulties participating in group discussions, and can lack the social skills that these require. I therefore interviewed each pupil separately.

I was aware that the use of questions may adversely affect the accuracy of, or inhibit responses. Begley (2000) expresses reservations about how far a child represents their own views in an interview, warning that their responses may reflect how they wish to be seen by others. Similarly Dockrell *et al.* (2000) suggest that 'a question that may seem neutral to an adult may seem very leading to a child' (p.55). In addition, questions may be interpreted in different ways according to the child's situation. A child on the verge of exclusion may be defensive and reluctant to give details, whereas a child who has no threat of exclusion may be more relaxed and willing to give open answers. This opinion is represented by Crozier and Tracey (2000), in an account of how a girl's experiences led to school disaffection. They warn that young people with behaviour problems 'are often resentful, defensive and alienated and, in some cases, disturbed. Their educational careers have invariably involved individual and family stress and invitations to discuss them are not always welcomed' (p.174). They also advise that such respondents should be treated with sensitivity. I therefore explored using alternative strategies that would open dialogue and give respondents some control over subject matter.

Dockrell *et al.* (2000) suggest that the use of statements and responses to photographs have been shown to be more effective than questions in eliciting responses. Following their advice I trialled the technique of using ten photographs from a range of resources (DCSF, 2007b) depicting scenes of conflict and harmony during the school day. I asked the respondents to comment on the photographs, with the intention of opening a dialogue (5.1).

I also researched a technique developed by Wearmouth (2004) to promote self-advocacy and facilitate interviewing disaffected children. Wearmouth stresses the importance of taking the views of pupils seriously and attempting to understand their perspectives. She developed the technique of 'Talking Stones' from a therapeutic viewpoint. During the interview process, pupils are given a group of about twenty stones of various textures, sizes and colours and asked to choose one that represents

them at school. They then discuss their choices and subsequently select other stones to represent significant relationships in school. The chosen stones are then positioned to represent the pupils' relationships with significant others in school. In Wearmouth's view the varying textures, sizes and shapes of the stones enable pupils to express their feelings in an accessible way. They project their own meanings into the stones. The value of this technique is that it enables children to describe situations from their own viewpoint and gives them some ownership in the interview process. Wearmouth comments 'The use of 'Talking Stones' allows a way of understanding more of what the student's experience is from the student's own viewpoint' (p.45).

This is the type of information I needed to inform my second research question **'What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?'** from the pupil's viewpoint, and is the second elicitation technique that I chose to trial in my pilot interviews to assess its suitability for subsequent interviews, with the intention of increasing the validity of the research.

3.2.3 Research Question 3

'What are the implications of the research for processes and systems?'

The basis for answering research question 3 lies in the comparison and interpretation of data collected for questions one and two. In this section I discuss the implications of the quantitative data from the LA, with the qualitative data elicited through the interviews and compare and contrast them with current thinking in research and literature.

Whereas the results, considered by research question 1 and 2 are the outcomes of data collection and data analysis, the answer to research question 3 is dependent on inferences based on the researcher's interpretations and expansions of such results. In my discussion of the findings of research question 1 and 2, I seek to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of why it is that some schools have more successful behaviour and exclusion outcomes than others. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) the advantage of using mixed methods lies in the quality of the inferences that are made at the end of the study. They describe how sequential mixed methods can enhance internal validity, leading to multiple inferences that confirm or complement each other.

The advantage of using the structure of the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3), at this stage, is that it allows the researcher to consider both the minutiae of

everyday interactions, and long term policies and initiatives, how they are interwoven, and how they impact on school exclusion.

3.3 Ethical Considerations and Equal Opportunities.

The methodology employed for the interviews in this study was approved by the University of Leeds School of Education and the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee. The sensitive nature of school exclusion as a subject for interview, coupled with the vulnerability of pupils at risk of exclusion, led me to pay careful attention to the processes involved in decisions associated with the ethics of the present research.

3.4 Validity

In this discussion, I demonstrate the validity of my research design in both my qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation. The original meaning of validity was ‘truthfulness,’ or that research was actually measuring what it set out to measure. This definition has recently broadened to encompass a range of concepts. In quantitative data validity may be expressed in terms of sampling procedure, instrumentation and statistical analysis, whereas qualitative approaches may emphasise the richness of the data obtained, the cohort studied and the extent of triangulation. Within both paradigms validity can be divided into two concepts: external validity or transferability, and internal validity or credibility. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) warn that invalidity can enter at any stage in research and that to avoid it, instrumentation and timescale must be appropriate.

3.4.1 External Validity

My first research question: ‘**What is the variance in exclusion rate in secondary schools in one Local Authority?**’ is answered by using quantitative methodology.

External validity within quantitative methodology is the extent the case can be generalised to the greater population. As discussed in 3.1.1, I answered the question by compared details of fixed-term and permanent exclusions in the Watermill Valley LA, recorded by schools and required by the DfES for all LAs in England, to construct frequency tables in the form of bar charts. I have included school profiles (Appendix 1) and a description of Watermill Valley LA (Chapter 1) to aid generalisability. Threats to the validity of this data are the possibility of human error in entering this information into the SIMS (Schools Information Management

System) and the occurrence of informal exclusions that would not register in this system. To enhance external validity I have noted areas in which I have knowledge, or there are indications of, inconsistencies between recorded data and events reported in interviews. However, these threats to validity would be present in any similar study undertaken in other LAs, therefore, I argue that, although I remained aware of them, they did not jeopardise the validity of this study. I further enhanced generalisability by including data on both the number of pupils excluded and the number of cases of exclusion where relevant.

Considering my second research question: **‘What are the factors leading to the variations in school exclusion rate?’** the use of qualitative methods requires a different approach to the issue of external validity. In qualitative terms this is the degree to which findings are comparable or transferable to a wider population. This can be partially achieved by including detailed descriptions of settings and participants, including sampling procedures and instrumentation, to enable others to assess the typicality of the situation.

In the present study I have included detailed descriptions of the Watermill Valley LA, and how I used the LA data to inform my sampling procedure. The issue of instrumentation was addressed by using the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) to identify areas for inquiry. I then designed a hierarchical focusing guide for use in the interviews (3.2.2). This ensured that while each interviewee was able to describe behaviour issues from their own perspectives, they covered the areas I had identified. To enhance external validity, I piloted the interviews extensively with colleagues, their children and pupils at my place of work; with members of the Youth Offending Team (YOT); and with teachers in mainstream schools in order to assess whether my questions and interview technique were fit for purpose. Using PRU pupils for piloting the interviews involved an element of convenience, but I argue that it was also purposive in that they all had experience of school exclusion. I minimised the threat to validity by interviewing newly admitted pupils at KS4 who had no experience of being taught by me. In addition, my work colleagues and members of YOT all have experience of working with disaffected pupils and are aware of the issues faced by staff in main stream schools. I triangulated my pilot interviews by including interviews with three main-stream teachers and two children who were not at risk of exclusion.

I have included a detailed account of my approach to interviewing and how I designed a hierarchical interviewing guide using the ecosystemic framework to identify themes.

3.4.2 Internal Validity

In both quantitative and qualitative methods, internal validity is concerned with accuracy and plausibility of the research. Vidovich (2003) describes this process as ‘the extent to which researchers are observing/ measuring what they think they are observing/ measuring’ (p.77).

In the case of my first research question: **‘What is the variance in exclusion rate in secondary schools in one Local Authority?’** I used the LA data to compare patterns of exclusion between and within schools.

Considering my second research question: **‘What are the factors leading to the variations in school exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?’** the issue of internal validity is more complex. In qualitative terms internal validity relates to the reliability of the inferences from the data.

In the case of interviews, internal validity is threatened by the numerous variables involved in every human interaction which occur during a transaction and are to a certain extent beyond the control of the interviewer. Schostak (2006) highlights the complexity of the interview as a technique for collecting data, referring to the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee as one that is continually changing and being renegotiated. There are two major threats to reliability in the quality and initial interpretation of interview data in the context of this study: the respondent may be reluctant to express views on the sensitive topic of school exclusion; and the interview situation and balance of power in the interview may inhibit pupil responses.

I took steps to minimise these threats to reliability by explaining my position as researcher at the beginning of the interviews and using open-ended questions. During all of the interviews, I endeavoured to present myself in a non-threatening, impartial way. I made use of the counselling techniques, advocated by Rogers (1967), of unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy to put the interviewee at their ease but maintain objectivity. I also utilised the method of ‘Talking Stones’ developed by Wearmouth (2004) to promote self-advocacy and facilitate interviewing disaffected children (Chapter 3.2.2.2). This latter method enables children to describe situations from their own viewpoint and gives them some ownership in the interview process, and partially addresses the balance of power in the interview.

A further threat to internal validity lies in the interpretation of the data. Scott and Usher (1999) refer to logical inference, as opposed to the quantitative statistical inference, based on the plausibility of the research. To achieve logical inference

they describe an analytical approach on which I have structured this part of my discussion. This consists of:

- Classifying data by identifying significant patterns in responses to research tools. In the present research I initially researched the literature and LA data concerning school exclusion and identified issues pertinent school exclusion. Using this information I developed an ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) which I used, in conjunction with information from existing literature and the LA data to design a hierarchical focusing guide for my interviews. I then classified the data generated in the interviews by transcribing them and looking for common themes and ideas using Smith and Osborn's (2008) interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) (Appendix 7)
- Identifying and understanding the relationships between these themes in order to extend their credibility into the wider population. I have addressed this issue by comparing my findings with those in the existing literature. A criticism of this process is its reliance on the researcher's analytical ability based on prior knowledge of the world. I argue that I have a strong background in both the practical and theoretical aspects of school exclusion on which to base my analysis as demonstrated in Chapter 1
- Identifying those constructs that are supported by the greater part of the research and which occur in all areas. There is a danger that findings can be manipulated to serve the purpose of the researcher. Delamont (1992) warns against collusion, suggesting that 'There is always a temptation to ignore the incidents or comments which do not support the general argument that is developing' (p.160). In a similar vein, Silverman (2000) warns against anecdotalism, in which findings are based on a few well-chosen examples rather than critical investigation of all of the data. In the present context, the use of the ecosystemic framework ensures that research does not focus on isolated or individual occurrences but takes account of the many factors influencing school exclusion. I see this as a good reason to aim for transparency in my methods and objectivity in my analysis, including as much detail as possible in my methods and findings. Therefore, I have included 'thick description' of both procedures and outcomes of my research, and maintaining an objective approach to the data collected

An additional problem with using interviews is the difficulty the interviewer encounters in interpreting data generated from the interview without the experiences of the respondent. In my view it is imperative that the researcher is aware of this.

Schostak (2006) advises that, 'No individual can step inside the experience of another' (p.14). An additional problem is whether the interviewer understands what the interviewee means. These issues can both be addressed by triangulation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) defined triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection. In the present study the interviews have been 'member checked' by returning transcriptions of the interviews to the respondents to confirm that it represents their views. This also gave the opportunity for the clarification of points where necessary.

3.4.2.1 Sampling

The method of sampling can increase internal validity by being as representative of the population as possible. The decision was taken to use purposive sampling for both the pupils to be interviewed and their schools. While this approach is not necessarily representative of a wider population, it serves the specific needs of this research by providing a rich source of data for comparison. In the case of the schools, this involved analysing the variables recorded in the school exclusions data (Chapter 4) to compare patterns and trends within and between schools. This information was used to identify three secondary schools for comparison: one with a high exclusion rate, one with a low exclusion rate and one with a medium exclusion rate, based on the fixed-term exclusion figures for 2004/5 and 2005/6 and school profiles (4.9).

When selecting pupils to be interviewed, I argue that this is necessarily a purposive sample, the intention being to interview those with first-hand knowledge of factors leading to school exclusion. The decision was made to focus on pupils in years 9 and 10, as the data from Watermill Valley (Chapter 4) and national data (DfES, 2006b, 2007b) indicate that these are the age groups at which the risk of exclusion is highest. Each participating school was invited to identify pupils in Y9 and Y10 who have been, or are in danger of being excluded. From this list I selected two boys and two girls in both Y9 and Y10. The criterion for selection was pupils whose dates of birth are in February, in order to minimise the effect of being the oldest or youngest in the year group. For the same reason, the selection of included pupils also involved pupils whose date of birth is in February, a pupil from Y9 and Y10 being selected at random. Parental interviews took place with the help of the gatekeeper who approached a parent that they believed would be willing participants in the research.

The starting point for the staff interviewees involved the gate-keeper through whom access was initially negotiated. I interviewed three members of staff in each

school: a senior member of staff with a responsibility for behaviour, a teacher and a member of staff linked to the LSU or similar provision. In cases where selected interviewees were unable or unwilling to take part in the research, they were replaced in order that each school was equally represented.

Using the above information I completed an ethical review that was approved by the AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds who commented that they were satisfied that the necessary procedures had been put in place and were consistent with the University's guidelines on ethical conduct within research (Chapter 3.3).

Part 2 of the thesis documents the analysis of the LA data; and an account of the interview process, followed by the results and analysis of the interviews.

Part 2

4 The Local Authority data

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I describe my design in phase 1 of the research and how I collected, processed and analysed raw data on Watermill LA school exclusions to identify patterns within the LA. In my analysis of the LA data I had four purposes:

- To answer my first research question concerning the variation in exclusion rate in Watermill Valley
- To provide an overview of the LA
- To ascertain whether the LA exclusion rates are consistent with national patterns
- To help me to select my sample for phase 2 of the research

4.1 Analysing the LA data

Research Question 1

What is the variation in exclusion rate in secondary schools in one Local Authority?

In order to answer this question I collected and collated the information available about the secondary schools in Watermill Valley. This information was then analysed to identify any patterns or variations between the schools in the LA. Data on exclusions for each school is recorded electronically and collected by the LA for national statistics. Recording exclusions electronically is a relatively new way of storing data. Although I had access to the 2003/4 data for Watermill Valley, this method of recording exclusions was used inconsistently in schools at the time

and the reliability of the information was not always dependable. I therefore chose to compare data from the two school years 2004/5 and 2005/6.¹

Through the LA I had access to exclusion information including both the number of cases of exclusion and the number of pupils from each school that had fixed-term exclusions over the year. This also provided me with information regarding pupils who were excluded on more than one occasion during the school year. The age and gender of each excluded pupils was included in this data as was their SEN status. Also available was the duration and trigger for each exclusion. Information about the ethnicity of each pupil was unavailable as this was stored in their pupil number.

4.2 School profiles

I also compiled a profile of each school using information from the Local Authority concerning the school population to gain a detailed knowledge of the schools and also to inform future readers who want to make comparisons (Appendix 1). This included the number on roll, eligibility for Free School Meals, percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities and proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs. I enhanced this information with further data from the school performance report of 2006 (DfE, 2010b) including the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A-C GCSEs and also the 'value added' figure for each school's performance. This not only gave me some indication of the school's performance in national examinations but also pupil progression between Key Stages 2 and 4 compared to the national average. I also included the results of recent OfSTED reports.

To further enhance the information on socio-economic backgrounds of the school intakes, I also considered government deprivation indicators. The English Indices for Deprivation (ODPM, 2004) is a national method of ranking the deprivation of small areas. It shows the level of multiple deprivation in areas with a population of about 1,500 referred to as 'Lower layer super output areas' (LSOAs). Deprivation is estimated across the seven domains of income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; barriers to housing and services; crime, and living environment. Information from the Watermill Valley in 2007², based on 2005 figures, shows that 16 LSOAs are among the 20% substantially deprived nationally and of these 13 LSOAs in the area are among the 10% most deprived

¹ This data still proved to be incomplete as Micklestone School did not submit information about fixed-term exclusions for 2004/5. Although I approached the school for the missing information, they did not respond to my request.

² Information from LA intranet

nationally. The most deprived LSOAs in Watermill Valley are concentrated around the intake areas of Bitterclough, Bobbinthorpe, Withensgate and Tenterworth Schools. Slackthwaite and Blackmoor have two LSOAs of substantial deprivation and Grimsdale, Flatcapden and Netherswike all have one LSOA of substantial deprivation. Such linkages need to be treated with some caution since there is a considerable amount of mobility among the school population with some pupils travelling significant distances to schools outside their areas. This mobility can be observed particularly in pupils attending the selective-intake and faith schools.

4.3 Permanent exclusions

My initial analysis of the data from Watermill Valley focused on the number of permanent exclusions in each school over the two year period 2004/5 and 2005/6.

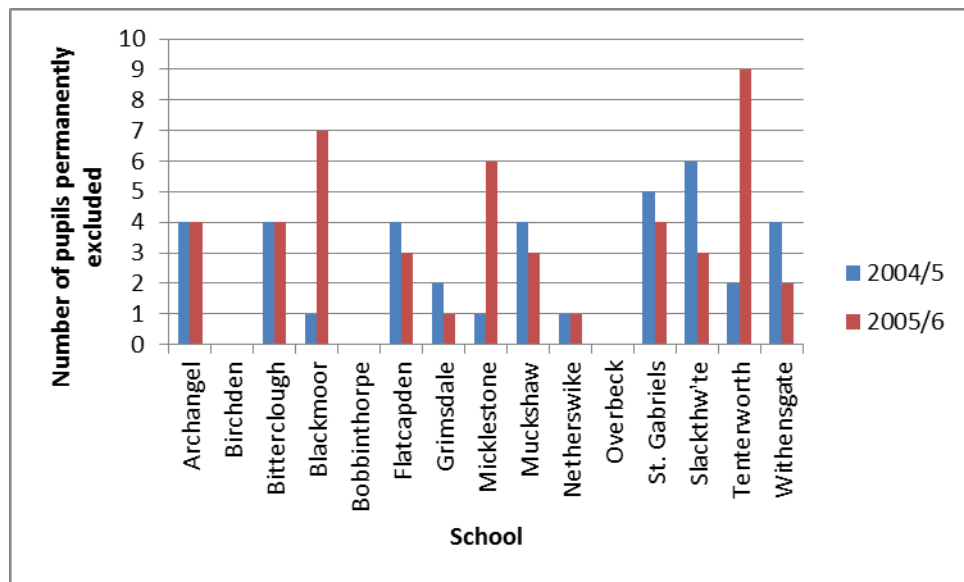


Figure 4.1 Permanent exclusions in Watermill Valley: 2004/5 and 2005/6

Figure 4.1 indicates that permanent exclusion patterns were consistent in six schools over the two-year period. Archangel and Bitterclough excluded four pupils during both of the school years and Netherswike excluded one pupil each year. Three schools did not make any permanent exclusions during this period, these being the two selective entry schools, and Bobbinthorpe, a school that was in the process of moving to new premises at that time. In 2004/5 the highest excluding school was Slackthwaite with 6 pupils. This was followed by St Gabriels with 5 permanent exclusions. The schools with greatest variations in permanent exclusions over the

two periods were Blackmoor, Micklestone and Tenterworth. In 2004/5 Blackmoor and Micklestone excluded one pupil each but in 2005/6 excluded 7 and 6 pupils respectively. In the same period the exclusion rate at Tenterworth rose from 2 to 9. This coincided with the appointment of a new headteacher. The rate of permanent exclusions at the remaining three schools: Flatcapden, Grimsdale and Withensgate varied at between 1 and 4 permanent exclusions during the two periods.

Although exclusions were used unevenly across the schools, the overall permanent exclusion rate for secondary schools in Watermill Valley in 2004/5 was 0.24% of the school population rising to 0.3% in 2005/6. This was comparable to the national average of 0.24% of the school population in secondary schools being permanently excluded (DfES 2007b). In order to gain a deeper understanding of exclusion patterns I then analysed the data for fixed-term exclusions over the same period.

4.4 Fixed-term exclusions

The government statistical analyses of permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools (DfES, 2006b and 2007b) focus on ‘cases of exclusion’, this being the number of times an exclusion is made. My scrutiny of the Watermill Valley has led me to also consider the proportion of individual ‘pupils excluded’ as a significant factor in the implementation of exclusions. The same pupils are sometimes excluded on multiple occasions and analysis of this factor further illuminates variations in school practices. I have also used the data on ‘cases of exclusion’ and ‘pupils excluded’ to highlight the differences and patterns in individual school use of exclusions. The impact of multiple exclusions is further discussed in Chapter 4.8.1.

Figure 4.2 considers the distribution of fixed-term exclusions as a percentage of the school population over the periods 2004/5 and 2005/6. Comparisons of the figures highlight two outstanding characteristics:

- There are wide variations between the fixed-term exclusion rates in the different schools. Bobbinthorpe had the highest fixed-term exclusions with nearly 19% of the school population being excluded in each year, while Grimsdale and Overbeck were the lowest excluding schools with 1% of the school population being excluded during same period
- There is a high degree of consistency in the number of fixed-term exclusions within each school for the two periods with the majority of schools showing little or no variation. Bitterclough shows the greatest variation in the

application of fixed-term exclusions at 11.8% in 2004/5 and 16% in 2005/6: a rise of 5.2% over the two year period.

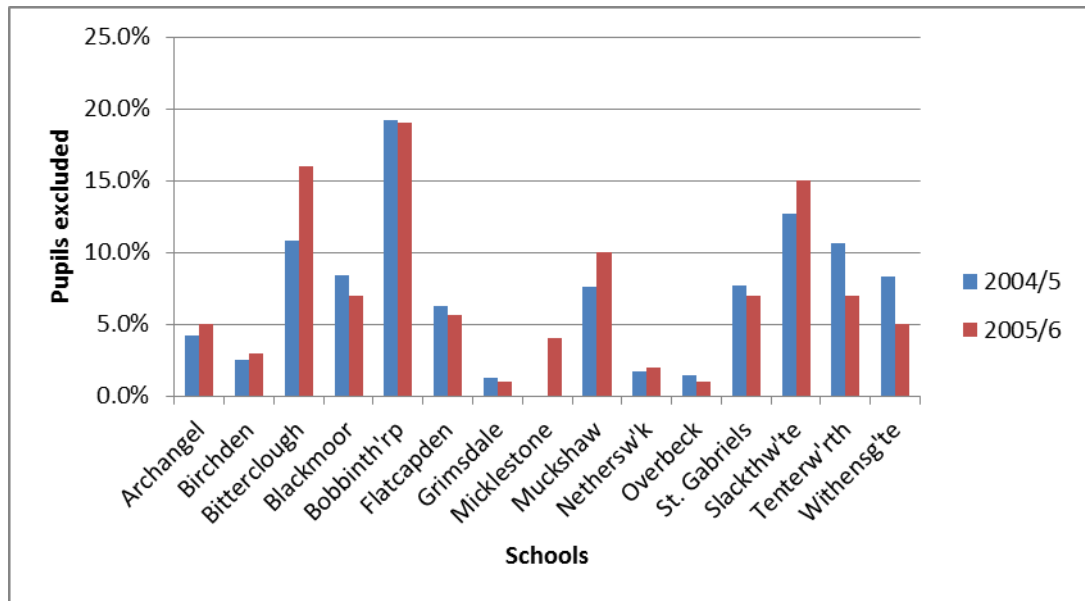


Figure 4.2 Fixed-term exclusions in 2004/5 and 2005/6: percentage of pupils excluded

After comparing fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates for the two periods, I then made a more detailed analysis of the fixed-term exclusions data in order to identify patterns in the way exclusions are applied (Appendix 2). This information was then used to select the school sample.

4.5 Ecosystemic analysis

I have presented quantitative data about exclusions across the LA in comparison with the national picture and also some evidence of variations between schools in the same LA. It is my contention that variations in exclusions are not solely a product of different pupil characteristics. I have already noted some factors which may be relevant (e.g. changes of headteacher, socio-economic circumstances, and selective intake) but also the instability of the population in one school. In order to produce a more systematic and rigorous appraisal of other contingent factors I will apply Bronfenbrenner's framework. Since this was not originally designed for this purpose, I have had to make adjustments and will defend how I located some of the variables within the systems that he proposed. Bronfenbrenner posited that there is an interaction between the systems. However, for clarity, I will analyse each of the systems separately whilst acknowledging that there are interactions.

4.6 The individual child

Bronfenbrenner argued that the characteristics of the individual child influence the behaviour of others, particularly in face-to-face relationships in the microsystem. Based on my review of the literature, the key salient attributes of the individual child have been identified as age, gender and ethnicity (Chapter 2.3).

From both the literature and the data from the LA, it was evident that the rate of exclusion was strongly related to age. Within the LA in both 2004/5 and 2005/6, exclusions were found to peak in Y9 and Y10, rarely occurring in primary schools or in Y12 and Y13. This is consistent with the national trend, the DfES reporting that ‘The most common point for both boys and girls to be excluded is at ages 13 and 14 (equivalent to year groups 9 and 10)’ (2006b, 2007b).

With regard to gender the overall exclusion rate of boys exceeded that of girls in Watermill Valley in both 2004/5 and 2005/6, with three out of four exclusions involving boys (Appendix 2 figures 0.1 and 0.3). Similarly national statistics show that, in both 2004/5 and 2005/6, around three times as many boys as girls were excluded from secondary schools (DfES, 2006b, 2007b). The gender exclusion rate does not appear to be related to proportions of males and females in the overall school population (Appendix 2, Figure 0.1).

Data relating to the third attribute of the individual child, ethnicity was more difficult to ascertain. Direct information concerning the ethnicity of each excluded child was unavailable³. The information available concerns the distribution of pupils from ethnic minorities across the schools and is therefore considered at the level of the macrosystem (Chapter 4.9.3).

4.7 The microsystem

The microsystem is concerned with the relationships in which the child has face-to-face contact with others. As I will illustrate, the precursors to exclusion were predominantly linked to an interaction or interactions involving pupil/pupil, pupil/teacher or pupil/pupils. Given that pattern which is highlighted in the notes below Figure 4.3, in this section I examine the reasons given for exclusions, classifying them as part of the microsystem.

³ Information concerning the ethnicity of excluded pupils is encoded in each unique pupil number and was unavailable to me.

4.7.1 The triggers for school exclusion

The raw data from 2004/5 and 2005/6 record the triggers leading to exclusion (Appendix 2, tables 0.5 and 0.6). The categories describing triggers for exclusions are predetermined and appear in Annexe B of the DfES Guidance on Exclusion (DfES, 2006e).

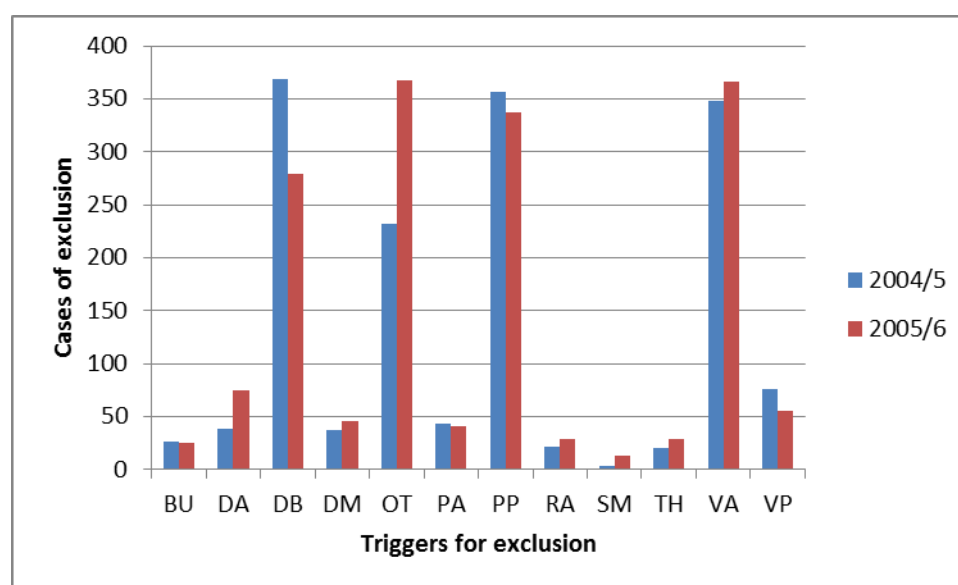


Figure 4.3 Fixed-term exclusions in 2004/5 and 2005/6: triggers for exclusion (those potentially involving face-to-face interaction are shaded yellow)

BU: Bullying	DM: Damage	PP: Physical assault of pupil	TH: Theft
DA: Drugs and alcohol	OT: Other	RA: Racial abuse	VA: Verbal abuse of adult
DB: Persistent disruptive behaviour	PA: Physical assault of adult	SM: Sexual misconduct	VP: Verbal abuse of pupil

It is evident that the categories provided by the DfES are frequently (7 out of 12) related to interactions between the excluded pupil and other(s). It is also clear that PP and VA are frequent factors. There is no evidence about how schools are interpreting the terms ‘other’ and DB leaving the possibility that they might include some face-to-face interaction. Theft may involve an individual but may also be from the organisation and therefore I did not include it.

Figure 4.3 shows the triggers for exclusion across the schools in Watermill Valley in 2004/5 and 2005/6. I have used the ‘cases of exclusion’ rate for this factor as pupils who are excluded more than once are often excluded for different reasons. There is a high degree of consistency in the triggers for exclusion for the two periods and these were also consistent with national findings, the three dominant factors

being verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (VA), physical assault of a pupil (PP), and persistent disruptive behaviour (DB) (DfES, 2006b, 2007b). The category of 'other' (OT) was also used frequently in Watermill Valley, these four categories being the triggers for the vast majority of exclusions. Although the overall pattern for triggers leading to exclusion was similar to that nationally, individual schools were found to use the categories very differently. An example of this can be observed in Tables 0.5 and 0.6 (Appendix 2) where in 2004/5 Bitterclough used the category of DB 129 times and OT 12 times. In the following year the situation was reversed when DB was only used 59 times compared to 88 cases of OT. Further analysis of the triggers for exclusion are included in the exosystem (Chapter 4.8.2).

4.8 The exosystem

The exosystem is concerned with the school structures that impact on the behaviour of the child. In this section I have located the data on multiple exclusions; the duration of school exclusions, and exclusions relating to drugs and alcohol, as they reflect individual school policy and practice.

4.8.1 Multiple exclusions

The DfES (2007a) advises that the number of times each pupil is excluded should be minimised, suggesting strategies that would meet this aim including engaging with parents, changing class, curriculum alternatives at KS4, temporary placement in an on-site Learning Support Unit (LSU) or an off-site PRU, a managed move to another school, multi-agency work and provision for SEN. DfES (2007b) figures show that nationally of fixed-term exclusions 63% of pupils were excluded once, 19% twice and 9% three times, with less than 1% being excluded more than 7 times.

In Watermill Valley in 2004/5, although there were 1570 cases of exclusion, these only involved 924 pupils. Similarly in 2005/6 there were 1664 cases of exclusion but only involved 978 pupils (Appendix 2, tables 0.1-0.4). More detailed analysis indicates that the use of multiple exclusions was uneven with the practice occurring infrequently in the Archangel, Birchden, Netherswike, Overbeck, Tenterworth and Withensgate.

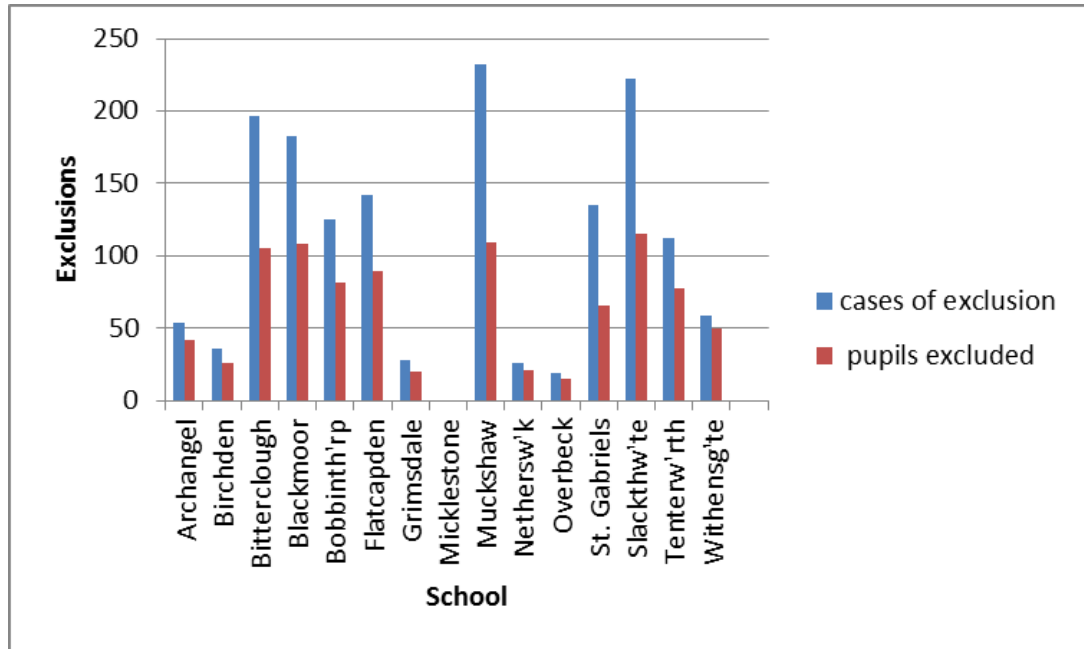


Figure 4.4 Cases of exclusion and pupils excluded in 2004/5

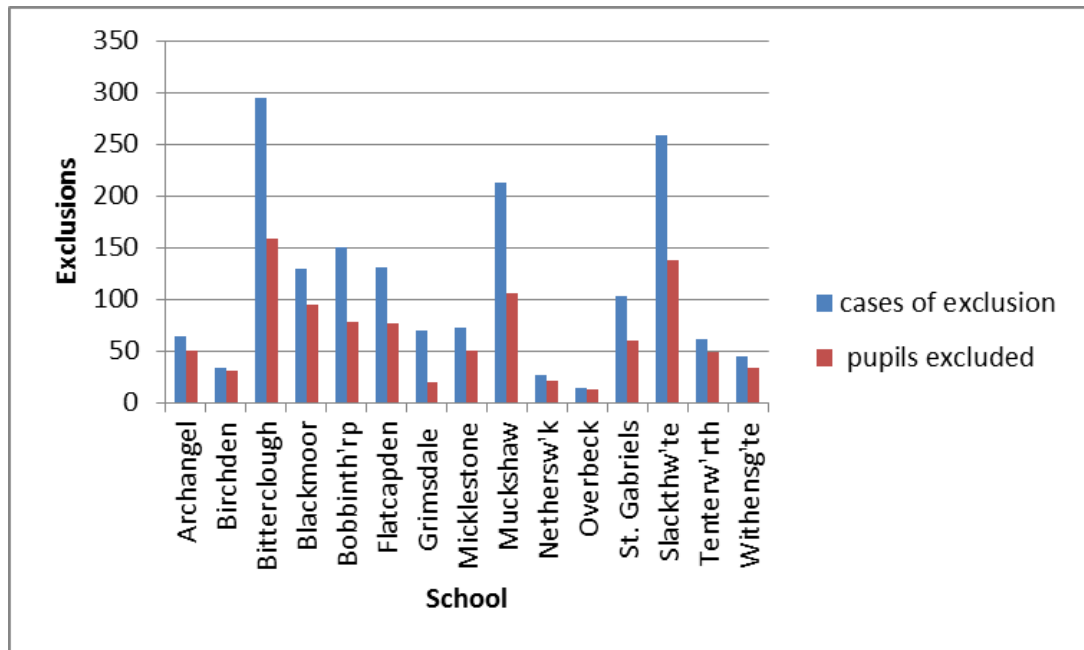


Figure 4.5 Cases of exclusion and pupils excluded in 2005/6

Figures 4.4 and 4.5 compare the number of cases of exclusion with the number of pupils excluded in Watermill Valley. It can be observed that there were around twice as many cases of exclusion than pupils excluded at Bitterclough, Muckshaw, St Gabriels and Slackthwaite in both 2004/5 and 2005/6. The same pattern is seen in Grimsdale in 2005/6.

A further consideration when examining this data is the number of times each individual pupil is excluded (Appendix 2, Tables 0.7 and 0.8). In 2004/5 although Bitterclough appears to use a high number of multiple exclusions these are applied to only 30% of the pupils excluded. Within this figure is one pupil who was excluded 10 times and another 14 times. In the same period Muckshaw was the highest user of multiple exclusions with 46% of pupils being excluded more than once and including individual pupils being excluded 8, 9 and 14 times. At Slackthwaite and St Gabriels there was also a high incidence of multiple exclusions at 42% and 41% respectively.

During the period of 2005/6 Grimsdale and Bobbinthorpe's multiple exclusion rate rose sharply: Grimsdale increasing from 25% to 68%, including one pupil being excluded 8 and another 10 times. At the same time the use of multiple exclusions at Bobbinthorpe rose from 10% to 56%. During the same period, Muckshaw continued to use a high number of multiple exclusions with 46% of pupils being excluded more than once and one pupil being excluded 9 times. St Gabriels at 40% and Bitterclough at 39%, including one pupil being excluded 8 times, another 9 times and a third 10 times, followed this pattern of multiple exclusions.

4.8.1 Duration of exclusions

In this section I examine the LA data relating to the duration of exclusions. Government guidance⁴ is that the optimum length of a fixed-term exclusion should be between one and three days. According to the DfES (2006a) this is sufficient time to address the serious nature of an incident without adversely affecting a pupil's education. They warn that a longer period of exclusion makes it more difficult for pupils to reintegrate. The maximum length of time a pupil can be excluded for is 30 sessions or 15 days in a term or 90 sessions or 45 days in a school year at which point the school must permanently exclude the pupil. In September 2007 new legislation was introduced requiring schools to provide full-time education from the sixth day of any fixed-term exclusions (DfES, 2007a). I have used data from Appendix 2, tables 0.2 and 0.4 to show the mean, median and mode lengths of exclusion (Appendix 2, figures 0.2, 0.3, 0.4.).

The duration of the majority of cases of exclusion across the LA did not exceed 7 sessions or 3.5 days. This is consistent with national figures, the average length of a fixed-term exclusion in 2004/5 being 3.6 days and in 2005/6 3.5 days (DfES, 2006b, 2007b). Most schools exhibited a high within-school consistency in

⁴ The DfES guidance on exclusions (2006f) allows fixed-term exclusions for up to 45 days in any one school year

the durations of exclusions in 2004/5 and 2005/6 (Appendix 2, figures 0.2 and 0.3). Where lengthy exclusions occurred they were associated with physical assaults on pupils or with the exclusions relating to drugs and alcohol which are discussed in the following section.

4.8.2 Drugs and alcohol related exclusions

I have included drugs and alcohol related exclusions in the exosystem as it is an example of a category that is used very much at the discretion of the headteacher. Tables 0.5 and 0.6 (Appendix 2) indicate that this is a category that is used infrequently and unevenly as a trigger for exclusion. It appears to be used in isolated incidents as seen in Blackmoor when 13 pupils were excluded between 6.4.05 to 30.6.05. A similar pattern is seen at Muckshaw when 3 groups of pupils were excluded for drugs and alcohol on the same days; 4 in March, 5 in June and 3 in July. In 2005/6, in Micklestone, 39 pupils (out of 40 in the year) were given fixed-term exclusions for drugs and alcohol, in a six-week period, between 23.1.06 and 9.3.06. Eventually six of these pupils were permanently excluded. The exclusion of these pupils constituted over 50% of the total exclusions in Micklestone for 2005/6 and accounts for the lengthy exclusions (Appendix 2, figure 0.4).

4.9 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is concerned with political, social and cultural attitudes, and government initiatives and legislation that affect structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school. It is here that I have located factors impacting on exclusions that are beyond the control of the individual school. These comprise the characteristics of the school populations including socio-economic factors; selective grammar schools; ethnicity, and changes in school-intake.

4.9.1 Socio-economic factors

One of the most widely-used and accessible indications of the socio-economic background of a school population is the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Although some high-excluding schools had a large proportion of pupils eligible for FSM, two of the schools with the highest proportion of pupils with FSM eligibility were relatively low-excluding.

Figure 4.6 is derived from the school profiles in Appendix 1 and Table 0.3, Appendix 2. It compares the percentage of the school populations with fixed-term exclusions with the percentage of the school populations eligible for FSM. A

Pearson product-moment test for correlation between the two variables yielded the following results:

$$r (df 13) = 0.47 \text{ } p < 0.05.$$

The correlation obtained is greater than that required for significance at the 5% level and therefore is statistically significant. However, two schools lie outside the general pattern of distribution: Withensgate and Tenterworth both have high eligibility for FSM, but low exclusion rates. Without these schools there is a much higher correlation coefficient (0.9).

The atypical profile of Withensgate can be partially attributed to the ethnicity of the school population which is predominantly of Pakistani heritage (Chapter 4.9.3). National data from 2006 shows that only 3.3% of pupils of Pakistani heritage were excluded compared with 5.6% of White British pupils (DfES, 2006a). In the case of Tenterworth, although the school was in the process of closing following an adverse report from Ofsted (Appendix 1), subsequent inspections were more favourable and in 2008 the school was taken out of special measures. At this time the LSU was commended as being 'spectacularly effective in working with the significant number of students who find life in mainstream school too difficult' (OfSTED, 2008). Omission of the anomalous schools, Withensgate and Tenterworth, reveal that there is a high correlation between the percentage of the school population eligible for Free School Meals and the percentage of pupils given fixed term exclusions. This is consistent with national patterns. From 2008 onwards national figures show finding that children who are eligible for FSM are 3 times more likely to receive either a permanent or fixed period exclusion than children who are not eligible for FSM (DfE, 2010).

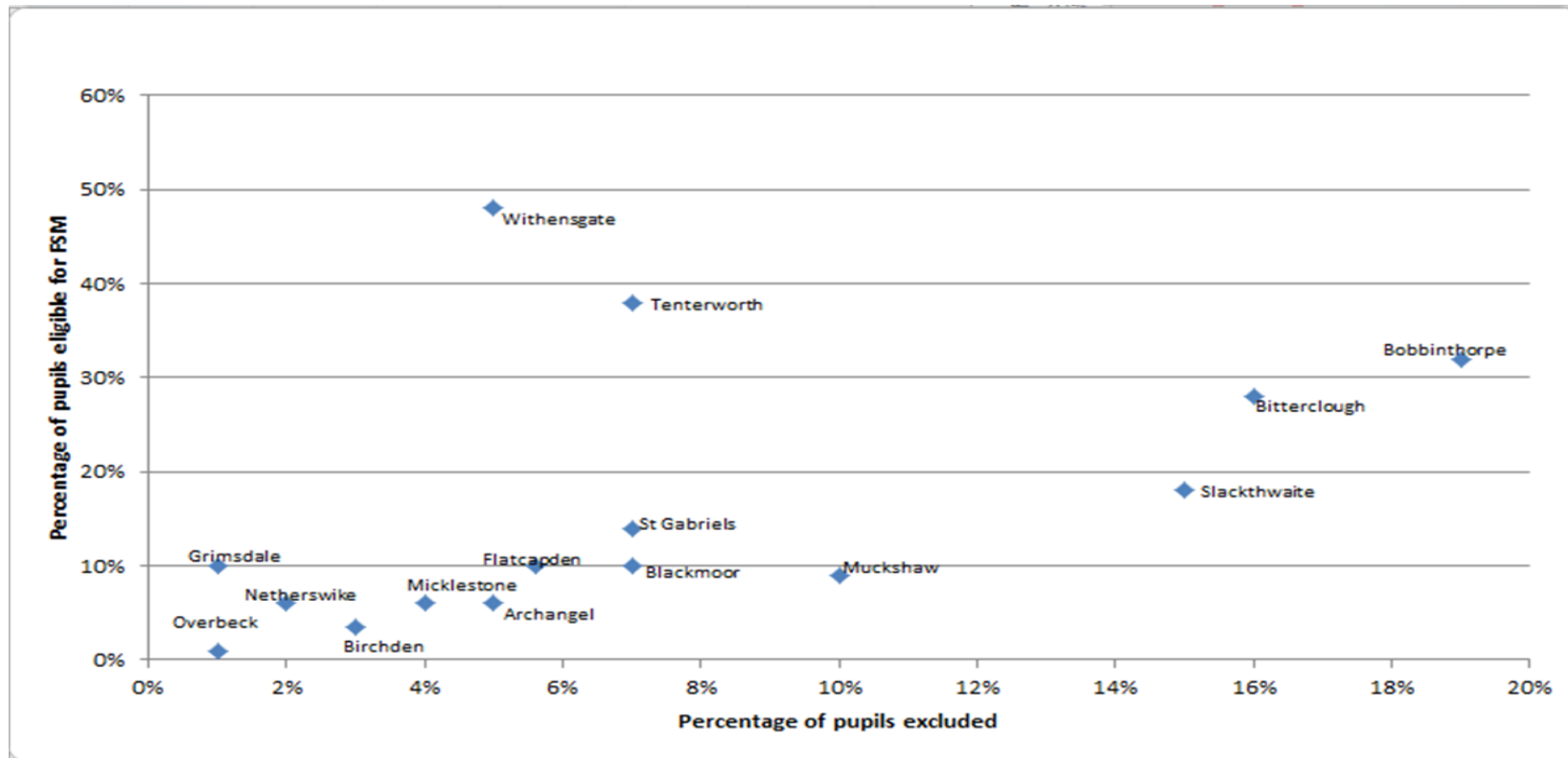


Figure 4.6 Scatter graph comparing the percentage of school population eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and percentage of school population with fixed term exclusions¹

¹ Information on FSM from Local Authority Intranet 15.11.06 (Appendix 1)

4.9.2 Selective grammar schools

The retention of selective grammar schools in Watermill Valley is a significant factor in the profiles of the school populations. This results in a high proportion of children with SEN being concentrated in the remaining schools as illustrated in Figure 4.7 derived from Appendix 2, Table 0.9, where it can be observed that Birchden (1.7%) and Overbeck (1.8%) have very small proportions of pupils with SEN within their school populations. Although I have positioned SEN in the exosystem of the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) arguing that it is a school process that impacts on the behaviour of the child, in this instance I have included it in the macrosystem because the LA structure impacts on the level of SEN in the school populations. This an example of the essential fluidity of the model discussed in Chapter 2.3. The DfE (2011) indicates that the occurrence of SEN in state maintained secondary schools was 18.5% in 2007. The data from Watermill Valley shows an uneven distribution of pupils with SEN with very low numbers in the selective entry schools. In the non-selective and denominational schools there is a wide variation in the number of pupils with SEN ranging from 9.2% at Netherswike to 42.3% at Tenterworth. Those schools with the highest population with identified SEN (Bitterclough, Bobbinthorpe, Tenterworth and Withensgate) draw their intake from the most deprived areas of the authority.

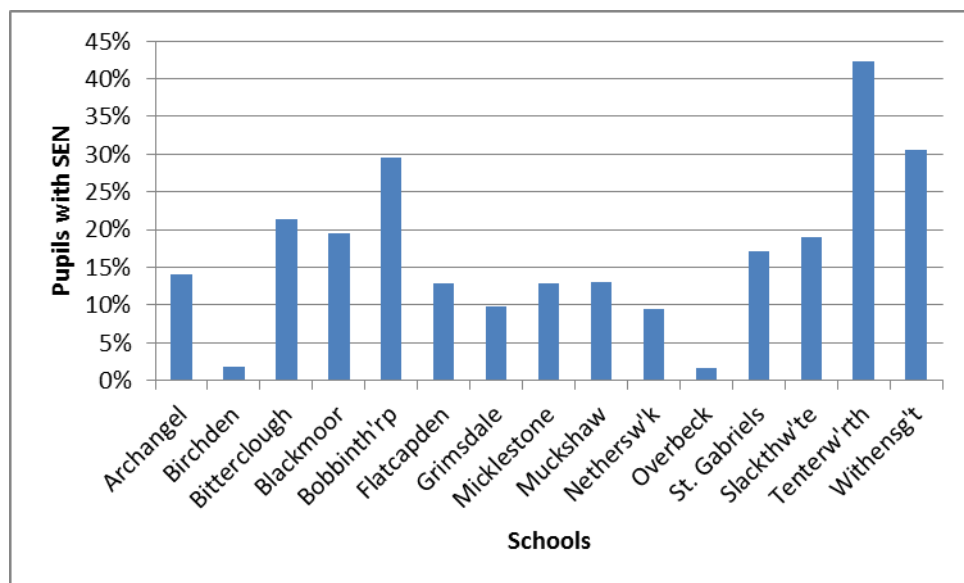


Figure 4.7 The percentage of pupils with SEN in Watermill Valley schools in 2006¹

¹ Data from Watermill Valley intranet 11.5.06

The occurrence of SEN is a significant factor in exclusion (Chapter 2.2.5). The DfES (2006b) reported that pupils with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) are at a far higher risk of permanent exclusion than others. The DfES data shows that 6 out of every 10,000 pupils with no SEN were permanently excluded in 2004/5, compared with 37 out of every 10,000 of pupils with statements of SEN, and 40 with SEN but without statements² (Appendix 2, tables 0.10 and 0.11). Records show that pupils with SEN were around 5 times more likely to be excluded for a fixed period than pupils without SEN (DfES, 2006b, 2007b).

Figure 4.8 is derived from the school profiles in Appendix 1 and Table 0.3, Appendix 2. It compares the percentage of the school populations excluded for a fixed term with the percentage of the school populations with SEN. A Pearson product-moment test for correlation between the two variables yielded the following results:

$$r (df 13) = 0.5 \text{ } p < 0.05$$

The correlation obtained is greater than that required for significance at the 5% level and therefore is statistically significant. However, as in the case of FSM (Chapter 4.9.1) Withensgate and Tenterworth with a high level of pupils with SEN but low exclusion rates, lie outside the general pattern of distribution. Without these schools there is a much higher correlation coefficient (0.85).

While the correlation between the two variables is moderately high when all of the schools are considered, when the two anomalous schools are excluded the correlations become very high indeed showing a very strong relationship between the two variables.

² A **Statement of Special Educational Needs** is where there is a legal document, reviewed annually, stating the criteria that must be achieved to meet the needs of the pupil. The LEA will seek evidence from the school that strategies and programmes implemented over a period of time have been unsuccessful. The LEA will need information about the child's progress over time and clear documentation on the child's SEN and the action taken to deal with these needs.

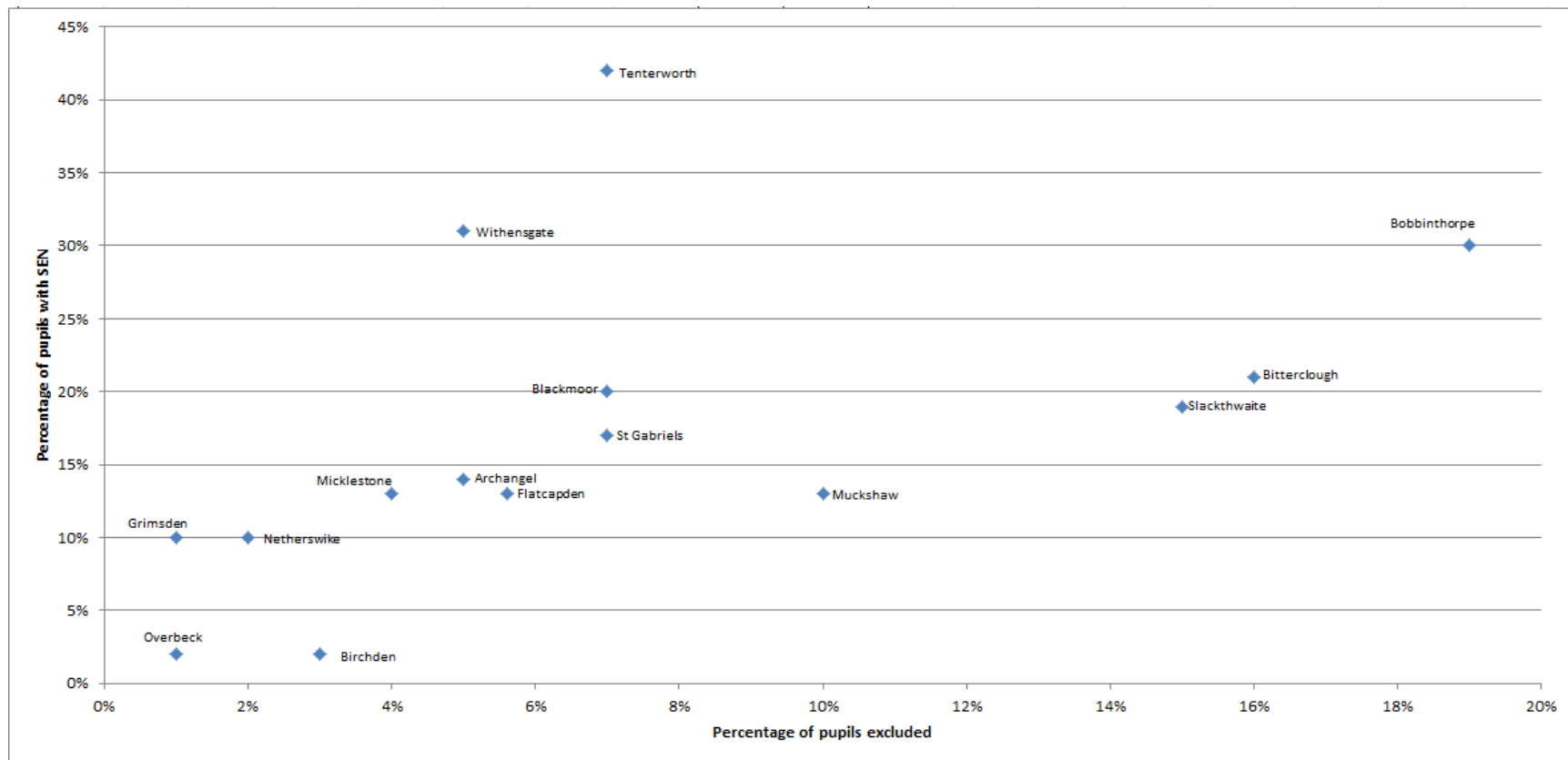


Figure 4.8 Scatter graph comparing percentage of pupils excluded with pupils with SEN

4.9.3 The ethnicity of the school populations

Information concerning the ethnicity of excluded pupils was unavailable (Chapter 4.6). In order to enhance comparability of the study I have used data accessed from the LA intranet to compare the proportions of pupils from ethnic minorities in each school (Appendix 1).

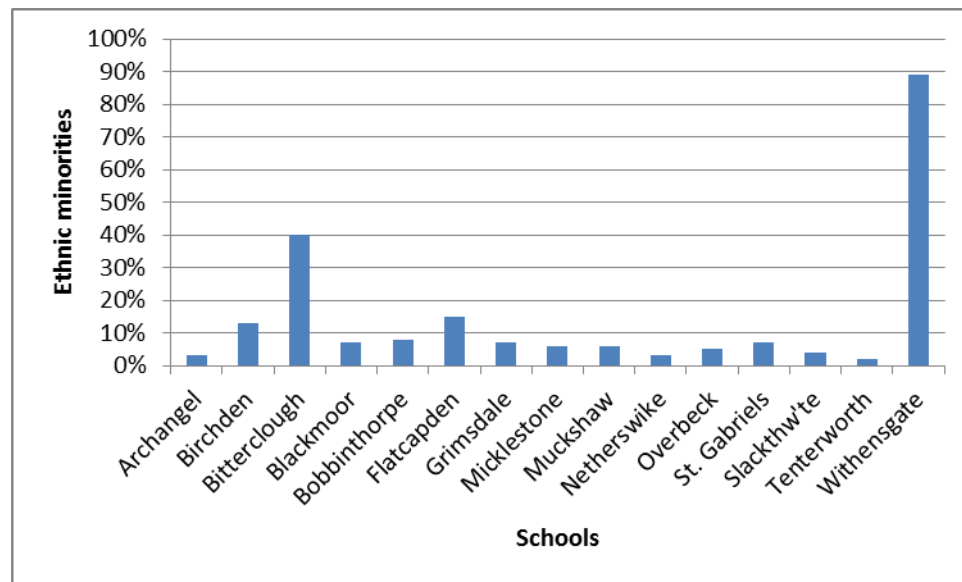


Figure 4.9 Percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities: 15.11.06

Figure 4.9, derived from data in Appendix 1, shows the proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities in Watermill Valley. The chart indicates that Watermill Valley has a predominantly White British population with a small number of pupils from ethnic minorities in most schools, with two exceptions: Withensgate where 89% of the pupils are from ethnic minorities; and Bitterclough where 40% of the pupils are from ethnic minorities.

Ethnicity has been identified as a significant variable associated with exclusions. The DfES (2007b) data on exclusions shows that during the period 2005/6, while the overall rate for permanent exclusion for all pupils was 14 in 10,000, the ethnic minorities experiencing the highest permanent exclusion rates were the Traveller of Irish Heritage (78 in 10,000) and White and Black Caribbean (41 in 10,000) groups. In the case of fixed-term exclusions, 8 in every 100 pupils of mixed ethnic heritage and Black pupils were excluded, compared to 6 in 100 for White pupils and 2 in 100 for pupils of Asian heritage. The DfES (2006a) Guidance on Exclusion requires schools to monitor and analyse exclusions by ethnicity, to ensure that they do not discriminate against ethnic minorities.

4.9.4 Changes in school intake

School intakes can change and did so in the case of Bitterclough where there was an influx of pupils from Eastern Europe starting in 2006/7¹. The rate of mobility in the school population rose and there was a significant increase in the number of in-year admissions, including recent arrivals from Slovakia and the Czech Republic who need support learning English.

A further factor in the rise in new admissions was that Tenterworth, a troubled school in a deprived area with a history of adverse publicity, was in the process of closing during the present study. Some of the pupils admitted to Bitterclough from Tenterworth arrived with a history of behaviour issues and this contributed to a sharp rise in the rate of exclusions.

4.10 The school sample

In this section I describe how I identified my schools for further research. It is in the selection of schools that my quantitative data on school exclusions is linked with qualitative data on the schools. For my selection of schools, although I focused on the variations clearly demonstrated in the LA data, I also took into account specific circumstances of schools that would enhance comparability. Scrutiny of the school profiles (Appendix 1), in conjunction with my analysis of the percentage of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions (Figure 4.2), revealed that the two of the schools with low exclusion rates, Overbeck and Birchden, were grammar schools with a selective entry system. Within the LA there were also two voluntary aided denominational schools: St Gabriel's and Archangel. I rejected these schools, making the decision to select the schools from state comprehensives with non-selective admissions criteria leaving eleven schools for consideration. There were four further factors noted on the school profiles that also influenced my choice of sample schools. One school, Tenterworth, had recently received adverse national publicity. I felt that studying the exclusions in this school had the potential to do further damage to the school's reputation. Another school, Bobbinthorpe, was experiencing problems settling into a new building and I did not consider that studying the school at this time would reflect established procedures. A third school, Slackthwaite was in Special Measures following an OfSTED inspection in 2006. At the time of sampling it was under the leadership of two visiting headteachers, and, as

¹ Information from interviews of Mr Daniels (deputy head) and Mr Wallace (teacher) at Bitterclough (5.4.1.3)

with Bobbinthorpe, I did not consider that this would reflect established practices. The exclusion data for the fourth school, Mickleston was unavailable for the period 2004/5 and consequently I was unable to analyse exclusions data over the two year period. I therefore rejected these four schools as cases for study, leaving 7 schools for consideration.

I made the decision to divide the schools into three groups, locating schools with an exclusion rate under 5% in the low-excluding group; schools with an exclusion rate of between 5% and 10% in the medium-excluding group; and those over 10% in the high-excluding group (Figure 4.2).

The subsequent process of approaching schools is recorded in my field work diary (Appendix 8). There were two schools, Netherswike and Grimsdale, in the low-excluding group. Netherswike also had the reputation of being open to sharing good practice. I therefore contacted the head of Netherswike, inviting the school take part in my research project. Their response was that they were unable to take part in the study because of prior commitment to two other research projects. I then approached the head of Grimsdale who accepted my invitation to take part in the research. In the medium-excluding group there were four schools: Blackmoor, Flatcapden, Muckshaw and Withensgate. My choice of school in this group had an element of convenience. Following a PRU management committee meeting that we both attended, I asked the headteacher of Blackmoor's advice on the best way to approach schools to invite them to take part in the project. During our conversation he indicated that he would be willing to take part in the study and I accepted his offer. In the high-excluding group there was only one school, Bitterclough that met my criteria. The headteacher accepted my invitation to take part in the study.

4.11 Reflective commentary

In analysing the LA data four of the layers of the ecosystemic framework described in Chapter 2.3 were used, these being the characteristics of the individual child; the face-to-face relationships of the microsystem; the implementation of school systems and the interpretation of government laws and guidelines in the exosystem; and LA organisation and government legislation in the macrosystem. These layers have been employed as a tool for exploration of the data but it is evident that they are not discrete; there is considerable movement and interaction between the variables identified.

Starting with the outermost layer, my analysis of the data in the macrosystem provides an overview of the LA. Those characteristics of the schools located in the

macrosystem and beyond the control of the individual school impact strongly on school exclusions. The characteristics of the schools in Watermill Valley are diverse and variable. The most deprived LSOAs in Watermill Valley are concentrated around the intake areas of four schools. These schools have a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for FSM and also a high proportion of pupils who have identified SEN. The data indicates that, with the exception of two atypical schools, there is a high correlation between these factors. This is consistent with the literature which indicates that both socio-economic status and SEN are significant factors in school exclusion (Croll, 2002; Lloyd *et al.*, 2003; DfES, 2006b and 2007b).

The distribution of pupils from ethnic minorities was also uneven with a high concentration in two schools. The largest group of ethnic minorities in Watermill Valley are of Pakistani heritage. This distribution is analogous with the findings of Burgess and Wilson (2004) who observed a significant degree of variation in levels of ethnic segregation across LEAs and ethnic groups, finding that segregation was particularly high for pupils of Asian heritage and was positively related to their proportion in the local population, with a high proportion of pupils with SEN and eligibility for FSM but a low number of school exclusions, a pattern reflected in one of the schools in the study. This also reflects national findings that indicate that Asian heritage has a negative association with exclusion (DfES 2006b).

While school behaviour policies are shaped in the macrosystem by government guidelines and legislation and by the cultural climate, they are formalised in the exosystem by school organisation. The LA data on individual school practice in applying exclusions reveals distinct within-school patterns concerning multiple exclusions and the duration of exclusions. It also reveals that it is at the level of interpersonal relationships located in the microsystem that the majority of exclusions are triggered. Precursors to exclusion are influenced not only by pupil behaviour but also by the quality of school relationships and individual staff interpretation of school rules (Riley and Docking, 2004). A high degree of within-school consistency and between school variations in exclusion patterns was observed at this point. The variation in practice indicates that schools differ widely in their attitude to exclusion. Similarly the triggers for exclusions appeared to be related to individual school practice.

In the innermost layer of the ecosystem, the individual attributes of the child, the data from Watermill Valley reflect the national patterns with the risk of exclusion rising with age, reaching a peak in Y9 and Y10 and dropping sharply after that point. It is equally evident that boys are three times as likely as girls to be excluded. Variations to this pattern can be observed in the selective entry schools where the rates of girls' and boys' exclusions are more similar.

The analysis of the LA data highlights the variations in exclusion rate within schools in Watermill Valley. It allows confidence that the overall rates for school exclusions in Watermill Valley LA are consistent with national data. It also indicates that there is considerable variation between schools but consistency within schools. Unexplained variations suggest that there are differences between the schools' ability or commitment to provide appropriately for children entitled to FSM and with SEN. This information was used to inform my choice of schools for further research, leading to the second phase of my research, the school interviews.

5 The interviews

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I show how I addressed my second research question: **What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?** by conducting interviews with staff, pupils and parents in each of the schools in my sample. Initially I describe how used my pilot interviews to refine my interview strategies, and document my success in using the technique of ‘Talking Stones’ to elicit responses from pupil respondents. I then focus on the sampling methods used to select respondents followed by an account of how the interviews were conducted and a summary of each interview.

5.1 Pilot Interviews

In order to trial my interview guide, I piloted the interviews with 14 respondents drawn from PRU pupils, work colleagues, friends and friends’ children. These included:

- 4 newly admitted PRU pupils
- 2 included pupils
- 2 youth workers
- 1 Youth Offending Team worker
- 1 police officer attached to the Youth Offending Team
- 1 Learning Support Unit manager
- 3 mainstream teachers

In my pilot study I interviewed representatives of outside agencies involved with schools, including the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Workers.

Although I believe that these agencies have a rich and valid contribution to make to illuminating why exclusions vary, in my final design I was unable to include these informants because schools vary in the way they employ or use non-teaching staff and outside agencies. Only one of the schools in my sample mentioned contact with Youth Workers and only one school mentioned contact with YOT. An additional consideration when deciding not to include YOT workers in the interviews was that their experience is limited to pupils who are in the criminal justice system. In contrast, the school staff have experience of working with a wider range of pupils who may or may not have committed criminal offences.

My pilot interviews highlighted the difficulties of eliciting responses from children. In order to initiate a dialogue I trialled two elicitation techniques described in Chapter 3.2.2.3. The technique of asking pupils to comment on SEAL photos depicting situations of conflict and harmony during the school day proved to be unproductive. Both included pupils and those at risk of exclusion had difficulty responding in any depth to the stimuli, their comments being limited to a narrative of the events portrayed. I therefore rejected the use of the photographs in my research interviews.

In contrast, I found that the ‘Talking Stones’ technique, developed by Wearmouth (2004) was very successful in eliciting rich responses from pupils. Prior to the interview I explained the process to the respondents, inviting them to help me to arrange the stones on the table. I used a range of stones with a variety of textures and sizes. I then asked the respondent to choose a stone to represent them at school. Depending on the outcome I either probed the reasons for their response or continued by asking them to choose a stone for someone who has helped them at school. At this point the majority of the respondents felt comfortable about talking to me about school issues and had given me some information that I could pursue as a natural progression during the interview. I left the stones on the table throughout the interview, finding that some respondents continued to hold ‘their stones’ throughout the interview. Others, at my suggestion, placed their stones with the ones chosen for people with whom they had a positive relationship. Following my positive experiences in the pilot interviews I made the decision to retain the ‘Talking Stones’ as an elicitation technique.

5.2 Selecting the respondents

My first contact with each school was through the headteacher. In all cases I was then referred to a deputy head with a responsibility for behaviour. I explained my

research to the deputy heads and interviewed them, following which they became my point of contact in the schools, putting me in touch with staff, pupils and parents.

Initially, I requested each participating school to identify pupils in Y9 and Y10 who had been, or were in danger of being excluded. From this list I intended to select two boys and two girls in both Y9 and Y10. The criterion for selection was to select those pupils whose dates of birth are in February, in order to minimise the effect of being the oldest or youngest in the year group. For the same reason, the selection of peers to be interviewed also focused on pupils whose date of birth is in February, a pupil from Y9 and Y10 being selected at random. Despite my efforts I had no control over the pupils sent to me for interview. In all schools the deputy heads made the decision about who I interviewed. Initial contact with pupils was made by letter, both to the individual pupil and to their parents/carers explaining the research and requesting permission to interview (Appendix 3). This was approved by the University of Leeds School of Education and the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee.

I also requested two members of staff for interview: a teacher and a staff member linked to a Learning Support Unit (LSU). In order to maximise comparability I asked for teachers respondents with about four years of teaching experience. One of the staff with a responsibility for behaviour was also a teacher. In one school (Grimsdale) a member of staff associated with the LSU declined my invitation for an interview and the deputy head arranged for me to interview the organiser of a Y11 alternative curriculum group. Parents were also selected for interview by the deputy heads. A full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 5.

5.3 Conducting the interviews

Following the analysis of the LA data I initially identified three schools as my sample for further study (Chapter 4.10). Because Netherswike, my first choice of low-excluding school, was unable to take part in the study, I then approached the headteacher of Grimsdale inviting the school to take part in the research. Arranging the interviews at Grimsdale, the low-excluding school, proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of this part of the research. I encountered many setbacks that are recorded in my field work diary (Appendix 8). By July 2009, I had completed the interviews. All of the interviews were conducted in the schools in private rooms. I noted the duration and nature of any interruptions in the interview transcriptions.

5.3.1 The pupil interviews

I began the pupil interviews by reiterating the contents of the consent letters they had signed (Appendix 3), assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses. I then gave a brief outline of my research and explained how they had been chosen for interview because of their interesting and useful ideas about school exclusions. I introduced myself as a teacher in the PRU, while at the same time assuring them that the research was not connected with the PRU. I explained that I wanted to know about their views, experiences and observations. I then asked for their permission to audio-record their interview. I also explained that I would transcribe the interview and return it to them to check and inform me of any changes they wished to make. All of the respondents consented to this. We then tested the recording equipment together. I then described how I would start by asking them to choose a 'Talking Stone' (Chapters 3.2.2.3 and 5.1). They helped me to spread the stones out on a table so that they had a good idea of the range of shapes sizes and textures. This was also an opportunity for informal contact before the start of the interview. Examples of their responses to this activity are recorded in Appendix 9.

During the interviews I was careful to maximise beneficence by carefully observing responses to questions. I reflected the respondents' own words when probing and clarifying responses. I also made judgements on which questions to ask, depending on the reactions of the respondents. An example of this is that one of the included pupils, Roland (Blackmoor) appeared to be particularly sensitive to discussions involving disruptive behaviour in the classroom and for this reason I finished the interview without probing his views on this topic. Conversely, if a respondent was eager to volunteer information unrelated to my interview guide, I followed their train of thought before guiding them back to my questions. At the end of each interview I gave each respondent the opportunity to ask their own questions.

5.3.2 The adult interviews

In the adult interviews I again introduced myself in my role as teacher in the PRU and also as a PhD student at the University of Leeds. I explained the purpose of my research and requested their permission to audio-record the interview, explaining that I would then transcribe it and return it to them for their approval and to make any adjustments to represent their views more clearly. I started each interview by explaining that I was interested in the respondent's perspectives on behaviour issues and encouraged them to talk freely on the topic. I then followed the same techniques described for the pupil respondents, carefully observing responses to questions, reflecting the respondents' own words when probing and clarifying responses and

using the hierarchical focusing guide where necessary to ensure that they had covered all of the identified areas. As with the pupil interviews, I finished by giving the respondents the opportunity to ask their own questions.

5.3.3 Duration of interviews

Table 5.1 shows the duration of interviews in each school. From the pilot interviews it was estimated that the pupil interviews would last for 15 minutes, the staff interviews for 40 minutes and the parental interviews for 30 minutes. In practice, because of the open-ended nature of the interviewing techniques, there was considerable disparity between the lengths of the interviews. The duration of interviews was also governed by the depth of response given by interviewees and the time available for individuals to take part in the research.

Table 5.1 Duration of interviews

School	Bitterclough	minutes	Blackmoor	minutes	Grimsdale	minutes
Pupils at risk of exclusion	Albert	15	Charday	13	Aaron	22
	Alma	12	Jay	9	James	13
	Aqib	23	Marlo	13	Karim	17
	Pingu	12	Namond	16	-	-
subtotal		62		51		52
Included pupils	Ali	12	Bodie	15	Crystal	20
	Bethany	13	Roland	9	Rhonda	18
sub-total		25		24		38
Staff: deputy head	Mr Daniels	33	Mr Carver	32	Mr Freamon	62
Other staff	Mrs Little	53	Mr Barksdale	40	Mr Howard	41
	Mr Wallace	32	Ms Bell	53	Mrs Pearlman	33
subtotal		118		125		136
Parent	-	-	Francine	30	Donette	15
Total		205		230		240

The duration of pupil interviews was sometimes governed by school organisation. At Bitterclough, four pupils were sent to me at the same time, resulting in some pupils waiting outside the interview room while I conducted the other interviews. The outcome of this situation was that the interviews on that day were limited to 15 minutes regardless of pupil responsiveness. The length of the interviews for pupils at risk of exclusion ranged from Jay (Blackmoor) at 9 minutes to Aqib (Bitterclough) at 23 minutes. For included pupils interviews ranged from Roland (Blackmoor) at 9 minutes to Crystal (Grimsdale) at 20 minutes.

The duration of adult interviews was often dependant on the length of time the adult had available. I met teaching staff at the end of the school day and although they were willing participants they were also eager to complete their obligations and go home. The length of staff interviews ranged from Mr Carver's (Blackmoor) at 32 minutes to Mr Freamon's (Grimsdale) at 61 minutes.

The two parental interviews were also of disparate lengths because of the depth of the individual responses. Francine (Blackmoor) during an interview of 30 minutes gave very full responses whereas Donette's shorter responses amounted to 15 minutes.

Overall the total interview times for each school varied: these being 205 minutes at Bitterclough, 230 minutes at Blackmoor, and 240 minutes at Grimsdale.

5.4 Interview Summaries

In this section I have included a short summary of each interview. Under the heading of each school, I have arranged the interviews in the following order: the pupils at risk of exclusion; the included pupils; the teaching staff, and the parent interviews.

5.4.1 Bitterclough

5.4.1.1 Pupils at risk of exclusion

Alma Y9²

Ethnicity: Mixed Heritage: White/Afro-Caribbean

Location: Interview room

Date 11.7.08

Duration 12 minutes

Alma's behaviour is a problem most days. She feels that teachers do not treat her with respect. She hates being shouted at but reacts better if a teacher speaks quietly to her. Her behaviour follows a pattern that she recognises involving her imitating the teacher in a rude way. She refuses to apologise for her behaviour unless the teacher makes the first apology.

Her problems started at the end of Y5 but she has now decided to have a fresh start and behave in lessons. She enjoys practical lessons such as drama and music as they tend to be less formal with opportunities to talk to her peers while she works on tasks.

Alma's parents are tired of the continual phone calls from school about her behaviour. They used to stop her from going out when she had problems at school but now feel that they have done all they can to make her behave at school and they

² Alma successfully completed her education at Bitterclough.

find it difficult to manage her behaviour at home if they punish her. She is concerned about her father's ill-health and tries to avoid upsetting him.

Alma finds teachers who use humour helpful and this can calm her down. She has had individual sessions from a worker from an outside agency but eventually asked for this to stop as the relationship deteriorated. She had a more positive experience with a worker from another agency [possibly a Youth Worker] who took her to a neighbourhood centre and was more communicative. Alma would no longer like someone to work with her outside the school day as she has a busy social life.

Alma is looking forward to the next school year when she will be doing food technology, business studies and child care. She enjoys cooking and also often looks after her young cousins, taking them to a nearby town at the weekend. She is pleased that her aunt trusts her to be responsible for them. When she leaves school she would like to either be a lawyer or work in a special care baby unit.

Albert Y9³

Ethnicity: White British

Location: Interview room

Date: 20.3.09

Duration: 15 minutes

This interview took place the day after Albert had attended a meeting with the school governors to discuss his behaviour. Albert is aware that his behaviour interferes with his progress in lessons. He is often off-task, shouting out a lot, wanting to talk to his friends and for them to text him. This can happen in any lesson including tech, PE and maths which are Albert's favourite lessons. Albert has enjoyed some success in these lessons and he believes that this is because he was well behaved at first and the teachers got to know and like him. He often tells teachers to "Shut up", the precursor to this is usually that he feels that the teacher has shouted in his face. Albert walks out of the classroom when this happens. Another factor that affects his behaviour is that his fellow pupils taunt him by calling his name. Although they are reprimanded Albert feels that he is punished more severely as he is the one who walks out.

Albert's behavioural problems started in Y2 or Y3 and have continued. He came to Bitterclough about six months ago after being permanently excluded from

³ Albert left the LA due to family circumstances shortly after the interview.

Blackmoor. Rather than attending the PRU his mother intervened on his behalf and asked the school to take him. At first he was well behaved as he only knew two pupils in the school but his behaviour deteriorated as he became more familiar with his fellow pupils. Albert has had help with anger management, has spent six weeks in the LSU and has been in internal exclusion eight times where he was isolated from his friends.

Albert lives with his mother and two younger siblings and does not have behavioural issues at home. He does not want to upset his mother who worked hard to get him into the school. At home Albert enjoys riding motor bikes although he does not have his own yet. He has a close friend who enjoys the same activity. He would like to be a plumber when he leaves school but thinks this is unlikely because of his behaviour. He feels that well behaved pupils are better than him and his friends as they will have good jobs and earn more money when they leave school.

Pingu⁴ Y 10

Ethnicity: White British

Location: Interview room

Date: 11.7.08

Duration: 12 minutes

Pingu hates being shouted at by teachers. She feels angry a lot of the time because of this. Teachers send her out of the room and then forget about her. She returns to the room and shouts and swears at the teachers. She has had anger management sessions in the LSU involving relaxation but feels that this has not improved her ability to control her temper. She sometimes feels that because of past actions she is falsely accused of disruptive behaviour. Pingu does not go to form lessons as she does not like them. She and her friends used to walk around the school to avoid them, however she is now spending time in the LSU instead of going to her form and she prefers this. Her favourite lesson is textiles where she is making a party dress that she described in detail. She also enjoys PE and is good at netball. She dislikes most other lessons especially science as she does not get on with the teacher.

Pingu has one very close friend that she sees both at school and at home. She finds that when they are together everything goes smoothly and that she does not get

⁴ Pingu was permanently excluded a few months after the interview.

into trouble. They are together in textiles where they talk but because of the nature of the lesson this is acceptable.

Pingu has been excluded many times. She feels that teachers do not help her and that they get her excluded. She would like more help with her anger. She also mentioned that she has problems at home that affect her behaviour and that she would like to be able to talk to someone about this.

Aqib⁵ Y10

Ethnicity: Pakistani

Location: Head's office

Date: 23.9.08

Duration: 23 minutes

Aqib experiences a lot of problems at school including fighting other pupils and arguing and swearing at teachers. He often walks out of lessons after conflict with staff and has been involved in fighting other pupils. He enjoys maths but is unhappy about his other GCSE subjects. He has also had many detentions and was suspended from school for a month last year. He feels that this was too long for a suspension and resents the fact that he missed the opportunity to choose his options because of it.

Aqib did not experience problems at primary school. He was happy there and his main interest was cars. He does not know why he has been in so much trouble at secondary school. The main difference that he can see between primary and secondary school is that he was allowed to talk more at primary school.

Recently Aqib feels that his behaviour has improved. He has now lost interest in fighting. He is pleased that he has not had any incident sheets in the last two days. He would like to get a good job when he leaves school so he knows that he will have to start working hard and keep out of trouble. He is looking forward to doing a work experience placement at an engineering factory.

Aqib's home life is happy. He does not get into trouble as there is nothing to argue about. While he was off school he slept in late every day and then helped his father to fix a car.

⁵ Aqib was permanently excluded shortly after the interview

5.4.1.2 The included pupils

Bethany Y9

Ethnicity: Mixed heritage White/Pakistani

Duration: 13 minutes

Location: Headteacher's office

Bethany describes herself as a quiet, hardworking member of her form. She says that her form are well-behaved and there are few problems in classes although she recognises that talking out of turn, swearing and arguing and fighting in class occurs in the school. She is aware of conflict at break times including white and Asian pupils fighting in gangs. When this happens she keeps out of the way while teachers isolate the fighting pupils.

Bethany thinks that pupils who get involved in disruptive behaviour are throwing their lives away as they are not concerned about getting good GCSEs. She is aware that they may have problems at home or may be bullied. Bethany is proactive in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour, befriending new pupils and inviting classmates who are being bullied to join her friendship group. She was inspired to do this because of the good experience she had when she first joined the school during Y7 when an older pupil helped her to settle in. Bethany has experienced bullying in the past but that stopped when the school intervened and threatened to involve the police.

Bethany enjoys maths but has problems in algebra as she has difficulty understanding the concepts. She wishes the teacher would give her more help but is aware that if pupils ask for help they are sometimes sent out of the room for shouting out.

Bethany thinks that the best way to help pupils with behavioural problems would be to give them explicit instructions on how to behave in class coupled with a generous reward scheme which could be withdrawn as their behaviour improves.

Ali Y10

Ethnicity: Pakistani

Date: 11.7.08

Duration: 12 minutes

Location: Interview room

Ali feels that his time at school is positive and enjoys all lessons except for citizenship but he is aware of those who experience difficulties, explaining that his close friend has been bullied and that his home life is unhappy. Ali feels that he is able to stand up to bullies whereas his friend has been coerced into doing homework for other pupils. Ali describes pupils who are disruptive in school as presenting themselves as gangsters, smoking, taking drugs and bullying others. He has noticed that they often get into fights. He does not believe that detentions and exclusions are effective strategies and would like to see a system where disengaged pupils are withdrawn from mainstream classes and given an alternative curriculum to help them to conform. He also believes that there is a case for giving more rewards to disruptive pupils to encourage good behaviour, gradually withdrawing the rewards as they improve. For himself he finds that merit rewards systems are effective but his preferred reward is a letter to his parents.

5.4.1.3 The Staff

Mr Daniels: Deputy Head

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 50-59

Date: 23.4.08

Time: 11.20

Duration: 33 minutes

Location: Part 1, Mr Daniel's office; Part 2, office adjoining IT class where Mr Daniels was supervising.

Mr Daniels was originally a PE teacher and has worked at Bitterclough for many years. He has recently been appointed to the role of deputy head.

In Mr Daniels' opinion exclusions can occur for a variety of reasons from an isolated incident to persistent disruption. He feels that the school's dominant behavioural issues are lack of motivation and low-level disruption. Low-level disruption often occurs when pupils are not engaged in learning taking the form of social talk in lessons. In previous years the school has had very high levels of both permanent and fixed-term exclusion⁶ and several measures have recently been taken to tackle this problem. A new senior member of staff with a responsibility for behavioural issues has been appointed and will join the school in the near future. Staff absences have been a cause of disruption and cover supervisors are now being

⁶ 303 fixed-term exclusions from Bitterclough in 2006/7 [Watermill Valley SIMS data]

used instead of supply teachers to minimise this effect. There are two alternative provisions:

- The Span Unit where up to six pupils who are struggling in the classrooms go for three to six week periods
- In September an internal exclusion unit was established as a way of addressing the high levels of exclusions in previous years. This has reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions. In Mr Daniels's opinion it is more effective than external exclusions

A more visible reward system has also been introduced. Behaviour issues have been carefully monitored over the past year to identify when and where they take place. The deputy head also conducts surveys to elicit the views of members of staff on changes in the school. The school has a mixed intake of Pakistani and white pupils and a university is at present doing a study focusing on the exclusion rates of Pakistani pupils⁷.

Mr Daniels takes a proactive approach to behaviour issues with a focus on pre-empting conflicts. He recognises a clear pastoral link between behaviour and learning and would like to make changes to meet the needs of those pupils who find changes of classes and teachers difficult.

Mrs Little: Head of LSU,

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 60-65

Date: 29.4.08

Duration: 53 minutes

Location: LSU

Mrs Little was originally an English teacher but worked in the Watermill Valley Behaviour Support Service for several years before being appointed to develop and run the LSU at Bitterclough. She has been teaching for many years and is approaching retirement.

Mrs Little feels that children's behaviour has deteriorated over the past ten years and that the reason for this is the breakdown of the nuclear family and the result of serial relationships with extended families. In her opinion it is now the majority of young people who are disrespectful and that this is a deliberate strategy

⁷ The school has a population of 40% Asian and 60% White. In 2006/7 the school permanently excluded 7 pupils of whom 5 were of Asian origin.

to get what they want. She strongly believes that the cause of behaviour problems lies in the home and that schools cannot be expected to compensate for parents' shortcomings. She also relates behaviour problems to dietary causes. She is in close contact with parents and feels that they are as difficult as the pupils. She advises them to punish bad behaviour by withdrawing children's possessions at home, encouraging them to earn them back by changing their behaviour. She also advises them on diet, suggesting that they give their children food supplements.

Mrs Little favours the use of behaviour modification in the form of the sanctions of after-school detentions, and losing breaks and lunch times. She also uses monetary rewards as an incentive to maintain good behaviour.

Mrs Little feels that her views do not concur with the rest of the school. In her opinion the school management sometimes see the LSU as a box to be ticked for some difficult pupils who may not benefit from her approach. She is also critical of the new internal exclusion room as she feels that pupils enjoy going there and it is not a deterrent. She believes that mainstream school is not suitable for some children, and that there should be an alternative curriculum provided outside mainstream school where different agencies can easily be accessed.

She also believes that even when learning difficulties are identified, teachers do not have time to assimilate this information and make sufficient differentiation for these problems. She is critical of the inconsistencies she has noticed in other members of staff and believes that all staff should tackle behaviour issues as they arise. She also feels that newly qualified staff have insufficient training to deal with behaviour issues.

Mr Wallace: Science Teacher

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 30-39

Date: 11.6.08

Duration: 32 minutes

Time: 15.43

Location: Science laboratory

Mr Wallace was formerly a science technician at Bitterclough and completed the GTP training to become a teacher in 2003-4, prior to that he worked in material engineering, running factories for ten years.

In Mr Wallace's opinion, the pupils at Bitterclough are difficult to control. He attributes this to home influences. The majority of the pupils come from working class backgrounds and the school culture is very different to their home experiences. From his observations the changes in management over the past four years have had a detrimental effect on behaviour. There is less clarity about how rules are enforced and communication between senior staff and teaching staff is less efficient.

Another contributing factor is the diverse nature of the school intake. Outside the classroom there are distinct ethnic divisions between the White British, Pakistani and more recently Eastern European pupils. Mr Wallace has witnessed fights breaking out between the White British and Pakistani groups, escalated by the involvement of older members of these communities from outside school. Although the school has put in place some initiatives to address the integration of the ethnic groups, these have only been successful when the pupils are inside the classroom.

In the classroom behaviour problems range from low-level talking and distracting others to more serious incidents occurring at lesson changes when pupils from other classes come in, cause fights and disrupt lessons. He finds that a major part of his job is devoted to establishing an atmosphere where learning can take place. He does this by using a seating plan and using both the school reward scheme and his own in-class rewards. He also uses detentions but finds that these are most effective when applied immediately after an incident. The prolonged process of arranging after-school detentions lessens their impact.

5.4.2 Blackmoor

5.4.2.1 The pupils at risk of exclusion

Jay Y9⁸

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 4.11.08

Time: 14.53

Duration: 9 minutes

Location: Interview room

Jay was reluctant to talk about his own experiences in school and preferred to describe his observations of others. He has noticed that other pupils get detentions

⁸ Jay successfully completed his education at Blackmoor.

for leaving school without permission, smoking and chewing gum. When a supply teacher is present pupils are more disruptive, talking and shouting out. This results in pupils being sent to work with another member of staff. Jay was bullied when he first came to the school because of his hair but this has been resolved since he changed the style. He lives with his four siblings, mother and stepfather. He hopes to work in his stepfather's plumbing business when he leaves school.

Namond Y9⁹

Ethnicity: Mixed heritage British/Afro-Caribbean

Date: 4.11.08

Time: 12.31

Duration: 16 minutes

Location: Interview room

Namond describes himself as 'big and rough'. In his view he has always stood out in class because of his size and demeanour. Teachers will assume that he is the instigator of disruptive behaviour and he gets blamed for the actions of others. Similarly, at home he finds that his mother will blame him rather than his younger brother and sister when problems arise. The only time he is praised is when he succeeds at rugby. He is a talented rugby player and has been chosen to represent the county although his cheeky behaviour prevented him from taking this opportunity. He spends most evenings training. Namond finds writing difficult. In science the teacher prints his work out so that he does not have to copy it like his class mates, however, he still finds it difficult to understand the work he is required to do and would prefer it if she gave him the answers.

In the past Namond has had support from the Behaviour and Attendance Service but he now feels that his behaviour has improved because he is on the verge of permanent exclusion. He does want to be excluded so he is trying to comply with staff expectations.

Charday¹⁰: Y10

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 4.11.08

Time: 14.14

⁹ Namond successfully completed his education at Blackmoor

¹⁰ Charday was permanently excluded later in the school year

Duration: 13 minutes

Location: Interview room

Charday is often in trouble in lessons because she talks and distracts others. She finds it difficult to control her moods and is easily upset by her peers. When she first came to the school in Y7 she had a large friendship group within her form. The form was split up at the end of Y7 because this group was so unruly. They argued a lot and were disruptive in lessons. Now Charday feels that her behaviour is getting better. She has a close friend who has a steadying influence on her. At present she is on report and is trying to comply because she does not want an after school detention.

At home she gets on well with her two siblings and mother but argues with her father who works away during the week. She enjoys spending time in her friends' houses and does not get into trouble with the police.

Marlo Y10¹¹

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 5.11.08

Time: 11.40

Duration: 13 minutes

Location: Interview room

Marlo was reticent and defensive at times during the interview. As a high achiever, he spent Y7 and Y8 at Micklestone and then came to Blackmoor at the beginning of Y9 as the result of a managed move. This has been a positive experience for him. He finds it hard to understand why Micklestone has a reputation for good exam results as he did not feel that he learned a lot there and that the teachers did not treat him with respect. The other pupils were rough and abusive to staff. In his view he is learning more at Blackmoor because of the positive attitude of the pupils and the more flexible approach of the staff.

His behaviour has improved recently and this year he has not had any detentions. He mainly gets into trouble at break times when he goes off-site without permission and is late back, and also for playing football in the wrong place. He

¹¹ Marlo successfully completed his education at Blackmoor

truanted a lot at Micklestone but has not truanted at all at Blackmoor. In class he mentioned informal pupil-talk as a problem with some teachers but argued that he learns better when he communicates. In his opinion peer influence has the biggest impact on behaviour, especially when pupils want to make an impression on their class mates.

He lives with his parents and sister on a large council estate at the other side of the main town and well out of Blackmoor's catchment area. His parents chose to send him to a school away from his neighbourhood peers.

5.4.2.2 The included pupils

Roland Y9

Ethnicity: White British

Date; 4.11.08

Duration: 9 minutes

Time: 15.08

Location: Interview room

Roland appeared to be very upset at times during the interview, particularly when describing the behaviour of a fellow pupil who he believes behaves badly in order to attract attention. From his observations staff interventions are effective in stopping disruptive behaviour with fixed-term exclusions, truancy reports and behaviour reports being particularly successful in reducing disruption.

In his opinion, disruptive pupils are unable to recognise inappropriate behaviour. They do not realise the impact it has on others. They are unwilling to listen to advice from either their parents or their teachers. Roland thinks that they should be taught to empathise with others.

Bodie Y10

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 4.11.08

Time: 14.28

Duration: 15 minutes

Location: Interview room

Bodie feels that he behaves well and works hard at school but was keen to point out that he has a 'fun side' being a member of the cadets and playing rugby. From his observations low-level disruption in the form of talking out of turn can be a problem in the classroom. He attributes this to pupils wanting to make an impression on their peers. Vandalism and graffiti have also been problems recently. One of Bodie's concerns is the demoralising effect bullying can have on pupils. He believes that it can be the result of issues in the pupil's background especially when home life is disrupted. He feels that the school takes it seriously and use exclusion as a punishment for bullying but that it would be more effective to explore the reasons behind bullying rather than meting out punishments.

5.4.2.3 The staff

Mr Carver: Deputy Head

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 30-39

Date: 12.5.08

Time: 10.30

Duration: 32 minutes

Location: Deputy Head's office

Mr Carver encourages an ethos of pride in belonging to the school. He recognises that there is some low-level disruption in lessons and at unstructured times but in his opinion behaviour is mainly good. He is prepared to respond to problems that occur outside the school as he feels that behaviour is to some extent still the school's responsibility and with daily contact staff are more able to address behaviour issues than the police. Another of the school's strengths is the way that pupils with SEN relating to learning difficulties, are accepted and integrated into the school this is partly due to the support they receive from non-teaching staff and the LSU.

In Mr Carver's opinion behaviour problems can arise from lack of engagement in the school curriculum and staff are encouraged to vary the way they present lessons and to make them as interactive as possible. Some pupils are difficult to engage because they have issues that stem from their home backgrounds and school may feel less important.

Rewards systems are based on commendations for following school systems leading to certificates and form reward trips. Mr Carver believes that to improve

behaviour, it is important to address small issues such as uniform infringements. He also feels that parental support and the commitment of form teachers is vital for implementing behaviour management.

Ms Bell: PE and dance teacher, assistant head of year

Ethnicity: White British.

Age: 20-29

Date: 21.2.08

Time: 15.43

Duration: 53 minutes

Location: Headteacher's office

In Ms Bell's opinion behaviour at the school is mainly good, the biggest problem being low-level disruption in lessons which can usually be rectified by teachers addressing different learning styles. However there are some pupils who do not comply no matter how engaging the lesson is. One of the reasons for this is that pupils' home background may shape their attitudes to education. If education is not valued at home or if home life is very difficult, pupils may not engage with lessons. Peers can also be a distraction and Ms Bell commented that it is not 'cool' to comply with teachers' requests. Some pupils have difficulty accessing the curriculum and this may cause them to be disruptive. She has not noticed any difference between behaviour in PE where pupils are grouped according to ability and dance which is mixed ability.

Ms Bell's attitude to the behaviour management system is that if minor incidents such as school uniform infringements are addressed more serious ones do not arise. From her experience a positive approach to pupils works best. She has noticed that an authoritarian manner can cause conflict and that behaviour management has to be applied with sensitivity.

Mr Barksdale: Supervisor of LSU

Ethnicity: Mixed Heritage British/Afro-Caribbean

Age: 20-29

Date: 17.7.08

Time: 15.43

Duration: 40 minutes

Location: Interview room adjacent to LSU

Mr Barksdale was previously a pupil at Blackmoor. He has been working at the school for five years. He initially worked as a support worker for pupils with SEN, followed by a year as a cover supervisor and has been recently appointed as the supervisor of the LSU.

In Mr Barksdale's opinion, the behaviour at Blackmoor is mostly good. The behaviour problems he sees in the classrooms are low-level disruption in the form of talking, pen tapping and chewing. Mr Barksdale differentiates between emotional and social difficulties, and behavioural difficulties. He describes social difficulties as a lack of skill and knowledge in how to communicate with others whereas he sees behavioural difficulties as a path chosen by the pupil suggesting that they may originate from home where expectations of behaviour differ from those at school. He also cites tiredness at the end of the day and personality clashes as a cause of conflict.

Mr Barksdale feels that problems are very individual to the pupil and vary accordingly. He is very aware of problems stemming from learning difficulties and uses a range of strategies to support vulnerable pupils. He favours the use of behaviour modification techniques to motivate pupils to learn and differentiates rewards and activities to meet the needs of his pupils. New to the post, he has recently been on a course to help him with strategies.

5.4.2.4 The Parent

Francine: mother of Namond

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 30-39

Date: 12.12.08

Time: 12.31

Duration: 30 minutes

Location: Interview room at school (Francine's choice)

[This was the second time Francine was interviewed. The first interview was lost due to a computer malfunction and Francine kindly agreed to repeat the interview two weeks later. Francine was nervous about the interview being audio-recorded, so I put the recorder out of sight]

Francine has two other children, Anna who is twenty months younger than Namond and Nat who is five. She works nights as a care worker.

Francine is aware that Namond has always had difficulties at school. He has had problems with writing and although Francine tried to help him by buying him a pencil grip, he presses very hard, his writing is barely legible and he is exhausted after writing half a page. He has not been diagnosed with dyslexia although she has been informed that he has dyslexic tendencies. Francine has found the school very helpful in some areas. They have now given Namond a laptop to help him with writing. He also has help with reading and writing from the support worker of a child with an SEN statement in his class.

Namond does not respond well to direct orders and Francine feels the same. He responds better to humour and banter. He has difficulties with pragmatic language especially if he is given several instructions at the same time. He also finds it difficult to adjust to change. He thinks that teachers pick on him but this is sometimes because he misunderstands situations. Francine attended a meeting in the past where it was advised that Namond should not be excluded from school because of his problems; however he has been excluded several times since then. Namond becomes angry when he is frustrated and cannot calm down. Francine feels that he does not learn through the sanctions that she and the school put in place.

Since primary school Namond has been prejudged because of his size and appearance which Francine describes as 'big and loud with a lot of bushy hair'. Teachers have always been reluctant to take him on outside school activities. However, twice on two recent occasions staff have seen him in a new light. On an outing to a beach Namond behaved well and related well to the staff, showing a keen interest in the activity and on a climbing trip to Wales Namond impressed staff by using his prior knowledge to help others.

Much of Francine's time is occupied taking her children to sporting activities. Namond is a talented rugby player and was chosen to play for the county team. However he was excluded from the team because he pretended to sneeze over one of the training staff.

At home Namond enjoys making things and willingly uses joinery tools. He has, with the help of a neighbour, built his own house in the garden and this is where he spends much of his time. He paid for part of it with money he earned from a paper round that he and his sister share.

Francine's daughter was excluded from school at the time of the interview.

5.4.3 Grimsdale

5.4.3.1 The pupils at risk of exclusion

Aaron Y9¹²

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 3.7.09

Time: 9.30

Duration: 22 minutes

Location: School interview room

Aaron describes himself as feeling depressed when he is at school. He does not enjoy school and attends on an extremely reduced timetable. He has recently been diagnosed with ADHD and is concerned that his medication is making him produce excess mucus. Aaron prefers being in the LSU than in mainstream lessons. He feels well supported by two of the staff there who understand his need to move around the room and listen to music. They approach him with sensitivity and listen to his views. Aaron does not relate easily to his peers and can become upset by comments they make about him.

When he is at home Aaron described himself as feeling normal. He has been living with his grandma for the last two years because of conflict between him and his seventeen year old brother. He has also been involved in criminal activities with a family who live near to his mother's house. He keeps in close contact with his mother, seeing her most days. At home Aaron enjoys listening to music, playing on his PlayStation and riding motor cycles. He spoke at length about the close relationship he had had with his uncle who had died the previous year.

James Y10¹³

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 10.12.08

Time: 11.49

Duration: 13 minutes

Location: Maurice Freamon, the Deputy Head's room

¹² Aaron completed his education at Grimsdale, spending his last year in the Y11 group alternative group

¹³ James successfully completed his education at Grimsdale.

James describes himself as having mixed behaviours. He is in top ability sets for most lessons but talks a lot and if staff admonish him he becomes angry and aggressive. He feels that staff sometimes pick on him because of his reputation. He has observed that pupil behaviour is generally better in the higher ability groups. Last year when he was in mixed ability groups there was more disruption. James is disapproving of pupils that are continually disruptive because he does not think they are taking their education seriously.

James' parents are separated and he lives with his father who is steward at a golf club. His younger sister lives with his mother. He is skilled at rugby and plays in both a local team and the school team. He would like to play more rugby at school. He is also skilled at golf and hopes to play nationally next year. James has a criminal record for damaging cars.

Karim Y10¹⁴

Ethnicity: Pakistani

Date: 14.7.09

Time: 10.10

Duration: 17 minutes

Location: School interview room

Karim describes himself as being good most of the time, but with some episodes of misbehaviour. He is sometimes disruptive when he is with his peers and is vying for attention. He can also be argumentative and angry, losing control of his temper. Karim's behaviour is dependent on whether he enjoys a lesson and his relationship with the teacher. His father, for whom he has great respect and affection, has cared for him since his mother died when he was two. He has two older brothers who have been to university and this is the route that Karim expects to take. To do so he realises that he must learn to control his angry outbursts.

Karim feels singled out for punishment by one teacher and believes that this is due to racism. He has noticed that the teacher is more lenient on his white peers when they misbehave. Pakistani¹⁵ pupils are in a minority at the school and Karim has also been the target of racist comments from other pupils. He feels powerless to tackle this as he does not feel that the school takes effective action against racism.

¹⁴ Karim successfully completed his education at Grimsdale.

¹⁵In 2006 7.4% of the school population were from ethnic minorities

5.4.3.2 The included pupils

Rhonda Y9

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 7.1.09

Time: 11.45

Duration: 18 minutes

Location: Interview room

Rhonda describes herself as a quiet, compliant pupil. She finds disruptive pupils annoying especially when they interrupt lessons. This happens when she is in mixed ability lessons with her form but not in lessons where pupils are grouped for ability as she is in higher sets. She prefers teachers to establish firm, fair disciplinary methods because she finds this approach more effective than an authoritarian approach or a too liberal approach. The school reward system is effective for her because she is motivated to earn credits towards school trips. She is frustrated when disruptive pupils behave well and are given an excessive number of credits. She found it upsetting when a boy in her form with learning difficulties was bullied and felt empowered that her form found a way to prevent this. Despite this experience she feels that peer pressure is not an effective way to make disruptive pupils conform. She would prefer it if they were educated separately.

Crystal Y10

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 14.7.09

Time: 11.30

Duration: 20 minutes

Location: Interview room

Crystal describes herself as well-behaved. She talked at length about a former friend whose behaviour changed and deteriorated following the breakdown of her parents' marriage. The friend has now been excluded from school and moved from the area and Crystal has no desire to continue the friendship. In her view it is wrong to relate poor behaviour to outside influences. She sees it as a choice made by the individual and is very disapproving of pupils who make wrong choices. In her view pupils choose to behave badly to impress their peers. She has noticed that girls' behaviour becomes more difficult in Y9 whereas boys misbehave at a younger age. In Y10

most pupils take school more seriously and settle down. Crystal is aware that there is some racism at Grimsdale and believes this is learned behaviour from home.

5.4.3.3 The Staff

Mr Freamon: Deputy Head

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 50-59

Date 18.4.08

Duration 62 minutes

Location Mr Freamon's Office

Mr Freamon has been teaching in schools in Watermill Valley for many years. In Mr Freamon's view there are four types of behaviour problems:

- Low-level behaviour that results from lack of engagement in the curriculum
- One-off incidents like fighting
- Extreme behaviour that may come from home or outside events
- 'Systematic' disengagement with school

The fourth group is the one the school focuses on because of the impact this group can have on their peers. The school is very proactive in its approach, with a clear emphasis on avoiding exclusions and doing its best to meet the needs of its most challenging and vulnerable pupils. In Y11 there is a withdrawal group with an alternative curriculum for the ten most disruptive pupils. Mr Freamon emphasised the impact this has on the remaining pupils in the year. There are three pastoral centres, one for each Key Stage, where pupils can be withdrawn and work under the supervision of support staff and senior management. In addition the school employs four pastoral support workers who work with the heads of years. The school partially funds a community police officer who maintains close contact between school and home, as does the educational welfare officer part of whose remit is to withdraw vulnerable pupils from lessons to explore and resolve problems they may be experiencing. As an additional strategy the school also funds pupils to attend the PRU, and this has been long-term in one instance.

There is a clear, hierarchical behaviour management system but this is implemented with care, with senior management checking that classroom staff have used all available strategies before withdrawing pupils from lessons.

Mr Freamon stressed the fact that Grimsdale's size and budget enables it to make alternative provisions for vulnerable pupils. However, the system is not perfect, as indicated by a recent spate of exclusions¹⁶.

Mr Howard: Teacher

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 20-29

Date: 1.4.09

Duration: 41 minutes

Location: Mr Howard's form room

Mr Howard is the head of boys' PE and has recently joined the school after teaching in a large inner city school for six years. In his view behaviour at Grimsdale is generally good. He has noticed a small amount of low-level disruption, particularly at the beginning of classes but not on the scale of his old school. He attributes this difference to Grimsdale's small catchment area which brings a strong sense of community to the school. He is also aware that the headteacher provides clear, strong leadership that contributes to the ethos of the school.

Mr Howard believes that the behaviour management system is effective at Grimsdale because senior staff make disciplinary decisions based on individual needs and circumstances rather than following the system rigidly. In his last school he observed that an inflexible approach to discipline resulted in an increased number of fixed-term exclusions whereas, at Grimsdale, these are kept to the minimum. He finds that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and there is an effective reward system. He would like to introduce more sporting events and activities to engage more pupils in physical activities. In his experience, giving pupils responsibility is also an effective way to involve them in meaningful activities.

Mr Howard feels supported by the school. The senior staff are approachable and respond quickly and effectively to disruption. He is kept well informed about pupil issues and contacts parents about pupil behaviour when necessary. From his observations pupils with problem behaviour tend to come from impoverished backgrounds, although there are many exceptions to this. Peer pressure is another factor that can influence both positive and negative behaviour. In his view pupils

¹⁶ During the 2007/8 period there was a considerable rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions at Grimsdale

need clear boundaries and those who are unable to conform to school need alternative arrangements to meet both their needs and the needs of their peers.

Mrs Pearlman: Supervisor of Y11 alternative curriculum group

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 40-49

[This interview is in two parts as it was conducted during the school day when Mrs Pearlman was supervising her group at an out of school site]

Interview 1

Date: 19.11.08

Time: 11.40

Duration: 18 minutes

Location: Interviewer's car

Interview 2

Date: 3.12.08

Time: 10.37

Duration: 15 minutes

Location: Interviewer's car

Mrs Pearlman worked in a legal office for many years before her employment at Grimsdale. She has two sons, one of whom experienced behaviour problems at school. She is a non-teaching assistant who supervises the Y11 alternative programme that is organised by Mr Freamon.

Mrs Pearlman believes that behaviour problems stem from a combination of home influences, peer pressure and living in a culture where material possessions are over-valued. She works mainly with boys and finds that their response to conflict is often aggressive. She encourages them to take part in physical activities to release this energy. Her pupils' level of engagement is very much dependent on the approach of the person delivering the activity. Two pupils who would not engage with the Y11 programme are now on fixed-term exclusions and due to meet the governors as a disciplinary measure shortly, however, to avoid permanent exclusion, the school is looking for other activities for them.

Mrs Pearlman works outside the school behaviour management system as she finds that her pupils do not respond well to long-term goals. She finds that immediate rewards and the use of sarcasm and humour are more effective. She maintains close contact with parents and will, with their agreement send pupils home when they are disruptive. She is also in close contact with the Youth Offending Team as many of her pupils are involved in the criminal justice system.

Mrs Pearlman feels relatively unsupported by the school. In her opinion, because she is out of the school building most of the week, senior staff tend to overlook her group. She has occasional meetings with Mr Freamon, but she would like these to be more frequent and she would also like more training.

5.4.3.4 The Parent

Donette: Mother of Aaron

Ethnicity: White British

Age: 30-39

Date: 14.7.09

Time: 9.50

Duration: 15 minutes

Location: Interview room at school

Aaron has recently been assessed as having ADHD. Donette believes that this is the cause of Aaron's behavioural difficulties. Aaron has always had problems. He was late walking and attended a speech therapist before starting school. At primary school his behaviour problems were recognised and he was referred for assessment but no diagnosis was made. Subsequently Aaron was regarded as 'naughty'. Aaron is never still. He is always moving or fidgeting. He can be moody and can become angry, kicking doors at home and walking out of lessons at school. When left alone he will eventually calm down but there is nothing else Donette has found that can help him. She has tried bribing him but he is impervious to this. Donette believes that Aaron becomes frustrated because he has problems understanding and carrying out instructions. He often forgets to complete tasks.

Donette is very happy with the support she has received from the school both for Aaron and for her older son, Tommy, who attended the Y11 alternative

provision. She feels that the school has been accommodating to Aaron, pushing for a clinical diagnosis, which has taken two years and arranging for out of school rewards when he has succeeded.

Aaron is now living with his grandma to keep him away from a family that Donette believes has a bad influence on him. He has been in trouble with the police due to his association with them. He now plays with a younger boy who lives near to his grandma.

5.5 Analysing the Interviews

I have used the interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA), described by Smith and Osborn (2008), to analyse the transcripts of the interviews. I chose this method because my aim is to understand variation in school exclusions by looking at staff, pupil and parents' opinions and perceptions. The use of the interview guide and open-ended questions gave scope for participants to explain their own interpretations of events and resulted in much variation between interviews. IPA is fit for purpose for the analysis of this type of interview as it is concerned with a detailed examination of an individual's experience, rather than the production of an objective statement. Smith and Osborn (2008) describe this as a two-stage interpretation process in which the participant is trying to make sense of events in their lives and the researcher is trying understand how the participant is interpreting their world. It assumes a chain of connection between the individual's talk, thinking and emotional state.

The first stage of the analysis involved immersion in the data. By reading and rereading each transcript I familiarised myself with the content of each interview. I then annotated the data to summarise comments and identify ideas, making a summary of each interviewee's comments (Chapter 5.4). These ideas were then coded and clustered into themes identified in the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3).

I then selected which responses to include in my results. My initial focus was on the responses on areas already identified that occurred most frequently in the interviews as they appeared to be important to the respondents. Subsequently I gave attention to issues that emerged from the interviews that had previously not been identified but that occurred frequently. The processes involved in school exclusions are complex and the constraints of the present study do not allow for each factor to be explored in depth. In my results I have therefore focused on those factors that

emerged from the interviews as the most salient. In Appendix 7, I give an example of how I used this method to analyse staff/ pupil relationships.

In Chapters 6-9 I address **Research Question 2:**

What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?

The chapters correspond to the systems in the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3). I have subdivided each system into the headings identified in the framework, collated the comments according to whether they were made by a pupil, member of staff or a parent and grouped them in a separate section for each school. I have included some comments on ethnicity in the microsystem because this is where they occurred. Where I have quoted directly from the interviews I have retained the language used by the respondents as I felt that it was important that their views were expressed using their own words.

6 The microsystem

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I begin to explore research question 2:

What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?

by addressing the sub-question:

How do relationships in the home, neighbourhood and at school, relate to exclusion?

In my model of the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3), based on the work of Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem is where face-to-face relationships directly influencing the child are located. My rationale for this was set out in chapter 2.3 and referred to how the nature of relationships are partially mediated by the age, gender and race of the child. In this chapter I start by recording the views of respondents concerning the attributes of the individual child. This is followed by the impact of face-to-face staff/pupil relationships on behaviour. I then explore responses relating to peer relationships formed at school followed by the impact of home relationships on behaviour. At the end of the chapter is a reflective commentary on the interview responses.

The first section in this chapter addresses the sub-question: **How do the ‘within child’ factors of age, gender and ethnicity relate to school exclusion?**

6.1 The attributes of the individual child

6.1.1 Age

Views on the role of age in relation to behaviour varied greatly. Although there was some degree of agreement among respondents that there was a higher risk of behaviour likely to lead to exclusion occurring in years Y8, Y9 and Y10, respondents had divergent views about behaviour patterns leading up to this point. Some pupils at risk of exclusion and both parents felt that problems had always been present and are part of the child's personality. Both Karim (Y10) and James (Y10) from Grimsdale say they have always had some behaviour problems in class that they relate to being argumentative. They both feel that this is part of their personality. James described himself: "I've always been a bit disruptive. That's what they say because I always talk, but then if they say something I get mad and I argue back". Likewise, Karim explained: "I sometimes am bit, to be honest, I'm a bit argumentative, but I've been like that since I was a kid." Namond's (Y9, Blackmoor) mother, Francine, was aware that Namond's problems had been present for many years. She reported that her son had experienced behavioural problems since starting school. She explained: "I don't know why he's naughty. He's always had behavioural issues ever since nursery."

For others the transition to secondary school heralded the onset of behavioural difficulties. Aqib (Y10, Bitterclough) did not experience problems until he came to secondary school. At primary school his consuming interest was cars. It was when he came to high school that he started fighting other pupils and arguing with and swearing at teachers. He was unable to explain the difference in his behaviour except that there was a big difference between primary school and secondary school. He commented: "All I was interested in there was in cars. No fighting and no arguments... and no swearing at teachers... I didn't think like that."

Some respondents held the opinion that behaviour is less problematic in Y10 and Y11 because at this stage pupils are focused on gaining qualifications and are able to choose their subjects. James (Y10, Grimsdale) has been 'on-called'¹⁷ many times in Y8 and Y9 but these have reduced in number recently. This is because he realises that Y10 is an important year and he needs to work hard for his GCSEs and does not want to miss lessons. He explained: "I've got better since last year, 'cause we have on-calls, like...and I had loads last year and loads the year before, but this year, I've only had, like, three....Cause I know I have to concentrate more now, 'cause it's the last two years."

¹⁷ 'On-called' is when a senior member of staff is called to a classroom to deal with a behaviour issue

However, in the opinion of some staff the GCSE curriculum fails to engage those pupils who do not value education and those who are less academic. For these pupils an alternative curriculum was sometimes more effective in meeting their needs. Mr Freamon (Grimsdale) is very proactive in accommodating, and providing a suitable age-appropriate curriculum for, pupils who experience problems. He has already identified a group of pupils in Y9 who have long-term behaviour problems and is planning to offer these pupils an alternative curriculum in Y10 similar to the one already in place for pupils in Y11. He is also in the process of identifying which Y10 pupils will join the Y11 alternative group next year.

In contrast Mr Carver's (Blackmoor) concern lay in whether the rewards and sanctions used in the school were age-appropriate. With regard to sanctions, he does not think long exclusions are effective, particularly for younger pupils who may forget why they have been given. However, in his opinion, the efficacy of rewards depends on the form teachers' enthusiasm for them. In his opinion, when teachers value reward systems, pupils will follow their lead no matter what their age. Staff at all of the schools mentioned the effectiveness of age-appropriate behaviour management and teaching strategies. These included how seating plans and reward systems were implemented, and the role of the curriculum and the LSU.

6.1.2 Gender

Views on the ways gender impacts on exclusion were more similar. There was a general agreement among respondents that boys are more likely to be at risk of exclusion than girls, however, in all of the schools both staff and pupils agreed that there are sometimes cohorts of pupils, either male or female, whose behaviour is problematic. These will vary from year to year, and are sometimes dependant on the distribution of genders within the year. By exchanging information with other heads of year, Ms Bell (Blackmoor) is aware that year groups vary. The head of Y8 is finding boys difficult whereas there is a group of girls in Y9 who are problematic. Charday (Y10, Blackmoor) related how, in Y7, she was involved with a group of girls in her form who were misbehaving. The strategy chosen by the school to solve this problem was to split the group of girls up by putting them into different forms.

Both staff and pupils observed that girls' and boys' behaviour and their responses to sanctions, was often very different. In general, girls tended to disrupt lessons through social talk with their peers, but were usually compliant when challenged. Boys were more inclined to disrupt lessons by fighting and were more likely to challenge staff when reprimanded. However, the behaviour of boys and girls at risk of exclusion was very similar, involving arguing with staff and walking

out of lessons. This was variously viewed by staff as either a cause for complaint or as a new challenge to be addressed. From Namond's (Y9, Blackmoor) observations, there is a marked difference between the way girls and boys are disciplined. He feels that girls are given more leeway and often avoid punishments because of their gender.

Two female staff respondents reported that they preferred working with boys rather than girls because they could understand their behaviour better. Mrs Little prefers teaching boys to girls. She finds girls' behaviour, including the way they present themselves and the way they act, unacceptable. She mentioned her disapproval of girls' behaviour spontaneously, twice, attributing it to home influences. She commented: "...the girls, when they are bad they are atrocious. I'd rather have the boys any day. Girls are sometimes just appalling...The way they conduct their lives. In their behaviour, their attitude, their mannerisms, their speech..."

Mrs Pearl also relates better to boys. Although she occasionally works with girls in the main school, she has only boys in the Y11 group. She finds that, as the mother of two boys, she is able to understand their problems more easily than she can with girls. She explained: "I don't click with girls as well as I do with boys. That might be because I've got two boys of my own. I seem to be able to deal with boys better than girls."

Both girls and boys were reported by staff and pupils as being involved in same-sex bullying and fighting incidents. However gang-fighting was only observed to occur among boys at Bitterclough.

6.1.3 Ethnicity

The third 'within child' factor in the ecosystemic framework is ethnicity. In this section I have drawn together the respondents' views on how ethnicity impacts on behaviour. There were very few responses concerning impact of ethnicity on exclusions.

The majority of the comments came from Bitterclough where there was a greater ethnic mix than the other schools. Mr Daniels expressed concern that the school permanently had excluded a large number of Asian boys in the previous year, explaining that "the year before this, we permanently excluded seven students. Five of those were young Asian males, and, bearing in mind they are in a 60 /40% minority in Y7 to Y11, that's a significant difference." The issue of the disproportionate number of pupils of Asian heritage being excluded had been chosen by the school as the focus of a study by a nearby university. Both Mr Daniels and

Mr Wallace from Bitterclough reported that the school had a diverse population and the different racial groups were not fully integrated. This is reported more fully in the section on peer relationships (Chapter 6.6.2)

At Blackmoor the deputy head reported that there were no issues related to ethnicity, whereas at Grimsdale, two pupils mentioned racial issues. Karim (Y10), a pupil at risk of exclusion of Pakistani heritage, expressed concern that he had been victimised by a teacher and that this was racially driven. A prompted¹⁸ response from Crystal, (Y10) an included pupil revealed that she was aware of racism concerning one pupil. She attributed racist attitudes to home background and was not confident that staff interventions were effective.

6.2 Positive staff/pupil relationships

In this section I explore how positive relationships are established between staff and pupils. Pupils from all of the schools gave examples of positive interactions with teachers.

6.2.1 Bitterclough

Albert described how his behaviour improved when he was with staff who had built a positive relationship with him when he first came to the school. He is aware of his tendency to shout and appreciates teachers who react to this with sensitivity. He explained: “When I first came I were good for a bit and then they started to like me and all so they’ve always given me a chance and say, “If you shout out one more time, you’re getting sent out” but the other teachers, they just shout at you and I don’t like it.”

The use of humour was also a strategy that pupils found helpful. Alma explained how teachers use this to defuse conflict, explaining that “There’s some teachers where, if you’re in a mood, they can make you laugh.”

Sometimes pupils were unable identify the conditions that promoted good relationships with staff. Pingu (Y10) was unable to explain why she had a positive relationship with her textiles teacher but commented: “I don’t know. I just get really on with her. She’s all right.”

¹⁸ This refers to Tomlinson’s (1979) method of hierarchical focussing in which questions move from the general to the more specific after the respondent has developed responses in their own terms (3.2.2.1)

6.2.2 Blackmoor

Positive communication in the classroom was seen as important for two pupils who experienced problems at Blackmoor. Charday (Y9, Blackmoor) described her maths teacher's approach to classroom communication. "... [I]n maths we can talk, but we can't talk too much, and then he's not really, like, he's not really strict with us. He lets us have a bit of leeway, but we've got to do the work at the same time as well..."

Marlo (Y10) reflected on why he had a good relationship with his geography teacher. He described him as "quite strict but he makes it fun." Marlo had previously attended Micklestone and had moved to Blackmoor because of behaviour issues. He felt that he was experiencing more success at Blackmoor because of his better relationship with staff. He explained: "Over there, there are some teachers that are all right, [but some] just kind of abuse you and here they don't."

6.2.3 Grimsdale

The importance of mutual respect between staff and pupils was recognised by Karim (Y10) who felt that his behaviour was dependent on establishing a good relationship with the teacher. He described how the relationship became reciprocal if there was respect on each side, but when he did not feel that he was respected he became angry. "If somebody's good to me then I appreciate that and I be good back to them, so I won't be able to mess about with somebody who's good with me... if a teacher's not good with me, that's what mostly makes me mess about."

Fair treatment from staff was a factor that was important to all pupils. Rhonda (Y9), an included pupil, observed that there was good behaviour in her geography class because of the positive relationship the teacher had established with the pupils. It was significant to her that he only punished those who were misbehaving, but was consistent in using sanctions. "He's fair, like, people have a laugh, so they want to listen to what he has to say. He makes everything interesting, so that works all right." Similarly, Crystal (Y9), another included pupil, explained how her history teacher had created an atmosphere of mutual respect, giving the pupils a chance to talk periodically. In her opinion "...he's like one of us. He treats us like he wants to be treated and he's not really strict. He says, 'I've got to come down to your level'... I think that's good...we know that we've got to respect him because he respects us."

Mrs Pearlman stressed the importance of staff maintaining a balance between authority and respect. In her role in supporting the Y11 pupils in a variety of settings she has observed how an interesting activity and a relaxed staff attitude impacts on relationships with pupils. She explained: "This morning they've been absolutely wonderful...they like doing this... [The tutor is a] guy called Sidney. He's an artist,

but he's quite relaxed about them walking around and touching stuff. [Sidney] and I just made them all tea and toast as they were drawing and it's a quite relaxed...it's a nice environment."

6.3 Negative staff/pupil relationships

The greater proportion of responses concerning the staff/pupil relationships focused on negative aspects interactions and how they impact on behaviour. In this section I begin by examining the reported antecedents of conflict in the classroom and the factors that influence the subsequent interactions between staff and pupils.

In all of the schools, the deputy heads acknowledged that low-level disruption occurs in the classroom and that this is one of the main disciplinary issues. In particular 'talking out of turn' and 'hindering other children' were identified as the main problem behaviours. Pupils also acknowledged that this behaviour occurs and that they take part in it.

6.3.1 Bitterclough

The staff at Bitterclough all agreed that pupil behaviour is a problem at the school. Both Mrs Little and Mr Wallace were less guarded in their comments than staff in the other schools. From Mrs Little's observations, behaviour has deteriorated in recent years: "...going back ten years, twenty years ago, the behaviour of kids that were badly behaved was not remotely like it is today...[P]eople would have been absolutely astounded to see what we accept today." In her opinion pupil behaviour is located in the child and is a conscious choice in order to obtain a result: "They will behave how they want to behave...They choose when to behave well, and they choose when to behave badly." Mr Wallace mentioned that the issue of pupils refusing to follow instructions is a major source of disruption stating that: "The main problem...one that people find difficult to control, is pupils not doing what you ask them to do." He described the strategies he uses to control the class as structured and authoritarian: "I've become quite authoritarian and...I don't have as many problems as other people because of the very structured way that I go through and try and control the behaviour so that learning can take place."

Mr Daniels (Bitterclough) felt that low-level disruption is one of the schools' biggest issues. In his opinion it arises because the pupils prioritise the social aspect of school. In his opinion "I think...learning is not, perhaps, their main priority. It's probably secondary to their social life. They come in to talk. They come in to be with other pupils."

Conflict between staff and pupils was sometimes attributed to personality clashes. Mr Wallace described how he sometimes encountered pupils that he could not relate to: "...as I get more experienced it becomes rarer and rarer, but there are some students that I know I can't teach, and I haven't got the skills to have them in the classroom, because they're so disruptive, they're behaviour is so...opposite. I just clash personally with them so I can't have them in a classroom."

Three of the pupils from Bitterclough who experienced problems all mentioned that the teacher shouting was a cause of conflict and upset to them, eliciting an emotional response. Pingu (Y10) described her dislike of teachers raising their voices: "If [teachers] shout and stuff like that, it just gets on my nerves and I hate it." The main reason Albert (Y9) gave for initiating the behaviour which led to his many exclusions was when teachers shouted at him. He described how he would resolve this conflict by leaving the room: "Say when a teacher shouts at me, in my face, I don't like it, so I'll walk out." He complained that he does not like it when teachers shout in his face, however, when probed about how close the teachers were to him he explained: "Not that close. I just don't like them shouting at me." Alma (Y9) felt that teacher responses can be inflammatory, explaining that she felt undervalued by the manner in which teachers talked to her: "Some ... teachers just think that they can talk to people like rubbish."

Pupils at risk of exclusion gave several examples of how their behaviour was initiated by teacher interventions that they perceived as unfair. Pingu (Y10) explained that she had been wrongly accused of throwing a pen, and how her subsequent behaviour put her in danger of exclusion: "[I]n RE, people were chucking pens around, and this lass had chucked one pen. [The teacher] thought it were me, and I tried to explain to him that it weren't me. Apparently I called him a nobhead or something, but I didn't. So I walked out and then I asked to come back in and he started shouting at me, so I just kicked off."

6.3.2 Blackmoor

At Blackmoor there was a consensus between the staff interviewed that staff/pupil relationships were generally good in the school. Mr Carver explained that "...we do have more serious offences like verbal abuse of staff, but again, they are few and far between." As with the staff at Bitterclough, Ms Bell acknowledged that pupil behaviour had changed but related this to cultural changes in the expectations of society, suggesting that the solution to conflict lies in changing staff attitudes. She sees a tension between authoritarian teaching styles and establishing positive relationships with pupils: "...I think that times have changed and children behave in

slightly different ways. They're a bit more outspoken... and I think that some teachers, who have been in teaching for a very long time, still teach in the same way that they have always taught ... [W]hen you hear that so-and-so's been in trouble, and if it's the same teacher, then you have to start looking at, if it's the same people, why is it?"

Two of the staff mentioned that personality clashes can occur, recognising that behaviour can be influenced by personal relationships. Mr Barksdale, the head of the LSU, described an example of a personality clash: "...we've got one lad who doesn't get on with the science teacher, so whenever he's got science, it doesn't matter when it is, or whenever he's got that teacher, that's when his bad behaviour comes out." Ms Bell described how life choices can be influenced by negative relationships: "I think there's always clashes of personality. I've been interviewing all the Y11s in my year to see whether they're going on to college or staying on, or... and one of them said, 'I just don't get on with him. I just don't. We just clash, and he doesn't like me. I don't like him.'"

Francine, Namond's mother, was concerned that her son was prejudged by staff from his appearance and demeanour. At primary school she said, "He was just classed as naughty" P.1 (44). One teacher commented that "It wouldn't be so bad if he wasn't so big." She finds that this attitude has continued at Blackmoor. At her daughter's open evening a teacher commented, "Oh I do know Namond, but I wouldn't like to teach him." However, she is aware that staff have changed their attitudes when they see Namond in situations in which he is comfortable. Francine described how Namond's behaviour on two school trips had changed staff's opinions of him. On one trip with the deputy head, Namond, already familiar with the activities, had been helpful to other pupils. She related how Mr Carver saw a different side to Namond: "He'd only seen this boy naughty...then when they went on this trip, because Namond didn't push in and some of the other kids did, he was helping the others do whatever activity they were doing, then he saw him in a different light."

A common response to teachers' disciplinary methods was for pupils to argue with them. Some pupils acknowledged the role their own moods played in interactions. These pupils explained their behaviour by describing themselves as argumentative or moody. They see this as part of their character and to some degree beyond their control. The idea that pupil moods can be a cause of disruption was cited by several respondents. Charday (Y10, Blackmoor) felt that her moods affect her behaviour and are both beyond her control and unrelated to school. She explained that "Some days I'll be in a mood anyway and then if someone, like, says something stupid to me, I'll just say something back."

6.3.3 Grimsdale

Staff at Grimsdale agreed that although low-level disruption occurs, it is not a major problem. In comparison with his previous post in a large city school, Mr Howard thought that the behaviour at Grimsdale was generally good. Like Mr Wallace at Bitterclough, he found that refusal to follow instructions was the main type of problem he met but he did not consider this to be a major problem. “I would say for me it is generally, you know, obviously when I say low-level, it’s the odd bit of poor behaviour...It’s nothing major really.”

Two boys from Grimsdale described a similar response. James (Y10), a pupil who experienced difficulties, explained how conflict arises because he always talks in the classroom: “I’ve always been a bit, I don’t know, disruptive. That’s what they say because I always talk, but then if they say something I get mad and I argue back.” Karim (Y10) described his character in a similar manner acknowledging that conflict is sometimes instigated by his approach which can be argumentative (see Chapter 6.1.1). This view is echoed by Rhonda (Y9), an included pupil, who described a boy in her form as “prickly” and “touchy when you say owt and they’re just annoying and shout out in class.”

The role emotion plays in conflict was recognised by Mr Freamon when he described children who are disengaged from education: “What you don’t have, with children who have systematically disengaged, don’t want to be here, they do not reflect on their behaviour, because they are just either angry, or upset, or emotional about school..’

Two of the pupils who experienced problems felt that they were treated unfairly by individual staff and this was a precursor to their disruptive behaviour. Karim (Y10) feels that one teacher singles him out for punishment and that this is because of Karim’s Pakistani heritage. During the interview he twice mentioned that he had been blamed for others’ behaviour. He explained: “I don’t think he likes me either because he always tends to shout at me and stuff. Sometimes, say if I haven’t done anything, I’ll get the blame for it too.” James (Y10) was also concerned that one teacher singled him out. He explained this as a personality clash, describing an interaction: “..she looked straight at me and she said, ‘That was you James,’ and I just got accused straight away and it wasn’t me., so that annoys me and I got angry and started...”

6.4 Respect

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was the importance given to the establishment of mutual respect between staff and pupils. The establishment of a respectful relationship appeared to be dependent on the control that staff had over classes, which in turn was dependent on familiarity and staff approach to discipline. Both pupils and staff commented that some staff are unable to form a positive relationship with pupils. Pupils were very aware of which teachers are able to control a class and it was evident that teachers' lack of classroom control was seen to be undesirable for both pupils with behaviour difficulties and those without. This was particularly evident with supply staff.

6.4.1 Bitterclough

Both pupils and staff at Bitterclough were concerned with the problem of classroom control. Staff and pupils agreed that familiarity and the extent to which a teacher has built up a relationship with pupils impacts on behaviour. Jay (Y9, Blackmoor), a pupil at risk of exclusion, noticed that classroom management was less effective when a supply teacher was covering a lesson. He described how pupil behaviour became more challenging in the form of talking out of turn and shouting out, leading to the teacher shouting: "[He] shouts at them and he sends some of them out and then brings them back in and they'll do it again, so then he'll send them back out again."

Mr Wallace reinforced this observation, commenting that the longer he has been at the school the more respectful pupils are: "They're respectful to me but...I've been here for longer than any of the pupils now which seems to make a great difference." He believes that a lack of respect is the cause of the main behaviour problems in the school.

The problems arising from unfamiliarity with staff has been recognised by the school management which has taken steps to reduce the number of supply staff employed by employing cover supervisors. Staff status was also recognised as a barrier to pupil respect. Mr Wallace explained that pupils can react very differently depending on the status of the member of staff they are with. "A lot of our pupils will deal completely differently with an adult if they know that they are a teacher or a support assistant, and some members of the school will treat support assistants appallingly." He has noticed that while some staff can calm situations others can escalate them, describing how a minor incident can become a major issue: "...some support assistants can calm a situation down and other support assistants can help a situation flare up... It's just the way they react to how somebody deals with them..."

6.4.2 Blackmoor

A positive relationship between staff and pupils was prioritised at Blackmoor where Mr Carver explained that, in his opinion, a respectful and trusting relationship between staff and pupils is essential to maintain good behaviour in school: “Desirable behaviour is to me two things; it’s respect and trust. If they have a respect for the school and a respect for the environment and respect for the people that are here, and also the trust, between both of us that they’ll trust that we’ll react to problems that they’ve got, and that we can trust them to tell the truth, and they’re going to behave in an acceptable manner.” Ms Bell, the PE teacher, also stressed the importance of respect, observing that problems arise when pupils are unable to build this type of relationship. “To me...it’s just, sort of, a lack of respect, sometimes, that some children don’t seem to have.” She relates this to a deficit of social skills acquired at home: “I think it’s just beyond school. I think it’s how they’ve been brought up.”

The status of staff was another factor identified as a possible cause of conflict. Ms Bell was aware that pupils’ attitudes to support staff were not always positive. She commented: “I think we have some great support assistants...They’re working with difficult children, and they can give them a lot of stick.”

Mr Carver also stressed the importance of continuity and how supply teachers and teachers on short-term contracts could experience problems when pupils tested out their boundaries, but emphasised that this was not a frequent problem at the school.

6.4.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale, Mrs Pearlman also felt that pupils who were disruptive in school had not learned how to show respect at home and this prevented them from interacting successfully in class: “I think a lot of them don’t have the people skills and they don’t know how to address people, they don’t really know how to behave and ask for things. Some of that may be how they’re spoken to at home. They’re not given the respect at home and they don’t know how to dish it out the other end.”

6.5 Power conflicts

Another reported cause of conflict, closely connected to respect, was the recognition of a power struggle within the classroom. Many of the pupils, particularly the included pupils, wanted teachers to be in control and described the difficulties that

can arise if they do not achieve this. In contrast some of the pupils at risk of exclusion openly challenged the teachers' authority. In this section I examine how pupils perceive, and react to, conflict with staff.

6.5.1 Bitterclough

One of the responses all of the pupils who experienced problems at Bitterclough used when they were in conflict with staff was to walk out of the classroom. The pupils viewed their exit from the classroom as a way of empowering themselves. Alma (Y9) described how she challenges teachers when she feels that she is not being treated with respect: "Some classes are all right but some are annoying and the teachers just think that they can talk to people like rubbish, and they think they're in power, but they're not." Alma was very aware of the pattern of behaviour that results in conflict with staff and described a process that she consciously follows: "I start getting more rude, because whatever they say I start copying it, but I'll say it in a nasty way. As I'm walking out of a lesson, if a teacher says, 'How rude', I'll say it back. The same thing in a more rude way." She continued describing the exchange as it develops: "...then when the teacher says I've got to say sorry, I won't say it. I'll make them say it first, or if they won't say it, I won't say it at all. I'll walk off." Similarly, Aqib (Y10) described how he left the room after arguing with a teacher: "...I needed the toilet, and he goes, 'You can't go' and I go, 'What if you needed the toilet, you'd go straight away, wouldn't you?' and he goes, 'You're going to read this down here' and I go, 'Why? If you won't answer me, why?' and that, so I went to the toilet..." The idea of conflict in school relationships originating in the hierarchical power structure was not confined to pupils at Bitterclough.

6.5.2 Blackmoor

At Blackmoor, pupils described how they observed staff who were unable to control classes. Bodie (Y10), an included pupil, commented that "There's different teachers and they have different ways, and some teachers can't handle the classes." As an example he described his feelings of discomfort when a teacher was unable to control of a class: "...she showed her emotions a bit too much... she ended up crying in one of the lessons... it didn't show her authority in the classroom."

In contrast Marlo (Y10) described pupil reactions to the strategies of a 'strict' teacher who shouts: "[He] says you're not allowed to talk in lessons... [H]e just makes you all sit down on your own and we all laugh at him." Marlo described a similar response to the pupils at Bitterclough: "... [He] says, 'I'm keeping you in for three minutes after the bell' [then] we just go when bell goes."

Perceived unfair treatment by teachers was cited as a cause of conflict for Namond (Y9) who felt that he had been harshly treated when returning to school

after an exclusion. “If that had been someone else they’d have got suspended for it and they would have come back but I came back and got put on report.” Namond’s mother, Francine verified this, saying “He thinks that people pick on him.”

Some pupils withdraw their presence in response to perceived unfairness. Mr Barksdale described a situation where a pupil refused to attend a class because of an incident which appeared to be relatively minor: “She... went to a lesson and her mobile phone went off and the teacher didn’t make a big deal of it. She said, ‘Turn it off and make sure that it doesn’t happen again’ and carried on with the lesson, but the child sees it as bit of a dispute now so she just refuses to go to the lesson.”

Pupils can also come into conflict through misunderstanding situations. Francine related an incident in which Namond was asked to sit at computer away from his friends. Namond became angry because he felt that he was being punished for no reason, not realising that the computer he wished to sit at was broken. He was excluded for his behaviour.

She explained, “Namond thought he was picking on him so Namond confronted him, “Why can they sit over there?” in an angry tone so obviously the teacher got angry and asked him to leave and blah, blah, blah and he did get excluded for that.”

6.5.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale, Karim (Y10) felt that his views were not considered by some teachers. He felt that these teachers demanded obedience irrespective of pupils’ opinions: “... sometimes I argue for a good reason, but the teachers don’t take that. They don’t want you to argue about things. They just want you to do what they say.”

6.6 Peer relationships

The effect of peers was identified as a significant factor in behaviour by both pupils and staff. There was a consensus that peers could have a positive or negative effect on behaviour and could be influential in making important choices. The following findings focus on pupil and staff observations and opinions about the impact of peers both in and outside the classroom. Negative influences of peers were recognised by many pupils as one step on the path to exclusion. There was a marked distinction between the responses of the included pupils and those who experienced difficulties when describing their reactions to their peers. Included pupils were confident that the school systems would be used to intervene in negative interactions

whereas pupils with behavioural difficulties were more likely to describe how they were upset by interactions with other pupils and how they reacted in ways that often took them into the disciplinary system and possible exclusion.

Included pupils all expressed some irritation with low-level disruption in classes and several pupils attributed this behaviour to a lack of engagement in education and a desire to impress their class mates.

6.6.1 Positive relationships

Both the included pupils and those that experienced difficulties described positive relationships with their peers.

6.6.1.1 Bitterclough

Pingu (Y10) described how her feelings change when she is with her best friend. They call each other cousins because they feel so close. Pingu is in the same textiles class as her friend and when they are together she does not get into trouble. She explained how she experiences a feeling of calmness, compared to her usual feisty manner: "... me and her really, really get on. We call each other cousins. When we're together, time just goes proper slowly. When we're together we don't do owt but I really like the smoothness of it...So we don't get into trouble or owt...Just, like, hanging around, but we talk to each other about everything so that's all right." In contrast, both Alma (Y9) and Albert (Y9) went into less detail, defining their friendships purely in terms of common interests. Albert (Y9) saw similarities between him and his friend explaining that "He's just like me. He likes everything that I like and we just get on." Likewise Alma saw her and her friend as liking 'girly' things. Aqib (Y10) did not mention any particular friendships at school but described how he often talks to his peers in class.

The included pupils at Bitterclough both chose to talk about their friendships with more troubled pupils. Ali (Y10) spoke of his friend with compassion, explaining that his life is difficult because of his troubled home life. In Ali's view: "... he's clever and he's a good person, but he doesn't always do his homework and stuff like that, and he gets threatened because he doesn't stick up for himself." Bethany described how she has been bullied in the past and this has helped her to recognise when others are being bullied and to help them. She explained how she is proactive by approaching new and vulnerable pupils and asking them if they would like to join her friendship group. "...if people are getting bullied and we see them by themselves, me and my friends go up to them and ask them if they want to hang

around with us and new people as well, when they don't have any friends." This is based on her experience when she first came to the school during Y7: "...when I first started in Y7, they got someone older to come to my form and look after me and look around, to show me around the school... because I started late on in Y7...and they do it with every new student really."

6.6.1.2 Blackmoor

Like Pingu, Charday (Y10) has a friend who has a positive effect on her behaviour. She explained that she had become friends with Abby relatively recently and that this friendship and being with a small group of friends has helped her behaviour in school: "I didn't hang round with Abby until I was at the end of Y9, and then me and Abby just hang around together now and Aimee from Y9...We get on better as well when we're not hanging round in a big group." Charday finds that Abby is supportive in helping her to control her moods: "...at school she's really good and then...I don't know, but she's always there and, like, if I'm in a mood she's always there and sorts it out." Marlo (Y10) described the physical attributes of his friend, saying that he chose a round stone because it was the same shape as his friend. He also described the respect he has for his friend, referring to him as "solid".

As at Bitterclough, one of the included pupils did not confine his friendships to other included pupils. Bodie has a close friendship with Lex, who experiences problems at school. He described how Lex, as the 'class clown' had been disruptive in class. When he was younger he used to have many detentions but more recently his behaviour has improved.

6.6.1.3 Grimsdale

Crystal (10) described how a close friendship with another girl changed when the girl started to misbehave at school. Crystal ended the relationship. In her view, her friend changed when she joined a new and unsuitable friendship group. The friend blamed her negative attitude to school on the break-up of her parents' marriage, but Crystal believes that this is not a good reason for poor behaviour. She explained: "...at the time when she were changing... she'd say, 'Oh, my mum were out all last night' and I'd just reply, 'That doesn't mean that you have to not come to school and just misbehave and skive off and stuff.'"

The other included pupil, Rhonda (Y9) held very different views. She explained how she felt empathy for Andy, a fellow pupil, who experienced bullying behaviour in the class.: "There's this boy there and I think he's dyslexic and he's

nice but he just gets on your nerves sometimes and everyone's like, people are mean to him and no-one stands up for him because they don't want to be called friends with him and it's awful to watch but you just have to..." She described how she had played a part in helping to support Andy and counteract the bullying. "Last year something did get done. We set up a chart and if you were being...If someone saw you doing something good you got a nomination in this box, and then whoever got highest by the end of year got like a box of chocolates. It got better and Andy nominated a lot of people for being nice to him, which were nice."

Rhonda admires her best friend who she feels has her own opinions and is impervious to influence from her peers: "...she's my best friend but she's just different, like she doesn't care what anyone thinks about her and she's not bad, but she just says what she thinks and is good fun."

Even pupils who experienced great problems forming relationships found some aspects of peer relationships positive. One of the most socially isolated pupils, Aaron (Y9), described his changeable relationship with another pupil, Russell: "...sometimes he's good, and sometimes he can be bad." He gets on well with Russell when they are doing things that they both enjoy. However, sometimes Russell is verbally abusive to Aaron: "Sometimes he's just annoying me and starts saying something about me behind my back...He starts calling me a nobhead."

6.6.2 Negative relationships

In contrast to the positive aspects of peer relationships, pupils and staff also attributed problem behaviour to conflict arising from negative peer relationships.

6.6.2.1 Bitterclough

The two included pupils, Bethany (Y9) and Ali (Y10) both mentioned that they felt that pupils at risk of exclusion had no interest in their education or its impact on their future. Bethany suggested that disruptive pupils "...just want to throw their life away." In Ali's opinion "...they think they're gangsters and they don't care about education." Later he repeated this opinion describing disruptive pupils as "People who don't care about their education. They don't think that education is important. They just think that they own the place basically."

Bullying behaviour was frequently cited as a reason for pupils to be disciplined. Both Bethany and Ali described how they had experienced some bullying but had found the school supportive in counteracting it. Bethany described how, when she was in Y8, a girl in Y9 had bullied her. Bethany had reported the

matter to staff who tackled the bullying by isolating the Y9 girl and threatening to involve the police. However, although she felt that staff had dealt effectively with the bullying incident described above, Bethany did not feel immune from bullying behaviour. Her least favourite lesson was English and she attributed this to the attitudes of some of her peers. She had recently moved to a higher set in this subject and felt that some other pupils were scathing of her if she answered a question incorrectly. She explained that “[I]f you get a question wrong in class, they’ll look at you in a nasty way, and stuff like that, and then you just feel out of place...Because they probably think they’re better than other people.”

In Ali’s opinion bullies only pick on those unable to protect themselves. He described how a close friend of his was coerced into completing homework for class mates because he was unable to stand up their threats. “These boys in my class, they say to him, ‘You do it and if you don’t do it, we’ll grass on you and say you did this and this.’” In his own experience staff dealt effectively with bullies when informed about them: “They get into trouble and get detentions and things like that. Last year a couple of them got expelled for a couple of days.”

When questioned about problems arising outside the classroom both Bethany (Y9) and Ali (Y10) mentioned that there were gangs of pupils who fought at break times. They recognised that there was a racial identity to the gangs. Bethany, a pupil of mixed heritage, described a situation that had occurred the previous day: “Well, people go round in big gangs trying to start fights sometimes, like Asian people and white people and all different kinds, but they try to start fights with other people and, like, they walk round in gangs of thirty like they did yesterday and they tried to kick off a fight yesterday.” This observation was reinforced by the comments of Mr Wallace, the science teacher, who explained that the school population is diverse, with a high proportion of White British, Pakistani and, more recently, Eastern European pupils who tend to gravitate towards those of the same ethnic origins. He described how fights can break out between gangs with a strong ethnic identity. “The worst time it happened was somebody said that somebody had punched somebody else, and they hadn’t. It had been a rumour that had got round and all of a sudden, people’s brothers are turning up, and the police turned up and there was nothing that had started it, just a rumour...[A]ll of a sudden the whole school was at breaking point for no reason at all...That was the most frightening thing I had seen in this school that all of a sudden we were two packs, and I was stood in the middle of it It was quite frightening.” In his opinion, although the school is aware of the situation and has made various attempts to integrate the groups, they have so far been unsuccessful. Mr Wallace relates the lack of integration to the pattern in the local town where ethnic groups live in well-defined areas and are not integrated. He

commented: “Lots of things have been tried. We’ve tried to do sports and clubs, but people seem to revert back to where that seems to be the first port of call, rather than ‘my year’ or ‘my form’ or ‘my anything else’ it’s ‘my ethnic group’ and it’s quite disturbing sometimes.”

Several pupils who experienced difficulties mentioned the impact that peers have on their behaviour. Aqib (Y10) explained how he had been involved in a culture of fighting both in and out of the classroom leading to fixed-term exclusions. He described how his peers challenge to fight them. He explained that “People ask me to fight.” Aqib recalled one incident in the previous year when he had experienced a month long fixed-term exclusion. He commented that “Last year I was suspended for about a month...There was a fight on this corridor and I got involved in it too.” The suspension took place during the time when he should have chosen his Y10 GCSE options. He felt that this had a long-term impact on his attainment as he was not interested in some of the subjects that he was now studying.

Pingu (Y10) another pupil at risk of exclusions, explained how disruptive behaviour by other pupils was sometimes the impetus for her own behaviour. She described the conflict she had with her RE teacher and how the situation had arisen because of being blamed for her peers’ behaviour: “[P]eople were chucking pens around.” Likewise, Albert (Y9) described how the behaviour of his peers leads to his own disruptive behaviour: “Sometimes they just shout my name constantly and then when I answer to them, Miss will shout at me and then I’ll walk out and then I’ll get in trouble.”

Mr Daniels views pupils’ social talk in class as one of the school’s biggest problems. He describes it as low-level disruption and relates it to lack of engagement in education. He described how “...students [come] into lessons where learning is not, perhaps, their main priority. It’s probably secondary to their social life. They come in to talk. They come in to be with other pupils. All quite nice, all quite pleasant, but learning is not the number one priority there...” Mr Wallace’s view differs from this in that he sees pupil interaction as a more serious problem in classrooms. He categorised problems into low and high level disruption and stated that there was some form of high level disruption in the majority of lessons, caused by pupil interactions, giving the example of pupils coming into the class from elsewhere: “...kids coming in causing a fight from another lesson, on their way to another lesson. They’ll come in and try and disrupt whatever’s going on, or try and interfere.”

6.6.2.2 Blackmoor

As in Bitterclough, the included pupils expressed their irritation with disruptive behaviour in lessons. At the beginning of the interview when asked to choose a 'Talking Stone' for someone they did not get on with they chose stones for disruptive members of their class, Bodie (Y10) described his frustration with a boy in his set who interrupted lessons by answering the teacher back and shouting out. He interpreted this behaviour as the boy's way of gaining negative reactions from teachers in order to maintain his school reputation as a "bad boy" although he was very able and in high sets. He explained that "on the inside I know that he is a very smart lad because he's in the top sets for most stuff, but he does it to show, 'Oh no. I'm not a swot. I'm one of the bad boys.'" The perception that disruptive behaviour meets a need in the perpetrator was also held by Roland (Y9) who described how a boy interrupted lessons to gain attention to reinforce his reputation as the class clown. "I think he's just trying to get attention...he just thinks he's the only one that can be funny, but he's not." This view was also held by Marlo (Y10), one of the pupils who experienced difficulties in school. In his opinion, the way they wish to appear in front of their peers is a significant factor in some pupils' behaviour. In his view "They try to look hard and stuff."

Ms Bell concurred with the pupils' view that some pupils will be disruptive as a deliberate strategy to gain recognition with their peers. In her opinion "It's not peer pressure, but it's, sort of, trying to be cool, fit in with friends and it's not seen to be good to be sensible and to be sat there listening, and it's really, sort of, geeky. There's a stigma attached to that...I just think there's a lot of pressure on children to conform to a certain way of acting..." She gave an example of a pupil who was disruptive as a way of compensating for academic problems, explaining that "...he obviously felt vulnerable in that sort of way, and his way of coping with that was to try to act cool and hard and, 'I'm not bothered,' and to try to build himself a reputation in that way." She saw pupil talk as a low-level behaviour as did Charday (Y10), one of the pupils at risk of exclusion, who described talking out of turn in class as "...just talking and distracting people."

In Ms Bell's opinion, bullying is far more serious and can lead to exclusion. She commented that "...if you've been found bullying it's a serious issue and you are excluded and your parents have to come in and you have to speak about that." Bullying was also recognised as an issue by some of the pupils. Bodie (Y10) was aware of some incidents of bullying, one of which had ended with the permanent exclusion of the perpetrator. He felt that the school and in particular, Mr Carver, the deputy head, dealt well with bullying incidents. He described how the Mr Carver took a hard line with bullying and would use the behaviour management system to

tackle it. “[He] doesn’t tolerate bullying at all. If somebody’s bullying someone, he’ll give them a warning...If it carries on further to that, he’ll suspend the student, and if it carries on when they come back, they’ll get expelled.” He described in detail how one particular incident of bullying was effectively tackled using a permanent exclusion. “...there was a girl in our form and she was really badly bullying another girl, and it ended up being physically, mentally and verbally. It ended up with the girl leaving one of the lessons crying and the other girl chasing after her out of the lesson, but she got suspended three times and now she has been expelled.” Although he felt supported by the staff and systems, Bodie was aware that bullying incidents continued to take place: “...there are elements of bullying,...You can’t say that in the school we are bully-free, because that would just be a lie, so we do have small amounts of bullying that they aren’t kept under control by the teachers.”

In contrast, Jay (Y9), a pupil at risk of exclusion, had also experienced bullying but had not approached the staff to counteract it. He explained that he had been bullied when he first came to the school by pupils who called him names because of his haircut. He solved the problem by conforming to peer pressure and changing his hair style.

Two of the staff mentioned the possibility of pupils copying disruptive behaviour. Mr Carver posited the idea that pupils would follow the behaviour of others if they thought that there would be no consequences. However, in his opinion, pupil awareness that sanctions would be applied immediately prevents this happening: He was confident that the school system was effectively implemented. “What the children in this school know is that if they do something wrong, they’ll be punished for it...They see the implications of what that person has done pretty quickly, so it puts them off.” Similarly, Mr Barksdale felt that although the behaviour system was implemented effectively, he voiced some concern that exposure to the very disruptive behaviour of one girl in the LSU was potentially damaging for some pupils who were likely to copy her behaviour. For other pupils, the realisation that her behaviour was leading to exclusions was enough to prevent them from imitating her. Evidence that the school is aware of and acts to prevent the disruptive effects of pupil pressure came from Charday who described how her original Y7 form had been split up because of the negative influence that a group of girls were having on each other. She explained, “I hung around with quite a lot of people and we were in the same form, and the form got split up...we weren’t all behaving together so they had to split us all up for us to be OK, so all my friends, like, who I hang round with at break and dinner, have, like, gone to different forms.”

She described how the influence of this peer group impacted on behaviour: "... if one of us was in a mood, we'd take it out on other people."

There was some evidence that the pupils at risk of exclusion had difficulties relating to other pupils. When Charday, chose a 'Talking Stone' for someone that she did not relate well to, she described a fellow pupil whose name she did not know. She was unable to articulate the reasons for their dislike for each other. "I don't like her and she doesn't like me...whenever we see each other we both, like, glare at each other or say something to each other..." Namond (Y9) felt that his peers were intimidated by his physical size. When he chose a stone for himself he described it as "big, rough and it doesn't fit with the rest of them."

Mr Barksdale voiced some concerns about the difficulties some pupils have in relating to each other. He differentiates between behavioural problems and social and emotional problems. In his opinion the pupils with social and emotional problems experience difficulties in forming relationships: "...it's not necessarily that they're poorly behaved but they struggle to communicate properly with peers."

Outside the classroom both staff and pupils mentioned very few incidents involving peer interactions, although Mr Carver felt that there were more incidents during unstructured times. He mentioned that problems could involve pushing on the corridors and some minor fights. Roland (Y9) also observed that "Quite recently there have been quite a lot of fights going on."

6.6.2.3 Grimsdale

As with the other schools, when asked to choose a 'Talking Stone' for pupils that they did not relate well too, the included pupils at Grimsdale both chose stones for peers who were disruptive in class. Rhonda (Y9) selected a stone for a boy whose behaviour irritated her, not only because communication with him was difficult, but also because his behaviour interfered with lessons. "They're prickly...touchy when you say owt and they're just annoying and shout out in class, so they just do my head in." Crystal (Y10) chose a stone for a former friend whose behaviour changed when she became friends with a different peer group, leading eventually to permanent exclusion. She explained, "[I]t's someone who, like, just gets on my nerves, and she's bad behaved and she's just being a pest...She just, like, she doesn't do what teacher asks. Like, she's left school, well she got booted out and stuff...She's just changed. She were one of my best friends. She just changed totally." Both of the included pupils were clear in their view that pupil behaviour is very much influenced by peer group. In Crystal's opinion her former friend chose her new friends unwisely: "She got in with wrong crowd." Later in the interview she

again voiced her exasperation with classroom disruption relating it to pupil status and reputation: “Well, I don’t know why people misbehave...they just, like, do it to show off, and just to get attention and stuff, and get a name for themselves, so I don’t see why they should.”

Similarly, Rhonda (Y9) explained her view of the power of peer influence “It depends what friends you’re with. If you get in with, like, stupid people then you turn into one.” Rhonda went on to explain how she had observed behaviour and attitudes changing during her time in secondary school and acknowledged that allegiances also change. “I think it’s because you’ve not been with all the people that you are when you’re in high school. Everyone changes when they come. Like you’re friends with people in primary school and now they don’t even look at you...” Rhonda also described how perceived differences can lead to bullying behaviour. She described how Jimmy, a boy in her form who has a learning difficulty, was bullied by other members of the form including Nathan and Alfie. She explained: “Nathan’s always telling Jimmy to shut up even when he hasn’t said owt... then Alfie...he’s always proper mean, just like Nathan and they don’t need to be like that. They don’t need to pick on him. They’re just not nice to him.”

Both of the teaching staff interviewed concurred in the way they viewed peer influence on behaviour. Mr Howard described the effect of peers on behaviour as ‘massive’. His view was similar to that of Mr Carver at Blackmoor, believing that immediate action was necessary to prevent other pupils from copying inappropriate behaviour. He explained: “I think pupils and children in general, model their behaviour on others, and if it’s not dealt with by the teacher in the right manner, quickly, it seems the norm, acceptable, and children are very good at adapting to the things around them and I think if they see that poor behaviour, they are inclined to jump on board.”

Similarly, Mr Freamon described peer influence as ‘profound’. He viewed problems of low-level disruption in the classroom as stemming from pupils’ peers having an adverse impact on them. He also described recent incidents in which a group of Y9 girls were targeting attractive girls and bullying them. This had led to parental involvement and fixed term exclusions. Mr Freamon commented “...we work very closely with their parents and so on. Some of them have been on fixed term exclusions.” He had observed that other pupils were following this behaviour: “...behind them seems to be a group of followers who want to be seen to be with these girls...”

To reinforce his view, Mr Freamon described the outcome of some research currently being conducted in the school where it had transpired that the major factor influencing pupil participation in outside school activities appeared to be the

involvement of friendship groups. He explained that peer reactions influence whether pupils will participate in activities such as drama, the desire to appear 'cool' overriding other considerations. Mr Freamon was aware that some pupils are very sensitive to peer reactions and this can have strong influence on behaviour. He believes that peers affect the behaviour of some pupils "even to the effect when you wouldn't take part in an event or an activity... if they thought they were being belittled, or someone was being horrible to them."

Mrs Pearlman, in the Y11 alternative curriculum provision, also described the effect of peers as 'massive'. She is very aware of the importance her pupils put on gaining a dominant position within the group and how this results in conflict, including bullying. She explained: She described how the dominant position is now filled by two other pupils but she is better able to manage these pupils' behaviour through immediate interventions: "...two of them that are now excluded, they had a massive effect on them, because they were 'top dog'. Now we've got two others who vie for 'top dog' in the absence of the other two, but they're more workable. We calm them down better. And they do intimidate and they bully and they take cigarettes off each other, and there's a lot of verbal pushing and shoving, which I try to keep an ear out for and stamp on immediately."

Two of the pupils who experienced difficulties mentioned that their behaviour in lessons was heavily influenced by their peers. Karim (Y10) described his sometimes violent reactions to other pupils deliberately goading him. "Most of the time, say somebody's done something to me, like swore at me and calling me names and that, I'll do something really bad to them. Say sometimes somebody's really winding me up, calling me names; I'll end up smacking them or something like that." Fighting was not the only way that Karim reacted to his peers. At the time of the interview he was spending a week in the LSU as a punishment for destroying a classmate's work. He explained that "This girl, obviously I haven't been getting on with her for a long time, she kept winding me up and calling me names and she just really got to me and one day we were in lesson and she was on a computer and I ended up deleting her work on her computer, so obviously I got in trouble for that." Karim felt that the girl took an active part in the exchange and that, although he was being punished, his actions were to some extent justified. He continued: "Obviously, I wouldn't have done it if she hadn't been winding me up. You would have to be mental to do that." In Karim's opinion it is in less structured lessons that he experiences more difficulties and seeks attention from his friends. He acknowledged the influence his peers have on his behaviour in some lessons. He explained: "I enjoy lessons like business studies and IT and stuff when we go on the computers and stuff, but sometimes it depends as well if your friends are around

with you as well and you can mess around just to seek attention and all stuff like that...That's what it is, isn't it? Peer pressure and obviously you are with your friends so you tend to mess about sometimes."

Aaron (Y9) also experiences his peers making comments about him. In contrast to Karim's experiences of the camaraderie of his classmates, he described the classroom as a situation in which he was isolated and saw himself as an outsider. Although he did not describe his peers' behaviour as 'bullying' he perceived other pupils as singling him out. Aaron explained that he liked English because the other pupils did not pick on him: "That's 'cause they haven't got all [the pupils] in that lesson that annoy me, who think they're hard. Cause they pick on people that are a lot smaller than them and a lot softer." He went on to describe the peer interactions that upset him: "They won't pick on anyone like me. I've told them to, but they won't. They know what they'll get... I'd knock them out. I'm not scared of them. Even if they bray me I'd still give them a good go." It is unclear from his interview whether he reacts violently in the classroom but he described at length the fights he has been involved in as a reaction to comments and remarks made to him. He mentioned that he has, in the past, started shouting at other pupils in class and as a result has been put 'on-call'. One of Aaron's coping strategies has been to withdraw himself from lessons by walking out and, at the time of the interview, he was on a severely reduced timetable and taking part in very few mainstream lessons.

James (Y10), the third pupil who experienced difficulties, was the most disparate respondent at Grimsdale. He differed from the other respondents in that he did not mention any personal conflict with classmates. His opinion also differed from others as he observed that being sent out of lessons was not confined to those pupils who are known to be disruptive. He explained: "... quite a few people never get sent out, but some of my mates, like, a few of them are quite like me, but, like, ones that aren't will still be sent out and stuff, 'cause it's not just, like, bad people who get sent out. Good people get sent out as well." However, his behaviour was influenced to some extent by his peers in that he was seen as disruptive by staff for talking to his friends in lessons.

Outside the classroom the included pupils agreed that there were few problems. Rhonda felt that behaviour was good in unstructured time apart from some people running around the building and the occasional fight. Crystal concurred with this view, mentioning occasional fights, but adding that some girls fight frequently: "There's not really many fights, but some girls always have fights." She described how two girls had taken part in a very public fight over a presumed insult the previous week. Crystal explained that this incident was one of two that had taken place on the same day. In both cases staff had intervened.

Mr Freamon also mentioned how fights could occur as the result of conflict in school. He explained that “one-off incidents...will happen because of an event that has happened in school, so, for instance, a conflict between two individuals or something like that: two boys falling out, two girls falling out, name-calling and so on.”

Crystal also suggested that fights could also occur because of incidents arising in the classroom, including racism. She described how she has observed racist incidents in the school: “[T]here’s one boy that no-one likes and he gets lots of racist comments at him. I just tell all my friends to stop because we don’t like it when he turns round and says something to them, and there’s no need for them to do it, they just say it all the time whenever they see him. She just says, ‘Well I don’t like him.’” When questioned about the school systems relating to racism, she explained how the boy had taken the matter to the Head of Year but she felt that this was ineffective. In her opinion racist attitudes are difficult to change and are heavily influenced by parental attitudes. She explained “I don’t think it will ever stop. I think there will always be someone doing that. I think that the way you’re brought up affects it as well, like, if your mum and dad are racist, then it will affect whether you are racist.”

Although Crystal’s comments on racism were elicited in response to a direct question from the interviewer, the subject was broached spontaneously by Karim who felt that it was a major factor in the problems he experienced. Like Crystal, he described how he felt that informing staff about racist comments was ineffectual. The result of this was that he was punished for retaliating to comments: “I’ve had racial comments to me loads of times. A lot of pupils are racist and, to be honest, I’m being honest now, if I go and tell, nothing much will happen to them...They only tell them not to do it again. To be honest I don’t even go and tell the teachers because I know they won’t do anything about it... I’m not really bothered. I’m strong enough to cope with that...I don’t really go and tell the teachers much. So a lot of people tend to go and tell about me.”

The pupils who experienced difficulties also mentioned problems at unstructured times of the school day. Karim described how he misbehaved at lunchtimes with his friends. “[S]ometimes I get in trouble in school but not in lessons, for general messing around...not listening to dinner ladies and all that stuff.”

6.7 Home relationships

In this section I examine how pupils at risk of exclusion and parent respondents described relationships at home and their impact on behaviour. I include comments

made by staff and included pupils concerning the home backgrounds of pupils at risk of exclusion.

6.7.1 Family relationships

Staff and included pupils felt that family relationships were strongly related to behaviour at school. The home experiences related by pupils at risk of exclusion varied widely. Parent respondents both acknowledged that the difficulties their children experienced at school were evident at home.

6.7.1.1 Bitterclough

Three of the pupils at risk of exclusion, Alma (Y9), Albert (Y9) and Aqib (Y10), felt supported by their families. Alma (Y9) who lives with her parents and brother had, in the past, been disruptive at home when her parents tried to punish her for misbehaving at school. She has now stopped this, partly because she feels that her parents do not want her to repeat this behaviour but also because she is concerned about her father's health and does not want to put him under any more pressure. Alma also reported that her parents are no longer punishing her at home for incidents at school as they feel that they have no control over her behaviour outside the home. She feels that her parents deserve her respect. She explained "I used to shout and slamming doors, but I never swore at them. I just used to shout at them. I don't know if that's fair on other people but it's mum and dad and my family. You've got to have respect for them."

Aqib also expressed respect for his family. He lives with his parents and siblings. When asked to choose a stone for someone he related well to, he chose a smooth stone for his father and family. He does not argue at home like he does at school because, he explained, "I've got nothing to argue about at home".

Albert also said that he related well to his family. He lives with his mother and two younger siblings. His mother is upset when he gets in trouble at school. He explained how he had been permanently excluded from his previous school, Blackmoor, and his mother had spent time contacting people to find a new school for him. He commented: "...my mum had to ring up some people but it took them ages to get back in touch... It was hard to find a school that would accept me."

Both Aqib and Alma mentioned that they learned skills from their families. Alma has watched her mother cook and this has influenced her choice of GCSEs. She has also chosen to do child development at GCSE because she likes babies. She

spends time at weekends looking after her young cousins and her aunt recognises that she treats them in a responsible manner, keeping them safe and looking after their needs. For Aqib the time he spent at home on a fixed-term exclusion was occupied by helping his father mend a car.

In contrast, Pingu (Y10), the fourth pupil at risk of exclusion school, spontaneously mentioned that she also experienced problems at home and that these affected her behaviour at school, but did not enlarge on them¹⁹.

Both of the included pupils held the view that home background may impact on behaviour at school. Bethany (Y9) suggested that both home backgrounds and bullying could lead to problematic behaviour: “Well they might be brought up with a bad background or be getting bullied or they might be getting bullied at home.” Ali (Y10) agreed that home background can affect behaviour. He described how his friend had problems at home and these had led to problems at school. He explained that “...he doesn’t have a nice home life.” For Ali recognition from home is the best reward he can have. In Ali’s view, problem behaviour does not always lie with the child’s parents. He had observed parents giving their children guidance, but their advice was not always taken. He commented: “Well, their parents, in some cases I know that they tell them off and they don’t like them to do it, but they don’t listen to their parents.”

Staff opinions about the impact of home relationships on behaviour varied from the broader sociological view point of Mr Daniels to Mrs Little’s opinion that the responsibility for problem behaviour lies in pupil attitudes and the incompetence of their parents. Mr Daniels felt that the low-level disruption stemming from parental attitudes was the schools’ biggest challenge. In his experience, many pupils come from backgrounds with no history of higher education and subsequently education is not seen as a priority and pupils are not motivated to succeed. Although he recognises that parents want to be supportive he also realises that they are often ineffective with their difficult offspring. He commented: “Our parents are very supportive...I don’t think they are always effective...Very good, very helpful, but, yeah, some of the kiddies are not the easiest in the world.”

Both Mrs Little and Mr Daniels agreed that if pupils are having problems at school they are also likely to experience problems at home. Mrs Little commented that “...regardless of how bad these kids are at home, they’re ten times worse at home than at school.” Similarly, in Mr Daniels’ opinion, “...when we ring home and say, ‘We are struggling’, then they probably say the same, more often than not. It’s

¹⁹ This was because of time constraints. I did not probe into the nature of her problems but immediately went on to another question

quite rare that we struggle badly with a student and everything is fine at home, or vice versa.”

In Mrs Little opinion parental influence is a major factor in problem behaviour. She explained: “Once we get to the parents, the parents are just as badly behaved as they are, a lot of the time.” One of the problems, in her view, is that parents accept poor behaviour from their children and do not address it at home. She explained: “They haven’t got consequences at home. They have got no fear of consequences.” One particular concern of hers was the behaviour of girls which she attributed to home influences. She feels that schools are unfairly held responsible for conduct that is beyond their control: ‘I’m fed up with people blaming schools and expecting schools to do everything. That’s coming from home.’”

She believes that when a pupil experienced behaviour problems at school but not at home, it is also due to parenting. She commented: “...you’ll get the odd one who’ll be as good as gold at home, but that’s because he’s not being confronted in any way at all, about anything. He gets his own way all the time, so he’s not going to be a problem, is he?” She believes that the cause of some problems is family breakdown and regrouping of families. She commented: “...99% of the kids that I get are one parent families with real dads that people don’t see, step dads that don’t particularly like them, second step dads, third step dads...it’s as if the kids haven’t got roots of any type.”

Both Mrs Little and Mr Wallace agreed that the pupils who experience problems lack social skills and that this stems from their home backgrounds. According to Mrs Little “They have got no knowledge of social skills, of how to behave, of what’s acceptable.” This view was also held by Mr Wallace who commented: “I think the main behaviour problems come from a sort of respect, or a lack of respect, from the background of the pupils we have.” He has also observed that pupils are not accustomed to being praised at home. “Praise is a great reward for our kids. They don’t get a lot of praise at home, and then some kids don’t quite know what you’re doing...They’re not quite sure what to do.”

6.7.1.2 Blackmoor

Two of the pupils at risk of exclusion at Blackmoor said that they also had some problems at home. Charday (Y10), who lives with her parents, sister and brother, explained that she relates well to everyone at home apart from her father who works away. When he comes home there is some conflict. She commented that in general she is happy at home. When Charday is in trouble at school she is also punished at home. Her parents shout at her and also prevent her from going out.

Namond (Y9) also mentioned that he experienced some problems at home. He lives with his mother and younger sister and brother. He feels that he is blamed by his mother for everything that goes wrong at home. The only time he mother praises him is when he plays well in his rugby team.

Francine, Namond's mother, works nights and spends a great deal of her time taking her children to different sporting activities after school. Namond has always experienced problems at school. When he had trouble learning to write, Francine bought him a pencil grip. She has recently built a house in her garden for Namond. She finds that all three children argue at times, but does not feel that it is excessive. She explained that Namond needs firm boundaries, and that that using humour is also an effective strategy: "with Namond, he is big and he is loud and you've to put your foot down with him. You're the adult, he's the child but you've got to have a joke with him."

She described how Namond loses his temper when he cannot understand situations. She feels that she and others, including teachers, have to be very clear when giving him instructions, explaining the reasons behind them. She described a recent event in which Namond lost his temper and was excluded, commenting: "I know as an adult we shouldn't have to explain everything but if you know Namond's history, then you do. So if this teacher had of said, "Look mate, those are broke, you have to sit here," that would've been the end of it."

Of the other two pupils at risk of exclusion, Jay (Y9) was reluctant to speak personally, preferring to talk about hypothetical situations. He lives with his mother, step-father and three younger problems. Because he is the oldest he is allowed to go to bed later than his siblings. In his opinion, pupils who get detentions at school would also swear at their parents and misbehave all the time at home.

Marlo (Y10) was also reluctant to talk about his own experiences. He lives with his parents and sister. He was quite defensive and guarded throughout the interview and volunteered very few details of his life.

The included pupils differed in their opinions about the impact of pupils' backgrounds. Roland (Y9) concurred with Ali (Bitterclough) when he suggested that pupils who got into trouble at school may be ignoring parental advice. In his opinion the reason for their behaviour is located in the pupils. "It's not always what the parents tell them 'cause they don't always listen to their parents. They'll not listen to the parents and they'll not listen to the teachers." Conversely, Bodie (Y10) believes that lack of continuity in home care can lead to problems at school. He has observed that children in the LA care system can experience more problems both with school work and with relationships including bullying and being the victim of bullies.

From the staff viewpoint, Mr Carver, the deputy head, stressed the benefits of shared aims between home and school. He believes that discipline is most effective when parents support school actions by punishing their children at home for misbehaviour at school. From his observations he concludes that the school strategies will be ineffective if parents are experiencing difficulties with their child at home. He commented that : "...the best ones are when parents and the teachers are in partnership together, if they're not, you can have as many strategies as you like. It's not going to work."

Both Mr Barksdale and Ms Bell also speculated about the impact parental example has on pupil behaviour. They were both aware that some parental behaviour is incongruent with expectations at school. In Mr Barksdale's opinion, "Sometimes they struggle to take things from home, to leave them at home and take a different approach in school." He gave the example of the school ban on chewing gum. He suggested that if parents were using this as a strategy for giving up smoking and it was not an issue at home, pupils may have difficulty in accepting the rules at school. Similarly, Ms Bell was concerned that the language and behaviour that some pupils experience at home is very different to that which is acceptable at school. She felt that some pupils have been so damaged by their backgrounds that there is little the school can do for them. She described the case of a pupil who came from a challenging background where swearing was part of his normal speech, and how, although she was aware that his comments were not directed at her, the school was eventually unable to accommodate him. Ms Bell has also observed that some pupils come from homes in which shouting is the norm and the result of this is that shouting as a behaviour management strategy has little impact on them. She wonders whether disrespect for teachers also arises from home attitudes. She felt that if the school staff had more information about home issues they may be more understanding of pupil behaviour and this would lead to less conflict.

Both Mr Barksdale and Ms Bell were concerned that the parents of some pupils did not value their educational achievements. Mr Barksdale cited the example of a girl with very challenging behaviour explaining that, although her parents care for her, they do not value education.

6.7.1.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale two of the pupils who experienced problems talked at length about their home backgrounds and how they relate to members of their families. Aaron (Y9) was almost dismissive of school and wanted to focus on his home experiences. For the past two years he has been living with his grandmother. This is because he

does not get on with his sixteen year old brother who he describes as treating him as a 'slave'. Aaron sees his mother most days. His mother and step father live nearby with three of Aaron's siblings. It appeared from the interview that another sibling has been taken into care. There has been social services involvement in the past because Aaron's stepfather did not know how gentle to be with his first child. Aaron also has three other siblings who share a father but do not live as part of his family unit. When Aaron was asked to choose a 'Talking Stone' to represent himself at school he chose one that he described as "...holey, it's old, it's all rotten."

Aaron explained that when he is at school he feels depressed. When asked to choose a stone to represent himself at home he chose a very different one, describing it as "Normal. It's perfect and it's normal." Aaron does not feel that he has behaviour problems at home. He enjoys being at home and spends his time "...playing on my PlayStation, and that, and listening to music." Aaron seems to have a good relationship with his step-father. He has a part time job in the same place as his step-father and also mentioned 'play fighting' with him. Aaron has recently been diagnosed with ADHD and is on medication. He thinks that the medication is making him produce a lot of catarrh and said that his stepfather and boss have seen him coughing up phlegm which he refers to as 'snooking up'. However he said that his mother does not believe that this is a side effect of the medication. He explained "I'm taking these tablets...sometimes I've been snooking up a lot...my mum thinks it's rubbish...even though my boss and my step dad have seen me do it at work." He used to be very close to his uncle who has now died of cancer. Aaron used to go out with his uncle on his motor bike and felt that he could talk to him about his emotions. If he could have one wish it would be to bring his uncle back.

Aaron's mother, Donette, explained that Aaron was living with his grandmother to distance him from a neighbouring family who had a bad influence on him. She spoke of his behaviour at home. He sometimes becomes frustrated and moody and finds the best response is to leave him alone to calm down: "Just leaving him. Letting him calm down and then he will eventually come back." She has found that incentives are ineffective, commenting that "...He's a child that you can't blackmail. If you said to Aaron, "If you don't, you won't get this," he's not bothered. He doesn't care!" She attributes his academic performance to ADHD which has, until recently been undiagnosed. She explained: "he's below average, but they think that could be because of the ADHD, because obviously he couldn't concentrate."

Karim (Y10) also talked at length about his home. When he was asked to choose a 'Talking Stone' for someone who he relates well to, he chose one for his

father. Karim's mother died when he was two and he and his two older brothers have been cared for and supported by his father. When Karim had problems with his maths teacher, his father came in on open day and explained Karim's views. Karim's oldest brother has graduated from university and has just opened his own business and his other brother is studying at university at present. Karim thinks he is bright enough to go to university as well.

The other pupil who experienced problems at school, James (Y10), said very little about his home. He lives with his father who is a steward at a golf course and has a younger sister who lives with his mother. When he was younger and got into trouble at school his parents used to have a lot to say about it. However, now he is older he does not spend so much time at home as he is always out with his friends. When he gets into trouble at school his mother is upset but his father reacts more strongly. According to James, "My mum just gets upset and mad, but my dad goes mad."

The two included pupils from Grimsdale had similar ideas about the impact pupil backgrounds have on behaviour. They felt that the reason for pupil behaviour difficulties was located to some extent in the child. Crystal (Y10) was dismissive of people who blame their bad behaviour on home circumstances as her friend did. In her opinion, everyone has problems and we just have to deal with them. Her friend blamed the break-up of her parents' marriage for her problems. Because her mother had stayed out all night her friend did not come to school. She also stopped speaking to her father. In Crystal's view, home circumstances should not impact on behaviour at school: "Some take it to reasons of putting the blame on problems at home and stuff like that, but anyone who's got problems at home, they don't have to misbehave at school." However, Crystal attributed racist attitudes to home influences (6.3).

The staff at Grimsdale all agreed that home backgrounds could have an adverse effect on pupil behaviour. Mr Freamon's first comment on the reasons for behaviour problems was that they could be because of home background, citing significant issues, such as long term breakdown of the family, as impacting adversely on pupil behaviour in school. He suggested that: "...there are behaviour problems that are intrinsic to home background or events that are happening outside of home and those behaviour problems come into schools from whatever event that has happened."

Mr Howard concurred with this view, referring to his former school where he had noticed that behavioural issues were most frequently seen in pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds both economically and socially. He was aware that behaviour issues were not confined to this group and had known cases of pupils

from stable homes who had problems in school. He shared Ms Bell's (Blackmoor) view that it is important that teachers are aware of home issues that may impact on behaviour, adding that he felt that Grimsdale kept him better informed than his previous school.

Because of the small number of pupils in her Y11 group and because she keeps in close contact with their parents, Mrs Pearlman was well-informed about home issues. In her opinion behaviour in young children is learnt from home. She is concerned that the pupils who experience behaviour problems at school are often deprived of good role models at home and are unskilled in relating to people in a more formal situation, leading to conflict at school. A further barrier to school success she identifies is that parents do not relate well to school, describing them as "sometimes ...a bit school phobic." She feels that parents do not spend enough time with their children. She gave an example of a girl who she taught to tell the time. The girl was initially very aggressive and abusive but when she was calm she explained to Mrs Pearlman that she could not tell the time because her mother had not yet taught her. "I don't think she has a lot of attention at home. I know that when I mentioned about the time thing she said, "My mum's been trying to show me...meaning to show me for ages."

6.7.2 Neighbourhood relationships

In this section I have focused on information about the pupils' neighbourhood relationships and connected activities that take place at home. This does not relate to individual schools therefore I have recorded all responses under the headings: home peers and leisure activities, including work-related activities; and criminal activities. None of the responses from the included pupils related to home peers or activities.

6.7.2.1 Home peer relationships and leisure activities

Two of the pupils have jobs. Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) has a job on Saturdays, holidays and when he is not at school, changing tyres at a garage where his stepfather works. He enjoys it and is looking forward to Y10 when he will spend more time there. He commented: "After the six week holidays I'm there nearly every day of the year." He relates well to the other workers and has been praised for his ability in mental arithmetic. He spends the money he earns on cigarettes which he gives to his friends. Sometimes he borrows money from his grandmother so he pays her back out of his wages. Namond (Y9, Blackmoor) shares a paper round with his younger sister. He has used the proceeds to pay towards a house that his mother, Francine, has built for him in her garden. Two of the girls are interested in careers

in child care. Pingu (Y10, Bitterclough) is going for a job interview for work in a nursery for children with disabilities. Alma (Y9, Bitterclough) has looked after her aunt's children at weekends since she was 13.

Several of the boys were members of sports teams. Two of them hope to take up their chosen sport professionally in the future. James (Y10, Grimsdale) used to play football and that is why he chose to go to a sports college. Now he plays rugby for the school team and he also plays for a nearby village team with two of his friends. He and his friends tend to spend a lot of time in the village. They do not like coming into the town where the school is because they do not like the people who live there and they do not like him and his friends. He lives with his father at a golf club where he is the steward at a golf club. James is skilful at golf and hopes to play for the county next year.

Namond is good at PE at school and follows this interest outside school. He plays a lot of rugby and is in a local team and the school team. He had a sports scholarship for the county team but this was terminated when he was cheeky to one of the coaches. He would like to play rugby professionally when he leaves school. Rugby training takes up a lot of his time outside school. He trains most nights, explaining "I've got rugby training every day of the week." When he is not playing rugby he watches TV. His mother Francine remarked that Namond has also helped a neighbour to build a house for him in the garden. She explained: "He's hammered, screwed, held stuff together. He's good at stuff like that and it interests him. Next door but one to where we live, Dave who's built it (Dave's built his son one, so there's two)...he's helped doing his house and they learnt together because they'd never done it before. He's more than willing to help Dave any time, and I think it's good for him to learn."

Albert (Y9, Bitterclough) and Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) both expressed an interest in motor bikes. Albert enjoys riding quads and motor bikes in his free time. He goes with his friends and rides on their bikes but he has not got his own bike yet. Aaron loves motor bikes and used to have his own. His cousin took it away to mend it but, because Aaron owed him £20, he sold it. Now, like Albert, he shares his friend's bike, riding in an area where the residents are not disturbed by it: "No-one moans. They're druggies and that so they're not that bothered." Aaron is on a reduced timetable and spends a lot of time at home where he plays on his X-box and listens to music. His mother commented: "He doesn't have many close friends. The friends that he has are a lot younger than him...or he tends to hang on with people that are a lot older than him that get him into trouble."

In the past, Aqib (Y10, Bitterclough) has been interested in fighting and went to a kick boxing club for a short time. He thinks he may take up boxing again when

fasting is over. When he was in primary school his main interest was cars, especially sports cars and this is still an absorbing interest. He explained “Cars, that’s what I was interested in first. I still am. Fighting, I’m not really interested in it. If a fight happens, I will fight. I’m still interested in cars...All sorts like sports cars.” When he was excluded from school for several weeks he helped his father to mend a car. He would like to work in engineering when he leaves school.

Charday likes to spend time with her friends when she is at home. They meet up in each other’s houses. Sometimes one of her friends who has a car used to bring everyone to her house, but now they go by bus to another friend’s house.

6.7.2.2 Criminal activities

James (Y10, Grimsdale) and Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) have been involved in criminal activities outside school. Aaron is living with his grandmother. In his view this is because of his troubled relationship with his brother, however his mother, Donette, said that it was too keep him away from a local family, the Wildes, who had a bad influence on him. Aaron commented: “Mum said I used to be a proper nice boy till I started hanging around with the Wildes. They live down by my mum’s. That’s when I started getting involved with the police and that.” He was involved in robberies and smoked cannabis.

James has also been involved in criminal activities with his peers. He explained: “I’ve been in trouble, like, with the police once or twice” P.5 (18). He has a criminal record after being caught damaging cars. He explained how this could affect his future: “[I got a] Reprimand...Criminal record and I’m clear at eighteen, and if you do anything else, it gets serious and they’ve got your finger prints and your DNA and that’s about it, but it’s quite serious if you do owt again ‘cause you can go to court.”

Marlo (Y10, Blackmoor), who lives in a deprived area, knows people who get into trouble outside school for doing things like throwing fireworks at people. He has also had fireworks thrown at himself by his peers “Throwing fireworks at people and stuff... I’ve had a rockets shot at me.”

Karim (Y10, Grimsdale) has never been in trouble with the police. He described the kind of trouble he gets into as “just a bit of silliness”. However, he was aware that it is important to control behaviour: “It’s just a bit of general silliness, if you know what I mean and obviously, if you don’t control it, it can get you in trouble.”

6.8 Reflective commentary

The focus of this chapter has been the microsystem, the part of the ecosystemic framework where face-to-face relationships are located (Chapter 2.3). Included in this chapter are the characteristics of the individual child in the form of age, gender and race as these are factors that have been identified as significant in exclusion rate, both nationally and in the LA data (DfES, 2006a, 2007b). In this section I reflect on the interview responses and indicate how they relate to the ecosystemic framework. Analysis of the responses has highlighted three themes that have a significant influence on school exclusions: staff/pupil relationships; pupil/peer relationships; and home relationships.

The data indicates that it is the quality of relationships between staff and pupils that can either engage pupils or give rise to conflict. An important factor appears to be staff attitudes to disruptive behaviour, a factor that is influenced by both the cultural climate in the macrosystem, and the school ethos in the exosystem. Staff responses to low-level disruption were the most frequently cited reason for conflict, setting the tone for further interactions. These observations echo Bronfenbrenner's (1992) revision of the definition of the microsystem when he highlighted the impact the characteristics of the other people in face-to-face relationships have on the development of the child.

A key feature in staff/pupil relationships was the idea that conflict arose through the perceived injustice of an imbalance of power in the classroom. This finding is supported by the literature (Furlong, 1991; McFadden and Munns, 2002; Sellman, 2009). It is at the point of applying school discipline that the microsystem of face-to-face relationships and the exosystem of the social structures that impact on the microsystem can cause conflict. Classroom staff are in a position where they have to not only relate to pupils as individuals but also uphold systems that may appear unjust to those pupils. The concept of an imbalance of power also links strongly with the cultural climate in the macrosystem (Chapter 9).

The second theme, pupil/pupil relationships was regarded by both staff and included pupils as pivotal in influencing the behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion. They viewed disruptive behaviour as a way in which some pupils maintained their status and reputation suggesting that if they cannot shine academically they might want to stand out as disruptive. Some pupils at risk of exclusion acknowledged that they prioritised social contact with their peers over the learning experience provided at school. This theme is closely related to factors in the macrosystem including staff attitudes towards pupils from challenging backgrounds (Chapter 9.1) and cultural influences on pupils' aspirations (Chapter 9.2).

Another powerful influence on behaviour was bonds between peers of the same ethnic groups. Relationships between peers from different ethnic groups appeared to be particularly conflicted when minority groups were not fully integrated into the school and community, resulting in reported gang fighting in the high-excluding school. This is an aspect of school culture that is explored in the exosystem, where school systems influence behaviour, and in the macrosystem where the cultural climate impacts on the behaviour of the individual.

The third theme, also linking strongly to factors in the macrosystem was home relationships where role models and peer relationships were seen to exert a powerful influence on behaviour. Staff and included pupils associated confrontational behaviour with a mismatch between home and school expectations and aspirations. Although most pupils at risk of exclusion spoke positively about their families and felt supported by them, staff and included pupils questioned the extent to which the families of pupils at risk of exclusion reinforced educational achievements. An important factor observed by staff was that if pupils are having problems at school the same is happening at home. This view was reinforced by the parent respondents who both acknowledged that their children experienced problems at home.

A further significant factor attributed to troubled home lives was that pupils at risk of exclusion found it difficult to resolve conflict, reacting impulsively and exhibiting highly emotional responses. Other staff explanations for emotional responses included the idea that pupil behaviour is changing and becoming more challenging. This was variously explained in terms of cultural changes in homes and society, a factor that is explored more fully in the macrosystem (Chapter 9). Some staff felt that schools should accept this change and work towards accommodating it in their ways of working. They acknowledged that cultural mores are changing and that this impacts on behaviour. Staff attitudes towards cultural changes varied widely. Whether they were viewed a cause for complaint or as a new challenge to be addressed, staff stressed the importance of communication with and support from home, bringing the discussion into the realm of the mesosystem where connections between the relationships in the microsystem are located.

In the light of these reflections my next chapter focusses on interview responses relating to the mesosystem, the systems of communication between the areas in the microsystem, in the ecosystemic framework.

7 The mesosystem

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In this chapter I continue to explore research question 2:

What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?

by addressing the sub-question:

How do the links within the mesosystem impact on school exclusion?

In the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) the mesosystem is where interconnections between the child's face-to-face relationships are located. In this chapter I focus on staff communication and home/school relationships.

7.1 Staff communication

There was wide variation between the schools on the emphasis senior staff gave to communication. Similarly staff varied in their views of the efficacy of the school systems of communication.

7.1.1 Bitterclough

Mrs Little was very dissatisfied with communication in the school. When pupils return to the mainstream lessons from the LSU, Mrs Little informs staff about the strategies that she has found successful. Whether this information is used is one of her concerns. Twice she questioned whether teachers have time to read about pupils with problems. In Mrs Little's view time constraints prevent information being handed on verbally: "...nobody has got time to go round and tell them about all of these kids that have all of these problems..." Feedback is primarily through the

'challenge cards' that pupils take with them when they go into mainstream lessons. These are returned to Mrs Little with a record of pupil behaviour in each lesson. Information about academic levels is also available from the SENCO.

Mrs Little's concern is that, although a great deal of information is collected about pupils with problems it is often unused in the mainstream school. She feels that staff do not, either because of lack of time or interest, use the information available to differentiate and that the work she does with pupils in the LSU is not valued by the rest of the school: "It's all very well SENCO doing all the reading tests and getting all the reading ages, but if the staff don't know, and then, if they do know and if they don't use it to differentiate work, because it's too much like hard work."

Mrs Little feels that her opinion differs from that of the school. From her observations the LSU is used as a way of removing pupils with problems from the mainstream lessons. However, no consideration is given to whether they will benefit from their stay there. She feels that her efforts and the pupils' successes go unrecognised. She explained: "My view doesn't concur with the school's view at all. The school's view is that this is a place to put them, out of sight, out of mind, and if they do well, they do well. Nobody gives any praise to me, to the kids."

In Mr Wallace's opinion a recent change in the management structure at the school has resulted in less efficient communication between SMT and the rest of the staff. "The communication has definitely changed, through management as was, as it is now...Not for the better." In his view, the outcome of these changes is that sanctions are not implemented consistently. This is partly due to a lack of clarity about who makes decisions. He commented: "...we're not quite sure how the hierarchy goes, who's responsible for which individual department. It's all a bit vague at the moment." Mr Wallace also feels that there is less communication between teaching staff and management and that this has had a detrimental effect on the morale of staff. "I think it could be slightly more coordinated and slightly more inclusive of the staff. I think it's been decided at a high management level, which has never really happened before. Before there's always been at least some consultation, where now there's no consultation. It's just sometimes, on a Monday, there'll be a memo saying, 'This is what we're doing this week.'" In the former system a briefing took place in the staff room every morning before school. The problem with this was the time factor involved in attending the meeting and returning to classrooms in order to teach so the number of meetings has now been reduced to two a week. Mr Wallace is on duty for one of these briefings with the result that he can only attend one a week. He finds that he does not always have the information he needs about the pupils in his class.

Mr Wallace feels that the behaviour in the school has deteriorated and that the SMT are trying to address this by targeting problem areas. This month the focus is for pupils to get to their lessons on time. When questioned, Mr Wallace was unsure whether the pupils were aware of these targets as they were formerly explained by SMT in assemblies. At the time of the interview there were exams taking place in the school hall and assemblies could not take place, so it was the form teachers who were communicating the target to the pupils.

In contrast, Mr Daniels feels that the recent changes in school staffing has facilitated communication. ‘Non-teaching progress managers’ who have a purely pastoral role have now taken the place of heads of year. This has, in his view, resulted in more efficient communication. Mr Daniels commented: “They’re more accessible and more immediate.” Information about behavioural issues is shared by using the school systems of incident sheets, or ‘on-call’ for more serious matters. This is then shared with other staff so that everyone has a clear picture of a pupil’s behaviour. Mr Daniels also uses surveys to find out about staff opinions. At the time of the interview he was collating information about staff feedback on setting in the school.

7.1.2 **Blackmoor**

Ms Bell described how information about pupil behaviour at Blackmoor is shared by a combination of pastoral and academic approaches. Blackmoor takes a proactive role in identifying pupils who might experience behavioural problems. This is achieved by monitoring teacher feedback on pupil behaviour on entry to the school. Issues are addressed by drawing up individual behaviour plans, and also identifying any learning difficulties presented by the pupil. This is carried out by the deputy head who explains the strategy to the pupils individually.

When behaviour issues occur, staff can share information via subject leaders, or through pastoral staff, including form teachers who have an overview of their pupils’ behaviour. In addition to the school behaviour management systems of reports and detentions, Ms Bell also described an informal system of information sharing where teachers discuss issues that concern them: “...you’d generally, if someone was misbehaving in your lesson, you’d know whose form they were from and you’d speak to them and say, ‘Is this going on in other lessons?’”

A different approach can be seen from the point of view of the manager of the LSU. He described how each pupil in the LSU has a designated ‘key worker’, a similar role to a learning mentor. For Mr Barksdale the role of the key worker is

instrumental in collating and sharing information about his pupils. He explained: “All the students in the access centre will have a key worker and the key worker is a link between the child and the staff, between the child and home, between school and home.” In addition, Mr Barksdale keeps his own record of the behaviour each pupil in the LSU which he then shares with other staff: “On my account, I keep a book, so I say what they’ve been doing. If they don’t do anything I can write it down there then I can pass it on to subject teachers as and when I see them.”

Staff are also informed about serious issues concerning individual pupils through the twice weekly staff briefings. Mr Barksdale commented: “...we have a full staff briefing on a Monday morning and a Thursday morning. Any serious issues will be brought up there, so all staff know about it.” To share information about strategies for individual pupils, Mr Barksdale will approach the appropriate head of year who will then call a meeting for staff involved with the pupil. In Mr Barksdale’s opinion, this is an efficient system as it targets the relevant staff.

Information is also shared incidentally through the report system. When signing the report, each teacher is made aware of the pupils’ behaviour in other lessons. Mr Barksdale commented: “Obviously each member of staff that teaches that child can see how they are doing.”

Mr Carver described how he lets other members of staff know about behaviour issues. There is a board in the staff room where exclusions are recorded. Teaching staff are expected to deal with minor problems in the classroom, whereas more serious problems can be addressed as a departmental issue or, if they warrant it, senior management can be involved. Incident forms are used to record and relay information about problems with pupils and these include instructions about the circumstances under which they should be used. There is also a system whereby SMT monitor classrooms late in the afternoon to ascertain that there are no problems. He explained: “Lesson five we also have drop-in sessions, so I go round on a Wednesday lesson five, knock on every door, say ‘Is everything all right?’”

In addition, teachers can come directly to SMT if they are experiencing problems in the classroom. In Mr Carver’s opinion, staff are confident that they are supported by SMT. He emphasised the importance of having an open door policy. There is always a member of the SMT on duty who can be called on if necessary. He commented: “...what is good about this school, that I’ve always felt, is that staff do feel supported. They know that if they make a complaint, there will be action...”

He described an incident in which a pupil had sworn at a teacher and was immediately given a fixed-term exclusion. The teacher was surprised as his experience at a previous school had been that swearing at staff had been treated as a

minor misdemeanour. He explained how the consistent and supportive attitude of the SMT helped both pupils and staff, resulting in very few incidents of verbal abuse: "...children know, 'If I do that, I'm going' and staff appreciate that because they know that if something happens we will deal with it..." He commented: "...it does help staff realise that we are on their side and they are not going to be tret like dirt in your own classroom."

7.1.3 Grimsdale

In Mr Howard's experience there are clear channels for sharing concerns in the school. He explained: "Mr Freamon is in overall charge of behaviour at school, so yeah, there's designated members of staff who you can go to if you've got an issue...or if it needs referring on they will be more than happy to help out as well."

Mr Howard finds the senior staff in the school very supportive. They are aware of behavioural issues. He commented: "I think here senior members of staff do know what behaviour is like and I think it's monitored regularly enough to see what behaviour's like." He finds them approachable, explaining that they will respond to problems in a proactive way: "...they're very supportive in that way as well, and just try to be involved and just know the kids and try their best to try and get them back on side." Information is shared through regular meetings called by the heads of year. He explained: "We have year team meetings and if any information that we need to know crops up, the head of year for Y7 would then come up to me and disclose the information."

In contrast Mrs Pearlman does not feel supported by the school staff. She finds that she has very little opportunity to discuss strategies with other members of staff. She would like more contact with Mr Freamon, her line manager, and has asked for weekly meetings but thinks they will be unlikely to be introduced. In an emergency there is someone at school she can contact but, in her opinion, they would prefer her to solve problems that arise rather than involving them. She explained; "There is somebody there, but, somehow...it's like, I do feel that they'd rather me just deal with it myself, because out of sight is out of mind." She had a job review on the week of the interview and voiced her concerns to Mr Freamon.

Mr Freamon stressed the importance he places on face-to face communication within the school. The school does not use emails to impart information. He commented: "We don't even use emails...We, as a staff, have decided that you can get inundated with it...We believe in personal conversations and contact going on." Important information is shared in staff briefings and individual conversations. The school also implements an 'open door' approach where senior staff are available to

discuss issues. Mr Freamon explained that this approach also operates on a literal level: "...they tend to have an open door policy, and it's not just a policy. We have open doors...my door is open every single day, unless I've got something I specifically need to do, and staff come in and we talk to each other."

Staff induction is an important element of information sharing. New staff are given a detailed handbook and a mentor. Mr Freamon commented: "...we are also very conscious that the training has to go in. All new staff go through an entire induction process during an entire year and they have a mentor as well. There's a [senior] member of staff who's in charge of all the new staff ... there's also a staff handbook that tells you key things about the year ..."

Staff are also given very explicit information about how to respond to problems in the classroom. Mr Freamon explained how the staff guidelines were written in collaboration with staff with the aim to achieve clarity so that all staff knew the procedures to follow when an incident occurred.

7.2 Home/school relationships

Both staff and parent respondents stressed the importance of effective communication between home and school. Opinions among staff varied widely on the appropriate level of involvement in pupils' lives outside school. The views of the included pupils and those of the pupils at risk of exclusion varied widely concerning the impact of home/ school communication on exclusion and behaviour. For this reason I have subdivided the views of the included pupils from those of the pupils at risk of exclusion.

7.2.1 Bitterclough

The included pupils

Bethany (Y9) talked about home/school contact in terms of disciplinary measures. In her opinion it is senior management rather than class teachers who will contact parents about behaviour issues. From her observations, although teachers may threaten this action, they are unlikely to carry it out. However contact with home is a powerful strategy and this is the reason that behaviour will improve when heads of year enter a classroom. She explained that: "...sometimes the head of year comes and visits your classes, so everybody is quiet then... 'cause the head of year will just phone your parents and, like, punish you." Ali Y10, views positive home contact as a welcome reward for his efforts and this is his preferred reward.

The pupils at risk of exclusion

Alma (Y9) has had negative experiences of school contact with home. In her view it does not help her behaviour but causes conflict at home and unnecessary worry for her parents. Her parents are unhappy that they have been contacted by the school so frequently. They feel that they are unable to influence her behaviour at school and are reluctant to punish her at home for fear that she will behave badly at home. She explained: “[My parents] just can’t be bothered with it any more...they go, ‘We always get phone calls’, and they go, ‘Just try and be good and if you don’t we can’t do anything else about it.’”

Aqib’s (Y10) parents have also had negative experiences of contact with school. Aqib had a lengthy, fixed-term exclusion at the end of the previous school year. At first it was understood that the exclusion was for a week and Aqib’s father accepted this. However, Aqib reported that there was no fixed date for him to return to school and his father made repeated phone calls to the school to clarify this. He was given conflicting information with the result that Aqib did not return to school for over a month. Both Aqib and his parents felt that the exclusion had been too lengthy and were frustrated by the difficulty they experienced in communicating with the school.

Albert’s (Y9) experiences of home/school contact concerned his mother’s attempts to find him a new school after his permanent exclusion from Blackmoor. He spent six weeks at home, during which time his mother contacted various people to get him a place in a new school: “I didn’t come straight here...I had something like six week off school. I got kicked out of there and my mum had to ring up some people but it took them ages to get back in touch ...It was hard to find a school that would accept me.”

Staff views

Mrs Little has a lot of contact with home, meeting parents before pupils spend time in the LSU when they are required to sign a contract to agree to support her work at home. She gives parents advice about how to manage their children’s behaviour at home and asks them to withdraw privileges to reinforce the work of the LSU. She related how she speaks to parents: “...first of all have you got a TV in his bedroom? Right, take the plug off. Has he got this? Right, take it off him. Has he got that? Right, take it away from him. OK, I want you to do all this today while he’s in here, and I want you to just take everything away, and when he gets home tonight, he’s going to have to start to earn that back by getting good reports home from school. And, obviously, if he’s not behaving at home he doesn’t get them back either.” She

also gives parents advice about diet, advocating the use of Omega 3 to improve behaviour. During a pupil's time in the LSU Mrs Little keeps in close contact with parents. She is in daily telephone contact if there are problems and sends a card home if they are doing well.

In Mrs Little's opinion, parental attitudes to their children's behaviour is of paramount importance. Her view of parents of children who access the LSU is negative and she feels that they do not value education: "Too many parents don't care." She also believes that parents do not model acceptable behaviour to their children, explaining that "Once we get to the parents, the parents are just as badly behaved as they are, a lot of the time." In her opinion, parents accept poor behaviour as part of their child's personality: "...you're getting more and more mothers now who are actually being physically assaulted by children, girls and boys...and they're accepting it, a lot of them: 'That's the way she is' not 'What can we do about it?'"

In Mrs Little's view parenting skills need to be taught but parents are unwilling to access parenting classes when run by social services. She commented: "I also think we should be doing something about parenting skills as well, because we've got mums who are asking for help, crying out for help, and nobody's helping them...They don't even want to touch social services."

In Mr Daniels' opinion, although parents are supportive they are not always effective. He observes that there are some children with difficult behaviour and that parents experience the same difficulties at home.

7.2.2 Blackmoor

Pupil views

Only one of the pupils at Blackmoor mentioned home/school contact. Charday's (Y10) parents punish her at home when she has behaviour problems at school. She explained that she is admonished when she gets into trouble at school. Her parents shout at her and take away privileges: "I get shouted at...I get grounded, I have to stay in."

Staff views

Ms Bell described the variations between the families of pupils with problem behaviour. She is aware that the home circumstances of some pupils impinge on and take priority over school issues and described circumstances where basic needs like food and safety may not be met by families. She commented "...there is some horrible circumstances out there for different children, and we've got our share of

them in school.” She is concerned that important family events that may impact on behaviour are not always shared with the school

Mr Carver shares this concern observing that if there are problems in the pupil’s home, then these will manifest themselves in school. He sees that there will be a conflict between the priorities of a child who has just witnessed domestic violence and their adherence to school rules: “...you’re telling the child, ‘Get your tie up’, when at home dad’s just attacked mum and children have seen this...” In his view a troubled home life often results in problems at school, commenting: “I don’t think that it would be a surprise to anyone that children that do have a difficult home background are in more trouble in school than other children are.”

In contrast, Ms Bell has observed that some children from seemingly settled families experience behaviour problems: “...It’s not always the case, and you do get children that you just think, ‘Why? There is actually no reason for you to be acting like this. You’ve got a lovely family...” Also there are pupils from challenging circumstances who do not have behavioural issues: “We have some children that are from really deprived families that are lovely, and their families do the best for them and no behaviour problems whatsoever...”

Mr Barksdale also shares this view, observing that a lot of the problems that pupils have at school stem from a mismatch between expectations at home and school: “I think a lot of it comes from the home, or their upbringing and the community in which they live... Sometimes they struggle to take things from home, to leave them at home and take a different approach in school. Like if they are going to go home and chew constantly, well that’s fine, but they can’t do it in school.” Ms Bell was also concerned that home attitudes to education could lead to disrespect, commenting that “...sometimes, if the kids know the parents are going to back them up, then they’re not going to respect the teacher anyway.”

In Mr Carver’s experience, supportive parents will reinforce school sanctions by giving their children sanctions at home. He described a supportive parent: “What a good parent will do if we say detention, it will be a case of, ‘I will punish them at home and I want you to phone me every time there’s a problem now, because I’m not having none of this, none of that.” He reiterated this opinion three times during the interview.

Ms Bell concurred with this view, citing examples of how some parents questioned the disciplinary decisions of the school. She sees this as counterproductive to school discipline: “...we have obviously parents that will ring up at the drop of a hat saying, ‘You’ve told my child off because of this, and der-der-der....” She has also experienced pupils who threaten to send their parents to

school to contest disciplinary measures. She explained: “I’ve had a child today who said to me, ‘My dad will come up.’”

Mr Barksdale maintains regular contact with the parents or carers of the pupils for whom he is a key worker and believes that this is so for other key workers. He finds home contact an effective way to reinforce sanctions in the LSU. He explained that some parents are willing to give rewards and sanctions at home, based on their child’s behaviour at school. He gives the example of positive feedback: “I rang mum to ...let her know that he’d done really well...It’s good because his mum can then work with us and give him sanctions if he’s done something really bad, like she might say, ‘Well he’s not having his games console tonight.’”

Both Ms Bell and Mr Carver explained that after an exclusion, pupils and parents would have to attend a meeting prior to the pupil’s return to school. In Mr Carver’s opinion the inconvenience this may cause parents emphasises the serious nature of an exclusion.

Parental views

Francine reinforces school discipline at home by withdrawing Namond’s privileges. She explained her strategy if Namond is excluded from school: “...he knows that he won’t be allowed to play rugby. He’s grounded that night and that...I’m saying it’s a killer, because it is, because he’ll carry on being naughty, not that night, but he’s still been excluded. He got picked to play for Watermill Valley... Well, I pulled him out of one because he got excluded.” She has attended many meetings about Namond’s behaviour. When he was at primary school an expert told the school not to exclude him but he has subsequently been excluded many times.

7.2.3 Grimsdale

Pupil views

Two of the pupils who experienced problems at Grimsdale spoke about parental contact with school. Karim (Y10) commented that his father is happy to have contact with staff. Karim has explained to his father about a problem he has with one of his teachers. He has found his father supportive and willing to explain Karim’s views to the teacher concerned. This happened on an open evening when Karim’s father voiced his concerns that he was being victimised: “...my dad said, ‘Obviously you need to watch out as well because, obviously, I’m not saying that my son, like, doesn’t mess about, but if it’s other people messing about as well, you need to watch out for them and treat them all fairly.’”

James (Y10) also talked about home/school contact. When he was younger and got into trouble at school, James' parents used to voice their concern, however, now he is older this has changed and they do not comment on it. He commented: "...when I were younger they'd say something about it, but now I'm older, they say nowt" P.5 (4). However, if James is excluded his parents are very concerned. He explained: "My dad goes mad, and my mum just gets upset and mad."

Staff views

Mr Freamon was aware of how home issues can impact on behaviour. He stressed the importance of considering all of the information available when deciding on sanctions: "...any other background information you have to consider, whether you've got anything in the family background-a bereavement or something like that..." In order to achieve this he keeps in close contact with families and carers. Mr Howard also believes that it is important that a form teacher is aware of issues coming from a pupil's home background. He feels that he is given this information at Grimsdale although he did not have this information at his previous school. When asked if he received information about home backgrounds he replied: "Here, I'd say, 'Yes.' At my old school...even as a form tutor, the information that I thought you should know about was kept from you and you had to go and search it out yourself, whereas...as a form tutor, I think you should be made aware of these things."

Mr Howard recognises the importance of keeping parents informed about any issues arising with their children. He explained how he had not only contacted parents by phone but also invited them in to school to discuss strategies to resolve problems: "I'm one for getting contact and ringing home and speaking to parents. There've been incidents this year with a few boys in Y10...where I've had to speak to them, ring home. I've had parents in. I've had meetings." He also stressed the importance he places on keeping parents informed about issues arising in school and is aware that sometimes parents are unaware of how their children behave at school. He explained: "...there's been a few occasions where I've rung home and the parents are like, 'I can't believe that. I send him to school with his kit and I just think he's getting involved and he's doing well.'" It is definitely a good thing, telling them how it is."

Mr Freamon explained how he involves parents in educational decisions. The parents of the pupils that have been identified to join the next Y11 alternative programme group had already been approached about their children's involvement in the project. Parents are also involved in planning programmes for pupils who are experiencing serious behavioural problems. He gave the example of a boy who I had recently taught at the PRU: "...if we have two or three like Adrian, Adrian's mum came to meetings and we planned the next few weeks." He also mentioned that

parents are always involved in exclusions and have to attend a meeting at school before their child returns after a fixed-term exclusion.

Parents are contacted as a strategy to reduce exclusions. If a child is involved in a serious incident at school like fighting: "...if it's a serious concern...then the parents may be contacted...it's to try to reduce that ad hoc use of exclusions." Mr Freamon also explained how the community police officer will come to an agreement with parents to bring pupils home if necessary rather than formally exclude them: "Mary Webb [the home school liaison officer] will, sometimes, for example, say to parents, 'They're really worked up. Can I bring them home now with me? ...We'll get them settled at home...so they are not being excluded from school,' but parents are saying, 'Bring them home. Don't get them excluded,' ... so we're working with parents."

Mrs Pearlman also maintains close contact with the families of her pupils. She described how she meets parents before their child comes to the Y11 provision, positioning herself as a mother who has brought up a difficult child: "Before the lads come on the course, I insist on meeting the parents. I tell the parents that I've had a difficult child." She explains to parents how she will work in partnership with them to support their child in the Y11 provision. She asks them to support her in disciplinary matters: "I'll say to them, 'I'm on your side. This is me and you getting your lad through this last year at school and I'll help him with his CV, I'll help him with his references, I'll help to get him into college, and when I ring you, all I want from you is that you answer the phone and that you back me up' ...and quite often, well, most of the time, they are very, very supportive." She also involves parents in disciplinary decisions and described how she sometimes comes to an agreement with parents to send a pupil home: "I might ring them and say, 'He's doing my head in today. Will you have a word with him? All right I'm sending him home.'"

Parental views

Aaron's behaviour has been a concern since primary school. Although he was referred for help none was forthcoming. Since he has been at Grimsdale he has had additional help when an outside agency took him out for rewards. He was recently referred to CAMHS (Child and adolescent mental health service) and has recently been diagnosed with ADHD. Donette is pleased with the diagnosis as the medication prescribed has already had an impact on Aaron's behaviour. She feels that the school has pushed for help with Aaron. She has an older son who attended the Y11 group and she was happy with the way they helped him. She explained that if there was a problem with other pupils she would contact Mrs Pearlman and it would be

addressed quickly. She explained: “Sometimes we’d have a...because there were some kids obviously that he didn’t get on with, but we spoke to Mrs Pearlman and she was straight on to it and he were fine.”

7.3 Reflective commentary

The focus of this chapter has been the mesosystem, the part of the ecosystemic framework where linkages between the people and processes in the microsystem are located (2.3). In this section I reflect on the interview responses concerned with the mesosystem, relating themes to the ecosystemic framework (Chapter 2.3).

In the mesosystem two themes that impact on school exclusions were identified: inter-staff communication and home/school communication. The quality and frequency of communication varied widely between the schools and was highly dependent on school practices (See Chapter 8). Within staff communication, three strands were evident, namely the dissemination of information from senior management, sharing information among staff, and communication between on-site units and the main school.

The dissemination of information by management was most effective when it was prioritised by senior staff and there was a range of methods available to facilitate this. This relates closely to school ethos in the exosystem (See Chapter 8) as it was dependent on individual school practices. Ease of contact with senior staff including face-to face conversations and an open-door policy were highly valued. In contrast, factors described as detrimental to good communication included timetabling that prevented staff from attending briefing sessions resulting in teaching staff feeling under-valued and ill-prepared to implement whole school strategies. Given the evidence in Chapter 8 about the importance of consistency for pupils with SEBD the lack of effective communication within the mesosystem may be a contributory factor.

Information sharing between staff took place formally (e.g. departmental meetings and through dedicated noticeboards) but also informally by word of mouth. A further means of information sharing reported by one school was the appointment of key workers for vulnerable pupils as another method of ensuring that individual problems were communicated. Whatever processes were adopted, there was evidence that the quality adult/adult relationships were critical to their effectiveness. These are also an aspect of school culture and are more fully developed in Chapter 8.

Staff communication between on-site units and the school was an unusual situation that made particular demands on processes and relationships. In two of the

on-site units staff were dissatisfied with the level of communication with the rest of the school. They felt isolated and reported that there was little discussion about the needs of pupils once they were removed from mainstream lessons. In contrast, in the third school, staff reported close communication with both management and classroom staff. This provided evidence that the differences could not be accounted for solely by geographical factors. Two factors appeared to be important. First, in the third school there was a formal requirement of close supervision of the newly appointed head of the unit by the deputy head. This increased the frequency of contact, an aspect not well-developed in Bronfenbrenner's model. Second, the understandings and purposes of the provisions varied, an issue which will be developed in Chapter 8 on the exosystem.

The second theme identified in this chapter was home /school communication. The forging of good relationships between home and school was viewed by all school staff as a powerful way to influence and improve behaviour. There was a consensus that support from the home was an important factor in success at school, a factor relating to both school ethos in the exosystem and to the cultural climate in the macrosystem. Staff varied in the way they interacted with parents. This appeared to be dependent on their personal attitudes to pupils at risk of exclusion, with some staff believing that pupils had behaviour problems because parents were ineffective or disinterested. Contact in this case focussed on perceived deficits in parenting, and sometimes involved advice regarding home discipline. Other staff took a more egalitarian view seeing their role as a partnership with parents. Parents were sometimes asked to support school discipline at home and in some cases pupils in crisis were, with the agreement of their families, sent home in order to avoid exclusions. This is an illegal practice and was severely criticised as an infringement of children's rights by the OCC (2012) in their School Exclusions Inquiry. This practice is located not only in the mesosystem but also in the exosystem as part of the unofficial school organisation and in addition, as there is a legal requirement to record school exclusions, in the macrosystem.

In the light of these reflections my next chapter focusses on interview responses relating to the next layer of the ecosystemic framework, the exosystem, where the school organisation and structures that impact on and are influenced by the mesosystem and microsystem are located.

8 The exosystem

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Beyond the mesosystem in the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3) are the structures impacting on the microsystems and mesosystem: the exosystem. In this chapter I examine how the school policies, structures and organisation impact on the behaviour of the child. These include behaviour management; curriculum and pedagogy; and special educational needs. I have included data on the use of exclusions as these reflect variations in individual school practice.

8.1 Behaviour management

By far the greatest number of comments and opinions in the interviews related to behaviour management. I have divided this section into the subheadings: behaviour policies; rewards and incentives; sanctions; monitoring behaviour; and further strategies. I end this section with respondents' comments on recent developments and ideas for the future.

8.1.1 Behaviour Policies

The aim of all of the behaviour policies was to maintain order in school by using behaviour modification in the form of a hierarchical system of both rewards and sanctions. They were similar in that they each contain advice for classroom teachers on how to maintain discipline in the classroom, focusing on positive feedback and the reward system. They all describe a hierarchy of responses to behaviour incidents, the most serious of which was 'on-call' where a senior member of staff will be called to a serious incident that needs immediate attention. Sanctions varied

according to the nature of the incident, from a verbal admonishment for a minor matter, to internal and external exclusions for more serious incidents. Between these extremes there are detentions, contact with home, a letter home, an interview with parents or the pupil can be put 'on-report' involving feedback from each lesson.

Although the information from each school was similar there were some variations that could impact on the implementation of sanctions. Some areas that the schools focused on appear to be somewhat idiosyncratic and particular to the individual school: Bitterclough has a daily lunchtime standards detention for those who infringe the standards of the school including uniform / jewellery; punctuality; and adhering to the prescribed procedures for day book systems and equipment, whereas Blackmoor has a weekly senior staff detention, taking place for 30 minutes after school, for smoking, being out of school without permission and for dropping litter.

8.1.1.1 Bitterclough

The Bitterclough Staff Handbook acknowledges the complexity of disruptive behaviour and that it may originate outside the classroom. Although it describes a range of strategies for responding to challenging behaviour, it recognises that teacher responses to disruptive behaviour are dependent on the individual's approach, advocating the use of pre-planned strategies that can be developed with experience.

Staff were conscious of discrepancies between the behaviour policy and its implementation. Although the staff handbook states that verbal abuse of staff is regarded as a serious incident, from the evidence of both pupils and staff, the school response can be variable. From Mr Wallace's observations the use of exclusion has changed with the appointments of a new deputy head and assistant heads during the past year. Formerly he observed that a pupil would be excluded for swearing at a teacher, fighting, dangerous or aggressive behaviour. With the introduction of internal exclusion and head of year exclusions he finds the system less clear and has noticed inconsistencies in the use of exclusions. He commented: "It used to be quite clear that if a pupil swore directly at a teacher, if a pupil was involved in a fight, if a pupil was aggressive or any dangerous behaviour, then they would be excluded." He explained that it is now unclear whether a pupil will be excluded for verbally abusing staff or whether the incident will merit a far lesser sanction: "...you can see a pupil that's sworn at a teacher still in mainstream lessons, where another pupil whose misdemeanour might seem...swearing at another pupil... is excluded."

Pupils at Bitterclough were also aware that there were inconsistencies in the way sanctions were implemented. Pingu (Y10) was critical of teachers who failed to carry out strategies. She explained that the teachers tended to forget that they had sent her out, leaving her outside the classroom for unspecified times and she then became abusive to them. She explained: “Like say...the teachers send you out and they say, ‘I’ll come for you in five minutes.’ They don’t come for you and you stand outside for ages until the end of the lesson and it’s just stupid. If people say they’re going to come out for you in five minutes they should...” Aqib (Y10) also noticed that teachers did not always implement sanctions but this could be to his advantage. He explained that after arguing with the teacher about going to the toilet he left the room without permission. “...so I went to the toilet and then he kept me behind. He wanted me to stay behind in school for an hour, but I didn’t go, so he’s forgot about it.”

8.1.1.2 Blackmoor

The Positive Behaviour and Discipline Policy at Blackmoor was more explicit than that at Bitterclough, describing seven stages of responses to disruptive behaviour starting with non-verbal interventions of ignoring, eye contact and physical proximity. These are followed by a hierarchy of verbal responses with scripted suggestions of ‘What to say’ and ‘What not to say.’ The policy also describes four levels of severity of incident ranging from those that can be resolved by the classroom teacher to those that require intervention by senior management.

Staff at Blackmoor felt supported by the way their senior management dealt with incidents. The case of verbal abuse of staff is an interesting example of how consistently sanctions are implemented. Mr Carver described how verbal abuse of staff is always taken seriously, with the pupil involved being excluded for a fixed-term. He related an incident where he excluded a child for swearing at a new member of staff teacher who remarked: “At my old school, it just wouldn’t have happened. It would have been a case of somebody talked to him and then he’d have been back in class in ten minutes.”

Pupils were not always in agreement with staff about the consistency with which sanctions were implemented. Marlo (Y10) observed that he had not been given a detention for being late: “I’m late for registration, they just ... say, ‘If you’re late again, you’ll get a detention’ but they don’t give you one.”

8.1.1.3 Grimsdale

From the information given by Mr Freamon, the behaviour policy at Grimsdale is similar to that at Blackmoor in that it describes the response expected by staff to

individual incidents. In his opinion, it is the formal systems that are in place that ensure that the school runs smoothly. He commented that: “The other thing that is really successful is that we have very formal systems in the school. Our confidence comes from our systems.” Mr Freamon feels that the policy has clear guidelines for dealing with any situation that arises. The action to be taken in any situation is systematically documented for the information of all staff and pupils. The system was developed in consultation with staff and pupils. The pupils were involved in the writing of the code of conduct. Mr Freamon explained: “The kids wrote their own code of conduct... We discussed it at length with them what they wanted.”

The behaviour policy was developed by a group of staff focusing on behaviour issues. If a student misbehaves in class there is a system of warnings and time out. It gives specific examples of problem behaviour and the sanctions that follow. Mr Freamon explained: “The guidelines are about how to deal with different instances, so, what they’re over, who you report to... Every member of staff has this guideline, so we follow the principles... So it gets rid of the grey areas... We made sure that we’ve kept absolute clarity...” The principles that he focuses on are “three ‘C’s... control, consistency and care.” Mr Freamon felt that consistency was a priority, stating that “I think that one of the most important things is the consistency element, because that reduces all the variabilities.”

There was a tension between the Grimsdale policy aims of consistency and how the system is implemented. Although the policy advocates uniformity in staff responses, it emerged that responses could be variable particularly when dealing with pupils with complex difficulties. There was recognition that some pupils have underlying problems that cannot be addressed by a simple rewards and sanctions system. Mr Freamon spoke at length about the advantages of having some flexibility in the system, explaining that, if the guidelines were followed too rigidly, the result could be an increase in exclusions. The aim of the school is to keep exclusions to a minimum by meeting the needs of all pupils, so, the behaviour policy is not always adhered to. He explained “...we realise that we could be hog tied by saying you’ve done this, you’ve done and you’ve done that, so you have to be excluded...” Using the example of Adrian, a boy I was familiar with as he had attended the PRU, Mr Freamon explained how the school could use different responses when they deemed it necessary: “[W]ith Adrian we realised that he was adding them up very quickly, so at times we did not exclude him, worked with him in school... You have to review each of these things: How serious was it? What was the threat? What’s the background, in other words has he been doing this before?” In his opinion, too rigid an application of sanctions, particularly exclusions, is counterproductive. He

explained “Are you going to exclude in Y7?..If you start using your biggest weapon/stick...in Y7, well, what are you going to do in Y10?”

This opinion was reinforced by Mr Howard, who had been in post at Grimsdale for eight months. He observed that at his previous school there had been very clear guidelines for staff response to different behaviours. However, at Grimsdale he feels that the system is more flexible and heads of years are free to make their own decisions. In his view the system at Grimsdale is more effective because the heads of year take into consideration not only the incident but also the particular pupil. He explained that the same incident may be viewed differently in different age groups. In contrast the pupils at his previous school knew that if they truanted they would be on truancy report and be in detention after school. The problem he saw was that the system was so rigid that sanctions were used excessively and lost their impact. In his view, the fact that the Grimsdale system is more flexible and less prescriptive means that the staff are able to respond on an individual level and this is more effective.

Nevertheless, a high degree of the consistency appears to be desirable from both staff and pupil perspectives. In common with Blackmoor, staff were concerned that verbal abuse was taken seriously. Mr Howard described how he felt supported when a child who swore at him was excluded.

The included pupils did not always concur with staff about the consistency with which sanctions were implemented. In Crystal’s (Y10) opinion, sanctions can be dependent on an individual teacher’s decision. Describing the behaviour of some girls she said: “...they’ll just...won’t stop arguing with the teacher until they get sent out and then they just come back in sometimes and they get put ‘on-call’. It depends what mood teacher’s in or what he thinks is best.” Rhonda (Y9) also felt that it was the approach of the individual teacher that dictated behaviour. She cited the example of one teacher was ineffective because she was inconsistent in implementing the sanctions available. In contrast she described how a teacher shouted ineffectually. “[He] Shouts at them. They’ll listen, like, ten minutes then as soon as he turns round to go on the computer, that’s it. They’re just talking again and he tells them to shut up again.”

In each school there were two strands to behaviour management: rewards and sanctions. The connection between the two varied from school to school. The closest connection was seen at Grimsdale where Mr Freamon explained that if a pupil received a sanction, this impacted on the number of credits needed to receive a reward: “...if you get on-called from a lesson, your target goes up by five, so you don’t actually get credits taken off you, but your target becomes three hundred and

five...and if you get excluded, it goes up to three hundred and twenty-five. In other words, an exclusion would cost you dearly on rewards as well.”

8.1.2 Rewards and incentives

One of the most interesting aspects of the behaviour systems was the care and emphasis schools put on rewarding and providing incentives for their pupils. Unfortunately it seemed that these worked well for included pupils but had little meaning for or impact on the pupils who experienced difficulties.

8.1.2.1 Bitterclough

Mr Daniels gave a clear description of the school reward system explaining that in the main school the reward system is based on credit stamps. These can be given by any member of staff for doing something that is deemed worthwhile, both academically and socially, and are recorded in the pupil’s day book. They are totalled at the end of each week and sent to the pastoral administrator who adds them up every ten weeks. The pupils are then rewarded in assembly with certificates, letters home and vouchers. They also have weekly awards for the form that has the most merits and a lucky dip where any pupil who has earned a credit has a chance to win a £5 voucher.

Ali (Y10) and Bethany (Y9), the included pupils at Bitterclough, were in favour of giving disruptive pupils more incentives to improve their behaviour. They both described their ideas of how substantial rewards could be used initially and that as behaviour changed these could be reduced until the pupil is reintegrated into the school system. Ali explained his belief that monetary rewards would support this process. “I’d give more rewards so they work more after that so their behaviour might slowly change.” This echoes his own experience of receiving certificates: “I feel, like, really happy when I know I’m going to get more certificates.” He explained that as behaviour improved the rewards could be reduced.

Bethany’s idea was similar in that she believed that pupils who experienced problems needed more incentives than others. In her opinion, the bigger the reward the more likely pupils are to change their behaviour. She also believes that eventually external rewards can be withdrawn because the desired behaviour will be internalised: “...when they’re good in every lesson, you can stop giving them rewards and just tell them to be good.” None of the pupils who experienced difficulties at Bitterclough mentioned rewards or incentives.

Staff varied in the way they used incentives, but both teaching staff mentioned that short term and immediate rewards were more effective than long term goals. In the main school, Mr Wallace uses some incentives in addition to the school merit system. He explained “We have a lot of interactive activities and we use a lot of ICT, so we use that as a bribe...or we get to use the computers to revise.”

Mrs Little has her own behaviour management system in the LSU. Every pupil starts the day with ten points which can be lost through disobeying the code of conduct. They earn a sticker for every twenty points. At the end of the week the pupils receive cash rewards of 50p for their stickers. Mrs Little explained that this system differed from the mainstream where pupils are rewarded with credits and vouchers. The monetary reward is more meaningful to pupils at risk of exclusion. Mrs Little commented: “The rest of the school get merits and vouchers and stuff, but these are kids that don’t get merits.” She found this an effective reward at all ages.

The pupils in the LSU have to earn their break times so they start with no breaks for the first week and a half. They eat their lunch in the canteen at a different time from the main school, so they are isolated from their classmates. Mrs Little is very much in favour of parents using behaviour modification methods at home to control behaviour at school. She advises parents to remove their children’s possessions so that they can earn them back through good behaviour at school.

8.1.2.2 Blackmoor

Ms Bell and Mr Carver explained how the school reward system is implemented. This is based on commendations being given as a reward for good work or behaviour. Certificates are given as pupils accumulate commendations and a raffle ticket is also given with each commendation for a prize draw at the end of each year. At the end of each term the winning form in each year group is also given £200 for a trip. There is also a weekly form competition for those who get the most commendations. Mr Carver thinks this system is very generous but is aware that some Y10 and Y11 pupils are no longer motivated by it. In his opinion, the success of the system depends on individual form teachers’ commitment to it. He explained: “I don’t care what year they are in, if the form tutors in for it, they’re all in for it.”

Ms Bell voiced some concern that the reward system could be perceived as unfair. She had observed that some included pupils felt that pupils with problems were excessively rewarded for good behaviour.

Mr Barksdale has recently taken up the post of manager of the LSU. He has previously been working in the school as a support worker and is in the process of incorporating the strategies that he considered effective in the LSU. This system is separate from that of the main school. He described how he uses rewards rather than

sanctions to encourage desirable behaviour. He is running a sweepstake for the European Football Championships, and also is also introducing rewards that appeal to pupils who are less focused on sports, like listening to music and watching videos.

Francine, related how her son, Namond's (Y9), behaviour had prevented him from going on school trips throughout his schooling. She explained: "At infant school he wasn't allowed on a trip ...so he got taken off two weeks before he was due to go. All his friends went off to camp and he wasn't allowed to go." She feels that Namond has not learned from his experiences. He was recently dropped from the county rugby team for being cheeky to a coach.

8.1.2.3 Grimsdale

In response to a question from the interviewer, one of the included pupils at Grimsdale described how the rewards system was implemented. Rhonda (Y9) talked at length about how pupils can earn credits that can make them eligible for school trips. "You get credits which, if you get, like so many at the end of the year, you go on a trip." She personally finds that this is an incentive to do well in lessons. In her opinion "It makes you want to buck your ideas up and get credits to go."

Forms can also be rewarded through the credit system and pupils with problem behaviour can interfere with these. Rhonda described how staff tried to use peer pressure to improve behaviour, but this was not always successful. She described how "Teachers try saying things like, 'You're going to wreck it for the rest of the form', but they don't care."

Rhonda observed that it is easier for pupils with behavioural difficulties to earn credits than those who behave well all the time. In her opinion, when a pupil with problems behaves well they seem to earn a lot of credits. She explained that "...it's annoying when you are, like, sat there all the time just getting on with things and then they are good for one lesson and they get about ten credits..."

In Mr Freamon's opinion, the school addresses this problem by automatically giving credits for following school expectations and making an effort. An additional strategy is to limit the number of credits that pupils can earn to two per lesson. "We ...say to staff, 'You can only give two credits in a lesson, per student, and one must be for work, and only one can be for attitude and approach.'" He explained that the pupils review the rewards for credits every half-term.

It is more difficult to earn rewards if a pupil is sanctioned for misbehaviour. An extra five credits are added to the target every time a pupil is on-called from a lesson and an extra ten credits are added for an exclusion. Mr Freamon does not view this strategy as taking credits away from disruptive pupils. He explained that

the reason for increasing the target is to encourage the pupil to make a consistent improvement in their behaviour.

Mrs Pearlman uses a range of strategies to control pupils and finds she has to vary them depending on the individual case. “I try different things on different ones, because they’re such a mixed bunch that you can’t really have one strategy that would suit all of them.” This is the most difficult part of her role because she is constantly questioned by the pupils about why different rules apply for different pupils. She has noticed that her pupils test her to find out whether she will carry out threats, and find that she does. The morning of the interview she had used both rewards and sanctions: “They’ve had tea and toast this morning, which I promised them, but the other side of the coin is that they did my head in with mobile phones, so they’re banned today.”

Donette related how her son, Aaron’s (Y9) behaviour impacted on his eligibility for rewards. She explained: “He got stopped going on school trips...because of his behaviour...”

8.1.3 Sanctions

In this section I examine whether the sanctions at each school deter pupils from disruptive behaviour that could lead to exclusions.

8.1.3.1 Bitterclough

At Bitterclough, both of the included pupils referred to exclusion as being part of the behaviour management system. Bethany (Y9) mentioned it as a response to serious fighting, explaining how staff would first isolate the protagonists and take witness statements, exclusion only occurring after police involvement and continued fighting. She spoke positively about the school system of sanctions. In her opinion the system of sanctions was clear and the levels of intervention were matched to the severity of the misdemeanour. Bethany believes that detentions are an effective deterrent for people talking in class, however, for more serious problems the presence of a senior member of staff can have a big impact because they will not only punish the protagonists but also inform parents. She thinks that although a class teacher may threaten to phone parents they would not carry out the threat.

The included pupils’ opinions did not concur with those of the pupils experiencing difficulties at Bitterclough who had been excluded many times and did not consider that exclusion effectively addressed behaviour issues. The pupils at risk of exclusion did not wish to be permanently excluded and were aware of the processes that led to their fixed-term exclusions but were unable to find ways to

prevent it happening. They had not found fixed-term exclusions helpful in improving their behaviour. Pingu (Y10) has been excluded on a fixed-term basis many times but did not feel that it helped her. She commented, "... it's just very, very stupid." Aqib (Y10) also felt that exclusions had not helped his behaviour. Albert (Y9) has already been permanently excluded from Blackmoor and is on the verge of being permanently excluded from Bitterclough. In his opinion the school has done all it can to help him, commenting that "There's nowt else to do for them." He now feels that the onus is on him to behave well.

The LSU is used to withdraw pupils from lessons and activities that can be problematic and, in addition, the school now has an internal exclusion unit, where pupils can be excluded from lessons but still attend school. Mr Daniels commented: "The other one that we have is the internal exclusion unit, because our exclusions, our short-term exclusions were high, very high. So we developed an internal exclusion unit, that's staffed full-time."

The teaching staff at Bitterclough both believed that taking time away from pupils was an effective deterrent and that the more immediate this was the better. They both agreed that lengthy after-school detentions are ineffective because the need to give parents twenty-four hours' written notice of this type of detention meant that it could take place several days after the incident and lose its impact. Mr Wallace finds that the most effective sanction is to keep pupils for five minutes after the lesson. He has observed that five minutes off break times has more impact than an after school detention. In his view pupils want to be with their friends and it is this aspect that makes a shorter break time a deterrent. If they know well in advance that they have an after school detention he believes they are already resigned to this and it does not have the same impact.

8.1.3.2 Blackmoor

Roland (Y9), one of the included pupils at Blackmoor, explained how the behaviour management system is implemented. He described how his teachers go through a series of steps to address behaviour, observing that if a problem cannot be addressed within the classroom the pupil is sent out. If the problem continues the pupil is sent to the head of year. Referring to a boy in his form he explained: "He'd get told off and then he wouldn't learn so he'd get sent outside and then if he wouldn't learn again, he'd get sent to his head of year and it keeps going on." In Roland's opinions these strategies are successful as the boy's behaviour has improved recently.

Roland thinks the truancy report that pupils carry to each lesson is a good way of improving attendance. He is aware of three different report cards that pupils have

to carry and thinks they are effective because they help staff monitor pupils' behaviour. He voiced some irritation when he described how the behaviour of a boy in his class interrupted lessons, stating that "...they sometimes let our form down in what we do, so we can't enjoy lessons as much 'cause the teachers are too busy telling him off."

He mentioned that there had been some fights at the school recently but they had now stopped because of effective staff intervention. Roland was unsure how the problem was solved but he thinks that fixed-term exclusions were used and believes that this would be a deterrent. Bodie (Y10), the other included pupil, agreed that fixed-term exclusions would be only be used in a serious situation. In his opinion, "...it's usually a last resort thing is a suspension."

A more commonly used form of control and monitoring is to put pupils on a daily report that must be signed by teachers in every lesson. At the time of her interview Charday (Y10) was 'on report'. She had to show the report to Mr Carver every morning and lunchtime so that he could monitor her behaviour. If she received a negative report she would have to go to detention after school. In her opinion this was an effective deterrent because she wanted to avoid the detention: "Yes it does [help me behave] because I get a DT after school if I get a cross, so I try my best to try and stay out of trouble."²⁰

Namond was also 'on-report' following a fixed-term exclusion. He already felt that he stood out in class because he is physically larger than his class mates, and that the report emphasised his differences. He also felt that this sanction was unnecessarily harsh and that other pupils would return to school after a fixed-term exclusion with no further action. Since his recent exclusion he realises that he must now behave well to avoid permanent exclusion. He commented: "...I'm on the verge of getting kicked out, so I have to behave."

A strategy that was seen to be effective was to move pupils from their peers. This can take place within the school as in the case of Charday who described how, in Y7, she had been one of a large group of girls in the same form with whose behaviour was very challenging. At the end of Y7 they were split up as a behaviour management strategy. In Charday's opinion this strategy was effective as she now has a different friendship group who have a more positive influence on her behaviour.

Internal exclusions are used in the school, where a pupil is withdrawn from lessons to work with a senior member of staff. Mr Carver commented that this is not always ideal. He is a PE teacher and he feels that sitting in the sun watching a PE

²⁰ Charday was permanently excluded later in the school year

lesson may be regarded as a reward by pupils. Mr Barksdale described how the LSU is also used as part of internal exclusion with the additional loss of breaks and lunchtimes.

Mr Carver explained that sanctions have to vary to meet the needs of the individual: "Every child's different. For some children report cards are brilliant. They don't like being told off by teachers. They don't like being told off by their parents, so they are getting a double whammy. They don't like that at all. Some children don't like detentions, so some children, you put them in detention, again." In his opinion discipline is most effective when it is supported by the pupils' parents: "When parents and the school are together in harmony, that's when discipline works the best."

Staff opinions about the efficacy of sanctions were all favourable. Mr Carver (the deputy head) and Ms Bell (the PE teacher) felt that they mainly dealt with low-level disruptive behaviour, both mentioning infringements of uniform as a problem. Ms Bell and Mr Carver shared the view that if low-level rule-breaking is addressed then the bigger problems do not occur so frequently. In Ms Bell's opinion "...if you keep those small things under control, the bigger things don't really arise, as such. If it's a bit of a crime to have your shirt out, then things that would be really, really a problem don't seem to arise as much."

Mr Carver listed the sanctions that are used in the school. These include both departmental and school detentions; report cards; internal exclusions that usually involve the pupils staying with a head of year and occasionally in the LSU; and finally fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The sanction for truancy is litter picking. Pupils wear a yellow vest for this activity as a further deterrent. Mr Carver explained that "We always say, 'You do an hour litter picking', because they put a yellow jacket on and it just shows them up. It makes them stand out a bit more."

Mr Carver explained that fixed-term exclusions are only used for serious incidents such as swearing at staff, violent behaviour towards staff or pupils, theft and drugs. Drug taking at school is taken seriously by both the school and governors, leading to fixed-term exclusion in the first instance, followed by permanent exclusion for the second incident. Exclusions are always followed by a lengthy interview with parents. Mr Carver sees this interview as a further deterrent as it inconveniences parents and forces them to address their children's behaviour. He explained: "We won't accept the child back unless parents come in and have a long discussion about what's happened, which some parents don't like because it inconveniences them...the inconvenience is part of the whole strategy, to a certain extent."

Ms Bell does not view exclusion as a punishment, but rather a way of removing the pupil from the situation in order to explore ways of resolving it in consultation with parents. "...we want them just basically out of school so we get the chance for their parents to come in..." She agreed with Mr Carver on the importance of eliciting parental support, mentioning that writing a behaviour contract with the agreement of parents is a powerful way of addressing behaviour issues. As mentioned previously (Chapter 8.1.1), staff guidance on tackling disruption in the classroom is very explicit. Ms Bell described how she would use the hierarchy of interventions, starting with a look from the teacher, followed by teacher proximity to the pupil. This would be followed by a verbal intervention. If this was unsuccessful, Ms Bell explained that she would then speak to the pupil individually outside the classroom. The usual sanction for low-level disruption is for the pupil to be removed from the room. If this was ineffective the matter would be referred to the departmental head and form teacher. The form head would have information from other lessons, and if they deemed it necessary, would put the pupil on report so that any patterns could be identified. At this point parents would also be informed. The pupil would then be referred to the head of year, followed by the key stage manager and finally the governors. After two disciplinary visits to the governors she explained that it is usual to be permanently excluded.

8.1.3.3 Grimsdale

As with the other schools, internal exclusion is used as a control measure. All of the pupils who experienced problems mentioned spending time outside mainstream lessons. James (Y10) has had many fixed-term exclusions in the past but none so far this academic year. He observed that the internal exclusion system has prevented him from being excluded. He has had three 'on-calls' this year where he has had to work on the corridor near the SMT offices. He explained "I've been excluded loads of times, but not yet this year... 'Cause I've got better since last year, 'cause we have on-calls, like, if you're bad in lesson, you have to come and sit up on top corridor [near senior staff offices]." Karim (Y10) has also been sent to the top corridor to finish his work when he is disruptive.

The school is well resourced with areas where pupils can be withdrawn from lessons to both work and discuss problems. Mr Freamon commented that the school is well resourced with withdrawal areas: "We've also got pastoral centres, so there's the KS4 Centre, a sixth form centre and a KS3 centre and each of these places have their own, not work areas, but withdrawal areas for kids for interviews and so on, and sometimes students, again, if they have problems come and do their work here. So, again, it's giving them that bit of leeway to stop things escalating." The LSU can also be used to withdraw pupils from mainstream classes as an alternative to

exclusion. This is where Karim was based at the time of his interview because he had destroyed another pupils' work.

The included pupils were both critical of the strategy of sending pupils out of lessons, feeling that often the pupils continued to be disruptive when they returned to the lesson. Crystal was also unconvinced about the efficacy of the 'on-call system where a pupil is sent out of a lesson to complete their work in the vicinity of the SMT. She commented: "They go outside the headteacher's office and there's a corridor and they just sit on there for the lesson... [then] They just do it in another lesson."

Mr Freamon is aware that recently the school has had to permanently exclude more pupils than they did previously. He realises that Grimsdale has been chosen as low-excluding school for the purposes of this study. Although he thinks that Grimsdale's exclusions are low he does not think that the system is perfect. He warned: "... [W]e're not quite as good as we appear. I think our numbers were all right, but we've had some instances where we've had to do permanent exclusions, so I don't want you to go away thinking that the Grimsdale model is the ideal. It works, but we're experiencing, like every other school, challenging individuals who, at times, test all our systems and go beyond it." He explained how the school guidelines for exclusions were devised. Exclusion, both fixed-term and permanent, is considered to be the last resort in the management of behaviour. The type of incident deemed to be the most serious in the school is where behaviour, if a pupil were allowed to remain "would seriously harm the educational welfare of the pupil, or others in the school." When a range of strategies has been tried and are ineffective, then exclusion will be used.

Mrs Pearlman explained how she deals with problems that arise with these pupils once they are in the alternative curriculum provision. The sanctions she finds effective are taking away breaks, telling parents that their children are smoking and banning mobile phones. If pupils misbehave on the minibus that takes them to their alternative provisions she makes them get off the bus and informs their parents where they are.

If pupils are very abusive or violent to her or another pupil the usual school policy is used. At the time of the interview two of her pupils were on fixed-term exclusions and were due to meet with the governors about their behaviour. For less serious incidents, like refusal to comply or fighting, another strategy she uses, in common with the main school and in agreement with their parents, is to send pupils home for a 'cooling-off' period. This is a very informal process. She explained: "If they literally and blatantly are being difficult and refusing to cooperate, I send them home. I send them home for the rest of the day, and that would be an informal, sort

of parents agreeing that we can send them home.” The ethos of the provision is that exclusions are to be avoided as the intention is to keep the pupils in school. Mrs Pearlman considers a permanent exclusion as a failure in the system: “It’s a failure to us, permanent exclusion, to think that they are just sitting at home doing nothing.”

8.1.4 Monitoring behaviour

In this section my focus is on the extent to which behaviour incidents are monitored and how that information is collected and used.

8.1.4.1 Bitterclough

For the past five school terms Bitterclough has been logging behaviour records into a database that analyses which pupils are involved and what the issues are. The information is also analysed according to when and where incidents took place. The information is then used to identify and anticipate problems. Mr Daniels went on to describe how the information is used to inform planning: “It gives us some good information and from that we try to address issues through raising achievement plans and pastoral intervention.”

One of the problem areas identified by Mr Daniels was the movement of pupils around the school. He explained: “...going off the year before’s data, we’re identifying areas that need to be really taken on quickly, and do what we can to say to staff, you know, on corridors at change of lessons, doors open, kiddies off the corridors quickly at lesson changeover, pastoral staff to be around just so that they’re there chivvying people along to where they should be.”

During my interviews at Bitterclough there were many pupils in the corridors during lessons. Pingu described how she walked round the school unchallenged when she argued with a teacher: “I don’t go to form or owt...Because I don’t like it...I just walk around school with my mates. [I] So does anyone see you walking round? [P] No. I just walk past everyone.”

Another cause for concern has been the high exclusion rate among ethnic minorities. During the previous year the school excluded seven pupils, five of whom were boys of Asian origin. Mr Daniels commented that because pupils from ethnic minorities are in a 40/60% minority in Y7-Y11, the school were now working with a nearby university to address this imbalance.

Mrs Little has devised her own system of monitoring pupils’ behaviour when they return to the mainstream lessons after being in the LSU. The reward system in the LSU can also be used for monitoring behaviour. Each pupil starts the day with

ten points. They can lose them for swearing, uniform, lack of effort, lateness. These accumulate and at the end of the week pupils are rewarded with money and a card home [Chapter 8.1.2].

8.1.4.2 Blackmoor

Staff at Blackmoor made few references to monitoring behaviour. The monitoring process appears to start with informal observation triggered by form tutor reports. There was no mention of analysis through the school database. If it escalates or continues to be a problem the behaviour is monitored on a head of year's report that the pupil takes to each lesson. A more serious intervention is that the pupil is monitored by the Key Stage manager, and if this is ineffective the pupil is asked to attend a meeting with the governors. Ms Bell commented "The general rule of thumb is twice up against governors and then you're permanently excluded." She explained that when a pupil is identified as having behaviour difficulties, staff then look at academic achievement and refer the pupil to Mr Carver whose remit is to develop behaviour plans with the pupils. Another form of monitoring takes place during the last lesson of the day when Mr Carver and the SMT walk round the school checking that there are no problems (Chapter 7.1.2).

8.1.4.3 Grimsdale

Mr Freamon listed four types of monitoring used in the school: Attendance, academic progress, personal reports and 'on-call' incidents. A traffic light system is used to indicate the status of a pupils' personal report, so red indicates that a pupil is experiencing difficulties. This status can change with the pupils' behaviour. The number of 'on-call' incidents is monitored through the school database and Mr Freamon was able to analyse the number of incidents in the school years from 2005-8. They occur in 1.5% of the school lessons. When a member of staff uses the 'on-call' system they are required to record when and why the incident took place. The incidents are then followed up, in the first instance with the member of staff involved, then the head of department then the head of year. Parents can also be involved in discussions. The heads of year monitor incidents that their pupils are involved in but Mr Freamon has an overview of the whole school. This system is also used to monitor when and where most incidents occur. A pattern that Mr Freamon has noticed emerging from his data is that incidents tend to occur more on Thursday afternoons. Mr Freamon commented that the school is very proactive in addressing problems.

Movement of pupils within the school is also monitored using a pass system. Mr Freamon explained how pupils were required to carry passes if they were out of

class during lesson times. The colour of these is changed every half term and any member of staff, including ancillary workers, can ask to see them. He explained: "...if you are on the corridor, you are open to, or subject to, questioning from any member of staff...you get a lesson pass from a teacher, and we change them every half-term. They're colour coded...you're going to have cleaners.... anybody will ask you, 'Can I see your lesson pass? If not go back and get one.'"

Problem behaviour is monitored through the 'on-call' book and reports and then analysed to identify any patterns. The information from the monitoring is used to plan strategies to deal with disruption: "We are plotting, and we plan. The 'on-call book' also records where, so we identify hot spots. We also identify times of day, times of the week."

Mr Howard shared Mr Freamon's view that efficient monitoring took place. He commented: "I think generally speaking the strategies that are in place here, the report system, subject tutor reports, head of year reports, they're good. They're monitored well and the kids respond well to them..."

8.1.5 Further strategies for preventing exclusions

In this section I examine evidence for strategies for preventing exclusions, including both in-school provisions and cooperation between schools and with other educational providers to meet the needs of pupils. All of the schools have LSUs that are used to address behaviour issues [9.2.3]. In addition they all have an internal exclusion system in lieu of fixed-term exclusions [9.1.3]. Further strategies are described below.

8.1.5.1 Bitterclough

A new start at another school can follow permanent exclusion. Albert (Y9) had been permanently excluded from Blackmoor in Y8 and, instead of attending the PRU, his mother had arranged for him to attend Bitterclough. He described how he behaved well when he first started attending Bitterclough and made good relationships with some teachers. During the six months he has attended the school he has gradually reverted to the behaviours that had caused his exclusion from Blackmoor: shouting out in class and telling teachers to "Shut up". The day before I interviewed him he had attended a meeting with the governors and was adamant that he would now behave well as he did not want to be excluded from Bitterclough. He commented: "...I don't want to get kicked out of this school so I just think, 'If I'm going to shout out or anything like that I'm going to end up getting kicked out....'"

The teaching of anger management is another strategy used to reduce disruptive behaviour. All of the pupils at Bitterclough have been given additional help for anger management. Albert (Y9) and Pingu (Y10) explained that this had taken place when they spent time in the LSU, whereas Alma (Y9) and Aqib (Y10) both mentioned having support from outside agencies. Pingu believes that a more productive strategy would be to spend more time in the LSU with regular anger management sessions and a member of staff that she could talk to about her problems. However, her experiences of anger management have been that it is ineffective. She explained: "I did anger management...But it hasn't worked."

Recently the school has taken measures to reduce the high numbers of fixed-term exclusions. Mr Daniels explained that changes had been made in staffing to address pastoral issues and identify possible problems: "The idea is that it's very, sort of, proactive pastoral care, rather than reactive, and trying to head problems off before they actually happen."

8.1.5.2 Blackmoor

A strategy that schools can use to prevent exclusion is the 'managed move' where there is an agreement to move a pupil to another school to avoid permanent exclusion. Marlo had in the past attended Micklestone, another school in the LA. He left at the beginning of Y9 because he was in danger of being permanently excluded, and was accepted onto the school roll at Blackmoor. He feels that his behaviour has improved since the move. At Micklestone he truanted frequently and did not take the teachers seriously whereas at Blackmoor he has not truanted at all during the year he has attended. He feels that the teachers at Blackmoor relate better to the pupils and because of that he is learning more.

Ms Bell described how she had noticed that some pupils do not recognise school as important and that subsequently the usual disciplinary systems are ineffective. She described her experiences with Michael, a boy she recognised as coming from a deprived background. In her view he was unaware of when his language and behaviour was inappropriate. She explained that his behaviour impacted on other pupils "...round school, he just got more and more into trouble for various things...it starts affecting other children, and how they're learning and distracting other people." When he was in Y7 the school funded a placement for him at the PRU that was to continue until he left school in Y11.

An additional strategy is to prevent exclusion by addressing underlying problems in children's lives. Claire, the child protection officer, will follow up concerns about pupils' home circumstances and mentoring is available from trainee social workers on placement in the school.

8.1.5.3 Grimsdale

One of the most striking differences between the system at Grimsdale and the other schools was the wide range of strategies invested in to avoid exclusions. In Mr Freamon's opinion, it is far more effective to look at the reasons behind the problem behaviour than to exclude. The decision to exclude rests with Mr Freamon and the other deputy head and is a formal process that is carefully considered. They may overrule the opinion of other senior members of staff and decide to use a different strategy to keep the pupil in school.

Mr Freamon explained that it is a priority to focus on pupils who experience behaviour problems because the school is aware of the impact they can have on other students. In his opinion, these pupils are unable to change their behaviour and interventions are necessary. He commented that "...we as a staff, focus on those because we know that the disruption that they cause to other students is phenomenal and also you've got address their behaviours because they're not capable of doing that themselves."

As with the case of Michael at Blackmoor, Mr Freamon described how a pupil Y7, Lester, had been funded to attend the PRU. He explained how the school had decided that mainstream schooling was inappropriate for this child and therefore chose to keep him at the PRU throughout his time at secondary school. They did this because they believed that if Lester was permanently excluded from Grimsdale, the PRU would have to try to return him to another mainstream school. In Mr Freamon's view their funding of Lester in a setting with small groups was a way of providing him with a degree of educational success that he would not have otherwise experienced. He commented "...it was our educational judgement at the time and it's probably proven that he did survive it to a degree."

Mr Freamon described a further strategy for keeping pupils in school. The school employs a home/liasion coordinator, Mary Webb. Her role is to work with vulnerable students and their families. If pupils are experiencing problems in the classroom she has a system of 'time-out cards' that pupils can use to see her. They may complete their work in her office with her support. Mr Freamon explained, "...she has a safe haven for them to go to. So when a lot of my students get to the point where they are about to explode, in other words, reach exclusion point, many of them go and see her..." She monitors their attendance and behaviour throughout the week so is aware of lessons that may pose problems and can pre-empt these. Alternatively, she may contact parents, if necessary, and ask them if she can take the pupil home [Chapter 7.2.3]. Mr Freamon observed that this is another effective method of avoiding exclusions. During the interview I questioned whether this strategy was an informal exclusion (Chapter 2 and Appendix 6, point 4). Mr

Freamon felt that it was a pragmatic method of pre-empting a situation in which an exclusion was inevitable explaining that "...the reality is, if the child stayed at school they would be excluded, they would cause loads of problems for themselves, probably get themselves excluded for a very long period of time."

Individual timetables can be tailored to meet the needs of some pupils. Aaron also spends a large proportion of his much reduced timetable in the LSU but sees this as a refuge from lessons rather than a sanction. At these times he either stays in the LSU or goes to his lesson. He finds the LSU helpful because he relates well to the staff there. They let him listen to his music and are sensitive to his need to walk around the room.

8.1.6 Recent developments and the ideas for the future

All of the schools are constantly reviewing their systems and striving to improve them. In this section I have drawn together recent changes described by respondents and ideas both staff and pupils have for improving systems.

8.1.6.1 Bitterclough

There have been two recent changes in the school structure designed to reduce disruptive behaviour. The first has been the appointment of cover supervisors for teacher absences as it had been noticed that pupils tended to be disruptive with supply teachers. The second change has been the replacement of head of year posts with non-teaching progress managers who concentrate on the pastoral aspects of the school. In addition a new member of staff with responsibility for pastoral care has been appointed and will be starting at the school the following month. At present the senior members of staff are reviewing the needs of the school. The recent introduction of an internal exclusion provision at Bitterclough has caused the fixed-term exclusion rate to plummet from 303 cases in 2006/7 to 42 cases in 2007/8.

In Mrs Little's opinion, a lot of the pupils with problems should not be in mainstream schools. She would prefer them to be in a provision with an alternative timetable, with access to a psychologist. "I think that we shouldn't actually have a lot of these kids in mainstream schools. I think ...we should have a proper, good provision for these young people, not just sin-bins but some place that has got an alternative type of education We've got to have somewhere for them that's actually got an on-site psychologist, an on-site menu that they can tap into."

Both of the included pupils mentioned bullying as a problem that they have encountered. Ali (Y10) was aware that fixed-term exclusions had been given to

some pupils the previous year in response to bullying, but questioned how effective it is. In his view a more cogent strategy would be to temporarily isolate disruptive pupils in their own classes where the curriculum would focus on social skills. He explained that it would make a difference “If they had to go somewhere separate where they just had their own classrooms, teaching them how to behave, and teaching them how to behave appropriately and what happens if you do bad things, until they actually change and then they come back into the classrooms.” Ali and Bethany both believe that social skills have to be taught explicitly and that rewarding good conduct is a powerful way of changing behaviour. Bethany explained how a member of staff would have to teach social skills: “Probably, you’d have to get a teacher to sit down and talk to them and tell them the rights and wrongs and how to behave in class...”

Two of the pupils at risk of exclusion felt they would benefit from more individual support. Aqib wanted more academic help in lessons he does not understand and Pingu wanted help with anger management and a mentor.

8.1.6.2 Blackmoor

In Roland’s (Y9) opinion the most effective strategy in addressing disruptive behaviour would be if the pupils were able to empathise with others: “...just to realise how other people are feeling if it were happening to them, and just to think about what they’re doing rather than thinking about themselves” P.4 (26). Bodie (Y10) concurred with this view. He was particularly concerned about bullying and felt that it was addressed quickly at the school, by staff meeting with both parties and trying to resolve the problem immediately. Like Roland, he felt that pupils need to be able to empathise with others: “I think people who bully need to look at it from the other person’s perspective, because it can be demoralising, can bullying.” He believes that punishments have a place as a deterrent but, for him, it would be important to find out if there is an underlying reason for disruptive behaviour.

One of the pupils at risk of exclusion, Namond (Y9), would like more contact with people trained to help him. He previously had weekly sessions with a Behaviour Support Worker that he found useful.

The staff also indicated how they would like to improve the behaviour management in the school. Both Mr Carver and Ms Bell believe that effective strategies to improve behaviour lie in the curriculum. Mr Carver feels that the school offers a diverse range of subjects and pupils have the opportunity to choose their own programmes. In his view, following pupils’ own interests will improve their behaviour.

Ms Bell locates the reasons for poor behaviour in the pedagogy of the teacher. She commented that “If there are behaviour problems in your class, I think the first thing any good teacher should do is look at themselves.” She explained that the staff had received training on making the curriculum more accessible by addressing different learning styles and making learning interactive. However she acknowledged that when these concerns are addressed, behaviour issues can still occur.

In Ms Bell’s opinion, more staff training on the reasons behind disruptive behaviour and how to address it would make the school response to behaviour problems more effective. She thinks that if staff took a more holistic view of pupils they would be more understanding about their problems. She would also like to see more sharing of important information about pupils’ backgrounds that may impact on their behaviour.

8.1.6.3 Grimsdale

The included pupils, Rhonda and Crystal, differed in their ideas about how to address disruptive behaviour. Rhonda felt exasperated by the impact it has on teaching and would prefer to have a separate class for those who had problems: “Just put all the bad people in one form and then they’d just be bad with each other” whereas Crystal would isolate the protagonists and give them guidance. In Crystal’s opinion pupils would not necessarily follow advice: “...you can talk to them and advise them...but you can’t make them do something they don’t want to...so nowt really helps.”

The pupils at risk of exclusion also had ideas about how the systems could be improved. Aaron would like someone to talk to about how he feels. He used to talk to his uncle who died a couple of years ago. James would like more rugby games and more interesting, practical lessons: “Lessons where you can still learn but you can have more fun in it. Some teachers are proper boring in lessons, like sometimes we don’t do any practical...We do all about writing and stuff...” Karim suggested that employing an observer in the classroom would ensure that both pupils and staff were treated fairly. He commented: “I’d get an assistant for most lessons, to sit inside the lessons and analyse the lessons to see what’s going on, and see if anything unfair is going on or not, towards the teacher or either the pupil.”

At Grimsdale, four pastoral support workers have been appointed to support the work of the heads of year. Mr Freamon explained: “...they are available to work with individuals, to go and sit in the backs of lessons, to work with kids in lessons, and withdraw students to work with them, to pick up any problems and fire-fight...but also they can be pro-active as well...”

The staff from Grimsdale described how they would like to develop the behaviour management system. In the near future, Mr Freamon would like to establish an alternative group for pupils in KS3 in addition to the Y11 provision. He has already identified a group of boys and two girls in Y9 who are having problems. This would not be as intensive as the provision for the Y11s who spend four out of five days out of school. His intention is to have a resource base for the group to work in at school with visiting tutors from outside for some lessons. The school has links with a nearby University where there is a Youth Work course and students from this course are already doing work placements at the school. As part of their placement the Youth Workers are already doing some projects in the schools including developing social skills. Mr Freamon would like to see their skills being used with the Y9 group. He emphasised the importance of forward planning for any intervention. In his experience he has to plan for 12 months ahead, and he is intending to start this new provision in September when the Y9 pupils that he has identified will be entering Y10. He sees this type of intervention as an opportunity for pupils to work in very small groups on their individual difficulties.

Mr Howard finds that the system at Grimsdale compares very favourably with that of his previous school. He agrees that providing alternatives to mainstream lessons for pupils at risk of exclusion is an effective way of meeting the needs of all pupils. The only thing he has been surprised at is that there are no after school detentions for Y7 and Y8 and he feels that introducing these would be an effective strategy.

In contrast, Mrs Pearlman does not feel supported by the school systems. She feels that she does not have enough strategies to cope with the very challenging behaviour of her group of pupils. She would like more training on strategies to work with her pupils. She would also like a clearer behaviour policy with clear consequences. She explained “I’ve asked to go on some courses, you know, dealing with difficult groups, dealing with attention seeking...and yeah, I would really like to have a few more stages, like a policy where the kids are very clear on what’s expected and if they don’t do that...”

8.2 Curriculum and pedagogy

In this section I examine pupil and staff opinions about the taught curriculum and how it impacts on behaviour. Four themes emerged from the interviews: pupils’ curriculum preferences; staff opinions; alternative provisions and setting.

8.2.1 Pupils' curriculum preferences

The pupil responses regarding curriculum preferences were revealing in that most had very strong preferences. There was a marked difference between the preferences of the included girls and those at risk of exclusion.

Table 8.1 Pupils' curriculum preferences

School	Name	Likes	Reasons	Dislikes	Reasons
Bitterclough	Albert	Maths, PE, ICT, DT	Everyone likes PE		
	Ali (i) ²¹	Maths, PE, business studies	Future career	Citizenship	No-one likes it
	Alma	Drama, Music, PE in past	Fun, can talk, can be loud	PE	Too cold
	Aqib	Maths	Is good at it	LT	Does not understand it
	Bethany (i)	Maths	Is good at it, likes teacher and is with friends		
	Pingu	Textiles Homework in LSU	Creative, can talk to friends Not boring, can go on computer	Science Anger management	Dislikes teacher ineffective
Blackmoor	Charday	Health and beauty	Likes college	Graphics	Did not choose it
	Jay	PE-gymnastics	Is good at it	English	
	Marlo	Technology	Practical, learns how to use machines		
	Namond	PE, rugby	Is good at it	Science	Does not understand it
Grimsdale	Aaron	Maths, English	Good at mental maths, other pupils leave him alone		
	Crystal (i)	History	Fun, likes teacher		
	James	Biology Rugby	Likes teacher and practicals	Physics, chemistry	Does not understand it, does not like copying or working from book
	Karim	Business studies, ICT	Likes computers, is with friends		
	Rhonda (i)	Geography	Likes teacher		

²¹(i) indicates included pupil

Considering the preferences of the pupils at risk of exclusion, 7/11 pupils listed more than one subject that they enjoyed. 10/11 pupils preferred lessons either with a practical element or involving computers. Out of these, 5/11 pupils preferred sporting activities and 4/11 design technology.

The included girls preferred history and geography, while the included boy preferred maths, PE and business studies. The included boys from Blackmoor did not mention curriculum preferences.

The subject preferred by the greatest number of pupils was maths with 6/15 of all pupils expressing this choice, including 5/6 pupils from Bitterclough. 5/11 pupils at risk of exclusion preferred subjects because they were good at them.

Social reasons were cited for subject preferences by 8/15 of all pupils. The two girls at risk of exclusion from Bitterclough mentioned talking to friends as an important consideration, whereas the two included girls at Grimsdale both preferred lessons where they liked the teacher. Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) was the only pupil who expressed a preference for English, his reason being that other pupils left him alone.

Only 7 pupils gave reasons for disliking subjects. Out of those, 3/7 pupils said that they did not understand the subject and Aqib (Y10, Bitterclough) did not know what the subject (LT) was.

8.2.2 Staff opinions

In this section I examine staff opinions on the impact of the curriculum on school exclusion. It emerged that schools varied widely in the strategies they used to engage pupils in learning.

8.2.2.1 Bitterclough

In Mrs Little's opinion, a lot of the pupils with problems should not be in mainstream schools (Chapter 8.1.5). She would also welcome extra provisions for low levels of literacy and numeracy including more practical maths activities in classes. In her view, "It's actually living maths that these kids want, not an awful lot of the stuff that they do do."

She described how pupils can become engaged in learning by relating subject matter to their experiences. She had recently accompanied one of her pupils, Carl, to a maths class, and was able to alert the teacher to the fact that the boy had been

using ratio in a college building course. From her observations this changed the way Carl and the teacher related to each other.

Mrs Little spoke about her plans to extend the social skills curriculum in the LSU for when a new assistant is appointed. At present she runs two relaxation groups, one for girls and one for boys. She intends to continue with the relaxation groups and reintroduce a 'start the day group' where pupils come to the LSU in the morning to focus on their attitude to school. They will talk about what may happen in the day, any problems that could arrive and what they can do about them. She will check that pupils have brought the equipment they need for the day. In the past she has led anger management groups but she realised that it was ineffective to teach anger management to a group of angry pupils, and she now does this individually. She will also run a self-awareness group and a nurturing group for new pupils.

8.2.2.2 Blackmoor

At the beginning of their interviews, both Mr Carver and Ms Bell stressed that pupils lose interest in lessons that are not stimulating. In Mr Carver's view low-level disruption in the classroom can occur from lack of engagement in the lesson: "Sometimes it can be a child who isn't exactly thrilled by the lesson that's on offer..." P.1 (28-29). Ms Bell placed the responsibility for maintaining pupil interest with the teachers, explaining that "...kids misbehave when they're not entertained, when they're not having fun..." Mr Carver agrees that the behaviour of the pupils is dependent on the individual teacher. He has not observed any difference in behaviour problems within any particular subjects. He explained: "...more often than not there are teachers who will have more problems but it's not like science is a nightmare or geography is a nightmare."

Mr Carver and Ms Bell both favoured the use of interactive teaching methods to retain pupil interest. In Ms Bell's opinion, "I think there are ways that you can make it more interesting, that kids can be more active, even in, sort of, mundane modules, as such, and children don't like to be just sat there for 50 minutes just listening to a teacher or just doing a book." She explained that the staff had undergone recent training in the ways pupil's learning styles vary and that these styles should be taken into consideration in lessons. Mr Carver also expressed this view, explaining that the school employed a variety of methods of presenting information in order to engage pupils. He observed that they utilised "A variety of different teaching styles, different use of equipment...so there's a real variety of lessons, lots of interaction... lots of different stimuli for children to feed off." However, Ms Bell commented that these strategies do not change the behaviour of

some pupils. She explained that "...there are obviously instances where the lesson is interactive. The kids should be doing what they want. It should be quite interesting and you still get behaviour problems off certain individuals." Mr Barksdale concurred with this view. From his observations, practical activities are not always conducive to compliant behaviour. He described how one high achieving pupil's disruptive behaviour was impacting on his academic progress, explaining that the pupil "...did best in maths for his year group, and in his science test... he's come third best in his year...but the teachers say he won't go into the top group...because of his behaviour." The problem is that in the top set there are a lot of experiments and the boy cannot reliably follow instructions, causing concern about safety.

For Mr Carver the breadth of curriculum is also important in improving behaviour and he described how, in his opinion, the school excels at providing a wide variety of subjects so that pupils have a good choice of options at GCSE. He sees this as a way of addressing disaffection by providing more choice for pupils. He explained. Ms Bell agrees that pupil choice at GCSE level is an important factor in addressing behaviour problems. She explains that "Nobody likes to do what they don't enjoy, do they?" P.6 (29-30). From her observations behaviour improves when pupils have chosen their options: "I think the problems do reduce in Y10, because they are picking what they want to do." However, she has noticed that some Y10 and 11 girls continue to be difficult to motivate in PE. She has also noticed that Y9 pupils become less motivated in subjects that they will not follow to GCSE level and that this can lead to behaviour problems. She remarked that: "I think they begin to make their minds up about what they're going to do in GCSEs, so some subjects they decide they're not bothered about." She sees a similar situation when pupils near the end of Y11 and feel that GCSEs are not relevant to their future employment. She explained that they no longer attend school: "...most of the people that we're chasing up have decided... 'I'm getting a job. Doing my GCSEs won't help me get a job...I'm going to get a job. I'm not bothering to come to school anymore.'"

The LSU is an integral part of behaviour management in lessons. Mr Carver explained that it was initially set up to address the behaviour of disruptive pupils: "...it's where children who initially were behaving poorly in certain lessons would go to so that they could improve their behaviour." In Ms Bell's view temporary removal from the main classroom to a smaller setting can improve behaviour.

Mr Barksdale described how the main curriculum in the LSU follows each pupil's usual timetable. He explained how the pupils are usually given work by the subject teacher. If a pupil has learning needs in core subjects the LSU is flexible enough to provide extra lessons where necessary. Concurrently the pupils in the

LSU are given individual behaviour targets to help them to reintegrate into mainstream lessons.

8.2.2.3 Grimsdale

In Mr Freamon's opinion, the reason that Grimsdale has a low exclusion rate is the result of proactive strategies with pupils with behaviour problems. "I think that... it's ... our long-term planning, that actually enables us to reduce the exclusion levels. I think that's how we've been successful." He explained that by planning ahead the school has been able to provide pupils at risk of exclusion with an appropriate curriculum. According to Mr Freamon the change in their curriculum has had the advantage of meeting their needs and improving their behaviour. He commented: "...we are making a curriculum that is appropriate to them which is having a positive impact on behaviour in the school."

He gave several examples of how these were implemented. One was the group of ten Y11 pupils known as 11A who had been identified by their disengagement in lessons. A second strategy has been to provide a bright, but disruptive pupil with a college place rather than keep him in school where he was in danger of exclusion. A third strategy was for the school to pay for a place at the PRU for a pupil who was identified as having severe behavioural issues in Y7 [Chapter 8.1.5]

Mr Howard was in agreement that some pupils at risk of exclusion should be given an alternative provision, because of their effect on the learning of the other pupils. He explained "...I think there needs to be systems in place where these children know that if they can't conform to basic school expectations, then I think they need to be out...if they cannot handle that environment, then there needs to be something alternative for them to go into." His experience in teaching PE is that there are very few behaviour problems in his subject. He has observed that occasionally, at the start of a lesson, a pupil may try to avoid taking part by saying that they have forgotten their equipment, but this is a rare occurrence.

He explained how he has found several strategies effective in engaging disruptive pupils in PE. He advocates making the lessons fun and keeping them practical. He has also found that giving pupils at risk of exclusion responsibility is an effective way of engaging them. He described examples of how he would give specific tasks to pupils with problems: "...it might be something as simple as, 'Can you John, can you go and take these three guys and can you be responsible for them for pulse rates for the warm-up?'... I've found that that works really well with the students here."

A further strategy has been to engage pupils in extra-curricular activities. He gave an example of how a pupil who had been problematic had become involved in

a table tennis tournament and how this had changed his attitude and behaviour in lessons: “He’s coaching the younger students and now in lessons he’s switched on. He doesn’t misbehave...that’s been a massive change. He’s done really well.”

8.2.3 Alternative provisions

All of the schools used Learning Support Units (LSU) to address the additional needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. At Bitterclough and Blackmoor I interviewed the managers of the LSUs, however, I was unable to interview the manager of the LSU at Grimsdale (see Chapter 5.3, and Appendix 8, 4.11.08 and 5.11.08) and in her place I interviewed the manager of a Y11 alternative curriculum group.

8.2.3.1 Bitterclough

The LSU at Bitterclough is a short stay, multi-purpose provision catering for both pupils with behaviour issues and those with learning needs. At present the teacher in charge, Mrs Little, reported that she takes a maximum of five pupils at a time in the LSU because she is on her own. The number will go up to nine when her support assistant is appointed. She has had six pupils in the past, but found that she could not do the monitoring she needs to with this number. The pupils are usually from Y7, Y8 and Y9. Mrs Little explained that is unusual for pupils from Y10 and Y11 to be referred her as they are considered unsuitable for the provision. She commented: “...usually at that age they’re past me, up and out of it, off the wall.” Pupils attend the LSU for three, four or five weeks at a time depending on their needs. Mr Daniels explained that the length of stay is also dependent on whether the pupils have accessed the provision before. As a result the intake is always staggered with pupils at different stages of their stay.

Before a pupil is admitted to the LSU their parents or carers must sign a ‘commitment sheet’ and are given an information pack to inform them of the aims of the unit and the consequences for non-compliance. Mrs Little maintains close contact with each pupil’s home throughout their stay, both by a daily telephone call and by sending cards home to reinforce good behaviour. In her opinion, parental contact is an essential element in her work with pupils who experience problems at school. She commented that it is ineffective to work in isolation: “...you can’t lock yourself up in school and deal with a pupil in school.”

The pupils start the LSU with no break times. They eat their meals in the canteen at a separate time from the mainstream school. This is a deliberate strategy to isolate them from their peers. Mrs Little explained: “It’s taking them away from their social time and taking them away from their friends.” After the first week and a half, pupils can start to earn their breaks. Mrs Little also uses after school detentions

as a sanction and informs parents that these will be implemented immediately rather than giving the usual 48 hours' notice.

Mr Daniels did not qualify which students could benefit from the LSU. In his opinion it is for any student. He explained that it is for "...for students that might be struggling for whatever reason." Mrs Little described the different types of pupils that come to the LSU. Some pupils have anger issues, others are withdrawn, violent or verbally abusive. She relates some of these problems to complex and underlying issues and sometimes advises parents and carers to refer their children to CAMHS²². She feels that the behaviour of pupils is deteriorating. She occasionally has pupils who work hard but finds that most of the pupils referred to her are badly behaved. She explained: "They're after an easy time. I'm talking about the majority of the kids that I work with... There are kids who come in and work hard, and do their bit in the community...but the number of those kids is dwindling...Now they are a minority. The majority are the badly behaved ones." She is also of the opinion that some pupils do not meet the criteria of the LSU and are beyond her help. She feels that they have been referred to her in order to show that the school has attempted to meet their needs, commenting that "Some members of staff see this as a tick box..." In her experience these pupils do not engage with her programme and will eventually be permanently excluded. Mr Wallace concurred with Mrs Little's view, explaining that: "It works for some, but for some it's just a game."

Most of the pupils attend the LSU on a full-time basis but Mr Daniels stressed that they are quickly reintegrated into mainstream classes. He explained that "...generally within the second week, then we start to feed them back into better lessons." Throughout this period and for the following three weeks after reintegration, Mrs Little continues to monitor their behaviour by means of a 'challenge card' on which a mark for behaviour and effort is recorded in each lesson. Mr Daniels sees the challenge card as an effective way of supporting the pupils. They also attend a weekly review meeting with Mrs Little and she continues to make contact with home.

Mrs Little gave an example of a positive experience of the LSU. Carl, (Y11) had just been reintegrated into the mainstream school. He was referred after being excluded from the construction academy. Mrs Little was surprised that he stayed because of his age and attitude. After five weeks he wrote in his log '*9th of April I had all my breaks and all my lessons, I did well in everything. I made no poor choices. I'm meeting objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4. It's my last day so there's no tomorrow.*'

²² Child and adolescent mental health services

The other alternative provision at Bitterclough is the internal exclusion room. According to Mr Daniels this provision was introduced in September 2007 as a response to the very high rate of fixed-term exclusions. He explained: "...our short-term exclusions were high, very high. So we developed an internal exclusion unit, that's staffed full-time." He felt that this system was more effective than fixed-term exclusion as the pupils continued to engage in learning. Mrs Little was critical of the internal exclusion room. In her opinion it is too attractive to pupils at risk of exclusion because the rules are less stringent than in the mainstream lessons. Her view is that it should have the same ethos as the LSU. She commented: "It's not particularly successful because the kids actually want to go there [laughs] ... because "we are allowed to wear our earphones and play our music"...it's got to be some place where they don't want to be."

8.2.3.2 Blackmoor

The LSU at Blackmoor takes up to six pupils. According to Mr Carver the school has made the decision to keep it at this number or less. At the time of the interview with Mr Carver, the pupils were supervised by a behaviour manager who was temporarily employed in this role while playing rugby for the local town team. He returned to New Zealand shortly after the interview and a new supervisor, Mr Barksdale was appointed and was interviewed when Mr Carver considered that he had become familiar with the post. Mr Barksdale was a former pupil and had been a support worker for several years prior to his appointment to the LSU. In Mr Carver's opinion, the approach and character of the supervisor is more important than their qualifications, and is instrumental to the success of the LSU. There are two crucial elements to the role, the first being that they need to create an atmosphere to make pupils feel comfortable about attending the provision. It is however, equally important that pupils want to return to mainstream lessons. Mr Carver explained: "...it's got to be the right person in there. It's got to be a person that, and this is the hardest bit, that the children aren't bothered about going in, but want to come out, and that's a real hard balancing act, is that." Mr Barksdale was also concerned that the pupils did not see the LSU as an easy option compared with mainstream lessons.

The LSU was initially set up for pupils whose behaviour was problematic in lessons. Mr Barksdale described the process for referring pupils to the LSU, emphasising the high degree of communication and consensus between staff to ensure that it would meet the needs of the pupil, he commented that: "...if they have continued behaviour problems in a certain subject area, they'll go through the head of subject. Then if the head of subject can't deal with it, it will go to head of year, and then, after head of year it's key stage manager and they'll all meet with

myself to see if the [LSU] will be beneficial for them.” Mr Carver explained that the function of the LSU has changed and it now also caters for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties. He observed that “...it’s a refuge for children that are more vulnerable at lunch times and break times, an area where children that are struggling in certain lessons can go to as well.” Ms Bell concurred with this view, adding that the LSU was also used to help pupils who have difficulties accessing the curriculum.

The LSU does not have its own curriculum; all of the staff explained that for the majority of the time pupils work on an individual programme, following their usual timetable within the LSU. In this way they retain the balance of each pupil’s curriculum and they may only attend the LSU for specified lessons.

In Ms Bell’s view one of the functions of the LSU is to see if pupils will work better away from their usual classroom setting. In addition, Mr Carver explained that some pupils may be withdrawn from other lessons by the supervisor to work on basic literacy and numeracy. The LSU is also used to meet the emotional needs of some pupils. During Mr Barksdale’s interview it emerged that a pupil was in the LSU while he waited for a support worker to take him to a lesson. Mr Barksdale explained that: “He shouldn’t be in there, but he’s actually got a support who takes him to PE. He’s a bit school phobic. He doesn’t like space that’s occupied, especially as heavily as the PE changing rooms will be, so his support will take him to lesson...”

Although most pupils spend a limited amount of their school time in the LSU, Mr Barksdale identified two more groups of pupils who may access the LSU for more protracted periods. The first group are pupils who have been excluded from mainstream lessons. The unit is sometimes used as a full-time provision for pupils on internal exclusions. However, he was careful to point out that this is dependent both on the pupil and the reason for exclusion. Pupils returning to school from fixed-term exclusions may also access the provision as a strategy to reintegrate them into the school. The second group mentioned by Mr Barksdale as using the provision are those pupils who are having problems within mainstream lessons: “...there’s a lad in there now and he’s not on internal exclusion, but he’s struggling to fit in with the rest of his class, so he’s going to be in there for the rest of the term.”

Mr Barksdale described how the LSU provides an alternative curriculum beyond that offered in the mainstream school. An outside agency takes the pupils for physical activities including bike riding, swimming, abseiling and rock climbing. Mr Barksdale has also arranged for pupils to go to a nursing home to do community work with the elderly residents the following September. His intention is to motivate the pupils to improve their skills in an informal setting. He explained: “...if I take

them down to Golden Age they might still be reading which is what they'd be doing here, but they see it as a morning out of school, so they don't see it as school work and they'll be reading to someone else as well so, hopefully that will motivate them a lot as well."

In Mr Carver's opinion, the LSU fosters a culture of acceptance and tolerance. Although the pupils all work on individual tasks, they do not resent this. He explained: "It works and there's no stigma about being in there."

8.2.3.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale there are two provisions outside the mainstream school- the LSU and the Y11 alternative programme group. Because my focus was the Y11 group I have very little information about the LSU. Mr Howard mentioned that pupils were taken out of mainstream lessons and work in the LSU on a reduced timetable. It also emerged that the LSU was used for internal exclusions. One of the pupils that I interviewed, Karim (Y10), was, at the time of interview, spending a week in the LSU because he had destroyed the work of a peer.

Mr Freamon explained that the 11A group was set up for pupils that were disruptive in the classroom. They now spend the greater part of the week on projects outside school, thus avoiding spending time in the classroom where they were unable to function. "Over the year then, they've got a much more structured environment, but it's not a school environment, which is the thing that they actually disengaged with." In Mr Freamon's view the fact that they are removed from the school has a positive effect on the learning of the remaining pupils. He commented: "...just think of the impact. What's the impact on them, but what's the impact on the other 260 students you've got in the year group, so the effect is phenomenal."

Mr Freamon explained how the school closely monitored the behaviour of pupils who experienced behaviour problems and identified those who were not succeeding in the classroom. They plan to provide alternative programmes for selected Y10 pupils either via college placements or with Mrs Pearlman's 11A group. The school uses the pupils' anticipation of joining the alternative provision to help to modify their behaviour. Mr Freamon commented "...we can contain them because one of the things that we do is we say, 'If you keep your head down over the next few months, few weeks, I should say, you will join this thing that you want to do.'" He was the only deputy head to talk about his budget. In his view, as a large school, Grimsdale had more flexibility with financial resources than the smaller schools, and that this helped to reduce exclusions as they were better placed to concentrate resources on targeted pupils.

8.2.4 Setting

The schools differed markedly in their use of setting pupils. Bitterclough had introduced setting for all pupils at the start of the school year whereas Blackmoor set for maths and for PE; and Grimsdale set for the core subjects of maths, English and science.

8.2.4.1 Bitterclough

Mr Daniels had carried out a survey to elicit staff opinions on setting. The staff were asked to respond to the statement “*Setting in almost all areas of the curriculum has improved teaching and learning in my area.*” Mr Daniels read out six of the responses during the interview. Although most staff were in favour of setting, one of the six responses indicated that the respondent had reservations about the strategy: ‘...does it create two schools, for higher achievers and lower achievers?’ In Mr Daniels’ opinion setting helps the more able pupils. He explained: “They haven’t been lost, in between the morass of teaching to the middle and hoping that the bottom end and the top end will sort of work their own way through.”

Mr Wallace was one of the teachers who was in favour of setting. He explained that although the school had always set in Y8 to Y11 in science, they had recently introduced setting in Y7. He commented: “We’ve recently started setting Y7, which has made a big difference...” He has found that this has had a positive impact on his teaching as, and, although he still has to differentiate, the difference between high and low achievers has narrowed in each class: “...we were in a situation where you’d have someone with a CAT²³ score of 72 in the same class as someone with a CAT score of 128, so differentiating for that vast amount was very difficult, where at least now they’re banded close together... you’re differentiating on a much smaller scale, and your learning goals and outcomes are similar...so I find it helps, greatly.”

However, Mrs Little was very much against setting. In her view it creates a very difficult cohort in the lower sets. She is in favour of mixed ability teaching because she believes that it is beneficial for the less able pupils to have more challenging work: “...what they’ve done for September, they’ve done the worst thing they could have done. They’ve put all the lower sets in together. That’s going to be hell. It’s much better if they’re spread through, much better, and then you can

²³ Cognitive ability score

sit them beside somebody that's kind of...you know, to pull them up, whereas if they are all barking together, that's the way they stay."

Bethany's (Y9) view reinforces that of Mrs Little. She is in the higher ability sets and finds that pupils behave well. She has experienced some difficulty when she moved to a higher set in English because she had the impression that the other pupils felt superior to her. "I'm in quite a high set for English which is set 2 and people, because I'm in set 3 originally...brainy people usually, like, if you get a question wrong in class, they'll look at you in a nasty way...and then you just feel out of place...Because they probably think they're better than other people."

8.2.4.2 Blackmoor

Opinions at Blackmoor differed concerning the degree of setting in the school. Mr Carver informed me that the school only set in maths²⁴. In his opinion it does not impact on pupil behaviour. He regularly walks round the school during the last lesson of the day and has not noticed any difference with the behaviour in maths compared with other classes. Ms Bell has experience of teaching PE which is set into two streams, and dance, which is mixed ability. In her opinion both systems work well. She believes that teachers should differentiate in any group although she is aware that the wider the range of ability the more difficult this is: "I do think you should be able to differentiate within your class, regardless of what ability you've got." Ms Bell is aware that setting can be detrimental to the moral and motivation of those in lower sets: "I don't think it's that great for moral and...motivation...self-efficacy to think, 'Oh, I'm I the bottom set.'" She does, however, recognise that it is necessary to set at GCSE level where pupils are working towards different qualifications. Behaviour putting a pupil at risk of exclusion can influence inclusion in top sets. Mr Barksdale described how a pupil's test results indicated that he should be in the top group for science but this would not happen: "...he's come best in his class...but the teachers say he won't go into the top group...because of his behaviour."

8.2.4.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale Rhonda (Y9), an included pupil, prefers setting. She explained that setting is used for the core subjects of English, math and science, and also for French and PE. The pupils are taught with their form for the remaining lessons. Rhonda. She commented: "It'll be better after we've chosen our options."

James (Y10), a pupil at risk of exclusion, concurred with Rhonda's view. Last year when he was taught with his form for many subjects he observed that pupils did

²⁴ During the pilot interviews a maths teacher from the school informed me that the school set in maths, languages and science, but not in geography, history or English.

not behave well. He explained: "...in my form there were quite a few bad people, so quite a few people got sent out, and one's been permanently excluded." He finds the behaviour is better in the higher ability sets where he is now placed. This has impacted on his own behaviour which has improved this year. He commented: "... this year, 'cause...we're in sets now, and I'm in nice sets for English, maths and science, I'm in the top, so don't hardly ever get sent out...it's, like, the brainier people who are better behaved."

8.3 Special Educational Needs

All of the pupils at risk of exclusion were identified by the schools as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), usually related to their behaviour but also, in some, cases related to learning difficulties. In this section I examine how respondents view SEN. It emerged that some staff gave more credence to identified learning difficulties than to SEN related to behaviour. Both parent respondents attributed their child's behaviour to underlying, and in one case undiagnosed, learning difficulties.

8.3.1 Bitterclough

Mrs Little expressed her concern that a lot of teachers were unaware of the difficulties faced by their pupils in both their learning and their home circumstances. She explained: "...they don't know reading ages; they don't know about dyscalculia; they don't know about dyslexia; they don't know about the kids they've got in front of them." Through her experience she had become particularly aware of the problems some pupils of Asian heritage had with English: "I've got a lot of, especially Asian lads, with very low level on their English, written, reading, really low level..." She also mentioned that a large number of pupils are innumerate: "... what amazes me is the...vast majority of kids that I get in can't do maths." Mrs Little also described the differing behavioural problems of the pupils who are referred to her. She described how these can range from quiet, introverted behaviour to outward acting, disruptive behaviour.

There is a hearing impaired unit in the school and Mr Wallace observed that support for these pupils was well-defined, whereas support for pupils with behavioural difficulties could be sporadic and unpredictable: "It's a bit undefined how and when you get [support]...With behaviour it depends on who the child is and what the staffing arrangements are. So you can have a support in one lesson, then in the next lesson, there's no support there...it can throw you."

8.3.1 Blackmoor

Ms Bell itemised the some of the ways the school addresses the education of pupils with SEN. The majority of pupils experiencing problems have been identified in primary school, but Ms Bell observed that occasionally problems are not recognised until high school. If behaviour problems are identified, staff will look for possible learning difficulties. It is then the responsibility of the deputy head to develop individual behaviour plans to meet the pupils' needs. Those identified with SEN are then given appropriate incentives to shape their behaviour.

Ms Bell is aware of the positive effect praise has on her pupils. She explained that the Y11 boy found it difficult to accept her praise at first. She feels that his behaviour has improved this year, since she has given him praise and taken him on a curriculum trip. She described how the school attempts to address inequalities by giving pupils experiences that they would not get at home. She explained how this strategy is not always successful: "with one of the girls we've got at the minute, she's just not responding to anything, no matter how much we try, even giving her little treats like taking her out of school."

In addition, some pupils are provided with in-class support for behaviour problems. Ms Bell gave the example of the differentiation used with a Y11 pupil with behavioural difficulties. He has support in lessons and his poor language is tactically ignored because he is statemented.

In Mr Barksdale's view there are two very different groups of pupils using the LSU: those who are there for behavioural reasons and those who have social and emotional issues. He explained: "...the children in the emotional and social, it's not necessarily that they're poorly behaved but they struggle to communicate properly with peers and stuff whereas behavioural they are poorly behaved and that's why they are in there." He described how he tried to keep the two groups separate and tried to make sure that they knew they were in the LSU for different reasons; a punitive one for those with poor behaviour and a therapeutic one for the other pupils.

In contrast to this to this observation, Mr Barksdale described how Namond (Y9) has difficulties with both behaviour and literacy. He attributes Namond's behaviour problems to his learning difficulties. He commented: "With that child a lot of his behaviour comes from[learning difficulties]...he's not a very good writer. He doesn't think he can read too well ..."

Both Namond and his mother, Francine, were very aware of his difficulties in writing. Francine has observed that writing is a difficult and exhausting exercise for Namond. She commented that "He can't write. His writing is absolutely atrocious.

She finds that he cannot sustain this activity for a prolonged period, explaining that: "...he holds the pen that hard that by the time that he's done half a page his hand hurts...and his hand writing is, well it is readable just." His slow progress is sometimes a cause of conflict in the classroom. According to Francine: "...by the time he's done something like half a page his hand obviously hurts, so then he gets into trouble, 'You're not doing enough work.'"

Francine is, on the whole, happy with the way Blackmoor has supported Namond. At primary school after an assessment Francine was told that Namond "has tendencies towards dyslexia." She felt that because he had no firm diagnosis of specific learning difficulties, he was regarded as having behaviour difficulties.

In response to my query about the possibility that the Namond has dyspraxia, Mr Barksdale explained that he had been screened for dyspraxia and although his score was not low enough to indicate a developmental coordination difficulty, he did not rule out the possibility that there was some level of dyspraxia. Mr Barksdale did have some reservations about this as he was aware that the Namond is a talented rugby player and does not appear to have a deficit in his ability to do anything except write.

To support his class work Namond has been provided with a laptop that he takes to some lessons. The school also provide support in lessons by sitting him with a girl who has an SEN statement. Francine explained: "...he's not stated but he does have a girl in his class, she has support and they do help him with certain lessons so they do really well for him." He is also provided with extra help in reading or writing for tests.

Francine observed that Namond has additional difficulties apart from writing. He has difficulty following complex instructions. Francine compared the difference in the way Namond and his sister respond to instructions at home. She is aware that she has to give one instruction at a time: "I think Namond has got something missing up there because where I can say... it's not just a boy thing, where I can say to Anna, "Can you do this and do this and do this?" with Namond I've got to say, "Can you do this?" and then wait a bit, 'Can you do this?.'" At school he struggles to comply with classroom routines and follow teacher instructions and this can result in conflict. Francine has attended meetings where this difficulty has been discussed and has emphasised the importance of differentiating instructions. In Francine's view staff should be aware of pupils with complex issues in order to differentiate for them.

Although Namond is aware of teachers' attempts to adapt work to meet his needs, he does not always find this helpful because of his difficulty in following

instructions. He described how a teacher had printed out his work to avoid asking him to copy it: "...she printed all the work what we do on a sheet of paper, because everyone else has to copy it down and I've already got it all, so she tells me to write stuff in tables and stuff and I don't even get what I'm writing down... she walks off and I tell her I don't understand it..."

Namond also finds it difficult to adapt to change and becomes angry when he is frustrated. In Francine's opinion: "He gets that wound up that the only way that he can release it is in anger. He can't calm down." His angry reaction following a misunderstanding for the reasons for an instruction has recently resulted in an exclusion. In Francine's opinion, staff should be aware of Namond's difficulties and take these into consideration when dealing with him.

In Mr Carver's view the school is very supportive of individual differences. The alternative provision has a positive impact on how vulnerable pupils are able to manage in the school. In his opinion some of the pupils with special needs would not be able to stay in a mainstream school without the support systems that are in place at Blackmoor. He explained how the ethos of the school contributes to this inclusive practice with pupils recognising and accepting one another's differences: "I think that's a strength of our school that the more vulnerable children and perhaps more vulnerable in the sense of easy bullying targets get by at Blackmoor."

Mr Carver recognises that there are myriad reasons that pupils have behaviour problems. He differentiated between an intrinsic inability to conform and a medical diagnosis underlying behavioural difficulties, mentioning that "Sometimes it's just children who are poorly behaved or not particularly enthralled by what's being offered to them and decide they're going to disrupt somebody else, and sometimes you get may have reasons for their behaviour, like ADHD, etc."

8.3.2 Grimsdale

Mr Freamon differentiated between the behaviour of the majority of pupils and those he described as 'systematically disengaged'. He sees the difference lying in the ability for a child to reflect on their behaviour. He explained: "If you've got a kid who misbehaves in a class, usually, most children who reflect on their behaviour are actually [of] aware that...You've got every chance of fixing that behaviour, of improving it, of changing it, of modifying it."

In his opinion it is the disengaged pupils that staff have to focus on in order to maintain order. He explained: "...we as a staff, focus on those because we know that the disruption that they cause to other students is phenomenal and also you've got address their behaviours because they're not capable of doing that themselves."

Donette, the mother of Aaron (Y9), reinforced Mr Freamon's description of the disengaged pupil. When describing Aaron she commented: "He doesn't like school...He says that he doesn't see the point in coming to school."

Donette has been aware of Aaron's difficulties from an early age. He was slow to start walking and talking, and went to speech therapy before school age. At primary school he had behaviour problems and Donette mentioned that this affected his access to school activities. She commented that "...everyone kept saying, 'He's a naughty child and he's got behavioural problems...'" Although his primary school tried to address his problems by referring him to an unspecified outside agency, no diagnosis was made at this stage. According to Donette "They did send him for referral to get help in school but he didn't get anything."

Donette has found Grimsdale to be very supportive to her and her family. Her older son Tommy also experienced difficulties in reading and writing. He too attended Grimsdale and in Y11 he attended the alternative provision with Mrs Pearlman. She commented: "I don't think he would have got through if it weren't for certain people in this school, like Mrs Donnelly (SENCO), she's been with both of them..."

Both Donette and Aaron were pleased with Aaron's recent diagnosis of ADHD. Donette talked at length about how the school was instrumental in obtaining the diagnosis through referral to CAMHS. She feels that the ADHD explains why his academic achievements are below average, commenting that "...he's below average [in reading], but they think that could be because of the ADHD, because obviously he couldn't concentrate." Aaron also appeared to be happy with the diagnosis. He volunteered the information that he was taking medication prescribed for the condition.

8.4 Reflective commentary

In this chapter my focus of this chapter has been the exosystem, the part of the ecosystemic framework where the social structures impacting on the microsystem and mesosystem are located. In this section I address my research sub-question: **How do school policies, structures and organisation impact on exclusion?** by reflecting on the interview responses concerned with the exosystem and indicate how they relate to the ecosystemic framework (2.3). I have identified three themes that influence school exclusions, namely behaviour management, curriculum and pedagogy, and provisions for children with special educational needs.

The behaviour management systems in all of the schools were formalised in behaviour policies. The staff descriptions of the behaviour management systems reflected the individual school ethos and set the tone for staff/pupil relationships, linking with face-to-face relationships in the microsystem (Harris *et al.*, 2003; Reed, 2005b). In the low-excluding school, the clarity of the system, and the consistency which it was applied, was viewed by the deputy head as a significant factor in reducing exclusions. Alongside the desire for consistency was the acknowledgement that a degree of flexibility of response was necessary to meet the varying needs of pupils. Pupil respondents at all schools were very aware of staff inconsistencies in responding to individual pupils, a factor that again links with staff/pupil relationships in the microsystem.

The extent to which schools focused their resources on pupils at risk of exclusion appeared to be an important factor in avoiding exclusions, reflecting individual school ethos. The low-excluding school was proactive and creative in providing additional strategies to address behaviour and avoid exclusions, including employing additional pastoral staff to liaise with the pupils' homes. Strategies in the medium and high excluding schools were less extensive. Pupils at risk of exclusion felt that they would benefit from more support, including opportunities to talk to trained workers about their problems and more help with academic subjects.

The methods by which pupil behaviour was monitored also appeared to be significant. Although it is a government requirement that fixed term and permanent exclusions are recorded, linking school practice with the macrosystem, the methods used to record more minor incidents varied between schools. Behaviour in all of the schools was closely monitored, however, while the high-excluding school emphasised the use of databases to monitor incidents and analyse patterns of behaviour, it was the presence and intervention of senior management that was seen as a powerful influence on behaviour by staff in the medium and low-excluding schools.

The second theme, curriculum and pedagogy, was identified by staff as having a significant influence on the engagement of pupils, and therefore minimising their risk of exclusion. This reflects the opinions in the literature where both the Lamb Inquiry (DCFS, 2009) and Hallam *et al.* (2010) suggest that making changes in the curriculum can increase pupil engagement, support pupils' learning and reduce school exclusions. In the present study each school provided an alternative to mainstream lessons, situated away from the main body of the school. The structure and programmes of the provisions varied widely between schools, as did the staff. Contact with the main school had a significant influence on staff morale, a factor that relates to staff communication in the mesosystem.

The third theme identified as having a significant impact on school exclusion was SEN (DfES (2006a)). The data indicates that staff perspectives on SEN reflected not only the school ethos but also individual attitudes. In all of the schools there was a tendency for pupils with diagnoses of specific conditions to be more accepted, and sometimes privileged, over those experiencing general behaviour difficulties, a factor linking to both the school ethos and to face-to-face relationships in the microsystem. In the high excluding school there was a tendency for staff to regard behaviour problems as a conscious choice made by the child and subsequently there was a punitive attitude to their management. In the low, and to some extent the medium-excluding school, staff focused on pupils' backgrounds and prior learning experiences to explain behaviour. The parent respondents both attributed their children's problems to underlying learning difficulties.

In the following chapter I explore how factors in the macrosystem, outside the control of the individual school, impact on exclusions.

9 The macrosystem

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I analyse the interview responses relating to the outer layer of the ecosystemic framework (Chapter 2, figure 2.3) including political and social attitudes, and government initiatives and legislation that affect structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school. I start with responses concerning the socio-economic factors impacting on school exclusion and the impact of the cultural climate. This is followed by a section on government guidance and legislation. I conclude with details relating to the characteristics of the school population, that impact on the schools but are beyond their control.

9.1 Social exclusion

The staff and included pupil respondents from all of the schools were of the opinion that most pupils who experienced problems came from backgrounds with some degree of economic and social deprivation. As the following results demonstrate, this section has strong links with home relationships in the microsystem and much of the data was common to both systems (see Chapter 6.6). In this section I have focused on how socio-economic backgrounds were viewed and how they were perceived to impact on behaviour that puts pupils at risk of exclusion. A recurring comment from staff was that pupils from backgrounds of relative poverty²⁵ did not share the same culture and values as those from more prosperous, middle-class backgrounds and that this put them at a considerable disadvantage in functioning within the classroom.

²⁵ The Poverty Site (2011) makes the distinction between ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ poverty, relative poverty relating to the minimum standards below which no one should fall in a rich country.

9.1.1 Bitterclough

In Mr Daniels' view, it is parental lack of engagement in education that influences pupils' behaviour (Chapter 6.7). They do not have experience of further or higher education and do not encourage these aspirations in their children who subsequently are unmotivated to succeed academically. Similarly, Mr Wallace observed that the school population is mainly drawn from the lower economic strata. He was aware of a dissonance between school values and those of pupils' homes, commenting that: "It's not like a nice middle class school where people say, 'Please' and 'Thank you.'"

Mrs Little attributed behaviour issues in schools to a deficit in parenting skills (Chapter 7.2.1). She felt that pupil behaviour reflected that of their parents and a breakdown in family life. In her view problematic behaviour at home is transferred to school because parents are unwilling or unable to discipline their children at home. She was concerned that families experiencing problems of social exclusion were not accessing the help they needed to support their children. Placing responsibility for pupil behaviour with their parents she commented that schools are unfairly held responsible for conduct that is beyond their control.

None of the staff mentioned the difficult circumstances in which some of their pupils at risk of exclusion lived. These were evident in the problems I encountered when arranging parental interviews. I was put in touch with two parents, the first of whose phone was no longer connected. The second, Pingu's mother, who had a difficult relationship with her daughter, withdrew from the study when Pingu was permanently excluded from school. Finally I was put in touch with Albert's mother who, after three missed appointments withdrew as she was leaving the area to live in a women's refuge.

9.1.2 Blackmoor

The staff at Blackmoor all commented that pupils at risk of exclusion were likely to come from socially deprived backgrounds. Ms Bell explained her view that a background of multiple deprivation can impact on behaviour. She commented "...I don't think I'd be wrong in saying that the children who cause the most behaviour problems are the children that are from...the sort of struggling families, from the...lower economic class... maybe not working, parents aren't working, or one parent families..." Mr Barksdale also mentioned that behaviour is a result of a combination of family circumstances and social background. Mr Carver concurred that a troubled background impacts on behaviour.

All of the staff at Blackmoor explained pupils' problem behaviour in terms of outside influences. Ms Bell suggested that school may not be the priority for pupils from backgrounds who do not value education and do not aspire to gaining qualifications. She explained that some pupils at risk of exclusion do not see the point of education as a means to future employment. She commented: "They probably haven't got the role models at home that are saying, 'This is important to you. You need this for a job,' because they probably haven't got those sorts of people to aspire to anyway, so it's not important."

Staff agreed that problems at home can impact on behaviour in school. Mr Carver explained that pupils may not develop the resilience to separate the demands of school from worries about events at home. Ms Bell echoed this view, observing that issues at home take precedence over school work. She explained: "...school's not their main priority, so who can blame them sometimes...Are they going to have something to eat tonight?" or "What's going to happen when so-and-so gets home?"...not, "Can I get to school and hand my homework in on time?"

Staff commented that the experiences and influences associated with social exclusion also impact on the efficacy of school sanctions. Ms Bell also observed that disciplinary strategies that do not always have an impact on socially excluded pupils. As previously mentioned she explained that pupils become immune to shouting if it occurs constantly at home (Chapter 6.7). Exclusion was also a sanction that was not always a deterrent. She commented that "They're not bothered if they get excluded for X amount of days and then come back...I just think they think, 'Oh, well, I'm not bothered.'"

Staff acknowledged that socio-economic deprivation does not always lead to behaviour difficulties. Ms Bell explained: "We have some children that are from really deprived families that are lovely, and their families do the best for them and no behaviour problems whatsoever." Parents sometimes made choices to improve the future of their children. This is illustrated by Marlo (Y10), a pupil at risk of exclusion, who lived in a deprived area of a town several miles away from Blackmoor. His neighbourhood peers went to schools nearer their homes but his parents had chosen to send him to Blackmoor where they believed he could experience success away from the influence of his peers.

9.1.3 Grimsdale

At Grimsdale staff and included pupils commented on the economic backgrounds of pupils at risk of exclusion. All of the staff referred to impact of both economic deprivation and social exclusion. Mr Freamon described how pupils at risk of

exclusion tended to come from distinct urban areas and from backgrounds of multiple deprivation.

Mr Howard referred to his previous school where he had noticed that behavioural issues were most frequently seen in pupils from the most economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. From his experience he explained that "...it tended to be the kids who were a little bit more impoverished, you know, the families, probably broken homes and things like that. Kids tended to be those who lived in council estates who weren't as well off as the other pupils."

Mrs Pearlman also believes, like Mr Howard, that economic circumstances impact on behaviour. She observed that pupils from economically disadvantaged homes could feel excluded due to lack of material possessions and this could lead to conflict. She explained: "I think there's a lot of pressure around kids to have things, to have material things...They get wound up with the fact that they haven't got things." A further barrier to school success she identifies is that parents do not relate well to school, describing them as "sometimes ...a bit school phobic."

Both Rhonda (Y9), an included pupil, and Mr Howard commented that although most pupils who experienced problems came from troubled backgrounds there were exceptions. Rhonda compared the backgrounds of two of her classmates who had problems, focusing on their economic status. She observed that one included boy's parents loved him, but they were not well off and he did not have a lot of material possessions. She felt that the other boy's parents were reasonably affluent and in her opinion, this boy is not badly brought up but is unable to control his temper. Mr Howard was aware that pupils with behaviour issues were not confined to troubled backgrounds and had known cases pupils from stable homes who had problems in school.

9.2 Cultural influences

In this section I examine respondents' opinions on the influence of the cultural climate on behaviour. Several of the respondents attributed pupil behaviour to cultural influences. Two staff respondents had contrasting views. At Bitterclough, Mrs Little was concerned that moral standards were falling, commenting that "The actual quality of bad behaviour has actually deteriorated and got worse...The sexual activity among young girls, among very young girls, it's almost as if it's acceptable." She felt that, contrary to her instincts, this behaviour was being ignored: "...instead of rising to it, like an awful lot of things in life now, we are putting up with it, we are adjusting to it."

Ms Bell at Blackmoor also acknowledged that cultural mores were changing but felt that the school staff had to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate this. She commented: "I think that times have changed and children behave in slightly different ways. They're a bit more outspoken, things like that and I think that some teachers, who have been in teaching for a very long time, still teach in the same way that they have always taught ... I think there are certain ways that you can speak to children without having to go into a dictatorship, but still be in charge."

Ms Bell was aware that there was pressure from peers and from outside the school to reject school values and that this influenced behaviour and work choices. In her view: "...it's not seen to be good to be sensible and to be sat there listening, and it's really, sort of, geeky. There's a stigma attached to that. I think it's hard for kids just to be nice and polite and doing the work on time, without being ridiculed for it."

This opinion was reinforced by several of the pupils at risk of exclusion who did not see higher education as a path to future employment. Jay (Y9, Blackmoor) and Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) both expected to join their step-fathers in manual work, and Alma (Y9, Bitterclough) and Pingu (Y10, Bitterclough) wanted to work as nursery nurses.

Even high achieving pupils did not envisage taking further academic qualifications. James (Grimsdale, Y10) an academically able boy whose parents had sent him to a school outside his deprived neighbourhood area in order to give him a better start in life did not consider staying at school after his GCSEs. He commented "...when I'm older, I want to be, like, a plumber or something. I don't want to be in an office, even if it does get me more money."

Albert (Y9, Bitterclough) already felt that his options for employment were limited: "I want to be a plumber, but you've got to be good at school for that." He felt that his had damaged his life chances with his behaviour, comparing himself with included pupils: "They're all right. Better than us. Because they're going to have money and stuff when they're older which we won't... They're going to have a good job when we'll still be without a job, because if we carry on and get kicked out of school and no school accepts you, you don't have any exams and things like that."

The one exception to this attitude was Karim (Y10, Grimsdale) who, with two brothers at university, already had a family history of higher education. He observed that "I think I'll get to University as well. I've got the grades. It's not a matter about the grades. I'm clever enough to do anything. It's just, like, a bit on the behaviour side of it."

9.3 Government legislation

In this section I discuss the impact of two pieces of government legislation that were identified in the research design as potentially having an impact on exclusions, these being parental choice introduced in the Education Act (DES, 1980) and new legislation introduced shortly before the interviews took place: ‘Providing full-time education from the sixth day of any fixed period exclusion’ (DfES, 2007a).

9.3.1 Parental choice

The mobility of the school populations in Watermill Valley has been described in Chapter 4.2., with parents sending their children far afield to attend their chosen school. An outcome of parental choice of school, introduced by the Education Act (DES, 1980), is oversubscription to popular schools, giving them more control over which pupils they accept. Evidence from both the data, and literature, suggests that parental choice can influence the demographics of schools (Smithers and Robinson, 2010). Blackmoor, the medium-excluding school, was becoming an increasingly popular choice of school in the surrounding area. Mr Carver, the deputy head, explained how increasing demand for places had resulted in a reduction in the number of feeder schools that could be offered places. Last year there were 49 feeder schools but, because of the increased demand in places, at the time of interview the number has fallen to 29.

In contrast Bitterclough, the high-excluding school, was undersubscribed and therefore had less control over admissions as it always had vacancies. It was the school of choice for ‘in-year’ admissions, particularly for migrants from Eastern Europe for whom English was an additional language. In addition, Tenterworth, a troubled secondary school in the area, was in the process of closing, with the result that many of its pupils, some with challenging behaviour issues, were coming to the school. Mr Wallace explained “We have got a lot of students coming in from places like Tenterworth. We have had an influx of [their] students at the end of the year, and we have some sort of system where students who have been excluded from other schools come to us...they seem to have to make their point of coming here.”

9.3.2 Providing education for excluded pupils

In response to the Steer Committee recommendations (DfES, 2006d) to limit the need for fixed-term exclusions, all of the schools had made provision for internal exclusion. The report also highlighted the danger of pupils regarding fixed term exclusions as holidays, recommending that some provision be made for educating pupils when excluded from school. In September 2007 the government introduced

further legislation for schools to provide education on and after the 6th day of exclusion (DfES, 2007a). All of the interviews took place after this date. In this section I examine the impact of this legislation on the duration of fixed-term exclusions. The duration of fixed-term exclusions varied widely between schools but was more consistent within schools. One of the interviewer-led themes in the interviews was to inquire how this legislation has impacted on exclusions (see Appendix 4).

At Bitterclough Mr Daniels explained that exclusions have not exceeded five days since September 2007. If there was the need to exclude for a longer period, he was confident that the school would be able to accommodate this in partnership with another school, although the mechanism for this was not yet in place at the time of the interview. The LA data for the school year 2006/7 shows that there were 4 occasions when exclusions exceeded 5 days at Bitterclough, compared with 3 the previous year.

At Blackmoor staff had varied views of how the legislation impacted on the duration of exclusions. In Ms Bell's view, there is no rigid system for deciding the length of exclusions although she is aware that one of the deputy heads has suggested that a tariff system may be helpful in making decisions. Both Ms Bell and Mr Carver agreed that each case is unique and must be considered separately. However, he explained that most fixed-term exclusions would last from one to three days and that he did not support the use of longer periods away from school because he felt that the punishment lost its impact: "I don't believe in fifteen days and twenty days. It's a complete waste of time for me. The child, and I'm thinking of a boy in Y7, will forget what's happened yesterday in ten minutes..."

Mr Carver explained that the school policy was to limit fixed-term exclusions to five days, and that this would be given a for more serious incidents when there is involvement of governors. Both Mr Carver and Ms Bell agreed that the issue of sixth-day cover would not occur as the school does not exclude for this length of time. However, in Mr Barksdale's (LSU supervisor) view, fixed-term exclusions can last up to two weeks for extreme incidents. He described the circumstances that could prompt a lengthy exclusion as "Swearing at a member staff, severe violence to pupils...They all merit external exclusion...Some children would be externally excluded, suspended, two weeks at home." The LA data confirms Mr Barksdale's opinion showing that in 2005/6 two exclusions lasted 9 days. In 2006/7 the incidence of lengthy exclusions rose at Blackmoor, there being 7 occasions when exclusions exceeded 5 days

At Grimsdale Mr Freamon explained that exclusion was used as a last resort after a range of strategies had been applied, but very few lasted more than three

days. He did not feel that the new legislation would affect the length of exclusions because by the time they occurred the situation with pupils had reached a crisis and the school had respond appropriately. The LA data shows that in 2005/6 there were 8 exclusions lasting more than 5 days, compared with 7 in 2006/7.

9.4 School population

Although the catchment areas of all the schools in the sample included an industrial town, they varied in location, size and population characteristics. In this section I examine the extent to which they varied and how this impacted on exclusion rates.

9.4.1 Bitterclough

Bitterclough, the highest-excluding school, was also the smallest school in the sample with a school population of just under a thousand. There was a high level of deprivation among the pupils. The catchment area included several deprived LSOAs²⁶ and the eligibility for FSM was 27.5% (see Figure 4.6 and Appendix 1).

Bitterclough had the most diverse population with a large and growing proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities. Data from the LA shows that, in 2006, 39.5% of the school population were from ethnic minorities (Appendix 1). These were drawn from an established community of Pakistani origin and a more recent influx of migrants from Eastern Europe. There was a consensus among the respondents that the ethnic groups were not integrated. Opinions differed concerning how much this impacted on behaviour. There had been some incidents of gang fighting among the different ethnic groups described in the microsystem (Chapter 6.6.2). In contrast, although Mr Daniels acknowledged that the pupils were not fully integrated, in his view ethnic conflicts were not a problem. He commented: “There are no real issues there, but I couldn’t say that we integrate fully.”

9.4.2 Blackmoor

Blackmoor, the medium-excluding school, with nearly 1400 pupils on the school roll, was becoming an increasingly popular choice of school in the surrounding area. The catchment area is diverse, including the local town with some areas of deprivation and an outlying rural area. The school has 10.4% eligibility for FSM and 7.4% of the pupils came from ethnic minorities in 2006 (Appendix 1).

²⁶ Lower layer super output areas, see Chapter 4.2.

There were no major issues with intake. In Mr Carver's view pupils are proud of the school and feel part of the community. He commented that "...the fact is that they are proud to come...here, the children ...do actually have a sense of belonging here." Staff perceived pupil behaviour as good and Mr Carver's most pressing concern at the time of interview was uniform infringements.

9.4.3 Grimsdale

Grimsdale, the lowest-excluding school, had the largest population with around 1600 pupils on roll. The characteristics of the school population were similar to Blackmoor with 10.3% eligibility for FSM and 7.2% of the pupils coming from ethnic minorities in 2006. The school draws its pupils from the small town where it is situated and several surrounding villages.

Mr Howard compared the school to his previous inner city school. From his observations the school serves a close community. He commented "...it's a bit like a community school...it seems to be a lot tighter and people know each other and are a lot more friendly." He was aware that the children's behaviour was less challenging than that of his previous pupils commenting that "I think another thing as well, from my own personal point of view, is that the pupils don't seem as street-wise here...They just kind of seem a lot younger here and a lot politer."

9.5 Reflective commentary

The focus of this chapter has been the macrosystem, including social exclusion; cultural influences; government legislation and school intake factors. In this section I reflect on the interview responses and indicate how they relate to the ecosystemic framework.

The first theme of social exclusion, including poverty and its accompanying disadvantages, was referred to by both staff and pupils as having a significant impact on pupil behaviour (Croll, 2002; Araujo, 2005). There was evidence that some staff respondents did not view the individual child and their family as an isolated case but stereotyped them as representatives of a sub-culture. Staff respondents from both the high and medium-excluding schools referred to a shared attitude among deprived families of undervaluing educational achievement explaining that families that have no history of higher education do not view academic achievement as a priority or a gateway to future employment. In the relevant literature relative poverty and deep poverty have both been identified as having far-reaching effects on all areas of life

including success at school and academic achievement (Townsend, 1979; Harris et al., 2003; DCSF, 2009b).

The evidence from the LA data indicates that social exclusion is not necessarily detrimental to pupil behaviour. At the level of the exosystem, individual school ethos and organisation is influential. Two schools in the sample, Tenterworth and Withensgate, had high levels of deprivation and SEN in their population but low exclusion rates (Chapter 4.8). In addition, some parents made choices to improve the future of their children, by choosing to send them away from their neighbourhood peers (Marlo, Chapter 9.1.2) and by taking them to sporting and other extra-curricular activities (Francine, Chapter 6.5.1.).

Closely associated with attitudes towards social exclusion are the prevailing cultural influences that are reflected in staff attitudes to pupils from deprived backgrounds. Evidence indicates that negative attitudes can be attributed to a hegemony in which exclusions are driven by desire of the middle class school to be dominant (Reay, 2008; Mac an Ghail, 2006, 2011). Coupled with this is the effects of living in a 'blame culture' which the poor are vilified in the media and in government initiatives (NatCen, 2012a). In contrast, more positive attitudes reflect a deeper understanding of the challenges of chaotic lives associated with social exclusion. Staff attitudes link strongly to school ethos in the exosystem, communication with parents in the mesosystem and staff/ pupil relationships in the microsystem.

The role of government legislation regarding parental choice impacts strongly on the characteristics of school populations. From the evidence in the data, the more popular a school is, the smaller the catchment area, whereas an undersubscribed school is more likely to have a diverse intake from a large area. Poor integration of minority groups can impact on behaviour putting pupils at risk of exclusion. This is an issue related to the school ethos and organisation at the exosystem level and to interpersonal relationships at the level of the microsystem.

A similar situation is seen with regard to the 6th day cover legislation. Responses from school staff and subsequent LA data indicate that the introduction of the new legislation had very little impact on the duration of exclusions. School exclusion is used as a last resort and at that the point it appears that the 6th day cover legislation is not an incentive to reduce the length of exclusions. In deciding on the duration of an exclusion each incident was assessed separately. Duration of exclusion depended on the severity of the incident and again reflected the school ethos at exosystem level and interpersonal relationships and staff attitudes at the level of the microsystem.

At LA level, the diversity of the school population appears to be an important factor in variations in exclusion rates. Evidence from the respondents in the present study indicates that the greater the diversity of the school population, the more reports of significant issues between pupils. Disharmony between ethnic groups relates strongly to the school ethos in the exosystem, and to staff/pupil and peer relationships in the microsystem.

In the following section I discuss the implications of my research for processes and systems. I also review the methodology and the limitations of the study; the study's contribution to existing knowledge, and considerations for future research.

Part 3

10 Discussion

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

In this chapter I use my analysis of the LA data; the data from the interviews; and the literature concerning school exclusion to answer my third research question: **‘What are the implications of the research for processes and systems?’**

In the following discussion I argue that an ecosystemic view of school exclusion reveals how a complex series of factors, from both outside and within school, impact on variations in school exclusion rate. In my discussion I have focused on the processes operating in schools that promote inclusion and avoid exclusion. At the same time, I highlight points for schools to avoid, that do not facilitate inclusion. In my discussion of each layer of the framework I have drawn on existing research; national and LA data; and the opinions of respondents and stakeholders, discussing qualitative and quantitative data together.

I begin by exploring how factors originating in the macrosystem, have resulted in the creation of a socially-excluded underclass that is deprived of the material and social benefits of a prosperous country and that it is children from this sector that are at the greatest risk of exclusion from school. This followed by sections on the inner levels of the ecosystemic framework, where I demonstrate how the school variations in exclusion rates relate not only to the proportion of pupils who are from excluded backgrounds but also the extent to which the cultural climate and individual school ethos shapes attitudes towards and provisions for disadvantaged pupils, and how this impacts on their performance at all levels of the school system. The impact of attributes of the individual child on exclusion have been discussed where they arise in the ecosystemic framework (Figure 2.3).

My argument is based on the existing literature and the findings from my own research. The latter, using established and innovative methodologies, provided rich data to exemplify and elaborate the themes. The insights of the students and their families including the linkages to data from other sources are central to the discussion. The discussion affirms that understanding of exclusion should take into account not just the immediate contextual factors but also the wider context.

10.1 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the most distal area of the framework from the child. It is where political, social and cultural attitudes are located, including the impact of the government legislation, the economic climate, the cultural climate and the media, that affect structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school.

10.1.1 School intake factors

At the level of the macrosystem, government statistics show that school intake factors, particularly those associated with poverty, have a marked impact on exclusion. The DfE (2010a) recorded a higher level of exclusions of children eligible for free school meals compared with the rest of the school population, commenting that ‘Children who are eligible for Free School Meals are around 3 times more likely to receive either a permanent or fixed period exclusion than children who are not eligible for free school meals’. This is supported by analysis of the LA data in the present study that identified a high correlation between eligibility for free school meals and the rate of exclusions in the majority of the schools (Chapter 4.9.1). This finding is further supported by the observations of both staff and included pupils in all schools in the present study who observed that pupils at risk of exclusion tend to come from poorer backgrounds.

The extent to which poverty disadvantages children is well-documented in the associated literature. Poverty affects not only the material goods that people can afford, but has important implications for physical and mental well-being and life chances (Townsend, 1979; Blanden, 2008; DCSF, 2009b). One of the far-reaching effects of poverty is its relationship with employment and low aspirations. In their study of schools in former coalfield areas, Harris, *et al.* (2003) found that parental long-term unemployment had an adverse effect on the aspirations and school performance of pupils. A lack of educational aspirations has also been identified as a driver in involvement in deviant behaviour. In their study of young people’s motivation in taking part in the August Riots of 2011, NatCen (2012b) report that

those who had low aspirations for the future, particularly related to education, gave this as a reason to take part. NatCen comment, ‘some young people felt that their prospects were so bleak that they had little to lose by their involvement’ (p.7). In contrast those with hopes of a better future through education were less likely to take part. This is consistent with the findings in the present study. The low aspirations of the pupils at risk of exclusion reflect the comparatively low level of social mobility in present-day Britain. Blanden (2008) reports that social mobility, at its highest after the Second World War, has declined and is now, with the USA, below that of the majority of comparatively wealthy countries, concluding that those countries with the greatest inequalities in wealth suffer from the lowest social mobility.

The evidence about the impact of socio-economic background on pupil engagement and school exclusions led me to explore the factors that promote inequalities in schools in the Watermill Valley. While the majority of secondary schools are comprehensive, the retention of two state-funded, selective-intake grammar schools has a major impact on the characteristics of the population of schools within the LA (Chapter 4.9). There are wide variations in school intakes, with high-achieving pupils from more privileged backgrounds dominating the grammar schools resulting in a concentration of lower-achieving, less privileged pupils from deprived areas in many of the non-selective entry schools. The outcome of selection is clearly demonstrated by the GCSE results from 2006 when 99% of the pupils at the two grammar schools gained A-C grades (Appendix 1). In contrast, with exception of Withensgate²⁷, results in the schools with the most deprived populations were far lower. Only 12% of pupils at Bobbinthorpe and 4% of pupils at Tenterworth gained 5 or more A-C grades at GCSE. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Parsons and Welsh (2006) who describe how the three schools in an LA with the greatest population of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and eligibility for FSM in their sample appeared at the bottom of the performance league table. They comment that ‘The schools that have fewest barriers to admission return the worst public examination performance’ (p.248).

An additional outcome of the retention of the grammar schools in Watermill Valley is that pupils with identified SEN are concentrated in the remaining schools, with the highest number in the schools with the least privileged intake (Figure 4.7). The association between SEN, FSM and achievement is highlighted by Croll’s (2002) large scale study of teachers in primary schools where, eligibility for FSM was identified as a strong predictor of achievement and a moderately strong predictor of SEN, particularly that involving discipline. This is reflected in the

²⁷ Withensgate was an anomalous school with a large proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities, mainly of Pakistani heritage

present study where there was a high correlation between eligibility for FSM and school exclusion, and between SEN and school exclusion (Chapter 4.9).

10.1.2 The role of parents

A second important factor promoting inequalities in schools has been identified in the literature as that of the role of parents in education (Reay, 2008; Smithers and Robinson, 2010). The degree to which parents are involved in their child's education has increased over recent years as a result of government legislation. Parental choice of school was introduced by the Education Act (DES, 1980), with the expressed intention of enabling parents to select the school they would like for their child. This initiative was compounded by the Parents' Charter (DES, 1991) which promised to extend the amount of information available on schools with the publication of examination results, National Curriculum test results and truancy rates. However, evidence from the literature suggests that, rather than improve provisions, this legislation has resulted in an entrenching of variations between school populations (Gewirtz, *et al.*, 1995; McNally, 2003; Araujo, 2005; Reay, 2008). In their study on social variation among schools, Smithers and Robinson (2010) found that England's comprehensive schools are highly socially selective. Their findings indicate that the social make-up of a school partly reflects its location, but is strongly influenced by parental choice and that parents tend to choose schools where pupils similar to their own go. This conclusion echoes that of Tomlinson (2005) who describes how parental choice creates an unbalanced academic and social mix in inner-city schools, with middle class parents choosing to send their children to schools in neighbouring areas to avoid these schools, a choice that is unavailable to less privileged families. Likewise, McNally (2003) observes that 'A potential consequence of a choice-based system is that disadvantaged people have to take up the 'choices' that others do not want to make' (p.134). As a result children from under-privileged backgrounds are less likely to attend high performing schools or to receive the support needed to achieve their potential, exemplified in the present study by the low proportion of pupils eligible for FSM in the grammar schools (Figure 4.6).

Increasing parental involvement in education has been identified as a factor that disadvantages pupils from deprived backgrounds (McNally, 2003; Araujo, 2005; Tomlinson, 2005). Reay (2008) is highly critical of the role New Labour has taken in promoting inequalities in schools by both encouraging competition between schools, and prioritising parental involvement in education. Problematising the Blairite preoccupation with the role of parents in their children's education (DfEE, 1998), she describes how the principle relies on parental equality in educational

experience, concluding that, in practice, the degree to which parents involve themselves in their children's education is strongly dependent on their own backgrounds and school experiences, and is a highly gendered, 'raced' and classed process. She argues that as a result of the present emphasis on parental involvement, inequalities between parents have led to the positioning of working class parents as failing.

Both Mac an Ghaill (1996) and Reay (2008) view educational inequalities and the domination of middle class values in schools as cultural hegemony. In his study of the experiences of students in a sixth-form college who had been labelled as 'educational failures', Mac an Ghaill (1996) suggests that social class was a central explanatory variable of his students' experiences. This view is echoed by Reay (2008) who views the promotion of parental choice of school and the further involvement of parents in support for education, in the form of attending meetings, supervising homework and reinforcing school discipline, as a means of enabling middle-class parents to monopolise the best education for their children.

In the present study, there was evidence that a middle class hegemony prevailed in the high-excluding school. The head of the LSU was highly critical of the parenting of disadvantaged pupils. Similarly the deputy head felt that parents of pupils at risk of exclusion did not value educational achievement. In contrast, in the low and medium-excluding schools staff appeared to take a broader, less critical view of struggling parents, expressing awareness of the multiple pressures that accompany poverty.

The qualitative data reveals that the pupils at risk from exclusion felt disengaged from the advantages that education can bring. This was evident even in cases where pupils were academically able. The majority of pupils at risk of exclusion did not associate academic achievements with future employment, and aspired to work in occupations that did not require a high level of formal qualifications (Chapter 9.2). Marlo's (Y10, Blackmoor) parents appeared to be sentient of this effect and had sent him to a school away from his peers to increase his chances in education. However, by Y10 he had rejected the idea of higher education, preferring to train as a plumber. This pattern is recognised by DCFS (2009) who observe that those children from deprived backgrounds who initially appear to be doing well find it harder to sustain progress as they get older. In the present study the only pupil at risk of exclusion who hoped to attend university was Karim (Grimsdale, Y10), who came from a middle class background where, with two older brothers in higher education, education was already valued.

10.1.3 The media and the cultural climate

Government initiatives that privilege middle class parents are closely linked to the media portrayal of deprived families and how the cultural climate influences the attitudes of school staff.

The idea that inequalities and the resulting problems of deprivation can be blamed on the inadequacies of the individual rather than to deficits in society is well established, and is associated with economic downturns, deferring public attention away from wealth distribution. Macnicol (1983) describes how the popularity of eugenics theory rose in the inter-war years as a way of explaining inequalities ranging from education to maternal mortality, explaining that ‘mass unemployment seemed convincing proof of racial degeneration’ (P.177). Economic growth in the mid-20th century heralded a more benign attitude to the poor. However, since the 1980s, with diminishing economic growth, attitudes towards the most vulnerable members of society have become more prejudiced. In their survey of British attitudes towards welfare recipients NatCen (2012b) found that those who regard benefits as too high, and therefore discouraging employment, rose from 40% in 1983, to over nearly 70% in 2006. The tendency to see the poor as undeserving has persisted in popular culture and is epitomised in the Sun’s ‘Beat the Cheat’ campaign, in which readers are encouraged to report benefit fraud (Dunn, 2012). Using emotive language those on welfare benefits are described as ‘feckless benefits claimants’ adding that ‘Fraud has soared in tough economic times.’

In the present study negative staff opinions and attitudes concerning parenting styles and deprivation can be traced to this popular belief, fed by the government and the media. There was a tendency for school staff, particularly in the high-excluding school, to stereotype pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, associating socio-economic factors with behaviours that put pupils at risk of exclusion. This led them to focus on groups but fail to engage with the lived realities of individuals. This attitude was observed to a lesser extent at the medium-excluding school. In contrast at the low-excluding school attitudes to pupils were driven by an inclusive ethos that valued each child as an individual, striving to meet their diverse needs, admitting to a sense of failure when a pupil was excluded (Chapter 8.1.3).

The evidence indicates that negative attitudes towards pupils at risk of exclusion is an important factor in variations in school exclusion rate and is a recurring theme at all levels of the ecosystemic framework.

10.2 The exosystem

At the level of the exosystem, where school organisation takes place, the factors in the macrosystem have a marked impact on school systems. The evidence from the literature indicates that the ethos of the school is highly dependent on the attitudes of the senior management, which, in turn are influenced by both their cultural and political viewpoints, and the current educational climate. The relevant literature highlights the importance of the values of school leadership in school ethos. In their study of schools in former coal fields, Harris, *et al.* (2003) observed that leadership, high expectations and relationship building were instrumental in improving educational opportunities for all children. They comment that ‘The vision and practices of the headteachers reflected a number of core personal values concerning the modelling and promotion of respect (for individuals), fairness and equality, caring for the well being and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty’ (p.16). Similarly, describing ethos as the atmosphere in the school, Olsen and Cooper (2003) compare the impact of differing attitudes commenting that: ‘The atmosphere in some schools is positive and enriching, imbuing staff and students with a sense of well-being and optimism. In other schools the atmosphere is toxic, giving rise to a sense of demoralisation, depression and hostility’ (p.69).

With the evidence in Chapter 4 of a high correlation between eligibility for FSM, identification of SEN and school exclusion it could be argued that it is the characteristics of the school intake that govern the extent to which successful strategies can be implemented. Indeed this had a significant impact on the school population in the high-excluding school in the study where there was a high degree of deprivation. In contrast, the evidence in Appendix 1 and Chapter 4 indicates that although the low and medium-excluding schools had similar intakes the characteristics of the school population are not the only factors at play

From the evidence, it appears that an expression of the school’s ethos is the way it uses its resources to meet the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. In the low and medium excluding schools, there was a marked difference between the school attitudes to meeting the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. The comments of the deputy head in the low-excluding school revealed that the school was committed to treating every child on an individual basis, and that the school systems reflected this attitude. A proactive approach, combined with considerable investment of resources, were dedicated to the targeting of provisions for individual pupils who did not engage with mainstream lessons, planning ahead to provide a range of strategies to engage pupils and avoid exclusions. The deputy head adopted a reflective approach to pupils at risk of exclusion, offering a raft of reasons for the problems that arose

and creative strategies to solve them. The success of this approach is supported by the LA data that records a consistently low level of exclusions for the period studied (Figure 4.2). In contrast, at the medium-excluding school, although the staff were committed to providing a varied and empathetic curriculum for some pupils with identified SEN, there was evidence that the manager of the LSU made a distinction between those with emotional difficulties and those with behavioural difficulties, the former being privileged over the latter. At the high-excluding school, the provision for pupils at risk of exclusion was more limited, and the attitude of the deputy head less flexible, with a focus on the school problems rather than solutions. The evidence from the LA data indicates a more reactive approach, with pupils being excluded on a regular basis, and many pupils being excluded on multiple occasions.

In the following sections I discuss how the schools in the study varied in the ways they addressed the needs of these pupil at risk of exclusion in terms of behaviour management and alternative strategies. I also discuss the importance of pupil voice.

10.2.1 Behaviour management

Variations in the implementation of the school behaviour policies reflected differences in school ethos. In all of the schools behaviour modification, where desired behaviour was reinforced by tangible rewards, was the preferred method of addressing behaviour and performance. All of the schools had highly developed hierarchical behaviour management systems of rewards and sanctions where early interventions were low-level, leading to either more severe sanctions, or more valued incentives and rewards.

One of the major differences between the schools lay in the clarity of the behaviour management schemes. The evidence from the interviews indicates that there was a tension between the desire for clear sanctions and the way in which they were applied. At the low and medium-excluding schools the emphasis was on the need for clear guidelines. The behaviour policy at the medium-excluding school went as far as to give a hierarchy of responses to disruptive behaviour in the classroom, with an accompanying script. In contrast the policy at the high-excluding school was less clear and more open to individual staff interpretations and initiatives. This approach was reflected in staff and pupil responses. Although it was recognised by pupils at all schools that individual staff omit to apply sanctions, the responses of the pupils suggest that this may be a frequent occurrence at the high-excluding school where pupils at risk of exclusion both mentioned and were

observed roaming the corridors during lesson time and were not always challenged for this. In contrast, at the low-excluding school a highly-developed system was in place to ensure that pupils remained in lessons unless they had permission to leave. Teaching staff at the high-excluding school were aware of the discrepancies between the sanctions system and its implementation, but felt unsupported by senior staff.

The comments of the staff respondents indicate that there is fine balance between presenting a clear system to both staff and pupils and implementing the system with sensitivity. There was a conflict in some schools between the desire for consistency in the application of sanctions and the flexibility to respond to individuals' needs. At the low-excluding school, the deputy head explained how, following the guidelines rigidly, some pupils could swiftly arrive at the point of permanent exclusion but the school intervened and used additional strategies such as alternative timetables, curriculum and the cooperation of parents to prevent this happening. Pupil respondents in all schools were aware that the implementation of sanctions was dependent on both staff/pupil relationships and the responses and attitudes of individual staff.

One strategy applied to avert fixed term exclusions at the low-excluding school was the use of informal exclusions at times of crisis and may be a factor in the low number of formal exclusions recorded at the school. The literature resonates with this finding indicating that school records may not accurately reflect practice. Reed (2005a) found the use of informal exclusions to be a factor in variations in school exclusion rates, observing that the 'Use of informal temporary exclusion accounts for some of the variation in school fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion rates' (p.3). Similarly, Smith (2006) reports that, in his Edinburgh study, the number of pupil respondents who said that they had been excluded was higher than school records indicated. Government guidance is clear that informal exclusions are illegal. They state that: 'Informal or unofficial exclusions are illegal regardless of whether they are done with the agreement of parents or carers' (DCFS, 2008a, p.15). The Office of the Children's Commissioner Report (2012) into exclusions calls for further regulation to deter informal exclusions, viewing them as an infringement of pupils' right to education. However, because schools avoid exclusions where possible, in the interests of both the pupils and the school, this appears to be a widespread and successful, but unrecorded strategy.

The overt use of informal exclusions at the low-excluding school can be attributed to the school ethos of meeting the needs of all pupils. Unofficial exclusion can be viewed as a humane method of damage limitation with removal from school protecting vulnerable pupils in a crisis from committing criminal acts. It resonates with Little's (2005) account of using a flexible approach to interventions within a

hierarchical system in order to achieve a best fit between problem behaviour and management. A similar approach is advocated by Hilton (2006) who advises that instead of using systems in a rigid way, they should be applied with sensitivity, taking account of individual circumstances. In contrast, strategies in use at the medium-excluding school were less sensitive, involving humiliation and punitive practices to establish order. Mr Carver described how the sanction for truancy was designed to embarrass pupils and Ms Bell felt that focus on minor uniform infringements would deter pupils from more serious breaches of rules (Chapter 8.1.3).

Another popular alternative to exclusion, favoured by both staff and pupils at risk of exclusion, was internal exclusion, where pupils are excluded from lessons but still attend school. This strategy had been introduced in all of the schools as a response to government pressure to reduce fixed-term exclusions and maintain continuity in pupils' education. This is resonant of Reed's (2005a) finding that internal exclusion is seen as a fairer and more effective alternative to fixed-term exclusion. The schools varied widely in the both way they organised internal exclusions and their effectiveness. In all of the schools the LSUs were used to some degree for this purpose and this appeared to be a pragmatic decision contrary to Government guidelines that advise that LSUs should not be used for internal exclusions (DfES, 2006a). At the low-excluding school, internal exclusions were closely supervised by senior management in an area away from the classrooms. Both staff and pupils felt that this was a successful strategy. In contrast at the medium and high-excluding schools, dedicated internal exclusion rooms had been established. Respondents' opinions differed regarding the efficacy of this system. Pupils at neither school mentioned internal exclusion. At the high-excluding school, although Mr Daniels, the deputy head observed that internal exclusion had been successful in reducing fixed-term exclusions, Mrs Little felt that it was not a deterrent as pupils viewed it as an enjoyable rather than punitive experience.

The data indicates that whole school reward systems were ineffective in shaping the behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion. A further indictment of the efficacy of the reward systems was that teaching staff in all of the schools introduced their own 'in-class' rewards including discussion time, interactive games, and lotteries. It is significant that both the LSUs and the Y11 alternative group had developed their own schemes with more proximal rewards than those in the main schools. Despite the adults' references to reward systems it is notable that none of the pupils at risk of exclusion mentioned rewards. It appears that rewards are relatively inaccessible to pupils at risk of exclusion and also that involvement with sanctions had an adverse effect on eligibility for rewards. The parent respondents

described instances of double jeopardy, where pupils were at risk of being punished twice for the same incident. They reported that reward trips at the low and medium-excluding schools were particularly inaccessible to pupils at risk of exclusion with past behaviour impacting on their children's eligibility for these incentives. This view was reinforced by the deputy head of the low-excluding school when he explained that the number of credits required for reward trips was raised when a sanction was incurred.

In contrast, the included pupils in all schools reported that they valued and were motivated by rewards schemes (Chapter 8.1.2). They were also motivated by qualities intrinsic to learning such as mastering new skills, or by certificates and letters home. The relevant literature indicates that included pupils have developed internalised incentives that regulate classroom behaviour and motivate them to succeed academically (Solomon and Rogers, 2001). Increasing the accessibility of reward schemes appears to be a powerful incentive in motivating pupils. In their study on schools in former coal fields Harris *et al.* (2003) describe how achievement was raised by taking every opportunity to celebrate success with speech days; award ceremonies; celebratory events, and reward schemes (p.19).

The efficacy of rewards appears to be dependent on the attitudes of the staff who implement them. The deputy head's view at the medium-excluding school was that staff commitment to a reward scheme was instrumental in its success. This view is supported by Reed (2005a) who observed that a shared ethos among staff is instrumental in influencing pupil behaviour. She comments: 'Behaviour outcomes also depend on levels of staff buy-in to the approach to behaviour. Staff need to be able to believe in both the capacity of schools and their own ability to influence behaviour. A shared school ethos is equally important' Reed, 2005a, p.43).

10.2.2 **Alternative strategies**

Curriculum content and delivery were factors that were perceived by staff respondents as having a significant impact on the engagement of pupils, and therefore minimising their risk of exclusion (Chapter 8.2). The medium-excluding school placed particular emphasis on varying curriculum delivery as a strategy to engage all pupils in learning. Both staff and pupils agreed that taking an active role in learning through practical activities, including talking, engaged pupils whereas copying and textbook based exercises were demotivating. Another successful strategy was for the medium-excluding school to reorganise form groupings in response to disruptive behaviour from a challenging cohort of pupils.

All of the schools provided LSUs, the characteristics of which varied widely between the three schools. Comparability in the present study was highest between the LSUs at the medium and high-excluding schools as these were both short-term provisions for pupils with the intention of reintegration into the mainstream classes. The Y11 group at the low-excluding-school was in addition to the LSU and served a different purpose, providing a full-time, alternative programme for ten pupils throughout the school year.

The staff understandings and purposes of the provisions varied, and this appeared to impact on their success, a factor influenced by both school ethos in the exosystem and the cultural attitudes of the staff originating in the macrosystem. There was a marked contrast between the punitive regime applied at the high-excluded school and the more nurturing approaches by the low and medium-excluding. This is epitomised in the staff approach to breaks and lunchtimes. At the high-excluding school pupils were obliged to earn breaks and lunchtimes through compliant behaviour, whereas at the medium-excluding school, in addition to providing a full-time placement for some pupils, the LSU was also used by pupils as a refuge from the pressures of the mainstream school, after their reintegration. In their study of KS3 nurture groups, Garner and Thomas (2011) stress the importance of providing a non-threatening environment for vulnerable pupils, observing that pupils regarded the provision as a secure base and 'safe haven'. They observed that it was beneficial that, after reintegration into the mainstream classes, pupils were able to access the nurture group when necessary.

The evidence from the data indicates that length of placement in the units also impacted on their effectiveness. The deputy head at the high-excluding school, questioned the long-term effectiveness of the LSU. He observed that pupils can be very settled while in the LSU but on return to the mainstream school they struggle to conform. In contrast at the medium-excluding school, the placements were more flexible depending on the individual pupil's readiness to return to the mainstream lessons. This variation appears to be linked to the degree to which the units were integrated with the mainstream school. In both LSUs there was an emphasis on the enhancement of both basic academic skills and social skills. Variations lay in the extent to which academic work was related to mainstream programmes, reflecting the degree of integration with the mainstream classes. In the medium-excluding school, subject staff provided work for individual pupils ensuring that pupils could easily return to lessons. However, in the high-excluding school a separate teaching programme was provided and little contact was made with mainstream teachers. The success of the Y11 unit at the low-excluding school appeared to lie in the small group and alternative curriculum offered, a strategy that was deemed more

appropriate for KS4 pupils. Following its success, at the time of the interview plans were in progress to form an additional alternative curriculum group for younger pupils.

Staff at all of the schools mentioned the effectiveness of age-appropriate behaviour management strategies. Both staff and included pupils agreed that behaviour was less problematic in Y7 and Y8 and therefore less severe sanctions necessary. Some sanctions were deliberately avoided for younger pupils. At the low-excluding school, after-school detentions were not used for Y7 and Y8 pupils. The senior staff were reluctant to use exclusions with younger pupils, partly because it was felt that they would not connect the sanction with their actions and partly because staff were keen to try exploring other solutions before using the ultimate sanction.

Opinions varied concerning the impact of the curriculum on behaviour. Staff at the medium-excluding school and pupils from all schools observed that behaviour improved with the introduction of the GCSE curriculum in Y10, relating the acquisition of qualifications to future work opportunities. However, staff at the low-excluding school reported that the GCSE curriculum fails to engage pupils who are less academic, where the school curriculum seems unrelated to their future prospects. There was also a consensus among staff and pupil respondents at all schools that behaviour was better in higher sets. However, evidence from the medium-excluding school indicates that access to higher sets can be dependent on both behaviour and performance (Chapter 8.2.4).

The identification of a pupil's Special Educational Needs (SEN) was a factor that initiated additional support. In all of the schools this enabled access to the intervention of pastoral staff. The creativity with which these staff were employed reflected the attitude of the individual school towards pupils at risk of exclusion. The medium-excluding school valued the input of key workers who facilitated communication between pupil, home and school. They also used trainee youth workers to extend the curriculum. However, there was evidence that staff gave more credence to identified learning difficulties than to SEN relating to behaviour. At the low-excluding school considerable creativity was used to employ a range of pastoral staff who intervened in different situations; a community police officer liaised between school and home; escorting pupils in crisis home; an education welfare officer was able to supervise the schoolwork of up to six pupils in her room, if necessary. Pupils also valued the support of pastoral workers, although these interventions were often short-lived. Pupils from all of the schools related how they had benefitted from the opportunity to talk to adults from outside the teaching staff about issues.

An additional successful strategy described by both staff and pupils at risk of exclusion was the use of ‘managed moves’ where arrangements are made for a pupil at risk of exclusion to move to another school. Two of the pupil respondents had experienced managed moves, with different outcomes. The evidence indicates that the success of this strategy depends to some extent on the level of support and understanding of staff. Marlo (Y10) at the medium-excluding school felt that the move had been positive and that his new school was more able to meet his needs due to better relationships between staff and pupils. In contrast after only six months in his new school, Albert (Y9) at the high-excluding school was on the verge of exclusion. He felt relatively unsupported, especially by staff with whom he was unfamiliar, an issue relating to staff communication in the mesosystem.

The literature indicates that managed moves are not suitable for all pupils. Parsons (2009) comments that managed moves are particularly useful for one-off, and out of character incidents but that they are an ineffective strategy for those with a history of behaviour problems. Similarly, Bombèr (2009) suggests that managed moves do not meet the needs of pupils with insecure attachment. She observes that ‘This approach can have an adverse effect on those young people who have experienced relational trauma and loss in early years’ (p.33). In her view their needs are better met by enabling them to form transitional attachment to a key adult within their school setting.

10.2.3 Pupil voice

From the evidence in the data the promotion of pupil voice appears to be an important factor in reducing exclusions, and is associated with school ethos and societal attitudes towards pupils at risk of exclusion. A feeling of disempowerment was cited by pupils at all of the schools as a reason for their oppositional behaviour. One of the clearest messages from pupils at risk of exclusion was that they felt alienated from the education process and wanted their views to be considered but felt that there was no platform to facilitate this. They saw their relationships with staff in terms of conflict, describing how they challenged staff authority by arguing, or by withdrawing from the classroom. The idea that pupils use disruptive behaviour to empower themselves is supported by the literature. Sellman (2009) suggests that ‘...some students experienced greater voice/power when they exhibited more challenging behaviour’ (p.42). Furlong (1991) explains this process in terms of a power struggle, taking the view that the predominantly working class children who resist schooling are not challenging an abstract social structure but are challenging real people who have the power to constrain their freedom. Likewise, McFadden and

Munns (2002) comment: 'Whereas the teachers have control of content, the pupils can decide what work they want to do and at what pace' (p.361).

The extent to which pupils are involved in formulating behaviour policies appears to reflect the wider school ethos and is further evidence of the impact of the hegemony promoted by the domination of middle class values in schools (Chapter 10.1). Friere's (2000) analysis of the oppressive nature of student/teacher relationship highlights this process. Using the analogy of pupils as receptacles for knowledge imparted by the teacher, he describes a 'banking' concept of education in which compliant pupils are valued over the non-compliant: 'The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled the better students they are' (p.72). To humanise the process he advocates a partnership between staff and pupils, with each acknowledging the value of the others' contributions.

In the present study only one adult respondent spontaneously mentioned the importance of including pupil voice in the formulation of policy, when the deputy at the low-excluding school explained that the code of conduct was written in consultation with the pupils (Chapter 8.1.1.3). It was unclear how this was achieved but it appears unlikely that those at risk of exclusion were involved in this process (Cefai and Cooper, 2009). The methodology did not allow for exploration into pupil voice at the remaining two schools. However, harmonious relationships described by both staff and pupils involved egalitarian interactions rather than where staff took an authoritarian stance (Chapter 10.4).

10.3 The mesosystem

The mesosystem is the layer of the ecosystemic framework relating to connections between the exosystem and the microsystem (Figure 2.3). The data indicates that two themes appear to be important factors in variations in exclusion rate: inter-staff communication and home/school communication.

10.3.1 Staff communication

At the level of the mesosystem, communication between senior management and mainstream staff was an important factor in influencing variations in school exclusions. In the present study there was marked contrast between attitudes towards decision-making and information sharing between the high and low-excluding schools. At the high-excluding school, it was clear that decisions were made at senior level. The staff respondents focused on formal systems of information sharing, and there was little evidence of opportunities for the involvement of the school community in developing strategies. There were reported

organisational problems in disseminating information, with senior staff relying on staff briefings to communicate information on whole school issues. Some staff were unable to attend these due to the time constraints and work commitments, a result of which was that the teaching staff interviewed felt out of touch with the aims of the school and ill-prepared to implement strategies with pupils. In contrast, at the low-excluding school senior management prioritised information sharing. The school used a range of methods to disseminate information including face-to-face communication in preference to emails giving all staff opportunities to voice their opinions. At the low and medium-excluding schools it was evident that staff felt well-informed and confident that they had the necessary information to apply strategies. Senior staff at both schools reported that they were open to discussing issues concerning individual pupils with staff. They both mentioned that they kept an 'open door' policy where staff could come at any time to discuss concerns. Staff respondents also described information sharing that takes place informally, through discussions with colleagues. The outcome of these measures was that staff were alerted to issues with individual pupils and strategies shared. This approach is reflected in the literature where both Munn and Lloyd (2005) and Daniels (2006) prioritise information sharing, suggesting that knowledge of the complexities of pupils' lives outside the classroom may promote understanding of challenging behaviour.

The evidence indicates that both the formulation of policy and the dissemination of information is a whole school issue, stemming from school ethos in the exosystem and reflecting the school leadership style. An autocratic approach was evident in the high-excluding school which had a disempowering effect, resulting in a lowering of staff morale, an outcome of which, inferred from respondents' comments on supply staff, was a high turnover of staff and frequent staff absences. This is in contrast to staff views in the medium and low-excluding schools, where a more open, egalitarian approach led to high staff morale and the unsettling effects of employing supply staff was less evident. The importance of an open and sharing leadership style was recognised by Harris *et al.* (2003) who observed that this approach not only raised staff morale but also motivated and sustained performance over time (p.16).

Staff communication between on-site units and the school was an extreme situation that made particular demands on processes and relationships. It appears that both the quality and frequency of contact between mainstream staff and on-site units is an important factor in the efficacy of the LSUs. In the on-site units at the high and low-excluding schools staff were dissatisfied with the level of communication with the rest of the school. They felt isolated and reported that there

was little discussion about the needs of pupils once they were removed from mainstream lessons, reflecting an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ attitude from leadership. In contrast, in the medium-excluding school, staff reported close communication with both management and classroom staff.

The value of close contact between the mainstream school and on-site units in the outcomes for pupils at risk of exclusion is emphasised by Bombèr (2009) who prioritises the importance of supporting pupils with challenging behaviour over a protracted period. This links closely with Glaser’s (2000) medical model of child development which describes how the brain is programmed to develop skills at critical periods. This approach advises that learning is less efficient outside the critical period and that children take considerably longer to acquire the same skills later in life. Thus changing pupil behaviour at KS3 and KS4 may be a lengthy process. This view is supported by the findings of the Ofsted evaluation of LSUs (2006). They attribute the poor success of reintegration from LSUs to a combination of pupils’ lack of readiness to return to the mainstream classes and a deficit in effective behaviour management strategies. They comment: ‘In almost half of the LSUs inspected, reintegrating pupils to mainstream classes was not always successful, either because pupils had not learnt to cope or because mainstream teachers did not have strategies to manage the reintegrated pupils effectively’ (p.2).

School-level decisions about the deployment of school resources also had an important role in staff communication. The evidence from the low and medium-excluding schools indicates that the appointment of pastoral staff contributed to efficacy in information sharing, particularly when this role was prioritised. Pastoral staff were able to make good relationships with pupils at risk of exclusion; had knowledge of their history; strengths and weaknesses, and could use their knowledge to both mentor pupils and to act as advocates in conflicts.

10.3.2 Home/ school communication

The second important theme identified in the mesosystem was that of home /school communication. In the present study, the forging of good relationships between home and school was viewed by all school staff as a powerful way to influence and improve behaviour. Staff in the on-site units maintained particularly close contact with pupils’ parents and carers, keeping them informed of their children’s progress. This was regarded as helpful by both staff and parents as issues could be resolved quickly. However, the evidence indicates that communication alone was not enough

to impact on exclusions. The quality, frequency and focus of communication was as important as the quantity.

It appears that the more complex and long-running the dialogue between home and school, the better each party understands the issues the child faces. The involvement of parents in planning strategies for individual pupils is a school-level decision, indicative of the wider school ethos. An important feature of this interaction at the low-excluding, and to some degree, medium-excluding school, was that parents were viewed as partners, and when problems arose, were involved in discussion with senior management at an early stage. The parental respondents from the medium and low-excluding schools valued contact with school. They reported regular meetings with staff where the complex needs of their children were discussed and strategies discussed. However, at the medium-excluding school the parent respondent reported that advice from outside agencies was not always followed (Chapter 7.2.2). This finding echoes that of the Lamb Inquiry (DSCF, 2009) which identified parental involvement, both with schools and with other agencies, as having a profound impact on pupils' progress. It advocates consulting with and involving parents at all stages of SEN intervention as a means of addressing behaviour issues.

In contrast, there was evidence that the high-excluding school took a more autocratic view of the home/school relationships, with the school taking the role as the 'expert' on the individual child. Parents were encouraged to support school discipline by reinforcing rewards and sanctions at home, but there was no evidence of involving parents in decisions, and there was some evidence of communication problems between the mainstream school and home (Chapter 7.2.1.1). Some of the disciplinary advice given to parents by Mrs Little at the LSU in the high-excluding school was draconian, involving a punitive regime in which pupils at risk of exclusion earned all privileges at home through their behaviour at school. Mrs Little saw her role with parents as instructional rather than egalitarian, focussing on perceived deficits in their skills. Although she had regular contact with parents, dialogue consisted of giving instructions on disciplinary matters within the home, and advice on nutrition. This is indicative of her views on behaviour issues in which she locates problems within the child, assuming that they are very much in control of their behaviour and are able to change it at will.

The maintenance of a balance between positive and negative feedback was viewed as an important element in home/school communication, the data indicating that excessive negative feedback damages the home/school relationship. There was a tension between parental desire to show their support for school discipline and their need to maintain harmony in the home. In one case long-term negative feedback

from the high-excluding school resulted in parents withdrawing from school communication (Chapter 7.2.1.1).

10.4 The Microsystem

The microsystem is the layer of the ecosystemic framework relating to face-to-face relationships directly influencing the child (Figure 2.3). In this section I have identified three themes from the data that appear to be important factors in variations in exclusions: staff/pupil relationships; peer relationships; and home relationships. The attributes of the individual child are discussed where they arise.

10.4.1 Staff/ pupil relationships

Closely related to behaviour management, staff/pupil relationships was the aspect of education most frequently cited by staff and pupils as a reason for conflict. This finding is consistent with the LA data that shows that one of the major triggers for exclusion involved face-to-face interactions with staff (Figure 4.3). The LA data follows the national trend where ‘verbal abuse of staff was found to be the second most frequent reason for fixed-term exclusion. In 2004/5 the DfES reported that ‘23 per cent of fixed period exclusions involved verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour against an adult’ (DfES, 2006a, p.4). The importance of positive staff/pupil relationships has been highlighted in the literature. In his Edinburgh study of Youth Transitions and Crime, Smith (2006) found that attachment to school, and particularly attachment to teachers, is closely related to positive behaviour and outcomes in later life. Similarly, Cooper (2008) stresses the role of positive staff/pupil relationships in outcomes for pupils experiencing problems in school, stating: ‘Positive adult–pupil relationships often act as protective and remedial factors in the lives of young people with SEBD’ (p.18).

Promoting positive relationships between staff and pupils is a complex process involving both whole school initiatives and individual attitudes. The wider influences on staff attitudes have been discussed at some length in the section on the macrosystem (Chapter 10.1), where the political and media portrayal of the economically deprived have engendered attitudes of blame and prejudice. Attitudes are also influenced by school ethos in the exosystem (Chapter 10.2) and staff communication in the mesosystem (Chapter 10.3). It is at microsystem level in face-to face interactions that these factors are played out.

The data in the present study indicates that staff attitudes, particularly those relating to pupils at risk of exclusion, were a key feature in the quality of staff/ pupil relationships. Shaped by their attitudes, it appears to be the nature of staff interventions that can lead to, or de-escalate, conflict in schools. The problems associated with teacher reactions are well-documented by Weiss (2002a, 2002b) when he explains the process of transference, in which teacher responses are governed by their past experiences and have very little bearing on current situations. He warns that ‘...an individual child’s social and emotional behaviour toward other pupils or toward the teacher may evoke a powerful and apparently unaccountable reaction in the teacher’ (Weiss, 2002b, p.117).

Pupils at risk of exclusion in all of the schools mentioned how early interventions by staff can be key in conflict situations. The staff intervention of shouting was of particular concern to pupils at risk of exclusion who found it both demeaning and provocative. Pupil respondents mentioned feeling personally attacked and undervalued by this intervention. Another form of intervention that frequently led to conflict was when pupils at risk of exclusion felt that they were treated unfairly by staff, being prejudged and singled out as the instigators of disruptive behaviour.

This view is supported by the literature. Riley and Docking (2004) found that most pupils in their study held specific grievances against staff, resenting those who shouted at them; talked down to them; punished them without listening to their views, and punished the whole class rather than individuals. The literature also indicates that there is a danger that staff will ascribe extreme behaviour to those pupils who they perceived as having BESD with the accompanying danger that pupil behaviour could become consistent with teacher expectations (Soles *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, pupils’ past behaviour can determine teachers’ attitudes, a practice reported by the parent respondent at the medium-excluding school. Hilton (2006) found that pupils felt that they were targeted or picked on because of previous behaviour.

In the present study, staff beliefs about the causes of behaviour difficulties appeared to influence their attitudes. At the high-excluding school, the teaching staff located behaviour difficulties within the child, viewing challenging behaviour as a conscious choice made by the individual. This underpinned the teachers’ decisions about intervention. In the high-excluding school the teaching staff interviewed both established order through coercion, Mr Wallace using his size and voice, and Mrs Little through a punitive regime. This is consistent with the literature. Soles *et al.*’s (2008) indicate that teachers’ views of pupils as disruptive predispose them to punish them. In a similar vein, Cooper and Jacobs (2011) report that the cycle of

disaffection is perpetuated by punitive practices, suggesting that ‘...punitive and coercive teachers tend to promote, albeit unwittingly, coercive behaviour in their students’ (p.7).

In contrast, there was a culture of explaining behaviour problems in terms of school processes, family background and deprivation in the low, and to some extent, in the medium-excluding school. This difference can be attributed to variations in school ethos and management style. It appears that the ‘top-down’ management style at the high-excluding school had an adverse influence on both staff morale and staff approach to pupils at risk of exclusion, whereas the more egalitarian ethos at the lower-excluding schools had a beneficial influence on morale and staff/pupil relationships.

Closely linked with staff morale and school ethos was the principle of treating others with respect. Respect was a recurring theme in the interviews and a quality that was highly valued by both staff and pupils. There were a range of successful methods of achieving this. An important strategy cited by both included pupils and those at risk of exclusion, indicative of both staff attitudes and the schools ethos, was when staff gave pupils opportunities to talk. This included group activities within the curriculum and also informal talk within a framework of equality in the classroom, giving the pupils confidence that their ideas were respected and valued.

Some staff and a parent respondent suggested that creating opportunities to interact in an informal setting would further this aim and that this could be achieved through joint participation in extra-curricular activities and informal contact between staff and pupils. PE teachers from the low and medium-excluding schools recognised the value of this approach, and invested their own time in arranging sporting events and training opportunities outside the school day. Based on the evidence from the interviews recognition of the value of building relationships requires not only willingness of the individual staff member but also formal commitment from the school in the form of pastoral interventions such as shared activities within the school day. This opinion is supported by Riley and Docking (2004) who highlight the importance of effective dialogue and fostering of relationships beyond the rules of conduct to achieve a culture of mutual respect between staff and students. Building relationships could be further enhanced by extending pupil voice to include the views of pupils at risk of exclusion, and increasing their participation in the school process.

10.4.2 Peer relationships at school

In this section I discuss how peers can exert a positive or negative influence on behaviour leading to exclusions. There was, with the exception of conflict between ethnic groups at the high excluding school²⁸ (Chapter 6.6.2.1), little variation of opinions on the effects of peer relationships between schools and I have accordingly focussed on the general advantages and disadvantages involved. In the present study the way in which pupils at risk of exclusion described their friendships is revealing as it was often in terms of a mutually beneficial and empathetic relationship that supports their positive behaviour, and differed markedly from their descriptions of more troubled relationships. Respondents agreed that peers have a powerful influence on behaviour, staff and included pupils regarding peer influence as pivotal in influencing the behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion.

From the evidence it appears that positive peer role models can play a powerful role in promoting good behaviour. Several pupils described how their friends were supportive in helping them to control their emotions and remain calm in lessons. In all of the schools, included pupils described friendships with their peers who experienced difficulties at school. At the high-excluding school this extended to creating ‘buddy’ systems in which new or vulnerable pupils were supported by a peer. The majority of included pupils expressed sympathy towards, and understanding of, their troubled classmates. This observation resonates with the findings of Cruddas and Haddock (2003). Focusing on girls, they show the positive effects of discussions with peers, lessen feelings of isolation and increasing self-confidence.

Although the positive influence of peer relationships was not acknowledged by the majority of staff respondents there were exceptions. Some staff at the low and medium-excluding schools, proactively sought to benefit from or manage peer interactions. At the low-excluding school, Mr Howard described the benefits of giving a troubled pupil responsibility in coaching others in table tennis (Chapter 8.2.2), while at the medium-excluding school the form groupings were rearranged to improve the distribution of role models in one year group (Chapter 6.6.2.2).

The negative effects of peer influences were more widely reported by staff and pupils. These included behaviours involving social contact, status and reputation; and bullying. They all acknowledged that a major cause of disruption is that some

²⁸ The tensions between ethnic groups in the high-excluding school can be partially attributed to the residential segregation of the Pakistani population in the area (Burgess and Wilson, 2004) and the language barrier for the newly arrived Eastern European migrants.

pupils at risk of exclusion prioritised social contact with their peers over the learning experience. This was a major cause of conflict in staff/ pupil relationships, discussed above. Several pupils both included and at risk of exclusion described how other pupils used the classroom as a way to gain attention, by shouting out, answering back and disrupting lessons. They viewed this as a deliberate strategy designed to maintain status and reputation. At the medium-excluding school, Ms Bell observed that there is a stigma attached to being compliant. This is particularly evident when classes are set for ability with a concentration of low achieving pupils in lower sets, where pupils who conform to school rules and work hard are often regarded as low status by their peers. In the higher sets pupils at all of the schools agreed that behaviour is more compliant. This finding relates closely to influences in the exosystem where school ethos and a middle class hegemony impacts on the development of school attachment (Smith, 2006). It also relates to forces in the macrosystem where low social mobility (Blanden, 2008), and the resulting low pupil aspirations (Harris *et al.*, 2003; NatCen, 2012b), lead to failure to engage in the school.

10.5 Methodology and limitations of the study

The underlying analytic and organisational tool for my study is the application of the ecosystemic framework. The advantage of using this approach is that it acknowledges that school exclusion is a complex and multi-faceted process, and that to understand the factors involved attention must be given to variables acting at all levels, from the attributes of the individual and their relationships, to the broader domains of school organisation and cultural influences.

In choosing this approach I took account of Reed's (2005a) opinion that the majority of studies on school exclusions have been carried out with narrow parameters, focusing on a particular aspect of the process rather than taking a broader view of the issue. She comments that '...very little work has taken a holistic view of the school' (p.10). A study on the factors impacting on school exclusion must necessarily take account of all of the elements involved rather than simply its individual components. In this way an understanding of the multi-dimensional process can be reached. Using the ecosystemic framework meets this objective, providing a structure in which to explore the many variables at play in the exclusion process.

In the study I used mixed methodologies to examine the variation in school exclusions. In Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) an advantage of using mixed methodologies rather than confining research to a single paradigm is that a more global view of the subject of study is achieved. In addition, the use of mixed

methodologies offset the disadvantages the methods have by themselves. This view is reinforced by Robson (2002) who indicates that the use of mixed methodologies increase validity. In his view ‘Any one way of measuring or gathering data is likely to have its shortcomings’ p.103).

10.5.1 Research question 1

What is the variation in exclusion rates in secondary schools in one Local Authority?

To answer my first question, I used quantitative methods to show the variation in exclusion rate in secondary schools in one Local Authority. My source of evidence was LA archival records. Analysing the broad numerical data from the LA, I used descriptive statistical analysis to describe the data and locate trends and patterns in exclusions. This was an effective method of identifying variations between school exclusion rates needed to carry out the research for my second research question. Processing the data was facilitated by audio recording and therefore relatively easy to analyse. It had the added advantage of yielding valuable insights into the circumstances under which schools use exclusions, including gender; age; SEN; precipitating reasons for exclusion; and durations of exclusions. I was able to make a more detailed analysis of the data than that published by the Government (DfES 2006b, 2007b) by comparing the number of cases of exclusion with the number of pupils excluded. This gave further insights into how frequently pupils were being excluded. I was able to use the data analysis to identify three schools for further study.

The limitations of this approach apply to its validity. The external validity of a method relates to its accuracy. Data recorded by schools relies on the accuracy of individuals and is therefore subject to human error. The DfE (2010a) documents under-reporting of both permanent and fixed-term exclusions, commenting that ‘Analysis suggests that the number of fixed period exclusions may be undercounted by up to 400 (1%) in primary schools, in state-funded secondary schools by around 7,000 (2%) and by up to 100 (1%) in special schools’ (p.6). The sensitive nature of school exclusions, coupled with pressure from the government and market forces, increases its susceptibility to manipulation, as in the case of informal exclusions. As the LA data was the only measure available, I had to use it to select my sample of schools for research. I was aware throughout the research of the need for caution in the interpretation of the data.

A further limitation, identified by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), is that past trends are not always a good predictor of future events. However, the recording

and reporting to the government of fixed-term exclusions was a relatively new procedure at the time and the data collected by Watermill Valley was incomplete before 2004/5, limiting the available data to the two periods 2004/5 and 2005/6. To address this issue I remained aware throughout the research of the need to exercise caution in making judgements about a school's performance based on a two-year period. An additional limitation of using historical data, identified by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) is that it neglects the influence of unpredicted events. In the present study this was evident in the introduction of legislation in September 2007 which had the effect of reducing the length of exclusions by schools introducing internal exclusion provisions (DfES 2007a).

10.5.2 Research Question 2

‘What are the factors leading to the variations in exclusion rates between secondary schools in one Local Authority?’

In order to answer my second research question I applied a qualitative methodology in the form of interviews that took place in three schools identified in my analysis of the LA schools exclusions data as high, medium and low-excluders. In order to gain insights into a broad spectrum of the issues impacting on exclusion, I interviewed ten people associated with each school: a deputy head; a teacher; a supervisor of an alternative unit; four pupils at risk of exclusion (a girl and boy from Y9 and a girl and boy from Y10); two included pupils (one girl and one boy from Y9 or Y10); and a parent. Although I had identified staff from external agencies as impacting on school exclusions in my research design, in practice variations in staffing between schools made this impractical (Chapter 5.2).

A threat to the validity of the sampling technique was that the gatekeeper at each school had control over the selection of my respondents. At each school the gatekeeper was a deputy head with a responsibility for behaviour. I was aware that the gatekeepers had the power to present their schools in a positive or negative light depending on the respondents they selected. To minimise sampling bias I specified the gender and age of pupils, and the experience or positions of staff that I wished to interview. The respondents from the alternative units were selected according to their school role and the parents by their willingness to participate in the research. By providing optimum conditions to address issues of sampling and instrumentation, I have minimised threats to external validity.

Although, when I initially spoke to the deputy heads I was very specific about the characteristics of my respondents, in practice I had to accept the interviewees selected by the gatekeepers. My aim was to interview three girls and three boys in

each school, however, at Blackmoor my pupil respondents were all boys apart from one Y10 girl.

Internal validity is concerned with accuracy and plausibility of the research. In the present study this relates to the possibility of bias influencing interview responses. Robson (2002) identifies participant bias as the extent to which a respondent's comments are authentic or biased by the interview situation. In the present study I carefully researched and piloted interviewing techniques, in order to gain the respondents' perceptions and interpretations of the factors impacting on school exclusions. I chose to use Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical focusing technique in one-to-one interviews. Because my objective was to elicit the perspectives of the individuals, and avoid influencing them by my own beliefs, I used the hierarchical focusing technique to encourage the respondents to speak freely about their perceptions of behaviour at school. The initial open-framing had the advantage of allowing respondents to voice their predominant perspectives. This also had the effect of redressing the power balance by giving the interviewees some ownership of the interview process.

The elicitation technique of 'Talking Stones' that I used for the pupil respondents proved to be an effective way of helping them to access and voice their views, generating rich data encompassing their perceptions about the factors leading to exclusion. My approach to the use of 'Talking Stones' differed from that of Wearmouth in that my aim was to elicit the views and perspectives of pupils to inform my research rather than as a therapeutic tool for the benefit of the pupils. I used the stones as a method of helping the pupils to engage in a dialogue that they had initiated with their choice of stones.

During the interviews the pupil respondents quickly embraced the idea of choosing a stone to represent themselves, with the exception of Jay (Y9, Blackmoor) who was unable to relate to the technique. The method of presenting stones with a variety of shapes, sizes and textures, but with a limited range of colours, proved to be effective (Chapter 3.2.2.3). Pupils took great care in selecting a stone and explaining why they made their choice, with the majority focusing on texture. Analogies were drawn by most pupils between the surface of their chosen stone and their school experiences, smooth textures being equated with harmonious experiences and rough or lumpy with conflicts (Appendix 9). Most responses provided me with opportunities to probe responses and develop themes introduced by the pupils, reflecting their own terminology. Subsequent interview questions were often a natural progression from the discussion of the 'Talking Stones'. In the case of Jay, who felt unable to choose a stone, I continued with the interview by asking him if he could think of an incident that had been a problem at school.

I found that the technique of ‘Talking Stones’ could be adapted to individual responses. In some interviews the stones became a focus throughout the interview. Some pupils held their stones, others, at my suggestion, placed their stones with the ones chosen for people they trust. In the case of Aaron (Y9, Grimsdale) he described his stone as: ‘It’s holey, it’s old, it’s all rotten’ (Appendix 9). He explained that when he is at school he feels depressed. During the interview he continually rearranged the stones around the table. When I asked him to choose a stone to represent him at home he chose one with a very different texture that he described as: ‘Normal. It’s perfect and it’s normal.’

Another interesting response came from Namond (Y9, Blackmoor). Initially he chose a stone to represent himself at school because, as he explained, ‘it’s big, rough and it doesn’t fit with the rest of them’. However, a few minutes later, when I asked him to choose a stone for someone else, he refused, commenting that: ‘All they look like is a pile of rocks’. His resistance was short-lived as he then proceeded to use the stones to describe the characteristics of different pupils in the classroom (Appendix 9).

From my experience and observations the value of using the ‘Talking Stones’ lies in giving the pupil respondents concrete objects on which to focus their ideas. For pupils who lack confidence or who do not feel at ease in an interview, the stones provide a means of deflecting attention away themselves, creating a safe way to talk about topics that may be sensitive. For more confident, articulate pupils such as Karim (Y10, Grimsdale and Bodie (Y10, Blackmoor) the exercise of choosing a stone provided a focus for their ideas (Appendix 9).

Although the techniques of hierarchical focusing and ‘Talking Stones’ appeared to be effective methods of prompting responses, I had no way of ascertaining whether the responses I elicited were authentic or whether respondents misled me, deliberately or otherwise. I have discussed this issue at length in my methodology chapter (Chapter 3.2.2.2). To maximise the potential for authenticity, in addition to the utilisation of the hierarchical focusing guide, I established a non-threatening atmosphere and gained trust by explaining my role and the purpose of the research, coupled with assurances of anonymity. Interview responses were triangulated by ‘member checking’ where the researcher gives respondents the opportunity to comment on the contents of their interview by returning their transcript and giving them the opportunity to change or clarify their comments. By fulfilling these conditions I optimised the potential for the external validity of the study. If, after taking these measures, the respondents wanted to mislead me, they had their reasons for doing so, which may be equally valid as others’ expressed

opinions. I therefore considered all comments in the same light assuming that they were authentic.

A further threat to the internal validity of my methodology was observer bias, or the potential for my stance to be non-neutral. In my role as a teacher working in the Pupil Referral Unit in Watermill Valley I am in contact with excluded pupils from many schools and already hold some opinions about reasons for the variation in exclusion rates. In order to address this issue I approached my research with an open-mind and only considered data generated through the research. I also discussed my research methods with critical friends throughout the research process in order to maintain objectivity.

10.5.3 Research Question 3

What are the implications of the research for processes and systems?

The answers to my third research question lie in the discussion and comparison of the qualitative and quantitative data to identify the issues that it reveals. Internal validity relating to my third question concerns the accuracy of both data analysis and inferences derived from the data.

In Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) view one of the advantages of using mixed methodologies is that together they provide stronger inferences. They describe how sequential mixed methods can enhance internal validity, leading to multiple inferences that confirm or complement each other.

The advantage of using the structure of the ecosystemic framework, at this stage, is that it allows the researcher to consider both the minutiae of everyday interactions, and long term policies and initiatives, how they are interwoven, and how they impact on school exclusion. The ecosystemic framework takes account of both the organisational and human elements of the school system. Tensions between the two are revealed in the discussion stage of the research. A limitation of using the ecosystemic framework is that the Bronfenbrenner model maps the existence of various relationships but does not imply whether or not they are benign. This is most evident in the microsystem where it is the interactions in the face-to-face relationships that can lead to, or prevent, school exclusions.

10.6 Contributions of the study and implications for research

In the earlier sections of this chapter I have discussed my findings from Part 2 of my research: the LA data (Chapter 4) and the interviews (Chapters 5-9). In this section, I

comment on the contribution of this study to existing knowledge about school exclusion and its implications for research.

The study strengthens existing research by the innovative use of methodologies to gain a holistic view of the range of factors at play in school exclusions. This process has been facilitated by applying an ecological perspective to school exclusions throughout the study utilising an ecosystemic framework adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979). The initial process of identifying patterns in variations in school exclusion rates through the statistical analysis of existing data gave an overview of practices through which schools for further research were identified. The use of mixed methodologies provides strong, original evidence that illuminates the variations in school practices. The study is distinctive in the extent to which it took into account the pupils' views, a group that is not always well-represented in the corpus of existing research.

A further original aspect of the study lay in the methods used in the interviews to ensure, as far as possible, unbiased interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Taking account of the opinions of those who have most to lose, the pupils and especially those who are at risk of exclusion, gives an insight into the processes involved in and leading up to exclusion. Seeing school processes from their perspective enriches our knowledge of the processes in school that fail to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. Of particular value was the use of the elicitation technique involved in the pupil interviews. The technique of using 'Talking Stones' (Wearmouth, 2004) as a starting point for pupil interviews proved to be successful in enabling pupils to share their authentic views on the sensitive issue of school exclusion. Using a hierarchical focusing guide for both pupils and adults further facilitated this process by using open-framed questions to enable the respondents to voice their predominant perspectives.

The study confirms that schools vary widely in character and outcomes and has provided an in-depth insight into the considerable variation in the way the needs of vulnerable pupils are met in different contexts. Those differences were set within the role of government initiatives, legislation and individual LAs. There are multiple innovations in all areas that impact on pupils. The impact of multiple deprivation has also been highlighted with recommendations for targeted resources to address inequalities in pupil backgrounds.

Although variations in school intakes impact on exclusion rates with high correlations between deprivation, SEN and exclusion, the individual school ethos is a crucial element in addressing the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. Low-excluding schools appear have an egalitarian ethos and this is reflected in the promotion of positive relationships between all stakeholders. Higher-excluding

schools appear to take a more autocratic approach to management with the result that staff feel isolated and unsupported, leading to a punitive approach to pupils at risk of exclusion, leading to tensions and conflict at classroom level.

Effective ways of reducing school exclusions include flexible and proactive strategies for pupils at risk of exclusion by providing alternative timetables and tailoring provisions to meet the social and learning needs of the individual. In addition, the importance of schools giving all pupils opportunities to voice their opinions must not be overlooked. The viewpoints of the pupils at risk of exclusion reveal valuable insights into the processes involved in and leading up to exclusion. The message that many pupils at risk of exclusion made clear is that they do not want to be excluded, but that they feel disenfranchised by many aspects of school systems.

A further contribution of the study is that the methodologies applied in this instance can be gainfully transferred to other educational studies. In the following section I highlight potential areas for further research.

10.7 Areas for further research

The present study has revealed the complexity of the issues impacting on school exclusion. Taking an ecosystemic approach to school exclusion is by nature an exploratory process, and has therefore highlighted many areas for further investigation, including the strengthening of student voice, and the effective promotion of school attachment and positive staff/pupil relationships.

For me, one of the most poignant findings has been the high rate of exclusion of pupils with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN). This questions how we meet the needs of our most vulnerable pupils and certainly bears further investigation. An extension of the present study could involve an in-depth study of classroom and school-level interventions that support the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion.

Further potential areas for research revealed by the research are:

- The impact of pastoral interventions outside the classroom. Several of the respondents spoke positively about the interventions of mentors and outreach social workers. Further research could focus on the involvement and impact on outside agencies and multi-agency working on the outcomes of pupils at risk of exclusion
- Effective interventions within schools to address problems experienced by pupils at risk of exclusion. Findings indicate that some pupils may need support to develop self-regulating behaviour. Potential areas for further

research include the role of KS3 Nurture Groups; and the impact of changes in the curriculum including more access to and higher status associated with vocational qualifications

- The effective promotion of parent and school partnerships, identified by staff and the existing literature as pivotal in successful educational outcomes for children
- The impact of ability grouping on behaviour, pupil well-being and achievement. Both included pupils and those at risk of exclusion attached value judgements to ability groups, describing high achieving groups as 'good' and low groups as 'bad' Evidence from the staff interviews indicate that educational opportunities can be jeopardised by risky behaviour
- Effective strategies to integrate ethnic minorities in school populations. The findings of the present study indicate that the cohesion of a school population is a major factor in maintaining harmony. At Bitterclough, the high-excluding school, conflict was attributed to a changing school population and a lack of integration of ethnic minority groups
- The impact of marketing of schools in the state education system and the far-reaching effects of school choice

11 Conclusion

1 Introduction	2 Exclusion from school	3 Methodology	4 The Local Authority data
5 The interviews	6 The microsystem	7 The mesosystem	8 The exosystem
9 The macrosystem	10 Discussion	11 Conclusion	

This study has taken an ecosystemic approach to the complexities involved in variations in school exclusions, using Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1992) ecosystemic framework adapted for the purpose of this study. In Chapter 2.3 I justified how I applied Bronfenbrenner's model to this context. Drawing on national and LA data on school exclusions an overview of patterns of school exclusions in one LA has been established and this information utilised to identify three schools for focussed study. It has been through the use of a hierarchical focussing approach to interviewing (Tomlinson, 1979) that the authentic views of staff, parents and pupils at the chosen schools were accessed. This process was facilitated with the pupil respondents through the technique of 'Talking Stones' (Wearmouth, 2004) as an effective method of gaining the perspectives of hard-to-reach pupils.

At macrosystem level, analysis of the data indicates that government legislation and initiatives concerning the retention of grammar schools, combined with the growing role of parents in education, and particularly choice of school, privileges pupils from relatively affluent middle class backgrounds. Pupils from deprived backgrounds are concentrated in less popular schools and are more likely to have identified SEN, factors that both increase the likelihood of school exclusion (Croll, 2002; DfE, 2010a). This had a significant impact on the school population in the high-excluding school in the study where there was a high degree of deprivation. The other two schools had more stable populations from less challenging backgrounds. It could be argued that the lower levels of challenging behaviour in these two schools allowed more successful strategies to be implemented. I analysed the available data which indicated that intakes are broadly similar. Rather, the difference in the number of exclusions between the similar intakes in the medium

and low-excluding schools (Figure 4.2) indicates that the characteristics of the school population are not the only factors at play.

Government and media attitudes to poverty also have a powerful impact on variations in school exclusion rates, with the promotion of a middle-class hegemony, coupled with media vilification of the poor as undeserving impacting on the cultural climate. This has repercussions in the exosystem, where the individual school ethos is shaped by the beliefs and attitudes of senior staff. The data in the present study indicates that an understanding of the complexities of the lives of pupils at risk of exclusion is reflected in the school systems, exemplified in the low-excluding school where an egalitarian approach prioritised the needs of the individual pupil, with a high level of flexibility in the resourcing provisions. Higher rates of exclusion were observed in the remaining two schools where responses to behaviour issues were given less priority, and pupils at risk of exclusion were seen as a distinct group rather than individuals. Although the senior staff in the medium-excluding school valued consistency in the implementation of behaviour management, the higher exclusion rate can be attributed to a lower level of flexibility and creativity in their provision for pupils at risk of exclusion. In addition behaviour management strategies were applied with less sensitivity, and sometimes involved humiliating pupils. There was also evidence that staff gave more credence to identified learning difficulties than to SEN relating to behaviour. In the high-excluding school the evidence indicates that an autocratic approach to management resulted in less sensitivity to the needs of the individual, with staff sometimes taking a punitive approach to behaviour issues. This was exacerbated by the problems arising from a changing school population and friction between pupils of different ethnicities.

The variations in school ethos also had far-reaching effects on the quality of relationships in the mesosystem. At the low-excluding school, there was a strong ethos of respect for staff, pupils and parents. Effective information-sharing between staff was highly valued, and facilitated through face-to-face contact and an open-door policy. The school worked in partnership with parents to meet the needs of individual pupils. This approach was mirrored to some extent at the medium-excluding school where there was evidence of good communication between staff, and senior staff were committed to building relationships within the community outside the remit of the school. However at the high-excluding school the more autocratic management style, combined with ineffective communication between staff, was reflected in less positive relationships between staff and parents.

Although the outer layers of the ecosystemic framework impacted on the way systems were developed in the schools, it was at the microsystem level, in the face-to-face relationships between staff and pupils in the classroom that the systems were

implemented and it was in these transactions that most conflicts leading to school exclusions occurred. It was evident from the responses of both included pupils and those at risk of exclusion that it was the quality of these staff/pupil relationships that was crucial for outcomes and that this was to some extent dependent on the approach of the individual member of staff. Staff attitudes were, in turn influenced by both the wider cultural climate and the ethos of the school. Although it is difficult to generalise from a small-scale study it appears to be a combination of the school-level attitudes regarding disruptive behaviour and staff morale that influence staff responses that either lead to, or prevent, school exclusions. At the high-excluding school, low staff morale and an autocratic management led to an emphasis on punitive interventions and further conflict, whereas at the low-excluding school, and to a lesser extent, the medium excluding school, a supportive and strong senior staff presence coupled with strategies focussing on the appropriate provision for each pupil were instrumental in preventing exclusions.

A further important finding was the level of disempowerment and disengagement from the educational process experienced by pupils at risk of exclusion. The study highlights the value of extending pupil voice to include and respond to the views of all pupils. From the evidence in this study, it is my conclusion that schools need to consider ways of accessing the views of all pupils and seeing school practices from their perspectives. I have demonstrated in my research and in the following section that, with appropriate methodologies, the views of hard-to-reach pupils can be accessed. It is only when schools have the will to consider and respond to the views of all pupils that exclusive practices will be reduced.

In conclusion there are multiple drivers to variations in rates of exclusion in schools. Within the context of an ecological analysis of the issues there is a complex dynamic involving both inequities in a post-welfare society and individual attitudes, shaped by the cultural climate and the personal beliefs of those involved in the process.

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Appendices
Appendix 1: School Profiles 2006/7

School	Number on roll to nearest 100*	Status*	Range	% Ethnic minority*	% FSM eligibility*	Special features*****	GCS E %***	V A***	Pupils with SEN*				
									Pupils with a statement	% of pupils on roll	Pupils without a statement	% of pupils on roll	% of pupils with SEN
Archangel	1000	Aided	11-18	2.5	6.1	Faith School	48	1006.7	25	2.3	118	11.8	14.1
Birchden	1000	Grammar	11-18	13.2	3.5	Selective intake OfSTED 2006: good	99	982.9	2	0.2	16	1.6	1.8
Bitterclough	1000	Community	11-18	39.5	27.5		34	988.0	44	4.5	176	17.9	21.4
Blackmoor	1300	Foundation	11-18	7.2	10.4	New building: 2005 Summer 2007 Head is acting Head of St. Gabriel's OfSTED 2006: Good	34	1006.1	41	3.1	219	16.4	19.5
Bobbinthorpe	400	Community	11-16	7.6	31.8	New building 2005 OfSTED Report 2006: Satisfactory	12	1007.9	25	6.1	97	23.5	29.6
Flatcapden	1400	Foundation	11-18	15.0	10.4	OfSTED 2006: Good	49	984.0	44	3.2	133	9.6	12.8
Grimsdale	1600	Foundation	11-18	7.4	10.3		37	997.7	35	2.2	119	7.6	9.8
Micklestone	1100	Foundation	11-18	6.3	6.4		37	989.7	20	1.8	125	11.0	12.8
Muckshaw	1400	Community	11-18	6.3	8.5		42	980.3	47	3.4	131	9.6	13
Netherswike	1200	Foundation	11-18	2.8	6.3		55	1008.5	39	3.1	80	6.4	9.5

School	Number on roll*	Status*	Range	% Ethnic minority*	% FSM eligibility*	Special features	GCSE %**	V A**	Pupils with SEN*				
									Pupils with a statement	% of pupils on roll	Pupils without a statement	% of pupils on roll	% of pupils with SEN
Overbeck	1000	Grammar	11-18	4.7	1.2	Selective intake	99	991.8	2	0.2	16	1.5	1.7
Slackthwaite	900	Community	11-18	7.4	14.3	Geographically isolated. Summer 2007. 2 acting Heads in partnership. OfSTED 2006: In Special Measures	34	976.7	35	4.0	115	13.1	17.1
St Gabriel's	800	Aided	11-18	3.6	18.2	Faith school OfSTED Inspection Report Autumn 2006: In Special Measures	22	976.1	10	1.2	149	17.7	18.9
Tenterworth	700	Community	11-18	1.9	37.5	Adverse publicity OfSTED Inspection Report 2006: Notice to Improve	4	973.2	22	3.3	257	39.0	42.3
Withensgate	600	Community	11-16	88.7	47.8	New building and site 2006 Summer 2007: Head is acting Head of Slackthwaite	28	1011.7	16	2.5	181	28.1	30.6

Glossary GCSE %: pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs at Grade A-C

FSM: Free School Meals

VA: Value added

School status

Aided schools are mainly religious or 'faith' schools although anyone can apply for a place. They are run by their governing body.

Community schools are run by the local authority.

Grammar schools select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability.

Foundation schools are run by their own governing body.

From http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ChoosingASchool/DG_4016312

*Information from Local Authority Intranet 15.11.06, number on roll to nearest 100

**Information from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/education/05/school_tables/secondary_schools/html/381.stm(12.11.06)

*** (<http://www.education.gov.uk/performance/tables/index.shtml>) (DfE, 2010b) archives

**** OfSTED reports from 2006-2007 included (www.OfSTED.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report)

Table 0.5 Triggers for exclusion 2004/5

School	BU	DA	DB	DM	OT	PA	PP	RA	SM	TH	VA	VP	Total
Archangel	0	6	8	0	4	0	18	0	0	1	15	2	54
Birchden	2	0	5	9	5	1	8	0	0	3	1	2	36
Bitterclough	6	0	129	1	12	0	24	0	0	1	8	16	197
Blackmoor	0	13	24	4	34	8	35	2	1	3	50	9	183
Bobbinth'rpe	3	0	2	3	19	4	40	5	0	2	44	3	125
Flatcapden	10	3	34	3	24	4	38	4	0	0	19	3	142
Grimsdale	1	0	8	0	4	1	4	1	0	1	7	1	28
Micklestone	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Muckshaw	3	13	40	2	28	10	57	2	0	3	56	18	232
Netherswike	0	0	0	0	6	1	8	0	0	1	5	5	26
Overbeck	0	1	0	0	10	0	3	0	0	0	5	0	19
St. Gabriel's	0	1	40	8	15	4	32	7	1	0	23	4	135
Slackthwaite	1	0	49	2	45	6	43	0	1	4	67	4	222
Tenterworth	0	0	29	4	6	4	30	0	0	0	37	2	112
Withensgate	0	1	1	1	20	0	17	0	0	1	11	7	59
	26	38	369	37	232	43	357	21	3	20	348	76	1570

BU: Bullying	DM: Damage	PP: Physical assault of pupil	TH: Theft
DA: Drugs and alcohol	OT: Other	RA: Racial abuse	VA: Verbal abuse of adult
DB: Persistent disruptive behaviour	PA: Physical assault of adult	SM: Sexual misconduct	VP: Verbal abuse of pupil

Table 0.6 Triggers for exclusion 2005/6

School	BU	DA	DB	DM	OT	PA	PP	RA	SM	TH	VA	VP	Total
Archangel	0	3	4	1	19	0	17	0	1	2	15	2	64
Birchden	0	8	0	1	11	0	4	2	0	4	0	0	34
Bitterclough	15	1	59	5	88	3	66	1	3	0	33	21	295
Blackmoor	0	9	24	9	13	11	27	0	0	3	29	4	129
Bobbinth'rpe	0	0	5	2	47	1	39	0	1	0	53	2	150
Flatcapden	5	0	18	2	25	2	33	1	0	0	37	7	130
Grimsdale	1	1	28	0	14	3	9	1	2	1	8	1	69
Micklestone	0	39	1	4	9	2	5	0	1	0	11	1	73
Muckshaw	4	5	44	2	29	8	34	18	2	9	54	3	212
Netherswike	0	3	1	0	3	0	13	0	0	1	5	1	27
Overbeck	0	2	1	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	14
St. Gabriel's	0	1	22	3	18	3	19	2	2	1	28	4	103
Slackthwaite	0	0	58	4	71	1	46	2	0	5	64	7	258
Tenterworth	0	1	12	12	0	5	10	2	1	0	17	2	61
Withensgate	0	1	2	1	11	2	15	0	0	3	10	0	45
	25	74	279	46	367	41	337	29	13	29	366	55	1664

BU: Bullying	DM: Damage	PP: Physical assault of pupil	TH: Theft
DA: Drugs and alcohol	OT: Other	RA: Racial abuse	VA: Verbal abuse of adult
DB: Persistent disruptive behaviour	PA: Physical assault of adult	SM: Sexual misconduct	VP: Verbal abuse of pupil

Table 0.7 Incidence of multiple exclusions 2004/5

	Total pupils excluded	Number of times excluded											
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	14		
Archangel	42	10	1	1								12	29%
Birchden	26	7	3									10	38%
Bitterclough	105	12	7	2	3	4	2			1	1	32	30%
Blackmoor	108	20	10	4	2	2		1				39	36%
Bobbinth'rp	81	2	4	1	1							8	10%
Flatcapden	89	5	7	5	1	1	1					20	22%
Grimsdale	20	3	1	1								5	25%
Micklestone		Data unavailable											
Muckshaw	109	22	15	4	2	4		1	1		1	50	46%
Nethersw 'k	21	4	1									5	25%
Overbeck	15	2	1									3	20%
St. Gabriels	66	8	9	1	3	4	1	1				27	41%
Slackthw 'te	115	22	12	4	4	2	2	2				48	42%
Tenterw 'rth	77	17	4	3								24	31%
Withensg'te	50	7	1									8	16%

Table 0.8 Incidence of multiple exclusions 2005/6

	Total pupils excluded	Number of times excluded										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Archangel	50	9	1	1							11	22%
Birchden	30	2	1								3	10%
Bitterclough	159	32	17	2	4	3	1	1	1	1	62	39%
Blackmoor	95	21	4	1							26	27%
Bobbinth'rp	78	26	10	3	3	1	1				44	56%
Flatcapden	77	23	6	1	4						34	44%
Grimsdale	19	2	4	1	1	2	1	1		1	13	68%
Micklestone	50	6	2	4							12	24%
Muckshaw	106	20	13	6	4	3	2		1		49	46%
Nethersw 'k	21											0%
Overbeck	12	2									2	17%
St. Gabriels	60	11	10	2	1						24	40%
Slackthw 'te	138	22	11	9	7	1	1	1			52	38%
Tenterw 'rth	49	4	4								8	16%
Withensg't	34	4	3								7	21%

Table 0.9 Special educational needs in school population¹

	pupils with SEN	pupils without statement	pupils with statement	pupils with EBD statement
Archangel	14%	12%	2%	0.19%
Birchden	2%	2%	0%	0.00%
Bitterclough	22%	18%	5%	0.51%
Blackmoor	20%	16%	3%	0.75%
Bobbinth'rp	30%	24%	6%	0.24%
Flatcapden	13%	10%	3%	0.15%
Grimsdale	10%	8%	2%	0.25%
Micklestone	13%	11%	2%	0.08%
Muckshaw	13%	10%	3%	0.72%
Nethersw'k	10%	6%	3%	0.08%
Overbeck	2%	2%	0%	0.00%
St. Gabriels	17%	13%	4%	0.24%
Slackthw'te	19%	18%	1%	0.34%
Tenterw'rth	42%	39%	3%	0.91%
Withensg'te	31%	28%	3%	0.00%

Table 0.10 Percentage of excluded pupils with SEN 2004/5

School	Cases of exclusion	SEN	%	Pupils excluded	SEN	%
Archangel	54	22	41	42	13	31
Birchden	36	1	3	26	1	4
Bitterclough	197	113	57	105	38	36
Blackmoor	183	101	55	108	46	43
Bobbinth'rp	125	54	43	81	36	44
Flatcapden	142	64	45	89	37	42
Grimsdale	28	22	78	20	16	80
Micklestone	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muckshaw	232	77	33	109	34	31
Nethersw'k	26	13	50	21	11	52
Overbeck	19	0	0	15	0	0
St. Gabriels	135	61	45	66	25	38
Slackthw'te	222	96	43	115	34	30
Tenterw'rth	112	53	47	77	46	60
Withensg'te	59	16	27	50	14	28

¹ Information from Local Authority Intranet 15.11.06

Table 0.11 Percentage of excluded pupils with SEN 2005/6

School	Cases of exclusion	SEN	%	Pupils excluded	SEN	%
Archangel	64	26	40	50	21	42
Birchden	34	2	6	30	2	6
Bitterclough	295	134	45	159	62	39
Blackmoor	129	42	33	95	28	29
Bobbinth'rp	150	95	63	78	43	55
Flatcapden	130	55	42	77	31	40
Grimsdale	69	61	88	19	16	84
Micklestone	73	26	36	50	12	24
Muckshaw	212	76	36	106	28	26
Nethersw'k	27	16	59	21	13	62
Overbeck	14	0	0	12	0	0
St. Gabriels	103	27	26	60	15	25
Slackthw'te	258	120	47	138	51	37
Tenterw'rth	61	40	66	49	31	63
Withensg'te	45	21	47	34	17	50

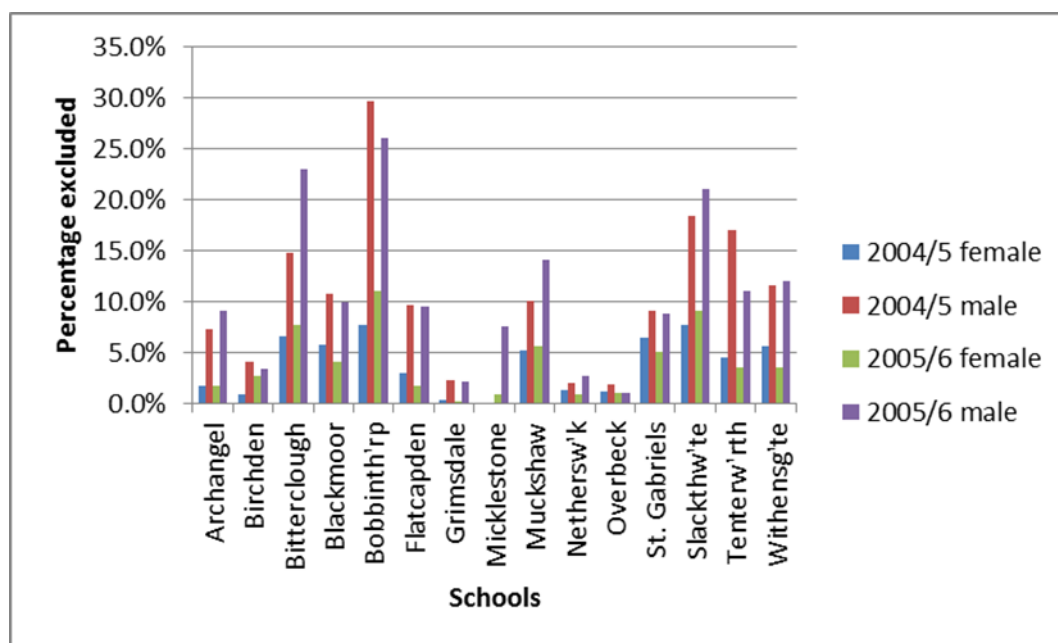


Figure 0.1 Fixed term exclusions: percentage exclusion rates for girls and boys

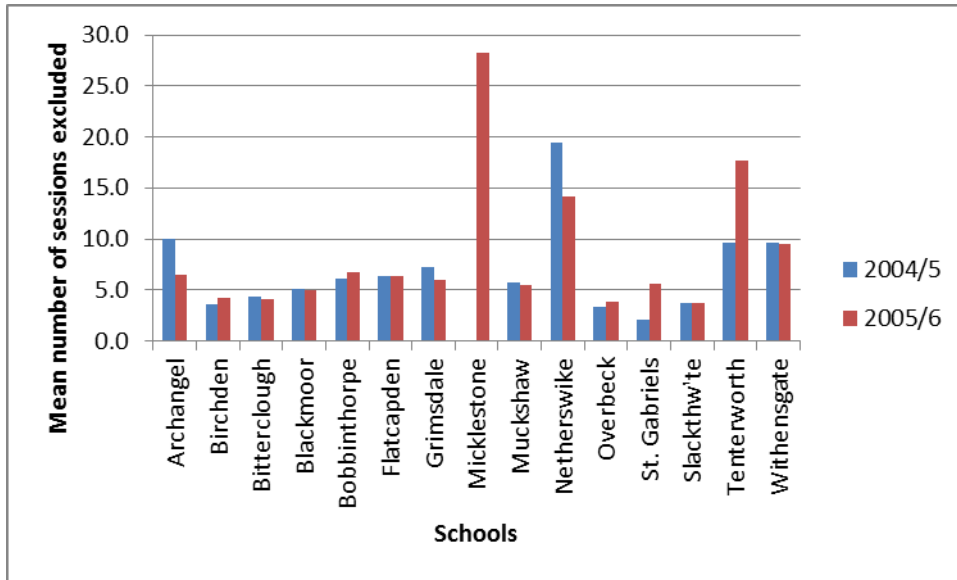


Figure 0.2 Fixed-term exclusions in 2004/5 and 2005/6: mean length of exclusions

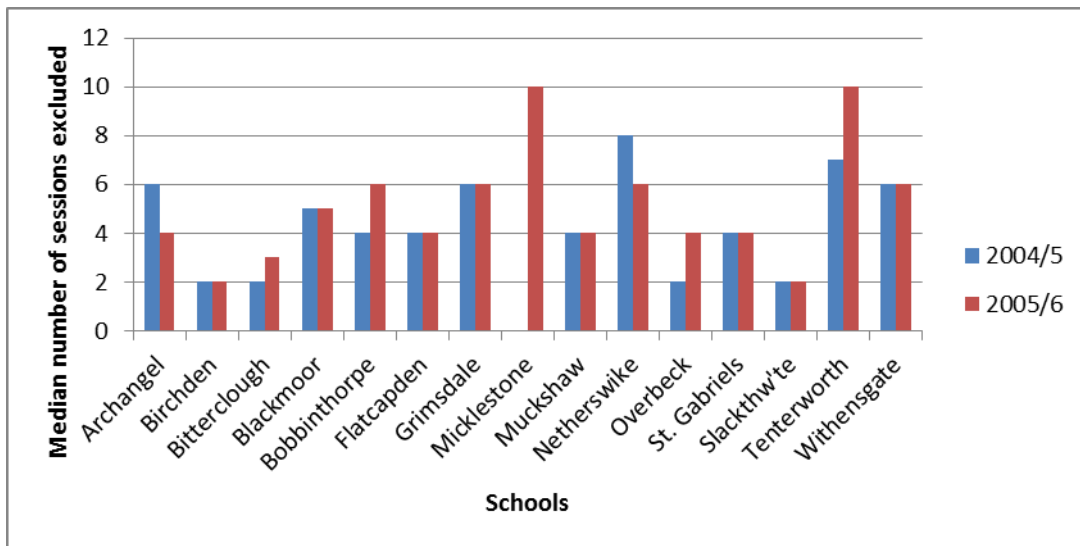


Figure 0.3 Fixed-term exclusions in 2004/5 and 2005/6: median length of exclusion

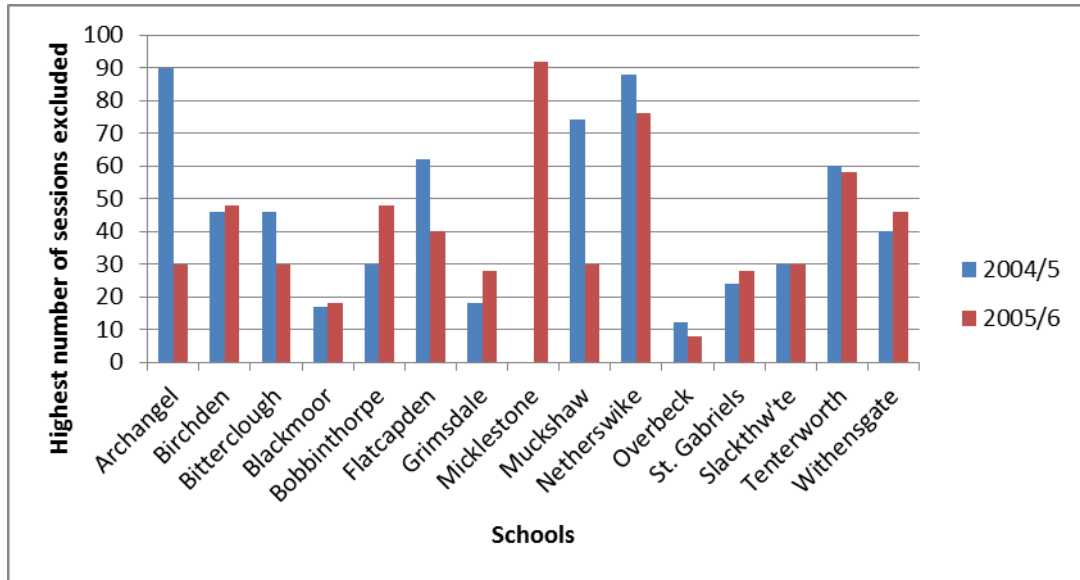


Figure 0.4 Fixed-term exclusions in 2004/5- and 2005/6: highest number of sessions excluded

Appendix 3: Correspondence related to ethics

The following letters were approved by AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds.

Initial contact letter to Headteacher

Dear Headteacher (**name**)

I am a teacher in the Watermill Valley KS3 Pupil Referral Unit. I am also a PhD student at the University of Leeds, School of Education and am in the process of researching variations in school exclusion rates. The focus of my study is the perspectives of those involved, with a view to illuminating understanding of the factors relating to school exclusion.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet you at a convenient time, and explain my study in more depth, with a view to conducting research in _____ School. Initially I wish to interview a member of your senior management team about their views on behavioural difficulties experienced by pupils in your school. This would take about 30 minutes. This would be followed by interviews with a teacher and a staff member in a learning support unit. I would also like to interview pupils and a parent over the coming year.

I can assure you that any data generated from interviews will be treated as confidential. The anonymity of all participants and schools will be preserved and any disclosure of data or subsequent analysis will not refer directly to the participants in my study. If participants wish to withdraw from the study at any time they will be free to do so. I will be seeking informed consent from all participants and additional consent from parents of pupils involved. In order to maximise the accuracy of my data, I will be seeking participants' consent to use audio equipment to record interviews. I will keep you informed of my findings and summarise them for you when the research is completed (projected date June 2010). I hope my findings will be helpful in your work.

Name, Head of Family Support Services in (**LA**), is aware of my study, and I have permission to contact schools. However, this research has not been

commissioned by Watermill Valley. I am working under the supervision of Professor David Sugden and Miss Susan Pearson of the School of Education at the University of Leeds, who can be contacted at:

The School of Education

University of Leeds

Leeds

LS2 9JT

I am able to meet you on a Wednesday or Friday afternoon or after school on most days. I will follow this letter with a telephone call in ten days' time. I look forward to your reply.

Pupil consent letter

Dear Pupil (name)

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research interview. I am sending a letter to your parents/carers asking for their permission for you to do this. I am studying problems that pupils may experience in school and have chosen you to interview, as I believe that you have some interesting and useful ideas about behaviour in schools. I would like to talk to you, for about fifteen minutes during the school day. With your permission the interview will be audio recorded and I will then transcribe it so that you can check that you agree with what it says.

The interview will be confidential. I will be asking you to choose a fictitious name so that no one will be able to identify you or your views. I hope your experiences and ideas will help schools to understand the difficulties that some pupils encounter in school.

To agree to take part in the interview, please sign and return the consent slip below to _____.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Cherril Collins (Ms)

I would like to take part in a research interview with Cherril Collins at _____ School. I understand that all information is confidential. I consent to my interview being used as part of Cherril Collins's research.

Name _____ (Please print)

Signature _____

Date _____

Parent/carer consent letter

Dear Parent/ Carer (**name**),

I am writing to ask for your permission for (**child's name**) to take part in a research study. I am sending a separate letter to (**child's name**) inviting **him/her** to take part.

I am a PhD student at the University of Leeds, School of Education and am in the process of researching problems that children may experience in school. The focus of my study is the views of those involved and I am using interviews to gain this knowledge. I have chosen (**child's name**) as someone who may have interesting and useful ideas about how schools approach behaviour. I would like to talk to (**child's name**) for about fifteen minutes about **his/her** own experiences and feelings about behaviour in school. With your child's agreement the interview will be audio recorded. I will then transcribe the interview and return it to (**child's name**) who can make any amendments **s/he** wishes to.

I can assure you that the interviews are confidential. (**child's name**)'s identity will not be revealed and his opinions will not be available to the school. It is also entirely voluntary and if (**child's name**) wishes to withdraw from the study at any time **s/he** will be free to do so.

I hope my findings will help schools to understand the difficulties children experience. To give your consent for (**child's name**) to take part in this research, please sign the attached form and return it to school.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Cherril Collins (Ms)

Parent/ carer interview consent letter

Dear (Name)

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study. I am a PhD student at the University of Leeds, School of Education and am in the process of researching problems that children may experience in school.

The focus of my study is the views of those involved and I am using interviews to gain this knowledge. I have chosen you as someone who may have interesting and useful ideas about how schools approach behaviour. I would like to talk to you for about thirty minutes about your experiences and feelings about behaviour in school. With your permission the interview will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. I will then transcribe the interview and you can make any amendments you wish to. I would like to conduct the interview in a place at a pre-arranged time.

I can assure you that the interviews are confidential. Your identity will not be revealed and your opinions will not be available to the school. It is also entirely voluntary and if you wish to withdraw from the study at any time you are free to do so.

I hope my findings will help schools to understand the difficulties children experience. To give your consent to take part in this research, please sign the attached form and return it to school.

I look forward to your reply.

I would like to take part in a research interview with Cherril Collins at _____ School. I understand that all information is confidential. I consent to my interview being used as part of Cherril Collins's research.

Name _____ (Please print)

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 4: Hierarchical focusing guides

Hierarchical focusing guide for school staff

1. Will you talk to me for a few minutes about your views on behaviour problems?
How do you view behaviour problems?

How would you describe behaviour problems?

in class
at break
at other times
outside school

Can you think of any problems that occur regularly?

Can you describe them?
How often do they occur?

What would you see as desirable behaviour?
Why do behaviour problems occur?

Do you think your view concurs with the school's view and the views of others?

Have you noticed any patterns?

Time of day?
Lessons?
Teachers?
SEN?
Gender/age?
Home background?
Attainment/ability?
Ethnicity?

2. How does _____ school address behaviour problems?
How does your behaviour policy work?

Have you made any changes to your policy recently? (6th day provision)

How do you use rewards and sanctions?

Do you have any on-site provision for pupils with behaviour problems?

Do you have any teaching or non-teaching staff with responsibility for behaviour?

Do you use exclusions?

How do you use exclusions?

Under what circumstances would
an exclusion be made?

When would a fixed-term exclusion be given?

Would it always result in fixed-term exclusion?

What would be the duration?

When would a permanent exclusion be given?

3. In your opinion, which strategies are most effective with children with behaviour difficulties?

Why?

Have you noticed any patterns?

Are any strategies more effective with certain groups?

What is the effect of learning mentors/support staff?

What is the effect of peers?

What is the effect of contact with outside agencies?

What is the effect of contact with home?

4. How do you let other members of staff know about behaviour issues?

Is there a system for recording incidents?

Is there any time that you can talk about strategies or issues?

5. Are there any other strategies that you would like to use?
What and Why?
6. Are there any questions that you would like to ask?

Hierarchical focusing guide for pupils

Talking Stones Introductory Activity¹

Will you choose a stone that represents you?

That's an interesting choice. What was it about that stone that made you choose it?²

Supplementary questions at discretion of interviewer

Will you choose a stone that represents someone/teacher/member of staff/pupil important to you at school?

Will you choose a stone that represents someone that you do not get on with?

I want you to talk to me about your views on behaviour at school.

Will you tell me about something you have noticed about behaviour at school? (Ask for specific incident)

What is bad behaviour?

What happens?

What are the people like?

What makes people get into trouble?

Who/what helps them?

Who/what does not help them

in class
at break
at other times
outside school
Lessons?
Teachers?
SEN?
peers
Gender/age?
Home background?
Attainment/ability?
Ethnicity

What is good behaviour in school?

in class
at break
at other times
outside school
Lessons?
Peers
Teachers?
SEN?
Gender/age?
Personality?
Home background?
Attainment/ability?
ethnicity

What would you do to help people who have behaviour problems?

Would you like to ask me anything?

¹ This activity was used to set the child at their ease and elicit an initial response (See 3.2.2.3)

² At this point respondent may give information that can be explored

Hierarchical focusing guide for parents

1. Will you talk to me for a few minutes about your views on [Child's name] behaviour at school?
How do you view behaviour problems?

How would you describe behaviour problems?

At school
At home
outside home

Can you think of any problems that occur regularly?

Can you describe them?

How often?

When did you first start noticing them?

What would you see as desirable behaviour?

Why do behaviour problems occur?

Have you noticed any patterns?

Time of day?
Lessons?
Teachers?
SEN?
Gender/age?
Personality?
Home background?
Attainment/ability?
Ethnicity?

2. How do you address behaviour problems?

How do you use rewards and sanctions?

3. In your opinion, which strategies are most effective with children with behaviour difficulties?

Why?

Have you noticed any patterns?

What is the effect of peers?

What is the effect of siblings?

What is the effect of contact with outside agencies?

What is the effect of contact with school?

4. How do you let the school know about behaviour issues?

Is there a system for recording incidents?

Is there any one that you can talk to about strategies?

5. Are there any other strategies that you would like to use?

What and Why?

6. Are there any questions that you would like to ask?

Appendix 5: The Respondents

Bitterclough

The Pupils

Year Group	At risk of exclusion	Included
Y9	Albert	Bethany
	Alma	
Y10	Aqib	Ali
	Pingu	

The staff

Deputy Head: Mr Daniels

Head of LSU: Mrs Little

Teacher: Mr Wallace

Head of Y9: Miss Corbett

Blackmoor

The Pupils

Year Group	At risk of exclusion	Included
Y9	Jay	Roland
	Namond	
Y10	Charday	Bodie
	Marlo	

Former pupil now at PRU: Michael

The staff

Deputy Head: Mr Carver

Head of LSU- Mr Barksdale

Teacher-Leanne: Ms Bell

School nurse: Claire

The parent

Mother of Namond: Francine

Namond's siblings: Anna and Nat

Grimsdale

The Pupils

Year Group	At risk of exclusion	Included
Y9	Aaron	Rhonda
	Darnell ³	
Y10	James	Crystal
	Karim	

Aaron's cousin: Chris, Aaron's friend: Russell

Rhonda's peers: Simon, Andy, Nathan

Former pupil at Grimsdale and PRU- Lester

The staff

Deputy Head: Mr Freamon

Other Deputy Head: Mr Withers

Alternative programme for Y11s: Mrs Pearlman

Community police officer: Katie Dixon

Home/school liaison officer: Mary Webb

SENCO: Maria Donnelly

Teacher: Mr Howard

LSU Support: Mrs Sampson and Miss Duquette

The parent

Mother of Aaron: Donette

Aaron's older brother: Tommy, Aaron's sisters: Aimee and Delores.

³ Interview lost due to computer fault 8.1.09

Appendix 6: Sample interviews

1. The beginning of an interview

Mrs Pearlman (Grimsdale) manager of Y11 alternative curriculum group

I⁴. Will you talk to me for a few minutes about your views on behaviour problems?

Mrs Pearlman: I think that behaviour in young children is learnt. Quite often it comes from their background, sometimes it comes from the network of children that they have grown up around and it becomes an intrinsic part of their being. They seem to think that they've always got somebody that they have to...some sort of peer pressure, somebody that they have to live up to.

2. Eliciting an opinion

Ali (Y 10, Bitterclough) included pupil

Ali. They get into trouble and get detentions and things like that. Last year a couple of them got expelled for a couple of days.

I. Do you think that made a difference?

Ali. A bit, but not much of a difference.

I. Yeah. So what would make a difference?

Ali. If they had to go somewhere separate where they just had their own classrooms, teaching them how to behave, and teaching them how to behave appropriately and what happens if you do bad things, until they actually change and then they come back into the classrooms.

3. Clarifying a point

Ms Bell (Blackmoor) teacher,

I. You've mentioned low-level disruption. What would that be?

Ms Bell. Talking in class when they've been asked to be quiet; failing to hand their homework in at the right time...walking into class with their coats on when they shouldn't be; and it's just that low-level...not a massive problem, but it starts to grate on you after a while.

⁴ I: Interviewer

4. Probing

Mr Freamon (Grimsdale) deputy head

Mr Freamon. ...there's another reason why we didn't end up with so many exclusions, because Mary [the EWO] will, sometimes, for example, say to parents, 'They're really worked up. Can I bring them home now with me? I'll bring them home. We'll get them settled at home' and so on, so they are not being excluded from school...

I. That can't be seen as an unofficial exclusion then?

Mr Freamon. It's not an exclusion, as such, because they are not being excluded from school. We discuss with parents what parents want to do and so on, and it can be that parents would say, 'Would you bring them home, because I don't want them to be excluded...'

5. Broaching a new topic.

Francine (Blackmoor) parent,

I. So what about at school, do you know why he gets into trouble at school?

Francine. He thinks that people pick on him. It's like that teacher's negative towards him and never even taught him yet and there was a situation...

Appendix 7: Analysis of interviews

The first stage of the analysis involved immersion in the data. By reading and rereading each transcript I familiarised themselves with the data. The data was then annotated to summarise comments and identify ideas. These ideas were then coded and clustered into themes. I used my ecosystemic framework was used to structure the themes.

From an initial reading of the pupils' interviews it was evident that negative relationships between school staff and pupils was an important issue. This was a feature of the greatest number of responses from pupils from all the schools including those pupils who did not experience behavioural difficulties. These responses related to the microsystem in the ecosystemic framework. I have used the theme of staff/pupil relationships as an example of how I continued my analysis.

The second stage of the analysis involved rereading the interviews and grouping all responses relating to the staff and pupil relationships, including a reference to the location of the comment, into two separate documents: one for pupils and one for adults. I then revisited the interview scripts and made sure that I had included all relevant responses. This was a worthwhile exercise as I had often overlooked comments in my initial sorting process. Familiarising myself with the detailed content of each interview led to deeper understanding of each respondents' viewpoint and brought to light issues that were not at first evident.

Table 0.12 Staff/Pupil interactions

Pupil behaviour	Staff behaviour	Behaviour in common
Pupil annoying/abusive/rude	Staff familiarity/unfamiliarity/status	Empathy/reciprocal/respect
Pupil escalates conflict	Staff not listening	Personality clash
Pupil explains	Teachers annoying /abusive/rude	
Pupil misunderstands	Teacher encourages talk	
Pupil moody	Teacher escalates conflict	
Pupil power	Teacher explains	
Pupils refuse to follow instructions	Teacher ineffectual	
Pupils talking out of turn	Teacher intimidating	
Pupil throws missiles	Teacher misunderstands	
Pupil walks out	Teacher sends pupil out	
	Teacher shouts	

My next step was to consider pupil responses in each school and looked for similarities and differences in them and grouped them together accordingly. I did the same for staff comments. I then colour-coded all responses according to the type of interaction: initially I identified 23 categories; 10 relating to pupil behaviours/attributes, 11 relating to staff behaviours/attributes and 2 categories common to both pupils and staff: 'personality clashes' and Empathy/reciprocal/respect. Responses were then categorised by type of behaviour and whether the behaviour was pupil or staff instigated (table 18).

I then looked for commonalities in the behaviours described. From the table of interactions, four main types of negative pupil behaviour/response were identified by both pupils and staff as:

1. Feeling moody, misunderstood, not being listened to
2. Low-level disruption: Talking out of turn,
3. Escalating: refusal to follow instructions, shouting, throwing objects
4. High-level: abusive, answering back, arguing, walking out

Pupils identified four main types of negative staff behaviour/ response:

1. No control
2. Shouting, intimidating, abusive
3. Sending pupil out
4. Discouraging talk/opinions

Pupils identified four main types of positive staff behaviour/ response:

1. Encouraging talk/opinions
2. Explaining
3. Taking control
4. Empathy, respect, reciprocal relationship

This process helped me to clarify my thinking about the processes involved in classroom conflict. In the final recording of the comments on relationships between staff and pupils I began by identifying the positive aspects of interactions in each

school (6.2). I followed this with a section on the negative aspects of relationships between staff and pupils (6.3). The next section relates to the importance given by both staff and pupils to establishing a respectful relationship (6.4). The final section focuses on the power conflicts within the classroom (6.5). In this, as in the majority of analyses of the interviews, I have grouped comments from each school together.

Appendix 8: Field work diary

Date	Comment
1.1.08- 13.3.08	Pilot interviews with teachers, pupils and staff from outside agencies
8.1.08	Initial contact letters sent to Blackmoor, Bitterclough and Netherswike schools
14.1.08	Letter received from Netherswike rejecting my request to conduct research. They already have two ongoing research projects at school.
21.1.08	Follow up telephone call to Blackmoor- appointment for first visit made. Follow up telephone call to Bitterclough- Head unavailable
30.1.08	First appointment to meet Head of Blackmoor.
21.2.08	First teacher interview at Blackmoor School during open evening. Exchanged email addresses with deputy head with responsibility for behaviour
25.2.08	Initial contact letter sent to Grimsdale. Telephone call to Bitterclough. Spoke to Head. Have been asked to phone back after half-term.
28.2.08	Third Appointment at Blackmoor School. Open evening. Head in meeting- no messages left- assume that he has forgotten arrangement
5.3.08	Follow up telephone call to Grimsdale. Referred to Deputy head who is unavailable.
12.3.08	Email to Deputy Head at Blackmoor to arrange meeting
13.3.08- 14.7.09	A total of 34 telephone calls to Grimsdale School, 8 of which were responded to. A total of 9 emails, 3 of which were responded to. Examples below.
12.1.09	Phoned deputy at Grimsdale to ask if I can interview tomorrow. Unavailable. Left message.
13.1.09	Phoned deputy at Grimsdale to ask if I can interview tomorrow. Unavailable. Left message.
14.1.09	Phoned deputy at Grimsdale to ask if I can interview tomorrow. Unavailable. Left message. He phoned back with a message letting me know that there are no people available this am for interview. Also the parents of one pupil have refused consent to let their child take part in research.
16.1.09	Email to deputy at Grimsdale thanking him for his message and asking him if he can give me the name of another pupil to replace the one who cannot take part. Also repeated request to interview member of staff and parent.

24.11.08	Emailed deputy at Grimsdale to enquire whether any consent forms have been returned so that I can start interviewing on Wednesday 26.11.08.
27.11.08	Received email from deputy at Grimsdale saying that consent forms had 'dropped off his radar', but that he would chase them up as soon as possible
1.12.08	Telephoned head of alternative provision at Grimsdale to arrange second part of interview. We will meet on 3.12.08 at 10.30. Left telephone message with admin at Grimsdale asking if deputy would let me know if any consent forms have been returned so that I can start interviewing pupils on Wednesday
4.11.08	Visited Grimsdale for interview and found that the head of the LSU had a teaching commitment at the time of interview. Rearranged this for 5.11.08 after school when there was a parents' meeting. Received an email from head of LSU at Grimsdale. She is unable to meet me tomorrow and will not be able to find a teacher for me to interview. She suggested two names of Y9 pupils for interview but I have already taught one of them so had to reject that child. Replied suggesting that we rearrange interview. Sent email to deputy at Grimsdale asking him to arrange interview teacher.
5.11.08	Received email from head of LSU at Grimsdale saying that on reflection she does not wish take part in my research. Sent email to deputy at Grimsdale letting him know that head of LSU is not taking part in research and asking him if he can suggest anyone with a similar role who may be interested.

Appendix 9 Pupil responses to 'Talking Stones'

Name of pupil	Response to interviewer question: Why did you choose that stone?
Aaron Y9	<p>'It's holey, it's old, it's all rotten. I. So what made you choose that one? A. I don't know. It's when I'm at school I feel proper down'</p> <p>Later in the interview Aaron chose a stone to represent him at home: 'Normal. It's perfect and it's normal'</p>
Albert Y9	'I have chose this stone because it is all rough and it reminds me of answering back to teachers' P.1
Ali Y10	'Because it's nice and smooth and I think that my life is very nice at school and I don't have much trouble. Every now and then you don't get stuff right...'
Alma Y9	'Because it's got purple and pink on it...Because I like purple and pink...Yes I like them because they're like girly colours' P.1 (14-22).
Aqib Y10	'It's plain, normal... It's smooth'
Bethany Y9	'Because it's like...it looks gentle and kind and hardworking' P.1
Bodie Y10	'It looks quite smooth on top and I'd say my time in school runs quite smoothly. It's not very often that I'm in trouble. I'm not saying that I'm never in trouble because I do talk, but I think since I've been here, I've only had one detention. And on the bottom it is quite bumpy so I'd say that represents my fun side because ...I don't just get on with work...I do have a fun side, like I'm in cadets and I

	play rugby and stuff like that'
Charday Y10	'Because, sometimes I'm good at school and then I have bad days and then I can just shout and everything at people, and then some days I'm good'
Crystal Y10	'Because it's like, smooth and that and I think that I'm quite good behaved, so it's not like, hard and knotty like the others. It's quite an all right colour to represent that I'm good as well...'
James Y10	'It stands out...Because I've mixed behaviours. Sometimes I'm good and sometimes I misbehave'
Jay (Y9)	'I don't know. I can't pick one. I don't know what to pick... I don't know what to say'
Karim Y10	'...it's like the shape of it, isn't it? It's pretty smooth but it's got like these little lumps in it. That's to show that at school, I'm sometimes... mostly I'm good but I can misbehave as well, so I do get into trouble as well sometimes, so that's what this stone shows'
Marlo	'It looks like it will skim if you threw it'
Namond Y9 (1)	<p>'Because it's big, rough and it doesn't fit with the rest of them'</p> <p>Later in the interview Namond refused to choose a stone for someone else, commenting: 'All they look like is a pile of rocks'</p> <p>Shortly afterwards he use the stones to describe other pupils' characteristics:</p> <p>[Picking up a smooth pebble] 'Yeah, well, half the girls, they're all smooth and they get away with anything... I. So you chose that kind of smoothness for the girls? N. Yeah, because they just say a lot. Because if you're the kind of a boy like that...' (indicating a sharp stone)</p>

Pingu Y10	'Because in school I've got an attitude problem and I dig myself big holes and stuff, and it's got holes in it' P
Roland Y9	'I see myself as a kind person and not a rough person...I'm not always happy, so a bit of a dark colour'
Rhonda Y9	'Smooth. Pretty small because I'm pretty quiet and I just get on with things. Just blend in'