

**CHILDREN WITH FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AND THEIR  
EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL BELONGING: AN INTERPRETATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**



A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London  
Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

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## **Abstract**

### ***Background***

Children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are considered a vulnerable population of learners. Their complex neurodevelopmental profiles and ‘invisible’ disabilities can present as challenging for educators and may curtail full and meaningful participation in school life. Despite the high numbers of children with FASD believed to be within the British education system, knowledge and understanding amongst UK professionals remains scant. What is more, there exists a dearth of research which has given pupils with FASD a voice to share their school experiences.

### ***Methods***

This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of school belonging from the perspectives of four children (aged 7-10 years) with a known diagnosis of FASD. Data was collected using remote semi-structured interviews and sought to explore what helps children with FASD to belong in UK mainstream primary schools. Participants were invited to represent their views using drawing and modelling. Discrepancies between their perceived sense of school belonging and preferred sense of school belonging were explored. The data was analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

### ***Results***

All four of the children with FASD felt like they belonged in their respective schools and told of factors which facilitated their positive belongingness experiences. These were grouped into four superordinate themes: School Ethos and Sense of Community, Relatedness to Peers, Staff Attributes and Teaching Practices, and Myself as a Learner. The findings provide support for Allen et al’s. (2016) Socio-Ecological Framework of School Belonging.

## ***Conclusions***

It is anticipated that this research will go some way towards raising the profile of FASD amongst frontline educational professionals in the UK. Given children and young people with FASD are vulnerable to disrupted schooling, strengthening their belongingness to school may be one way in which to promote positive and inclusive school experiences and minimise the risk of secondary disabilities.



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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>ACEs</b>	Adverse Childhood Experiences
<b>ADHD</b>	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<b>APPG</b>	All Party Parliamentary Group
<b>ARBD</b>	Alcohol Related Birth Defects
<b>ARND</b>	Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder
<b>BMA</b>	British Medical Association
<b>BPS</b>	British Psychological Society
<b>CASP</b>	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus
<b>CYP</b>	Children and Young People
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Baring Service
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health
<b>EP</b>	Educational Psychologist
<b>EPS</b>	Educational Psychology Service
<b>FAS</b>	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
<b>FASD</b>	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
<b>GT</b>	Grounded Theory
<b>IPA</b>	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>NA</b>	Narrative Approach
<b>ND-PAE</b>	Neurobehavioural Disorder associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NICE</b>	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
<b>NOFAS-UK</b>	National Organisation of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PAE</b>	Prenatal Alcohol Exposure
<b>PCP</b>	Person Centred Planning
<b>pFAS</b>	Partial Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
<b>SEMH</b>	Social Emotional Mental Health

<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
<b>SIGN</b>	Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network
<b>SIM</b>	Student Integration Model
<b>SOSB</b>	Sense of School Belonging
<b>TA</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>TEP</b>	Trainee Educational Psychologist
<b>UEL</b>	University of East London
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>VERP</b>	Video Enhanced Reflective Practice
<b>YP</b>	Young Person

“I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now”

-C.S. Lewis

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

The first chapter of this thesis begins with a brief introduction to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. The challenges pertaining to timely identification and diagnosis are discussed and the global prevalence rates illustrated. The impact of prenatal alcohol exposure on distinct brain domains will be explored and the implications for learning and development considered. The concept of belonging, in particular school belonging, is then introduced, and this is followed by placing the present research in context. The chapter concludes with the identification of the researcher's position and a statement of the research rationale.

### **1.2 Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

The United Kingdom (UK) has the fourth highest rate of maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy in the world (Popova et al., 2017), with prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) now considered a significant public health concern (McQuire, 2018). Although the risks to the developing baby following low level<sup>1</sup> drinking are believed to be small, there is no known amount of alcohol that can be safely consumed during pregnancy (Department of Health, 2016).

Alcohol is a teratogenic substance<sup>2</sup>, an agent which when ingested by an expectant mother passes readily through the placenta and into the amniotic fluid encircling the developing baby (Gupta et al., 2016). In the absence of a mature blood filtration system, alcohol has the capacity to directly enter the blood stream of the developing foetus, where it can lead to foetal malformation and/or improper development (British Medical Association [BMA], 2016). Contingent upon a complex interplay between the volume, pattern and timing of PAE

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<sup>1</sup> There is little standardisation of the terms low, moderate and heavy drinking in the literature (BMA, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> A substance which interferes with typical embryonic or foetal development (Gupta et al., 2016).

(BMA, 2016), as well as other maternal genetic and epigenetic factors (Ungerer et al., 2013), exposure to alcohol in utero can lead to a range of irreversible and life-long neurocognitive and behavioural disabilities, and structural abnormalities, known collectively as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (Price, 2019).

### ***1.2.1 Terminology, Diagnosis and Diagnostic Challenges***

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used historically to encompass foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), partial foetal alcohol syndrome (pFAS), alcohol related birth defects (ARBDs), alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND), and neurobehavioral disorder associated with PAE (ND-PAE) (BMA, 2016). In 2019, the first national guidelines for children and young people (CYP) born to alcohol exposed pregnancies were published in the UK (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network [SIGN] 156, 2019), and as part of this guidance, three new clinical diagnostic/descriptor terms<sup>3</sup> were demarcated. In line with international terminology, the guidelines endorse the national utilisation of the terms FASD *with* sentinel facial features (which include the simultaneous presentation of short palpebral fissures, a thin upper vermilion, and elongated philtrum), FASD *without* sentinel facial features, and CYP at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD associated with PAE (SIGN 156, 2019). It is noteworthy however that this nomenclature is still in its infancy and is not yet reliably used within the literature.

Diagnosis of FASD necessitates a comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment from, but not limited to Paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapists, Clinical Psychologists, Educational Psychologists, Health Visitors and Occupational Therapists (SIGN 156, 2019; BMA, 2016). This must include obtainment of “family, social and medical history, as well as

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<sup>3</sup> FASD *with* sentinel facial features is a diagnostic term, however FASD without sentinel facial features and CYP at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD associated with PAE are descriptive terms (SIGN 156, 2019).

a complete physical medical examination” (SIGN 156, p. 17, 2019). Hereditary or underlying genetic disorders should also be screened for and excluded as causal factors, and other prenatal and postnatal factors which may potentially influence a child’s developmental trajectory noted (Jackson & Mukherjee, 2019). In order to satisfy the criteria for a diagnosis of FASD *with* sentinel facial features, the SIGN guidelines mandate that CYP must present with concurrent tripartite facial dysmorphism (as described above), severe impairment in three or more of the identified neurodevelopmental areas of assessment (see figure 1), but PAE need not be confirmed (SIGN 156, 2019). A descriptor of FASD *without* sentinel facial features may be used only if there is a confirmed history of PAE, along with severe impairment in the requisite three or more identified neurodevelopmental areas of assessment (SIGN 156, 2019). If CYP have confirmed alcohol exposure in utero, but they do not meet the central nervous system diagnostic criteria of three or more impairments, despite presenting with a neurodevelopmental delay, the nomenclature at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD, associated with PAE may be considered (SIGN 156, 2019). A complete diagnostic algorithm explicating this is presented in Appendix A. Since fewer than 10% of persons affected by PAE present with discernible sentinel facial features (Streissguth & O’Malley, 2000), FASD is often colloquially termed a ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’ disability (Millar et al., 2017). This, along with a lack of professional knowledge and understanding of FASD (Mukherjee et al., 2006), inconsistent recording practices within maternity pathways (SIGN 156, 2019; BMA, 2016), as well as risk of negative stigma (Bell et al., 2016) can make gaining an appropriate diagnosis problematical. Consistent with this, Blackburn et al. (2009) highlight how diagnoses of FASD are often missed altogether or CYP are misdiagnosed with other neurodevelopmental disorders which often co-occur. Furthermore, in the UK, there exists no clear diagnostic pathway, with only one specialist clinic serving the entire population of CYP and adults (All Party Parliamentary Group

[APPG], 2015). To this end, the UK is considered a long way behind its international counterparts when it comes to early identification and prevention (APPG, 2015).

Nevertheless, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2020) recently published the first draft quality standard for FASD as a way of driving forwards measurable quality improvements for this population. Subject to consultation, the publication of this final quality standard is expected for later in 2021, and this is anticipated to go some way towards increasing awareness amongst professionals, and the timelier provision of support for these vulnerable persons in the UK.

### ***1.2.2 Prevalence***

PAE is the leading cause of preventable, non-genetic neurodisability and learning difference in the Western world (BMA, 2016), with in excess of 1% of babies born globally thought to be born with impairments related to gestational alcohol exposure (Lange et al., 2017; Westrup, 2013). CYP in the care system are known to be disproportionately affected, with incidences of PAE predicted to be as high as 85% (Carpenter, 2011). In the absence of a robust prevalence study, it is not possible to conclusively evidence how many individuals are affected by FASD in the UK, however McQuire et al. (2019) forecasts based on existing cohort data, that prevalence may be anywhere between 6% and 17%. The number of babies born each year (even based on conservative estimates) thus surpass the numbers of babies born with Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Cystic Fibrosis and Spina Bifida combined (Blackburn, 2010). What is more, these figures suggest there may be as many CYP with presentations consistent with FASD in UK classrooms as there are Autism Spectrum Disorders (Westrup, 2013), yet FASD remains considerably under-researched by comparison.

### ***1.2.3 Brain Domains and Implications for Learning and Development***

There are nine distinct brain domains (see figure 1) believed to be affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol (National Health Service [NHS], 2019). Severe impairments in any three of these areas (classified by a global score, or major sub-domain score on any standardised neuropsychological assessment measure that is  $\geq 2$  standard deviations below the mean) is suggestive of a central nervous system deficit (SIGN 156, 2019), which may explain the pervasive learning, behavioural, emotional, social and sensory challenges seen within the foetal alcohol spectrum (Blackburn, 2010). Although no two individuals will be affected homogeneously, there is nonetheless an emerging pattern of consistent strengths and needs seen universally amongst this population (Mattson et al., 2011). These are described below.

**Figure 1**

*Nine Brain Domains Potentially Affected by PAE. Image retrieved from [https://www.nhsaaa.net/media/8391/fasd\\_whateducatorsneedtoknow.pdf](https://www.nhsaaa.net/media/8391/fasd_whateducatorsneedtoknow.pdf)*



Research suggests CYP with FASD habitually present with pervasive difficulties with attention and concentration (Blackburn, 2010). Many experience working memory challenges (Green et al., 2009) and encounter widespread difficulties in understanding mathematical concepts such as time and money (NHS, 2019). Executive functioning<sup>4</sup> difficulties are often seen as one of the hallmarks of FASD, with difficulties with inhibitory control and self-regulation commonplace (Khoury et al., 2015; Rasmussen & Bisanz, 2009). Many individuals also present with visual spatial perceptual challenges (Mattson et al., 2011), are *hyper* or *hypo* sensitive to sensory stimuli (Carr et al., 2010) and experience developmental delays in adaptive functioning and self-help skills across the lifespan (NHS, 2019). Whilst it is not uncommon for individuals to possess superior expressive language abilities, perhaps even beyond their chronological age, this can mask difficulties with higher order receptive language skills necessary for task mastery (Benton Gibbard et al., 2003). Difficulties understanding social consequences of behaviour are also prevalent amongst this population, as well as challenges reading and responding to social cues (Kodituwakku, 2007). Besides this, due to their high impressionability (Fast & Conry, 2009), CYP are at elevated risk of ostracisation, inculcation and bullying amongst their peer group (Kully-Martens et al., 2012). In spite of these challenges however, CYP with FASD often have affable, warm personalities (Blackburn 2010). Many are visually strong and exhibit skills in visual arts, storytelling, music and sports, and demonstrate excellent practical skills and competencies (Blackburn, 2010).

Owing to the wide variation of strengths and needs seen as a result of teratogenesis, CYP born following alcohol exposed pregnancies are often described as having spiky neurodevelopmental profiles (Blackburn et al., 2012). Their atypical learning trajectories may

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<sup>4</sup> Executive function refers to the set of higher order cognitive skills which govern conscious control and decision making (Suchy, 2009).

“militate against sustained learning with cumulative gains” (Carpenter, 2011, p.38) which not only proves perplexing for educators but makes meeting the needs of these vulnerable individuals complex and multifaceted (Carpenter, 2011). Moreover, their vulnerabilities place them at greater risk of secondary disabilities including disrupted school experiences, characterised by exclusions, absenteeism and permanent disaffection (Streissguth et al., 2004; Streissguth et al., 1996). As part of her national directive, Blackburn (2010) advocates for individualised and bespoke learning programmes and asserts that greater consideration must be given to supporting CYP’s lesser targeted social and emotional development, as a way of reducing barriers to participation, and enabling CYP to learn and function more effectively in inclusive and enriching school communities.

### **1.3 Belonging**

Bouchard and Berg (2017) posit belonging is a “relationally derived psychosocial construct” (p.107), commonly associated with the language of acceptance, connection, and affiliation. First described by Maslow (1943) in his motivational hierarchy, he described how humans have a psychological need to belong, with satisfaction of one’s love and belongingness needs considered a pre-requisite to self-actualisation and human flourishing. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), human beings have a “pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships” (p.497) and as part of their ‘Belongingness Hypothesis’, they theorise that satisfaction of this drive is contingent upon individuals forming reciprocal, conflict free interpersonal bonds with multiple persons. The importance of this relational hypothesis thus has notable parallels with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which postulates that babies come into the world with an innate need to form attachment relationships with their primary

caregivers. It is these early relationships which are proposed to function as a prototype for all future social relationships (Bowlby, 1988).

Although considered a universal need, the intensity with which these belongingness needs are experienced and gratified differ based on individual and cultural constructions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Indeed, belongingness in more recent years has been evidenced to be more pronounced in individualist Western cultures, where more lateralised power relationships are commonplace (Cortina et al., 2017). Although a largely Westernised construct, there is nonetheless overwhelming consensus amongst the literature that satisfaction of belongingness needs through positive relationships is compellingly associated with greater social, behavioural and psychological outcomes (Smedley, 2011). Because of this, the notion of belonging has been explored within a plethora of different communities, and institutional establishments alike.

### ***1.3.1 School Belonging***

There is compelling evidence to suggest that schools play an instrumental role in nurturing a sense of belonging (Allen & Bowles, 2013). Humans are inherently social beings and schools are important institutions in which pupils can build a social network and establish positive and enduring relationships with others in *loco parentis* (Watson & Ecken, 2003). Defined as the “extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment” (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p.61), school belonging has received a fusillade of recent attention within the domain of Educational Psychology. Academically, positive experiences of school belonging are associated with increased school motivation, engagement with learning, attendance, school completion and increased academic attainment (Moallem, 2013; Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Osterman, 2000). Pupils who report that they belong are less likely to be bullied in school and

are less likely to display aggressive, disruptive or externalising behaviours (Bond et al., 2007). Together with this, there is a growing body of literature which evidences how belonging in school can safeguard against the effects of anxiety and depression (Roffey et al., 2019) and enhance social competence and psycho-social adjustment (Murray & Greenberg, 2001).

Despite this, as many as one in four pupils globally purportedly feel a disconnectedness from school (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, [OECD], 2017). A lack of perceived belongingness is associated with higher levels of loneliness and emotional distress (Sargent et al., 2002), poorer interpersonal relationships (Lee & Breen, 2007) and higher incidences of mental and physical ill health (Resnick et al., 1997). Research suggests that CYP with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are particularly vulnerable to negative belongingness experiences (Porter & Ingram, 2021), with those who experience difficulties with relationships, most at risk of disconnectedness (Cumming et al., 2017).

Although research in this domain is scarce, as part of a wider inclusive approach to education, Porter and Ingram (2021) promulgate that promoting school wide belongingness may be a relatively inexpensive preventative mechanism through which to thwart feelings of disconnectedness and the burgeoning rates of exclusion seen commonly amongst those with SEND (Department for Education, 2019). Given CYP with FASD are socially and emotionally vulnerable and are disproportionately represented in figures of exclusion, this may have particular relevance for this population.

#### **1.4 Context of this Research**

Since its inception, inclusion has been a mainstay in educational policy and practice. ‘Harnessing community cohesiveness and fostering a sense of belonging’ is considered a core component of inclusive school practice (Warnock, 2005). Schools have an obligation to

promote this inclusivity and accommodate the individual needs of all pupils in their settings (Ainscow, 1999). As part of this section, legislation pertaining to the inclusion of CYP with SEND in schools is explicated, given its resonance with the present research. Although this research was conducted at a national level (and discussion as part of this section will henceforth be limited to the national context), the researcher nonetheless acknowledges how legislation also infiltrates and informs local priorities based on her experiences on placement within a Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology Service (EPS).

Article 28 of the United Nation Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) mandates that access to a basic education is a fundamental human right for all CYP (UN, 1989). In 1994, the Salamanca statement reaffirmed this commitment and further saw 92 governments globally pledge to adopt the tenets of a socially just inclusive education system (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], p.13). In response to this rhetoric, later that decade, the new Labour government made a commitment to put inclusion at the fore of its education agenda; showing a commitment to reform the way in which children with SEND were educated in UK mainstream schools (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2020).

In 2010, the Equality Act was passed, which states that education settings are legally obliged to ensure CYP with protected characteristics, including those with disabilities such as FASD are not discriminated against or disadvantaged but have reasonable modifications made to ensure fair and equal access to education (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015). The publication of the SEND Code of Practice followed in 2015 (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2015) and this was billed as the largest reform of educational practice for two decades. Backed by law, the Code saw a shift towards the more meaningful inclusion of the perspectives of CYP with SEND, and their families, in all aspects of their

education, health and care planning. Moreover, this set a precedent for active pupil participation and person-centred practices. With a commitment to promoting pupil voice, capturing the views of CYP with SEND continues to be a core national priority for all educational professionals working within the field of special education.

It is important to also place the present research within the context of the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which was declared shortly after the researcher received ethical approval. This caused significant disruption to the schooling of all CYP countrywide, with some CYP in the UK missing upwards of 3 months of in-school education. On their return to school in September 2020, there was a notable paradigm shift towards prioritising ‘relational catch-up’, socialisation and pupil well-being (DeSouza, 2021). As such, the researcher argues that promoting belongingness has never been more of a priority for schools than it is at present.

### **1.5 Researcher’s Position**

Prior to commencing my training as an Educational Psychologist (EP) I was fortunate to hold a number of different roles in mainstream and specialist school settings which afforded me with an unrivalled insight into both the joys and complexities of special education. My most poignant role was that of a Portage Home Visitor, whereby I was privileged to work in partnership with families, empowering parents and carers to support the learning and development of pre-schoolers with complex needs. The Portage small steps to learning model is underpinned by 12 core principles (National Portage Association, 2019) and it was working in adherence with these positive and inclusive principles which first inspired my interest in Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and strengths based emancipatory approaches.

In 2018, I embarked upon my Educational and Child Psychology doctoral training with the University of East London (UEL). My foremost reason for choosing to study at UEL was because of its affiliation with Positive Psychology and its values informed curriculum. UEL has an inclusive ethos, which promotes autonomy, beneficence and social justice as part of its core values, and I consider these values to personify my own professional practice as a trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). As such, within my privileged dual role as a practitioner psychologist and a doctoral researcher, I see it as my prerogative to challenge unethical or exclusionary practices and advocate for the rights of vulnerable children. Moreover, I hold the position that CYP are experts in their own lives, and I believe the best way to learn is vicariously through the lived experiences of others. I am passionate therefore about giving CYP a voice to meaningfully share their views and acting on these beliefs to inspire positive change for all those with whom I work.

My personal interest in FASD stemmed from witnessing a friend's struggles to gain the appropriate educational support for her son. His school career was tumultuous; he was poorly understood, and he was regularly excluded from multiple school placements. Learning of his experiences inspired a visit to the National Clinic for FASD in March 2019, and this was the catalyst for aspiring to work more closely with this population. During my time spent with Dr Mukherjee and his team, I was saddened to hear that the experiences of my friend's son were not an anomaly but were incessant amongst others affected by PAE. Therefore, I identified a role for EPs in working more preventatively with this population. Giving voice to CYP with FASD to further share their school experiences as a way of informing pedagogy and bolstering inclusive practices felt like a pertinent area to investigate further.

## **1.6 Research Rationale and Aims**

“Teachers and teaching support staff will undoubtedly meet children with FASD in their classrooms” (Blackburn, 2010, p.2), but yet within the UK, there exists a dearth of knowledge and understanding amongst professionals about how best to meet the needs of this vulnerable population. The little research that does exist has focused on the teratogenic impact of alcohol on learning and development from a quantitative neuropsychological perspective, but comparatively little is known about how CYP with FASD themselves experience school. There is thus a pressing need for research to explore what helps these individuals to experience school positively and feel rightfully included as part of their school communities. In line with the national inclusion agenda, and the legislative importance of listening to the views of all CYP, this research therefore aims to give children with FASD a voice to share their own lived experiences of schooling, with a particular focus on what helps this population to feel as though they belong. Further justification for exploring the construct of belonging is given in Chapter Two.

## **1.7 A Note on Language**

The umbrella term FASD is used in this thesis to describe the range of effects caused by PAE. This encompasses all of the descriptor terms outlined in section 1.2.1. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges how the synonyms school relatedness, school connectedness and school membership are used interchangeably within the literature (Korpershoek et al., 2020). For the purpose of this thesis, the theoretically apprised term, school belonging is preferred. Moreover, this thesis is interested in individual constructions of school belonging, and thus the abbreviation, sense of school belonging (SOSB) will be adopted herein.

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter gave a brief overview of FASD, how it is diagnosed and the predicted prevalence rates in the UK. Consideration was given to the possible brain regions impacted by PAE and the implications for learning and development. The phenomenon of school belonging was then introduced, and the wealth of positive outcomes associated with a SOSB explored. The importance of this research was placed in context nationally and the chapter concluded with a statement of the researcher's position and the research rationale.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides a detailed and critical review of the literature pertaining to the educational experiences of CYP and adults with FASD. The chapter begins by outlining the systematic search strategy adopted, before providing an overview and critical appraisal of the reviewed literature. Gaps in the literature and areas for further investigation will be considered and discussed in relation to the present research. The chapter concludes with the research aims and respective research questions which underpin the present study.

### **2.2 Systematic Literature Review**

A systematic search of the literature was carried out in July 2020 to explore and critically review the existing published research around the school experiences of CYP and adults with a diagnosis of FASD or known history of PAE. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring the lived school experiences from the perspective of the CYP themselves, and thus the review sought to explore pupil voice as it related to current and retrospective school experiences. Based on this, the researcher sought to answer the following literature review question: ‘how do CYP with a diagnosis of FASD or a known history of PAE experience school?’ One final search was conducted in February 2021 to ensure that any recent publications meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria were also incorporated, however no further studies were identified at this stage.

#### ***2.2.1 Literature Search Process***

A full systematic literature review was conducted using EBSCO Host. The following online databases were independently searched:

- Academic Search Complete
- APA PsycINFO
- British Education Index
- Child Development and Adolescent Studies
- Education Research Complete
- ERIC
- Teacher Reference Centre

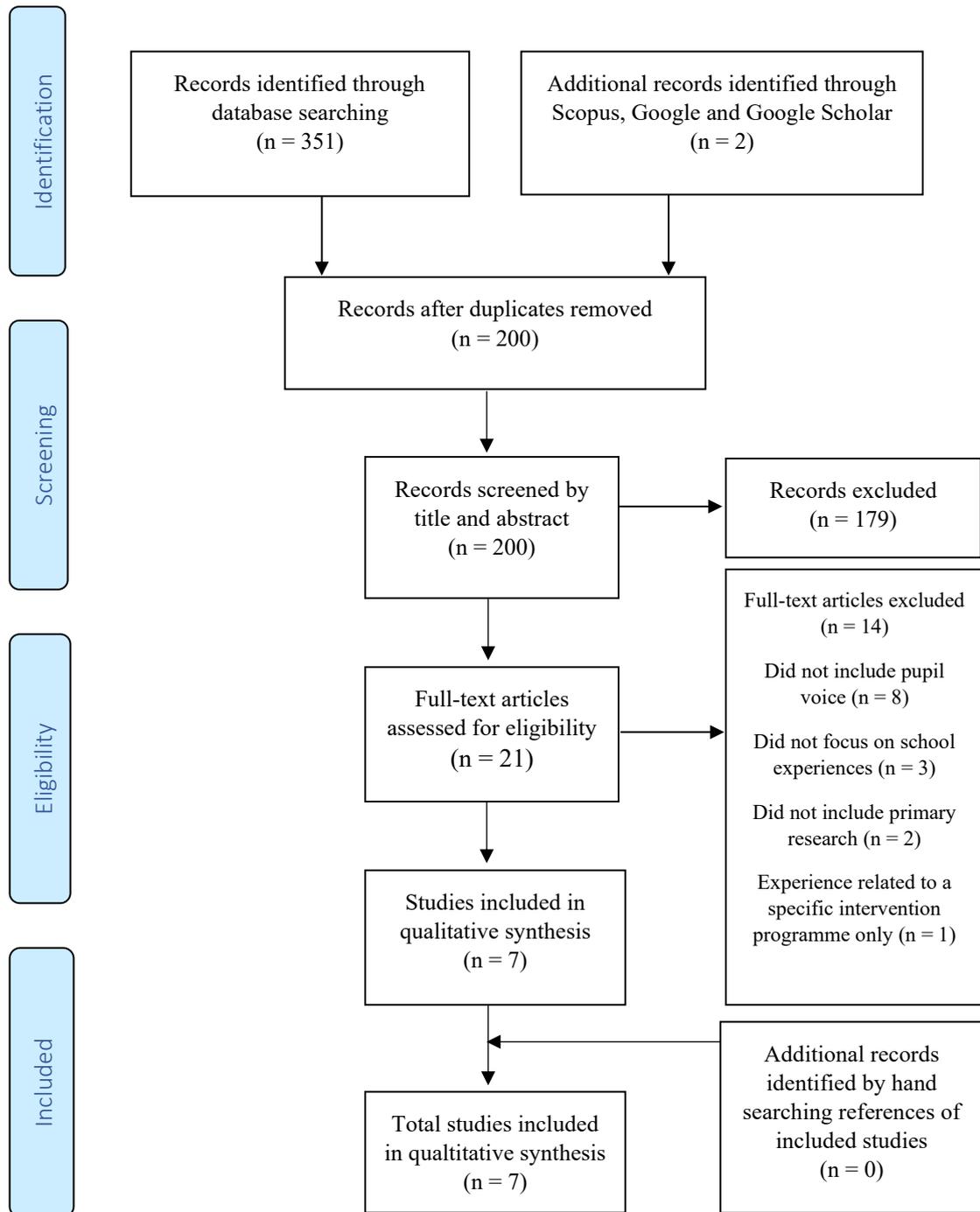
In order to encapsulate the variable diagnostic and descriptor terms, synonyms and/or alternative spellings associated with the umbrella term Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, the researcher used the thesaurus function to facilitate the systematic search of the databases. In addition to this, the Boolean operator ‘AND’ was used to explore the co-occurrence of the search term FASD with pupil school experiences. The same search terms were entered independently into each database; full details of which can be found in Appendix C. Limiters included scholarly peer reviewed journals and articles which were written in English. The researcher did not limit by age nor year as she did not want to exclude adults’ retrospective school experiences as she was cognisant of the dearth of research exploring pupil voice from her initial scoping. Exclusion criteria included articles which did not contain school experiences or pupil voice, or those with alcohol related impairments; a comprehensive list of criteria can be found in Appendix B. Seven peer reviewed journal articles met the inclusion criteria for the review at this stage.

At this point, a further search was conducted using Scopus and the researcher hand searched Google and Google Scholar for any additional papers that had not been identified by the former database searches. Moreover, the reference lists of each of the research studies were also examined via a ‘snowballing’ technique. No further research studies were identified,

resulting in a final total of seven studies for inclusion in the systematic review. The full references of all seven papers included in the review are listed in Appendix D.

**Figure 2**

*PRISMA Flow Diagram of Studies Included in the Systematic Review*



### ***2.2.2 Critical Appraisal***

Once the studies for the review had been identified, each of the articles were read in full and critically appraised by the researcher. Critical appraisal can be defined as the “process of carefully and systematically examining research to judge it’s trustworthiness and its value and relevance in a particular context” (Burls, 2009, p.1). To guide this process, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist (2018) was used. This framework is designed exclusively for the robust appraisal of qualitative research and was chosen purposefully by the researcher to complement the qualitative research designs of all of the included papers. The reader is directed to Appendix E for a comprehensive overview and critique of each of the studies.

### ***2.2.3 Introduction to the Literature***

The paucity of studies identified through the systematic search suggests research pertaining to pupil lived experiences of schooling for those with FASD remains an underexplored area of psychological research. This was found to be especially true of research conducted in the UK, with a noticeable absence of any studies from Europe meeting the criteria for inclusion. Nonetheless, the review does include the school experiences of CYP and adults educated in the USA, Canada and New Zealand, and provides a valuable qualitative insight into how school is currently experienced (or was historically experienced) by this population.

The review captured areas of academic, behavioural, emotional and social challenge, as well as areas of schooling that were experienced positively by CYP and adults with FASD.

Factors identified as contributing to school success and persistence (school completion) were illustrated, plus key providers of relational support. For readability, the findings are grouped into two overarching themes entitled: negative school experiences and positive school

experiences. It is noteworthy that some of the studies spanned multiple sub-themes and thus the findings of these studies will be detailed under multiple headings. Information about the studies will be described in greatest depth at the point of first introduction, but further reference and critique will be made throughout the chapter as felt to be necessary.

## **2.3 Negative School Experiences**

### ***2.3.1 Disrupted Learning Experiences and Challenges Accessing the Curriculum***

The literature captured the disrupted learning experiences for CYP and adults prenatally exposed to alcohol. Four papers explored the self-identified cognitive, behavioural and emotional challenges experienced by this population. These papers will be presented under the following sub-themes: cognition and learning, and behavioural and emotional regulation difficulties.

**2.3.1.1 Cognition and Learning.** Brenna et al. (2017) explored the experiences of living with FASD for a single 21 year old Canadian young adult male with a co-morbid FASD and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis. The researchers enlisted a novel, visual, participatory approach and sought to qualitatively gain his retrospective views about education. Never before used with individuals with FASD, the researcher's choice of Photovoice methodology was a particular strength of the study and was well justified in light of previous research with other similar populations. Data from the semi-structured interviews accompanying the Photovoice were deductively thematically analysed, and four themes were found to emerge from the data. These themes were interpreted through the lens of Schwab's (1978) curriculum theory, which provided an appropriate theoretical framework from which to conceptualise the research findings.

The single participant told of the profound difficulties he encountered with paying attention in class, concentrating for sustained periods and memorising key facts or computations. He recounted specific difficulties with his penmanship, typing proficiency, reading and application of number and he described a tendency to “complete tasks at the last minute” (p.223). This, he believed was due to poor time management skills and his brain based inflexibility. Although he often noticed small improvements in his abilities, these gains were seldom maintained, and this he felt impacted negatively on his ability to access the curriculum comparably to his peers. No mention however was given to the young adults’ ADHD diagnosis throughout the research and thus it is unclear the impact that having a dual diagnosis of FASD with ADHD had on his experiences of school. This likely reflected the solitary focus of the research on FASD.

Although the use of Photovoice empowered the young adult to share his experiences of school creatively and accessibly, the researchers also aptly recognised the drawbacks of utilising a single case study design. They noted how the themes drawn out from the thematic analysis are reflective of the single participant alone and may not be typical of others’ experiences of school. Within the literature, there is much contention around using thematic analysis with single case study designs, with Braun and Clarke (2013) asserting a sample size of between six and ten participants for small scale research is preferable. Others, however, assert thematic saturation should be sought as the ‘gold standard’ (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Despite these viewpoints, Brenna et al. (2017) posited that the rich, multi-layered data outweighed the limitations pertaining to rigour and generalisability and moreover was congruent with their espoused research aims to meaningfully elicit pupil voice.

Difficulties with the fundamental cognitive skills necessary for learning were also expounded by the adolescents and adults in Salmon and Buetow’s (2012) study. Seeking to qualitatively

explore and understand the daily challenges faced by 14 New Zealand individuals aged between 16 and 37 with diagnoses of FAS and FAE, the researchers adopted a two-phase sequential mixed method design utilising transcendental phenomenology and grounded theory. The only mixed methods design included in the review, Salmon and Buetow's (2012) choice of method was congruent with their own ontology and epistemology and both components were considered necessary to fully answer their explorative research question. Daily challenges in the classroom emerged as a main theme from the unstructured interviews, with inattention, disorganisation and difficulties completing school-work due to poor conceptual understanding amongst the most commonly cited learning challenges. Memory problems emerged as an additional theme, with all 14 participants describing what the researchers termed "daily forgetfulness" (p.45). In this way, the cognition and learning challenges described can be considered similar to those described by the young adult in Brenna et al's. (2017) case study and point to difficulties with executive functioning skills. Although the sample size fell within the recommended size for a transcendental phenomenological analysis, it is of note that eight of the 14 participants in Salmon and Buetow's (2012) study were no longer in education, and of these eight, four had been out of education for 12 years or more. The reliability of participant experience must therefore be interpreted with caution given the elapsed time between actual participant lived experience and subsequent recall. Seeking to validate these retrospective accounts or triangulate participant experience the researchers duly acknowledge may have allayed some of these shortcomings. Nevertheless, the sequential mixed methods design was a relative strength and did fittingly permit the triangulation of multi-modal qualitative data across phases. It is also noteworthy that the participants had other related medical conditions and thus it is difficult to extrapolate whether their experiences of schooling they described were unique to having FASD or were a product of their related medical conditions, or both.

**2.3.1.2 Behavioural and Emotional Regulation Difficulties.** Across the literature, participant narratives included experiences of being in trouble in school and it was this which contributed in part towards the negative perceptions of schooling experienced by some. This was elucidated by the adults in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) study who found that getting into trouble was an experience shared by all. Adopting a basic qualitative approach, Knorr and McIntyre (2016) used semi-structured interviews to gain an in depth understanding of the retrospective school and life experiences of four Canadian adults aged between 18 and 30 years, all of whom had a self-disclosed diagnosis of either FAS, partial FAS or ARND (which included FAE). Only those who were appraised "effective communicators" (p.57) however were deemed eligible to participate and thus it could be argued that the rigorous screening process may have marginalised the voices of individuals with poorer language abilities, whose perceptions were equally valid.

All four of the participants in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) research recognised how the cognitive and adaptive challenges associated with FASD meant they were often in trouble, and this led to collective expressions of anger and frustration towards their diagnoses. Their conversance with trouble participants felt emanated predominantly from their inability to access the curriculum, but participants also recognised how they used their extrovert behaviours as a way of seeking likes to mitigate feelings of exclusion. This was encapsulated by the theme 'I don't fit in'. One adult described how because of his FASD he was highly gullible and impressionable, which meant he was often reprimanded for behaviours he did not realise were inappropriate. Another participant described how he embodied the role of the 'class clown' to gain approval from his peers. He described how he was hyperactive, and because of this, his teachers adopted punitive, exclusionary approaches, such as making him stand alone in the corridor. Another participant told how she struggled to regulate her emotions because she did not feel like she fitted in, and so "being bad or out of control"

(p.61) was the only way of gaining attention. As with the aforementioned research studies however, participant views were collected post school completion and thus the interpretation must be cautionary. Moreover, although the first author acknowledged her vested interest in the research due to her own lived experiences of supporting family members with PAE, a more explicit examination of researcher reflexivity, including the possible influence of researcher bias was warranted.

Demonstrating knowledge of their disability and recognising the impact that this had was also a dominant theme identified by Stade et al. (2011). In the first study of its kind to elicit the voices of very young children and adolescents in Canada, Stade et al. (2011) used open ended, unstructured interviews to capture data from 22 school aged individuals between 6 and 18 years of age who had a confirmed diagnosis of FAS, partial FAS or ARND. The researchers justified their choice of unstructured interviewing as they wanted to be sensitive to the variable cognition and learning needs seen across the spectrum. It is significant to note that two of the older participants with FASD chose not to have their interviews recorded, meaning the researchers were reliant on analysing handwritten notes for these participants. Pleasingly though, all of the participants agreed that the themes generated were representative of their experiences, demonstrating the credibility and internal validity of the research. The data was analysed using an adapted version of Colaizzi's (1978) robust and rigorous seven step qualitative method, and the steps the researchers followed were detailed accordingly, further aiding the research transparency.

Three dominant themes emerged from the data. Under the dominant theme 'knowing the disability' was the sub-theme 'understanding the limitations of the disability' and all children and adolescents reflected on how FASD imposed limitations on their abilities to regulate themselves and participate fully in school life. As with the participants in Knorr and

McIntyre's (2016) research, this led to the participants feeling different, and it was difficulties with understanding the learning material along with difficulties regulating impulses which led to participants finding themselves in trouble. This was borne out in accounts of physical aggression, emotional reactivity, as well as in friendship difficulties. Unlike the findings from Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) research however, rather than feeling anger towards their FASD diagnoses, knowing about their diagnoses afforded the participants a more astute understanding of their challenges.

### ***2.3.2 Peer Relationships and Social Integration Experiences***

The literature also captured the lived experiences of CYP and adults as they related to school as a social environment. Three papers captured the negative social integration experiences of those with FASD and their desire to be liked, fit in and belong in school. These papers are explicated under the sub-themes; difficulties making and keeping friends, and (in)appropriateness of friendships.

**2.3.2.1 Difficulties Making and Keeping Friends.** For the 14 New Zealand adolescents and adults in Salmon & Buetow's (2012) study, socialisation difficulties emerged as an additional dominant theme. The researchers detailed how for individuals with FASD, social experiences in school were conceptualised by feelings of loneliness, exclusion and a longing for friendship, closeness and intimacy. Desperately wanting to 'fit in', participants spoke of how their attempts at recruiting friends were often rejected. Even where friendships did blossom, these relationships were seldom maintained. Friendship difficulties were associated with beliefs that their peer group viewed them as different, and this had profound implications for their willingness to seek out social connections with others. For 'most' of the participants, these friendship challenges were associated with school experiences marred by truanting, suspensions and/or dropping out of school prematurely. Unfortunately, it was

unclear for how many of the participants this was true of given the lack of numerical specificity given by the researchers.

In keeping with this, feeling as though they did not belong socially in school was an experience also shared by all four of the adults in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) study. Experiencing difficulties making and keeping friends, the adults told how attempts at building relationships were often snubbed. Failing to successfully navigate and find their place within the complex social milieu, this led to the participants feeling alone and as though they too did not 'fit in' in school. These social vulnerabilities meant that these individuals were also the target of unkind behaviours, with all of the adults recounting their lived experiences of bullying. Taken together, this led to the participants feeling socially rejected, frustrations relating to which were exhibited in their attribution of blame towards their diagnoses.

What is more, feeling different was also expounded as a meta construct in Stade et al's. (2011) research, with notions of difference implicitly embedded within participant narratives. In contrast to Salmon and Buetow's (2012) research however, the construct of difference was associated with participant self-perceptions, rather than beliefs about how they were perceived by others. This was most evident in the sub-theme 'feeling alone with other kids', whereby participants, despite acknowledging they had friends, proffered comparisons between themselves and others. Participants recognised how unlike their peers, they often did not have a consistent friend to play with nor the cardinal social skills to be able to interact consummately with their chosen peer group. It was these experiences which incited feelings of loneliness. Interestingly, the researchers recognised how they were pressed to explore participant friendships more explicitly, as no child willingly described interactions with a

friendship group. This in itself was telling of the social struggles of these individuals and provided additional evidence of the friendship difficulties common in CYP with FASD.

**2.3.2.2 (In)Appropriateness of Friendship.** As well as experiencing difficulty making and keeping friends, the type and appropriateness of children's friendships was also illuminated in the literature. Whilst for one adult in Salmon and Buetow's (2012) study this meant that he affiliated himself with likeminded children, for the majority, their impressionability and unrelenting pursuit of friendship meant self-identified poor friendship choices. This resulted in them becoming involved with the 'wrong crowd' in school. Looking back, the adult participants recognised how their peers had been influential in them making risky choices, many of which resulted in deleterious consequences which persisted into adulthood.

For the young gentleman in Brenna et al's. (2017) research, he too recognised how his choices of friends were not always viewed favourably, especially by his parents. He described how he gravitated to "good people who do bad stuff" (p.223), as for him, associating with others who have "gone through shit too" (p.223) was a way of avoiding discrimination, whilst maintaining a sense of belongingness. It must again be reiterated though that both of these studies were retrospective and none of these reflections pertaining to friendship choices were reflective of those currently accessing education.

## **2.4 Positive School Experiences**

### ***2.4.1 School Completion and Further Education***

The literature also detailed aspects of schooling which were experienced more positively by CYP and adults with FASD. Three papers (by the same first author) narrowly explored what constituted a successful school experience for this population, as well as the

factors which facilitated school completion and access to further education. These were expounded under the sub-headings: school persistence, and post-secondary educational experiences.

**2.4.1.1 School Persistence.** Duquette and Stodel (2005) sought to determine factors which constituted a successful school experience for adopted individuals with FASD and their parents in a small state in eastern Canada. Seven CYP and adults aged between 9 and 30 years were sent a postal copy of an open-ended questionnaire before being invited to participate in a semi-structured interview about their experiences. Data from the participants' adoptive parents and four additional parents were collected and were analysed using an adapted grounded theory approach. Despite the broad range of strength and need seen commonly across the foetal alcohol spectrum, no diagnostic information was provided about the participants, which suggests an assumed homogeneity. Whilst, for the younger children in the study a successful school experience meant having friends and being liked, for the older CYP, success for them was conceptualised by achieving well academically and following the same academic trajectory as their classmates. Duquette and Stodel (2005) acknowledged how consistent with previous studies with students with disabilities, teacher knowledge of participant disability, coupled with care and willingness to adapt teaching and learning practices were instrumental in participants' experiences of success and these themes were indigenous in both pupil and parental reports.

Although the study was the first to explore successful school experiences from the perspectives of CYP with FASD themselves, because all of the participants completed the questionnaires in their own homes, it was not possible to determine whether the responses given had been influenced by other stakeholders. As well as this, two of the participant interviews were unable to be recorded, meaning the richness and authenticity of the verbatim

accounts was lacking. It is also noteworthy that more meaning appeared to be grounded in parental reports than in pupil reports, and thus at times the power of pupil voice was sometimes lost.

Despite Duquette and Stodel's (2005) research demonstrating factors which contributed to school success, which was welcome given the high preponderance of deficit based research, the researchers recognised how all of the participants in their research aged 20 years and above had left high school prematurely. Contrastingly, the adolescents still attending school appeared to be following a more preferable trajectory. The reason for these differences prompted a series of further interrelated qualitative research studies to specifically explore factors influencing school persistence (Duquette et al. 2006; Duquette & Orders, 2013).

Duquette et al. (2006) adopted a qualitative methodology with a multiple case study design to explore participants' experiences of high school and determine which factors enabled young people with FASD to persist with their education. Persistence, in this context referred to high school completion or participant intention to complete their programme of studies. Eight American and Canadian adolescents with diagnoses of FAS, FAE or ARND aged between 15 and 20 years and their adoptive parents were recruited to the research. Parents were recruited first and were 'encouraged' to recruit their adolescents. In this way, the adolescents conceivably may have felt obliged to participate, which raises concerns around the ethical nature of the recruitment process. The research design and methodology were akin to that of Duquette and Stodel's (2005) research, which functioned as a pilot. In spite of this, identical methodological errors were made, most notably with data recording. Tinto's (1975, 1997) Student Integration Model (SIM) provided a theoretical framework to guide the study and was an effective way of conceptualising the background, academic and social factors which

facilitated pupil motivations to remain in education over and above personal challenges (such as those associated with FASD).

Duquette et al. (2006) presented brief case studies for each of the eight participants which effectively gave voice to their lived experiences of schooling. The case studies included details of the participants' cognitive profile and identified learning challenges associated with their FASD. As well as privileging individual accounts, the use of multiple case studies enabled cross case analyses to be made, henceforth adding to the power and transferability of the research that was lacking in the single case study research of Brenna et al. (2017). The results revealed that all of the students interviewed demonstrated a commitment to remaining in school. Pupil reasons for wanting to persist ranged from aspiring to make their parents proud to gaining financial subsidies, as well as seeking a sense of personal accomplishment. Whilst friendship motivated attendance in the interim, all of the participants attributed their reasons for persisting longer term to the support their parents afforded them. Specifically, where parents had high expectations, advocated for them, and supported the adolescents to feel academically and socially successful, this equated to a positive perception of school and was linked with propensity to persist. Triangulation of pupil and parental perceptions revealed this was common amongst both counterparts, further aiding the trustworthiness of the research. Further discussion around parental support will be explicated in section 2.4.2.2.

It is noteworthy that Tinto's (1975, 1997) model had only previously been utilised to predict disaffection of college students, with notable mixed results for those with learning disabilities. Some of the pupils in this study were under the age of 16 and thus persisting in school was not a choice for these individuals, but a legal requirement. The interpretation offered by the researchers may thus be limited to those 16 years and above who actively chose to remain in school.

**2.4.1.2 Post-Secondary Educational Experiences.** Building on their persistence research, the post-secondary educational experiences of adults with a diagnosis of FAS or ARND were explored by Duquette and Orders (2013). Four adults aged between 26 and 43 were recruited to the study from the USA or Canada, all of whom were enrolled on or had previously been enrolled on a college course or skills programme. Their experiences of post-secondary education and persistence behaviours were explored retrospectively using semi-structured interviews and framed theoretically as with previous research by Tinto's (1975,1997) SIM. For the single adult participant who was able to successfully pass her college course, she particularly valued access to 1:1 tuition, clear stepped instructions, the reduction of overwhelming visual and auditory stimuli, the utilisation of multi-sensory instructional methods and reduced homework demands, which were afforded she told, based on the advocacy of her parents. The researchers concluded that before enrolling, pupils' primary and secondary disabilities must be considered along with their high school academic preparedness and goal directedness, in order to provide a more tailored academic support programme necessary for success.

As has been commonplace in the literature, Duquette and Orders (2013) recruited participants who had been out of education for many years, which may have meant that recollection of participant experience may not have been as reliable as data collected during the college years themselves. Nevertheless, the researchers acknowledged how no studies had explored the educational experiences of young adults with FASD remaining in education beyond compulsory school age. The broad claims and recommendations however are based on the experiences of only four participants, only one participant of whom was able to complete her college course and thus further research is needed in this domain.

## ***2.4.2 Resiliency and Sources of Support***

The literature also captured the resiliency factors and self-identified sources of support which CYP and adults with FASD believed enabled them to experience their school years more positively. Six papers explored personal strengths and the supportiveness of others. These papers will be presented under the following sub-themes: individual strengths and learning accommodations, parents as advocates, teachers and other key educators, and friends and community groups.

**2.4.2.1 Individual Strengths and Learning Accommodations.** The young adult in Brenna et al's. (2017) research was able to offer a novel and "innovative view of ability within disability" (p.226). He recognised how having a diagnosis of FASD meant he was visually and practically superior to his peers and he asserted how using techniques such as chunking, taking frequent breaks, being alert for cues, making best use of his visual and spatial memory and working through tasks sequentially aided him in navigating his studies successfully. For this young person, having an awareness of his strengths and the support he required to be successful, uniquely assisted him in self-advocation, as well as giving him the confidence to seek support. In contrast to Salmon and Buetow's (2012) research, having a set of skills that made him unique and 'different' was viewed positively, and helped him to be seen as an individual in his own right, rather than as defined by his medical diagnosis.

In Duquette et al's. (2006) study, the adolescents were also able to reflect on the learning accommodations which helped them to experience school positively. For those educated in the public sector, participants valued having access to differentiated learning in classes with fewer pupils, having test accommodations, access to specialised courses, as well reduced academic expectations in mainstream classes. That said, although pupils endorsed having reduced academic expectations, it was important that this was offset with a sufficient level of

challenge. With the exception of one individual, all of the young adults who received these accommodations viewed them positively and it was these differentiated learning experiences which enabled pupils to perceive themselves as suitably academically integrated.

**2.4.2.2 Parents as Advocates.** The support of family members was voiced by pupils in the literature as underwriting their positive experiences of schooling and a central and enduring facet of their school constitution (Knorr & McIntyre, 2016; Stade et al., 2011; Duquette et al. 2006). All 22 children and young adults in Stade et al's. (2011) research, reported feeling well supported by their parents and carers. Whilst the specifics of support caregivers provided appeared to be unique to individual experience, what was commonplace was the perceived impact this had on their capacity to manage their disability and associated academic functioning.

As part of their study exploring resiliency factors, all four participants in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) research identified having supportive parents or caregivers as important to them in managing the school environment. Parental support was conceptualised by the participants as offering advice and emotionally coaching them through challenging situations they encountered in school. In this way, the participants recognised how their parents taught them to become advocates for themselves. This was despite the adversity many experienced. Nevertheless, although this was the only paper as part of the reviewed literature to explicitly explore resiliency *per se*, providing a theoretical basis to resilience would have further enhanced the power and credibility of the research findings.

Further to the aforementioned research, Duquette et al. (2006) found that parental support and advocacy contributed to pupils' positive experiences of success in school and abilities to persist with academia. Five out of eight of the adolescents saw their parents as supporting with the academic demands of schooling such as providing homework support and extra

tuition, as well as providing them with emotional support to persevere. The researchers postulated that it was the actions of the parents which influenced the quality of the school programmes and hence mediated the biological risk of FASD to produce positive educational outcomes. Despite this, the adolescents appeared to have a narrower and slightly different understanding of parental support than was detailed by the parents themselves.

**2.4.2.3 Teachers and Other Key Educators.** Reflecting on his experiences, the young adult in Brenna et al's. (2017) research represented photographically how important the support of his teachers was to him during his school years. Despite initially rejecting help, he came to see his teachers as a constant and spoke of their unwavering support. He saw it as his role to seek out information from medical professionals and family members to educate himself about FASD, and for him, upskilling school staff and showing confidence in asking for support conferred greater access to resources and curricular adaptations.

Although the participants in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) study were not as active in seeking support from others and did not seek to impart their knowledge in the same way, they too acknowledged how educator support had been integral in their experiences of success. Whilst one adult commended his teachers for attending an FASD conference, it was the support of his teaching assistants in particular which appeared most prized. This extra help afforded by support staff, as well as the access to the resource room contributed to their resiliency.

The CYP in Duquette and Stodel's (2005) research had very assured ideas about the type of educator support which was most helpful. Having a teacher who was calm, and patient was especially important, as well as someone who supported them to achieve their goals and aspirations. Having a teacher who helped them to self-regulate and manage their behaviour was also indispensable. Conversely, teachers who gave up easily on them and wrongly associated their neurodevelopmental challenges with willful dispositions were viewed

undesirably. Although the provision of good teachers was synonymous with positive and successful school experiences, not all children were privy to such esteemed educators.

**2.4.2.4 Friends and Community Groups.** Having friends in school was often cited in the literature as contributory to positive school experiences. All of the eight adolescents in Duquette et al's. (2006) studies reported having friends in school, of which five reported that they had a best friend. Half of the participants indicated that they perceived themselves to belong socially in school, whilst three others felt that their belongingness was more intermittent. Speaking of their best friends, the participants acknowledged how having friends mitigated against experiences of bullying, helped them to understand difficult situations and gave them someone to talk to during breaktimes. As well as this, the adolescents recognised how their friends helped explain tricky work and provided support with homework. Interestingly, although all of the participants considered themselves to have friends, their parents likened their children's 'friendships' to transactional exchanges between acquaintances. Moreover, there was some ambivalence around whether being educated in classes for children with SEND helped or hindered friendship formation.

Although for the adults in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) study, the adult participants reflected on their largely negative social experiences in school, for these adults, attending community groups or extra-curricular activities were central to their perceived social integration. For one adult, taking an elective drama group gave her friends for the first time. Two of the other adults credited a youth group as sources of support within and beyond school.

Drama was also prized by the young adult in Brenna et al's. (2017) research, who found independence and acceptance in attending a school theatre group. He also advocated for peer sponsors, as he found it easier to discuss his challenges with his peers, with whom he trusted, rather than teachers or his parents. In this way, he felt a school peer sponsor system would

offer others with SEND a non-judgmental support network that he hoped could in time be available in school as well as vocationally.

## **2.5 Summary of Literature**

The systematic literature review captured the lived experiences of schooling for CYP and adults with FASD using a range of qualitative methods. School experiences for this population were mixed, with most studies capturing a combination of positive and negative aspects of schooling concomitantly within their research. It is important to note that FASD is a spectrum disorder, and this may account, in part for the variable experiences of schooling experienced by this population of learners.

Amongst the negative experiences of schooling were challenges accessing the curriculum, which participants believed were in part due to their cognition and learning difficulties and behavioural and emotional regulation challenges. Because of this, many found themselves in trouble in school and felt misunderstood by staff members. CYP with FASD felt as though they did not fit in and perceived themselves to be different to their peers. Many experienced challenges making and keeping friends, were bullied or were led astray by the ‘wrong crowd’. Because of the challenges they faced, many condemned their FASD diagnoses and cited having FASD as a barrier for them scholastically.

Amongst the literature presented under the positive school experiences, a collection of studies explored persistence behaviours, and the factors which mitigated premature school drop-out. Participants were able to offer insights into what helped them to persist and adaptations which facilitated their positive academic and social integration experiences. It is noteworthy however that all of these studies were directed by the same first author (Duquette) and not only is this a limitation of the review, but it also highlights the narrow breadth and depth of the literature that is currently available in this domain. The literature also captured

pupil resiliency, strengths and relational sources of support considered integral to positive school appraisals.

## **2.6 Gaps in the Literature Informing the Research**

Article 12 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989) asserts that all children have the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters of their lives affecting them. In spite of this, the small number of papers in the literature review implies that the voices of CYP and adults with FASD continue to be marginalised and underrepresented in Educational Psychology research.

Based on the literature review findings, there currently exists a dearth of research which has given CYP with FASD a voice to share their experiences of school, with perturbingly no known peer reviewed research conducted in the UK. This is despite the high suspected prevalence of CYP with FASD in UK classrooms (Lange et al., 2017). A noticeable absence of studies in the review captured the views of young children under the age of 10, with the preponderance of the research exploring the school experiences of the adolescent population and older. The findings of Stade et al. (2011) and Duquette and Stodel (2005) however provide evidence that young primary aged children with an FASD diagnosis do possess the skills to be able to successfully articulate their views about school. This, however, remains an underexplored area of psychological research and may, the researcher conjectures, reflect the deficit focus narrative surrounding the capacity of these individuals. Moreover, half of the studies in the reviewed literature captured retrospective pupil accounts and thus the reliability of these studies with much older adults may be potentially problematic.

With this in mind, the present study was committed to making a positive contribution to the small but emerging Educational Psychology evidence base, through innovatively empowering children in the UK with FASD to for the first time share their experiences of school.

Furthermore, given the paucity of studies focussing on the primary phase, the present

research chose to specifically explore the current lived experiences of children with FASD currently attending UK mainstream primaries, to address these gaps and aforementioned limitations pertaining to retrospective data collection.

Additionally, the researcher identified the construct of belonging as a ‘meta’ theme which spanned the review. Although not explicitly explored within the studies, or backed by theory, the literature captured variable experiences of fitting in, feeling included, feeling accepted, as well as feeling academically and socially integrated. This was shown to be positively associated with school persistence. A foundational component in understanding what helps CYP to remain in school and experience school positively may thus be the extent to which pupils feel as though they belong. Indeed, research suggests that a positive SOSB is negatively associated with school drop-out (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Given the mixed experiences of those prenatally exposed to alcohol identified in this review, further exploration of how children with FASD experience belonging in their primary schools was thus warranted. The present study therefore chose to address this gap in the literature. Moreover, it is anticipated that by exploring what helps children to belong in school, this may be a possible mechanism through which to abate feelings of difference and marginalisation and support CYP to feel rightfully included in mainstream school settings.

## **2.7 Research Questions**

This research will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How is school belonging experienced by children with a diagnosis of FASD?
2. What helps children with an FASD diagnosis to feel as though they belong in school?
3. Which factors do children with an FASD diagnosis think would strengthen their sense of school belonging?

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an overview and critique of the published pupil voice literature pertaining to the experiences of schooling for CYP and adults with FASD. Gaps in the literature were identified, and these were used to inform the rationale for the present research. The chapter concluded with the research questions which will be explored as part of this research.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Collection**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter begins with an outline of the researcher's ontological and epistemological position and is followed by a discussion of the theoretical orientation of the research. The design of the research is then set out and different qualitative methods are explored. The research techniques used are detailed and the procedure the researcher followed to gather the data is explicated. Details of the research participants and recruitment are then given, and the chapter concludes by detailing the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research.

### **3.2 Ontology and Epistemology**

In order to carry out effective, purposeful and justifiable research, it is imperative that consideration is given to the philosophical underpinnings of the research (Proctor, 1998). As humans, we all hold individualistic beliefs around the nature of reality (ontology) and the way in which the world is known (epistemology), and it is these underlying beliefs, norms and values which inform the paradigm<sup>5</sup> from which the researcher subsequently designs and builds their method of research inquiry (Robson, 2011). In view of the researcher's ontology and epistemology, this research will be positioned within an interpretivist or constructivist paradigm, which places emphasis on seeking to explore the multifaceted and subjective social world through the eyes of the beholder (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Working within an interpretivist paradigm permits researchers to gain a deep understanding of human experience, values, prejudices, and perspectives within a given social context that goes

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<sup>5</sup> "A paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, world view or framework which guides research and practice" (Willis, 2007, p.8).

beyond any observable or surface level description (Pham, 2018). It is this humanistic world view that formed the basis of the current research.

### ***3.2.1 Ontological Position***

One's ontological stance can be seen as existing on a continuum from relativism to realism, separated by a critical realist ontology at the centre. Whilst relativists assert there are multiple realities which are contingent upon the way in which one comes to acquire such knowledge, realists posit that there is only one truth or objective reality that is discoverable through quantifiable research alone (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Between the two ontologies sits a critical realist position and critical realists hold the view that some authentic reality exists (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997) but this reality cannot ever be fully known or understood (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Consistent with an interpretivist approach, the current research is underpinned by a relativist ontology, which refutes the notion that there is a single absolute truth that is falsifiable and can be explicitly tested (Pham, 2018). Instead, the researcher believes that there are as many multiple complex interpretations and realities as there are human contributors (Robson, 2011). As part of this research, the researcher seeks to subjectively explore these multiple realities, with children's individual constructions of school belonging considered equally valid.

### ***3.2.2 Epistemological Position***

Derived from the Greek words 'episteme' and 'logos', meaning knowledge and study (Horrigan, 2007), epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge; that is the 'how, and the what, can we know'? (Willig, 2008). Separated by contextualism, which alleges knowledge is valid in certain contexts, positivism assumes a linear relationship between the world and one's perception of it. The polar opposite of this is social constructionism, which holds the position that there are multiple knowledges rather than one discrete knowledge to

be known (Willig, 2008). It is this philosophical standpoint which resonates most strongly with the researcher. Social constructionist epistemologies maintain that human experience is constructed, and individuals henceforth create their own meaning based on these constructions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The notion of school belonging, the researcher attests can be considered a social construct, and is a phenomenon mediated by one's own historical experiences, culture and interactions with others emmeshed within a complex social ecology (Willig, 2008). Although the participants will be united by a common diagnosis- which itself can be considered shaped by the social meanings and rhetoric individuals attach- experiences of school belonging will be unique to each individual. How belonging is experienced by children with FASD can thus be considered a product of how the participants themselves make sense of and understand their lived experiences.

### **3.3 Research Purpose**

Despite the literature review evidencing varying experiences of 'fitting in' and integration amongst CYP and adults with a history of PAE, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no known academic peer-reviewed research has explored the lived experiences of school belonging for children with an FASD diagnosis in the UK. Robson (2011) contends that "achieving a clear description of a poorly understood area can reasonably be the priority" (p.39) for real world research, and thus consistent with the research questions explicated in section 2.7, the current study was exploratory in purpose and sought to explore specifically how individuals with FASD make sense of and understand their experiences of belonging in UK mainstream primary schools.

In addition to a traditional exploratory research purpose, the research also had an emancipatory underpinning and uniquely sought to give a voice to children with FASD, whose voices in the literature, as with other individuals with SEND, are seldom heard. It has

been suggested that in doing so, the researcher can be seen as adopting the role of an advocate (Robson, 2011). Moreover, research suggests that emancipatory research has the potential to foster self-development and self-determination (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998) and conducted well, Robson and McCartan (2016) proclaim it has the propensity to “extend the abilities, confidence or self-valuing” (p.61) of those involved. It is hoped that by seeking to empower the children to share descriptions about what works well, that this will go some way towards helping participants to achieve these outcomes.

### **3.4 Theoretical Orientation and Conceptual Framework**

#### ***3.4.1 Positive Psychology***

Whilst there is a growing body of evidence which documents from a neuropsychological or deficit-oriented model the educational barriers and challenges CYP with PAE routinely encounter, what the existing research largely neglects to encompass is what these children *can* do successfully and the strengths and resources these individuals possess. Via a strengths-based exploration of what is working well within school, the emphasis of this research is on moving away from problematising individuals with FASD, to focussing more preventatively on “competence enhancement and capacity building at the individual and systems level” (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1999, p. 7). Parallels can thus be drawn with Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000); a branch of Psychology which broadly aims to conceptualise, examine and actively promote factors that permit individuals, groups, and communities to realise their strengths and capacity to thrive and flourish (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019).

### ***3.4.2 Solution Focussed Approaches***

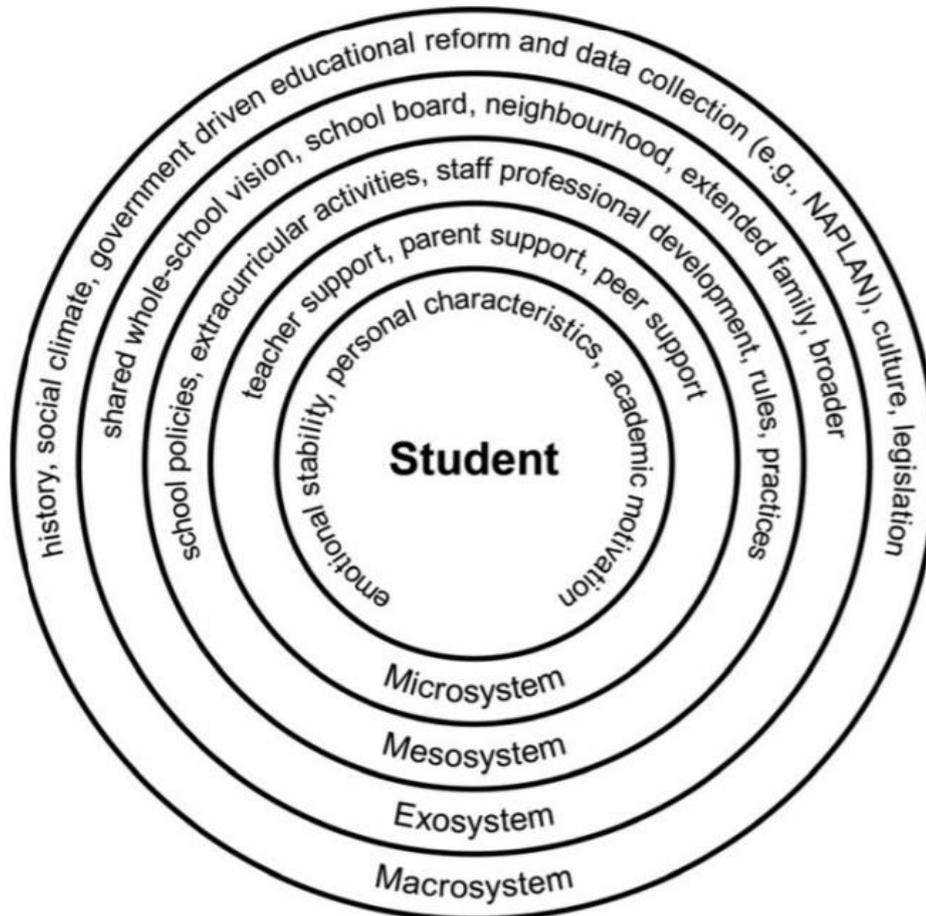
This research also drew on many of the tenets and tools located within solution-focused or solution-oriented approaches. As Harker et al. (2017) describe, solution oriented is a term used to reflect an “inclusive, person-centred practice” (p. 170) which seeks to support individuals to build solutions and ways forwards without the problem being present. Largely influenced by the work of deShazer and Berg in the 1980’s, through looking at the factors which are already contributing to change, a new way of looking at the problem can emerge, and a new future can be co-constructed (Harker et al., 2017). In the present research, the researcher used tools and techniques inherent in this approach, including exception finding, resource activation, scaling and articulating best hopes for a preferred future. Using these techniques permitted the participants to share their own unique constructions of school belonging as experts in their own lives and think about times when their experiences of school belonging, if difficult, had been less challenging. Moreover, this research provided the space for participants to consider their own resources and empowered them to articulate their best hopes for belonging in the future.

### ***3.4.3 Socio-Ecological Framework of School Belonging***

Allen et al. (2016) posit school belonging is a “multi-layered socio-ecological phenomenon” (p. 99) which can be seen as being influenced by individual, relational and wider organisational factors which exist inside a broad political, social and cultural school ecology. Informed by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological framework for human development, Allen et al. (2016) proposed their own socio-ecological framework as a way of explaining the multiple interrelated influencers on secondary school belonging, displayed below in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Socio-Ecological Framework of Belonging*



The framework acknowledges how pupils bring with them their own personal characteristics and motivations, but proposes that their belongingness is also influenced, by the relationships pupils have with others at the level of the microsystem. Progressing through the concentric rings to the level of the mesosystem, at this level there exists the school rules and practices which influence the everyday running of schools, further influenced by the extended whole school practices, wider community and extended family influencers at the level of the exosystem. The outer influence is underwritten by legislation, social norms and governmental initiatives. The present research will be informed by this conceptual model and will seek to

explore the multiple layers of influence on children's SOSB to determine whether these influencers are also applicable to primary aged children with FASD, whose belongingness experiences are unexplored.

### **3.5 Qualitative Research Design**

Although well established in the social sciences, educational research was historically dominated by quantitative research that revered objectivity and scientific rigour (Lichtman, 2013). In the late 1980's traditional positivist or post-positivist stances however were challenged by the new age qualitative researchers who held poststructural or postmodernist viewpoints, and this led to a period of phenomenal growth for qualitative methods, especially within the field of special educational needs and disability research (Lichtman, 2012; Hatch, 2002; Pugach, 2001; Avramidis & Smith, 1999). Qualitative research is often described as "exploratory, open-ended and organic" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.21) and is concerned with the "quality and texture of experience" (Willig, 2008, p. 8), as opposed to establishing causality. Given the aforementioned research aims and research rationale, a quantitative research design, the researcher avowed would not have allowed for the preservation and in depth exploration of participant lived experience. Consequently, the present research was framed by a qualitative methodology and used complementary exploratory qualitative methods of data collection.

#### ***3.5.1 Choosing a Qualitative Method***

The researcher carefully considered a number of qualitative methods. These included Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, Narrative Approaches and Phenomenological methods, each of which are discussed below.

**3.5.1.1 Thematic Analysis.** Firstly, the researcher considered Thematic Analysis (TA) as a flexible foundational method for identifying semantic themes or commonalities across multiple participant narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because SOSB remains a relatively underexplored area of research however, the researcher was not wholly confident in the assumption that there would be any tangible similarities between participant experience. Moreover, any similarities found would be of secondary importance to the rich phenomenological experience and participant meaning making the researcher was striving for and thus this method was discounted on this basis.

**3.5.1.2 Grounded Theory.** Grounded Theory (GT) was considered given its strong tradition within symbolic interactionism and interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). It is based on the premise that theory is ‘grounded’ in the data and thus only after the data has been generated can discoverable rules and theory be constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). GT is particularly interested in social phenomena and social processes in context (Charmaz, 2006). Willig (2008) posits that this arguably curbs its suitability to experiential research questions apposite to individual lived experience. For the researcher, exploring how an individual thinks and feels subjectively and introspectively about their own experiences of belonging in school was of central importance. Besides, the researchers’ foregone exploration and critical appraisal of extant literature, application of conceptual frameworks and the researchers own epistemology and reflexivity further meant this inductive approach was unsuitable.

**3.5.1.3 Narrative Approaches.** Given the researcher was interested in participant experience, narrative approaches (NA) including memory work were also researched and considered complementary to the research rationale and aims. Central to NA is the notion of ‘story telling’ and epistemologically, this approach was congruent with the researchers own social constructionist stance. Nevertheless, this approach presupposes that participants not

only have their own stories to tell but are able to coherently retell them to form meaningful narratives (Willig, 2008). Mindful that SOSB may have been a novel concept for many of the participants and given the variable age and cognition and learning needs anticipated, the researcher felt that without questioning and direct exploration of constructs, the participants would perhaps struggle to articulate their experiences through the medium of sequential story-telling. This approach was thus also deemed unsuitable for the participant demographic.

With this in mind, the researcher began exploring phenomenological approaches to qualitative research, namely Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This was appraised to be the most fitting method to realise the research aims of the current study. An in depth description of IPA is given below, including the main theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the approach. Details of data analysis will be explicated in section 4.2.

### ***3.5.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis***

IPA is a contextualist approach to qualitative research, which avows to explore what it is like to really live a particular moment from the perspective of the individual themselves (Larkin et al., 2006). Developed in the 1990's by Jonathan Smith and colleagues, IPA aims to humanistically “explore in detail individual and personal lived experience and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world” (Smith & Eatough, 2016, p.50). Underpinned by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, these philosophical doctrines will each be explored in turn below.

**3.5.2.1 Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is the study of human experience and phenomenologists are especially interested in exploring from the viewpoint of participants what human experience is actually *like* and how as individuals we come to make sense of these lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). “Concerned with the phenomena that appear in our consciousness as we engage in the world around us”, the way in which we perceive,

describe and reflect on phenomena can be considered constitutive of the experience itself (Willig, 2008, p.52). In order to understand the true essence of a phenomenon in its absolute form, Edmund Husserl, the German philosopher and acclaimed pioneer of phenomenology posited we must bracket off any assumed or taken for granted knowledge about a phenomenon (Willig, 2008). Individuals can perceive and experience phenomena that appear alike in contrastingly different ways, but only when an experience has been perceived with intentionality Husserl purports does a phenomenon really exist (Smith et al., 2009). Given the paucity of phenomenological research which has sought to give children with FASD a voice, the current research was especially interested in exploring what experiences of mainstream school belonging are like. By placing particular prominence on the value of each individual account, not only does IPA allow the researcher to get ‘close to’ participant experience but it also empowers participants to share their individual perceptions of reality.

**3.5.2.2 Hermeneutics and the Hermeneutic Cycle.** Although initially developed as two discrete philosophical movements, challenges to traditional phenomenological approaches saw researchers, especially Heidegger, a student of Husserl’s, question the possibility of knowledge existence without interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). This led to many researchers adopting a hermeneutic version of phenomenology, wherein interpretation was considered symbiotic to phenomenological analysis (Willig, 2008). Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, is central to IPA, and assumes that humans are self-reflective and self-interpretative beings who are motivated to make sense of what they experience (Smith et al., 2009). The function of interpretation is henceforth to make meaning intelligible (Grondin, 1994) and as participants reflect on and retell their experiences, inevitably this becomes a meaning making endeavour.

As well as the participants sense making attempts, within IPA, the researcher uses their own interpretive resources to add a further layer of interpretation to participant experience (Braun & Clark, 2013). Because the researcher is unable to directly access the innermost world of the participants, in essence, the researcher can be seen as making sense of the participant trying to make sense of their own experiences and this is known as a double hermeneutic (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this way, “instead of attempting to bracket presuppositions and assumptions about the world, the interpretative phenomenological researcher works with, and uses them in an attempt to advance understanding” (Willig, 2008, p.56). Interpretation then can be seen as happening at the level of the researcher and the participant, with the participants meaning making considered first order and the researchers sense making of participant meaning and uncovering of hidden or implicit textual meanings second order (Smith et al., 2009). To do this, the researcher must take on the composite role of staying true to and preserving participant accounts, known as the hermeneutics of empathy, whilst also viewing the data through a critical psychology lens, known collectively as the hermeneutics of suspicion (Smith et al., 2009).

Meaning making is not a linear process, rather it draws on the cyclic and dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, which has come to be known as the hermeneutic cycle (Willig, 2008). When seeking to infer meaning from the text, the researcher moves iteratively back and forth between different ways of thinking about and interpreting the data until an end point is reached. This is notwithstanding the additional stratum of interpretation and meaning that will be added during the iterative and inductive process of analysis, informed by the knowledge, assumptions, beliefs and the moral values the researcher brings reflexively to this process (Larkin et al., 2006).

**3.5.2.3 Idiography.** The antithesis of mainstream nomothetic Psychology, IPA strives for an in depth focus and understanding of ‘the particular’, that is the exploration of a given experiential phenomenon, from a particular perspective in a specified context (Smith et al., 2009). Within the current research, SOSB is being explored from the perspective of a purposefully selected homogenous group of people (children with FASD diagnoses). This commitment to particularity means that IPA lends itself best to small sample sizes where thorough and systematic analyses of particular instances of experience can unearth novel and significant contributions about a phenomenon of interest (Smith et al., 2009). The benefit of having multiple participants means the researcher is able to inductively and interrogatively ‘step into the shoes of the participants’ at a deeper level, safeguard individual experience, whilst also looking for any convergence and divergence amongst experience (Smedley, 2011). Through connecting the research findings to existing research from the field of Educational Psychology, as will be prioritised as part of the analysis, the researcher can be seen as guiding the reader towards realising where this idiographic research fits with the wider nomothetic literature base (Smith et al., 2009).

**3.5.2.4 Limitations of IPA.** IPA assumes that participants are able to adequately share their experiences through language (Smith et al., 2009) and thus this is in part based on the skills of the interviewer (who considers herself a novice) through appropriate and developmentally appropriate questioning to support participants to share their experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2016). Whilst appealingly IPA elicits rich descriptions of participant experience, its interpretative power stops here, and it is unable to give explanation as to why these experiences were experienced in a given way (Willig, 2008). For example, this research will not allow for the researcher to ascertain *why* positive or negative experiences of school belonging occurred, but nor does it claim to do so. Additionally, while the imposition of insight allows for the generation of ‘thick’ and meaningful higher order interpretative

accounts, this in itself raises questions about the ethics of researcher interpretation (Willig, 2008). Nevertheless, the researcher recognises this as a necessary step with IPA.

### ***3.5.3 Research Techniques***

In order to give participants a voice to share their individual constructions and experiences of school belonging, the researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews as her primary method of data collection. Smith and Osborn (2003, p.53) appraise in depth semi-structured interviews to be the “exemplary method of conducting IPA”. Moreover, this method was consistent with the researcher’s epistemology and the open ended questions allowed the participants to share what was important to them using their own words and language constructs (Willig, 2008). Using semi-structured interviews aptly enabled the researcher to ask unplanned questions, clarifying questions and follow up on unexpected or unforeseen disclosures, in order to deepen the discussion without being constrained by a pre-determined question set (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, it permitted the researcher to respond flexibly to the divergent needs of the participants.

Each participant took part in one remote interview in their homes, which lasted between 1 hour 54 minutes and 2 hours 20 minutes in total, complete with screen breaks. It is noteworthy however that the remote style of delivery was not the researcher’s preferred method of data collection, but this reflected the limitations and restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Further details will be given in section 3.7.1.

**3.5.3.1 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule.** The researcher prepared a comprehensive interview schedule which she used as a flexible guide during the interview process (See Appendix K). Consideration was given to the use of question type, the sequencing of the questions, question wording and clarity, and the prompts used to further participant answers as per Braun and Clarke’s (2013) recommendations. Despite the

comprehensiveness of the schedule, the researcher did not use this schedule prescriptively, rather she adopted a more relaxed, informal style of questioning based on the principles of attuned interaction (Kennedy & Landor, 2015). This, the researcher believed, allowed for a more natural flow of conversation and rapport building.

The content of the interview schedule was informed by the literature review, as well as Allen et al's. (2016) socio-ecological framework of belonging and was founded in the three research questions set out in section 2.7. Underpinned by Positive Psychology, the interview schedule was designed in such a way as to capture participants' positive school experiences and the aspects of schooling which facilitated experiences of belonging, as well as individual sources of strength and resilience. Although deciding against completing a mixed methods study, the Belonging Scale (Frederickson et al., 2007) was also consulted based on its strong presence within the literature base and questions were revised to capture open ended participant responses. The researcher was mindful that she also wanted the research to be as participatory as was possible remotely, espousing to give participants a "direct role in constructing and discussing research material" (Clark, 2017, p.17). Some of the questions therefore gave the participants the opportunity to use creative resources to represent their experiences visually akin to a Mosaic Approach<sup>6</sup>. The researcher considered analysing these drawings or constructions using Roses' critical visual methodology framework (2001), however critical appraisal revealed this to lack sufficient methodological rigour. Instead, the researcher used these activities as a way of gaining further information about the dichotomous constructs of positive and negative SOSB. Projective techniques such as these have been evidenced to be effective tools for idiographically eliciting information about a child's innermost world; notably in ways that do not rely wholly on language (Chandler,

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<sup>6</sup> A Mosaic approach is a multi-method participatory qualitative approach, wherein individual tools or methods are chosen by CYP themselves (Clarke, 2017).

2003). Ensuring the accessibility of the research for all participants was an important consideration for the researcher and was paramount given the broad range of strength and need seen across the foetal alcohol spectrum. Underpinned by principles from psychodynamic theory and consistent with a psychoanalytical approach to voice elicitation (Bernardo, 2021), the drawings and models the children created can be assumed to be representative of the participants' externalised or projected unconscious motivations, feelings and aspirations (Chandler, 2003). Although these drawings were not analysed *per se*, participants' pictures and models are included within the findings section as an exemplification of the research themes.

After reviewing and reworking the interview schedule, the guide was further reviewed by a 16 year old male with FASD, who was recruited via convenience sampling from the researcher's placement LA. The young person (YP) was sent a copy of the semi-structured interview transcript via email along with a series of questions to consider. Despite postulating that the questions themselves were developmentally appropriate, he felt that the concept of school belonging was challenging to conceptualise and he questioned the accessibility for younger children. This prompted the production of a child friendly PowerPoint presentation to introduce the concept preliminarily. Further details will be given in section 3.5.4. This method has been used successfully in previous belonging research with children with SEND (Midgen et al., 2019). The YP also advised making the research more practical, and so an additional colouring activity was incorporated into the conceptualisation phase. Other than minor changes of wording, no further amendments were made before piloting.

### ***3.5.4 Procedure***

One week before the scheduled date of the research, participants were posted a resource pack to their home address. The resource pack comprised a range of creative tools,

including two base plates, an assortment of LEGO® bricks, LEGO® and LEGO® Friends figures, plastic figurines, two tubs of Play-Doh and a range of felt tip colouring pens. Participants were also sent print outs of the Blob Playground and Blob Classroom worksheets (Wilson & Long, 2017), a Relationship Circle template and a nominal scale ranging from 0-10. An example of the resource pack is depicted in Figure 4 below.

#### **Figure 4**

*Example Resource Pack Sent to Participants*



Parents/Carers were sent a link via Microsoft Teams, an online video communication platform, to join the videocall with the researcher. In order to begin to build a rapport with the children, the researcher began with some Problem Free Talk. Participants were then invited to jointly review the participant information sheet and ask any clarifying questions. Verbal assent was gained and the researcher confirmed that participants were happy with the interview being video recorded.

After a warm-up game of 'Favourites', the researcher introduced the topic of belonging. Participants were shown a PowerPoint (See Appendix L) depicting three fictional animals and were asked where they thought the creatures might feel like they belong the most. Participants were asked to share their reasoning for their choices. It was not important where the participants chose, so long as they could justify their reasoning within the context of belonging. The participants' answers were then used to structure conversations around what it might mean to belong.

The focus then shifted to thinking more specifically about school belonging. The participants were asked to colour in a blob character from the Blob Playground (See Appendix M) who looked like they belonged in school and a blob character who did not look as if they belonged. This was then repeated for the Blob Classroom (See Appendix N) picture and participants were asked to justify their choices via open ended questioning. Participants were then asked to select a set of materials from the resource pack and use them creatively to draw or construct two pictures/models. Firstly, participants were asked to draw or create a model of a person who felt like they belonged in their school specifically, followed by a person who felt like they did not belong in their school. Using the nominal scale, parents/carers supported the children to place their drawing or model representing a person with low belonging on the left underneath 0, and their drawing or model of someone with high belonging on the right underneath 10. Participants were then asked where they would place themselves on the continuum and their choice of positioning was explored. An example of this scaling activity is displayed below in Figure 5.

## Figure 5

### *Example Scaling Activity*



Participants then completed a Relationship Circle activity (See Appendix O), to visually represent the important people in their lives. This was informed by Baumeister and Leary's (1995) 'Belongingness Hypothesis'. This allowed the researcher to ask more meaningful and individualised questions about specific individuals and determine precisely how these people provided support. The participants were then invited to return to the scaling activity and identify where they would like to be on the scale. Using resource activating questions, the participants were encouraged to think about their preferred future and think specifically about their own strengths and the strengths of others that could help them move closer to their goals.

### **3.6 Pilot Interview**

After reviewing the semi-structured interview schedule with the young adult advisor, a remote pilot interview was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 to examine the feasibility of

the research protocol and appraise the effectiveness of the virtual method of delivery. The pilot participant was an 11 year old boy, Geoff (pseudonym) whose mother responded to the call to participate advert, described below in section 3.7.1. Geoff was keen to participate in the research, but attending a school in Hong Kong, he did not meet the inclusion criteria for participation. As such, he was included as a pilot participant and was made aware that his data would not be included as part of the thesis publication. Geoff remarked that he enjoyed participating and articulated that his favourite parts of the research were the construction and scaling activity. After around 30 minutes, Geoff became restless and so it was suggested he took a screen break. As a result of this, the researcher built in two screen breaks into her interview schedule. Based on the feedback given from Geoff and the researcher's own reflections, no further changes were made to the research design and protocol after the pilot.

## **3.7 Participants**

### ***3.7.1 Sampling and Recruitment***

The recruitment process took place between 22<sup>nd</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher contacted the National Organisation of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS-UK) and FASD Awareness SE, two charitable organisations based in the UK and asked permission for her participant advert to be shared on their website and social media platforms. The researcher also produced a short recruitment video. Two parents contacted the researcher expressing an interest between the months of July and September 2020, but their children did not meet the criteria for inclusion. The researcher had originally planned to limit her in person recruitment to the South East of England, however due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, University protocols meant that no face to face data collection was permitted. Mindful of the pressing deadlines, in September 2020, the researcher made the decision to change her method of data collection to a remote

semi-structured interview format (from an in-person Mosaic Approach using camera walking tours). With participant location no longer a barrier, the researcher also decided to amend her inclusion criteria to include children attending a mainstream school anywhere in the UK in order to widen her recruitment opportunities.

For phase two of recruitment, between September and November 2020, the researcher recontacted NOFAS-UK and FASD Awareness SE and they agreed to share an updated version of the participant advert (See Appendix F). This was shared on their website, Twitter and Facebook pages and was accompanied by an updated recruitment video. On the advert was the researcher's email address and adults were invited to express their interest in this way. The researcher responded to expressions of interest within one working day. As part of this email, the researcher provided further information about the research and confirmed with parents and caregivers that their child/child they cared for met the following criteria:

- The child is between 7 and 11 years of age.
- The child has a confirmed diagnosis of a Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (this includes FASD with(out) sentinel facial features, FAS, pFAS, ARBD, ARND, ND-PAE, and CYP at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD associated with PAE).
- The child attends a mainstream Primary school in the UK.
- The child has an awareness of their diagnosis.

The researcher decided on the age range of 7-11 as she wanted to ensure that the participants were old enough to have had the opportunity to build their SOSB within the UK education system. Based on practice based evidence acquired from her experience as a TEP, the researcher felt that the creative nature of the research was accessible to children with a developmental age as young as 5. Children with FASD often present with large differences

between their chronological age and developmental age and thus a lower limit of 7 was chosen to account for these possible discrepancies.

The upper limit of 11 was placed on participants as the researcher wanted to focus her efforts exclusively on the primary school environment, given the dearth of research conducted within the primary phase. Moreover, this contributed to the homogeneity of the sample necessary for IPA. Additionally, research suggests the majority of primary aged children with FASD are educated in mainstream settings (Ryan & Fergusson, 2006) and thus the researcher chose to limit her inclusion criteria to account for this.

Lastly, the inclusion criteria specified that children must have a diagnosis of FASD. Many children do not receive a formal diagnosis until early/middle childhood (BMA, 2016), which gave further justification for the choice of age banding. Parents/carers were asked to confirm and disclose their child's given clinical diagnosis, but no formal evidence of this was sought. Moreover, ethically, the researcher felt that the potential for diagnostic disclosure during the research itself was too high, so it was decided that a diagnostic awareness would also be a necessary part of the inclusion criteria.

Once it was confirmed that the inclusion criteria had been met, the researcher emailed parents and carers a consent form (See Appendix H). A child friendly participant information sheet (See Appendix I) and assent form (See Appendix J) for participants was also attached and parents and carers were encouraged to read through the form with their children/child they cared for before signing. These were returned to the researcher digitally and were stored securely. Only once the researcher had received both forms were the interviews scheduled.

### ***3.7.2 Participant Characteristics***

Smith et al., (2009) posit a sample size of between three and six participants denotes a “reasonable sample size” (p. 51) for an Interpretative Phenomenological research project. A sample of this size they postulate limits the likelihood of the novice researcher becoming overawed, but still provides plenteous, rich data for the exploration of similarity and difference. In light of this, four participants were successfully recruited to the research via the purposive criterion sampling method explained above. An additional family showed interest in the research and the researcher scheduled a preliminary discussion with the family. However, the child found it too difficult to engage remotely and so the family withdrew from the research at this point.

Details of the participant demographics are displayed below in Table 1. All of the participants resided in England and attended English mainstream schools. Three of the participants were cared for by adoptive parents and one participant was currently living with a foster family. The participants will be introduced more fully as part of Chapter Four. All of the children chose their own pseudonyms, as demonstrated below.

**Table 1***Participant Characteristics*

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>School Year Group</b>	<b>Diagnoses</b>	<b>Parental Status</b>
Geoff (Pilot)	11	7	FASD	Adoptive Parents
Bob	8	4	FASD with sentinel facial features, ASD, ADHD	Adoptive Parents
Kitty	10	5	FASD	Adoptive Parents
Lily	7	2	FASD, Reactive Attachment Disorder, ADHD	Foster Parents
Susie	10	5	FASD, Attachment Disorder, suspected ADHD	Adoptive Parents

**3.8 Transcription and Data Analysis**

Data collection took place between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020. All four of the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. This commenced immediately after data collection and was completed within a week. This included word for word transcription, with all instances of pauses, laughter and self-corrections recorded, as well as non-verbal communication attempts and other notable environmental factors detailed (See Appendix U for transcript excerpt). The data was subsequently analysed using IPA. Details of the analysis is given in section 4.2.

**3.9 Ethical Considerations**

In order to safeguard the well-being of participants, the research is informed by the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2018) and the Health and Care Professions Council (2016) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. Ethical approval was also granted from the UEL School of Psychology Ethics Committee in

February 2020 (See Appendix R). This was amended in September 2020 to account for remote delivery (See Appendix S). As part of the application for ethical approval, the researcher completed a risk assessment. Necessary precautions and actions were considered and implemented to minimise risks to the researcher and the participants.

### ***3.9.1 Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw***

Parents/carers who showed an interest in the research were emailed an information sheet (See Appendix G), which detailed the study aims and requirements, alongside key issues pertaining to confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and withdrawal rights and entitlements. As well as this, the researcher also created a child friendly participant information sheet complete with pictorial aids. Adults were encouraged to contact the researcher with any questions about the research before giving consent for participation. Prior to data collection, written consent was obtained from all adults and written assent obtained from the children themselves. Verbal consent was also gathered on the day of testing. In order to ensure participants were fully briefed about what they were consenting to, the researcher dedicated time at the start of the research to go through the participant information sheet. At this point, she also ensured that the participants consented to the conversations being videorecorded. Besides this, the researcher gave the children opportunities to ask any clarifying questions throughout and she regularly checked participant understanding as standard procedure. This mandated the researcher to be clear and transparent and ensured that no deception of participants was permissible.

It was made clear to participants during the research that no answer was incorrect and the participants could move to the next question at any time. The participatory element of the research also functioned assuredly to reduce possible power imbalances between the researcher and the participants. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at

any time without reason, up to and including data transcription. Once the final transcript had been produced however, participants and their parents/carers were notified that from this point onwards it would not be possible to withdraw their data and any data provided would continue to be used anonymously, as per their initial consent.

### ***3.9.2 Children as a Vulnerable Participant Group***

Children with SEND are considered a vulnerable participant group (Robson, 2011) and thus the researcher was required to show evidence of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) certificate to the ethics board before the research was approved. Before commencing the research, the researcher also consulted the BPS (2020) publication pertaining to working with CYP using online video platforms and decided it best practice that children should be accompanied during the video call. A parent or carer was present at all times, which appeared to reinforce to the children that this was a safe space to engage with the researcher. What is more, the researcher used her psychological skills to remain attuned to any signs of distress or fatigue (of which none were noted) and made every attempt to ensure that protecting participant safety and wellbeing was an utmost priority.

### ***3.9.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity***

Data was collected and captured remotely using the recording function on Microsoft Teams. Once saved in the researcher's own UEL One Drive, the recordings were immediately deleted from the chat function on Teams, as well as Microsoft Stream. The transcripts were viewed only by the researcher for the purpose of data analysis. Parents and carers were also given the option to review the transcripts, however all families opted to receive a copy of the themes instead.

Consent forms were completed electronically and were stored in a safe location along with anonymised pictures of participant models and drawings. These will be retained until successful Viva defence, after which time they will be destroyed. Anonymised transcripts will be kept on an encrypted USB device until April 2022, which will enable the researcher to return to them for the purpose of publication. A research data management plan was completed and approved by the University, which detailed how the recordings would be stored, backed up, retained and shared in compliance GDPR regulations and the UK Data Protection Act. Participants were reminded that any information they shared would be kept confidential; only in the event of a safeguarding disclosure would the researcher be obliged to break confidentiality.

As aforementioned, in order to preserve anonymity, participants were given the option to choose their own pseudonym, which was used for the purpose of data analysis and write-up. Participant names were pseudonymised during the transcription phase and the researcher ensured that no other names or other identifiable information including schools and LA names were included anywhere in the project. Pseudonyms were given to parents, teachers, friends and schools by the researcher.

#### ***3.9.4 Compensation***

Despite considering sanitising and quarantining the equipment between data collection in line with COVID-19 protocols, the researcher decided that the safest option was to post children their own individual resource packs. All participants were entitled to keep the contents for their enjoyment. This was made clear in the participant advert which the researcher recognised may have incentivised participation. Nevertheless, this was deemed a necessary measure. No other compensation was given.

### ***3.9.5 Debriefing and Duty of Care***

The researcher was mindful that discussing school experiences might evoke strong feelings and emotions, however given her Doctoral training and experience working with CYP with social, emotional, mental health needs, she felt well equipped to safeguard participant well-being. One participant spoke of an incident of feeling alone in school, but she offered discussions about this willingly and showed no signs of psychological distress.

Besides this, the researcher ensured that once the interview was complete participants were verbally debriefed. A child friendly debrief sheet (See Appendix P) and adult debrief sheet (See Appendix Q) was then emailed to the adults for reading and dissemination to the children. The adult debrief sheet contained the contact details for the researcher and research supervisor, as well as signposting to relevant support services.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of the Research**

Qualitative research cannot be appraised in the same way as traditional quantitative research methodologies due to its idiographic and hermeneutic underpinnings. In response to this, in 2000, Yardley developed a set of theoretically neutral principles of quality assessment that can be applied to appraise and enhance the validity of qualitative research. Yardley's criteria are recommended specifically for data in experiential or constructionist form and therefore these principles were felt to be most complementary to appraising the trustworthiness of this phenomenological research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As part of this penultimate section, these principles will be discussed.

#### ***3.10.1 Sensitivity to Context***

Any good quality research Yardley (2000, 2008) posits must be grounded in relevant theoretical and empirical literature. Accordingly, the researcher completed a comprehensive

systematic literature review which was used to inform all aspects of the research conceptualisation and implementation. Notwithstanding the socio-cultural context of the research, Yardley notes how one must also be sensitive to the “normative, ideological, historical, linguistic and socio-economic influences on the beliefs, objectives, expectations and talk of all participants” (2000, p.220), as well as the ethical implications of conducting research with vulnerable individuals. In light of this, the current research was designed in such a way to allow the previously unheard voices of children with FASD to be sensitively and ethically heard, (whilst also demonstrating sensitivity to the possible stigma associated with PAE and participants’ care experiences).

### ***3.10.2 Commitment and Rigour***

Commitment, Yardley (2017) asserts can be demonstrated primarily through one’s in depth engagement with the subject area. The researcher was committed to designing a research study that enabled her to get as close to participant lived experience as possible and this was facilitated by the researcher’s skills and competencies in the methods used; acquired through her Doctoral training and experiences as a TEP. As well as this, the researcher sought the experience of a YP with FASD and piloted her interview schedule to ensure its robustness and rigorousness. Thereafter, she immersed herself fully in the data analysis procedure, allowing enough time for the analysis, outlining this in full and showing a commitment to completing an interpretative analysis of the highest quality.

### ***3.10.3 Transparency and Coherence***

Setting out how the data was to be collected and analysed ensures transparency and cogency of the research (Yardley, 2017). Through presenting excerpts and direct quotes (as is seen in the next chapter), the reader is able to see how the data relates to the research questions and its theoretical, philosophical, and conceptual underpinnings. Moreover, a

comprehensive audit trail was kept, which allows the reader to determine how the themes were generated. Invariably, this interpretation is influenced by the researchers' own experiences, thoughts, feeling and values both as a person and as a theorist (Willig, 2008). and in order to make this as explicit as possible, the researcher referred to her reflective diary throughout as a way of demonstrating her testament to openness and transparency.

#### ***3.10.4 Impact and Importance***

Lastly, research is considered to be qualitatively valid if it is able to generate knowledge that is useful (Yardley, 2000). In this way, the current research aims to have an applied impact not only for the children who participated in the research but to the wider community of CYP with FASD through contributing to positive systemic change. This research is also inherent in advancing psychological understanding of the concept of school belonging and the different eco-systemic factors which may help to facilitate positive experiences for those with SEND more broadly.

#### **3.11 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is the process of 'being aware' of how one's beliefs, judgements and practices may influencing the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This is inevitably informed by the researcher's own position and values, as outlined in section 1.5, and discussed further in section 5.8.1. Reflexivity should permeate all aspects of IPA and thus as a way of further limiting threats to validity and reducing researcher bias, the researcher was committed to reflexively bracketing off her own thoughts, feelings and assumptions and revisiting these throughout the research process.

### **3.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the research methodology and the data collection procedure the researcher followed. The chapter began with an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings, before setting out the research purpose and design. Consideration was given to the theoretical orientation, before introducing the research methods and procedure. Details of the participants, including how they were recruited to the study were then given. The chapter concluded with a summary of the ethical considerations and an appraisal of the trustworthiness of the research. In the following chapter, details of the analysis will be given and the voices of children with FASD will be heard.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

Following on from the methodology, this chapter will begin by describing the procedure the researcher followed to analyse the data using IPA. The superordinate and subordinate themes yielded from the data will be presented individually for each of the four participants first, after which point themes common across participants will be explored.

### **4.2 Introduction to Analysis**

Smith et al. (2009) outlined a step by step procedure to follow when analysing data using IPA. They recommend researchers adhere to a set of predetermined stages and work through them sequentially to facilitate clarity and manageability of the analysis. Details of each of the steps the researcher followed are summarised below.

#### ***4.2.1 Step 1: Reading and Re-reading***

The researcher began with the most detailed and complex interview first. She began by reading and re-reading the first transcript multiple times to re-familiarise herself with the data. Because the researcher was responsible for transcribing the interviews herself, she was seamlessly and efficiently able to re-enter the participants' world, hearing their 'voices' as she revisited the transcripts. After the transcript had been read three times, the researcher noted down any initial comments, feelings or emotions that reading the transcript evoked for her. This functioned to help the researcher to 'bracket off' some of her most powerful observations and move forward with the analysis.

#### ***4.2.2 Step 2: Initial Noting***

Smith et al. (2009) posit the initial noting stage "is the most detailed and time consuming" phase (p.83) as it requires the researcher to become more familiar with the data

and engage with the semantic content at an exploratory level. To do this, the researcher reformatted her initial transcript, producing two additional columns: one for initial noting and the other for emergent themes (See Appendix V). After free association, three different types of exploratory commenting were added to the initial noting column, with each subsequent re-read focusing on a different type of commenting:

1. Descriptive comments- literal descriptions of content and subject area.
2. Linguistic comments- comments pertaining to language use and how participants chose to linguistically express themselves, this included references to choice of wording, pronoun use, pauses, hesitancy, repetition, intonation, as well as the use of linguistic devices such as metaphors.
3. Conceptual comments- moving beyond explicit or surface level descriptive comments to conceptual wonderings and interpretative questioning of attributed meaning based on theory and personal experiences.

As part of this phase, when the text referred to the visual data, the researcher returned to photographs of participants' models or drawings for closer inspection. Whilst it was the narratives accompanying the visual data which were interpretatively analysed, rather than the visuals *per se*, it was helpful nonetheless for the researcher to view and reflect on the language and media simultaneously. These visuals are discussed as part of the analysis and are used to exemplify the subordinate themes.

#### ***4.2.3 Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes***

The focus then shifted away from the transcript itself to the initial notes and the comments made by the researcher during steps one and two. This was so as to begin developing short statements or themes which encapsulated the researcher's interpretation of

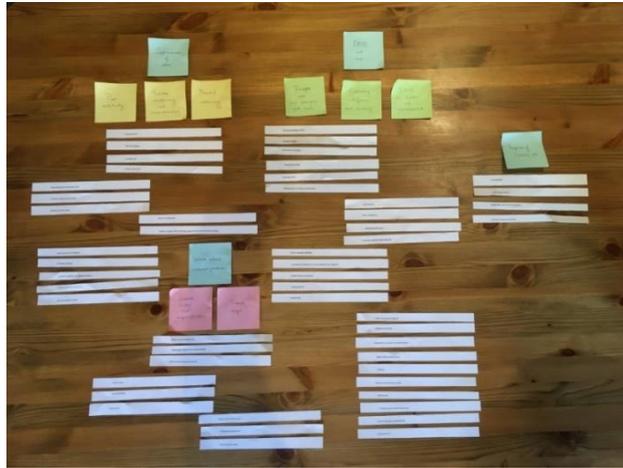
participant experience. Smith et al. (2009) contend “themes are usually expressed as stages which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual” (p.92). It is noteworthy that the themes chosen have particular pertinence to the research questions, but do not reflect all aspects of participant experience discussed in the interview. The themes developed reflect the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ sense making attempts- a double hermeneutic. To this end, the researcher recognises that other researchers may have interpreted the findings contrarily or focused on different aspects of school experience.

#### ***4.2.4 Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes***

The list of chronologically occurring emergent themes was screened for duplicates before being printed out and cut into individual strips of paper for further analysis. The strips of paper were spread across a large surface and the researcher eyeballed them for commonalities. Any related themes were clustered together, and a working map of themes was produced. An example is displayed in Figure 6, below. Once the researcher was pleased with these preliminary groupings she left the clusters in situ and returned after a short break to make any further adjustments.

## Figure 6

### *Example Spatial Map of Themes Produced for a Single Participant*



To guide the formation of superordinate and subordinate themes, the researcher used a number of different techniques, which Smith et al. (2009) attest is necessary for a more creative and deeper analysis. These techniques included:

1. Abstraction- looking at a cluster of emergent themes and seeking to attribute a newly defined, higher order theme which encapsulated the lower themes.
2. Subsumption- promoting an emergent theme which encapsulated a number of other emergent themes to superordinate status.
3. Polarisation- exploring oppositional relationships between emergent themes, particularly pertinent given the comparative discussions around positive and negative SOSB.
4. Numeration- paying particular attention to the frequency with which emergent themes were noted, as an indication of importance.
5. Contextualisation- identifying themes by their contextual or narrative elements, especially as they relate to an event or temporal moment.

Once these themes had been decided, they were tabulated along with the transcript line numbers and all of the quotes pertaining to that theme. The most pertinent quotes are included within the main body of this thesis to exemplify individual participant themes. The reader is directed to Appendices W-AB for the complete set of quotes comprising each theme.

#### ***4.2.5 Step 5: Moving to the Next Case***

Step five involved repeating the aforementioned steps for each of the three remaining participants. The data from the first participant was parked at this stage. Since the researcher was committed to upholding the idiographic nature of IPA, she was mindful that some of her thoughts and interpretations could infiltrate future analyses by way of the immersive nature of her involvement. Before beginning again at step one with a new case, the researcher sought to bracket off any assumptions about the first case so that she could approach each new case afresh.

#### ***4.2.6 Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases***

Once themes for each of the participants had been identified, the final step involved looking for patterns across cases (See Appendix AA). As well as looking at the individual themes, the researcher returned to the individual transcripts to look for commonalities. On occasion, the researcher noticed how there were ideas or concepts in individual transcripts which did not constitute an individual theme as part of the individual analysis but were relevant to the shared themes. These were subsumed where necessary.

According to Smith et al. (2009), for a theme to be considered recurrent, it must be present in at least half of the cases. This was necessary to ensure the validity of the final themes. As such, where a theme was present in two or more transcripts, these themes were cut into

individual strips and the researcher returned to step four to consider linkages and interrelations between the themes. Many of the superordinate subordinate pairings remained, but some were separated and reconstituted into new themes and new theme names were constructed. A graphic representation of the cross-case superordinate and subordinate themes is displayed in section 4.4.

### **4.3 Individual Interview Findings**

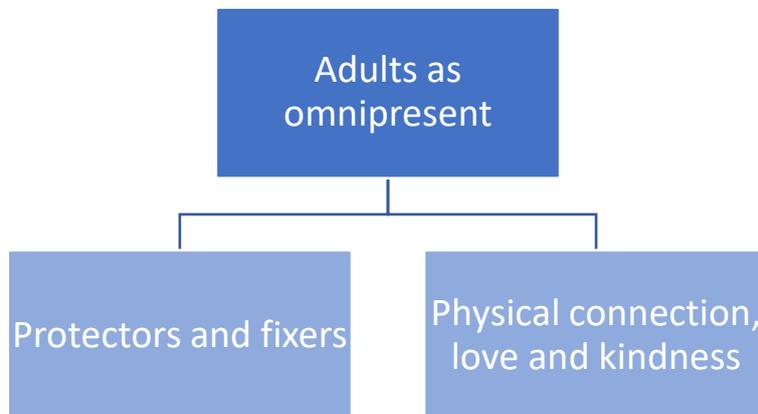
The researcher felt strongly that she wanted to honour individual participant experience and as such she chose to present the research findings on an individual case by case basis. As part of this section, the researcher will individually introduce the participants, before exploring the superordinate and subordinate themes which emerged from her interpretation.

#### ***4.3.1 Lily***

Lily is an enthusiastic and funny 7 year old girl who lives at home with her foster parents, Sandra and Tom and her beloved fish Nemo and Dory. Lily delights in being out in the countryside, especially going foraging for natural resources to use in her arts and crafts. During the first COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020, Lily was educated at home by her foster mother. Two superordinate themes and five subordinate themes were drawn out from the analysis of Lily's data. These themes are explored below.

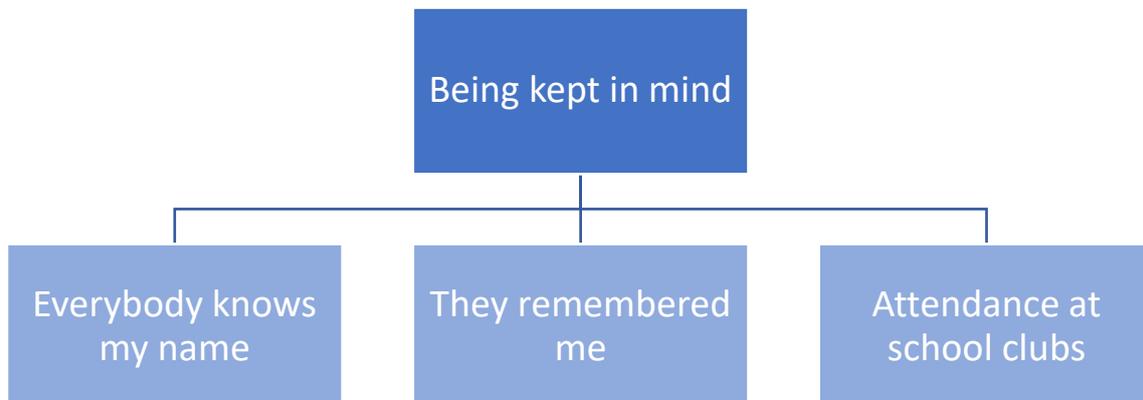
**Figure 7**

*Superordinate Theme 1: Adults as Omnipresent*



**Figure 8**

*Superordinate Theme 2: Being Kept in Mind*



**4.3.1.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Adults as Omnipresent.** Lily’s interpersonal relationships with adults were instrumental in fostering a positive SOSB. There was a sense from Lily’s narrative that adult support was enduring and always available to her when required. This included members of school and home as interrelated communities.

**4.3.1.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Protectors and Fixers.** Lily spoke about her teachers and support staff with fondness. The prominence of teachers and their helping practices in her

narrative suggests they were a vitally important resource. As such, she experienced school positively and rated her experience of school belongingness as 10/10. When asked for her reasoning behind her impeccable score she nonchalantly asserted,

*“[Because] teachers are there” (844)*

Lily spoke of the protective presence of one member of staff in particular and told how,

*“she used to be there for me to tell her if anything was wrong” (1056)*

Lily’s use of the words ‘*there for me*’ implied that this teacher was somebody she could rely on and confide in during times of challenge or hardship. She alluded to how her role had changed due to the introduction of the class ‘bubble system’, but nonetheless, their relationship had endured, and she stressed appreciatively how she was still able to see her during lunchtimes.

The protective or supervisory role of teachers was also depicted in Lily’s playground model of belonging, shown below in Figure 9.

**Figure 9**

*Lily’s Playground Model of Children who feel Like they Belong in School*



Shown here, positioned slightly adrift from the three friends holding hands playing, Lily described how the teacher was,

*“Making sure everybody’s ok” (710)*

Rather than being there just to safeguard individual well-being however, Lily conceptualised the role of the teacher as protecting the safety of all pupils, as demonstrated by her emphasis on the indefinite pronoun ‘*everybody*’.

Moreover, Lily told how the practices of staff members enabled her to feel safe in school. She described how she has a ‘safe space’ in Mrs. Nate’s office, which she can access when needed. She further told how it is Mrs. Nate’s responsibility as Deputy Head to,

*“... look after the school” (861)*

She also told how Mrs. Nate,

*“... tells people off and sometimes tells people rules” (859)*

Rather than being intimidated by her authority however, knowing that there were rules and boundaries in place appeared to be containing for Lily and furthermore appeared to reinforce her sense of safety and belonging.

As well as being protectors, Lily also conceptualised adults as fixers. She told how if she had fallen over it would be the adults who would be there to help. If children were arguing, as depicted in her model of a child who did not belong in her school, Lily described how adults would also be on hand,

*“... trying to fix it” (765)*

Similarly, this notion of fixing was also inherent in how she described her foster mother’s response to any difficulties she encountered in school.

*“[Mum would] ring the school” (1109)*

To this end, adults appeared to take on a primary preventative role of creating a safe and protective environment. It was the social support and notion of teachers as protectors and fixers rather than educators which appeared to be most revered by Lily.

**4.3.1.1.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Physical Connection, Love and Kindness.** For Lily, being able to connect on a physical level with adults seemed to fulfil a primary need to feel loved and cared for. The time before school was seen as a particularly poignant time for enjoying cuddles with her foster parents.

*“[Mummy Sandra] gives me cuddles before she goes. Sometimes I chase her coz I just want one more cuddle” (1131)*

Lily’s pursuit of ‘*just one more cuddle*’ from her foster mother signifies a possible separation anxiety and is interpreted as a way of Lily trying to maintain this physical connection and avoid her mother’s parting. To abate these feelings of loss, in her foster mothers’ absence, Lily appears to look to others to embody this role for her in school in *loco parentis*. She described how her teaching assistants,

*“... maybe [give me] huggles” (1196)*

In this way, I wonder whether she sees her teaching assistants as an extension of home. Lily’s use of the word ‘*maybe*’ however suggests that these ‘*huggles*’ are more intermittent than Lily would like. Given the pertinence of COVID-19 throughout her account, this could be interpreted as being in response to the social distancing measures in place at the time, which conceivably may have imposed restrictions on physical touch.

As well as opportunities for physical connection, Lily spoke about how she valued her teachers being kind to her. This was a trait she also recognised in herself. Describing Mrs. Nate, Lily told how,

*“She’s very very kind to me isn’t she” (looking towards her Mother) (467)*

Her repetition of the word ‘very’ implies an extraordinariness to her kindness. For Lily, kindness was associated with the receipt of gifts and extrinsic rewards, as well as ‘time in’ with Mrs. Nate.

*“Er she buys me things and reads me stories and speaks kindly” (470)*

Lily’s use of the first person gives the impression that this kindness was exclusive to her and this appeared to connote a special bond between the two of them. Lily also recounted how Mrs. Nate afforded her special privileges and dispensations.

*“[Mrs. Nate] takes me to get water from the staffroom. Guess what, Mr. Fisher when he does the water bottles he does it from the staffroom as well” (giggling, hands to face) (894)*

Lily’s giggles and non-verbal self-consciousness implies that these privileges were received appreciatively by Lily but were perhaps not afforded to the rest of the children in her school. In this way, she appears to see them as a special, ‘adult like’ treat.

**4.3.1.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Being Kept in Mind.** A central theme running through Lily’s narrative was the notion of wanting to be kept in mind. This emerged especially, but not exclusively in reference to her experiences of schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**4.3.1.2.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Everybody Knows my Name.** Lily alluded to the benefits of being educated within a small, one form entry school. She told how this helped her to feel included.

*S: "They all know who you are don't they" (1026)*

*L: "Yes, they do, **everybody** knows my name" (1027)*

Lily's choice of the word 'everybody' suggests that this assertion was applicable to the whole school as one big community. This acknowledgement appeared to come with a sense of pride that people knew who she was and afforded her, her own sense of identity within school. I wonder whether this was particularly pertinent for Lily given her changes of foster placement and impermanency of home life.

This recognition and accolade of being known extended to the school administrative staff also. Lily told of a playful exchange she was a part of.

*"On Friday when Mummy was gonna take me to the hospital but I kept going to see Mrs. Nate and I kept smiling at the office ladies and they kept saying that's a cheeky smile" (1032)*

Her recurrent smiles and playful demeanour can be interpreted as connection seeking and appear to be a way of Lily making sure she was kept in mind. This was aided by the administrative staff receiving Lily's initiatives for non-verbal communication and responding to them spiritedly.

**4.3.1.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2: They Remembered Me.** Lily reflected on when she was unable to attend school during the first national COVID-19 lockdown. Lily remembered affectionately the contact she had with her teachers during this time.

*“... every week [Mrs. Nate] read us a story” (1253)*

Lily appeared to enjoy being read to and she recited a number of books she and her peers enjoyed together via Zoom. This weekly story time appeared to be a way of bridging home and school and maintaining connection with Mrs. Nate, and her peers, despite being physically separate. As well as this, Lily reflected appreciatively on the direct contact her teachers made with her.

*L: “They sent me messages (1264)*

Most of all though, Lily was grateful that she had not been forgotten about.

*“Yeah, it was good they [teachers] remembered me” (1271)*

It was the efforts of the teachers to maintain lines of communication during these challenging times which ostensibly conveyed to Lily that she remained an important and valued member of the school community. Furthermore, for Lily, knowing that she had been kept in mind appeared to facilitate her transition back to school in September.

*“Excited I was coz that means I wouldn’t have Mummy. Then I did started to miss her a little bit” (1326)*

Although there was an element of ambivalence in her feelings surrounding leaving her mother, possibly due to her attachment needs, her high perceived SOSB just a couple of months later verified how her perceived belongingness had not been hampered by her physical absence from school.

**4.3.1.2.3 Subordinate Theme 3: Attendance at School Clubs.** Lily articulated how school clubs were an important aspect of her school experience. Firstly, she told how in the school holidays she attended a school run activity club.

*“[At holiday club] sometimes we go on bouncy castles and sometimes the boys play football and we play” (122)*

Lily appeared to value the social opportunities that the activity club afforded her and the collective use of the term ‘we’ suggests she saw activity club as a shared pursuit with others.

As well as this, Lily also described her attendance at after school club.

*“Sometimes I go to after school club... it’s a bit like a nursery... a few of us... somebody somebody comes and picks us up” (139)*

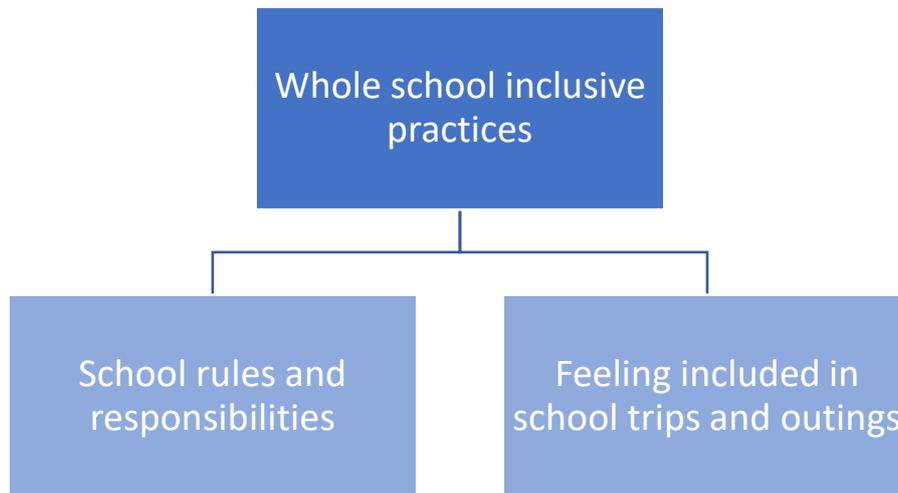
Unlike with holiday club however, Lily appeared insouciant about the specific activities available and did not offer discussion of this. Instead, she placed greater emphasis on the staff helper, and the relational function of the club. This implies it was not the after-school club *per se* that was important, but the fact she was able to maintain her much esteemed connection and affiliation with school.

#### **4.3.2 Kitty**

Kitty is an articulate, friendly 10 year old girl who lives at home with her adoptive parents, Melissa and Mark and two older siblings, Max and Katie. She is a keen dancer and delights in making her own candy floss. During the COVID-19 school closures, Kitty was homeschooled by her adoptive parents. Three superordinate themes and eight subordinate themes were drawn from the analysis and interpretation of her Kitty’s experiences.

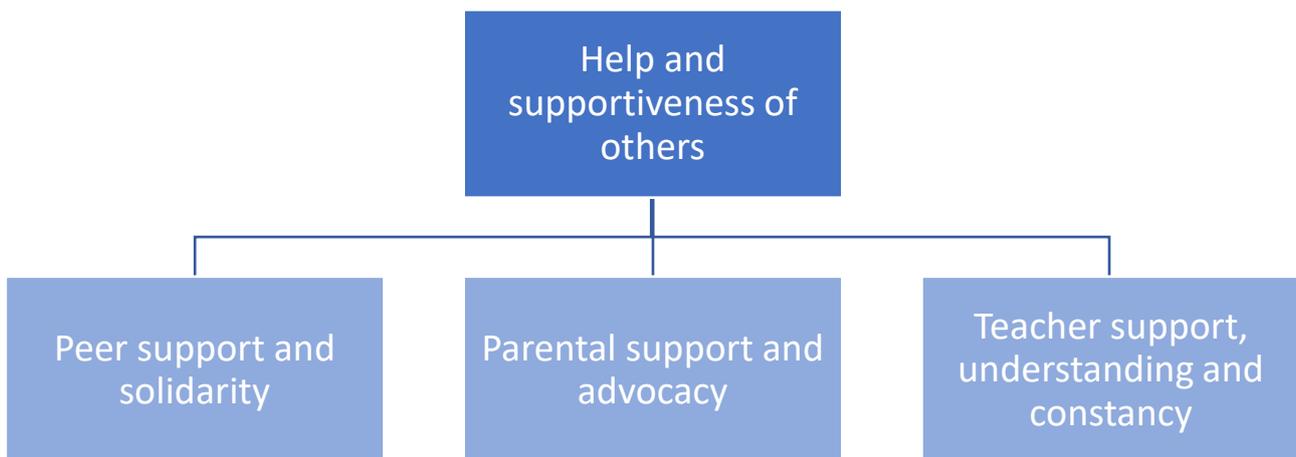
**Figure 10**

*Superordinate Theme 1: Whole School Inclusive Practices*



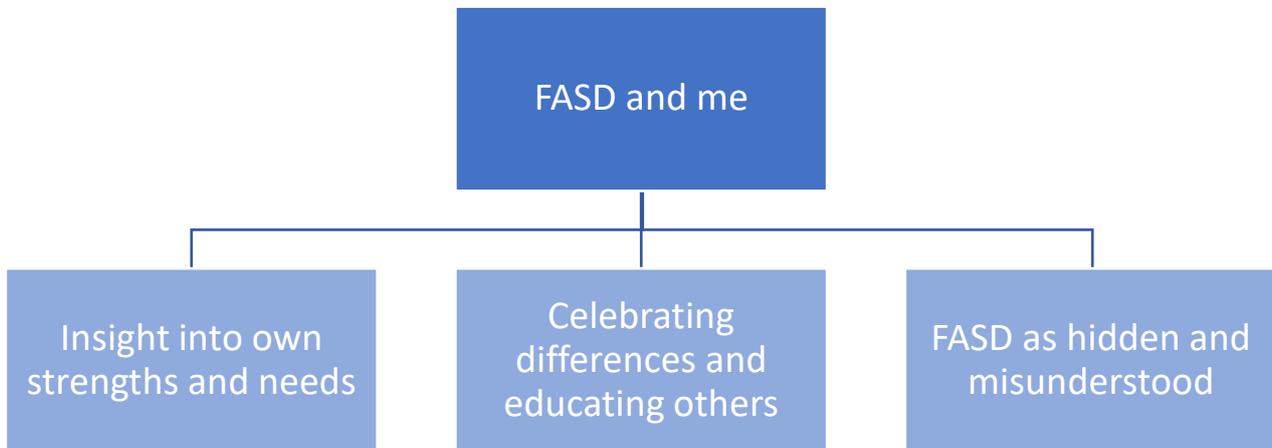
**Figure 11**

*Superordinate Theme 2: Help and Supportiveness of Others*



**Figure 12**

*Superordinate Theme 3: FASD and Me*



**4.3.2.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Whole School Inclusive Practices.** As well as reflecting on the individualised support she received at school, Kitty shared some of the whole school practices which enabled her to feel as though she belonged as part of her school community.

**4.3.2.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1: School Rules and Responsibilities.** Kitty appeared to be well acquainted with the school rules and she saw the rules of the school as helping to govern positive behaviours. She articulated how,

*“... [the rules] help(s) on some reasons like to help you to be good” (695)*

In her model of a person who felt like they belonged in her school, Kitty depicted a group of friends working hard during a maths lesson, listening to the teacher and adhering to the rules of the classroom. This is depicted in the right hand model, shown below in Figure 13.

### Figure 13

#### *Kitty's Models of Belonging*



She told how when everybody follows the rules, this makes for a happy environment, and one where she feels like she belongs. As such, belonging for Kitty was described as,

*“where you’re meant to be” (5)*

A negative SOSB conversely was associated with an environment wherein children break the rules and demonstrate ‘red behaviours’. Nevertheless, when these rules are broken, Kitty told of a clear system in place to manage this. This appeared to provide comfort for her and like Lily, conferred a sense of safety, knowing that these behaviours would be appropriately and fairly sanctioned.

*“If you’re messing around you get a verbal warning and then if you mess around even more you get a physical” (Kitty, 407)*

Kitty candidly told how she sometimes struggles to regulate her own behaviours however and follow the rules to be kind. She drew parallels between herself and the model on the left.

*“[the person in the grey hat] feels like me. I lash back sometimes” (970)*

Because of her experiences of others occasionally being unkind to her, she perceived her SOSB to be between a 7/8 out of 10. She reasoned how,

*“it’s near, more near ten because people are nice to me more than they be mean to me” (1008)*

Nonetheless, she asserted that she still feels as though she belongs in school. In this way, Kitty appeared to allude to how her SOSB could be transient and context dependent, with her SOSB experienced more positively in some situations and more negatively in others.

As well as discussing school rules, Kitty told how within school she held a number of responsibilities. She was excited to share her role of class book monitor.

*“Um well every Monday we have these monitors and I’m the book monitor” (1047)*

Kitty appeared to take the role incredibly seriously and spoke in great depth about what her duty entailed. With this responsibility appeared to come a sense of pride and prestige.

*“... like I’ve got a responsibility like I feel good because of it” (1054)*

This was true also of how she conceptualised taking care of the school guinea pigs.

*“... we have responsibilities and actually in Year 1 we got to feed them [the guinea pigs], like I I was allowed to feed them and do things with them and with a helper” (1133)*

As well as the responsibility of feeding the animals, Kitty appeared to delight in sharing in this experience socially with a peer.

#### ***4.3.2.1.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Feeling Included in School Trips and Outings.***

Kitty reflected warmly on the opportunities she had to go on whole school trips, and she told

of a trip to an aquarium prior to COVID-19. Kitty alluded to how important it was that she felt included and was able to share in this experience with others, including her father as a parent helper. It was significant that she reflected on how it would feel if somebody from school was prohibited from attending,

*“They might feel really angry coz like if everyone else goes and they might think the teachers think they are like the worst in the class and leave them behind” (1101)*

In this way, Kitty appears to see being left behind as a punishment, and one which she equates with teacher liking and academic prowess. Being fearful of being *‘left behind’* appeared to emanate from a similar experience Kitty herself had with her Brownie group.

*“Actually, I felt like that once... I was in Brownies... and they went on this really fun camping trip and they left me behind” (1103)*

Kitty’s description of feeling *‘left behind’* suggests she felt rejected and excluded from an experience she wished to be a part of. As well as highlighting the importance of inclusion for Kitty, in this way, her account highlights the significance of being included in all discussions which directly impact her.

**4.3.2.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Help and Supportiveness of Others.** During her account, Kitty detailed the helping practices of her peers, parents and teachers and told how she felt mostly well supported and understood in school.

**4.3.2.2.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Peer Support and Solidarity.** For Kitty, the classroom was the place in school where she felt like she belonged the most and she demonstrated an awareness of the link between peer support and belonging.

*“Coz I’ve got my friends in there [the classroom] (1043)*

She told how her peers stood up for her in class.

*“... my whole class just goes in and says to the teacher she can't help it and my whole class is just helping me and they understand” (700)*

Kitty's repeated reference to the 'whole class' suggests that this support was not true just of one or two friends, but the whole class as a collective group. Not only did they demonstrate their understanding, but they stood together with Kitty in solidarity to safeguard her experiences when they thought she was being unfairly treated. In this way, Kitty can be seen as theorising their role as activists and supporters. Moreover, Kitty's language of '*whenever I do it*' suggests that this was not an uncommon exchange but happened often.

This support was also evident on the playground and Kitty gave copious examples of how her friends were there for her when she needed them.

*“They would come up to me and help me and say are you okay Kitty” (1545)*

In the same way as in the classroom, this represents the responsiveness and sensitivity of the support offered by her peers.

**4.3.2.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Parental Support and Advocacy.** Kitty also recognised the support she received from her adoptive parents, her mother in particular. Her reliance on her mother was palpable in her account, especially as it related to aspects of her schoolwork experienced as challenging.

*“... if I'm struggling with my homework Mummy comes and helps me” (1339)*

As well as helping with home learning, Kitty also appeared to see her mother as somebody she could confide in. Not only would she help to make sense of events at school, but Kitty also told how she would contact the school and speak to her teachers directly.

*“She'd ring her [her teacher] up and check what's going on and she like ((3)) telling other teachers off (1354)*

Knowing that her mother would telephone the school and defend her actions unconditionally appeared comforting and suggests she sees her mother as an advocate for her and her needs. Her use of the phrase *'telling off'* insinuates an apportionment of blame however, and suggests it was her teachers who were often at fault.

#### ***4.3.2.2.3 Subordinate Theme 3: Teacher Support, Understanding and Constancy.***

The support of adults in school pervaded Kitty's narrative and feeling understood was of paramount importance to her. It was the support of her teaching assistant, Miss Church, in particular that appeared to be especially cherished by Kitty.

*"...it's like she [Miss Church] understood me a lot more than other people did and like she helped me a lot more" (1295)*

Because of this understanding, Miss Church appeared to be more attuned to Kitty's needs and was able to provide co-regulation during times of heightened stress.

*"Um she took me out when I was angry" (1299)*

Despite no longer having Miss Church as a TA due to COVID-19, Kitty asserted,

*"... but we're still really nice friends" (1289)*

The frequency with which Kitty spoke about Miss Church implies she sees her as significant person in her life. Kitty conceptualises the bond that they share as on par with a friendship, which perhaps suggests she sees her as an 'equal'. This, it could be argued is different to traditional teacher-pupil hierarchical power relationships.

The impact of COVID-19 was much discussed by Kitty and she valued the constancy of her teachers during this time, maintaining connection with her so that she did not become forgotten about.

*“Just because you’re away doesn’t mean that they’ve forgotten you and basically you’re nothing and they know you’re still there” (1669)*

Her account suggests belongingness can be experienced even when not physically present.

On her return to school however, Kitty told of how the classes had been reshuffled.

*“... I really like her [Miss Church] and I felt really sad when I had to move class and I was and I was thinking ow I don’t wanna leave, I really belong in this class” (1487)*

The moving of classes incited feelings of sadness for Kitty. This highlights the importance of class membership and staff continuity and demonstrates the sizable impact that a single staff member can have on fostering a SOSB.

**4.3.2.3 Superordinate Theme 3: FASD and Me.** Kitty demonstrated an astute understanding of FASD and was the only participant of the four to discuss the impact her diagnosis had on her experiences of schooling.

**4.3.2.3.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Insight into Own Strengths and Needs.** Kitty spoke about the lessons she enjoyed in school and where she considered herself to be most strong.

*“[I’m good at] singing, drawing, Lego, dancing, writing, maths” (1256)*

As well as recognising her strengths, Kitty recognised how parts of schooling were more challenging for her. When selecting a blob who she felt did not look liked they belonged in school, she chose a blob who appeared to be struggling academically. She made comparisons between the blob and her own experiences in the classroom.

*“Erm it’s like this person like erm they feel upset like (.) like me. I struggle with things that other children don’t” (536)*

She also cited her abilities to listen as a challenge for her.

*“Like I I... saying I’m being true here... I’m not really good at listening” (468)*

Nevertheless, Kitty recognised how she benefitted from small class sizes and the provision of enhanced teacher support. This was further borne out in her aspirations regarding her choice of secondary school placement.

*“I think we are gonna go to Honeysuckle school and like its only got like ten children in a class and I I would feel good about of that because the teachers can give me more help and support” (616)*

As part of her narrative, she appeared to also recognise the confines of the support available within a mainstream class of 30 children. For Kitty then, this suggests that a more specialist environment may be preferred by her educationally.

#### ***4.3.2.3.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Celebrating Differences and Educating Others.***

Kitty was keen to celebrate her differences as well as seeing in others aspects of their character which made them special too.

*“I’m different to a lot of people but like I feel that’s a good thing coz like I’m different in a lot of ways but everyone’s different” (794)*

*“Even if they’re small or big or different, everyone is special in their own way” (814)*

Recognising her differences within the context of universal uniqueness showcased her advanced understanding of diversity and individuality. Taking this ownership looked to be incredibly empowering for Kitty, so much so, she told of how when she was younger she was encouraged to speak about her FASD diagnosis.

*“... in year two the teacher said do you wanna tell the class about it [FASD] and I stood up in the front of the class and basically a lot of the teachers came in” (1741)*

It was Kitty's class teacher who suggested she spoke about FASD and she created a culture and ethos within school where Kitty was able to feel proud and confident enough to speak openly. Sharing her knowledge and advocating for herself, even at the young age of six was commendable. Being given a voice in school appeared to communicate to her that she mattered, that she belonged and moreover would have a lasting legacy for others with FASD attending the school in future. Belonging then, was associated with having the confidence to *be* who she is, rather than feeling pressurised to change who she is to fit in with others.

**4.3.2.3.3 Subordinate Theme 3: FASD as Hidden and Misunderstood.** Despite her efforts to educate those in her school, Kitty told of particular times when she still felt that her FASD was misunderstood and this led to her often finding herself in trouble. She told how,

*"... when like there's new people in like new adults I get told off about it [squealing] once and don't know how to help it" (677)*

The practices of new and unfamiliar teachers appear to be largely at odds with the self-regulatory behaviours Miss Church actively encouraged. There was a sense that her behaviours were seen as willful or volitional rather than as a result of her challenges associated with FASD.

Kitty believed that feeling misunderstood was in part because FASD is a hidden disability.

*"But like I've got hidden alcohol, foetal alcohol but if it was showing it would be a bit different like" (1733)*

In this way, Kitty appears to suggest that if her brain injury were more visible, perhaps people would be more understanding of the challenges she encounters. As such, Kitty had very assured ideas about what would help to educate new teachers to the school.

*“Um to explain to them what I’ve been like through, like I nearly died when I was little” (1595)*

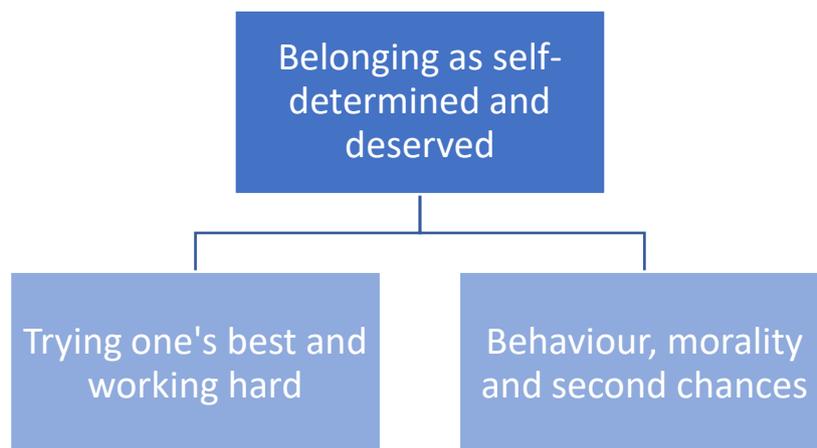
By taking ownership of her diagnosis, advocating for herself and her own needs and ensuring a greater continuity of support amongst staff members, Kitty was confident that she herself had the capacity to effect positive changes.

#### **4.3.3 Susie**

Susie is an active 10 year old girl who lives at home with her adoptive parents, Kate and Anthony, her older brother Michael and her dog Digby. She enjoys riding her bike with her respite carer and has a keen interest in the Ancient Egyptians. Susie was homeschooled by her mother during the COVID-19 school closures but did return to school in June as a Key Worker child. Two superordinate themes and six subordinate themes were identified.

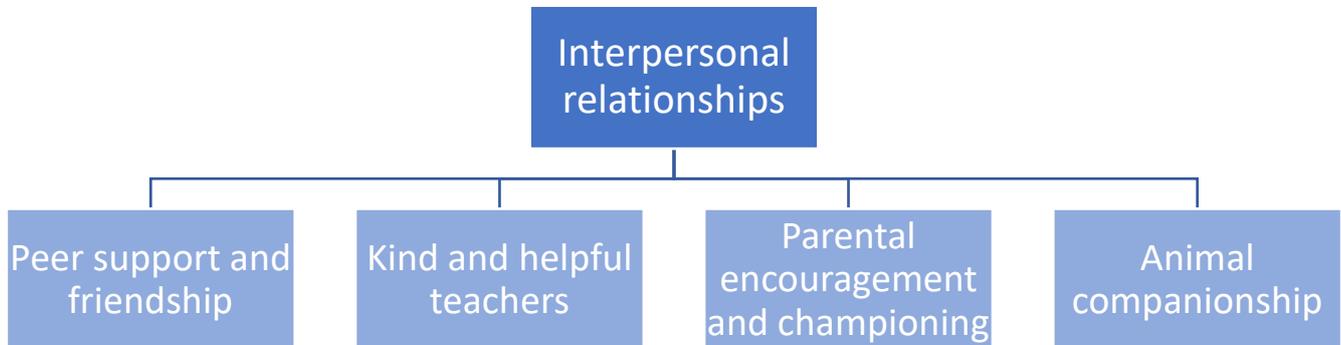
#### **Figure 14**

*Superordinate Theme 1: Belonging as Self-determined and Deserved*



**Figure 15**

*Superordinate Theme 2: Interpersonal Relationships*



**4.3.3.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Belonging as Self-Determined and Deserved.** Susie had definite and sophisticated ideas about how belonging as a construct is not an automatic entitlement but instead is an accolade that must be earned through her own efforts. She was very cognisant of the need for repentance and reparation and she saw this as inherent in the culture and ethos of her school.

**4.3.3.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Trying One’s Best and Working Hard.** Pervasive in Susie’s account was the importance of working hard and her commitment and tenacity was evident both in her own reflections and in the way in which she interpreted the behaviours of others. During the blob classroom activity, she selected a blob seated at the front of the classroom and told how,

*“... that person des deserves to be at school and er have a reward because that person’s trying to work hard” (459)*

Susie’s use of the word ‘*deserves*’ is intriguing and implies that a positive SOSB is acquired through one’s own efforts in the classroom, procured through working hard. This is caveated with the use of the word ‘*trying*’, in this way equating belonging with the demonstration of

positive behaviours for learning. Her reference to rewards may signify that she herself is often rewarded for her efforts in school, and it is this growth mindset which Susie has seemingly internalised as being important.

Speaking of her own lived experiences, Susie gave a rating of 10/10, asserting how she feels,

*“... very very very very happy at school” (832)*

Her repeated usage and emphasis on the word ‘very’ is indicative of the extent of her happiness and she attributed this specifically to her love of learning. This, taken together with a belief that her efforts would be recognised and praised appeared to strengthen her resolve to work hard and want to do her best.

**4.3.3.1.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Behaviour, Morality and Second Chances.** How people treat one another in school was of notable importance to Susie and she associated the maltreatment and unkind behaviours of children with being undeserving of a place in her school.

*“She belongs, but I don’t think that those two girls should belong to the school because they’re being mean to that little girl” (319)*

Describing the blobs as not belonging ‘to’ the school implies that she sees belonging in its possessional form, rather than as a feeling or emotion. Although she recognised that the girl would be feeling upset, she did not see her as experiencing a negative SOSB. Rather, she proclaimed that it was the perpetrators of the unkind behaviours who she felt should not belong. This implies that their behaviours do not fit with Susie’s conceptualisation of how children *should* behave and what would be acceptable perchance in her own school.

This implies Susie has a strong moral compass, and this is borne out further in Susie’s later discussion of the school rules and values.

*“Do as you are done by” (693)*

*“Be kind” (695)*

Nevertheless, Susie recognised how sometimes, she herself found it hard to follow the school rules and occasionally she made mistakes. What was important however was being given the opportunity to repent.

*“I have a chance... if I hurt people I have a chance and I say sorry and I make them feel better” (513)*

A school culture of tolerance, understanding and restorative justice whereby it was ‘ok’ to make mistakes, was henceforth revered and contributed positively to Susie feeling a valued member of the school community. This culture, it could be inferred reinforced to Susie that even if she does mistakes, it is the behaviour that is disapproved of and not her as a person, which is especially important given her co-morbid Attachment Disorder.

**4.3.3.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Interpersonal Relationships.** As well as recognising her own efforts and role in fostering her SOSB, Susie also valued her interpersonal relationships with others.

**4.3.3.2.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Peer Support and Friendship.** Susie talked about her own friends within school and was able to list a wealth of friends during the relationship circle activity. She told of a new friendship she had formed with a girl named Saskia who had recently joined her school.

*“We play together” (1618)*

*“We just do skipping” (1620)*

Despite Susie's friend Saskia having only been in the school a number of days, Susie reflected on how being a good friend to her had helped Saskia to settle in and belong, in this way seeing school belonging as a shared and reciprocal process.

Susie asserted her SOSB could be improved with having more friends. Her aspiration for more friends appeared to have emerged from a recent change in her friendship group.

*“... also, I feel a bit sad... a lovely lad in my school called Harrison is leaving, going to another school” (951)*

She pensively told how Harrison was her lunch buddy and how he also fulfilled a helping role at playtimes.

*“He helps me if I fall over” (983)*

As well as seeing friends as a source of fun, in this way, Susie also appeared to value her friends' capacity for kindness and helping. Although lamenting the loss of her friend Harrison to another school, she was nonetheless still able to recognise that she had other friends who could fulfil this role in his place.

**4.3.3.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Kind and Helpful Teachers.** Susie also credited her teachers as being instrumental in providing her with help and support. In her model of a child who felt like they belonged in her school Susie depicted a teaching assistant and a child working together.

## Figure 16

### *Susie's Model of a Person who Feels Like They Belong in School*



She told how,

*“[The TA] is working with the child” (660)*

Susie’s use of the word ‘*with*’ implies a togetherness and a collaborative allegiance between the TA and pupil. The TA is pictured with their arm on the pupil’s shoulder and this could denote a reassuring presence. The small size of the room and the absence of other pupils was also significant and was tantamount to Susie’s preference for direct work with her TA away from the busy classroom.

Describing her own lived experiences, she described the support she received from her 1:1 TA.

*“[Mrs. Bolton] helps me” (851)*

*“[she] takes me out... for a walk” (1562)*

Susie recognised how Mrs. Bolton taking her out of the class helped her to regulate herself when she was finding it difficult to concentrate in class.

Susie also spoke positively about a number of teachers within the school and the kindness that they demonstrated towards her. This elicited feelings of happiness in Susie. The support of teachers also appeared to extend to the playground too.

*“If somebody’s bothering me... he [Mr. Tolworth] just tells someone off” (1643)*

Knowing that Mr. Tolworth would act on her concerns and eradicate unkind behaviours appeared to be consoling and enabled her to enjoy a safe and immersive play experience.

#### ***4.3.3.2.3 Subordinate Theme 3: Parental Encouragement and Championing.***

Mention of parental support pervaded Susie’s account, especially in relation to helping her with her academic pursuits. She was excited to tell of the handwriting work she and her mother had completed together.

*“This is what I did yesterday” (proudly holding up a page of handwriting to the screen) (1346)*

Susie appeared proud to showcase her work. It was her mother’s championing and words of encouragement that enabled her to be successful and persevere with the task.

*K: “What was I saying ((3)) You can (1363)*

*S: “Do it”*

As well as offering words of encouragement, Susie recognised how her mother helps her with her comprehension homework, an aspect of schooling she finds difficult.

*K: “How do we do the comprehension ((4)) who does the thinking” (1398)*

*S: “Me”*

*K: “Who does the writing”*

S: (points to Mum) **“Teamwork”**

Her mother’s differentiation of the task through removing the written demands was considered facilitatory to task success. Parallels can be drawn with this exchange and the way in which Susie works in tandem with her TA in the classroom.

**4.3.3.2.4 Subordinate Theme 4: Animal Companionship.** Susie’s interpersonal relationships were not limited to humans, but also included interactions with two specially trained school reading dogs, Merlin and Doug. Susie intimated how photos of the dogs take pride of place on the school staff board and are thus seen as an integral part of the school community.

*“Actually I have got two. Two school dogs” (924)*

*“Merlin’s black and white with brown eye brown eyebrows” (933)*

Susie’s reference to the dogs in the first person seems to be reflective of the personal bond that the two of them share and implies a belongingness to her. This is despite the dogs being for the benefit of the whole school. That said, there is a sense that Merlin actively seeks Susie out in the classroom.

*“Merlin always comes and sit next to me” (949)*

*“[he] comes on me” (1420)*

Susie’s use of the word ‘always’ implies that Merlin purposefully and regularly chooses her to sit alongside. She delights in his presence and the reverence at being specially chosen by him. Rather than recognising how he supports her with her reading, it is the companionship and comfort he offers which is outwardly more treasured.

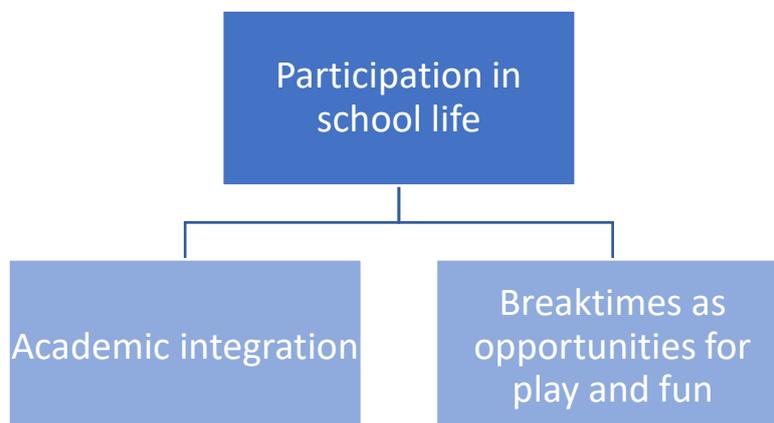
Susie described how ‘time in’ with Merlin and Doug can be earned and this is seen by Susie as a motivator to meet her targets and engage in her learning. Knowing that she can gain credits towards spending extra time with Doug and Merlin is perhaps linked with her motivation and commitment to hard work, as described in the theme entitled, ‘Trying one’s best and working hard’.

#### **4.3.4 Bob**

Bob is an active, gregarious 8 year old boy who started in Year Three in September. He loves doing front flips on his trampoline and playing football with his friends. He lives at home with his adoptive parents, Lisa and Phil and older sister Sandy. Two superordinate themes and four subordinate themes emerged from the analysis of Bob’s transcripts.

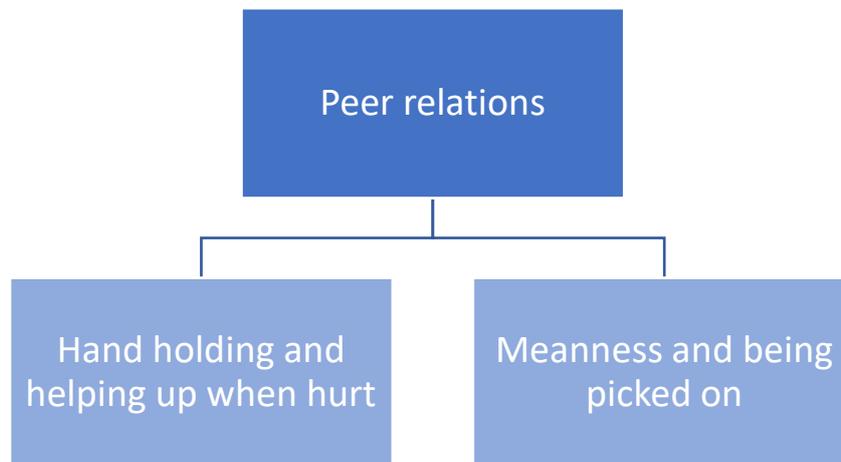
#### **Figure 17**

*Superordinate Theme 1: Participation in School Life*



**Figure 18**

*Superordinate Theme 2: Peer Relations*



**4.3.4.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Participation in School Life.** For Bob, being able to actively participate in school life and feel included academically and socially in school was central to his narrative and contributed positively to his appraisals.

**4.3.4.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Academic Integration.** Bob associated a positive SOSB with being able to participate in classroom learning. During the blob classroom activity, Bob selected a studious blob who was seated at his desk. He shared how his hand was raised,

*“Because he’s got a really good question” (297)*

Based on his expression, Bob articulated how the blob looked really happy and he saw his hand up as signifying his engagement and willingness to be involved in the lesson.

Conversely, when asked to select a blob who he felt did not feel like they belonged in his school, Bob selected a blob that was stood alone at the back of the classroom.

*“Folding his arms” (316)*

He established that he looked really sad, which he reasoned was,

*“Coz he doesn’t want to be at school” (319)*

From this, it could be inferred that Bob equated a negative SOSB with challenges accessing the curriculum.

Interestingly, Bob’s choice of the blob depicting a positive SOSB appeared to also represent his own lived experiences of schooling and enjoyment of learning. Bob perceived his own SOSB to be 10/10 and he asserted this rating was because,

*“I do my work” (686)*

This suggests that Bob feels suitably academically integrated. There was also a sense from this that following the classroom rules was important to Bob and he especially relished getting the answers right in class.

*“I get ticks, a lot of ticks don’t I Daddy” (689)*

For Bob, these ticks appear to act as endorsements of his efforts. His repetition of the word ‘ticks’ and his addition of the adverb ‘a lot’ implied that he was regularly rewarded for his academic endeavours, and this recognition appeared to incentivise him to want to do well.

Bob also demonstrated an insight into what helped him in the classroom.

*“I’m allowed to use a Chromebook. I’m actually allowed to use a Chromebook”  
(1205)*

Bob recognised how using a Chromebook helped him with his typing and this appeared to enable him to participate more fully in the classroom. There was a sense of disbelief in his expression, as demonstrated by his repetition, perhaps because this was so sought after, or because it was a relatively new addition, but it was welcomed by him, nonetheless.

Although Bob valued participation in his schoolwork and appeared academically integrated, he found it much more challenging to identify who helped him in school.

*“err I n’t know” (1156)*

In contrast to the other three participants, he was reliant on prompting from his father to identify and name any teachers or teaching assistants who supported him. Even when his father named adults, Bob was unable to articulate how they helped him, suggesting his support network was either not well understood by Bob or was not as valued as physical aids or the support of his peers.

#### ***4.3.4.1.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Breaktimes as Opportunities for Play and Fun.***

Central to Bob’s school experiences was the importance of play. He told how his happy place was on the school football pitch playing football with his friends. Belonging to Bob meant feeling included in team pursuits and spending his breaktimes in the company of others. This was illustrated further in Bob’s choice of blobs on the blob playground activity. He chose the blob stood in the middle of the huge puddle and he remarked how,

*“He’s got a smile um smiley face on him” (240)*

Bob recognised how this blob was not alone in the puddle but was having fun with his friends, henceforth seeing puddle jumping as a shared endeavour.

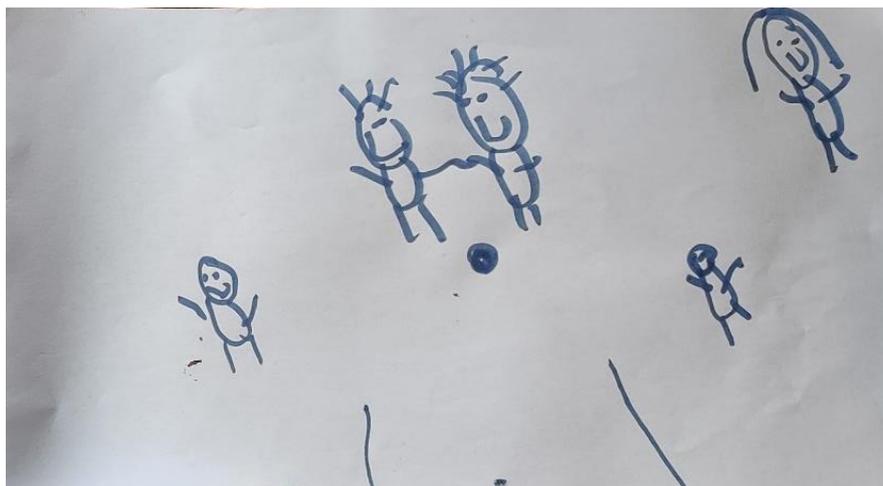
In contrast, the blob Bob chose depicting someone who did not feel like they belonged in school was seated at the table with their head in their hands. Unable to access the fun going on around him because he had been excluded from the activities his peers were accessing, Bob intimated how this incited a feeling of sadness for this blob and meant playtime was experienced negatively.

**4.3.4.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Peer Relations.** Friendship was revered by Bob and he saw his friends as instrumental in providing peer support and aiding his experiences of belonging in school. He appeared to see peer relations on a continuum from meanness to kindness, which coincided with his conceptualisations of belonging.

**4.3.4.2.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Hand Holding and Helping Up when Hurt.** In his drawing of a person who felt like they belonged in school, Bob depicted four children and a teacher playing football together on the school field, shown below in Figure 19.

**Figure 19**

*Bob's Depiction of a Person Who Feels Like They Belong in His School*



When asked what he had drawn, Bob responded with,

*“((4)) two people holding hands” (642)*

Whilst the game of football itself was seemingly of secondary importance, it was the act of hand holding that had the substantive meaning and was clearly visible in Bob's illustration as well as his verbal description. This suggests that Bob conceptualises belonging as an experience that is shared between two people and the act of hand holding can be interpreted

as a protective gesture which physically and figuratively connects or bonds two persons together.

Reflecting on the aspects of his own school day he most enjoyed, similarly, Bob spoke of his enjoyment of playing football with his friend Laura. The picture Bob drew of someone who felt like they belonged thus appeared to be symbolic of Bob's own lived experiences and was congruent with how Bob rated his experiences of belonging in school.

Drawing his best friend Laura as part of the relationship circle activity he told how,

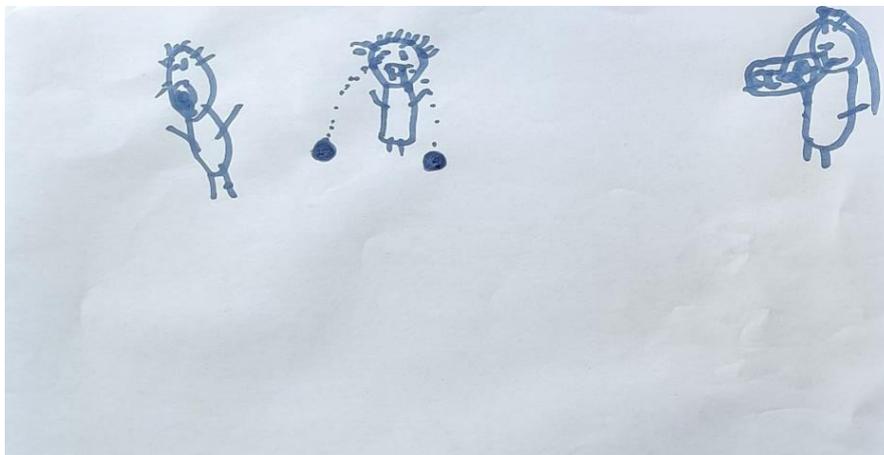
*"I'm gonna do her very cute. She's really cute" (907)*

This 'cuteness' appeared to be what drew Bob to Laura's friendship and was the part of her character and personality he adored the most. Over and above teachers, it was Laura Bob would turn to for support in the classroom and in the playground to help him up if he were hurt or sad.

**4.3.4.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Meanness and Being Picked On.** Conversely, Bob had a very clear idea about what somebody who did not feel like they belonged in school would look like, as shown below in Figure 20.

**Figure 20**

*Bob's Depiction of a Person in his School Who Does Not Feel Like they Belong*



Referring to the person on the left, Bob described how,

*“[He’s] sticking his tongue out” (610)*

For Bob, this gesture appeared to epitomise unkindness. So much so, he depicted the child in the middle with tears streaming from his face and reasoned this was because,

*“Somebody [was] being mean to him” (607)*

Also in Bob’s picture was a teacher and she is seen shouting ‘stop’. In this way, Bob appears to equate the teacher’s presence with a position of authority, and he believed that she had the power to halt the unkind behaviours.

As well as representing negative experiences of belonging through drawing, Bob also chose to use Lego® and figures to represent his constructions. He acted out a fight scene between three characters and this dissociation appeared easier for him than speaking about his own experiences.

### **Figure 21**

*Bob’s Lego Model of a Person who Does not Feel Like They Belong in His School*



He described how,

*“He’s [the person seated] telling the teacher that these two brothers are picking on him” (456)*

Not only were they using unkind language, but the two figures pictured without heads were also being physically aggressive to the boy.

*“Hello, we’re taller than you. I’ll stand on your head and punch you away (.) punch you away” (440)*

In this way, Bob appeared to associate negative feelings of belonging with being on the receiving end of physical violence and verbal abuse. His reference to size was noteworthy, and the positioning of the brothers on a raised block may be associated with increased power and kudos.

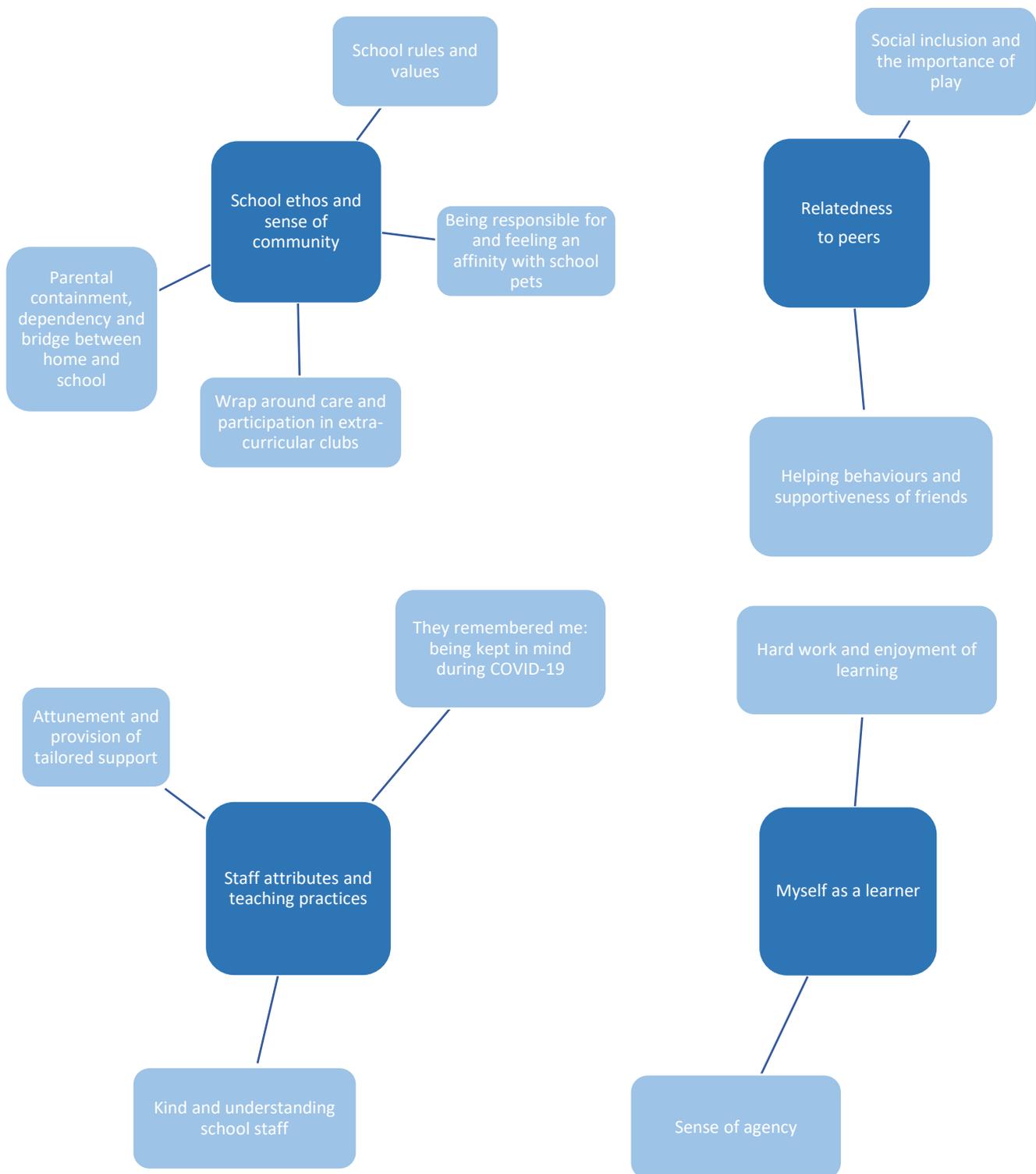
It was unclear however whether these experiences were reflective of Bob’s own experiences in school. The realness and detail within the interactions suggests that perhaps this was something Bob had indeed experienced himself, however.

#### **4.4 Patterns Across Cases**

Once the analysis had been completed for each of the cases, the researcher looked for commonalities across cases, through reviewing the subordinate themes, as well as returning back to the individual participant transcripts themselves. Where a theme was present in two or more participant transcripts these themes were reviewed and new themes were constructed. See Appendix AA for a table of patterns across cases. A discussion of the themes which constitute the superordinate themes is given below.

**Figure 22**

*Thematic Map of Final Superordinate and Subordinate Themes*



#### ***4.4.1 Superordinate Theme 1: School Ethos and Sense of Community***

All of the participants alluded to the culture and ethos of the school as being instrumental in fostering a positive SOSB.

**4.4.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1: School Rules and Values.** Three of the participants demonstrated a good understanding of their school rules and shared them eloquently in their accounts. Susie, Kitty and Lily all told how being kind was important and this appeared to be a rule they themselves aspired to follow. Consistent with a value led education system, for Susie and Lily especially, their school rules had moral underpinnings.

*“Do as you are done by” (Susie, 693)*

*“... treat others as you would be treated, that’s a golden rule” (Lily, 933)*

Rules appeared to confer a sense of safety for the participants, enhanced further by the responsiveness of staff in dealing with incidents. This is encapsulated in Lily’s account and by her construal of adults as ‘protectors and fixers’. It was unclear whether these rules had been drawn up in conjunction with the children, but the confidence with which they spoke about them suggests that they may have been involved in their construction.

All the girls in their recital of the rules told of the behaviours that were disparaged in their schools and it was these behaviours which were associated with their constructions of a negative SOSB. For Susie however, knowing that she would always be afforded a second chance was a core part of her school experience.

*“I always have another chance” (Susie, 513)*

Furthermore, it was the inclusive ethos of Kitty’s school in particular and the values they instilled within her which helped her to feel like she was an important member of the school community and enabled her to see differences in herself and others positively.

#### 4.4.1.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Wrap Around Care and Participation in

**Extracurricular Clubs.** All three of the girls told how they had opportunities to attend a wide variety of different clubs run by their schools. Susie valued attending mindfulness club and a running club, whereas Lily and Kitty valued attending afterschool clubs and holiday clubs.

For Lily and Kitty however, what appeared more important was the opportunity to spend time with the other children and be involved in the camaraderie.

*“We make fun of Mr. Williamson... sometimes we call him Mrs. Williamson!” (Lily, 980)*

Although clubs were important, interestingly, Kitty recognised how attending for only a few sessions did not connote belonging and alluded to the need for more sustained attendance.

*“... I haven't really been there lots [after school club] so I don't think I would belong in there” (Kitty, 122)*

Moreover, there was a collective wish for the participants to attend a greater number of clubs. Susie would like to return to choir club and Lily spoke about wanting to attend breakfast club.

*“Also sometimes in the mornings they still do breakfast club and I've been wanting to go there but Daddy says no” (Lily, 960)*

Lily's father's prohibition was a source of sadness for her and there was an apparent 'fear of missing out'. Knowing that other children were a part of this small breakfast club sub-community and that she was not appeared to incite feelings of disappointment and frustration.

#### 4.4.1.3 Subordinate Theme 3: Being Responsible for and Feeling an Affinity with

**School Pets.** All four participants referred to animals in their accounts, but it was Kitty and

Susie who spoke positively about their own lived experiences of having pets in school. The benefits of having pets in school appeared to be threefold. Firstly, the children valued looking after the welfare of the animals and holding responsibilities including feeding, grooming and taking them for walks.

*“I take Merlin around the school running track” (Susie, 1001)*

Secondly, the children valued the calming influence and the companionship of the animals.

*“I love animals because they make me feel calm and happy and not alone basically”*

*(Kitty, 1136)*

In this way, the animals appeared to provide not only love and connection but also solace during times of difficulty. Kitty recognised the therapeutic benefit of spending time with animals and was left feeling bereft when the rabbits sadly passed away. Similarly, for Susie, it was the social time and bonding with Doug and Merlin she delighted in the most.

Thirdly, looking after the animals was an experience commonly shared with a peer.

*“I do things with them and with a helper and yeah that was really nice” (Kitty, 1135)*

Animals in this way also facilitated the social interactions through joint working with others.

**4.4.1.4 Subordinate Theme 4: Parental Containment, Dependency and Bridge Between Home and School.** All four of the participants spoke fondly about their parents and the role that they had in supporting them with their schooling. During the relationship circle activity, all of the children placed their parents in the innermost circle and named them first as the people who supported them most.

Lily and Kitty saw their parents and carers as providing them with emotional support and credited them as able to contain their big feelings and emotions through love and kindness.

*“[Mummy] gives me cuddles when I need it and can make me stop cry” (Lily, 1397)*

When upset by something that had happened at school, both Lily and Kitty told with confidence how they knew their parents could be depended on and would be able to sort out any misunderstandings by making direct contact with the school.

*“Mummy gets on the phone and tells the teachers off” (Kitty, 688)*

*“[Mummy would] ring the school” (Lily, 1109)*

For both girls, this was because they felt their parents understood them incomparably. In this way, parents acted as advocates for the children and their needs.

All participants recognised how their parents also provided them with academic support to enable them to access the curriculum more effectively.

*“[Mummy helps with homework] quite a lot” (Lily, 1123)*

*“... she [Mum] helps me with things I don't understand” (Kitty, 819)*

This collaborative working was noted to be helpful by the participants and opportunities for pre-teaching and relearning at home was welcomed by the participants. This appeared to be a necessary pre-requisite to help them to bridge their learning and further motivated them to want to do well.

#### ***4.4.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Relatedness to Peers***

All of the participants spoke about their peers and feeling related to and included as part of a peer group was instrumental to their SOSB.

**4.4.2.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Social Inclusion and the Importance of Play.** The physical playground environment was important to Kitty and Susie's play experiences, and

they told of the large equipment they enjoyed playing on. Lily was also able to offer ideas on how to make the physical playground environment even more fun.

*“... when Covid didn’t happen there was like this little area which was like a mini assault course and there was like these climbing things and there was monkey bars and ropes” (Kitty, 323)*

*“A trampoline... and a slide in the field, no I meant a swing” [How to improve school] (Lily, 1356)*

Whilst Kitty acknowledged the impact that Covid had on her play experiences, she also noticed how on her return to school, play was prioritised by her teachers.

*“... one day I was able to go back, not working but playing, just doing activities” (Kitty, 1628)*

This is suggestive of a school environment whereby pupil well-being and reconnection is prized as part of a holistic education system.

Synonymous with speaking about feeling like they belonged in school was feeling socially included and having somebody with whom they could interact with socially at breaktimes. Curiously, larger team games and activities appeared to be most prized.

*“[We play] football” (Bob, 648)*

*“... we did the conga around the playground and everybody was joining in and basically everyone of the playground was joining in” (Kitty, 1532)*

Conversely, when the participants did not have somebody to play with in school, it was these exclusionary practices that the participants attributed to negative experiences of belonging.

*“... because once... I was upset and everyone basically kept on playing and didn't really notice me and I felt like I didn't belong and I was basically invisible” (Kitty, 423)*

Kitty's description of being invisible is particularly powerful and demonstrates the emotional gravitas that feeling socially excluded can have on one's self perception and a person's experiences of belonging. Although meanness and unkindness featured as part of the other children's conceptualisations, Kitty was the only participant to describe feeling alone. Her use of the fronted adverbial 'once' however, suggests that this was atypical of her experiences.

#### **4.4.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Helping Behaviours and Supportiveness of**

**Friends.** All four of the participants included friends in their relationship circle and were able to share details of how their friends, not just peers or acquaintances helped them in school. Kitty spoke philosophically about what having friends meant to her.

*“... being friends is an important role to be, to have in life really” (Kitty, 808)*

The participants saw their friends as providers of physical help and support in the playground. Both Bob and Susie articulated how their friends would help them up if they had fallen.

*“And he helps me [her friend Harrison] if I fall over” (Susie, 983)*

*“She'd [his friend Laura] help me up” (Bob, 1144)*

These helping behaviours were also true of the participants' friends within the classroom. Providing them with academic support when they were finding something challenging was embraced by Kitty and Bob.

*“... they understand what what like I struggles with and stuff” (Kitty, 1518)*

*R: "Who in the classroom helps you learn the most"?*

*B: "My friends" (Bob, 722)*

For Kitty, it was more about her friends understanding her struggles, but for Bob it was about physically helping him with his learning. It was interesting that Bob chose his friends above his teachers and his friends appeared to be the ones with whom he had the closest relationships with, in school.

#### ***4.4.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Staff Attributes and Teaching Practices***

With the exception of Bob, all of the participants had very assured ideas about the ways their teachers and support staff helped them in school and the distinctive qualities their favourite teachers possessed.

##### **4.4.3.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Kind Natured and Understanding School Staff.**

Kindness and understanding were the two most commonly cited attributes that the children liked about the staff in their schools and this appeared to help them to feel safe, secure and accepted wholeheartedly without judgement.

*"Yeah, she's so kind and she understands me so well" (describing her class teacher, Miss P) (Kitty, 1483)*

*"She's very kind" (describing her class teacher) (Susie, 1539)*

These qualities were not associated with any educational hierarchy or management structure, but instead spanned the whole school unit. Given kindness was identified as one of the school rules, it is perhaps unsurprising that this was a quality that the girls looked for in staff members simultaneously.

Where staff members did not possess these qualities of kindness and understanding however, this provoked negative appraisals.

*“Miss Hatton is not important to me because she’s **really** scary” (Kitty, 1471)*

Miss Hatton’s lack of understanding of Kitty’s needs is interpreted by her as scary, and the emphasis on the word ‘*really*’ highlights the potency of this. This, she believed, was in part due to FASD being a hidden disability as her needs were not as immediately obvious compared with those with visible or physical disabilities.

#### **4.4.3.2 Subordinate Theme 2: They Remembered Me: Being Kept in Mind**

**During COVID-19.** Kitty, Lily and Susie offered their own views and thoughts on the COVID-19 pandemic and reflected on their homeschooling experiences. There was a collective gratitude towards their teachers and the innovative lengths they went to remain in touch during these unprecedented times, through personal driveway visits, Zoom calls and emails.

Irrespective of the medium of connection however, what appeared most important to the participants was that their teachers had remembered them, and they had not been forgotten.

*“Yeah it was good they remembered me” (Lily, 1271)*

*“[I was] happy because I knew I wasn’t alone like the teachers hadn’t just forgotten me” (Kitty, 1665)*

All of the participants had historical experiences of the care system, which is perhaps why being kept in mind was so important given the possible transiency of adults in their early lives.

#### 4.4.3.3 Subordinate Theme 3: Attunement and Provision of Tailored Support.

Where teaching staff had a good understanding of the participants' needs, they appeared able to provide them with more tailored support.

Three of the participants spoke about their teaching assistants taking them out of the lessons. This appeared to have a co-regulatory purpose, as well as to support with challenges with attention and concentration.

*“She [Miss Church, TA] took me out when I was angry” (Kitty, 1299)*

*“She [Mrs. Bolton, TA] takes me out... for a walk” (Susie, 1562)*

As well as this, the children recognised how they were often taken out of the class for intervention groups.

*“I used to go to this maths group and we did year 4 work when I was in Year 5 coz I struggled with it” (Kitty, 1508)*

*“[I go on] the space hopper and the wobble board and a ball where you lay your tummy and wiggle on it” (Lily, 1002)*

Whilst all of the participants viewed this extra help and support favourably rather than as exclusionary, Lily was very clear as to the reasons why she left the class.

*“But it's not because I've been naughty it's because maybe because it's too loud” (Lily, 1208)*

Lily's apparent need to assert this may indicate that she is conscious of how this external intervention is viewed.

Within the classroom, having access to a Chromebook and interactive resources on the whiteboard helped Bob with his learning and Susie valued her TA sitting alongside her.

Similarly, Lily valued her TA writing things on a whiteboard for her and thus lessening the demands of the task appeared to be what was important for the participants.

#### ***4.4.4 Superordinate Theme 4: Myself as a learner***

All of the participants demonstrated insight into their strengths and needs and what it was about them as independent and agentic learners that helped them to feel academically integrated.

**4.4.4.1 Subordinate Theme 1: Hard Work and Enjoyment of Learning.** Three of the participants spoke about the importance of working hard in school and there was a sense of self drive and determination amongst the participants to want to do well academically.

Synonymous with hard work appeared to be the accolades and rewards the participants associated with doing well.

*“... they put their hand up and they’re the only one that’s like right and then they feel good about that” (Kitty, 595)*

Whilst getting the answers the right was sufficient for Kitty to feel good, being praised for their work was also important to Bob and Lily, but for Bob in the way of ticks and Lily in the form of stickers. This suggests that as well as being intrinsically motivated, striving towards external recognition and validation was also important for these children.

For Bob and Susie, it was their love of learning which meant they rated their sense of belonging as 10/10. Susie told of a how she had recently enjoyed learning about Remembrance Day.

*“... I enjoy learning about Poppies” (Susie, 840)*

For Kitty however, rather than the subject material, it was the practices and mannerisms of her teachers that facilitated her enjoyment of learning.

*“[Mr. Donaldson] taught us once and he’s really nice. He’s really funny as well. Um, Miss Parker is really enthusiastic. Whenever she does something, whenever we’re working she makes it funny” (Kitty, 1478)*

**4.4.4.2 Subordinate Theme 2: Sense of Agency.** Beyond having an insight into their own strengths and needs, Lily and Kitty both demonstrated their sense of agency in relation to getting their emotional and safety needs met in school.

*“I ask as well [to go to Mrs. Nate’s office] and Mrs. Fraser says yes” (Lily, 901)*

*“I’m allowed to go on the school carpet and just relax coz there’s like a calming down basket” (Kitty, 1262)*

For Lily, this was through asking for time-out in Mrs. Nate’s office, and the frequency with which she visits Mrs. Nate suggests that her requests were often met affirmatively. For Kitty, she was able to independently access the calming resources when she needed them, reinforcing her capacity as an agentic and self-regulated learner. This was demonstrated further in her own self-awareness.

*“... I’m noticing that it’s helping me (Kitty, 1267)*

Kitty had ideas about areas of schooling she wanted to work on, and she appeared determined to make the changes herself.

*“... there’s things I need to learn on writing like um capital letters in the right places” (Kitty, 1502)*

Her use of the word 'I' suggests that this is something she herself wants to develop, further demonstrating her intrinsic motivation and commitment to her schooling, as well as her belief in her own capacity for progress. Moreover, Susie in her account spoke of her targets and demonstrated an awareness of her learning goals and objectives. Moreover, both girls also revealed in the responsibilities they were given in their respective classrooms.

At times, as mentioned in previous themes, the participants recognised their need for help and all of the participants appeared to be receptive of the support staff offered. Susie, Kitty and Lily used language such as 'with', 'next to', 'helping' and 'support' in their narratives when describing the support of staff, suggesting they provided an enabling environment of collaboration and promoted their metacognition in the learning process.

Both Lily and Kitty were able to offer insight into aspects of schooling which they thought would enhance their SOSB.

*"Oh yeah, headphones. I'd like it to be quiet" (Lily, 1363)*

*"Um, for a lot of people to understand me more, like more people to understand"*

*(Kitty, 1588)*

Lily was able to offer her suggestions based on a recent meeting she had been involved in at her school. Agency, having a voice and being encouraged to be autonomous in their studies was henceforth inadvertently esteemed by the participants.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data, including how the individual and collective group themes were identified. Superordinate and subordinate themes for each of the four participants were first detailed and the researcher offered an interpretation of the participants' lived experiences. The final themes were then

displayed and the themes discussed briefly in turn. The final chapter, Chapter Five, will discuss these themes in relation to the existing literature base.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter aims to provide a reflective synthesis of the research findings presented in Chapter Four. Connections will be made to the research presented within the literature review, as well as to the wider literature base and theory pertaining to school belonging. A critique of the study's strengths and limitations will be offered, and consideration will be given to the implications of this research. The researcher will conclude by offering her own reflections and will delineate possible areas for future research within this domain.

### **5.2 Synthesis of the Research Findings**

This explorative research study sought to answer three research questions:

1. How is school belonging experienced by children with a diagnosis of FASD?
2. What helps children with an FASD diagnosis to feel as though they belong in school?
3. Which factors do children with an FASD diagnosis think would strengthen their sense of school belonging (SOSB)?

The themes which emerged from the cross-case analyses will be mapped onto the individual research questions and discussed in light of relevant psychological theory and research.

#### ***5.2.1 Research Question 1: How is School Belonging Experienced by Children with a Diagnosis of FASD?***

All four of the children with FASD felt like they belonged in their respective schools. Three of the children rated their SOSB as 10/10, with only Kitty awarding a less than perfect score of 7/8 out of 10 to describe her lived experiences. Kitty's slightly lower rating of belonging was commensurate to the times where she felt alone, misunderstood, or was treated

meanly by her peers, but she reasoned her positive experiences outweighed those that were negative. She was adamant nonetheless that she still belonged in school.

All of the participants were able to offer descriptions about what a positive and negative SOSB meant to them. A negative SOSB was associated with loneliness, meanness and unkind behaviours, whereas a positive SOSB was dichotomously associated with feelings of happiness amongst the participants. This is consistent with the findings of Baumeister and Leary (1995) who posit children with a positive SOSB typically exude higher levels of happiness, elation, and tranquility in school.

For the children in the present study, their schools were places where they felt they were 'meant to be' and belonging was conceptualised by being included fully in all aspects of school life. Most important appeared to be having opportunities to share in these relational experiences with others. There was a strong sense within their narratives that the children felt both academically and socially integrated because of the inclusive practices of their schools and the similarities they saw between themselves and their peers. This was in contrast however to the findings of the adolescents and adults in Knorr and McIntyre (2016) and Salmon and Buetow's (2012) research (discussed within the literature review). Because of their FASD diagnoses, these participants saw themselves as different to their peers and consequently, this was associated with feelings that they did not 'fit in' within school.

Kitty contrastingly offered a distinct perspective and alluded to how belonging was not about fitting in with the majority but was about feeling accepted and understood as an individual in her own right. In this way, she appeared to have a more nuanced understanding of belonging, consistent with her superior cognition and language skills. She spoke philosophically about the importance of celebrating difference and diversity and was an advocate for herself as well as others with FASD. This was consistent with the findings of the single young adult

participant in Brenna et al.'s (2017) research who offered a unique conceptualisation of 'ability within disability'. Rather than feeling pressured to change to fit in with others, for Kitty, belonging was about presenting her authentic self and the school system adapting and shifting to accommodate her needs. This was an interesting distinction, exemplified also by Brown (2010). She illustrates how "fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand doesn't require us to *change* who we are; it requires us to *be* who we are" (p.25). Although 'fitting in' is often a term conflated with school belonging, this research elucidates how 'fitting in' and 'belonging' may be distinct and dichotomous constructs that should be used interchangeably with caution.

There exists a paucity of research which has explored the belongingness experiences of CYP with SEND. The research that does exist, overwhelmingly from the secondary population, appears to suggest that individuals with SEND typically experience belonging more negatively than their peer groups (Porter & Ingram, 2021). The overall strong SOSB found in this study, refutes these findings, but can be considered congruent with the findings of Midgen et al. (2019), who evidenced that many young children with SEND when asked do indeed feel as though they belong in school.

The present study highlighted four eco-systemic superordinate themes which emerged from the cross case analyses: school ethos and sense of community, relatedness to peers, staff attributes and teaching practices, and myself as a learner. Within these themes were a number of subordinate themes which related to proponents of school which helped the children to feel as though they belong in school. These will now be explored independently under research question two.

## ***5.2.2 Research Question 2: What Helps Children with an FASD Diagnosis to Feel as Though they Belong in School?***

**5.2.2.1 School Rules and Values.** Participants placed great emphasis on the rules which governed their respective schools. Rules were seen as applicable to all members of the school community and were perceived by the participants as having a helping function. Interestingly, the participants in this research especially valued knowing what would happen if these rules were breached. Indeed, pupil perception of fair and consistent disciplinary strategies has been linked in the literature with school connectedness (Libbey, 2004; Brown & Evans, 2002). Moreover, teacher responsiveness to unkind behaviours appeared to proffer feelings of safety and psychological containment amongst the participants. This is consistent with a wealth of research which postulates feeling safe is a necessary pre-requisite to SOSB (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Allen & Kern, 2017; Einberg et al., 2015).

Participants especially valued kindness and respect, with schools appearing to promote a whole school culture and ethos of belonging through their value based inclusive practices, which permeated school life. This is consistent with the findings of Dimitrellou (2017), who found a positive association between a school culture underwritten by inclusivity and perceived SOSB amongst pupils with Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) needs. In the present research, Susie in particular recognised how she often found it hard to regulate her behaviours and especially valued a school community where mistakes were seen as learning opportunities. She was readily afforded the opportunity to quickly make amends through a focus on restorative relational repair. Indeed, where schools adopt evidenced based relational approaches such as Emotion Coaching (Gottman et al., 1996), research suggests teacher-pupil relationships are preserved, which is essential for the maintenance of SOSB (Rose et al., 2015). This finding however differed significantly to the experiences of the young adults with

FASD in Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) research who told of their behaviours being met with a behaviourist rhetoric of punitive, disciplinary strategies.

#### **5.2.2.2 Wrap Around Care and Participation in Extra-Curricular School Clubs.**

Participants spoke fondly about their involvement in a wide variety of extra-curricular school clubs, and there exists in the literature a wealth of evidence supporting the positive correlation between club membership and pupil SOSB (Allen et al., 2018; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). SOSB has been evidenced to be positively associated with the number of extra-curricular clubs a pupil is affiliated with (Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Libbey, 2004), which may account for why Lily was so intent on extending her repertoire to also include breakfast club. Although the participants in this research gave some detail of the activities they enjoyed, what was most esteemed was the opportunities to maintain connections with friends and staff members. This is consistent with research which shows how club attendance has the capacity to mitigate against feelings of peer group alienation (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). The findings of this research are also consistent with those of Midgen et al. (2019) who found that being included in extra-curricular clubs, as well as school trips was the second most important factor influencing belongingness for CYP with SEND. This provides further evidence for the importance of relationships, as well as highlighting the importance of whole school inclusive practices in providing fair and equitable opportunities for all.

#### **5.2.2.3 Being Responsible for and Feeling and Affinity with School Pets.**

A novel and unexpected finding from this research was the prominence of school pets in the participants' narratives. Therapy dogs and reading education assistant dogs, such as those Susie described, are becoming increasingly popular and the effectiveness of animal assisted interventions are amassing a robust evidence base (Brelsford et al., 2017). For the children in this research however, it was not the educational benefits of the animals they described as

important, but the companionship, affection, and the opportunities to share in these responsibilities with their friends which was most prized.

Although the impact of school pets on children's SEMH is well-documented in the literature (O'Haire et al., 2013; Kortschal & Ortbauer, 2003), only one study has explicitly explored the link between animals and SOSB, capitulating this as a comparatively novel research finding. Miller (2018) found that animal assisted activities had a positive impact on pupil SOSB. Consistent with Baumeister and Leary's (1995) 'Belongness Hypothesis', she postulates that animals can be seen as mimicking the relational role of humans. This is interesting, as in the present research, all four participants included animals within their relationship circles, suggesting the participants did not discriminate between human and non-human relationships. Furthermore, stroking animals within trusting relationships has been evidenced to release the hormone oxytocin, which is associated with feelings of comfort, safety, and relaxation (Beetz, 2012). Given that disrupted attachment relationships are common in children with FASD (Blackburn et al., 2012), school pets may provide opportunities for reparation of possible insecure attachment experiences and in turn bolster capacity to form lasting and meaningful human connections. Already in the UK there exists one animal charity, FASD dogs UK, which suggests the wider therapeutic impact of animals for this population is beginning to be recognised.

**5.2.2.4 Parental Containment, Dependency and Bridge between Home and School.** The children in this research appraised their relationships with their parents and carers positively and saw their involvement in their school careers as central to their belongingness experiences. It is widely accepted in the literature that parental involvement in is associated with more auspicious academic outcomes (Stewart, 2008), however there is only a small body of research which also links parental involvement with socio-emotional

outcomes, namely school belonging (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Where families are involved in their children's schooling, pupils are more likely to identify positively with their schools and teaching staff, and report feeling more accepted by the school community as a collective whole (Wickery, 2010; Osterman, 2000).

Parents and carers were seen by the children in the present research as providers of emotional support and containment. The views of the children in this research corroborate the views of the young adults with FASD in Duquette et al.'s (2006) and Knorr and McIntyre's (2016) research, who especially valued the emotional supportiveness of their parents. As well this, the participants valued parental academic support and involvement in their learning.

Similarly, this was consistent with the findings of Stade et al. (2012) and Duquette et al. (2006), who recognised how parents of pupils with FASD helped them to feel more academically integrated in school, through supporting them with homework and extra tuition. Osterman (2000) recognises how parental involvement and advocacy can facilitate teacher knowledge of adolescent learning needs, and this is particularly pertinent for this population, where educator knowledge of FASD is often mediocre at best (Duquette & Stodel, 2005).

Where schools and parents communicate effectively about pupils, this clarifies the roles of different stakeholders and gives the potential for parents to bridge the support for school learning at home (Stewart, 2008).

**5.2.2.5 Social Inclusion and the Importance of Play.** Socially, all of the participants described their enjoyment of breaktimes and the games and activities they delighted in with their friends. Article 31 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989) posits that all children have the right to play and the abundance of social, emotional, physical and health benefits associated with play has long been known (Lester & Russell, 2010). Playtime appeared to serve a dual purpose for the participants. Firstly, it satisfied the relational needs for these children, and there exists a

strong link between positive social relations with peers and SOSB within the literature (Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Cemalcilar, 2010; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Secondly, feeling included in games or interactions appeared to facilitate the participants' sub-group membership within the wider school community. This was true also of the findings of Smedley (2011), who found being included in team games such as football was positively associated with SOSB amongst boys with literacy difficulties.

Children with learning difficulties however have been evidenced to be at greater risk of loneliness and peer rejection within school (Hall & McGregor, 2000) and this is associated with poorer belongingness experiences. This was common of the experiences of CYP with FASD in the literature review (Knorr & McIntyre, 2016; Salmon & Buetow, 2012; Stade et al., 2011) who felt rejected by their peers and consequently as though they did not 'fit in'. Interestingly, these experiences were largely true of adolescents and older adults, and it is important to consider the very divergent playground environments and social opportunities which may be available to the different age groups. Only Kitty in the present research told of feeling alone and isolated, but this was temporal and quickly resolved. This research thus provides positive support that social inclusion is achievable for CYP with SEND. It is important that children with FASD are supported to make these connections and have plentiful opportunities for play with their peers. However, given the small sample size, further research with this population of primary individuals is thus warranted.

**5.2.2.6 Helping Behaviours and Supportiveness of Friends.** As well as seeing their friends as people with whom they could have fun with, the participants valued the help and support of their friends. Although there was some reference to supporting them academically, this theme emerged mostly in reference to seeing their friends as providers of emotional support, or physical support when hurt. Kitty told of the advocacy behaviours of her peers in

relation to her FASD. Peer advocacy was a novel finding that has not before been addressed in the literature. There was a sense that these friendships were reciprocal or dyadic, with participants valuing qualities in their friendships that they also valued in themselves (and their teachers). Peer support is commonly cited as an important tenet in facilitating psychosocial connectedness within school, with peers instrumental in providing social and academic support (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Osterman, 2000; Wentzel, 1998). It is noteworthy however that much of the literature is confined to adolescence as this is a time where peer influence on behaviour and functioning becomes more dominant.

Despite this, the provision of helpful and supportive peers is less likely in children with learning difficulties. Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2000) found that primary aged children with learning difficulties did not experience a SOSB due to the lack of peer and teacher support they perceived available to them. The literature pertaining to friendships and peer support for CYP with FASD is mixed, but where peer support is available, as in the current research, their support is highly valued and contributory both to their academic and social integration experiences. This was especially true of the young adult with FASD in Brenna et al's. (2017) research who advocated for a peer sponsor system. Garmezy (1983) goes so far as saying that peer help and support is a protective factor that can mediate negative factors associated with at risk pupils, which is especially pertinent for this population.

**5.2.2.7 Kind Natured and Understanding School Staff.** Given the length of time children spend with the teachers across the school day, Kesner (2000) affirms that "... there is no other nonfamilial adult who is more significant in a child's life than his or her teacher" (p.134). The benefits of positive pupil-teacher relationships are abundant in the literature, with research suggesting that pupil-teacher relationships are the strongest predictors of pupil SOSB (Johnson, 2009; Garcia-Reed, 2007; Brewster & Bowen, 2004). For children with

SEND however, pupils typically experience more negative relationships with their teachers in comparison with their 'neurotypical' peers. For example, Murray and Greenberg (2001) found that children with learning disabilities reported lower levels of connectedness to school, in part due to their poorer perceived relationships with school staff. Although for Bob, his relationship with his teachers were seldom mentioned, Kitty, Lily and Susie all gave examples of positive relationships with a wide range of staff members. For the most part, relationships with teachers were experienced positively for this population, refuting the findings of Murray and Greenberg (2001).

Congruent with the participants' own values and self-appraisals, and the wider values of their respective schools, participants esteemed kindness in their teachers and support staff, with kind and understanding school staff emerging as a dominant theme in this research. Kindness pervaded descriptions of teacher voice, temperament as well as teacher actions, such as making special dispensations, or being given stickers or rewards. Where participants felt that their teachers understood them, listened to them and were empathetic to their needs, this was also associated with more positive pupil appraisals. This is consistent with the findings of Alder (2002) and Noddings (2005) who identified feeling listened to as one of the core tenets of a caring teacher. Contrariwise, where participants did not feel listened to or understood as was the case intermittently for Kitty, this was associated with a more negative SOSB. She saw it as her role and responsibility therefore to disseminate her knowledge and understanding of FASD. This was consistent with the actions of the young adult in Brenna et al's. (2017) research, although was a relatively novel finding here, given Kitty's young age. For the parents in Duquette and Stodel's (2005) research, they felt school was a more positive experience for their children where teachers were more versed in the complexities of FASD. What this highlights is the need for greater identification of need and more consistent understanding of FASD amongst professionals.

**5.2.2.8 They Remembered Me: Being Kept in Mind During COVID-19.** For the children in this research, being kept in mind emerged as a strong theme within participant accounts. This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which unexpectedly, and abruptly disrupted the school experiences of all of the children involved. Children valued opportunities to stay connected with staff during this time, and their perceived SOSB did not appear to be affected by their school absence during the nationwide school closures.

A high proportion of CYP exposed to alcohol in utero are often care experienced (Astley et al., 2002). Many of these children also experience high levels of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as trauma, abuse or neglect (Coggins et al., 2007). The impact of developmental trauma and childhood adversity is well documented in the literature and is known to lead to similar developmental challenges as those seen within the foetal alcohol spectrum, thus making the impact of ACEs and PAE complex to disentangle (Flannigan et al., 2021). The combined impact of PAE and postnatal adversity has been described often by researchers as conferring a ‘state of double jeopardy’ for already vulnerable individuals (Olson et al., 2009). This double jeopardy was recently expounded by Price (2019), who found that 77% of CYP in his sample of CYP aged between 4 and 16 years with FASD also had at least one ACE. Despite the many observable similarities pertaining to the impact of PAE and ACEs, where individuals present with history of dual exposures, he asserts that the provision of support should be primarily FASD informed, given PAE accounts for a greater proportion of the variance in presentation.

In the current research, three of the participants had been adopted from local authority care and one participant was cared for by foster parents. Children with FASD have been evidenced to be more vulnerable to experiencing attachment difficulties given the higher preponderance of early caregiving instabilities seen amongst this population (Blackburn et

al., 2012). This current superordinate theme in particular may henceforth reflect the current and historical care experiences of the participants. Whilst details of the participants' early life experiences were not known, two of the participants within the present study had a known diagnosis of Attachment Disorder. Geddes (2006) asserts that, "the vulnerability for these pupils lies in the challenges of separation and the fear of being 'lost from mind'" (p.102). The impact of COVID-19 presented as a very real fear of being forgotten for the children in this research, as demonstrated in their narratives. Educators are often seen as a secure base for children with attachment difficulties, especially during times of psychological distress (Bombèr, 2018). Moreover, relationships with trustworthy adults in childhood, have been shown to mitigate some of these adversities associated with unsatisfactory attachment experiences (Werner, 1993). Amidst the uncertainties of school closures, it was the teachers and support staff who provided constancy for the participants. Indeed, newly published research highlights how Teaching Assistants were the "unsung heroes" of the pandemic (Moss et al., 2021). These findings are therefore consistent with wider research pertaining to pupil-teacher attachment that has highlighted the importance of adult relationships as an important contributor to a pupils' SOSB (Watson & Ecken, 2003; Pianta, 1992). This research thus supposes that the efforts of the teachers to maintain their connection and virtual proximity in the absence of physical closeness during 'lockdown' was a way of them maintaining this attachment relationship and thwarting participant fears of being forgotten.

**5.2.2.9 Attunement and Provision of Tailored Support.** Where teachers had a good understanding of the participants' needs, it followed that participants perceived them as more adept at offering more individualised support. For both Bob and Kitty, they benefitted from having adaptations made to lessen the demands on writing for example. Pupil preference for TA support amongst children with FASD was consistent with the findings of Duquette and Stodel (2005). They found that where teachers adapted teaching and learning pedagogies to

reflect individual need, this was seen as contributory to perceptions of school success amongst pupils with FASD and their adoptive parents.

Participants especially valued being taken out for movement breaks as well as being given the opportunities to participate in a wide range of intervention groups. Although research suggests that where TA's deliver high quality, evidence based interventions, this is associated with on average a 3 or 4 month improvement in attainment (Sharples et al., 2015), little is known about the impact of external class learning on pupils SOSB. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), humans have an innate need for competence, autonomy and relatedness and where these needs are satisfied within the school environment, pupils have a higher level of intrinsic motivation to learn and engage (Goldman et al., 2017). It could be conjectured that the differentiation available within these intervention groups went some way towards fulfilling this need for academic self-competence and this in turn boosted pupil enjoyment of and willingness to engage with the support. Alternatively, it may be that the additional time spent in close proximity with staff members fostered greater feelings of relatedness.

It is noteworthy however, that whilst all of the participants enjoyed their time away from the class, Lily was worried about how this was perceived by her peers and the possible stigmatisation associated with additional support. Within the literature, pupils with FASD present with mixed feelings towards receiving specialist instruction and being educated in specialist classes. Academically, participants appear to appreciate the curricular accessibility, although socially, this appeared to act as a hindrance to their social acceptance (Duquette et al., 2007; 2006).

**5.2.2.10 Hard Work and Enjoyment of Learning.** As well as enjoying the social times within school, participants enjoyed being in the classroom. Despite acknowledging

areas of learning that were more challenging for them, participants were motivated to want to do well. An enjoyment of learning was consistent with the findings of the young adult with FASD in Brenna et al's. (2017) research. Similarly, hard work was associated also with willingness to persist with their education for the adults with FASD in Duquette et al's. (2006) research. These findings however did not support those of Knorr and McIntyre (2017) and Salmon and Buetow (2012), who found that difficulties accessing the school curriculum amongst CYP and adults with FASD impinged on their experiences of schooling and led to a proliferation of challenging behaviours and social avoidance.

According to SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), academic motivation is contingent upon cognitions pertaining to goal setting and beliefs that these goals are realisable. Where individuals feel academically motivated (Allen et al., 2018) and demonstrate idealist teacher behaviours, they are often preferred or seen as more popular by their teachers (Davis, 2006), and this is associated with a positive SOSB. Interestingly, where pupils feel connected with school, they are more likely to be motivated within the classroom (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013), have a more positive attitude to learning and higher levels of engagement (Osterman, 2000). This suggests that there exists a bidirectional relationship between academic motivation and SOSB (Allen et al., 2018).

Further to this, the participants appeared to have internalised the notion that trying their best was important in school. This was borne out in reference to teamwork and working with support staff to better understand tasks. This finding supports the conclusions of Korpershoek et al. (2020) who found that where students perceived their classroom as mastery goal orientated and were positive about the overall classroom climate, they also felt more strongly related to school. Moreover, this has been linked with more favourable perceptions of competency (Sekreter, 2016).

**5.2.2.11 Sense of Agency.** The final theme to emerge from the data was pupil sense of agency. As well as demonstrating an insight into their own strengths and needs, participants valued taking responsibility for their own learning and need for self-regulation. They were able to access calming resources, or safe spaces in school when they needed to, and this was actively encouraged by kind and understanding school staff. The findings of the present research support those of Duquette and Stodel (2005), who found that CYP with FASD valued having a teacher who helped them to self-regulate and manage their behaviour. Moreover, access to a resource room was also cited as important in helping with self-regulation in Brenna et al.'s. (2017) research. Frydenberg et al. (2009) posit that where secondary school pupils are engaged in productive coping and are able to successfully regulate their behavioural and emotional impulses, this is positively related to well-being and to a lesser extent SOSB. However, for CYP with FASD, much of the research within the literature review demonstrated how behavioural and emotional regulation needs were not well understood and often they were met with punitive disciplinary strategies and exclusive practices (Knorr & McIntyre, 2016; Stadel et al., 2012).

Many of the pupils in the present research used the analogy or alluded to the importance of teamwork and stressed the significance of working *with* support staff. This allowed pupils to feel agentic in their learning and develop greater self-determination. This seemingly allowed pupils to view themselves more positively and having high self-esteem and self-efficacy (Faircloth, 2009; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004) has been linked with a positive SOSB, as has the presence of positive emotions including hope and optimism (Rechsly et al., 2008). For many CYP with FASD however, individuals often have very negative self-perceptions, present with low self-esteem and self-confidence, and see their FASD diagnoses negatively and as a barrier to their learning (Salmon & Buetow, 2011). The present research thus highlights the importance of creating an environment where CYP have opportunities to be

successful and are included in decisions about their support and learning if they are to feel as though they belong.

### ***5.2.3 Research Question 3: Which Factors do Children with an FASD Diagnosis Think Would Strengthen their Sense of School Belonging?***

All of the children were able to offer at least one idea about how their SOSB could be optimised. This ranged from aspiring to have more fun outdoor playground equipment, school guinea pigs to care for, headphones to dull extraneous classroom sounds, more friends, and for staff members to possess a more incisive understanding of FASD. Pupil suggestions therefore spanned a multitude of eco-systemic spheres, all of which were encompassed under the superordinate themes discussed in the previous section. Only one participant, Kitty, presented with small discrepancies between her actual and ideal SOSB, with the majority of participants articulating that their schools were optimally meeting their fundamental belonging needs. As such, participants offered little in the way of suggestions for improvement.

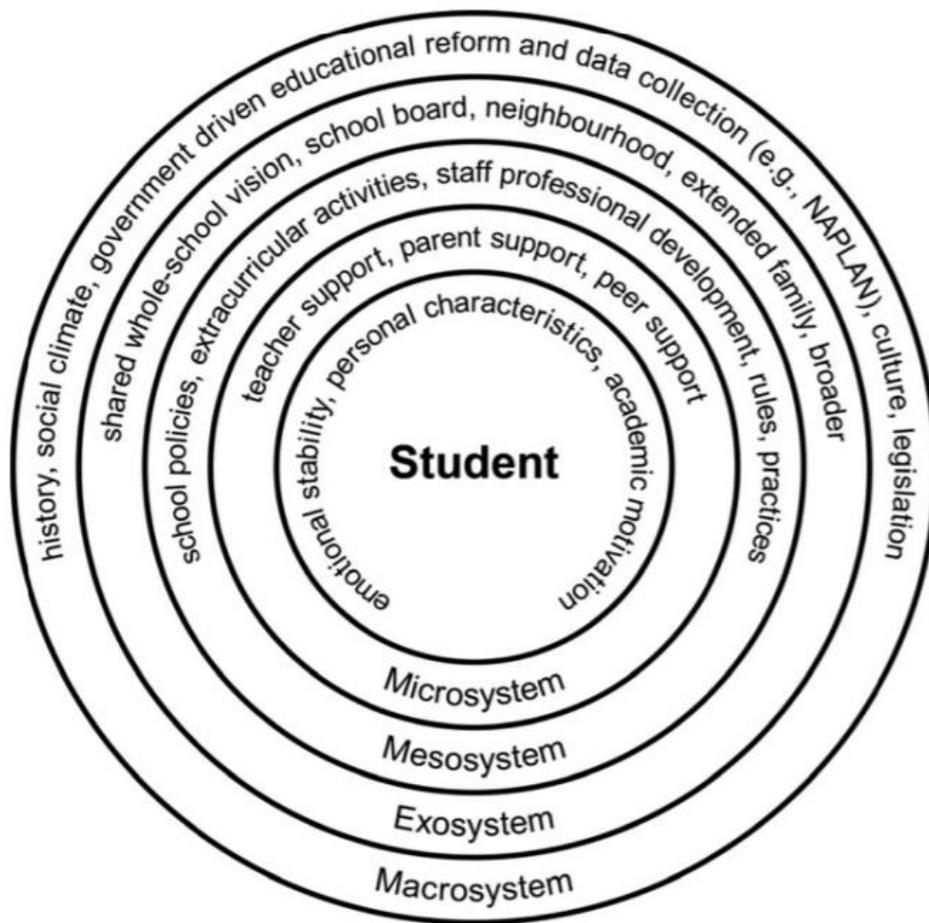
Given the overwhelmingly positive appraisals these pupils afforded their schools, there is lots to be learnt from what is already working and intervention efforts should focus on strengthening what helps, as discussed in section 5.2.2. Although children with FASD are considered a vulnerable population group, the findings of this research provide strong evidence for the importance of placing children at the centre of planning and decision making. Person-centred approaches advocate for the shift of the power differential from professionals to service users (DoH, 2010) and this research has demonstrated that when given an opportunity, children with FASD are able to articulate what is working well and offer suggestions about what they need. Schools may also benefit from using PCP methods to

build on what is already working well at the whole school level and consider their systemic visions for inclusivity and belongingness.

### 5.3. Socio-Ecological Framework of School Belonging

**Figure 23**

*Socio-Ecological Framework of Belonging*



The findings from this research provide support for Allen et al's. (2016) socio-ecological framework in explaining the factors influencing SOSB amongst primary age students with FASD. This suggests the framework has relevance for younger children, as well as those with SEND, populations with whom this model has not yet been applied in the

literature. As part of this section, the researcher will discuss the findings as they relate to the different layers of the ecosystem.

### ***5.3.1 Individual***

Participants demonstrated a commitment to their learning and presented as academically motivated. They liked receiving stickers, and praise for their efforts, as well as access to personalised learning programmes. Participants felt like they had a sense of agency and autonomy, were beginning to be able self-regulate or seek out avenues of support and demonstrated an insight into what helps them to be successful. Participants mostly had a positive self-concept and were able to identify personal character strengths, attributes, skills or talents they liked about themselves, as well as demonstrating their resilience both in relation to FASD and with managing educational changes and challenges.

### ***5.3.2 Microsystem***

Participants valued their relationships with staff members, as well as school pets. School staff mostly understood the participants, were kind, provided tailored resources, pastoral support and were attuned to participants needs. They could fix problems in school or provide solace away from the classroom. Friends provided peer support and stood with participants in solidarity when they were unfairly treated. They looked after the participants in the playground and were people with whom the participants could play and have fun with. Parents or carers bridged the two learning environments of home and school. They helped with homework or extra tuition, advocated for their children's rights, were dependable and responsive to need. They were problem solvers and conflict resolutioners, as well as providers of love and support.

### ***5.3.3 Mesosystem***

Participants demonstrated an awareness of the school rules. They saw the rules as relevant to everyone and enablers of safety and security. They valued a consistent approach to discipline and saw sanctions as fair and progressive. Participants had opportunities to attend extra-curricular activities, including school trips. There was a whole school culture of inclusivity, value and acceptance, with second chances and restorative practices inherent in the schools' ethos. Inclusive values permeated policy and practice at whole school level and filtered down in the classroom into the relationships between pupils as well as between staff and children.

### ***5.3.4 Exosystem and Macrosystem***

Although factors at the exosystem and macrosystem were not prominent enough in participant accounts to be included as a theme, participants spoke of the importance of grandparents, extended family members and respite carers. They included them with their relationship circles but did not overtly discuss their influence on SOSB. Participants attended clubs at the weekend and their home learning experiences were mandatory in light of government published COVID-19 legislation. Arguably however, children of primary age, are unlikely to be aware of many macrosystemic factors.

In sum, the findings suggest that what helps children with FASD to belong in school is influenced by a broad range of interrelated eco-systemic factors. Intervention efforts must be targeted at multiple layers of the system in order to be maximally effective in promoting or enhancing a positive SOSB. This shifts thinking away from viewing SOSB through a deficit, within child lens, towards thinking more systemically about how changes in the system may ameliorate a negative SOSB and promote inclusive practices.

## **5.4 Implications for EP Practice and Other School Based Professionals Working with CYP with FASD**

Given the educational vulnerability surrounding children with a history of PAE (Carpenter, 2011), it is likely that EPs will be regularly privileged with working with children from this population (Westrup, 2013). The findings of this research thus hold much relevance for EP practice as well as for other professionals who have an interest in providing educationally for this population. The views of CYP with FASD are seldom heard, but this research suggests that young, primary aged children with FASD have the capacity to share their views. Promoting the voices of CYP with SEND and keeping the child at the centre of any work is a core legislative and axiological component of EP practice (DfE, 2014) and EPs may benefit from having tools and techniques such as those used within this research, available to them as part of their toolkit when completing preventative or statutory assessment work.

The findings of this research are consistent with an eco-systemic conceptualisation of belonging (Allen et al., 2016). This has implications for the interventive efforts of EPs and school based or peripatetic professionals. EPs are well placed within their roles in LAs to work preventatively with different stakeholders across multiple levels of the eco-system. This includes working at the level of the individual child, relationally with parents, teachers and other key educators, as well at the whole school level (Allen et al., 2016).

At the mesosystemic or exosystemic level, EPs have the capacity to work systemically *with* schools as organisational change consultants. Inclusive practice is a priority for EPs (Hick, 2005) and thus EPs could feasibly use their skill set to think collectively with school leaders, governors, teaching staff, lunchtime supervisors and members of the school council about how to embed belongingness in school culture and ensure feelings of inclusion, value and

acceptance permeate all aspects of school life. Existing policies and practices could be adjusted under the guidance of EPs to further promote inclusivity for everyone and align with what CYP say they need from their schools. Based on this research, this might include thinking about how pupils with additional needs are meaningfully included in extra-curricular clubs and shared pursuits, how to better work in partnership with families, the importance of play and breaktimes, as well as how difference and diversity is celebrated within school.

Through their consultative work with teachers, school staff and parents, the findings of this research also have implications for the support EPs may be able to provide to key stakeholders at the microsystemic level. Smedley (2011) posits, “educationalists need to be aware of the impact of the teacher as an agent for change and implement an intervention that also enhances pupil-teacher relationships” (p.118). EPs may henceforth advise on the key components of effective relationships and consult on ways in which opportunities for connection can be implicitly and explicitly embedded into teacher practices. It is important that staff are attuned to their pupils’ needs, are personable and communicate to children that they matter. Children with FASD value being kept in mind, and through overtly communicating this, teachers have the capacity to militate against a negative SOSB. EPs may henceforth have a part to play in supporting staff development through the provision of reflective spaces, coaching or supervision for staff working with vulnerable children such as these (Midgen et al., 2019).

The children in this research also spoke about the importance of friendship and teachers could use their positive teacher-pupil relationships to proactively model positive relationships. Individuals with FASD may benefit from opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers in class, or from access to peer mentoring or buddy schemes. EPs may conceivably have a role in supporting school with the delivery of whole class or small group friendship or

social skills interventions, as well as working at the individual level with pupils around building their autonomy, self-esteem and self-concept.

Lastly, the children in this research spoke about the importance of having teachers who are kind and understanding of FASD. In this way, it is important that staff members seek to educate themselves about the possible impacts of PAE, as well as empower the children to impart their own knowledge and foster their own self-determination. When CYP feel as though they belong in school, this is associated with a plethora of positive consequences. Through these interventive efforts, EPs and school staff thus have the capacity to make positive changes to the wider educational experiences of this population of vulnerable learners.

### **5.5 Dissemination of Findings**

Tarling (2006, p. 125) posits, “the object of dissemination is to maximise the impact of the project by getting the messages across to those who could benefit from the research”. With this in mind, firstly, the researcher acknowledged the importance of communicating the research findings to the participants. To ensure the accessibility of the research findings, the researcher wrote personalised letters to each of the participants summarising what they had shared during the interviews and encouraged them to share them with the important people in their lives (See Appendix S).

As well as writing to the children directly, secondly, the researcher emailed the themes to parents/carers to review. Following the thesis Viva, the researcher intends to also send a visual representation of the final themes, as well as a brief summary of the key findings. Furthermore, a link to the British Library EThOS website, where the full thesis will be available for download will be made available.

Thirdly, the researcher also intends to send an executive summary of the research findings to NOFAS-UK and FASD Awareness South East, the two charities who supported with the recruitment process, to disseminate to interested parents and carers. Penultimately, although the research was not limited to the LA where the researcher is currently on placement, the researcher plans to share her findings with members of the EPS who may likely be involved in working preventatively with CYP with FASD in their practice. Moreover, an opportunity to share the findings of the research with other EPs and TEPs will be possible at the UEL Doctoral research presentation day scheduled for July 2021.

Lastly, the researcher aims to publish an article from this thesis in an academic journal once the research has been successfully defended, to maximise dissemination. It is hoped that in doing so, this will prompt further pupil voice research with individuals with FASD in the UK in the academic community, as well as facilitating wider national public and professional awareness of FASD.

## **5.6 Research Strengths**

To the researcher's knowledge, there exists no study which has explicitly explored the lived experiences of school belonging for children with FASD in UK mainstream primary schools. This thesis therefore provides a novel contribution to the literature base and enabled for the first time children with FASD to be given a voice to make sense of their own experiences of belonging in school. The study was grounded in Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), which refreshingly shifted the narrative away from deficit, to exploring the positive proponents of pupil experiences. Listening to the stories of the four children with FASD was a privilege and the use of IPA aptly permitted the rich idiographic understanding of differential participant experience which exists across the foetal

alcohol spectrum. Given the voices of CYP with FASD are seldom heard, this was considered a core strength of this research.

The use of drawing and modelling provided pupils with a participatory medium through which to express themselves creatively. COVID-19 forced the researcher to make changes to her research design, but the researcher demonstrated tenacity in adapting her method of data collection to still retain this practical element. This functioned to lessen the reliance on language and was viewed positively by the participants. Kitty told how,

*“... things that like you’re doing now I don’t find it boring coz like it’s really fun”*  
(473)

Coates (2002) maintains that CYP can use drawings to define reality. As part of the research, the participants frequently drew parallels between their drawings and models and their own lived experiences and so this projective technique was considered facilitatory to entering the participants’ world, as well as reducing a possible power imbalance between the researcher and the participants. Moreover, the use of scaling helped participants to explore constructs of belonging as on a dual continuum, and they used this as a tool from which to reflect on their own experiences and locate themselves more meaningfully than questions alone. This also facilitated thinking about what an ideal score on the continuum would look like. As well as this, the relationship circle activity enabled participants to identify aspects of their own constitution which aided their SOSB as well as to realise the expansive support networks they had available to them. Furthermore, the remote nature of the study also meant that participants could access the research from their own homes, which likely facilitated their engagement and contributions further.

The researcher was apprehensive whether the construct of belonging would be understood by the participants, however the PowerPoint presentation at the start of the research was

considered a welcome addition. This functioned to introduce belonging via a child friendly, accessible medium. The addition of the PowerPoint was informed by the consultation the researcher had with the adult advisor with FASD, and then later trialled with the pilot participant. The use of fictional characters was seen as being removed enough from their own school experiences to still allow for the participants to reliably share their own idiographic thoughts and reflections. Moreover, Kitty explicitly compared her own lived experiences to those of the fictional characters during her narrative, providing further evidence for the effectiveness of this resource. The working and reworking of the semi-structured interview schedule in light of the young adult advisors' comments as well as the piloting of the study remotely were central to the accessibility of this research.

Lastly, participants and their parents/carers were given the option to member check their transcripts. Although all of the dyads declined, the researcher ensured that she listened back to the video clips and cross referenced the videos with the written transcripts to account for this. All parents and carers agreed that the themes were representative of participant experience, highlighting the trustworthiness of the research. Moreover, unlike many of the current pupil voice studies, all pupils were attending school at the time of data collection and thus participant accounts are considered to be more trustworthy than those that had gone before in this way.

## **5.7 Research Limitations**

During the recruitment phase, the researcher was contacted by a number of parents whose children did not have a diagnosis of FASD. Parents spoke of how their lack of diagnoses was a barrier to accessing support for their child more generally, and in the same way, it is contrite that they also appeared to be disadvantaged by their lack of diagnosis in the present study. Including children with a history of PAE or those who were actively pursuing a

diagnosis the researcher recognises may have been a more equitable and socially just criterion for inclusion.

Because of the remote nature of delivery, the children were interviewed at home with their parents or carers. Whilst this arguably enabled the children to feel more relaxed, it was not always possible to elicit the views of the children themselves. The children often looked to their parents or carers for validation or approval, or their parents/ carers answered on their behalf. In this way, the presence of adults may have inadvertently influenced the social desirability of participant responses. Given this research was looking exclusively at pupil voice, the researcher chose only to use quotes from participants to determine the research themes. Nevertheless, being privy to this information the researcher recognised informed her whole-part-whole hermeneutic understanding and interpretation of participant experience.

Although IPA was appraised to be the most fitting method for this current research, nonetheless, it is not without its conceptual and practical limitations. IPA subsumes a small, homogeneous sample and thus the researcher purposefully chose to limit her sample to four children with FASD diagnoses to account for this. Despite aiming for homogeneity, consistent with the very nature of spectrum disorders, there was great variability in presentation between participants. The teratogenic impact of alcohol on the unborn foetus is affected by the timing and volume of alcohol consumed in pregnancy (Mattson et al., 2001), and thus it is unsurprising that the children with FASD, although classified under the same broad diagnostic umbrella had divergent neurodevelopmental profiles and levels of need. Whilst it is conceivable that this may have impacted their experiences of belonging in school, IPA does not allow for an exploration of why a phenomenon was experienced in a given way (Willig, 2008). Bob had a known diagnosis of FASD with sentinel facial features, but there was a lack of specific diagnostic information provided for the other children. The researcher

recognises that collecting more detailed diagnostic history may have been advantageous, however exploring diagnosis was not considered to be a priority of the present research. The findings of this research resultantly cannot be generalised beyond the individual participants for whom the experiences were unique, but nor is this considered one of the core aims of phenomenological research.

The researcher holds the position that IPA also necessitates a level of linguistic competence necessary for semantic and latent interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). For Bob in particular, he found the questions at times difficult to access. This appeared to be a barrier to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the subtleties and nuances of his lived experiences. A more participatory method of data collection may have been preferable and this is discussed further in section 5.9. Nevertheless, the individual analysis the researcher conducted ensured that Bob's voice was still able to be heard. Other forms of analyses which focus on similarity of experience may not have protected participant voice in the same way.

Although the researcher shared the themes drawn out of the analysis with parents/carers and with her Director of Studies, at no point were the themes peer checked against participant transcripts to ensure correspondence with participant quotes. Recruiting a peer to code a section of the transcript would be one way of further increasing the trustworthiness of the research. Nevertheless, a clear audit trail was kept, ensuring the researcher was able to evidence how she arrived at the superordinate and subordinate themes.

Despite these limitations, the researcher acknowledges how the study design was appropriate for meeting the research aims and was consistent with her own epistemology, as set out in section 3.2. The benefits of capturing rich, lived experience data by way of phenomenological research can thus be considered to outweigh these aforementioned limitations, especially given the dearth of research in this domain.

## **5.8 Personal Reflections and Reflexivity**

Sword (1999) argues that “no research is free from biases, assumptions and personality of the researcher and we cannot remove the self from those activities in which we are intimately involved” (p.277). Within IPA, access to the participants’ world is dependent “on and is complicated by the researcher’s own conceptions” (Smith et al., 1999, p.218). In this way, IPA as part of the interpretative or hermeneutic tradition incorporates reflexivity into each stage of the research and is seen as vital in aiding research transparency. In order to demonstrate this transparency, the first person presence ‘I’ is used herein as a way of demonstrating my own self-reflexivity and role within the research process.

### ***5.8.1 Role and Position of Researcher***

As an EP in training, I am passionate about inclusion. Advocating for all children to be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve was my principal reason for first joining this profession. Just as these values permeate my own professional practice, so do they my research endeavours and my decisions and interpretations made throughout this research can be seen as being influenced by my axiology. I forever strive to put the child at the centre of my work and I attest to adopt a position of non-judgement and curiosity. Staying true to this, I designed my semi-structured interview schedule so that the questions posed were neutral and open ended and allowed me to position the participants within this research as experts in their own lives. Moreover, my interpersonal skills and training in Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) allowed me to sensitively receive and respond to the participants initiatives with genuineness and authenticity.

At times within this research however, I felt conflicted, especially when children spoke about challenges they encountered in school. My initial reaction was for me to deepen discussions and problem solve jointly with the children in a way in which I would typically in my role as

a TEP. I had to remind myself that I was not having a problem solving consultation, but I was seeking to impartially gather information about participant experience within a formal academic research capacity. This at times felt uncomfortable and was an ongoing dilemma I encountered with whether to reconcile or separate my role as a Doctoral researcher from that of my role as a TEP, whilst at the same time staying true to my values.

### ***5.8.2 Researcher Bias and Audit Trail***

As part of this research, a clear audit trail was kept, demonstrating how I arrived at the final superordinate and subordinate themes. The themes which emerged for each participant, as well as key words and line numbers pertaining to each theme were logged, details of which can be seen in Appendices W-AB.

A reflective research diary (Robson & McCartan, 2016) was also kept as a way of documenting my thinking and decision making. The diary was also a medium through which to note down any reactions the research provoked or aspects of interviews that particularly struck me on a psychological and personal level. I was mindful of privileging accounts that resonated strongly with me but being able to note these reflections down was a way of me recognising possible influences on the data. Excerpts from my reflective diary are shown in Appendix AC. Expressing myself through uninhibited narrative felt containing, as post data collection especially, my mind was awash with wonderings, questions, and preliminary interpretations, all of which were too ‘messy’ to hold on to effectively within my mind. Gladly, I was able to return to this diary when interpreting the data and this helped to consolidate my thinking and at times move me forwards to a position of clarity.

### ***5.8.3 Reflections on Using IPA***

Both my Undergraduate and Postgraduate research used positivist quantitative methods and so I was apprehensive about venturing into an unknown qualitative world. That being said, I was confident that my choice of IPA aligned most closely with my own philosophical underpinnings and was a fitting approach to answer my research questions. I immersed myself in the data collection and analysis, and Smith et al.'s (2009) heuristic framework, as outlined in section 4.2 gave invaluable structure and systematicity to my analysis. On reflection however, I did not fully appreciate how intricate and abstruse the process of analysis needed to be and the time needed to move from the descriptive to the interpretive. As such, I became enveloped within this process. The process was cognitively complex and emotionally demanding, but a rewarding one, nonetheless. With time, I became more consciously competent, and my interpretations became more sophisticated as I was able to engage in higher order conceptual thinking and see linkages and patterns within the data. Moreover, through the iterative process of drafting and redrafting, my interpretation took on a deeper level of meaning and fidelity and enabled me to appreciate the value of working with the data in such a profound way.

### **5.9 Implications for Research and Future Directions**

This study has demonstrated how it is possible to meaningfully elicit the voices of primary aged children with FASD using phenomenological research methods. This was a novel approach, given only one paper in the literature review explored phenomenology. The benefits of including children with SEND in research are aplenty, especially in improving the quality of school experience for marginalised groups within the community (Tangen, 2009). It is important that future research continues to include CYP with FASD in their study

designs, so that their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations for schooling not only continue to be heard but are used resolutely to inform national inclusion policy and practice.

This study was the first of its kind to qualitatively explore SOSB for this population, and thus further research is warranted to substantiate and build on these preliminary findings. The findings from this research are limited to primary aged children with FASD attending UK mainstream primary schools, as well as those living with foster or adoptive families. No participants were living with birth families. It would be advantageous to explore SOSB across the age range, including the early years and post-16 population, as well as exploring how experiences differ for CYP living with biological or kinship carers. As well as this, exploring how the experiences compare in special schools would be of interest, given there is likely to be a high proportion of CYP with FASD educated in specialist settings or resourced base provisions.

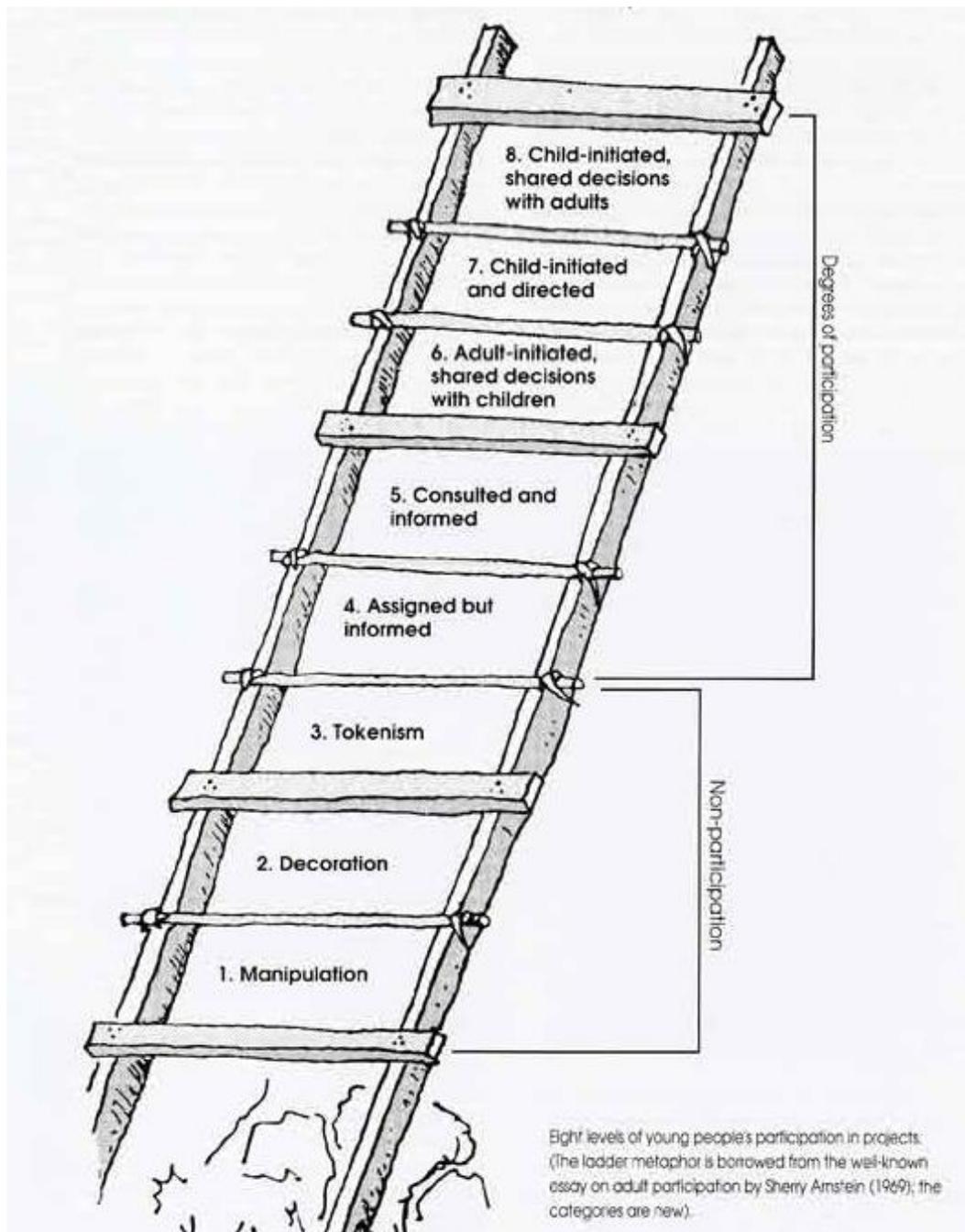
Using a Mosaic Approach would be one of way of eliciting the voices of very young children or those with more significant cognition and learning needs. A Mosaic Approach to pupil voice elicitation “combines traditional qualitative research methods of observing and interviewing with participatory methods in which children play a direct role in constructing and discussing research material” (Clark, 2017, p.17). The use of a Mosaic Approach was intended for use in this study, but the impact of COVID-19 meant this was not possible in its fullest sense. As such, future research could aspire to use a range of creative, developmentally appropriate tools such as photographs and map making to gather the views of pupils with FASD spanning different key stages.

What is fundamental however in any future research with this population is that children are included meaningfully. Hart (1992) uses the analogy of a ladder to describe eight different levels of participation, as depicted below in Figure 24. Tokenistic inclusion is equated with

‘non-participation’ and thus it is important that future research considers ways to authentically include those with FASD in their research endeavours.

**Figure 24**

*Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Participation. Sourced from [https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)*



Coad and Evans (2008) posit that the participation of CYP as peer or co-researchers is becoming increasingly popular in psychological research. Giving CYP with FASD the opportunity to work *with* researchers through their involvement in the research process itself to design a project, make decisions about data collection, analyse, and disseminate the findings would be an innovative way of advancing emancipatory participation ‘up the ladder’. Not only would it seek to empower and upskill the participants but it would be a way of humanistically recalibrating possible power imbalances typical of more conventional researcher, ‘researched’ relationships (Bangnoli & Clark, 2010).

Finally, this study focused exclusively on participant voice. Future research could also seek to ascertain the views of parents, carers and other key scholarly stakeholders who have an interest in providing educationally for these pupils, especially as the children in this research credited them as instrumental persons in their belongingness experiences.

### **5.10 Conclusion and Final Thoughts**

The aim of this exploratory and emancipatory thesis was to explore the lived experiences of school belonging for four children with FASD attending UK mainstream primary schools. Few studies globally have given children with FASD a voice to share their experiences of school, with a noticeable absence of any peer reviewed pupil voice research conducted with children born to alcohol exposed pregnancies in the UK. This research ergo makes a novel contribution to the literature and provides a unique insight into the phenomenological experiences of this population of vulnerable learners.

Adopting a strengths-based approach, the present research sought to determine how school belonging is experienced by children with FASD diagnoses and gain a nuanced understanding of the self-identified factors which participants supposed promoted their SOSB. As part of the semi-structured interviews, participants were invited to use drawing and

modelling to represent their views, as well as solution focused techniques to explore possible discrepancies between actual and preferred SOSB. Despite previous research documenting mixed school experiences for this population, all of the participants felt like they belonged in school and identified what it was about themselves, others and the school environment as a whole which were instrumental in promoting their SOSB. Four superordinate themes emerged from the data: school ethos and sense of community, relatedness to peers, staff attributes and teaching practices, and myself as a learner. The results offer support for Allen et al's. (2016) eco-systemic model of belonging and provide a conceptual framework for schools, EPs, and other professionals to use when supporting CYP with FASD to belong in school, as part of their inclusion agendas.

In conclusion, it is anticipated that this emancipatory research will go some way towards increasing the belongingness experiences of CYP affected by alcohol exposure in utero, and with it, the wealth of positive academic, social and emotional outcomes associated with a positive SOSB. This may, furthermore, act as a protective factor against some of the endemic secondary disabilities and adversities CYP with FASD are vulnerable to.

It is the researcher's hope that every child with FASD knows that they matter, that they are valued and that they belong meaningfully and unequivocally within their school communities.

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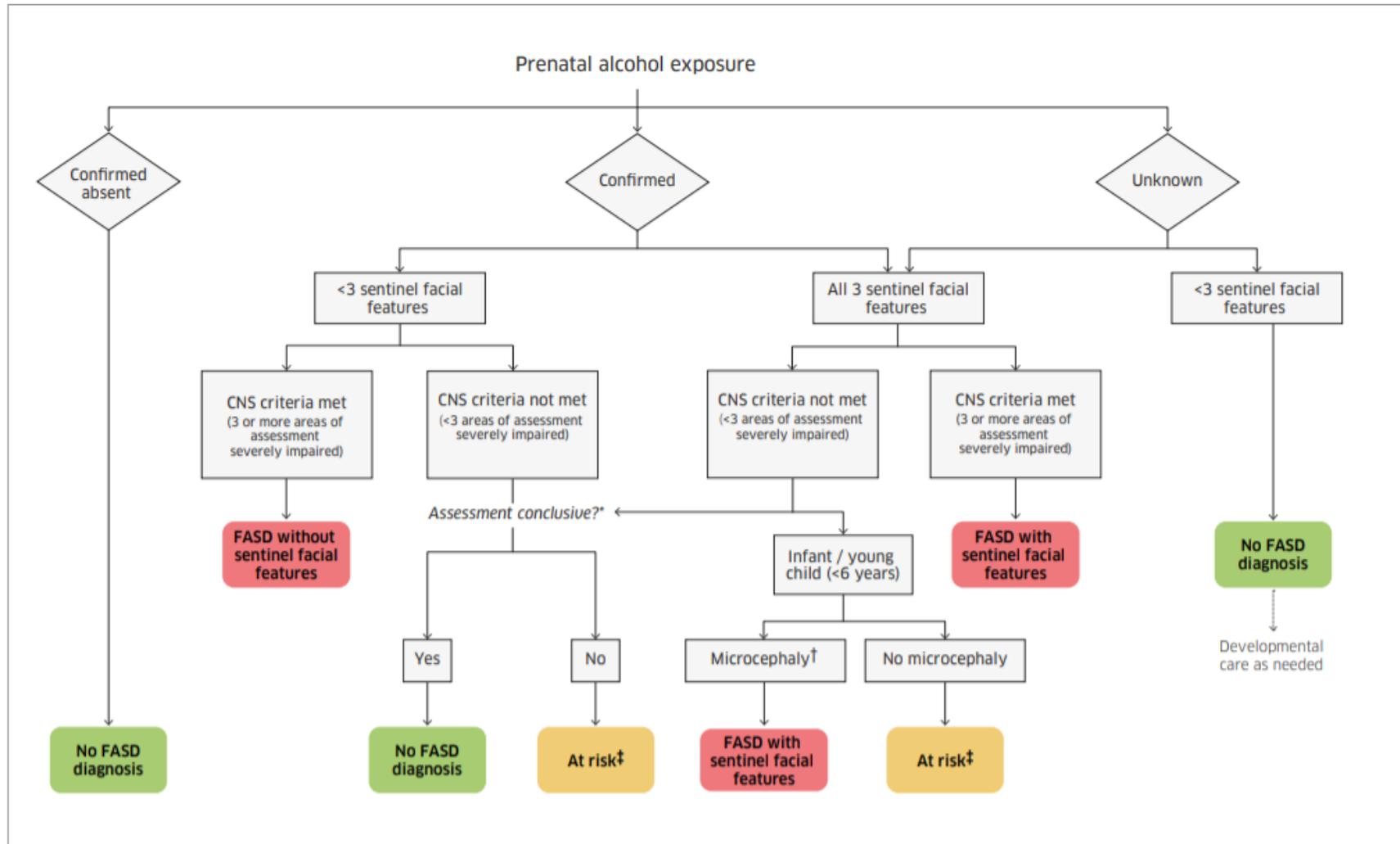
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## Appendix A

### SIGN 156 Diagnostic Algorithm for FASD



## Appendix B

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Systematic Literature Review Studies

Study Feature	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Justification
Publication language	The whole publication is available in the English language.	Only part or none of the publication is available in the English language.	The author does not have access to translation services and thus it is important that the whole study is available in the researcher's first language for purpose of synthesis and critique.
Publication place and type	The study features as part of a peer reviewed academic journal.	The research is not published in a peer reviewed journal or is a dissertation or thesis.	Studies published in peer reviewed journals have undergone a stringent and robust peer review process meaning that the research has greater originality and credibility.
Research type	The research is a primary piece of research. Key studies identified as part of a systematic review must be accessed independently in full.	The research is a secondary piece of research such as a literature review or a summary of another piece of research.	In order to review and critique the studies the researcher must have access to the original papers and research as published by the primary researchers.
Research focus	The study explores experiences of schooling.	The research is not about school experiences or is about experiences of a specific school based intervention programme.	The author is particularly interested in experiences as they relate to schooling given the submission is part of a Professional Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral programme.
	The study is all about or includes lived experiences of	The study does not include pupil voice and only presents	The author is interested in lived experiences of

	<p>schooling from the perspective of children young people and adults with FASD themselves.</p>	<p>views about schooling from different stakeholders including parents, teachers and other professionals.</p> <p>The study does not include participants who have a diagnosis of FASD or where FASD is suspected due to maternal alcohol consumption.</p>	<p>schooling from the perspective of the CYP and adults themselves, specifically those where a diagnosis of FASD is confirmed or suspected.</p>
<p>Research accessibility</p>	<p>The full text is accessible through the University online library or through inter library loan requests.</p>	<p>Only part or none of the text is accessible through the University online library or inter library loan requests.</p>	<p>The full text must be available for the researcher to complete a comprehensive review and critique to guide future research and identify gaps in the literature.</p>

## Appendix C

### Systematic Literature Review Search Trail

Database	<i>Academic Search Complete</i>
Search Terms	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
Limiters Applied	Peer-Reviewed English Language
Results	141
Articles Selected	4 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brenna, B., Burles, M., Holtlander, L. &amp; Bocking, S. (2017). A school curriculum for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Advice from a young adult with FASD.</li> <li>2. Stade, B. et al., (2011). Feeling different: The experience of living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> <li>3. Salmon, J. &amp; Buetow, S. (2012). An exploration of the experiences and perspectives of New Zealanders with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> <li>4. Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S. &amp; Hagglund, K. (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> </ol>
Database	<i>APA PsycINFO</i>
Search Terms	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
Limiters Applied	Peer-Reviewed English Language
Results	102
Articles Selected	5 (3 duplicates found in previous database denoted by *) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. * Stade, B. et al., (2011). Feeling different: The experience of living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> <li>2. * Salmon, J. &amp; Buetow, S. (2012). An exploration of the experiences and perspectives of New Zealanders with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> <li>3. Duquette, C. &amp; Stodel, E. (2005). School experiences of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> </ol>

	<p>4. Knorr, L. &amp; McIntyre, L. (2016). Resilience in the face of adversity: Stories from adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.</p> <p>5. * Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S. &amp; Hagglund, K. (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</p>
<b>Database</b>	<b><i>British Education Index</i></b>
<b>Search Terms</b>	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
<b>Limiters Applied</b>	Peer-Reviewed English Language
<b>Results</b>	4
<b>Articles Selected</b>	0
<b>Database</b>	<b><i>Child Development and Adolescent Studies</i></b>
<b>Search Terms</b>	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
<b>Limiters Applied</b>	Peer-Reviewed English Language
<b>Results</b>	10
<b>Articles Selected</b>	0
<b>Database</b>	<b><i>Education Research Complete</i></b>
<b>Search Terms</b>	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
<b>Limiters Applied</b>	Peer-Reviewed English Language
<b>Results</b>	55
<b>Articles Selected</b>	5 (4 duplicates found in previous databases denoted by *)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. * Brenna, Burles, Holtslander &amp; Bocking (2017). A school curriculum for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Advice from a young adult with FASD.</li> <li>2. Duquette &amp; Orders (2013). Postsecondary educational experiences of adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.</li> <li>3. * Knorr &amp; McIntyre (2016). Resilience in the face of adversity: Stories from adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.</li> <li>4. * Duquette, Stodel, Fullarton &amp; Hagglund, (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with FASD.</li> <li>5. * Duquette &amp; Stodel (2005). School experiences of children with FASD.</li> </ol>
<b>Database</b>	<b><i>ERIC</i></b>
<b>Search Terms</b>	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)
<b>Limiters Applied</b>	Peer-Reviewed English Language
<b>Results</b>	35
<b>Articles Selected</b>	<p>5 (5 duplicates found in previous databases denoted by *)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. * Knorr &amp; McIntyre (2016). Resilience in the face of adversity: Stories from adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.</li> <li>2. * Duquette &amp; Orders (2013). Postsecondary educational experiences of adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.</li> <li>3. * Brenna, Burles, Holtslander &amp; Bocking (2017). A school curriculum for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Advice from a young adult with FASD.</li> <li>4. * Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S. &amp; Hagglund, K. (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> <li>5. * Duquette &amp; Stodel (2005). School experiences of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</li> </ol>
<b>Database</b>	<b><i>Teacher Reference Centre</i></b>
<b>Search Terms</b>	("foetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder" OR "foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial foetal alcohol syndrome" OR "partial fetal alcohol syndrome" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder" OR "alcohol related birth defects" OR "prenatal alcohol" OR "pre-natal alcohol") AND (school OR education) AND (experiences OR views OR voice OR perspectives)

Limiters Applied	Peer-Reviewed English Language
Results	4
Articles Selected	0

## Appendix D

### Final Reference List of Articles Included in the Systematic Literature Review

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#### Full Reference

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Brenna, B., Burles, M., Holtslander, L., & Bocking, S. (2017). A school curriculum for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Advice from a young adult with FASD. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 21*(2), 218-229.

Duquette, C., & Orders, S. (2013). Postsecondary educational experiences of adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *International Journal of Special Education, 28*(3), 68-81.

Duquette, C., & Stodel, E. (2005). School experiences of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 15*(2), 51-75.

Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S., & Hagglund, K. (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 31*(4), 219-231.

Knorr, L., & McIntyre, L. (2016). Resilience in the face of adversity: Stories from adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. *Exceptionality Education International, 26*(1), 53-75.

Salmon, J. V., & Buetow, S. A. (2012). An exploration of the experiences and perspectives of New Zealanders with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Journal of Population Therapeutics and Clinical Pharmacology, 19*(1), 41-50.

Stade, B., Beyene, J., Buller, K., Ross, S., Patterson, K., Stevens, B., Sgro, M., Ungar, W., Watson, W., & Koren, G. (2011). Feeling different: The experience of living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Journal of Population Therapeutics and Clinical Pharmacology, 18*(3), 475-485.

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## Appendix E

### Summary and Critical Appraisal of Studies Included in Systematic Review

Title and Author	Aim and Participants	Theoretical and Conceptual Underpinnings	Research Design and Methodology	Key Findings <sup>7</sup>	Critical Appraisal (Using CASP)
<p><b><i>I. Brenna, B., Burles, M., Holtslander, L. &amp; Bocking, S. (2017). A school curriculum for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Advice from a young adult.</i></b></p>	<p>To gain an insight into the subjective school experiences of a young adult with FASD as a means of guiding educational provision and support.</p> <p>RQ: What are young adults' experiences of living with FASD in relation to education?</p> <p>21-year-old Canadian young adult and his adoptive parents. Nathan (pseudonym) has a diagnosis of FAS and ADHD. Attended a mainstream elementary and high school.</p>	<p>Schwab's (1978) theory of curriculum commonplaces adopted as a theoretical lens through which to interpret the findings.</p>	<p>Single case study design</p> <p>Photovoice methodology</p> <p>Three semi-structured interviews; two with the young adult (pre and post photographs) and one with young persons' adoptive parents exploring diagnosis, school experiences, interests, abilities, and challenges.</p>	<p>4 emergent themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need to balance support with growing need for independence.</li> <li>2. Strengths and challenges</li> <li>3. Attitude and adaptations</li> <li>4. Identified need and advice for others.</li> </ol> <p><i>Learners</i></p> <p>Nathan identified personal strengths in visual learning, spatial memory, observation, improvisation, and adaptation, using his hands, ability to attend when interested, persistence, acting.</p> <p>Identified challenges in motivation, punctuality, reading, memorising, numbers, writing, typing, attention, concentration, homework, reading others' emotions, peer selection-gravitating towards 'good people who do bad stuff'.</p>	<p>Research focus was relevant given the paucity of research exploring lived experiences from the perspective of individuals with FASD themselves.</p> <p>Aims were clearly stated, although impact of the research on the wider curriculum likely to be small given the single case study design.</p> <p>Participatory approach using photovoice methodology appropriate for eliciting lived experiences of participant. Appropriate description and justification given for using methodology, as well as limitations considered.</p> <p>Recruitment strategy detailed through a local support organisation and justification given for not wanting to circulate information more widely.</p>

<sup>7</sup> Specific to school experiences of those with FASD if part of a wider study

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Helpful strategies included memorising, frequent breaks, looking for cues, reducing load, prioritising, using visual strengths, avoiding difficulties, know support network and seek help and share own knowledge of FASD.

Teachers

Grades 8-11 were most challenging, but teachers were supportive, telling teachers about his challenges resulted in greater classroom support which was welcomed. Acknowledged he has acted out to gain independence but recognised this was both 'exciting' and 'scary'. Notion of support by way of a peer sponsor system sought.

Milieu

Want for others to gain greater knowledge and understanding of FASD, including teachers and parents. Support in school contexts which disappear post-graduation. Would like bridging programmes to careers post-secondary education, including greater support at outreach and community level. Difficult to separate his identity from FAS. Friends see him as 'normal'.

However, little consideration given to recruitment challenges specifically for this population.

Sufficient detail given about case study participant. Consideration given to methodological limitations such as issues of generalisability and lack of cross-case comparison.

Methods clear and detailed with appropriate timescales given. Second interview gave the participant an opportunity to give meaning to his photographs and also provided an opportunity for the researcher to check the identified themes with the participants to ensure credibility between the researcher and participants' accounts.

Data transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed. Scant detail of the process and the quality standards abided by. Themes mapped onto Schwab's framework.

No explicit consideration given to the relationship between the researcher and the participant and influence of researcher bias.

Ethical approval from research institution stated, but no further

				<p><u>Resources</u> Importance of having teachers and peers with a good understanding of FASD. Discord between not wanting to disclose his diagnosis to his peers mostly, but sometimes wanting to disclose to those who had experienced life challenges who were more likely to be understanding.</p>	<p>consideration given to ethical issues.</p> <p>Clear statement of findings discussed in response to research question and existing data.</p> <p>Retrospective rather than current lived experience.</p>
<p><b>2. Duquette, C. &amp; Orders, S. (2013). <i>Postsecondary educational experiences of adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.</i></b></p>	<p>To retrospectively examine the postsecondary educational experiences of adults with FASD, namely what helped them to persist beyond compulsory school age.</p> <p>RQ1: What are the background characteristics of the postsecondary students with FASD?</p> <p>RQ2: How are the students with FASD academically and socially integrated into postsecondary institutions?</p> <p>RQ3: What are the facilitators and</p>	<p>Tinto's (1975, 1997) Student Integration Model as a theoretical framework through which to view phenomena of experience.</p>	<p>Qualitative phenomenological research study exploring retrospective lived experience.</p> <p>In depth interviews with adults with FASD conducted in person or via telephone lasting up to 1 hour. Online survey for parents.</p>	<p><u>Elementary and Secondary School experiences</u> Difficulties finding the correct placement. Feeling as though they did not belong in special education classes or mainstream classes.</p> <p>3 of the adult participants exhibited challenging behaviours. One took on the role of the class clown because she found it especially hard to concentrate.</p> <p>English and art were enjoyed by the three older participants and all experienced challenges with mathematics.</p> <p>Limited opportunities for work experience or vocational opportunities. Where this was available this was not considered enjoyable.</p>	<p>No studies to date which have explored the educational experiences of young adults remaining in education beyond compulsory school age, hence giving justification for the research rationale.</p> <p>Justification for using a qualitative methodology given as much of the research to date exploring persistence has gathered quantitative data.</p> <p>Research framed within Tinto's SIM, however research has shown mixed results for using this with post-secondary students as well as those with disabilities attending Universities.</p> <p>Similar recruitment strategies to previous research.</p> <p>Based on retrospective experiences which may mean that recollection of participant</p>

<p>barriers to persistence until graduation?</p> <p>Part of a larger piece of research exploring the post-secondary educational experiences and subsequent employment and individual living arrangements.</p> <p>4 adults aged between 26 and 43 with diagnoses of FASD who were currently enrolled or had been previously enrolled in a postsecondary education programme from Canada and the USA.</p> <p>Participants were recruited through an email advert mailed to an Ontario FASD support group and FAS link that their adoptive parents responded to. 4 adoptive parents indicated that they had adult children with FASD who would be interested in participating.</p>	<p>All participated in sports or extra-curricular activities and enjoyed these experiences.</p> <p>2 or the adults dropped out of school because they became involved with the wrong crowd.</p> <p><u>Postsecondary Educational Experiences</u></p> <p>1 adult enrolled in a GED programme and took English and Maths course. The other adults attended college courses in welding, cooking and a high school diploma in English and Maths. Only one adult completed the course.</p> <p>Only one adult received accommodations to access the course. One of the adults who did not receive any accommodations in college would have liked smaller class sizes and help with completing his assignments. Other recommendations included 1:1 assistance, presenting information one piece at a time, speaking slowly, reducing sensory overload, varying instructional methods, and limiting homework demands.</p> <p><u>Background Characteristics</u></p> <p>None of the participants had transition planning in place for post-secondary education. Only</p>	<p>experience may not be as reliable as data collected shortly after graduating or during college years. This may have been due to recruitment challenges, but this was not clear.</p> <p>Interview schedule provided in the appendix. Open ended questions gave participants the opportunity to elaborate, yielding rich lived experience.</p> <p>Access to potential participants was limited by asking parents whether they wanted to participate and whether their child also wanted to participate. Separate adverts for adults with FASD and parents of adults with FASD may have yielded a higher number of participants.</p> <p>Clear methods given for data analysis and identification of themes. Data was analysed independently by researchers in the first instance before being analysed inductively for themes.</p> <p>Conducting member checks and negative case analyses increased credibility of study.</p> <p>Researchers completed a confirmability audit, and a negative case analysis was also</p>
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resulting in a sample of 4 adults with FASD and 4 adoptive parents.

one of the participants new of their diagnosis at the time of transition.

Academic Integration

Degree of academic integration was associated with extent of primary and secondary disabilities associated with FASD, as well as the goodness of fit between the demands of the programme and the young person's profile of need.

Social Integration

Only one individual was socially integrated, but this was in a negative way and contributed to his dropping out of school. Social integration did not contribute to persistence with postsecondary courses.

Factors to consider when enrolling in secondary education

1. Individual
  - presentation relating to primary and secondary disabilities
  - academic preparation
  - goal directedness
  
2. Institution
  - potential academic integration
  - Potential social integration

conducted to aid the trustworthiness of data.

Ethical issues not addressed as part of publication.

Large focus on high school and secondary school experiences despite this not being part of the research questions.

Possible reasons given for why only one adult completed postsecondary education programme.

Suggestions to revision of Tinto's model given, as well as recommendations for course instructors and other young adults considering enrolling in post-secondary education.

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3. Family Support  
 - advocacy or assistance  
 - academic support
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**3. Duquette, C. & Stodel, E. (2005). *School experiences of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.***

To gain an understanding of the school experiences of children with FASD, including what constituted a successful school experience from the perspective of children themselves and their parents.

RQ1: What are the experiences of children with FASD while attending school?

RQ2: What constitutes a successful school experience for children with FASD?

RQ3: What are the transition experiences of those with FASD?

7 adopted children with FASD and 11 parents recruited through an FASD association in Eastern Ontario. 4 females

Inferred Positive Psychology grounding given the focus on strengths, but no explicit reference given to underpinning psychological theory or frameworks.

Children and young adults were sent a copy of an open-ended questionnaire in the post. Parents also completed an open-ended questionnaire with the exception of a small number of questions pertaining to demographics. Parents and their children were then invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to give further rich detail about their school experiences. Of the children who completed the questionnaire, 4 children agreed to participate and 5 out of the 11 parents agreed. Interviews were mostly conducted face to face, with the exception of one email exchange.

*A Successful School Experience*  
 For older children, a successful school experience was associated with improving their grades and graduating from school. For some, school success meant being able to understand and participate rather than being marginalised. These ideas were largely consistent with parental views.

For younger children, success was associated with having friends.

Parents and children agreed that having a caring teacher was instrumental in school success. Where teachers had a knowledge of FASD and were willing to make accommodations this contributed to more positive perceptions.

According to the young people with FASD, ways teachers could help included helping them to achieve their goals, control their behaviour, explain things slowly and using simple language, using visuals, and installing a buddy system so that their peers could help them to understand. What

Research purpose clearly stated and the study's unique contribution to the literature evident.

Appropriate use of qualitative methodology adapted from the grounded theory approach stated and justified.

Questionnaire's and in depth interviews permitted thick, rich descriptions of experience. However, questionnaires were sent home for participants to complete. Responses may have been influenced by parents and thus the validity of this method of data collection is questionable.

Recruitment strategy detailed but limited to one small area of Canada. Justification given to the minimum chronological age of the participants, but no consideration given to their developmental age and the accessibility of the questionnaire.

Trustworthiness was strengthened by the triangulation of participant and parental accounts.

<p>aged between 9 and 30 and 3 males aged between 10 and 28. All adoptive parents of children in the study participated as well as 4 additional parents (their children chose not to participate).</p> <p>NB: This was a pilot study which preceded the publication by Duquette et al., (2006).</p>	<p>Qualitative and exploratory research design.</p>	<p>was not considered helpful was getting frustrated, or be yelled by teachers, ignoring them, giving up on them or encouraging them to drop out. Experiences of positive teachers were mixed.</p> <p>All participants over 18 had had access to job training or work experience at school, however this experience was not considered helpful in supporting the young people to gain employment.</p>	<p>Participants were given opportunities to review their transcripts via member checking, ensuring credibility of the research.</p> <p>Due to technology issues, two interviews were not able to be recorded and transcribed verbatim, but themes were drawn instead from researcher notes. Despite this, the researchers do not consider the impact on the reliability of this data.</p> <p>Participants were middle class adoptive parents from a cultural majority and thus it is unclear whether the findings were also representative of birth mothers and limited to a single cultural group.</p> <p>Insufficient detail given to ethical considerations including whether ethical approval was given from ethics committee.</p> <p>Despite seeking the views of children and their parents, the presented findings appeared disproportionately skewed towards parental views.</p> <p>Implications for practice clearly stated based on the findings but</p>
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<p><b>4. Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S. &amp; Hagglund, K. (2006). Persistence in high school: Experiences of adolescents and young adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.</b></p>	<p>To examine persistence in high school for adolescents with FASD.</p> <p>RQ1: What are the school experiences of secondary school students with FASD, taking into consideration their background characteristics, academic integration, and social integration into the institution?</p> <p>RQ2: Why do these adolescents persist in school?</p> <p>8 adolescents aged between 15-20 years and their adoptive parents from USA and Canada. Parents were recruited from advertisements on FASLINK and OLDERFAS website and were asked whether their children were also interested in participating in the research. Adolescents</p>	<p>Tinto's (1975, 1997) Student Integration Model as a theoretical framework. This informed the inductive data analysis.</p>	<p>A qualitative methodology with a multiple case study design.</p> <p>Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.</p>	<p><u>Karolina</u> Wants to feel accepted by her peers but felt the special education classes she attended led to some peers rejecting her.</p> <p><u>Jamie</u> Shared experiences of her peers saying unkind comments to her, leaving her not always feeling connected socially to her peers.</p> <p><u>Diana</u> Felt strong feelings of social connectedness, For Diana it was being educated in a private school which helped her to feel involved and supported and improve her social skills.</p> <p><u>Ted</u> Experienced challenges with English and maths, as well as difficulties managing his behavioural outbursts. His experiences of bullying led him to socialising with unfavourable peer groups, but Ted saw this as a positive as it enabled him to protect himself and feel less threatened.</p> <p><u>Beth</u> Her friends were the reason she persisted in school. She cited her friends as the ones her</p>	<p>no suggestions given for future research.</p> <p>Current research informed by Duquette &amp; Stodel's (2005) pilot study. Previously, no research had explored the persistence of young people with FASD in high school and thus given the high exclusion rates and levels of drop out this research was warranted.</p> <p>Qualitative case study design appeared appropriate design to answer research questions. Advantages for using a multiple case study design discussed, including giving greater power to the research and greater transferability compared with a single case study design.</p> <p>Good use of theoretical framework underpinning the research, including critique of Tinto's model.</p> <p>Recruitment strategy was through parents initially. It may be that parents who had greater involvement in their children's schooling were more likely to respond to the advert. Moreover, adolescents of parents who participated may have felt more obliged to participate. At least one parent of each adolescent purposefully recruited to</p>
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<p>were still attending or had recently graduated from high school.</p>	<p>encouraged her with her work, especially to slow down and not to rush.</p>	<p>corroborate data and experiences of adolescents.</p>
	<p><u>Peter</u> Being educated in the Special education class helped Peter to feel comfortable. Not only did these pupils give Peter somebody to talk to, but they also helped him and were understanding of his situation.</p>	<p>Participant inclusion criteria not listed.</p>
	<p><u>Jen</u> Jen described herself as one of the most popular in school because she was somebody who stood out.</p>	<p>Questionnaires and interview questions adapted from previous pilot study (Duquette &amp; Stodel, 2005) and adapted to reflect Tinto's model.</p>
	<p><u>Cross-case analyses</u> Background characteristics Difficulties associated with FASD included forgetting, personal obstacles, feeling different, learning challenges, and having to watch out for themselves.</p>	<p>Identical questions were posed to parents and the adolescents in order to be able to triangulate responses.</p>
	<p>For the adolescents, being with their friends was the best thing about school but the work was the most difficult aspect of schooling. An optimal level of challenge when it came to assignments was wanted, as well as hands on teaching techniques.</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted via telephone rather than in person. Unclear whether researchers considered the implication of these changes, as this may have prohibited the collection of more in depth information compared to face to face interviews.</p>
		<p>Participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts.</p>
		<p>Consideration given to trustworthiness of data, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (2000). Credibility enhanced by completing cross case analyses and member checking. Transferability aided by compiling individual case studies</p>

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<p>One young person described her mother as an advocate.</p>	<p>from parent child dyads containing exact wordings.</p>
<p><u>Academic Integration</u> For all but one of the adolescents educated in more specialised placements, they valued the academic adjustments these settings afforded. The young person who did not value the academic adjustment, valued the behavioural adjustments instead.</p>	<p>Data analysed manually to aid researcher engagement with the data.</p> <p>Confirmability audit conducted and successfully showed how participant data could be traced back to its original source.</p>
<p>Being successful at school was associated with achieving good grades.</p>	<p>Dependability audits conducted and data corresponded with RQ's. Agreement between individual data analyses and the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data and spanned the cases.</p>
<p><u>Social integration</u> Whilst all of the adolescents reported that they had friends at school, this was not without its challenges in making and keeping them.</p>	<p>Effective use of quotes to aid the richness of the voices of parents and their adopted children.</p>
<p>Feelings of social connectedness appeared to be context dependent. Three of the adolescents who did not feel accepted by their peers felt that this was because they were different and were taught in or associated with the special education classes.</p>	<p>Findings limited to adoptive mother's experiences and cannot be generalised to the experience of biological mothers.</p>
<p>Conversely, some saw friends as protective factors who helped them to navigate the academic and social side of school.</p>	<p>All parents were considered advocates by their parents and thus it is unsurprising that this was a theme that emerged from the data.</p> <p>Not all of the data was audio-recorded, some was recorded by hand, meaning that some of the</p>

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				<p><i>Persistence</i> Parents and friends were cited as the main reasons adolescents persisted in school. Protective factor of parental advocacy mediated risk of FASD to produce positive educational outcomes.</p>	<p>richness and authenticity of capturing the words of the participants verbatim may have been lost.</p> <p>Ethical approval granted from ethics board within the University of Ottawa. Details of procedure followed to gain informed consent and to manage issues of confidentiality and participant right to withdraw. Pseudonyms pre-allocated rather than decided upon by participants themselves.</p> <p>Findings helpfully presented by case and then as part of a cross-case analysis.</p> <p>Identification of greater work around parental advocacy successfully identified, and the development of a framework called for.</p>
<p><b>5. Knorr, L. &amp; McIntyre, L. (2016). <i>Resilience in the face of adversity: Stories from adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.</i></b></p>	<p>To explore the school and life experiences of adults pre-natally exposed to alcohol to understand how success is achieved for this population.</p> <p>RQ1: What are the school and life experiences of those diagnosed with FASDs?</p>	<p>Resiliency theory (Luthar, Cicchetti &amp; Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001).</p>	<p>A basic qualitative approach</p> <p>Open ended interviews lasting between 45-150 minutes, followed up by a second interview whereby participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts.</p>	<p><i><u>I don't fit it. Negative school experiences leading to anger and frustration towards diagnosis.</u></i></p> <p>Participants experienced historical bullying and had difficulty making friends at school. Common to all participants was a sense that they did not belong at school and were treated as outsiders.</p>	<p>Clear research aims given with a view of understanding how success is experienced by this population given the preponderance of research focussing on impairments and negative school experiences.</p> <p>Eliciting pupil voice identified as largely under researched area and appropriate qualitative methodology utilised to address this.</p>

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RQ2: What has allowed these individuals to achieve success in school and life situations?

4 adults aged between the ages of 18-30 with a diagnosis of FASD recruited through purposive sampling via a 'call to participate notice' placed in community locations in Western Canada.

Participants recounted getting into trouble often and teachers taking a dislike to them.

Despite wanting to learn, participants experienced difficulty with school subjects, especially maths. This led to participants feeling angry and frustrated about their diagnosis.

*Intergenerational alcoholism, child abuse and drug addiction*  
School was considered to be a safe haven after witnessing parental alcohol abuse at home. This transcended into their own abusive drinking habits and high reported rates of substance misuse and promiscuity. Risky behaviours had ramifications for friendships.

*Healing the wounds: Source of strength, success and helping others*  
Asking for help, working with the resource teacher, and with parents at home helped make school a positive experience.

Being supported by teachers who knew about FASD and wanted to learn more meant teachers were better able to help and provide participants with the support they needed.

Justification for research given from first author's own experiences of family member being pre-natally exposed to alcohol and the challenges associated with this. Impact of researcher bias not considered.

Explorative and emancipatory in design. Framed within a resiliency framework, which appeared appropriate to address research aims.

Recruitment strategy included an eligibility interview. Although all participants were deemed cognitively able to understand and respond to posed questions, this may have unfairly excluded participants based on their variable communicative abilities.

Participants came from a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds.

Participants given a pseudonym rather than having the option to choose this themselves.

Retrospective accounts of school given and thus the reliability and validity of the accounts can be questioned given the time elapsed

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Attendance at extra-curricular youth groups enabled participants to feel worthy and be themselves, as well as avoid the lure of unhelpful means of coping including drugs and alcohol.

between their experience and data collection.

Research situated within a resiliency framework, but little attempts made to map the findings onto this framework. No mention of positive psychology or strengths based approached.

Second interview provided the participants with opportunities to check and amend their transcripts, none of whom did, which hence increases the study's credibility.

Interview transcript included as part of the appendices.

No critical examination of researcher role and potential bias when identifying themes and looking for commonalities across individuals.

Approval gained from University ethics board and consideration given to the anonymisation of data to protect confidentiality.

Open coding used by student researcher. No member triangulation of codes and themes drawn from the data. No reference to the credibility of their findings.

Recommendations given for educators as well as families for

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					supporting young people with FASD and areas for future research considered.
<b>6. Salmon, J. &amp; Buetow, S. (2012). <i>An exploration of the experiences and perspectives of New Zealanders with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.</i></b>	<p>To explore and understand the daily challenges experienced by New Zealand individuals with a diagnosis of FASD.</p> <p>14 participants aged between 14 and 37 years of age with a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effects. Participants were recruited through 3 FASD agencies within New Zealand via purposive sampling.</p>	<p>Research framed by the meta theory of pragmatism.</p>	<p>Explorative qualitative research study.</p> <p>Sequential mixed methods design.</p> <p>Divided into 2 phases; Transcendental Phenomenology to produce descriptive accounts and Traditional Grounded Theory to understanding meanings ground in participants lived experiences of FASD.</p>	<p>Phase One <u>Daily Challenges within the Classroom</u> Challenges in completing high school due to attentional challenges, difficulty completing schoolwork and getting oneself into trouble. This led to lower self-esteem and self-confidence which were cited as reasons for truanting or being expelled from school.</p> <p>Participants considered themselves different to others and spoke of experiences of bullying.</p> <p>Protective strategies and adaptations to help with learning difficulties included being taught in small groups, visualisation, interesting subjects, and a good relationship with teachers.</p> <p><u>Memory Problems</u> Daily forgetfulness considered a regular occurrence for all participants. Many experience each day as new day and have difficulties retain information and making use of prior learning.</p> <p><u>Socialisation Difficulties</u> Feelings of social exclusion and isolation. Tendency to gravitate</p>	<p>Very broad aim identified to explore day to day experiences of living with FASD. No specific research question(s) listed.</p> <p>Importance of research topic justified given absence of qualitative research exploring experiences of NZ population of young people and adults with FASD.</p> <p>Appropriate justification of qualitative methodologies given and framed within the context of meta theory of pragmatism, as well as researcher's ontology and epistemology.</p> <p>Purposive sampling strategy detailed. 14/16 participants asked to participate agreed. Unclear why 2 participants chose not to participate. Justification given to the age of participants chosen, in view of eliciting sufficient data about school years and beyond. Inclusion criteria and participant characteristics detailed comprehensively.</p> <p>Data collected via audio recorded face to face unstructured questioning. Explicit avoidance of questioning which may permit</p>

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towards the ‘wrong type’ of friends. Often exploited by these friends, which lead to them making the wrong choices, including engaging in inappropriate behaviours. Misconstrued often due to communication challenges. Difficulties attributed to being perceived as ‘different’ but aided when explained the nature of their challenges.

Phase Two

*People with FASD Grow up and Look Back*

Hearing others’ stories enabled young people to reflect on their own behaviours and notice the impact FASD has had on their lives and the lives of their parents.. A greater awareness of the signs and symptoms of FASD identified as a support strategy.

suggestibility, confabulation and acquiescence Questions used in phase one used to guide phase two. Data analyses via Moutaskas’ modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methods of analysis to suspend researcher perspective and elicit participant narrative. Phase two analysis akin to Glaser’s constant comparative method of analysis in order to allow concepts, categories, and themes to emerge from the data.

Ethical approval gained from University of Auckland Human Participants ethics committee. No details of how research was introduced to participants and the methods deployed to maintain ethical standards.

Rigorous data analysis. Triangulation of data to ensure credibility of account. However, no attempt was made to validate the retrospective accounts shared by the young adults.

Use of direct quotes aided authenticity of experience for the reader.

Clear statement of findings and attempt made to relate to existing research.

					How exactly the findings from the research can be used to improve future policy development unclear, however recognition given to the benefit research may have for FASD community through the possible advancement of knowledge and understanding of professionals.
<b>7. Stade et al., (2011). <i>Feeling different: The experience of living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder</i></b>	To describe the experiences of living with FASD from the perspectives of Canadian children themselves.  RQ: What are children's experiences of living day-to-day with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.  22 children with a diagnosis of FASD aged between 6-18 years of age recruited from 18 FASD support groups across Canada.	No explicit reference made to any theoretical or conceptual underpinnings.	Open ended unstructured qualitative interviews to elicit emic data pertaining to lived experiences. Care taken not to rephrase or paraphrase and to avoid the use of leading or probing questions.  Each participant interviewed up to a maximum of 3 times for 30-45 minutes.	<u><i>Overarching theme: Feeling Different</i></u>  <u><i>Knowing the Disability</i></u> 1. Understanding the limitations of the disability Difficulties with learning, attention, and behavioural regulation, as well as motor challenges and social difficulties consistent with their diagnosis. 2. Experiencing the unfairness of the FASD Etiology Shared awareness of impact of pre-natal drinking and the notion of maternal choice.  <u><i>Feeling Alone-Feeling Supported</i></u> 1. Feeling alone with other kids Difficulties forming close relationships with friends. Challenges associated with making and maintaining friendships with others. Sense of loneliness and feeling different to other children socially. 2. Feeling supported by parents Ability to manage their disability attributed to the support and care	Research aims and purpose clearly listed, and rationale justified in view of paucity of research exploring the experiences of living with FASD.  Qualitative methodology deemed appropriate for exploring day-to-day experiences. Justification given by authors. 3 broad questions listed to be encompassed as part of the unstructured interview. Clear description given to the techniques used to elicit subjective experience and the techniques avoided as a means of understanding how people makes sense of and attribute meaning to their own subjective experience. Good exploration of researcher bias and methods used to avoid this.  Appropriate recruitment strategy and inclusion criteria clearly listed. Reference made to convenience sampling.

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of parents. Awareness of the impact their disability had emotionally on their parents.

Overcoming the Disability

Willingness to participate in activities and lead a fulfilling life despite the constraints of their disability.

Ethical approval sought from relevant ethics committee. Little details of how the research was explained to the participants in order to determine ethical protocol.

Data transcribed verbatim by PI. An adaptation of Colaizzi's phenomenological methods for analysing written documents was utilised. Detailed 7 step procedure followed and issues of credibility and internal validity considered.

Sufficient data collected to draw themes. Good use of quotes to capture pupil voice.

Clear statement of findings discussed with reference to research question. Limited reference made to previous research, and no psychological theory referenced.

Implications considered and future research suggested.

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## Appendix F

### Participant Recruitment Advertisement



# Lived Experience of School Belonging in Children with FASD



- Do you have parental responsibility of a child aged 7-11 with a diagnosis of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?
- Does your child/child you care for attend a mainstream Primary school?
- Would they like to receive a free resource pack and participate in a piece of fun and innovative research?

*If yes...  
then I would love to hear from you!*

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of East London who is passionate about giving children with FASD a voice. I am looking to recruit a number of children with FASD to my online research study commencing Autumn 2020.

For more information please contact Amy Hammond,  
Principal Researcher



## Appendix G

### Parent/ Carer Information Sheet



### **Children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and their Experiences of School** **Belonging: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Dear Parents/Carers,

My name is Amy Hammond and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of East London and I am currently on placement within XX Educational Psychology Service. Thank you for showing some interest in my research exploring experiences of school belonging for children with a diagnosis FASD. Please read the following information carefully before deciding whether you would like your child/child you care for to participate.

#### **What is the study about and what are the benefits of participation?**

I am interested in exploring how children with FASD experience school belonging and particularly what factors children identify as helping them to belong in school. Very few research studies have been conducted with individuals with FASD in the UK and as such, I am passionate about giving young people with FASD a voice to share what is important to them. I want to explore from a positive psychology perspective what children believe helps them to belong in school and how their experiences of belonging can be enhanced. Children will be encouraged to share with their teachers what helps them to feel as though they belong via a means of their choosing and it is hoped that this research will have a positive impact on their experiences of belonging within school. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will help to increase knowledge of FASD amongst educational professionals and improve the wider experiences of school belonging for other children with FASD nationally.

#### **Who is eligible for participation?**

In order to give consent for your child/child you care for to participate in the research, you must have parental responsibility. Furthermore, the child you care for must be:

1. Aged between 7 and 11 years old at the time of data collection
2. Have a clinical diagnosis of FASD (this includes Foetal Alcohol Syndrome with or without sentinel facial features, children at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD associated with PAE, partial Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, alcohol related birth

defects, alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorders and neurobehavioural disorder associated with prenatal alcohol exposure).

3. Be attending a UK mainstream primary school
4. Have an awareness of their diagnosis

### **What does the research entail?**

You and your child/child you care for will be invited to meet with me remotely via Microsoft Teams, a virtual communication platform on a day and time of your choosing. Prior to meeting via Teams, you will be sent in the post a resource pack with items needed for the research. Your child will be able to keep the contents, which I hope they will enjoy using! During the session, your child/child you care for will have opportunities to make models using Lego or playdough and draw pictures to represent their experiences of belonging. As well as this, they will be asked a series of questions about their creations and will be asked to rate on a visual scale how much they feel that they belong in school. They will then complete a relationship circle activity whereby they will be supported to think about the people they have in their life who help them to belong. These discussions will be video recorded on Microsoft Teams, which will enable me to accurately capture their views verbatim. The session will last for about 1 hour in total, but we can do this in small chunks if you prefer. The video will only be viewed by myself and my research supervisor. Once they have been transcribed, they will be deleted.

### **Does my child/child I care for have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether you would like your child/child you care for to take part. If you do decide you would be happy for them to participate please complete the attached consent form. I have also attached an information sheet for your child/child you care for, and I encourage you to read this through with them and discuss the study before they sign. If they are happy to participate, they will also need to give written verbal assent. Furthermore, I will ensure that they are happy to participate when I meet with them on Teams.

### **Will the information provided be kept confidential?**

This research has been approved by the UEL School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, which ensures that this research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society. As well as this, this research complies with all legal requirements to make sure all information provided remains confidential. I may quote some words from your child/the child you care for directly in my thesis write-up, however their name, school and any other form of identifying information will be omitted. Furthermore, they will be given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym if they so wish, which will be used for the purpose of publication. Data will be stored until the research project has been examined; after this point all data will be deleted, and only anonymised transcripts kept for the purpose of publication.

Only if your child/child you care for shares with me information that means they or someone they know may be in danger would I need to break confidentiality.

**What if I decide I no longer wish for my child/child I care for to participate?**

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are free to withdraw your child/child you care for from the research at any time before or during the study without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. They can also withdraw from the research themselves, without reason. Once data has been collected you have until the data analysis has started to request your child's responses are withdrawn, after which time alas it will no longer be possible.

**Further Information**

The research study will not explicitly explore your child's diagnosis of FASD, but the researcher is mindful that children may ask why they have been selected to participate in the research. The research will therefore comply with the British Psychological Society's standards of ethics and the researcher's own moral and ethical obligations not to deceive participants.

If you have any further questions or would like to find out more about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor using the details below.

Amy Hammond, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of East London / xx  
Psychology Service; Email: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Dr Pandora Giles, Academic and Professional Tutor, University of East London; Email:  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**Many thanks for your interest in this research**

## Appendix H

### Parent/ Carer Consent Form

I have read and understand the information sheet	Yes	No
I acknowledge that my child/child I care for meets the inclusion criteria	Yes	No
I have parental responsibility	Yes	No
I agree to the interview being video recorded via Microsoft Teams	Yes	No
I understand I can withdraw this consent up until transcription of the data and any information held will be deleted immediately	Yes	No

I give consent for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to take part in research conducted by Trainee Educational Psychologist, Amy Hammond exploring the experiences of school belonging for children with FASD.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

### Participant Information Sheet

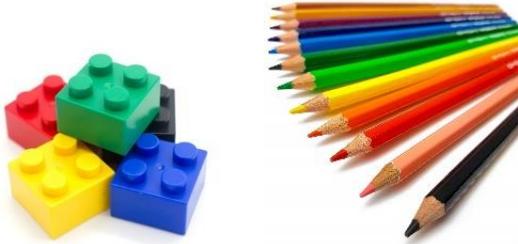
	<p>My name is Amy and I am training to become an Educational Psychologist.</p>
	<p>This means that I work with lots of children just like you and help them with their learning in school.</p>
	<p>I want to find out about how children like you feel about school.</p>
	<p>If you would like to take part, this is what will happen.</p>



I will meet with you and the person who cares for you on the computer and will ask you some questions about school.



I will be in my house and you will be in your house.



You can draw me a picture or make me a model if you like.



If it is ok, I will record a video of what we talk about.



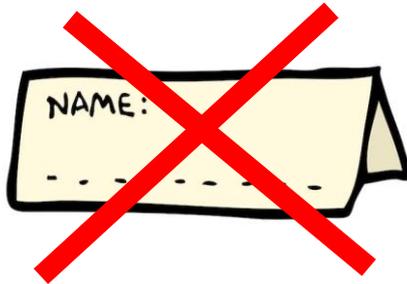
If there is a question you are not sure about or do not want to answer, that is ok. We can just move onto the next one.



What you say will be kept safe until I have written it up for my University project and then it will be deleted.



You can decide if you want to share what you tell me with your family or your teachers. You can choose how we do this if you would like.



I might use some of what you say for my University project. But I will not use your name. I will use a made up name instead. If you like, you can choose the name.

## Appendix J

### Participant Assent Form

Please read the following and circle **YES** or **NO**



I have read the participant information sheet or have had it read to me	YES	NO
I agree to what I say being videoed	YES	NO
I know that I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time	YES	NO
I know that I can choose not to answer a question if I do not want to and can ask to skip to the next question	YES	NO
I know that I can decide not to take part at any time and the information will be deleted straight away	YES	NO
I know that what I say may be used for a University project, but my real name will not be used and so nobody will know it is me	YES	NO
I understand that what I say will be kept in a safe place and will be deleted when it has been written up	YES	NO
I would like to take part in this project	YES	NO

Name: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix K

### Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

#### Part 1: Introduction

- Introduce self and explain the purpose of today, including a brief outline of the activities.
- Go through participant information sheet and give a brief outline of the activities, take any questions.
- Check child consents to participate in the research and is happy to be videoed.
- Problem Free Talk and 'Favourites' getting to know me game.

#### Part 2: PowerPoint Introduction to Belonging

1. If I said I feel like I belong what do you think this might mean?  
*Prompt: What do you think the word belong means?*  
*What might it mean if someone belongs?*  
*It's ok if you don't, I am going to introduce you to three different characters to help us.*
2. Where do you think Dave the dinosaur might feel as though he belongs the most? In Dinoland or in space?
3. Why did you choose here?  
*Prompt: What helps Dave to belong do you think?*
4. What about Felicity the Frog, where do you think she belongs the most?
5. What made you choose here?  
*Prompt: What helps Felicity to belong do you think?*
6. And what about Penelope the Penguin, where does she belong the most do you think?
7. What made you choose here?  
*Prompt: What helps Penelope belong do you think?*
8. Can you think of any places where you feel as though you belong?

#### Part 3: Blob Playground and Blob Classroom

- Show Blob Playground picture
  1. What do you notice about the picture?

2. Is there anything the same as your school?
  3. Is there anything that is different to your school?
  4. Can you colour in somebody who you think might feel as though they belong?  
*Prompt: Why did you choose that blob?*  
 - *What are they doing?*  
 - *How might they be feeling?*  
 - *How do you know that they belong?*
  5. Can you colour in somebody who you think might feel as though they do not belong?  
*Prompt: Why did you choose that blob?*  
 - *What are they doing?*  
 - *How might they be feeling?*  
 - *How do you know they feel like they don't belong?*
- *Repeat questions for Blob Classroom*

#### Part 4: School belonging drawing/construction activity

1. Can you draw me a picture/ show me with the figures/ make me a model of someone who you think feels like they belong in your school?  
*Prompt: What is the person doing?*  
*Where are they in school?*  
*How might the person be feeling?*  
*How do you know that they belong in school?*  
*Is there anybody else around, any adults or children? (If yes), what are they doing?*
2. If someone does not feel like they belong in your school what might that look like?  
 Can you show me/ draw me a picture?  
*Prompt: What might they be doing?*  
*Where are they in school?*  
*How might they be feeling?*  
*How can you tell that they don't belong in school?*  
*Is there anybody else with them, any adults or children?*

#### Part 5: Scaling

- Ask parents/carers to position the child's model or drawing on the numerical scale provided. On the left underneath 0, the child's drawing or model of someone who does not belong is placed. On the right underneath 10, the child's drawing or model of someone who does belong in school is placed).
1. Thinking about you now, where would you place yourself on the scale?

*Prompt: Would it be nearer to the model of someone who belongs at school or someone who doesn't belong at school?  
Which number do you think?*

2. Can you tell me why you chose here?

*Prompt: Do you feel like you belong at xx school?*

*What helps you to feel that way?*

*Is there anything in your classroom or around school that helps?*

*Where in school do you feel like you belong the most?*

*Is there anything else that helps you?*

#### Part 6: Relationship Circle Activity

- Ask parents to support children to write the names or draw pictures on their relationship circle.

#### Part 7: Questions about Relationship Circle and Who Helps

1. Is there anything that you do that helps you feel like you belong (gesture to the inner circle)?

*Prompt: What is special about you?*

*What do you do to help you to belong at school?*

2. What about people in this circle (gesture to second circle of people closest to child)?  
Is there anything that these people do to help?

*Prompt: What about your family?*

*What about your friends?*

*What about your teachers or teaching assistants?*

*Is there anyone else in school that helps you to feel as though you belong?*

*What do they do?*

3. What about people in this circle (gesture to outer circle of people who are present in the children's life but perhaps don't know them as well). Is there anything that these people do to help?

*Prompt: What do these people do?*

*How do they help you to belong at school?*

4. Is there anybody else that we have missed?

*Prompt: Is there anybody else, anyone at all?*

*How do they help you?*

5. Do you remember when some schools were closed because of the germs? What was that like for you?

*Prompt: Was there anything that school did to help you feel like you still belonged at school?*

## Part 8: Hopes for the Future

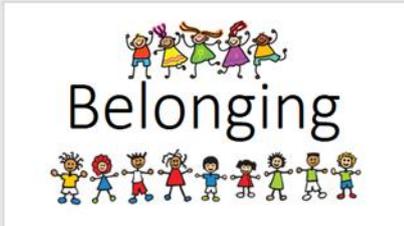
1. You told me that you feel like you are a X on this scale. Where would you like to be on this scale? (gesture to the numbers)  
*Prompt: Which number would you like to be?*  
*Why did you choose that number?*  
*How will you know when you are at that number?*
2. If you wanted to move closer to this number is there anything else that you think you could do?  
*Prompt: What could you do?*
3. Is there anything anybody else could do that you think would help?  
*Prompt: Gesture to the different people in the circle*
4. Is there anything else that you think would help you to feel like you belong more at school?  
*Prompt: Is there anything you can think of, anything at all?*
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about school, or is there anything I have missed?

## Part 9: Ending

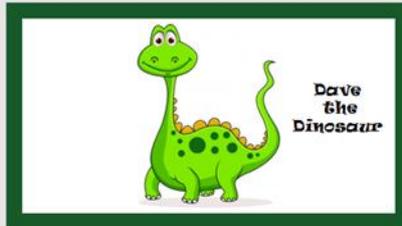
- Thank child for their hard work and participation.
- Explain how data will be stored and remind them of their right to withdraw.
- Remind child that no identifying information will be kept and invite them to choose their own pseudonym for purpose of publication.
- Discuss next steps re reading transcripts and member checking.

# Appendix L

## PowerPoint Presentation Slides Introducing Belonging



1



2



3



4



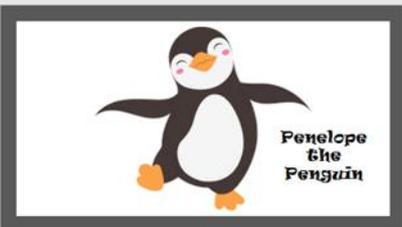
5



6



7



8



9



10



11

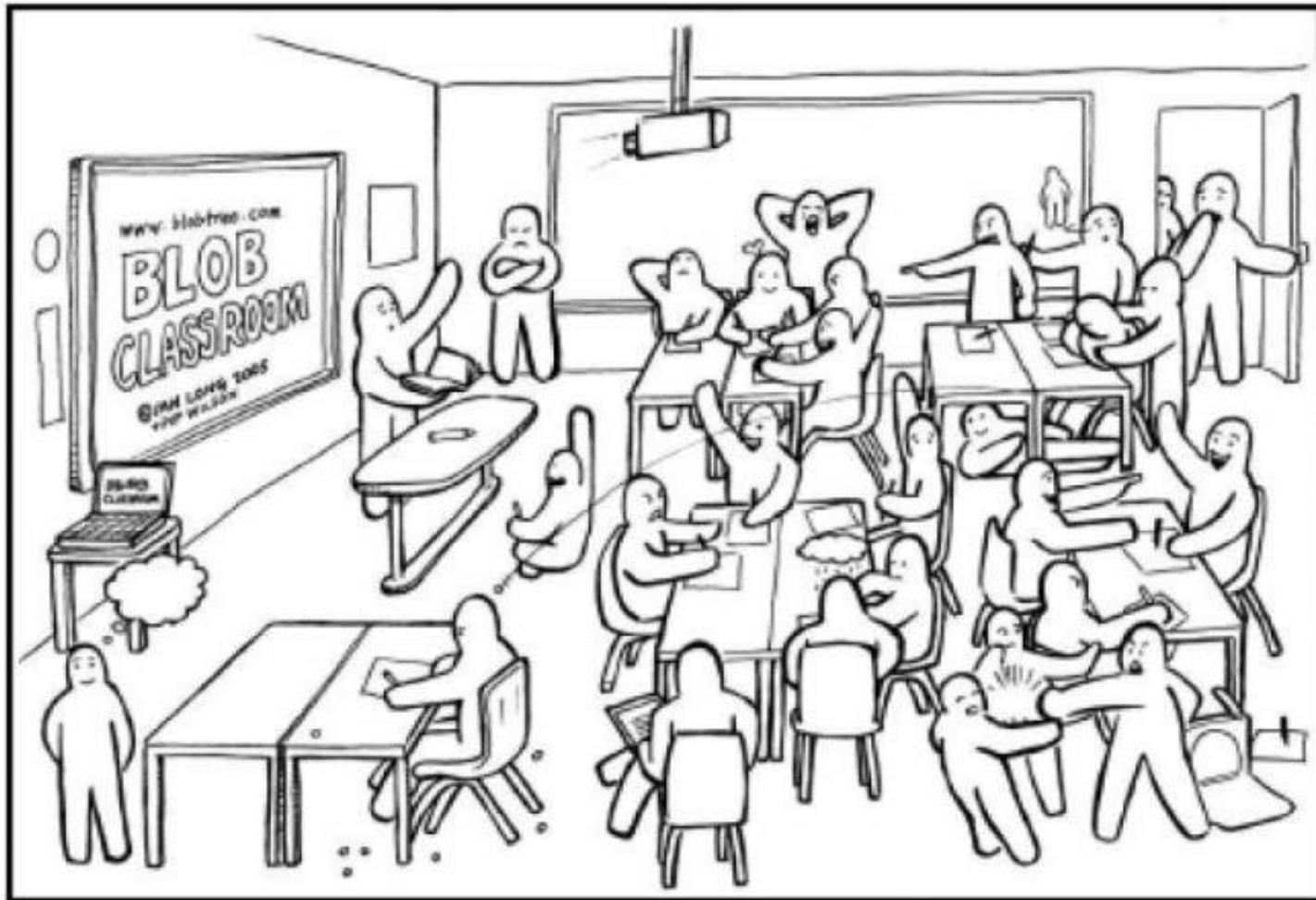
Appendix M

Blob Playground (Wilson & Long, 2017)

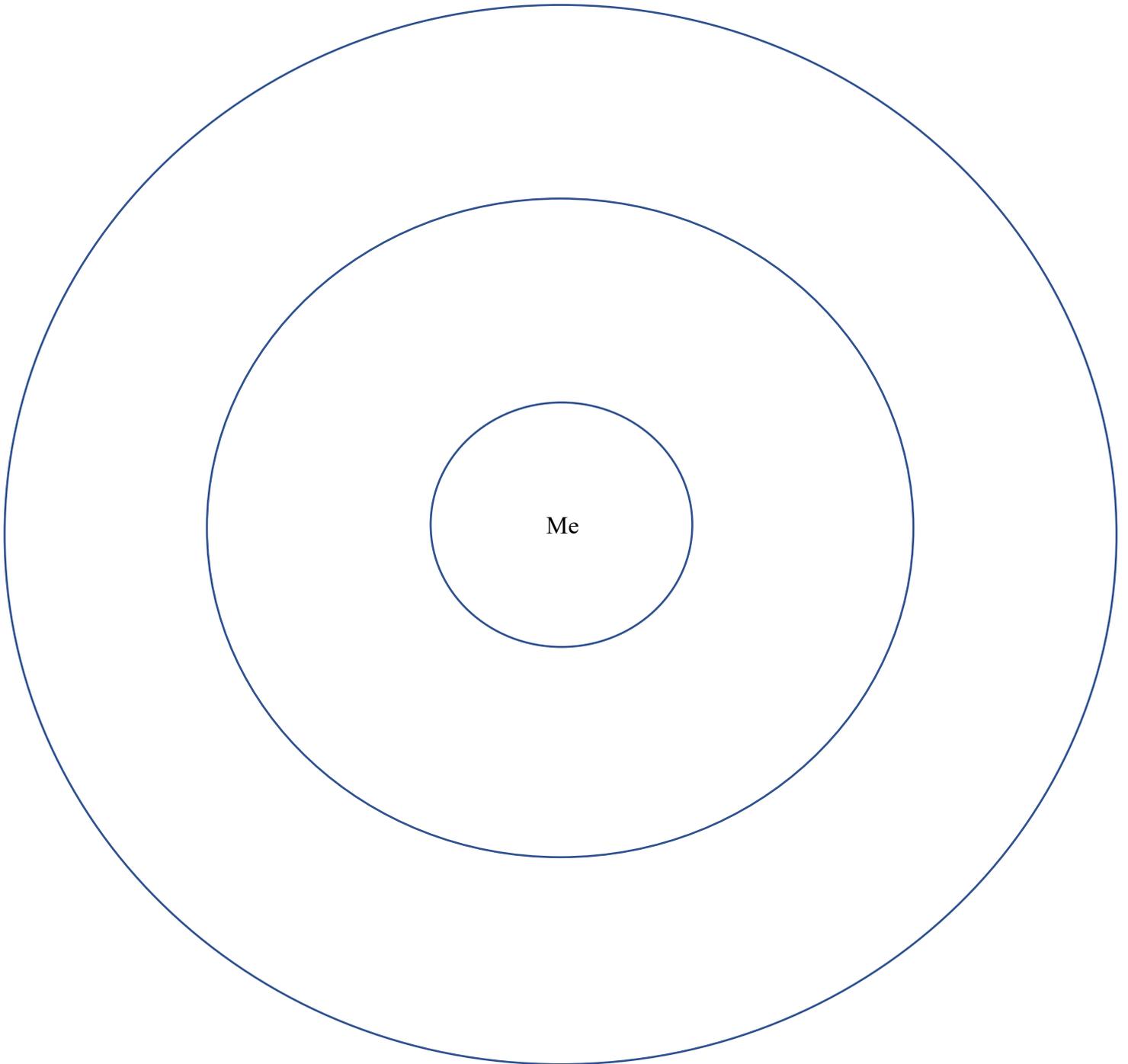


## Appendix N

Blob Classroom (Wilson & Long, 2017)



**Appendix O**  
Relationship Circle



**Central Circle:** You

**Inner Circle:** People who are closed to you, who love and support you

**Outer Circle:** People who are present in your life, but who maybe do not know you as well

## Appendix P

### Participant Debrief Letter

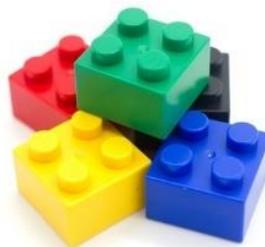


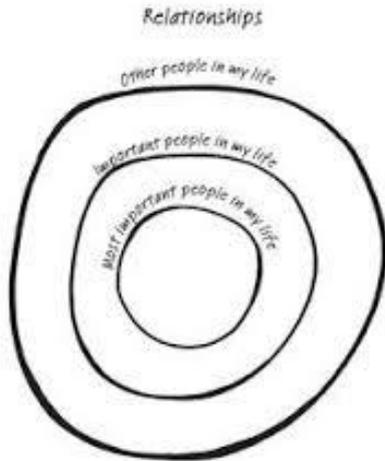
Thank you for sharing lots of information about your school experiences and taking part in some activities with me. You did a great job!



We talked about what you think school belonging means and what it's like for you in school.

You drew some pictures or made models out of Lego or playdough





You thought about the people who you have around you who help you to belong in school.

And you thought about what you think might make you feel like you belong even more in school.



I recorded what you told me, and I will keep what you told me safe. I might use some of what you said for my University project and then I will delete it. Remember, I won't use your real name or the name of your school, so nobody will know it is you.

If you have any more questions you can ask your Mum/Dad or whoever looks after you for more information.



Thank you very much 😊

## Appendix Q

### Parent/Carer Debrief Form



### **Children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and their Experiences of School** **Belonging: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Sincere thanks for consenting for your child/child you care for to participate in my research exploring the experiences of school belonging for children with FASD. Hopefully, this research will make a positive difference to their sense of belonging in school and will benefit other children affected by prenatal alcohol exposure.

The responses given will now be transcribed and any form of identifying information will be omitted or pseudonymised for the purpose of publication. Once the recordings have been transcribed, they will be deleted.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor using the details below. Once the data has been analysed I will endeavour to send you a synopsis of the research and my main findings.

For further help and advice, the following websites have some great family and educational advice and resources.

NOFAS-UK

[www.nofas-uk.org](http://www.nofas-uk.org)

FASD Awareness SE

[www.fasdawaareness.org.uk](http://www.fasdawaareness.org.uk)

FASD Alliance  
[www.fasd-uk.net](http://www.fasd-uk.net)

SEND Advice XX  
[www.sendadvicexx.co.uk](http://www.sendadvicexx.co.uk)

IASS  
[www.cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk](http://www.cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk)

Amy Hammond, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of East London / XX  
Educational Psychology Service; Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dr Pandora Giles, Academic and Professional Tutor, University of East London; Email:  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

## Appendix R

### UEL Ethics Approval

#### School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

### NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

#### For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Andrea Giraldez-Hayes

**SUPERVISOR:** Pandora Giles

**STUDENT:** Amy Hammond

**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

**Title of proposed study:** Children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and their Experiences of School Belonging: An interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

#### DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

#### DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

Approved

**Minor amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Major amendments required (for reviewer):**

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):**

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature)*:

Student number:

Date:

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER (for reviewer)**

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

Yes

**Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment**

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

**Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.**

MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

LOW

**Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).**

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Andrea Giraldez-Hayes

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2020

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

**RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:**

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in

## Appendix S

### Remote Delivery Ethics Amendments

Name of applicant: Amy Hammond  
 Programme of study: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology  
 Title of research: Children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and their Experiences of School Belonging: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis  
 Name of supervisor: Dr Pandora Giles

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
All parts of data to be collected remotely via Microsoft Teams.	Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions it will not be possible to collect data in schools as originally planned.
Rather than the participants taking photographs in school, participants will now answer remote questions at home about what helps them to belong in school and will complete a Relationship Circle activity.	Due to COVID-19, participants are unable to move freely about the school to take photographs due to a need to remain in their 'bubbles'. Not all schools are accepting external visitors.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	✓	

Student's signature (please type your name): Amy Hammond

Date: 25/9/2020

<b>TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER</b>		
<b>Amendment(s) approved</b>	YES	
<b>Comments</b>		

Reviewer: Dr Pandora Giles

Date: 29/09/2020

## Appendix T

### Example Summary Letter to Participant

Dear Lily,

I had such a lovely time chatting with you before Christmas. Thank you so much for sharing with me lots of information about your school for my project.

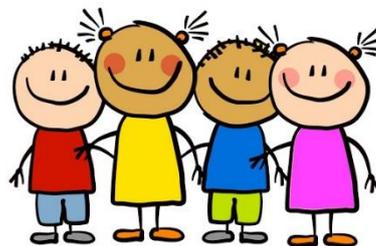
You told me that you feel like you really belong and feel happy at school. In fact, you gave a score of 10/10!

This is your model you build of your three friends and your teacher looking after you.



There are lots of things in school that help you to feel like you belong. You told me that these things are important to you:

- Going to school clubs
- Spending time with Mrs. Nate and getting ice cold water from the water cooler
- Classroom assistants helping by writing on the whiteboard for you
- Your three best friends looking after you and getting a teacher if you are hurt
- Having teachers who are there for you
- Having fun with the office ladies
- People being kind to you
- Having people to play with
- You also liked getting emails from your teachers during lockdown and listening to Mrs. Nate's Zoom stories



These are the things you told me that you are good at:

- You're kind and you help people when they've fallen over
- Helping Mummy with her work
- Thinking of other people
- Sharing
- Cuddles
- Making people laugh



During our time together, I also noticed that you were:

- Good at using the computer
- Very smiley and friendly
- Very good at meeting new people
- Good at talking about school



You told me that you would belong even more at your school if:

- You could have guinea pigs to look after
- For Mummy and Daddy to be teachers
- To have a slide in the field
- To have headphones to make it a bit quieter



It is up to you who you would like to share this letter with. It might be helpful to share it with school if you want as they might be able to make things even better for you.

Thank you for all your hard work,

Amy

## Appendix U

### Extract from Interview Transcript

#### Key

R	Researcher
...	Unfinished Utterance
//	Interruption or Overlap
()	Non-verbal Communication, e.g., smiles, laughter, grimace
<inaudible>	Inaudible Content
(.)	Short Pause (lasting 2 seconds or fewer)
((number in seconds))	Longer Pause (lasting 3 seconds or more)
<b>Bold</b>	Emphasised word or phrase
<i>(Italics)</i>	Additional Contextual Information, e.g., showing drawing to screen

644	S: I've built a cl... I've built a small weeny desk
645	R: Uh huh
646	S: And I've built two seats
647	R: Yep
648	S: And they have space between them because it's Covid for
649	this person and they have space so they are sitting down
650	together
651	R: So they're distanced because of Covid but they're still able
652	to be together
653	S: Yeah
654	R: // And so somebody who belongs it sounds like... being
655	together with somebody else is important. Is that right
656	S: Yes
657	R: Ahh, so you've got the child and did you say it was the
658	teacher
659	S: Yeah. The TA is sitting with the person, child
660	R: The TA is sitting there too with the child. And what is the
661	TA doing
662	S: Working with the child
663	R: Okay and are they helping with their learning
664	S: Yes
665	R: And how do you think the child feels to have that help and
666	support
667	S: That child feels <b>very</b> happy

668	R: They feel really happy. So having the help and support is a
669	good thing
670	S: Yeah
671	R: And helps them to belong in the classroom. Is that right
672	S: Yeah
673	R: Wonderful. What a fantastic model. Is there anything else
674	going on in the classroom which helps them to belong
675	S: ((3)) Hmm. I'm not sure
676	R: I think you've done a great job. So somebody who belongs
677	has a teacher or a TA who helps with their learning, helps the
678	the child to be able to do their maths, to do their timestables
679	S: Yeah
680	R: And they feel happy (.) Great. Are you adding more bits to
681	your model
682	S: // And they're not allowed to go outside because it's
683	learning time and that persons not allowed outside
684	R: Okay, so have they got rules they need to follow
685	S: Yeah
686	R: Ahhh
687	S: Once they've done their work they can go outside
688	R: Ahh and do they like going outside in the playground do
689	you think
690	S: Yeah
691	R: You said they've got rules. And do you have rules in your
692	classroom that you have to follow
693	S: Yeah
694	R: And and what rules do you have
695	S: ((3)) Do as you are done by
696	R: (nodding)
697	S: Be kind
698	R: Very key rules aren't they
699	S: Yeah
700	R: And do all of the children in your class follow these rules or
701	not
702	S: Yeah
703	R: That sounds really important, thank you. So I wonder next
704	Susie... you've done a lovely model of the person who belongs
705	and feels safe and happy... this time, with your other base plate
706	and the rest of the Lego, can you show me someone who who
707	doesn't belong (shaking head) and doesn't feel happy or safe in
708	school
709	S: ( <i>handing her model to her Mum</i> ) you have that
710	M: Right, yeah get the other base plate and make someone
711	who's not happy, not safe. Yeah ((12)) Are you choosing
712	S: Uh huh
713	M: ((15)) pieces ((6)) ok
714	S: ( <i>starts building her model</i> )
715	R: ((17)) so somebody who doesn't belong in their school.
716	What might that look like

717	M: Have a think ((6)) why mightn't they belong huh
718	S: ((4)) One will stick. This person ( <i>holding character up to</i>
719	<i>the screen</i> ) doesn't belong because this person punched that
720	person ( <i>acting out a fight between two characters</i> )
721	R: Okay. So sounds like not a very nice person
722	S: Yeah
723	R: Mmmm
724	S: But this person always have a chance ( <i>holding up figure</i>
725	<i>who was fighting</i> )

## Appendix V

### Example of Exploratory Comments and Emergent Themes

#### Key

- Descriptive comments: standard font
- Linguistic comments: italicized font
- Conceptual comments: underlined
- Additional questions for myself in bold

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Roles and Responsibilities	S: I ask to do the books and I do it K: What books, what does that mean S: The R.E books	Asking, implies a choice <u>Willingness to help, fits with her own values of kindness and wanting to help others</u> <u>Does she enjoy R.E.? What is significant about this lesson?</u>
Keen Helper Clarifying Responsibility	K: Collecting books S: No, handing them out K: Handing them out, that's a responsibility R: Ah okay. So you're really helpful in the class, handing out the books to the other children S: Yeah R: So you have a special job or responsibility when you have Mr M's class	Clarifying what her job entailed Self-identified responsibility  <b>Is this only limited to Mr. M's class I wonder or does she have other responsibilities?</b>
Shared Responsibilities Importance of Others	S: Maybe my friend X helps me R: So you do it together S: Yeah R: And does that help you to belong in Mr M's class S: Yeah	<u>Sharing in this role with others- is this more important than the job itself?</u> Importance of togetherness  Short answer in response to closed question. <b>Need for open questions</b>

<p>School Pets</p>	<p>R: Wonderful... such as helpful person Susie. And is there anywhere else in school where you feel happy ((4)) or is it in the classroom you feel happiest  S: Yeah  R: Lovely. Is there anything else you can think of that helps you in school to feel happy and safe and belong  K: Ohhh, a little guy who lives in the office  S: <b>Merlin</b>  M: Yes. We forgot about him  R: A little guy who lives in the office, who's this  S: Merlin  R: Who's Merlin  S: He's the school dog</p>	<p>Belonging as context dependent  Classroom as a safe space, incited feelings of happiness</p> <p>Mum's prompting didn't give Susie the chance to answer. <b>What is the impact of this?</b></p> <p><i>Said with importance</i></p>
<p>Dogs as part of the School Community</p>	<p>R: Noooo way, you have a school dog  S: (nodding, smiling) actually I have got two. Two school dogs  K: That's right. What's the other one called  S: Doug  K: Doug and Merlin  R: Doug and Merlin, what fantastic names  K: And they're faces are on the staff board of all the teachers and the staff, the two dogs have their photos on the board  R: (laughing) that's incredible. And do you know what type of dogs they are  Susie  S: ((3)) Merlin's black and white with brown eye brown eyebrows  K: He's a sprocker</p>	<p>School dog, belonging to the whole school. Susie spoke of the importance of the family dog too  Sense of pride, knowing smile  <i>Use of 'I' is contradictory if belongs to school. Does she actually see them as belonging to her?</i>  <i>Communicating she has two appears important to her, <u>perhaps associated with greater kudos?</u></i></p> <p><i>Descriptive account</i></p>

<p>Being Chosen Companionship</p>	<p>S: Yeah K: Springer and a cocker together R: Oh wow K: And I think Doug's a bit of er er a hound isn't he. R: (laughter) K: He's a mixture of lots of different dogs isn't he R: Ah S: Springer spaniel, cocker spaniel K: Merlin's a springer and a cocker and Doug is kind of lots of different kinds of dog isn't he S: Yeah K: Awww. On the, on the board they are R: // how do, how do those dogs help you in school Susie S: Merlin always comes and sits next to me</p>	<p><i>Repeating her mother's description</i></p> <p>Reference to school picture board <b>Interjected too soon- be mindful of internet delay, give longer to answer</b></p> <p><i>'Always' implies this happens often. Susie is the one chosen. This seems to come with a sense of pride. Physical presence of sitting next to her is important. Possible links with attachment relationship and historical care experiences</i></p> <p>Quick change of subject. Keen to communicate her sadness. In touch with her feelings His loveliness makes the loss even more profound, sounds like he was important to her Loss of friendship</p>
<p>Loss and Change Relationship breakdown</p>	<p>S: A lovely lad in my class called X is leaving, going to another school R: Oh that's a shame isn't it S: And it's not XX school it's XX K: XX maybe S: Yeah K: Yeah, he's moving schools... that's erm yeah R: And is he quite a close friend of yours S: Yeah K: Yeah, and it was very sudden wasn't it S: Yeah</p>	<p>Very particular about which school. Appears that she knows these schools</p> <p>Sudden, unexpected</p>

<p>Adaptability to Change</p>	<p>K: He told you on Thursday that he was leaving on Friday  S: No  K: We didn't get much warning  S: No, on on on Monday, tomorrow  K: He told you on Monday. No, no but he's not coming back on Monday but we only really found out on Thursday didn't we  S: Yeah  K: That the next day was going to be his last day. We didn't get much notice did we  S: No  R: That's a real shame  K: &lt;inaudible&gt;  R: I'm sorry to hear that. And did he really help you in school Susie. What did he do to help you belong</p>	<p>Some confusion around this. Has he left?</p>
<p>Peer Support at Lunchtime</p>	<p>K: ((4)) he used to be your lunch buddy  S: Yep  R: Ahh, did you used to sit with him and have lunch together  S: Yeah  R: And that sounds like that was important</p>	<p>What is the significance of lunchtime?  <u>Is this why she chose to speak about the classroom more than breaktimes and lunchtimes?</u>  <u>Sounds as if this loss is still raw for her. Perhaps why she feels happiest in the classroom</u></p>
<p>Playground Support Helping up When Hurt</p>	<p>S: And he helps me if I fall over  R: Is there anybody else maybe that can do the same job now he's not going to be at your school anymore  S: ((5)) well  R: // are there any other friends you've got who might do that if you fall over and help you</p>	<p>Physically picks her up. <u>Is there worry about who will fulfil this role now he has left?</u>    <i>Long pause, no answer, is she struggling to identify other sources of support?</i></p>

Dependency of Mother	S: Well x helps me R: You've got x, that's good to know S: Plus I've got x and Mummy M: Mmmm	Able to list another friend, suggests she has a wide support network, links with relationships circle Mummy as someone she can always depend on, always there for her
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## Appendix W

### Themes and Verbatim Quotes from Lily's Interview

Superordinate and Subordinate themes	Transcript line numbers	Verbatim Quotes	
<b>Adults as Omnipresent</b> Protectors and Fixers	710	Er making sure everybody's ok	
	765	Um, trying to fix it	
	844	((teachers are there))	
	861	Er she looks after the school	
	933	Don't shout, ah ((6)) treat others like you would be treated, that's a golden rule and you can't say bad words	
	1053	Er, she used to look after me at playtime but she doesn't now because of coronavirus	
	1056	She used to be there for me to tell her if anything was wrong	
	1068	Erm looks after me and she says if we can go for our dinner or not because the first ones have to go first	
	1109	Ring the school	
	1220	Ah teachers, teachers help	
	1225	Go and get a teacher	
	Physical Connection, Love and Kindness	403	I love her
		467	She's very very kind to me isn't she (looking towards her Mother)
470		Er she buys me things and reads me stories and speaks kindly	
1089		She looks after me, she does lots of things for me, um she sometimes tidies my room, she earns lots of money and she gives me cuddles when I need it and she loves me lots	
1103		Um, she'd give you a cuddle	
1129		((7)) drops me off sometimes	
1131		And gives me cuddles before she goes. Sometimes I chase her coz I just want one more cuddle	
1147		He looks after me in the mornings and gives me breakfast and gives me lots of huggles and sometimes he lets me watch things on the iPad	
1196		Learning and maybe huggles	
1383		Mummy can ask that question because she always says I'm super duper special don't you	
1387	Er you once said because I'm kind and I help people when they've fallen over, I don't just leave them		
1397	L always asks do I have something and guess what I say... I say yes		
1420			

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<b>Being Kept in Mind</b>	1027	Yes, they do, everybody knows my name
Everybody knows my name	1032	On Friday when Mummy was gonna take me to the hospital but I kept going to see Mrs. N and I kept smiling at the office ladies and they kept saying that's a cheeky smile
They Remembered Me	1242	We done home school which was boring ((4)) which was boring
	1253	Oh yeah. Every week she read us a story
	1264	They sent me messages
	1267	Phone messages
	1271	Yeah it was good they remembered me
	1326	Excited I was coz it means I wouldn't have Mummy. Then I did started to miss her a little bit
Attendance at School Clubs	119	Activity club
	122	Sometimes we go on bouncy castles and sometimes the boys play football and we play
	139	Sometimes I go to after school club
	141	It's a bit like a nursery and it is a nursery but once the nursery people have gone sometimes we we go there... a few of us... somebody somebody comes and picks us up
	960	Holiday club and also sometimes in the morning they still do breakfast club and I've been wanting to go there but Daddy says no

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## Appendix X

### Themes and Verbatim Quotes from Kitty's Interview

Superordinate and Subordinate themes	Transcript line numbers	Verbatim Quotes	
<b>Whole School Inclusive Practices</b> School Rules and Responsibilities	407	It means like at our school... if you're messing around you get a verbal warning and then if you mess around even more you get a physical and then if you be really naughty you get a yellow card and it goes home to tell what happened and then if you get a red card it means you punched someone or really hurt them	
	652	In our classroom... I'll give you five of our rules. Keep your hands and feet to yourself, erm be kind, don't mess around ((3)) um (.) don't shout out and don't fidget... you know what I mean like don't... I like to touch things	
	695	Well having the rules helps on some reasons like to help you to be good	
	1047	Um well every Monday we have these monitors and I'm like the book monitor and every Monday in the morning they do so I go to like the bookshelves and there's a box of books that everyone's read and they don't want them anymore and then they have to be quarantined and then put back in the shelves and I do that job	
	1054	Er, like I've got a responsibility like I feel good because of it	
	1125	Um we used to have a rabbit called snowflake but she died	
	1126	We have two guinea pigs and we used to have chickens but the fox ate them	
	1133	Good thing because well we have responsibilities and actually in Year one we had to feed them like I I was allowed to feed them and stroke them and do things with them and with a helper and year that was really nice and like my... I love animals because animals make me feel calm and happy and not alone basically	
	Feeling Included in School Trips and Outings	1079	Oh I went to the aquarium
		1081	So the aquarium is um a place. It's very special actually. It's a place where it's it's basically the ocean and it's got... it's in a building and it's in X and it's got tanks, really big tanks of fish and sharks and starfish and stuff like that

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	1088	I went with my class
	1090	Oh and Daddy came too
	1093	Yep, everyone
	1096	Well we were doing this thing about animals and fish and things... we were doing sealife and well it gave us lots of ideas about it and like it was learning in a very fun way
	1101	They might feel really angry coz like if everyone else goes and they might think the teacher's think the teacher's think they are like the worst in the class and just leave them behind. Actually, I felt like that once because everyone in my Brownies, I was in Brownies and um then I don't think they let me go coz I wasn't ready and they went on this really fun camping trip and they left me behind like as they meant ta
<b>Help and Supportiveness of Others</b>	360	Once I fell over in school and I was really upset but my best friends A made me laugh <b>so much</b> and I couldn't stop
Peer Support and Solidarity	700	I like I feel really good because whenever I do it and I get told off my whole class just goes in and says to the teacher she can't help it and my whole class is just helping me and like they understand
	808	Well sometimes he can be like we're friends and being friends is an important role to be to have in life really
	1043	Coz I've got my friends in there and coz I've got people I know there and things like that
	1517	They help me because they're near me and like they understand what what like I struggles with and stuff
	1524	Um they help me by playing with me and like making me happy and things like that
	1545	They would come up to me and say are you okay Kitty and like they would take me to the teacher and help me and be nice
	1549	And they know what I like, so whatever I like they do it and they make me feel happy
Parental Support and Advocacy	683	Yeah but like my parents understand lots about me so yeah
	688	And Mummy gets on the phone and tells teachers off
	819	By my family. Yeah, my Mum always... she helps me with things that I really don't understand

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	1320	I just wanted to tell you... if you're wondering, my Mum is actually not my Mum in real life. She foster cared me because like my Mum couldn't look after me, my proper Mum and then my um this woman over here um she says she found me in the hospital and was like ooh I wanna foster care this child and after a big discussion she said to Dad I want to get this little child, she's gorgeous, she's a little angel
	1339	Well whenever I'm like right... if I'm struggling with my homework Mummy comes and helps me... she like does the dishwasher and things and she cooks tea whilst I'm relaxing and like she does basically like all the work and I get to relax
	1351	Um, they would talk about it with me
	1354	Oh, she said she'd ring up and check what's going on and she like ((3)) telling other teachers off
Teacher Support, Understanding and Constancy	635	Yeah I normally go out to groups like... in the afternoon I'm normally like being really giddy in the afternoon so like after lunch every day erm I I go out with erm a lady called A and um she does this time with me. I call it calming down time and we normally do colouring or playing with playdough
	988	He's going out sorting it out
	1238	Yeah, I wanna put her in the important one coz she's quite, she's very important
	1286	Miss C is a teacher assistant and she helped me so much and she understands and she was always with me
	1289	Yeah but we're still really nice friends
	1295	So Miss C is a teaching assistant and it's like she understood me a lot more than other people did and like she helped me a lot more and she was with me a lot more
	1299	Um she like took me out when I was angry and she took me out for sessions and we did this thing
	1475	Oh and um Mr D. He's a really nice man
	1478	Deputy Head and he taught my class once and he's really nice. He's really funny as well. Um, Miss P is really enthusiastic. Whenever she does something, whenever we're working she makes it funny
	1483	Yeah, she's so kind and she understands me so well

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	1485	Yeah and I really like her and I feel really sad when I had to move class and I was and I was thinking ow I don't wanna leave, I really belong in this class
	1493	Um, well they help me with things I struggle with and that's good coz like I don't know as many things as other children
	1507	I used to go to this maths group and we did year four work when were in year five coz I struggled with it
<b>FASD and Me</b> Insight into Own Strengths and Needs	468	Like I I... saying I'm being true here... I'm not really good at listening
	493	I really really like um writing. I used to hate writing but now like it's basically nearly my favourite subject
	536	Erm it's like this person like erm they feel upset (.) like me. I struggle with things that other children don't and I get like really anxious. I get anxious because like if it's timed I get like really scared and I don't know why but I just do
	617	It's only got like ten children in a class and I I would feel good about of that because the teachers can give me more help and support
	771	Yeah, I'm a forgetter
	1256	Erm singing, drawing, Lego, dancing, writing, maths uh what else
	1261	When I'm angry I'm allowed to go to the school carpet and just relax coz there's like a calming down basket with fun things to like you calm you down if you're sad or angry
Celebrating Differences and Educating Others	208	Well we're all different in lots of ways but we can be the same in some ways
	794	I'm different to a lot of people but like I feel that's a good thing coz like I'm different in a lot of ways but everyone's different
	812	Yeah, I mean why wouldn't they be as everyone's important
	814	Even if they're small or big or different, everyone is special in their own way
	1741	Like all of my friends in like reception and year one didn't know but in year two the teacher said do you wanna tell the class about it and I stood up in front of the class and Miss and basically a lot of the teachers came in and um I was just standing at the front and I was about six
	1595	Um to explain to them what I've been through, like I nearly died when I was little, kind of. Well

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		probably not because of my foetal alcohol, it was probably coz I was two pounds seven
FASD as Hidden and Misunderstood	655	I I I like to touch things and I'm like uh I want to touch this thing and then I kinda get told off a lot for that
	660	She hates people fidgeting
	664	She's she's very scary and and I can't really help to like touch things and fiddle and I normally get told off because um Miss H's worst thing for a child to do is fidget
	674	Um like I don't really know... for them to understand and like know what I can't help
	677	I've got this thing what I do this thing really
	697	weirdly and when like when there's new people in like new adults I get told off once about it and I don't know how to help it
	1588	Um, for a lot of people to understand me more, like more people to understand
	1733	But like I've got hidden alcohol, foetal alcohol but if it was showing it would be a bit different like

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## Appendix Y

### Themes and Verbatim Quotes from Susie's Interview

Superordinate and Subordinate themes	Transcript line numbers	Verbatim Quotes	
<b>Belonging as Self-Determined and Deserved</b>	459	Because that person des deserves to be at school and er have a reward because that person's trying to work hard	
	Trying One's Best and Working Hard	501	Because that person shouldn't be in in school and that person isn't working hard and that person shouldn't get a reward
		605	Hard work
		608	Well (.) its timestable time. For the timestables
		832	((5)) because (.) I feel <b>very very very very</b> happy at school
		837	Learning
		840	((4)) hmmm ((3)) I enjoy learning about poppies and stuff
		895	I ask to do the books and I do it
		1318	(.) I'm good at (.) writing
		1320	Maths
Behaviour, Morality and Second Chances	319	(.) she belongs but I don't think those two girls should belong to the school because they're being mean to that little girl	
	329	I think they should go to a different school	
	384	They're playing with each other and they're not including the other person	
	508	// but but everyone has a chance	
	511	Yeah. If I just have a chance	
	513	I have a chance... if I hurt people I have a chance and I say sorry and I make them feel better	
	693	Do as you are done by	
	695	Be kind	
	716	((4)) one will stick. This person ( <i>holding character up to screen</i> ) doesn't belong because this person punched that person ( <i>acting out a fight between two characters</i> )	
	<b>Interpersonal Relationships</b>	423	(.) because they play together. All three of them play together
Peer Support and Friendship		783	Do you wanna play, do you wanna play (pretending to be the voice of one of the characters inviting the little girl to play)
		953	A lovely lad in my class called x is leaving, going to another school

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	983	And he helps me if I fall over
	1612	I wanna show um... this is what my friend x taught me
	1618	Yeah, we play together
	1620	We just do skipping
	1629	We have a dance routine
	1771	Playing
	1795	<b>Friends</b>
Kind and Helpful Teachers	660	Working with the child
	665	That child feels <b>very very</b> happy
	845	Mrs B
	851	She helps me
	1539	She's very kind
	1562	Takes me out
	1564	For a walk
	1637	Mr. T's there though
	1639	Helps me
	1643	((3)) if somebody's bothering me
	1652	He just tells someone off
Parental Encouragement and Championing	992	Plus I've got X and Mummy
	1331	((4)) we did... Mum and I did a load of things and let me show you something that I did
	1346	This is what I did yesterday ( <i>holding handwriting book up to screen</i> )
	1364	You can do it
	1397	Comprehension
	1407	<b>Teamwork</b>
	1442	I read the whole of my book to my Mum and I got one hundred and thirty points
	1461	He reads it
	1463	Listen
Animal Companionship	917	<b>Merlin</b>
	922	He's the school dog
	924	Actually I have got two. Two school dogs
	926	Doug
	933	((3)) Merlin's black and white with brown eye brown eyebrows
	943	Springer spaniel, cocker spaniel
	949	Merlin always comes and sits next to me
	1001	Yeah, I just take Merlin around the school running track
	1420	Come on me

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## Appendix Z

### Themes and Verbatim Quotes from Bob's Interview

Superordinate and Subordinate themes	Transcript line numbers	Verbatim Quotes
<b>Participation in school life</b> Academic Integration	290	Yes, with his hands sticking up
	295	He looks really happy
	297	Because he's got a really good question
	316	Er (.) he's folding his arms
	319	Coz he doesn't want to be at school
	330	Standing on his own
	678	(pointing at number 10)
	686	Because I do my work
	689	I get ticks, a lot of ticks don't I Daddy
	1091	You and Mummy (5 reads)
1205	I'm allowed to use a ChromeBook... I'm actually allowed to use a ChromeBook	
Breaktimes as Opportunities for Play and Fun	237	The one in the puddle
	240	Because he's got a smile um smiley face on him
	246	Er there's somebody jumping into the puddle
	267	Erm because he looks really sad
	694	((7)) the football pitch
<b>Peer Relations</b> Hand Holding and Helping up when Hurt	642	((4)) two people holding hands
	644	Coz they're best friends
	646	Playing
	648	<i>(draws a ball)</i> football
	651	Really happy
	907	I'm gonna do her very cute. She's really cute
	1077	And L
	1144	Help me up
1147	Erm ((3)) still (.) help me	
Meanness and Being Picked On	383	((6)) <i>(playing with the figures)</i> I go punch him down
	409	<i>(playing with the figures)</i> bye bye... you're big and fat... I'm jumping on your head
	422	We're taller than you person <i>(using figure to speak to another figure)</i>
	451	They're being mean
	456	He's telling the teacher that these two brothers are picking on him
	478	I've got my uniform. This is my normal clothes <i>(holding up one figure)</i> and I'm changing into my uniform
	607	Somebody's being mean to him



## Appendix AA

List of Themes and Participant Accounts Contributing to Themes

Individual Participant Superordinate themes	Individual Participant Subordinate themes	Participants contributing to theme				Present in over half of sample?
		Kitty	Lily	Susie	Bob	
Whole school inclusive practices	School rules and responsibilities	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Feeling included in school trips and outings	✓				
Help and supportiveness of others	Peer support and solidarity	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Parental support and advocacy	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Teacher support, understanding and constancy	✓	✓	✓		✓
FASD and me	Insight into own strengths and needs	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Celebrating differences and educating others	✓				
	FASD as hidden and misunderstood	✓				
Adults as omnipresent	Protectors and fixers	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Physical connection, love and kindness	✓	✓	✓		✓
Being kept in mind	Everybody knows my name		✓			
	They remembered me	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Attendance at school clubs		✓	✓		✓

Belonging as self-determined and deserved	Trying one's best and working hard	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Behaviour, morality and second chances	✓	✓	✓		✓
Interpersonal relationships	Peer support and friendship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Kind and helpful teachers	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Parental encouragement and championing	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Animal companionship	✓	✓	✓		✓
Participation in school life	Academic integration	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Breaktimes as opportunities for play and fun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peer relations	Hand holding and helping up when hurt	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Meanness and being picked on	✓			✓	✓

## Appendix AB

### Cross Case Themes and Verbatim Quotes from All Participants

Superordinate and Subordinate themes	Participant	Transcript line numbers	Verbatim Quotes
<b>School Ethos and Sense of Community</b> School Rules and Values	Lily	859	Er tells people off and sometimes tells people rules
		933	Don't shout, ah (6) treat others like you would be treated, that's a golden rule and you can't say bad words
		941	Learn
		1027	Yes they do, everybody knows my name
	Kitty	208	Well we're all different in lots of ways but we can be the same in some ways
		407	It means like at our school... if you're messing around you get a verbal warning and then if you mess around even more you get a physical and then if you be really naughty you get a yellow card and it goes home to tell what happened and then if you get a red card it means you punched someone and really hurt them
		652	In our classroom... I'll give you five of our rules. Keep your hands and feet to yourself, erm be kind, don't mess around ((3)) um (.) don't shout out and don't fidget... you know what I mean like don't... I like to touch things
		695	Well having the rules helps on some reasons like to help you to be good
		794	I'm different to a lot of people but like I feel that's a good thing coz like I'm different in a lot of ways but everyone's different
		812	Yeah, I mean why wouldn't they be as everyone's important
		814	Even if they're small or big or different, everyone is special in their own way
		Susie	508 511

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		513	I have a chance... if I hurt people I have a chance and I say sorry and I make them feel better
		680	// and they're not allowed to go outside because it's learning time for that person and that person is not allowed to go outside
		693	Do as you are done by
		695	Be kind
		722	<i>But this person always have a chance (holding up figure who was fighting)</i>
Wrap-Around Care and Participation in Extra Curricular Clubs	Lily	119	Activity club
		122	Sometimes we go on bouncy castles and sometimes the boys play football and we play
		139	Sometimes I go to after school club
		141	It's a bit like a nursery and it is a nursery but once the nursery people have gone sometimes we we go there... a few of us... somebody somebody comes and picks us up
		960	Holiday club and also sometimes in the morning they still do breakfast club and I've been wanting to go there but Daddy says no
	Kitty	119	Five six seven club
		122	Ah after school club and I haven't really been there lots so I don't think I would belong in there
		126	Oh yeah I go to a dancing school and swimming lessons and I think I belong in them as well
	Susie	124	Erm well it's not starting because of Covid but I actually erm do erm... I do two clubs. I do erm running club and I also do mindfulness
		130	It's a school running club that I go to
135		((4)) before breakfast sometimes	
137		And sometimes at school at... in lunchtimes	
147		We do loads of stuff like (.) we do well painting, drawing and things like that	
		150	Calm things
		881	And I used to do choir

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Being Responsible for and Feeling an Affinity with School Pets	Lily	915	I wish we had guinea pigs
		927	I'm going to ask Mrs. N for them on Monday
		1351	Oh yeah, I should have said guinea pigs
	Kitty	1125	Um we used to have a rabbit called snowflake but she died
		1126	We have two guinea pigs and we used to have chickens but the fox ate them
		1133	Good thing because well we have responsibilities and actually in Year one we had to feed them like I I was allowed to feed them and stroke them and do things with them and with a helper and year that was really nice and like my... I love animals because animals make me feel calm and happy and not alone basically
	Susie	917	<b>Merlin</b>
		922	He's the school dog
		924	Actually I have got two. Two school dogs
926		Doug	
933		((3)) Merlin's black and white with brown eye brown eyebrows	
943		Springer spaniel, cocker spaniel	
949		Merlin always comes and sits next to me	
1001		Yeah, I just take Merlin around the school running track	
1420	Come on me		
Parental Containment, Dependency and Bridge Between Home and School	Lily	403	I love her
		1089	She looks after me, she does lots of things for me, um she sometimes tidies my room, she earns lots of money and she gives me cuddles when I need it and she loves me lots
		1103	Um, she'd give you a cuddle
		1109	Ring the school
		1129	((7)) drops me off sometimes
		1131	And gives me cuddles before she goes. Sometimes I chase her coz I just want one more cuddle

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	1147	He looks after me in the mornings and gives me breakfast and gives me lots of huggles and sometimes he lets me watch things on the iPad
	1229	I did not have a super teacher at home, I had a Mrs x teacher at home
	1315	Excited I was coz that means I wouldn't have Mummy. Then I did started to miss her a little bit
	1326	No, that's up to Mummy and Daddy
	1342	For Mummy and Daddy to be teachers
	1397	She gives me cuddles when I need it, she can make me stop cry
Kitty	683	Yeah but like my parents understand lots about me so yeah
	688	And Mummy gets on the phone and tells teachers off
	819	By my family. Yeah, my Mum always... she helps me with things that I really don't understand
	1090	Oh and Daddy came too
	1339	Well whenever I'm like right... if I'm struggling with my homework Mummy comes and helps me... she like does the dishwasher and things and she cooks tea whilst I'm relaxing and like she does basically like all the work and I get to relax
	1351	Um, they would talk about it with me
	1354	Oh, she said she'd ring up and check what's going on and she like ((3)) telling other teachers off
Susie	992	Plus I've got X and Mummy
	1331	((4)) we did... Mum and I did a load of things and let me show you something that I did
	1346	This is what I did yesterday ( <i>holding handwriting book up to screen</i> )
	1364	You can do it
	1397	Comprehension
	1407	<b>Teamwork</b>
	1442	I read the whole of my book to my Mum and I got one hundred and thirty points
	1461	He reads it
	1463	Listen

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	Bob	1062	Daddy (walks to school)
		1064	Daddy (makes sandwiches)
		1091	You and Mummy (5 reads)
<b>Relatedness to Peers</b>	Lily	303	Um because maybe his friends maybe might maybe they're making fun of him (.) or maybe teasing him
Social Inclusion and Importance of Play		326	Um, because he looks like he might be playing hide and seek
		574	Um, go on the slide
		841	Because I've got people to play with
		1001	(shaking head) no, it's the playdough and the trampoline at school
		1356	Trampoline
		1358	A slide in the field, no I meant a swing
	Kitty	323	But but there when covid didn't happen there was like this little area which was like a little mini assault course and there was like these climbing things and there was monkey bars and ropes and things that you could do on it
		423	Yeah yeah I think so (.) because once I was crying at school and I was upset and everyone basically kept on playing and didn't really notice me and I felt like I didn't belong and I was basically invisible
		622	Er ((3)) like belonging and like it's not like you're on your own not like Doug no Dave the dinosaur if he lived in space he would be all alone but like he's with his friends
		1524	They help me by playing with me and making me happy and things like that
		1528	We play tig and we chat and we actually once we did the conga around the playground and everybody was joining in and basically everyone of the playground was joining in doing the conga and A was at the front and I was second and everyone just joined at the back and be like choo choo choo come and join the conga
		1535	Well we normally do, I'm normally just being silly with A

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		1626	Really upsetting because I couldn't see my friends and I was actually crying
	Susie	384	They're playing with each other and not including the other person
		423	Because they play together, all three of them play together
		783	Do you wanna play do you wanna play
		1620	We just do skipping
		1629	We have a dance routine
		1766	No-one plays with me
		1771	Playing
	Bob	648	<i>(draws a football)</i> football
		694	((7)) the football pitch
		1139	Play
Helping Behaviours and Supportiveness of Friends	Lily	1225	Go and get a teacher
	Kitty	550	I think there's a person holding like trying to help and there's a person coming into the class who looks a bit shocked and I think he (.) its like a friend of another friend and like he wants to help him
		700	And like I feel really good because whenever I do it and I get told off my whole class just goes in and says to the teacher she can't help it and my whole class is just helping me and like they understand
		1518	They help me because they're near me and like they understand what what like I struggles with and stuff
		1545	They would come up to me and say are you okay Kitty
	Susie	905	Maybe my friend X helps me
		983	And he helps me if I fall over
		1795	Friends
	Bob	642	((4)) two people holding hands
		644	Coz they're best friends
		722	My friends
		1144	Help me up

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<b>Staff Attributes and Teaching Practices</b> Kind Natured and Understanding School Staff	Lily	467	She's very very kind to me (looking towards Mum)
		470	Er she buys me things and reads me stories and speaks kindly
		1053	Er she used to look after me at playtime but she doesn't now because of coronavirus
	Kitty	1286	Miss C is a teacher assistant and she helped me so much and she understands and she was always with me
		1289	Yeah but we're still really nice friends
		1295	So Miss C is a teaching assistant and it's like she understood me a lot more than other people did and like she helped me a lot more and she was with me a lot more
		1472	Miss H came but Miss H is not important to me because she's really scary
		1475	Oh and um Mr. D. He's a really nice man
		1478	Deputy Head and he taught my class once and he's really nice. He's really funny as well. Um, Miss P is really enthusiastic. Whenever she does something, whenever we're working she makes it funny
		1483	Yeah, she's so kind and she understands me so well
1608	To be a bit more nicer to me and not tell me off coz when people tell me off I feel really upset		
	Susie	1539	She's very kind
They Remembered Me: Being Kept in Mind During COVID-19	Lily	1253	Oh yeah. Every week she read us a story
		1264	They sent me messages
		1267	Phone messages
		1271	Yeah it was good they remembered me
	Kitty	1657	Um by calling them on WhatsApp
		1659	My friends and I could see them and we were just chatting away every day

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		1665	Happy because I knew I wasn't alone like the teachers hadn't just forgotten me
		1670	Yeah because just because you're away doesn't mean that they've forgotten you and basically you're nothing and they know you're still there
	Susie	1693	Lot of workbooks
		1696	He was on our drive and it was very funny
		1707	<b>Zoom</b>
		1723	My teachers
Attunement and Provision of Tailored Support	Lily	470	Er she buys me things and reads me stories
		1001	The space hopper and the wobble board and a ball where you lay your tummy and wiggle on it... and I've got a black one of these ( <i>holding up sensory cushion</i> )
		1199	Sometimes they're writing on the whiteboard
		1208	But it's not because I've been naughty it's because maybe it's because it's too loud
	Kitty	618	I think we're gonna go to X school and like it's only got like ten children in a class and I I would feel good about that because the teachers can give me more help and support
		635	Yeah I normally go out to groups like... in the afternoon I'm normally like being really giddy in the afternoon so like after lunch every day erm I I go out with erm a lady called A and um she does this time with me. I call it calming down time and we normally do colouring or playing with playdough
		1299	Um she like took me out when I was angry and she took me out for sessions
		1493	Um, well like they help me with things I struggle with and that's good coz like I don't know as many things as other children

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		1508	(nodding) no actually we don't. I used to go to this maths group and we did year four work when we were in year five coz I struggled with it
	Susie	657 660 851 1562 1564	The TA is sitting with the person, child Working with the child She helps me She takes me out For a walk
	Bob	714 1205  1298	I turn it on and it has number stuff I'm allowed to use a ChromeBook... I'm actually allowed to use a ChromeBook Yeah I do everything. We did a butterfly and we were trying to catch it by the net
Hard Work and Enjoyment of Learning	Lily	1304	No, they said it was amazing
	Kitty	493	I really really like um writing. I used to hate writing but now like it's basically nearly my favourite subject
		594	They put their hand up and they're the only one that's like right and then they feel good about that
		1256	Erm singing, drawing, Lego, dancing, writing, maths, uh what else
	Susie	501	Because that person des deserves to be at school and er have a reward because that person's trying to work hard
		605	Because that person shouldn't be in in school and that person isn't working hard and that person shouldn't get a reward
		608	Hard work
		832	Well (.) its timestable time. For the timestables
		837	((5)) because (.) I feel <b>very very very</b> happy at school
		840	Learning
895		((4)) hmmm ((3)) I enjoy learning about poppies and stuff	
		1318	I ask to do the books and I do it
		1320	(.) I'm good at (.) writing Maths

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		1593	And I study the Egyptians and I like the way um (.) the mumification progress with all the bits taken out of the body
		1593	Yes. And the Aztecs. I've got a book
	Bob	297	Because he's got a really good question
		686	Because I do my work
		689	I get ticks, a lot of ticks don't I Daddy
Sense of Agency	Lily	901	No. I don't. I ask as well and Mrs. X says yes
		1351	Oh yeah I should have said guinea pigs
		1356	Trampoline
		1358	A slide in the field, no I mean a swing
		1363	Oh yeah, headphones, I'd like it to be quiet
	Kitty	617	It's only got like ten children in a class and I I would feel good about of that because the teachers can give me more help and support
		697	It's something I really need to work on
		1133	Good thing because well we have responsibilities
		1261	When I'm angry I'm allowed to go to the school carpet and just relax coz there's like a calming down basket with fun things to like you calm you down if you're sad or angry
		1267	Um, I'm noticing that it's helping me
		1502	There's things that I need to learn on writing like um capital letters in the right places and um the right punctuation and things like that, the right spelling
	Susie	660	Working with the child
		1364	You can do it
		1407	<b>Teamwork</b>
		1440	I (.) on Friday or Thursday on Wednesday I met my target
		1467	I read my reading books
		1472	Because I met my target

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## Appendix AC

### Excerpts from Research Diary

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020

I received ethical approval for my thesis today! This is starting to feel real now. It means so much though to be researching something I am passionate about. This research is really making me think about the ways in which I elicit pupil voice in my practice, and I find myself asking, could I do more, how can I make sure I am always striving to put the CYP at the centre of all that I could do?

March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020

We are officially in the midst of a global pandemic and the country is in lockdown. I certainly didn't allow for this as part of my GANNT chart! I'm not really sure what this will mean for my research. Hopefully within a few weeks this will all 'blow over' and we will be able to return to some semblance of normality.

April 12<sup>th</sup> 2020

This is serious. This really isn't going to blow over. I had hoped to start recruitment this month, but what with children not in school and no idea when they will be returning, it feels a bit insensitive to even be thinking about this right now. I'm struggling to just sit with the feeling that everything is on hold, and the uncertainty is a real challenge. I decided to contact NOFAS-UK and I had a lovely response back which is something I suppose. When the time is right they are going to share my advert for participants, which is great. The lady was really passionate about my research, which makes all the stresses feel worthwhile.

30<sup>th</sup> May 2020

The global situation is dire and very saddening. Schools are remaining shut for all but a couple of year groups. I think I will need to park recruitment for now.

5<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Some children are back to school, but most children won't be back in school now until September. I wonder what this will mean for children's' mental health and well-being? As for their sense of belonging, I wonder how this has been affected? I'm reading lots in the news about the efforts school staff are going to maintain connections with children during home schooling. I would be really interested to know more about this.

10<sup>th</sup> July 2020

The cases are coming down. I've been wondering about speaking to NOFAS-UK about posting my advert. I had hoped to have all my data by now and I currently don't even have any participants. This is worrying. Maybe I will speak to NOFAS...

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

My advert has gone out, hurrah. Hopefully, people will start to show some interest soon.

12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Still no participants. One mum showed an interest, but her children don't have a diagnosis. I wonder whether this is going to prove a barrier to recruitment? Perhaps I should have amended my inclusion criteria to include 'on the waitlist for assessment' given diagnosis is so challenging for this population.

7<sup>th</sup> September 2020

It's great that children are back in school. I had another expression of interest this week, but again, still not meeting all components of the inclusion criteria. I spoke to a lovely lady from FASD Awareness SE today also who I met at the ACAMH conference last year. They have shared my advert on social media and my video has gone out in the newsletter this week.

18<sup>th</sup> September 2020

University have suspended face to face data collection. Looks like I need to amend my research to a remote format. I'm not quite sure how I will be able to keep a participatory element via video. It looks like camera tours and book making is not going to be possible now. This saddens me. I fear this research is not going to be the research I had hoped for, and still no participants!

13<sup>th</sup> October 2020

One good thing about remote data collection is that I am now not constrained by location. My adverts and videos have been reshared and I am now recruiting nationally. Finally it looks like I might have some participants.

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

Lots of expressions of interest in my research this week, spanning as far as Australia and Hong Kong. I have arranged to complete my pilot study with a little boy in Hong Kong. He meets all of the inclusion apart from accessing the UK education system, so I thought this would be a good opportunity to pilot my remote delivery with him. I can email the resources, and he has his own set of Lego and playdoh at home. Hopefully, I can firm up arrangements with other interested participants this week too.

1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

I completed my pilot study today. I can't believe how nervous I was. I think I was most nervous about the remote nature of the delivery. I was worried that he might be too tired to engage given the time difference. I had no reason to worry- Geoff engaged so well! The PowerPoint really helped as when I first asked him what he thought belonging meant he wasn't able to tell me. But after he had seen the PowerPoint he seemed to have a better understanding. I was particularly surprised how long the interview lasted. I built in a couple of breaks as he appeared restless at times. I think it's important to remember how hard it is to engage on a computer screen. For my next interview, I must check in more often with whether breaks are needed.

8<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Interview 1 for real today. Again, I was super nervous. What if she didn't engage? What if she didn't understand what I was asking her to do? What if the internet connection broke down? These were just a few thoughts there were going around in my head before joining the call. I think my nerves actually helped, and I named them at the start. I think this helped to put Susie at ease too. Susie told me so much about her school experiences. At times I noticed that my questioning was a little too closed and maybe she could have told me ever more if my questions were more open. I will work on this for my next interview. The guide was helpful, but I did definitely digress from it. It felt more important to be responsive to what Susie was telling me however, and this made the interview feel more authentic.

14<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Interview 2 today. The nerves were gone and I was able to enjoy in the experience. Lily was quite shy and I so I spent a long time building rapport with her. This felt really necessary. She was only 7 and I know I for one at 7 years old wouldn't have been able to engage with a stranger in the way that she did so well. That was pretty remarkable. Lots of things she told me about her school took me back to my school days and made me reflect on how lucky I was to have such caring and responsive teachers and such a happy childhood. I wonder whether this has biased how I view school though? I think it certainly informed my reasoning for using a strengths based approach.

15<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Today's interview was more challenging. Bob found it much harder to engage and his attention and concentration was a barrier for him. He did exceptionally well though and was happy to continue. He really benefitted from the Lego and the drawing activities as this took some of the emphasis away from spoken language. It's such a shame I wasn't able to do this in person as I think he would have really enjoyed the school tour and taking photographs. I'm trying to remember not to be too hard on myself. This was beyond my control and I've managed to adapt well considering.

17<sup>th</sup> November 2020

It has been such a pleasure transcribing these interviews and listening back to the experiences the children shared with me about school. Despite it being lengthy, I am glad I took the decision to do this as I feel like I really know my data inside out.

18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

I started my analysis today. I had lots that came to mind as part of the initial noting stage and it felt straightforward to do the descriptive commenting but moving to the interpretation felt much more challenging. As somebody who hasn't experienced the care system I wonder whether I have a preconception of what this is like and I am interpreting Lily's actions through this lens too much. Her love for her foster mother was really palpable and I can't help but feel emotional knowing the journey she has been through in her young life.

21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

I was able to be much more interpretative today and I asked lots of questions of the data. What does this mean? Why did she choose that word? How is that relevant given the wider context? Focusing in on my notes I started to see themes emerging. It was helpful to spread these out across the kitchen table and start to see linkages and commonalities. I have started to see clusters of themes emerging. I will review them again tomorrow.

## Appendix AD

### Timeline of Main Procedures Undertaken

Procedure	Date (s)
Initial Scoping	July 2019-September 2019
Research Proposal Submitted	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
UEL Ethics Request Submitted	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
UEL Ethics Request Approved	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2020
Research Registration Approved	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Systematic Literature Review	July 2020
Recruitment Wave 1	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2020-28 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Ethics Amendments Approved	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Recruitment Wave 2	29 <sup>th</sup> September-15 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Pilot Study	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2020
Interview 1	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Interview 2	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Interview 3	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Interview 4	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2020
Transcription Completed	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Analysis of Data	January 2021
Write-Up of Remaining Chapters	January-April 2021
Thesis Submission	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2021