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Management of Teaching Assistants to promote the Social Inclusion of pupils identified with Special Educational Needs in mainstream English primary schools

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Abstract

This thesis presents a qualitative investigation into the complexities associated with the management of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in mainstream English primary schools. The aim of this study was to determine the specific influence of TAs on the process of social inclusion, with particular regard to pupils identified with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In providing a background for the investigation, three interconnected literature bases are analysed: first, the complexity of TAs' role; second, the management structures currently operating regarding TAs' role; and third, the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. The methodological approach undertaken was that of the multiple case study, involving three primary schools across England. Semi-structured interviews with the schools' professionals, a photography method with pupils and non-participant observations were undertaken as data collection methods. Analysis of the data has led to the 'fuzzy generalisation' (Bassey, 1998) that TAs' particular influence over the process of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools lies in supporting pupils with building their social competence to form positive social relationships. A recommendation is made that educational policy considers TAs' positive influence over the process of social inclusion and thus reconceptualises TAs' current role to take account of this.

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<u>Declaration</u>

 I, Helen Jane Saddler, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the next ten years the world we inhabit will change massively. We are at an inflection point in the economic and educational development of nations. We cannot ignore, wish away or seek to stand aside from these developments. Not least because they promise a dramatic step forward in the unleashing of talent, the fulfillment of human potential and the reach of our creativity (Michael Gove, Association of School and College Leaders, p.1, 24th March, 2012).

If the former Minister for Education is correct, over the next ten years, the English education system will be required to respond to the pressures that globalisation will exert on society. Some potential areas of positive development within the English primary school system are identified in this thesis, which focuses on the Teaching Assistant (TA), an increasingly prominent influence in children's education (Balshaw, 2010).TAs usually work on a full-time basis in schools and have often accessed a limited amount of training both prior to and in their role. They are often parents of children who have attended the school in which they work and many TAs have been in the role for over 10 years. There is widespread ambiguity and complexity surrounding the role of TAs; thus it is currently difficult to determine TAs' primary positive influence over pupils' education. However, it is vital that TAs' influence over pupils' education be explored in order that their potential be both realised and acknowledged in policy and practice. This realisation will enable the role of TAs to be defined most effectively in fostering pupils' unleashing of talent and creativity.

It is acknowledged that TAs primarily work with pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN). Research exploring the nature and impact of this work has mainly concentrated on evaluating TAs' influence through measuring pupils' academic outcomes. However, there is a need to explore TAs' influence on both pupils' social and academic outcomes, if their influence is to be determined effectively (Symes & Humphrey, 2010). The reasons for this are explored in the literature review chapters of this thesis. Consequently, the influence of TAs on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN is the key focus in this thesis. Pupils identified with SEN are widely accepted to be at proportionally greater risk of social

exclusion and bullying than their non-SEN peers (Frostad & Pijl, 2007). Therefore, linking the role of TAs to the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN could benefit both policy and practice in primary education. In doing this, there are two principal aims in this project:

The first aim is to identify and explore the current complexities associated with managing and defining the responsibilities within the role of TAs.

The second aim is to examine TAs' particular influence over the process of social inclusion, with specific regard to the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN).

Meeting these two aims has enabled recommendations to be made regarding management of TAs' role. These recommendations have the potential to support TAs in promoting the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN.

1.1 Rationale for the study

The researcher's interest in the role of the TA was first sparked during completion of her undergraduate degree in primary education (commenced in 2007). In order to gain qualified teacher status (QTS), she was required to undertake four, term-long primary school placements over four years. Almost immediately she was struck by the complexity of the role of TAs in each school. The researcher observed TAs undertaking a wide variety of tasks on a daily basis, including first aid, lunchtime duties, in-class support, out-of-class support, administration duties, disciplining students, teaching whole classes, dealing with parents, planning interventions, delivering interventions, and many more. Consequently, as a student teacher, she was confused about the nature of the role of TAs within schools and even more confused about the role of TAs nationally.

The researcher was aware that TAs virtually exclusively worked with children identified with SEN and had been taught at university that the SENCO had specific positional responsibilities concerning TAs' management. However, in all of her placement schools, she discovered the head teacher to be managing the entire staff

body. As a result, it was clear to her that that there was a certain disparity between the rhetoric surrounding both TAs' management and role, and the reality in mainstream primary schools. She was, therefore, highly motivated to study TAs' role further for her undergraduate dissertation. The study, in one mainstream primary school in the North East of England, confirmed her hypothesis with regard to that case: TAs' role is highly complex and is challenging to manage effectively.

The researcher completed an MPhil study (in 2012) which was used as a pilot study for this doctoral research. During the literature review for this study, the researcher was highly engaged by the research concerning the poor social position of pupils identified with SEN, leading to frequent marginalisation of these pupils. As TAs are acknowledged to work most frequently with these pupils, it seemed important that TAs' role be investigated with a specific focus on social inclusion. The results of the MPhil study suggested that effective management of TAs could engender their specific influence over the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices. This conclusion is further investigated within this thesis.

The researcher's educational experiences thus far, both as a scholar and a teacher, have consistently highlighted the strength of TAs' influence over pupils' educational experiences. The current Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, recently stated at the Conservative Party conference: 'It's a well-versed truth, that no education system can be better than the quality of its Teachers. I say without hesitation, that teaching is the noblest of professions. Because Teachers have in their hands the power to shape the destiny of thousands of young people' (5th October, 2015). This study commences with the assertion that this can be extended to TAs, reinforcing the need for their potential to be reached within the current English educational system.

1.2 Background to the development of TAs

Over the last seventeen years there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of TAs employed in English primary schools. This was initially due to the rapid increase in the number of Statements of SEN awarded to pupils in mainstream schooling since 1998. A Statement is a document which sets out a child's SEN and any additional help that the child should receive. It affords the school funding with the aim of ensuring that the child receives the support they require to make progress in

their learning. From 1998 to 2011, the number of pupils with a Statement in mainstream primary schools rose from 143,000 to 224,110 (DfE, 2012, p.2). However, whilst the numbers of pupils with Statements has remained relatively constant over the last few years, the number of TAs continues to grow: see Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: The number of full-time equivalent school staff and pupils with a Statement (or equivalent) of SEN in local authority (LA) maintained schools and Academy schools in England: 2011-2015.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
TAs (in thousands)	219.8	232.3	243.7	255.1	N/A
Pupils with Statements (or equivalent) of SEN (in thousands)	224.1	226.1	229.4	232.2	236.2

Source: DfE, 2012; DfE, 2013; DfE, 2015a, DfE, 2015b.

These consistent increases in numbers of TAs are seen primarily due to the large and growing number of pupils identified with SEN but unsuccessful in obtaining a Statement (or equivalent). In January 2015, there were some 1,065,280 pupils with SEN without the equivalent of a Statement, 12.6 per cent of pupils across all schools (DfE, 2015, p.3). These children do not provide schools with funding for additional provision. However, the vast numbers of these children and their often severe and complex needs mean that school managers are choosing to continue to spend money on the employment of TAs, in supporting the pupils identified with SEN in their schools (Goddard, Obaden & Mowat, 2007).

It is likely that numbers of TAs will soon begin to increase at a faster rate than over the past 5 years due to the recent reforms to the SEN system, detailed in chapter 2, section 2.1. The government's updated 'Achievement for All' scheme, detailed in the Green Paper 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability' (DfE, 2011, p.67) was the first step to reforming the SEN system. The Green Paper detailed that the government planned to reduce the numbers of Statemented children across England to avoid 'over-identification' of SEN. It is argued within the paper that declassification of students who currently hold Statements is possible, 'because with a culture of high expectations and provision of personalised school-based support the label itself is no longer necessary' (p.65).

However, some educational professionals have argued that the government's emphasis on high expectations, suggests a return to the target-setting culture that perhaps ironically led to the original Statementing of pupils identified with SEN (Bignold & Barbera, 2011; Robertson, 2012). Additionally, there is no evidence to suggest that removing a pupil's Statement will remove their additional needs or raise their aspirations. Trials of the new Education, Health and Care plan (EHC), which has replaced the Statement of SEN, have indicated that the numbers of children for whom an EHC has been written have remained constant in the pathfinder boroughs (DfE, 2013). This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, section 2.1. Therefore, the role of TAs and the support TAs can offer continues to be imperative to many pupils identified with SEN.

1.3 Introduction to the research questions

It is widely acknowledged that TAs' influence over mainstream primary pupils' education is prominent (Butt & Lance, 2009; Gerschel, 2005; Moran and Abbott, 2002; Quicke, 2003). However, the role of TAs is regarded by many professionals to be both highly complex and unclear. TAs undertake both pastoral and educational responsibilities in role on a daily basis; determining how these are to be effectively undertaken simultaneously is problematic. Moreover, the variety in responsibilities that TAs undertake makes defining the role of TAs particularly challenging. Additionally, the management structures holding responsibility for TAs' role are widely variable. Staff members with various positional responsibilities have been found to be responsible for managing TAs. In order to investigate these difficulties in greater detail, an overarching research question is presented below:

To what extent can the management of teaching assistants promote the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools?

To explore the previously identified difficulties with the complexity in TAs' role and management, the first research question for this project is as follows:

Q1 How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining the responsibilities within their role in mainstream primary schools?

It is recognised that the pupils with whom TAs work most frequently, those identified with SEN, have fewer friends, are less popular and are more likely to be the victims of bullying than their non-SEN peers (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; McLaughlin, Byers & Peppin-Vaughan, 2010; Nowicki, 2003). Therefore, the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN is determined to be generally poor (Symes & Humphrey, 2012). As TAs most frequently work with these pupils, it follows that TAs' influence on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN be considered. A discussion of what this thesis defines as children identified with SEN will be explored in chapter 2. Thus, the second research question investigated in this project is:

Q2 What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

In order to draw the two research questions together, and present recommendations for future policy and practice, a third over-arching research question is considered:

Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?

1.4 Overview of the methodological approach

An interpretivist approach was undertaken towards the research process. Three in-depth case studies were conducted in three mainstream primary schools across different areas of England in order to answer the three research questions posed. The methods employed in all cases are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Methods employed

Method	Persons Involved
Semi-structured interviews	TAs, Teachers, Headteachers, SENCOs and deputy heads.
Non- participant observations	In one class per school over a period of 2 weeks in each school.
Research conversations	Small groups of same-age children of varying abilities.

1.5 Contribution of this study to educational policy and practice

The role of TAs is notoriously unclear and, as a result, difficult to manage. This research has identified effective practice in the deployment of TAs, which will enhance the work of Teachers, senior management staff and TAs themselves. This should be economically significant because the money spent on employing the large numbers of TAs in schools could be used more effectively. This research should also have benefits in terms of promoting the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. Current literature identifies a plethora of problems associating close proximity working of TAs to children identified with SEN. This research has synthesised notions of effective practice with regard to TAs' promoting of social skills and relationships, also potentially conducive to enhancing educational achievement of pupils identified with SEN.

Additionally, this research should serve to support schools and other educational institutions with the implementation of the reforms to the Special Educational Needs identification and support systems contained within the Children and Families Act (2014). The changes associated with this act, passed in September 2014, are explained in chapter 2, along with the relevance of these changes in relation to this study. Furthermore, recommendations made at the end of this thesis have potential to support practitioners and policy makers with implementing effective approaches to the management of TAs in mainstream primary schools.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has commenced with an introduction to the issues investigated in this project. In chapter two, a review of the literature pertinent to the first two

literature bases explored in this thesis is presented. In chapter three, an exploration of the concept of social inclusion is offered, including an 'ideal' model and a 'current' model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools. This exploration then informs an in-depth review of the third literature base in chapter four. The methodological approach and methodology chosen for this empirical study is described in chapter five. In chapter six, introductions to the staff participants in the three research schools chosen in this project are made. In chapter seven, analysis of the data collected is presented, relating to the management of TAs. The participating pupils are introduced in chapter eight, which then enables data to be presented and analysed in relation to the pupils in chapter 9. Chapter 10 explores the influence of TAs on pupils' social inclusion. Finally, in chapter 11, this thesis is concluded.

<u>**Chapter 2: Literature review I**</u>

<u>**2.1 Introduction**</u>

There are three key and interconnected literature bases requiring investigation in answering the overarching research question for this thesis, namely: 'To what extent can the management of teaching assistants promote the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools?' The first literature review examines the current roles and responsibilities of TAs in mainstream primary schools. The second investigates current management structures of TAs and their influence on TAs' roles. The third review explores the current literature associated with the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN. These three literature bases are combined to explore TAs' influence on facilitating the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. This chapter will explore the first two of the three literature bases. In chapter three, social inclusion is explored through the presentation of two models, an 'ideal' model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools and a 'current' model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools. This, then, enables exploration of the third literature base in the fourth chapter.

For the purposes of this review, the term TA is used to describe all support staff who assist with pupil learning. Therefore, this includes Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Cover Supervisors (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). Additionally, although it is recognised and explained in my literature review that TAs undertake a wide variety of responsibilities within their distinct roles, the term 'role' will be used throughout this thesis. There are specific commonalities between TAs' roles, which enable comparisons to be made and grouped successfully under one 'role.' This is also appropriate due to the requirement of all primary schools to devise specific contractual job descriptions for individual TAs in their school, involving prioritising of TAs' responsibilities.

<u>Undertaking a literature review</u>

Knopf (2006) states, 'a literature review summarises and evaluates a body of writings about a specific topic' (p.127). Throughout this review, the validity of authors' claims is ascertained by extracting and analysing the information, ideas, data, evidence and methodological assumptions presented by the writers (Hart, 1999). Consequently, synthesised conclusions are presented, derived through ascertaining the

validity of the literature discussed (Poulson & Wallace, 2003). These conclusions inform the research questions; they represent areas for further exploration. Additionally, this review served as a reflexive tool to be revisited when analysing data. The contentious issues presented in this review informed the author's analytic thought processes.

Current literature focusing on mainstream English primary schools is predominantly consulted, as this is consistent with the fieldwork for this thesis. The researcher's professional knowledge base and practical classroom experiences are predominantly based in English primary schools. Additionally, the literature suggests that the role of TAs is rather different in secondary schools, due to greater variance in classroom dynamics (Farrell, Balshaw & Polat, 1999). Literature focusing on secondary schools, special schools and/or within a wider geographical area including international studies will, however, be referred to, when the arguments are pertinent to the discussion. Literature from 1998 and beyond is mainly drawn upon as this period signifies the commencement of the development of TAs in England, as discussed below.

Defining special educational needs (SEN): legislative reforms

Before the role of TAs can be explored in relation to pupils identified with SEN, it is important that the term 'special educational needs' be defined. When this study began in October 2012, the researcher consulted the SEN Code of Practice (2001) for the most current definition of SEN, and applied this definition to this doctoral study. However, partway through this study, in September 2014, a new Children and Families Act was passed, which brought about some significant changes to the system of SEN identification and support. These changes were deemed necessary as a result of the associated difficulties with the Statementing process (discussed later in this section). Rix (2009) identified these difficulties as, 'costly, cumbersome, adversarial and lengthy' (p.11). The changes pertinent to this study are explained within this section.

The 2001 Code of Practice (COP) provided the following definition of SEN:
'Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or

(b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority

(c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them' (p.12).

The COP states that early, school-based identification of SEN is vital in order to provide an effective graduated response to a child's additional needs. This graduated response is no longer employed under the 2014 legislation, but was at the time this study commenced, thus is important to detail. At the time this study commenced the COP informed the procedures undertaken to meet the needs of the children involved in this research, thus necessarily had an influence over TAs' role and responsibilities within it.

The first stage of the COP-detailed graduated response was known as 'Early Years Action.' It involved school-designed, alternative support for a pupil who was experiencing ongoing difficulties which were impeding their rate of educational progress. Pupils needs were 'labelled' with categories of SEN, encompassing four broad areas: 'communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behaviour, emotional and social development; and sensory and/or physical' (Farrell, 2001, p.3). These categories were further sub-divided into more specific categories, for example, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The terminology used for SEN 'labels' in this thesis originates from the SEN Code of Practices (COP) (2001), which was in place when this study commenced, unless otherwise stated.

If Early Years Action was found to have inadequate influence over that child's rate of progress then that child was moved on to 'Early Years Action Plus.' This stage involved the school seeking the advice and support of external agencies in order to improve a pupil's rate of progress, known as a 'multi-agency' approach (Atkinson, Wilkin, Stott, Doherty & Kinder, 2001). Finally, if Early Years Action Plus was found to be ineffective, a school, in close consultation with the child's parents and external agencies, was eligible to apply for a statutory assessment of that child's needs. If the

child's needs were determined to be severe and complex, he/she may be granted a Statement of SEN, which resulted in funding for the school to spend on additional provision to meet the child's needs.

Under the COP legislation, a child who was identified with SEN was provided with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which detailed the school-based interventions that the child was to receive in order to meet their additional needs. It is in the IEP that the TA who provided support for that child was frequently named, and was often asked to sign the document to indicate that they undertook responsibility for meeting the described actions.

However, the Children and Families Act, which came into force in September 2014 changed many of these processes. The definition of SEN remains largely unaltered, with the only change being in section (b) of the definition of learning difficulty, see below:

'Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

(b) have a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions' (p.16).

When this definition is compared with the previous COP (2001) definition, it can be seen that the restriction of 'schools within the area of the local authority' is removed, and replaced with 'in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.' This indicates a shift in area restrictions, with the local authority boundaries lifted in the new legislation.

One of the most significant changes involved the introduction of a new 'Education Health and Care' plan (EHCP). This aims to bring together external agencies responsible for a child's care, in an attempt to provide a holistic response to a child's needs. The EHC plan replaces the IEP, with one single needs assessment undertaken to formulate the EHC plan, rather than graduated response to SEN that was undertaken with the previous approach.

The 'labels' of SEN were also altered, with the aim of affording greater flexibility to schools in meeting individuals' specific needs and avoiding the current problem of over-identification of needs (DfE, 2011). There is now one single school-based category or response, for children whose needs are not being met through normal school provision. In addition, one aspect of the definition for well-being of

children and young people with SEN refers to 'Social, Mental and Emotional Health,' indicating that young people's mental health needs are considered for the first time in legislation.

Another significant reform involves the requirement from Local Authorities (LAs) to produce a Local Offer, setting out information about the provision they expect to be available for children and young people in their area who have SEN, including those who do not have EHCPs. This must be done within 18 months of the introduction of the reforms, by June 2016.

Additionally, the role of parents has significantly shifted within the new reforms, to induce a devolvement of power from schools to parents of children identified with SEN. If a child is provided with an EHCP with attached funding, then under the new reforms parents can elect to have responsibility over how the funding to meet their child's needs is allocated. Parents can nominate a 'key worker' from any form of provision, including Education, Health and Social Care, who manages and coordinates a child's provision. However, this reform requires parents to be well informed on all areas of their child's needs, particularly if they elect to manage the financial implications of meeting those needs themselves. Furthermore, increasing parental responsibility over the allocation of funding may engender a culture of excessive pressure and expectation on parents to ensure that they are effectively assessing approaches to meeting their children's needs (Rix, 2009).

Now that the definitions of 'SEN' and the legislative reforms associated with the educational provision for children identified with SEN have been explored, as they pertain to this thesis, the role of TAs can now be addressed.

2.2 TAs: A complex and shifting role

In this section the literature concerning the first of the three literature bases pertinent to this thesis is discussed: the nature of the role that TAs currently undertake in mainstream primary schools in England. This section considers the complex and shifting role of TAs, specifically, the problem of role-blurring between TAs and Teachers, differences between the roles and responsibilities of Level 1 TAs and HLTAs, the influence of TAs on pupils learning and TAs' pastoral role.

<u>Defining TAs' role</u>

Devecchi, Dettori and Doveston (2012) recently described the development of TAs' role as occurring in, 'an organic and ad hoc manner' (p.22). In their document 'Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide,' intended to inform school professionals, the DfES define TAs' role as fourfold, involving, 'supporting pupils, Teachers, the school and the curriculum' (2001, p.8). However, numerous researchers have found that the tasks required to be undertaken by TAs in meeting the four components of their role are too numerous to be completed within the constraints of the school day (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Gerschel, 2005; Hancock, Cable & Eyres, 2010); the recent Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, Russell & Webster, 2008) identified six categories of TA tasks in schools:-

1. Support for Teachers and/or the curriculum
2. Direct learning support for pupils
3. Direct pastoral support for pupils
4. Indirect support for pupils
5. Support for the school (administrative/communicative)
6. Support for the school (physical environment) (p.9).

The researchers found that by far the greatest amount of TA time was spent on supporting pupils, an average of approximately 3.8 hours out of the 7.5 hours worked by TAs per day (ibid). However, it is important to note that strong methodological criticisms have been raised against the DISS report, which are explored later in this chapter. Nevertheless Blatchford et al.'s (2008) finding that TAs spend most of their time supporting pupils is consistent with other studies into the responsibilities of TAs (Collins & Simco, 2006; Farrell et al., 2010; Hancock & Collins, 2005).

It is widely accepted that TAs' role is primarily and historically rooted in supporting children identified with SEN (Webster et al., 2010). However, the structure of TAs' working with children identified with SEN varies widely across England (Butt & Lance, 2009). Historically TAs have worked, virtually exclusively, with individual pupils identified with SEN, as part of what Gerschel (2005) terms a 'key-worker' system. This is characterised by naming TAs as the primary support, for individual children with Statements (DfES, 2001). Justification for this approach is

that TAs provide pupils with the individualised academic support required to work confidently (DfES, 2003).

However, the 'key-worker' system has been criticised by Vincett, Cremin & Thomas (2005). They argue that this system frequently results in TAs over-supporting the children (usually identified with SEN) that they support, precipitating 'SEN Velcro-syndrome.' TAs become, 'constantly focused on the child in their charge' (Shevlin, Kenny & Loxley, 2008, p.147). Consequently, some children become reliant on the support that individual TAs provide and lack confidence during independent working, termed as 'learned helplessness' (Hopson & Scally, 1981). Whilst this is concerning, it should be noted that in recent years, TAs have increasingly assisted children in small group workings within primary classrooms (Gerschel, 2005). This reduces the instances of individual support, therefore precipitates the avoidance of 'learned helplessness' amongst children identified with SEN. Nevertheless, numerous research projects have shown that these small groups continue to primarily constitute pupils identified with SEN, raising concerns as to whether independent working is actually occurring (Moran and Abbott, 2002).

In 2009 Lamb undertook a review of parental confidence in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). He conducted interviews and focus groups with parents and school professionals in eight English counties, involving just over 3,400 participants. Lamb concluded that as a consequence of the 'key-worker' system, 'too many children with SEN are missing out on the core benefits of quality first teaching' (p.30). He identified that much of the teaching of children identified with SEN has been 'handed over' to TAs, leading to, 'the weaker Teachers teaching SEN students' (p.29). This is particularly apparent during the Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time of Teachers; many HLTAs are given responsibility for whole class teaching during Teachers' PPA time, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Additionally, large-scale research by Rubie-Davies, Blatchford, Webster, Koutsobou and Bassett (2010) into TAs' role in mainstream English primary schools concluded that, 'TAs do not provide *additional* support but *alternative* support' (p.430).

This notion of TAs providing alternative student support assumes TAs to be capable of engaging in the act of teaching. However, whether or not TAs are able to undertake a pedagogical role is questioned. This is a complex issue to address and is

important in effectively investigating the role of TAs; as such it is explored below (Butt and Lance, 2009; Gerschel, 2005; Moran and Abbott, 2002; Quike, 2003).

<u>To what extent do TAs undertake a pedagogical role?</u>

In order to effectively address how far TAs undertake a pedagogical role, it is necessary to identify the difference between pedagogy and teaching. The distinction between these two terms was first explained in the researcher's MPhil thesis (Saddler, 2012). It is referenced below and will be discussed later in this thesis, in relation to the data gathered.

Alexander (2004) defines pedagogy as, 'what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted' (p.11). Therefore, in order to undertake a pedagogical role, specific knowledge and skills are required to develop the capacity to make informed, responsible decisions about the teaching process.

In contrast, teaching is defined as, 'the act of using method x to enable pupil to learn y.' (ibid, p.12). TAs may engage in the act of teaching, as they have often built the knowledge and skills to implement a given strategy to enable learning. However, TAs do not possess the understanding required to make pedagogical decisions. Pedagogy is unique to the teacher, the fundamental difference between Teachers and TAs. Teachers have responsibility for decision-making about the teaching process for all learners: TAs have the capacity to act on these decisions through assisting with teaching to improve learning (Saddler, 2012, p.9).

The DfES (2003) stated that TAs are required, 'to support the delivery of quality teaching and a modern curriculum.' (p.7). This clearly demonstrates advocation of TAs engaging in the act of teaching to support learning, not undertaking the responsibilities associated with a pedagogical role. Additionally, the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009) found that, 'the majority of TAs in England do not have a university degree and many hold no qualifications above a grade C in GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)' (p.12). This, along with there being low

qualification requirements to undertake the role of a TA, is likely to inhibit TAs from building the skills to undertake an effective pedagogical role (Farrell et al., 2010). However, it may be that some responsibilities within TAs' role are requiring TAs to make pedagogical decisions, for example, relating to planning and assessment of pupils' progress. Yet, though this may be the case, it is likely that TAs' pedagogical decision making may not be informed, therefore may not be effective, due to lack of training and teaching-focused qualifications. This study will aim to investigate whether or not TAs are making pedagogical decisions that are traditionally associated with the role of teaching.

As a result of the problematic nature of pedagogical decision making, it is important that a school's educational professionals recognise that Teachers possess overall responsibility for pupils' learning and not TAs. However, the point at which TAs' teaching role ends and Teachers' pedagogical role begins is difficult to determine. Consequently, this has led to widespread blurring of role boundaries across schools in England (Gerber, Finn, Achillies & Boyd-Zacharis, 2001). The views of one participant in Blatchford et al.'s (2006) DISS study highlights this problem:

> *'The expectations of TAs' own abilities and competencies has completely changed. Original support staff were a "mum's army" who did general welfare activities in class. Now they are expected to deliver ELS, ALS, FLS, Springboard (all catch up programmes) and lack of academic ability creates problems within school. Their salaries are insufficient and fail to reflect the demands of their very useful support role. They are not teachers yet they are expected to teach.'* (Headteacher, Primary) (p.101).

The above quotation highlights the tensions often experienced in identifying the distinct responsibilities within the roles of Teachers and TAs in mainstream primary classrooms. TAs often view their role as similar to that of Teachers, especially during Teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, when they can be expected to teach whole classes, as will be discussed in the following section of this thesis. However, Teachers generally view their role as professionally dissimilar to that of TAs; Teachers have academic qualifications that should allow them to make educated pedagogical decisions and TAs do not. Indeed, TAs are often

viewed as non-professionals, which further depresses their status. This tension is often a threat to working relationships between Teachers and TAs (Williams & Connor, 2012).

TAs having access to more specialist training related to SEN than Teachers can often lead to role-blurring. TAs can be chosen to attend courses on specific areas of SEN provision, related to the needs of the children with whom they are working. This is due to the high contact time that TAs working in individual structures often experience with children identified with SEN, the specific needs of those children and the cost implications; TAs are cheaper to release from the classroom than Teachers (Burgess & Mayes, 2007). This may mean that, in some cases, TAs find themselves to be more knowledgeable regarding the specific needs of some of the children with which they work than the teacher, further contributing to role-blurring between Teachers and TAs (Mowat, 2009).

In order to implement effective role boundaries between Teachers and TAs, it is suggested that policy makers produce clear role descriptors that highlight the fundamental differences between the responsibilities that Teachers hold, in comparison with those of TAs. Building on this, schools should document clear contractual job descriptions for both Teachers and TAs, detailing their specific professional responsibilities in that school. It is acknowledged that this is problematic, as practical flexibility in working arrangements is required, due to the non-liner nature of the learning process. However, defining role boundaries between Teachers and TAs would at least ensure that all educational professionals in the school were aware of their specific responsibilities with regard to children's learning (Bach, Kessler & Heron, 2006).

This system allows for flexibility at school level but also ensures that fundamental differences between school professionals' roles are clarified at policy level. Schools' job descriptions can take the specific needs of individuals in that school into account and, therefore, conceptualise professionals' roles to incorporate these. TAs' current contractual job descriptions require research, in order to discover how far they specify the differences between the roles of Teachers and TAs, yet allow for flexibility. Competence of the senior management team is vital in reaching this balance. However, as is discussed later in this chapter, management of TAs is acknowledged as being particularly poor (Gerschel, 2005).

The introduction of HLTAs

The role of Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) was introduced in 2003. The role was devised by the government in response to research undertaken by Price Waterhouse Cooper, in 2001, which identified that Teachers were overloaded by professional responsibilities. Thus, the HLTA role was introduced in order to relieve Teachers of some of these responsibilities, by delegating them to HLTAs. Unlike TAs, HLTAs are required to hold educational qualifications, namely level 2 or above in English and Mathematics.

HLTAs are formally assessed against 33 professional standards, derived from the professional standards for Teachers (Teacher Training Agency, 2003). These standards include responsibilities in planning, monitoring and assessment of pupils' work, thus affording HLTAs pedagogical responsibilities. Additionally, HLTAs are often stated to hold 'line management' responsibilities, which will be discussed later in this section. Until August 2012 the government funded an external body to assess HLTAs' fulfillment of the professional standards, however, this funding was withdrawn. This has left Headteachers to undertake the responsibility of assessing their school's HLTAs internally.

Burgess and Mayes (2009) identified that over 21,000 TAs acquired HLTA status up to 2009, with numbers continuing to rise. However, research undertaken by Emira (2011) determined that the introduction of HLTA status has done little to clarify the ambiguity surrounding TAs' role and responsibilities. Many HLTAs undertake the same responsibilities as Level 1 TAs, as both remain under the same guidance and management of Teachers and Headteachers and often have not been promoted due to lack of available roles at HLTA level (Hryniewicz, 2013). However, where there are differences between the responsibilities of HLTAs and Level 1 TAs they frequently lie in leadership.

The role of HLTA is at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 4; a level at which leadership is mentioned as a specific responsibility. Consequently, HLTAs may have leadership responsibilities at school level, such as leading TA teams in regular meetings, organising their professional development and developing effective communication within teams and with staff (Gerschel, 2005). Fundamentally, whether or not HLTAs exercise leadership within schools, they are

trained to recognise and understand leadership styles and leadership skills in order to be fully qualified (Kamen, 2003, p.145). This is what separates the role of HLTAs from that of Level 1 TAs.

Many research studies have found HLTAs' role to involve responsibilities over managing other school staff members, predominantly other TAs (Gerschel, 2005; Townsend & Parker, 2005; Watkinson, 2003). However, Emira (2011) argues that there is a fundamental difference between leadership and management and, crucially, HLTAs are only qualified to undertake leadership responsibilities and not management responsibilities. Gronn (2009) argues that leadership is the process of envisioning tasks, whereas management is the accomplishment of these tasks. Therefore, leadership may be a responsibility within a manager's role, however, the two are conceptually distinct. To relate this to the role of HLTAs, HLTAs may determine the tasks that a team of TAs are required to undertake, however, it is the job of the senior management team to delegate these jobs in managing the staff body of a school.

In 2007, Goddard, Obaden and Mowat presented the results of their three-year study into the impact of introducing the qualification on HLTAs' role descriptions and job satisfaction. They found that HLTAs identified increased pay, increased status, respect from other staff members and promotion to be direct benefits of the qualification. However, Goddard, Obaden and Mowat also found that of the HLTAs who gained the status in 2004, only half were employed at Level 4. Consequently, some HLTAs were angered and frustrated at the lack of immediate career progression as a result of gaining the qualification. Goddard, Obaden and Mowat found that the lack of advertised HLTA roles led to staff with HLTA status being employed in increasingly varied job roles. These roles included pastoral heads of year, behaviour intervention managers and Assistant SENCO as well as curriculum roles such as unqualified teacher and cover for PPA time.

Consequently, it is widely argued that the introduction of the HLTA role has exacerbated the disparity in TAs' role, and caused further role-blurring between TAs and Teachers (Heardman et al. 2009; Hryniewicz, 2008; Watkinson, 2003). This role-blurring causes inherent de-professionalisation of the role of Teachers, frequently leading to tensions between Teachers and TAs (Devecchi, Dettori & Doveston, 2011). Mansaray (2006) describes TAs' current role as 'liminal,' defining this as,

'transitional, incomplete, ambiguous and incoherent' (p.174). He further argues that a second 'liminal' aspect to TAs role concerns their professional status. Although it is widely acknowledged that TAs are pivotal to pupils' learning experiences, their role is currently constructed as peripheral to teaching and learning. Thus, there is an obvious disparity here, between TAs' role on a policy-level and TAs' role on a practice-level. It is therefore necessary to explore TAs' current influence on pupils' learning at practice-level to determine how policy makers should conceptualise the current role.

The influence of TAs on pupils' learning

Table 2.1 reflects the contentious findings of two high-profile research projects into the deployment of TAs in assisting with pupil learning; the toolkit of strategies to improve learning project (Higgins & Kokotsaki, 2011) and the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford et al., 2008; Blatchford et al., 2009; Blatchford et al., 2012). It should be noted that the findings emerging from the DISS study were released in stages, across four main reports, thus a number of references to the findings of this study are presented in this thesis.

Table 2.1 Headlines concerning TAs' influence on pupils' learning

Title	Publication	Date
Teaching assistants 'fail to improve school results.'	The Telegraph	26th May 2011
Teaching assistants don't boost pupils' progress, report finds.	The Guardian	4th September 2009
TAs: Teaching assistants impair pupil performance.	TES	4th September 2009
Teaching assistants blamed for poor results	The Telegraph	4th September 2009

Both reports announced that TAs' support made, 'small or no effects on attainment' (Higgins, & Kokotsaki, 2011, p.27). Additionally, the DISS report

claimed that, 'those pupils receiving most TA support made less progress than similar pupils who received little or no TA support' (Blatchford et al. 2009, p.323). Whilst these findings are of concern, it is important to note that they are strongly focused on academic outcomes as indicators of educational success, without exploring TAs' influence on pupils' social outcomes (Balshaw, 2010; Fletcher-Campbell, 2010; Giangreco, 2010). Moreover Higgins & Kokotsaki (2011) describe the evidence base as 'limited' when determining TAs' influence on pupils' learning. This means that their conclusions should be reviewed with caution, as they may not capture the wide range of influences relating to the efficacy of TAs' role. Higgins & Kokotsaki acknowledge that, 'more research must be done to determine the best ways for Teachers and Teaching Assistants to work together' (p.35).

Little acknowledgement, in either report, is given to the influence of TAs on the process of social inclusion, which, as has previously been identified, is inextricably linked to academic achievement. If TAs' impact on pupils' learning is to be fully understood, the influence of TAs on the process of social inclusion requires investigation (Hancock at al., 2010).

This strong focus on determining schools' success in terms of pupils' academic outcomes alone is a common methodological approach in educational research. Smees and Thomas (1998) explain the problem with this approach:

The majority of research into school improvement centres on academic achievement as an indicator of school effectiveness. Although this is a vital indicator, it alone can tell us little about the school environment or the pupils' attitudes within it- only whether or not the school is succeeding in terms of academic outcomes (p.7).

The quotation above highlights that educational research centering on academic outcomes alone has been recognised as limited. That is not to say that it is a method lacking rigor, only that it is not always the best methodology to employ with research rooted in school effectiveness. This argument is particularly pertinent to this study, as the complex and wide ranging nature of SEN and TAs' role requires an exploration, which a focus on academic achievement cannot fully capture. Effective methodology in this study requires a focus on the social influences operating within the researcher's

areas of interest. This further suggests that the current emphasis on academic achievement as a school improvement indicator, originating at policy-level, is not always effective. This will be explored further in chapter three, during the explanation of the current model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools.

The limitations of a strong focus on academic outcomes is particularly important to recognise when conducting research with children identified with SEN, where academic achievement is generally lower, and often does not represent the overall educational experience of these children. The methodological approach in this thesis therefore centres on qualitative methodology that allows the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of the school environment as a whole. The justification for this approach will be discussed further in chapter five.

The primary method of data collection designed by Blatchford et al. (2009) was questionnaire distribution. An approximate total of 20,000 questionnaires were analysed, from primary, secondary and special schools across England and Wales during strand one of the research, indicating that a large number of participants were involved in the study. These questionnaires concentrated on determining the nature and characteristics of TAs' deployment quantitatively, constituting information gathering on training, wages, hours worked and qualifications. In strand two of the research, the authors employed a multi-method approach, in which they conducted surveys, observations and school-level case studies, working in 76 schools with 2,528 pupils. These methods were chosen with the aim of 'obtaining a detailed and integrated account of the deployment and impact of support staff' (p.3). Although these qualitative methods better lend themselves to gaining understandings relating to TAs' influence on pupils' social experiences, the authors chose to focus many of the qualitative methods on gaining information relating to TAs' influence on pupils' academic progress over an academic year, based on National Curriculum levels and Key Stage test results. Consequently, the strong focus on academic attainment as the optimum measure of effective education remained throughout the study. The authors have been strongly criticised for failing to gather substantial qualitative data concerning TAs' influence on social processes of learning, rendering their conclusions, to an extent, unreliable (Balshaw, 2010; Fletcher-Campbell, 2010).

Having listened to Peter Blatchford explaining his choices concerning research methodology at a seminar in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge

in 2012, it was apparent that academic attainment was paramount as an indicator of success in the DISS research project. This is certainly a valid indicator of success, however, it is argued in this thesis that to gain an holistic understanding of TAs' influence on pupils' educational experiences, an exploration of social inclusion must be considered in methodological approaches. Furthermore, in the questionnaires distributed, only one open question was posed to Teachers, by the researchers, as to how they viewed TAs' impact on their pupils' learning. This could be argued to be solely opinion based and relies on teacher-recall and an unclear evidence base (Fletcher-Campbell, 2010).

Perhaps it would have been useful for the authors to have conducted single-child qualitative case studies on pupils identified with SEN. This would have provided access to fuller understandings regarding the effects of TAs' presence on pupils' learning, in particular pupils' social inclusion within the school community. Additionally, it would have been useful for the authors to have taken account of pupil voice in the design of their methodology, as children, 'are active agents in their own learning and are entitled, wherever possible, to democratic participation in research pertaining to their interests' (Ravet, 2008, p.234). This would have provided the researchers with a greater evidence base in addressing their first research aim, 'to determine TAs' impact on pupils' positive approaches to learning.' (Blatchford et al., 2009).

TAs' pastoral role

Most of Blatchford et al.'s (2008) six categories of TAs' tasks in school are directly associated with supporting teaching and learning. However, the third category was identified as, 'direct pastoral support for pupils' (p.76). Recognising TAs' pastoral role is important in order to fully explore and understand TAs' responsibilities.

As has been discussed, concerns have been raised as to the effectiveness of TAs' support on pupils' academic attainment. However, it is important to consider the influence of TAs' pastoral role on pupils' educational experiences. This will allow an holistic picture of TAs' influence to be built that takes account of more than academic achievement alone. TAs' pastoral role is particularly advocated as part of the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda: described as 'building rapport and relationships with

students, effective working with outside agencies and creating a whole-school approach to pastoral care' (DfES, p.14). The pastoral relationship commonly built between TAs and pupils identified with SEN is important, due to reciprocal trust and respect and the time-intensive rapport built (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). It, therefore, follows that the strong pastoral relationship built between children identified with SEN and TAs could be developed to positively influence pupils' social experiences within the learning environment; this is discussed further in chapter three.

Equally, the strong links that TAs often have with the school community reinforce their unique position; 'if the TAs are well connected to the school community, they might be in an excellent position to support positive peer interactions' (Minondo et al. 2001, p.118). In addition, research undertaken by Tucker (2009) identified that TAs were often the, 'first port of call for parents requiring information and advice' (p.294). This was particularly common with parents of children who were identified with SEN; parents felt that TAs had an increased understanding of their child due to the time intensive rapport built between them (ibid). Consequently, researching TAs' influence from an academic perspective alone can neglect to take account of TAs' pastoral influence. This thesis aims to research TAs' influence from a social perspective and, thus, aims to fill the gap in existing research regarding TAs' influence on primary aged pupils' educational experiences.

2.3 The influence of management structures on TAs' role

This section of the review addresses the second of the three interconnected literature bases identified in section 2.1 of this thesis. The nature of TAs' current management structures is explored and the influence of these structures on TAs' role is addressed.

TAs' management structures are accepted to be widely variable across primary schools in England (Minondo et al, 2001). Research undertaken by Butt and Lance (2009) noted, 'the confusing range of management models brought to bear on the work of TAs' (p.226). Butt and Lance also identified that the majority of TAs involved in their study were unaware of who their manager was, whether they had more than one manager or who indeed had overall responsibility for their work. In fact, numerous studies aiming to disentangle the complexity of TAs' role have noted the disparate nature of the management structures involved in TAs' deployment

(Higgins & Kokotsaki, 2011; Blatchford et al., 2009; Gerschel, 2005).

Ineffective management that fails to take account of TAs' knowledge and skills diminishes TAs' support for pupils' learning (Watkinson, 2003). Hancock, Hall, Cable and Eyres (2010) argue that TAs' role should be afforded a degree of flexibility both at policy-level and practice-level. At policy-level it is important to allow individual schools sufficient flexibility to design TAs' roles to meet the specific needs of the children in that school. At practice-level, flexibility is vital in order to respond to both pupils' and TAs' changing needs and the ever changing school day. Nevertheless, TAs require specific contractual job descriptions, detailing the responsibilities within their role. Consequently, a balance needs to be struck between clear, manageable role descriptors that ensure role-blurring is avoided and flexibility.

The following section discusses some prominent problems within TAs' current management systems, derived from various research studies. It should be noted that the wide variety of management systems across England limits the generalisability of these arguments. However, this further highlights the disparity in management systems, as discussed below.

Who possesses overall responsibility for TAs' management?

Devecchi and Rouse (2010) identified that staff members possessing overall responsibility for managing TAs' role is widely inconsistent between schools in England. These staff members include Headteachers, deputy heads, SENCOs, Teachers and occasionally HLTAs (as line managers). As has previously been discussed, it is not within the HLTA job description to undertake management, yet this is often seen. It should be noted that Devecchi and Rouse's study was conducted in secondary schools, however, the findings resonate with those of Hammersley-Fletcher, Lowe & Pugh (2006), as well as the researcher's professional experience and prior research.

The advice given in the 'SEN Code of Practice' (DfES, 2001) identifies SENCOs as having positional responsibilities relating to the management of TAs. In mainstream primary schools, the SENCOs' responsibilities are stated to include, 'managing learning support assistants (and) coordinating the provision for children with SEN' (ibid, p.29). No guidance is given in this document, however, to inform SENCOs about how to manage TAs effectively. Additionally, much research has

concluded that there is widespread ambiguity over what constitutes SENCOs' role as well as over their status within school (Layton, 2005; Wedell, 2005). Layton (2005) identified four main areas over which SENCOs have positional responsibilities:

1. Strategic direction and development of SEN provision in school
2. Teaching and learning
3. Leading and managing staff
4. Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources (p.54).

These areas are problematic when determining SENCOs' status within a schools' staff body. Clearly, SENCOs are intended to hold leadership responsibilities; therefore many schools find it useful to place SENCOs within the senior management team. However, SENCOs often still hold class teacher responsibilities and, thus often find themselves in a 'middle-ground,' part of the senior management team when required, yet also experiencing the same status as the other class Teachers (Layton, 2005). Indeed, Layton concludes that, 'SENCOs do not believe that key people and agencies see them in a leadership role, even though most expect them to 'manage' SEN matters' (p.55). This suggests that SENCOs' status ambiguity originates at policy-level; requiring further research. It should be noted that Layton's sample size is relatively small, having only a 25% response rate from their questionnaires; consequently, generalisability of her results is problematic. Nevertheless, ambiguity surrounding SENCOs' role and responsibilities is widely acknowledged (Burton & Goodman, 2010; Lewis, Neill & Campbell, 1997; Morewood, 2012; Robertson, 2012).

Despite SENCOs' positional management responsibilities, research undertaken by the NFER (2004) into the employment and deployment of TAs discovered that, 'in primary schools, the Headteacher was most likely to line manage TAs (81%)' (Smith, Whitby & Sharp, 2004, p.11); only 33% of TAs were managed by SENCOs. This research involved a total of 2,668 TAs and school leaders from primary, secondary and special schools, providing a particularly strong mechanism for generalisability. Whilst this is significant, it is recognised that some Headteachers may also undertake the SENCO role (the reason why the proportions cited above total over 100%), indeed SENCOs may undertake many positional roles within school structures; the validity of this study is consequently problematic. Nevertheless, the results highlight the importance of whole-school staff awareness with regard to operating management

structures (Butt & Lance, 2009).

As a focus of this study is on successful management structures, tt is important to consider why, in the NFER's (2004) research, such a high proportion of Headteachers undertook the role of managing TAs. Gerschel's (2005) research suggested that the complexity of the TA role requires particularly strong leadership to manage. As the figurehead of leadership in schools is the Headteacher, he\she is the obvious choice for management of TAs. It should be noted, however, that the size of the schools involved in Gerschel's study is unknown. This could affect her findings considerably as Headteachers typically undertake the role of SENCO in small schools (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010).

Additionally, Gerschel found that when SENCOs did undertake management responsibilities with regard to TAs, those who possessed little current experience of working with children identified with SEN resulted in problematic management, as well as a lack of efficacy in their role more generally. This further resulted in poor day-to-day timetabling, as well as ineffective pairing between TAs and children. Gerschel, therefore, highlights the importance of SENCOs possessing relevant, in-depth knowledge and understanding relating to legislation and effective practice when working with children identified with SEN (Wearmouth, 2009). It should be noted that Gershel's London-based research may not reflect the national picture of TAs' management. However, her findings resonate with many other research studies conducted nationally (Collins & Simco, 2006; Hancock et al., 2010; Logan, 2006).

Research by the NFER (2007) into the deployment and impact of HLTAs in English primary, secondary and special schools identified six quoted principles for senior management teams to follow in engendering a school wide model of good practice:

1. Take a whole school review of staffing, including deciding on the number of HLTA posts and matching the needs of one's school with HLTA interests and skills.

2. Consult with HLTAs about a specialist role, for example a subject, pastoral, SEN or intervention role.

3. Allocate HLTAs to staff teams and develop teamwork, including identifying a 'close' line manager.

4. Define role requirements and responsibilities, including differentiating

HLTA from TA roles.

5.   Raise awareness of the HLTA role among staff and parents.

6.   Support and develop HLTAs in their role, including continuing professional development (CPD), performance reviews, resource allocation (especially planning time) and role/career development (p.8).

Deciding which school staff members are best placed to implement the above six principles is difficult at policy-level. This is as a result of the unique nature of schools and the individuals within them (Fletcher-Campbell, 2010). Perhaps, as Bach, Kessler and Heron (2006) suggest, decisions regarding TAs' management should be undertaken on an individual school basis. Consequently, the specific strengths and skills of individual professionals can be utlised. However, this may not be practically viable, as national guidance remains statutory in supporting schools to make sound managerial decisions. Perhaps guidance documents should endeavor to strike a more effective balance between prescription and flexibility, as their success has been limited thus far (Cremin, Thomas & Vincett, 2003). The guidance documents referred to are the 'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice' (DfES, 2001), 'Working with TAs: A good practice guide' (DfES, 2003) and 'National Occupational Standards for supporting Teaching Learning' (DfE, 2010). This thesis researches TAs' current management structures in-depth in three schools; this should enable tentative recommendations to be made based on effective practice observed.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has explored the literature pertinent to the first two literature bases identified in chapter one: the current roles and responsibilities of TAs in mainstream primary schools and the current management structures of TAs, including how those management structures influence TAs' role. Chapter three moves on to explore the concept of social inclusion, as it relates to pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools. Two models of social inclusion are presented and explored, which have been informed by the literature, an ideal model and a current model. This then allows investigation of the third literature base pertinent to this thesis in chapter four: the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN.

<div align="center">**Chapter 3: Exploring Social Inclusion**</div>

In order to effectively explore TAs' influence on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN (the third literature base, explored in chapter four), it is vital that a definition of the term 'social inclusion' be first identified. Social inclusion is widely recognised as a complex process, involving complex concepts (Kershner & Farrell, 2009). In order to clarify the process, two researcher-devised models of social inclusion are presented in this chapter, which specifically focus on mainstream primary communities; an 'ideal' model and a current model. Review of relevant literature has informed these models. Presentation of these models will enable the current process of social inclusion in mainstream primary communities to be compared with the 'ideal' process. Thus changes in policies and practices to achieve the 'ideal' process of social inclusion, with a specific focus on TAs' role, can be explored later in this thesis.

3.1 Defining Inclusion

'Schooling has always produced exclusion' (Slee, 2001, p.118).

The term 'inclusion' is used in representing a variety of viewpoints and approaches, making it an elusive goal (Wilde & Avramidis, 2011). However, inclusion is widely acknowledged to be a defining feature of effective educational policy and consequently successful schooling (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Kershner & Farrell, 2009; Vickerman & Hodkinson, 2009). As inclusion is interpreted differently by educationalists, both on a macro and micro level, a spectrum of approaches to the goal have been seen. Thus, ambiguity surrounding the concept is widespread, leading to Slee's (2001) assertion that exclusion of some members of the educational community is inevitable.

Historically, the inclusion of individuals was primarily determined by their school placement. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), initiated the placement of pupils with diverse needs in a common, mainstream educational environment. UNESCO stated this to be, 'the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (Clause 5, paragraph 2). Consequently, many professionals questioned the need for special schools. However, in 2005, Baroness Warnock argued that mainstream provision for all was resulting in exclusion for

many. Warnock cited high levels of bullying and victimisation of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream schools. Thus, the place of special schools in an effective educational system was again widely recognised.

Viewing inclusion in terms of placement alone can be regarded as an integrationist attitude (Tutt, 2007). In this attitude, individuals' additional needs are viewed as problems to be adapted to the mainstream environment rather than accommodated through adjustment of the learning environment. Current thinking focuses strongly on inclusion being viewed in terms of participation, suggesting that there is an inherent social focus within the concept of inclusion (Koster et.al. 2009; Vickerman & Hodkinson, 2009; Wilde & Avramidis, 2011).

However, Avramidis and Wilde (2009) argue that this social focus is often ignored when assessing inclusive educational developments. Assessments generally focus on structures and practices, therefore neglect to address social and affective outcomes of the developments. Consequently, research into the social aspects of inclusive schooling is lacking. In order to address this, social outcomes of inclusive education are a strong focus in this thesis, with a particular regard to children identified with SEN. In order to investigate the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN effectively, it is important that the concept of 'social inclusion' is defined as it is used in this thesis.

3.2 Defining social inclusion

As with the term 'inclusion,' the term 'social inclusion' is complex and involves multiple inter-related concepts. In order to identify and explore these concepts effectively, in relation to the areas of interest for this thesis, a model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools has been developed. This model will be presented and discussed in relation to relevant literature later in this chapter.

The theory of learning to be addressed when exploring the concept of social inclusion is that of social constructivism. This theory recognises the inherent social nature of learning, involving definite interplay between the learner and the sociocultural context in which the learner is positioned (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, it can be deduced that the social nature of learning inextricably links the concepts of academic achievement and social inclusion. As Black-Hawkins (2010) explains, 'the inclusion of a child in a school has little meaning unless s/he also

experiences achievement, and that child is unlikely to achieve unless s/he are included' (p.27). Therefore, socially inclusive practices are necessary in order to provide a holistic, child-centred primary education that values both educational achievement and social inclusion (Didaskalou, Andreou & Vlachou, 2009).

To extend this argument, it seems likely that if a child is socially included within a learning environment, their academic achievement will improve. Similarly, if a child experiences social exclusion, perhaps through victimisation or bullying, it is likely that their academic achievement will be lower than is possible. As children identified with SEN are far more likely to experience victimisation and/or bullying than their non-SEN peers then it follows that these pupils will benefit most from an inclusive educational environment (Frostad & Pijl, 2007). Consequently, it is important to investigate the inclusivity of the educational environment for pupils identified with SEN, with specific regard to TAs' influence on this environment, as a prominent influence in the educational experiences of pupils identified with SEN.

However, as the process of social inclusion within mainstream primary schools is complex and, to a degree variable, it is difficult to define. Nevertheless, reviewing the literature has enabled an 'ideal' model of social inclusion to be developed, see Figure 3.1, which displays the interplay between the complex concepts involved in defining the term. The literature that informs the model follows its presentation. The model is discussed with specific reference to pupils identified with SEN, to identify the specific challenges and difficulties to achieving the process of social inclusion. Additionally, a second model of social inclusion has been developed which reflects the current process, see Figure 3.2. Discussion of this model, following discussion of Figure 3.1, will aid exploration of the tensions within current educational policy. These tensions make the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN problematic.

Figure 3.1 Ideal model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Ideal Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities

Theory Orientated

Policy Orientated

Practice Orientated

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Socially inclusive values and beliefs

Social competence

Social participation

Socially inclusive practices

Positive social interactions

Participation within the learning environment

Socially Inclusive Interventions

Positive social relationships

Active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment

Figure 3.2 Current Model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities
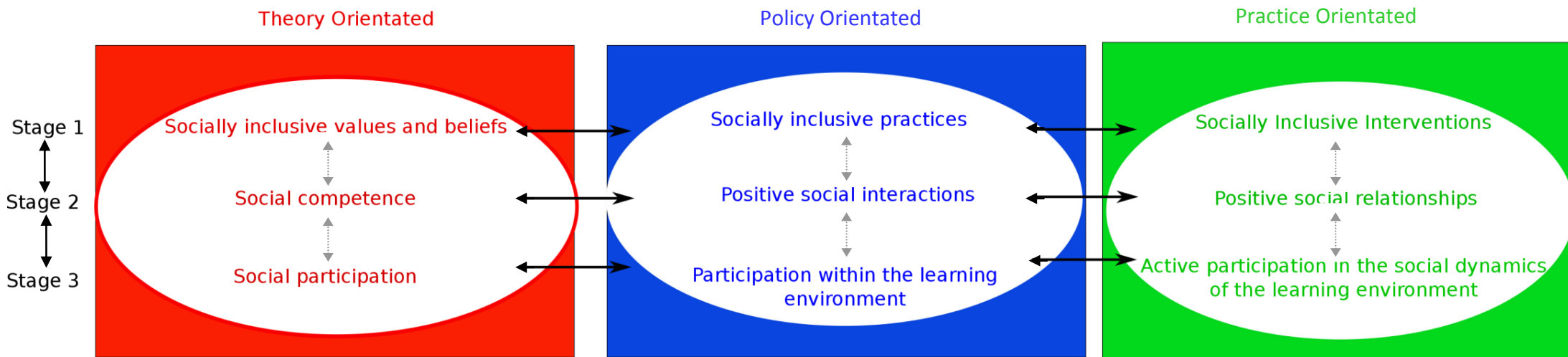
Current Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities
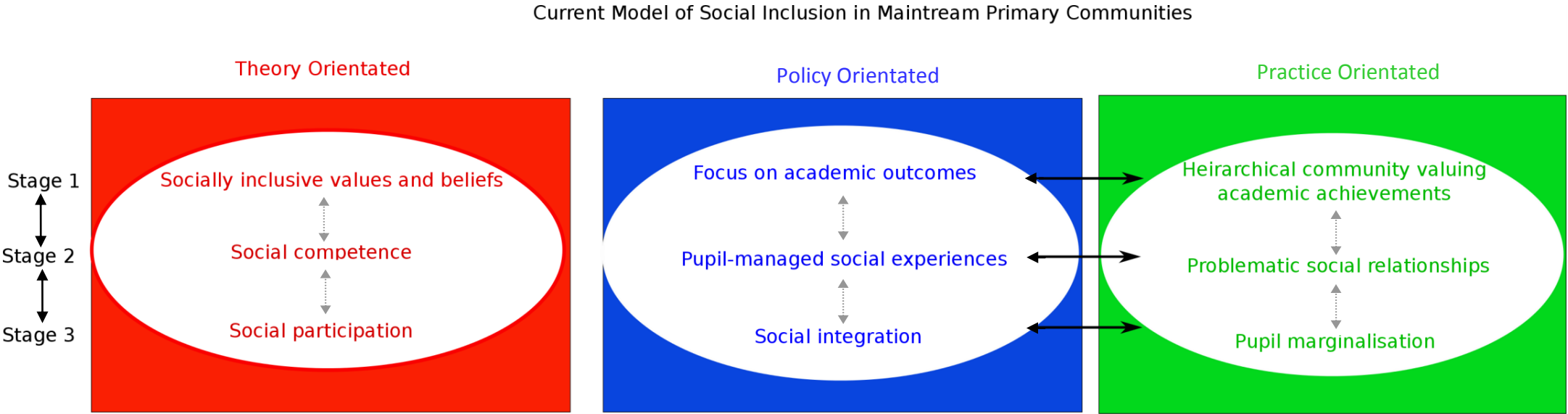
Explanation of Figure 3.1

      The model displays three primary influences on the process of social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary communities; theory, policy and practice. All three are interlinked as, ideally, at a basic level theory informs educational policy, which in turn informs school practice, and the same is true in the reverse. Hence, two-way arrows are displayed between each of the concepts within the three primary influences. To further explore the relationships between the concepts identified in the model, three stages have been depicted in the model. It should be noted that these stages, although may appear somewhat linear, are multi-faceted and involve complex inter-linkages. Consequently, to take account of these inter-linkages, two way arrows are visible between the stages. The researcher deemed it necessary to include the three stages in the model so as to aid organisation of the model description. The three stages will now be discussed with reference to the literature that has informed them.

Stage 1

      Kershner & Farrell (2009) state that an inclusive education system depends upon, 'identifying the cluster of values, beliefs and activities that succeed in maximising children's engagement in learning and reducing the marginalisation or exclusion of certain groups or individuals in the school system' (p.52). Consequently, frequent reflection on one's socially inclusive values and beliefs, undertaken by all members of the school community, is imperative in developing a socially inclusive educational environment (Rix & Paige-Smith, 2011). Socially inclusive values and beliefs can be thought to encompass three fundamental principles, identified by Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006): the presence of all, the participation of all and the achievement of all. These principles are intended as reflexive tools for use by schools when nurturing inclusive communities. They can be viewed as accumulative, one principle building upon another. Accommodating all children in a common classroom environment (presence) affords all the opportunity to act within that environment (participation), leading to gains in academic and social learning (achievement). Thus, the principles reinforce the strong relationship between academic achievement and social inclusion.

It follows that, from these inclusive values and beliefs, the design of socially inclusive practices within educational policy be facilitated. These practices should be designed at policy level in order to engender social inclusion as an imperative within the educational community. Once designed, these policy driven practices can then inform the development of socially inclusive interventions. Mainstream school communities can use the policy-advocated socially inclusive practices to develop socially inclusive interventions that meet the specific needs of their pupils. Consequently, it is at practice level that the specific needs of pupils identified with SEN can be met. Interventions can be designed and implemented that promote the social inclusion of mainstream schools' most vulnerable pupils (Frostad & Pijl, 2007).

It should be noted that socially inclusive values and beliefs, not only allow the development of, but are also informed by socially inclusive practices and interventions (Kershner & Farrell, 2009). Thus, Stage 1 of the model involves interplay between socially inclusive values and beliefs and the socially inclusive practices and interventions that they enable; hence the two way arrows between the concepts. Ultimately, however, it is often through initial recognition and demonstration of the three socially inclusive principles, amongst the school community, that school-based interventions to achieve them can be designed and implemented (Hill, Davis, Prout & Tisdall, 2006).

Stage 2

Reviewing the literature has identified that the presence of socially inclusive values and beliefs throughout an educational community supports pupils identified with SEN to develop social competence. With regard to the children in a school's community, social competence is defined by Odom and Diamond (1998) as, 'children integrating cognitive, communication, affective and motor skills to meet their own intrapersonal goals' (p.10). Therefore, a child displaying social competence is able to effectively manage his/her social experiences. It is important to remember that the intrapersonal goals, to which Odom and Diamond are referring, relate to both social and academic learning.

From a policy perspective, opportunities for positive social interactions need to be provided at Stage 2, in order that pupils are able to exercise their social competence through interaction with others. McLelland, Morrison and Holmes

(2000a) identify that, in order to maintain their social competence, pupils need to practice their, 'prosocial behavior, peer relations, and appropriate classroom behavior' (p.308). Therefore, effective educational policy recognises the need to promote peer relations by facilitating positive social interactions within the learning environment.

In practice, positive social interactions can be used as building blocks in developing positive social relationships (Currarini, Jackson & Pin, 2009). Pupils' social competence enables them to engage in positive social interactions, which then enables positive social relationships to be built with members of the mainstream primary school community. Problems with building positive social relationships are commonly cited when focusing specifically on pupils identified with SEN (Frostad & Pijl, 2007); this will be explored later in this chapter. Consequently, the importance of providing opportunities for positive social interactions amongst mainstream primary pupils identified with SEN in particular needs to be acknowledged by policy makers. Ultimately, providing opportunities for positive social interaction is vital in fostering positive social relationships (Avramidis & Wilde, 2009).

Stage 3

Donnelly and Coakley (2002) state that; 'social inclusion is about making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society' (p.viii). This definition of social inclusion suggests that the ultimate goal of providing a socially inclusive education system is to enable the participation of its members in society. Therefore, social participation is displayed as the ultimate goal of the theory orientated process in the model. It is widely accepted that participation is a complex and elusive term. Pirrie and Head (2007) state, 'the point, simply, is that participation is not a constant. The degree to which an individual (or indeed a group) participates can vary according to circumstances' (p.24).

In addressing the complexity associated with the term, Sfard (1998) defines participation metaphorically. She explains that the participation metaphor is conceptually distinct from the acquisition metaphor, in which learning is viewed as the development of concepts and the acquisition of knowledge. Instead, the participation metaphor suggests that the learner should be viewed as a person interested in partaking in activities, rather than engaging purely in accumulating knowledge. Sfard explains the difference as viewing, 'people 'in action' rather than

people 'as such.'' (p.12). Therefore, for the remainder of this thesis, the term 'participation' will be defined as viewing children 'in action,' fully engaging in the school community, and not passively 'as such.'

From an 'ideal' policy perspective, the goal of social inclusion in education translates to the social participation of all, both adults and children, within learning environments (Kershner & Farrell, 2009). Socially inclusive educational policy therefore prioritises the achievement of all within the learning environment of mainstream primary schools, both academically and socially. The following definition by Ainscow and Booth (2002) is useful in addressing the concept of participation in the context of a school community:

> Participation in education involves going beyond access. It implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught, and having a say in how education is experienced. But participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself. I participate with you, when you recognise me as a person like yourself, and accept me for who I am (p.2).

This definition reinforces the need to view participation both in terms of academic outcomes and social outcomes. Pupils identified with SEN are widely accepted to be more likely to display poorer social competence than their non-SEN peers (Frederickson & Simmons, 2008). Therefore, from a practice perspective, the ultimate goal of social inclusion, for pupils identified with SEN in particular, is to take active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment. The positive social relationships that pupils build with their peers facilitate this participation, as pupils are able to engage effectively with each other, and thus engage within the learning environment. This social engagement will necessarily benefit pupils' academic engagement, as the processes of social inclusion and academic achievement are inextricably linked (Black-Hawkins, 2010).

For the purposes of this thesis, the stage of the model at which TAs hold specific influence requires investigation. TAs are integral to the current educational experience of many children in primary schools. Therefore, it follows that TAs have strong potential influence over the social inclusion of pupils, particularly those

identified with SEN. Determining at which stage/s, in the model, TAs' potential is most significant could hold great benefits for the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN in particular. As has been discussed previously, the concepts presented in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are strongly interlinked, hence the faded, dotted two-way arrows between them. Thus, any forthcoming assertions made regarding TAs' influence on a specific process within the model should be viewed with caution. However, the model is useful in offering an attempt to disentangle some of the complexities within the concepts explored for this thesis.

The current picture

The 'ideal' model of social inclusion has now been presented and discussed. However, the social and academic outcomes of children identified with SEN strongly suggest that this model is not currently being achieved in mainstream primary schools. Review of current literature has led to the production of a second model, see Figure 3.2, which reflects the current influences on the process of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools. The literature that has informed this model follows its presentation. Comparison of the 'ideal' and current models allows some difficulties with the current educational system to be identified. These problems are then investigated, with specific reference to TAs, in this thesis. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are presented alongside each other on pages 42 and 43 for ease of comparison.

Figure 3.2 Current Model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Current Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities
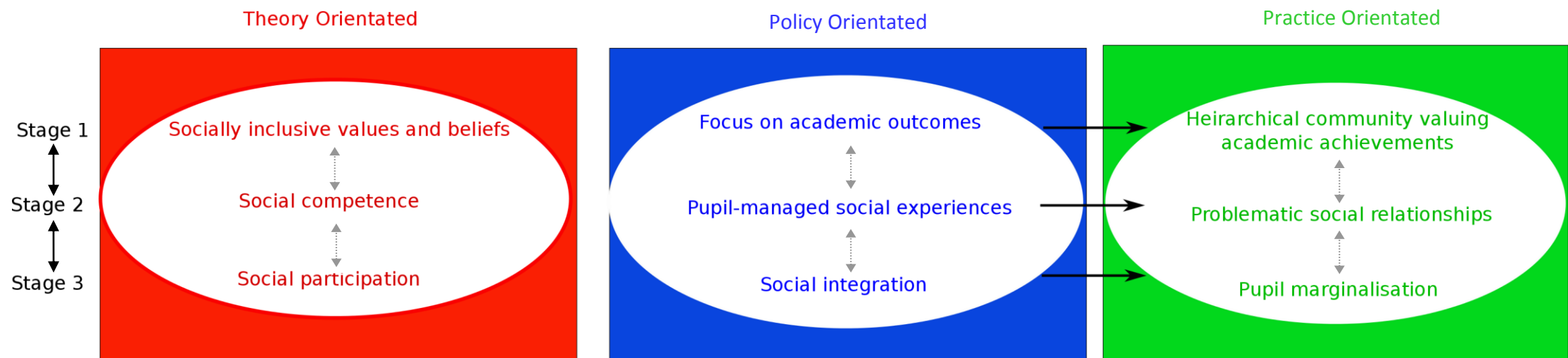
<u>Explanation of Figure 3.2</u>

Arrows between the theory orientated and policy orientated influences have been omitted in the current model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools. This is because current educational policy and resulting practice arguably does not follow theoretical perspectives regarding effective social inclusion (Burton, Bartlett & Anderson de Cuevas, 2011; Kershner & Farrell 2009).

Educational theory suggests that socially inclusive values and beliefs are vital in underpinning the design of effective socially inclusive practices (Kersher & Farrell, 2009). However, the current government's values and beliefs centre on academic achievement (DfE, 2010). Smees and Thomas (1998) identify the problems with emphasis on academic achievement in educational research:

> The majority of research into school improvement centres on academic achievement as an indicator of school effectiveness. Although this is a vital indicator, it alone can tell us little about the school environment or the pupils' attitudes within it, only whether or not the school is succeeding in terms of academic outcomes (p.7).

Academic outcomes are regarded with paramount importance in current educational policy, which arguably necessarily results in the devaluing of social outcomes, thus the devaluing of the process of social inclusion (Farrell, 2005). Therefore, this strong policy focus on academic outcomes is likely to be hindering the development of socially inclusive practices (Frederickson & Furnham, 2004). Consequently, current policy may be neglecting to support pupils identified with SEN in developing social competence. Pupils are expected to self-manage their social experiences with members of the school community, whilst often lacking the social competence to do so.

Thus, under the current educational policy, pupils are argued to be socially integrated rather than socially included (Farrell, 2005). Policy that fails to provide pupils with socially inclusive practices, fails to support pupils in managing their specific learning needs. Therefore, pupils' SENs are regarded as problems to be overcome and adapted to the learning environment, rather than accommodated

through adaptation of the learning environment. This results in 'social integration' being representative of Stage 3 of the current policy influence on the process of social inclusion, distinctly separate from the ultimate aim of social participation. Currently, pupils are unable to participate in the learning environment because they are often unsupported in developing the social competence to meet this aim (Nowicki, 2003). As previously discussed, it should be noted that the stages depicted in the model are primarily for ease of explanation with regard to the concepts explored in the model. These stages should not be regarded as absolute, due to the complex inter-linkages of the concepts explored. The two-way arrows between the three stages identify their inter-related nature.

One-way arrows are present between the policy and practice influences in the current model of social inclusion, due to policy necessarily informing practice regardless of whether or not theory is taken into account in policy making. The arrows are not two-way because it can be argued that teachers' views on educational policy are not always taken into account by policy makers (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2010). The high value placed on academic achievement in policy results in a hierarchical school community in practice; those achieving highest academically are most valued (Alexiadou, 2002). As a result of this, and of lacking socially inclusive practices at Stage one, Stage two of the current practice orientated process is represented as problematic social relationships. Pupils who lack social competence, and are unsupported in building that competence through socially inclusive interventions, often form problematic social relationships (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; McLaughlin, Byers & Peppin-Vaughan, 2010). These pupils are most often pupils identified with SEN. Problematic social relationships between pupils identified with SEN and their peers are widely recognised (Avramidis, 2010; Cooper, 2008; Frostad & Piji, 2007) and will be explored in depth later in this thesis.

The final stage of the current process of social inclusion in practice is shown as pupil marginalisation. This is demonstrative of the stark difference between the 'ideal' goal of social inclusion and the current outcome of the process of social inclusion: social participation against pupil marginalisation. Whilst current educational policy is championing academic achievement as the ultimate goal, socially inclusive practices and interventions will remain undervalued. Consequently,

pupils are often under-supported in developing the social competence required to form positive social relationships with others in the learning community (Kershner & Farrell, 2009). Ultimately, this is leading to many pupils currently experiencing marginalisation, possibly due to perceived poor social competence by non-SEN peers; this will be further discussed later in this thesis.

It can therefore be seen that the 'ideal' process of social inclusion is far from being achieved under current educational policy. It is the aim of this thesis to research and identify the ways in which current educational policy could be altered to improve the current process of socially including pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools. A specific focus on the role of TAs will be maintained throughout, so as to identify TAs' potential influence on improving the social inclusion of primary aged pupils identified with SEN. Now that the process of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools has been further explored, reviewing further literature pertinent to this thesis is possible.

<div align="center">**Chapter 4: Literature Review II**</div>

In this chapter, the literature pertinent to the third literature base is reviewed. The chapter begins by exploring the current literature surrounding the social position of pupils identified with SEN. The chapter then moves on to explore social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream UK primary schools, as well as the nature of bullying and marginalisation that they often experience. Finally, it relates the social position of pupils identified with SEN to the role of TAs: three current interventions that specifically focus on social inclusion, which TAs are involved in implementing are identified and explored.

4.1 The social position of pupils identified with SEN

The social position of pupils identified with SEN is widely acknowledged as particularly poor (Frederickson, 2010; Hall & McGregor, 2000; McLaughlin, Byers & Peppin-Vaughan, 2010). This can lead to a number of problems associated with building and maintaining positive social relationships, as explored later in this chapter (Avramidis, 2010; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; McLaughlin, Byers & Peppin-Vaughan, 2010; Wendelborg & Tossebro, 2011). However, in order to determine the significance of research in this area, the meaning of the term 'social position' must first be explored. It is important to recognise that the arguments put forward in this section are generalised; children identified with SEN cannot be seen as a homogenous group, therefore these arguments should be seen as a trend rather than an absolute. However, these arguments are considered valid to this thesis due to the necessary focus on children identified with SEN as a group.

Researching social position

In 2009, Koster, Nakken, Pijl and Van Houten undertook a literature review on the social dimension of inclusion in primary educational research. They noted that, in the sixty-two articles that they reviewed, the term 'social position' was frequently used interchangeably with many other terms, including 'social integration,' 'social inclusion,' 'social participation,' 'social acceptance,' 'social preference,' and 'social nominations.' Koster et al. also noted that researchers often used these terms without providing definitions of them; consequently, determining their significance in relation

to other studies is difficult. When conducting the literature review for this thesis, lack of explicit definitions for the term 'social position' in individual studies was found to be widespread; many researchers had elected not to venture any kind of definition of the term. Koster et al. concluded that in order for future research to be as useful as possible, operational definitions of these, presently interwoven terms, must be produced.

In 2001, Gest, Graham-Bermann and Hartup undertook a quantitative research project in order to determine the conceptually distinct dimensions that comprise a child's 'social position' in a mainstream primary classroom. It should be noted that Gest et.al.'s research was conducted in the United States, however, the age-range researched fits with the area of interest in this thesis. Additionally, the research was extensive, 239 students across a Midwestern suburban-metropolitan school district participated. The authors determined that there are three conceptually distinct aspects that comprise a definition of a child's 'social position' in mainstream primary classrooms: number of mutual friendships, social network centrality and sociometric status. The authors simplify these aspects by stating: 'having friends, occupying a central position in the network of informal peer groups, and being liked or disliked are three conceptually distinct aspects of children's social position in the classroom' (p.23).

Gest et al. (2001) suggested that, in order to research a child's social position effectively, all three aspects must be considered when designing the methodology. They advised that 'number of mutual friendships' could be researched by asking both non-SEN and children identified with SEN who share the same classroom to name all of the children in that classroom whom they regard as friends. This way, the number of reciprocated friendships can be determined. Researching 'social network centrality' was suggested to entail asking the class cohort to name groups of children that spend time together socially, and those who often spend time alone/do not form part of a group. This gives the researcher insights into the positions that individuals hold within a peer group. Finally, researching 'sociometric status' was advised to involve asking individuals within the same class to identify children that they like most and those whom they like least. This allows the researcher to determine how 'popular' or not individuals are within a class.

Most recent research into the social position of children identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools has utilised sociometry as the main research method, often combined with other researcher-designed research tools (Monchy, Pijl & Zandberg, 2004; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Nowicki, 2003; Symes & Humphrey, 2012). Although this method is useful in researching an aspect of students' social positions in mainstream primary schools, methodological criticisms have been raised against it. Avramidis (2010) argues that asking children to report their negative perceptions of peers raises ethical issues. This method may negatively influence children's interactions, as the researcher may prompt a child to voice a previously unrecognised and/or unspoken negative perception of another, which could influence subsequent interactions between these children. In order to avoid these ethical issues, Avramidis recommends application of the Social Cognitive Mapping (SCM) approach, first used by Cairns, Gariepy, Kindermann, and Leung in 1997. This technique results in a 'composite social map' of the class being generated through questioning the children regarding the friendship groups in the class. Children are asked the question 'who hangs around together in this class?' This results in the classification of pupils in one of four types of network centrality: Nuclear, Secondary, Peripheral, and Isolate. Nuclear describes pupils who are nominated in a high frequency within their peer cluster, Secondary describes pupils who are nominated an average amount of times, Peripheral pupils are nominated at low frequency and Isolate are pupils who are not identified as belonging to a cluster (ibid).

The SCM approach is based upon the premise that children are expert observers and their knowledge about the social dynamics of a school can be utilised in effective research. This approach could be employed to research all three of Gest et al.'s (2001) aspects of social position. The 'number of mutual friendships' could be determined via examining whether naming of students in personal friendship groups is reciprocal. 'Social network centrality' is essentially the aim of SCM. Avramidis' (2010) methodology included a complementary technique to SCM in order to determine pupils' 'sociometric status': 'the study utilised eight peer-assessed social behaviour indicators to determine the composition of the identified peer clusters and the pro-social or anti-social characteristics of each member' (p.415). This allowed the researcher to determine the popularity of individuals in the class.

All research papers reviewed that explore children's social position have identified relationships between low social position and marginalisation and/or bullying. It is clear that the vast majority of research considering social position and marginalisation/bullying have found a positive relationship between the two; if a child has low social position within a class, he/she is more likely to be bullied. This is even more prevalent when research is carried out with children identified with SEN (Davis, Howell & Cooke, 2002; Didaskalou, Andreou & Vlachou, 2009; Frederickson, 2010; McLaughlin, Byers & Vaughan, 2010, Nowicki, 2003, Symes & Humphrey, 2012). There is, therefore, a strong link between pupils identified with SEN occupying low social position and experiencing marginalisation and/or bullying. It is necessary to explore the reasons why pupils identified with SEN often occupy low social positions, as argued above. Therefore, the next section in this chapter presents recent research which highlights specific characteristics relating to the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN.

4.2 Social Inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN

Research undertaken by Speech and Language Therapist Alex Kelly (2011) in mainstream secondary schools in England led her to identify eight categories of non-verbal communication skills, which she found to be consistently under-developed in children identified with SEN:

1. Eye contact
2. Facial expression
3. Gestures
4. Distance
5. Touch
6. Fidgeting
7. Posture
8. Personal Appearance

(Kelly, 2011, p.15)

Kelly used these categorisations to develop her widely utilised 'Talkabout' resources (1997; 2009; 2011; 2012), providing a wealth of intervention materials with which

school-based professionals can build on the social skills of the pupils identified with SEN that they work with.

Interestingly, it is often the case that pupils identified with SEN are unaware that they are experiencing difficulties with their non-verbal communication skills. This lack of self awareness often also extends to social competency and social positioning amongst peers. This relates to the findings of Friedman et al.'s (2003) research into the impact of social interventions on children/adults identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Friedman et al. recognised that both children and adults involved in their research displayed a lack of self-awareness with regard to specific non-verbal communication methods, particularly related to facial expressions. This, consequently, led to frequent problematic interpretations during conversational exchanges; the problem further precipitated by the children's'/adults' lack of self-awareness of their subsequent misinterpretations.

Lacking self-awareness with regard to social positioning was also identified in Semrund-Clikeman's (2001) research exploring the social competence of children who have experienced Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). He recognised that many of the children who had experienced TBI were no longer socially accepted by their previously made friends, and often lacked insight into why this may have occurred. He further identified that these children often, as a consequence, resorted to social withdrawal or aggressive behaviours in order to attempt to regain social standing amongst the group.

Numerous research studies have also suggested that children identified with SEN find the conventions of effective use of humour particularly difficult to comprehend (Roy et al. 2009; Reddy, Williams & Vaughn, 2002; Samson & Hegenloh, 2010). Specifically, both children and adults identified with ASD often have difficulty with developing abstract understandings of concepts, thus their conceptual understanding is usually context-dependent. Additionally, those identified with ASD also typically struggle to integrate information into a new concept (Samson & Hegenloh, 2010).

Bertilsdotter Rosqvist's (2012) research into ASD-identified teenagers' use of humour concluded that children and adults identified with ASD not only struggle to conceptualise and implement the socially accepted conventions of humour, but they

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also frequently find themselves part of a humour that is disabling or denigrating (Reid, Stoughton & Smith, 2006). This is characterised by those identified with ASD frequently finding themselves as 'the butt of the joke,' relating to power imbalances often characteristic of the 'asymmetrical communal' relationship constructs formed by pupils identified with SEN and their non-SEN peers (as will be discussed later in this chapter).

Investigating appropriate use of humour is difficult, as a result of a vast array of humour forms and of subjective humour interpretations. Humour can be represented as jokes, puns, riddles, sarcasm, physical antics, nonverbal behaviours, cartoons, and one-liners (Wanzer, 2002). Additionally, successful study of humour invokes the assumption that the researcher his/herself can identify the effective/ineffective use of humour, thus understands the socially acceptable conventions of humour.

Relatively few research studies exist, which have focused on the use of humour in building effective social relationships. However, although not directly in line with the topics of interest for this study, there are a number of studies that have investigated the effect of teacher-humour on student participation and/or attainment (Aylor & Opplinger, 2003; Bryant, Comisky, Crane, & Zillmann, 1980; Wanzer, 2002; White, 2001). These studies have, in the main, neglected to define what is meant by appropriate or effective use of humour. However, Wanzer et al.'s (2006) research categorised both the instances of effective and ineffective use of humour that they studied. They identified four distinct types of effective humour:

1. Related (humour relevant to the context in which it was used)
2. Unrelated (humour non-relevant to the context in which it was used)
3. Self-disparaging (humour directed at oneself)
4. Unintentional (humour that was spontaneous and unplanned)

Wanzer et al. (2006) identified three distinct types of ineffective use of humour:

1. Offensive (humour offensive in nature)
2. Student-targeted disparaging humour (directing humour at a student)
3. 'Other'-targeted disparaging humour (directing humour at an 'other')

For the purposes of this thesis, the above conceptualisations of both effective and ineffective humour will be used, as/when appropriate, to analyse the instances of humour observed by the researcher.

4.3 Bullying and marginalisation of pupils identified with SEN

For the purposes of this thesis, bullying is defined using the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) 'Safe to Learn' guidance: 'behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally' (2007, p.11). A large-scale literature review into the research concerning the bullying and marginalisation of children with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was undertaken by McLaughlin, Byers and Peppin-Vaughan in 2010. A total of 260 papers were reviewed in this study; all were published post 1990 and research involved primary aged children identified with a wide range of SENs. The results of this review are therefore pertinent to the interests within this thesis. McLaughlin et al. concluded that pupils identified with SEN were at greater risk of marginalisation than their peers. They stated: 'children with SEN and/or disabilities are significantly more likely to be bullied or victimized than their non- disabled peers' (p.47). Additionally, Frostad & Pijl's (2007) research into the social position of pupils identified with SEN concluded that, 'pupils with special needs are less popular, have less friends and participate less often' (p.15). Whilst this study is Norwegian, it was conducted in 15 mainstream primary schools, involving 27 classes, therefore is conducive with the ages of children and school type focused upon in this study. Moreover, this finding is consistent with other studies into the social position of pupils identified with SEN (Avramidis, 2010; Davis, Howell & Cook, 2002; McCoy & Banks, 2012; Wendelborg & Tossebro, 2011).

It can therefore be concluded that primary-aged children identified with SEN are disproportionately at risk of bullying when compared with their non-SEN peers, within mainstream school environments. McLaughlin et al. (2010) further identified that poor social skills and difficulties with communication emerge frequently as characteristics of pupils who experience bullying and/or marginalisation. The authors identified that many children identified with SEN display poor social competence, as

a result of underdeveloped social skills and/or communication skills. This poor social competence makes these children particularly vulnerable to bullying. Consequently, McLaughlin et al. recommend that; 'the social aspects of education should have a central role in the curriculum for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. Particular emphasis should be given to peer education, peer support and the development of social competence' (p.9). This reflects the findings of Kelly (2011), as has previously been discussed, and Nowicki's (2003) research into the social competence of children identified with SEN. Nowicki identified that poor social skills are a primary contributing factor in the bullying of pupils identified with SEN. However, Nowicki also identified that there are many other contributing factors in the marginalisation of these pupils; further research into these factors is necessary in order to tailor effective support and prevention for bullying.

Nowicki identified the importance of implementing socially inclusive interventions, specifically tailored to improving social skills, thus improving the social competence of many pupils identified with SEN. However, much previous research into socially inclusive interventions to support social skills improvement has concluded that they have generally been unsuccessful (Forness & Kavalle, 1996; Pavri & Luftig, 2001). A study into socially inclusive interventions, undertaken by Swanson and Hoskyn (1998) suggested that variations between studies in content, intensity, and measurement techniques contributed to the poor overall outcome of the interventions. Further research into the nature of the socially inclusive interventions to support pupils' social skill development is necessary in reducing the instances of bullying and marginalisation of pupils identified with SEN.

4.4 Models of relationships constructed with children identified with SEN

It has been identified in this thesis that children identified with SEN are experiencing higher levels of bullying and marginalization than their non-SEN peers. However, it is still widely accepted that these pupils do still form relationships with their peers (Davis, Howell & Cooke, 2002; Frederickson, 2010; Frederickson & Simmons, 2008; Frostad & Pijl, 2007). Exploring the most common relationship constructs that these pupils form is useful in determining the successful and/or less successful components of these relationships; this will then inform future research.

Much research on primary students' social relationships shows their preference to build relationships with similar peers; this was named by McPherson, Smith-Loven & Cook (2001) as 'homophily' and is defined by Currurani, Jackson & Pin (2009) as, 'a tendency of various types of individuals to associate with others who are similar to themselves' (p.1003). Homophily can be based on various pupil characteristics that include age, gender, race, educational attainment, values, interests and/or beliefs. Children identified with SEN often appear 'different' to their peers in many of the characteristics previously listed. This means that peers often fail to find any common ground with pupils identified with SEN, preventing relationships to be built between them. Additionally, research indicates that children prefer to befriend others who have visible, relatable difficulties in accessing learning, rather than those with non-visible internal difficulties (Guralnick, Connor, Hammond, Gottman & Kinnish, 1996).

Hartup (1989) identified two major types of relationships formed between different members of a school's community: horizontal and vertical relationships. Vertical relationships are those formed with individuals with more (or less) knowledge and power. Children typically have these relationships with parents or Teachers, due to the imbalance of power between the individuals. Horizontal relationships are formed with partners with more equal status, generally peers. These equal status relationships are of great value in the development of children's social competence, due to the social skills and communication skills gained from them (Schaffer, 1996). However, children identified with SEN often fail to form horizontal relationships with their peers, instead, when a relationship is formed between a child identified with SEN and a peer, it tends to be vertical. This is because children identified with SEN often display poor social competence; therefore, there is a resultant power imbalance between the individuals, leading to vertical relationships. These relationships are less helpful in supporting pupils to build social and communication skills, thus, less helpful in the development of social competence. Consequently, the building of relationships between children identified with SEN and their peers can be regarded as negatively cyclical; vertical relationships are formed, which often fail to improve pupils' social competence, further leading to the formation of vertical relationships.

Most research into the models of relationships constructed with children identified with SEN have concluded that they largely involve power imbalances, consistent with Hartup's 1989 research (Frederickson, 2010; Frederickson & Simmons, 2008). Frederickson (2010) identified that the most common relationship amongst pupils identified with SEN and their peers is the asymmetrical communal relationship. This is characterised by pupils identified with SEN being 'looked after' by their empathetic peers without SEN.

In 2008, Frederickson and Simmons conducted a study that researched relationships formed by pupils identified with SEN and their non-SEN peers. Their research involved giving 142 children, aged between 9 and 11, stickers to divide between classmates. They found that, 'children with SEN and best friends were treated generously and rewards were likely to be shared equally with them' (p.1069). A 'charitable' attitude towards pupils with SEN was shown through non-SEN peers sharing a greater proportion of the stickers. The children with the stickers did not share them with children identified with SEN out of friendship but empathetically. It should be noted that this study defined pupils with SEN as children, 'with a Statement of special needs who had previously been educated in a special school' (ibid, p.1062). Therefore, the 'charitable' model presented may not necessarily apply to pupils identified as having less severe and/or complex needs.

It should also be noted that Frostad & Pijl (2007) found, in their previously discussed study, that, 'pupils without special needs can be accepted by their peers without having a friendship, and can have a friendship without being a member of a subgroup, whereas this does not hold for most pupils with special needs' (p.23). Therefore, it seems that, pupils identified with SEN require friendships in order to be accepted by their peers and must be part of a sub-group in order to build that friendship. This could explain the high levels of marginalisation and bullying that pupils identified with SEN experience; Frostad and Pijl (2007) argue that they are marginalised unless they have well-established friendships with peers and are an acknowledged part of a sub-group.

The poor social competence and lacking self-awareness that pupils identified with SEN often experience means that friendship building, therefore actively participating in a sub-group, is problematic. Consequently, peer acceptance of these

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pupils is challenging. Relating the findings in this chapter to the two models of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools, presented in chapter three, is now helpful in identifying the areas in which current educational policy and practice are lacking.

Relating the marginalisation of pupils identified with SEN to the 'ideal' and 'current' models of social inclusion

Review of the literature has enabled the suggestion that children identified with SEN are at greater risk of bullying and/or marginalisation than their non-SEN peers. It is suggested that the reason this group of children is at greater risk is due to poor social competence. This poor social competence is often as result of poor social skills and difficulties with multiple inter-related communication skills (McLaughlin et al. 2010). It is helpful to relate this finding to both the 'ideal' and 'current' models of social inclusion presented in chapter three; this will enable the areas in which improvements to current policy and practice can be made to be suggested, thus, could reduce the instances of bullying and marginalisation with children identified with SEN.

When considering Figure 3.2 on page 49 (the current model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools), it is suggested that many children identified with SEN are currently experiencing difficulties in accessing the second theory-orientated level of social inclusion 'social competence.' This is preventing these children from successfully reaching Stage three of the theory-orientated element of the model, 'social participation.' The literature suggests that this is as a result of poor social skills and difficulties with communication. Academically orientated policies are resulting in many pupils managing their own social experiences. This, teamed with poor social competence, is resulting in the social experiences of pupils identified with SEN being poorly self-managed. In practice, this is leading to these pupils forming problematic social relationships with their peers, often resulting in the marginalisation and bullying of these pupils.

When considering Figure 3.1 (the 'ideal' model of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools) it can be seen that the stage in which pupils identified with SEN require additional support, not present in the current model, is in Stage 1 of the policy-orientated element. Pupils require the support of 'socially inclusive

practices' in order to experience positive social interactions. In practice, pupils who are lacking social competence require specific, tailored socially inclusive interventions in order to experience positive social interactions, thus build positive social relationships with their peers. This should then enable these pupils to experience active participation in the learning environment, without experiencing the marginalisation associated with pupil-managed social experiences.

It can be seen from the model that socially inclusive interventions are a mechanism by which pupils, who are currently experiencing bullying and marginalisation, can be supported to actively participate in the social dynamics of the learning environment. Consequently, it is necessary to examine the current socially inclusive interventions that operate in mainstream primary schools in England. This should enable successes and problems with existing interventions to be identified, informing the methodology of this thesis.

4.5 Current socially inclusive interventions implemented by TAs

This section draws together the literature base exploring the role and influence of TAs with the literature base examining the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. It is useful to identify interventions that particularly involve children identified with SEN, and that often involve TAs in their implementation. This will further clarify the influence that TAs currently have on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN and will highlight areas for further research in this thesis.

In 2005, Groom and Rose researched the role of TAs in supporting the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in 94 mainstream primary schools in England. They presented a table that identifies the range of interventions, involving TAs, that support pupils with SEBD (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: The range of socially inclusive support methods involving TAs

One-to-one support in school	Home school liaison
Small group work	Mentoring
Curriculum support	Lunch time support
Reward system	Nurture groups
Time out/withdrawal	Peer support
Pastoral care	Playground support
Circle time	Self esteem programmes

(Groom & Rose, 2005, p.24).

The methods in Table 4.1 are mainly undertaken as part of TAs' existing daily responsibilities and not as additions to their existing role. This means that the majority of Groom and Rose's identified supportive methods are occurring as part of an unstructured and non-monitored approach, meaning that many methods operate on an 'ad hoc' basis and the impact of such methods is not measured. Therefore, although perceived to be helpful by schools' educational professionals, the influence of these methods on pupils' social competence is relatively unknown. Additionally, these methods are not always designed to meet the specific needs at individual-level, meaning that their influence on social inclusion of these individual pupils may be limited.

It should be noted that there is very little in the way of guidance or support on either a National or a Local Authority level, in relation to programmes that aim to improve pupils' experiences of social inclusion. This study will aim to gather evidence on individual schools' approaches to improving pupils' experiences of social inclusion. This should enable good practice recommendations to be made with regard to TAs' role and the development of social competence with the children they work with; predominantly those identified with SEN.

Most research evaluating interventions implemented by TAs focuses on interventions that aim to develop Literacy and/or Numeracy skills with pupils. Research evaluating planned interventions which are specifically tailored to improving the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN, is lacking. However, it is possible to review research into the three most common interventions, which do not focus predominantly on Literacy or Numeracy, implemented in the primary age

phase. A total of 52 papers evaluating interventions focused on the development of social competence were reviewed; 17 focused on Circle Time, 12 on the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme and 12 on Nurture Groups. Therefore, the reminder of this section presents a brief evaluation of the SEAL programme, Nurture Groups and Circle Time.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme

The SEAL programme was designed to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills in the primary school. It was part of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot funded by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and piloted in 25 Local Authorities in England between 2003 and 2005. The SEAL programme is based on curriculum materials which aim to develop the underpinning qualities and skills that help promote positive behaviour and effective learning. It focuses on five social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills (DfES, 2003). The materials are organised into seven themes: New beginnings, Getting on and falling out, Say no to bullying, Going for goals, Good to be me, Relationships and Changes.

The largest-scale review of the SEAL programme was conducted by Hallan, Rhamie & Shaw in 2006, and focused on impact related to primary pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills. The research involved 78 schools and approximately 10,000 students, demonstrating reliability. Hallam et al. noted that SEAL was primarily taught on a whole-class basis; therefore was not specifically tailored to the needs of individual pupils identified with SEN. However, the programme did implement and evaluate small group interventions for children needing additional focused help in developing social, emotional and behavioural skills. It is assumed that many of the pupils with whom these interventions were undertaken were identified with SEN; therefore SEAL does fit within the parameters of this review.

Hallam et al. (2006) found that the school professionals implementing SEAL varied widely across the 78 schools researched. However, TAs were named among the school professionals who had been found to hold positional responsibilities over managing the intervention. The questionnaires that Hallam et al. distributed to school

professionals showed that 48% of Teachers asked acknowledged that SEAL had reduced the instances of bullying in their school. However, 74% of the non- teaching staff indicated that it had reduced bullying, 95% reported that it had promoted the emotional wellbeing of pupils and 84% stated that it had improved pupils' social skills. Hallam et al. further state, 'it is interesting that those staff responsible for supervising the children's behaviour out of the classroom perceived a much greater impact on bullying than the Teachers. This may be because 'bullying behaviour is more common in the playground than in the classroom environment' (p.318). This finding reinforces the potential influence that TAs could hold over the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. TAs spend much more 'out of classroom' time with pupils, therefore, they are well placed to make judgments regarding the social competence of individuals (Hallam, 2009). Consequently, TAs may be well placed to implement interventions focused on developing pupils' social competence, particularly with pupils who require additional assistance in developing social competence.

The SEAL programme ran successfully under the Labour government in the majority of primary schools across England from 2003 until 2012. However, in 2012, the Coalition government decided to withdraw the funding for the programme. This could perhaps be as a result of a paper published by Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, in 2010, which presented a range of problematic findings relating to the efficacy of the SEAL programme. These findings included the programme being utilised as a 'tick box' exercise and the implementation being described as 'patchy,' due to unstructured delivery of the programme. This has meant that the implementation of the SEAL programme in English primary schools has recently declined. However, many schools are still using the materials that were previously provided by the government in current practice.

Nurture Groups

The first Nurture Groups (NGs) were established over 30 years ago, however, their numbers have increased exponentially over the last 10 years (Boxall, 2002). The theory behind NGs is that many children who exhibit emotional and behavioural difficulties often experience emotions and exhibit behaviours that are

developmentally inappropriate (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). Pupils who often benefit from NGs have difficulties in identifying with the feelings of others and acknowledging those feelings. In order to improve the social competence of these pupils, a nurturing process is undertaken, which equips them with the ability to meet their individual psychological needs through social interaction.

NGs are often used as a bridge between special school provision and mainstream provision, therefore, are particularly tailored to meet the needs of students who have quite severe and complex behavioural, social and/or emotional problems. However, NGs are often placed in mainstream schools and involve TAs, therefore fall within the parameters of review within this thesis. The traditional model of NGs is called the 'Boxall' model and consists of 10 to 12, 4-6 year old pupils in a mainstream primary school, led by one teacher and one TA (Howes, Emanuel & Farrell, 2002).

Four specific papers evaluating NGs concluded that they were particularly successful with pupils who were identified with behavioural, social and/or emotional difficulties, in terms of improving their social competence and decreasing the instances of marginalisation (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2003; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; O'Connor & Colwell, 2003). However, the success of the intervention was variable when considering pupils identified with SEN as a homogenous group. In fact, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) found that NGs had a negative impact on the academic achievement of the pupils in their sample.

Circle Time

Circle Time (CT) is defined by Lown (2002) as, 'a way of approaching the task of teaching children and young people personal and social skills. More specifically, it is a period of class activity, in which pupils and teacher sit together in a circle formation, to share ideas, feelings and games/activities about one or more social/emotional/curricular issues' (p.94). Creating a culture of trust and an associated willingness to discuss feelings are seen as a prerequisite for the discussion of sensitive issues and activities designed to facilitate social development (Blatchford et al., 2009). Consequently, Teachers and TAs responsible for facilitating these discussions require training regarding the creation of a culture of trust with the pupils during Circle Time sessions. With an established culture of trust, pupils learn how to

articulate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. These sessions can also act as group problem-solving events, in which procedures for handling challenging experiences, such as bullying or test anxiety, can be explored and resolved (Cooper, 2008).

CT has been determined to be particularly successful with children identified with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Cooper (2008) explains why this is the case:

> There is often no more important strategy for dealing with potential or actual SEBD than talking the issues through in a calm and sympathetic way, with a view to encouraging children to recognise the range of behavioural choices that are available in a given situation, and then encouraging them to identify which choices are preferable (p.19).

Consequently, through discussing the issues that pupils with SEBD are struggling with, those pupils can gain a better understanding of the options in how to deal with the issue explored. This will build their social and communication skills, thus improve the social competence of pupils identified with SEN.

4.6 Summary

The literature review undertaken for this thesis has addressed three key and interconnected literature bases in answering the overarching research question: 'To what extent can the management of teaching assistants promote the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools?' The first literature base review examined the current roles and responsibilities of TAs in mainstream primary schools. The second investigated TAs' current management structures and their influence on TAs' roles. The third review explored the current literature associated with the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. The key themes to emerge from all literature review chapters presented are summarised under the headings of the three literature bases for the remainder of this section.

TAs' role and responsibilities

TAs' role is traditionally rooted in supporting pupils with their learning. This is primarily through individual or small group workings, predominantly with pupils identified with SEN. However, TAs' role has developed in an 'ad hoc' manner. This has meant that TAs' role has evolved to consist of many different complex responsibilities, collectively considered problematic within the time constraints of a primary school day. Historically, the 'key worker' system of TAs' deployment was employed, as described in more detail in chapter 2. However, over the last ten years, the TA role has changed to involve small group workings and teacher-like responsibilities, rather than exclusively supportive tasks on a one to one basis.

Additionally, over the last five years the levels of qualifications that TAs hold appear to have increased, yet the roles available to them have remained at similar levels, with the vast majority of TAs being employed at Level 1 or 2. Research was undertaken by Devecchi and Rouse (2013) into the qualification levels of TAs in Northampton LA. A survey of 243 TAs and 23 CPD managers in the borough revealed that 22% of the TAs had undertaken the HLTA qualification, yet there are far fewer HLTA positions available than are required for all those qualified to be working at HLTA level. Additionally, 10% of the TAs surveyed were BA degree holders, the equivalent of a level 6 qualification, most of whom were working at Level 1 or 2.

The introduction of HLTA status is argued to have had little positive influence on the complexity of TAs' role; many HLTAs are still working as Level 1 or 2 TAs, which suggests that jobs to complement the introduction of the role have not materialised (ibid). Research into TAs' influence on pupils' learning has determined that some TAs are thought to negatively influence pupils' academic achievement, however, the efficacy in methodology of these studies is questioned. Pupil voice requires acknowledgement in researchers' methodology, in order to fully understand the influence of TAs on pupils' social experiences in learning.

TAs' management structures

TAs' management structures are accepted to be widely variable across mainstream primary schools in England. Despite the SENCO having policy-

determined positional responsibilities over TAs' management, it is found that the Headteacher is most likely to manage TAs' role and responsibilities in England. There is a recognised tension between prescription and flexibility in the management of TAs' role. TAs require clear, documented job descriptions in order to detail their specific positional responsibilities, and to avoid role-blurring between TAs and Teachers. However, flexibility in TAs' responsibilities is also required in order to effectively respond to changes in the needs and interests of both pupils and TAs themselves.

Social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN

The social position of pupils identified with SEN is widely accepted to be particularly poor. All research papers reviewed have identified a strong relationship between poor social position and bullying and/or marginalisation. It has been suggested that high levels of bullying and/or marginalisation of pupils identified with SEN are primarily due to the poor social competence that these children often display, resulting from poor social skills and difficulties with communication.

It has been found that pupils identified with SEN commonly form asymmetrical communal relationships, which involve power imbalances. These relationships are thought to be less helpful, to pupils identified with SEN, in developing social competence. Thus, relationships are viewed as cyclical; pupils identified with SEN display poor social competence thus form relationships characterised by power imbalances. These relationships fail to improve the social competence of these pupils, thus lead to the forming of further asymmetrical relationships.

In relating the role of TAs to the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN, three common social competence-focused interventions have been identified: SEAL, Nurture Groups and Circle Time. These interventions have been tentatively suggested to have a positive influence on the social inclusion of pupils identified with BSED. However, there is an obvious lack of research into specific, planned socially inclusive interventions that involve TAs. This is either because the research has not yet been undertaken or simply due to the lack of these interventions in mainstream primary schools in England. This requires further research within the methodology of this thesis.

This study will aim to identify whether or not TAs are currently undertaking any socially inclusive practices with the children they work with, predominantly those identified with SEN. This will then enable better understanding of TAs' role in relation to the process of social inclusion, thus enabling good practice recommendations to be made in this regard. Now that the three interconnected literature bases pertinent to this thesis have been fully explored, the methodological approach and research methodology chosen can be presented and justified in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to identify, explain and justify the research process undertaken in addressing the research questions devised for this thesis. The over-arching research question of this project, along with the three sub-questions, are re-stated below:

To what extent can the management of teaching assistants promote the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools?

Q1 How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining their role within mainstream primary schools?

Q2 What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?

This chapter begins by explaining the researcher's epistemological stance and theoretical perspective. The multiple case study approach that was adopted in this study is then explored and justified; leading to an introduction to the three case schools chosen. The sampling method employed in selecting the cases is also described. This chapter then moves on to discuss the pilot study undertaken for this research, the aims of it and the resulting changes to the methodology of this study. This then enables explanation and justification of the research methods chosen: non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and multi-sensory research with children. The sampling methods employed in selecting the participants in each case school are also discussed. Ethical considerations pertinent to this thesis are then identified and explored, leading to an evaluation of the validity and reliability of the study. Finally, a description of the data analysis technique employed in this research is provided.

5.1 Researcher Stance

Although this section has a strong literature focus, it is presented in the methodology chapter of this thesis because it informs the methodological approach adopted in this research. This research project has a particular focus on exploring the social nature of learning. Consequently, it is deemed that the most appropriate epistemological stance to underpin this study is that of social constructivism. This perspective centres on the idea that people play an active role in their own meaning making, informed by the accepted social cultures within a specific context (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is possible to argue that the most appropriate perspective to underpin this research is constructionist. A social constructionist perspective, 'places an emphasis on the power of relationships over individual minds, multiple worlds over singular realities, collaborative interdependence over individual heroism, and dialogue over monologue' (Gergen, 2003, p.185). Thus, social constructionists view meaning making as constructed solely through social interactions; this fits with the perspective underpinning this thesis. However, a constructionist viewpoint is primarily concerned with the emergent, socially constructed character of the meaning making, thus focuses on the meaning that is constructed as a result of the process. This research project is specifically concerned with investigating the process of meaning making that occurs (constructivist), and not the actual meaning that is made (constructionist) (Schwandt, 1999). Thus, it is determined that the most appropriate epistemological stance to underpinning this study is that of social constructivism.

The focus of social constructivist theory is that of cognitive development, leading to deeper understanding; this is understood as constructions of active learner reorganisation (Vygotsky, 1978; Fosnot, 2005). Social constructivists view learning as a non-linear process, which is primarily influenced by the social context of the learner. Thus, the position that a child holds within the social context of a school is the primary influence in their cognitive development. This highlights the importance of research that explores a pupil's social position as well as their academic achievement. Determining school efficacy in terms of pupils' academic outcomes alone encompasses a constructionist perspective, however, exploring the influence of

a pupil's unique social experiences within school enables the outcomes to be better understood. This is situated within a social constructivist perspective (Fosnot, 2005).

Vygotsky (1978) argues that learners can often be assisted to master the concepts that they are unable to make sense of independently through social interactions with others. He states that this collaborative development of understanding takes place in a child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as, 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This perspective views dialogue as key to the meaning making process; dialogue engenders higher-order thinking to promote learning that is not possible without collaborative intervention. Fosnot & Perry (1996) specifically relate this concept to educational settings by describing the constructivist classroom as, 'a community of discourse engaged in activity, reflection and conversation' (p.34). Thus, observing the dialogue occurring in the three case study schools in this study enables the researcher to form deeper understandings regarding the perspectives of the school community, specifically with regard to the role of TAs in enabling the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in mainstream primary schools.

The ontological perspective that underpins this research is that of interpretivism. The interpretivist paradigm emphasises the importance of social interaction as the basis of knowledge building; the individual and society are regarded as inseparable entities (O'Donoghue, 2007). Stake (2005) simplifies the interpretivist perspective specifically for researchers by stating, 'conflicting precedents exist for any label. It is important for us to recognise that others will not use the words or the methods as we do' (p.2). The interpretivist paradigm fits with a social constructivist perspective; both are concerned with the influence of a learner's social context in his/her meaning making. Consequently, in this study, participants' actions require interpretation and understanding within the context of the school's social practices (Usher, 2002). Fundamentally, interpretivists endeavor to explore the meanings that phenomena hold for participants in their everyday settings (Chaiklin, 2003). Thus, this study has endeavored to explore the meanings that TAs' role hold for the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN.

It is important to recognise that there is a significant assumption identified within an interpretivist perspective. It is widely accepted that meanings are constructed through individuals' contextual experiences with school practices, however, everyday social interactions between participants also influence individuals' meaning making. Thus, individuals not only give meaning to their own actions but also those of others within a mutual environment. As Blackledge and Hunt (1985) identify, 'people mutually interpret the behaviour of other people with whom we interact. It follows from this that subsequent action depends on our interpretation' (p.236). Consequently, to directly relate this to research in schools, it is not only the educational context that influences an individuals' meaning making and behaviour, but also the social interactions between others in a common educational context. Therefore, behaviour of the participants in the three case study schools is influenced, not only by the practices in the schools considered, but also the behaviour of other participants in the same school (ibid).

Additionally, individual participants interpret the behaviour of others differently; therefore interpretations by the researcher cannot be regarded as absolute. Whilst these criticisms of an interpretivist approach are important to consider, it should be recognised that the very nature of interpretation is changeable. People modify their interpretations over time, regardless of the influence of social interactions between actors in their everyday activity. Thus, the researcher's interpretations of participants' behaviour are valid in that specific context and at that specific time period (Usher, 2002).

5.2 Qualitative research approach

A qualitative approach was thought to be the most applicable to this research project, due to the aim of determining individuals' perspectives regarding the role of TAs and the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. Data were required that located participants' perceptions within their social contexts, which qualitative research allows the researcher to achieve. Defining what is meant by qualitative research is problematic due to the complexity of and variety in practices and methods inferred by the term. Qualitative research has no theory or paradigm that distinctly

constitutes the approach; this makes it particularly difficult to both conceptualise and define (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Nevertheless, Schostak (2002) ventured a definition of the qualitative research approach: 'exploring ways in which a 'self' and its 'world' are constituted through an imaginative grasp in relation to experiences of 'reality.' (p.18). This can be further conceptualised as a methodological approach to designing methods and collecting data that locates the researcher in the social world of the research context, his/her aim being to understand individuals' perceptions of the world in which they operate (Bell, 2010). To relate this conceptualisation to this study specifically, a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to design methods, including observation, interviewing and multi-sensory research with children, that located the researcher in the social world of the participants. This allowed the researcher to better understand participants' perceptions regarding the role of TAs and the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN.

Qualitative research has been criticised due to its frequent, necessary emphasis on the singular researcher's skills and interpretations. This has resulted in claims of researcher subjectivity with regard to both the collection and analysis of the data gathered. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state, 'any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity' (p.29). Claims of researcher subjectivity are relevant to this study in that the researcher necessarily brought her personal and professional views and experiences to the role, resulting in unique decision-making regarding the research methods employed and the data analysed.

Stake (2005), however, argues that, 'subjectivity is not seen as a failing needed to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding' (p.45). This suggests that the constraints of single-researcher data gathering and analysis make for effective research. Through a qualitative research approach, researchers are able to immerse themselves in participants' social contexts, therefore affording the researcher a greater understanding of individuals' contextual thoughts, beliefs and opinions.

Additionally, employing reflexivity throughout the research process enabled the researcher to recognise the influence of many of her personal and professional

opinions and beliefs on the research process. Reflexivity was employed by Davis (1998), who identified that a researcher's world view has two parts. The first is concerned with the influence of academic paradigms, for example, theory, ethics and research methodology. The second is concerned with their non-academic life experiences, otherwise known as their cultural prejudices. Davis argues that effective researchers both recognise and investigate the influence of these two 'voices' on their research process and meaning making. In this way, the negative effects of researcher subjectivity are minimised (Campbell, 1995). Keeping a self-reflexive diary throughout the research process, allowed the researcher to identify her existing 'voices' and determine their influence on the research process.

5.3 Pilot Study: MPhil research

In 2012, an MPhil degree research project focusing on perspectives relating to special and inclusive education/ educational leadership and school improvement was completed by the researcher at the University of Cambridge (Saddler, 2012; Saddler, 2013). The research project served as a pilot study for this doctoral research. The project was successful in clarifying areas requiring further investigation through doctoral study; the methodological approach and methods utilised were also refined. This section reviews the MPhil pilot research undertaken and presents the conclusions drawn from the research, along with specific recommendations pertinent to this doctoral research.

A single case study approach was undertaken in the MPhil research in order to investigate the research question '*How can TAs be managed to promote the successful social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in this school?*' The case study school was purposefully sampled. Previous teaching experience had identified good practice with regard to TAs. The school, 'Riverdale,' (a pseudonym) is located in Durham Local Authority and is a mainstream, voluntarily controlled Junior school (Years 3 to 6). An overview of the key findings of this study, in relation to the research questions posed, is presented in Table 5.1. The findings presented in Table 5.1 led to the formation of recommendations for future research, which have informed the methodology of this doctoral research.

Table 5.1 Key Findings from MPhil research

Research Question Posed	Findings
Q1 How is the role of TAs currently defined in mainstream primary schools?	• TAs primarily worked with children identified with SEN, in small groupings or individually. • TAs were found to undertake a wide variety of tasks within their role at Riverdale. The analogy of 'changing caps' was used to describe the frequency with which TAs undertook different tasks. • TAs' role was found to change between those working at Level 1 TAs and HLTAs, particularly in the conceptualisations that they had of their primary role; HLTAs viewed their role in terms of promoting pupils' learning through bridging pedagogic boundaries and Level 1 TAs viewed their role in terms of behaviour management.
Q2 What are TAs' current management structures and who has overall responsibility for their management?	• The Headteacher was viewed as the figurehead of management at Riverdale. • The senior management team undertook timetabling of TAs, performance management meetings and professional development meetings collectively. • Riverdale's professionals particularly emphasised the difficulties associated with timetabling, due to the 'changing caps' of TAs and the challenges of 'normal school life.'
Q3 What is the influence of TAs on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?	• 2 key factors were found to promote efficacy of TAs' role at Riverdale: 1. Skills, knowledge and interests of individual TAs were utilised by the senior management team 2. TAs are timetabled according to the needs of individuals or groups of children in the school. • TAs' particular influence on the process of including pupils identified with SEN was found to be in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices.

(Saddler, 2012*)*

Two key recommendations were made, which have influenced the methodological design of this doctoral research: 1. Further case studies were recommended, in order to determine the variety in and efficacy of TAs' current management structures, operating across primary schools in England. The literature suggests that there is great disparity between TAs' management structures in England, however, in-depth research exploring the structure and efficacy of management approaches is lacking.

2. A recommendation was made that TAs' specific influence on the process of social inclusion at Riverdale be tested as a hypothesis through further case studies. Thus, investigating the role of TAs, with specific emphasis on the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices, is undertaken in this research. In this way, the hypothesis that *'TAs' particular influence over the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN lies in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices'* is investigated in this doctoral research.

The above hypothesis was formed as a result of data analysed from seven professionals and ten children, which specifically places TAs' particular influence over the learning of pupils identified with SEN at Riverdale as rooted in socially inclusive practices. Participants interviewed consistently revealed that TAs' role at Riverdale was most helpful in building social relationships between children. The following quotations from the MPhil thesis highlight this perspective:

'That's the way we support them, we get to know them' (TA3, 2012).

'She (TA) tells you if you're nasty to people. Then she helps you to be friends again' (Pupil, 2012).

'They (TAs) can pick up on friendships and can see how the children interact socially. They will often feed back to us and inform us of children who are having trouble making friends or who are having problems with existing friendships' (Deputy Head, 2012) (Saddler, 2012).

The data collection methods that were employed in answering the pilot study research questions presented in Table 5.1 are identified in Table 5.2. The literature underpinning the use of these methods is discussed later in this chapter, in section 5.6.

Table 5.2 Data collection methods employed in the MPhil study

Method	Participants/Documentation	Research questions addressed by method
Non-Participant observations (6, hour- long)	Year 5 • Observation 1 (Numeracy) • Observation 2 (Literacy) • Observation 3 (Numeracy) Year 3 • Observation 4 (Numeracy) • Observation 5 (Literacy) • Observation 6 (Numeracy)	Q1, Q3
Semi-structured interviews with staff	• Headteacher • Deputy head/SENCO • TA1 • TA2 • TA3 • Teacher 1 • Teacher 2	Q1, Q2, Q3
Focus group interviews with 2 groups of 5 children	Year 5 • Focus group 1 • Focus group 2	Q3
Documentary analysis	• Ofsted report • TAs' contractual job descriptions • SEN and Anti-Bullying policies	Q1, Q2

*(*Saddler, 2012*)*

The data collection methods employed in the MPhil study were deemed to be successful in effectively answering the research questions posed, as discussed in section 5.6. However, a limitation to the validity of the study was found to be in the focus groups conducted with children identified with SEN. The focus groups conducted were found to more strongly resemble group interviewing. Children were often reluctant to build on each other's contributions without researcher intervention,

despite reminders that they did not need adult permission to speak (Vaughn, Schumm & Singabub, 1996). Additionally, some children took on the role of 'dominant talkers,' leaving others requiring moderator prompting to participate at all (Kreuger, 1998). Consequently, the data gained from this method were not as rich as expected. This has resulted in the modification of research methods with children for this doctoral research. Two different research methods involving children were re-piloted in Riverdale in June 2013, the results of which informed the methodology of this thesis. This is discussed in the following section.

Re-piloting of the research methods with children

As was identified in the previous section, the focus group interviews conducted with children in the pilot research were not as successful as expected. Consequently, two alternative research methods were identified through reviewing literature pertinent to this research approach; this literature is discussed in section 5.6. These two methods were piloted with children in Riverdale in June 2013. As a result of this re-piloting of the research methods with children, the method of photography was chosen for implementation during the main study. The reasons for this are discussed in section 5.6, under the 'multi-sensory methods with children' subheading. As the pilot studies have been explored, the methodological approach and methods employed within this doctoral study are now identified and justified. These will now be further detailed, commencing with the multiple case study approach.

5.4 The multiple case study approach

The importance of designing a methodological approach originating from the research questions posed, was reinforced to the researcher during the MPhil research in 2012 (Somekh & Lewin, 2004). Consequently, a multiple case study approach was adopted, due to its efficacy in providing the researcher with methods that allow in-depth investigation of the research questions, presented at the beginning of the chapter.

A qualitative research approach is predominantly multi-method in nature (Flick, 2002). This involves triangulation of methods, with the result adding, 'rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008,

p.7). Arguably, the most effective way of combining research methods is through a case study. Defining what is meant by a case study is problematic, due to the inherent multi-method nature of the approach. However, this is taken into account by Robson (2002), who defines the case study as, 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (p.178). In this doctoral research, the contemporary phenomenon under investigation is that of the influence of TAs on the process of socially including children identified with SEN. The real-life contexts investigated are three mainstream primary schools in the North of England, and the multiple sources of evidence employed include non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, multi-sensory research with children and documentary analysis.

Much has been written exploring types of case studies and the motivations for their selection (Bassey, 1998; Stake, 2005; Stenhouse 1985; Yin, 2013). Having fully reviewed the literature identifying types of case studies, it was determined that the three case studies undertaken in this research most closely fit with the 'evaluative' case study identified by Stenhouse (1985) and the 'instrumental' case study identified by Stake (2005). Stenhouse defines the 'evaluative' case study as intended to, 'provide educational actors or decision makers with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions' (p.50). In this study, the cases sampled enabled the researcher to judge the merit of the deployment of TAs in each case school considered; particularly with reference to the interventions TAs were involved in. Stake's (2005) 'instrumental' study involves research into one or more particular situations in order to try to understand an outside concern. In this way, 'we start and end with issues dominant' (1995, p.16). This research both starts and ends with the issue of needing to determine effective management of TAs' role to identify their particular influence over the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN; the case studies chosen involve gathering data that allow for the formation of conclusions with regard to the issue explored.

In some fields, for example anthropology and political science, the multiple case study approach is considered to encompass an entirely different methodology from single case studies (Yin, 2013). However, Yin considers multiple case studies to be within the same methodological framework as single case studies. He identifies the

major difference to be in the sampling method chosen for selection of cases in the study, due to alternative selection motivations. Yin suggests that selection of two or three cases should be made on the grounds of 'literal replication' (p.54). This involves sampling of cases because they are believed to have exemplary outcomes in relation to a theory, enabling transference of research methods between cases. In this research, three case schools were purposively sampled due to their identified best practice in relation to the phenomenon researched and similar research methods were employed in all three cases. The sampling method employed will be further discussed in this section.

Yin suggests researchers be mindful that the cases chosen are independently holistic, therefore, variation between cases is not eliminated by this approach. It is recognised that multiple case studies afford comparisons to be made regarding a researcher's chosen phenomenon, nevertheless, the unique nature of a case prevents complete similarity. Each case can be viewed as a 'bounded system,' in which a unique complex of interrelated elements or characteristics operate within identifiable boundaries (Stake, 2005). However, Yin also suggests that, 'the analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial' (p.53). If common conclusions can be drawn from two or more cases, rather than one, the external generalisability of the findings are immeasurably expanded (Torrance, 2008).

Generalisability of the case study is, however, one of the most frequently challenged aspects of this approach. For example, Creswell (2007) claims that the conclusions of case study research are often too specific to the single case studied, therefore any generalisations made are coloured by the unique nature of the case. However, Verschuren (2003) argues that claims of low generalisability are often made by researchers who view the case study as the study of a single object, rather than a methodological approach or a research strategy. If the 'case study' is viewed as an approach then its usefulness in generating knowledge is more clearly understood.

Simons (1980) argues that the strength of the case study approach lies in its attention to the complexity and subtlety of an aspect of a case in its own right. As Stake (2005) identifies, 'the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization' (p.8). Additionally, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that formal generalisation of the case is over-valued; the 'force of example' that one case study may set is

frequently underestimated. Therefore, researchers are best placed to seek an accurate but limited understanding of the phenomenon studied (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2008).

Bassey (1998) suggests that the tension between particularisation and generalisation may be addressed though what he terms 'fuzzy generalisations.' He argues that the application of these 'fuzzy generalisations' from one case to others of varying contexts is important, so that recommendations from one school can be applied to others. The aim of this process is explained by Simons (2009): by understanding 'a school' we can increase our understanding of 'other schools' and this has the potential to contribute to our collective knowledge about 'The School.' To relate this analogy to this research project specifically, the MPhil pilot study research undertaken in 2012 identified effective practice in managing the role of TAs to support the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in 'a school.' This enabled a hypothesis regarding effective deployment of TAs to be formed. In this doctoral research, the hypothesis has been applied to three 'other schools' in order to determine generalizability to 'The School' as an entity.

Sampling of the case studies

Purposive sampling was employed to select the schools in which the case study was conducted. Denscombe (2010) defines purposive sampling: 'the researcher deliberately selects particular cases because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data' (p.17). This method was employed due to the evaluative nature of this study. Purposive selection of the schools was necessary, in order to evaluate the merit and worth of the school's management of TAs in promoting the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. Therefore, the sampling method employed directly related to the research aims (Stake, 2005).

In purposively sampling the research schools, the researcher was able to select schools in which good practice with regard to the research phenomena was acknowledged. Initially, areas of the country in which the researcher had access to accommodation were focused on: these included the Local Authorities of York, Durham, Wolverhampton and London Boroughs. It was decided early on that the researcher would choose either one of York or Durham in which to conduct research as, geographically, the areas were too similar and the researcher sought as diverse a

geographical sample as possible. This diversity allowed the researcher to gain access to differing community-based challenges in each of the schools chosen, as discussed further in chapter 6. Exploring a range of community-based challenges afforded tentative generalisation of the conclusions and recommendations of this study, regarding optimum deployment of TAs, to national primary schools.

The sampling process began by the researcher accessing Ofsted inspection reports of primary schools that had an overall effectiveness rating of 'Outstanding' in York, Durham and Wolverhampton, in order to select the first two research schools. When 'Outstanding' reports were identified, the researcher then separated those reports in which the schools had higher than average levels of children identified with SEN, higher than average free school meal allocation and, preferably, those in which TAs were mentioned in the text. It was also preferable if the area of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was 'Outstanding,' as this category best fits the social research aims.

Higher than average levels of children identified with SEN were required due to the researcher's focus on observing TAs working with these children, as well as the research method with children requiring participants that were diagnosed with a special educational need. Higher than average levels of free school meals was preferred due to the additional income that these schools receive in the form of 'pupil premium;' the researcher's previous professional experience had shown that this money was often spent on more creative, non-traditional forms of provision for the pupils; consequently, the researcher may observe increased numbers of TAs at work or implementation of more creative, social based interventions. Finally, it was important to the researcher that each school had a different particular community-based challenge to their pupils' education, as this would increase the generalisability of conclusions drawn regarding the effectiveness of TAs. The school chosen in Durham had a particular challenge of high levels of Children Looked After (CLA): the school in Wolverhampton had pupils from a large number of different cultural backgrounds and the school in London had a very high number of children living in social housing. These differences in the schools' communities made for rich data collection regarding TAs' influence on the social challenges of inclusive education.

In March 2014, the researcher relocated to London in order to undertake an ESRC Internship, linked to the PhD scholarship, for 4 months at the Cabinet Office. The researcher undertook the role of Policy Advisor in the Youth Policy Team and predominantly worked on a project to support impact evaluation of youth based non-cognitive skill focused programmes. As the researcher was living in London, it made sense that the third research school be London-based. The process of purposively sampling the third school was slightly different to the first two. In September 2014, the researcher was providing some consultative support to the Mayor's Education and Youth Team in Greater London Authority, City Hall. This team had built a 'Gold Club' of high performing London schools, consisting of 106 primary and secondary schools at the time. The researcher used these schools as a basis for purposive sampling of the third research school, reading through the Ofsted reports of the primary schools in the Gold Club and determining which met the sampling criteria previously described and then contacted appropriate schools, with the first school contacted consenting to take part.

The three schools chosen for research in this study are introduced to the reader in chapter 6. Information is given regarding the pupil make up of each school, as well as the surrounding community in which the schools are situated. Sampling of the three schools collectively, aims to provide as rich a picture as possible, with regard to management of the role of TAs with particular focus on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN.

5.5. Data collection methods

In this section the data collection methods that were adopted both within the pilot studies and doctoral research are presented, explained and justified. This section begins by addressing non-participant observation, followed by semi-structured interviewing, leading to documentary analysis and ending with multi-sensory research with children. The sampling methods adopted are discussed within each method described. The documents used and procedure followed in undertaking documentary analysis are also discussed. Table 5.3 presents an overview of the data collection methods that the researcher planned to employ in each case school in this study. A sample data collection schedule is also affixed to this thesis in the appendices section

(see Appendix 1). A total of two weeks was spent conducting research in each of the three case schools. 23 children were involved in the research, rather than the planned 24, as one child sampled was absent on the day of the photography task. Two further semi-structured interviews than planned were undertaken at Cherry Blossom as the researcher deemed them important to maximising the quality of data gathered in this study. Moreover, one fewer interview was undertaken at Birchwood, due to one of the sampled class teachers also holding the Assistant Head/SENCO role. Introductions to all participants in this study are presented in chapters 6 and 8 of this thesis; these introductions also serve as rationales for involving the sampled participants.

Table 5.3 Data collection methods employed in each case school

Method	Participants/Documents	Research questions addressed
Introductory meeting	Headteacher	N/A
Non-Participant observations	5x Observations across 2 Headteacher-chosen year group classes in each of the research schools (n=30)	Q1, Q2
Semi-structured interviews with staff	In each school, as appropriate: • Headteacher • Deputy head/SENCO • TA 1 • TA 2 • TA 3 • TA 4 • Teacher 1 • Teacher 2 (n = 24)	Q1, Q2, Q3
Photography with children Followed by Research conversation on an individual basis with children	Sample 4 Children identified with SEN in 2 classes in each research school (n = 24)	Q2, Q3
Documentary analysis	• Ofsted report • TAs' contractual job descriptions • SEN and Anti-Bullying policies	Q1, Q2

<u>Non-participant observations</u>

Ten hour-long observations were undertaken in each case school, over a period of two weeks. Observations were based in Key Stage Two as the researcher required children of Key Stage Two age to take part in the photography task, as is explained later in this section. It was important to the researcher that the observations took place in the classrooms in which children chosen to undertake the photography task were based, so that the researcher became familiar and non-threatening to these children. This also allowed the researcher to observe pupils' interactions with their peers and gain insights regarding pupils' social positioning with their peers, which informed the photography task undertaken with the children.

During the introductory meetings with the Headteachers of the three research schools, the researcher asked each Headteacher to identify two classrooms in which the observations would be most useful, with regard to the researcher's objectives. The researcher asked for classrooms in Key Stage two, in which there were large numbers of children identified with SEN, preferably those who may be experiencing social inclusion difficulties, and more than one TA regularly working with the children in that class. Thus, the participants involved in the observations were purposively sampled by the Headteachers of the case schools.

The TAs in the two Key Stage Two classrooms that the researcher was based in across each school were the main focus of the observations. The observations were non-participant in nature due to the researcher maintaining non-engagement in the classroom activity whilst observing (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The key aim of the observations was to watch the TAs chosen in their working environments; the observations enabled the researcher to determine the variety of tasks undertaken by TAs and the social interactions between TAs and pupils. This enabled data to be gathered that was directly pertinent to both the first and second research question posed in this study. The observations took place at different timetabled periods and of different subjects in each school; this enabled the researcher to observe the activities of TAs under different teacher direction, with various students and at different sections of the school day.

It could be argued that participant observations would have better suited this study as this approach allows the researcher to become an active member of the

classroom and, thus gain an insider's perspective on the phenomenon studied (Angrosino, 2012, p.166). However, it was decided that non-participant observations, in which the researcher decidedly takes an inactive role in the classroom discourse, were most appropriate. In order to answer the research questions posed in this study most effectively, it was vital that the researcher observed TAs in as 'naturalistic' a context as possible (Edwards & Westgate, 1994). In this way, the actions most representative of TAs' normal classroom behaviour could be observed. Thus, the most appropriate observational method in this study was deemed to be unobtrusive and non-participant.

As the nature of observation places emphasis on the skills of the singular researcher, researcher bias is often cited as the greatest failing of the method (Angrosino, 2012; Gillham, 2000; Papatheodorou, Luff & Gill, 2011; Simpson & Tuson, 2003). This is described by Edwards and Westgate (1994) as the 'observer's paradox' (p.77). Researchers and their recording devices are likely to be obtrusive, which leads to participants detecting that they are being watched, therefore, they may well talk more, or talk less, or simply talk differently. Consequently, the observer's paradox results in the observations undertaken lacking full 'naturalistic' representation of the phenomenon studied. This necessarily has a negative influence over the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the method.

However, Gillham (2000) identifies that this problem can be minimised by employing the method of observation as an 'initial phase' technique (p.48). In this way, observation is used by the researcher to gain initial understandings regarding the issues that comprise the phenomenon studied. These issues can then be further explored by employing alternative research methods. In this study, the majority of the observations took place before implementing other research methods in each school. The data gathered from the observations were then able to inform the other research methods employed (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). This approach provided the researcher with important contextual understandings regarding TAs' role and social interactions with pupils, which were instrumental in the design of interview protocols.

It is often argued that the time-consuming nature of observations makes them a less effective method for use in case study research (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). However, the researcher deemed that the narrow focus of the observations justified

their use. The actions of TAs were the primary focus of the observations; this minimised the data gathered, therefore increased manageability of the method (Edwards & Westgate, 1994). Additionally, as was previously mentioned, the observations were employed in conjunction with other methods in this study, allowing for careful management of the volume of data gathered.

The researcher recorded the observations via semi-structured narratives, a method in which notes are made around set observation foci. However, these foci can be deviated from to record data pertinent to the wider research aims, as the researcher deems appropriate (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). Written notes were made throughout the observations on the following foci:

- Which children the TA was working with and where
- Types of communication between the TA and teacher
- Types of communication between the TA and the children
- The role/s that the TA undertook throughout the lesson.
- The interventions that the TA was involved in during the lessons.

The relatively unstructured nature of the observations could be criticised for lacking a systematic approach (Mercer, 2010). However, as previously explained, this method was primarily employed to inform additional research methods. Consequently, the unstructured nature of the observations was necessary in affording the flexibility to note down issues/events that bore significance to the research questions, which were investigated further through subsequent research methods (Gillham, 2000). The researcher sat on a table in each classroom/study space close enough so that the activity could be seen and heard, yet suitably far away so that non-participant status could be maintained. Therefore, the researcher was provided with direct access to the social interactions between the TA and the other members of the room, yet researcher influence on these interactions was minimised as far as possible (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). There were instances in which TAs exited the classroom with some children in order to work on something specific in a quieter space. In these instances the researcher followed the TA, as observation of TAs' role and communication was the focus.

<u>Semi-structured interviews</u>

The researcher undertook 7 semi-structured interviews in Birchwood, 8 in Mountford and 10 in Cherry Blossom. Chapter 6 gives backgrounds of the staff sampled to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The foci of the interviews was to determine TAs' current management structures operating in the school and the role that the staff perceived TAs to be undertaking, Additionally, the researcher was interested in eliciting both TAs' and other staff members' perspectives regarding the current and potential influence of TAs on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. The interview protocols used and the main research question focused on in each interview question are presented in Tables 5.4 and 5.5. Question 11, written in blue in Table 5.4, was posed exclusively to the Headteachers and Deputy Head/SENCOs. Question 12, written in red, was posed exclusively to Teachers.

The researcher purposively sampled the participants interviewed. This was in order to ensure that staff members chosen to participate were able to give specific insights, pertinent to the research questions of this thesis. Staff members interviewed represented both those part of the senior management team and those not, in order to include members of all hierarchical groups within the area of study (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). This ensured that the researcher gained a full range of perspectives in relation to the chosen phenomenon. Headteachers were chosen because they were able to provide the researcher with insights and opinions based on viewing the school holistically. This meant that they gave specific insights into the holistic management of TAs in their school. SENCOs were chosen for interview because they were the only named staff member with statutory positional responsibilities relating to the management of TAs and the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN, thus they were able to provide the researcher with insights related to both policy and practice. Teachers were chosen to be interviewed because they were able to discuss their experiences of TAs' input and the influence that this has on the children in their classrooms. Finally, TAs themselves were interviewed in order to gain access to their conceptualisations of their role. Interviewing TAs also gave the researcher insights regarding their specific professional needs and interests.

Table 5.4 Interview protocol used when interviewing Teachers

Question	Research Question Addressed
1. Can you tell me a little bit about your professional background? How long have you worked in this school/class? What is it about this school that attracted you to working here?	N/A
2. What is your idea of what the term 'social inclusion' means?	Q3
3. How do you think pupils identified with special educational needs are socially included in your school? Can you give me some examples?	Q3
4. How would you describe the role of the teaching assistant in this school? What are its main features? Examples?	Q1
5. In this school, are some aspects of TAs' role are more important than others? If so, which and why?	Q1
6. How do teaching assistants influence the social development of the pupils in the classes they work in?	Q3
7. How do you think the skills of the teaching assistants in your school can be used to their full potential, to aid the social inclusion of the pupils they work with?	Q3
8. Who has responsibility for managing the teaching assistants in your school? Why do you think this is? What does the management structure look like?	Q2
9. What do you perceive to be the strengths and limitations of the management of teaching assistants in your school?	Q2
10. How do you think the management of teaching assistants could be improved?	Q2
11. Are there any issues that make the management of the TAs in your school difficult? If so, what are these? How do these difficulties influence the social inclusion of the pupils that they work with?	Q2
12. How do you work with the teaching assistant based in your classroom to ensure that his/her skills are being used effectively? How do you use his/her skills to aid the social inclusion of the pupils that he/she works with?	Q1

Table 5.5 Interview protocol used when interviewing TAs

Question	Research Question Addressed
1. Can you tell me a little bit about your professional background? How long have you worked in this school/class? What is it about this school that attracted you to working here?	N/A
2. What is your idea of what the term 'social inclusion' means?	Q3
3. How do you think pupils identified with special educational needs are socially included in your school? Can you give me some examples?	Q3
4. How far do you think your role relates to the social inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in your class?	Q3
5. In a typical lesson, what would your role be? For example, what is your role in a daily literacy/numeracy lesson?	Q1
6. How far do you find, if at all, your role differs from that of the teacher in your class?	Q1
7. Which children in the class do you work with? Does this vary at all?	Q1
8. What information are you given in terms of your role and the children's learning?	Q1
9. To what extent do you think your skills, knowledge and expertise are used in the classroom? Which skills, if any, do you think could be used better?	Q2
10. Do you know who has responsibility for deciding what your role is in school? Does this vary from a day-to-day basis to termly or yearly?	Q2
11. What do you think are the strengths and limitations of the way your role is managed in this school?	Q2
12. Is there anything that you would change to improve how you are managed?	Q2

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken due to the need to investigate the values, beliefs and motives behind individuals' behaviour and experiences, in fully exploring the research questions of this study (Foddy, 1993). It is argued by Siedman (1998) that interviewing is most effective in, 'allowing us to put behaviour in context and provides access to understanding their action' (p.4). Thus, employing interviewing following on from non-participant observations allowed the researcher to gain understandings regarding participants' observed actions. All interviews were undertaken inside the schools' buildings, both in classrooms, staff rooms or offices. This was deemed to be conducive to effective data collection as, 'people talk more freely on their own ground' (Gillham, 2000, p.9). Exact locations of the individual interviews were chosen based on the availability of rooms at the time of the interview and/or where the participants stated they would feel most comfortable.

Wengraf (2001) argues that the greatest advantage of semi-structured interviewing as a research method is its relative flexibility. The relatively unstructured interview protocol enables both the researcher and the participant to exert control over the direction of the interview. Not only does this encourage interviewees to follow their interests within the parameters of the issues explored, but it also urges the participants to share their stories and extend their answers, due to the supportive culture that flexibility provides (Keats, 2000). Thus, semi-structured interviewing is conducive with the researcher's epistemological stance of social constructivism, discussed in section 5.1; Vygotsky (1978) states that, 'every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness' (p.236).

When conducting interviews, the researcher undertakes the role of the research instrument. Therefore, the researcher's 'biases, angers, fears and enthusiasms influence questioning style and how what is heard is interpreted' (Rubin & Rubin, 2004, p.12). Although this is recognised as a limitation of the method chosen, ensuring reflexivity throughout the research process minimises bias (Davis, 1998). The researcher kept a self-reflexive diary from the commencement of methodological planning to the end of the process; this has informed the researcher's analytic thought processes. It also aided recognition of the influence that personal values, beliefs and experiences have had on the research process.

Whilst it is widely accepted that interviewing produces rich data (Gillham, 2000; Siedman, 1998; Wengraf, 2001), its time consuming nature should not be

ignored. In order to afford effective data analysis, interviews require transcription, which is very time consuming, particularly for a single researcher. For this reason, questionnaire distribution was considered as a way of gathering numerous data regarding the role and management of TAs. However, the literature suggests that questionnaires typically induce a low return rate and fail to provide access to individuals' motivations behind their thoughts and opinions, thus rendering the data gathered to be less rich in comparison with that gathered through interviewing (Keats, 2000). Consequently, interviewing was determined to be the most effective method, both in terms of richness of data gathered and time taken, to meet the needs of this research.

Documentary Analysis

Educational policy makers and professionals are recognised as major producers of documentary materials in providing rationales for their institutional approaches (Silverman, 2006). Thus, analysis of a school's documents can reveal a great deal in relation to a researcher's area of interest. Atkinson and Coffey (2004), however, identify a fundamental limitation of this research method: 'Documents are not neutral, transparent reflections of organisational or occupational life. They actively construct the very organisations they purport to describe' (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.78). Consequently, it is suggested that documents are unable to accurately represent the nature of school life. Thus, effective analysis of these documents requires a focus on how organisational realities are represented through textual conventions. Additionally, documentary analysis should be used to complement other research methods to ensure that data accurately representing school life is gathered.

In this study, the following documents were analysed in each case school: most recent Osfted inspection report, SEN Policy, Anti-bullying Policy and TAs' contractual job descriptions (if available). The aim of the analysis was to compare the rhetoric of the practices stated in the text with the reality of the data gathered from other research methods in this study. This allowed for school-based comparisons between policy and practice to be made. The broad conclusions drawn from the analysed data gathered from the other research methods in this study were applied to

the documents analysed as codes. This ensured that only data relevant to the research questions posed in this study was analysed.

<u>Multi-sensory methods with children</u>

In this section, the methods chosen for conducting research with children during the MPhil pilot study, re-piloting in June 2013 at Riverdale and the main doctoral study are identified and critiqued.

Focus group interviews were chosen for use with the participating children in the MPhil pilot study. Focus groups were chosen as the literature suggested that the informal nature of the group environment was conducive with greater participant disclosure, one of the most commonly cited barriers to effective research with children (Vaughn, Schumm & Singabub, 1996). A focus group is defined by Krueger (1994) as, 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (p.6). Participants are prompted to articulate their perspectives through building on the contributions of their fellow participants and/or the researcher. Consequently, the researcher can gain valuable insights into the motives behind individuals' thoughts, actions and behaviours (Morgan and Krueger, 1993).

In conducting focus groups the role of the researcher, as moderator, is highly influential (Litoselliti, 2003). Greenbaum (1998) likens the moderator role to that of an orchestral conductor; he/she 'sets the tone for the session and directs it in such a way that the research objectives are achieved' (p.73). If the moderator is effective, the discussion throughout the focus group should be predominantly participant focused. The moderator uses his/her skills to prompt participants when required, but primarily promotes discussion between the participants (Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Litoselliti, 2003; Morgan, 1997). Vaughn et al. (1996) suggest that this is both particularly challenging and especially important when conducting focus groups with children, due to children's tendency to wait for adult prompts.

Having conducted the focus groups, the researcher did indeed find that the children were often reluctant to build on each other's contributions without intervention, despite reminders that they were not required to wait for permission to speak. Children spoke more freely when encouraged to share their stories; participants give the researcher greatest access to their motives through the medium of story-

telling (Morgan, 1997). Some children, however, clearly undertook the role of 'dominant talkers,' leaving others requiring moderator prompting to participate at all (Krueger, 1994). As a result of the high level of moderator input into the focus groups with children, they were deemed to be less successful than anticipated. Thus, alternative research methods for use with children required re-piloting for this doctoral thesis.

Review of recent methodological literature led the researcher to identify that the choice of methods employed with children largely depended on the individual researcher's perception of the nature of childhood (Punch, 2002). This is discussed extensively in the next section of this chapter, as it specifically pertains to the ethical considerations of this study. Through broad reading on this subject, the researcher's view of the nature of childhood was determined to lie in viewing children as similar to adults, yet possessing different competencies, which require alternative research methods to access children's perceptions (Punch, 2002). This view of the nature of childhood is shared by many researchers and has led to a plethora of multi-sensory research methods, for use with children, being developed over the last ten years (Buchwald, Schantz-Laursen & Delmar, 2009; Coad, 2007; Einarsdottir, 2008; Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2006; Morrow, 2008; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009). These have included photography, diaries, drawings, sentence completion and writing, the draw and write technique, child-led tours and radio workshops (Punch, 2002). These methods have been developed to complement the perspective that children are able to divulge as much relevant, in-depth information to researchers regarding their chosen phenomenon as adults, however, they require varied multi-sensory methods in order to express them effectively (Morrow & Richards, 1999).

As discussed in section 5.3, two of the above alternative methods were piloted in Riverdale in June 2013, child-led tours and photography. Both child-led tours and photography were used by Moss and Clark (2011) as part of their 'mosaic approach' to eliciting the insights of children through research. This approach involves a variety of research tools, chosen to, 'play to young children's strengths, methods which are active, accessible and not reliant on the written or spoken word' (p.13). Having chosen a method that relied exclusively on the spoken word during the MPhil pilot study (focus group interviews), Moss and Clark's (2011) research tools highly engaged the researcher, as they allow children to share their views and experiences

through a method that plays to their specific competencies. This is particularly relevant when considering the competencies of the children with whom research is conducted in this study; children identified with SEN often display under-developed literacy skills for their age, thus selection of methods that do not solely rely on the spoken or written word is important.

Child-led tours

Child-led tours are similar to 'transect walks,' which were first used in international development; they allow people who have under-developed literacy skills to convey their local knowledge about their immediate surroundings (Hart, 1999). Clark and Moss (2005) relate this method specifically to educational research by stating: 'The physicality and mobility of this technique lends itself to being used by young children. This tool plays to their strengths as natural explorers and knowledgeable guides. The 'normal' power balance in the classroom is reversed and children are in control of the content of the tour and how it is recorded' (p.16). Photographs are taken of specific areas of schools that children view as important, which can then be used as stimuli for further discussion on children's past and present feelings relating to the places photographed (Punch, 2002).

At Riverdale, the researcher adapted this method slightly by introducing an additional, visual element to the child-led tours conducted. Stickers that displayed smiley faces and sad faces were given to children when they stopped at particular areas of the school whist leading the tour. Children were asked to stick either a happy face or a sad face in the area and take a photograph of this (Clark, 2005). Photographs of interest to the researcher were then printed off and used as stimuli for further discussion on the pupil's feelings about places in school after the tour. This allowed the researcher to gain richer data on the phenomenon of interest: the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN and TAs' influence on this process.

Photography

The photography method was also piloted in June 2013 at Riverdale. Although photography was included within the child-led tours method, the researcher determined that piloting it as a solitary method was necessary, in exploring an approach that excluded dialogue and allowed the child to exert total control over the

method (Punch, 2002). Punch (2001) used photography in educational research with children aged 6-14 in Bolivia. It should be noted that although the educational context of Punch's research is different to that of this research, the age range of the study fits with this doctoral study, therefore was deemed to be relevant. Punch used the photographs as stimuli for subsequent discussions with the children on her phenomenon of interest: their perceptions of autonomy at school.

At Riverdale, children were given a digital camera of their own and asked to take photographs that represented 'a day in their life at school;' children were afforded total autonomy over the method. They were asked not to give the camera to any other pupil or adult at the school whilst undertaking the task and were allowed to take an unlimited number of photographs. Punch (2002) undertook a similar approach in her research and concluded that children's enjoyment in using the cameras stimulated their motivation to complete the research task. This allowed for rich subsequent discussions, as there were many photographs to talk around. However, Punch also noted that children often became over excited when presented with responsibility over the cameras and this led to a reduction in the relevance of many pupils' photographs.

Pilot findings

Having piloted both methods at Riverdale in June 2013, the researcher determined that photography was most effective in meeting the research aims of this project. Thus photography, followed by research conversations with individuals around their photographs, was implemented as a research method in the three case schools. The research conversations that took place with pupils who undertook the independent photography method were of significantly higher quality than those arising from the child-led tours method. As with Punch's (2001) research, all children were visibly excited when their photographs were revealed to them for the first time during the conversations and were eager to discuss the meanings behind them. However, the children with whom the researcher had conducted the child-led tours method were visibly less enthusiastic about the pictures that had been taken and required more researcher prompting in order to discuss their meaning.

Perhaps the complete autonomy over the camera that the children with the photography method experienced, afforded stronger engagement with the subsequent

conversation. Additionally, the vast majority of the independent photographs taken by the children were during playtimes and lunchtimes. This afforded the researcher a rich understanding of those children's friendship networks, which made conversations regarding the social experiences of those children particularly fruitful. These conversations were much more difficult to navigate with children who had participated in child-led tours.

The photography method was conducted with four children in each of two year groups, across the three research schools. However, it was only conducted with seven children at Cherry Blossom due to the absence of one sampled child on the day that the data were collected. Consequently, this method was conducted with twenty-three pupils in total. The children sampled for involvement in this method were primarily those who were on the SEN register. Review of the literature in section 4.3, enabled the suggestion that children identified with SEN are at greater risk of bullying and/or marginalisation than their non-SEN peers. Thus, these children were identified as best placed for involvement in addressing the research question for this study.

Having fully explored the justification for the research methods with children that were employed in this study, the ethical considerations that underpin them are now considered. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the process of this doctoral study, particularly as children identified with SEN were strongly involved in the research.

5.6 Ethical considerations

This section explores the ethical considerations that pertain to this particular research, which have informed the methodological design and analysis of data in this study (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009). This section begins by exploring the specific ethical considerations when conducting research with children. The issues of informed consent and voluntary participation are then addressed. Finally, confidentiality and anonymity are investigated.

Conducting ethical research with children

Deciding to involve children in research involves particular ethical considerations, specifically when involving children identified with SEN, as they are often viewed as being more 'vulnerable' than their non-SEN peers. The debate

surrounding children holding a 'vulnerable' position in society is one of the major current influences in the ethics of conducting research with children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009a). Fundamentally, the way in which a researcher views the nature of childhood and the status of children in society, that is, how vulnerable they are in relation to adults, influences their approach to researching children (Punch, 2002). The extent to which children are viewed as similar or different from adults has implications for the whole of the research methodological approach, including, 'design, methods, ethics, participation and/or analysis' (Punch, 2002, p. 321).

Historically, two major perspectives on the nature of childhood are held; that children are essentially indistinguishable from adults (Morrow & Richards, 1996) and that children are entirely distinct from adults (Hill, 1997). If a researcher holds the perspective that children are indistinguishable from adults, he/she will use exactly the same methodological approach as if research was conducted with adults. However, Punch (2002) argues that this approach does not recognise the inevitable influence of the power imbalance between the adult researcher and the children. If a researcher holds the view that children are entirely distinct from adults, he/she will often take an ethnographic approach to research; the justification being that children's worlds can only be interpreted by the adult researcher infiltrating these worlds in order to gain contextual understandings regarding children's perceptions. However Punch (2002) suggests that this approach fails to effectively research the world of the child due to the inevitable barrier between the reality of the researcher and reality of the child; adults can never truly perceive childhood again.

Consequently, Punch has developed a third perspective; in this perspective children are viewed as similar in nature to adults, however, they possess different competencies. This means that researchers are required to design research methods that allow exploration of the phenomenon of interest through children's varied competencies. As discussed previously in this chapter, Punch's perspective on the nature of childhood has been adopted by many recent researchers (Buchwald, Schantz-Laursen & Delmar, 2009; Coad, 2007; Einarsdottir, 2006; Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2006; Morrow, 2008; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009), and has led to the emergence of a plethora of alternative multi-sensory research methods for use with children. Punch suggests that in order to, 'research a diversity of childhoods and take into account children's varied social competencies and life experiences is to use a

range of different methods and techniques' (p.322). Thus, combining a range of multi-sensory research methods allows children's different competencies to be accommodated by adult researchers. This is the approach followed in this study.

It is acknowledged that the researcher's choice solely to involve children identified with SEN raises ethical issues. By working exclusively with these children, identifying them as 'a group' was unavoidable; children were chosen specifically because of their requirement for additional support in accessing learning. This was particularly difficult to manage ethically; the researcher was aware that the children themselves may have identified that their involvement was elicited purely because they were identified with SEN. In order to try and minimise the negative effects of the groupings, all children were spoken to at playtimes and around the school to ensure that the researcher did not demonstrate a sole interest in children identified with SEN.

Whilst this aspect of the research design was problematic, the benefits of eliciting pupils' voices in research that concerns them are widely recognised (Christensen & Prout 2002; Clark, McQuail & Moss 2003; Greene & Hogan 2005; Tangen, 2008). Hill (1997) argues that if you fail to elicit children's perspectives in research, 'you risk misperceiving the wishes, needs and interest of children' (p.173). Additionally, it is argued that this research has the potential to benefit directly the children with involvement, therefore their involvement was deemed justified.

Informed consent and voluntary participation

BERA (2011) defines voluntary informed consent as, 'the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway' (p. 5). There are particular recognised difficulties with gaining the informed consent and voluntary participation of children, specifically those children identified with SEN (Farrell, 2005; Fraser & Meadows, 2008; Freeman & Mathison, 2009b). It is often difficult to determine children's understanding of the research that they are being asked to participate in; this pertains to children identified with SEN particularly (Holt, 2004).

Additionally, children frequently consent to partake in tasks that their adult Teachers suggest, due to recognised power imbalances between adults and children (Christensen & James, 2008). Consequently, the adult researcher has an unavoidable influence over children's decision making with regard to participating in the study

(Freeman & Mathison, 2009a). Furthermore, the researcher's professional status as a qualified teacher may have increased the power differential. This is particularly pertinent in the MPhil pilot study school, at which the researcher had taught during her final teaching practice. However, none of the children included in the pilot study had been taught by the researcher and the researcher had not taught in any of the three case schools researched for the doctoral study. The researcher also made sure to discuss her role as a researcher with the children before gaining consent.

In order to ensure that all participants were able to give informed consent and voluntarily participate the researcher designed a 'participant information sheet' and 'voluntary consent form;' (see appendices 2 and 3). The participant information sheet was shown to all adult participants, before asking them to sign their voluntary consent form. The Headteacher signed the voluntary consent form as the 'responsible other' for the children with whom research was conducted (BERA, 2011; Fraser et al. 2004). The researcher ensured that, before signing, the Headteacher was fully aware that some of the photographs would be displayed in the write up of this study, which would be a public document. Additionally, the school sent out a researcher-devised parental consent form to all parents of children in both of the classes in which the researcher was based, before the researcher arrived at the case schools. A copy of the parental consent form is provided in Appendix 5. This form clearly explained that photographs would be used in the researcher's write up of the study. Only two parents across the three schools expressed that they were unhappy for their children to take part in the research; these children were therefore never approached for participation by the researcher and all photographs including these children were deleted before data analysis occurred.

Before conducting the photography method with each sampled child, the study was briefly explained to the child by the researcher and participation was explained to be voluntary. Individual children were asked to give their verbal and written consent before any research was conducted. Children were asked to tick a picture of a smiley face, if they were happy to take part, or a sad face, if they were unwilling to take part. The consent form completed by the children is provided in Appendix 4.

<u>Confidentiality and anonymity</u>

The issues of confidentiality and anonymity are particularly important in undertaking ethical research with children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009a). The researcher had to be prepared for the children to disclose safeguarding issues, although none materialised (Christensen & James, 2008). On entry to each research school, the researcher made sure to identify the designated safeguarding professional, in case of any disclosure by a child requiring further safeguarding support. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were given to the schools and all participants involved in the research methods. Photographs depicting the faces of participants and other children attending the research schools are presented in this thesis, however all other identifying features have been anonymised, for example school badges, to protect anonymity (BERA, 2011).

When addressing confidentiality, dilemmas between respect for the quality of research and respect for the person should be considered. Particularly strong motives for gathering quality data were held by the researcher, as this research is integral to successfully completing a doctoral study. However, the researcher was also obligated to ensure that the participants were treated with respect throughout the research process (BERA, 2011). For this reason, the content of individuals' interviews was not discussed with other participants, despite the benefits that doing so may have had for data quality. In addition, Full ethical approval was gained from the University of York before undertaking this research.

5.7 Validity and Reliability

In this section the internal and external validity of the research process is discussed. This is followed by an analysis of the reliability of the methodology employed in this study. The generalisability of the conclusions drawn from the case studies undertaken in this research is also further considered.

<u>Internal and external validity</u>

Validity is defined by Hammersley (1990) as, 'the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers' (p.57). Consequently, this research is regarded as valid if it accurately represents the role of TAs and the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN in each of the case schools researched.

In determining the validity of this study holistically, it is important to consider both the internal and external validity of the research undertaken.

Internal validity refers to the extent to which the data generated by the research relates to the research aims, within a singular piece of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that triangulation of research methods promotes internal validity in qualitative research. Whilst it cannot be claimed that triangulation alone ensures internal validity, the multi-method nature of this research design does promote validity of this study. Observations, semi-structured interviews and multi-sensory research with children were employed with a variety of participants, across all three case schools. Thus, triangulation ensured that large amounts of rich, relevant data were collected. The methods were carefully designed to specifically relate to the research questions posed; this ensured internal validity of the data.

In determining the external validity of a research project, the generalisability of the conclusions drawn to other contexts must be considered (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). The generalisability of the case study, however, is highly contested, as was discussed in section 5.4 (Cresswell, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Verschuren, 2003). Cresswell (2007) argues that conclusions drawn from a singular case study solely pertain to the unique nature of that case. Consequently, the inevitable differences between the unique environments of the three case schools reduce the external validity of the conclusions drawn.

However, Stake (2005) argues that generalisation of conclusions is not the aim of the approach. He presents a notion of the 'intrinsic case study,' stating that, 'this case is of interest … in all its particularity and ordinariness' (p.236). Therefore, the unique complexities of a singular case are paramount in the case study approach, reinforcing its usefulness (Simons, 1980). Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies that the 'force of example' that singular cases can provide is regularly underestimated; they often lead to the development of new knowledge and understandings that can be tested in subsequent case studies. This was seen by the researcher as a result of the MPhil pilot study; Riverdale acted as a 'force of example,' leading to the hypothesis that the specific influence of TAs on the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN lies in the implementation of socially inclusive interventions. This

hypothesis has been applied to the multiple case study approach in this doctoral research.

Reliability

Reliability is defined by Kirk & Miller (1986) as, 'the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production' (p.26). Therefore, the reliability of a study deals with its replicability. As has already been discussed, the strong emphasis on the skills of the individual researcher often means that the conclusions drawn from the case study approach are subject to researcher bias. However, reflexivity was employed throughout the research process to minimise this effect as far as possible (Davis, 1998).

In order to determine the reliability of the research methods employed, all were piloted as part of an MPhil study in 2012. The research methods employed with children were piloted twice, having found the initial method to be less effective than intended. This rigorous piloting allowed the researcher to determine whether participants understood the concepts within the questions asked as intended. Additionally, 'member checking' of the transcripts produced from the semi-structured interviews was undertaken (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This consisted of taking the transcripts back to some of the participants in the pilot school to confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account that was produced.

In order to maximise the reliability of the data, all interviews and conversations with children and adults were recorded and transcribed. A sample transcription is provided in Appendix 6. Seidman (1998) argues that, 'to work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text to study' (p.97). However, in doing so, participants' responses may have been affected (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The researcher was aware that the presence of the recorder occasionally distracted the children at the beginning of the individual follow up discussions. Consequently, their answers were either visibly more carefully considered than later in the discussion, or lacking detail and clarity as a result of particular interest in the dictaphone. Additionally, transcription of the data was highly time-consuming (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Nevertheless, the perspective of Wengraf (2001) is agreed with, that these limitations were outweighed by the richness of data gained, which greatly aided the data analysis process.

5.8 Data Analysis

Smit (2002) defines data analysis as, 'a process of resolving data in its constituent components, to reveal its characteristic elements and structure' (p.66). Analysis of qualitative data is typically an iterative process; a framework of specific codes to be imposed on the data is not devised. Instead, codes and concepts arise from the data as they are continually analysed (Srivastara and Hopwood, 2009). Thus, a combination of inductive and deductive analytic processes was implemented.

The researcher approached the analytic process with the hypothesis formed as a result of the MPhil pilot study: *TAs' particular influence over the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN lies in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices.* Additionally, broad themes were identified as ideas that had arisen from the review of the literature and the pilot study (see Table 5.1). However these ideas were not translated into specific codes to be applied to the data. Much literature reviewed on the analysis of qualitative data concluded that analysis was most effective when codes arose from the data themselves. Thus the hypothesis and broad themes that had emerged from the pilot study data were kept in the researcher's mind throughout the analysis but not applied to the data as codes; this would have been overly constraining to the analysis.

It was decided that the constant comparative method of data analysis was most appropriate to this research, fitting with the iterative nature of qualitative data analysis. This method required repeated comparison and contrast of new codes, categories and concepts as they arose (Denscombe, 2010). The process began with adult interview one, drawing out codes to compare with interview two. This comparison continued until all interviews had been analysed and definite themes running through the data had been identified. Thus, the researcher was able to cross-check individual participants' responses with others to determine similarities and differences between their experiences of TAs' management structures and TAs' influence on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. The same process was then completed with the transcriptions from the research conversations with children regarding the photographs taken. This approach allowed organisation of the data into common 'themes,' but also allowed the researcher to identify data that did not 'fit' into the themes drawn and investigate these anomalies. Appendix 7 provides a sample interview transcript having been coded during the analysis procedure.

The narratives produced from the non-participant observations and thoughts written in the researcher's self-reflexive diary were read chronologically, comparing them with the themes identified from analysis of the interviews and conversations with children. Additionally, once the themes from the data gathered were identified, these themes were imposed as codes on the following documentation: the most recent Ofsted report for the schools, TAs' contractual job descriptions and the schools' SEN and Anti-Bullying policies. This analysis allowed the researcher to compare the perspectives of schools' professionals with schools' formal documentation regarding the role of TAs and the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. The themes identified through the analysis of the data are presented and discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

The use of computer software in aiding data analysis was considered, due to its capacity to support effective data management. Computer software is able to analyse large amounts of raw data within short time periods much more effectively than a singular researcher (Rademaker, Grace & Curda, 2012). Miles and Huberman (1994) identified, however, that computers are incapable of discerning the meaning of particular words or phrases (Smit, 2002). Therefore, it is impossible for authors to rely on software for independent analysis of the data gathered. Lee (1996) argued that this is positive, however, as it avoids researchers developing over-reliance on the software for analysis. Nevertheless, the language limitations of software significantly reduce its reliability (Lewins & Silver, 2007).

Davis & Mayer (2009) suggested that one of the most problematic consequences of reliance on software programmes, such as CAQDAS/Atlas.ti is that it often results in qualitative data being analysed quantitatively; this increases homogeneity in methods of data analysis. However, Lee (1996) argued that, 'their [CAQDAS] ability effectively to manage data may be a considerable improvement over the ad hoc procedures we suspect frequently underpinned manual analysis' (p.23). The data analysis procedure undertaken in this study, however, was planned and executed according to a structured method that arose from reviewing the literature (as described earlier in the section). Consequently, it was determined that the structured nature of manual analysis was most suitable to this study, as opposed to relying on the limitations of software analysis.

In order to conduct the research conversations with children, it was first necessary to undertake preliminary analysis of the photographs that the children took during the photography method of data collection. Undertaking analysis of data gathered involving children is by nature problematic, as decisions regarding which data to use and the interpretations of that data are made by the adult researcher (Punch, 2002). Consequently, particular care should be exercised when interpreting the views and opinions of children, as Mayhall (1994) identifies:

> However much one may involve children in considering data, the presentation of it is likely to require analyses and interpretations, at least for some purposes, which do demand different knowledge than that generally available to children, in order to explicate children's social status and structural positioning (p.11).

The described problematic nature of adults interpreting data relating to children's views and opinions was mitigated in this study by affording children the opportunity to partake in the analysis process: children were given the opportunity to explain their rationales informing the photographs taken during the research conversations. This supported the researcher to access the influence of the children's social worlds on the data gathering process, thus supported better interpretation of the data analysed (Harden et al., 2000).

The researcher conducted preliminary analysis of the photographs in order to identify the photographs that were likely to foster quality discourse during the research conversations. This process undertaken was similar to that of Sharples et al. (2003), in their study exploring children's photographic behaviour. The researcher printed out the children's photographs on the day that they were taken and laid them all out to identify those that 'stood out' when viewing the photography data in its entirety, for example dark areas of the playground with no children present; or, a storage cupboard in the hall. Those photographs were then chosen as a focus for the research conversations the following day; the researcher directed the discourse to those photographs when the children required prompting.

The photographs that 'stood out' were not, however, the exclusive focus of the discourse; children were encouraged to talk around the photographs that they wished to at any time. This ensured that the researcher encouraged the children to express

their thoughts and opinions as freely as possible, enhancing their willingness to communicate and the richness of the findings (Hill, 1997). Once the research conversations had taken place, they were transcribed and coded according to the constant comparative method, as described earlier in this section.

5.9 Summary

This chapter has explored and justified the methodological process undertaken by the researcher in completing the research for this doctoral study. The chapter began by explaining the researcher's epistemological stance and theoretical perspective. The multiple case study approach that was adopted in this study was then explored and justified, leading to an introduction to the three case schools chosen. This chapter then moved on to discussing the pilot study undertaken for this research, the aims of it and the resulting changes to the methodology of this study. The research methods chosen in this study were then explained and justified. Ethical considerations pertinent to this thesis were then explored, leading to an evaluation of the validity and reliability of the study. Finally, a description of the data analysis technique employed in this research was provided.

The next chapter of this thesis will present the key themes to emerge from the data analysed in this study. These themes are discussed with specific reference to the models of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools presented in chapter 3. This allows the current process of social inclusion to be further explored in practice, enabling comparisons to be drawn between current educational practice and policy.

Chapter 6: Introducing the research schools

Before presenting and discussing the key findings that have emerged from the data gathered, it is important to introduce the reader to the three schools that sampled for involvement in this study. As previously discussed in section 5.3, the researcher aimed to sample the three research schools to provide data as generalisable as possible relating to the influence of TAs on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. To do this, the researcher sampled the schools to represent different regions of the country, each with particular community-based challenges to the education of their pupils. These differences in the schools' communities made for rich data collection regarding TAs' influence on the social challenges of inclusive education.

It should be acknowledged that researcher bias inevitably affects the reliability of the conclusions drawn from this research. As has previously been discussed, the researcher has a professional background in mainstream primary teaching. Thus, it should be noted that the researcher's interpretations and meaning-making with regard to the data analysed was influenced by previous experiences as a mainstream primary teacher. Additionally, this is true of the professionals with whom the interviews were conducted (Walliman, 2006). Professionals' previous experiences necessarily informed their perspectives regarding the chosen phenomena. Therefore, it was deemed important that some background to the experiences of the three schools' professionals, informing their views and opinions, be presented to the reader as introductions to each school are given.

6.1 School 1: Birchwood

Birchwood is an average sized primary school, situated in Stockton Local Authority (LA), situated between the counties of Durham and North Yorkshire. Birchwood's most recent Ofsted inspection report was in March 2013, in which it was rated as 'outstanding' with no key areas for improvement. The report specifically mentions the excellent influence of TAs in meeting the unique needs of individuals. The pupils that enter Birchwood at Nursery typically display language and communication skills that are well below the national average. Additionally, the proportion of students who are looked after by the LA or have families who are being supported with parenting by the LA is well above the national average. It is for this reason that Birchwood was chosen by the researcher; the particular challenges that the

school face with pupil safeguarding make it a rich source of data with regard to the researcher's foci in this doctoral study.

Birchwood is commended for enabling pupils to make rapid speech, language and communication progress, resulting in their pupils meeting national averages in this respect by the time that they leave. See Table 6.1 for information on those members of Birchwood's staff who participated in this research. An introduction to the Birchwood's pupils participating in this study is given in chapter 8.

Table 6.1 The professional background of Birchwood's staff

Participant and Pseudonym used	Professional Background
Head teacher Louise (*HT*)	Louise has been at Birchwood for 6 years. She has been in the teaching profession for 17 years and has always wanted to be a teacher. She has taught in a number of challenging schools across the country and came to Birchwood as a young Head, when the school was in special measures. Over the past 6 years Louise has been dedicated to the school reaching a rating of outstanding, which they achieved 1 1/2 years ago.
Assistant Head/ SENCO Sharon (*AH/SENCO*)	Sharon has been teaching for 38 years. She has spent all of those years working at Birchwood. Sharon is dedicated to her job and has no plans for retirement as she enjoys her job so much. Sharon works 3 days a week in her Year 5 classroom and in her office 2 days a week in her senior management role.
Teacher 1 Heather (*T1*)	Heather has worked at Birchwood for 23 years. She did a PGCE after completing a Philosophy degree in the North East and came to Birchwood immediately afterwards. Heather is on the senior management team and is responsible for Gifted and Talented children. Heather is the Year 6 teacher.
TA1 (Level 2) Kath (*TA1*)	Kath has been a TA for almost 20 years and was the first TA ever to work at Birchwood. Kath originally became a TA because both of her daughters were at Birchwood. Kath is an HLTA, although is employed at Level 2, and works mainly with Year 6 children.
TA2 (Level 2) Anne (*TA2*)	Anne has worked at Birchwood since 2002 and became interested in the role because her son is dyslexic and she wanted more information on how to help him. Anne supports individuals at the moment and her artistic skills are used creatively by the Head in running many social skill based interventions.
TA 3 (Level 2) Claire (*TA3*)	Claire has been working at Birchwood for 15 years and became a TA because both of her children attended the school and wanted to be able to support her son who had speech and language difficulties. She volunteered initially and then undertook her TA course at the local college. Claire mainly works with small groups of children and mainly delivers academic-based interventions.
TA 4 (Level 1) Nicola (*TA4*)	Nicola says she became a TA 'by accident.' She was a single mother in need of work and the job centre encouraged her to undertake a TA course. She initially worked in her daughter's school but came to Birchwood to work individually with a child. She has been at Birchwood for 2 years.

The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is nearly double the national average at Birchwood, allowing for the allocation of additional funding to the school, in meeting the needs of those vulnerable children. Additionally, the number of pupils identified with SEN at Birchwood is high. The school achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark (Gold) in 2011, which demonstrates it's strong emphasis on inclusive practice.

6.2 School 2: Mountford

Mountford is an average sized primary school in Wolverhampton Local Authority in the West Midlands. The school was visited by the researcher in January 2014; at that time the most recent inspection report was from November 2011, in which the school was judged to be 'Outstanding' in all key areas. However, a month after the researcher left the school the school was again inspected by Ofsted and found to be 'Good' in February 2014, with behaviour and safety of pupils judged as outstanding. The TAs at Mountford were directly mentioned in the new Ofsted report and their work was praised: 'Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to other pupils as a result of good, well-thought-out activities that interest and motivate them and good support from well-trained teaching assistants' (Ofsted, 2014). The professional relationships between TAs and Teachers were also deemed to be positive in making sure all pupils receive the help they need.

The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average in Mountford, as is the number of disabled pupils and those who have SEN. Almost three quarters of the pupils at Mountford come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. This means that many of the parents of pupils at Mountford have little or no English, posing particular problems with parental engagement with the school. The specific language challenges that the school's community present is the main reason why Mountford was chosen by the researcher. See Table 6.2 for information on those members of Mountford's staff who participated in this research. An introduction to Mountford's pupils participating in this study is given in chapter 8.

Table 6.2 The professional background of Mountford's staff.

Participant and Pseudonym used	Professional Background
Head teacher Samuel (*HT*)	Samuel began his career as a banker, however, he 'fell' into teaching about 25 years ago. He has always taught in the LA of Wolverhampton, but this is the first school in which Samuel has taught where there is a rich ethnic diversity. He has been Head of Mountford for 9 years.
Deputy Head/SENCO Lisa (*DH/SENCO*)	Lisa has been teaching at Mountford for 6 years; this is her third teaching post. She has known Samuel since she did her NQT year. He was the Deputy Head at her first school. Lisa is mainly an out of class Deputy Head, although she does take groups of gifted Year 6 students out of class in the mornings to do Numeracy interventions with them.
Teacher 1 Sanjit (*T1*)	Sanjit has been teaching for 8 years. He has spent all of those years teaching at Mountford. Sanjit has become a Maths specialist after Samuel picked up on his enjoyment of the subject. He feels very supported by Samuel and enjoys the ethnic diversity of the school. He teaches Year 5.
Teacher 2 Parmdeep (*T2*)	This is Parmdeep's second year of teaching, after having completed her NQT year at Mountford last year. She lives in the local area and teaches Year 3 at Mountford.
TA1 (Level 2) Lara (*TA1*)	Lara has been a TA for 18 years. Prior to this she worked in the NHS as a Nurse. Lara first became interested in supporting teaching because she has a son with Autism. She wanted to learn more about how to support him and the school recommended that she come in and help, which then eventually led to a TA role. She worked across 5 different schools in Wolverhampton before going full time at Mountford 12 years ago. She currently supports Year 5.
TA2 (Level 5) Becky (*TA2*)	Becky had a long career as a police officer before becoming a TA. She supported her children, who attended Mountford 10 years ago, on a school trip and was asked if she'd like to help out in the school, which then led to a TA role. She took 2 years out to work in a specialist behaviour school, but then returned to Mountford. She holds a foundation degree (Level 5), but is employed at level 2. Becky is timetabled all across the school, but primarily worked with SEBD pupils.
TA 3 (Level 2) Janet (*TA3*)	Janet has worked at Mountford for 7 years. She trained as a Nursery Nurse and came to the school for two of her placements. She struggled to find work as a Nursery Nurse so when Samuel offered her a job at Mountford she took it. Janet works as a one to one TA for a boy in Year 3. She's been working with him for 3 years.
TA 4 (Level 3) Lorraine (*TA4*)	Lorraine has only been at Mountford for a term. She's been employed as one to one support for a boy in Year 3 who is experiencing severe SEBD difficulties and is not accessing the curriculum. Lorraine used to work as a Mortgage Advisor and then in Textile design. Once her children were of school age she started training as a TA and has reached Level 3 standard. She is employed at Level 2.

6.3 School 3: Cherry Blossom

Cherry Blossom is an average sized primary school in the London borough of Greenwich. The overall percentage of children identified with SEN at Cherry Blossom stands at 30%, well above the national average. Cherry Blossom serves an ethically diverse community, yet almost all pupils live in the immediate vicinity of the school. The school is situated in the centre of a large social housing estate, which means that the direct school community, virtually exclusively, have strong personal relationships, which can pose challenges as well as opportunities for the school. Engaging with the whole school community is challenging for Cherry Blossom.

The researcher visited the school in November of 2014. At that time, the school was rated overall by Ofsted as 'Good' but 'Outstanding' in the areas of effectiveness of care, guidance and support and the effectiveness of partnerships to promote learning and well-being. Since the researcher's visit, the school has been visited again by Ofsted and was rated in January 2015 as 'Outstanding' overall and as 'Outstanding' in all key areas. Ofsted specifically mentioned the academic progress of children identified with SEN to be exceptional at Cherry Blossom.

As discussed briefly in section 5.4, Cherry Blossom was purposively sampled by the researcher through links with the Greater London Authority (GLA). At the time of research in the third school, the researcher was living in London and deemed it appropriate to sample a London-based school with challenges distinct from the first two research schools. As the researcher had been working closely with GLA during her ESRC Internship, she was well placed to consult their database of London 'Gold Club' schools. These 106 schools had been selected for 'Gold Club' status as a result of their strong academic performance, proven over a number of GLA defined variables. The researcher searched through the data on the 'Gold Club' schools to identify those with particularly high numbers of children identified with SEN. With 30% of the children identified with SEN, Cherry Blossom was well placed to be purposively sampled.

In February 2015, Cherry Blossom was identified by the Department for Education as one of the top 100 performing primary schools in England. They are awarded £1000 as recognition for the progress that their pupils make between Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2. See table 6.3 for information on the staff

members at Cherry Blossom who participated in the research. An introduction to
Cherry Blossom's pupils, participating in this study is given in chapter 8.

Table 6.3 The professional background of Cherry Blossom's staff.

Participant and Pseudonym used	Professional Background
Head teacher Jayne (*HT*)	Jayne has spent her whole working life in teaching. She will be retiring at the end of this academic year. She has always worked in the London borough of Greenwich and has been Head of Cherry Blossom for 11 years.
Teacher 1 Helen (*T1)*	Helen has been working at Cherry Blossom for 9 years. She was originally employed as a TA, working as one to one support. However, she completed a GTP in 2005 and then began working as a Teacher the following year. Helen teaches in Year 5.
Teacher 2 Ciaran (*T2)*	Ciaran is in his second year of teaching at Cherry Blossom. He is completing his NQT year this year, as he moved over from Ireland to take the role at Cherry Blossom and requires 2 years' teaching to gain NQT status. He teaches in Year 4, where there are 3 TAs present at all times of the day.
HLTA (Level 3) Briony *(HLTA)*	Briony is the only HLA at Cherry Blossom. She used to work as a Legal Secretary, but began working as a TA once she'd had her children. She became an HLTA when the post was first introduced in 2003. Briony has her own classroom in the school and mainly works with Year 6 children.
TA1 (Level 2) Casey *(TA1)*	Casey is employed as an ASD specialist TA at Cherry Blossom. After becoming a young Mum, Casey decided she'd like to work as a TA when her daughter started school. She undertook her Level 2 qualification and works with children across the school, mainly implementing social skill based interventions.
TA2 (Level 3) Gillian (*TA2)*	Gillian has worked at Cherry Blossom for a term. Previously, she was a childminder and has a Level 3 Diploma in Early Years and Childcare. Gillian is employed at Level 2 to work as a one to one TA with a boy in Year 4.
TA 3 (Level 2) Maria (*TA3)*	Maria has always worked at Cherry Blossom, having started working in Nursery when her youngest child was of school age. Maria is qualified to Level 2 and is currently working towards her Level 3 qualification. She works as a one to one TA with two children in the school, one in Year 1 and one in Year 4.
Gina (*TA4)*	Gina has worked at Cherry Blossom for 2 years. She has worked as a TA in various schools across Greenwich, over a period of 11 years. Gina is from Cyprus, and worked as a bilingual TA for 9 years before working at Cherry Blossom. She works as a general TA in Year 5.
Li (*TA5)*	Li has been working at Cherry Blossom for 8 years. She began training as a TA once her eldest child was of school age. Li originates from Vietnam, having come to England at the age of 8 with no English. Li is qualified to Level 3, and is working towards her achieving a Foundation Degree (Level 5). Li works as a general class TA in Year 4.
Learning Mentor (Level 3) Tina *(LM)*	When Tina was growing up she wanted to be a nurse. Tina has worked in schools for 19 years, 12 of which as a TA in a mainstream school in Greenwich and then 2 as a TA in a PRU. She has been at Cherry Blossom for 5 years now, employed as a Learning Mentor.

Chapter 7: Data Presentation and Analysis: TAs

This chapter simultaneously presents and discusses the key findings that have emerged from the data pertinent to research question 1:

RQ1: How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining the responsibilities within their role in mainstream primary schools?

As the data collected in this study are qualitative in nature, suitable organisation of codes under chapters and sub-headings are required, in order to make the relationships identified clear and manageable (Swetnam, 2001). The most appropriate organisation of chapters and sub-headings for the data presented and analysed in this study are deemed by the researcher to be the research questions. Thus, the codes that have arisen from the analysis of data relevant to the research questions are addressed in separate chapters. This approach affords in-depth exploration of the key themes relevant to each research question.

The data relating to the first research question is presented and discussed in this chapter. As research questions two and three relate directly to the model of social inclusion (presented in chapter three) exploring the data pertinent to questions two and three separately from question one enables more focused data analysis. Thus, the data relating to questions two and three are explored in chapters 9 and 10, after introducing the pupils participating in this research in chapter 8.

This chapter explores the key themes to emerge from the interview data, collected in the three research schools, in relation to research question 1. The themes are presented under sub-headings: TA: 'Jack of all trades and master of none;' TAs: Leaders in learning; Importance of experience; Accountability versus responsibility; Inadequacy of pay and contracts; Overqualification of TAs; Status and respect; Importance of figureheads of management. These sub-headings emerged during the comparative data analysis process, in which codes were formed, revisited and compared in order to gain full access to the meaning of the data collected (see section 5.8). Information on the background of the staff participants was presented in chapter 6, and provides a lens through which the reader can consider the key themes to emerge in this chapter. Direct quotations from participants are presented in italics for ease of distinction.

7.1 TA *'Jack of all trades and master of none'* (Janet, TA3, Mountford)

'It's just so ingrained that it's quite hard to pick out what it is [Responsibilities within TAs' role]' (Louise HT, Birchwood).

'I wouldn't know where to start because I do things without thinking about them' (Claire, TA3, Birchwood).

'General dogsbody!' (Gina, TA4, Cherry Blossom).

'Jack of all trades and master of none was Janet's initial response when asked the question: 'In a typical lesson, what would your role be?' This description is similar to that of 'changing caps,' which is a term that emerged from the researcher's MPhil pilot study data; it describes the multi-faceted nature of the role of TAs. The Headteacher of Riverdale (the pilot study school) articulated, *'they (TAs) can change caps without even thinking about it; first aid cap, HLTA cap, intervention cap, different intervention cap, everything'* (Caroline, HT) (Saddler, 2012).

The quotations at the beginning of this sub-section represent data gathered from the professionals at all three research schools. They strongly reinforce the notion that TAs undertake multi-faceted roles, made up of responsibilities requiring a range of skills. This concept presents a difficulty in identifying all responsibilities that comprise TAs' role. All staff members interviewed for this study noted the high number of duties and responsibilities undertaken by the TAs in the school on a daily basis. This finding resonates with those of Blatchford et al. (2009); Collins & Simco (2006); Farrell (2005) and Hancock & Collins, (2005). In addition to this, the data suggest that the duties and responsibilities of TAs are not only numerous, but difficult to define. Often TAs interviewed spoke of the constantly evolving nature of their roles, many aligning with the viewpoint of Claire (TA3, Birchwood), that they '*do things without thinking about them'* Thus, the data gathered in this study suggest that both defining and monitoring the responsibilities that comprise the role of TAs in mainstream primary schools is challenging.

It is interesting to note that 9 out of the 12 TAs interviewed were positive about the wide variety within and changeability of their role. Kath stated, '*I am always up for having a change, I've no problems with change at all, it would probably be boring otherwise'* (TA1). Those TAs also expressed positivity about the

flexibility in their roles. Indeed, flexibility was seen as a defining characteristic of TAs' role with all but one of the professionals interviewed using the word 'flexibility' to describe the role. This concept of flexibility was strongly related to children's changeable needs; TAs' role often needed to change with little warning, due to the needs that children presented on individual school days. As Tina (Learning Mentor, School 3) put it; *'I can't possibly work to a timetable because who knows how these children come into school in the morning. My day is based on how the children are feeling basically.'* This data highlights the problematic nature of achieving effective timetabling of TAs.

This finding contradicts those of Devecchi and Rouse (2010), Gerschel (2005) and Hancock, Hall, Cable and Eyres (2010), as well as Mansaray's (2006) case study of an inner-London primary school. Mansaray found that TAs were generally unsupported and overwhelmed by the constant change of pace. Perhaps TAs' responses to the variety in their role are affected by the quality of dialogue between staff, or the confidence that TAs display within their roles. Additionally, the degree to which TAs' relationships with the class Teachers at Birchwood are supportive will likely influence the degree of TAs' satisfaction within their role. As the schools were purposively sampled, with one of the criteria being to be rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, it is likely that good practice will have been observed by the researcher with regard to effective professional relationships.

Becky (TA2, Mountford) was not as positive about the wide variety and changeability within her role. She stated, '*I just don't know whether I'm coming or going sometimes. It's too much to be pulled here and there away from your timetable all the time because you're not getting to support the children that you know the best.'* Becky's statement relates to the Mansaray's (2006) finding that TAs were often overwhelmed by the change of pace. Becky's statement also suggests that she felt that her timetable did not reflect the realities of the school day.

Additionally, Janet's use of the phrase '*Jack of all trades and master of none'* suggests that she not only acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of her role, but also feels that her skills are not sufficiently developed, or indeed valued sufficiently, to be able to 'master' the responsibilities within it. Janet's statement is particularly interesting, as later in her interview she highlights her confidence in leading the

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learning experiences of the children she works with. This is explored further in the following section.

7.2 TAs: Leaders in learning

'They [TAs] are leaders in learning in their own way, they are leading learning with their small groups' (Samuel, HT, Mountford).

All but two (n = 12, 86%) of the TAs interviewed stated that they felt confident in their role. 50% (n = 7) of the TAs interviewed also explained that they would be confident to lead whole class teaching, which requires very different skills to supporting a group. Interestingly, these 7 TAs were the participants with the highest number of years in the role, which suggests that confidence in the role is linked to experience. Li (TA4, Cherry Blossom) articulated her level of confidence in her skills by stating; *'when we have supply Teachers in I keep thinking 'I'm doing the work here,' I might as well just do it!'* A further two TAs interviewed also stated that they felt confident to lead the learning of the whole class when the teacher was unable to do so. This suggests that many of the TAs interviewed believed they have the skills and knowledge required to lead learning, responsibilities which traditionally sit exclusively within the role of the teacher. Additionally, many Teachers and Senior Leaders interviewed in the research schools also articulated that their school's TAs were capable of leading learning, as is demonstrated by the quotation at the beginning of this subheading. The observations undertaken in the case schools reinforce this viewpoint, as all but two (83%) TAs observed led learning via interventions either in small group or one to one working structures.

Perhaps one of the reasons why most TAs interviewed felt confident in their role is as a result of the autonomy that most were afforded with regard to their work with children. All TAs interviewed were responsible for planning and assessing small groups of children in both Literacy and Numeracy, with some TAs planning and assessing interventions outside of discrete subject teaching (this will be explored further in chapter 10). These TAs most often withdrew between 4 and 8 children from the classroom, during the discrete subject teaching, and supported them independently. All TAs were given an overview of the weekly whole-class based planning for these sessions, but were very often expected to plan for their groups independently. Anne (TA2, Birchwood) identified that her role related to the

assessment of the group of children with which she works daily: *'I know exactly where the children start and when they finish I know exactly where they are finishing.'* Additionally, those TAs who were not responsible for group work frequently planned activities for individual working with a child, which were often undertaken during teacher-led work.

However, although most TAs were openly confident about their planning and assessment abilities, they did not view their planning as similar to that of the Teachers in the school. Kath (TA2, Birchwood) described it as, '*we plan a little bit but it's sort of sub-planning to the main planning I would say. We more reinforce what's being taught.'* This is indicative of a widespread concern from TAs that their role not be equated, both in terms of status and skills, to that of the teacher. Many TAs were visibly uncomfortable with stating that they felt they had the skills and knowledge of a teacher, using phrases such as '*I'm not blowing my own trumpet but…'* (Becky, TA2, Mountford) and '*I'm not being bigheaded but…'* (Li, TA4, Cherry Blossom).

This modest confidence displayed by TAs is interesting when addressing the debate regarding that ability of TAs to undertake a pedagogical role (see section 2.2). According to Alexander (2004) pedagogy is a skill unique to Teachers, afforded by their higher-level training, enabling them to develop the capacity to make informed, responsible decisions about the teaching process. His definition of pedagogy is, 'what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted' (p.11).

Most TAs have not accessed the same level of training as Teachers, thus, it is likely that many TAs have not been encouraged to foster pedagogical skills through education. Yet, by taking responsibility for planning and assessment tasks, TAs are clearly making autonomous decisions regarding the learning process of their students and are possibly making pedagogical decisions. Indeed, the skills that both Teachers and TAs attribute to the role of TAs suggest pedagogical decision-making. This suggests that Alexander's assertion of pedagogy being a skill unique to teachers may not represent the reality. When asked to discuss the skills that the TAs at their schools possess, many staff equated them to those of a teacher; Heather (T1, Birchwood) replied, *'to be honest, I think they need to be like a teacher.'* This response is virtually identical to those of four other Teachers and suggests that TAs have the potential to fulfill Alexander's definition of pedagogy. However, it is obvious from previous

research that not all TAs are capable of making decisions that can be attributed to pedagogical understanding. Additionally, whether or not these potential pedagogical decisions are informed or indeed effective is not known (Burton & Goodman, 2011). Furthermore, senior leaders in each school explained that not all their TAs had the skills of a teacher. Clearly, determining what has convinced some TAs and Teachers at the research schools that TAs are able to make potentially pedagogical decisions is important in highlighting improvements to the current management and deployment of TAs nationally.

7.3 Importance of experience

'I love Year 6, I know what's coming, I know what we do' (Kath, TA1, Birchwood).
'If I'm struggling to find things for a child then I just go home and look at things I've used before. You get used to knowing what will work for some children and what won't' (Anne, TA2, Birchwood).
'I didn't follow a scheme, I just knew that they would struggle with it' (Claire, TA3, Mountford).

The above quotations, from TAs across all three research schools, highlight the perceived value of their experience in demonstrating success in their role. All TAs mentioned the importance of experience, even the newest TA interviewed (Gillian, TA2, Cherry Blossom) who explained that her previous role as a nursery leader had greatly influenced her practice in her term-long role at Cherry Blossom. This is most likely due to the inadequacy in training that TAs receive; it is often of short duration and insufficiently prepares TAs for the wide variety of tasks undertaken in their role (Burgess & Mayes, 2009; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Tucker, 2009).

Many TA training courses are offered in distance learning formats and, of those requiring attendance, most are of approximately 6 month duration (TES, 2009). Li (TA4, Cherry Blossom) highlighted the extremely short duration of her course: *'I did an NVQ Level 3 TA qualification, which was 6 weeks I think, a one off intense course.'* This short duration results in minimal school experiences, forcing TAs to build 'on the job' skills. This, perhaps, is why the TAs interviewed valued their built up experience in improving pupils' learning experiences. More needs to be done to improve the initial training experiences that TAs have access to, so that more TAs

enter the role with adequate understanding of children's needs, particularly in relation to children identified with SEN.

It should be noted, however, that staff members in all three research schools spoke of available training opportunities for TAs, once in role, although these were variable by school and staff member. At Birchwood, all staff members, including TAs, were able to request a visit to an educational provider or access a training course that met their interests. Kath described it as: *'We get an email of all the training courses that are available for TAs and if we are interested we just say and they sort it out. We can also ask to go somewhere. So last year I was looking after a Down's boy and I went to a special school to see what they did with Down's children* (TA2, Birchwood*)*. Louise (HT, Birchwood) explained the rationale behind the training opportunities, *'they've got to be open to visiting other settings and learning and being reflective in their practice. It's about skilling them up and empowering them.'* Louise's description highlights the value that she places on the TAs in her school. It clearly demonstrates that TAs are as valued as Teachers in terms of their professional needs; '*empowering*' staff is only a priority if they are viewed with importance. This suggests that national professionalisation of the role of TAs could be effective, in valuing their contribution to pupils' education (Webster, 2014).

The extensive training that TAs have access to at Birchwood is not typical of the average primary school in England, which is generally much more limited and often not related to the skills, knowledge or interests of individual TAs (Burgess & Mayes, 2009; Saddler, 2012). Extensive training opportunities at Birchwood were likely available as a result of the Headteacher's specific interest in CPD, which she discussed with the researcher at their informal first meeting. The training opportunities available to staff in Cherry Blossom and Mountford were fewer and more sporadic, with preference often given to staff who displayed most motivation to attend. As Casey (TA2, Cherry Blossom) explained: *'Our old SENCO used to put the booklet for the borough on the table, but that don't happen anymore. Senior leadership now go through and choose, which is fine, but I think everyone needs to be given the same opportunities.'* Therefore participants' discussions with the researcher regarding training highlighted varying experiences of training opportunities. Additionally, the training opportunities provided seemed to vary in quality and relevance, the highest of which was identified by TAs to be when the training had

been requested by them. However, this only serves to strengthen the argument that TAs' initial training is often inadequate and leads to over-reliance on building up experience and 'learning on the job' methods.

7.4 Accountability versus responsibility

When asked interview questions which aimed to identify the responsibilities within TAs' roles, staff members at all three research schools discussed 'role-blurring' between TAs and Teachers. This blurring in roles was often articulated using the terms 'accountability' and 'responsibility.' All staff members interviewed noted the pressure on the whole staff to perform and raise standards, indicating shared understandings within the professional workforce. Sharon highlighted this: *'We've got to remember that everything is about impacting on standards'* (AH/SENCO, Birchwood). Heather also notes the accountability of the TAs in the school, *'they are held accountable and they do feed back' (*T1, Birchwood). Additionally, 50% (n=7) of the TAs interviewed spoke of pressure to raise standards, some using the term 'accountable.'

The data gathered consistently indicate that staff members across the three research schools perceive the fundamental difference between the role of the teacher and that of TAs to lie with responsibility levels. As Anne puts it: *'I think the main difference is in responsibility, at the end of the day whatever happens, Heather is responsible for the children in this class and I'm not really, or only to a degree'* (TA2, Birchwood). This suggests that, as a member of school staff, TAs are accountable for improving the children's learning, but Teachers hold ultimate responsibility for the achievement and safety of the children. Documentary analysis indicated that TAs have certain contractual responsibilities within their role, which render them accountable, but not responsible for children's learning. Helen explains this by stating: *'Ultimately, you know that the responsibility of the children will fall on the class teacher, and it should, but that's not to say that there shouldn't be certain responsibilities on TAs'* (T1, Cherry Blossom). This perceived difference between accountability and responsibility perhaps reflects the different levels of training between Teachers and TAs; the responsibility for meeting academic standards is not a typical part of TAs' training, it is for Teachers.

7.5 Inadequacy of pay and contracts

All TAs interviewed at all three research schools stated that they viewed their pay to be inadequate for the role that they undertook. This is in line with other recent research by Devecchi, Dettori and Doveston (2012) into the status of TAs in Italy and England. However, contrary to the above research, when TAs mentioned poor pay, this did not seem to the researcher to be a barrier to their effective working. It was noted as something that would be changed in an ideal world but was, as Anne put it, '*just something you've got to accept. You've just got to get on with it.*' (TA2, Birchwood). However, pay was a more significant issue at Mountford. The week before the researcher entered the school, Wolverhampton LA announced that all TAs' pay would be cut by 2%. This was obviously negatively perceived by the TAs of Mountford, who viewed the cut as particularly unfair to a profession which is already widely acknowledged to receive low pay for the work they undertake. This lack of perceived fair payment for the role may have resulted in TAs feeling demoralised and exploited, as Lara articulated: '*The pay just shows a lack of appreciation, and you're not given any about anything while the pay is like this. Appreciation, that's all you want at the end of the day*' (TA1, Mountford). Lara's viewpoint is particularly problematic when it is considered that it may lead to experiences for the pupils with which TAs work (ibid).

Poor pay was not only mentioned by TAs, but also by Teachers. Heather explained the difficulty with TAs covering whole classes, as opposed to supply Teachers coming in: '*Sometimes I do think, you know, Kath is taking on this class and doing a better job than somebody who would be getting paid a lot more than her. That always, that's one thing I don't find fair. They are doing exactly the same job.*' (T1, Birchwood). This further problematises the previously discussed role-blurring in terms of pedagogical decision-making between Teachers and TAs.

Additionally, both Teachers and TAs also mentioned the lack of job security for many TAs across all research schools. Many TAs had joined the research schools to provide individual support for one child who had been awarded a Statement of SEN; thus, the funding for TAs' role is often linked to individual children. This means that job security is only guaranteed while the individual child is attending the school. 33% of the TAs interviewed were on permanent contracts, the majority were on year-long contracts. Of those TAs who were on permanent contracts, they had frequently

waited a number of years before their contracts were made permanent. This creates a pressure on TAs to build a strong bond with the child with which they are working, which can be problematic, due to resulting difficulties with SEN-velcro syndrome and often ineffective, forced working relationships between TAs and children.

This further highlights the previously discussed pressure on TAs in terms of accountability in improving standards. Louise described an incident of one TAs' job insecurity: *'We had a TA last year that was on a one to one contract and she just didn't gel with that child, so it's picking up things like that'* (Lisa, DH/SENCO, Mountford). This example highlights the need to research ways in which TAs' contractual job descriptions could become more stable.

7.6 Over-qualification of TAs

Perhaps the inadequacy of TAs' pay is compounded by the fact that 83% of the TAs interviewed across the research schools were qualified to a higher level than they were employed at. In some cases the gaps between employment level and qualification level were quite large, for example Becky (TA2) at Mountford had obtained a Foundation Degree (to Level 5) and was employed at Level 2. Additionally, two other TAs (Li and Lara) had achieved HLA status, and were also employed at Level 2. What is more surprising is that in all three cases the schools had encouraged their staff members to improve their qualification levels, with some subsidising the costs of the training. This has led to some dissatisfaction amongst the staff; they had up-skilled, but were unable to access promotional roles. Perhaps more needs to be done to ensure that schools encouraging their TAs to access higher qualifications make promotional positions available regularly. Otherwise, TAs will be less likely to exercise their improved skills, and schools may not see the benefits of this.

For Becky, Li and Lara, the decision to take/remain in a role that required a lower level of qualification than they held was due to the lack of availability of HLTA roles in their local areas. However, Kath actively chose not to put her HLTA status into practice at Birchwood:

> *'I've also done an HLTA, which I've got but I don't actually put that into practice. That's my choice and actually that's, thankfully, with the Head that's*

fine. It was just one of those things, I did it, I loved doing it, I thoroughly enjoyed doing the course, but I didn't know if it's really what I wanted to do. I do like to work in small groups, I like the idea of working with a certain number of children, rather than taking whole classes. Although we do do that, because we are level 3s, so we do step in now and again. But I don't want to do that all the time' (TA1).

Kath's viewpoint suggests that her primary role in working with individuals or small groups is most rewarding. Indeed, when asked what they enjoy most about their role, all TAs interviewed stated working with children; they spoke of the satisfaction of really getting to know the pupils that they work with as individuals. Both TAs and Teachers noted that it was much more difficult for Teachers to build as strong relationships with children than TAs, due to the time intensive rapport built. Heather (T1, Birchwood) voiced that Kath's relationships with the children she works with were stronger than those that she could build: *'I think they have that closer … especially with that group they are working with they do have a close bond and they do nurture them really really well'* (T1, 2013).

Additionally, it is possible that Kath was not motivated to work as an HLTA due to the increased level of planning and assessment associated with the role; these tasks were stated by all TAs interviewed as reasons not to pursue a career in teaching. Claire explained: *'It's very different in that I can go home and I don't have loads and loads and loads of planning. I can leave it at school and just plan for my little group where Sharon has all of her SEN, you know, and a lot of other things. I know that sometimes at weekends she'd be up till 12 o'clock and that's the side I wouldn't want to have. So I think I'm quite happy with my role as a teaching assistant'* (TA3, Mountford).

However, TAs interviewed did not '*leave it at school'* as Claire put it. All TAs told the researcher that they spent a proportion of their unpaid time working. Many TAs often marked when they arrived at home in the evenings and planned their Literacy and Numeracy lessons at weekends. Additionally, all TAs arrived in the morning before their paid work commenced and stayed later than their paid hours in the afternoon. When it is considered that TAs' poor pay is highlighted as a key theme from this research, there is a real sense that efficacy of the TAs' role relies on

goodwill. If this is to continue, it is important that the current government recognises the goodwill that TAs are offering towards their role, and rewards it accordingly.

7.7 Status and respect

'You're not a TA, you're part of the teaching team' (Louise, HT, Birchwood)
'Anything that's staff related, we're always welcome to come to, we're included in it'
(Claire, TA3, Birchwood).
'Heather refers to all of us in the classroom as Teachers, which I like because it puts us all on the same level' (Kath, TA1, Birchwood).
'I always feel that, I mean we don't say that, but sometimes it comes across like they are not a teacher and I hate that if anybody ever says that' (Heather, T1, Birchwood).

The quotations above reflect the strong sense of perceived equality in status between TAs and Teachers at Birchwood. All staff members working with children were called 'Teachers,' which immediately created an ethos of respect from the pupils, as well as a strong sense of teamwork across the staff. This ethos of equality in terms of respect is, perhaps, the reason why most pupils of Birchwood viewed the TAs with as much respect as the Teachers. Claire certainly felt that was the case: *'There is more respect from the children because the Teachers treat us in the same way' (*TA3). Additionally, Nicole reinforced this viewpoint: *'I think they [the children] know we're teaching assistants but I think we get the same respect because I don't think that their lunchtime assistants get the same'* (TA4).

However, uniform notions of equal status were not as present at Cherry Blossom or Mountford. Although most staff spoke of children viewing TAs as professionals who commanded respect, there was most disparity in status between staff members of different positional responsibilities. Lara (TA3) explained her perception on status amongst the staff at Mountford:

> *'Well, sometimes they do pull the card, 'I'm the Teacher, you're the TA' and sometimes I object to that because I'm of an older age group but on the whole I just do what I'm told. I wanted to go on a Gardening course recently and I was told there wasn't any funding. That grieves you in some ways because I*

was doing something beneficial for the children, and then they go and buy 60 ipads, and the Teachers get one each, so them sort of things grate on me.'

The data therefore highlighted the importance of creating a culture and ethos of respect for TAs, stemming from the senior management team, in order that children view TAs as professionals who command respect. Recent research suggests that a culture of equality between TAs and Teachers is often lacking in mainstream primary schools across England (Burgess & Mayes, 2007; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008). Perhaps educational policy should focus on ways to engender equality, to promote equal respect between TAs and Teachers in mainstream primary schools. Ultimately, if TAs are not experiencing social inclusion within their working environment, they will be less likely to effectively facilitate the social inclusion of the pupils with which they work (Devecchi, Dettori & Doveston, 2012).

7.8 Importance of figureheads in management

The staff member chosen to manage the TAs differed somewhat across Birchwood, Mountford and Cherry Blossom. However, all staff members interviewed at each school were aware of who TAs' manager(s) were, and of the management structure across the schools. Therefore, it can be identified that visible figureheads were present in the research schools. It is likely that this will have resulted in more effective management of TAs, as TAs were able to identify which staff member to approach when experiencing difficulties relating to their management.

All participants at Birchwood identified Sharon (AH/SENCO) as having overall responsibility for the management of TAs. This is in line with policy documentation (DfES, 2001), which names the SENCO as having specific positional responsibilities relating to the management of TAs (as was discussed in section 2.3). Sharon's responsibilities included leading monthly meetings with TAs, managing the school's buddy system for new TAs, timetabling, drop in observations of TAs and formal observations of TAs. However, this is not in line with findings from other studies into the management of TAs in English mainstream primary schools, which have identified the Headteacher as most commonly taking overall responsibility for managing TAs (Smith, Whitby & Sharp, 2004, p.11). It should be recognised that Sharon is employed as both SENCO and Assistant Head at Birchwood, therefore, it is

unclear as to whether she is taking on management of the TAs as part of her SENCO role or her Assistant Head role.

However, there were some tasks within TAs' management that interviewed participants at Birchwood stated were undertaken by the Headteacher, Louise. These included yearly 'job chats' with TAs on an individual basis, which are otherwise known as professional development meetings, as well as organisation of training for TAs. This structure was similar at Mountford and Cherry Blossom, with the Headteacher playing an integral part in performance management of TAs in the school. Yet, at Cherry Blossom the Headteacher delegated a number of management responsibilities to Briony, an HLTA, who had significant positional responsibilities related to TAs' management, including maintenance of performance management records and timetabling of TAs.

The performance management and professional development meetings that were employed across the research schools particularly relate to NFER's (2006) sixth principle for effective management (see chapter 2.3): 'support and develop HLTAs in their role, including CPD, performance reviews, resource allocation (especially planning time) and role/career development (p.8). It seems that members of the senior leadership team undertook the management of TAs at Birchwood as a 'team effort.' The literature suggests that the complexity of TAs' role requires particularly strong leadership to manage (Gerschel, 2005). Consequently, it may have been deemed most effective to share the responsibility amongst the senior leadership team across the schools.

All TAs spoke very positively of their management, and voiced a willingness to approach senior management with any difficult issues they faced in their roles. This suggests that a 'team effort' approach to TAs management might be most successful in mainstream primary schools. None of the TAs interviewed identified anything that they would change about their management, apart from the already discussed difficulties for some in accessing effective training. Claire at Birchwood summed up the benefits of a team work approach to staff management, *'It's more like a family here to be honest'* (TA3).

7.9 Summary

This chapter has presented and explored the key themes to emerge in relation to the management of TAs' role and the responsibilities within it, across all three research schools. The themes to emerge included: TA: 'Jack of all trades and master of none;' TAs: Leaders in learning; Importance of experience; Accountability versus responsibility; Inadequacy of pay and contracts; Over-qualification of TAs; Status and respect; Figureheads of management.

These themes have identified that there are a number of current significant barriers to the successful management of TAs across the three research schools. Some positive approaches to TAs' management, as perceived by the staff members involved in this research, have also been identified. Identification of both the positive and negative approaches to TAs' management has enabled the development of Figure 7.1. Figure 7.1 presents themes directly related to the answering of research question 1 in this study: How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining the responsibilities within TAs' role in mainstream primary schools?

Figure 7.1 presents the key approaches likely to be successful with regard to the management of TAs at the three case study schools participating in this study. It should be stressed that these characteristics pertain to the schools involved in this study only, therefore are not widely generalisable to all mainstream primary schools across England. Additionally, it is important to note that it is not known whether or not these approaches result in high quality learning experiences for pupils; therefore, Figure 7.1 should not be viewed as a tool by which quality teaching and learning can be assured, rather as a tool by which a successful management culture could be engendered. Yet, these approaches are in line with the findings of many other studies that have researched TAs' management structures (Higgins & Kokotsaki, 2011; Blatchford et al., 2009; Gerschel, 2005). It is appropriate to translate these findings to what Bassey (1998) terms a 'fuzzy generalization.' By applying the understandings regarding effective management of TAs from this study, understandings of 'other schools' can be improved and this has the potential to contribute to collective knowledge about effective approaches to TAs' management in 'The School' (Simons, 1980).

Figure 7.1 Successful approaches to TAs' management across research schools
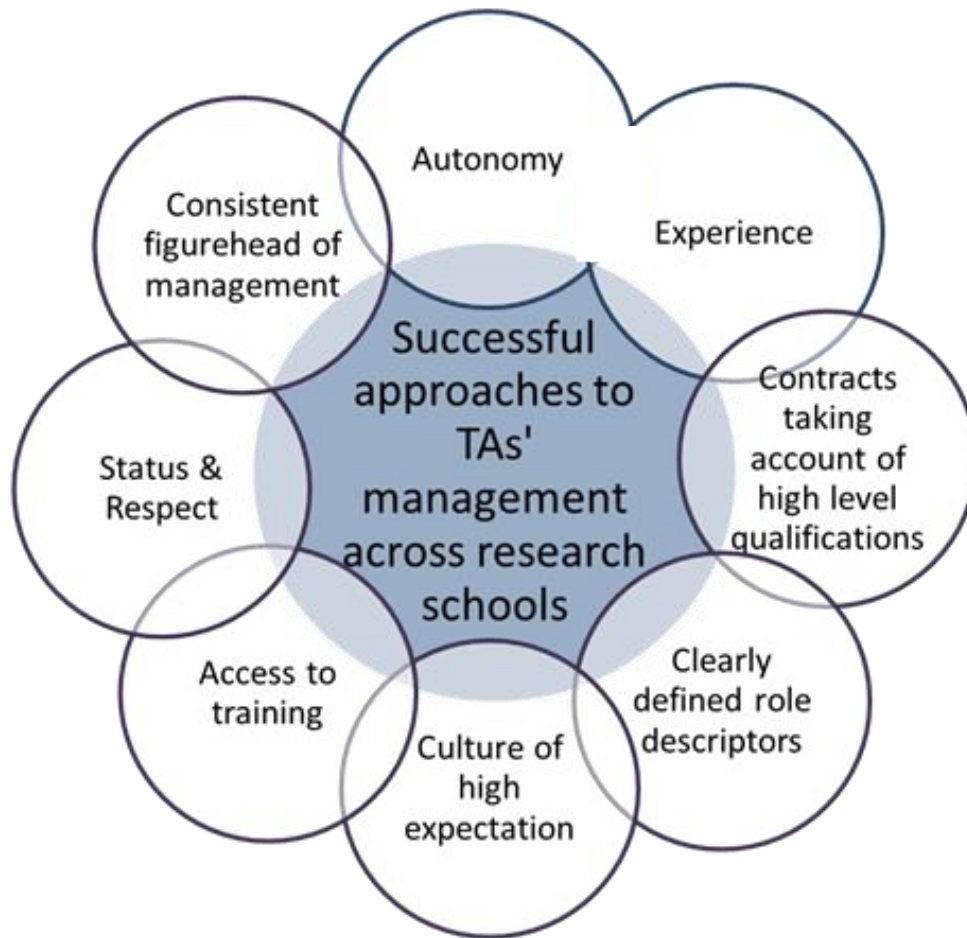
Figure 7.1 identifies that the following approaches are likely to result in successful management of TAs across the three schools involved in this study: Autonomy; Experience; Status & Respect; Access to Training; Culture of high expectation; Clearly defined role descriptors; Contracts taking account of high level qualifications; and, Consistent figurehead of management.

It can be seen from Figure 7.1 that the circles containing approaches to TAs' management are overlapping. This indicates that these approaches are inter-related, and can inform the success of each other; for example, contracts taking account of high level of qualifications are likely to engender a culture of high expectation, as the high level skills and abilities of TAs have been recognised and are more likely to inform senior managers' expectations. Additionally, all circles containing approaches to management are unshaded. This indicates that barriers were identified in relation to these approaches, to differing degrees, across the three schools participating in this

study. These barriers presented significant challenges to the effective management of TAs.

The data gathered enabled the tentative suggestion that TAs experienced higher levels of confidence in their role when autonomy was afforded to them by their management. It appeared that many TAs appreciated being given the autonomy to plan and deliver interventions, with minimal input from the teacher and in a space independent from the main teaching occurring in the classroom. This could be as a result of the trust shown by teachers towards TAs in allowing them to take ownership over the implementation of interventions. However, it appears that for this TA autonomy to result in higher confidence levels, it should perhaps be coupled with extensive experience. TAs with extensive experience were most likely to speak positively about taking ownership over planning and delivering interventions. TAs who were relatively new to the role generally spoke less positively about autonomy. Consequently, the overlapping lines between the circles representing 'Autonomy' and 'Experience' have been removed, to indicate the fluid relationship between them.

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, one of the greatest barriers to effective management of TAs in the research schools appeared to be Over-qualification of TAs, leading to difficulties in role-blurring between Teachers and TAs, as well as a culture of high expectations in terms of TAs' abilities within their role, not afforded by their current pay rates. All TAs voiced that they spent a significant amount of their unpaid time at home working, most commonly either marking or preparing lessons. This may have contributed to what the data identified as problematic levels of job satisfaction amongst some of the TAs interviewed. Clearly, there was a culture of expectation in all three research schools that TAs would give more to their role than their pay and hours in school afforded. This was made particularly difficult to challenge by the general inadequacy of contracts in defining TAs' role and responsibilities.

A culture of high expectation is regarded as an effective approach to TAs' management, in encouraging TAs to achieve their potential within their role. However, schools should be mindful that unreasonably high expectations can result in low levels of job satisfaction and excessive pressure in terms of TAs' accountability for pupils' progress. Thus, Culture of high expectation is unshaded in the model to

highlight the barrier of excessively high expectations, which was identified in some of the research schools.

Additionally, the data presented in this chapter have identified that TAs were not always given adequate training to prepare them for the wide variety of tasks undertaken within their role. Although TAs in all three research schools spoke of available training opportunities, they were variable by school and staff member. Furthermore, virtually all training opportunities that TAs accessed were aimed at and chosen by the Teachers, thus were often of limited relevance and support to TAs in their role. A lack of access to relevant training opportunities for TAs in mainstream primary schools has been widely acknowledged across a number of studies (Burgess & Mayes, 2009; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Tucker, 2009). TAs were likely to speak more positively about their management if/when they had accessed training opportunities that aligned with their personal interests and/or were of direct relevance to the responsibilities that they undertook within their role . It seems likely that, in the contexts researched in this study, a combination of autonomy, backed up by extensive experience, and access to training requested by TAs would denote successful approaches to TAs' management.

The data informing this chapter have indicated that some TAs did not perceive their status as equal to teachers in their school, and thus felt that their role was not as well respected. This is depicted as a barrier to effective management of TAs in Figure 7.1, as it often prevented TAs from engaging in dialogue with the Teachers to support optimal learning experiences for the pupils worked with. Finally, TAs spoke positively about their management if there was an obvious figurehead of management, for example, Sharon (AH/SENCO) at Birchwood. Although much of TAs' management across the three research schools was identified as a 'team effort,' it appears important that a figurehead was present, so that TAs are aware of the staff member they should approach when experiencing any difficulties with the responsibilities within their role.

As the data pertinent to the answering of research question one has been explored, it is now appropriate to present and analyse the data relevant to research questions two and three. Chapter 8 introduces the pupils participating in this research, which supports the presentation of data related to research questions two and three in chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 8: Introducing the participating pupils

This chapter provides information on the pupils sampled to undertake the photography task and follow-up research conversation, in each of the three research schools. As with the participating staff members, pseudonyms have been used throughout this section and the remainder of this thesis. The information presented was gathered from conversations with Teachers, TAs and pupils themselves, as well as from each pupil's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Statement of SEN, if applicable. Thus, it should be recognised that much of what is presented in this chapter, by way of description, is opinion-based, originating from the professionals working with the participating pupils. However, it is still important to include, as professionals' opinions on the needs of individuals have informed the support given to that pupil, and are therefore important in understanding all influences on a pupil's education.

It is important for the reader to form an understanding of each pupil's particular needs, both academic and social, from the point of view of the child his/herself and the educational professionals working with him/her. This will allow the reader to better contextualise the conclusions made with regard to the pupils involved in this study. Additionally, it is useful to acknowledge the existing influences on each pupil, in terms of expectations and assumptions, in order to optimally analyse the data gathered, and the conclusions made with regard to that pupil.

8.1 Birchwood

The researcher was based in Year 5 and Year 6 classrooms throughout the two-week research period. Four children from Year 5 and four children from Year 6 were chosen to undertake the photography task and follow up research conversation with the researcher. This method was discussed in detail in section 5.5. The researcher had intended to sample students according to their SEN status, with children identified with SEN best placed for involvement in this study. However, as was discussed in chapter 4, the heterogeneous nature of individuals makes 'labelling' of children under the umbrella category of 'SEN' problematic. Thus, the researcher found that each child considered for involvement in this study presented with a number of characteristics relevant to this study that were not always 'labelled' as

'SEN.' Additionally, there were some instances in which children that did fall within the label of 'SEN' appeared to display well-developed social skills and were not experiencing profound teacher-identified difficulties with social inclusion in their school. Thus, the researcher deemed it inappropriate to involve children in the study who may have SEN status, but who were displaying well-developed social skills. It was often the case that these children did not work for significant periods of time with a TA; this was also a reason for non-involvement in the study.

As the sampling of children was a more problematic process than had been anticipated when formulating the methodology of this study, the researcher had a greater number of conversations than anticipated with staff members who worked closely with the children under consideration for involvement, such as Teachers, TAs and/or Senior Leaders. Additionally, the researcher made sure to be in as many lessons as was possible under the observation method, so as to observe which children were experiencing problematic social inclusion within the school, and those working with a TA regularly. This ensured that the children chosen were best placed to provide data relevant to answering the pertinent research questions for this study:

Q2 What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?

Pupil 1: Brad

Day to day, his Teacher (Heather (T1)) finds Brad's behaviour the most challenging of the pupils in her Year 6 classroom. Brad frequently struggles with anger, which make it difficult for him to complete work in the classroom. Brad works in a small group of six pupils, outside the Year 6 classroom, with Kath (TA1) during daily English and Maths lessons. Until this academic year, Brad frequently soiled himself at school. He is particularly friends with Jamie (Pupil 2).

Pupil 2: Jamie

Jamie is in Heather's (T1) Year 6 classroom. Jamie has been diagnosed with Attachment Disorder and is a Child Looked After (CLA). Jamie has a moderate learning delay and works with Kath (TA1) every morning, in a small group of 6 children, working on English and Maths based interventions. Jamie is often disruptive in a classroom setting and finds it difficult to form and maintain relationships inside the classroom. However, Jamie does appear to form good relationships on the playground, with the other boys who spend their break times playing football. He is a particular friend of Brad (Pupil 1).

Pupil 3: Simon

Simon has been at Birchwood for 5 academic terms; after being bullied in his previous school he wanted to experience a new environment. He is in Heather's (T1) Year 6 class and works with Kath (TA1) in a small group out of the classroom for Maths every morning. Simon has not been diagnosed or 'labelled' with any particular additional need, however, it is the professional opinion of all those who work with him, and of the researcher, that Simon displays many characteristics of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He is currently undergoing assessment for ASD. Simon finds it very difficult to build relationships with other children in school and is almost always alone on the playground at lunchtime.

Pupil 4: Cole

Cole is in Heather's (T1) Year 6 class. He is currently looked after by his Grandmother, having come from a home struggling with drugs and alcohol dependency. He has been 'labelled' by the school as having a severe learning delay, and is supported by Anne (TA2) on an individual basis every morning. Cole has a Statement of SEN, which provides the funding required for Anne to support him on an individual basis every morning. Most playtimes, Cole plays football with other children in his year and the year below.

Pupil 5: Lewis

Lewis is a very quiet member of Sharon's (AH/SENCO) year 5 classroom. He has a Statement of SEN, which diagnoses him with a 'Moderate Learning Delay.'

Lewis finds it difficult to interact with other children, both inside and outside the classroom. He has one particularly good friend, as identified by him and the professionals who work with him. They frequently play football together at break times. Lewis' Statement provides the funding required for one to one support from Nicola (TA4) for 20 hours a week. This affords support during daily Maths and English lessons in the mornings.

Pupil 6: Fred

Fred is a pupil in Sharon's (AH/SENCO) Year 5 classroom. He has been diagnosed as having Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). Under the reforms to the SEN system, the Children and Families Act (2014) terms this category of need as 'Emotional or Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) (20:163). Fred's EBD manifests itself most prominently as anger. Fred frequently becomes angry, both inside and outside lesson time, when he finds a situation difficult to deal with. This has meant that Fred has had difficulty in forming effective relationships with other children in school, due to aggressive and domineering behaviours. In the mornings, Fred works with Claire (TA3), in a small group of 5 pupils, on English and Maths based interventions.

Pupil 7: Mark

Mark has only been receiving additional support in Sharon's (AH/SENCO) Year 5 class this academic year. He is a very quiet child and the professionals working with him suspect that he has quite severely underdeveloped speech, language and communication skills (SLCN). Mark has recently begun working with Lewis (Pupil 5) and his TA (Nicola, TA4) most mornings during English and Maths lessons. He appears to form reasonably successful relationships with other children on the playground through football, however, is very quiet during lesson time and infrequently speaks to other children.

Pupil 8: Rebecca

Rebecca is one of the quietest children in Sharon's (AH/SENCO) Year 5 classroom. Rebecca rarely speaks to other children or the professionals working with her unless she is spoken to. She has been diagnosed by the school as having delayed

speech; therefore her difficulties are placed under the SEN category of 'Speech, Language and Communication Needs' (SLCN). Rebecca works with Claire (TA3) all morning, out of the classroom, in a small group of 5 pupils on English and Maths interventions.

8.2 Mountford

The researcher was based in two classrooms at Mountford: Parmdeep's (T2) Year 3 and Sanjeet's (T1) Year 5. Four children in each of Year 3 and Year 5 classrooms were chosen to undertake the photography task and the follow up research conversations. Profiles of these children are provided below:

Pupil 1: Paul

Paul is in Sanjeet's (T1) Year 5 class. He is the brother of Will (Pupil 7) in Year 3. He is on the school's SEN register at School Action Plus; originally his targets were Literacy-based, however from July 2013 the targets became more social-skill focused. Will has difficulties with having negative thoughts and displaying poor self-esteem. There have been periods of time when Paul has been unable to sleep at all and hears voices in his head. Paul receives a 30-minute one to one session a week with a TA, during which time he completes a page of his 'Happy Book.' This is an intervention that the school has devised for Paul, and is discussed in more detail in chapter 10. Paul finds it very difficult to form relationships with other students at Mountford, mainly spending playtimes on his own or with his brother and/or sister. It is suspected that Paul has ASD, and is being assessed at the time of the researcher's visit.

Pupil 2: Zane

Zane is in Sanjeet's (T1) Year 5 class. He has a Statement of SEN, which affords funding for him to have Physiotherapy for his Cerebral Palsy. Zane also has SLCN, which particularly display themselves through Zane's lack of displaying and understanding emotions. Zane is not currently timetabled to be supported by a TA, however, when in class, Lara (TA1) always sits next to Zane and supports him, on what would usually be an individual support structure, to complete teacher-led tasks

during whole class teaching. Zane does not appear to have any difficulties making friends in school, despite his language difficulties.

Pupil 3: Demi

Demi is in Sanjeet's (T1) Year 5 class. Demi is on Mountford's SEN register, at School Action Plus, as a result of her learning delay with English and Maths particularly. All of Demi's targets are currently English and Maths based, however, the professionals working with her cite her behaviour as the biggest current barrier to her successful learning. Sanjeet (T1) and Lara (TA1) describe Demi as 'moody,' as a result of her difficulty with undertaking/completing tasks if they aren't aligned with her interests. Demi finds it difficult to maintain friendships; it seems that other pupils become disinterested in maintaining a relationship with her due to her extreme emotional reactions to events that aren't within her control, for example, if the bell goes in the middle of a game she is playing Demi will become very angry and directs this towards other children.

Pupil 4: Taleq

Taleq is in Sanjeet's (T1) Year 5 class. When the researcher arrived at Mountford, she was informed that Taleq was just commencing a period of emergency intervention, as a result of him displaying particularly problematic behaviour. At the time the researcher visited Mountford, Becky (TA2) was supporting Taleq within the classroom during all lessons in the mornings, and approximately 50% of the lessons in the afternoon. Her main role was observed as keeping Taleq on task, to a level at which he could complete tasks assigned by Sanjeet (T1). Taleq had been displaying particularly disruptive behaviour, which was making it difficult for Sanjeet (T1) to teach the whole class effectively. Taleq is on the school's SEN register, at School Action Plus, as a result of his Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. His targets include: 'not to hurt or upset others,' which suggests that he has difficulties with displaying appropriate behaviour towards other pupils.

Pupil 5: Robert

Robert is in Parmdeep's (T2) Year 3 class. Robert has a Statement of SEN for Severe Learning Delay, which entitles him to full-time individual support from a TA.

His individual support is currently provided by Janet (TA3), who has been working with him for 3 years. Robert's needs are complex and a diagnosis of them has proved difficult to make. His Individual Education Plan (IEP) focuses on communication needs, with his targets arising from Speech and Language Reports, having been provided by a Speech and Language Therapist. All lessons are differentiated for Robert, as he is unable to access the learning of the other pupils in the class. Robert is a well-liked member of Year 3 and socialises well with other children, however, he finds it difficult to spend time away from Janet (TA3).

Pupil 6: Destiny

Destiny is in Parmdeep's (T2) Year 3 class. She is on the school's SEN register at School Action Plus, as a result of her problematic behaviour. Destiny is currently being assessed for Oppositional Defiance Disorder as she finds it difficult to follow instructions given to her by Parmdeep and/or the TAs she works with. Almost all of her targets on her IEP are behaviour-based and TAs are specifically mentioned in supporting her to reach her targets, for example, 'TAs' support by initiating conversation with her [Destiny].' Destiny finds it difficult to build relationships with other pupils; most playtimes she bursts into tears when children don't follow her instructions. Destiny does not receive timetabled support from TAs, however, is often supported on an ad hoc basis by Janet (TA3), during lesson time.

Pupil 7: Will

Will is in Parmdeep's (T2) Year 3 class. He struggles with controlling his emotions, particularly when he feels angry. Most days Will shakes with anger at something occurring unexpectedly/against his wishes and bursts into tears in the classroom. Will does not have any timetabled support from a TA, however, is often supported to manage his emotions after an outburst by Janet (TA3) during lesson time. Will finds it particularly difficult to form relationships with other children in school and usually plays on his own at playtime, occasionally playing with his brother and/or sister. Will is on medication for ADHD, which affects his energy levels; he often falls asleep during lesson time and finds it hard to sleep during the night. He is also suspected of having ASD, for which he was being assessed at the time of the researcher's visit.

Pupil 8: Zion

Zion has only been at Mountford for one academic term (12 weeks). He has been placed in Parmdeep's (T2) Year 3 class, however, as he is 10 years old he should be in Year 6. Zion has a Statement of SEN, entitling him to 20 hours of individual support from a TA. The professionals working with him believe that Zion requires more individual support than the Statement affords, thus are looking at applying for more funding for him and are looking at Special School alternatives, as he is currently not coping well with mainstream provision. Zion is supported by Lorraine (TA4), who began working at Mountford 12 weeks ago, employed to support Zion. Zion has been diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and displays severe learning delays and difficulties forming relationships with others. Zion believes that he is in Year 3 to support the other children, thus this is his focus during lesson time and Lorraine finds it very difficult to support Zion to complete any planned task at all.

8.3 Cherry Blossom

The researcher worked with pupils in two classrooms at Cherry Blossom, Year 4 and Year 5. Ciaran (T2) taught the pupils based in Year 4 and Helen (T1) taught those in Year 5. The researcher undertook the photography task and follow up research conversations with three pupils in Year 4 and four pupils in Year 5. Originally, the researcher had intended to involve four pupils from Year 4, however, one of the participants selected was unfortunately absent from school on the day of the photography task, therefore he could not be involved in the research. This means that a total of seven pupils were involved in this study from Cherry Blossom, one less than originally intended in the methodology.

Pupil 1: Alison

Alison is in Helen's (T1) Year 5 classroom. She came to Cherry Blossom one academic year ago, as a result of wanting to move schools due to the bullying that her Mother voiced was occurring. Alison is on the school's SEN register, at School Action Plus, as a result of her Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. She also has difficulties with English, struggling with her writing particularly. Alison is supported by Gina (TA4), in a group of 6 children in the mornings, during the English hour. Gina also sometimes takes Alison out of the classroom in a small group setting during

the afternoons, on an ad hoc basis, if deemed to be useful. Alison finds it difficult to control her emotions, often getting angry and disrupting the whole class during lesson time. She frequently needs 'time out' (a period of time away from the main class) in the reading corner to successfully get though a lesson. Alison struggles to form friendships in school and often plays alone during break times.

Pupil 2: Farouq

Farouq is of particularly high ability in his class, working at a level above that expected nationally in all subject areas. Farouq is a 'cheeky class member,' as described by his Teacher Helen (T1). He often disrupts the class once he's finished working and will refuse to complete work if he isn't interested in it. Additionally, Farouq finds it difficult to form lasting friendships in school, although he can be observed playing football with a large number of boys at playtime. Farouq is at School Action Plus for his Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, however does not have any timetabled support from TAs.

Pupil 3: Denis

Denis is in Ciaran's (T2) Year 4 class. He was diagnosed with Douchen's Muscular Dystrophy shortly after birth. This means that Denis' mobility is restricted and his learning is delayed. Denis has a Statement of SEN for his condition, which affords individual support for him throughout the whole school day. Denis is supported by Gillian (TA2) in the mornings and Maria (TA3) in the afternoons. Denis is a well liked member of the class, and often plays with a variety of children during playtime.

Pupil 4: Alan

Alan is in Helen's (T1) Year 5 class. He is at School Action Plus as a result of SLCN. Alan finds it particularly difficult to understand, follow and remember instructions. This means that he rarely completes work set during whole class teaching sessions. Gina (TA4) frequently works with Alan to ensure that he understands the instructions given to him by Helen (T1) and to encourage him to complete tasks set. Alan is working at a level much lower than that expected at his age in both English and Maths. Alan frequently works in a small group, led by Gina

(TA4) for Maths and English. Alan plays football with other children at playtimes, but does not appear to have any particular friends.

Pupil 5: Harry

Harry is a pupil in Helen's (T1) Year 5 class. Harry was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) two years ago. He finds the noise of the classroom difficult to handle and frequently spends time in small group, social-skill based interventions with Casey (TA4). Harry is working at expected levels in Maths and English. He struggles with forming friendships in school and will often play independently at playtime.

Pupil 6: James

James is in Ciaran's (T2) year 4 classroom. James is not on the school's SEN register, however, over the past two academic terms, concerns have been raised in a number of areas about James' progress. James has many of the characteristics of ASD, disliking noisy environments, displaying obsessional behaviour and SLCN. Additionally, significant concerns about James' social skills have been flagged; James does not appear to have any friends in school and has expressed a strong desire to 'get some.' James also has a relatively problematic home life; his Mum is struggling to cope with his aggressive behaviour towards her, none of which he displays in school. He frequently hits his Mum and pulls out her hair when she is sleeping in his room, which she does every night as James is unable to sleep alone. At the time of the researcher's visit, the family were receiving support from Tina (LM) in their home. Additionally, James was receiving some support from Casey (TA4) in the same small group as Harry (Pupil 5), which focused on social skill development.

Pupil 7: Kain

Kain is a pupil in Ciaran's (T2) Year 4 class. Kain is a Child Looked After (CLA), having been exposed to the effects of drugs and alcohol abuse from a young age. He is one of four children, only now living with one sibling, as the others are being looked after elsewhere. Kain is at School Action Plus as a result of his Emotional Behavioural Difficulties, with the professionals that he works with suspecting that he also displays difficulties associated with Attachment Disorder.

Kain can be quite aggressive towards other children, which has resulted in him finding it difficult to form lasting relationships with others. He lacks empathy and can often upset other children without understanding the cause. Kain and his carers work with Tina (LM) on a regular basis, to support Kain with his emotional needs. Additionally, Li (TA5) often works with Kain in class, supporting him with his below average English and Maths abilities.

Chapter 9: Data presentation and analysis: Pupils

This chapter presents data pertinent to the answering of research question 2:

RQ2: What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

As with data presented in previous chapters, the data presented in this chapter were gathered and analysed according to a social constructivist approach. This perspective presents that learning is primarily influenced by the social context of the learner (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). Therefore, identifying pupils' social contexts was vital in fully appreciating the influence of the role of TAs on pupils' experiences of social inclusion. Consequently, the researcher endeavored to place herself in the social contexts of the pupils involved in this study, with the aim of identifying characteristics relating to their social inclusion within a constructivist classroom.

Chapter 7 of this thesis identified the characteristics relating to the role and responsibilities of the TAs involved in this study. This chapter explores the specific social inclusion characteristics of the pupils involved in this study, to enable TAs' influence on the process of pupils' social inclusion to be fully appreciated. Much previous research has identified that pupils identified with SEN experience greater levels of bullying, marginalisation and victimisation, however, as was discussed in chapter 4, few have researched the characteristics of pupils' difficulties with social inclusion (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; McLaughlin, Byers & Peppin-Vaughan, 2010; Nowicki, 2003). The themes explored in this chapter include: lacking self-awareness; ineffective use of humour in verbal communication; under-developed non-verbal communication skills; importance of home-based relationship building; self-managed social experiences; consistency in playtime routines and lack of relevance in verbal communication.

Understanding the current social inclusion experiences of the pupils involved in this study will then afford the exploration of TAs' influence over them in chapter 10. Chapter 10 presents data pertinent to defining the characteristics of TAs' role in promoting pupils' social inclusion. It relates pupils' social inclusion characteristics, presented in this chapter, to the data regarding TAs' current influence on the social inclusion of those pupils. Chapters 7, 9 and 10 together, then, enable good practice

recommendations to be made in chapter 11, with regards to optimising TAs' role and responsibilities within mainstream primary schools. The data analysed in this chapter were gathered through the following research methods: semi-structured interviews with staff, observations, photography and follow up research conversations with children.

Although the heterogeneous nature of children has been acknowledged and discussed in previous chapters, the children involved in this study must be considered as a homogenous group for the purposes of this thesis. This thesis aims to make recommendations with regard to good practice in deployment of TAs; this requires identifying similar characteristics amongst the children that TAs predominantly work with, whilst continuing to acknowledge that children are, by nature, different.

The concept of 'Social Inclusion' was defined in chapter 3, and presented as an ideal process via Figure 3.1, which is again presented in this sub-section for ease of reference. To further explain the relevance of the definition to this chapter, in relation to Figure 3.1; the characteristics presented in this chapter are determined to have an influence on the practice-orientated aspect of social inclusion; this may be a positive or negative influence. The characteristics explored include pupils' positive social interactions and/or resultant active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment.

Figure 3.1 Ideal Model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Ideal Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities

Theory Orientated	Policy Orientated	Practice Orientated
Socially inclusive values and beliefs	Socially inclusive practices	Socially Inclusive Interventions
Social competence	Positive social interactions	Positive social relationships
Social participation	Participation within the learning environment	Active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

9.1 Lacking self-awareness

Eight of the twenty-three (35%) children involved in this study, verbally articulated that they did not understand why they were unable to neither form nor sustain relationships with other children. A further eleven children (49%) who were identified as experiencing social inclusion difficulties were unable to verbally articulate an awareness of this. Thus, in total, nineteen of the twenty-three (83%) children involved in this study were identified as experiencing social inclusion difficulties, all of whom were experiencing some form of lacking self-awareness in relation to these difficulties. There appear to be three levels of understanding at which self-awareness was lacking for the children involved in this study. Children appeared to display a lack of self-awareness in relation to one or more of the following researcher-identified understandings:

1. Understanding that he/she had not formed typical relationships with other children in school;

2. Understanding that he/she did not possess the social competence required to form friendships;

3. Understanding which social skills he/she is lacking, in order to identify techniques/approaches to improve his/her social competence.

To further expand this point with specific examples, Paul (Pupil 1) and Will (Pupil 7), brothers at Mountford, and Kain (Pupil 7 at Cherry Blossom) are examples of children who experienced similar levels of social exclusion at school. They predominantly spent their playtimes alone and were identified by other children taking part in this study as children who had difficulties in forming friendships. However, their self-awareness regarding their difficulties experienced differed. Excerpts from their research conversations are presented below and, where appropriate, the photographs referred to have also been inserted.

During the research conversation with Will (pupil 7), he articulated the following to the researcher:

'Sometimes I don't even find anybody to play with. Sometimes I don't have much friends, I'd like to have 100 friends. I keep on trying and I never get any new friends, I just lost friends. I just don't know how to get them. Last Year Paul got some friends, with some help, but now he's lost them all.'

Paul (pupil 1) was able to articulate the following during his research conversation:

'I sometimes play with him (points to a picture inserted below). Sometimes we don't play with each other. But sometimes when he's playing a game I'm not allowed to play with him coz some children say it's full up or something. So I sometimes just wander around on my own at playtime.'

Researcher: 'Ok, how do you think children can make friends in school?'

Paul: 'Errrr… ransack the Art cupboard!' (laughs).

Kain (Pupil 7) at Cherry Blossom indicated significant self-awareness in relation to his lack of relationship building:

Researcher: 'How do you think a new girl or boy could make friends with children in this school?'

Kain: 'Just sit down in a corner and cry because I don't know how to have friends. I have no friends now. I was just sitting there crying the other day and they just stared at me and hurt my feelings. I would say 'can you be my best friend?' and they wouldn't say anything'.
...
Researcher: 'Do you like school Kain?'

Kain: 'No. People are always annoying me and I hardly get any friends. I'm always nervous to ask people to be my friend in case they say no.'

Both Will and Kain indicated that they had good self-awareness in relation to understanding 1; they were clearly able to articulate that they had not formed their desired number of friendships with other children in the school. However, Paul did not verbalise this; it is likely that he did not have the self-awareness required to understand that he had not formed typical relationships with the other children in the school. He could not see that his 'wandering around on his own at playtime' was not typical of other children his age. That is not to say that his spending time alone is necessarily perceived as negative to him, as Paul might prefer to spend his time that way. Nevertheless, his speech does indicate a lack of understanding as to his poor social positioning in the school.

Will's speech indicates that he did have an understanding relating to level 2; he appeared to understand that he was lacking the social competence required to form relationships with other children; '*I keep on trying and I never get any new friends…I just don't know how to get them.*' However, it is at Level 3 that Will's lack of self-awareness becomes apparent. Will was unable to understand what he was doing wrong, which shows that he was unaware of which of his skills were lacking, thus could not identify appropriate techniques/approaches to implement in order to

improve his social competence. This is similar to Kain's self-awareness in understanding that he was lacking the skills needed to make friendships: '*People are always annoying me and I hardly get any friends. I'm always nervous to ask people to be my friend in case they say no.*' Kain's admission that he cried as a result of not having any friends, indicates that he was unaware of what he needed to do in order to improve the likelihood of his forming friendships with his peers. His exasperation with his current situation was obvious when he stated: '*Just sit down in a corner and cry because I don't know how to have friends.*'

Additionally, six children (23%) involved in this study were observed engaging in aggressive behaviours, perhaps in an attempt to either gain or regain social standing amongst their peers. Pupil 4 (Taleq) at Mountford is a good example of a child who was displaying particularly aggressive behaviours towards his peers and adults in the school, however he was lacking the self-awareness required to acknowledge that it was having a negative influence on his existing friendships. The researcher observed a number of instances both in the classroom and on the playground, in which Taleq's behaviour resulted in him experiencing social exclusion by his peers, for example not being picked for football captain when previously he had been chosen; not being allowed to play on the team in which he usually played; being a less attractive choice for his peers during paired or group work.

9.2 Ineffective use of humour in verbal communication

All but six (74%) children involved in this research displayed use of humour when presented with a situation during their research conversations that they either:

1. Did not understand; or
2. Were uncomfortable to engage with.

Children either gave what they perceived to be a witty verbal response to a question that they didn't understand/found uncomfortable or answered with what could be described as 'nervous laughter.' The researcher identified examples of humour used both effectively and ineffectively by the children involved. Effective use of humour appeared to be determined by that child's understanding, or lack of understanding, of the socially acceptable conventions of humour. Thus, those who were using it effectively were conforming to the socially accepted conventions of humour; those who were not displayed humour atypical to social norms.

This research has indicated that effective or ineffective use of humour appears to have a strong influence over the social positioning of a child within the classroom and wider school context. The children who used humour ineffectively overwhelmingly experienced greater difficulties with social inclusion than those who used humour effectively; they were much more likely to play alone during break times and were able to identify fewer children who they could term 'friends' during the research conversations. To give an example, Alan (Pupil 4) at Cherry Blossom described his use of humour during his research conversation. The photographs referred to have been inserted within the dialogue to give the reader context for the conversation:

Researcher: 'Ok. Let's have a look at some outside the classroom. Who is this?'

Alan: 'Fathis.'

Researcher: 'Is he your friend?'

Alan: 'No I wanted to make a joke of him.'

Researcher: 'Why?'

Alan:' I was laughing.'

...

Researcher: 'Ok, let's have a look at people on the playground.'

Alan: 'Ok. I was making a joke of him (points to a boy in Year 6). I play football every day. There, there, there (points to pictures of football).'

Researcher: 'Does anyone ever fall out playing football?'

Alan: 'Sometimes I joke. I copy him (points to picture above)'.

Researcher: 'Does it annoy people, do they laugh?'

Alan: 'Nope.'

As can be seen from the dialogue above, and as was observed by the researcher whilst in Cherry Blossom, Alan was attempting to use humour to engage with his peers, however he was failing to use humour in a socially acceptable way. Alan said he '*makes a joke*' of other children frequently; this fits with Wanzer et al.'s (2006) ineffective use of humour category of 'student-directed disparaging humour' and was likely employed in order to gain pupils' attention, in an attempt to gain their approval to stimulate relationships to form. However, Alan was gaining the attention of his classmates for negative reasons; they did not like being copied by him, nor did they like it when he '*makes a joke*' of them. The researcher's ad hoc observations on the playground supported this assertion; peers would frequently move away from Alan and attempt to ignore him when he attempted to '*make a joke*' of them. Alan's ineffective use of humour indicates a lack of social competence, and thus he found

himself lacking the skills needed to form relationships with his peers. This links to a lack of self-awareness, as explored in section 9.1; Alan was unaware that this use of humour was ineffective; he did not have sufficient insight into his own skills to be able to identify this.

The children involved in this study most frequently used humour specifically when laughing in response to a question that they either did not understand, or were uncomfortable with. For example:

Pupil 6 (Fred) at Birchwood

Researcher: (Points to picture below) 'Are they all your friends or just people in the class?'

Fred: 'All my friends.'

Researcher: 'That's nice. Do you feel like you've got lots of friends?'

Fred: (laughs).

Researcher: 'What would you do in school if you felt like you wanted to make more friends?'

Fred: 'I don't know.'

Pupil 1 (Paul) at Mountford

Researcher: 'Ok. If you wanted to make more friends in school what do you think children would do?'

Paul: 'They'd go around and ask people (laughs).'

Pupil 3 (Demi) at Mountford

Demi: 'Mrs C helps me with stuff, she helps me if I'm stuck on something yeah, she just comes over and helps me.'

Researcher: 'That's nice, what kind of things does she say to you to help you?'

Demi: 'She…hmmmm, (laughs). She does….'

…

Researcher: 'Yes. Do you fall out with people lots in school or not?'

Demi: (laughs hysterically). 'What's fall out?'

Researcher: 'When you have an argument with someone.'

Demi: (Points to picture below) 'Look, Esme is walking away when Ruby was talking to her (laughs).'

…

Researcher: 'Sometimes you get a bit angry and frustrated in the classroom don't you?'

Demi: (laughs).

Researcher: 'Why do you think that is?'

Demi: 'Don't know.'

When analysing instances of laughter in response to researcher-questions, it can be identified that most instances were after the researcher had asked a question focused on the following three topics, as the excerpts above indicate:

1. The nature of support for academic work that the pupil receives

2. The relationships/friendships that the child may/may not have formed

3. Emotional and/or behavioural difficulties that he/she may be experiencing.

Consequently, it seems likely that children attempting to use humour in conversations are doing so to mask their lack of understanding/discomfort with regard to the three topics listed above specifically. When the discussion covered other topics, such as general playtime routines or activities pupils' engaged in at home, laughter was not as common a response from the pupils. This suggests Wanzer et al.'s (2006) effective

'unrelated' category of humour was used ineffectively in this study. Students were using 'unrelated' humour when it was irrelevant to the context of the conversation, this was not perceived as humorous by others partaking in the conversation, mainly as a result of lack of understanding of the origins of the humourous comment.

Interestingly, despite children frequently using humour ineffectively, the research conversations clearly indicated that pupils perceived effective use of humour as one of the most significant determining factors of high social positioning, across all three research schools. As Fred (Pupil 6) at Birchwood identified *'the funniest one gets to be the football captain every day.'* There are many other examples that indicate good humour as being a recognised positive quality by the children involved in the research conversations, some of which are presented below:

Pupil 5 (Lewis) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Who are usually captains?'

Lewis: 'Sometimes it changes. Scott is always the captain every single time. He's funny though.'

Pupil 2 (Jamie) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Is it easy to make friends here or hard?'

Jamie: 'Easy. All you have to do is be funny and you make friends. When I first started one of my friends said, 'what's 2 add 2,' I was just like '12' and they said, 'oh yeah, you're funny.' You just make fun games with them like hide and seek. You know what I actually think, this whole school and outside, it would be a good paintballing map. If I'm a teacher I would get a school and make it like a paintballing map. I'm not being a teacher anyway.'

Jamie is an example of a child who used humour effectively, thus experienced fewer difficulties with social inclusion than most other children involved in this study. Like many other children, Jamie used humour when he didn't understand a situation or when he was uncomfortable with it. The difference with Jamie's use of humour is that he understood the conventions of using humour effectively; he laughed when it was socially acceptable to do so and made remarks that most of his peers found witty.

Jamie used both 'related' and 'self-disparaging' examples of humour during observations and the research conversation (Wanzer et al., 2006). Thus, Jamie had identified, conceptualised and then contextualised the socially accepted conventions of humour. Consequently, Jamie displayed effective social competence with regard to humour and was able to use this skill to form relationships with his peers.

Conversations that the researcher had with children not directly involved in the research during playtimes indicated that children identified with SEN were more likely to be accepted, and even liked by their peers if they were perceived as 'funny.' When the researcher asked why children who did not lack social competence liked those who did, those children almost exclusively answered with some variation of 'because he/she is funny.' Indeed, the researcher identified that effective/ineffective use of humour appeared to be the most influential characteristic in the successful (or not) forming and/or maintaining of relationships for the pupils directly involved in this study. Thus, it could be argued that future interventions should focus on teaching children, who are experiencing social inclusion difficulties, the conventions of effective use of humour, to enable them to use this understanding to better form relationships with their peers.

Of the four students identified with/undergoing diagnosis for ASD who participated directly in this study (Simon, Birchwood; Paul and Will, Mountford; Harry, Cherry Blossom), three displayed use of humour which was deemed to be ineffective. The most common circumstance in which they all used humour was in laughing at what was perceived by the researcher as 'unrelated' during the research conversations. The following examples indicate children suspected/identified with ASD using humour in an 'unrelated' way, unrelated to the context of conversations:

Pupil 1 (Paul) at Mountford

Researcher: 'Ok. If you wanted to make more friends in school what do you think children would do?'

Paul: 'They'd go around and ask people (laughs).'

<u>Pupil 3 (Simon) at Birchwood</u>

Researcher: 'Is there anyone on the playground that you would go to who is your friend?'

Simon: 'Erm, well I don't have much friends. But I like to give Hannah hugs and Milly and Chloe, sometimes I like to give my friends man hugs (laughs).'

Researcher: 'Do they like that?'

Simon: 'Yeah (laughs). At least some of them do.'

Pupil 5 (Harry) at Cherry Blossom was the only child identified with ASD involved in this study who did not use humour against socially acceptable conventions. Harry was identified by many children in his class, both during research conversations with other students and informal conversations with other students in the school on the playground, as a friend. Even one of the most selective students when forming relationships with others, Farouq (Pupil 2, Cherry Blossom), gave the following view of Harry during his research conversation:

Researcher- This is Harry isn't it? Do you get on with him?

Farouq- Yeah, Harry's ok (smiles).

Observations in their classroom identified that Harry and Farouq sat alongside each other on a table at the front of the classroom during all lessons. The researcher observed seven instances in which Harry made Farouq laugh, according to the conventions of effective use of humour, rather than Farouq 'laughing at' Harry, in a disparaging manner. These observations and verbal validations from his fellow peers indicate that Harry had successfully conceptualised and contextualised the socially acceptable conventions of humour, and was able to implement these understandings to form friendships with his peers.

9.3 Under-developed non-verbal communication skills

100% of the children involved in this study consistently displayed under-developed skills in relation to Kelly's (2001) multiple non-verbal communication categories, which were explored in the literature review of this thesis. It is however expected that all primary-aged children would display some difficulties with the communication categories identified, as these skills should be in continual development at the primary age phase. However, the notable difference with the children involved in this study is that they consistently displayed difficulties with regard to multiple communication behaviours. Additionally, not only did the children fail to display appropriate behaviours themselves, in relation to one or more of the categorisations, they also failed to identify many of those behaviours in their peers. Most of the data pertinent to this assertion originated from the observations undertaken in the classrooms, an example of which is presented below:

Observation 7 (Birchwood)

TA1 (Kath) working with a group of six children out of the classroom, implementing a Literacy intervention 'Project X.'

9.25am- TA1 notices one child (Simon, Pupil 3) is disengaged and is fidgeting with his pencil. Moves over to child and reinforces behaviour expectations on the wall.

Gives encouragement to him and a starting point for his writing. No eye contact from student.

9.45am- Children working in pair- [one of the pair is Simon (Pupil 3)]. Simon leaning over his partner's book, talking very close to his face. Waving his arms around very close to his partner's face when talking about their plan to build a Lego space ship with their coloured pieces.

The observation above clearly indicates that Simon is displaying multiple under-developed non-verbal communication skills, for his age, in the following categories as identified by Kelly (2011): Eye contact, Gestures, Distance and Fidgeting. Simon also provided an example of his poorly developed Distance and Touch skills during his research conversation, an excerpt of which is provided below:

Pupil 3 (Simon) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Is there anyone on the playground that you would go to who is your friend?'

Simon: 'Erm, well I don't have much friends. But I like to give Hannah hugs and Milly and Chloe, sometimes I like to give my friends man hugs (laughs).'

Researcher: 'Do they like that?'

Simon: 'Yeah (laughs). At least some of them do.'

Harry (Pupil 5) at Cherry Blossom was the only child identified with ASD in this study who presented particularly well-developed non-verbal communication skills, in line with those expected for his age, as his Individual Education Plan (IEP) indicates. Harry was clearly able to understand and interpret a range of facial expressions, as the excerpt from his research conversation indicates:

Child 5 (Harry) at Cherry Blossom

Researcher: 'What's your favourite subject or thing to do at school?'

Harry: 'I don't know.'

Researcher: 'That's ok.'

Harry: 'Right this one was the trickiest of them all. I was right outside the door and I had to zoom in. She was smiling as well so that's a really good sign.'

The previous excerpt indicates that Harry is able to interpret that the facial expression of smiling signifies that that individual is experiencing a positive emotion. This suggests that Harry may be able to interpret a range of facial expressions and their underlying emotions effectively, something which is widely acknowledged to be challenging for many children identified with ASD (Grossman & Tager-Flusberg, 2012; Peterson, Wellman & Slaughter, 2012; Weigelt et al., 2012). Indeed, the researcher's observations in Harry's classroom suggest that Harry is able to detect when a peer is experiencing a range of both positive and negative emotions by interpreting their non-verbal communication, most probably be interpreting their facial expressions.

Perhaps Harry's particularly well-developed verbal and non-verbal communication skills are due to his successful diagnosis with ASD. Harry was diagnosed with ASD, and had been awarded a Statement of SEN, two academic years before the researcher worked with him, thus had been receiving support which was tailored to his specific needs for a significant time period. This is longer than all other children identified with/under assessment for ASD involved in this study. The interventions that the researcher observed Harry taking part in were of particularly high quality in terms of content directly related to Harry's needs, which also may explain his well-developed skills. These interventions will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter of this thesis. Additionally, as explored previously, the heterogeneous nature of children results in each child's needs and aptitude for acquiring skills taught to them being different. Therefore, Harry's communication characteristics cannot be generalised to represent all children identified with ASD, neither can those of the other three children identified with ASD involved in this study. However, they provide a useful sample with which to make context-dependent conclusions.

9.4 Importance of home-based relationship building

Of the nine out of the twenty-three children (39%) involved in this research who were identified as having successfully built and/or maintained one or more relationships with other children, six (26%) had originally begun playing with that friend outside of school. It appears that a relationship initiated outside of school, as a result of parents being friends or of living in close proximity to each other, strongly increases the likelihood of both effective relationships forming and maintaining.

The excerpts below, from research conversations with two pupils, provide pupils' descriptions of the initiation of their home-originated relationships:

Pupil 5 (Lewis) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Ok, lets have a look at the ones at playtime.'

Lewis: 'That's one of people playing football. My friend Riley is on that one with the thing that he made. My two other friends as well in this one. That's my friend working. That's Lennon (photograph inserted below).'

Researcher: 'How did you become friends with Lennon?'

Lewis: 'I've known him since I used to live across the road from him.'

Researcher: 'Ok, do you play with him at home?'

Lewis: 'I go to my Nanna's because my Nanna lives across the road from him so I go out and play there at my Nanna's. My Nanna only moved because it's near my friend's house.'

Researcher: 'That's good, you must get on well with each other.'

Lewis: 'Well we do have a fight when I'm at mine. He punches me in the back, and even though he's got problems I can still get him down. We don't do it at school because we get told off. At home we don't, my mam just goes, 'pack it in you's two.''

Pupil 8 (Rebecca) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Can you tell me about who you play with at playtime?'

Rebecca: 'It's normally me and Naomi.'

Researcher: 'Ok, why do you think you two are friends?'

Rebecca: 'Because her Mam came to my Mam's wedding, we've been friends since we've been little babies.'

Pupil 2 (Farouq) at Cherry Blossom

Researcher: 'Do you live around here?'

Farouq: 'Yeah, in a flat. I play with Faris, my best friend, every single day at a football tournament and we're on the same team. Our Dad's go to the pub together.'

The excerpts above indicate that parental/other relations' relationships are key precipitators of pupil relationships. The observations and research conversations further suggested that parental/relational influences on pupil relationship forming appear to be most important at two distinct phases of friendship forming:

1. Initiating first contact
2. Maintaining established friendships

Parental friendships provide a non-threatening method by which children can be introduced to each other, requiring minimal effort on the part of the children (Howes, 1996). This is particularly useful to a child who experiences difficulties with forming relationships with his/her peers; these children often, as the excerpts presented in section 9.1 highlight, struggle with knowing how to initiate first contact in friendship forming. Additionally, children experiencing poor social positioning frequently struggle to maintain effective relationships, once they are formed. The following excerpts highlight this:

<u>Pupil 1 (Alison) at Cherry Blossom</u>

Researcher: 'Who do you normally play with at playtime, on your own or with other children?'

Alison: 'I play with Katie but she's not letting me play, last time she did it for 2 weeks. I asked her and asked her but she kept saying no, no, no, no.'

Researcher: 'Why?'

Alison: ' Don't know.'

Researcher: 'Have you asked anyone about it?'

Alison: 'No, just keep it to myself. I don't like talking to people about it.'

Researcher: 'Ok, what do you think you might do then?'

Alison: 'Don't know. Say 'can I play with you?' but she won't let me. You choose another picture.'

<u>Will (Pupil 7) at Mountford</u>

Will: [when discussing his brother's friendships] '*Last Year Paul got some friends, with some help, but now he's lost them all.'*

It seems likely that maintained relationships between pupils' parents provide conditions under which it is easier for children who experience social positioning difficulties to maintain their established relationships. If parents maintain effective contact and see each other regularly, then their children will often necessarily see each other regularly, thus maintain good levels of contact. Additionally, parents may provide effective intervention support if/when incidents occur between their children in which relationships could be threatened.

Previous research has indicated that parents may have the potential to exert significant influence upon their children's friendships, both in terms of direct instruction and supervision, as well as supporting their children's development of an appropriate peer network. Research undertaken by Frankel at al. (2010) into the effects of parent-assisted Children's Friendship Training (CFT) on their primary-aged children's friendships identified a number of positive effects of parental involvement.

Frankel et al. were particularly interested in investigating the relationship between number of play dates (parents meeting up for their children to play together) and peer interactions on the school playground. They identified that hosted play dates showed significant positive correlation with two important indices of peer acceptance: joint engagement and positive peer response to the initiations of children with lower social positioning. Additionally, US-based research undertaken by Simons-Morton and Crump (2003) into the influence of parental involvement in sixth grader's school adjustment and engagement identified that parental involvement improves pupils' social competence, leading to improved school adjustment and engagement, to a greater extent with girls. However, the researchers did not define what they conceptualised as 'parental engagement,' thus it is difficult to determine which parental approaches directly result in improved social competence of their children.

9.5 Self-managed social experiences

Of the twenty-three students involved in the photography task and follow up research conversations, only eight (36%) children indicated that they would speak to an adult if/when they experienced a problem on the playground, or if they wanted to make more friends in school. This indicates that fifteen (65%) children decided that they were more comfortable self-managing their social experiences than asking for an adult to assist them, even when this self-management was of minimal success. The excerpts below, from the research conversations conducted with the students, identify pupils' lack of perception that TAs are able to support them in managing their social experiences:

Pupil 4 (Cole) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'That's good. If a child in school didn't have many friends, who do you think they would go and see about it?'

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Cole: *'Erm… nobody. Just ask them.'*

Researcher: *'Do you think any Teachers could help them?'*

Cole: *'Nope.'*

Pupil 1 (Paul) at Mountford

Researcher: *'Ok. If you wanted to make more friends in school what do you think children would do?'*

Paul: *'They'd go around and ask people (laughs).'*

Researcher: *'Do you think they'd ask any of the Teachers to help them?'*

Paul: *'Er, some of them might.'*

Researcher: *'Which teacher would you ask if you had to choose?'*

Paul: *'Er….I don't know.'*

Pupil 6 (James) at Cherry Blossom

Researcher: *'What would you do James if a new boy or girl started in school and they wanted to make friends. What would you tell them to do you think?'*

James: *'Well, you can ask him 'can I play with Freddie today?' and they'd say 'yes , you can James but be careful because Mr O's got a bad leg.' You can always say that.'*

Researcher: *'Do you think everyone has lots of friends in school?'*

James: *'Some people's got school uniform like I've got on today because I don't like dressing up, it's just a bit boring you know, people will just laugh at me.'*

…

James: *'I've done my homework.'*

Researcher: *'Do you ever get angry at school or stressed out about things?'*

James: *'Hmm, maybe. A bit angry because sometimes the children can be (inaudible). It sounds like a bit of a struggle with it.'*

Researcher: *'Do you calm yourself down ok?'*

James: *'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'*

Researcher: 'Do you think any of the adults could help you with it?'

James: 'Suppose.'

Researcher: 'How?'

James: 'Don't know really.'

The excerpts above are interesting, given the strong pastoral role that TAs have widely been accepted to undertake, particularly with children they work closest with. This links to the discussion in chapter 2, section 2.2, of this thesis regarding the value of TAs' pastoral role. Of Blatchford et al.'s (2008) six categories of TAs' tasks in school, most are directly associated with supporting teaching and learning. However, the third category is identified as, 'direct pastoral support for pupils' (p.76). Clearly, this strong pastoral relationship built between some children identified with SEN and TAs has the potential to positively influence pupils' social experiences within the learning environment, particularly when TAs and children are working together as part of an individual support structure (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Tucker, 2009). Additionally the strong connections that TAs often have with the immediate school community can further strengthen this potential. This was recognised by Mindondo et al. in their (2010) research the role of TAs in inclusive practice; 'if the TAs are well connected to the school community, they might be in an excellent position to support positive peer interactions' (p.118).

However, the data gathered in this study suggests that TAs' potential to support children in managing their social experiences is not currently reached in the case study schools sampled for this research. This could be as a result of ineffective management of TAs, as was discussed in chapter 7, and presented in Figure 7.1. However, it could be the case that some pupils were responding with some variation of 'I would tell the teacher' when asked what they would do if they had a problem in school, as a result of that being the taught response to such a question. It was the impression of the researcher that children may have responded in what they deemed to be the correct way, yet, might not have responded as such if the discussed scenario were to occur. However, this is a supposition on the part of the researcher and should be treated with caution.

Further research to identify the barrier/s to students accessing support from TAs in managing their social experiences would be useful, to further clarify optimum design of TAs' roles and responsibilities. It is likely that students' perceived lack of potential support from TAs in managing their social experiences is as a result of TAs neglecting to implement interventions that specifically teach the skills of building and maintaining relationships. Instead, as will be explored further in the next chapter, TAs in the research schools spent the vast majority of their time implementing Literacy or Maths focused interventions.

It is important to note that this study was conducted in schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, and whose Ofsted inspection reports specifically mentioned the strength of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' development (2011; 2013; 2015). Thus, it might be the case that pupils attending the case study schools are experiencing lower than average levels of bullying, victimisation and/or marginalisation, as a result of effective support systems in place, successfully supporting children in managing their social experiences. Thus, the need for adults in the research schools to support pupils with their social interactions could be lower than average. However, as discussed in section 9.1, the data gathered identified that nineteen of the twenty three students (83%) involved in this study were experiencing significant social inclusion difficulties, manifesting as difficulties with both forming and maintaining relationships with their peers. Thus, many of the children involved were clearly in need of accessing support to better manage their social experiences in school.

Of the eight (35%) children in this study who expressed the view that they would speak to an adult if they had a problem on the playground, when asked who specifically, all except one (88%) identified that they would approach the TA that they worked with most frequently. Additionally, six of those eight (75%) children who were open to approaching an adult were receiving support from a TA as part of an individual working structure. It is therefore likely the frequency and intensity of the supportive relationship built up between children and TAs is a predictor of TAs' positively supporting children with their social interactions and experiences. The excerpts below, from the research conversations conducted with the students, identify the students' perceived role in managing their social relationships of the TAs they work with on an individual support basis:

Researcher: 'Ok. If you were outside at playtime and you had a problem who would you go and see about it?'

Zane: 'My teacher.'

Researcher: 'Any teacher or some more than others.'

Zane: 'The teacher who is outside.'

Researcher: 'Ok, what do you think they would say?'

Zane: 'Just sort it out.'

Researcher: 'If there was a child in school that didn't have many friends what do you think they could do?'

Zane: 'Find a friend, ask them. Just say 'can I be your friend' and then they'd say 'yes.'

Researcher: 'Good idea. Do you think that any of the Teachers could help with that?'

Zane: 'Yep. Miss M [TA] but anyone really.'

Child 3 (Denis) at Cherry Blossom

Researcher: 'What would you do if a new boy or girls started and they wanted to make friends?'

Denis: 'You can make friends by talking to them.'

Researcher: 'That's right. If you had a problem in school who would you go and talk to?'

Denis: 'Miss W, there she is (points to picture of TA inserted).'

Researcher: 'What do you think she would say?'

Denis: 'Don't know.'

The above excerpts identify that some children working on an individual support basis with a TA would feel comfortable to go to that staff member if they needed support with managing a social relationship. However, when asked why they would go to that adult, and/or how that adult could help them, all children were unable to articulate a clear reason/method in their response. Perhaps these children were so used to their TA supporting them in lesson time that, by extension, they perceived that TA as being able to support them through out of classroom difficulties. This could be a consequence of 'SEN Velcro syndrome,' as explored in chapter 2.3, a situation in which TAs become, 'constantly focused on the child in their charge' (Shevlin, Kenny & Loxley, 2008, p.147). Thus, some children become reliant on the support that individual TAs provide and lack confidence during independent working, termed as 'learned helplessness' (Hopson & Scally, 1981). Perhaps these children are experiencing a lack of confidence during independent social experiences, thus are relying on the support of their TA in navigating these challenges. Yet, the children

involved in this study are unable to articulate the ways in which TAs support them in forming effective social relationships with their peers. This is, perhaps, where TAs' implementation of inclusive interventions could support pupils with articulating their social inclusion needs. If TAs implemented evidenced, highly structured interventions systematically, then pupils' communication and language skills should improve over time. This would then support pupils with articulating their social needs, thus improving TAs' ability to support pupils with managing their social experiences.

9.6 Consistency in playtime routines

Of the twenty-three children involved in this research, all but three (87%) spoke of and/or were observed as having similar routines during playtimes. These playtime routines appeared to consistently encompass one of the following activity structures:

- Spending time alone, in similar areas of the playground
- Spending time playing with one 'best friend,' usually playing the same games
- Playing football with the same group of children

There are a number of studies that have investigated children's use of primary school playgrounds. However, there is a lack of research into the experiences of primary-aged children identified with SEN on school playgrounds. One such study was undertaken by Wooley et al. (2006) with students who were identified with a physical disability in mainstream primary schools in Yorkshire. Wooley et al. identified that the most common characteristic of the students' play was that it followed specific, consistent routines. This was deduced to be as a result of high levels of risk felt by the students, when changes to their existing routines occurred. However, it should be noted that the researchers also found significant variation in the playtime characteristics of the students involved in their study, dependent upon the children themselves and their age, personality, nature of their SEN, and also on the attitudes of their peers.

This highlights the previously explored difficulty with making generalisations based upon categorisation of SENs, due to the heterogeneous nature of children. The following playtime activity structures should therefore be viewed with caution as they are not widely generalisable, however they do reflect appropriate categorisation of the

playtimes of the pupils involved in this study, from across the three case study schools.

Spending time alone

Of the twenty-three students involved in this research, seven (30%) either verbalised during the research conversations or were observed as spending most of their playtimes alone. This was either as a result of them wanting to spend time alone, or struggling to form relationships with their peers. To explore this activity structure further, it is useful to discuss one of the children involved in the research specifically, that of Simon (Pupil 3, Birchwood). Simon was able to verbally articulate his thoughts and feelings regarding spending time alone on the playground particularly well. Additionally, Simon's playtime behaviours were typical of the other six children whose playtimes appeared to consistently encompass this activity structure, thus are likely generalisable to the experiences of some of the children sampled for involvement in this study. As was explored in greater detail in chapter 8, Simon displays many characteristics of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and finds it very difficult to build relationships with other children in school; he is almost always alone on the playground at lunchtime.

The excerpts below are from the research conversation undertaken with Simon, and focus on his verbalised thoughts/opinions on his playground routine:

Child 5 (Simon) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'What do you usually do at playtime, do you like it or not?'

Simon: 'Erm, if it's a very cold playtime or a very hot playtime no. If it's a hot one I like to erm, you know, get a few sheets of paper, well before I do that I ask Mrs C (T1, Heather) if I can do some drawing inside because well, my body doesn't quite like the heat. It likes a decent bit of heat but not too hot.'

Researcher: 'So tell me about where you usually go at playtime. Who do you usually talk to?'

Simon: 'Well I like to talk to my Teaching Assistants and my friends.'

Researcher: 'Ok, what would you do of you had a problem on the playground?'

Simon: 'Go to a Teaching Assistant or a Teacher.'

Researcher: 'Is there anyone on the playground that you would go to who is your friend?'

Simon: 'Erm, well I don't have much friends. But I like to give Hannah hugs and Milly and Chloe, sometimes I like to give my friends man hugs (laughs).'

Researcher: 'Do they like that?'

Simon: 'Yeah (laughs). At least some of them do.'

Researcher: 'Have you ever helped anyone out at playtime?'

Simon: 'Erm, well, my memory isn't that great but I'm quite sure that I have helped people in the past.'

Researcher: 'Don't worry, what is your favourite time of day?'

Simon: 'My favourite time of day is golden time, actually, a Friday night, I mean the darkness and the sky and the lights, it's just feels so cozy… My brother is in school now in the Nursery here and on his first day I was really worried about him making friends and things, I mean on my first day here. I used to play by myself, in Newport Primary [Simon's previous school].*'*

Researcher: 'Did you choose to do that?'

Simon: ' Well I didn't choose…well, it's just that I felt more cozy, I was like 'yey, I've got all of this to myself.' It's just that I wasn't really well…'

Researcher: 'Did you not know how to play with them that well?'

Simon: 'No.'

Researcher: 'Have you learned a bit more here?'

Simon-: 'Yes. Sometimes when I go downstairs I like to see if I can spot my brother and if he's out playing I like to have a look out of the window and see him. The thing is I want to be there for him so that if someone bullies him I can say, 'hey, are you bullying my little brother? That's my little brother out there so if you don't stop it I'll not be happy.''

The above excerpts from Simon's research conversation indicate that he has clearly experienced some difficulties with social inclusion at playtimes in his current and previous schools. However, his perceptions on whether or not he has successfully built and/or maintained relationships with other children appear to differ throughout the conversation. When asked how he spends his playtimes, Simon answered, *'well I like to talk to my teaching assistants and friends.'* However, later on in the conversation Simon stated *'well I don't have much friends.'* Simon also acknowledged that he has had difficulty with determining how to play with other children, both in his previous school and his existing school, but suggests that his skills have improved since he began at Birchwood.

Interestingly, Simon was observed by the researcher as consistently spending time alone during playtimes and rarely playing with other children. This would suggest that Simon is still experiencing difficulties with forming and maintaining friendships, probably as a result of poor social competence. Although his friendship skills may have improved, it does appear that they are still not at a level that enables him to form friendships effectively. However, it should be noted that Simon is undergoing assessment for ASD, a category of SEN in which the symptoms frequently include students preferring to spend time alone, rather than with others. This is often due to an inability to cope with high noise levels and the active

imaginations of those with the diagnosis, which often allows them to play well independently and contently (Kasari et al. 2011). Therefore, Simon may simply enjoy spending playtimes alone, thus the infrequent interactions that he has with other children may satisfy his personal requirements related to friendship building.

Children who were categorised as spending most of their time alone on the playground frequently stated in the research conversations that they had formed friendships with either named or unnamed peers. However, unstructured observations conducted by the researcher at playtimes provided evidence to the contrary. Indeed, this theme was identified amongst children in all three categories of playtime activity structures. Of the twenty-three students interviewed, eight (35%) named students that they were friends with, yet observations indicated that this was not the case. Often, minimal interactions were observed between the students who were supposed friends. Additionally, many of the interactions observed included the children involved in this study following the peer(s) they wished to form relationships with. This indicates that many children involved in this study may have wanted to form relationships with particular individuals, yet were unable to do so. Alternatively, these students were perhaps unable to determine the characteristics of friendship, thus could not correctly identify which members of their class were friends and which were not during the research conversations.

Interestingly, of the seven students who consistently spent their time alone at playtimes, five (71%) were either identified with or were in the process of being assessed for ASD. Studies exploring the communication patterns of children identified with ASD have identified that these children often spend a significant amount of their time on the playground alone (Chamberlain et al., 2007; Greenspan & Wieder, 1997; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Kasari et al. 2011). This is frequently as a result of children with ASD regularly experiencing high levels of self-absorption, often manifesting itself as obsessional behaviour around topics of particular interest to that child. Consequently, initiating or responding to communication with their peers is particularly difficult for children identified with ASD, and thus opportunities to build and maintain relationships with their peers are often limited (Greenspan & Wieder, 1997).

This relates to a wider characteristic within the playground activity structure of spending time alone; that of spending time in quiet places. Of the seven children

who verbalised that they spend time alone, or were observed doing so at playtimes, four (57%) were frequently spending their playtime in quiet spaces of the playground. Indeed, a number of the photographs taken by these children are of quiet spaces, both inside and outside the classroom, in which there were few or no other children present. Some of these photographs and the accompanying sections of the research conversations are presented below:

Pupil 5 (Harry) Cherry Blossom

Researcher: 'Harry, can you tell me about this photograph?'

Harry: 'That's where I play around the tyres coz there's a tunnel and there's even a little spot and that's where I like to run around.'

Researcher: 'What's nice about it?'

Harry: 'Well you can see, even if someone is in a hurry I can still look from there and watch people. It's nice to be on your own there and there's not too much noise.'

Researcher: 'So which one do you like the most?'

Alison: 'This one, this is the fox hole because we've got loads of foxes in there. Can I take some more pictures tomorrow?'

Researcher: 'Let's talk about that later. Why do you like this place?'

Alison: 'It's very nice and quiet and exciting there, you can see all the fish and sometimes the foxes.'

...

Researcher: 'Oh, I like this picture, what is that of?'

Alison: 'Er, the reading corner.'

Researcher: 'I've seen you go in that sometimes, what is it for?'

Alison: '(laughs). Yeah. When I feel a little bit sad I'll go in there. Miss M lets me go in there (points to a picture of Miss M). It calms me down because I can just sit and no one is annoying me'.

Clearly, as the above quotations indicate, many children who are experiencing difficulties with social inclusion appreciate the availability of quiet spaces in which they can elect to spend their time. This is likely to be particularly useful for those children identified with ASD and/or ADHD, as both of those categorisations of SEN involve the child being particularly susceptible to over-stimulation. These children typically display sensory processing disorders, which means that they often lack 'the ability to use the neurological process to organize sensation from one's own body and the environment, thus making it possible to use the body effectively within the environment' (Ringland et al., 2014, p.817). Consequently, the escape that quieter environments afford enables children who are easily over-stimulated to remove themselves from situations in which sensory overload could occur.

<u>Spending time with one 'best friend,' usually playing the same games</u>

Six out of the twenty-three (26%) children involved in this study predominantly spent time with one 'best friend' during playtimes, usually a 'best friend' whom they played with outside as well as inside of school. To explore this friendship structure in detail, it is useful to present the data gathered from the photography task and follow up research conversation with Rebecca (Pupil 8, Birchwood). As was explored in greater detail in chapter 8, Rebecca is one of the quietest children in her class.

She rarely speaks to other children or the professionals working with her unless she is spoken to and has been diagnosed by the school as having delayed speech. Rebecca has one 'best friend,' Naomi, with whom she spends all of her time outside of the classroom, as well as inside the classroom when allowed to do so. Rebecca discussed her friendship with Naomi in her research conversation, relevant excerpts of which are presented below:

Researcher: 'Ok Rebecca, I'm going to lie all of the photographs out and you can choose some to talk to me about, ok?'

Rebecca: 'Yes.'

Researcher: 'Where do you want to start?'

Rebecca: 'That one, it was my best friend Naomi doing hopscotch at playtime. I play with her every day. She was trying to act funny in that picture.'
...
Researcher: 'Can you tell me about who you play with at playtime?'

Rebecca: 'It's normally me and Naomi.'

...

Researcher: 'Ok, if you wanted to make more friends in school what would you do?'

Rebecca: 'Erm, I would go and talk to Naomi first and see if it's ok with her and then I would go and ask people if I could be their friend.'

The above excerpts indicate that Rebecca's friendship with Naomi is central to her relationship decision-making at school. This is indicated by Rebecca stating in the research conversation that she'd need to talk to Naomi first, before approaching another child with whom to initiate a friendship. Indeed, the researcher gained the impression from the ad hoc observations on the playground and in the classroom that the friendship was equally important to Naomi as Rebecca. Neither girl was observed playing with children apart from each other whilst the researcher was at Mountford. Rebecca's one 'best friend' playtime activity structure is similar to that of all other five children identified as playing predominantly with one child at playtimes. Additionally, as was explored in section 9.3 of this thesis, most of these 'best friend' relationships were initiated out of school, as the parents of the two children were existing friends.

It seems likely that many of the children involved in this research were adopting a one 'best friend' playtime activity structure as a result of their social skills difficulties. Perhaps these children deemed it more productive to put all of their efforts into maintaining their established friendship with one of their peers, rather than into forming additional friendships. This is likely to have been as a result of parental involvement in initiating first contact to form relationships between their children. Initiating first contact in formation of a friendship is often the most difficult aspect of building and maintaining relationships in school (Frankel & Myatt, 2003). Thus, pupils who have successfully navigated making first contact, with the support of their parents, are unlikely to attempt this task with another child independently.

The importance of football

In all three research schools football was a strong influencing factor in the social dynamics of the schools, particularly for the boys involved in this study. Much of the topic of discussion in the research conversations focused on football; it was clearly the most important indicator of social positioning for some of the boys. The below excerpts from the research conversations highlight the focus on football of many of the students' dialogue:

Pupil 1 (Brad) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Where do you want to start? You've got lots of the yard, haven't you?'

Brad: ' Ok, I went outside to take this picture and I took lots of my friends. Bailey, I know Bailey liked getting his picture took.'

Brad: 'This one I don't know, but this one because I like playing football. That's when it was nice but now it's turned out not nice. People are not making the teams fair, all the craps are on one team and all the goods are on the other team so they're not making it fair. Like Jake, he always gets his own way so it's not fair.'

Researcher: 'Ok, so are all of the people that you play football with your friends or just people that play?'

Brad: 'They're my friends, like Coby, all of them, he passes it to me nearly all of the time. Jake, even though he doesn't do anything for me in football, but you know... He's my friend.'

...

Researcher: 'Ok, right, have you ever had a problem on the yard and you've gone to speak to an adult about it?'

Brad: 'Once at football. I said how about me Mark, Cameron and Jake and Charlie and Reece take all the other good players, because they are all the good players, and they said no so they went how about this, all of us take Brad and then we had a go of that and I was by myself with all of them taking on me, and they beat me I think it was 5-4.'

Researcher: 'Wow, that's hard isn't it?'

Brad: 'Yeah. Then I had to tell my Nanna [A Lunchtime Supervisor] *because I didn't like it, they said oh it's just because Brad got beat but it wasn't, it was because it was unfair.'*

Researcher: 'Yes, who was it that you told?'

Brad: 'I've forgotten because it was in Year 5 but Mrs Cole wasn't there. But it was Nanna Thompson I think, she said, 'I think I'll sort the teams out.' So Miss Henry she was all mad at her and she put Me, Charlie, Reece, Cameron and Mark and then all the others and then Jake started having a go at Nanna saying that it wasn't fair, but she said, 'it was unfair for Brad to be by himself though,' then they said, 'but at least he scored four goals.' She said that, 'I don't care if he scored four goals, it's still unfair.' Then Jake went on the other team and we beat them 1-0 and I scored. The problem is that Cameron chooses the teams, Jake always gets his own way, Riley

doesn't really bother, Mark doesn't really bother, Charlie tells us what to do so it's only two that really don't really bother. But Cameron is the worst at it. He says right that him being by himself or with other players isn't fair so just because it was me and the others they got more players and then Jake said that was unfair so they put Jake on the team and took me off so that's not fair neither, it's always Jake, he always has to get his own way.'

Researcher: 'Ok. that's a shame. Have you ever seen anybody on the playground that plays on their own or is a bit lonely?'

Brad: 'Simon. I always play football like every day and Simon doesn't even want to play football, he just has no one to play with. But I see'd him and said, 'do you want to play football?' He played for a little bit and then went off straight away, the ball went out and he came off. I don't know if he's scared of the ball because someone kicked it to him and he went off the pitch.'

Pupil 6 (Fred) at Birchwood

Researcher: 'Ok, why did you take lots of photographs of football?'

Fred: 'Because I play in the playground, like, it's like Year 5 and 6 and they play together and then it's like Year 4 and 3'.

Researcher: 'Right, how do the teams work?'

Fred: 'We like have captains and then they pick people and then when they've picked people they start a match.'

Researcher: 'Ok, is it usually fair?'

Fred: 'Sometimes, not all the time.'

Researcher: 'Who are usually captains?'

Fred: 'Sometimes it changes. Scott is always the captain every single time. He's funny though.'

Researcher: 'Do you all get on well or do you have arguments sometimes?'

Fred: 'We get on well I think'.
...

Researcher: 'Ok. Do you usually play with the same people at playtime or different people?'

Fred: 'Same people because they always play football.'

Pupil 4 (Alan) at Cherry Blossom

Researcher: 'Who would you say your friends were at school?'

Alan: 'He's the best at football. It's too much, people being friends. It's like too much. (He then names 11 people pointing to the following picture).'

The importance of football in building and maintaining friendships was also a theme to emerge from research conducted by Jago et al. (2009), which focused on the initiation and maintenance of friendship groups through physical activity. Jago et al.'s research was conducted with 10 and 11 year olds in mainstream primary schools in England, and thus falls within the ages of interest for this study. It is important to note that Jago et al.'s study was not exclusively conducted with children identified with SEN; consequently some of the findings from their research may not be directly relevant to this study. However, it is likely that some children whose abilities fall within the SEN category were present in the schools in which the research was conducted, thus the conclusions from this research are important to consider.

Jago et al. identified that strong physical activity ability was perceived by almost all boys as a desirable character trait, with increased ability strongly associated with both popularity and peer leadership (Weiss & Smith, 2002). This assertion clearly emerges from the data gathered in this study, as the excerpts above indicate. Brad's (Pupil 1, Birchwood) long explanation of the dynamics between the players of football in his school indicates the strong influence in social positioning that football holds. Brad's following statement highlights that football also has an influence on his personal friendships: '*Jake, even though he doesn't do anything for me in football, but*

you know. He's my friend.' This statement indicates that Brad is more likely to regard someone as a friend if they behave favourably towards him during football games e.g. passing the ball to him, picking him to be on their team.

Jago et al. also identified that physical activity ability was less important as a predictor of popularity amongst girls. It appeared that girls' friendship groups were also based around their physical activity abilities, so some girls with strong physical ability formed friendships instigated by a 'football club' or something similar, and others, who displayed poorer activity ability formed friendships that were non-activity ability based. Indeed, for those children who displayed poor activity ability, their lack of ability was often deemed essential for membership to their friendship groups. However, unlike the boys, girls' separate friendship groups appeared to include 'popular' members of the school, rather than solely the 'football friendship group,' as with the boys. Thus, girls' popularity was spread across a number of different groupings, rather than just one, activity ability based grouping, as with the boys. Nevertheless, girls did acknowledge, in ad hoc conversations with the researcher, that they deemed membership of the 'football group' as an important factor in boys' popularity.

The lack of girls' participation in sport has long been acknowledged, and many barriers still exist that make girls' participation difficult, predominantly as a result of a problematic disjunction between sport and femininity (Roth & Bascow, 2004). Girls often verbalise their desire to play football, but are hindered by gender-specific barriers to their participation. Research undertaken by Newman, Woodcock & Dunham (2006) into children's perceptions of the playground identified that many of the primary-aged girls they interviewed wanted to play football but found the boys who played too physically and verbally intimidating to approach. It is likely that children who have poor social competence may feel even higher levels of intimidation at the prospect of approaching those who display good physical activity skills. Newman et al.'s (2006) research used photography as a method to stimulate conversation during the interviews with the children that were involved in the study. However, unlike this study, the researchers took photographs of the children, rather than gave the children the autonomy to take the photographs themselves. The researchers did, however, conclude that the photographs enabled greater engagement in conversation from the pupils involved, predominantly through the medium of story

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telling. Further conclusions regarding the use of the photography method employed in this research are presented later in this thesis.

Football is historically recognised as being a 'boy's sport,' with traditionally male-associated characteristics of masculinity and strength still strongly associated with footballing ability. This may make it particularly difficult for children identified with some types of SENs to be accepted as proficient footballers, for example for those who experience physical or motor difficulties, as their strength and masculinity may be deemed inadequate by their peers. Therefore, it may be more difficult for these boys to hold good social positioning in school, as playing football has been seen, both in this study and many others, to be a strong predictor of high social status (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Jago et al. 2009; Renold, 2005; Swain, 2000).

It appears, however, that some boys involved in this study have been able to mask their social competence difficulties by displaying proficiency in football playing. The research conversations and observations conducted in this study indicated that all boys who displayed good physical activity ability were respected by their peers, thus were given higher social status amongst their peers and were better placed to form relationships with their peers. However, whether these relationships result in the formation of friendships is unclear. Three of the boys who stated that their football proficiency was high, and was observed as such, still were experiencing difficulties with forming friendships.

It seems likely that children identified with SEN are able to improve their social status by engendering respect from their peers for their high footballing proficiency. However, these children are still experiencing difficulties with forming and maintaining friendships; their social competence difficulties are often detected by their peers during classroom activity and when not engaging in football. Thus, the teaching and learning of friendship skills is still critical in enabling these pupils to effectively form and maintain the friendships that they desire.

9.7 Lack of relevance in verbal communication

Six of the twenty three (26%) pupils involved in this study displayed a lack of relevance in their verbal communication at various times during the research period. Irrelevance in verbal communication was identified by the researcher during communications with seven of the twenty three (30%) pupils involved in this study,

four of whom were identified with ASD, and the other three of whom were identified by their Teachers/TAs as having some form of additional speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Some excerpts from research conversations in which pupils displayed what was perceived to be irrelevance in their verbal communication are displayed below:

Pupil 5 (Robert) at Mountford

Researcher: 'Is Miss S's (Lisa, DH/SENCO) job the same or different to Miss R's (Janet, TA3)?'

Robert: 'Yes. The same. This is going to be in the Robert book. It's time for lunchtime. Ok let's go.'

Researcher: 'You've already had lunch Robert. Is lunchtime your favourite time of day?'

Robert: 'Ok, it's time for lunch lets go! (enthusiastically).'

Researcher: 'It's not lunchtime Robert. Would you like to stop?'

Robert: '(looks at picture of the drawings he did at lunchtime below). But my baby chair I lost him. I lost my baby chair in here but I lost this one Miss.'

<u>Pupil 7 (Will) at Mountford</u>

Researcher: 'What about in the classroom? Does somebody help you?'

Will: 'What do you think's up here in the brain then? What is up in my brain?

Researcher- I don't know Will.'

Will: 'It's something beginning with, it's a type of dinosaur and it begins with T.'

Researcher: 'T Rex, got it. So who helps you to calm down the most?'

Will: 'I don't know, I've forgotten.'

Researcher: 'That's ok.'

...
Researcher: 'Ok, so what do you think would help you to not get frustrated in the classroom?'

Will: 'Yes, give me a dinosaur picture to colour in and to do origami with it.'

Researcher: 'Ok, but what about when you have to do your normal work?'

Will: (pauses). 'Shall I tell you something about how they look? Look at their coats, they're the same.'

<u>Pupil 6 (James) at Cherry Blossom</u>

Researcher: 'Do you think everyone has lots of friends in school?'

James: 'Some people's got school uniform like I've got on today because I don't like dressing up, it's just a bit boring you know, people will just laugh at me. Sometimes I wear my tracksuit bottoms, but sometimes they're a bit too small for me so I've got my school trousers on instead. Wait a minute, I forgot to bring my trainers in, don't matter, I've got my plimsolls instead. Guess how many minutes I can get changed in? One minute, sometimes two minutes. Sometimes you know about 10 minutes.'

The above excerpts from research conversations indicate that some pupils involved in this research presented what were perceived to be irrelevant responses to questions asked by the researcher, for example Will answering '*shall I tell you something about how they look?*' when asked the question, *'what about when you*

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have to do your normal work?' and James answering *'some people's got school uniform…'* when asked the question *'do you think everyone has lots of friends in school?'* It was apparent to the researcher that James' response related to an incident that had occurred immediately preceding the research conversation. James was frequently last in getting changed for sport, and had been that morning, which had resulted in his teacher sanctioning him. Perhaps James was unable to separate his thoughts around the preceding incident and the questions asked by the researcher in the research conversation.

Yet, all of these children displayed relevance in their verbal communication throughout the majority of answers given to the questions posed in the research conversations. This suggests that these children were able to detect the researcher's intention when posing the majority of questions asked in the conversations, therefore perhaps were able to detect the literal meaning of the researcher's words throughout most of the conversation. Further analysis of the instances in which irrelevance was displayed indicated that pupils most often answered with an irrelevant statement when a question was posed that was of a more sensitive nature than had been asked previously. This suggests that either students found the sensitive nature of the question more difficult to interpret than the researcher's previous speech, thus were unable to conceptualise relevant answers, or, students answered irrelevantly as a result of their discomfort with the sensitive nature of the question.

This relates to the discussion on pupils' inappropriate use of humour in section 9.2. Children were identified as using humour inappropriately when presented with a situation during their research conversations that they either:

1. Did not understand; or
2. Were uncomfortable to engage with.

These two potential causes of ineffective humour appear to translate to irrelevance in verbal communication. However, the difference with irrelevance in communication is that there is no effective use of irrelevance, as there appeared to be with humour.

Additionally, as with effective or ineffective use of humour, irrelevance in verbal communication appears to have a strong influence over the social positioning of that child within the classroom and wider school context. The pupils who answered some researcher-posed questions irrelevantly overwhelmingly experienced greater difficulties with social inclusion than those who answered all questions relevantly;

they were much more likely to play alone during break times and were perceived as 'more different' by their non-SEN peers. This perception became apparent to the researcher during 'ad hoc' conversations that took place during playtimes with other pupils in the classrooms in which the pupils participating in this research were based. Words such as 'weird' and 'strange' were used frequently by their peers to describe pupils who displayed irrelevance in their verbal communication, strongly indicating a lower social positioning of these children.

When analysing instances of irrelevance in children's verbal communication, the same three topics as were predictors of laughter appeared to be predictors of irrelevance:

1. The nature of support for academic work that the pupil receives
2. The relationships/friendships that the child may/may not have formed
3. Emotional and/or behavioural difficulties that he/she may be experiencing

This further highlights the need to teach appropriate responses to what could be perceived as sensitive questions by the child identified with SEN, as many children are clearly employing what they perceive to be appropriate responses to sensitive discussions, yet are displaying a lack of social competence in their responses.

9.8 Summary

This chapter has identified and explored a number of themes to emerge from the data gathered, relating to the social inclusion characteristics of the group of children involved in this study. These themes include: lacking self-awareness; ineffective use of humour in verbal communication; under-developed non-verbal social experiences; consistency in playtime routines and lack of relevance in verbal communication. The number of children in this study identified with the above characteristics is summarised in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 indicates that high proportions of the pupils involved in this study are experiencing multiple challenges to their social inclusion in the schools at which they attend. Only four pupils, of the twenty-three (17%) involved in this study, are not thought to be experiencing difficulties with social inclusion. Additionally, it is striking that all pupils involved in this study are identified as experiencing consistent difficulties with multiple non-verbal communication skills, as identified by Kelly (2011). Perhaps the four pupils who did display non-verbal communication

difficulties yet were not identified as experiencing social inclusion difficulties, had employed strategies by which they could 'mask' their lack of non-verbal communication skills. It appears that, for some of these pupils, effective use of humour was the way in which this was achieved.

Furthermore, it appears that the characteristics of social inclusion difficulties for the pupils involved in this study are complex, and encompass a multifaceted interplay between specific communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Thus, it appears that there is not one specific skill which is a predictor of difficulties with

Table 9.1 Number of children identified with social inclusion characteristics in this study (by descending number of pupils)

Characteristic	Number of Pupils (n=23)	% of pupils (n=23)
Experiencing consistent difficulties with multiple non-verbal communication skills	23	100
Experiencing difficulties with Social Inclusion at school	19	83
Self-managing social experiences	15	65
Successfully built/maintained a relationship with 1 or more child	9	39
Lacking self awareness	8	35
Ineffective use of humour	7	30
Spending playtimes alone	7	30
Displaying lack of relevance in verbal communication	7	30
Displaying aggressive behaviours	6	26
Spending playtimes with one 'best friend' usually playing the same games	6	26
Friendships initiated at home	5	22
Predominantly spending time in quiet places of playground	4	17

social inclusion. Consequently, it seems likely that an approach by which pupils are encouraged to develop a range of different social skills, could be effective in overcoming the challenges to social inclusion that these pupils face.

9.9 Pupils' social inclusion characteristics and the process of social inclusion

It is possible to link the findings in this chapter to the literature-informed, researcher-devised 'current model of social inclusion' (Figure 3.2), first presented in chapter 3: the model is again presented in this section for ease of reference. This chapter has presented data that aligns with the practice-orientated section of Figure 3.2, particularly in relation to Stages two and three of that section in identifying pupils' 'problematic social relationships' and resulting 'pupil marginalisation.' As has been previously discussed, the stages depicted in the model should be viewed with caution, as they are strongly inter-linked. However, they do provide a useful tool by which the data gathered, in relation to pupils' social inclusion characteristics and TAs' influence on the process of social inclusion, can be analysed and presented.

It is clear that many pupils are electing not to involve TAs, or indeed any other adults, in supporting them with their social experiences. It is also clear that the vast majority of participating pupils in the three research schools are experiencing difficulties in forming social relationships with their peers, as only 9 (39%) of the 23 pupils involved in this study had successfully built or maintained a relationship with one or more child in school. Consequently, it is apparent that many of the pupils attending the three schools involved in this study are experiencing marginalisation, as identified as Stage 3 in the practice-orientated section of Figure 3.2. This is particularly surprising given that the schools involved were purposively sampled according to their inclusive ethos.

It is consequently possible to make what Bassey (1998) terms a 'fuzzy generalisation: pupils' self-managed social experiences are contributing to pupils' experienced difficulties in forming social relationships with their peers. It is important, therefore, to conduct further research to identify whether or not adult support, in managing social experiences, can engender pupils' building of social relationships with their peers. Data pertinent to addressing this are also presented in chapter 10.

Figure 3.2 Current Model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Current Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities
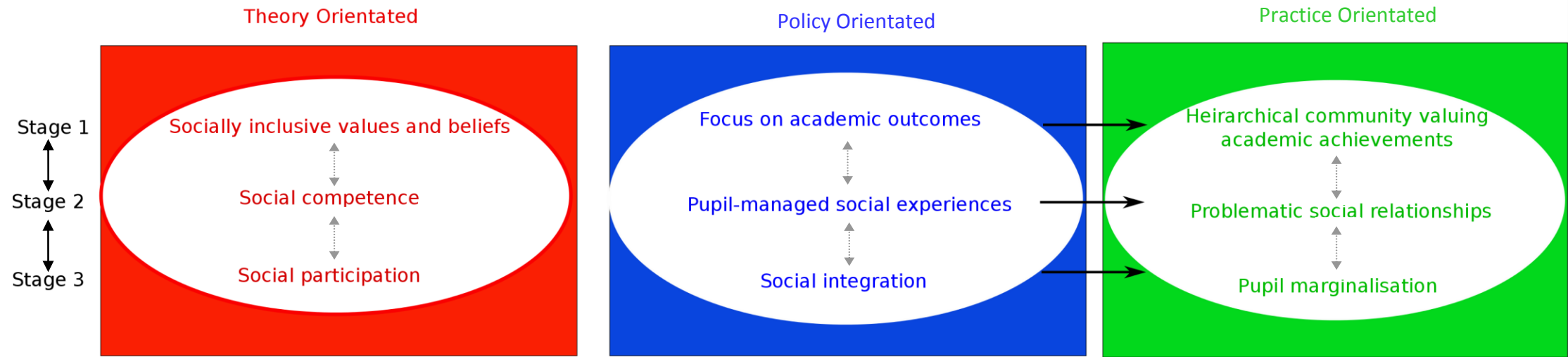
Additionally, chapter 10 will investigate whether, as Figure 3.2 predicts, the current lack of support afforded to pupils in managing their social experiences is as a result of a school-level lack of focus on socially inclusive interventions, stemming from a policy-level focus on academic attainment. This will enable recommendations to be made in chapter 11, relating to TAs' role in supporting students identified with SEN in their social experiences. Finally, recommendations for further research will be made in chapter 11, which specifically focus on reducing the difficulties with social inclusion that the pupils involved in this study have been identified to be facing.

Chapter 10: Data presentation and analysis: TAs' current influence over pupils' social inclusion

Chapters 7 and 9 have explored the data pertinent to the roles and responsibilities of TAs involved in this study, and the social inclusion of the pupils involved in this study respectively. This has enabled the identification and exploration of themes relating to the research questions for investigation in this study. Table 10.1 presents a reminder of the themes explored in chapters 7 and 9.

Table 10.1: A summary of the findings presented in chapters 7 and 9, relating to characteristics of TAs' roles and pupils' social inclusion

TAs' roles and responsibilities (as discussed in chapter 7)	Pupils' social inclusion characteristics (as discussed in chapter 9)
TA: Jack of all trades and master of none	Lacking self-awareness
TAs: Leaders in learning	Ineffective use of humour in verbal communication
Importance of experience	Under-developed non-verbal communication skills
Accountability vs responsibility	Importance of home-based relationship building
Inadequacy of pay and contracts	Self-managed social experiences
Over-qualification of TAs	Consistency in playtime routines
Status and respect	Lack of relevance in verbal communication
Importance of figureheads of management	

This chapter will bring the two previously explored evidence bases together to present data that identify TAs' current influence over the process of social inclusion

for the pupils involved in this study. This chapter explores aspects of TAs' role and responsibilities which are thought to directly influence the characteristics identified in chapter 9, in relation to pupils' social inclusion. The themes explored in this chapter include: TAs: behaviour management specialists; TA-implemented interventions; Pastoral relationships; and, Role-blurring. This chapter presents data primarily gathered through semi-structured interviews with TAs, Teachers and Headteachers and observations of TAs. The data presented predominantly relates to research questions two and three, presented below:

Q2: What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?

10.1 TAs: Behaviour management specialists

All TAs observed in the three case study schools spent a significant proportion of their time with pupils reinforcing behavioural expectations. In all observations undertaken for this study, TAs spent the majority of their time either reinforcing behaviour expectations with pupils or scaffolding learning. The term 'scaffolding learning' is used in this chapter to represent guiding children's learning and development by a more knowledgeable adult (Stone, 1998). In this chapter, 'scaffolding learning' focuses on the academic concepts studied in a given session. It is accepted that scaffolding learning can focus on social skills concepts, however, for the purposes of this chapter, it is assumed that the focus of a lesson is on a Maths/English concept, as this was most frequently observed.

TAs' focus on reinforcing behaviour expectations is similar to the findings of Trevor Kerry (2005), who identified 'behaviour manager' as a key component in his typology of TAs. Kerry defines the role as, 'involved with behaviour support with an individual or with groups, including monitoring and control, and dealing with parents in issues of pupil behaviour' (p.21). In this study, two distinct categories of behaviour management approaches were identified, which can be separated according to the setting in which TAs were based.

TAs undertaking a classroom-based role, working with a varied group of pupils in the same classroom in which whole-class teaching was occurring, were most likely to spend their time reinforcing behaviour expectations. These expectations were, virtually exclusively, set by the teacher present in that classroom. This approach manifested as TAs autonomously identifying which pupils to work with, in supporting them to manage their behavioural reactions to the learning task set by the teacher. TAs would typically support a range of students in a given lesson, attempting to anticipate any changes in pupils' moods that could trigger challenging displays of behaviour. TAs would then attempt to mitigate these changes so that whole class teaching could continue without the Teacher having to intervene and tackle problematic behaviour. The excerpt below, from an observation at Cherry Blossom in Year 5, provides evidence for the above assertion.

9.50am: Literacy
Student Teacher undertaking main teaching, TA4 (Gina) supporting

10.09am: Alison and Tyrone working on a teacher-assigned task, writing words on flipchart paper. They turn the paper around and Alison asks 'do you want to sit next to me?' Tyrone looks away, clearly uncomfortable and shrugs his shoulders. Alison begins to go red and starts fidgeting with her emotion cards.

10.11am: Gina is working with Alan as he's not engaging with the task, lack of concentration. She scans the room and sees Alison looking upset, assigns Alan a task and moves across to Alison to ask what the problem is. Supports her to calm down and assigns a task for her to complete independently.

10.17am: Faraz calls out to Gina saying he's stuck. He's disrupting the others on his table by making them laugh. Gina moves across to sit with him to explain the task.

10.20am: Tyrone is laughing loudly and distracting others. Gina calls to him for his attention and points to her eyes to show she's watching him.

10.25am: Alison is in the reading corner playing with a wind chime, which is disrupting the lesson. Gina moves over to her and removes the wind chime before moving her back to her desk and assigning her another task. Gina reminds Alison to use her emotion cards to signify how she's feeling rather than leave her desk and wander around.

10.28am: Tyrone refusing to follow Teacher's instruction to get on with his work. Gina moves over to him and discusses the 'appropriate talking' rules. Manages to move him back to his seat and calm him.

The above extract indicates the significant proportion of time Gina spent on managing behaviour compared with scaffolding learning in a given lesson. Gina moved her attention between pupils six times in a 17 minute period of the lesson, working with four different pupils. All instances were in an attempt to either prevent or reduce pupils' displays of challenging behaviour, usually rooted in loss of concentration/lack of understanding relating to the teacher-assigned task. This suggests that Gina's priority during whole class teaching was to ensure that the teacher was able to follow her lesson plan and that pupils were able to engage in the lesson. Indeed, when interviewed, Gina explained her method of support during whole class teaching:

Gina: 'I think it's experience of working for so many years, and I have noticed over the years that a child who is misbehaving, there are a number of ways that you can deal with it. I try and deal with it as much as I can, without disturbing the class, so it's just tactics like that.'

Researcher: 'Ok. Do you always work with the same children or does that vary a bit?'

Gina: 'It's mainly those children who are low able, or mainly children who have behavioural problems. Like with Faraz, he needs to move all the time, and you know, once you get to know a child you will know what he needs, if he needs to move then you have to find a way to let him! It's hard but you just want the teacher to be able to teach!'

(TA4, Cherry Blossom, 2014)

Gina's words identify that her priority during whole class teaching focuses on supporting *'the teacher to be able to teach.'* This finding is similar to that of Burton & Goodman's (2011) study into SENCOs' perspectives on inclusive practice (2011). The authors suggested that many additional adults in a given classroom's learning environment were 'crowd controllers.' In this approach, TAs utilise their strong understanding of individual pupils' behaviour to manage disruption and act as an enabler of the quality first teaching of the teacher, thus endeavouring to allow as many pupils as possible to access the teaching at any given time. However, the authors argued that this approach was often not effective in creating a nurturing environment in which pupils felt supported to learn. Pupils were frequently not exposed to situations in which their learning was scaffolded by additional adults, as a result of the adults' focus on behaviour management, and consequently pupils were often not supported to become independent.

Small groups: Learning focused

TAs undertaking a role supporting pupils as part of a small group arrangement or on an individual basis, outside of the main teaching classroom, were most likely to spend their time scaffolding learning. Thus, it appeared that managing behaviour did not demand as much time for TAs working with small groups or on an individual basis, than for TAs working in a whole class-based role. It could be argued that this is as a result of fewer children being present within small group working arrangements, resulting in fewer instances of problematic behaviour occurring and less time demanded for TAs to resolve these. It could also be argued that fewer instances of problematic behavior may have occurred due to change in context; the TA was the most prominent adult in the small groups, and thus commanded more respect from the children, whereas in the classroom the Teacher was the most prominent adult.

However, there were significant differences in behaviour management strategies employed between TAs working with small groups and those working with whole classes. Additionally, observations identified that similar displays of behaviour occurred from pupils both in whole class settings and in small group settings, yet they were fewer in number during small group working. This suggests that TAs may have

employed more effective behaviour management approaches for the pupils involved in the small groups, enabling more opportunities for scaffolding learning.

As was identified in the previous sub-section, the behaviour management strategies employed during whole class teaching focused on reinforcement of teacher-set expectations. However, 7 out of the 9 (78%) TAs observed, who were employed mostly in small group workings, devised and implemented their own behaviour management approaches. A summary of these approaches is provided in Table 10.2. The behaviour management strategies identified in Table 10.2 identify a wide range of approaches to overcoming problematic displays of behaviour. However, the common feature of these approaches is that TAs have developed them to utilise only with the small groups that they support outside the main classroom, and thus they are separate from the teacher-developed whole class behaviour management strategies. Consequently, these approaches can be argued to be personalised to the small number of children with whom they are employed.

When looking in greater detail at the behaviour management techniques presented in Table 10.2, strong examples of personalisation can be identified. An example of this is with the raffle ticket strategy that Lorraine employed. Lorraine's small groupings were particularly male dominated, with many of those boys being interested in playing an army-related game on the playground. Thus, there were many army-related prizes in Lorraine's shoebox for the boys to choose from if/when they won at the end of the week, for example small soldier figures, paper parachutes and khaki coloured pencils. Lorraine had identified personal motivations of the pupils in her small groups and had tailored her behaviour management techniques to take account of them. Informal conversations with Lorraine indicated that she ensured the interests of individuals' in her small groups were considered when buying prizes for her raffles. Consequently, pupils could be argued to be more responsive to Lorraine's techniques, as they understood and identified with the rewards.

Table 10.2 A summary of the behaviour management strategies TAs devised and implemented with small groups

Behaviour management approach	Description
Stickers	4 TAs (Lorraine, Lara, Gillian & Li) had personalised sets of stickers that they had purchased for use with small groups. They were used as rewards for good pieces of work and good displays of behaviour.
'Perfect Partners' wall chart	Lara created this wall chart, which she displayed on the wall of the classroom in which she was working with small groups. She had the names of her students on one side and would put ticks next to one set of partners at the end of every session, to denote the pair that had worked most effectively together throughout the session.
Raffle tickets	2 TAs (Lorraine & Gillian) in different schools gave out raffle tickets to students for good pieces of work and/or good displays of behaviour. At the end of the week the raffle was drawn and winners were able to draw something out of the prize boxes.
Pebbles in a jar	Nicole had different jars that corresponded to each intervention group that she supported. She would carry the appropriate jar to each session and pebbles would be put in for good work/good behaviour. When the jar was full the whole group would be rewarded.
Names on a whiteboard	Claire wrote pupils' names on the whiteboard of whichever classroom she was in to highlight problematic poor displays of behaviour. These names served as warnings for the pupils. She would rub them off if pupils showed good behaviour later in sessions.
Playtime helpers	2 TAs (Maria & Nicola) rewarded pupils, at the end of sessions, who had produced good piece of work/showed good behaviour with helping them to put equipment out during playtime/lead the classroom out to the yard.

It can be identified that TAs' role on the playground may have supported the personalising of behaviour management systems. All TAs involved in this study were responsible for managing the safety of pupils on the playground at break times, with many TAs also spending time on the playground at lunchtimes. Many studies into

TAs' role and responsibilities have identified playground duties as a key component of their day-to-day timetable (Groom, 2006). This role on the playground enables TAs to gain understanding of pupils' relationships with their peers, the nature of pupils' social interactions and to participate in TA to pupil interactions. TAs can then utilise these understandings in designing their behaviour management systems.

Indeed, as can been seen in Table 10.2, Maria and Nicola both clearly utilised their understandings from their role on the playground to support their behaviour management techniques. Both TAs rewarded pupils for examples of what they deemed to be good work or appropriate behaviour by allowing those children to support them with playtime resources or to lead out their classes to the yard for playtime. This indicates that Maria and Nicola both identified an opportunity for their role on the playground to support their behaviour management strategies.

This finding relates to that identified as a result of the researcher's pilot study, conducted in support of an MPhil degree. A TA at Riverdale stated, *'That's the way we support them, we get to know them'* (Saddler, 2014). The high level of contact TAs typically have with the students they work closely with, both in the classroom and on the playground, enables an holistic understanding of a pupil's needs to be ascertained. This understanding was discussed in chapter 2.2, when exploring the pastoral role that TAs often undertake with the pupils with whom they work. TAs often form understandings at deeper levels than is possible for Teachers to ascertain, due to the higher number of students whom Teachers usually work with (Devecchi & Brown, 2013). Consequently, it can be argued that TAs' personalised approaches to behaviour management may be more effective in some cases than those of Teachers. Further research into these systems would be useful in identifying characteristics of effective behaviour management systems in different contexts.

10.2 TA-implemented interventions

As was discussed in chapter 4, the majority of papers evaluating TA-implemented interventions explore interventions which focus on Literacy/Numeracy-related concepts. Of the 15 sessions in which TAs were observed implementing interventions with small groups, 11 (73%) were focused on implementing interventions that supported pupils with concepts exclusively linked to English or Maths. However, 4 interventions observed focused specifically on building social

competence with pupils, therefore were deemed by the researcher to be particularly related to the areas of interest for this thesis. These 4 interventions can be strongly linked to pupils' social inclusion characteristics, as informal conversations with the schools' staff members indicated that they had been employed by the school with the broad aim of improving pupils' experiences of social inclusion. Hence, the data explored in this section can be analysed in relation to the ideal and current models of social inclusion, presented in chapter 3.

It should be noted that none of the schools were gathering longitudinal data to measure the impact of the interventions presented in this section, therefore, their influence on pupils' social inclusion and/or academic attainment is not known. Nevertheless, it is relevant to present these to the reader, as they pertain to the answering of RQs 1 and 2. The implementation of these interventions relates to TAs' responsibilities within their roles at the three research schools and TAs were asked to implement these interventions with the aim of improving pupils' social inclusion.

Observation 1: Happy Book
TA (Sarah) is working on an individual basis with Paul (Pupil 1, Mountford)

1.10pm: Paul and TA working individually on a table outside of the classroom. Paul is drawing a picture. TA says 'you can colour in the sea and then I'd like you to tell me two things that have made you happy this week.'

Paul gets a book for TA to show her and shows her his reading journal, which he has been writing in.

TA asking questions about book Paul has been reading: 'why did you choose it?' 'what did you like about it?'

1.15pm: TA explains to researcher that she and Paul share a love of Star Wars.

1.18pm: TA asks if Paul has any stickers left to get this week, or if he has received any raffle tickets from another TA.

1.20pm: TA goes to write the date in Paul's Happy Book and asks him to think about and write down some things that he is happy about this week.

1.25pm: TA asks Paul if he is ok with her writing in his book. He replies 'yes,' TA dates and writes about what they have been doing in the session. TA then asks questions about Paul's homelife: 'how is Evelyn?' 'what did you do at home at the weekend?' Paul tells a story about his Mum knitting jumpers for him and his siblings for Christmas.

1.30pm: TA writes in Paul's Reading Record, telling Paul exactly what she is writing.

1.33pm: TA says 'I'm going to take you back to class soon Paul.' Paul groans. They then have a brief discussion about how Paul knows that Santa isn't real. TA explains that it isn't kind to tell other children that. He responds with, 'hmmm, I'm pretty sure I'll crack.' Paul then draws a picture in his book that he says the TA isn't allowed to see and she says 'that's fine.' He is giggling. Paul says, 'I'd like to have a picture of myself in my happy book.' He then asks if anybody else has any special pens and TA replies 'no.'

1.35pm: TA tells Paul that the session has ended and takes Paul back to his main classroom.

Observation 1 presents data relating to a TA-implemented intervention programme, independent from discrete subject teaching and not linked directly to any National Curriculum objectives. The TA implementing the programme (Sarah) was not chosen to partake in a semi-structured interview for this study, as she was not based in either of the classrooms in which the observations took place. However, discussions with Sarah indicated to the researcher that she devised this intervention independently. Sarah had been asked by Lisa (DH/SENCO) at Mountford to take Paul out of the main classroom for half an hour a week, on an individual basis, to focus on improving his self-esteem. Paul had been experiencing negative thoughts relating to his self-esteem and had frequently discussed feeling worthless. Sarah had supported Paul at various times across the 3 years that he had attended Mountford and had built up a good relationship with him, hence Lisa asking Sarah to work with him on an individual basis.

The intervention that Sarah devised was not a planned and prescriptive intervention programme, nor was it research-based or the impact of it measured. However, measurement of its success was monitored according to how far it supported Paul's IEP target of 'Paul can identify at least three positive things about himself when asked.' It was clear from the observation that Paul enjoyed the sessions; his groan when Sarah said '*I'm going to take you back to class soon'* identified that he would rather have been partaking in the intervention than whole class teaching. Additionally, it was clear that a culture of trust and mutual respect was built up between Paul and Sarah. Paul talked freely about his home life, even with the added 'researcher-effect' as a result of the researcher observing the discourse (Gillham, 2000). Additionally, Paul felt confident enough to voice that he did not want Sarah to see one of his drawings, without fear of sanction, further reinforcing the culture of trust, respect and autonomy built between them.

This observation also highlights the autonomy that Sarah was afforded by Lisa in developing a programme to support Paul with his social competence. It also highlights Sarah's skills and knowledge relating to social skill focused interventions,

as she was able to devise and implement a programme independently. Although the impact of Sarah's programme could have been better assessed, the clear enjoyment of Paul during the sessions could be argued to be an indicator of success. Additionally, Paul's IEP review indicated that he was 'growing in confidence,' which could possibly be linked to the influence of Sarah's intervention. Further research would be recommended to identify whether or not Sarah's intervention had a positive influence on Paul's self-esteem, and whether or not this influence was sustained over time.

Observation 2: Lego Therapy

Casey (TA1) at Cherry Blossom was employed as an ASD specialist at the school. Her timetable was exclusively focused on implementing social skill-focused interventions. During the researcher's time at Cherry Blossom, Casey was observed implementing a Lego Therapy intervention with a small group of three pupils on a table outside of whole class teaching. An excerpt from the observation transcript is presented below.

1.30pm: TA starts by explaining that they're going to be playing their Lego game today, where they will all have a job and they have to keep that job and let others in the group do their job. She explains that they will have to work together the build a lego model on a picture card.

1.35pm: TA hands out the job cards (builder, distributor and engineer). She then explains that the engineer has to start by describing which brick they need first and where to put it.

1.38pm: Engineer looks at TA and does not speak so TA models how to ask for the brick he needs, 'David, can I have a red Lego piece please?' Engineer then repeats after TA.

1.42pm: The group is working together to build the Lego structure. The child who is taking the part of Distributor becomes agitated and fidgets. She says to TA, 'I want to build the boat.' TA says, 'we have to work together to build it. Remember to touch

your playdoh when you start to feel upset and it will calm you down.' The child does this and returns to her role in the game.

1.45pm: Structure is nearly built. TA explains to the group that there are 5 minutes remaining of their session. She gets a sparkly lava timer out of her bag and puts it in the middle of the table so that all children can see it. She then turns it so that the timer has started.

1.50pm: The child playing the part of Engineer indicates that the timer has run out. TA says 'you're right. What does that mean?' Engineer replies, 'we have to tidy up ready for next lesson.' TA plays 30 seconds of the song 'Whistle While You Work,' and children know to have everything put away by the end of it.

Over the past 10 years, the number of schools implementing Lego Therapy as an intervention programme in primary schools has significantly increased. Support staff have predominantly been responsible for its implementation, with the aim of the programme being to improve pupils' social competence. Attwood (1998) described Lego therapy as having a basis in 'constructive application' (p.96). This is as a result of the programme utilising pupils' existing interests to motivate learning experiences and changes in behaviour. This can lead to improvements in both academic attainment and social skill competence. Numerous research studies indicate that Lego Therapy, when implemented effectively, has the potential to improve pupils' social competence, particularly in relation to teamwork skills, verbal communication skills and in frequency and duration of social interactions (LeGoff, 2004; LeGoff & Sherman, 2006; Owens et al., 2008; Reichow & Volkmar, 2010).

Casey's implementation of the Lego Therapy programme focused on encouragement and modelling. The observation indicated that she modelled verbal communication when pupils were lacking the confidence or skills to communicate independently. When the child undertaking the part of the Engineer did not contribute to the session, Casey modelled the phrase, *'David, can I have a red Lego piece please?'* This then gave that child the confidence and skills to be able to contribute. Once Casey was confident that all pupils were able to undertake the roles assigned to them in the session, she chose to take a more passive role in the discourse, rather than

the required active role at the beginning. As the session progressed, Casey facilitated the discourse as and when required, but focused on allowing the pupils to work as independently as possible. Clearly, Casey's knowledge of how and when to intervene throughout the course of the session, coupled with her strong knowledge of verbal modelling, allowed the session to progress as planned.

Additionally, Casey worked with a number of the children involved in the observed Lego Therapy session, across a range of different intervention programmes. This enabled her to gain a good understanding of individuals' skills and abilities, and thus supported her to identify appropriate situations in which to intervene in the discourse. Her strong knowledge of individual pupils' abilities allowed her to identify optimal ways in which to frame her verbal modelling. Casey was sampled to partake in a semi-structured interview for this study. An excerpt from the transcript of this interview identifies Casey's ability to identify the support that individuals require, as a result of the time intensive rapport built between herself and many of the children in Cherry Blossom:

Researcher: 'On a day to day basis what would your role be?'

Casey: 'Its changed quite a bit, I will be timetabled across about 5/6 children. There are some Statemented children with ASD who I don't work with because they have one to one support. I can offer advice, or if I have resources they know they can come to me for whatever they need but there are some children without a diagnosis that get left behind. So I was timetabled across about 7 children I think it was; in the end I take groups of them out in the afternoons and we do activities. And then just before half term, a girl in Year 2 was flagged up as really struggling, so I'm now with her for 15 hours, so basically every morning. So I've been on a trip this morning, so have been catching up with her from half term.'

Researcher: 'Ok, so do you plan for the children that you work with?'

Casey: 'Yeah, it all depends. I like to keep them in class for as long as they're managing. Obviously, if they're not managing I can see, I know what to say to them and I take them out and we may even do something completely different, it depends

how their mind is at that time. So most of them tend to stay in class a lot more with the one to one support, which has proved to be really good. But when they don't I know what their triggers are and I can give them activities that I know will work for them, either on their own or in a group.'

Observation 3: Sensory room

        Casey's ability to *'give them* [pupils] *activities that I know will work for them, either on their own or in a group'* was again highlighted by another observation, which involved Casey working with pupils in a sensory room. Whilst the researcher was conducting an observation in the Year 4 classroom at Cherry Blossom, Casey (TA1) entered the classroom and asked to remove James (pupil 6) for an intervention. The researcher followed Casey, James and another 3 pupils from various year groups to a sensory room in the school. An extract from the observation is presented below:

2.15pm: Casey has picked up 4 children from different year groups in the school, including James, and has taken them into the Sensory room. Items in the room include: lava lamps, bubbling water lamps, light up plastic balls, soft play items, backlit floor, blackout blinds, beanbags and cushions.

Casey tells the group that they have 20 minutes to play in here. She states: 'I'll be here if you need anything but this is your time to play with each other.'

2.20pm: One child in the group comes up to Casey and asks her to play with him. She says 'why don't you ask James if he'd like to play with you and your ball?'

2.23pm: Same child returns to Casey and asks if she'll play with him. Casey takes him over to James, kneels down to eye level with them and models asking someone to play with them: 'Mark would like to play with someone, James do you think you and Mark could play together with his ball on the beanbags?' James responds 'yes' enthusiastically, takes Mark's hand and leads him over to the beanbags.

The above observation extract indicates that the sensory room was used to provide opportunities for pupils to learn through play. The extract highlights that Casey was

able to use the sensory room to scaffold positive social interactions between the pupils in the room. When Mark approached Casey to ask her to play with him, it was clear that he did not have the confidence to ask a peer. Casey responded by modeling positive social interaction between the two boys; she got down to their eye level, demonstrated appropriate body language and good verbal communication skills when posing the question, *'James, do you think you and Mark could play together with his ball on the beanbags?'*

The researcher asked Casey how she chose the pupils to take to the sensory room, once in the intervention had finished. Casey responded that she gauged which pupils would benefit by listening to the TAs and Teachers at break times and lunchtimes, to hear which pupils were struggling with their academic work, behaviour or a problem they may be having at home. She explained it as identifying pupils who were, 'having a bad day.' Casey was then free to enter the classrooms of the pupils she identified would benefit from the sensory room and ask to take them out for 20 minutes. Almost all teachers agreed. On average, Casey conducted sensory room sessions three times at week at Cherry Blossom.

Casey's rationale for choosing pupils to partake in the sensory room sessions indicates that her implementation of this intervention was fairly ad-hoc in nature. Casey was not implementing an evidence-based strategy for choosing the children and appeared not to sample the children according to particular social competence characteristics. Additionally, as has previously been discussed, no longitudinal data was being gathered by the school to identify any positive impacts of this intervention on pupils' social inclusion, thus the success of the intervention cannot be determined. However, it does appear that Casey was well placed to implement such an intervention; she displayed excellent modelling skills and clearly had a good understanding of individuals' existing social needs. Furthermore, the pupils involved demonstrated clear enjoyment at having accessed such an intervention. Consequently, further research is recommended to assess the impact of such interventions on pupils' social inclusion and academic attainment.

Observation 4: Circle Time

A Circle Time session took place during an observation with Year 5 pupils at Birchwood. Circle Time was discussed at length in section 4.4 of this thesis and is

defined as, 'a way of approaching the task of teaching children and young people personal and social skills. More specifically it is a period of class activity in which pupils and teacher sit together in a circle formation to share ideas, feelings and games/activities about one or more social/emotional/curricular issues' (Lown, 2002, p.94).

The lesson during which the circle time session took place was originally planned as a Maths lesson. However, an incident occurred on the playground immediately before the lesson, which the teacher felt needed immediate attention; two boys had fought over the outcome of a football match. When all of the pupils were seated on the carpet after coming in from break, Heather (T1) explained that the boys involved needed to spend some time reflecting on their behaviours. Heather then asked Claire (TA3) to take a group of 6 boys out of the classroom for this lesson and conduct a Circle Time session. Thus, the Circle Time session that the researcher observed was unplanned and ad hoc in nature. An excerpt of the observation record for this session is provided below.

10.20am: Claire has moved the tables in her room to create a large space of carpet in the middle of the room and has asked the boys to sit in a circle. Claire: 'we're going to spend half an hour discussing the problems that you've all been having during your football matches.' She emphasises that they must agree not to discuss what is said with others outside of this group.

10.24am: Going around the group, Claire asks everyone to give one word that shows their feelings about the situation. 'Annoyed, angry, frustrated, sad, fed up' are all given by the boys.

10.35am: Claire invites the boys to individually share their thoughts on why so many disagreements are occurring during their football matches. They go around the group building on each other's contributions, with only one boy speaking at a time.

10.41am: Chris starts to speak when Fred is having his turn. Claire stops the boy. She says, 'each person's time to speak must be respected, we mustn't interrupt.'

10.53am: All boys who wish to do so have now spoken. Claire hands out pieces of paper and pens and asks each of them to write a pledge about what they'll agree to do to avoid disagreements in the future.

10.58am: Claire asks boys if she can read their pledges out to the group. They say they would like to do it themselves so they go around the circle and read out their pledges. They include 'make sure the captain is fair' and 'not put all the best players on one team.'

The prevalence of Circle Time sessions in primary schools was discussed in chapter 4.4. In that section, the importance of creating a culture of trust and an associated willingness to discuss feelings was identified. Indeed, they are seen as a prerequisite for the discussion of sensitive issues and activities designed to facilitate social development (Blatchford et al., 2008). The above extract of the circle time observation highlighted Claire's understanding that trust and respect are key characteristics of a successful Circle Time session. Claire's verbal emphasis of the need to keep what was said within the group and not to discuss it with pupils outside provides evidence for this. Additionally, Claire's response to interruption during one boy's time to speak indicates respect as a key characteristic of the Circle Time observed. Claire used the word 'respect' in her verbal communication during the session: she stated, *'each person's time to speak must be respected, we mustn't interrupt.'* It was clear that all pupils involved felt respected and safe within the culture of trust built, as they all contributed to the discussion at various points throughout the session.

The Circle Time session observed enabled the pupils involved to problem-solve, as well as discuss the concept of managing feelings. Pupils were able to reach an agreement as to how they would tackle the specific problem of disagreements when playing football, both on an individual level and at a group level. Their written pledges and subsequent discussion provided evidence of this. Pupils spent a significant proportion of the discussion focusing on how to manage their anger and frustration when the game did not go according to plan. Many of their pledges described strategies that they would employ to manage their problematic reactions to

feelings of anger and frustration, for example Niall's pledge read *'I will count to three in my head before speaking when I'm annoyed.'*

Summary of TA-implemented interventions

This section has explored four specific examples of TA-implemented interventions, which were employed by the schools with the aim of improving pupils' social competence. These four interventions had been devised as a response to some pupils experiencing difficulties with social inclusion, thus were of direct relevance to the areas of interest for this thesis. However, as has been previously discussed, none of the schools were gathering any longitudinal data to identify the impact of these interventions on pupils' learning. Additionally, many of the interventions were implemented on an ad-hoc basis, without employing specific sampling criterion to identify children who would benefit from them. Furthermore, the unstructured nature of the researcher's observations makes the data gathered, to an extent, unreliable. Yet, it did appear that the children experienced great satisfaction from par-taking in the interventions and there was some IEP evidence to suggest that the interventions may have been successful. Further research is recommended to identify whether or not TA-implemented interventions that focus specifically on improving pupils' social inclusion are having positive impacts on pupils' outcomes.

10.3 Pastoral Relationships

The social competence focused interventions presented in the preceding section highlight the strong pastoral role that TAs were observed undertaking with the pupils in the case study schools. TAs' pastoral role was discussed in section 2.2 and defined as, 'building rapport and relationships with students, effective working with outside agencies and creating a whole school approach to pastoral care' (DfES, 2003, p.14). The personal nature of the social competence focused interventions that TAs were observed facilitating required a strong pastoral relationship to have been built between the TA and the pupil(s) involved.

An example of TAs' pastoral role enhancing social competence focused interventions is the Happy Book intervention, undertaken with Paul and facilitated by Sarah (TA, Mountford). Sarah clearly demonstrated a strong understanding of Paul's relationships, not only in school but also outside of school. Paul was comfortable in

answering Sarah's questions about his family life, for example, *'how is Evelyn?'* *'What did you do at home at the weekend?'* Paul responded by telling Sarah a story about his Mum knitting jumpers for him and his siblings for Christmas, showing that he was comfortable in sharing details of his family life with Sarah. Paul was not observed having such personal conversations with other members of the staff at Mountford.

Additionally, observation of the discourse during the intervention highlighted that Sarah and Paul had become familiar with each other's likes and dislikes. Sarah stated to the researcher during the intervention that she and Paul had a shared love of Star Wars. This indicates that the relationship built between Sarah and Paul was one of mutual trust and respect, as they shared details about their likes and dislikes with each other, going beyond the requirements of the foci within the intervention. Paul elected to tell Sarah personal details about his life, as a result of the rapport built between them. This suggests that Sarah had built a pastoral relationship with Paul. This pastoral relationship may have been a significant enabler of the successful implementation of the intervention (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010).

Similarly, the discourse that Claire (TA3, Mountford) facilitated during the Circle Time observation presented earlier in this chapter, was of a personal nature. For the intervention to progress effectively, the pupils involved must have felt respected and safe within the culture of trust built, as discussed in section 10.2. As the intervention was ad hoc in nature, it is particularly surprising that the culture of trust was built to an extent that the pupils were able to engage in a discourse of such a personal nature. This suggests that Claire had previously built pastoral relationships with the pupils involved, at an extent to which pupils were happy to contribute. The researcher did observe Claire working with 4 of the 6 boys involved as part of small group workings on separate occasions, delivering Literacy and Numeracy focused interventions outside of the classroom. This could explain why some of the boys felt comfortable to discuss their problematic social relationships with Claire.

Perhaps Claire's frequent and regular presence on the playground was enough to support a pastoral relationship with some of the boys. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, all TAs involved in this study were responsible for managing the safety of pupils on the playground at break times, with many TAs also spending time on the playground at lunchtimes. This role on the playground enables TAs to gain access to

pupils' relationships with their peers, the nature of pupils' social interactions and to participate in TA to pupil interactions (Groom & Rose, 2005). Thus, it is likely that TAs' role on the playground has enabled them to build pastoral relationships with many pupils across the school. Therefore, TAs could be best placed to facilitate a whole school approach to pastoral care.

The observations of Casey's (TA1, Cherry Blossom) interventions also highlighted the pastoral relationships that she had built with the pupils she worked with. Casey knew when to intervene in discourse to support pupils who were struggling. Her strong knowledge of individuals' social and academic abilities had been developed as a result of the time-intensive rapport built between Casey and the pupils she worked with. Casey's ability to *'give them* [pupils] *activities that I know will work for them, either on their own or in a group,'* could only have been supported by the pastoral nature of the role she undertook at Cherry Blossom.

It may be that other members of the staff at the case study schools could have built such pastoral relationships with the pupils involved in this study, particularly if they were given the opportunity to implement time-intensive interventions with them. Thus, it is not appropriate to suggest that TAs are the only staff members capable of building such pastoral relationships with pupils. However, as TAs most frequently work with pupils as part of a small group structure, or on an individual basis, it can be argued that TAs are the best placed members of staff to build effective pastoral relationships with pupils across the school.

Consequently, as has been observed in all three case study schools, it is likely that TAs are well placed to utilise their potential to build pastoral relationships with pupils and facilitate social competence focused interventions. This may support pupils to achieve the overall goal of the process of social inclusion, as presented in chapter 3.1: active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment. This finding also supports the hypothesis presented in chapter 5.3, which arose from the MPhil pilot study for this research:

TAs' particular influence over the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN lies in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices.

10.4 Role-blurring

Significant role-blurring was identified between TAs and numerous staff members across all three research schools. In this study, role-blurring was particularly apparent between TAs and those with roles related to family liaison, and SENCOs. Therefore, this section examines the characteristics of the role-blurring observed between TAs and these staff members. The key characteristic of the role-blurring identified between TAs and family liaison staff members relates to contact with the immediate school community. With regard to SENCOs, role-blurring was observed in relation to management, development of SEN provision in school and pedagogical skills.

TAs and the Family Liaison role

All three of the case study schools had created non-teaching positions within their staffing structure, with particular responsibilities over home-school liaison. This section explores the characteristics of the three family liaison roles observed, with the aim of identifying schools' rationales behind employing these staff members and to highlight ways in which their responsibilities relate to TAs' role.

Inclusion Officer (Mavis): Birchwood

Birchwood employed an Inclusion Officer (Mavis), a position shared with another primary school in the local area. Mavis had an office at Birchwood in which she spent 3 days a week. The semi-structured interview that the researcher conducted with Louise (HT, Birchwood) identified the rationale behind employing Mavis. A relevant extract from the semi-structured interview transcript with Louise is presented below.

Extract from interview conducted with Louise (HT of Birchwood)

Researcher: 'So why did you choose to employ an Inclusion Officer?'

Louise: 'When I first became Head here, there were two immediate problems that I needed to solve. The first was the finance issues and the second were the meetings scheduled for me. When I arrived I had -£104,000 in my main budget, so I had to make redundancies and no one volunteered so that was quite tough. But actually, long

term wise, it did me a favour because it made my staff stronger. But the biggest drain on my time was that I had 91 meetings with parents in the diary for my fist term in post. It was just unachievable! I knew I had to bring someone on board who could manage the meetings with parents and with other multi-agencies, because we had so many kids on the SEN register that multi-agency meetings were happening every day.

So, I made the decision to employ Mavis because she has a Social Work background and was used to working with families leading chaotic lifestyles. We share her with another school because she was too expensive full time, but I've never regretted employing her. She is that bridge between teaching staff and parents. The parents tell her things that there's no way they'd tell me or any of the Teachers. The TAs work closely with Mavis because the parents tell them all sorts, probably because a lot of them know each other because they live in the local area.'

Inclusion Manager (Julie): Mountford

Mountford employed Julie on a part-time basis to undertake the role of 'Inclusion Manager.' During her semi-structured interview, Lisa (DH/SENCO) gave details about the responsibilities within Julie's role. An extract from the interview transcript with Lisa is presented below.

Extract from interview conducted with Lisa (DH/SENCO at Mountford)

Lisa: 'The parents really love her, I mean she'd only been here a month and we had a parents evening and parents were coming up to us and saying, 'she's brilliant!' So we recognised that. It's because she's not a teacher but she's still part of school and I think so long as they trust her and she's helping them then it just helps us to see that other side. So anyone you have a concern about, any small thing, she can go and look in to it, and it might be nothing, but actually at least you know you've done something about it. Because you do worry that you're going to miss something. In the real world with everything going on, it's a real ask to keep in your head every child at every time. But she works well between staff as well, all of those little anecdotal things that you can go to her with she will investigate.'

Learning Mentor (Tina): Cherry Blossom

Cherry Blossom also created a non-teaching position in their staff, with the title 'Learning Mentor.' The Learning Mentor (Tina) was interviewed by the researcher. An extract is presented below, in which Tina gave information about her role and responsibilities within it.

Extract from interview conducted with Tina (Learning Mentor)

Researcher: 'So on a day to day basis, what kind of things would you be doing?'

Tina: 'Right, it varies. I can't possibly work to a timetable because who knows how these children come into school in the morning. My day is based on how the children are feeling basically. So I always start the day with going to breakfast club. Then I do the lates, monitor the children who are coming in late and I'm office based so people know where I am if there's a problem. I then clock who will need extra support. It might be a day when we do a little friendship group, Teachers will say 'this group aren't getting on in school.' I could be called to Year 4 or 6 if people need taking out. So I'm first port of call for anything really. Plus I could be at child protection meetings, safeguarding now, child in need, team around the child…could be lead professional. We've got family liaison workers outside of school, early intervention and family liaison, I work with them and do the referrals. So we can send people into the home if they agree to it. The list goes on and on.'

Many parallels can be drawn between the roles of TAs and Family Liaison staff members. Linking family liaison roles to the findings presented in chapter 7, in relation to TAs' management across the three research schools, highlights autonomy and experience as common a common feature of both roles.

Informal discussions with Tina, Julie and Mavis identified that they had all worked with children and their families for a minimum of 10 years before taking up their posts in the case study schools, indicative of high levels of experience in working with children. Tina had been a TA for 14 years before taking up her post as a Learning Mentor in Cherry Blossom. The researcher was not able to ascertain the

particulars of Julie and Mavis' previous employment as they were not sampled for involvement in the interviews conducted for this thesis.

The researcher's informal observations indicated that all three family liaison staff members were afforded a great deal of autonomy within their roles. None was timetabled to support specific pupils at particular times; all three family liaison staff members were expected to use their initiative to identify which children and families required support when. As Tina explained, *'I can't possibly work to a timetable because who knows how these children come into school in the morning. My day is based on how the children are feeling basically.'* This is similar to the finding explored in chapter 7.2: many TAs were taking responsibility for planning and assessment tasks thus were making autonomous decisions regarding the learning process of their students.

With regard to responsibilities within the family liaison roles, when compared with TAs' role, the strong level of contact that the family liaison officers had with the immediate school community is similar to that of TAs in all three case study schools. All 14 TAs interviewed in this study lived in the immediate local area. Conversely, none of the Teachers interviewed in this study lived in the immediate local area. This presented both opportunities and challenges to TAs in their role with regard to the research areas of interest in this study. TAs' strong links with the immediate school community resulted in many of the TAs having built relationships with the parents of the pupils attending the school in which they worked. This supported them in building strong understandings with regard to the social dynamics of pupils' home lives. It also provided the school with a useful method of conveying messages, as TAs could often have informal conversations on the playground with parents about issues that the school were concerned about.

This study indicated that parents often viewed TAs as less intimidating and therefore more approachable when compared with Teachers. When interviewed, Jayne (HT, Cherry Blossom) described the importance of TAs' role with parents: *'they're the link between the learning and the child, the teacher and the parents.'* This was particularly found to be the case at Mountford, where the ethnic diversity of the pupils was high. As was discussed in the introduction to Mountford in chapter 6, almost three quarters of the pupils at Mountford came from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who spoke English as an additional

language was well above the national average. In his interview, Samuel (HT, Mountford) revealed that he had made a conscious decision to employ TAs who represented some of the ethnic minority backgrounds of the pupils in the school. An excerpt in which Samuel explained his decision is given below:

'I know this is stereotyping, but one of the issues that we face is that with Pakistani heritage children…they perform worse than any other ethnic group, across the country, not just in this school. Linked in to that is that parents don't necessarily prioritise learning as much as they can, so it's a choice on their part. Other Asian groups will make a concerted effort to promote education within their children from an early age. But with Pakistani families, most will speak Urdu within the home, which does create a barrier and an issue with regards to children's access to the curriculum in school.

Also one of the other things that we need to work on is, a lot of value, on going to a Mosque school and learning the Qur'an every day of the week for 2 hours, it's a big undertaking, and it's from a young age so it's quite a lot of formalised learning. That is given, rightly or wrongly, a higher priority than the learning that we do here in a lot of families. So we decided that we needed to do something to reach out to Pakistani families, so we've employed two TAs in the last two years who are of Pakistani heritage. That's made a huge difference because they can speak Urdu with the parents on the playground, let us know if anything is bothering them that we couldn't have picked up on because we don't understand the culture.' (Samuel, HT, Mountford).

The above quotation highlights the crucial role that some TAs were undertaking in Mountford, in supporting the links between home and school for many of the pupils. Samuel had identified that language differences were a sufficient barrier to hinder parents in building links with their children's school. Consequently, it seems likely that some TAs at Mountford were undertaking a crucial responsibility within their role in forming and maintaining the links with the immediate school community.

However, TAs' relationships with parents outside of school also posed some challenges to their role. Some TAs' friendships with parents placed them in a difficult

position when the school was unhappy with a pupil's behaviour or wished to investigate the family structure. Gina (TA4, Cherry Blossom) informed the researcher that she had felt uncomfortable when one of her friend's children was stopped from attending a school trip; she had been asked by the mother to change the decision but was unable to do so. Additionally, Tina (LM, Tina) spoke of her negative reputation amongst the immediate school community as a result of the decisions that she had made in her role: *'There was a bit of a reputation of 'don't talk to Miss M because she'll take your kids away from you' but that's what those children needed. It's very difficult because they are such a close knit community out there and when people fall out they can come and tell me things and sometimes you just have to shut your ears off to it because you can't process everything'* (Tina, LM, Cherry Blossom).

It is clear that some of the difficulties with role-blurring between Teachers and TAs, presented in chapter 2.2, could be extended to those between TAs and family liaison staff members. In order to implement effective role boundaries between Teachers and TAs, it was suggested earlier in this thesis that policy makers produce clear role descriptors that highlight the fundamental differences between the responsibilities that Teachers hold, in comparison with those of TAs. It was also suggested that schools document clear contractual job descriptions, which address the differences in the roles of TAs and Teachers (Bach, Kessler & Heron, 2006).

Building on this, schools employing a family liaison staff member could also produce job descriptions that specify the ways in which the role holder works with families to support pupils. Perhaps a focus on identifying specific responsibilities, within each separate role, with regard to liaising with the immediate school community, would help to reduce role-blurring in schools. It may also help to reduce the number of responsibilities expected of TAs within their role. As discussed in chapter 7.1, TAs frequently think of themselves as *'Jack of all trades and master of none'* (Janet, TA3, Mountford). Perhaps clarifying expectations with regard to supporting the school community would help in reducing the problematic number of tasks undertaken by TAs on a daily basis.

Chapter 9 highlighted that home-based relationship building was particularly important for pupils identified with SEN in developing and maintaining effective friendships with their peers. Consequently, further research into the positional responsibilities undertaken by staff members, with regard to supporting the school

community is recommended. It would be particularly interesting to identify the number of English mainstream primary schools employing a family liaison-focused staff member, as this role appears to have a significant positive influence over the process of social inclusion for not only the pupils attending school, but their families as well.

<u>TA/SENCO</u>

In all three schools, some TAs were undertaking responsibilities within their role, which could be argued to constitute the responsibilities assigned to the SENCO. As was discussed in chapter 2.3, the advice given in the 'SEN Code of Practice' (DfES, 2001) identifies SENCOs as having positional responsibilities relating to the management of TAs. In mainstream primary schools, the SENCOs' responsibilities are stated to include, 'managing learning support assistants (and) coordinating the provision for pupils with SEN' (ibid, p.29). No guidance is given in this document, however, to inform SENCOs about how to manage TAs effectively. Additionally, much research has concluded that there is widespread ambiguity over what constitutes SENCOs' role, as well as over their status within school (Layton, 2005; Wedell, 2005).

However, as was discussed in section 7.8, the staff member assigned the responsibility of managing the TAs varied between the three research schools. Perhaps most surprisingly, Briony, the HLTA at Cherry Blossom was assigned positional responsibilities relating to TAs' management. Briony had responsibilities relating to areas 1 and 3 of Layton's (2005) categorisations, as she was not only responsible for timetabling Cherry Blossom's TAs, but also for implementing a performance management system with them. Thus, with regard to management responsibilities, role-blurring was observed between TAs and SENCOs.

Additionally, many TAs across the research schools contributed to supporting the direction and development of SEN provision in school, the first of Layton's SENCO responsibility categorisations. All except two (86%) TAs in the school were invited to IEP review meetings, as their input on pupils' progress and ability to meet the targets set was deemed valuable by the senior management team. This is likely as a result of the time intensive rapport built between TAs and the pupils they worked with, giving them a strong understanding of pupils' abilities, both social and

academic. Furthermore, TAs themselves explained to the researcher that they were accountable for the progress of the pupils they worked with regularly, discussed in detail in chapter 7.4. Yet, TAs' responsibilities with regard to the direction and development of SEN provision appeared to lie exclusively in relation to individual pupils, rather than the school as a whole. Strategic decisions affecting the whole school approach to meeting the needs of pupils identified with SEN, appeared to be undertaken exclusively by the senior management team.

The second of Layton's (2005) SENCO responsibility categorisations, 'teaching and learning,' as it relates to TAs, was discussed in chapter 7.2. A widely acknowledged debate exists as to whether or not TAs are capable of undertaking a 'teaching' role, or whether, due to their lack of training/qualifications, their role is exclusively in a 'supportive' capacity (Alexander, 2004). It appears that by taking responsibility for planning and assessment tasks, TAs were making autonomous decisions regarding the learning processes of their students. Thus, TAs are argued to have been making pedagogical decisions in relation to student's learning. Consequently, TAs can be argued to have been fulfilling Alexander's (2004) definition of pedagogy: 'what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted' (p.11). However, whether or not these pedagogical decisions are effective is not known, therefore further research into the nature of TAs' potential pedagogic decision making would be recommended.

The teaching role that TAs are argued to have undertaken in the research schools can be particularly linked to the social skills interventions presented earlier in this chapter. As was discussed in section 10.2, TAs were exclusively responsible for planning and implementing the social skill focused interventions observed with the pupils in all three research schools. Thus, they were inevitably making pedagogical decisions in relation to students' learning of social skill concepts. Additionally, TAs undertook formative assessment of pupils' abilities with regard to the social skill concepts taught.

However, this assessment was on an ad hoc basis and most frequently undertaken to inform IEP review meetings, therefore was not systematically addressed. Additionally, as was discussed in section 10.2, it should be noted that the data gathered, in relation to the efficacy of the social skill focused interventions

observed, is limited in generalisability. Only four out of the fifteen (27%) interventions TAs were observed implementing focused on social skill development. Thus, the sample size of observed interventions is particularly small. Furthermore, none of the schools sampled was gathering longitudinal data to identify any longer term effects of these interventions on pupils' social competence. This is not surprising given the ad-hoc nature and lack of structured planning involved in some of the interventions observed.

Yet, it does appear that TAs were making pedagogical decisions in relation to pupils' learning, with specific regard to the development of pupils' social competence. This demonstrates that many TAs have the confidence and skills required to undertake a teaching role with small groups of pupils. Further research is recommended to determine the efficacy of TAs' pedagogical decision making in improving pupils' learning. This would then identify which areas of TAs' pedagogical decision making are effective and which require additional training to improve.

Perhaps the identification of extensive role-blurring between TAs and other staff members at all three research schools is contributing to the difficulties in designing effective job descriptions for these staff members. Role-blurring may also be contributing to Jayne's notion of her role as *'Jack of all trades and master of none'* (TA3, Mountford, 2014). This concept was explored in detail in section 7.1, where it was identified that a very high number of duties are widely accepted to be undertaken by TAs on a daily basis (Blatchford at al., 2009; Collins & Simco, 2006; Farrell, 2005; Hancock & Collins, 2005). More needs to be done at both policy and practice levels to disentangle the complexities surrounding the responsibilities within TAs' role. Currently, the responsibilities are too numerous to afford effective management systems and cannot be undertaken skillfully by all TAs across school communities.

10.5 Summary

This chapter has explored aspects of TAs' current role that specifically relate to the facilitation of social inclusion with pupils identified with SEN. The themes explored in this chapter include: TAs: Behaviour management specialists; TA-implemented interventions; Pastoral relationships; and, Role-blurring. The findings relating to these themes are now summarised.

<u>TAs: Behaviour management specialists</u>

All TAs involved in this study were observed spending a significant proportion of their time working with students reinforcing behaviour expectations. However, the extent to which behaviour management was focused on and the strategies employed varied between the TAs observed. TAs based in whole classes were more likely to spend their time reinforcing behaviour expectations than scaffolding learning. These behaviour expectations were often set by the Teacher in the classroom, with the aim of allowing the *'teacher to be able to teach'* (Gina, TA4, Cherry Blossom). However, TAs working predominantly in small groups outside of the main teaching classroom were more likely to spend their time scaffolding learning. They were also more likely to employ their own behaviour management techniques, which were often reward based and personalised to the pupils in their small groups. This personalised, rewards based approach to behaviour management appeared to be most effective.

<u>TA-implemented interventions</u>

15 TA-implemented intervention sessions were observed across the three research schools. 4 of these sessions were chosen for discussion in this thesis, as they were employed in response to pupils' showing difficulties with social inclusion. It appeared that TAs may be well positioned to implement social competence focused interventions, due to their strong understanding of individuals' needs and interests. However, the efficacy of these interventions in terms of building pupils' social competence could not be deduced, due to lack of longitudinal data. Nevertheless, pupils were observed engaging willingly in the sessions and evidence from pupils' IEPs suggested that the sessions may have had a positive influence on pupils' outcomes. Further research is suggested to identify the impact of TA-implemented intervention programmes, which specifically aim to improve pupils' experiences of social inclusion.

<u>Pastoral relationships</u>

TAs' pastoral role with pupils identified with SEN was identified in all three research schools. It can be defined as, 'building rapport and relationships with

students' (DfES, 2003, p.14). Much of the discourse observed between TAs and pupils in small group contexts indicated that a culture of trust and mutual respect had been built between all participants. Students were comfortable in discussing aspects of their personal life and identifying their likes and dislikes. It is suggested that TAs' role on the playground may have supported building pastoral relationships with pupils across the schools, as TAs can draw upon their knowledge of individuals' social experiences and friendships to build pastoral relationships with them. TAs were observed knowing how and when to intervene in discourse to support pupils who were struggling with a given situation; this is likely as a result of TAs' strong understanding of both pupils' social and academic needs.

Role-blurring

Role-blurring was identified between TAs and multiple staff members across all three research schools. All three of the case study schools had created non-teaching positions in their staff, with particular responsibilities over home-school liaison. Many parallels could be drawn between the responsibilities within the family liaison staff members' roles and those within the TAs' role. These parallels included the autonomy afforded to these staff members in supporting pupils' learning; equality in status with the Teachers in the case study schools; and high levels of contact with the immediate school community. Parallels were also drawn between the responsibilities within both TAs' and SENCOs' roles in relation to Layton's (2005) four main areas of SENCO positional responsibilities. It is recommended that more needs to be done at both policy and practice levels to disentangle the complexities surrounding the responsibilities within TAs' role. Currently, the responsibilities are too numerous to afford effective management systems and cannot be undertaken skillfully by all TAs across a school.

10.6 TAs' role in the process of social inclusion

This chapter has presented data relating the current responsibilities within the role of the TAs to the social inclusion of the pupils involved in this study. These findings indicate that TAs may be well positioned to overcome some of the current difficulties associated with the process of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools, as presented in chapter 3 as Figure 3.2. Data gathered have suggested that

schools with an inclusive ethos can display attitudes that do not present as a hierarchical community valuing academic achievement alone; some schools appear to be linking the role of TAs to overcoming pupils' difficulties with social inclusion, via TA-implemented interventions, utilising TAs' strong links with parents and taking account of TAs' strong pastoral relationships with pupils.

However, as was identified in chapter 9, many pupils across these inclusive schools are experiencing marginalisation and are managing their own social experiences. Consequently, it can be suggested that there are a number of current barriers preventing TAs from effectively supporting pupils with the process of social inclusion. A number of these barriers were identified in chapter 7, which highlighted many current difficulties associated with TAs' management.

Yet, data presented in this chapter suggests that, across the three research schools, there is significant opportunity associated with TAs' role in supporting pupils with social inclusion. This chapter has explored a range of identified ways in which the responsibilities within TAs' role currently link to the process of social inclusion. These links can be related to the ideal model of social inclusion, first presented as Figure 3.1. The practice-orientated section of Figure 3.1 has been amended to take account of the links between TAs' role and the ideal process of social inclusion in mainstream primary schools. This is presented as Figure 10.4 and is subsequently explored.

Figure 10.4 indicates that the complex and inter-linked 3 stage practice-orientated ideal model of social inclusion, as was first presented as Figure 3.2, is practicable in mainstream primary schools. In chapter 5.3 the hypothesis was made that *TAs' particular influence over the process of socially including pupils identified with SEN lies in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices.* The data analysed in this chapter tentatively support that hypothesis; they indicate that many of the responsibilities within TAs' role can lend themselves to supporting pupils with the process of social inclusion. It appears that TAs' prominent role in the school community, coupled with their strong pastoral role could support the implementation of interventions which focus on building social competence. This may then equip pupils with the skills to develop positive social relationships. It should be noted, however, that this assertion is tentative, given that it strongly utilises data gathered from unstructured observations across three primary schools, and, thus requires

further investigation in future research. The end goal of the process of social inclusion remains to allow pupils to actively participate in the social dynamics of the learning environment, as was defined by Ainscow and Booth (2002):

> Participation in education involves going beyond access. It implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught, and having a say in how education is experienced. But participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself. I participate with you, when you recognise me as a person like yourself, and accept me for who I am (p.2).

Figure 10.4 TAs' influence on the practice-orientated ideal model of Social Inclusion
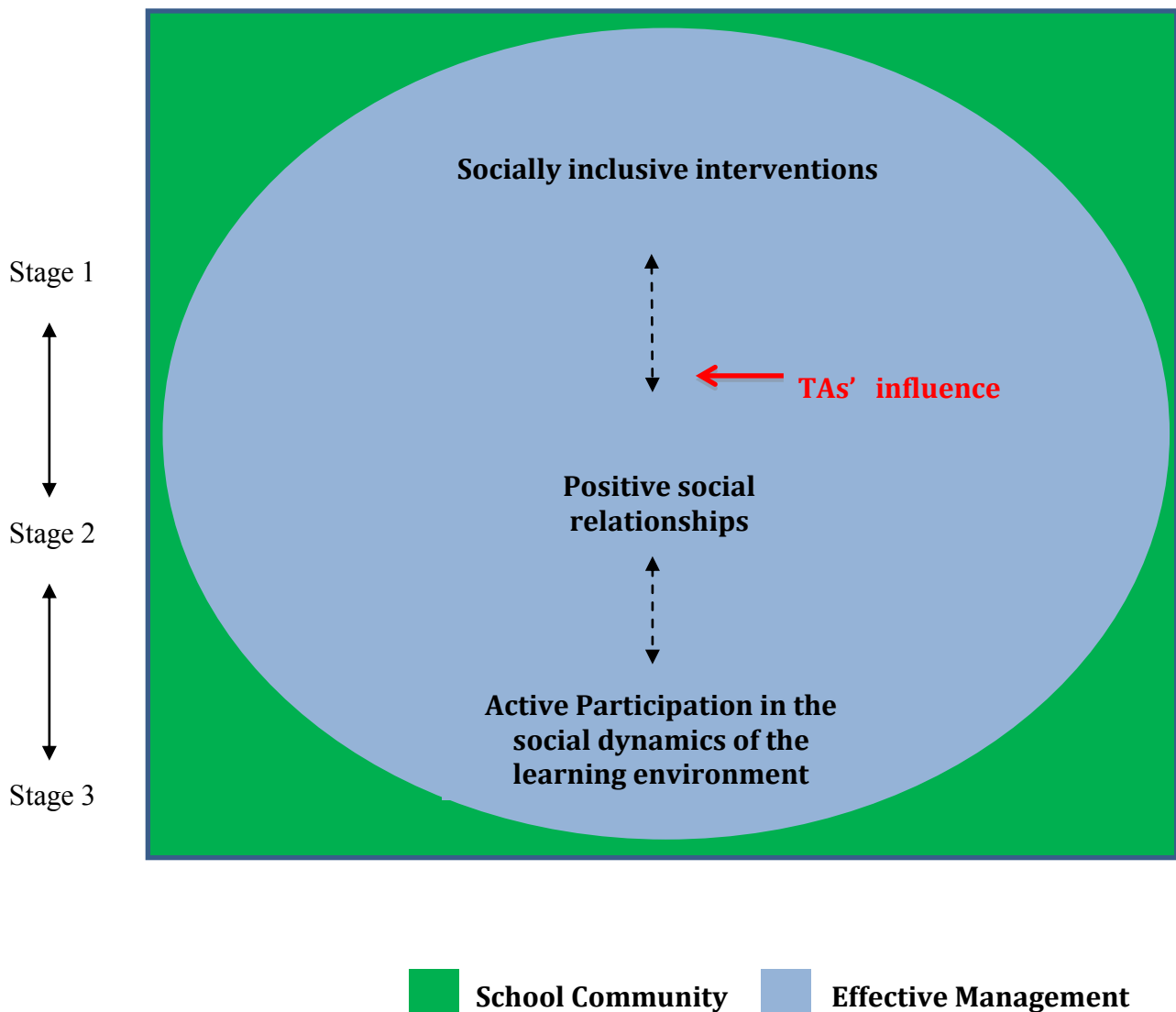
However, this study has identified that a number of barriers need to be overcome in current practice, in order to facilitate TAs' potential positive influence over pupils' social inclusion: Figure 10.4 takes account of these barriers. The first barrier lies in the lack of longitudinal data collected to determine the link between TA-implemented interventions and longer term outcomes for the pupils involved. This lack of data means that it is not currently possible to identify whether pupils who are gaining support to develop positive social relationships do indeed develop these relationships and then whether or not they lead to active participation in the social dynamics of the learning environment. Thus, the arrows between Stages one and two, and two and three, are dotted to identify the current tenuous nature of these links.

Another significant barrier to the ideal practice-orientated process of social inclusion is that of the current problematic nature of TAs' management, as was explored in chapter 7. To take account of this, the oval of the model is shaded to identify that effective management of TAs must frame the process of social inclusion, if TAs are to have an influence over it. Tentative suggestions of approaches to successful management of TAs, with regard to the three research schools, were presented in chapter 7, as Figure 7.1.

Additionally, this study has identified the importance of involving the school community in the process of social inclusion, therefore the model is framed by the school community to recognise this. All three schools employed a staff member with responsibility for family liaison, which resulted in improving the links between the school and parents. Many parallels were drawn between the role of TAs and that of the family liaison staff member thus, it is possible that TAs have a strong potential influence over supporting the school community in engaging with the process of social inclusion.

Now that the data pertaining to the three research questions under investigation in this study have been analysed and presented, conclusions and recommendations can be made. These are addressed in chapter 11 and focus particularly on the management of the responsibilities within TAs' role to maximise their potential positive influence over the process of social inclusion for the pupils they support.

<u>Chapter 11: Conclusions and Recommendations</u>

In this chapter, a conclusion to this thesis is presented. Initially, an overview of the key findings from this study is presented; the findings will be summarised in relation to the three research questions investigated for in this study. This then enables recommendations to be made, with specific regard to the management of TAs' role in taking account of their influence over the process of social inclusion for pupils identified with SEN. The strengths and limitations of the research design in this study are then considered, followed by presentation of the recommendations for further research. Finally, this thesis ends with the researcher's implementation of these recommendations for further research.

<u>11.1 Overview of key findings</u>

This section presents the key findings to emerge from this study in relation to the three research questions under investigation in this thesis:

Q1 How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining the responsibilities within their role in mainstream primary schools?

Q2 What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?

The findings that have emerged from exploration of the data gathered in this study are presented under subheadings of research questions one and two. A summary of the conclusions drawn from these findings is presented under the subheading of research question three, highlighting strategies to overcome some of the identified barriers to effective practice.

<u>Q1 How are TAs currently managed and who has overall responsibility for defining the responsibilities within their role in mainstream primary schools?</u>

The pertinent findings in relation to this research question were identified and explored in chapter 7. The key themes to emerge in relation to the management of TAs' role and the responsibilities within it, across all three research schools, included: TA: 'Jack of all trades and master of none;' TAs: Leaders in learning; Importance of experience; Accountability versus responsibility; Inadequacy of pay and contracts; Over-qualification of TAs; Status and respect; and, Figureheads of management.

Exploration of these themes enabled the development of a model of suggested successful approaches to TAs' management, pertinent to the three research schools, which was first presented as Figure 7.1 in chapter 7. Figure 7.1 is again presented to the reader in this section, to highlight the conclusions made in relation to research question one. The model identifies the following, potentially successful, approaches to TAs' management: Autonomy; Experience; Status & Respect; Access to Training; Culture of high expectation; Clearly defined role descriptors; Contracts taking account of high level qualifications; and, Consistent figurehead of management.

It can be seen from Figure 7.1 that the circles containing approaches to TAs' management are overlapping. This indicates that these approaches are inter-related, and can inform the success of each other; for example, contracts taking account of high level of qualifications are likely to engender a culture of high expectation, as the high level skills and abilities of TAs have been recognised and are more likely to inform senior managers' expectations. Additionally, all circles containing approaches to management are unshaded. This indicates that barriers were identified in relation to these approaches, to differing degrees, across the three schools participating in this study. These barriers presented significant challenges to the effective management of TAs.

The data gathered enabled the tentative suggestion that TAs experienced higher levels of confidence in their role when autonomy was afforded to them by their management. It appeared that many TAs appreciated being given the autonomy to plan and deliver interventions, with minimal input from the teacher and in a space independent from the main teaching occurring in the classroom. This could be as a result of the trust shown by teachers towards TAs in allowing them to take ownership

Figure 7.1 Successful approaches to TAs' management across research schools

over the implementation of interventions. However, it appears that for this TA autonomy to result in higher confidence levels, it should perhaps be coupled with extensive experience. Additionally, it is important to be aware that TAs' removal of children from the common classroom learning environment is perhaps not always the most inclusive approach.

Furthermore, TAs were not always given adequate training to prepare them for the wide variety of tasks undertaken within their role. Although TAs in all three research schools spoke of available training opportunities, they were variable by school and staff member. Furthermore, virtually all training opportunities that TAs did access were aimed at and chosen by the Teachers, thus were often of limited relevance and support to TAs in their role. Thus, this thesis concludes that more opportunities be provided for TAs to access high quality, relevant training and CPD

opportunities, which reduce the need for TAs to build up extensive experience before feeling confident in their role.

One of the greatest barriers to effective management of TAs in the research schools appeared to be Over-qualification of TAs, leading to difficulties in role-blurring between Teachers and TAs, as well as a culture of high expectation in terms of TAs' abilities within their role. These high expectations are often not afforded by TAs' current pay rates. All TAs involved in this study voiced that they spent a significant amount of their unpaid time at home working, most commonly either marking or preparing lessons. This will have contributed to what the data identified as problematic levels of job satisfaction amongst some of the TAs interviewed. Clearly, there was a culture of expectation in all three research schools that TAs would give more to their role than their pay and hours in school afforded. This was made particularly difficult to challenge by the general inadequacy of contracts in defining TAs' role and responsibilities.

It is acknowledged that a culture of high expectation can be regarded as a characteristic of effective TAs' management, in encouraging TAs to achieve their potential within their role. However, this thesis concludes that schools should be mindful that unreasonably high expectations could result in low job satisfaction and excessive pressure in terms of TAs' accountability for pupils' progress. Too high expectations are likely to exacerbate the finding that some TAs did not perceive their status as equal to Teachers in their school, thus felt that their role was not as well respected. This is depicted as a barrier to effective management of TAs in Figure 7.1, as it often prevented TAs from engaging in dialogue with the Teachers to support quality learning experiences for the pupils worked with. Linked to this, Teachers working with TAs should have realistic expectations related to TAs' accountability for pupils' learning. TAs are not employed as Teachers, thus should not exercise sole accountability for aspects of pupil progress; Teachers hold positional responsibility for the learning of the pupils in their classes.

The staff member with positional responsibility for the management of TAs differed somewhat in the three case study schools involved in this research. In all three schools the Headteacher was found to provide a strategic overview and monitoring of TAs' role in their school. However, differences in management structures became apparent when looking at timetabling; at Birchwood the Assistant

Head/SENCO undertook the timetabling of TAs, at Cherry Blossom and Mountford it was an HLTA. As was identified in the literature review for this thesis, the COP indicates that the staff member with positional responsibility for TAs management is the SENCO. This thesis concludes that a support and guidance document, published by DfE, would be useful in supporting SENCOs to understand and implement their positional responsibilities with regard to TAs' management. This would ensure that coherence of management approach and expectation is afforded to TAs in their role, by an appropriate 'figurehead' of management.

Q2 What is the current influence of TAs on the social inclusion characteristics of pupils identified with SEN?

The pertinent data in relation to this research question were identified and explored in chapters 9 and 10. In chapter 9 social inclusion characteristics of the pupils involved in this study were presented. The themes explored in that chapter included: lacking self-awareness; ineffective use of humour in verbal communication; under-developed non-verbal communication skills; importance of home-based relationship building; self-managed social experiences; consistency in playtime routines and lack of relevance in verbal communication.

The findings presented in chapter 9 indicated that high numbers of the pupils involved in this study were experiencing multiple challenges to their social inclusion. Only four pupils, of the twenty-three involved in this study (17%), were identified as not experiencing difficulties with social inclusion. Additionally, it was striking that 100% of the pupils involved in this study were identified as experiencing consistent difficulties with multiple non-verbal communication skills. It was suggested that the four pupils who did display non-verbal communication difficulties, yet were not identified as experiencing social inclusion difficulties, had employed strategies by which they could 'mask' their lack of non-verbal communication skills. It appeared that, for some of these pupils, effective use of humour was the way in which this was achieved.

Section 9.9 linked the findings relating to pupils' social inclusion and the literature-informed, researcher-devised 'current model of social inclusion' (Figure 3.2), first presented in chapter 3. Data was presented which supported the practice-orientated section of Figure 3.2, particularly in relation to Stages two and three of that

section in identifying pupils' 'problematic social relationships' and resulting 'pupil marginalisation.' Although, these stages should be viewed with caution as the process of social inclusion is acknowledged to involve a number of complex, inter-linked concepts.

It was clear that many pupils were electing not to involve TAs, or indeed any other adults, in supporting them with their social experiences. It was also clear that the vast majority of participating pupils in the three research schools were experiencing difficulties in forming social relationships with their peers, as only 9 of the 23 (39%) pupils involved in this study had successfully built or maintained a relationship with 1 or more child in school. Consequently, it was apparent that many of the pupils attending the three schools involved in this study were experiencing marginalisation, as identified as Stage 3 in the practice-orientated section of Figure 3.2. This is particularly surprising given that the schools involved were purposively sampled as a result of their inclusive ethos.

Consequently, this thesis presented what Bassey (1998) termed a 'fuzzy generalisation'*: the lack of adult support that many pupils currently access in managing their social experiences, is contributing to those pupils' experienced difficulties in forming social relationships with their peers.* In order to explore this assertion further, chapter 10 presented an in depth exploration of aspects of TAs' role and responsibilities which were thought to directly influence the characteristics identified in chapter 9, in relation to pupils' social inclusion. The findings presented in this chapter included: TAs: behaviour management specialists; TA-implemented interventions; Pastoral relationships; and, Role-blurring.

TAs' strong pastoral role with pupils identified with SEN was recognised in all three research schools. It was defined as, 'building rapport and relationships with students' (DfES, 2003, p.14). Much of the discourse observed between TAs and pupils in small group contexts indicated that a culture of trust and mutual respect had been built between all participants. Students were comfortable in discussing aspects of their personal life and identifying their likes and dislikes. It was suggested that TAs' role on the playground may have supported building pastoral relationships with pupils across the schools. Additionally, the personalised nature of the reward-focused behaviour management strategies that many TAs both developed and implemented,

independently from whole class strategies, are thought to have reinforced the pastoral relationships between TAs and the pupils they support.

Four interventions were explored which were specifically aimed at improving pupils' experiences of social inclusion. It should be noted that longitudinal data on the impact of these interventions on pupils' outcomes was lacking across all three schools. Thus, section 11.4 identifies a recommendation for future research that takes account of this. TAs were responsible for planning, organising and delivering the interventions presented. This relates to a specific debate woven throughout this thesis regarding whether or not TAs have the capability to undertake the pedagogical tasks historically associated with the teacher. According to Alexander (2004) pedagogy is a skill unique to Teachers, solely due to their higher-level training, enabling them to develop the capacity to make informed, responsible decisions about the teaching process. His definition of pedagogy is, 'what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted' (p.11).

The data gathered in this research reinforced the assertion presented in the literature review that most TAs have not accessed the same level of training as Teachers. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that many TAs have not been encouraged to foster pedagogical skills. Yet, by taking responsibility for planning, organising and delivering social skill focused interventions, TAs are clearly making autonomous decisions regarding the learning process of their students, thus, are making pedagogical decisions.

Indeed, the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with both Teachers and TAs, linked the role of TAs to pedagogical decision-making. When asked to discuss the skills that the TAs at their schools possess, many staff equated them to those of a Teacher; Heather replied, *'to be honest, I think they need to be like a teacher'* (T1, Birchwood, 2013). This response is similar to those of four other interviewed Teachers and suggests that TAs have the potential to fulfill Alexander's definition of pedagogy. However, it is obvious from previous research that not all TAs are capable of making decisions that can be attributed to pedagogical understanding (Burton & Goodman, 2011). Additionally, it is not known whether or not the potential pedagogical decisions that TAs are making are effective, due to

lacking evidence in relation to the impact of the interventions observed on pupils' learning.

This thesis concludes that there may be significant opportunity for TAs to undertake a pedagogical role in supporting pupils with social inclusion. However, these pedagogical decisions must be informed by appropriate training, to ensure that the decisions made are effective to pupils' learning. Additionally, there exist a number of practical barriers to this becoming a reality in current practice across mainstream primary schools. A number of the previously identified current challenges to the appropriate management of TAs will necessarily influence the potential for TAs to undertake a pedagogical role. In particular, role-blurring between Teachers and TAs and TAs and family liaison Officers is likely to have a significant effect on both identifying and taking account of TAs' pedagogical role. Finally, whether or not it is appropriate to encourage TAs to undertake a pedagogical role is currently unclear, as a result of insufficient evidence to identify whether or not their pedagogical decision making is effective. A professionalisation of the role would need to occur in order for pedagogical expectations to be attributed to the role of TAs.

It is appropriate to revisit the current and ideal models of social inclusion, first presented in chapter 3, to enable the findings of this study to be related to the literature-informed processes of social inclusion. These models are presented to the reader as Figures 3.2 and 11.1. The current model of social inclusion remains the same as was presented in section 3.2, as the data gathered in this thesis support the process originally presented. However, the ideal model of social inclusion (first presented as Figure 3.1) has been amended to take account of this research. This study has identified TAs' potential influence over the ideal process of social inclusion, as was presented and explored in section 10. 7. Thus, the ideal model of social inclusion presented in this chapter (Figure 11.1) takes account of this.

This thesis suggests that, within the sampled schools, TAs' specific influence over the ideal process of social inclusion may lie in implementing interventions which focus on supporting pupils' social inclusion, depicted in Figure 11.1. This is as a result of TAs' strong pastoral role and their prominent links with the local community. TAs were observed utilsing their pastoral relationships by working in small groups, implementing interventions which focused on building pupils' social competence. Although the efficacy of these interventions could not be determined, it

Figure 11.1 Updated Ideal model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Ideal Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities

Figure 3.2 Current Model of Social Inclusion in Mainstream Primary Communities

Current Model of Social Inclusion in Maintream Primary Communities

Theory Orientated

Policy Orientated

Practice Orientated

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Socially inclusive values and beliefs

Social competence

Social participation

Focus on academic outcomes

Pupil-managed social experiences

Social integration

Heirarchical community valuing academic achievements

Problematic social relationships

Pupil marginalisation
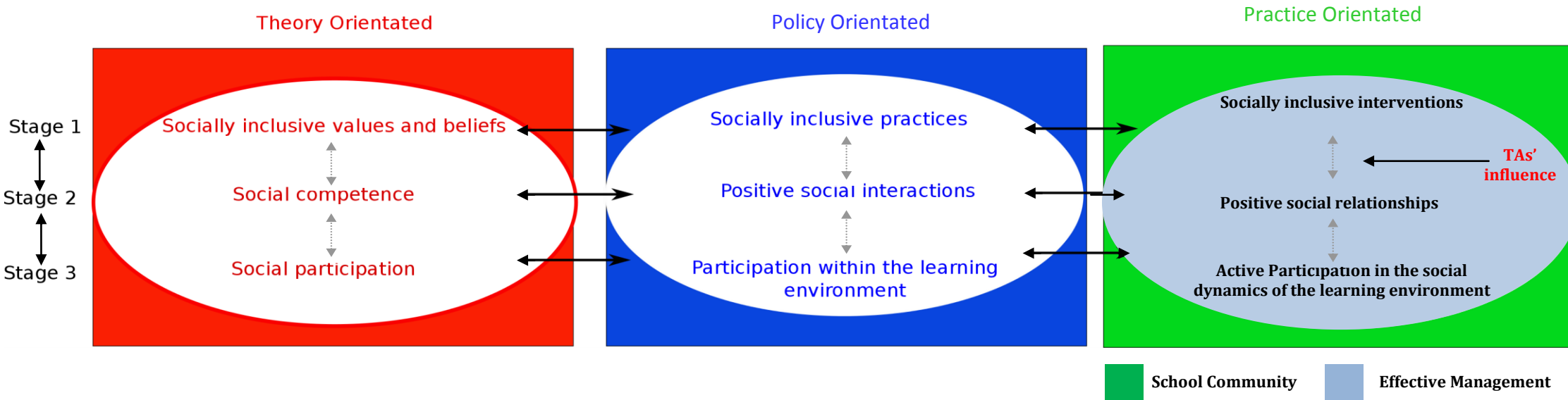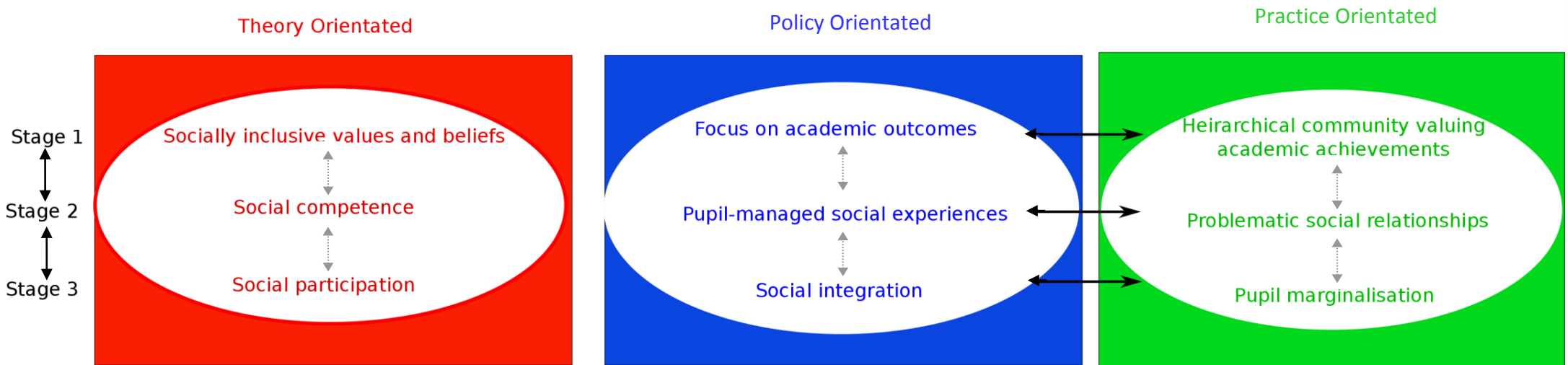
is possible to argue that TAs may be well-placed to implement future evidence-backed intervention programmes, which focus on improving pupils' social competence.

<u>Q3 What strategies can be implemented to effectively allow TAs to promote successful inclusion of pupils identified with SEN?</u>

This subheading serves to summarise the conclusions drawn as a result of this study, as presented under the previous two subheadings. Strategies to overcome some of the identified barriers to effective practice, with regard to TAs' role in the process of pupils' social inclusion, are then suggested.

<u>Management</u>

The following approaches to TAs' management have been suggested to be successful: Autonomy, Status & Respect, Access to Training; Experience; Culture of high expectation; Clearly defined role descriptors; and, contracts taking account of high level qualifications. There are a number of current barriers to these approaches, as identified in the research schools. The most significant barriers have been identified as role-blurring between TAs and Teachers, as well as TAs and Family Support Officers; Over-qualification of TAs leading to a culture of excessively high expectations; varied staff members taking positional responsibility for TAs' management and, crucially, inadequate training opportunities for TAs to reaching their potential in their role. In overcoming these barriers, this thesis suggests three key approaches, which will require further investigation in additional research in order to identify the detail required within each approach:

1. DfE, or a well-placed educationally-focused organisation, should publish guidelines to support schools with management of their TAs. These guidelines should provide support on drawing up effective contractual job descriptions for TAs, implementing an effective performance management system for TAs and identifying realistic expectations for their influence on pupils' learning. These expectations would depend upon whether or not the DfE sees fit to professionalise the role of TAs. To ensure that the guidelines are translated into practice, DfE could work with Ofsted to guarantee that current inspection frameworks take account of the ways in which senior leaders manage the TAs

in their schools, as TAs are not mentioned in the current 'School Inspection Handbook' (DfE, 2015).

2. Better timetabling of TAs should be supported. This should take account of the individual's skills, knowledge and interests, to ensure that TAs' influence on pupils' learning is positive, but also to ensure that TAs gain confidence and experience job satisfaction. Much of the efficacy of TAs' current role is reliant upon their goodwill, in undertaking unpaid work, which is not a sustainable employment approach. Currently, there are practical and knowledge-based differences between TAs operating across the three most common timetabling approaches; 'one to one,' 'small group' and 'whole class.' More effective timetabling should take account of TAs' skills and knowledge in relation to the three modes of working and timetable them accordingly. It is often not effective to have TAs working across all three on a daily basis.

3. More and relevant training and CPD opportunities should be afforded to TAs, to ensure that they have opportunities to improve their skills and experience equal status and respect amongst the school community. These training opportunities should be aimed exclusively at TAs, to ensure that they are relevant and skill-level appropriate. It is not always effective to afford TAs training opportunities aimed at Teachers. The content of this training would depend upon whether or not the government sees fit to professionalise the role of TAs.

TAs' influence over the process of pupils' social inclusion

Only four pupils, of the twenty-three involved in this study (17%), were identified as not experiencing difficulties with social inclusion. Additionally, it was striking that 100% of the pupils involved in this study were identified as experiencing consistent difficulties with multiple non-verbal communication skills. It was clear that many pupils were electing not to involve TAs, or indeed any other adults, in supporting them with their social experiences. Yet, TAs' strong pastoral role with pupils identified with SEN was recognised in all three research schools. Four social competence interventions, planned and implemented by TAs, were observed across the three research schools. However, longitudinal data to identify the influence of these interventions on pupils' learning was lacking. The following strategy is recommended to take account of the findings in this sub-section:

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1. A government-led professionalisation of TAs is recommended. This would serve to acknowledge TAs as having a strong influence on pupils' education, particularly pupils identified with SEN. Professionalisation could alleviate many of the management-related barriers to effective practice, as identified in the previous sub-section. TAs' role requires reconceptualising to take account of their skills, some of which have been tentatively suggested to be pedagogical. It is likely that schools could better utilise TAs' pastoral role by affording them specific responsibilities related to planning, perhaps in planning interventions which focus on building pupils' social competence. This professionalisation would need to identify the specific differences between the role of TAs and that of Teachers, to mitigate some of the acknowledged difficulties with role-blurring. It has been suggested in this thesis that the difference in roles can be conceptualised in relation to responsibility. Teachers should continue to hold the over-arching responsibility for the learning of all pupils in his/her class. However, TAs could be held accountable for the learning of small groups, in relation to learning objectives identified within TAs' planning for those small groups.

11.2 Strengths and limitations of the research design

This section identifies particular strengths and areas for improvement with regard to the research design adopted in this study. The areas considered include: researcher stance; ethical considerations and methods involving children; non-participant observations; and, generalisability.

Researcher stance

As was described in chapter 5, the researcher approached this study with a social constructivist perspective. This perspective presents that learning is primarily influenced by the social context of the learner (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). Therefore, the researcher investigated the constructivist classroom, one in which a community of discourse enables constant engagement with activity, reflection and conversation. This perspective is regarded by the researcher to have been a key strength of this study. A social constructivist approach to this study enabled the researcher to locate herself in the social world of the participants, unlocking in-depth insights relating to

the social interactions of/between the participants. Arguably, this approach was integral to the success of this study, as addressing the research questions required an investigation of the process of social inclusion. Thus, by its nature, effective data gathering in this study required the researcher to make sense of the social worlds of the participants; discourse was central to its methodology.

Ethical considerations and methods involving children

Another key strength of this study is regarded to be that ethical considerations were paramount to every decision made throughout the research process. Respect for both the participants and the quality of the research was maintained at all times. Particular regard for the quality of the research ensured that rich data were captured and rich description was presented when analysing data and drawing conclusions. This, therefore, supported the aim of this thesis, to enable the reader to form in-depth understandings regarding the chosen phenomena in the case study schools (Gillham, 2000).

The researcher was chosen at random by reviewers from the Education Ethics Committee at ESRC, to participate in an ethics audit of this study. This process occurred after the empirical research was undertaken in schools, and thus provided an excellent platform for researcher reflexivity on the ethical considerations within this study. It prompted the researcher to ensure that files relating to interviews, observations and photography with children were securely stored on her computer, prompting her to develop two layers of password protection for such sensitive information.

The ethics review also prompted the researcher to reflect upon the involvement of children within this research design, with a focus on the benefits with regard to data gathered and the ethical challenges faced. Having conducted analysis of the data gathered from this research, strong benefits have been identified from involving children in the methodology. The in-depth understandings that the researcher was able to gain, regarding children's experiences of social inclusion, would have been very difficult to form without the use of photography and research conversations with children.

The candid nature of the discourse between the researcher and the pupils during research conversations, enabled the researcher to identify common

characteristics of pupils' social competence abilities that observation alone would not have afforded. Additionally, the age range chosen for involvement in this method (Key Stage 2 pupils) was deemed appropriate, as some of the pictures were of poor quality due to pupils' poor photography skills. If this research had been conducted with Key Stage 1 pupils, it is the opinion of the researcher that the quality of the photographs taken would have been too poor to stimulate a rich discussion during the follow-up research conversations.

However, research involving children, particularly those identified with SEN, did pose significant ethical challenges. The candid nature of many of the conversations the researcher had with the pupils, resulted in many pupils expressing their sincere desperation and exasperation in not being able to form relationships with their peers. The researcher felt both a moral and professional obligation to make the schools aware of pupils' struggles with this aspect of their learning. As ethical considerations remained paramount to all decisions made in this study, the researcher determined that an appropriate strategy would be to provide 'a little summary of findings' to each research school involved. Thus, the researcher was given a 10 minute slot at the last staff meeting she was present for in each school, at which an A4 summary of initial findings was presented. An example of a summary is provided for the reader as Appendix 8. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to identify that many children required support with building their social relationships, but ensured that no names or details of individual children were given to staff members. It is concluded that the ethical challenges of involving children can be mitigated by the researcher maintaining a respect for quality of his/her research, with safeguarding paramount to all decision-making.

When designing the research methods undertaken in this study, the researcher elected to focus on involving children identified with SEN, as the literature had indicated that these pupils displayed proportionally lower levels of social competence, thus were more likely to experience bullying, victimisation and/or marginalisation. The researcher found this to be a helpful framework by which pupils' participation could be sampled. However, as was discussed in chapter 8, the researcher identified that many of the pupils who were working with TAs, particularly those who were accessing the social competence focused interventions, were frequently not on the SEN register. This may have been due to their difficulties not aligning with the 'label'

of SEN chosen for consideration in this study, and/or due to their assessment for SEN not having been undertaken at the time of research. In further research, the researcher deems it appropriate to use categorisations of SEN as a framework by which to sample pupils' for involvement, however, pupils displaying difficulties with social inclusion should not be excluded from sampling simply because they lack a concrete diagnosis. Additionally, a focus on sampling by difficulties with social inclusion may afford in depth analysis of bullying and friendships as a wider school population issue, which this research has indicated would be beneficial.

Non-participant observations

The aim of the non-participant observations undertaken in this study, as addressed in chapter 5, was to observe the TAs sampled in their working environments.

Written notes were made throughout the observations on the following:

- Which pupils the TA was working with and where
- Types of communication between the TA and teacher
- Types of communication between the TA and the pupils
- The role/s that the TA undertook throughout the lesson.
- The interventions that the TA was involved in during the lessons

This aim allowed the researcher to identify the variety of tasks undertaken by TAs and to observe social interactions between TAs and the pupils they worked with. It was particularly useful in gathering data relating to TAs' responsibilities within their role and aspects of their responsibilities which related to pupils' experiences of social inclusion.

However, an exclusive focus on the movements of TAs sometimes meant that the students sampled for involvement in the photography task, were not observed for long enough to enable the researcher to gather a picture of his/her social inclusion characteristics. Consequently, the discourse between the researcher and the pupils may not have been as rich as if the researcher had observed more of their movements within school. It would, perhaps, have been more effective for the researcher, when in whole class teaching scenarios, to focus on both TAs and pupils sampled for involvement from this study in the observations. This could then have allowed the researcher to build up a better understanding of pupils' social inclusion characteristics

before the photography tasks were undertaken. Additionally, a focus on observing the pupils sampled for involvement during playtimes could have mitigated this difficulty. It should be noted that the relatively unstructured nature of the observations conducted meant that conclusions could not be drawn in relation to the efficacy of TAs' roles in relation to pupils' learning. However, these observations did provide quality data that allowed the researcher to capture the range of responsibilities within the roles of the TAs sampled in this study. They also enabled tentative suggestions to be made in relation to successful approaches towards TAs' management.

Generalisability

As was discussed in section 5.4 of this thesis, generalisability of the multiple case-study methodological approach is a matter of debate. Having conducted this research, the researcher deems that the case study approach enabled successful exploration of the research questions posed. The process of social inclusion and investigation of the role of TAs involve many varied yet inextricably linked concepts. Thus, an in-depth empirical exploration of these concepts is imperative in grasping the issues studied in sufficient detail with which to draw conclusions. The researcher acknowledges that the conclusions drawn in this study are likely not to reflect those of all mainstream primary schools across England, in part due to the current fragmented nature of education in England. Consequently, the conclusions drawn should be viewed with caution when reflecting upon the mainstream primary school system as a whole. However, this study provides a useful 'force of example,' by which the conclusions made can be translated to other settings with the aim of encouraging reflection on individual schools' practices related to TAs (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The researcher aims to use these conclusions to follow the approach suggested by Simons (1980): by understanding 'a school' we can increase our understanding of 'other schools' and this has the potential to contribute to our collective knowledge about 'The School.'

11.3 Recommendations for future research

This study has identified a number of barriers to TAs' current influence on the social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN. It is appropriate to suggest areas of

further research, in order to design policies and practices to alleviate a number of barriers. This study presents four specific recommendations:

1. The 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1998) made within this study regarding effective management of TAs in supporting the process of social inclusion require investigation as hypotheses in schools across England, to determine generalisability. A larger-scale multiple case study approach could be adopted to identify whether or not TAs' role can positively influence the process of social inclusion for pupils identified with SEN. This approach would benefit from methods that enable the gathering of longitudinal data, to identify any lasting benefits of TAs' influence on pupils' social inclusion.

2. This study suggests that the social competence focused interventions that TAs plan and implement may improve pupils' experiences of social inclusion. Yet, little evaluation data exists to identify the impact of these programmes. Further evaluation-based research on the influence of existing social skill focused intervention programmes on pupils' social inclusion is recommended.

3. The literature suggests that TAs' role differs significantly in mainstream secondary schools compared to mainstream primary schools in England. Therefore, investigation of both TAs' role and management structures in English secondary schools as well as primary schools is required. This will allow the potential influence of TAs on the process of social inclusion with regard to pupils in secondary schools to be explored.

4. This research has identified that the responsibilities within TAs' role differ significantly when they are working as part of an individual structure, a group structure and a whole class structure. Further research is recommended to identify effective practices in relation to TAs' role in the three separate working structures, to ensure that performance expectations are in line with TAs' responsibilities.

11.4 Implementation of recommendations

It had always been the aim of the researcher that this doctoral study had significant and lasting influences on the practice of TAs in mainstream primary schools. The main motivation of this study, for the researcher, was to ensure that the conclusions drawn and recommendations made, be useful to the improvement of

educational practice. Thus, in the final year of this doctoral study, the researcher began to contemplate ways in which the conclusions emerging and recommendations made could be meaningfully translated to TAs' practice. The remainder of this chapter will be written in the first person, to reflect the personal journey that the researcher embarked upon.

The founding of Inclusive Classrooms

I was fortunate to be selected to undertake an ESRC Policy Internship in the Cabinet Office, in the second year of this study. Whist undertaking this internship, I decided that I would attempt to set up my own educationally focused social enterprise, with the aim of offering research-based training opportunities to TAs in mainstream primary schools across England. All of the Headteachers I had spoken to throughout my data gathering phase highlighted the severe lack of training opportunities that are specifically aimed at TAs. Most of the training that TAs access is primarily aimed at Teachers, thus is often not directly relevant. I had identified an urgent need to provide training opportunities that reached TAs exclusively, to ensure that their roles and responsibilities were taken account of and that they were given relevant opportunities to improve their skills.

I founded a social enterprise organisation 'Inclusive Classrooms' in July 2014, with the aim of attempting to turn my findings from this study into TA-focused training and CPD programmes. I decided that the first training programme I would develop would be a social skills intervention programme. This was as a result of the key finding from this study, that TAs may have a unique, and currently poorly utilised role, related to implementing socially inclusive intervention programmes with pupils who experience difficulties with social inclusion. Having researched TAs' training opportunities I identified that there were no current social skills intervention programmes that were aimed at TAs in their implementation, or indeed any organisation that exclusively focused on training TAs 'on the job.'

My first challenge was to gain some seed funding to enable me to register Inclusive Classrooms and to build my first training programme. I drew up a case for support and, with the pro-bono support of a social investment consultancy, began identifying pitching opportunities. After two months I had set up a bank account for the business, built a website, identified trustees (of which my doctoral supervisors are

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two) and gained £20,000 in grant funding. I was then ready to build the resources for the first training intervention programme.

The intervention programme was built between January 2015 and August 2015. I named it 'Social Storytime,' due to its focus of using the medium of storytelling to teach social skills. The intervention programme would last three academic terms and be accompanied by a full day of training for the TAs who would be implementing it. A sample lesson plan is presented in Appendix 9 and an extract of one of the six storybooks is presented in Appendix 10. The programme is currently piloting in three primary schools across London.

Impact measurement

One of the key recommendations in section 11.4 of this thesis, identified that little rigorous evaluation data currently exist to identify the impact of social competence focused programmes on pupils' social competence. Further evaluation-based research on the influence of existing social skill focused intervention programmes on pupils' social inclusion was recommended. Thus, devising and implementing effective impact measurement systems for any programmes/initiatives that I developed was integral to my approach.

Having studied the few impact measurement methods undertaken in programmes of a similar nature, I identified a 'wheel' approach to measuring social skills (Kelly, 2011). The method required an adult to rate the pupils involved in a programme on a scale, which could be adapted to the programme's criterion of interest. This rating would provide a baseline assessment of each child's skills before the programme and at the end of the programme. However, it could also be completed for each child at identified points throughout the intervention that they are undertaking, to track progress after each unit accessed. I found it to be accessible and simple to complete, which was ideally suited for use by TAs in their time-limited roles.

I ultimately developed a 'Skills Wheel,' for Social Storytime, which allowed TAs to capture a pupils' ability with regard to each skills cluster taught in Social Storytime. The wheel would be completed at the beginning and end of the intervention programme, and at three further points throughout the duration of the programme. The skills wheel, with accompanying rating system is presented to the

reader in Appendix 11.

<u>Next Steps</u>

To date I have been successful in gaining £55,000 in grant funding to support the development of Inclusive Classrooms. I am aiming to develop a second programme of the organisation this academic year, which will be entitled 'Good Practice for TAs.' I intend to use the findings from this study to write a manual which will provide good practice advice and support to TAs in their role. This will be accompanied by a one day training workshop at which I will encourage TAs to reflect upon their practice in supporting children's learning.

11.5 Final reflections

As a result of this research, I have developed as a researcher and a practitioner. I have come to further understand the importance of self-reflexivity (Davis, 1998). As a qualified teacher undertaking research in schools, I was required to constantly reflect upon my role as a researcher. Having taken on the roles of both teacher and researcher, I have realised that my views, opinions and biases about the schools, the staff members and the pupils influenced my data gathering and interpretation processes. This realisation has also informed my professional practice. I am now further aware of how my personal beliefs and interests inform my pedagogy and will maintain my self-reflexive attitude in my future professional practice and research.

TAs are a particularly prominent and valuable asset to the current English education school system. Therefore, it is important that their potential contribution to children's education be realised. This study has identified that TAs have strong potential to aid the process of social inclusion for primary aged pupils, particularly those identified with SEN. Specifically, TAs' influence has been identified to be in the design and implementation of socially inclusive practices in the sampled schools. However, TAs can only design and implement these practices if effective management systems are in place to utilise their knowledge, skills and interests.

Further research is required to determine recommendations for national structuring of TAs' management systems to meet the social and academic needs of the children, as well as the needs of the TAs themselves. However, I hope to continue the work of Inclusive Classrooms in order to disseminate the knowledge that I have

gained from undertaking this study, regarding the importance of effective management of TAs in mainstream primary schools. I feel very privileged to have been supported in ensuring that the findings of this doctoral study hold the potential to engender significant and lasting influences on the practice of TAs in mainstream primary schools across England.

Appendix 1: Sample data collection schedule

Data collection schedule: Cherry Blossom

Monday 13th October- 9.00am Numeracy observation Year 5
- 10.30am Literacy observation Year 5
- 2.00pm Interview with TA1 (Casey)

Tuesday 14th October - 9.00am Numeracy observation Year 5
- 1.00pm Interview with the Head Teacher (Jayne)

Wednesday 15st October - 10.00am Interview with TA2 (Gillian)
- 1.00pm Interview with HLTA (Briony)

Thursday 16nd October- 8.50am Gave cameras to Alison, Farouq and Alan
- 9.00am Numeracy observation Year 5
- 10.30am Literacy observation Year 5
- 12.00pm Spent time observing on the playground
- 3.30pm Interview with Teacher 1(Helen)

Friday 17rd October- 9.00am Research conversation with Alison (P1)
- 11.45am Interview with Teacher 2 (Ciaran)
- 10.00am Spent time observing on the playground
- 10.30am Research conversation with Farouq (p2)
- 1.30pm Research conversation with Alan (p4)

Monday 20th October- 9.00am Numeracy observation Year 4
- 10.30am Literacy observation Year 4
- 1.00pm Geography observation Year 4
- 3.30pm Interview with Maria (TA3)

Tuesday 21st October- 9.00am Numeracy observation
- 12.30pm Interview with Gina (TA4)
- 14.00pm Science observation Year 4

Wednesday 22nd October- 8.50am Gave cameras to Harry, James, Denis and Kian
- 9.00am Interview with Tina (LM)
- 12.00pm Spent time observing on the playground

- 2.00pm Art and Design observation

Thursday 23rd October- 9.00am Research conversation with Denis (p4)
- 10.30am Literacy observation Year 4
- 1.00pm Research conversation with Harry (p5)
- 1.30pm Research conversation with James (p6)

Friday 24th October- 9.00am Research conversation with Kain (p7)
- 3.00pm Interview with Li (TA)

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:

Management of teaching assistants to promote the social inclusion of pupils in mainstream primary schools

Purpose of the study:

Through my research, I am aiming to understand what teaching assistants do and how they are managed in your school. I am also interested in how this management of teaching assistants' role affects the social inclusion of pupils identified with special educational needs.

Your participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate I would like to conduct a semi-structured interview lasting no more than an hour. If possible, I would like to tape record the interview. I am interested in asking about your views concerning how teaching assistants are managed in this school and what you understand by the term 'social inclusion' with regard to pupils identified with special educational needs. For some teachers and teaching assistants, I would like to come to be an observer of your duties in the classroom. This can be negotiated at your convenience to cause minimal disruption to you and the children.

Confidentiality:

I will not name any individuals in my data collection process of my final write up and will ensure that no participants are identifiable.

Use of data:

I will give you the opportunity to read through the transcripts of our interviews so that you can tell me if there is something that you would like to change. All of the transcripts will be stored on my computer, which is password locked, so I will be the only person that can read the transcripts, other than my supervisor.

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Participation Consent Form

Study Title:

Management of teaching assistants to promote the social inclusion of pupils in mainstream primary schools

- I have read and understood the attached study information sheet and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this study.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself.
- I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study at any time.
- *Headteacher Only*- I understand that I am acting as the gatekeeper of the children that will be participating in this study. Therefore, I am signing on behalf of the children as well as myself.

- I understand that some of what I say might be used in researcher conferences or published in a journal, however, my identity will remain anonymous. *If you do not want your words to appear publicly please tick here* ☐

Signed _____

Print name _____

Date _____

Voluntary Consent Form- Children

Date_____

ID _____

If the *happy* face is ticked, I am *happy* to take part. If the **sad** face is ticked, I am **not happy** to take part.

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Dear Parents,

I am a PhD student at the University of York and am conducting some research throughout this term in your child's school. I am writing to you specifically because I am conducting some observations in your child's class. The title of my study is:

Management of teaching assistants to promote the social inclusion of pupils in mainstream primary schools

I am interested in learning about the Teaching Assistants in your child's school. I will be observing some lessons in your child's class so that I can learn more about what the Teaching Assistants do. My focus, in the observations, will be on observing what the Teaching Assistants do, not your children, however, I may note down some of what they say to help with this aim.

I would also like to conduct research with a small number of children in your child's class to help me with understanding what the Teaching Assistant's influence is on pupils' learning in this school. I may ask them to take some photographs of the school and/or informally talk to me about how the Teaching Assistants help them. I would like to use some of these photographs and some of the discussions in my write up for this project.

All children in the school will remain anonymous in my write-up of this research and all information that I gain throughout the research process will remain confidential. I have already gained permission from the Headteacher to conduct my research in this school.

If you are happy for me to ask your child if he/she would like to take part in my study then I would be very grateful. However, if you are unhappy with your child's involvement then please complete the slip below and return it to the class teacher by (date).

Thank you,

Helen Saddler

I am unwilling for my child (name)_____ to be asked to take part in this research.

Signed _____   Name _____

(please only complete if you are unwilling for your child to take part)

Transcript of Interview with Teacher 1 (Sanjit)

R- Can you tell me a little bit about your professional background? Have you worked here long?

I- Yeah sure, so, um, I've been a primary school teacher, this is my sixth year, of teaching. I started back in 2008 and I've thoroughly enjoyed, I've been given a lot of opportunities to progress in my career. I've got a very supportive boss, Mr Lint. So, early on in my career he spotted that I've got a passion for Maths, which I really enjoy teaching, so in my second year I was given the chance of specializing in Maths. So I completed a 2 year specialist Maths primary qualification. It was hard work but I got there in the end! Along with that my role now is kind of like a champion for Maths within the primary school. I've recently become Maths coordinator as well so I'm in charge of overseeing Maths in the school and making sure that we have the right resources and making sure that everybody's happy with their planning and, you know, that there's progression and children are making good progress. Recently we've had guidance about the new curriculum which is coming in in September so we've got that as our priority at the moment and amending what we currently teach so that, come September, we are ready to start teaching that. So, you know, kind of, we need to be hitting the ground running with that.

R- Ok, so have you always worked at this school then?

I- Yes, I started here in my NQT year and I've been here ever since.

R- Ok, what was it about it that you liked?

I- It's a lot of things. I mean, I went to a few schools for interview and I didn't get that gut feeling that I had with this school. I can't put my finger on exactly what it is but when I walked in to Merrygold I had a sort of warm, very positive feeling, as I was being shown around. The children seemed very friendly. The children here are very giving, they come from, some of them don't come from very privileged backgrounds and they appreciate when you do something for them. I'd rather work in that environment rather than, say somewhere that was quite affluent. You know, they don't always appreciate what you do. Also the staff here, you know, we're a very sort of tight knit school and all the staff work close together, you know, sharing ideas. Yeah it becomes a bit competitive at times but we all like to share ideas and I think the most important thing is my boss here, my headteacher, I've got a very supportive headteacher and I feel happy that if I've got any problems I can go to him and say, 'look I'm not very happy about so and so, you know, such and such is going on.' So I think that is the main things which keeps me here but on top of that you've got other staff, even like, with the

support staff I've got a good relationship with them, we'll have a banter you know. Then it's the children. So there's quite a lot of things really.

R- Thank you. So my research is specifically about social inclusion of pupils identified with SEN, so I'd just like to ask you what 'social inclusion' means to you and what it looks like here?

I- Well I think, my understanding of social inclusion is that you accommodate individual children's needs to the best that you can, so you cater for a child's needs whether they be very gifted and very able or whether they have severe learning difficulties. I mean sometimes when you try to include children actually you can be excluding them in a way as well so just because, you know, like say an SEN child, some children you try and cater for them but actually a mainstream school is not the best place for them but you do the best that you can with the resources that you have. For Statemented children it's great that they have that extra member of staff that can work with them one to one and I've seen children make really good progress who, without that Statement, wouldn't have. But then I've also got a number of children who are Statemented with one support staff member and it's very difficult to cater for their needs all the time. I've got 29/28 children in the class who also need my attention so it becomes a bit of a juggling game in a way. So morally and from my conscience I want to help every child, you know, that's my job but physically, I can't do that all the time. And I want to do that to the best of my ability but a lot of these children with SEN, they have quite specific needs.

R- Ok, are those needs academic, or social, or both?

I- I would say a mixture. I would say both are difficult but possibly more socially, when they haven't got the social skills or the calling out, you know ADHD, you know, they're being disruptive, you know, throwing chairs around. Not that I've experience that, probably to like a minor extent. I would say that that would be really difficult because it would disrupt your whole lesson and it would stop the learning of all the class. Whereas if a child is working below a level, you know, you can find resources, you can find something, which they can do at their level, you know. But then sometimes you will find that if I give something to a child with SEN which I think is at their level they will still need some input from myself or they will still need for me to sit down with them and say, 'you need to do this.' I can't just say 'this is your task, you need to get on with it.' So they need some input or some support, some adult input. So that sometimes becomes difficult, it depends on who I've got with me in class. The class that I'm in at the moment, they are a difficult class, they're quote rowdy, you know, quite excitable. I've been in a few situations where I've been explaining a task or explaining to a group with SEN, then I've got the rest of the class going off the rails. So if I'm in there by myself it is hard.

R- Yes, so in that way then, how do you think that the TAs that you work with specifically help with the social side?

I- Ok, so they've got a lot of experience behind them. I'm lucky to work with some quite experienced members of support staff so, if children are having difficulties socially, they will sometimes withdraw them from the class and just, having that one to one conversation with them, you know, 'what's wrong?' 'how've you been feeling today?' 'How do you think you could've approached that better?' and just building that awareness with them. Perhaps keeping like a behaviour journal, like a personal journal so that they can record their thoughts and feelings, you know, having a feelings chart. You know, that kind of emotional aspect, I think having that extra adult that really helps them. Whereas, if it's just myself and 30 other children I will try to do it but I don't think that I could do it justice, whereas if I had an extra adult then they would probably do that better, do you know what I mean?

R- Yes, definitely, that's great thank you. Erm, so if you had to design a role or explain what the role of the teaching assistants were, what kind of things would you include?

I- Ok, so in my opinion the role of the teaching assistant is to, yes support the teacher in the teaching and learning, with regards to children and children's learning, yes the teaching assistant is there to support that and to support the teaching with like preparing resources and all that. So making sure that the teacher is ready to teach a lesson essentially. But then there's also like admin tasks which are part of the role, putting up nice displays, which I'm rubbish at doing so I'm glad that they do that! But also within like whole school, having that contribution to school as well. So they should be part of the decision making in what's going on in the school in lessons, or whole school policies. I think they need to be a part of that.

R- Ok, so are they in this school?

I- Yes, I would say they are. And also giving them responsibility as well so having that trust with them. So for example at our school teaching assistants lead 'Read, Write, Inc' which is a reading and writing programme. So every member of support staff has a small group which they teach and they are responsible for, so they will plan and they will teach that group.

R- Do they assess that as well?

I- Erm, well there's that daily assessment where you'll say, 'yes, you know, you've understood that today and you haven't' but with regards to summative assessment where you level a child, that is done by the 'Read Write Inc' manager. So they are in charge of assessment to a certain degree, in the day to day lessons, it's important that you have a good dialogue with the teaching assistants, so that good relationship so that you can say, you know, 'how did so and so get on today?' you know, 'did they understand or do you think you need more help with that?' so having that dialogue. Erm, so I think communication is important.

R- When do you find time to do that?

I- So we try and do it at the beginning of the lesson, so when I get in I will say, 'Lara we'll be looking at this today' or, you know. 'we'll be looking at such and such.' Occasionally I'll give her the lesson plans for the week but not always. I have weeks when I'm more organized than others! But Lara is also delivering a Maths intervention programme, so whenever I do Maths there are a few children in the class who are working below a certain level in Maths. So I've brought in, as Maths coordinator, I've bought in a programme called 'Assisting Maths' which is designed to cater for children who are just below the level expected for that age. So she has got that, read it at home, familiarized herself with it, and she has taken responsibility to plan that, and deliver that, and she actually enjoys doing that. So I think, having that trust and, you know, of the abilities of that teaching assistant and that dialogue and trust, I think they appreciate that. Certainly Lara does I think. I trust her enough to plan and teach, you know, to a group of children in my class. I think that says a lot. But we do expect a lot from our teaching assistants in our school. You're not just there, you know, this is my class, these are my children, you know that's it. It's very much whole school, you know what I mean.

R- Ok. Yes. Do they all work together as a team?

I- Yeah, you know, helping out if we've got special days, it's teamwork. Whenever we have staff insets, support staff will be part of that initial meeting but then they will be allocated jobs and roles, you know 'would you do this?' In groups and pairs, 'could you sort out this for us?' So it's a very wide role, I can't define it too clearly (laughs).

R- It's ok, everyone says that! So do you think there is one part that is more important that another or not?

I- Yeah, I think in the classroom, erm, being approachable and having that good relationship with the children. Also having the skills and the subject knowledge to help move children's learning forward and having good communication skills and working well with the teacher. I think those are most important.

R- Yes. So in terms of the children that they work with specifically, what do you think that teaching assistants bring to their education?

I- Erm, that's difficult. I think sometimes, being male, sometimes having a female member of staff is useful for me because sometimes, especially the girls, they will approach a female member of staff perhaps easier than they could approach me. So that's something I've found through my experience, they will choose to go to other assistants, including those that I've had in that past. I do say to them, 'if you want to talk to me about anything I'm here' you know, I'm sure I'm not that scary! But I've found that they do go to Lara a lot. They do build that close relationship with that small group who perhaps they have worked with for a long period of time and who they have worked with most. We do have, I mean Lara worked with a group of girls right from Year 4 all the way until they left in Year 6 so sometimes she has letters back having left and update her. So they've got a really strong bond there and I think that's an aspect to their role.

R- Do you know if there are or have been any interventions in this school that have specifically focused on social aspects of pupils' education?

I- Yes we have. Believe to Achieve are an organisation who run mostly after school sports clubs but, I think it was two years ago, they ran some counseling sessions in school, so it was like a trained children's counselor. I remember being in Year 4 we had a few children who had counseling over a number of weeks, for a number of issues, some children had split families, you know quite difficult backgrounds, others were not displaying the right behaviour you know, perhaps issues around emotions and feelings, that kind of anger and not being able to channel it the right way. So we've had that going on, it was an external agency. Then when you were in Year 5 just we had a lady that came in, I think it's from BAHMS or CITS, I'm not quite sure but it's a local authority run thing, she works for the council, think it might be something to do with the GEM centre, which is part of the NHS and they help with the writing of Statements for children with SEN; all that department, so she's come in to work with Tabbit and Flavia because they 've got all those boundaries, socially, finding it hard to follow rules, calling out at times, and saying things to other children which they might not realise is hurtful. Those kinds of issues have gone one for a long time so they were both out today and that's been going on for some time. Then from last year I remember I had a lad who came from another school so he came from Year 5, didn't have good social skills, therefore found settling in quite difficult and the class that I had last year were not that great at being accepting of children that were a little bit different. So sometimes children can be like that, so we had lots of conversations, you know 'that's not how we do things here.' He was in the country for a while but he'd originally come from Poland so, but by that time, when it came to it he had picked up the language well, so I know it wasn't that that was the issue. Anyway, he didn't have very good social skills so that's why children picked on him, so we tried to deal with that the best way that we could. We had parents in etc.

R- Were teaching assistants ever involved in those things or was it teacher-led?

I- Teaching assistants would sometimes witness it going on and would say, 'so and so did this to Jack' etc. So they'll fill us in. So again, the lady that comes in, she would draw the particular child that was having problems with social skills and other children from the class, and to get them talking and sort of, develop their social skills as well. I purposely picked children that didn't get on with that lad so that they would also, it would develop their social skills as well. So, yes, that's that.

R- The problem that we often have is with measuring the success of a social skill based intervention. Is there anything that you use? Monitoring? Framework?

I- I don't think we've got a standardized way of measuring it. I think it's just monitoring, reviewing, dialogue between teachers and other staff and with parents. We've employed a Welfare Officer within school full time, she's been working since September and she has opened that channel of communication

between parents and the school, so like we've identified children who'd benefit from that for a number of reasons, you know, split families again or not very privileged backgrounds, difficult backgrounds, so erm, the welfare office will phone home, speak to the parents, visit them at home and it's just filling them in about what's going on in school, how can we help, explaining some of the issues and difficulties that the children are having and just opening that communication so that we understand more of what's going on, we've got more of an idea of maybe what's going on and why they're behaving like this. So I've spoken to the welfare officer a few times, she's come and approached me, and filled me in with so and so's parents aren't happy about something because this has happened or, 'can you check this?' Like for example Tarab, he's the lad that was pulled out earlier as well, not great social skills, he hasn't been changing his reading book recently and mum's worried about him not reading so just something as small as that helps. We had another issue where a girl had lost her grandfather and she was very close, so there'd been a bereavement in the family and that was affecting that child's schooling. The welfare officer was able to monitor that child closely and put in things to help her through that time.

R- Great. So you have a very diverse student population. Are there any particular challenges that that brings to the learning environment here?

I- Well yes, we do have a lot of EAL children but not in the sense that they are new arrivals because most of the children that we have, they were born in this country. However, not all of them have a good model of English back at home so that's something that we have to deal with on a day to day basis but mostly say through their writing, it comes through in their writing, for example not using the correct tense on verbs for example, mixing up the past and present, purely because they haven't got a good model of English at home. It affects their Literacy and their reading and writing, whereas some parents are great, they will work with their children at home, they will work with them every day and you can tell the difference. Where the parents have a lot of input you can tell the different with those children so yes it does bring some barriers as in the Literacy is more difficult; because they've not been exposed to that good model you've got to kind of undo that and model that good example of English and that good vocabulary, not all children have that. And with the cohort of children that we have, mainly from Pakistani backgrounds, not all of them have wide experiences out of school it's quite narrow. So you come to school and then you go home and then you go to the mosque for two hours, then you come home and do you homework and you go to bed. So it's quite repetitive, so as some children who are not from a Pakistani background, they have wide experiences, things like going to the local art gallery or going to the local museum, not all of them have experienced that so I think having those cultural barriers is difficult.

R- Does that cause social barriers between the children at school?

I- Erm, no I don't think it does. I think the children on the whole they get on very well with each other. I mean yes, we do have occurrences of misbehavior but it's very minor and I've worked in other schools where they have behaviour issues. I wouldn't say that the children in this school are naughty, but it's at a low level. I

would say it's minor and I've been judged as outstanding for our behaviour in the past and so yeah, I mean on the whole they are very respectful. I wouldn't say that cultural background acts as a barrier, although most of them are from the same background really. But those from a different background, they all gel together well, which is nice to see.

R- Ok, who has responsibility for managing the teaching assistants here?

I- I would say it's mostly the head teacher and the deputy head teacher. There is no sort of specific member of staff, like a middle manager. They are very much a pair and they work very well together, so ultimately they are responsible for managing the teaching assistants. The deputy head will do all the rotas and do all the timetabling but if the support staff have a problem I would imagine that they would go and see the head teacher. If it was something minor they might speak to the class teacher but if it was something major they would go to the head teacher.

R- Yes the headteacher is very visible here, how do you find that?

I- Yeah he is, when I first came here, that was unusual for me, because the last schools I'd been it, it wasn't like that. It was nice for me because it felt like I mattered, do you know what I mean? Someone had bothered to come in and see what I'm doing with the children. So yes, It keeps you on your toes but it's nice and I don't mind that at all. I think it's nice for the children as well, you know, they see the head and they respect that. You get some heads that are just locked away in the office, they don't see the children, they don't know the children's names and I don't think that's good.

R- Yes, I've noticed that here. Is there anything that makes the management of the teaching assistants here difficult?

I- Ok, I mean you can't please everybody. Sometimes you make a decision in school from a management point of view and you'll get some that are not happy about the decision, you know. Yeah there might be a bit of moaning going on in the background but ultimately everyone gets on with it. You know yes you'll go into a room and have a moan and let off some steam but you get on with it. Personally I stay away from that, you know, that's just me but people get involved and things get said but ultimately I think most people get on with it. And if people do have issues they will go and see the head. I think they teaching assistants respond positively when you try and involve them as much as you can in that decision. I think when they're no consulted, that upsets them and also that thing with experience, so more experienced teaching assistants could be given more responsibility, more of a role. Almost like you know when you differentiate for your class, according to their needs, in the same way, looking at your teaching assistants and saying, 'right, who is more experienced,' 'who needs this kind of support, who doesn't' do you know what I mean? And I think sometimes we see teaching assistants as one big group and we're not looking at them and thinking, 'right what are their strengths?' Because ultimately some teaching assistants are

better than others, so I think maybe looking at them and seeing their skills set, I think they would appreciate that.

R- Yes. I think I'm pretty much done here. Do teaching assistants go outside on the yard at playtimes?

I- Yeah we always have a teacher and a teaching assistant on duty so there is always two adults on duty during playtimes.

R- Ok, is that dinner time as well?

I- Not dinner time, the responsibility is with the dinner ladies to free up support staff for deadlines. So during playtimes it's a teacher and a teaching assistant, during lunchtimes its dinner ladies. It's their responsibility.

R- Brilliant. Do you want to add anything else?

I- Erm, all I would say is that yes we do need to care for children's needs and when I was at teaching practice I was told, 'every teaching is a special educational needs teacher' and I very much believe that. However, practically, having taught for a number of years, I would say that it's very difficult on your own, depending on how severe the children's needs are, because you have that one child who is very demanding and has a lot of needs, and you also have other children in your class and if you haven't got the adequate support, it becomes very difficult. I would also say that sometimes, like, it's very important that you have parents on your side as well, so having the support of parents, and making parents aware of what is best for their children because sometimes parents are scared to perhaps take them off to a school that would perhaps better suit their needs, for example, a special school. They want their children to be in a mainstream school however that could be failing them, so form their point of view, yes my child's in a mainstream school, you know, there's nothing wrong with him or her, but thy don't realise that actually they're failing them because you're not looking at what their needs are. So I would say sometimes that including a child is excluding them.

R- Ok, do you think the cultural differences in this school make that a bit more difficult?

I- Some of our parents are great, but I would say parents from the Asian backgrounds, they are quite...education is very important to them, you know, getting high grades, high standards, so I think they sometimes find it difficult. They are not realistic about their child's abilities, what they will attain ultimately, so they're over-ambitious, they don't realise what level their child is working at. So that becomes difficult for a teacher to say to them, 'your child has learning difficulties' or 'is experiencing such and such difficulties in this subject.' That becomes difficult so you have to use the right terminology and you have to approach it in a sensitive way. Whereas some parents are very open and they totally understand what difficulties their children have so I would say it's probably more difficult with the culture.

Transcript of Interview with TA2 (Anne)

R- So to start, can you tell me a little bit about your professional background?

I- Erm, I started in April 2002. I got in to being interested in teaching because my son is dyslexic and I didn't know, obviously when you have a child and they start school, you know nothing about they education system or what is going on so I did, at the time there was only a classroom teaching assistant course, and I did that. Then, I was working at the time as a receptionist in a business and a friends said to me at the time, she was working for RAPT (Raising Achievements Performance Team) and she said that, 'oh, you'd be really good at this, what do you think about doing this?' and I said 'oh yeah, I would like to have a go.' So I went to Billingham South to work with a little girl there who had Attachment Disorder and within a very short period of time we moved the child and came here and I've been here ever since, so from 2002. So I was quite lucky and I love it, it worked really well.

R- Excellent, so have you worked with different year groups?

I- I've worked, yes, in most years. I support children one to one, I have always done one to one. Not necessarily by choice- that's just the way it went. Only until recently, up until this last year I've always been on a contract so it's always been never knowing. You get a contract for the child so if the child stays here then you stay with them but if they move then that's it. I mean luckily they've always found me someone else to work with, but this is the first year that they've made me permanent and that only came about because the child that I was supporting last year had an accident towards the end of the term. It was bizarre. We'd been ice skating and it'd been lovely, no problems and on the school year he jumped and he fell and he damaged his knee and he's had to have an operation so he couldn't come back to school so that meant I couldn't work with him anymore. So I've stayed because I loved it and I've been given opportunities to work in every different class with many different children so it's always been challenging. I also support, as an extended half an hour, lunch hour in EYFS. I've done that for the last few years. I love it here I have to say, it has a lovely atmosphere, everybody is lovely and supportive. It feels very homely so that's nice.

little job security.

→ pastoral phrase.

R- Lovely. So as I was saying before, my research is about inclusion and the social side of that term so I am really asking people what they understand by the term 'social inclusion.' What are some of the first things that spring to your mind?

I- Erm, social inclusion. Erm, well we have run in Year 5 last year, I was working with a group that contained the child that I was supporting prior to this year. He was Autistic and we had somebody coming in from outside to talk to us about his needs so we started to run a little group, a social skills group basically. I ran that for nearly a year in there and continued it on a little but with the child and two other children. That was basically just working with a little group of children, it could have been just playing games and getting them talking and communicating

Promotion of social skills without recognising

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and listening to each other because sometimes they don't always listen to each other.

R- Ok. so was that a scheme that you followed or something that you devised yourselves, or adapted?

I- Erm, there was a scheme, I think it might have been called 'Talk About,' I don't know, Sheila might remember. But generally I went with that and just adapted it a bit really, as you go along. Yeah you just look things up, so they might like making little jigsaws and things, you know, you just tend to search, you go online to find things and use those. That was an intervention group, taking them out for half an hour once a week.

R- Did you see results with it?

I- I think so, it's sometimes hard to tell because you don't necessarily see the results there and then. I mean, they enjoyed it, so we have to think that if they enjoyed it then that was the main thing. Erm, some children like Cole now, he wouldn't work well in that kind of a group. If we put him in to that situation, I don't know him very well yet so it's kind of hard for me, I mean the other child that I work with, I worked with him for 3 years so I knew him very well. And you have to work with that specific child and what works for them. The other thing is that not children are alike so you've always got to adapt things and you've always got to change work. You don't want them to feel uncomfortable and you don't want them to be pressurised, they've got to be relaxed and they've got to enjoy it. I mean certain things you've got to do but when it comes to socialising... I mean in the classroom sometimes it's not necessary to work with the same child all the time and sit with that child and tell them all the time, it's just not right. I mean Cole wouldn't let me sit beside him all the time anyway! But you've got to , I think it depends on the child, I mean the child I had last year was glued to me so, I think you've got to give them the space. If you're there all the time with them then you're not letting them grow and you're not letting them shine or inter-react as much, so it's finding the balance and working with whichever child you've got and it's getting to know them. That's the key thing. Sometimes that's hard for a teacher, who has the whole class, and up to 30 children. She gets to know them very well but she might not get to know them as well as we would, working one to one with them.

recognise SEN - velcro syndrome

R- Yes. So you were saying you'd adapt things to children's needs. How do you know or find out what their needs are? Have you had specific training or is it experience, instinct?

I- Erm, I have had, I did do Autism training last year, I've also had behaviour management training. It was one of these things that was run with parents and, unfortunately, the boy who I was supporting's parents didn't go. It was aimed more at the parents but I did pick a lot of things up and you realise that suddenly, it's not just limited to school. It's the whole thing, we have them for so many hours a day but the parents have them for the rest of the time. You don't realise, well you do but, in terms of concentrating on your area, the effect that they have.

But the thing is…how do you know? I think, because you've got that experience you look at their peers and see that they're not fitting in for some reason. Then you've got to think, why are they being left out? Why isn't he playing with people? Why aren't people allowing him in to play their games? And then you try and work with them to make him included.

R- Yes, I've noticed that you all work on the yard at playtime every day as well. That must be a big help?

I- Well I think it is. It's also because we lead activities out there, so if a child doesn't have any friends they can still come and play and make friends. As you get to know the children you will find that they will come and stand beside you for half an hour or something and have a little chat, it's that bit of support. It's just that somebody to talk to and to know that they're not there by themselves.

R- That's great. This is a bit of a difficult question because you do so much but if you were to write a job description for your role what kind of things would it include?

I- (laughs) Ok, well let's go through the morning then. Well, obviously support the teacher and then do whatever, copying, getting resources together. Then you support the children during carpet time when they come in or when they have a problem or a question or something, they will come and ask you. You ask them questions during carpet time. Then we have supporting them in activities during lessons, Literacy and Numeracy, and we take them out during assembly for interventions. That time is catered more specifically to their needs rather than normal Literacy and Numeracy.

daily tasks (to mentioned)

R- Ok, do you plan for those sessions or the teacher?

I- It can be either. Last year because I knew the child so well she basically said, 'well you know what works, you do what you need.' With Project X, because He doesn't know about that then I will do that. But Literacy and Numeracy, basically she will say, like spellings and stuff, she will give me those. I mean, it's not always that way. When you talk at the beginning of the year about the sessions she might say, 'well, what would you like to do?' and then obviously if there's something else to squeeze in then we'll do that. It's just communicating for what the children that you are supporting need. Last year, the boy I supported, for him we had a session where it was just me and him doing some Art. So not only was it a reward for achieving what he did during the week, it was some time for me and him to talk, be creative, you know, just build up our relationship. He loved his Art. But, with Cole, we offered him that last year and he didn't want it. It's different needs for different children. With the younger children, it's easier to work with them because they're not so set in their ways but Cole is in Year 6 now; he doesn't want someone sitting over him, he doesn't want somebody telling him what to do all the time, you know. He thinks he is growing up, he doesn't want it.

using the skills of individual

R- So talking about working as a team, a lot is written about teaching assistants' and teachers' roles blurring together a bit. How do you see your role compared to Helen's?

I- I personally wouldn't. Me personally, I think~~ven~~ would. I suppose I haven't been in a situation where I've had to stand up and teach in front of the whole class. Erm, I think obviously Helen has been doing it a lot longer than me so she has lots of experience. Well, its obviously her knowledge. If I've got a problem then I'd go to her, if she's got a problem then, you know, she wouldn't come to me. They do all the lesson plans and all of the recording and the assessment; it's just the amount of stuff that they have to do. You know, people think that teachers have an easy job, no they don't! The paperwork now, that they have to do all the time, you know, it's just amazing. I wouldn't want that at all. I like what I do now, I like the job and wouldn't change it.

R- Yes. So who is responsible for managing what you do and what the other TAs do?

I- It would be Sharon because she's our SENCO, she's in charge of all the special needs and she also manages the TAs. We have a meeting once a term with her. I think with timetabling it's a mixture between the teacher you work with and Sh___ . On a day to day basis it's the teacher.

R- So if you wanted to change something about the way you were managed who would you go to?

I- Well, I'd probably go to Heather and then she would probably say, well you need to go and see Lou about that.

R- Where would you say that your strengths are? How could they be used ideally?

I- Probably the way that they are being used at the moment to be honest. Working one to one, we did have a meeting with the head at the end of last term and she basically said, 'where do you see yourself in 5 years time?' and I said well, I'd like to still be here! But I said I love everything I do, I love working one to one- not all the time but most of the time. I mean, I love the Arts side of things and because of that I've been given the chance to do a lot of that with the children and a lot of the artwork is around school and that's really nice to see. I've painted all of the walls outside and there are things hanging up all around the place and people will come and say, you know, 'we'll make a hanging for it or something.' I think, erm, working one to one is something that I've done for such a long time it's a good use of my skills, I can empathise with them and help with meeting their needs I think. Just being prepared to do things is important, not being rigid, being adaptable, willing to do things, not sticking to things. If it's not working you've got to change. Communicating as well, we've got a lovely team so it's great. I mean, I don't always know the answers to everything and I'll go and talk to the other TAs and we often find we've had the same problems so we share

and help each other. That does help an awful lot because you don't always know you're doing the right thing.

R- Yes, it seems a lot like a team here, no hierarchy?

I- No, definitely. It's more like a family here to be honest. The children come in and they're secure here and I think there's that feeling here.

R- The A4 pad you have, what do you use that for?

I- It's just notes, I might write down comments on what Cole has done or things like that. I'll try and put my literacy notes in here. It's just so that I know, I find that writing things down helps me to know exactly what ill be doing with my groups.

R- Great. Is there anything that you wanted to add?

I- No I think that's everything.

Equality of all staff members:
-All staff invited to PD days
-Professional development meetings annually.
-Inclusive and respectful relationships amongst all staff.
-culture and ethos of equality.

Multi- Agency working:
-SENCO's high level of knowledge and skill makes partnerships very successful

Allowing children to work independently:
-allows increased social development of pupils through social interactions, thus makes the school more inclusive.

Exceptional subject knowledge:
-generally acquired through experience, training on the job and personal desire to up-skill.
- Assessment of children's needs.

Distributed Leadership-
-Affords clarity amongst all staff members concerning their individual roles and responsibilities.

Inclusion

Mavis!

TAs

Pride:
-TAs work extra hours to ensure they are as prepared as possible.
-Fully appreciated and recognised by other staff.

Holistic approach to children's needs:
-Not afraid to 'think outside the box' in response to children's individual needs, e.g. little acorns, nurture groups

Early Intervention:
-Key to creating an inclusive culture within the school.
-Fighting hard for funding ensures that children's needs are met as early and as effectively as possible.

Nurturing role with the children:
-TAs understand the needs of individual children very well, both in terms of academic ability and social interactions.
-Children enjoy working with TAs and recognise TAs' positive influence on their education.

Instrumental in behaviour management:
-Many TAs have personal, individual rewards systems which the children respond very well to.
-Reinforce behaviour expectations amongst the whole class.
-Working as a team to alert teachers to successes/concerns.

inclusive classrooms

SOCIAL STORYTIME

TEACHING ASSISTANTS' MANUAL

SESSION 3 – RELEVANCE

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To identify the difference between relevant and irrelevant talking.

RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED:

- *A Play at Cherry Blossom* story book
- Social Storytime puppets
- Feelings board

INTRODUCTION

(5 mins)

TA to model the feelings board activity. Point to a feeling and give a sentence about why you feel that way.

Ask each child to complete the feelings board activity. This can be found in the resources section of this manual (page 62).

ACTIVITY 1

(5 mins)

Introduce the concept of relevance. What does it mean to be relevant when we talk? Explain that relevance means answering in a way that other people understand.

ACTIVITY 2

(20 mins)

TA to use puppets to act out additional speech phrases below.

Children to use thumbs up or thumbs down to represent whether the statements said by the puppets were relevant or not.

When not, children asked to respond with a statement that would be relevant, using the puppet to convey the sentence

Use the Hatty the Hedgehog and Emily the Elephant script opposite.

TA to model more sentences if time allows.

Hatty: "Emily, what would you like for dinner tonight?"

Emily: "I think I'd like lasagne for my dinner."

Hatty: "Emily, what did you do at the weekend?"

Emily: "I like watching TV."

Hatty: "Emily, do you have any brothers and sisters?"

Emily: "I have one brother."

Hatty: "Emily, do you want to play hopscotch?"

Emily: "My favourite game is football."

(This one will probably cause debate, explain that it is relevant to the topic of conversation but that it doesn't answer the question that Hatty asked).

UNIT 1

A Play at Cherry Blossom

Written by Helen Saddler
Illustrated by Heather Dickinson

SOCIAL STORY TIME

'Right, Hatty and Percy. Let's rehearse the part where Snow White wakes up and meets Prince Charming for the first time.'

'Off you go!'

Hatty began 'WHERE AM I? I'M SO CONFUSED. WHERE ARE THE DWARVES?'

'No, no, no, no! You don't want to deafen the audience Hatty! Much quieter please' said Mr Hoot. 'Action!'

Hatty tried again and her volume was perfect this time. 'Where am I? I'm so confused. Where are the dwarves?'

'Sausages' responded Percy.

'SAUSAGES... SAUSAGES?' wailed Mr Hoot. 'Percy, they aren't your lines.'

ASSESSMENT

It is very important that we assess the children involved in this programme before, during and after the intervention. This will ensure that we're able to identify where their skills have improved and take account of your good work in building pupils' skills.

The specifics of the assessment methods will have been explained to you during training, but the basics are described here to ensure you know what you need to do when.

Children's social skills are measured in this programme using the Skills Wheel.' The wheel should be completed at the following times during the programme:

1. Before starting Unit
2. In between Unit 2 and Unit 3
3. In between Unit 4 and Unit 5
4. At the end of Unit 6

A separate wheel must be completed for each child involved in the programme. A version of the wheel to photocopy is on page (11).

For all aspects of the skills in the wheel, you need to decide whether the child shows them:
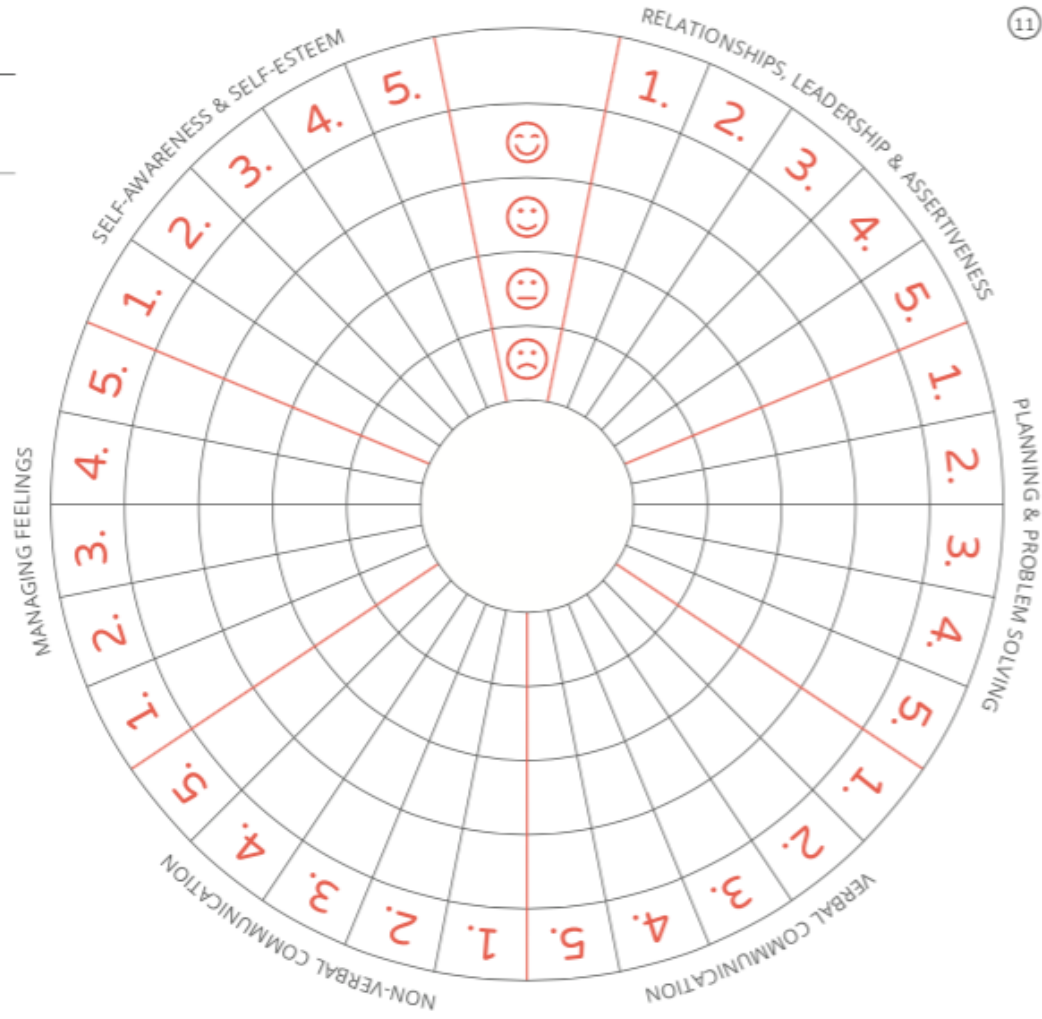
☺ ALWAYS

☺ SOMETIMES

😐 RARELY

☹ NEVER

The questions on the next page help you with what to look for when you're assessing the children you're working with.

NAME:

DATE:

RELATIONSHIPS, LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS

PLANNING & PROBLEM SOLVING

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

MANAGING FEELINGS

SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-ESTEEM

ASSESSMENT – CATEGORIES

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

1. **Personal Appearance**

   Are they able to identify at least three features of their personal appearance e.g. colour hair, colour eyes, height, clothing?

2. **Appearance of others**

   Are they able to identify at least three features of others' personal appearance e.g. colour hair, colour eyes, height, clothing?

3. **Likes**

   Can they identify at least three things that they like?

4. **Dislikes**

   Can they identify at least three things that they dislike?

5. **Strengths**

   Can they identify something that they feel they are good at?

MANAGING FEELINGS

1. **Identify emotions in self**

   Are they able to identify how they are feeling in different scenarios?

2. **Identify emotions in others**

   Are they able to identify how others might be feelings in different scenarios?

3. **Bodily reactions to emotions**

   Can they explain how their body reacts when they feel different emotions e.g. when they are nervous their palms might sweat, they might go red, they might fidget?

4. **Identifies appropriate responses to emotions**

   Are they able to react appropriately to different emotions e.g. can they calm themselves down when they feel angry?

5. **Follow a plan to respond to emotions**

   Can they appropriately follow a plan that they make to deal with a certain emotion e.g. breathe, count to ten and then talk to someone if they feel angry?

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

1. **Good eye contact**

   Do they follow the good eye contact rule when they talk to others?

2. **Good distance/touch**

   Do they display appropriate distance and touch when they speak to someone?

3. **Identify facial expressions**

   Are they able to identify a range of different facial expressions in others?

4. **Identifies 'good body language' in self**

   Can they identify when they are displaying good body language e.g. good distance, good touch and good eye contact?

5. **Identifies 'good body language' in others**

   Can they identify when others are displaying good body language e.g. good distance, good touch and good eye contact?

Glossary

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CLA	Child Looked After
COP	Code of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CFT	Children's Friendship Training
CT	Circle Time
DfE	Department for Education
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
EHC	Education, Health and Care
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FOS	Foundation Stage Outcomes
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IOE	Institute of Education
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MSE	Multi-Sensory Environment
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NG	Nurture Group
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office For Standards in Education
PD	Professional Development
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
TA	Teaching Assistant
SCM	Social Cognitive Mapping
SEL	Social and Emotional based Learning
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behvioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury

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