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The role of Teaching Assistants in developing independent learning skills for secondary aged children with SEND: a case study.

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# The role of Teaching Assistants in developing independent learning skills for secondary aged children with SEND: a case study.

A thesis submitted by Sam Edmondson  
for the award of Education Doctorate  
Institute of Education | St Mary's University | Twickenham

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## Abstract

*Sam Edmondson. St Mary's University. Institute of Education. The role of Teaching Assistants in developing independent learning skills for secondary aged children with SEND: a case study. Submitted for the award of Education Doctorate, September 2021.*

*Contemporary Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND) research has shown that the deployment of in-class teaching assistants has a negative impact on children's progress and attainment. Children with SEND receiving direct pedagogic instruction from teaching assistants make negative progress, compared to similar pupils who receive less or no support in the classroom (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015).*

*The study examined the experiences of teaching assistants, teachers and children in a secondary academy as the deployment of teaching assistants changed from predominantly in-class support to delivering targeted SEND interventions alongside the mainstream curriculum.*

*A qualitative case study recorded the participants' views (teaching assistants n=7, teachers n=6, children n=4) of the introduction of this alternate method to support children with SEND. A collaborative approach was taken to critique the existing model of provision, with the use of reflective accounts to consider the effectiveness of interventions completed in small groups, pairs and with individuals.*

*Three major outcomes were identified through this research.*

*First, this research demonstrated that the children completing interventions outside of the classroom demonstrated greater confidence, preparedness to participate, attentiveness and contributed more in their mainstream lesson.*

*Second, the school's knowledge of each individual child's needs through their participation in the intervention grew in comparison to the previous model, where teaching assistants were deployed in-class. Working with small groups and individuals led to far greater understanding of individual learning styles, and resulted in more comprehensive information being provided to teachers to support the children in their lessons.*

*Finally, teaching assistants reported that working more autonomously to deliver interventions to a caseload of children, allowed for growth in their professional skillset, created greater ownership in the outcomes for children, and increased their motivation and their feeling of being valued within the school.*

*The case study suggests that reconceptualising SEND provision and the role that teaching assistants can perform has created more confident learners, invigorated support staff, developed professional skillsets, and contributed towards more effective teaching of children with SEND.*

**Key words:** Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND) / teaching assistants / SEND intervention / SEND education / SEND pedagogy / inclusive pedagogy.



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## Glossary of acronyms

<b>ADHD</b>	– Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<b>ASD</b>	– Autism Spectrum Disorder
<b>BERA</b>	– British Education Research Association
<b>CPD</b>	– Continued Professional Development
<b>DfE</b>	– Department for Education
<b>DoH</b>	– Department of Health
<b>EEF</b>	– Education Endowment Foundation
<b>EHCP/Plan</b>	– Education, Health and Care Plan
<b>ECT</b>	– Early Careers Teacher
<b>GLA</b>	– Greater London Authority
<b>IFS</b>	– Institute for Fiscal Studies
<b>ITT</b>	– initial teacher training
<b>LA</b>	– local authority
<b>MAT</b>	– multi-academy trust
<b>NQT</b>	– newly qualified teacher (now known as Early Careers Teacher)
<b>ODD</b>	– Oppositional Defiance Disorder
<b>PD</b>	– physical disability
<b>PE</b>	– physical education
<b>SEMH</b>	– Social, Emotional and Mental Health
<b>SEND</b>	– Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
<b>SENCO</b>	– Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
<b>TA</b>	– teaching assistant (also known as Learning Support Assistant)

## 1. Introduction

As a secondary school Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), I am responsible for the progress and attainment of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). My professional setting is an all-through, inner-city academy in London, in a catchment area with the third- highest level of deprivation in London (of 633 wards) (Greater London Authority, 2020). I joined the school as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) in 2014, and was appointed SENCO in 2017.

Central to this research is my desire to improve the attainment outcomes for children with SEND in my setting, to better understand individual children's learning needs, and to rationalise a model of support that better suits these needs. This was necessary as over a period of 4 years, children in Key Stage 3 and 4 with SEND had been making less progress than their peers without SEND (see figures 1.1 and 1.2).

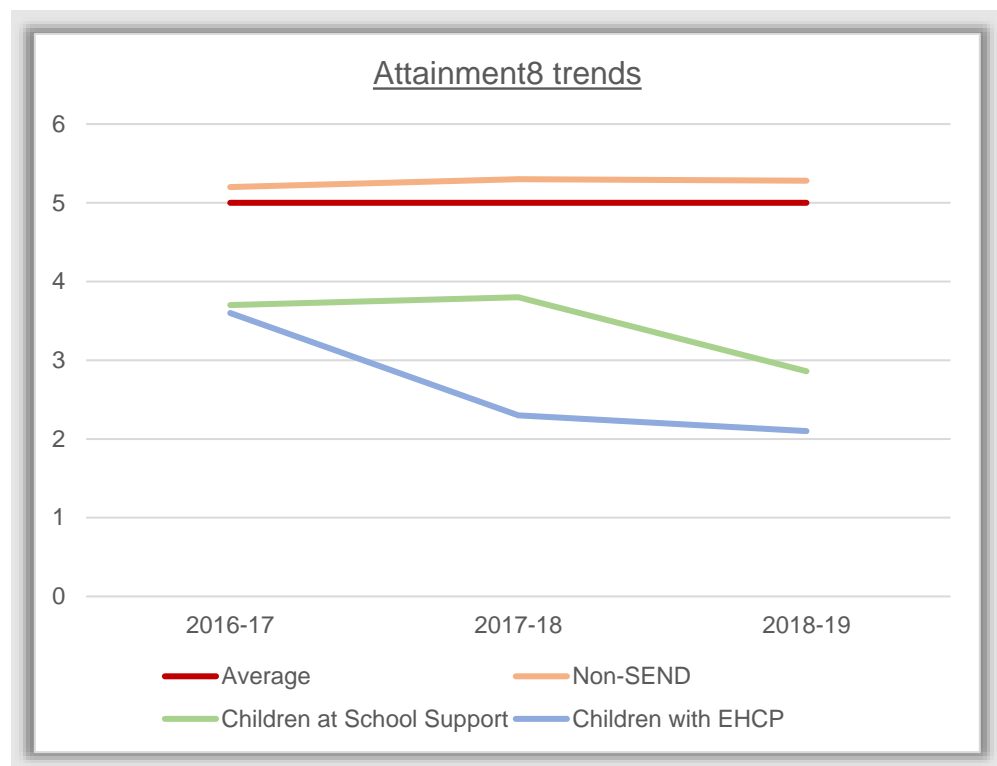


Figure 1.1: GCSE attainment data 2016-19

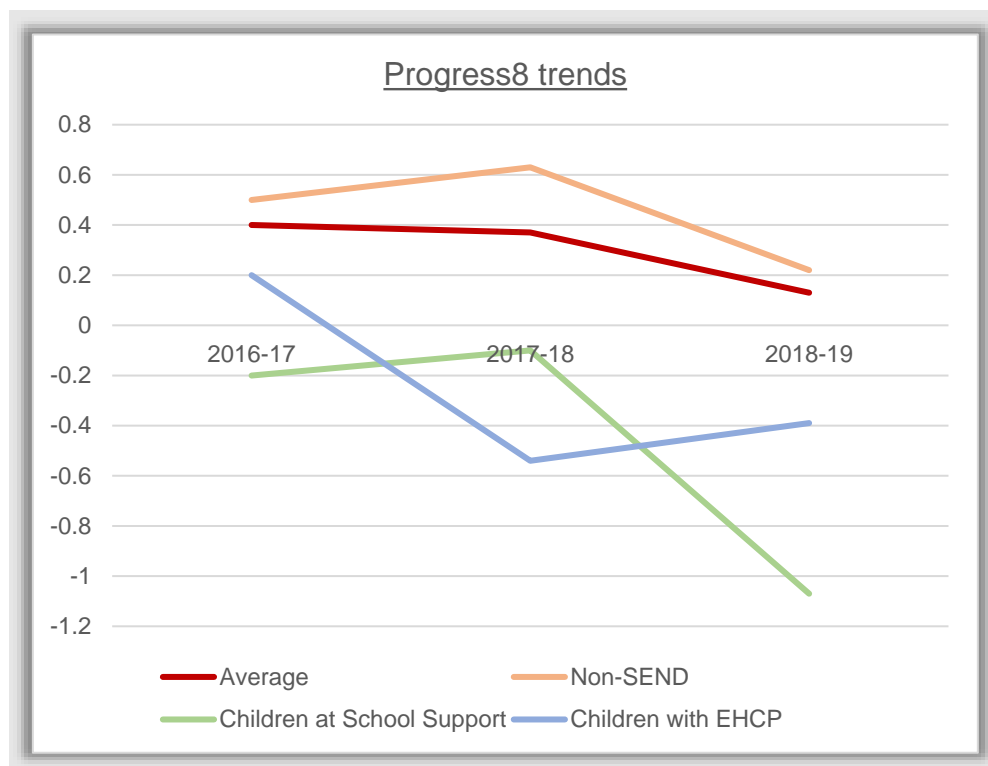


Figure 1.2: GCSE progress data 2016-19

From my professional perspective, it is powerful to know that two groups of children (SEND) are making less progress than another group of children (non-SEND) within my setting. Whilst low attainment is more regularly associated with SEND, children with SEND making less than expected progress than their peers is not equitable. Equitable provision for children is an area of increased interest in wealthy countries (Ainscow, 2020), however educational research remains 'confused' (Ainscow, 2020: 7) as to the actions required to achieve this.

Strategic leadership of SEND in my school setting, requires me to develop the vision and direction of the school's response to supporting children with SEND. To execute this vision with clarity, necessitates a whole-school approach, that leads to growth and improvement in teaching and outcomes (Packer, 2015). The SENCO could not teach every child with SEND, nor do I believe they should. All children can learn if they receive good teaching. The quality of planning and delivery of teaching has a major impact on every child's development, but most noticeably on those with lower cognitive functioning (Davies & Henderson, 2020). Teachers can develop professional skillsets to effectively educate children with SEND. In this research, I aim to show the important role teaching assistants can play in complementing mainstream curricula, using targeted learning interventions delivered to individuals or in pairs and small groups.

As the SENCO, I am the teacher responsible for overseeing the implementation of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015), and for allocating children to the SEND register. It is important to recognise that my approach to doing these things may differ to the approaches taken by SENCOs in other professional settings.

SEND are a school-specific classification. The term, introduced in the 1980's, is not used to highlight difficulties, but to describe provisions required to enable learning (Norwich, 2017). What is required to support children in one setting may differ vastly from the next. Influences include environment, school culture and ethos, quality of provision, teacher skill and experience, and availability of resources at school- and borough- level (see: The Guardian, 2021).

SEND differ from a medical diagnosis; SEND is not a fixed characteristic, but a recognition that a child needs additional support, or has additional learning needs at *this* point in their education (Department for Education/Department for Health, 2015). Research has shown that procedures for identifying children with SEND are poorly defined and lack specificity (Norwich, 2017). SEND designation is disproportionately attributed to children with lower prior attainment, where figure 1.3 provides an example of the distribution of children with SEND in a year group (Year 10), in the setting:

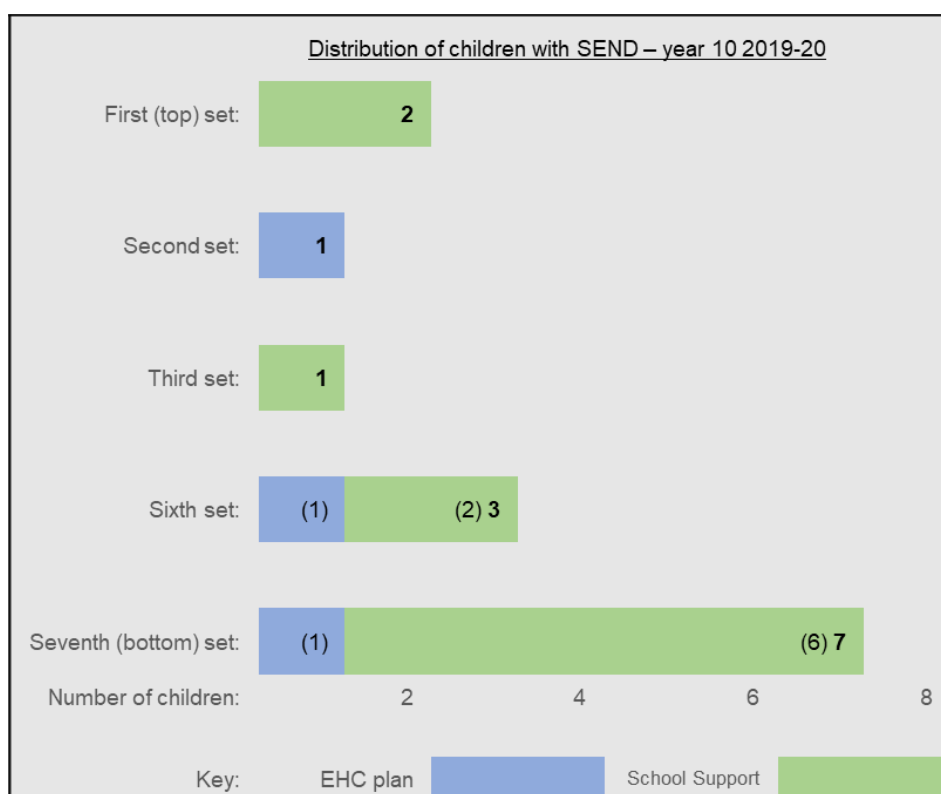


Figure 1.3: Distribution of children across a year group (Year 10)

Predominantly, SENCOs deploy teaching assistants in secondary mainstream classrooms to work alongside children with identified SEND (DfE, 2019). This model is called targeted in-class support and is historically the most utilised and recognised by the lay person. In-class support had been the method of deployment used in my research setting, prior to my appointment as SENCO. During my period in post, the number of teaching assistants had been reduced significantly due to the impact of budget constraints on the school (Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), 2020) (see figure 1.4)

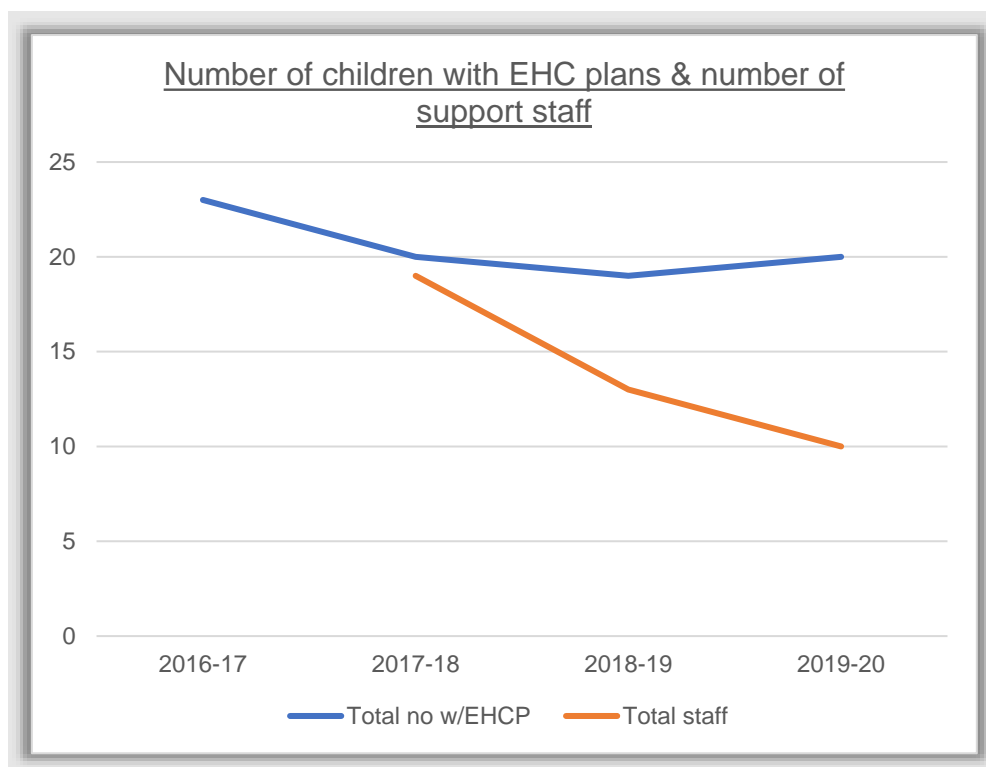


Figure 1.4 Number of children with EHC plans and number of support staff in setting (data unavailable 2016-17)

Figure 1.4 describes how the number of support staff has been reduced in the years that proceeded the case study, despite the number of children with funded Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs or EHC plans) remained relatively steady. When these numbers are taken in conjunction with the GCSE results (figures 1.1 and 1.2), I can conclude that previous numbers of support staff have not had a direct link to improved GCSE outcomes. My research wishes to understand how the role of these additional adults can best compliment teachers.

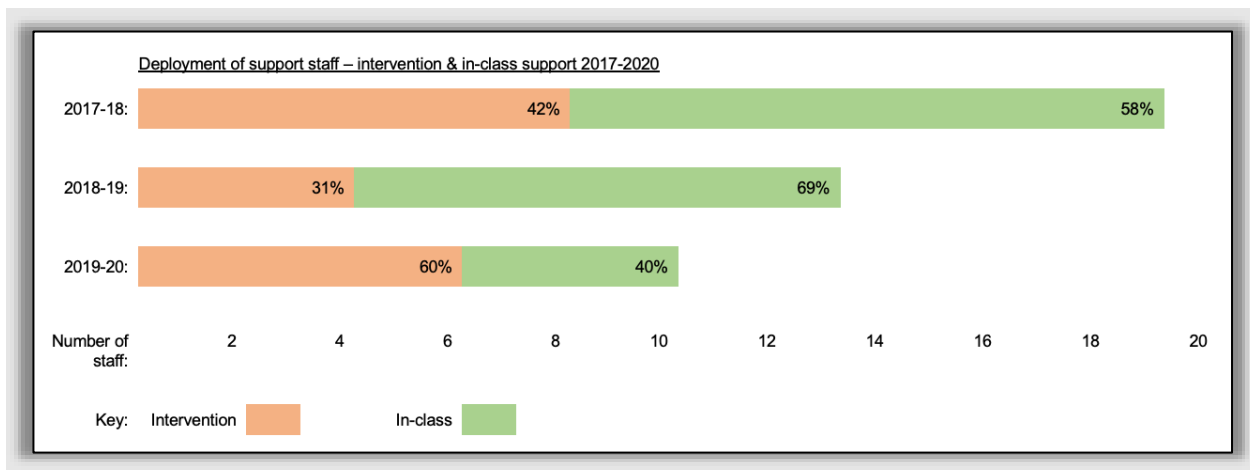


Figure 1.5: Deployment of support staff 2017-2020

Figure 1.5 shows that over the three-year period preceding my case study, in-class support had been the predominant mode of deployment for teaching assistants. Extensive contemporary research in England has shown that in-class support has a negative impact on the attainment of children with SEND, compared to where children with SEND are not supported by teaching assistants in their lessons (Davies and Henderson, 2020; Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015). Critical evaluation of school practices is required for effective school leadership (Ainscow, 2020; Hattie, 2012) and in my school, I suspected that increasing the quantity and quality of teacher-led support for children with SEND could be more effective, equitable and begin to redress the progress gap in our Year 11 outcomes.

Reflecting on the barriers experienced by children with SEND is an important step in meeting their needs, as when children with SEND experience barriers, they become marginalised (Ainscow, 2020). As part of my professional responsibilities, reflecting on the GCSE outcomes provided here supported my decision to conduct this case study. I felt that my teaching assistants' skill sets could enable independent delivery of learning interventions. This in turn could allow for more comprehensive work, with a wider number of children, compared to the existing in-class support model. I hoped this approach would become a more effective use of the teaching assistants as a resource.

In my professional setting I sought to test this assumption, and this case study will analyse the impact of delivering SEND interventions alongside a mainstream curriculum.

## 2 Aims and Objectives

Research shows that targeted learning interventions led by teaching assistants that complement the mainstream curricula, and address the learners' specific needs, had a positive impact on children with SEND (Davies and Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). My research project reports the views of teaching assistants and teachers, as this type of support was expanded in the setting.

The aim of the study was to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND, in-line with contemporary research findings. The primary objective was to strategically review the teaching assistants' delivery of learning interventions at three points in the school year, and correlate their claims with evidence obtained from the children's teachers.

Secondly, I aimed to provide a voice to two under-represented groups: teaching assistants and children with SEND. My research proposal's literature review suggested that the experience of teaching assistants was often not present in SEND research, even in research on their own effectiveness. I also wished to include the perspective of children with SEND, as this group are underrepresented in contemporary SEND studies.

### 2.1 Literature overview: what to expect

This literature review will provide the reader with a contextual understanding of SEND policy in England, and its application in the research setting. The literature review will examine contemporary, peer-reviewed SEND- research.

I have limited my literature review to certain policy and academic texts, in line with my inclusion criteria which were: current statutes that define SEND provision in England and Department for Education (DfE) policies that apply to all teachers since 2014, and studies conducted in schools in England or the United Kingdom, within a ten- year time frame. I qualified to teach in 2014 and my working knowledge is of the Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015).

My research will make direct links to approaches being used in my setting. As such, it felt pertinent to consider, review and critique similar contemporary studies. Viewing existing research that was completed within the parameters of the Code



of Practice 2014 fed into my research design. This approach ensured I was considering contemporary practice, as identified good- and better- practice for working with children with SEND is often moving forwards.

The literature review takes a specific focus on the two largest studies conducted to date: *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Five recommendations on special education needs in mainstream schools* (Davies and Henderson, 2020) and *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants* (Sharples et al, 2015). These studies are given prominence due to their scope and specificity, with the majority of the research conducted in schools in England and Wales. Further research will be presented that focused on the experiences of teaching assistants, teachers and children with SEND.

To provide the policy contexts for this research I have completed a document analysis of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2019), including the role that teachers and school leaders should take in improving outcomes for children with SEND. National data sets will be examined to enable the reader to understand the number of children these policies effect. These statistics will be compared with the research setting's cohort of children with SEND, to enable the reader to understand the impact of deprivation on the school's needs and our provision. If attainment outcomes, or the quality of the provision can be improved amidst these obstacles, then my primary aim will have been met, and the lessons learned will contribute to the wider discourse on SEND education and research.

I recognise that my experiences working with children with SEND, my professional role and my years in schools influence my subjective analysis of the literature I have selected. This requires reflexivity and an ability to question my own assumptions. Therefore, this introduction continues with a biography of my work to-date with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. I believe that by exploring my epistemological development, the reader gains an insight into why this research is so important to me.

### 2.1.1 Introducing myself: the teacher-researcher

This research project is the continuation of a thirteen-year journey through Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Supporting children with SEND has been central to my development as a teacher and a school leader.

My introduction to SEND came as an 18-year-old teaching assistant in a secondary comprehensive school in Somerset. I worked in this role for three years, incorporating other responsibilities including teaching nurture groups and running physical education programmes and enrichment activities. During this time, I was line managed by the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), who was also an Assistant Principal. Their subject specialism was physical education. I now fulfil the same role in an all-through academy in inner-London. My subject specialism is also physical education. There is a neat symmetry to our journeys.

I completed my undergraduate degree in Physical Education with QTS, then my Master's degree in Pedagogic Leadership in Physical Education; both qualifications enabled me to conduct research in the fields of PE and SEND. Issues within SEND have dominated my professional and academic development. Following my work as a teaching assistant, I presented on issues within SEND and PE on my interview for my undergraduate course. Later, my dissertation explored the needs of a child with cerebral palsy in physical education. My Master's thesis reviewed the impact of SEND-school teacher training from a case study in the Caribbean.

Predominantly, my professional experience has been working with low-attaining children who have cognitive impairments or communication needs. High-attaining children can have SEND. As a teaching assistant I have seen this when supporting children with cerebral palsy and achondroplasia in physical education. As a PE teacher and later SENCO, I have seen children with visual impairments and quadriplegia attain highly. However, the vast majority of children I have worked with achieve low academic outcomes. This is why examining possible influences on progress in-line with their peers is so important to my research; I firmly believe that with the appropriate support, children with SEND in my school should make better progress from their starting point, through their secondary education than they currently achieve:

*“Pupils with SEND are among the most vulnerable in the school system. The quality of support they receive affects their well-being, educational attainment, likelihood of subsequent employment, and long-term life prospects” (National Audit Office, 2019).*

It is a common misconception to refer to all children with SEND as being low-attaining, or worse, low-ability. In a decade which has been shaped by the politics of austerity, 70% of secondary school leaders reported reduction in teaching assistants due to funding cuts, prior to the pandemic (Sutton Trust, 2019), in addition to finite resources and diminishing staff numbers (National Association of Head Teachers, 2021). Ascertaining who to support has led to me predominantly focusing on low-attaining children with SEND.

In my experience there is a misunderstood relationship between having a special need or disability, and low attainment. This is brought in to focus during annual comparisons of SEND cohorts in my setting. These conceptualisations will be explored in greater depth in my literature review, and the misleading nature of comparisons between cohorts critiqued.

Supporting children with SEND has been central to my professional development as a teacher and a leader. Throughout my career I have continued to study the needs of children with SEND and have a thorough understanding of the contemporary models of support. For the benefit of the reader the introduction concludes with a brief overview of SEND in a mainstream secondary school-specific context.

### 2.1.2 SEND: a brief overview

Children’s learning and development is not linear; what is required to support children in one classroom, year group, school or region will differ in the next and cannot be congruent.

Special Educational Needs are a school-specific classification used to describe provisions required to enable learning (Norwich, 2017). They differ from the medical diagnosis of a disability (Mitra, 2006); SEN (without the D) is not a fixed characteristic, but a recognition that a child needs additional support or has additional learning needs at *the current* point in their education (DfE/DoH, 2015). However, data reported in England includes children with disability, but without

cognitive/communication impairment in SEND statistics and this use is the accepted way of reporting.

The average number of children in England with SEND receiving this degree of support per academic year is 14.9%<sup>1</sup> (DfE, 2020a). SEND, as a description of support, can be transitory. In England, 44% of children have been designated as having a SEND between reception and Year 11, moving on to or off of schools' SEND registers (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Hodkinson, 2016). This statistic demonstrates that SEND is not a fixed characteristic. At some point in their school careers, 44% of children require additional support to the extent that it meets the threshold of school support (SS); additional support that's cost and implementation totals less than £6,000 per annum (DfE/DoH, 2015), but is more targeted than universal classroom teaching. As introduced earlier, support is often delivered through in-class deployment of teaching assistants.

Within this 14.9%, 3.1% of children in England have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (DfE, 2020a). These plans are awarded to children with the highest tier of need. The plans detail children's individual needs and allocate funding to schools to deliver specialist support to address these, as well as documenting any medical- and social-care needs. The plans provide children with statutory support until the age of 25 (DfE/DoH, 2015) and are awarded and administered by Local Authorities (LA). Unlike other forms of SEND support, the plans tend to remain fixed once awarded. There are steps to remove an EHC plan if a child is no longer experiencing difficulties, but I have not yet experienced this in my career.

Research projects that the number of children with needs complex enough to require an EHC plan will grow by 15% until 2026 (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). These projections increased significantly in 2021, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic (DfE, 2021a).

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<sup>1</sup> 16.5% and 4% during 6 months period corrections (DfE, 2022)



Figure 2.1: % of children with EHC plans, SEND and Non-SEND in England (DfE, 2020a).

Figure 2.1 represents the numbers of children with SEND based on national statistics. In a class of 30 children, it is statistically likely that 4 or 5 children would be on the SEND register, with one of these requiring an EHC plan, suggesting SEND discourse is centred on a relatively low number. The literature review will explore the reality of these figures, how children with SEND are grouped, and the impact of other variables on SEND frequencies between schools and LA's. This section of the literature review will enable the reader to understand the importance of the research project in improving outcomes for this group of vulnerable children.

### 2.1.3 The role of teachers and teaching assistants

In England, all teachers are teachers of children with SEND (DfE, 2020b; Ofsted, 2019; DfE/DoH, 2015; Packer, 2015). This starts with headteachers, who must oversee a culture where SEND children can thrive (DfE, 2020b), and in which teachers are responsible for the attainment of children with SEND in the same way that they are responsible for the attainment of those without SEND. The literature review will investigate the role that teachers play in the education of children with SEND and reinforce the rationale for researching the impact teaching assistants can have on children's learning.

Many schools have a department allocated to supporting children with SEND, and much of the work done to support children with SEND is completed by teaching assistants. In schools in England, teaching assistants comprise 28% of the workforce: 265,600 adults are employed in this role (DfE, 2017). Where schools deploy teaching assistants in direct pedagogic roles, attainment remains the responsibility of the children's class teachers (DfE/DoH, 2015).

In my experience, I have found this specific responsibility to children with SEND difficult to disseminate to all teachers. Many teachers have engaged readily with making provision for our most vulnerable learners, but there have been a minority

of teachers in my setting who have attempted to challenge this responsibility. The Code of Practice is a powerful document for ensuring accountability.

In the research setting, there has been a year-on-year decrease in the number of adults employed as teaching assistants or in other support roles within the SEND department. This has led to an annual decrease in the number of children in receipt of additional support (DfE/DoH, 2015). Reduction in support can perpetuate misdiagnoses and provides a finite amount of support to vulnerable children in the school. Hence the importance placed on teachers and their need to support all children to make expected progress.

This context underpins my desire to implement and evaluate a model of support that better suits the needs of the children with SEND, whilst also providing strategies to teachers to incorporate into their lessons.

#### 2.1.4 Teaching assistants and their importance to this research

*Special Educational Needs In Mainstream Schools* (Davies & Henderson, 2020) plays a prominent role in the literature review, and challenges the idea that responsibility for SEND coordination is solely the job of the SENCO. In the setting, the support department is widely respected. Some research in schools in England (Maher & Vickerman, 2018) suggests that SENCOs and teaching assistants simply assimilate policy, but I feel that in our support department we actively shape the norms and values of SEND support. In the discussion around the role of teaching assistants, I will explore their perceived underrepresentation in SEND research, and their value to the school and the research findings.

The literature review will show that there can be a moral conflict of interest between schools' legal responsibilities towards children with SEND and the delivery of support, which is often based on pragmatism (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020). As I have stated in this introduction, we work in a decade which has been shaped by the politics of austerity, of finite resources and diminishing staff numbers, and ascertaining who to support has led to me predominantly focusing on low-attaining children. This is pragmatic and imperfect. I have only been able to do this due to a highly dedicated team of teaching assistants who share my vision for supporting our vulnerable children, yet their numbers have fallen from 19 to 11

members of staff over the past three academic years. At the time of writing (2020-21) the number of staff had fallen to 9 members of support staff.

I proposed that teacher-accountability for children with SEND is under-conceptualised. Indeed, school leaders report that inclusion policies would be unimplementable without teaching assistants (Webster & Blatchford, 2019), yet the broadest research into their impact, found that their impact in-class is negative.

Observed development does not always correlate with improved assessment outcomes and often children with SEND may make progress in such a way that is difficult to demonstrate in reporting models used by schools. For example, a child's grade 2 may become a more secure grade 2, but still remains a grade 2. Where teachers are accountable for children with SEND's progress and attainment, this reporting system does not demonstrate the hidden improvement in the children's learning. Often, tangible and qualitative progress is observed by the adults working alongside children with SEND, and these adults report a growth in confidence, or improved understanding of concepts.

My experience with adults observing growth and development lent itself to a qualitative case study project which sought to capture the nuances of SEND provision, from the differing perspectives and priorities of the participants.

## 2.2 Introducing my research findings

A desire to do more for children with SEND is embedded in this research. In England, and in London, increasingly, provision for the most vulnerable children is under-resourced (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Timberlake, 2018). SENCOs balance the issues of resource, finance, provision and inclusion on a daily basis.

Inclusive researchers emphasise the importance of reflecting on, problematising and questioning prevailing ontological assumptions on SEND practice (Dunne, Hallett, Kay & Woolhouse, 2018). Inclusion within the research setting is multi-faceted and is dependent on a shared vision between colleagues. There is tension between the intent to provide an inclusive education for these children, and the understanding of what inclusion looks like at different stages in a child's development. I believe this research shines a light on the ontological assumptions and provide a healthy level of challenge, where required.

I believe that my research will show through the participants' voices, that teaching assistant-led interventions provided children with increased confidence, willingness to participate in lessons, and other indicators of positive engagement. Subsequently, the research project will show that working in small groups, pairs and 1:1, enables teaching assistants to provide teachers with a depth of knowledge that could not be achieved through the in-class support model of deployment. This increased autonomy may lead to the teaching assistants reporting higher levels of work satisfaction and in my opinion, this can inform a positive feedback loop, which will ultimately see children with SEND narrowing the progress gap with their peers.

In this research project, I intend to explore changes to my setting's deployment of teaching assistants that may influence other SENCOs and school leaders to reflect on their own. I recognise the under-researched perspectives of teaching assistants and children in SEND research, and I strive to provide these groups with their voice. These groups are the implementers, or those in receipt of the SEND provision, and their experiences matter to me.

As with all research, my findings are applicable to this specific school setting and further investigation would be required to implement my approach in other settings.



## 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

In the literature review I will explore the concept of inclusion in schools in England, analyse documents that inform policy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision, and contemporary academic research in the field of SEND. A sequential approach has been used to provide the reader with a contextual understanding of the field within which the research will take place. The method of analysis of grey literature (documents that are not peer reviewed, or consider academic sources) is detailed in the research method section. Understanding the policy context for mainstream SEND coordination is required, to understand research studies in schools. To identify where my research fits within the existing literature, the themes and outcomes of the literature review will be brought together in the concluding section.

### 3.2 Literature review focus

The literature review was limited to the overarching statutory policies that currently apply to SEND coordination in England. When identifying which policies to include, I selected the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015), the Teacher's Standards (DfE, 2013), and the Ofsted Inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019).

The principles for limiting the review to these three policy documents was the breadth of oversight that these policy documents have on SEND coordination, and the quality of education in schools. All other policies were excluded from the literature review, unless they were directly referenced in the texts selected. Applying this boundary was appropriate, as it would ensure the reader had access to the statutory policy for SEND provision reviewed alongside the expectations of teachers, and outstanding schools. During my professional experience as a qualified teacher, there has been only one SEND Code of Practice, which was 2014.

The selected literature for review was that research conducted within the timeline of the 2014 statutory framework. It was pertinent to consider, review and critique contemporary studies, for example Done and Andrews (2019), Webster and Blatchford (2019) and Hanley, Winter and Burrell (2020). For the same reason, the search was limited to studies conducted in England or the United Kingdom as a

whole (but not Scotland alone, for example). Research conducted in primary settings was included, but has been highlighted to the reader, due to the differing approaches across phases. Working in an all-through academy, I felt confident in unpicking SEND practices in English primary school research and applying them to my own research question, despite the differences in provision. Limiting the inclusion criteria in this way ensured contemporary practice, and identified 'good' and 'better' practice for working with children with SEND, was reviewed. 'Good' practice identified in research for supporting children with SEND is continually evolving, so precedence was given to contemporary developments, as they would likely already incorporate previously identified elements for effective support.

To compliment contemporary research on SEND practices (see for example: Hanley et al, 2020; Wearmouth & Butler, 2020; Done & Andrews, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018), there is a focus on the meta-analysis of Cullen, Lindsay, Hastings, Denne and Stanford (2019). Their meta-analysis was commissioned and published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and authored by Davies and Henderson (2020). Due to the scope of the meta-analysis of Cullen et al (2019), there is an exception to this inclusion criteria, where the researchers used international studies or studies that did not fall under the SEND Code of Practice. These studies have collated a broader sample from which they draw their conclusions. The researchers referred to above are included in the EEF's meta-analysis (Cullen et al, 2019).

The EEF are an independent, research-driven charity partially funded by the Department for Education, that produces guidance papers that synthesise primary and secondary, UK and international research on SEND provision for professionals. The EEF have previously published meta-analyses to guide school leaders on the use of teaching assistants. Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2015) have contributed to the discourse on teaching assistant deployment. Reviewing these meta-analyses (Sharples et al, 2015; Davies & Henderson, 2020) complimented the studies that were identified through the inclusion criteria.

To summarise, the first section of the literature review extrapolates the differing views of inclusive education, and how that term applies to secondary mainstream education and SEND policy. The literature review will then analyse the selected

SEND policy documents, and contemporary SEND research. Finally, the conclusion will synthesise where my research fits within the existing literature.

### 3.3 Inclusive education

Inclusive education begins with children with SEND, and other disadvantages, being taught with their peers in mainstream settings (Schuelka, 2018). This type of equitable provision for children is an area of increased interest in wealthy countries (Ainscow, 2020; Castro-Kemp, Palikara, & Grande, 2019). In wealthy countries including England, many children with SEND leave school without qualifications, or with worthless qualifications (Ainscow, 2020). Children with SEND are 20% more likely to be unemployed aged 27 than their peers without SEND (DfE, 2018a). Of all school leavers aged 16 in England, 12% of children with EHC Plans attend secondary Sixth Forms, and only 8% go on to Higher Education (Hubble, 2019). Children with SEND should have equal opportunities to study and progress, as their peers of a similar attainment level. Children with lower attainment and SEND should not be 20% more likely to be unemployed than their peers. My research aims to influence the attainment of children with SEND, to better achieve equity in outcomes.

It is a legal requirement of schools in England to be inclusive. Schools in England cannot discriminate against children based on ethnicity, gender, religion, disability or any other protected characteristic (DfE, 2014). The Equality Act (2010) states that schools in England cannot discriminate in admission policies or provision and must make reasonable adjustments for children with SEND (Equality Act, 2010). Reasonable adjustments for children with SEND are central to the effective implementation of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015). Inclusive education assumes that all children have a right to be in the same educational setting (Schuelka, 2018). From a professional perspective, I broadly agree with this definition, up to the point that the child's needs can be met, without their mental or physical health being detrimentally impacted by their placement in a mainstream secondary.

Educational research is 'confused' (Ainscow, 2020: 7) as to the actions required to achieve equitable provision for children with SEND, due to the number of children leaving mainstream secondary education in affluent countries without worthwhile

qualifications. If children's needs are not being met, simply having children with SEND educated in mainstream settings is not inclusive. Separate programmes of study, or differentiation of mainstream teaching to such a degree that it is noticeably different to the teaching of their peers, can be considered exclusion by inclusion (Florian and Beaton, 2018). As mentioned above, leaving school without worthwhile qualifications does not satisfy the criteria for an inclusive education (Ainscow, 2020). Nor does the completion of worthless qualifications meet the standards for Outstanding provision in the Ofsted framework (Ofsted, 2019).

I do not believe a consensus on best-practice in SEND education can be found, as this would imply one approach would work with every child, in every context. There are competing initiatives, for example the tension created by the need for a broad and equitable curriculum (Ofsted, 2019) versus the long-term benefit of children passing GCSE maths and English (DfE, 2018a; Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2018; Machin, McNally & Ruiz-Valenzuela, 2018). Identifying best-practice for teaching children with SEND neglects to consider the individual. Each child is unique, and therefore provision and teaching approaches will differ. I will explore the reasoning behind this belief throughout this chapter.

Reflecting on the barriers experienced by children with SEND is an important step in meeting their needs, as when children with SEND experience barriers, they become marginalised (Ainscow, 2020). For this reason, inclusion should be considered an ongoing process to strive towards, rather than achievable target that can be assessed against (Schuelka, 2018). Marginalisation of the included child must be addressed, as a child's feeling of belonging is a predictor to their further development (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Maslow, 1956).

Inclusion is an approach to developing tolerance and understanding between peers (Ainscow, 2020). However, a barrier to embedding inclusive approaches in schools, are teachers views on inclusion of children whose SEND makes effective teaching more challenging (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020). Research shows that teachers can be unwilling to, or ambivalent towards, actively engaging with diagnosed SEND (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020; Dunne et al, 2018). My professional experience with teachers who hold an ambivalent or intolerant view of children with SEND, contrasts with the SEND Code of Practice and the Teacher's Standards. The challenge of putting policy into practice will be examined.

Wearmouth and Butler (2020) reported that SENCOs encounter ambivalence and unwillingness from teachers to engage with diagnosed special needs. The legal requirement of schools in England to be inclusive has “had serious implications for teacher education and the preparation of student teachers to understand inclusion and embed it in their practice” (Essex, Alexiadou & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2019: 2). During the literature review, micro concerns that affect the research area will be explored through the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Greater London Authority, 2020). This context will include a discussion on teacher retention, teacher allocation to low-attainment sets, and the influence of high frequencies of trainee teachers in schools. The catchment area’s context is important in framing inclusion in my school. A school’s context has an influence on teachers’ ability to understand, align with, and embed inclusion in their practice (Essex et al, 2019).

Progress towards inclusive education requires an effective strategy (Ainscow, 2020). A strategy’s effectiveness should be measurable. Measures to improve inclusion will require leaders to consider established practices: “thinking differently about inclusion and inclusive education first of all entails analysis of current practises and their conditions” (Done & Andrews, 2019: 15). It is the role of the SENCO, and school leaders, to implement the SEND Code of Practice in their setting (DfE/DoH, 2015). There are not abundant strategies for effective SEND provision, with more literature focused on what does not work (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020). The absence of strategies for SENCOs explains my interest in researching this area. Friction is present in competing policy initiatives, which will be discussed in the context of the current political climate, that espouses shrinkage of resource (Hanley et al, 2020). Reference to examples of competing policy initiatives that makes SEND education ineffective will be explored. For example, there exist contradictions within the Ofsted framework on meeting the needs of children with SEND, whilst maintaining a broad, equitable curriculum (Ofsted, 2019).

If progress towards inclusive education requires an effective strategy (Ainscow, 2020), this strategy must have clear goals for the children it aims to protect. Inclusive policy must be based on more than attending the same educational setting (Schuelka, 2018). My view on inclusive education works backwards from GCSE exams, the end point of secondary education. I have a robust, personal

belief that inclusion should ensure a child's later inclusion in society. Inclusion in schools could be seen as post-16 independence, a successful transition to adulthood, and employability. In my experience, the completion of GCSE English and maths will best support progression to adulthood (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2014). For example, the Centre for Vocational Education Research (2018) found that the biggest factor in children completing Further Education is passing GCSE English and maths. Later, data from the Department for Education (2018a) on the employment of school leavers aged 27 who were on the SEND register will be analysed against their peers. Comparisons between the data sets (Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2018; DfE, 2018a) reinforce my personal belief in prioritising passing GCSE English and maths.

A focus on pass grades may be considered a narrow focus of inclusion and inclusive practices. Despite this view, I believe I am an inclusive practitioner. Educational researchers may regard this view of inclusion as economic orthodoxy at work (Timberlake, 2018), to create "economic units of production" (Hodkinson, 2016: 182). However, as a professional working in a setting with very high levels of deprivation and vulnerability, suspension of moralistic views on inclusion, to best support the children, has been necessary. The acquisition of academic qualifications as an outcome of SEND support moves away from worthless qualifications (Ainscow, 2020). The research enquiry's focus on teaching assistants and learning interventions, hopes that children will achieve more positive outcomes in these qualifications.

To summarise, inclusive education is widely agreed to begin with children with SEND being taught with their peers in mainstream settings (Schuelka, 2018). However, there is a need for the education sector to acquire better strategies to ensure inclusive education is a success. The placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools should necessitate a focus on their preparation for adulthood. In England, the percentage of children with SEND being employed aged 27, is projected by the DfE (2018a) as 58% in stable employment versus 78% without SEND. The rate of employment for children who had SEND at school is not equitable. A prominent focus in the Ofsted framework (2019) is how equitable schools' provisions are for these children. Ainscow describes educational research as 'confused' (Ainscow, 2020: 7) as to the actions required to achieve equitable provision for children with SEND. Inclusive education should be a continuous

process of reflection and transformation, being about far more than counting the number of children with SEND in mainstream schools (Schuelka, 2018). SENCOs and school leaders should be considering the quality and equity of the teaching provision, and curriculum, in their settings. The DfE caution that “care should be taken to avoid skewing policy intervention toward more measurable skills (GCSE results)” (DfE, 2021c: 42). However, to develop inclusive practices, all parties need to understand the statutory frameworks for school SEND provision.

Simultaneously, professionals in schools need to unpick the aforementioned competing policy initiatives, before a school’s approach to SEND can be outlined.

The next section of the literature review will highlight how contemporary academic research plays an important role in identifying practices that are less effective, or do not help children with SEND develop. My interest is in attempting to identify practices that do more effectively support children with SEND. Justification will be made for grounding the research focus on the role teaching assistants have in supporting children with SEND. For example, one barrier to embedding inclusive approaches in schools are teachers views on inclusion of children whose SEND makes teaching more challenging (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020).

### 3.4 Grey literature

The aim of the next section of the literature review is to analyse the SEND policy context in England, to aid the readers’ understanding of SEND coordination in mainstream secondary education. To achieve this, systematic review of the current statutory policy documents that apply to schools was completed. These are: the SEND Code of Practice 2014, which will provide the reader with a macro understanding of contemporary SEND coordination. From this point, the role of the teacher can then be viewed through the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2013), and the combined contribution of school staff will be understood through the School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2019).

The method of analysis of grey literature (documents that are not peer reviewed or considered to be academic sources) is detailed in the research method section. The definition for grey literature in this thesis was a document containing text recorded without a researcher’s intervention (Bowen, 2009). This literature review limited analysis to three overarching policies, all publicly available from the government’s website.

### 3.5 SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015)

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 details the legal requirements and statutory guidance for professionals working with children with SEND. These professionals include teachers, the Local Authority (LA), social care and health care. The Code of Practice defines special educational needs, and outlines who is responsible for identifying and meeting these needs.

#### 3.5.1 The characteristics of a child with SEND

Across schools in England, children are designated to the SEND register when they experience “significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age” (DfE/DoH, 2015). Within the statutory policy governing education, the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015) provides the following definition for children who have SEND:

*“A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she: has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions”* (DfE/DoH, 2015: 15).

It is the SENCO’s role to record these children on the SEND register. Medical diagnoses will see a child included on the SEND register. The challenge for SENCOs is identifying the causes, when a child is experiencing greater difficulty in learning. The classification of children having difficulty with learning as having a SEND, is not universal nor centralised. Procedures to universally identify children as having a SEND are poorly defined, and lack specificity (Norwich, 2017). The Code of Practice states that if a child has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, they have a learning difficulty (DfE/DoH, 2015). There is no guidance as to how this should be assessed. Schools are required to make judgement calls on the progress a child is making, compared to their peers. Without universal tools for non-medical diagnoses, children can be wrongly categorised as SEND, when their needs could be addressed through better teaching (Hodkinson, 2016).

As discussed earlier, researchers recognise the need for the education sector to acquire better strategies to ensure inclusive education is a success. In this example, Hodkinson (2016) proposes that some children are being viewed as



having significant difficulties with learning because of inadequate teaching. Discrepancies in the quality of teaching provided to children is one contributing factor to a child being designated as having SEND. The allocation of higher quality teaching to these groups could be one step school leaders take to meet the needs of these children.

Ainscow (2020) states that equitable provision for children with SEND remains out of reach, whilst leaders remain confused as to how to achieve it. Research shows that class, gender and ethnicity affect the “actualisation of the body of pupils labelled as [SEND]” (Done & Andrews, 2019: 7; Petty, 2014). Done and Andrews draw this conclusion from data made available by the DfE (2018b), accounting for the entire school population 2017-18. Their study found boys are more likely to be on the SEND register than girls, as are children from ethnic minority backgrounds, and claim that this is a form of conditioning to deny social mobility (Done & Andrews, 2019). The prominence of SEND in minority groups is not equitable (Ainscow, 2020), and the issue of the lack of a universal system for identifying SEND in children (Norwich, 2017; Hodkinson, 2016) may need reviewing.

From a micro-perspective, statistics from the research setting align with these findings (Done & Andrews, 2019; DfE, 2018b), where 70% of the SEND register are male, and 83% of children with SEND are from ethnic minority backgrounds. It can be concluded that in the research setting, the statistics for gender and ethnicity support Done and Andrew’s (2019) claim that protected characteristics affect the actualisation of children designated SEND.

Children receiving additional support are normally entered on the SEND register, at the discretion of the school’s SENCO (DfE/DoH, 2015). However, in a setting with depleted funding, and a background of very high disadvantage (Greater London Authority, 2020; Taylor, Francis, Craig, Archer, Hodgen, Mazenod, Tereshchenko & Pepper, 2019), accurate identification of the barriers to a child’s learning is proving more difficult. Subsequently there are fewer diagnoses of special needs in the research setting. Nationally, there are a growing number of children in schools in England who do not receive additional support because their needs are undiagnosed. For example, 39% of referrals to CAMHS are not seen or are closed without diagnosis (NHS, 2020). Medical professionals are the only professionals who can diagnose needs such as Autism and ADHD.

Class is the third indicator that a child would be designated SEND (Done & Andrews, 2019; DfE, 2018b). Disadvantaged children attend the research setting in higher frequencies than the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Further research (Davies & Henderson, 2020) has shown that children with SEND are more likely to be from a disadvantaged background, indicated by the receipt of Free School Meals and/or the Pupil Premium. Inclusive education assumes that all children have a right to be in the same educational setting (Schuelka, 2018), yet class, gender and ethnicity have been shown to affect a child's designation to the SEND register (Done & Andrews, 2019; Petty, 2014). At present, having the right to attend the same educational setting does not result in children with SEND having access to equitable teaching (Hodkinson, 2016), and this teaching can even lead to children being wrongly categorised as having significant difficulties with learning.

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 provides a working definition for SENCOs to identify children with SEND. The language is ambiguous, using the term significant difficulty with learning. However, research (Done & Andrews, 2019; DfE, 2018b; Petty, 2014) shows that more children with SEND are from minority ethnic groups, disadvantaged backgrounds and comparisons between national data and the research setting suggests that protected characteristics affect the actualisation of children designated SEND. The next section of the literature review will assess the impact of SEND designation on attainment and progress in secondary schools in England.

### 3.5.2 The attainment of a child with SEND

Children with SEND, on average, attain half of the attainment8 score of children without SEND (DfE, 2020a; Davies & Henderson, 2020). The SEND Code of Practice defines a child has having SEND when they have “*a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age*” (DfE/DoH, 2015: 15). SEND designation is disproportionately attributed to children with lower prior attainment, so this attainment gap is explainable using the DfE's definition.

However, the progress of children with SEND by the end of Key Stage 4 is -0.62 compared to 0.08 for their non-SEND peers (DfE, 2020a). Children with SEND make 7/10s of a grade less progress than their peers without SEND, and over half

a grade of negative progress from the starting point at the beginning of Key Stage 3. Children with EHC plans, 3% of all children in English schools, made negative progress of over a grade: -1.17% (DfE, 2020a). Progress8 is a measure of children’s learning throughout their schooling, which makes use of the child’s prior attainment to judge their progress over a period of time.

Children with SEND move backwards during their five years of secondary education, per the government’s key measures of attainment and progress (DfE, 2020a). Not only are children with SEND making negative progress, but research shows more children are being designated to the SEND register (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Hanley et al, 2020; Done & Andrews, 2019). Finally, there are a growing number of children in schools in England who do not receive additional support because their needs are undiagnosed, with 39% of referrals to CAMHS not seen or closed (NHS, 2020).

To summarise, children with SEND attending secondary schools in England are making negative progress and this group of children is growing larger, and it is likely that a higher number of children should be designated SEND than are currently, due to resource shrinkage and under-identification.

### 3.5.3 Children who are disadvantaged

Children who are disadvantaged are a group who are also more likely to achieve low attainment than their peers (Taylor et al, 2019;). There are similarities in the outcomes of children who are disadvantaged and children who have SEND (Shaw, Bernardes, Trethewey, Menzies, 2016), which are relevant to this discussion. Low attainment is disproportionately likely for children from disadvantaged groups (DfE, 2018a; Shaw et al, 2016). Within EHC Plans, descriptions of needs and strategies to meet these needs were shown to be of lower quality in more deprived boroughs in London (Castro-Kemp et al, 2019). The research setting, an inner-city academy in London, has many predictors of disadvantage. Table 3.1 depicts the setting against the national average:

	Free School Meals	Pupil Premium	From an ethnic minority background	English as an Additional Language (EAL)	On the SEND register
Setting	23%	43%	95%	23%	10%

National average (secondary)	16%*	27% (age 4-16, eligible)+	32%*	17%*	14.9%^
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\*Office for National Statistics, 2019.

+Roberts, Foster and Long, 2021.

^DfE, 2020a.

Table 3.1: Predicators of disadvantage

The indicators of disadvantage in table 3.1 are higher than the national average, due the catchment area of the school. It is important to understand the influence disadvantage can have on attainment, as research has shown that children are being incorrectly categorised as having SEND due to biases against minority groups (Done & Andrews, 2019). Nationally, academisation has been shown to lead to a lower intake of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in academies (Liua, Bessudnov, Black & Norwich, 2020). The catchment area is in London's 1st percentile for income deprivation, and the 1st percentile for crime, in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Greater London Authority, 2020). The children attending the school face further hardship, as they live in a ward with employment in the 10th percentile, and education in the 13th percentile (Greater London Authority, 2020).

Research (Taylor et al, 2019; DfE, 2018a) shows that children who are disadvantaged attain lower than their peers who are not from disadvantaged backgrounds. Low attainment is more frequent in groups of children who receive Free School Meals (FSM), the Pupil Premium, are from ethnic minority backgrounds or are on the SEND register, relative to other groups without these characteristics. Therefore, low attainment is disproportionately achieved by children from disadvantaged groups (DfE, 2018a).

It is relevant to understand the influence that disadvantage has on children in the research setting. There are above average numbers of children who receive FSM and the Pupil Premium, characteristics that influence low attainment (Taylor et al, 2019). FSM and Pupil Premium are important predicators for attainment and progress in Key Stage 4. Children with SEND are twice as likely to receive FSM as their peers, and both groups are more likely to have lower attainment than their peers (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Shaw et al, 2016). Therefore, it would be expected that the school would have lower than average attainment, due to the high frequency of disadvantage.

Within the micro-context, the quality of education is in the 13th percentile in London and employment is in the 10th percentile (Greater London Authority,

2020). The chances of children with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds securing stable employment would expectedly be low, compared to their peers without SEND, living in the same area.

#### 3.5.4 Employability of adults who were disadvantaged children or children with SEND

FSM and SEND designation predicate lower employment in adulthood (DfE, 2018a). Statistics released in 2018, found that only 60% of adults aged 27 receiving FSM in Year 11 were in stable employment compared to 77% who did not receive FSM; with 24% on out-of-work benefit compared to 8% who did not receive FSM (DfE, 2018a).

Likewise, adults aged 27 who were on the SEND register when in Year 11 had similar statistics, with 58% in stable employment versus 78% without SEND, and 26% on out-of-work benefit compared to 7% who did not have SEND (DfE, 2018a). The inequity in employment opportunities for children with SEND, or receiving FSM, reinforces how more secure strategies for supporting these groups are required from the research community.

To summarise, in this section, the Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015) definition for a child with SEND was discussed. The Code of Practice 2014 definition for SEND is someone with a diagnosed learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made and/or they are someone experiencing a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age. It has been suggested that universal identification of children as having a SEND is difficult because significant difficulties are poorly defined, and lack specificity (Norwich, 2017). Schools are required to make judgement calls on the progress a child is making, compared to their peers, without access to universal assessment and devolved curricula. It is important to note that children can be wrongly categorised as SEND, when significant difficulties could be addressed through better teaching (Hodkinson, 2016).

The impact of being designated SEND is stark. At a macro level, research (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Taylor et al, 2019; Done & Andrews, 2019) and DfE statistics (DfE, 2020a; DfE, 2018a), show that children who are designated to school SEND registers are disproportionately likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds,

minority ethnic groups, and to have low prior attainment. Children with SEND who have completed secondary school education entirely within the policy parameters of the Code of Practice 2014 have made negative progress compared to their peers without SEND in the same period of time (DfE, 2020a). Children designated SEND when in Year 11 are 20% less likely to be employed aged 27 than their peers who did not have SEND (DfE, 2018a).

At the micro level, for children in the research setting, it is possible that there are wider implications that effective SEND provision can have on later life (Ainscow, 2020). As the statistics illustrated, children will leave this school aged 16 or 18 in a ward with 1st percentile income deprivation and 10th percentile employment prospects (Greater London Authority, 2020). Progressing into employment from such a starting point will be difficult enough for a child without SEND, comparatively far harder for a child with SEND who receives FSM (DfE, 2018a). Schools have an important role in preparing children for life beyond the age of 16. Having a long-term view of SEND provision and its contribution to the children's progression into adulthood is important to me as a researcher-professional. Ascertaining better practices to support children with SEND will contribute to this under-developed field of research.

To summarise, a child with SEND faces barriers to making progress, compared to children with similar prior attainment but without SEND designation (DfE, 2020a). Other indicators of disadvantage affect children's progress and attainment, compared to children who are not disadvantaged (Done & Andrews, 2019). Children designated SEND or disadvantaged have statistically lower employability as adults (DfE, 2018a). The following section will review how the role of school SENCO's is established, to support children with SEND.

### 3.6 The role of the SENCO

In this section, I will consider the role of the SENCO. This person is usually responsible for designating children to the SEND register. The first section has shown the impact that designating a child as SEND can have on their future opportunities. Every school is required to have a designated SENCO. A school's SENCO:

*“has an important role to play with the headteacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school... day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the SEN policy and co- ordination of*

*specific provision made to support individual pupils with SEND, including those who have EHC plans.” (DfE/DoH, 2015: 108)*

The main concern of the SENCO is the ongoing development of effective SEND policy. Best practice for ongoing development is said to involve regular review of their school's SEND provision, to ascertain its effectiveness (Davies & Henderson, 2020). To review a school's SEND provision, the SENCO should be able to view and feedback on teaching, learning support and pastoral care. Ofsted view these elements as fundamental to ensuring that a school's provision is equitable for children with and without SEND (Ofsted, 2019).

Maher (2018) describes the SENCO as the key decision maker in shaping the norms and values of SEND support (Maher, 2018). Whilst it is desirable for the SENCO to demonstrate inclusive ideals, SEND provision should be included as part of a regular cycle of whole school self-assessment (Packer, 2015). The importance of effective, aspirational SEND provision is seen in the requirements of the Ofsted Outstanding inspection framework (2019). Given the unique nature of children's SEND, provision for children with SEND must be designed on a cohort-by-cohort basis.

Professional experience has informed my position that effective education of children with SEND cannot be achieved without a whole school commitment. It is not possible for the SENCO to implement high-quality SEND support without collaborating with, and leading, colleagues. Research has claimed that effective inclusive pedagogy is complex (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Bowles, Radford & Bakopoulou, 2018), and that SENCOs are not confident that teachers are equipped to teach children with SEND appropriately (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020). I have concluded that effective teaching of children with SEND requires consistency and commitment, particularly at the planning stage.

The SENCO's ability to observe day-to-day teaching is limited (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). SENCOs are restricted in their ability to coordinate and collaborate with teachers largely because of administrative duties, and teaching responsibilities (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). Professionally, teaching and administrative duties are the biggest inhibiting factor in developing the school's SEND support in the research setting. Given that research, and my own experience, concludes that SENCOs do not have sufficient time to effectively

develop their school's SEND provision, it is necessary that school leaders are aligned on their SEND strategy (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Packer, 2015).

Packer (2015) and Davies and Henderson (2020) report that whole-school approaches are required for effective SEND education. A whole-school approach to observation and feedback, is particularly pertinent at the universal level (teacher-led, high-quality education (DfE/DoH, 2015)). A focus on teacher-led, quality-first education is desirable, as the biggest variable children with SEND face is the quality of teaching (Hodkinson, 2016; Hattie, 2012). If the SENCO is not able to observe and feedback to teachers of children with SEND, due to the bureaucratic demands of the role, other school leaders should contribute to this process.

The bureaucratic demands on the SENCO diminish the amount of time that can be allocated to teacher observation and feedback. It has already been discussed that children can be wrongly categorised as SEND, when significant difficulties could be addressed through better teaching (Hodkinson, 2016). Better teaching may be achievable if SENCOs were more frequently able to observe and feedback to teachers. Demystifying SEND pedagogy (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019) through more regular observation and feedback could aid teachers, and ultimately improve attainment outcomes for children with SEND.

The DfE call the SENCO a crucial intermediary role between child, parents and professionals (DfE, 2021c). The DfE (2021c) *SEND Support* report recognises that SENCOs are competing with delays and bureaucracy that prevent them attending to their professional responsibilities, or access to CPD (DfE, 2021c). In my experience, the role is mainly a bureaucratic, administrative position that requires the completion of many paper-based exercises for local authorities, parents and agencies.

The Code of Practice 2014 states that "the SENCO provides professional guidance to colleagues and will work closely with staff, parents and other agencies" (DfE/DoH, 2015: 108). Uniquely in educational policy this role must be filled by a person with qualified teacher status, which brings teaching responsibilities, on top of the bureaucratic elements of the role. Teaching



responsibilities add to a competing schedule for school SENCOs. However, teaching experience would also support observation and feedback to teachers.

In the research setting, I have little direct pedagogic contact with children with SEND, other than children in my own PE classes. My direct contact comes in a pastoral manner, whilst I direct teaching assistants and support teachers with their pedagogy. This emphasises the important nature of my enquiry as SENCOs have minimal direct impact on the children's learning, despite overall responsibility for their outcomes. Successful teaching of children with SEND starts with teacher knowledge of individual children with SEND, rather than training on pedagogic strategies (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Teacher reflection on the needs of the children they teach should also contribute to demystification of SEND pedagogy (Webster & Blatchford, 2019).

SENCOs cannot teach every child with SEND as inclusive education necessitates children being taught with their peers in mainstream classrooms (Schuelka, 2018). School leaders and SENCOs must monitor the effectiveness, and efficiency, of SEND-teaching in these classrooms (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Packer, 2015). Presently, many children with SEND leave school without qualifications, or with worthless qualifications (Ainscow, 2020). For this reason, one measure of effectiveness is attainment outcomes, in the same way that teachers of children without SEND are measured. Statutory requirements for teachers are:

*“high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people. Some children and young people need educational provision that is additional to or different from this... special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything else” (DfE/DoH, 2015: 25)*

The role of the children's teachers are prominent throughout the Code of Practice:

*‘Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff... They should work closely with any teaching assistants or specialist staff involved, to plan and assess the impact of support and interventions and how they can be linked to classroom teaching.’ (DfE/DoH, 2015: 99-101).*

The contribution of teaching assistants towards these children's education is stated as being that of support. The Code of Practice is clear, that teachers must remain the primary educator, or the primary director of the child's education. In the following section, the role of the teacher will be examined through the statutory framework of the Code of Practice and the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012).

### 3.7 Teachers of children with SEND

In the previous section, I highlighted how by implementing the Code of Practice, school SENCOs and leadership teams require teachers to be accountable for teaching children with SEND, and use quality-first teaching as a starting point to meeting their needs. In this section, I will extrapolate from the research effective teaching practices for children with SEND. I have limited the studies I will discuss to those that were completed in England, and unless otherwise stated these are based in secondary schools. The term inclusive pedagogy refers to teaching approaches used to support children with SEND in mainstream curricula.

As discussed above, the foundation for SEND provision is quality- first teaching (DfE/DoH, 2015). Regardless of the moral arguments around austerity politics (see: Hanley et al, 2020; Timberlake, 2018), attainment measures (see: White, 2019) and inclusive education (see: Petty, 2014), the statutory framework that SENCOs are primarily responsible for implementing, states that teachers must be responsible for the attainment of children with SEND in their classrooms.

Therefore, reference can be made to the DfE (2013)'s definition of quality- first teaching in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013), although these standards pre-date the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

- Teachers must adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities. They should use approaches which are appropriate to children's' needs in order to involve and motivate them (DfE, 2013).
- "Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities" (DfE, 2013: 14). Since 2014, this has included the SEND Code of Practice and the children's EHC plans.
- Teachers will "develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support" (DfE, 2013: 13). This necessitates working closely with the SENCO and the teaching assistants, as well as their mentor and Head of Department, to best meet the needs of the children.

These standards need to be achieved for a trainee to be awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) and must be demonstrated for a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to pass their NQT year<sup>2</sup>. Teacher's Standards predate the SEND Code of Practice, though given the extended period of continuous government it can be taken that these standards adhere to the conservative government's educational aims. One

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<sup>2</sup> Now ECT (early careers teacher) years

view is that the standards present inclusive education practices as an issue of teacher readiness. My professional experience is that it is not realistic to expect that a trainee teacher can respond to the needs of all pupils, including those with complex SEND. The skills required to effectively teach these children can be acquired through experience and reflection on practice (Mintz, 2019; Greaves, Belfield & Allen, 2019).

It has been posited that by leveraging teacher readiness on to the trainee and their school setting, the government succeed in avoiding questioning the placement of children with SEND in the mainstream under the guise of inclusion (Hanley et al, 2020; Done & Andrews, 2019; Timberlake, 2018). However, research has found that trainee teachers do not negatively impact public exam results (Greaves et al, 2019). Greaves et al (2019) analysis of national datasets does not align with the attainment8 or progress8 data for the setting, introduced earlier (see: [introduction](#)). For this reason, I conclude that the setting's context in an area with high indicators of deprivation adds complexity to a teacher readiness to teach groups with high frequencies of SEND and/or low attainment.

Key findings in SEND research frequently cite inadequate preparation and training of teachers, particularly pre-service trainees (Done & Andrews, 2019; Mintz, 2019; Greaves et al, 2019; Timberlake, 2018). The government recognise that the workload of an *experienced* teacher is excessive (DfE, 2018c), that finding the time in a working day to seek advice and specialist support may be beyond full-time, experienced teachers. With such a young workforce in the research setting, it is less realistic to expect teachers to be ready to meet the needs of children with SEND, as they take their first steps in their teaching careers.

Hanley et al (2020) argues that loading SEND- effectiveness on individual teachers is an example of anonymous, bureaucratic cultural violence that has been covertly designed to reinforce disadvantage. By withdrawing or defunding specialist support, they suggest this is about being more than simple austerity and should be considered within the entire conservative socio-political ideology (Hanley et al, 2020). This view is expanded further:

*“Neoliberal capitalism has a totalising effect on everyday life. This has specific ramifications for movements in civil society that seek to challenge the established economic order and imagine alternatives. [Any opposing view] will encounter some form of hindrance in attempting any meaningful critique of capitalism.” (White, 2015: 24)*

The viewpoint of Hanley et al (2020) and White (2015) is that conservative neoliberalism is covertly used to reinforce disadvantage. Such a claim is reinforced by the research into the role class, gender and ethnicity has on the children designated as SEND (Done & Andrews, 2019: 7; DfE, 2018a; Petty, 2014).

There is a view that inclusive pedagogy is complex (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Bowles et al, 2018). I disagree. My experience in schools leads me to believe that inclusive pedagogy becomes complex when teachers are unable to reflect on their approaches to teaching children with SEND. My view aligns with Lewis and Norwich (2005), who found that SEND pedagogy is best described as specialist teaching of exceptional children, through teacher knowledge of these children, rather than pedagogic strategies (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). I have found that the knowledge required to ensure these children can make progress can be acquired through ongoing reflection on practice.

It is unreasonable to expect teachers to become experts in every aspect of SEND provision (where they aren't working with children with these needs). Knowing the children they do teach is a reasonable expectation, and is a requirement in the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the Teachers' Standards (Davies & Henderson, 2020; DfE/DoH, 2015). My professional view is that, if appropriate strategies are provided to teachers, then these strategies implemented alongside their own ongoing professional reflection can meet the needs of the majority of children with SEND.

### 3.7.1 Pedagogical approaches for children with SEND

Hattie (2012) argues that the major source of controllable variance in schools are teachers, and each institution needs to take in to account micro-evidence on the effect these adults are having on the children they teach. Knowing the needs of individual children in a class is one important step in taking accountability for the whole class (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Reflecting on these needs should lead to better lessons, and consequently higher attainment.

Children can be wrongly categorised as having SEND, when their needs could be addressed through better teaching (Hodkinson, 2016). Inclusive pedagogy, in my opinion, is seen in settings and classrooms where teachers actively prepare for their individual classes and make good use of reflection between lessons (Lewis &

Norwich, 2005). Perhaps where high frequencies of children with multifaceted special needs are taught in the same classroom, one could make the case that balancing pedagogical approaches for different individuals would be complex. But I would maintain that the day-to-day planning and teaching of groups with low-prior attainment and/or high-frequencies of SEND are not discernibly different to the preparation required for other classes.

In contrast to my view, researchers propose that SEND pedagogy needs demystifying (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019). I am not convinced that SEND pedagogy is any different to approaches taken to children without SEND. My professional experience has led me to become a proponent of consistent preparation, planning, delivery and reflection for classes with high frequencies of children with SEND. The approach described here is the same approach I take to my own classes, regardless of the frequency of children with SEND. Lewis and Norwich (2005) described this approach as teacher knowledge of individual children with SEND, rather than pedagogic strategies. I have found that teacher knowledge of children can only be acquired through an ongoing process of reflection on practice.

The mystification of SEND pedagogy may be seen in a perceived gap in teachers' knowledge of SEND pedagogy and self-efficacy for teaching these groups (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Messiou, 2019; Meadows & Black, 2018). The legal requirement for schools to educate more children with SEND has had serious implications for teacher education, and the preparation of student teachers to understand inclusion and embed it in their practice (Essex et al, 2019). Small scale, mixed-methods research has found SENCOs that perceive their colleagues as unwilling to, or ambivalent towards, actively engaging with diagnosed SEND such as Autism (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020). Unwillingness or ambivalence towards a child's SEND is discriminatory (Equality Act, 2010), however, it is one of the challenges that I have faced. My experience, combined with the research of Wearmouth and Butler (2020), supports the claims of Essex et al (2019) that inclusive pedagogy has serious implications for teacher readiness. I have seen that the unwillingness or ambivalence towards children with SEND (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020) may be hidden behind the reported mystification of pedagogic approaches for these individuals and groups (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019).

To facilitate inclusion, teacher collaboration, reflective practice and the children's active participation must all be applied (Paulsrud & Nilhom, 2020; Messiou, 2019; Dunne et al, 2018). Direct pedagogic instruction must be led by the teacher (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). These studies suggest that preparation through reflection on previous lessons and teachers' knowledge of individual children will have a marked influence on confidence with these groups. The same research unpicked the mystification of SEND pedagogy, considering that approaches to teaching children with SEND are not materially different nor distinguishable from those that work with all learners (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019). My belief is that children with SEND benefit most from consistency across their school days, weeks, terms, and years.

Statistical links have been shown between SEND designation and other protected characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity (Done & Andrews, 2019). However, despite higher frequencies of children with SEND amongst these groups, there is not a consensus on good practice for SEND provision, because children, teachers and settings are all unique. Strategies that may prove successful with a specific need in a specific setting, may not be transferable to a different school, or prove successful with a different child with the same need in the same school. For this reason, teacher knowledge of individual children is necessary for effective education (Paulsrud & Nilhom, 2020; Messiou, 2019; Dunne et al, 2018; Lewis & Norwich, 2005). The lack of universal strategies for similar or differing SEND may also explain why research more frequently identifies practices that do not work, as these may be easier to capture.

A school's context may have an influence on children experiencing "significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age" (DfE/DoH, 2015), and being designated to a school's SEND register. As stated earlier, children can be wrongly categorised as having SEND, when their needs could be addressed through better teaching (Hodkinson, 2016). Due to a school's context, there may be differing issues around recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers (Essex et al, 2019); the types of teachers who could provide better teaching may not be present in every school.

Research in 6 initial teacher training providers (Lawson, Norwich and Nash, 2013) found that new teachers' preparedness to teach children with SEND was linked to the overall development of their pedagogy and that require favourable conditions in school placements to enhance their ability to make lessons accessible. A negative experience in their first year is also likely to impact on their continued aspirations to teach.

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) finds that schools with a more disadvantaged pupil body have heightened issues with teacher recruitment and retainment (Fullard and Zucollo, 2021), and have more newly qualified teachers. Teacher training is vital to developing teachers' inclusivity and increasing their confidence in teaching children with SEND (Mintz, 2019; Morley, Maher, Walsh, Dinning, Lloyd and Pratt, 2017). A higher proportion of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), would lead to more variable experiences teaching children with SEND during training years (Lawson et al, 2013). It can be concluded that children in the research setting are likely to receive more varied provision, due to high teacher turnover and high frequencies of trainee teachers and NQTs.

Pedagogy for, and support of children with SEND is one of many competing policy initiatives in secondary schools (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Done & Andrews, 2019). Supporting children with SEND is described as contingent on available resources, and dependant on numerous, and at times competing, policy initiatives (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Done & Andrews, 2019). See for example: the need to avoid diminished curriculums (Ofsted, 2019) whilst also appropriately preparing children for adulthood (Ofsted, 2019) and attaining pass grades in GCSE maths and English (Ofsted, 2019; Machin et al, 2018), as one example of competing policy initiatives from the inspection framework. As the policy discussion highlighted, children with SEND and low-prior attainment are likely to need more teaching hours to pass maths and English GCSE, to better access further education and prepare for adulthood. However, more teaching hours would decrease the number of curriculum hours focused on other subjects. This is one example of competing policy initiatives, which are well intentioned in writing, but hinder children with SEND when implemented.

The coalition and conservative government policies on education can be critiqued through a lens of economic orthodoxy (Timberlake, 2018). Economic orthodoxy

views education as a tool for creating “economic units of production” (Hodkinson, 2016: 182). Ofsted found between 2016-2020 that only a very small minority of children with SEND remain in lasting employment (Ofsted, 2021). Children with SEND should be entitled to an education that meets their needs, but at present complete less worthwhile qualifications than their peers (Ainscow, 2020). Investing in a child’s learning maximises future achievement, employability and health and wellbeing in adulthood (Marchant, Todd, Cooskey, Dredge, Jones, Reynolds, Stratton, Dwyer, Lyons & Brophy et al, 2019; Timberlake, 2018). Teachers will determine children with SEND’s future health and socio-economic outcomes and consequently their reliance on the state.

It is maintained that educational policy is first implemented, and then modified, by practitioners (Cavendish, Morris, Chapman, Ocasio-Stoutenburg & Kibler., 2020). Current educational policy in England is that teachers are accountable for the attainment of all the children in their classes (DfE/DoH, 2015). However, for the reasons discussed above, there is a school of thought that SEND pedagogy is complex. In a setting with high frequencies of staff turnover and an equally high number of early-career teachers, the experiences working with types of SEND, and knowledge of individual children and their needs, is difficult to maintain. In the next section, I will highlight the important role that teaching assistants play in supporting children with SEND. In the research setting, the annual turnover of teaching staff in the five-year period prior to this study was 24-33% annually. In the same period, teaching assistant numbers decreased, but there was a core group of adults in the SEND support department who became viewed as experienced members of staff.

### 3.8 Teaching assistants

Much of the work done to support children with SEND is completed by teaching assistants. In schools in England, teaching assistants comprise 28% of the workforce: 265,600 adults are employed in this role (DfE, 2017). Nationally, this demonstrates a reliance on the role, and validates the need to ensure their deployment is effective.

Teaching assistants are underrepresented in SEND research, including in research on their effectiveness, despite their importance to the progress and attainment of children with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al,



2015). Knowing that TAs are under-represented in academic research motivated my focus on their role in improving outcomes, rather than designing a study to capture the voices of the teachers, despite the more prominent role teachers have in the effective education of children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015).

Existing research has focused on three facets: (a) the role of teaching assistants; (b) the impact of teaching assistants on students, educators and inclusive education; and (c) the factors that influence the performance of teaching assistants (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015; Ofsted, 2008).

The typical impact of teaching assistants on children in UK schools is negative; children receiving the most in-class support from teaching assistants make less progress than similar pupils who receive less, or no, support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). The more support given by in-class teaching assistants, the more negative the children's progress. Large studies (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Bowles et al, 2018; Sharples et al, 2015) found that the majority of teaching assistant deployment is in an informal, instructional role supporting children with SEND one-to-one or in small groups; and that this form of instruction was of a markedly lower quality than that which could be delivered by the class teacher (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015).

The research that informed the EEF's Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools Guidance Report (Davies & Henderson, 2020) analysed 3 systematic reviews of 67 studies. Research showed that using teaching assistants who are untrained and/or unsupervised, allowing teaching assistants to deliver ineffective teaching, and teaching assistants being allocated to certain pupils had a negative impact on children with SEND's progress and attainment compared to those with similar needs but no teaching assistant support (Cullen et al, 2019). Recall that 28% of schools' workforce, in the most prominent form of deployment in classrooms, is causing such negative impact on our most vulnerable learners' attainment.

The meta-analyses favoured TA's delivery of intervention programmes outside of the mainstream lesson (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Webster &

De Boer, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015). These studies found moderately positive results for this mode of deployment. The conclusion drawn from meta-analyses (Cullen et al, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015) for better practice with SEND support is:

*“To support effectiveness, the teacher [or SENCO] must retain responsibility for selecting an evidence-based, relevant, targeted intervention; for training the TA to use it with fidelity; provide supervision; observe the TA working and provide feedback; and ensure that pupils with SEND are included in the teacher’s own whole class, small group and one-to-one pedagogical practice.”* (Cullen et al, 2019: 157)

This extract synthesises best practice for withdrawal intervention, based on the emerging research. Implementing each stage of these recommendations will be integral to the success of the research. The meta-analysis draws its conclusions from studies that totalled more than 1500 participants (adults and children), and a broad number of SEND across mainstream education settings, including primary schools (Cullen et al, 2019).

The negative impact of teaching assistants when deployed in-class is one of the most prominent claims in the report, yet the evidence base is far smaller than other major findings. For example, the claim that high quality teaching for all children will benefit children with SEND is based off 38 systematic reviews with positive results from the research question, examining 661 studies (Cullen et al, 2019). The evidence base that shows teaching assistants deployed in-class have a negative impact on children is based on just over 1000 participants, a much smaller sample than the nearly 22,000 participants in the high-quality teaching review. The smaller sample of 1000 participants may be explained by the national average for children with EHC plans (3%) resulting in fewer children and teaching assistants to include in the study.

Despite the relatively small number of participants found in the meta-analyses, the rigour with which the systemic reviews were selected demonstrates that teaching assistant deployment has been under-researched in the period 2010-19 compared to other modes of support for children with SEND (Cullen et al, 2019). Likewise it has been noted that children with EHC plans (that provide additional funding for support staff) represent 3% of the school population (DfE, 2020a), and as such this may limit the extent to which studies could be wide-ranging.

By way of contrast, a smaller study into teaching assistant motivations (Maher & Vickerman, 2018) found that a desire to help children is not prevalent in the

motivations of adults who become teaching assistants, and that there are often more pragmatic reasons for seeking the role. One reason given was the convenience of the working hours for parents of school-aged children (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). If the attractiveness of the job role is pragmatic in nature, then it is plausible that the outcomes achieved by the children are inconsequential to the employees. Having overseen a reduction in support staff from 19 to 10, I have a keen understanding of who is invested in the children's' well-being, progress and attainment, and would refute the claim that any of the teaching assistants employed in the setting are primarily in role due to its convenience. I also think that the challenging behaviour of the children across the school, would not make working here as a teaching assistant attractive, or seemingly easy. As such, the research of Maher and Vickerman (2018) played a role in the selection of a case study methodology (to be discussed in the next chapter).

### 3.9 Meeting the needs of children with SEND

Based on the existing research, I have conceptualised a model of better practice that requires removing the teaching assistants from the classroom, in my setting. I have concluded from the existing literature, that using the teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions will better meet the needs of the children in my setting (Cullen et al, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015).

Reorganisation in this manner is a leadership and deployment issue and, ethically, must meet the needs of the children. It is important to know that in the widest-ranging study in England, the children reported that teaching assistant support is always or often helpful, yet were unable to articulate the key characteristics of this helpful support (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). I have observed a close, trusting relationship develop between teaching assistants and children with SEND that is not always possible with a teacher-child relationship. I have seen that a closer working relationship can develop with a teaching assistant, and propose that this is due to the increased contact time as a pairing. From my observations it could be concluded that children report their teaching assistants as helpful, because they share a personal bond with this adult. Children with SEND may be unable to recognise the signs of good practice of effective in-class support. Hence the research (Webster & Blatchford, 2019) reporting that children find TA support helpful.

Redeploying the teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions would therefore enable children to continue to feel that they are receiving ‘help’, however this help could be better delivered through small group, pair, and individual work. I have concluded that teaching assistant support in the classroom is having some impact on children’s attainment (see figure 1.1 and figure 1.2), seen through the extensive meta-analyses available (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019). The next section will review the practice of intervention-based systems of support for children with SEND.

### 3.10 Withdrawal intervention

Cullen et al (2019) synthesise the elements of effective withdrawal intervention. The available literature demonstrates that an effective withdrawal intervention model will complement the children’s’ core curricula. The intervention model allows for more frequent repetition and can address misconceptions at an individual level (Petty, 2014). Carefully designed intervention could therefore reinforce key learning outcomes for the children’s core curricula (English and maths). The SEND Code of Practice maintains that class teachers remain responsible for educational outcomes, as any lack of support or training is not the fault of the teaching assistants (Davies & Henderson, 2020; DfE/DoH, 2015; Hattie, 2012).

In 17 systematic reviews, mode of instruction and positive adult-child relationship were found to have a positive impact on the intervention’s outcomes. The second most frequent predictor of a successful intervention was the characteristics of both the adult (being trained in the intervention; having fidelity over the content of the intervention) and the child (intervention appropriate to type of SEND; ethnicity; academic skill; prior knowledge). Fourteen reviews found positive outcomes linked to these attributes. Although it was not possible to ascertain how or why ethnicity impacted the outcome of studied intervention, nor to what degree, the quality assurance of the meta-analysis rated this conclusion as strong and the strength of evidence as high (Cullen et al, 2019). 95% of children in the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds so within their own cohort’s ethnicity is likely to be less impactful than the type of SEND being addressed or academic skill and prior knowledge. Indeed the meta-analysis that informed the EEF’s Guidance Report concluded that the key predictor of an intervention’s success was the class teacher understanding its context and agreeing with its approach (Cullen et al, 2019).

Cullen et al (2019) found that positive adult-child relationship had a positive impact on the intervention's outcomes. Positive relationships are required to best engage children being withdrawn for learning interventions. These allow for better inclusion in mainstream learning. In the primary sector, teaching assistants report that they view their roles as nurturing and holistic, and beyond enabling academic study; believed they formed better relationships with children with SEND than teachers; and that greater emphasis on building adult-child relationships is necessary in comparison to the requirements of their job descriptions (Syrnyk, 2018).

Children view inclusion as a positive concept in its abstract form (Essex et al, 2019; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). Knowing that children with SEND view inclusion as a positive can inform the effective deployment of teaching assistants. Research cautions the belief that inclusion and exclusion can be dichotomous or even placed on a spectrum and that actually inclusion is dependent on the person(s) experiencing them (Dunne et al, 2018). Dimitrellou & Hurry (2019) found that, despite the presence of teaching assistants in school, children with SEND still reported a stronger perceived relationship with their teacher than their support staff (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). In my experience in the setting, children with SEND wish to be treated like their peers, and some have exhibited behaviours that show resentment of the in-class support.

It is claimed that sustained use of teaching assistants in-class, despite the growing body of evidence to suggest their impact is negligible or negative, performs an important role in staving off debates about how to effectively educate children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Clarke & Visser, 2019a). This returns to my previous discussion about the political aims of austerity politics and the impact the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE, 2015) in distracting from the shrinkage of specialist support. This is seen in the prominence of in-class teaching assistants, the Velcro assistant, and the idea that support has been provided regardless of the impact or its outcomes (Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Butt, 2016; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). As shown above, small scale studies have shown that children have more favourable perceived relationships with their teachers than support staff. It is left to the SENCOs to implement and modify the policy to suit the needs of their learners (Cavendish et al, 2020).

Conclusions from meta-analyses show that clear definition of roles as well as enhanced and continued training of teachers to meet the needs of children with SEND are vital to effective deployment of teaching assistants (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharma & Salend, 2016).

### 3.11 Conclusion

In the first section of the literature review, I examined the designation of children to the SEND register. I considered the influence of disadvantage, and latterly how these statuses have impacted children's employability as young adults. I analysed the micro-context, through the lens of the London Indices of Deprivation (Greater London Authority, 2020). Research showed how the protected characteristics of gender, class and race impact on a child being designated to the SEND register (Done & Andrews, 2019). Compounding the prominence of SEND in minority groups, is that less adequate teaching leads to children being designated SEND. Provision for children with SEND is not equitable (Ainscow, 2020), and there is no universal system for identifying SEND in children (Norwich, 2017; Hodkinson, 2016). Combined, these factors see children with SEND make -0.62 grades of expected progress at the end of key stage 4, compared to 0.08 for their non-SEND peers (DfE, 2020a). Children with the highest tier of need, demonstrated by the acquisition of an EHC plan, make negative progress of over a grade: -1.17% (DfE, 2020a).

Besides medical diagnoses, the absence of a universal measure of whom should be designated SEND requires each school to respond to the needs of children experiencing significant learning difficulties in their own way. The multiple challenges that children with SEND face, reinforces the importance of raising the attainment and progress of this group. I reflected on my own professional experiences and concluded that passing maths and English would be the most important measure of how inclusive our setting's SEND support could be. For children with low prior attainment who have SEND, failure to pass maths and English costs the state more in the long-term than providing adequate resources for children with SEND has saved (Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2018; DfE, 2018a; Machin et al, 2018). Department for Education research showed that higher attainment in maths and English equates to higher earnings and higher reported happiness, but with the caveat that "care should be taken to avoid skewing policy intervention toward more measurable skills (GCSE results)"

(DfE, 2021c: 42). The DfE and the research of Machin et al (2018) and the Centre of Vocational Education Research (2018), shows the importance of succeeding in passing maths and English. A focus on maths and English can be rationalised as children with SEND are 20% more likely to be unemployed aged 27 than their peers without SEND (DfE, 2018a). For children with SEND and low prior attainment, it would seem reasonable to assign greater learning time to these subjects.

Furthermore, the literature review showed how improving the outcomes of children with SEND will be a multi-faceted and ongoing operation. Observations from my professional practice, as well as the academic and grey literature, recognised the importance that quality-first teaching will have on improving SEND outcomes. The biggest variable children with SEND face is the quality of teaching (Hodkinson, 2016; Hattie, 2012). However, there was significant research presented on teachers and pedagogy, whilst the role of teaching assistants was comparatively under-researched.

Presently, in schools in England, teaching assistants comprise 28% of the workforce (DfE, 2017) and the most prominent form of deployment is classroom-based support. Research showed that the children receiving the most in-class support from teaching assistants made less progress than similar pupils who received less, or no, support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). The meta-analyses reported that teaching assistant delivery of intervention programmes outside of the mainstream lesson was the most consistently positive use of these adults, when elements of effective withdrawal intervention were met (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Webster & De Boer, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015). An intervention model allows for more frequent repetition, and is shown to address misconceptions at an individual level (Petty, 2014). Ofsted view diminished curriculums as an unequitable approach, which could be considered counterintuitive when trying to balance the needs of the children, but flexibility can be built into an withdrawal/intervention approach.

My professional experience, reading of grey literature, and literature review have enabled me to conclude that an intervention model of support would better suit the needs of the children in my research setting. In my enquiry, I want to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions can influence

improved outcomes for children with SEND. I am cognisant that the use of teaching assistants will be one contributing factor, in what I hope leads to improved outcomes. There is much complexity, and multiple factors, that will contribute to my overall aim of improved outcomes for children. As teaching assistants are underrepresented in SEND research (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015), and the effectiveness of learning intervention is still an emerging area of research, I recognised that this study would contribute new knowledge to this important aspect of SEND support.



## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND, in-line with contemporary research findings. The methodology section will present the ontological perspective, research paradigm and approach elected to achieve this research aim.

### 4.2 Ontological perspective

The ontological perspective of this enquiry centres on the nature of human beings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and what is, the nature of their existence and the structure of their reality (Crotty, 1998). The stakeholders in the research were children with SEND, teaching assistants and teachers, and the ontological perspective of this research centred on their shared and contrasting views of reality (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014; Yin, 2003/2009).

Through this enquiry, I aimed to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND in my setting. As the SENCO, the variable I can best control is the deployment of teaching assistants. To provide this voice to the participants, I required a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodologies allow for exploration of a reality that is socially constructed, complex and changing (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Comparatively, quantitative methodology would have required a numerical, data-led approach to prove or disprove my theories regarding deployment of teaching assistants. To achieve my research aims, quantitative methodology seemed less valuable than a paradigm that would be rich in description, and attempt to unpick differing experiences to explain my area of inquiry (Ormston et al, 2014).

My belief that teaching assistants could have a more targeted influence on children with SEND would not only be measured through attainment outcomes. In my literature review, I have presented the literature pertaining to the value of quantitative data analysis between school SEND cohorts, and have concluded that individual progress for children with SEND cannot always be measured through assessment grades. Further, the literature review showed that there was room to describe the processes that make certain modes of deployment of teaching

assistant more effective. Attainment data omits the development of soft skills necessary for higher-level learning, such as the development of independence. The literature shows that children do not learn in a linear manner and as such a comparative analysis of attainment at the start, middle and end of the study would be of less value than qualitative discourse on the implementation and adaptation of learning interventions, and their inherent values and complications. Anticipating that the knowledge I sought to develop was descriptive in nature, led to the use of a qualitative methodology.

Minimal research exists that extrapolates how learning intervention programmes, including those that are sold to schools as packages, directly impact the learners in their core curricula. I concluded from my review of available research that intervention programmes should transcend SEND provision and link directly to the subject it's designed to support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019). I was keen to ensure the intervention did not exist in isolation. This knowledge reinforced my belief that attainment data would limit my understanding of *how* the intervention programmes benefit children. For this reason, I elected to complete a qualitative case study which enabled me to collate the views of the teachers and teaching assistants, to ascertain the influence of this new mode of deployment.

Qualitative methodologies would provide the participants with a voice that represents outcomes as something more than just a grade.

### 4.3 Constructivism

The constructivism philosophical paradigm asserts that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Dickson, Yeboah, & Ankrah, 2016; Baxter & Jack, 2008). In identifying my research methodology, I wished to develop knowledge and understanding of learning interventions and teaching assistant deployment, rather than a research paradigm that would prove or disprove my theories (Ormston et al, 2014). My identified research methodology allowed me, as all salient research projects should, the opportunity to learn. A constructivist paradigm therefore represented my belief in co-constructing new knowledge and would knit together the differing experiences of the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003/2009).

I posited that centring the research on the teaching assistants would enable their growth in understanding the influence their learning interventions would have on the children. In this context, an evaluative written approach would not suit the research as there would be tangential learning in areas I could not predict.

Therefore, I wished to participate in the data collection process through discussion (interview). Social constructivism would allow co-learning with the participants, as we sought knowledge from the change in their deployment. In addition, planning to make use of interviews suited my desire to research within my professional domain, as there was an established routine of discussion and reflection through the line management process.

Constructivist theory met the needs of the research design as the objective to review the learning interventions at three points in the year would allow the participants to update their understanding of the model of deployment, and their delivery of learning interventions. The constructivist approach planned for close collaboration between participant and researcher whilst enabling the participants to tell their stories (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The data analysis that occurs in the constructivist paradigm involves understanding and shaping the case and acknowledges the researcher's role in collecting and examining the data (Dickson et al, 2016). This is important to acknowledge biases introduced by the researcher's presence in the collection of data. For example, the line manager- managee relationship present in my results. I also anticipated a high degree of personal investment in the children's outcomes, as many of the participants had worked within the department for several years.

#### 4.4 Qualitative data

Constructivism has close ties with qualitative research approaches. The paradigm seeks to understand a phenomenon through studying the participants' experiences and considering their similar and differing experiences to draw conclusions (Dickson et al, 2016). Qualitative research is "seen as a subjective rather than objective undertaking, as a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts... [that seeks to] understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison,

2007:19/Cohen et al, 2018). This approach encapsulates the research aim as I sought to understand different participants' perspectives.

One feature of quantitative and mixed-methods research is the control group (Cohen et al, 2018). I believe it is unethical to use control groups when implementing changes in education provision. Designing control groups is discriminatory against disability, whereby all children should receive the best provision available to them. My literature review and pilot study had led me to believe that outcomes could improve through a change in deployment of teaching assistants. For this reason, I did not plan to include a control group of children being left in the previous model of support, for the purpose of comparison.

Qualitative case study has been the predominate form of investigation in to teaching assistant deployment (Cavendish et al, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Slater & Gazeley, 2019; Marchant et al, 2019; Syrnyk, 2018; Bowles et al, 2018; Timberlake, 2018 Butt, 2016). These designs incorporated observation and interview, though teacher-interview was more prevalent than teacher-and-teaching assistant- interview or teaching assistant- interview. Research on the deployment or performance of the teaching assistant rarely incorporated children with SEND's perspectives on what level or type of support best meets their needs. Exceptions were in the minority (Slater & Gazeley, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2019).

Clarke and Visser (2019b) state that choosing qualitative methods to investigate a research question is straightforward; the challenge lies within the selection of a specific methodology. Further, the chosen research *method* is deemed a key indicator in the quality of completed research; merely expanding the range of data collection methods does not ameliorate the issues created by use of narrow methodologies (Clarke & Visser, 2019b). Qualitative inquiry is less concerned with replicability, as the data generated is understood to be created in unique circumstances (Stahl & King, 2020).

I sought to identify a research methodology that would best enable me to collate the participants' unique experiences. I recognised that improved outcomes for children with SEND would be best seen through a qualitative, descriptive data set. In my experience, attainment data analysed on a child-by-child basis devolves into a qualitative discussion. I anticipated that using quantitative measures for a study

set within an academic year would not lead to useful comparative data, as it was not realistic to expect the redeployment of teaching assistants to have an instant effect on the children's' attainment.

Frequently, findings from small numbers of participants are presented in a percentage form, which is relatable when taken as a whole, but problematic when these statistics are lifted in to professional (non-academic) literature. I have seen this first-hand with parents, teaching staff including senior leaders, and the school SEND governor misinterpreting or failing to interrogate statistics from such studies. These are often found in the national media or in literature created by SEND charities. Due to these misconceptions, I committed to case study research which will present qualitative data. This will retain the integrity of the case study without causing the lay reader to misinterpret the findings, regardless of whether these are positive or negative. Statistics can often be used to convey cause and effect trends which are not appropriate to this case study, as the interventions are designed to meet the needs of the children.

Alongside capturing positive progress, I believed that understanding *how* the intervention influenced the children, and *why* teaching assistants felt this, would contribute greatly to contemporary SEND education discourse.

To achieve this, I elected to use a case study approach. Merriam (2009) showed that qualitative case study research is both descriptive and heuristic, providing a methodology that would allow me to address the needs of the learners with the participant teaching assistants. Case study methodology makes use of a research question/questions to frame the enquiry, and espouses an organised, systematic data collection process to produce rich data that can be reviewed in detail. An ability to articulate the data collection process is a prerequisite to ensuring validity of data (Cypress, 2017). This begins with an outline of case study methodology.

#### 4.5 Case study methodology

As previously highlighted, I aimed to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND in my setting, a school with high indices of deprivation, under-diagnosed needs, and a widening progress gap between children with SEND and those without. As the SENCO, the variable I can best control is the deployment of teaching assistants. Making better

use of teaching assistants requires an understanding of contemporary SEND research, which this research aims to develop and push forward. To achieve this objective, I planned to collaboratively review the teaching assistants' delivery of learning interventions at three points in the school year, and correlate their claims with evidence obtained from the children's' teachers. This approach lent itself to a case study methodology. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, particularly appropriate where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009).

I sought to provide a voice to school's teaching assistants, to evaluate their views on the effectiveness of the intervention model of deployment. Teaching assistants were underrepresented in SEND research (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015), which included research on their own effectiveness, and I committed to representing this group in my data. Omitting teaching assistants from research into their own effectiveness reinforced the hierarchical nature of the teacher- teaching assistant relationship.

Broadly, meta-analyses of research frequently demonstrate that inclusion, SEND education, SEND support, and teaching assistant deployment, are under-researched both in England and internationally (Sharma & Salend, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015; Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy & Wearmouth, 2009). This is pertinent considering the relative size of the sector that teaching assistants account for, and the documented concerns regarding SEND funding.

The common use of case study is to illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and the subsequent results (Schramm, 1971). Three major types of case study are: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive (Yin, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008). Explanatory case studies follow the implementation of a programme with the effects of said programme. Exploratory case studies are used to report or evaluate interventions without a clear, single set of outcomes. Descriptive case studies describe phenomena and their real-life occurrence (Yin, 2003/2009). Commonly, case study method will usually study *how* and *why* questions, cover contextual questions that are believed to be relevant, and explore areas where boundaries between context and phenomena aren't clear (Yin, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I believed that the boundary between teaching assistant support and the outcomes of children with SEND, particularly at GCSE, would be best investigated and addressed exclusively within the research setting. As a researcher-professional, I sought to understand the link between the multi-faceted contextual demands of the school and the attainment outcomes of the learners. I recognised that much of the provision and existing outcomes had parallels with the macro-research field, but due to the nature of SEND designation and the differences between cohorts across schools, wished to centre my enquiry on my school. As such I felt that an exploratory case study best met the needs of my research (Yin, 2003/2009).

Consequently, conducting a case study in my setting would best achieve the aim of the research enquiry. Understanding whether the redeployment of teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions required the views of the participants. The use of case study was validated by the need to gather and understand their experiences: "Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others. Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others" (Stake, 1995: 64). I have discussed how the SENCO must lead strategically and cannot provide direct input into the learning of every child with SEND. By reflecting with the participants on their observations, I can gain their descriptions and interpretations of how an intervention approach can be effective and/or refined to meet the needs of the children.

Due to the complexities of different pedagogy and the non-linear nature of learning, the use of case study is prominent in educational research. Educational research has shaped and evolved case study methodology due to its need to evaluate curriculum design and innovation, understand stakeholders' perspectives and explore the impact of socio-political contexts on the relative successes and failures of the topic in focus (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Case study research methodology in education has been used to evaluate the impact of educational strategies and to provide relevant evidence for policy and practice decisions that supported social and educational change in the United Kingdom and the United States (Harrison et al, 2017). I wished to evaluate the

influence of the redeployment of teaching assistants. It was a relevant research methodology because I did not wish to extrapolate generalisable or transferable findings from the research setting, nor present the findings as an *answer* for the education of other children with SEND. The most pressing desire was to improve the outcomes of the children in my setting. If the process of redeployment proved successful, other SENCOs may take inspiration from this approach, but my research is rooted in addressing the needs of my cohort.

Contemporary SEND research has utilised case study, but teaching assistants and children with SEND are under-represented compared to teachers and SENCOs (Riitaoja, Helakorpi & Holm, 2020). Bowles et al (2018) interviewed teaching assistants to ascertain their views on their profession. Limited research has been completed on the views of children with EHC plans (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). There is a need for further research on the perspectives of both teaching assistants and children, as under-theorised practices are adopted as provision and pedagogy for children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). Research in to teaching assistant effectiveness is predominantly characterised by small sample sizes and based on self-reports that focus on perceptions (Sharma & Salend, 2016) and as discussed is an area that is under-researched at present. It would not be appropriate to assume that the findings of this enquiry could translate to better outcomes if adopted in other settings, as the participant teachers, teaching assistants and children will all contribute towards their success or otherwise. This is why the context and phenomena needed exploring, as the boundaries between the two are not clear in contemporary SEND research (Yin, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Qualitative case study would best analyse the impact from the participants' perspectives. I posited that it would be more valuable than a quantitative approach, as research frequently found that settings that were geographically close utilised different approaches to support the children with SEND (Cavendish et al, 2020; Slater & Glazely, 2019; Butt, 2016). Indeed, prior existing knowledge reviewed within an analytical framework, rather than a critical framework, as used in some research (Clarke & Visser, 2019b) seemed an appropriate starting point for research design and will be explored in the *research method* chapter.



#### 4.5.1 Other methodologies considered

The terms *attitude change* and *cultural shift* appear regularly in research around teaching assistant deployment (Cavendish et al, 2020; Slater & Glazely, 2019; Butt, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015).

Collaborative action research is one methodology used in educational research to create change or to identify the potential for change (Messiou, 2019).

Collaborative action research is particularly prominent in the National Award for SEND Coordination, a post-graduate qualification that is a statutory requirement of SENCOs. In this methodology, the researcher is at the centre but I felt that case study methodology allowed my participants to remain central to the research enquiry, and that they deserved this position as the deliverers of the learning interventions.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was considered as one qualitative approach that could meet the aims of the research. This methodology placed reflexivity of the participant as central to understanding phenomena, whilst ensuring the researcher considered the way their search for knowledge impacts on the data generated (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The benefit of this approach is the participants added value to the researcher's interpretation of the area of focus. I had experience utilising this methodology to complete my MA dissertation. Nevertheless, I opted for case study as it better suited the time-limited nature of the change in deployment of the teaching assistants and the unique nature of the change in provision to meet the needs of the current cohort of children.

#### 4.5.2 Researcher positionality

Positionality is the way a researcher is defined by socially significant characteristics, which can be used to view and unpick power dynamics (Maher & Tetreault, 1994). Knowledge and the generation of new knowledge is validated by the inclusion of the 'knowers' specific position and context (Maher & Tetreault, 1993).

By examining my background and my own experiences, I am better able to present my positionality and attempt to avoid preconceived notions influencing the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researcher positionality should be explicitly discussed in qualitative research methodology. This not only addresses

possible bias but also provides the reader with an enhanced understanding of the choice of methods employed (Greene, 2014).

My first consideration was the professional dynamic, created by conducting the research in my school. One view on researcher positionality is to present statements of past experience to help the reader understand how these may shape the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As I am responsible for strategic leadership and outcomes for children with SEND, I am heavily invested in continually improving practice to benefit this group. My personal belief in inclusion and equitable opportunities, including equitable teaching, was presented in my introduction (see: [2.1.1. Introducing myself: the teacher-researcher](#)).

During a period of 3 years working as a teaching assistant (2007-2010), I began acquiring experience and knowledge of approaches to support individual children with SEND. As my role developed, I gained opportunities to work more autonomously with children with Statements of SEND. The knowledge I gained from working as a teaching assistant, and my interpretation of the role, has influenced my epistemology. As a professional and a manager, I value teaching assistants who can work more autonomously, as I have experienced success when given more responsibility and accountability. This is my specific position and context (Maher & Tetreault, 1993). Acknowledging my professional values helps to frame preconceived notions on effective SEND support (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By presenting my professional values, the reader can consider the rigour and credibility of my data collection (Hadi & Closs, 2016).

My positionality as a manager and a researcher, both roles aspiring to more positive outcomes for children's attainment, will have an influence on my data collection. I will be recruiting participants from employees whose performance I review annually. It is important to carefully consider how to ensure these colleagues have agency, and do not feel compelled to participate due to the hierarchical relationship (Manohar, Steiner-Lim, Macmillan & Arora, 2018). I have discussed participant recruitment further in the ethics section (see: [recruiting participants line-managed by the researcher-professional](#)). By reflecting on my positionality, I hope to "*ensure that the participant's voice is heard in the narratives that the researcher shares*" (Greene, 2014: 12). As I have stated, as an experienced and informed professional, I hold strong views on equitable

opportunities and provision for children with and without SEND, and this drives improvement in my setting. This viewpoint will influence my case study.

As a researcher, I also recognised that my role as a manager of the staff who I hoped to recruit could impact both the recruitment of a sample of teaching assistants, and the data they provide (Maher & Tetreault, 1994). Representation, voice and inclusion are the goals of my participant recruitment. Colleagues who are willing to participate may do so with a view to identifying improved approaches to SEND support. I discuss this in more detail in section 5 (see: 5.4.3 Recruiting participants line managed by the researcher-professional). I am conscious that “researchers need to limit their discussion about personal experiences so that they do not override the importance of the content or methods in a study” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 256) and feel that the power dynamics have been carefully considered in my discussion on ethics which will be presented later (see 5.4 Ethics).

#### 4.5.3 Rigour and credibility

Qualitative research is interpretive and makes less use of numerical data (Hadi & Closs, 2016). When conducting a case study, data tends to be generated and analysed by the researcher and can therefore become subject to researcher bias (Hadi & Closs, 2016). As qualitative research can be deemed less scientific, rigour must be upheld by the researcher during the investigation, rather than be judged externally at its completion (Cypress, 2017; Cohen et al, 2018).

Examples of maintaining rigour in this case study can be seen through the interviews, conducted following the processes outlined in my method. Due to my familiarity with some of the participants, discussion could have continued in a less formal manner within the setting. This approach would decrease the rigour of the data collected. To mitigate for research bias during data collection, (Cypress, 2017; Hadi & Closs, 2016) transcripts were reviewed with my supervisory team to conduct thematic analysis, which ensured rigour and validity was being considered throughout the investigation and not only on its completion (Cypress, 2017) (see: [appendix 7: supervisor coding for accuracy and emerging themes](#)).

Professionally, I am seeking to identify strategies that will ultimately improve the attainment outcomes of children with SEND in my setting. As a researcher, it is important to be aware of the limitations of a research project within education.

Research has found that of 900+ meta-analyses conducted across two publications, 95% of teacher claims or policy initiatives were shown to enhance children's' attainment (Hattie, 2012; Hattie, 2009). It is claimed that any sustained focus on an area of education will have a positive impact (Hattie, 2009/2012), so it is important to ascertain rigour and validity before any claims to new knowledge can be made.

In my dual role as a teacher-researcher, I have stated that the purpose of my research is not to provide a definitive way to coordinate SEND provision. The outcomes of my project should enable others to reflect on their provision. Then I believe I will have contributed to SEND discourse in a positive way.

Limitations to the study were recognised, and are evaluated in the results and discussion. As recorded earlier, I am aware that any additional focus placed on the support of children with SEND is likely to have some effect (Hattie, 2009/2012). This case study may see an improvement in outcomes for children with SEND, but may equally highlight under-performance prior to the intervention. To ensure rigour, the method of data collection is reported in the next chapter (Cypress, 2017; Cohen et al, 2018). For the same reason, the ethical considerations required for research within my setting (with participants whose performance I am responsible for, and children whose outcomes I am responsible for) is stated in detail in the research method section.

#### 4.6 Contributing new knowledge and SENCO engagement with research

Researcher-professionals working in SEND may have a larger than expected level of engagement with educational research, due to the requirement that newly appointed SENCOs must complete a post-graduate research certificate<sup>3</sup> to become fully qualified. In comparison, no such qualification is a statutory requirement for any other academic or pastoral leadership role. Course providers must enable SENCOs and perspective SENCOs to:

- Lead, develop and, where necessary, challenge senior leaders, colleagues and governors to meet the statutory needs of children with SEND, and:
- Critically evaluate evidence about learning, teaching and assessment in relation to pupils with SEN to inform practice (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> The National Award for SEND Coordination (NASENCO)

These must be achieved at Masters level. This is important as it could be argued that that the highest contribution to post-graduate level research from teachers working in schools would come from SENCOs and perspective SENCOs. NASEN publish three journals: *British Journal of Special Education*, *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, and *Support for Learning*. Although it is unclear how many of the projects submitted as part of the NASENCO are peer reviewed and published in these or other journals, I would propose that there would be a larger-than-normal audience for SEND- educational research, based on my own experience completing the NASENCO.

From a professional perspective, the Education Endowment Foundation guidance reports *Special Educational Needs In Mainstream Schools* (Davies & Henderson, 2020) and *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants* (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015) are seminal, practice-guiding texts. I caution the importance placed on meta-analysis in current SEND coordination, having taken three years of careful analysis of the model of support I inherited before enacting major change. This was then guided through engagement with research; there are also clear benefits to engaging with these wide-ranging studies of literature. Trends are established, despite the imperfect data sets, that are informative, thought provoking and prompt internal discussion and reflection. This reinforces my preference for qualitative accounts of progress over statistical ones, and supports my adoption of qualitative case study for this research project.

Unlike academic research or scientific study, much work in school is done with imperfect method. Significant numbers of SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants and children participating in research have reported that there is an absence of strong leadership from headteachers on effective educational provision for children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Hattie, 2012). Within the research setting I feel supported by the headteacher; however within the MAT's wider network of SENCOs there have been frequent reports that their voices are not heard. As part of a MAT, the strength of a network-based approach to SEND coordination may contribute to additional rigour of the provision. During the period of study, this was in *addition* to the academical ethical guidelines to which this research must abide.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

The use of case study methodology allowed for: inductive exploration, discovery of patterns, and holistic analysis of rich descriptions of the case (Harrison et al, 2017; Stake, 1995). This methodology emphasises defining and understanding the case through the participants' experiences and constructing new knowledge in a collaborative manner. This approach would best meet the aims and objectives of my enquiry: to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND in my setting. I am not hypothesis-testing and therefore the study will not produce a conceptual model of SEND education or support (Cohen et al, 2018).

Instead, the unique nature of the research is the voice granted to those who may normally have the least opportunity to be heard: the teaching assistants and the children receiving their support. This research will refine my setting's practice with the children as the central tenet of any success criteria.

The generation of rich, qualitative data using interviews would allow me to explore the case. The flexibility to expand the research and to evolve the questioning was important as I recognised that SEND education is not a simple linear process. The acknowledgement of the researcher's impact on data collection was important as this would introduce biases.

This study may expose flaws and omissions from our intervention policy. The participants will be imbued with the opportunity to share their experiences. Knowing my colleagues, they will be excited by this proposal. I approach this research as a reflective practitioner. Representation, voice and inclusion are the goals of my participant recruitment. Sharing theories and conceptualising the role together to benefit the children will underpin the discourse. I am prepared to find that withdrawal interventions have no- or negative- effect on our children with SEND. I am interested in the influence on attainment and progress data but believe that there may be a greater value in the development of children's skills for independence. This could include their capacity for pre-learning, effect on their confidence, their school readiness and willingness to participate, as well as their understanding of their needs.

Case study is prominent in educational research and this field has evolved case study methodology due to its need to evaluate curriculum design and innovation, understand stakeholders' perspectives and explore the impact of socio-political contexts on the relative successes and failures of the topic in focus (Harrison et al, 2017; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). This reasoning encapsulated the aims and objectives of the study.

## 5 Research Method

### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to understand whether the redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND. This aim was explored by providing a voice to participants, to record and evaluate their views on the effectiveness of the intervention programme. Case study methodology was selected to best capture the views of the participants, with interview being used to generate qualitative data. I used document analysis as a tool to ensure that the provision remained within the statutory framework for educating children with SEND, and to enable triangulation between the participants' voices and the policy context.

The primary objective was to strategically analyse the teaching assistants' views of learning intervention at three points in the school year, and correlate their claims with evidence obtained from the children and their teachers.

The literature review explored the differing impact teaching assistants can have on children with SEND, dependant on their deployment (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Sharples et al, 2015). Critical reflection on the setting's progress and attainment data has shown a negative, and widening, gap in outcomes for children sitting their GCSEs (see: [introduction](#)). Some use of numerical progress and attainment data may be seen in the participants' interviews, to aid their descriptions.

### 5.2 Setting and time of study

The research setting was an inner-city all through academy in London. As the SENCO for the secondary phase, the research involved children, teaching assistants and teachers working with children in Key Stage 3 and 4.

The case study was completed in academic year 2019-20. The introduction of a predominantly intervention-based approach to supporting children with SEND began in the summer term of academic year 2018-19, during which a 4-week trial was conducted with children and parents (see: [appendix 8](#)).

Due to Covid-19, the school closed in March 2020, which enforced changes to the programme of research. The impact of the school closure and the global pandemic



will be discussed later. In brief, the collection of interview data from the child-participants was inhibited by the school closure, whilst the collection of interview data from the teaching assistants and teachers continued within the overall schedule of the study.

The writing period of this thesis was completed in 2020-21. This allowed me to consider the ongoing influence of the intervention model on the school's SEND provision, following the completion of the research period.

### 5.3 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to trial the methodology and research tool for effective document analysis.

The examination of these documents was paramount to understanding the statutory framework for the redeployment of teaching assistants. As children with EHC plans (and other children with diagnosed SEND) have statutory provision detailed within their plans, the use of document analysis imbued me with the knowledge to complete the research method within the legal framework.

The pilot study also shaped and narrowed my research question, ultimately leading to the articulation of the question, aims and objectives of my thesis.

#### 5.3.1 Development of document analysis research tool

The role of SENCO has been described as primarily one of bureaucracy and administration. As a researcher-professional, I was required to make a distinction between academic research, for example peer reviewed journals, and grey literature, such as government policies (for example the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the Teachers' Standards). There are an extensive range of artefacts that are categorised as documents. The definition of such articles is that they 'contain text and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention' (Bowen, 2009: 27).

Documents are categorised as public, private, and personal (Mogalakwe, 2006). Public documents were of interest to my case study as the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015), the Ofsted School Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019) and the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013). These documents are vital in providing the research's context. Their examination is central to understanding how I intend

to improve outcomes for children with SEND whilst working within the statutory framework for SEND provision. In the [literature review](#) I justified why these documents were chosen in detail.

As such it was necessary to analyse these documents alongside the academic literature I identified for review, as this would ensure triangulation with the research data was possible. To ensure rigour in the completion of my document analysis, I piloted this research tool prior to submitting my research proposal.

### 5.3.2 Document analysis research pilot

Effective document analysis would allow me to identify pertinent content within swathes of text (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To achieve this, content and thematic analysis were applied to the selected documents identified above. A thematic analysis was then completed to identify pertinent passages to be analysed in greater depth. The emerging themes were used to triangulate data collected from other sources through coding, thus identifying overarching thematic features of the phenomena being studied (Bowen, 2009).

My pilot study asked the following questions of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015):

- What is the role of the teacher, as stated by the Code of Practice 2014?
- What is the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in implementing the Code of Practice 2014?

Thematic coding of the selected passages led to inferential work analysing the text (Bowen, 2009). This led to the identification of very opposing outcomes co-existing within the researcher's professional domain, even when both positions were viewed from the researcher's personal lens. Completing the document analysis research pilot outlined significant socio-political factors that underpin the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

### 5.3.3 Document analysis in this study

The pilot study provided me with a thorough understanding of the SEND Code of Practice from a researcher's lens. Scrutiny was placed on the SEND Code of Practice to answer the pilot's research question. This method was effective and was therefore expanded, to include the following pertinent documents:

- SEND Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015)

- Ofsted School Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019)
- Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013)

The research questions listed above were retained, whilst further search enquires enabled me to review these documents to triangulate my research aims. Alongside the role of the teacher and the SENCO, I asked the following questions of the documents:

- What is the role of the teaching assistant in supporting children with SEND?
- Who is responsible for the attainment of children with SEND?
- How does the progress and attainment of children with SEND impact a school's performance (as measured by Ofsted)?

#### 5.3.4 Document analysis findings

Procedural document analysis enables the development of empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My pilot study concluded that document analysis would be most effective when utilised for triangulation: as a combination of methodologies to study the phenomena. I completed my document analysis in two distinct stages: prior to the completion of the case study, and during the writing stage.

The findings from the first stage of document analysis were included in the literature review and highlighted as grey literature. The definition for grey literature in this thesis was a document containing text recorded without a researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2009: 27), and was limited to publicly available documents from the government website.

The second use of document analysis was to triangulate findings within the results and discussion section. This ensured that the process of redeploying teaching assistants in the setting remained within the statutory framework for supporting children with SEND. In turn, the document analysis ensured that the professional changes reported in this case study adhered to the ethical standards for research.

#### 5.4 Ethics

It is difficult to arrive at a definitive model of best pedagogic practice to support children with SEND, due to the changing trends in cohorts of children, and the non-linear nature in which children learn. 'Best' and better practice within SEND

education is cohort and child specific, and can be worked towards through the Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle (DfE/DoH, 2015). There is evidence to suggest that quality first teaching, and increased direct pedagogic contact with teachers, lead to better outcomes for children with SEND than the traditional deployment of teaching assistants as in-class support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Wearmouth & Butler, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Cullen et al, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015). Testing the underlying assumption that withdrawal interventions will have a greater influence on children with SEND, than the in-class support model, will be difficult to study over the course of one academic year.

Researchers looking to challenge hegemonic discourse ask: what can I do? (Done & Andrews, 2019). I need to ask this question of myself, my department, my colleagues, and the children for whom I am responsible. It may be easier to continue using an increasingly outdated model, than to question. To improve outcomes, progress, attainment, confidence, happiness, and future opportunities, I need to challenge hegemonic practice.

Challenging the status quo requires “thinking differently about inclusion and inclusive education” (Done & Andrews, 2019: 15). It will be necessary, initially, to analyse current practises and their conditions. “Thinking differently” about inclusive practices resonated with me, as I had seen a year-on-year increase in progress outcomes for children with SEND. I believe that the ethical requirements with which academic research is overseen, empowered me to change the provision. In the next section, I will explain how the completion of this case study for my doctoral thesis enhanced the ethical considerations made during a period of professional change in my setting.

#### 5.4.1 My view on control groups in educational research

From professional experience, I concluded that it is unethical to use control groups when implementing changes in education provision. I believe that designing control groups is discriminatory against disability. The data I present in this case study will be a qualitative account from the participants’ perspectives. A sudden change in our SEND cohort demographic could result in my provision reverting to the previous model of deployment, out of necessity. It is the role of the SENCO to ensure reasonable adjustments are made for each child with SEND. It is not the children’s responsibility to fit in to my model of SEND support. This knowledge grounds my approach to ethical research.

Other researchers may feel that control groups are applicable to educational research. Hattie (2012) notes that there are two methods to record the effect size of an intervention: either through comparison with a control group, for example giving one group of children homework and another group no homework, or through comparisons over time, for example using baseline tests and testing again weeks or months later. Control groups do not fit comfortably within this research, as I do not believe they are ethically viable in special needs research. Time in school is finite and every child's education matters; given the emerging research that promoted the effectiveness of an intervention-based approach to SEND support (Cullen et al, 2019), it would not be fair to retain children in the previous model to monitor and compare the impact for the benefit of my research.

#### 5.4.2 British Education Research Association (2018) guidelines

The British Education Research Association (2018) applied to this case study. Children with SEND are under-represented in academic research (Riitaoja et al, 2020; Cavendish et al, 2020; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Poulou & Norwich, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). Research should avoid tokenistic involvement of children with SEND (Messiou, 2019), a view which further justified conducting the case study within my own setting.

Within the professional domain there is an expectation that children will be regularly given the opportunity to feedback on their support; this takes place three times per year in-line with the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). It is not unusual to seek the views of the children, as part of the Assess-Plan-Do-Review process (called the Graduated Response) (DfE/DoH, 2015). However, child-participation should be tempered by the ethical considerations that centre on whether parents have disclosed diagnoses (as per parental preference), and due to the lower cognitive and communicative ability of some of the children with SEND, whether their participation would place undue stress on them regardless of their willingness to participate. Prior knowledge of the children approached to participate enabled me to ensure that diagnoses were disclosed by parents, and their familiarity with their role as a contributor to parent-SENCO meetings.

The involvement of children with SEND in the study was considered by the St Mary's University sub-committee for ethical approval, through the application for ethical approval form (see: [appendix 2](#)). The research was therefore aligned with

the university's ethics committee and the British Education Research Association (2018) guidelines.

The research was first approved by the gatekeeper of the school, the head teacher (see: [appendix 3](#)). Following this, the application was processed by St Mary's University sub-committee.

Child participants required parental consent to participate. This was requested through telephone call, which included a detailed overview of the proposed research and specifics such as: the number of interviews their child would participate in (maximum 4), the length of time the interviews would take (maximum 20 minutes), and most importantly that should the child or the parent wish to withdraw from the research process at any time, there would be no negative consequences on our professional relationship. Following each phone call a summary letter was emailed to each parent as a .pdf file alongside a reminder within the body of the email that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time (see: [appendix 4](#)).

Once parental permission was acquired, the children were asked if they would like to participate in the study. During this initial conversation it was discussed that there would not be any negative outcome should they not wish to participate. The children's agency in making this choice was considered.

It is important to acknowledge that power dynamics affect relationships and can be manifested in various forms, such as gender, age and level of education (Manohar et al, 2018; van der Riet & Grant, 2009). The potential child-participants could have a significant cognitive impairment, social, emotional, and mental health need, or communication needs. These factors created a clear issue around consent, and the children's possible role as participants in this study. By recognising the existence of the power dynamic between the researcher and the children, I attempted to reduce the possible impact on recruitment through the purposive sampling of the children (see: [5.6 Sampling](#) for more detail). I approached children and parents who had a pre-existing and positive professional relationship, to attempt to address the power dynamic. As with the recruitment of teaching assistants (see: [5.4.3](#)), I feel justified that I acted ethically as demonstrated by

some children and parents who did not wish to participate. The children were asked to sign consent forms (see: [appendix 5](#)) which were kept as hard copies.

#### 5.4.3 Recruiting participants line managed by the researcher-professional

The power dynamic in the recruitment of teaching assistants was also considered ethical. I directly line manage this group. Line management includes annual performance reviews, which are part of the school's formal processes and can inform employee's pay increases. Manohar et al (2018) state that hierarchical relationships can cause conflict during participant recruitment. I am confident that this was addressed through the voluntary recruitment procedure I incorporated, as several colleagues chose not to participate. To negate bias, the entire department were invited to participate (see: [appendix 6](#)), despite having identified that 5 teaching assistants would allow for saturation.

I ruled out identifying an alternate research setting. Research conducted within the professional domain benefits from the same environment, where deep and pre-existing links with participants to be drawn on and reflecting the daily lived experience of those involved (Clarke & Visser, 2019b). Both the research and the participants will have preconceived expectations about what they may contribute to the research process, with participants expecting to have their interests protected (Manohar et al, 2018). The existing professional relationships were initially recognised as both a strength and limitation. Participants may have been less inhibited in their feedback in their own professional context. I found that this openness and criticality was maintained during interviews. I concluded that I established an honest and trusting forum for feedback on the redeployment of teaching assistants, which was reinforced during the writing stage (where contact with participants continued in the professional contact). I do not believe that their knowledge of my ongoing study of the interventions negatively affected their performance in delivering these, and in the results and discussion section critical feedback has been captured.

Pre-existing relationships and the professional nature of the research, including disclosing my own views as part of the interview process, was an important element of the case study (Clarke & Visser, 2019b). We shared lived experiences each day with the aim of improving the provision for the children with SEND. These experiences crossed the spectrum of manager-employee relationship, but with a shared goal of informing and collaborating on new and potentially better



practice for the children. I am indebted to the teaching assistant participants for their perceived honesty and integrity throughout the process. I believe I was able to

*“[strike] the balance between recognising one’s own influence and the bias this brings and not, either being too paralysed by impact of this influence to act or, making the research too personal is challenging” (Clarke & Visser, 2019b: 464).*

Avoiding paralysis in the data collection process was simpler when all parties were motivated to improve the support provided to children with SEND.

Concerns around existing power relations and their influence on the research process were considered, but also justified by the response of participants (i.e. the willingness of some staff to not participate). I had managed many of the teaching assistants for 3 years, and the focus on improving provision to the benefit of the children underpinned all facets of the research. The commitment to improving provision in the school had been the case before the research period, for example in the 2018 trial of learning interventions. The trial period conducted in the summer term had also been a collaborative process, which needed the feedback of all participants to guide improvement (see: [appendix 8](#)). Those teaching assistants who chose not to participate in the study were not, in my professional view, any less committed to improving the outcomes of children with SEND.

Due to my existing knowledge of the school, and established relationships with the staff, I concluded that case study methodology was the optimum approach to researching the redeployment of teaching assistants. My case study was a collaborative project in the professional domain. The added rigour of the academic research was essential in enshrining the participants’ views and experiences with an additional layer of ethical consideration.

Recruiting teachers to participate in the study meant closely examining their teaching practice. In the second half of the research period, it became apparent that the voices of further participants would add rigour to the outcomes.

I have described how SENCOs are working within a system designed to categorise children within a deficit model, which is reinforced through individualisation of teacher performance (Done & Andrews, 2019). The purposive sample in the second period of recruitment focused on the teachers of the child-participants. Coincidentally, this group were all in their first-year teaching in the



research setting. Each teacher was also in the early stages of their teaching career, one an ITT and the other two NQT+1's<sup>4</sup>. The teachers' participation was sought through an introductory email followed by an initial discussion on the purpose of the research. Concerns that the teachers' performance would be individualised proved unfounded, as the discussion felt collaborative and reflective, rather than through a lens of accountability (Done & Andrews, 2019). Throughout the process the children remained central. This was apparent through the interview data, and through the professional relationships fostered throughout the year.

#### 5.4.4 Ensuring anonymity

The following processes were outlined in the ethics proposal to ensure anonymity:

- The school would be anonymised as an inner-London school.
- Participants would be anonymised using acronyms, for example TA-01, CH-01 (child), etc.
  - Due to the purposive sampling of the children, and of their unique special needs diagnoses, an additional review of interview transcripts would ascertain if they would be identifiable. This would primarily be required in the overview of results being provided to the gatekeeper on completion of the project.
- Participants' audio files were deleted after transcription. This ensured that the audio files were only stored on the secure device and were normally transcribed in a timely manner. They could not fall into the public domain. The device was secure because it had no internet connectivity (Cohen et al, 2018).
- All files pertaining to this research, including draft results and discussion sections and any documents engaging with the data, were stored offline on a hard drive. They could not fall into the public domain (Cohen et al, 2018).

These proposals were accepted by the university sub-committee for ethical approval (see: [appendix 2](#)) and executed throughout the period of study.

#### 5.4.5 Summary of ethical considerations and processes

To summarise, the ethical considerations of this research project were:

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<sup>4</sup> Now ECT(2)

- I believed the intervention would positively affect the children based on existing research (see: [section 3.7.1](#)).
  - No use of control groups to test this theory.
- Power dynamics were scrutinised and that no child or parent felt pressurised in to participating in the study.
  - Evidenced by children declining to participate.
- Pre-existing professional relationships with the teaching assistants were acknowledged in the proposal and acknowledged in the discussion.
- Withdrawal intervention model would be judged on its ability to meet the needs of the children, and not vice-versa.
- The process would not be used to assess teacher or teaching assistant performance in any formal capacity.

### 5.5 Audit trail

The next section of my research method chapter will provide the reader with an audit trail. An effective audit trail enables the reader to understand decisions taken during the study, where the reader could conceivably reach the same conclusions, or to not reach contradictory conclusions (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). I will summarise the decisions and choices made through the research period, regarding theoretical and methodological issues on sampling, recruitment, data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis, aiming to provide clear rationale for these decisions taken at each stage (Nowell et al, 2017).

The audit trail details the interruption to data collection caused by covid-19.

### 5.6 Sampling

Specific types of participant were required to achieve the aims of my case study. I required teaching assistants, children with SEND and teachers to triangulate my planned initial areas of interest. Understanding the teaching assistants' occupational experience was a prerequisite to enhancing the experiences of both the teaching assistant and the children with SEND. The research enquiry sought meaningful reflections on present and future inclusion (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). To achieve the research aims required a purposive sample (Cohen et al, 2018).

In the literature review I detailed how SEND designation differs from school to school (see: [3.5.1 the characteristics of a child with SEND](#)). To later draw a

conclusion from the case study, I decided on an inclusion/exclusion criteria for child-participants.

- Children would be in Year 8 or older at the beginning of the study, to enable comparative discussion.
- Children would have an Education, Health and Care plan or/and a diagnosed special educational need, as this would ensure that throughout settings these children would be recorded on the SEND register.
- The sample would, if attainable, be representative of the spectrum of needs throughout the school.

Full, informed consent was sought by all participants aged 18+ whilst parental permission alongside the agreed consent from child participants was attained in writing, as stated in the ethics section. The rationale for participants to have an EHC Plan or a diagnosed need was that, regardless of setting, they would be designated to the SEND register. Using a purposive sample in this way would enable readers' reflection and comparison with students in their own settings.

Purposive sampling lent itself to small sample sizes and allowed for the use of semi-structured interviews. Similar research saw interviews last between 20-60 minutes (Cavendish et al, 2020; Syrnyk, 2018). I anticipated that 20 minutes would be the upper limit for an effective semi-structured interview with the child-participants, whilst interviews ranging from 20-60 minutes was appropriate for the adult-participants. Using a purposive sample allowed me to ensure that a range of special needs diagnoses were represented in the outcomes. Conducting the interviews myself meant I had the required knowledge of individual participants to adapt questions to ensure they were accessible for the children.

#### 5.6.1 Recruitment of initial participants

The literature review showed that teaching assistants and children are under-represented in research on their support (Riitaoja et al, 2020; Roffey-Barensten, 2014). My professional experience and the knowledge gained from the literature review led me conclude that educational research should represent all those involved; school leaders, teachers, children, parents, and support staff (Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). If researchers recognise the importance of the voice of the teachers, research in to SEND support should likewise place more importance on the voice of the teaching assistants (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). As

the research aim was to improve outcomes for children with SEND, it was also important that they participated in my case study.

#### *5.6.1.1 Children with SEND*

The sample of four children participants (all from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds) were:

- A Year 8 child with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.
- A Year 8 child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- A Year 9 child with a Visual Impairment (VI) and an EHC plan.
- A Year 9 child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and an EHC plan.

#### *5.6.1.2 Teaching assistants*

Subsequently, the teaching assistants and assistant SENCO were invited to participate in the study. From the department, all the female teaching assistants (6) and assistant SENCO (1) elected to participate whilst none of the male staff (3) chose to participate. The unwillingness of staff to participate was unexpected but justified my effort to address the power dynamic with staff I line manage. The gender divide was noteworthy. National large-scale data in the UK shows that adult men aged 18-34 are the group least likely to interact with people with SEND; and more likely to hold negative attitudes towards them (Hutzler, Meier, Reuker & Zitomer, 2019). This information is reflective of the teaching assistants within the research setting, where the participants in the study were entirely female, whilst the male non-participants were in the 18-34 age range. It was interesting that the male teaching assistants elected not to participate in the research (a possible topic for further research). The non-participation of this group in my case study did not exclude them from re-deployment, or feedback given in the professional context. The male teaching assistants completed the same work as the female participant-teaching-assistants in all other aspects of their role.

#### *5.6.1.3 Teachers*

The final group of participants recruited for the research were the teachers. This would ensure my ability to triangulate the data from the three major stakeholders. Figure 5.1, below, is taken from my initial research proposal and illustrates the triangulation process. Absence of children's voice in SEND research is a frequent finding (see: Riitaoja et al, 2020; Cavendish et al, 2020; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019;

Messiou, 2017). Equal voice was to be given to each group of participants to demonstrate the impact of the intervention model:

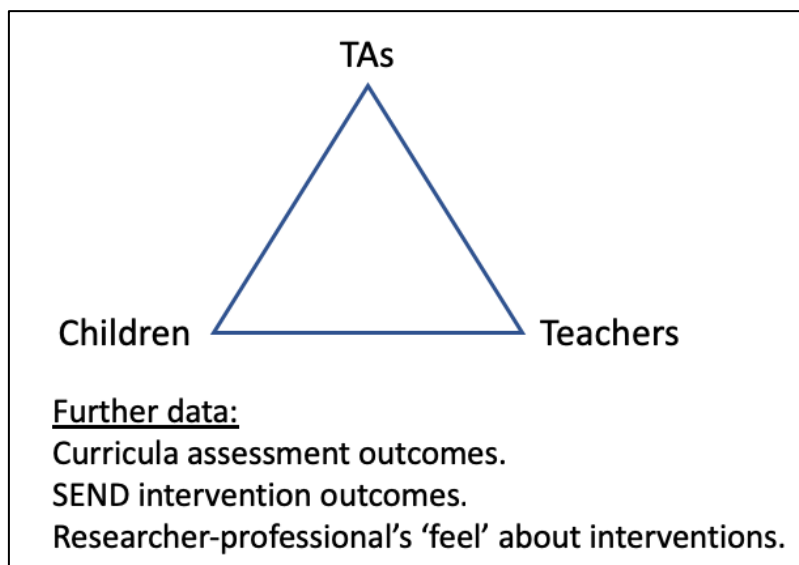


Figure 5.1: Triangulation of data (adapted from Hall, 2005 in Cohen et al, 2018).

One prominent issue highlighted with the context of the setting had been the turnover of staff in the setting. Over the previous three academic years this had ranged between 24-33% of teaching staff. My conceptual framework for data collection needed to adjust based on the new teaching allocations for the academic year. I had hoped that the purposive sample of teaching assistants and children, would inform the recruitment of teacher-participants (see Figure 5.2):

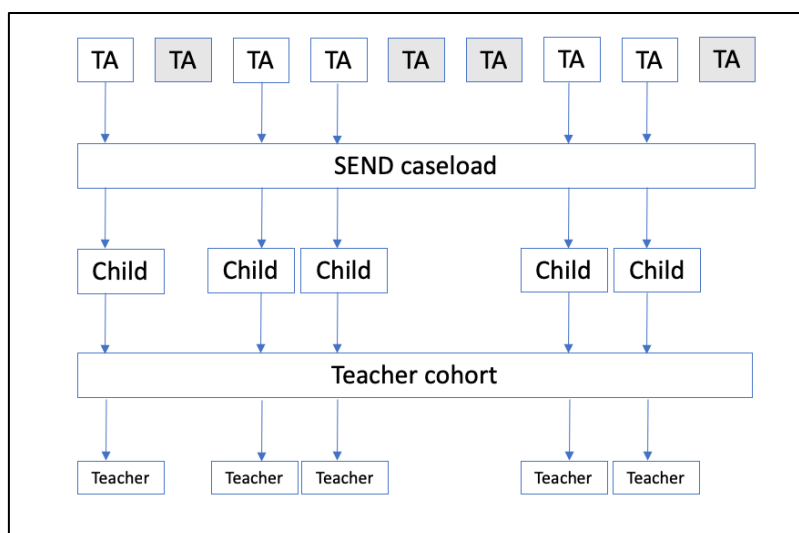


Figure 5.2: Intended approach to purposive sample (from research proposal)

However, it became clear once the children had been identified, that this method of identifying teachers to invite to participate would not work as either (a) their teachers had left, (b) they were still working in the school, but not teaching the classes the children were in, or (c) they continued to teach those classes but the

child had moved up or down out of that set. Instead, teacher-participants were set in to two categories:

- Teachers from the previous year (2), who could provide context of the child’s need/needs, and a starting point for the child’s progress or regression in the intervention approach.
- Teachers from the current academic year (3), who could describe the influence that the intervention work was having on both the child-participants, and the children with SEND, in their lessons.

I found that this approach to recruitment met the needs for triangulation detailed in Figure 5.1. As the case study progressed, the emergent themes required verification or examination by other teachers, who were approached to participate in my research.

#### 5.6.2 Recruitment of subsequent participants

Finally, as the first two rounds of interviews were completed, and my own professional reflections became centred on low literacy, I invited the Assistant Principal who oversaw literacy to participate in the study. This was a form of convenience sampling (although the discussion will show this was more like a necessity than a convenience). A colleague progressing towards becoming a SENCO had a strong interest in the case study, and I invited their feedback and involvement in the research. Participants in the research were recorded as:

CH-01	CH-02	CH-03	CH-04			
TA-01	TA-02	TA-03	TA-04	TA-05	TA-06	
AS-01	(Assistant SENCO)					
TE-01	TE-02	TE-03 (Prospective SENCO)		TE-04	TE-05	TE-06
AP-01	Assistant Principal					

Table 5.1: Participants in research

Therefore, the proposed sampling from my research proposal (see: Figure 5.2) evolved to become two-fold. Figure 5.3 displays the purposive sample of teachers and teaching assistants working directly with the children who participated in the research:

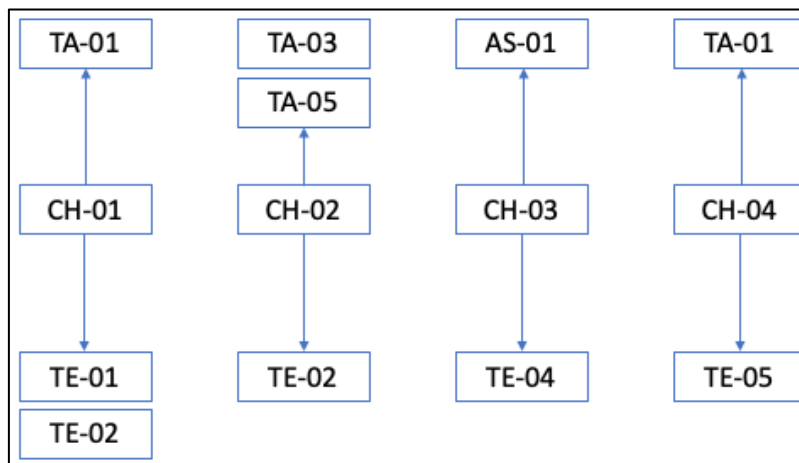


Figure 5.3: Adults working directly with children participating in research

And below, Figure 5.4 displays how adults participating in the research were working more generally with children with SEND, including the Assistant Principal with responsibility for literacy and the teacher who identified themselves as a perspective SENCO:

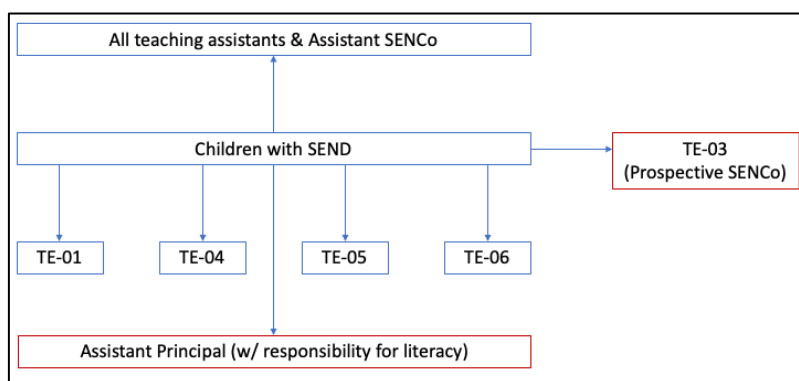


Figure 5.4: Adults working with children with SEND

### 5.7 Data Collection

Interviews were used to collect qualitative data for the case study. Semi-structured interviews were used (Cohen et al, 2018) to ensure that under-represented voices were present, and that these groups (children and teaching assistants) contributed to the area of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews have been used broadly in research, and offer flexibility and consistency to allow participants to explore their lived experiences (Guihen, 2019). The design of semi-structured interview questions is detailed later in this section.

My qualitative research study used 1:1 interviews with teaching assistants and Assistant SENCO (n= 6), children with SEND (n = 4) and teachers (n = 2) as a baseline, to gather views at the start of the study. As the research expanded, additional views were sought from teachers (n = 3), a colleague who was a prospective SENCO (n = 1) and school leadership (Assistant Principal) (n = 1).

One teaching assistant joined the department, and the research, in October 2019. Another went on maternity leave in March. Collection of interview data proceeded throughout the research period, ending at the end of the academic year (July 2020).

Interviews were conducted in person, at three points in the school year. The plan had been to complete four interviews. Figure 5.5 shows that this was impacted by (a) my reduced work commitments for 5 weeks in the autumn term due to a ruptured disc in my neck, and (b) Covid-19 enforced school-closure:

Proposed interview schedule:			
Baseline (Sept/Oct)	End of AUT term (Dec)	End of SPR term (Mar)	End of SUM term (June/July)
Children ✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching assistants ✓	✓	✓	✓
Teachers ✓		✓	✓

Adjusted interview schedule:			
Baseline (Sept/Oct)	End of AUT term (Dec)	End of SPR term (Mar)	End of SUM term (June/July)
Children ✓	x	x	x
Teaching assistants ✓	✓	x	✓
Teachers ✓		✓	✓

Figure 5.5: Proposed and completed interview schedule

The first national school closure due to Covid-19 (March 2020) had repercussions on the research outcomes. The children’s contributions to the triangulation process at the end of the research period are absent. The teaching assistants and teachers are well represented and in their cases the quality and quantity of the qualitative data exceeded my expectations. There was substantial variability in the length of the interviews as a result of participant’s roles, seniority, and experience. This variability was also seen in the qualitative design utilised by Hanley et al (2020), with similar results whereby data collection was lengthier when participants had more experience in the phenomena being studied. The teaching assistants’ preliminary interviews took place prior to the start of term, and therefore at the end of the year the final interviews were lengthier and more comprehensive following the completion of the period of study and their increased understanding of learning interventions.

### 5.7.1 Establishing trustworthiness of the human instrument

Using case study methodology required me to establish whether my data was credible (see [section 4.5.3: Rigour and credibility](#)). Credible data was essential to make accurate conclusions on my research question (Stahl & King, 2020). As the



sole interviewer, I had to establish trustworthiness of myself. The process of establishing trustworthiness of the human instrument can be compared to the calibration of a scientific instrument, before an experiment (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). For this reason, semi-structured interview questions were generated to guide initial interviews. Before each stage of follow-up interview, the semi-structured interview questions were refined based on the emerging trends being identified. These questions, once generated, were shared with the supervisory team.

Trustworthiness is more difficult to establish in qualitative data sets, as these tend to be generated and analysed by the researcher, and can therefore become subject to researcher bias (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is vital that rigour is upheld by the researcher throughout the investigation (Cypress, 2017; Cohen et al, 2018), so that data can be accepted.

Triangulation and peer review are two strategies available to the qualitative researcher to ensure credibility (Stahl & King, 2020; Pitney, 2004). Larger studies have achieved credibility through quality-assurance, via checking transcripts completed by more than one researcher at the transcription and coding stages. As a lone researcher, in my data collection process, I relied on my own engagement with the audio files and the job of manually transcribing them to ensure accuracy (Cavendish et al, 2020). These transcripts were provided to my supervisory team at points throughout the research period, who studied these for accuracy and emerging themes (see: [appendix 7: Supervisor coding for accuracy and emerging themes](#)).

Sharing transcripts, and the process of supervision, is shown to establish trustworthiness of the researcher's findings, being similar in nature to the review of an academic paper (Stahl & King, 2020). It is thought that:

*“Awareness that the work and the products from the work are to be inspected by a peer would cause the researcher to be careful with what is recorded as fact and what is set aside as researchers' interpretive comments about the data”* (Stahl & King, 2020: 27)

The process of supervision throughout the research and writing phases increased the rigour of the study. The supervisory team supported me in establishing that the data was trustworthy, by collaborating to verify emergent themes, through shared analysis of transcripts.

Triangulation between interviewees' transcripts also established their trustworthiness. The benefit of completing a professional doctorate was my immersion within the research setting (Guihen, 2019; Maher, 2018). To highlight this point, the redeployment of teaching assistants in my setting could have proceeded without a doctoral study. Conducting research, triangulating emerging themes between transcripts, and reflecting on my own experiences established credible data.

### 5.7.2 Transcription processes and identifying emergent themes

I transcribed the interviews and immediately begin highlighting emerging themes for academic purposes. The role of researcher-as-transcriber ensured that the interventions remained fit for purpose throughout the school year, which was a professional responsibility, as well as a research necessity. Alongside my academic interest in the outcomes, I was acutely aware that my responsibility to the children was to ensure they continued to benefit from the support being delivered, and this underpinned my application to the ethics board. This process continually reinforced my selection of case study methodology as the most appropriate methodology to achieving my research aims.

Manually typing the transcriptions enabled me to have a secure, professional knowledge of the impact redeploying the teaching assistant was having on the children. Transcription happened in a timely fashion, per my ethical application to conduct research. I believe that credibility was also aided by my existing relationships with the participants. This meant that I did not have to account for different accents or slang terms. When transcribing the interviews, I recorded the spoken aspect of the conversations. I did not record the emotions, other than noting when laughter interrupted the conversation. I used the comma sign to indicate a breath pause, and the ellipses to show a longer pause. When either of us interrupted the other, this was noted using the hyphen (see figure 5.6).

■: I don't think me personally, I wasn't very reliant on the direction, I think its really important to build a relationship at the start of the year, or even catch up with each other every term or so, so you know where you are needed most, sometimes I think its important to follow the teachers lead, but I think we know the students in a different way and I think its important when you have that relationship that you can feed that back to the teacher, so again for example my year 8's had a great relationship with ■■■■■ and I could say to her "well miss I think I should work with this pocket of students in this way" and she was happy for me to do that –

SED: -and how effective do you think that approach was?

■: very effective because you don't get a group of student because you don't get a group of students coming to English – because I worked in English – and having never achieved anything, because it's demotivating, you don't want to be able to come to school and just sit there for 55 minutes, never put your hand up because you don't understand, so I think it builds confidence, it encourages them to participate in the lesson and I think they've got something to show at the end of it, and also the back end of that is that when it comes to their assessments, even though I would be supporting the students whether it be writing, scribing or prompting, they are able to give me an answer that I can write down, so I think its really important.

SED: and was there anything you could measure that effectiveness with?

Figure 5.6: Sample of transcribed interview in MS Word, including punctuation used to demonstrate pauses and interruptions

These transcriptions enable me to reflect and refine my areas of enquiry, which will be discussed below.

### 5.7.3 Refining interview question design

I transcribed the interview data shortly after each interview was completed. This immediate reflection on the data informed the questions in the following round of interviews. The questioning became less conceptual, and more process driven. In the first round of interviews, the participants were asked:

Topic discussion: **How do you understand the changes to the provisions for SEND children?**

Specific possible questions:

- How do you anticipate these changes affecting the children? (*> what measures could you base this claim on?*)
- How do you feel this will affect you as a professional?

Figure 5.7: Semi-structured interview questions 1

These questions were conceptual and designed to ascertain the participants' understanding of the intervention model. This enabled me to identify a baseline to understand how the teaching assistant's delivery and engagement grew during the study. After the teaching assistants completed their first term of intervention work, these conceptual questions, *such as how will these changes affect the children? could be addressed through directed questions:*

Topic discussion: **How are you finding the experience of delivering the interventions?**

Specific possible questions:

- What do you think the intervention approach offers our children?
- How are you monitoring the impact of the intervention?
- How have you received feedback?

Figure 5.8: Semi-structured interview questions 2

The second and further rounds of interviews were more specific. This enabled me to focus my questions on certain types of intervention, or certain children receiving support. The evolution of the planned questions using the semi-structured approach was reflective of the needs of the individual children, as well as the developing skillsets of the teaching assistants who were delivering the interventions:

Topic discussion: **How do you understand the changes to the provisions for SEND children?**  
Specific possible questions:  
**Regarding the year:**

- On reflection how has the transition from mainly in-class support to mainly intervention-based work affected the children?
- If you feel it has been better, and what evidence can you suggest that supports that feeling?

**Regarding the interventions:**

- What makes the intervention successful?
- Have you been able to interact with the teachers to gather feedback on the interventions?
- Do you think you have had a clear understanding of why each child received the intervention that I've asked you to deliver?

**Regarding professional development:**

- How has the change from in-class to intervention with the deployment of the LSAs this year helped you develop as a professional?
- Do you think that time that we've gained professionally [due to the school closure] has helped make next year's interventions even more successful?

Figure 5.9: Semi-structured interview questions 3

The continual review of the interview data through transcribing and being immersed within the data enabled further recruitment of teachers to triangulate the findings, and provide further validity to the claims. As increased interview time became focused on literacy, low literacy, illiteracy and their effect on the children, the link to the English department was evident. The final round of interviews was successful in capturing the effect the interventions had on the children's progress in English, through this refinement-identification-recruitment approach described above. Three English teachers were interviewed in the same semi-structured style:

Topic discussion: **What are the children in your class gaining from completing literacy interventions?**

Specific possible questions:

- Are you aware of who the children are and what they are doing?
- Have you seen the children's soft-skills develop in lessons?
- How have you received feedback from the LSA delivering the intervention?

Figure 5.9: Semi-structured interview questions for English teachers

As the year progressed, the nuances of the redeployment of staff and the roles of the participants in the research, also necessitated different pre-planned questions and areas of inquiry for the semi-structured interviews. I believe the benefit of using case study methodology was the inherent flexibility to respond to different emerging themes, to better understand the phenomena, as opposed to proving or disproving a set theory (Ormston et al, 2014).

Using a constructivist paradigm allowed for co-construction of new knowledge and exploration of the differing experiences of the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003/2009). For example, the Assistant SENCO had completed their own interventions for children with dyslexia, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, but equally their time was spent managing the department alongside me. I concluded that the Assistant SENCO was well placed to give an overarching view of the intervention model. Semi-structured interviewing allowed flexibility. Questions planned for their interview returned to the conceptual tone that had framed the initial baseline questions:

Topic discussion: **How has the transition to in-class support gone throughout the year?**  
 Specific possible questions:

**Regarding staff:**

- Thinking about the staff who've been delivering interventions, have you seen a capacity to work with that independence across the team?
- Do you view that as a success of their capacity to work independently?

**Regarding children:**

- Did you have a sense that attainment and progress was going to be positively affected or was that too short a time to talk about the children's grades [due to the school closure]?
- Has there always been clear rationale for them to be on your interventions?

**Regarding the interventions:**

- If you were to improve the interventions how would you go about doing that?
- At a more conceptual level what do you think makes a successful intervention?

Figure 5.11: Semi-structured interview questions for Assistant SENCO

Different teaching assistants began to specialise in the delivery of certain interventions. Whilst the predominant need was for their delivery of literacy intervention, one teaching assistant began delivering Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) support and therefore we spoke in detail about that. Another teaching assistant planned an attention development programme for children with ADHD. The semi-structured question approach enabled broad themes to be maintained throughout the interviews whilst providing a level of specificity and additional detail which highlighted the work being completed at an individual level. Semi-structured interviews generated rich qualitative data (Ormston et al, 2014) and supported my secondary aim, to provide a voice to support staff, who were under-represented in SEND research.

#### 5.7.4 Alternate methods considered for data collection

Other approaches to data collection were considered during the planning phase.

##### 5.7.4.1 Saturation

Studies claiming to provide TAs and SENCOs with a voice utilised an approach of interviewing until saturation was achieved (Maher, 2018); a concept where the researcher decides where additional interviews would yield little additional information, and the line of enquiry becomes saturated by the available data

(Maher, 2018). I did not feel that this approach was appropriate to my SEND research, given the complexities and unique experiences both the children and the teaching assistants could present. Research has already been shown to under-represent children with SEND and teaching assistants in SEND research (Riitaoja et al, 2020; Cavendish et al, 2020; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Messiou, 2017). The saturation approach seemed disingenuous to the participants and suggested that the researcher may be able to predict where new divergent themes may and may not appear. I decided against adopting this approach when working with children with SEND, as in my experience no two children, nor days, are the same.

#### *5.7.4.2 Observation*

Researchers recognise that shortcomings in data collection included time restraints, for example where models were designed based on one-off observations (Slater & Gazeley, 2019). I decided against observation as part of the academic process as it was not feasible to include this form of data collection alongside my professional responsibilities.

Teaching assistants were observed delivering learning interventions as part of their continuing professional development, but this remained aligned to the daily responsibilities of their role. Where appropriate, the teaching assistants discussed these observations in their interviews. My decision was underpinned by my ethical approach to the case study and my dual role as researcher-professional. I was unwilling to disrupt the interventions' delivery by introducing more formal observational procedures that could disrupt the staff or children, despite my interest from a research perspective (Guihen, 2019).

Alongside my desire for authentic, unhindered delivery of the learning interventions for both the teaching assistants and the children, I had to consider my role as a member of the Senior Team on children with low-cognitive profiles and the impact my presence would have had on the observation data. As I am frequently required to discipline the children where expectations have not been met, there were children receiving intervention who could have been negatively impacted by my presence in the room. I recognise that there is a power imbalance between some children with SEND and their perceived relationship with adults (myself) and sought to avoid any negative impact on their learning.



#### 5.7.4.3 Profiling

Large studies often collect socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, and ethnicity. For example, the EEF guidance report *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* (Davies & Henderson, 2020) synthesises 102 peer-reviewed sources from the period 2000-2019. Some of these underlying reviews combine to create large data sources with socio-demographic characteristics. In educational research, highest qualification and years working in schools have also been considered pertinent to protected characteristics (Egan, Gage, Williams, Brands, Györei, López-Robles, Campoy, Decsi, Koletzko & Raats, 2019).

Similar demographic information was collected in small SEND case studies of teaching assistants (Syrnyk, 2018), including time within setting and number of years of experience working with children with SEND, which added further context to their study. As the case study was conducted within my professional domain, I had access to this information through existing relationships with my colleagues and the children. This was primary first-hand knowledge, but where I refer to cohorts in the discussion section, I was able to access this information through the school's universal data system.

However, through the course of my data review, I did not focus on the race of any individual involved in the study. During the media coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests I questioned whether to include race and ethnicity discourse in the final round of interviews, but felt this was disingenuous and tokenistic.

#### 5.7.4.4 Questionnaires

In addition to deciding against the collection of socio-demographic characteristics, I also decided against the use of questionnaires more broadly. I felt my professional relationship with the teaching assistants and children nullified the need to use these. Despite interviews being more frequently used with smaller samples following questionnaires (Clarke & Visser, 2019a), I felt that being so embedded in the school's SEND provision, working and researching alongside experienced teaching assistants, that there was little to be gained from an initial questionnaire. It is suggested that:

*“via surveys and interviews, TAs, students with and without disabilities, and educators can share their perceptions of the policies and practices implemented, identify successful and unsuccessful aspects and make suggestions for improving them”* (Sharma & Salend, 2016; 126)



I felt vindicated in the decision not to conduct surveys or questionnaires during the research, as the quality of the qualitative data has shown.

#### 5.7.5 Confirmation bias

Confirmation bias from prior experience had been acknowledged (Cavendish et al, 2020) through my discussion on power dynamics, and in my ethical statement and ethics application. In the setting, a trial period had already ascertained that the intervention model of support could better support the needs of the children with SEND. The trial period had been completed with feedback provided to the head teacher, school SEND governor and the children's parents. As a demonstration of the absence of confirmation bias, it would have been possible for the participants' feedback to instruct a reversion to the previous model of support. Were it necessary to revert to the previous model of deployment, this would have affected my research proposal.

School-based research should ensure that the data collection process is as convenient as possible for the participants (Guihen, 2019). Interviews with teachers were conducted around free periods or where time would be willingly volunteered; interviews with teaching assistants took place during time assigned to line management, interviews took place on a Parent-Tutor day (December) and on staff inset days (June and July), and this was justified as their views informed the professional work we were completing. The interviews with the children took place during lesson times, but with sufficient care to ensure that their learning was not disrupted. The process included my presence in ensuring they settled back into their lessons, once returned. As noted above, the interviews with the children did not continue during the school closure.

#### 5.8 Impact of Covid-19 on data collection

During the school closure I avoided the use of video-calling or similar technology to continue the study with the children. I did not believe that the children's continued involvement in my research outweighed their need for an approximation of normality whilst they remained at home. This caused disruption to the data collection schedule. I did not feel comfortable pursuing their thoughts on SEND support when intervention was not being delivered to them. The 2019-20 lockdown from March resulted in the children not attending any further interviews during the research period.

The interviews with adults continued as planned; face-to-face but implementing social distancing. The school closure allowed for lengthier interviews with less time constraints or pressures. The case study generated richer data for this, allowing for longer and more reflective interviews (Guihen, 2019). I saw that the staff's professional development benefited from the school closure. The time without children onsite allowed the teaching assistants to reflect on the learning interventions and refine the provision. The teaching assistants discuss this in their interviews. The professional time gained allowed collaboration with teachers, as intervention schemes and resources were adapted ready for the return of the children. The increased opportunity for collaboration, and the perception of support staff as equal partners in the education of children with SEND, is an emerging trend in research (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020). The participants demonstrate reflexive thinking on their performance which may be powerful, due to the break in schooling.

### 5.9 Data analysis

Small-scale qualitative questionnaire outcomes are presented as descriptive statistics in several SEND-specific research articles and guidance reports (see notably: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Wearmouth & Butler, 2020; Sharples et al, 2016). I was cautious about this approach as the lay person can misinterpret these data sets. Often schools are limited to one designated SEND expert to interpret these types of report or guidance document. Even with these experts in mind, presenting small-scale data sets in statistical forms, such as percentages, can be misleading.

SENCOs are the professionals I believe are most likely to be actively engaging with these outcomes (as newly appointed SENCOs must complete their NASENCO post-graduated qualification). Findings from small numbers of participants in qualitative research may not be representative of the needs or experiences of stakeholders in SEND education. I believe that case study methodology retained the integrity of the research, without causing the lay reader to misinterpret the findings, regardless of whether these were positive or negative. Statistics can often be used to convey cause and effect trends, which are not appropriate to this case study, as the interventions are designed to meet the needs of the children in my setting.

Participants' self-efficacy and attitudes and intentions towards children with SEND have proven important to findings in previous research (Hutzler et al, 2019), and could be established through the initial baseline interview. See, for example, the design of the questions for teaching assistants:

Topic discussion: **How do you understand the changes to the provisions for SEND children?**  
Specific possible questions:

- How do you anticipate these changes affecting the children? (> *what measures could you base this claim on?*)
- How do you feel this will affect you as a professional?

Figure 5.11: Semi-structured interview questions for English teachers

The use of these questions enabled me to return to the themes of self-efficacy, personal development, reflections on the use of the intervention model and consideration of how to improve these to continue to meet the needs of the children in the final interviews. Research has shown that participants' behaviour can be underpinned by a combination of child, adult and setting attributes feeding into the teacher or teaching assistants behaviours, and this should be acknowledged in the discussion (Hutzler et al, 2019). For this reason, I incorporated these themes into the semi-structured interviews.

During the data analysis stage, anonymity was achieved using the designated allocation of teacher XX or teaching assistant XX or child XX. This was applied after I had coded the data, as it allowed for a quicker process of thematic analysis. Likewise, non-participants were renamed, most frequently shown through square brackets as [a child with SEND] or [their English teacher] or [a teaching assistant].

Given the small scale of the research it was realistic to transcribe the interview data personally, and this allowed for initial consideration of exploratory coding. Whilst transcribing the interview data, I noted key words and phrases and where and with whom these appeared (Guihen, 2019; Maher, 2018). This immersion enabled early identification of emergent themes and informed follow-up interview questions. The iterative approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of each group of participants' experiences, throughout the period of the study.

### 5.10 Thematic analysis

Following transcription of the participants interview, I completed a thematic analysis of the data generated. Qualitative research makes use of thematic

analysis as “thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 5). I anticipated the generation of complex and varied interview data from the participants, and found that thematic analysis best identified common issues from the key stakeholders.

Thematic analysis is a method for examining the perspectives, similarities, and differences of different research participants. This approach to analysis is known to generate unanticipated insights (Nowell et al, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I anticipated that, given the differences in the role played by the stakeholders (children, teaching assistants and teachers), there would be some overlap and some difference in their experiences.

Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify different themes as they emerge and begin to piece these themes together. When this process happens concurrently with data acquisition, researchers can refine their research questions (Clarke & Visser, 2019b). Researchers identify these themes and bring them together in the discussion of their findings, to tell the story of their study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Effective thematic analysis ensures that the reader can see how each theme was derived from the data. Testing the accurate identification of each theme can be accomplished by returning to the raw data, and comparing it to the state theme, to make sure that all conclusions are firmly grounded in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers may consider how each theme fits into the overall story about the entire data set, in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 5.11 Exploratory coding

My exploratory coding approach was taken with a view to gaining meaningful insights into individuals’ professional experiences (Guihen, 2019), and I feel that the data corroborates this. Through personal preference I did this using highlighter pens on hard copies of my transcripts rather than extending my time at the computer screen. This approach lent itself to reading and re-reading the transcripts, and listening and re-listening to the audio, to ensure accuracy. This became a personal preference, as I believe this led to a more thorough

understanding of the themes as I found they were more tangible when engaged with in this way.

Research findings generate imperfect or provisional truths around constructs of daily life (Clarke & Visser, 2019b). For this reason, the emergent themes were important for the design of each stage of interview question and analysis. One example of this organic development of the research, was the provision for children with SEND and low literacy. The ongoing transcription of the interviews alongside my real-time professional reflections enabled me to recruit English teachers of the children with whom the teaching assistants were working and discussing. The English teachers were able to generate their own provisional truths that would either corroborate the teaching assistants' experiences or highlight their alternative viewpoint. The benefit of this immersive approach to data analysis ensured I acquired richer data at each point.

### 5.12 Replicability

SEND theory and research need not look for practices that will transfer wholesale (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Pitney, 2004). For example, taking a learning intervention I had created and delivering at a different school would have limited impact without contextual understanding. Instead of seeking transferable models, unpicking existing models and enabling reflection on effective strategies should be the research goal (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Pitney, 2004). This was the benefit of conducting a case study: studying how and why questions, contextual questions and exploring areas where boundaries between context and phenomena aren't clear (Yin, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008). I believe knowing that I was focusing solely on a model of SEND support for children in my setting, and not seeking a transferable model, was a central tenet to the success of this research project. I feel this is shown by the qualitative approach that avoided the creation of statistics that could be misinterpreted, and my preference for presenting participants' views from semi-structured discussion and reflection.

The essential aspects of my case study that could be replicated by a SENCO or a researcher in another setting are:

1. Identifying an issue within the setting
2. Conceptualising a resolution to this issue using literature
3. Collecting data on the influence of this new approach
4. Investing in the views of the stakeholders, and reflecting together

## 5. Refining the approach to address the issue

My research approach mirrors the Assess-Plan-Do-Review approach to SEND support (DfE/DoH, 2015). Where my pilot study and literature review had generated a possible solution to my identified concern, I felt validated in using case study methodology to track the implementation of this. However, action research methodology might better suit a SENCO or headteacher seeking to address their own concern.

The method of interviewing participants at selected points across the period of the case study is a common method within the qualitative paradigm (Cohen et al, 2018). Therefore, the prospective researcher should have an established pattern of meetings with children, parents and be informed by teacher's reports and data. This would allow for the replication of a similar study in another research setting.

### 5.13 Rigour and dependability of data

Qualitative research design and implementation can be emergent and require changing (Cypress, 2017). The inquirer has less control in the direction of the enquiry (once it's began), particularly in comparison to a mixed-methods or quantitative methodology. To ensure the dependability of qualitative data, I committed to one approach to data collection.

I elected to use interview to capture the non-static views of the participants and presented "a thorough description of the entire research process that allows for intersubjectivity [to indicate] good quality" (Cypress, 2017: 256) in this research method section. Earlier, I stated how I would establish trustworthiness in the human instrument (see section [5.7.1 Establish trustworthiness of the human instrument](#)). Judging the findings' trustworthiness was essential to my ability to make accurate decisions on emerging areas of interest (Stahl & King, 2020). Being confident in the participants' trustworthiness enabled refinement of my investigation (Cypress, 2017).

Qualitative inquiry is less concerned with replicability, as the data generated is understood to be created in unique circumstances (Stahl & King, 2020). It is essential to establish credibility and trustworthiness in my participants and their interview data, as this made my conclusions dependable. I conducted the research alone, as a single researcher. This enabled a consistent approach to data

collection and as mentioned before, being fully absorbed in the transcription of the interviews allowed me to reflect on themes as they emerged.

With regards rigour and transparency, I have considered how:

*“access to data augments and amplifies research by helping readers grasp the richness and diversity of the social activities that scholars study. It empowers them to assess for themselves to what extent (and how reliably) that evidence confirms particular descriptive and causal interpretations and analyses”* (Moravcsik, 2019: 3).

To ensure that the data can be considered rigorous and transparent, I committed to including verbatim quotations, in context, within my results and discussions chapter. This approach to presenting data ensures transparency:

*“transparency offers an opportunity for members of a particular research community to understand and assess their own scholarship. Data sharing and research transparency allow a researcher’s audience to evaluate claims and form an evidentiary and logical basis for treating the claims as valid”* (Lupia & Elman, 2014: 22).

As such, the reader’s access to verbatim quotations alongside my presentation of emergent themes for discussion should provide the requisite rigour and dependability from which by claims can be judged as valid.

#### 5.14 Presentation of findings

SEND theory and research need not look for practices that will transfer wholesale (Webster & Blatchford, 2019), but instead help participants to make sense of their SEND provision (Cavendish et al, 2020). Unpicking existing models and enabling reflection on effective strategies should be the research goal. Dunne et al (2018) call this the search within academic literature for “practical and experiential knowledge over theoretical [knowledge]” (22). In my results and discussion chapters, I present findings in a chronological analysis that demonstrates how the provision developed throughout the period of study, alongside professional reflections during the writing period, to form knowledge for practice (Dunne et al, 2018).

White (2019) recognises that educational philosophising has perhaps become the work of academics, and in response to universities’ needs to publish, there has been a rapid decrease in engagement between authors and their peers. This, it is claimed, is because philosophers and researchers in the field have other priorities besides the needs of teachers (White, 2019). My view is that my case study and the findings I present will be more helpful to professionals who seek to reflect on

their own provision. However, I also anticipate contributing new knowledge to the academic study of SEND support. It is hoped that the practical findings and development of SEND provision will be central to any further publication, and the philosophical/socio-political commentary will compliment this.

In my setting, I will present the findings of this research to the gatekeeper, who is the head teacher of the academy. The head teacher asked that a summarised account was to be presented to the senior leadership team on completion of the project. I will refer to the anonymised/summarised findings in my position on the MAT's SENCO forum. This will help the school and my colleagues across the MAT examine and make sense of their existing SEND provision (Cavendish et al, 2020). This exemplifies how my research will meet the needs of teachers first (White, 2019), whilst contributing new knowledge for academic consideration.



## 6 Results

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to understand if redeploying teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND.

Purposive sampling enabled the collection of rich qualitative data from teaching assistants (n=6) and the Assistant SENCO, a group that are under-represented in SEND research (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). Interviews with the teaching assistants ranged between 20-60 minutes, with greater depth of discussion occurring later in the project. This mirrored contemporary qualitative SEND research (see: Cavendish et al, 2020; Syrnyk, 2018) where interviews of up to 60 minutes allowed for meaningful insights into individuals' professional experiences (Guihen, 2019). This approach generated three important findings.

#### 6.1.1 Increased soft skills displayed in mainstream lessons

First, that the children completing learning interventions outside of the classroom in small groups, pairs or 1:1, demonstrated greater confidence in their mainstream lessons. Other soft skills reported to have increased were preparedness to participate, attentiveness, and contributions to class discussion.

#### 6.1.2 Greater understanding of individual children with SEND

The second finding was that the school's knowledge of individual children through their participation in the intervention, grew exponentially in comparison to the previous deployment of teaching assistants in-class. This led to a far greater understanding of individual learning styles and resulted in more comprehensive information being provided to teachers to support the children in their lessons, particularly for those children designated School Support.

#### 6.1.3 Growth in teaching assistant autonomy and feeling of purposefulness

Thirdly, teaching assistants reported that working more autonomously to deliver interventions to a caseload of children allowed for growth in their professional skillset, created greater ownership in the outcomes for children, and increased their motivation and their feeling of being valued within the school.

#### 6.1.4 Ratifying existing research

In addition to the three new findings introduced here, the qualitative data from the children and support staff ratified much of the existing research on ineffective in-

class support (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). Teaching assistants reported feeling that the influence of their presence decreased the amount of pedagogic contact children with SEND received from class teachers. The children with SEND were inconsistent in their understanding of the purpose of the second adult who worked with them.

#### 6.1.5 Contributing new understanding to the field of SEND support

The qualitative data generated in my case study contributes to the discourse on methods of SEND support that are deemed have a negative impact on children (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Butt, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). I concluded, based on the academic literature and the experiences of the participations, that this qualitative data is important in confirming existing research on in-class support, and adds the voices of children with SEND, and teaching assistants, who have previously been under-represented in research on their own effectiveness (Riitaoja et al, 2020; Roffey-Barensten, 2014). The following sections will explain each of the major findings from the case study.

#### 6.2 Increased soft skills displayed in mainstream lessons

The aim of the enquiry was to analyse the redeployment of teaching assistants to improve outcomes for children with SEND. This required a change of role from predominantly in-class support to the delivery of small group, pair and individual learning interventions. My belief was based on emerging contemporary case study research (for example: Webster & Blatchford, 2019) and meta-analyses (for example: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). I had not anticipated finding a clear link between learning interventions, increased soft skills, and greater access to mainstream learning. My thinking had been 'siloed' by the area I controlled (teaching assistant deployment) and my desire to improve the outcomes of children with SEND.

The findings were exciting as they emerged relatively early in the study, first being reported by teaching assistants after one term of learning intervention (Dec 2019/Jan 2020), and simultaneously corroborated by teachers in the same period. These results might suggest that collaborative approaches, that enable teaching assistants to compliment core curricula in short interventions, are highly influential in children succeeding in mainstream lessons.

Semi-structured interviews with experienced teaching assistants showed the influence of the interventions on the children's participation in lessons. TA-03 discussed the impact of the intervention approach on this growth in confidence in December, having completed a term of literacy intervention with targeted children with SEND:

*“oh[!] they really enjoy [it] and [the thing interventions] promote is that their confidence has gone up, they're not afraid to read in class, they're not afraid to speak up, and also they're not afraid to get things wrong because like I said to them everyone gets - everyone makes mistakes or is human and I feel like their behaviour and the attitude towards learning has changed as well because they try their best, they want to push themselves” (TA-03, interview 02).*

This finding was common throughout the interviews at this stage of the research (reported in December-January, 3 months into the study). TA-05 found that the effect of studying literacy in small groups had enabled three children in Year 10 to demonstrate greater engagement in English:

*“in class it was quite clear that the intervention were working with those students because for example [3 Year 10 children who received literacy intervention] would be able to engage with certain areas more so than they would have before (TA-05, interview 02).*

The successful increase in engagement was observed by the teaching assistants in lessons and fed back by the teachers of these classes. Due to the needs of children in Year 7, some teaching assistants remained deployed in-class in English and maths. TA-06 joined the department specifically to support the placement of two children with ASD. TA-06 had not worked in a secondary setting prior to their appointment, and they were the least experienced participant in the study. TA-06 saw an increase in confidence displayed by children in their class, following learning interventions.

The children that TA-06 was deployed to support would end the year with special school placements, as their transition to mainstream secondary had not proven appropriate to their needs. TA-06 would therefore complete intervention work with these children, and other children with SEND in Year 7, whilst also supporting them in-class. This mode of deployment bridged the previous model of in-class support with learning interventions. They found that literacy intervention:

*“gives them a more in-depth knowledge, and especially because if we're working alongside their English lessons. So I've noticed as well the things that I've gone through with them and asked them in their comprehension, they then also use that in their English lessons and put their hand up and answer the questions. I think as well it gives them more confidence because they might not be sure, but because*

*we've gone through it together and they know that I've been like "yeah, well done keep going" it then gives them the confidence to say in the classroom" (TA-06, interview 01).*

Both children would acquire places at special schools for 2019-20, as the calibre of support required for their sensory needs (underpinned by Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnoses) made mainstream secondary education too frequently inaccessible. Yet during their time in the classroom, the children whose SEN most inhibited their access to the setting, still demonstrated that they benefited from their learning intervention, and were observed to have utilised the content in their learning.

TA-05 found similarities to the other participants when comparing their previous role as in-class support in English lessons with the delivery of English to smaller intervention groups:

*"[intervention] differs in firstly the size of the group [compared to supporting in a mainstream classroom], and the abilities, even though the abilities did differ - vary - within the [mainstream] group, they were the same in the sense that I could support the children effectively, so, reading ages were quite similar, and their ability to understand tasks and to write, um, I liked those [interventions] a lot because we could do a lot of reading, [the interventions] were a lot slower as well, pace wise, so we were able to go over and recap things that they had learned in the lesson, and also any misconceptions that maybe they had gotten". (TA-05, interview 02).*

Here TA-05 suggests that one important aspect of a successful intervention may be the teaching assistant's flexibility with both the pace and the specificity of their work. TA-05 recognised that learning can be supported and reinforced through the intervention work that they completed on the children's reading topic, and particularly being able to go at a pace suitable to the individual participants.

I previously described my thinking as 'siloes' by my area of leadership. When I began to consider the re-deployment of teaching assistants in the previous academic year, I had hoped that my team of teaching assistants could fill the gaps created by less adequate teaching. I posited that the children's outcomes in assessments would justify the use of learning interventions (see: [appendix 9](#)). The participants' views on the successes of intervention in the research has exceeded my original premise.

In addition to the reported positive influence of the learning interventions by the adult participants, the research process also highlights the depth of collaboration

and insight between the teaching assistants and myself. TA-01 articulated this emerging link between the intervention and the impact in the classroom:

*“[The children] said “oh miss we’ve started reading [Of Mice and Men] in class, and we were able to give sir the details, we were able to tell sir the story”, so I was like “oh you are happy,” because [I told the children] “the reason that we are starting you off is for you to be ahead of your peers and this is an advantage for you, so you improve”, so I think they are happy with it and from what they [the teachers] are saying to me they are progressing in class as well.” (TA-01, interview 01).*

The links that the teaching assistants began to make between the intervention model and the core curriculum developed my understanding that, rather than having a direct impact on the children’s attainment; the content of the intervention could influence skills for independent learning.

The skills most frequently reported were: preparedness to participate, attentiveness, and contributions to class discussion. Developing these skills in the children with SEND would then aid the teachers in the classroom, as the children were more engaged in the class teaching, and therefore receiving the direct pedagogic contact that the meta-analyses had identified as having a major positive influence on progress and attainment (for example: Davies & Henderson, 2020).

The interviews that generated this qualitative data, and the ongoing dialogue available through conducting a case study in my own school setting, helped to extrapolate the answer as to how learning interventions could have a positive influence on children with SEND.

Alongside learning interventions linked to the core curricula of English and maths, a programme of support for specific special education needs was co-created by the participants and myself (see: [appendix 10](#)). The Assistant SENCO (AS-01), who was the most experienced member of staff in this study, found that focusing on the children’s specific SEND, rather than supporting them more generally in the classroom, had benefited children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These children grew more confident in not only their academic studies but in the way they could navigate social norms. By working 1:1, the delivery of ASD Social Stories interventions met the needs of the child, rather than responding to their needs reactively in the classroom. AS-01 shared that:

*“the intervention work I’ve done... the ASD side is more – its more support of the needs they have generally, rather than academically... it in turn helps them to be more successful academically and socially” (AS-01, interview 03).*

AS-01 suggests that learning interventions influenced an increase in academic success in children with communication and sensory needs, and they felt less overwhelmed in the classroom. In addition, for children with sensory needs such as ASD, it was suggested that they were better able to remain in lessons with this type of support. Where previously a class-based teaching assistant would have been able to remove a child who was overwhelmed and experiencing a meltdown, the same children were being equipped to work through these situations in the intervention time. Learning interventions reduced their reliance on the teaching assistant, and increased their ability to remain in lessons. The Assistant SENCO was able to use their intervention time to prepare children with ASD for forthcoming changes to their routines, for example impending assessment periods, or use their intervention time to work reflectively on issues that could have been handled differently by the children.

A further example of the positive influence that learning interventions had on our neurodiverse student body was seen in children with ADHD. Children with ADHD who struggled with attention were reported to be hyper-attentive to the teaching, knowing that they would be able to answer and contribute in the classroom. Pre-reading a text that would be covered in English, identifying new vocabulary or exploring similes and metaphors (“as solitary as an oyster”, “as merry as a schoolboy” see [appendix 9](#)) with the teaching assistant, equipped these children to succeed. Teachers reported that those children who had previously struggled to maintain concentration would demonstrate hyper-focus on their exposition, knowing that they would soon get to answer, and experience positive feedback for demonstrating their understanding.

As I have shown, children with ASD who completed a programme of Social Stories interventions were reportedly better equipped to respond to situations where they may have become overwhelmed previously. Children with ADHD were also responding positively to learning intervention, where previously a class-based teaching assistant may have been expected to prompt them to maintain attention on their teacher. Finally, those children with cognitive learning difficulties demonstrated that they were better able to follow class texts when pre-taught the same extracts in literacy intervention. By gaining a greater comprehension of these texts, the children were reported to be happier, and more often able to self-start in English lessons.

By equipping the children with strategies to support their diagnosed needs, the teaching assistants and Assistant SENCO found that they were able to display higher levels of independence in the classroom than previously. This was perceived through an increased confidence, preparedness to participate, and ability to regulate their special needs. To challenge the provisional truths generated by the teaching assistants, I recruited English teachers who were teaching these children's classes. TE-05's Year 7 class had a number of children with SEND, including four EHC plans. These children were receiving literacy intervention, whilst one child with ADHD also completed an attention development intervention. TE-05 observed that:

*"they were getting these [literacy] interventions and it would I would say it did show in terms of like confidence reading aloud and that kind of thing like you could see a difference but it was interesting ...[a child with ADHD and an EHC plan's attention] really developed on that front over, like, that was a really noticeable one."* (TE-05, interview 01).

TE-05 and other English teachers recruited to the study provided a level of confirmation to the teaching assistants' view that the children's soft skills were improving. The teachers also provided a constructive critique of the intervention model, particularly that they could be provided with greater knowledge of the content of the literacy interventions, so that they could work collaboratively with the SEND department staff to reinforce key concepts and learning with the targeted children:

*"[One way of improving withdrawal intervention would be] prior to you teaching year 7 A Christmas Carol if you are having children withdrawn from lessons to do literacy work that you would go through this programme with the LSA at the start of that half term, which I think is the best, one of the best ways I could ascertain you understanding what's being taught to the children, and knowing who the children are."* (TE-04, interview 01).

*"I think that class teachers could be more aware of the intervention that students receive outside of mainstream lessons... if teachers were aware of the additional English support students have received, it may help plan for the progression of knowledge or help with questioning in the class."* (TE-06, interview 01).

TE-04 and TE-06, both English teachers, encapsulated the eagerness with which the teaching staff requested more opportunities to meet, discuss and collaborate with support staff on literacy interventions. TE-04 & TE-06 felt this would be particularly beneficial at the start of a reading topic. This was a further positive outcome of the research: teachers responded so positively to the increased confidence and independence of the children, that they wanted to work more

closely and collaboratively with the support department, to understand and contribute towards the intervention model for their mutual benefit.

It is worth considering that these planning meetings were not part of the design of the intervention model that I had introduced. On reflection it shows how my approach had become isolated and focused solely on the teaching assistants as a solution to the progress disparities. The research process really demonstrated the importance of collaboration with staff across the setting, to begin to address the gap in progress, and the accessibility of mainstream curricula.

### 6.3 Greater understanding of individual children with SEND

The participant teaching assistants believed that their work supporting children through the intervention model allowed them to make stronger connections than were previously achievable supporting in the classroom. The participants perceived both stronger relationships, and a higher number of strong relationships, between teaching assistants and children. I felt that this expanded the department's, and the school's, knowledge of individual children exponentially and led to higher-quality support strategies being provided to teachers, particularly for children designated School Support.

The teaching assistants explained that their prior deployment supported children with EHC plans through accompanying them in their lessons, for example:

*“Previously we used to have a lot more in-class support, so we would be with our selected students following them around in class, often working with them either by sitting next to them or just kind of hovering around the class to ensure they access the support and the work that has been given to them” (TA-02, interview 01)*

*“[Previously] -I would still work with any of the kids, I will still walk around any of the children and see if they need my help. And if they don't, I would still walk around to see if they're okay, if they're up to task” (TA-03, interview 01).*

Both TA-02 and TA-03 provide concise depictions of their role when deployed in the classroom; and these views were consistent across the teaching assistant participants. The contextual understanding provided by the teaching assistants in their initial interviews gives an insight into the teaching assistants' perception of their role. I found that they felt under-utilised by teachers, particularly by trainee teachers and those new to the profession; that they felt they could be better utilised; and that their presence contributed to limited interactions between children with SEND and their teachers.



There was an existing progress gap between children with SEND and their peers without SEND at GCSE, attained during a three-year period of in-class support being the predominant model of deployment (see: figure 1.2). In-class support predated my appointment as SENCO. The data garnered from the first round of interviews correlates with the broader findings in meta-analyses that classroom based, general or undirected support leads to less progress being made than by children with similar needs who do not receive in-class support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). These findings are discussed in more detail below (see: [6.5 Confirmation of existing research](#)).

Many of the traits of ineffective support were found in the teaching assistants' reflections on the in-class mode of support that preceded the study. Little mention was made of supporting children at School Support who did not have a formal diagnosis of a SEND, other than to address general behaviour issues in a class. Despite the availability of large-scale data studying effective SEND provision (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019) the experience, years teaching or other factors that can influence quality of teaching were not captured in these studies. The absence of such contextual data in these meta-analyses reinforced my belief that working with children with SEND must be considered on a case-by-case basis, which lent itself to the qualitative research approach. Interviewing the teaching assistants and teachers enabled me to understand how the intervention approach was being seen to have a positive influence. My professional concern with the academic literature had been how approaches were being shown to be ineffective, without identifying alternatives that could be trialled. For this reason, learning interventions were an emerging area of SEND research.

One outcome from the transition to intervention work were stronger connections between teaching assistants and children at School Support than were previously achievable supporting in the classroom. In contrast to in-class support, as the study progressed the teaching assistants felt that completing interventions with the children enabled them to make strong connections with key children, and that the number of children with which they made these strong connections increased through the small groups, pairs or 1:1 working model:

*“they are quite happy to [come out of lessons], I think for them, some of them, we have 1:1 interaction with them, there are things that they tell us that they are comfortable telling us [what they don't know or understand] that if they were in class they wouldn't tell the teacher... so they quite like it” (TA-01, interview 02)*

By the end of the first term in the newly introduced model of support, TA-01 found that the children's willingness to trust had increased, and many reported a general increase in happiness and willingness to participate in intervention then they had experienced when proffering help in the classroom. Summarising the benefit of the intervention approach at the end of the academic year, TA-02 reflected that:

*“so that [teachers] actually know that the work we're doing isn't to just repeat syllabus to them but it's to kind of get to those core ... level of understanding ...those little bits that the teachers might not particularly know [the child doesn't know] and I think - I don't think it's easy to understand [that] until you work with a student one-on-one”* (TA-02, interview 03)

The teaching assistants' developed understanding that teachers cannot engage on a personal level with each child they teach, and it is plausible that the responsibility for managing small groups, pairs and individual interventions enabled the teaching assistants to better comprehend the teachers' task of managing the classroom.

TA-02 encapsulated this greater empathy, whilst also suggesting that the intervention model enabled the support staff to provide more intricate and child-specific strategies than we had previously made. The teaching assistants reported that they felt the intervention model allowed for this understanding to develop in a way that in-class support could not. The children also grew to recognise the benefit of the intervention approach, as conveyed by TA-03:

*“I remember talking to [them when I was in-class support to this child]: “you're messing about, you need to behave different”, and he said to me “I should've listened to you” ... But I think [intervention] works with [them] is - it's just [their lack of] understanding [of their needs]”* (TA-03, interview 02)

By completing small group, paired and individual work, I conclude that the children had more opportunity to be vulnerable, and to discuss the areas of the curriculum that they were struggling with. There was also opportunity for the teaching assistants to discuss with the children about their specific needs. During the writing period, I introduced an intervention specifically for this purpose, entitled 'How to Talk About My Needs'. This programme was designed to enable children to tell teachers about their special educational needs, and the support they require, when attending lessons without teaching assistants.

With the teaching assistants garnering a greater insight into individual children's learning styles, and the children better understanding their own needs, this

information could be provided to teachers. In some instances, teaching staff appreciated the impact of the teaching assistants' strategies perhaps even more than the influence of the intervention itself:

*“essentially you are not the expert as a history teacher you spend two hours a week with these kids, where some of the TAs or intervention teachers will be spending a lot of high frequency amount of time, which means like they're the people you should be asking for help and getting advice from”* (TE-03, interview 01)

Here TE-03 recognised that the quality and quantity of time spent with children with SEND made the teaching assistants the experts on individual needs, which flipped the hierarchy of expertise, in a way that was not always demonstrated by teaching staff towards in-class support. Further participant-teachers recognised the value of the teaching assistants' knowledge of individuals with special needs:

*“The TA's knowledge of the individuals in the group helped to create a more focussed atmosphere... [the] intervention that [students] received outside of lesson has helped with their attainment and engagement... when studying units on Of Mice and Men or gothic writing, [students] engaged with the same texts in their additional intervention students were confident sharing their knowledge in the classroom, even if [the] material or reading was duplicated, this often benefitted students [who found] the memorisation [sic] of characters and plot a challenge”* (TE-06, interview 01)

TE-06 was an early careers teacher who was new to the setting. TE-06 recognised the teaching assistants important role in providing information and strategies to inform pedagogy. TA-03, who had previous experience in primary schools and had joined the setting in the year I was appointed SENCO, had only experienced in-class deployment across two schools. TA-03 provided a level of confirmation that teachers were now seeking out their expertise in terms of knowing the children, and understanding their needs:

*“[the intervention's success can be judged] just by when the child, the student, the kids tell me, and also, ... [and I] observe, speak to [teachers] about how the kids are doing and then [discuss] whatever they want me to help them [understand about the children]”* (TA-03, interview 02)

TA-03 was able to provide strategies for children with SEND at School Support across two Key Stages by completing literacy intervention, reading, and emotional literacy group work with a variety of year groups. TA-03's caseload would average thirty children per week. As these children did not all have EHC Plans, the support they would have received in-class in the years prior would have been inconsistent, unplanned and reactive, given that the teaching assistants were deployed primarily to support that higher-tier of need.

TA-02 expanded on the theme of staff collaboration, echoing the confirmation provided by teachers. TA-02 was the most experienced teaching assistant in the

SEND department, pre-dating my appointment as SENCO by two years. TA-02 had been deployed in-class for several years, and they captured the change in their deployment and the effect on their work with the children:

*“[when] you started working with the students that you start to identify where specifically they are struggling and I think then you can in the, in that time in the one-on-one time you can start to focus on that [deficit you have identified]” (TA-02, interview 03)*

This statement from TA-02 underpins the claim that a greater understanding of individual children can be acquired through intervention-based support. The teaching assistants universally reported that supporting outside of the classroom and focusing on specific, individual needs was more beneficial to the children than their presence in the classroom had been. TA-01 felt more valued by the teachers who taught the children she worked with. A student with ASD was not receiving TA support in their lessons, and TA-01 noted that their French and Geography teachers were proactive in seeking strategies:

*“if [the student being discussed] has any problem or if [the teacher] is worried, she always comes to me so she knows that she can always relay to me whatever problems [the student] is going through and [the Geography teacher is doing the same].” (TA-01, interview 01)*

On reflection, the change to working 1:1 or in small groups with the children had perhaps not been fully visualised by myself or the TA's. The removal of teaching assistants from the classroom subverted the hierarchy of expertise, where before the TA's had felt they were the lesser member of the teacher-teaching assistant relationship. I have stated that teachers and staff were provided with better strategies to support children with SEND due to teaching assistants' closer working relationship with these key children. However, the support department also gained more of an understanding of the needs of children at school support, or those children making less-than expected progress.

Previously, TA-02 had identified that her role in the classroom predominantly involved behaviour management<sup>5</sup>, and withdrawal intervention presented an opportunity to lead direct work with the children. The teaching assistant was able to recognise differing needs under the umbrella of low literacy:

*“so I take the children for literacy and we are all covering the same book but I've got particular students whose main issue is they can't focus on a particular, after one sentence they've been distracted by something else of they've gone off, so the*

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<sup>5</sup> For example “a lot of the time it became more behaviourally based than actual learning based, a lot of the interactions soon became about telling the student to focus and do the work, and a lot of the time they might not have understood how to actually access the work” TA-02, interview 01.

*resources that I have to provide or I have to make have to be focused solely on what's happening there and then and try to get them engaged in that, whereas for another group it may be on purely understanding and for another group it might be something else it might be getting them to understand metaphors in the book, whereas, so like the more I work with them the more I'm finding, the real really specific things they struggle with, and then it's easier to then work on that to try and help them understanding but even in a group of 2 or 3 the differences are still so varied and vast that I'm still finding some instances where I'm like, that I can't, like the resources I have to make for you might be different for you, you and you.” (TA-02, interview 02).*

The children were paired by their reading age, which was tested for at the beginning of the term. For low literacy interventions, this involved pairing the Year 7's in numerical order, so that the children who scored age 6.5 were paired together, those that achieved age 6.9 were paired together, etc. One suggestion for developing the literacy interventions was to group the children with:

*“another student with that kind of specific need, because on the whole it's easy to say okay they struggle with reading, or there reading levels are quite low, but when you break it down even more for the ones who are very, very low, the reasons aren't always as simple as “they can't read” it's so specific so unless you can find across the board like similar kind of instances of “okay they definitely struggle with that in particular” (TA-02, interview 02).*

This proposal seemed sensible but created another layer of investigation; at the time we did not know the reason for the children's low literacy when we received their reading age data. This is because low literacy is an umbrella term that could encompass undiagnosed dyslexia, phonetical issues, English as an Additional Language (EAL), memory or cognitive deficits, and other needs that may require educational psychologist assessment. For this reason, it was useful to recruit the school's literacy lead to attempt to understand the literacy needs of the children.

AP-01 had encountered issues with literacy in her previous role as Head of English, and now as the Senior Leader responsible for literacy, explained that:

*“[children who are functionally illiterate in this school require] a curriculum that and a vocabulary curriculum in some respects because as soon as they can decode roots of words they're already a little bit less at sea... I recognise that some of those children their reading age is also linked to the actual retention struggle they face around the skill [due to a special need] and another, another thing that we're not there yet with is the diagnostics of what's causing the low literacy” (AP-01, interview 01).*

Here, the need for a strategy to support children with low literacy extended beyond children with SEND. During the writing period, the intervention model of support was extended to include all children with a reading age of 2 years or more below chronological age. School leaders adopting the intervention model for differing learning needs further reinforced the success of the case study. Over the period of study, I found interest, expertise and awareness of the issues our SEND learners

were experiencing, particularly amongst the senior team and the English and SEND departments. Low literacy is a recurring whole-school issue in the setting; however we had not settled on an adequate response to this need. Addressing the low literacy of the school required a whole-school response. It is unlikely that two 20-minute interventions per week can provide a significant and continuous increase in a child's reading age alone, and logistically I must impose a limit on the number of children my team can work with. Reading age itself is an imperfect measure of a child's literacy, as differing factors may impede fluency and comprehension. Adopting the intervention for children without SEND further demonstrates how the school viewed withdrawal intervention as an appropriate model.

Prior to the introduction of withdrawal interventions, teaching assistants worked in-class supporting identified children with SEND. The teaching assistants described how in-class support was often measured in work completion, beyond understanding, or retention of key information. AP-01 shared this realisation, and felt passionately about a need to move away from work completion as a sign of success for children with SEND, EAL or low literacy:

*"[teachers need] to know what to do when a child doesn't get it rather than maybe historically we just tell them what to write down or tell them what it means we need to give our children strategies to cope... so that literacy isn't this hook or add-on or gimmick it's this embedded thing that means the weakest student isn't always left behind they are incorporated and genuinely included which I know Sam is exactly what you're passionate about and so am I - I think any great practitioner in this school should be bothered by that"* (AP-01, interview 01)

AP-01 explains how work completion had become a signal for successful pedagogy in the school, but that this was perhaps linked more strongly with an effective behaviour policy where the children abided by the school's rules and the teachers would fill in the literal blanks in their learning. Under the previous model, children with SEND were supported in this process by teaching assistants, who felt that they diminished the amount of direct pedagogic contact from the children's' teachers.

Literacy has become a recurrent barrier throughout the three years I had been coordinating special needs at the school to this point. Where the teaching assistants alerted me to the differing needs of children, this helped me to understand that the teaching assistants would require flexibility in their timetable, to adapt to meet the needs of the children, rather than considering the intervention

a failure if it was not delivered in the way it was planned. The change to using targeted learning interventions provided the school a different approach to attend to learning deficits (and the low literacy learning interventions would be widely adopted across the MAT, throughout the writing period, which further demonstrated the regard that the approach became held in).

I conclude that leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants were unified in their belief that learning interventions were providing a greater depth of understanding of individual children in the setting, compared to when in-class support was widely used. Unfortunately for those children without EHC plans, there is a limit to the amount of support a school can make available, due to the lack of funding to support children with SEND (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020). In England, schools must demonstrate that they are providing the first £6,000 of additional support to children before an assessment request can be made for further funding. SENCOs and academics reviewing this research may reflect on similar pressures around which children to prioritise support of. TA-02, the longest- serving teaching assistant in the setting at the time of the research, summarised how the school acquired a greater understanding of children with SEND:

*“these [two children without EHC plans] are students that otherwise would have just gone unnoticed even if they had like an LSA in the classroom or if they were in a set that focused more on [their] reading, I think in a class of more than five or six their actual needs would have gone unnoticed; you wouldn't have realised exactly what it is they're struggling with and now having kind of identified these additionally it's what can you do [with the information]” (TA-02, interview 02).*

Despite my frustration with the limiting factors on who my department could work with, the same children received minimal attention or contact from an in-class teaching assistant. The lack of contact with support staff in the classroom was due to not having identified special needs on intake, or EHC plans, which would have designated a child as receiving support under the in-class support model.

As TA-02 stated, the children they were now able to work with using the intervention approach were those that normally go ‘unnoticed’ by an in-class teaching assistant. These children had been identified as children requiring support based on their reading age data, and this demonstrated how despite the reduction in support staff, the intervention model of deployment enabled a similar number of children to remain at School Support on the SEND register. This designation highlights the children’s need to the class teachers, and the teaching

assistants were able to provide further contextual information on how to support the children.

In the literature review, I considered how the Code of Practice 2014 (DfE/DoH, 2015), and specifically teacher-accountability for all the children in their classes, could be better supported in my school. By providing teachers with more details of individual learning needs, the teachers could support the children in developing independent skills:

*“with a particular year 10 student because they verbally were really engaged and really able - it was giving them the tools to get everything down on paper and then leaving it up to them because they were old enough to do it independently, it was being clear with them and home, and their teachers ... we're saying this is what we've done, and this is what he's going to do now moving forward [to support himself]” (AS-01, interview 03).*

To summarise, the school’s knowledge of individual children’s specific learning needs grew in comparison to the previous deployment of teaching assistants in-class. The previous limiting factors were created when children with low- prior attainment and/or at School Support were grouped together, but rarely received direct teaching assistant support. Completing learning interventions with children at School Support increased the school’s knowledge of the barriers they were experiencing. By knowing and understanding these children’s needs, the teaching assistants could better support teaching staff by sharing their concerns, as well as strategies that would support these needs directly. Withdrawal intervention also enabled me to begin further assessment, which may help the diagnoses of additional learning needs. This was made possible by the teaching assistants’ new knowledge of children at School Support or in low-prior attainment groups.

#### 6.4 Growth in teaching assistant autonomy and feeling of purposefulness

Contemporary research has detailed that teaching assistants are hampered by loosely defined roles when deployed in classrooms supporting targeted children or whole classes (Clarke & Visser, 2019a; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). The teaching assistants had high expectations for their redeployment, feeling positively about the move out of the classroom.

*[I expect] to learn more, to learn more about myself as well, to see if I can do it, and to see if what I’m teaching the kids they are actually learning it, do you see what I mean, and probably teaching myself as well.” (TA-03, interview 01).*

TA-03 captures the trepidation that many of the participants shared. There was an excitement around the change of approach, and many of the teaching assistants’



views on in-class support and their relationships particularly with newly qualified teachers have been shared earlier in this section. Whilst I would have described the group as driven and child-centric prior to their redeployment, it was apparent that the experienced members of the team were looking forward to the increased responsibility. TA-04, an aspirant teacher, also neatly explained the anticipated learning that they might make through leading small group and individual work:

*“I think as a professional it will affect me by giving me the understanding of different SEN needs of different students, ‘cos it’s not just working with kids with ASD, there are kids with ADHD and different diagnoses, so it will give me a better understanding of how every child is different and how every child learns and adapt to new information... [as an aspiring teacher] I think it will be something that would benefit me closely.”* (TA-04, interview 01).

TA-04’s examples capture the openness to change and how the teaching assistants felt positively about developing their skillsets at the beginning of the research. At the end of the academic year, the participants described the effect of their move to small group, paired and 1:1 work as contributing to their greater feeling of purposefulness and increased autonomy.

*“there’s a lot more autonomy in the work that you’re doing and um yeah you’re in charge of a lot of what you’re doing not just from the work that you’re creating and the resources that you’re making but also your timetabling... it definitely, definitely grows and your, you grow as a professional... it stops you from becoming lazy - it stops you from repeating the same thing kind of mindlessly, it keeps you on your toes and makes you be more specific to kids’ needs”* (TA-02, interview 03).

Participants’ self-efficacy and attitudes and intentions towards children with SEND have proven important to findings in previous research (Hutzler et al, 2019). The use of semi-structured interview questions enabled me to return to the themes of self-efficacy, personal development, reflections on the use of the intervention-model and consideration of how to improve these to continue to meet the needs of the children. In terms of attitudes and intentions towards children with SEND, the allocation of children to the teaching assistants developed their ownership of the interventions. Different teaching assistants reported developing different areas of strength, for example in literacy work, and SEMH support. TA-06, who was a graduate working in their first school, found their work rewarding:

*“the main success is the reading [intervention] purely because I can see them using it in the classroom and also in their lessons you can see the confidence that they have just with you as a person that they can trust and rely on - I think that really helps them in their lessons”* (TA-06, interview 01).

TA-03 found that for a difficult group of Year 10 children, who were resistant to the intervention, they required a degree of reflection on how to engage the learners:

*“I don’t know because sometimes I feel like are they bored - so not that it should be fun, fun, fun but - I wanted to meet their needs so we can all be okay with it if you*

*see what I mean, so sometimes yeah I think I just need to sit and adjust it just a little bit” (TA-03, interview 02).*

TA-03’s insight provided me with a reminder that the adults leading the interventions are not trained teachers and would need ongoing support to engage learners where they experienced difficulties or barriers. Many of the teaching assistants responded positively to the increased intellectual stimulation they experienced, planning to overcome barriers, such as those shared by TA-03. A further example, TA-06 had been allocating their planning time to ensuring that the children’s interventions were accessible and met their needs:

*“for example I’ve sat and made like, my own resources which I think will be useful to them, even little things like grids where they can write down their own quotes that they think is important, and simplistic timelines, so that as we’re reading a bit of the book we can see where we’re at on the timeline and things, just to make it a little bit more visual for them” (TA-06, interview 01).*

As stated earlier, TA-06 was new to the setting and therefore had not been deployed in-class full time in the years before the study. TA-06 joined the school in October and even at the early stage of the research period, the same teaching assistants who had reported growing fatigued by in-class support were demonstrating self-efficacy and positive intentions towards preparing their interventions for children with SEND. These positive intentions had been shown to have a positive impact on the instruction of children with SEND (Hutzler et al, 2019).

The teaching assistant participants felt that they were benefiting from clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the absence of which had been shown to reduce the effectiveness of TA’s (Clarke & Visser, 2019a: 313; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). The literature review had identified contemporary SEND research, which has focused on three facets: (a) the role of teaching assistants; (b) the impact of teaching assistants on students, educators and inclusive education; and (c) the factors that influence the performance of teaching assistants (Sharma & Salend, 2016). The case study found that redeployment from in-class support to the delivery of learning interventions led to an increase in positivity to all three facets.

On reflection, the support staff’s reported improvement in feeling purposeful, linked to the children’s’ increased confidence in class, happened very early into the research period. The teaching assistants were reporting on this feeling of purposefulness almost immediately. This is surprising because wide ranging research has been collated on the deployment of teaching assistants (Clarke &

Visser, 2019a; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015; Rix et al, 2009), yet I felt like I was making a 'bold' move in redeploying the staff. In the literature review, I described in-class support as the status quo. The redeployment of support staff could be viewed as merely following the findings of multiple researchers. This feeling of being 'bold' and brave might explain why, despite the abundant academic research, the status quo of in-class support remains in most settings.

It is suggested that the status quo of in-class support remains because policy and practice communities lack practitioner voices (Cavendish et al, 2020). More focus on collaborative practice between SENCOs, teaching assistants and teachers can address this missing dialogue. Historically, Ofsted have called for involvement of members of school support staff in development planning to ensure they receive a clear understanding of the academic priorities (Ofsted, 2008). As a practitioner working to coordinate SEND support in a secondary academy, with 100 children on the SEND register, I rely on teaching assistants to provide me with a comprehensive knowledge of the children I am responsible for. The voices of the teaching assistants are the most prominent aspect of these findings. The relative influence of the withdrawal intervention approach has been shown in the teacher's voices, earlier in the results section. Both groups of participants viewed their introduction as a success.

I valued practitioner voice before the study began. I am confident I have realised my commitment to the teaching assistants' practitioner voice, as their reflections are central to the suggestion of a positive influence on children with SEND. The finding that teaching assistants' autonomy and feeling of purposefulness increased through leading learning interventions is best seen in the interviews they participated in, and the rich qualitative accounts they generated. However, both the children's and the teaching assistants' interviews also confirmed existing research, that focus on the reasons why deployment in-class is often unsuccessful. The final section of the results chapter will focus on confirmation of existing research.

## 6.5 Confirmation of existing research

Prior to the research period, the teaching assistants predominantly supported children with special educational needs in their classrooms. Children with EHC plans, theoretically those with the most complex needs, have their support

expressed in teaching assistant hours of support. In-class support is the most frequent mode of deployment across mainstream secondary schools (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015). Despite prevalent research showing that this model of deployment has a negative impact on attainment of children with SEND, external pressures had upheld this status quo in many secondary schools (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). Alongside the academic literature, my professional view is that parents are assuaged by the presence of an additional adult, with relatively little understanding as to the role that adult is performing.

My research is notable as the voices of children with SEND and teaching assistants are captured, describing their role when deployed in-class. Capturing the teaching assistants' prior experiences enabled me to conclude that their sense of purposefulness increased through their redeployment. The participants reported feeling that their presence decreased the amount of pedagogic contact children with SEND received from class teachers, in the years preceding 2019-20. During the preceding years, the majority of support staff were deployed in-class (see: figure 1.5). The children with SEND also articulated their view on in-class support. Based on the academic literature (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Butt, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015), and the experiences of the participations, this qualitative data is important in confirming existing research on in-class support, as it adds the voices of children with SEND and teaching assistants. Both groups have previously been under-represented in research on the effectiveness of support that teaching assistants can provide children with SEND (Riitaoja et al, 2020; Roffey-Barensten, 2014).

The children's understanding of the support they received in-class should be viewed through their specific need. For example, CH-01 has an EHC plan due to their physical disability. CH-01 had a higher cognitive profile, than the other children in the study. They explained how the support of the teaching assistant ensured their access to education. CH-01 (interview 01) explained the support they receive for their visual impairment:

*I have enlarged papers and I have an iPad that's able to view the lessons... [the people that help me are] just the teachers in pupil support and any teachers in the class... [TA-01] enlarges my work and puts lessons up on the cloud... in some lessons, like especially if I need help in art or PE, there is usually another teacher there... [the role is] usually like explaining things or like showing me colours that I*

*wouldn't be able to see. Making sure that I can interpret the lesson... it's like helping me with certain tasks or helping me with what I am supposed to do.*

Their view of teaching assistant-led support was very much a functional role. There were clear outcomes and CH-01 would be able to ascertain whether the support was effective based on the output of TA-01's work. If the lesson resources were adapted and if practical support was made available in practical subjects, CH-01 felt that they were being supported. CH-01 demonstrated that their inclusion was dependant on this role being performed effectively. In this instance, where a child has a visual impairment, there are safety considerations that meant withdrawing their teaching assistant from an in-class role would be harmful.

In contrast, CH-02 (interview 01), who has diagnoses of ADHD and ODD, states that TA-05 and another TA who chose not to participate in this study, would help her:

*"if like I'm having a situation with a person it could be like I'm staring at them or they may be staring back at me, or they may start whispering about me or yeah something like that [the in-class TA would intervene]"*.

This was their initial reflection on the role adults play in supporting them in school. CH-02 is in the same year group as CH-01, but has a lower cognitive profile and is educated in lower-attaining groups. Their diagnosed needs contrast with the physical disability of CH-01. Their lower cognitive profile and their specific needs make their conceptualisation of teaching assistant support appear less progressive. CH-02 describes their support as something like that of a fire fighter, as a first responder to their pastoral "*situations*". This viewpoint can be understood through their ADHD and ODD diagnoses. These needs would inhibit the child's learning indirectly as they struggled with attention and peer relationships. CH-02 informed me that more generally, their in-class teaching assistant would help them:

*"if I don't understand the question, or I answered the question but I don't understand the rest of it, I would put my hand up and ask them to come and explain it more so that can like answer the question"*.

It was interesting to note that CH-02's initial reflections focused on resolving perceived behavioural issues; either her own or those of her peers. It took further prompting for CH-02 to consider that the in-class support also helped her with her learning. CH-02 believed that TA-05 and other TA's main role in supporting her was that "*they'll keep an eye on whose doing what*".

The third participant, CH-03, stated that (interview 01):

*"I have help with my learning 'cos when I am learning sometimes there is another teacher that can help you with the task and I find it really useful 'cos when there is one teacher they can't really get to everyone but when there's more teachers then it is easier"*

During Year 7 (2018-19; the preceding year), CH-03 regularly attended the support department as they were frequently overwhelmed by the secondary school setting. This presented as meltdowns, a term used to describe emotional outbursts and sensory overloads specific to people with autism (ASD). Often these would take place during transition, when the corridors became loud and busy.

CH-03 said he would come to Pupil Support: *"to tell them about my day and how I feel ...I found it really helpful and I think it influenced how I did in my [first] graded assessment this year"* this recollection is very understated from the neurotypical perspective, but understanding CH-03's autism spectrum disorder, it is significant that he recognised the role that the teaching assistants played in helping him maintain some emotional stability during his first year at secondary school.

Finally, CH-04 described their understanding of in-class support (interview 01): *"if I find something difficult, whoever's in the class helps me with the thing [I am finding difficult]... [a different TA] and there's another person as well, it's both [of them who help me]."* Throughout the course of our conversation, despite being at the beginning of Year 8, CH-04 remained unsure of the names of her teachers, many of whom taught her in Year 7. Likewise, CH-04 was unable to recall the presence of the teaching assistant that supported in her class, despite their presence in 26/29 periods per week in the preceding academic year. That teaching assistant chose not to participate in their study, but as part of my professional responsibilities to observe CH-04's class and that TA's role in supporting them, throughout 2018-19 and at the beginning of 2019, it was clear that CH-04 was being well-supported despite in the interview appearing to be unaware that the support was being given to her.

Of the four participants, one child had a physical disability. The child with the physical disability displayed a clear understanding of the purpose of their in-class support, and how teaching assistants specifically aided his inclusion in learning. The remaining three participants had diagnosed special educational needs: ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and speech, language and communication

needs. These children had all previously received a high frequency of in-class support from teaching assistants, but struggled to conceptualise how that support aided their learning. These three participants were able to tentatively describe the role that a second adult played in supporting their learning or their pastoral needs.

The teaching assistants participating in the study held different views on the effectiveness of their role when predominantly assigned to in-class support. Their views confirmed much of the established research (Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Butt, 2016; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014), with the participants suggesting that teachers did far less direct pedagogic instruction of children identified as being SEND, or other children who were within the teaching assistants' spheres of influence. Teaching assistants felt that their presence reduced the teachers' interactions with these children, and that this would negatively impact children with the highest levels of SEND the most profoundly (Sharples et al, 2015). Ultimately this was seen in the GCSE outcomes (see: figure 1.1 and figure 1.2), and the negative trend in progress and attainment outcomes compared to their peers without SEND.

The teaching assistants stated that they experienced teachers expecting them to play a direct role in the behaviour management of children with SEND, and in some instances whole-class behaviour management. The teaching assistants' view was consistent with research showing that 'inference' and 'assumption' rather than clearly defined roles and responsibilities reduced the effectiveness of TA's (Clarke & Visser, 2019a: 313; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019).

Undefined roles between teachers and teaching assistants are not a contemporary issue. Ofsted have called for clearer definitions of the role and understanding of teaching assistants' academic priorities since at least 2008 (Ofsted, 2008). I would go further and suggest in some instances prior to the redeployment of support staff, the lack of clarity over the teaching assistant's role in managing whole-class behaviour created friction, which had a further negative impact on teaching assistant's relationships with teachers and certain subject areas.

The lack of direction from the teachers was a recurring theme. TA-02 states that they hovered around. TA-03 (interview 01) discussed how they would work with children who didn't have an EHC plan:

*-I would still work with any of the kids, I will still walk around any of the children and see if they need my help. And if they don't, I would still walk around to see if they're okay, if they're up to task.*

Both teaching assistants had several years of experience supporting in this school, and other settings. Comparatively, teachers were often newer to the setting. The teaching assistants would often be more experienced in the setting and in many cases, working in education. The teachers may have assumed that the teaching assistants were best placed to direct themselves, given their comparative amount of experience. However, the lack of direction from teachers and the suggestion that they misunderstood the role of the teaching assistant was also shared by TA-04.

*Previously it was in-class support um depending on the child's need I would go to the child's lesson sit with them and if they don't understand the work the teacher has set and differentiate it for them and I would keep them focused on the task and just helping them if they became overwhelmed in the lesson and stuff like that... for instance in some cases it wasn't effective because for example because the child knows you are going to be - they spend less time getting to know their teachers they don't really acknowledge their teachers or their teachers don't really acknowledge them so there's no relationship there (TA-04, interview 01).*

TA-04 stated that previously, when supporting in-class, they would actively differentiate the learning for the child or children they were supporting. They felt strongly that this led to the children receiving less direct input from their teachers. It is telling that neither the teacher nor the child acknowledged the other, with TA-04 being heavily relied upon to meet the child's needs.

TA-05, in their role supporting in English lessons, also performed a similar role but received greater clarity from the teachers that they supported:

*On some occasions it would like where I would have to sit next to a student in order for them to get started and then I could walk away and float around the class, other times it would look like I would have to sit throughout the whole 55 minutes providing constant support and reminder to do work, other times I would be able to float because there were several students in the class who needed support, for example in my Year 8 class a lot of the times I would have a group of children who I would work with during those lessons and we had agreed that with the class teacher to enable those students to achieve something in the lesson and to get things done which I think works really well. (TA-05, interview 01).*

Each of the participants gave specific examples of this in-class support approach. It was described, variously, as floating, hovering or roaming. They reported infrequent direction from the teacher, and they did not solely support children with EHC plans. The teaching assistants predominantly felt that children who were



deemed to be SEND, or in need of their support, were not always those that they were allocated to support and that this caused tension with the teachers.

There was little reported evidence to suggest that teachers were actively engaging with children with SEND, nor taking a lead on their progress and attainment. They often felt that this defaulted to behaviour management support, because the teacher was either inadequately prepared to teach children with differing needs, or too inexperienced to effectively lead the classes in which they supported. There is little research to demonstrate how well teaching assistants can perform a behaviour management role (Clarke and Visser, 2019a). The support staff participating in the research (Clarke and Visser, 2019a) were vocal in their belief that the teacher should lead on whole class behaviour management. In the setting, TA-02 summarises the previous model of support:

*Select students that I would be in their classes and that would mean going in and sitting at the back of their classroom or being around them and making sure that they did the work they were being asked to, rather than being distracted and talking to other students... [this approach was not effective] when a lot of the time it became more behaviourally based than actual learning based, a lot of the interactions soon became about telling the student to focus and do the work, and a lot of the time they might not have understood how to actually access the work, and it wasn't proving very effective when we were trying to get them to do something that they didn't understand, in a classroom full of other students who did, it was kind of working against them. And then a lot of time they'd get in trouble, because they couldn't understand the work, and get sent out, and it was just a cycle, so it wasn't always that effective. (TA-02, interview 01)*

It was important to establish this baseline from the participants in the interview process, as I had felt that over the previous two years there had been an improvement in key areas of SEND support across the academy. The reports from the participants showed how far the school had had to come to reach this point, despite the in-class support being fundamentally inadequate.

Key issues that remained from the school's perspectives prior to the research period (2019-20) were: the approach of assigning inexperienced teachers to key groups with high frequencies of SEND; differing levels of accountability for direct pedagogic work and differentiation of activities (and who should lead on this); the lack of collaborative work with the teaching assistants; the expectation that the teaching assistant could or should lead on behaviour management; and, to continue integrating SEND pedagogy with the teaching and learning agenda rather than as a separate, or additional, consideration for teachers. The research is clear

that pedagogy, planning and delivery has a major impact on the development of all children, and particularly those with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020).

Proceeding the study, many of the teaching assistants reported that they felt responsible for the learning, progress and behaviour of the children that they were assigned. Teaching assistants also felt that their familiarity with whole teaching groups enabled them to perform an important role in supporting the teachers. They identified individual teachers who they felt incorporated their presence and position well in their lessons. The recurrent theme was that the teaching assistants often understood the needs of the individual child better than the teacher, and for this reason, teachers would defer to the teaching assistants' support. Teachers deferring to teaching assistants was not necessarily felt to be out of disregard for the needs of the children with SEND, nor because they didn't want to work with these children. Teaching assistants reported that teachers recognised their skill-sets:

*All the teachers were so different, it ranged from some teachers working really well with you and meeting with you before the class and talking to you about the students, what they needed and how we could support them a bit better, but as the year went on a lot of the time, it became kind of, the TA and that student, and the rest of the class, so it was like a separate entity, so it wasn't always the closest link with some of the teachers. Often at times as well it became quite teacher's assistant-y. So it was like you were being asked to do things that weren't were in relation to support the student, to help support the student or to help understand the work better (TA-02, interview 01).*

*Sometimes the teacher will say to me, oh we're learning this, like she will show me what they're learning, or she will say can I sit with the child and explain what they're doing. Because you know sometimes they go a bit fast for the children, so, what I do for my kids, we take our time, we pace it, because if its rushed they won't get it most of them. So we take our time. Or, I just take them out, and we do it together outside. They get it when you've explained it and they just get on with it (TA-03, interview 01)*

There was a consistent sense that the more experienced teachers formed better relationships with the teaching assistants, and presented as being more mature in their willingness to work as partners in the children's education. Throughout the proceeding years, there had been tension created when the teaching assistants had reported poor practice to me, and I would address this directly with the teacher or their Head of Department. There were instances whereby assigning inexperienced teachers, young teachers, or those new to the profession, could result in the teachers feeling surveilled by the teaching assistant. Where teaching is an emotional profession, those new to education likely require even higher degrees of emotional labour to become established and secure in their roles

(Hanley et al, 2020; Hattie, 2012). There would have been a heightened sense of 'failure' when trainees were allocated to classes with high frequencies of SEND, that they were under-equipped to teach.

In contrast, those more experienced teachers and the teachers that were willing to allocate time to meet and build relationships with the teaching assistants were often cited as having more positive interactions, and collaborative approaches to teaching and education the children with SEND. TA-05 (interview 01) describes their relationship with the teacher they supported in-class:

*I think its really important to build a relationship at the start of the year, or even catch up with each other every term or so, so you know where you are needed most, sometimes I think its important to follow the teachers lead, but I think we know the students in a different way and I think its important when you have that relationship that you can feed that back to the teacher, so again for example my Year 8's had a great relationship with [TE-02], and I could say to her "well miss I think I should work with this pocket of students in this way" and she was happy for me to do that –*

TA-05 would also benefit from daily contact with each of the English teachers they supported, as the children had between 5-7 lessons per week in English. In contrast, teaching assistants working with a key child or in other specific subject areas may have only seen the teacher once per week, due to the amount of time assigned to their subject. Less frequent occurrences of subjects generally correlated with poorer teacher-teaching assistant relationships. Similarly, higher teacher turnover and less experienced teaching staff did seem to affect non-core subjects (departments outside of English and maths) more regularly.

The teaching assistants had felt that teachers, in particular trainees and those new to the setting, lacked an understanding of the children with SEND. The teaching assistant's views were consistent with findings from contemporary research in both primary and secondary phases (Mintz, 2019). The reported absence of teaching assistant's voices in contemporary research motivated me to establish a baseline for TA growth, by exploring their experiences as in-class support in the years preceding the case study.

## 6.6 Summary of Results

Teaching assistants and teachers reported that children receiving interventions benefited from increased soft skills, such as confidence and willingness to participate in the classroom. It was felt that these presentations were underpinned by the quality of delivery by the teaching assistants; that through participating in

literacy interventions and targeted, SEND- specific work, the TAs were able to have a greater influence on the children's access to mainstream secondary education than by providing in-class support.

A consequence of using this intervention-based approach was acquiring greater individual strategies for children with SEND, and particularly those without EHC plans or formal diagnoses, designated School Support. Inherently, this increased the quality of information provided to teachers of these children, who could then adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individuals within their lessons.

Teachers provided confirmation that the learning interventions were having a positive effect on soft skills in the classroom. Having seen this, teachers wished to work more closely and collaboratively with teaching assistants and wanted to understand how this could be achieved through the acquisition of co-planning time and meeting more regularly with the teaching assistants delivering interventions. This was particularly seen in the views of English teachers, for whom the children receiving literacy intervention had the most positive bearing.

Finally, by withdrawing teaching assistants from supporting in-class, their own reported satisfaction, confidence, creativity, and accountability increased. By allocating small groups with similar SEND needs, and individual children for targeted intervention, the teaching assistants reported the development of their understanding of strategies that could support the children. Teaching assistants found that the autonomy to deliver the intervention increased their motivation, and this had a positive impact on the teaching assistant-child relationship, and the child's ability to participate in the mainstream classroom.

## 7 Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the results section, I stated that I had thought solely about the way teaching assistant deployment could influence children's attainment outcomes. My conceptualisation of how to improve SEND outcomes had been 'siloed'. I am the leader in the school who directs the deployment of teaching assistants, and the content of any learning interventions that they might be directed to deliver. I had anticipated that teaching assistants' direct work would be sufficient to achieve my aim, of improving these children's' outcomes. I had envisaged a direct impact on attainment grades for children with SEND receiving intervention.

I had not anticipated how the content of learning interventions appears to influence less measurable, yet desirable, traits in children and young people with SEND. This was a truly exciting discovery. I believe that I can make a meaningful contribution to discourse on SEND provision, from the completion of this study.

It became apparent early in the study that the much higher-leverage outcome of withdrawal intervention was the influence on the children's' engagement in their mainstream lessons. This observation seemed particularly prominent in English lessons, when children had completed literacy interventions that had tacit links to the mainstream curriculum.

Attuned to the early, emerging findings from the teaching assistants' interviews, I reflected on why I had not expected this link. Research had suggested that teaching assistants delivering targeted interventions to individuals or small group settings, had a consistent impact on attainment, by approximately three to four additional months' progress (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). The measure of three to four months progress suggested outcomes would be best seen in attainment data. Therefore, I had anticipated that the influence of the learning intervention would be seen most directly in assessment, rather than as a contributing factor to the children's holistic education.

Learning interventions' potential for positive impact was identified in the meta-analysis of Davies and Henderson (2020) and Cullen et al (2019). However, the report these studies generated (Education Endowment Foundation guidance

report *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*), attached a warning that only a handful of programmes in the UK had a secure evidence base for progress. My frustration with the EEF research-findings, a reliable source, was that I felt there was more guidance on what had been shown to not work, compared to what could or did work. I believe there is a need for SEND researchers to share more successful strategies. It is not necessary for these approaches to transfer “wholesale” (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14). My discussion will review the findings, indicators of success, and reflections and suggestions for maximising withdrawal interventions. I hope to expand the existing knowledge of how to support children with SEND through learning interventions.

To demonstrate new knowledge on how learning interventions have been successful, the discussion will be presented in a thematic analysis, divided into discussion points related to my three major research findings. The evaluation will be positioned alongside contemporary research, to demonstrate how SEND practice has been improved through this study. Finally, I will incorporate my reflections on the continued use of this approach in academic year 2020-21, during the writing period.

#### 7.1.1 Approaches to support children with SEND

Studies in the field of SEND have frequently reported factors that impede efficient teaching, support, and education of children with SEND. There is a growing base of rigorously researched methods of SEND support that have been deemed ineffective, or to have a negative impact (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Butt, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). A deficit model is useful in identifying strategies to avoid. These studies provided a weight of evidence against the ongoing use of in-class support by teaching assistants. Alongside the growing research base were the GCSE progress outcomes for children with SEND in my setting. The exam results for children receiving in-class support showed a negative and widening trend in progress over a three-year period (see figure 1.2: GCSE progress data 2016-19). The literature, and my own experiences, led me to the conclusion that teaching assistant deployment needed to be reconsidered in the setting.

Despite my initial belief that teaching assistant redeployment could address attainment concerns, the children would continue to spend significantly more time

in-class than in intervention. Larger, contemporary case studies (n=49) in secondary schools, propose that researchers possess little detail of what occurs within the classroom regarding SEND pedagogy (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). It is posited that SEND practices are under-theorised, and there is need for more empirical evidence from the classroom. Webster and Blatchford (2019) called for more theoretically grounded pedagogic practices for teachers of children with SEND. For these reasons, it is easier to explain why researchers more routinely make claims on what does not work, when large case studies are unable to draw conclusions on approaches that do work. From my professional perspective, it was important to continue to focus on SEND pedagogy in my setting, alongside the research project focusing on learning interventions.

Simultaneously, it remains important to be cognisant of the need to individualise approaches when working with children and SEND. Even two children with the same diagnosis, taught by the same teacher, will need subtly different approaches depending on their personalities, prior learning, and sense of belonging (Mazenod et al, 2019). If the reader accepts that two children with the same diagnosis, in the same classroom, will require differing approaches, then the idea of a transferable approach to teaching children with SEND is not achievable.

*“Rather than looking for practices that will transfer wholesale into another setting, efforts to unpick the professional thinking, trialling and reflection underpinning effective strategies and techniques have the potential to demystify pedagogy and empower schools to develop inclusive approaches” (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14)*

I agree with the conclusion of Webster and Blatchford (2019). As there is no transferable approach to teaching children with SEND, SENCOs will require strategies for individual children. My research has shown that suitable strategies for children at School Support can be acquired through learning intervention, and provided to teachers. Simultaneously, the learning interventions have shown to positively influence children’s participation in mainstream lessons, regardless of SEND designation. These findings challenge the status quo, where in-class support is still the predominant form of deployment of teaching assistants. In-class support is the status quo despite having a negative impact on the children who most need additional support. SENCOs may view in-class support as ‘something being better than nothing’. In my professional experience, parents value in-class support for their children, without understanding the negative impact that this mode of deployment has been shown to have. As a researcher-practitioner, I

sought an alternate strategy through trialling a different type of deployment and reflecting on my school's SEND provision (Webster & Blatchford, 2019).

From my professional perspective as a SENCO, I have concluded that it is not sufficient for research to continually rule out approaches. I believe that my enquiry contributes new knowledge to the field of SEND research, by extrapolating the positive outcomes from the alternate approach, and describing how these were reached. I hope that my research project leads to other SENCOs "thinking, trialling, and reflection" (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14) on their provision for children with SEND in other settings. I anticipate that the most desirable outcome for SENCOs being the increased participation of children with SEND in mainstream lessons, which is discussed in the next section.

## 7.2 Increased soft skills displayed in mainstream lessons

A priority area for secondary education in England should be obtaining a detailed understanding of the experiences of children with SEND, and how schools deliver provision to meet their needs (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016). In the research setting, outcomes between children with SEND and their peers was widening, which makes the provision for children with SEND an urgent priority.

My case study highlights how learning intervention can proactively meet the needs of learners from disadvantaged groups, fostering a more positive mindset towards learning, and encouraging participation in lessons. By developing children's soft skills, they can garner greater independence, which is a predictor to higher attainment outcomes (Mazenod et al, 2019).

Over the medium-term, the need for effective inclusive pedagogy will become even more prominent. Pre-covid projections showed that the number of children with needs complex enough to require an EHC plan will grow by 15% until 2026 (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). The literature review showed that being designated SEND leads to attainment disparities between children (Campbell, 2015), as do ethnicity and income level. More than 420,000 pupils have become eligible for free school meals since the first national lockdown (DfE, 2021b), and whilst some short-term financial support has been made available for schools to direct towards



catch-up, I believe that our setting will best benefit from a consistent, long-term plan to support the children.

Few studies have centred on the experiences of children with SEND (Sharma & Salend, 2016). I had committed to including the children's views in my research to address this discrepancy, but was unable to fulfil this in full, due to the pandemic. Predominantly in research, teachers, and then teaching assistants', views are sought (see: Davies & Henderson, 2020). Whilst the children's' voices are absent from the later rounds of data collection, the children and their parents continue to provide valued feedback within the setting.

#### 7.2.1 Children's views on in-class support

One purpose of the school's SEND department is to ensure inclusivity for children with SEND. The department enables children with SEND to be taught with their peers in mainstream settings (Schuelka, 2018). To be fully inclusive, the children are supported to access teaching, without their lessons being noticeably different to those of their peers (Florian and Beaton, 2018). The case study showed that children completing learning interventions, particularly those that pre-taught literacy, and directly linked to the curriculum, enabled children to access teaching.

The literature review showed that when children feel that school satisfies their needs, they develop a sense of belonging, a precursor to further development (Maslow, 1956). The learning interventions were reported to increase children's participation in mainstream lessons by teachers and teaching assistants. Both parties reported that the children with SEND were increasingly more confident to contribute in lessons, following the regular delivery of learning interventions.

##### 7.2.1.1 School belongingness

The research leads me to conclude that removing teaching assistants from classrooms and redeploying these staff to provide small group, paired and individual intervention ultimately fostered greater inclusion. Greater inclusion in the medium-term will contribute towards my aim of improving attainment outcomes for children with SEND in my setting. A sense of inclusivity is an important foundation for progress and attainment, as inclusivity also leads to independence (Mazenod et al, 2019). The children agreed that the support department, and the teaching assistants, supported them in feeling included in school. Those children recruited to participate in this study expressed an understanding of the role of teaching

assistants, but due to the national lockdown their views on learning interventions were not captured at the completion of the study.

In academic studies centred on the children's experiences (n=1440), it has been shown that a feeling of school belongingness is less for children with SEND. Further, this feeling of belongingness, or inclusivity, varies between children with differing special needs (n=282) (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). Seen through the differing needs of the participants (CH-02, CH-03 and CH-04), there was difficulty in articulating their support due to speech, language and communication needs. From the research (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019), one can extrapolate that a lesser feeling of belongingness would result in lesser independence, and therefore lower attainment. The delivery of learning intervention contributed to greater belongingness in school, and was reported on by both teachers and teaching assistants (for example: *"oh[!] they really enjoy [it] and [the thing interventions] promote is that their confidence has gone up, they're not afraid to read in class, they're not afraid to speak up"* TA-03, interview 02)

Similarly, CH-01, with a physical disability (visual impairment), was more assured in describing the specific support they required from teaching assistants, which allowed them to feel included, because the nature of their special need was more binary: if X was done, they felt included in Y.

Removing additional adults from the classroom and redeploying these staff members in an instructional capacity ultimately increased the children's sense of school belonging and inclusivity. The approach led to children with SEND adapting their relationships with teaching assistants, becoming less reliant on their pastoral care whilst continuing to feel that they belonged in the setting.

#### *7.2.1.2 Pastoral support from teaching assistants*

At the start of the case study (September 2019), the children participating in the study gave their view on how the teaching assistants and teachers supported them in the proceeding academic year/years. The children described the role these adults played in different manners. There was unanimous agreement that the teaching assistants were able to help them with their learning, whilst some of the children also identified that teaching assistants played an important role in providing pastoral support (for example, CH-02 and CH-03). These expressions

showed that the children felt included in mainstream secondary education, to some degree challenging the research of Dimitrellou and Hurry (2019).

From CH-02's perspective, the management of behaviour was an important aspect of their school belonging, a predictor to their further development (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). Interestingly, in this specific case, the child's perception of situations was often very different to the reality as observed by teachers and the teaching assistants. The presence of the teaching assistant in resolving CH-02's 'situations' was important in ensuring their inclusion (Maslow, 1956), despite the peer interactions often being exaggerated or misinterpreted due to the child's diagnosed ADHD and ODD. For example, when asked to think about lessons in which they previously didn't have support whilst in Year 8 (such as in PE, drama and geography) CH-02 said they "*would try and push myself a bit more or ask my normal class teacher*". CH-02 recognised the class teacher could be approached for help, but that they were more familiar requesting help from the in-class teaching assistant.

Research has shown that children perform better academically when they form emotionally supportive relationships (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Poulou & Norwich, 2019). It may be explained that CH-02's dependence on the teaching assistants to feel included was more due to the frequency with which they see and work directly with these staff. It was notable that during the writing period, CH-02 had less access to teaching assistants as they were less frequently deployed in lessons, and thus they engaged more frequently with their teachers. To conclude, support departments for children with SEND will be required to provide pastoral support to these students, but interventions can be carefully designed to support their SEND needs in a more proactive manner.

#### *7.2.1.3 Developing social relations with teachers*

For children with SEND, a feeling of school belongingness underpins a positive mindset towards learning (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). In this setting, there are higher than average predictors of low attainment (Campbell, 2015 and see table 3.1). The case study, and later observations during the writing period, have shown that low attainment can be addressed by developing children's soft skills.

Developing soft skills fosters greater independence, which is a predictor to higher attainment outcomes (Mazenod et al, 2019). An outcome of the positive influence

of learning interventions that develop soft skills, is the increase in positive interactions with teachers (as observed when pre-teaching literacy for English, for example: *“in class it was quite clear that the intervention were working with those students because for example [3 Year 10 children who received literacy intervention] would be able to engage with certain areas more so than they would have before”* (TA-05, interview 02).). As posited in the literature review, removing teaching assistants from classrooms necessitated increased teachers’ pedagogic contact with children with SEND. These interactions not only increased, but were reported to be more positive interactions than in the preceding years.

School belongingness is affected by the perceived quality of social relations with teachers (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). Social relations could be positively influenced through explicit pre-teaching and/or revision of English and maths curriculum content in learning interventions. Examples were reported by teaching assistants and teachers completing the study of A Christmas Carol (see intervention booklet in [appendix 9](#)):

English Lesson 1	Literacy Intervention 1 (Pre-teach)
Objective: Stave 1: Descriptions of Scrooge	Revising similes and identifying and understanding these in Stave 1 of A Christmas Carol
Literacy Intervention 1 (Revisit)	English Lesson 1
Identifying and understanding the similes (and their context) in Stave 1 of A Christmas Carol	Objective: Stave 1: Descriptions of Scrooge

Figure 7.2: Two variations on scheduling learning interventions (pre-teaching or revisiting)

By designing interventions to bolster inclusivity, for example through pre-teaching texts, learning intervention inverts the factors known to inhibit the progress of children with SEND. As noted, SEND research frequently focuses on factors impeding progress.

If the relationships between children and their teachers can remain positive, through their continued access to learning as well more overt praise from their ability to answer questions in the classroom, the children should be caught in an upwards spiral of increased school belongingness. As such, the use of teaching assistants delivering learning interventions was seen to be far more effective than their use as in-class support (for example: *“they were getting these [literacy] interventions and it would I would say it did show in terms of like confidence reading aloud and that kind of thing like you could see a difference but it was*

*interesting ...[a child with ADHD and an EHC plan's attention] really developed on that front over, like, that was a really noticeable one.*" (TE-05, interview 01).). If it is accepted that greater independence will lead to higher attainment outcomes (Mazenod et al, 2019), then SEND support should actively develop children's independent skills. The presence of a second adult in the classroom, particularly in an undefined role, was shown to reduce opportunities for independence (Ofsted, 2018). I concluded that linking the learning intervention to school's curricula was an important element, when extrapolating how learning interventions can have a positive impact on children with SEND of 3-4 months' progress (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019). However, alongside attainment outcomes, less measurable but desirable improvements were observed with CH-02. The next section measures successes (other than attainment), from this child's perspective.

#### *7.2.1.4 Measuring successes from the child's perspective*

From a micro-perspective, success for individual children with EHC plans is not solely measured in attainment outcomes. Objectives are reviewed annually within their plans, with updated strategies recorded in these annual reviews. One participant, CH-02, had experienced a particularly difficult Year 8 in 2018-19 (the year preceding the study). From an individual participant-perspective, receiving learning intervention had a positive effect on CH-02, who has a diagnosis of ADHD and ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder). The development was seen on a small, less quantifiable scale than attainment outcomes could demonstrate.

However, there is clear evidence that their school belongingness significantly increased through the period of study. TA-05 and I have worked very closely with CH-02 since she moved in to secondary<sup>6</sup>. There were signs of growth and an increased engagement in lessons reported, as well as overcoming some of the learned behaviours that are linked to their ODD. TA-05, whose small group Additional English intervention included CH-02, saw progress as early as December:

*"CH-02 - ... she's spending a lot of time being relocated out of the lesson but even the fact that she's in the room to be relocated is a progression from refusing to come in [in to the classroom or the intervention] ... she's coming to Additional English and the first she'd say is "don't ask me to read, I'm not going to read", the past two, three, two weeks we've gone from "Miss I've had a look through can I read from here to here?", so for me she's come out of my [her] comfort zone -*

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<sup>6</sup> The setting is an all-through academy, with capacity for 60 students per year group in primary and 180 per year group in secondary. Therefore, up to a third of the children in each secondary year group may already have been educated at the academy before I have contact with them.

*she's pushed herself and she wants to do something that she is obviously not quite comfortable doing, but she's doing it which I think is a success she still is not comfortable reading in the main lessons but I couldn't get her to read in there for ages-* (TA-05, interview 02)

The description provided by TA-05 is of very small, but noticeable improvements in desirable behaviour, such as entering an intervention, and then requesting to join in by reading aloud. CH-02 did not receive a Fixed Term Exclusion throughout 2019-20, in 2018-19 CH-02 had 10 days of Fixed Term Exclusion in the two terms prior to the intervention trial beginning. Therefore, the influence of the interventions is best demonstrated in their growth in maturity, ability to talk through problems in a calm manner, and their ability to understand the consequences of their actions.

In the example cited above, their progression was to begin to physically enter the core curricula classrooms and the intervention rooms. Entering the classrooms of their English and maths lessons would ultimately enable CH-02 to increase their attainment<sup>7</sup>. CH-02 achieved this reported growth in maturity, following the reduction of their in-class support. I have concluded that the reduced the number of opportunities per day for them to be defiant and may have heightened her sense of inclusion. The move to learning intervention, and the reduction in in-class support, was implemented with the support of CH-02's multi-agency team. TA-05 reported that:

*"one thing but the fact is she's gone for a whole term now without an exclusion which is unheard of obviously and she is getting relocated but she's even now willing to come to pupil support detentions, she's, she's - an she is more willing than she's ever been to receive support which is again probably not the outcome that Additional English is designed for but that constant contact with you, with people on this corridor"* (TA-05, interview 02).

CH-02 is a Looked After Child, who lives with their carer, and is supported regularly by a Social Worker and their Virtual Schools Teacher. Removing additional adults from CH-02's classroom required me to unpick the nature of in-class support with multiple professionals, all of whom queried the removal of teaching assistants. The focus on increasing CH-02's independence was one of the bigger influences in CH-02's turnaround in behaviour. Subsequently, CH-02 had a very positive school experience. CH-02, who reported to me on numerous occasions that they had not received a Fixed Term Exclusion all year (until March). It was clear that CH-02 had benefited through the learning intervention's' development of their feeling of school belongingness. The support provided to CH-

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing (6-month period of corrections) I can report that CH-02 passed their GCSE English exam, with a grade 4. They continued to receive English intervention throughout KS4.

02 throughout the trial period in the summer of 2018-19 and then into this school year demonstrates how effective support can be coordinated for children with the highest level of needs in a mainstream secondary:

*“and obviously [small group intervention is] giving key skills that she can use to make sure that she doesn't get relocated from history when she goes to history, she's got, you know she's used to remember “hmm okay this is what happens when I'm in with TA-05 or [Additional Maths HLTA], I need to think, that it's not okay to do this - okay I've done it let me now move on and get on with the lesson”, so yeah we might not have those 4's and 5's but there are things definitely that I think show that the interventions are supporting our students.*”

CH-02 experienced success, and their independence continued to prosper during the school's Covid-community classroom for eligible high-needs children. In turn this contact with support staff during the national lockdown enabled their positive relationship to continue into Key Stage 4 in 2020-21. CH-02 became a fantastic role model for younger children in the community classroom.

As has been shown in meta-analyses, the impact of teaching assistants deployed in-class is negative on children with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). Three half-terms of positive intervention were unlikely to redress their low attainment, and this was the case at the end of the Autumn term (the only available attainment data for 2019-20). However, there was positive progress made in the subsequent year and I am hopeful that by the time they sit their GCSEs the ongoing influence of learning intervention will see them achieving predicted attainment grades<sup>8</sup>.

Positive development of independent learning skills was also reported in the younger children, particularly those working with TA-06 in Year 7<sup>9</sup>. This qualitative evidence of improvement, increased engagement and progress was not supported by attainment data, as the school closure prevented end of year exams. However, the benefit of conducting the case study in my professional setting was the ongoing monitoring of the participants. The progress outcomes for 2020-21 suggested that the continuation of this model of support has had a positive influence, particularly on children with EHC plans:

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<sup>8</sup> (Writing during my 6-months corrections period) in summer 2022, 100% of children with EHC plans (4), passed GCSE English, including CH-01 and CH-02. 84% of children at school support (17), passed GCSE English. 49% of children with SEND (20) passed GCSE maths. CH-02 passed maths functional skills level 1. All children with SEND (21) received English intervention throughout KS4.

<sup>9</sup> (Writing during my 6-months corrections period) of two children with ASD who acquired special school placements, one began special school at the start of 2020-21, whilst the second remains on roll and has recently attained a grade 6 in their Year 10 English assessment. This student continues to receive English intervention.



Year 8	Progress8
School Support (11)	-0.09
EHC Plan (4)	<b>0.89</b>
Non-SEND (168)	0.37

Table 7.2: Progress8 outcomes for children completing learning interventions, 2020-21

The attainment outcomes for children who had completed one covid-year (Year 7) and a second year (2020-21) with frequent ‘burst bubbles’, and a second national lockdown (with intervention moving online to avoid losing time with the children), were extremely positive considering the outcomes and concerns described in the introduction (see figures 1.1 and 1.2 in the [introduction](#)). Emerging research from the DfE showed that nationally, disadvantaged children and those with SEND were making a ‘learning loss’ (DfE, 2020a: 11). During the writing period, internal assessments showed that children with SEND completing learning interventions were making positive progress. The trends identified by the DfE, using different measures, were not mirrored in the school’s internal assessment process.

Despite the observation of increased desirable soft-skills, and later the positive outcomes in 2020-21, some of the children with SEND did not respond positively to introduction of withdrawal interventions.

### 7.2.2 Negative association with withdrawal intervention

Children view inclusion as a positive concept in its abstract form (Essex et al, 2019; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019). However, issues were reported where children were unhappy about being withdrawn from lessons for intervention. My experience in school has been that some children do not want to be ‘seen’ receiving support. These children may feel excluded, or other, by being withdrawn from lessons. Most frequently, the children who challenged withdrawal were adolescent boys in KS4.

On a broader level, a wider ethical dilemma that affects SENCOs is the categorisation of those children with SEND; Done and Andrews (2019) state that ethnic minorities are over-represented, and males make up a disproportionate number of children officially categorised as having a SEND, and this helps control potentially unruly subgroups of society. The idea of control (Done & Andrews, 2019) is concerning. I did not value compliance more than the gains that could be made by actively participating in the learning intervention.



The twice-weekly withdrawal of certain children designated School Support or with an EHC Plan for learning intervention was not universally popular. Members of this group (male, ethnic minority background, SEND) would at times resist participating in their intervention. This resulted in a small number of children making a negative association with learning interventions.

It has been shown that the “process of inclusion first requires some form of exclusion regardless of the model of inclusive education under consideration” (Timberlake, 2018: 2), which is to say that inclusive education through learning intervention required some degree of exclusion from lessons. However, morally, and ethically, children missing 2x25 minutes of non-core lesson time per week to develop their literacy or numeracy far outweighed the exclusionary impact that low attainment in English or maths would have on their futures (DfE, 2018a; Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2018; Machin et al, 2018).

This issue of negative association was addressed at the beginning of 2020-21 by meeting each child and parent/carer individually, prior to the start of the school year to review their SEND provision and to (re) explain the intervention model. The school’s SEND Local Offer is also updated annually. Due to the planning time gained by the school closure, a complimentary parent- version of the learning interventions for Autumn term were provided so that the parent could support their child at home as well. Providing a complimentary parent pack to complete alongside the teaching assistants’ intervention was also observed to have a positive influence on school-parent relations in 2020-21.

### 7.2.3 Designing school-specific learning intervention

Sharples et al (2015) found that structured intervention for small groups and individuals has the most consistent impact on attainment compared to other forms of teaching assistant-led support. However, there are few programmes in the UK for which there is “secure evidence of effectiveness” (Sharples et al, 2015: 20). At the outset of the SEND provision review in 2018-19, I had recognised a pattern of lower progress and attainment than for children without SEND (figures 1.1 and 1.2) but did not have a definitive reason or set of reasons for this.

I could not buy an intervention package from the (for example Read Write Inc. Fresh Start RRP £4,500) as the needs of the children were not clearly identified beyond better, consistent teaching. Therefore I could not select from interventions that were evaluated as effective (Sharples et al, 2015).

I used my understanding of contemporary SEND- and intervention-research to design the learning interventions used in this study, so that a common model was used across the spectrum of needs we sought to address (see [appendix 9](#) and [appendix 10](#)). The examples included in these appendices are the ‘evolution’ of the original documents used in the case study, as the original artefacts are no longer available. Academic research showed that the common elements of successful learning interventions are:

- Sessions are brief (20–50mins), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period (8–20 weeks).
- Support staff receive extensive training from experienced teachers.
- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives.
- Teaching assistants closely follow the plan and structure of the intervention
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching.
- Positive effects are only observed when teaching assistants work in structured settings with high quality support and training.
- When teaching assistants are deployed in more informal, unsupported instructional roles, they can impact negatively on pupils’ learning outcomes.

Table 7.1: Common elements of effective interventions (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015: 11)

I was then able to design a training programme for my teaching assistants to deliver these learning interventions, and the timetable of their delivery (see [appendix 8](#)). Importantly, interventions that focused on literacy were delivered concurrently with the children’s’ reading topics. However, this required even more nuanced planning to ensure the children’s’ literacy intervention focused on the correct passages being studied that week. The teaching assistants and teachers agreed that, by incorporating the common element of effective interventions (table 7.1, above), these ‘homemade’ interventions had a positive influence on children with SEND:

*“[intervention] differs in firstly the size of the group [compared to supporting in a mainstream classroom], and the abilities... I liked those [literacy interventions] a lot because we could do a lot of reading, [the interventions] were a lot slower as well, pace wise, so we were able to go over and recap things that they had learned in the lesson, and also any misconceptions that maybe they had gotten”. (TA-05, interview 02).*

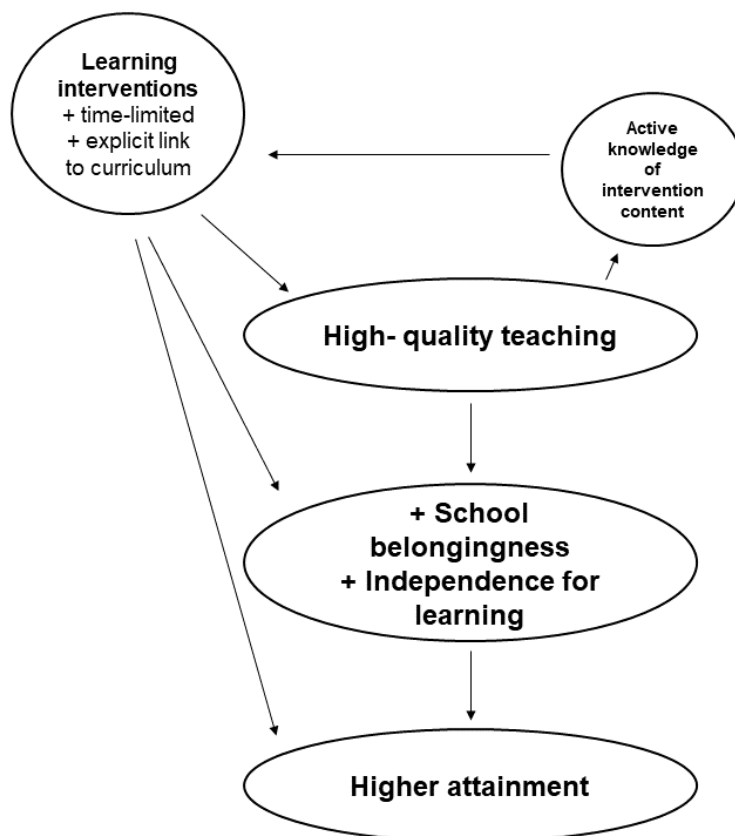
*“they were getting these [literacy] interventions and ...[a child with ADHD and an EHC plan’s attention] really developed on that front over, like, that was a really noticeable one.” (TE-05, interview 01).*

*“[Children] engaged with the same texts in their additional intervention students were confident sharing their knowledge in the classroom, even if [the] material or reading was duplicated, this often benefitted students [who found] the memorisation [sic] of characters and plot a challenge”. (TE-06, interview 01).*

*“the main success is the reading [intervention] purely because I can see them using it in the classroom and also in their lessons you can see the confidence that they have ... I think that really helps them in their lessons”. (TA-06, interview 01).*

I believe that the research has shown a clear link between positive reported outcomes, increased confidence, and willingness to participate in the classroom, and the explicit teaching and revision of the core curriculum.

**7.2.4 Modelling learning interventions, and their support of children with SEND**  
Due to the reported positive outcomes, it was possible to represent how I understand learning interventions were reported to support children with SEND. I have discussed how SEND research frequently focuses on factors impeding progress, dissuading the reader against certain approaches (for example, deployment of in-class teaching assistants). As the participants reported that learning interventions had a positive influence on the children’s learning, I have created an illustration describing the process in the research setting:



### Figure 7.1: Representation of the benefits of learning interventions

Figure 7.1, above, describes the fundamental layers of successful learning interventions that I have seen in the research setting. Following the common elements of effective intervention (*“the intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives. Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching. Support staff receive extensive training from experienced teachers”* from Table 7.1 Common elements of effective interventions) it was possible to create a safe space in which children could receive quality pedagogic delivery, with explicit links to the curricula being supported, and without significant amount of withdrawal from the classroom. It required me to design the content of the interventions, to train the staff on how to deliver them, and to timetable the content so that it aligned with the core curricula (see above [7.2.3 Designing school-specific learning intervention](#)).

For those interventions that supported children’s SEND (ASD Social Stories, Social Thinking, Mental Health issues), I maintained the same design but used my knowledge of the children and the recurring needs of the SEND cohorts to build a bank of interventions from which the teaching assistants could adapt during their planning time.

I have simplified multiple, complex aspects into an illustration, to explain the influence that withdrawal intervention has had in my setting. The common elements for successful learning intervention were incorporated, and the re-allocation of experienced teachers to teach these classes is difficult to quantify but extremely influential (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Packer, 2015). I believe the important, previously under-reported aspect of learning intervention research begins to be bridged: the how? question.

As a professional, I wanted to know how learning interventions better supported children, and improved attainment outcomes by 3-4 months’ progress (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015). This how? question can be understood through the psychological effect that improving children’s’ soft skills have had on their overall learning experience. The positive influence of learning interventions continued to be seen in the research setting in academic year 2020-21, during the writing period. Notably, pre-teaching or revisiting curricula content empowered children who do not normally feel successful in the classroom to track teaching.

Children can now be observed anticipate being able to contribute during questioning in class, and volunteer to read having practiced passages ahead of time. Likewise, addressing SEND needs in small groups and paired work not only built resilience in children and young people, but also helps to develop friendships. This was another ‘unplanned’ positive outcome, developing school belongingness and inclusivity (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Mazonod et al, 2019; Vasileiadis & Doikou-Avildou, 2018).

Children can be equipped to access high-quality teaching through an intervention model that is sensitively designed to avoid reducing the children’s sense of belonging. This creates a positive feedback loop that explains the reported increase in soft skills that teachers saw in the setting (see figure 7.1: Representation of the benefits of learning interventions). The change in deployment of teaching assistants from in-class support to delivering intervention has been transformative for the soft skills of the children receiving them in my setting (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Poulou & Norwich, 2019; Mazonod et al, 2019).

### 7.3 Greater understanding of individual children with SEND

One positive outcome of the research was to provide teachers with a greater understanding of the learning needs of children with SEND from our setting. For example, it was reported by a teacher that: *“The TA’s knowledge of the individuals in the group helped [me] to create a more focussed atmosphere”* (TE-06, interview 01). Understanding the needs of children with SEND is a prerequisite of quality-first teaching (DfE/DoH, 2015). Understanding children’s needs is particularly pertinent to schools in less affluent boroughs in England, as the quality of strategies provided in EHC Plans is shown to be lower (Castro-Kemp et al, 2019).

In the literature review, a recurrent theme was the influence of teacher readiness on effective education of children with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Packer, 2015). Research has called for training on pedagogic strategies (Lewis & Norwich, 2005), and the demystification of SEND pedagogy (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). By gaining a greater understanding of individual children with SEND, strategies could be shared with class teachers, as reported by TE-06 above, and other teachers in the results section (see: [6.3 Greater understanding of individual children with SEND](#)).

The increased knowledge of individual learning needs particularly favoured children designated School Support, as those with EHC plans already possessed a record of steps to take to support their learning in their plans. My enquiry showed that SEND diagnosis is less helpful for teaching, than building an understanding of these children's' learning needs (Davies & Henderson, 2020).

For example, in intervention, the teaching assistants could:

*“get to those core ... level of understanding ...those little bits that the teachers might not particularly know [the child doesn't know] and I think - I don't think it's easy to understand [that] until you work with a student one-on-one” (TA-02, interview 03)*

It was felt by the teaching assistants that intervention-based support allowed the children to develop their trust and foster better relationships. This in turn enabled the children to make progress with their intervention, and individual needs were identified through the completion of the intervention and the small group, paired or 1:1 work. The completion of the learning intervention and the understanding of specific areas of need, whether conceptual or based in comprehension, were fed back to the children's' teachers via children's Individual Education Plans. Engaging with this information enabled teachers to provide quality-first teaching (DfE/DoH, 2015).

The teaching assistants compared supporting teachers in this way favourably, compared to their previous deployment. The teaching assistants described this as reactive circulation, particularly in those classes where their role was poorly defined or where outcomes had not been agreed with the class teacher, for example: *“I would still work with any of the kids, I will still walk around any of the children and see if they need my help. And if they don't, I would still walk around to see if they're okay” (TA-03, interview 01)*. This mode of deployment had been critiqued in the literature (for example: Clarke & Visser, 2019a; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019) and shown to create negative outcomes, versus no in-class support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019).

The teaching assistants inverted the hierarchy of expertise, providing teachers with successful strategies to support children with SEND. For example, a teacher reflected that:

*“some of the TAs or intervention teachers will be spending a lot of high frequency amount of time, which means like they're the people you should be asking for help and getting advice from” (TE-03, interview 01)*.

The intervention-based support led to greater information on the needs of children at School Support being acquired. The teachers showed that they valued this information. Previously, these children were either loosely supported or unsupported in the previous model of deployment in-class (teaching assistants described their role as floating, hovering or roaming), as their needs were less pronounced or immediately obvious in low attaining groups with high proportions of SEND.

Strategies to support children with EHC plans were also improved, or refined, for example with CH-02, reported earlier (see: [7.2.1.4 Measuring successes from a child's perspective](#)). Despite CH-02 and other participants possessing EHC Plans, the quality of EHC Plans in less affluent boroughs is shown to be lower than for children with equivalent plans in more affluent boroughs (Castro-Kemp et al, 2019). Therefore the influence of learning interventions was that greater strategies were acquired to support children at both School Support and those with EHC Plans. Consequently, teacher- teaching assistant relationships improved. Due to the quality of strategies to support the children that were being provided to, and applied by, teachers, and the observed improvement in soft skills the children were showing in lessons, the friction that I had observed between teaching assistants and some teachers decreased significantly.

### 7.3.1 Positive relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and children

The research that informed the EEF's Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools Guidance Report (Davies & Henderson, 2020) analysed 29 systematic reviews of targeted intervention with positive outcomes, equating to 980 studies (Cullen et al 2019). In 17 of these systematic reviews, mode of instruction and positive adult-child relationship were found to have a positive impact on the intervention's outcomes. Interestingly, as with an earlier meta-analysis (Sharples et al, 2015), the content and design of the programme was shown to have less impact than the delivery/deliverer. Finding that content had less impact than delivery informed my literature review's conclusion; that more research needed to focus specifically on identifying elements that can have a positive impact on children's learning. I felt this would be of more value to the practitioners working in education settings, than reporting more negative factors. My case study confirmed that delivery/deliverer of a 'homemade' learning intervention could have a positive influence on children with SEND.

Understanding that the programme of intervention is only as effective as the delivery/deliverer, is vital in designing strategies to support children with SEND. Sharples et al (2015), Cullen et al (2019) and Davies and Henderson (2020) conclude that intervention:

- Positive effects are only observed when teaching assistants work in structured settings with high quality support and training.
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching.

I believe this further strengthens the link between the learning interventions and the growth and development of soft skills required for independent learning in the mainstream classroom (Mazenod et al, 2019). In the research setting, there is a commitment to class sizes of between 8-16 children in the lowest attainment groups, but these classes are not always sufficiently small enough to enable teachers to intimately understand the needs of every child. Nor would these teachers be expected to differentiate their lessons in 8-16 different ways. As the child's relationship with the teaching assistant delivering intervention can be so much more personal, in very small groups, pairs and at an individual level, knowledge of the children's learning needs can be acquired:

*because [I told the children] "the reason that we are starting you off is for you to be ahead of your peers and this is an advantage for you, so you improve", so I think they are happy with it and from what they [the teachers] are saying to me they are progressing in class as well."* (TA-01, interview 01)

*"I feel like their behaviour and the attitude towards learning has changed as well because they try their best, they want to push themselves"* (TA-03, interview 02)

*"[Intervention] gives them a more in-depth knowledge, and especially because if we're working alongside their English lessons... [it] gives them more confidence because they might not be sure, but because we've gone through it together and they know that I've been like "yeah, well done keep going" it then gives them the confidence to say in the classroom"* (TA-06, interview 01).

*"[the children benefited from learning interventions as they] were a lot slower as well, pace wise, so we were able to go over and recap things that they had learned in the lesson, and also any misconceptions that maybe they had gotten".* (TA-05, interview 02).

Cullen et al (2019) found that mode of instruction and positive adult-child relationship had a positive impact on the intervention's outcomes, and the teaching assistants' data confirmed the meta-analysis' findings.

Quality-first teaching requires teachers to know and understand the needs of children in their classes, and be accountable for their needs (DfE/DoH, 2015). Researchers and practitioners need to "demystify pedagogy and empower schools



to develop inclusive approaches” (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14). My case study showed that a secondary outcome from the introduction of learning interventions was an increase in teacher preparedness. Teachers can plan to address common misconceptions reported in learning interventions, or address specific concerns on an individual level, once the information has been shared by the teaching assistants. Acquiring greater understanding of individual children’s learning needs at school support has had a significant influence on teacher readiness, and contributes to better overall teaching for low-attaining groups (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018; Packer, 2015; Lewis & Norwich, 2005).

The redeployment of teaching assistants seen in my enquiry, led both teachers and teaching assistants to recognise that children could acquire skills in their interventions, and implement these in their mainstream lessons with some degree of independence. In some instances, the removal of teaching assistants led to improved relationships between teaching assistants and teachers. However, one area for improvement which was planned for 2020-21, was the collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants. I have stated that my thoughts on how to improve outcomes were ‘siloes’, and centred on the role of the teaching assistant. The case study revealed that teachers actively sought more information about the learning interventions and planned to collaborate more closely with support staff.

### 7.3.2 The hierarchical relationship between teachers and support staff

One area that support staff and teachers agreed on, is the need for greater collaboration and understanding of the intervention’s aims. For example, a teacher-participant stated:

*“[One way of improving withdrawal intervention would be] prior to you teaching year 7 A Christmas Carol if you are having children withdrawn from lessons to do literacy work that you would go through this programme with the LSA at the start of that half term, which I think is the best, one of the best ways I could ascertain you understanding what’s being taught to the children, and knowing who the children are.” (TE-04, interview 01).*

Both parties felt that the approaches identified to achieve these aims could reinforce pedagogy in the classroom. The meta-analysis that informed the EEF’s Guidance Report concluded that the key predictor of an intervention’s success was the class teacher understanding its context and agreeing with its approach (Cullen et al, 2019). The SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015) highlights how

teachers are accountable for the attainment of children in their class, including those receiving intervention overseen by support staff.

The conclusion in the EEF's Guidance Report cautions that intervention "*should not replace general efforts to improve the overall quality of teaching in the classroom*" (Davies & Henderson, 2020: 28). Similar research concluded that intervention should be explicitly integrated with the mainstream curriculum (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). This was demonstrated through the teaching assistants' ability to develop their literacy interventions to address specific misconceptions for their groups, and more broadly in my decision to create literacy interventions that linked directly to their mainstream reading/literacy curriculum rather than a generic or packaged literacy intervention. My decision to design interventions in this way contrasts with some SEND-specific programmes, for example Fresh Start or Lexia, which are interventions designed to improve specific skills. One area of focus as the setting's intervention model is developed and reflected upon is ensuring these explicit links remain (Davies & Henderson, 2020). Factors that could require review to the existing interventions include change of curricula, change of assessments for these curricula, and a change in the needs of the cohort (making certain successful interventions redundant).

More generally, the school closure in March 2020 due to Covid-19 highlighted how teachers and teaching assistants could build more positive and constructive relationships due to the amount of time gained, which was directed to reviewing and improving the learning intervention content. Existing research describes the demands on teachers as high (DfE, 2018c), and that teaching assistant performance suffers from a lack of direction in the classroom (Mazenod et al, 2019). Despite the tragic nature of Covid-19, the school closure did change the demands on teachers. One 'benefit' of Covid-19 was the time gained for teachers and teaching assistants to work collaboratively on improving the learning interventions.

As part of the ongoing review of the learning interventions in lockdown, requisite time has been built into the school induction programme for staff in September leading in to 2021-22, to ensure that literacy and maths intervention mirror the content being introduced in new curricula in Year 7. To this end, curriculum intentions documents were co-created with the Heads of Department for maths

and English, to ensure agreement on the content of the interventions in these subject areas. My professional experiences enable me to conclude that the increased dialogue between teachers and teaching assistants, the feeling that their work was being valued, and my requirement that the teaching assistants evolve the interventions I had introduced, contributed to their reported increase in purposefulness. Tasks such as reviewing A Christmas Carol intervention, updating and feeding back to the department, provided the teaching assistants with more autonomy. Growth in autonomy and feeling of purposefulness were my third major finding and will be discussed in the next section.

#### 7.4 Growth in teaching assistant autonomy and feeling of purposefulness

Wide-ranging research suggests deployment in-class results in the children's over-reliance on their support (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Slater and Gazeley, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015; Bowles et al, 2018). Over-reliance caused by teaching assistants' presence was observed to negatively impact the number of interactions between child and teacher (Sharples et al, 2015). Research and contextual information led me to redeploy the setting's teaching assistants. TA-02 described how the transition from in-class support to intervention work had felt at the end of the autumn term:

*"I am enjoying it, I'm finding it interesting and different, as the weeks have gone on we found more specific needs for specific children and we have been able to identify or work around those, so different interventions even though they may be covering the same things have now become more bespoke to the individual children"*

By withdrawing teaching assistants from the classrooms, teachers were required to have more deliberate interactions with children with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Slater and Gazeley, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015; Bowles et al, 2018). Meanwhile, the teaching assistants reported that their work delivering learning interventions felt far more positive and impactful. The participants began reporting this positive finding early in the study, and their belief in the model grew throughout the enquiry.

##### 7.4.1 Considerations for SENCOs

The case study has shown that the redeployment of teaching assistants to conduct weekly or twice weekly intervention programmes with small groups, pairs and individuals enabled a greater breadth of provision for children with SEND. The compromise was the reduction in the number of hours teaching assistants were

deployed in-class. Where a positive effect size is found, Hattie argues that beyond impact, cost of implementation and how resources can be allocated to support this positive impact should be central to reporting (Hattie, 2012). The effective cost of redeploying teaching assistants in monetary value is negligible, as it allowed existing staff to perform a different role. Deploying teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions was an almost total reversal of the previous model of deployment, with only English and maths lessons in the lowest attaining groups retaining in-class support<sup>10</sup>.

I have not concluded that SENCOs should proceed with their own large-scale redeployment, without being fully prepared to introduce learning interventions. I have shared my view that a SENCO could not lift my setting's intervention programme 'wholesale' (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14) and expect to replicate successes immediately. Research shows that positive effects are only observed in structured roles with high quality support and training; that support staff utilised in more informal withdrawal can negatively impact pupils' learning outcomes in much the same way that in-class support was shown to (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015).

Adults teaching and supporting children with SEND often feel disconnected from policy makers at a macro- level (Cavendish et al, 2020). The feeling of disconnection was observed in some teachers in the setting at the micro- level, who weren't consulted prior to my redeployment of staff. It is likely that some had become complacent with regards their role in ensuring the progress of children with SEND (DfE/DoH, 2015). Certainly, the teaching assistants' responses confirmed much of the existing research that shows diminished pedagogic contact between teachers and children with SEND when TA's are present in classrooms (see: [6.5 Confirmation of existing research](#)). Regardless of the lack of consultation, the teachers and teaching assistants believed that the intervention approach had proven successful for the children they worked with. However, the recruitment and confirmation of teachers was limited to English teachers (n=4) and Assistant Principal (n=1) with whom there was a direct link to the content of the literacy interventions. Maths teachers were not recruited, as the maths HLTA did not wish to participate in the study.

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<sup>10</sup> And children with Physical Disabilities (PD), as/if stated in their EHC plans.

#### 7.4.2 The value of support

In my experience working as SENCO, there is an ongoing need to quantify or value the support provided to children with SEND. Budgets are ‘topped up’ by EHCP funding, which is calculated by the setting’s LA at an LSA’s hourly rate. For children at school support, the academy’s notional SEND budget should demonstrate £6000 per child is allocated to their support. Language based around finding efficient models of support, whether in-class or intervention-based, conform to a creeping economic orthodoxy (Timberlake, 2018). For example, the reduction in support staff in the setting, whilst the number of children with EHC plans remained relatively static, in the preceding years 2016-19 (figure 1.4):

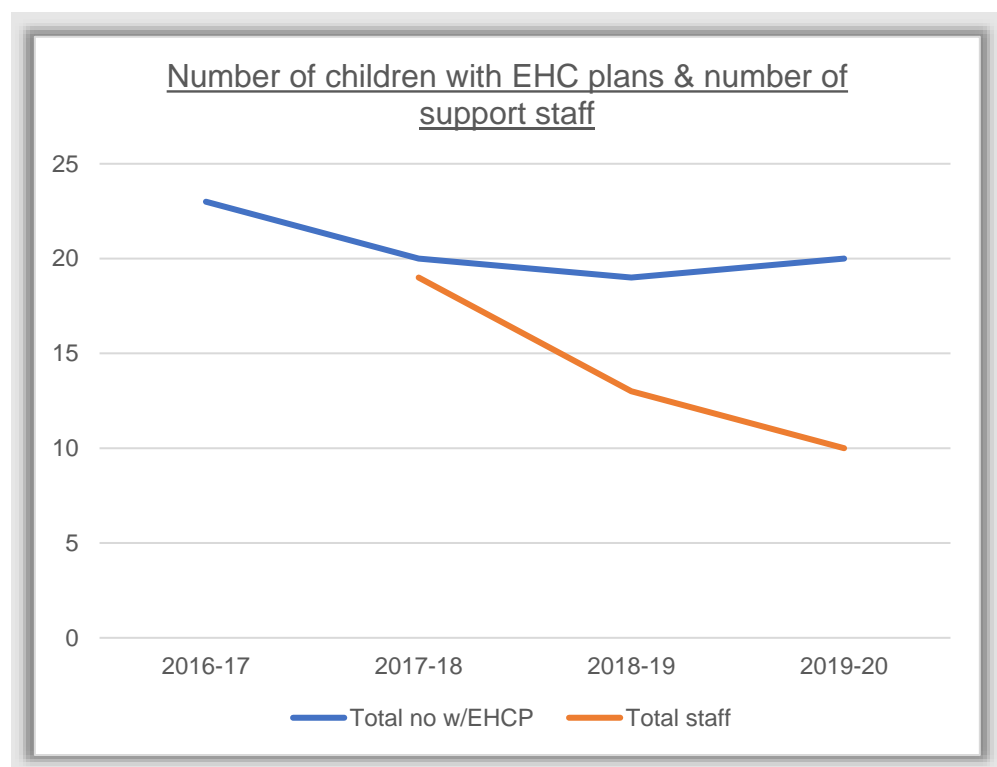


Figure 1.4 Number of children with EHC plans and number of support staff in setting (data unavailable 2016-17)

Due to this period of economic austerity, children in the setting could not all receive the number of hours of ‘in-class support’ in their EHCP budget. The concept that ‘in-class support’ is written in to the EHC plan demonstrates the growth of neoliberal concepts within the statutory provision for children with SEND (see: DfE/DoH, 2015).

The perceived cost of inclusion can be reduced through the of vocabulary of belonging (Timberlake, 2018). Once children feel that the school satisfies their

needs, they develop a sense of belonging, a precursor to further development (Maslow, 1956). Where this case study has reported successful engagement in lessons, and the development of key independent learning skills, defies the notion that 'in-class support' should be the status quo. Belonging has been seen in the teaching assistants' and teachers' claims to greater preparedness to participate, and confidence within the mainstream classrooms. The increase in soft skills shows the value of support.

Research has shown that sustained use of teaching assistants in-class, despite the growing body of evidence to suggest their impact is negligible or negative, performs an important role in staving off debates about how to effectively educate children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Clarke & Visser, 2019a). Alongside this debate, is the continued inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream education who could attend special schools instead. As I have noted in the results section, two Year 7's first required an additional teaching assistant to be appointed, and then acquired special school placements as secondary mainstream could not meet their needs. This is an example of neoliberal inclusion and the opportunity for defunding special schools, versus my view of inclusive education which assumes that all children have a right to be in the same educational setting (Schuelka, 2018) as long as that setting can meet their needs.

With limited resources, I sought to better understand how the most value could be found from the deployment of teaching assistants. Not only did the delivery of learning interventions have a positive influence on the children, but there was also a noticeable increase in the teaching assistants' work satisfaction, ownership of the intervention and willingness to collaborate with teachers. The change of deployment increased the value of the support staff, without any further financial (wage) commitment. Withdrawing support staff from lessons also ensured that the setting received full value from the teaching staff, in terms of their statutory duties to teach and be accountable for children with SEND (DfE/DoH, 2015).

#### 7.4.3 Teacher accountability

The Department for Education state that teachers are accountable for the attainment of all the children that they teach, including those with SEND and EHC plans (DfE/DoH, 2015). A contemporary meta-analysis concluded that *"schools need to consider how to change the quality of what happens in the immediate environment to best support the [SEND] pupil's learning, taking in to account the*

*individual*” (Davies & Henderson, 2020: 5). The statutory guidelines allow the SENCO, and school leaders, to ensure accountability of teachers. However, those teachers need to be equipped to teach classes with high frequencies of children with SEND. There is a question of teacher preparedness (Lawson et al, 2013), when allocating teachers to these classes.

As expressed, the largest variable that can be controlled by the SENCO is how teaching assistants are deployed. Removing these additional adults was the boldest step I could take, to affect the “immediate environment” (Davies & Henderson, 2020: 5) of children in their classrooms. My rationale, based on the literature review, was to reduce over-reliance on the second adult, and increase the number of pedagogic contacts between teacher and child.

The case study demonstrated that teachers felt more prepared to teach children with SEND when provided specific, tailored strategies for individuals. The teaching assistants were able to capture these strategies in the children’s Individual Education Plans. TE-06 stated that *“the TA’s [shared] knowledge of the individuals in the group helped [me] to create a more focussed atmosphere”* (TE-06, interview 01), capturing the view of the participants, and colleagues in the school, who were more equipped for groups with high frequencies of SEND, despite (or because of) the reduction of in-class support. Research had identified that SENCOs were not confident that teachers were equipped to teach children with SEND appropriately (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020). I reflected that after two years in post, the school was improving in key areas of SEND support. However, despite a gradual improvement in collaboration with support staff, I observed a significant increase in the frequency teaching staff sought strategies from myself and the teaching assistants once the teaching assistants were redeployed.

My case study corroborated research that clear definition of teaching assistants’ roles, and enhanced training of teachers to meet the needs of children with SEND are vital to effective deployment of teaching assistants (Sharma & Salend, 2016). Where the teaching assistants reported feeling disillusioned or inadequately supported by teachers, there tended to be infrequent or poor interactions between adults and/or a perceived limited understanding from the teacher towards the children.

As teaching assistants in the setting are employed to work with some of the most vulnerable children, I have viewed them to be highly invested in individual children's successes. It is possible that they were unable to comprehend that some teachers' priorities, or areas of investment, lay outside those children with SEND. Research has shown that pedagogy and support of children with SEND is one of many competing policy initiatives in secondary schools (Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Done & Andrews, 2019). Given the high number of NQTs and ITTs previously teaching groups with high frequencies of children with SEND, some of these competing initiatives would likely include behaviour management, climate for learning, and embedding the school's routines and sanctions policies.

Teaching assistants also identified experienced teachers who paid little attention to the needs of children with SEND. Wearmouth and Butler (2020) describe these teachers as ambivalent towards engaging with diagnosed SEND (Wearmouth & Butler, 2020; Dunne et al, 2018). If the teaching assistants found staff were ambivalent towards the most vulnerable children in a school with very high indicators of disadvantage, they would certainly mirror my early frustrations as the settings lead for special needs support.

Ambivalence can be seen in the teaching assistants' interview data. For example, TA-06, the least experienced participant, highlighted how regular or daily contact would not always correlate with more positive relationships with teachers. TA-06 (interview 01) described the contrast between working in-class in maths and English lessons. The two core subjects have similar amounts of teaching time allocated (6 hours per week in English and 5 per week in maths), however TA-06 reported that the contrast in their use was stark:

*"so I'm in a maths and English class, and I've kind of had like two completely different perspectives on it so in the English classroom it's really, really positive, and you can see that the teacher is really grateful for you to be in there, and it almost like makes me more confident to be like okay what I'm doing is working and it's positive, I can kind of use my own initiative and go and help wherever and whenever I think is appropriate and then the other side of it is in the maths classroom it was a bit more, the teachers in charge and I'm just there and yeah and I didn't really know where my place was in the classroom, and like he even pulled me to the side and was like "can you not help anybody apart from this one child" and I was a bit like "well what am I supposed to do when they asked me for help?" (TA-06, interview 01).*

There is a clear link between the level of support the teaching assistant felt, and the experience of the teacher they were working with. In this example, the English teacher was an experienced practitioner who had also been a teaching assistant.



The maths teacher was in the first term of their initial teacher training. A common feeling amongst the teaching assistants was that their presence caused some level of additional tension or anxiety to these newer and often younger adults. The fact that TA-06 was told not to help anybody apart from the child with an EHC plan whom they were designated to support is the antithesis of the teacher being accountable for all children's progress and attainment (DfE/DoH, 2015). This phrase is suggestive of the lack of awareness that teachers beginning their school-based training are shown to have in SEND research.

The Education Policy Institute found that schools with a more disadvantaged pupil body have more newly qualified teachers and have heightened issues with teacher recruitment and retainment (Fullard and Zuccollo, 2021). Both these findings can be observed in the teaching staff. In the setting, the percentage of staff turnover has never been lower than 24% since 2014 (the year I was employed). A higher proportion of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), would lead to more variable experiences teaching children with SEND during training years (Lawson et al, 2013). Teacher training is vital to developing teachers' inclusivity and increasing their confidence in teaching children with SEND (Mintz, 2019; Morley et al, 2017). During the case study, teaching assistants expressed frustration in their previous work in trainee teachers' classrooms. During the course of the study, the increased autonomy led to increased responsibility for these children. Direct responsibility for the children enabled the TA's to think deeply about their role in supporting the children. In interview 03, TA-02, the most experienced teaching assistant in the setting, asserted that delivering interventions stopped them from becoming lazy and mindless. This admission encapsulates the automated way that the teaching assistants worked in-class when given little guidance or direction by teachers.

#### 7.4.4 Teaching assistant accountability

Prior to the case study, some of the concerns raised regarding teacher engagement with key children may have been well founded. The change in deployment led the teaching assistants to understand that being responsible for small groups, pairs and individuals was a greater challenge than perhaps they had anticipated. The Assistant SENCO supports me in the management of the department. The Assistant SENCO had closely observed the effects of the intervention model, and the requirement for the teaching assistants to work more independently:

*“[the introduction of the intervention model] has given the members of staff and the department more independence and autonomy should I say ...and I think accountability um and I think its um also has given the students that one-to-one undivided attention that they might have been lacking” (AS-01, interview 03)*

Here AS-01 highlights the benefits of moving from in-class support to delivering interventions has benefited both the children and the staff. Where AS-01 describes the ‘undivided attention’ that the children can receive in their intervention, they support the teaching assistants’ view that this was not possible when supporting whole classes. Under the model of in-class support, teaching assistants were expecting direction from teachers, and where this was not forthcoming, they were reliant on their own proactivity and motivation to understand and support key children. AS-01 explains that through granting the teaching assistants more autonomy they also faced an increased accountability to work effectively with their allocated children. The intervention-based approach is beneficial to us as leaders, as we can better ensure the quality of work being completed with the children with SEND when other factors, such as classmates and teachers, are not influencing the intervention. AS-01 reflected that:

*“[those delivering interventions] have run it, it and kind of made it their own and been quite creative with it as well... it can be quite daunting and I think it does help with your confidence because it does make you a bit more in charge – it changes your position in the [teacher-TA-child relationship]” (AS-01, interview 03)*

AS-01 suggests that empowering the teaching assistants with the responsibility of delivering SEND interventions exceeded the expectation that they would merely deliver these tasks and activities. The teaching assistants started to adapt, develop and create more effective intervention work for the children, as their understanding of the individuals’ needs developed. Previously, the teaching assistants had been a group that understood their role to be primarily behaviour support, general circulation of class groups, and task completion for key children.

AS-01 felt that the intervention-approach to supporting the children with SEND equally impacted the teaching assistants, increasing their own independence and confidence, and changing the teacher-TA relationship. This feeling was reported by the teaching assistant participants, and their work is summarised neatly by TA-01:

*“I’ve learned a lot in terms of the intervention [model] I’ve lived the life of like a semi-teacher, VI technician and getting to know the students and the students to know me as well have that should I say that relationship with them, that connection with them” (TA-01, interview 03)*

Where before the TAs felt that teachers enforced responsibility for learning and behaviour in the classroom, and resented this as an inappropriate response to the needs of children with SEND, now the TAs relished the responsibility given to them to complete learning intervention:

*“whereas even little things that we were doing a poem the other day and I think because we've kind of got that relationship from reading outside she will happily, like, she's writing like, two pages worth now, which is really good” (TA-06, interview 01).*

*“a successful intervention is when you actually see it in the student's grade in their class work, their behaviour as well... it is important [for the content to compliment the curriculum and assessment] because that tells you if what you're doing is actually working if there's any positive outcome in what you're doing” (TA-01, interview 03).*

Here, two of the participants, working with differing year groups and prior-attainment levels, both shared how they felt an ownership for the children's outcomes. One through the positive feedback of seeing how much a child can achieve independently in the classroom, and the second through the outcomes of an assessment.

A common view amongst the TAs prior to the study was that teachers delegated responsibility for SEND children to them, whether directly and consciously, or subconsciously through their actions. By leading small group, pair and 1:1 work, the teaching assistants willingly took on this role, and reported a much more positive feeling of ownership.

From our professional perspectives, AS-01 and I felt that the intervention-approach to supporting the children with SEND equally benefited the teaching assistants, increasing their own independence and confidence, developing a greater understanding and appreciation of the teacher-TA relationship, and generating a desire to work more collaboratively than under the previous model of in-class deployment.

## 7.5 Summary

The aim of the study was to understand if redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND, in-line with contemporary research. The primary objective was to strategically review the teaching assistants' delivery of learning interventions at three points in the school year and correlate their claims with evidence obtained from the children's'

teachers. This would enable me to achieve my secondary aim of providing a voice to teaching assistants, a group under-represented in SEND research.

The research achieved the aim of improving outcomes for children with SEND. I can also conclude, from the case study, that I have gained a much greater understanding of influence learning interventions have on the soft skills of children in their mainstream classroom.

#### 7.5.1 Contributing new understanding to the field

The research indicated that learning interventions developed soft skills such as confidence in the classroom. Increased confidence in classrooms is desirable, as it led to greater willingness to participate and greater tracking of teaching/instruction. These soft skills are a prerequisite to an increased ability to learn independently, which is in turn a predictor of higher attainment (Mazenod et al, 2019). As such, the model of teaching assistant deployment that better met the needs of the children was one that minimised withdrawal from the core curricula (maths, English and science), and contributed directly to the children's' increased engagement in these lessons.

The case study's data collection was interrupted by Covid-19. This prevented interviews being completed with the child-participants. Research has highlighted the paucity of children's involvement regarding their SEND provision (Riitaoja, 2020). A benefit of conducting this study in my professional setting is the ongoing progress, and feedback, I received during the subsequent academic year. I have maintained an ongoing, reflective dialogue with the children and their parents, which is another benefit of conducting case study research in my setting. Whilst my research project did not amplify the children's voices in the academic domain as I had hoped, the effect of the case study on the school's provision for children with SEND has surpassed my original aim. I have seen the continued growth in independence from the children, superior differentiated approaches from the teachers, and continued ownership of the learning interventions from teaching assistants. My observations during the writing period were positively reflected in the progress and attainment data at the time of writing (August 2021).

#### 7.5.2 Ratifying existing research

My research indicates that the children completing learning interventions outside of the classroom in small groups, pairs or 1:1, demonstrated greater confidence in

their mainstream lesson. The learning interventions were designed with contemporary research at the fore (see table 7.1); that which had been shown to have a consistent impact on attainment of three to four additional months' progress (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015: 11).

Webster and Blatchford (2019) had found that high degrees of separation from teachers and peers led to diminished outcomes. Therefore, the interventions were delivered in a time-limited fashion, with learning interventions delivered in 2x20 minute blocks per week (and 2x55 minute blocks per week for ASD Social Stories). The meta-analysis deemed the sample size for learning interventions small, with "a handful of programmes in the UK for which there is a secure evidence base" (Sharples et al, 2015: 11). I felt justified in pursuing this approach to SEND support, given that the alternate evidence base for in-class support was much larger.

Common elements of effective interventions were extrapolated from the two widest ranging meta-analyses:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sessions are brief (20–50mins), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period (8–20 weeks).</li><li>• Support staff receive extensive training from experienced teachers.</li><li>• The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives.</li><li>• Teaching assistants closely follow the plan and structure of the intervention</li><li>• Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching.</li><li>• Positive effects are only observed when teaching assistants work in structured settings with high quality support and training.</li><li>• When teaching assistants are deployed in more informal, unsupported instructional roles, they can impact negatively on pupils' learning outcomes.</li></ul> |
|--|

Table 7.1: Common elements of effective interventions (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015: 11)

My study ratified the common elements of effective intervention identified in existing research (see table 7.1). Using Table 7.1 to design the learning interventions, and the logistics of withdrawal intervention, underpinned the successes seen by the participants. At the outset of the enquiry, I had sought to understand how to improve the attainment outcomes for children with SEND, however the much higher-leverage influence was on the children's' engagement in the mainstream lessons.

Table 7.1 suggested that effective learning intervention made connections between the intervention and classroom teaching. The participants found that the

more explicit the link to the curriculum, the better the children engaged in later lessons. It was the reported increase in soft skills that resonated with teaching assistants and teachers. From my academic literature search I can conclude that this understanding of how learning interventions can compliment high-quality teaching is novel in the field of SEND research.

### 7.5.3 Influence on teacher pedagogy

The participant teachers in the case study indicated how learning interventions had an indirect, positive, influence on their classroom pedagogy. Research showed that strategies identified as effective in supporting individual children's needs should be incorporated into everyday teaching; that the most effective teachers of children with SEND are "inclusive by design not as an afterthought" (Davies & Henderson, 2020: 2). Concurrent research concludes that teaching need not be materially different for children with SEND (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). Effective strategies for children with SEND were shared by teaching assistants during, or after, a period of learning interventions.

The case study showed that teaching assistants delivering learning interventions can work collaboratively with teachers, to provide these effective strategies. Delivery of learning intervention resulted in the reported increase in soft skills in lessons, such as preparedness to participate and attentiveness, whilst contributions to class discussion were also observed to have increased. The overall effect indicated children demonstrating greater inclusion in their learning.

Collaborative delivery of learning interventions by teaching assistants, that explicitly linked to the children's maths and English curricula, improved the soft skills of their participants. The teachers' response to the increased engagement from children with SEND was to seek further collaboration with the SEND department, to maximise the impact on their classes. Therefore, the engagement and the positive feedback loop that was generated during the research period, better demonstrated teachers taking accountability for the outcomes of the children with SEND (DfE/DoH, 2015).

From a school's perspective, there were few positive outcomes from Covid-19. One gain was the ability for adults to work collaboratively on planning interventions for academic year 2020-21. Prominent research concluded that there is need to

“demystify pedagogy and empower schools to develop inclusive approaches” (Webster & Blatchford, 2019: 14). Gaining time to refine the learning interventions, particularly those that reinforced the mainstream curriculum (literacy, maths), ensured that in the subsequent academic year the interventions were even more likely to support the children.

Through the redeployment of teaching assistants, the school’s knowledge of individual children comparatively increased when compared to the previous deployment of TAs in the classroom. This knowledge led to better teaching from their teachers. Meta-analyses conclude that educators who wish to ensure children with SEND make progress in-line with their peers do not require new, intricate programmes (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019). Instead, leaders should ensure teachers use familiar and powerful strategies that reflect the needs of the individual child (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019). The redeployment of teaching assistants allowed a wider cohort of SEND children to receive direct support. The influence of the learning interventions better enabled the school to acquire powerful strategies, particularly for those children at School Support who had not previously received such direct pedagogic support from classroom teaching assistants..

#### 7.5.4 Maximising the effectiveness of teaching assistants

Teaching assistants experienced growth in their professional skillset, held greater ownership in the outcomes for children, and increased their motivation and their feeling of being valued within the school. In turn, teaching assistants reported a greater engagement in their own work, which further strengthened the outcomes of the children.

The key contribution to the field is: teaching assistants can have a positive influence on the soft skills of children with SEND through the delivery of time-limited learning interventions, that are explicitly linked to the core curriculums in maths and English. These interventions were shown to increase key soft skills that can underpin greater independent learning, a predictor to higher attainment (Mazenod et al, 2019). Finally, there was a connection between the success of the intervention programme and the teaching assistants’ reported feeling of purposefulness and increased autonomy in their role, compared to their role supporting in-class.

### 7.5.5 Summary

The Education Endowment Foundation conclude through their meta-analyses (Cullen et al, 2019) that effective education of children with SEND requires careful implementation of interventions led by teaching assistants and teachers working collaboratively and effectively together (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015). Of the five recommendations in the Guidance Report, the research findings explicitly aligned with three:

- the need to build an ongoing, holistic understanding of each child;
- complement high quality teaching with carefully selected interventions;
- teachers to work effectively with teaching assistants (Davies & Henderson, 2020).

This enquiry further develops these key findings by developing the understanding of how learning interventions can be used to complement high quality teaching and how learning interventions can be used to acquire a better holistic understanding of children with SEND.

### 7.5.6 Closing remarks

My enquiry found that not only could the redeployment of teaching assistants lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND, but the question of how learning interventions benefit children has begun to be extrapolated. Building on the existing research, my findings posit that withdrawal interventions in small groups, pairs and on an individual basis can result in greater confidence, willingness to participate and ability to track teaching in the mainstream core curriculum. The development of these soft skills leads to an increased sense of belongingness, which fosters children's' ability to learn independently. Independent learning is in turn a predictor of higher attainment outcomes.



## 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Original contribution of knowledge to the field of SEND research

I believe there are exciting opportunities to learn from this research project. This enquiry has advanced the field of Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND) research through developing the link between learning interventions, mainstream classroom teaching and the reported increase in confidence, willingness to participate in lessons, and other important soft skills necessary for independent learning.

Independent learning skills are recognisably desirable traits for all school children. By enhancing opportunities for our most vulnerable learners to develop such soft skills, schools can better equip children with SEND to learn and flourish. I believe that reporting the learning intervention-approach to supporting children with SEND in my setting, will allow other SENCOs and leaders to reflect on the provision in their own schools.

To conclude, I will review my research aims and present emerging themes that I believe can advance practice for the deployment of teaching assistants to benefit these children, in addition to exploring the potential impact of my findings.

### 8.2 Research aims

The aim of the study was to understand how the redeployment of teaching assistants could lead to improved outcomes for children with SEND, in-line with contemporary research. By reviewing the teaching assistants' delivery of learning interventions at three points in the school year, and comparing their claims with evidence obtained from the children's' teachers, it has been shown that children completing learning interventions outside of the classroom increased soft skills required in their mainstream lessons. Increasing children's independence is a necessary step towards increasing attainment outcomes (Mazenod et al, 2019). With teachers and teaching assistants reporting improved attentiveness and willingness to participate, the potential longer-term benefits to the school's SEND cohorts are very exciting.

### 8.3 Potential impact for children with SEND

Finding that children's independent skills could develop through these targeted learning interventions was exciting for multiple reasons. Increased independence is a desirable trait which has a positive link to higher attainment (Mazenod et al,

2019). Investing in a child's learning maximises future achievement, employability and health and wellbeing in adulthood (Marchant et al, 2019; Timberlake, 2018.) These benefits are particularly pertinent in a catchment area with high amounts of deprivation, and low employment opportunities (Greater London Authority, 2020). Viewed over the long-term, developing independent skills for children with SEND should better prepare them for post-16 education and employment. Ofsted show that a very small minority of children with SEND remain in lasting employment (Ofsted, 2021), and this is a statistic that needs to be challenged. I have continued to see the clear benefits of this approach in my setting throughout the writing period, viewed both in the children's holistic development and their attainment outcomes. During the writing period, in February 2022, Ofsted found that:

*"Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full curriculum. This is because, in all phases of the school, these pupils receive excellent support. Staff know pupils and their individual needs well. They tailor lessons to meet pupils' specific needs, with additional well-targeted support from teaching assistants when needed."*

Updating this section during my 6-months corrections period, GCSE results were available from summer 2022:

- 100% of children with EHC plans (4), passed GCSE English, including CH-01 and CH-02.
- 84% of children at school support (17), passed GCSE English.
- 49% of children with SEND (20) passed GCSE maths. CH-02 passed maths functional skills level 1.
- All children with SEND (21) received English intervention throughout KS4.

And finally:

- CH-02 did not receive another Fixed-Term Exclusion during their time at secondary school. They are now studying Level 1 Hair and Beauty at a 'Good' FE college.

I hope that the soft skills acquired for independent learning remain with the children into adulthood. Preparing children for the realities of life after school is fundamental to my view of inclusive education.

The case study has also shown a positive impact on the setting's teaching assistants. I believe the redeployment of teaching assistants created a positive feedback loop, which generated greater investment in the delivery of high-quality

learning interventions. This subsequently increased their job satisfaction and improved their relationships with the children. Having a highly invested workforce who are seeing children benefit from their direct interventions, whilst at the same time having children and parents seeing the benefits of the withdrawal sessions, has allowed this method of teaching assistant deployment to be embedded in the school during the writing period. Subsequently, the network's secondary schools have begun adopting and adapting this method of deployment.

Concurrently, during the writing period, many of the participants have been promoted internally to pastoral roles that have been created specifically to recognise the skillsets of these teaching assistants: TA-01 became an Assistant Head of Year and TA-03 became a Head of Year, the first time non-teaching staff were appointed to either role. TA-04 began a PGCE course in English teaching in September 2022. TA-05 is now the academy's Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. TA-06 became an HLTA, and during my 6 months of corrections gained QTS and is appointed to teach PE in the setting from September 2023. Finally, in summer 2020, TA-02 was appointed to a paid internship/Master's degree as an officer in the prison service, and cited the year of additional autonomy and responsibility as their lever for moving on.

The impact of this study in my setting has been very clear. The influence of the learning interventions on the children receiving them has markedly improved their soft skills. The wider, potential impact of my research project is its contribution to the discourse on teaching assistant deployment; supporting quality-first teaching; and approaches that could increase the independent learning soft skills of children with SEND.

There are a number of emerging themes that researcher-professionals should consider, including quality-first teaching for children with SEND, rationalising teacher allocation to low-attainment sets, and the expansion of withdrawal interventions to benefit other areas of need, such as low literacy. These areas were identified within the setting as secondary or tertiary beneficiaries, from the focus on the redeployment of teaching assistants.

#### 8.4 Potential impact for teaching assistants

A recurring theme throughout the literature were researchers' desire to maximise the use of teaching assistants. This group represent a 28% (DfE, 2017) of the adult workforce in schools. Yet despite their presence in schools, their participation in peer-reviewed research is low.

My experience of working with and managing teaching assistants, has been of a group of individuals very invested in supporting vulnerable young people to learn. The teaching assistants have, as best as possible, fulfilled their professional responsibilities in which ever mode of deployment they have been utilised. The colleagues I have worked with, including the participants in the study, shared a desire to identify better practice. The idea of reciprocity and learning together, in our roles as SENCO and teaching assistants, was vital in refining this new mode of deployment.

Throughout this report evidence has been presented that shows ineffective deployment of teaching assistants has a negative impact on progress and attainment of children with SEND (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Webster & Blatchford, 2019; Cullen et al, 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Sharples et al, 2015). The teacher assistants' overall negative impact is attributed to the amount of direct instructional time teaching assistants have with high-needs children, compared to when no in-class support is provided to children with the same needs. The identification of this problem stems from the assistant being less-qualified, or unqualified, compared to the child's teacher. The traditional, and prominent, model of deployment of teaching assistants is classroom based and completing direct work with a child or children with SEND. If there is evidence to suggest that children with SEND are receiving less pedagogic instruction from qualified teachers than their peers, SENCOs should review their deployment of teaching assistants and challenge the status quo.

From a macro- perspective the effective deployment of teaching assistants continues to require refinement and further study, as the use of teaching assistants to support children with SEND can be efficient. In some complex cases, it might also be necessary or essential to deploy a teaching assistant in the classroom. Maximising the role of teaching assistants who are deployed in-class is one opportunity for further research.

After first considering the types of special need in my setting, and a document analysis of the SEND Code of Practice 2014, it proved feasible for children to attend lessons without the support of teaching assistants. Redeploying the teaching assistants, by definition, required the children and teachers to change their interactions within the classroom. I believe children are inherently durable, and the step taken to remove the teaching assistant was less troublesome for these children when accompanied by the allocation of experienced teachers to their classes. By making the decision to remove the teaching assistants from the classroom, I was able to use their skills in different ways.

Emerging research has identified how teaching assistants can deliver learning interventions to small groups, pairs, and individuals outside of the mainstream classroom. When these learning interventions fulfil certain criteria, they are shown to have a positive impact on the children receiving them (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Cullen et al, 2019). The unresolved question for SEND practitioners was *how?* How were withdrawal interventions contributing to improved progress for children with SEND. From my professional perspective, the most powerful finding from this research project has been extrapolating how to maximise learning interventions for my students.

### 8.5 Extrapolating the how?

The Education Endowment Foundation guidance report *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* (Davies & Henderson, 2020) synthesised 102 peer-reviewed sources from the period 2000-2019. The guidance report makes an academic meta-analysis and systematic review user-friendly for practitioners working with children with SEND, such as SENCOs.

Sitting beneath the guidance report is the peer-reviewed meta-analysis *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Evidence Review* (Cullen et al, 2019). This provides the widest-ranging review of existing and contemporary SEND research. Of 102 SEND-based research articles, 29 studies addressed learning interventions. These studies consisted of academic, social and behavioural interventions delivered to primary and secondary school children in England, and internationally. The systematic review showed that “the most frequent type of moderator of targeted intervention effectiveness were variants of teaching

approaches/strategies” (Cullen et al, 2019: 151), favouring embedded instruction, direct instruction, and modelling. They also found that positive deliverer-child relationship had a positive impact on the success of targeted intervention.

I believed that a gap existed between academic research and practitioner understanding of how to design learning interventions. This was important to ascertain, as the cost of intervention packages endorsed by research was prohibitive. Certain criteria had been identified that positively impacted learning intervention (see: Sharples et al, 2015), but research, including the EEF, cautioned that most packages of intervention had unproven track records. The how? question was partially answered, but there remained a need for further definition as to how learning interventions contributed to improved outcomes.

Due to a widening gap in progress and attainment between children with SEND and their peers, I sought to redeploy the teaching assistants in my setting. The enquiry studied their move to delivering learning intervention. Using teaching assistants to facilitate inclusion for children with SEND and EHC plans can be seen to compensate for failures in the school system (Webster & Blatchford, 2019): there is a need to develop alternate approaches to in-class support. By subscribing to the idea that teaching assistants should supplement, rather than replace, the teacher, the participants reported many positive indicators of progress in the classroom. This was seen in the responses from teaching assistants and teachers who both sought to work more closely together on future intervention programmes, having shared in the successes the children had experienced during the research period (2019-2021).

The learning interventions contributed to increased soft skills such as confidence, willingness to participate in lessons and comprehension of teaching by maintaining an explicit link to the curricula being studied and supported. I believe the how-question can begin to be understood. ‘How do learning interventions positively influence children with SEND?’ can be simplified into the following representation:

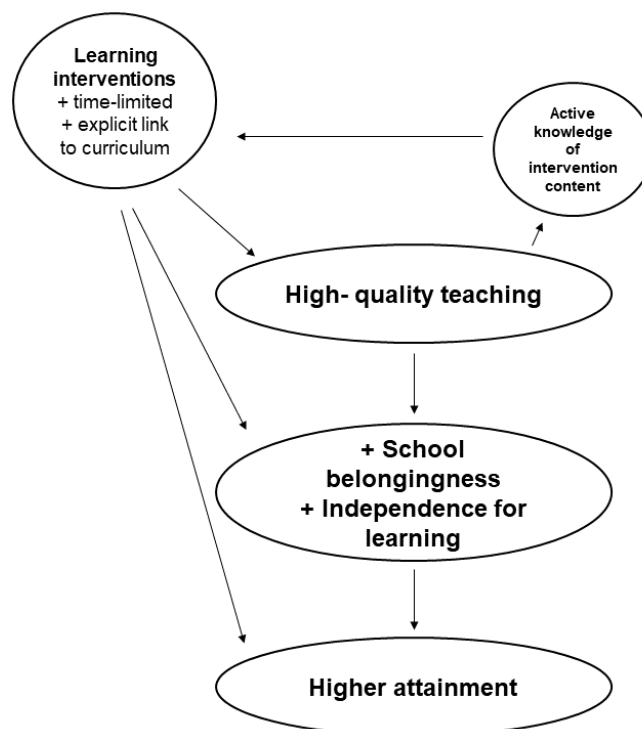


Figure 7.1 (see pg. 146): Representation of the benefits of learning interventions

Intervention should be delivered in a safe space, in which children receive quality pedagogic delivery, with explicit links to the curricula being supported. Children, teaching assistants, teachers and parents/carers should all be appraised of the purpose of the intervention. They should be time limited, so as to avoid disruption to mainstream curriculum lessons, and carefully timetabled to align with the content of weeks' or day's lesson objectives. These factors have been extrapolated from the case study, and have shown ongoing signs of success during the writing period.

### 8.6 Developments post-case study

The focus as I approached 2020-21 in my setting, was embedding learning interventions into Key Stage 3, reviewing the existing programmes with the support of Heads of Department, and expanding the number of children who are supported. The evidence from my enquiry suggested a positive influence was noted, within a term of their introduction. Teachers and teaching assistants reported a qualitative improvement in classroom behaviours as early as the Christmas holidays.

By withdrawing the teaching assistants from their role supporting in-class, by necessity teachers had to upskill to respond to the needs of the children they taught. The accountability for the progress of children with and without SEND reverted firmly to the class teachers (DfE/DoH, 2015). In 2020-21, this approach

was supported by the allocation of experienced teachers to classes with high numbers of children with SEND. This represented a commitment to high-quality SEND provision.

'Shining a light' on teaching assistants, as the key deliverers of learning intervention, allowed teachers to recognise the valuable information that was being acquired during learning interventions. I achieved my secondary aim, which was to provide teaching assistants with a voice in my enquiry. Teaching assistants in general are under-represented in research about their own effectiveness (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). In my professional capacity, I was able to facilitate the sharing of this high-leverage information.

Predominantly, I felt that teaching assistants in the school were already well-regarded. But given the explicit success learning interventions had on some of the children, I felt that their value increased even further. As such, despite the interruption caused by Covid-19 in March 2020 and spring 2021, there was a major upturn in positive outcomes across Key Stage 3, for children with SEND.

### 8.7 Implications and considerations for practice

This case study was completed in academic year 2019-20 with the support and participation of children, teaching assistants and teachers in my professional setting. The research captured the views of these participants as we sought more positive progress and attainment outcomes for children with SEND. The redeployment of support staff and the development of the learning interventions delivered in school proved to successfully meet the needs of the current cohorts of children. As a model of deployment, I retained and refined it during the year of writing (2020-21).

Practitioners would benefit from considering the breadth of such a project. Professionally, I had to design the content of the interventions, to train the staff on how to deliver them, and to timetable the content so that it aligned with the core curricula. On top of this, frequent informal- and peer-observations were conducted to ensure the delivery was meeting the needs of the children. As well as continuing the rigorous professional oversight of the intervention model in to 2020-21, I had to navigate the provision moving online during the spring lockdown (see: [appendix 12](#)).



Ostensibly the implication for the professional considering wholesale redeployment of support staff, is the investment in time that is required to begin narrowing attainment and progress gaps between children with SEND and those without.

The following implications should also be considered by researchers interested in SEND, researcher-professionals, and SENCOs:

#### 8.7.1 Implications for researchers and researcher-professionals

My case study sought to address an issue within my setting. The deployment of teaching assistants appeared to confirm contemporary research that showed the impact of TA's on children with SEND could be negative when leading to diminished pedagogic contact with their teacher (Sharples et al, 2015). The implication for researchers from my study of the redeployment of teaching assistants is to challenge status quo, and to encourage professionals to divert from the 'traditional' approach to supporting SEND.

My research suggests that children with SEND can develop the soft skills necessary to access secondary mainstream education with reportedly higher levels of independence through the use of learning interventions, then when they are supported by teaching assistants in-class. The implications for researchers should be to further codify 'good' and 'better' practice for the training of teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions, as well as refining the content of these interventions to ensure they maximise curricula links. Developing the independent skills for children with SEND could represent a longer-term solution to improving attainment and narrowing the gap in expected progress between children with SEND and those without. This would also be of benefit to school leaders (Ainscow, 2020).

In schools in England, in many spheres of middle- and senior-leadership, there is a limited need to engage in academic research. It is posited that "philosophical thinking is unlikely to flourish in the narrow, test-driven, government dominated school system we have today" (White, 2019: 198). The priority for many members of leadership teams in schools are accountability measures. The opportunity to reflect on provision may be lost.

Predominantly, educational research is written by academics and consumed by academics (White, 2019). However, SEND literature is accessed by practitioners working within the field. The NASENCO must be acquired within three years of appointment, therefore engaging with research does play a formative part in the development of the SENCO's approach. "Thinking differently about inclusion and inclusive education first of all entails analysis of current practises and their conditions" (Done and Andrews, 2019: 15) is the starting point from which praxis can develop. I believe that SENCOs have a unique opportunity to engage in academic research on areas of SEND support, that other newly appointed middle- and senior-leaders do not. Reflecting on my case study may provide an opportunity for others to reflect on their own provision.

Another implication from my case study, is that researchers should avoid unconsciously replicating the hierarchical binary that positions the teaching assistant as subordinate to the teacher (Slater and Gazeley, 2019; Maher & Vickerman, 2018), and therefore inferior within the research context. Findings from contemporary research focused on teaching assistant perspectives, described a feeling of undervalued-ness (Roffey-Barensten, 2014). I have espoused the contributions of the teaching assistants in the setting. I believe in promoting their effectiveness. I also feel this is reflected in their willingness to participate in the study. Finally, and most importantly, the high value placed on their contributions has contributed to the positive findings in this study.

#### 8.7.2 Implications for SENCOs and schools

Effective provision for children with SEND must remain school specific. The successes found in the intervention model in my setting may not be transferable to others. The design of the learning interventions was carefully tailored to the curricula in English and maths, and the needs of specific children with SEND. However, practitioners can use this study as a point to reflect on their own practice.

Schools and SENCOs introducing learning interventions should design these using the existing success criteria (see: table 7.1).

- Sessions are brief (20–50mins), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period (8–20 weeks).
- Support staff receive extensive training from experienced teachers
- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives
- Teaching assistants closely follow the plan and structure of the intervention
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching.
- Positive effects are only observed when teaching assistants work in structured settings with high quality support and training.
- When teaching assistants are deployed in more informal, unsupported instructional roles, they can impact negatively on pupils' learning outcomes.

Table 7.1 (see pg. 143): Common elements of effective interventions (Davies & Henderson, 2020; Sharples et al, 2015: 11)

Learning interventions should have an explicit link to the core curricula they are designed to support. This requires a high degree of understanding and/or collaboration between teaching departments in a school. An example of an explicit link would be: re- or pre-teaching the similes found in Stave 1 of A Christmas Carol in literacy intervention in the same week as the study of Stave 1, as shown in figure 7.2:

English Lesson 1	Literacy Intervention 1 (Pre-teach)
Objective: Stave 1: Descriptions of Scrooge	Revising similes and identifying and understanding these in Stave 1 of A Christmas Carol
Literacy Intervention 1 (Revisit)	English Lesson 1
Identifying and understanding the similes (and their context) in Stave 1 of A Christmas Carol	Objective: Stave 1: Descriptions of Scrooge

Figure 7.2: Two variations on scheduling learning interventions

Both teaching assistants and teachers agreed that the greater proximity in time to the core lesson, the greater success in seeing increased engagement and confidence in the classroom. The approach of pre-teaching content increased participation in class discussion and a willingness to read aloud. Delivering the learning intervention after the introduction of a topic in the core classroom enabled the teaching assistants to ascertain the depth of understanding, and unpick misconceptions that were not addressed by the teachers. Both approaches offered positive outcomes, but require effective communication and collaboration between teaching assistant and teacher to be most efficient. Where communication between colleagues was infrequent, teachers reported that pre-teaching had the greater impact of the two approaches as the children more readily engaged in learning in the classroom.

Where appropriate expertise has been acquired in settings, I would encourage fellow SENCOs to promote the use of teaching assistants to share their own knowledge of children with SEND. This study has shown that when teaching assistants have quality time with small groups, pairs and individuals, and are proficient in understanding the concepts being enhanced through learning intervention, their feedback to teachers was invaluable. Importantly, this far exceeded the strategies that could be identified through support in-class.

### 8.7.3 Implications for my setting

At the time of writing (August 2021) I have overseen two Covid- interrupted years of intervention-based support for children with SEND. The direct outcomes on progress and attainment have been brilliant. The importance placed on SEND pedagogy, and the focus that has been brought to the teaching needs of these groups, has also played an important role in increasing these children's outcomes.

As a response to austerity measures, and the direct impact they had on staff levels (19 adults when I was appointed, 8 in September 2021) this approach has ensured that a similar number of children remain on the SEND register, receiving a higher-quality of support than deployment in classrooms allowed for. Where children with physical disabilities require in-class support to access mainstream education, this remains in place. However, the benefits for children with learning difficulties that pre-/re-teaching curricula content in English and maths, and supporting the development of children's individual special needs, has been so positive that I cannot envisage reverting to in-class support. The influence of learning intervention has been reported to the MAT, school governors and the senior leadership team, and the outcomes have been seen by parents/carers and children.

### 8.8 Strengths and limitations of the case study

As a researcher-professional case study methodology allowed me to research within my real-life context (Yin, 2009). Case study methodology was appropriate as the boundaries between phenomenon (low progress outcomes for children with SEND compared to their peers without SEND) and context (mode of deployment of teaching assistants) were not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). I sought to understand the influence a change in context could have on the phenomenon. Case study was used to illuminate this decision, understand why it was taken, how change was implemented, and the subsequent results (Schramm, 1971):

A decision	To redeploy teaching assistants from in-class support to delivery of learning intervention
Why it was taken	In response to negative progress trends at GCSE and teaching assistant accounts of performance in public exams
How it was implemented	Teaching assistants trained to deliver learning interventions, allocated a caseload of children, and supported in the delivery of these
Subsequent results	Positive outcomes including observed increase in independent skills and latterly attainment data (2020-21); increased professional satisfaction reported by adults.

Table 8.1: Case Study process, adapted from Schramm, 1971.

Case study is prominent in educational research due to the complexities of different pedagogy and the non-linear nature of learning (Harrison et al, 2017). These complexities with learning were observed, for example, by the teaching assistants and teachers of English through the pre-teaching approach used to support literacy. Participants' interview data was compared, to corroborate the participants' claims. Case study methodology can therefore capture the impact of socio-political contexts on the relative successes and failures of approaches to support learning (Harrison et al, 2017; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). The grey literature analysis that was used aided the understanding of contemporary political ideologies that influence efficient SEND provision. This provided further context to the research findings.

Even with the evidence established in wider research, or any positive impact found in my own study, the process of moving towards a new model can be inhibited by numerous factors. These could be lack of support from the principal or senior leadership team; the understanding of parents, and of the children themselves; and structures imposed by local authority SEND services. In my experience these factors can all delay well-intentioned adaptation of new practice.

Although case study methodology can reveal 'good' and 'better' practice within a setting, the exact intervention model I utilised is unlikely to provide the professional sphere (SENCOs, school leaders, MATs, SEND agencies, etc) with a transferable model to provide an instant, positive uplift in measurable outcomes. The power of small-setting research, such as those projects completed as part of the

NASENCO, is the opportunity provided to SENCOs to reflect on their provision. Decisions on SEND practices must always be made with the cohort of children in mind.

My case study's limitation mirrors those found in contemporary SEND research. As a small-scale study, the approach to achieving positive results is not transferable to other settings as it was/is dependent on many variables. These include the attitude and aptitude of the teaching assistants and teachers, the needs of the children, the quality of the mainstream curricula, amongst multiple other factors. Therefore, better practice has been identified for the setting, and the current SEND cohort, but it must be recognised that this could change in the future. It would not be appropriate to suggest that any of specific interventions or the training could be *packaged* and provided to other settings.

#### 8.8.1 Commitment and rigour

Ensuring rigour of data collection and trustworthiness of the data were reinforced by my role as researcher-professional. My primary responsibility throughout the case study was to the children with whom I worked. Rigour was upheld during the investigation, rather than be judged externally at its completion (Cypress, 2017). The process of collating data through interviews was planned carefully, utilising a rigorous method that could be replicated by researchers in other settings. An audit trail has been recorded in the research methods section.

#### 8.8.2 Transparency

In my discussion, I have presented data verbatim to ensure trustworthiness (Moravcsik, 2019). Transparency has also been ensured through my chronological discussion of findings, and the presentation of changing views from the same adult within the thesis, where appropriate. My case study approach sought to capture the non-static views of participants in a way that quantitative research cannot (Cypress, 2017). Selected whole transcripts were reviewed with my supervisory team for the purpose of thematic analysis, further reinforcing transparency through the sharing of these documents.

As such, the reader can see the intention in my discussion to present the participants' views in an unbiased manner, whilst the availability of transcripts for my supervisory team furthered this transparent approach to analysis.

### 8.8.3 Influence

The case study captured the positive influence that redeploying teaching assistants to deliver learning interventions has had on the SEND cohorts in academic years 2019-2021. The initial successes reported by the teaching assistants during the research period have led to reflection and development of the interventions, to ensure refinement and continued improvement. This was then demonstrated in the outcomes of children with SEND in the end of year assessment data shared from July 2021. As I prepare for academic year 2021-22, the use of learning intervention has become the predominant form of SEND support in the setting and as such, further training and planning time has been allocated to their implementation throughout the autumn term and beyond.

### 8.8.4 Future research

Teaching assistants and children are under-represented in SEND research (Cavendish et al, 2020; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Poulou & Norwich, 2019; Sharples et al, 2015; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). I sought to represent both groups in my case study. The data collection and results attempts to redress the absence of teaching assistants from studies into their own effectiveness. Nevertheless, there is an absence in children's' voice due to the school closure in 2020. Despite a positive improvement in soft skills being observed by teaching assistants and teachers, and the subsequent improvement in attainment data that has been discussed, I feel that children's' views on their support remains a priority area for improving and developing SEND research.

I would revisit the children's participation in this study, and further develop its contribution to SEND practice through capturing their views on how learning intervention may foster greater inclusion in the classroom.



## 9 Reflection

### 9.1 Reflection on the role of the researcher-professional

I coordinate SEND provision and implement the SEND code of practice in my school, a job which I love. I had identified an area of concern in my school, which I sought to understand and attempt to fix. Case study methodology enabled me to conduct research in my professional setting. The outcome of this case study was increased discussion and development of an approach to support the learning of vulnerable children.

Completing the study, in the dual role of researcher-professional, was possible due to the shared commitment to improving outcomes that participants displayed in the school. I am extremely grateful to the teaching assistants and teachers, who worked so diligently to report on the successes and areas for improvement with the intervention model.

Another important benefit of doctoral research was the ethical approval required by the university, adding a layer of scrutiny to the change I wished to explore. This safety net prevented the children from being 'guineapigs' to a change of their support that was poorly planned or implemented on a whim.

For future participants in doctoral studies, I would recommend that researchers conducting similar studies complete the interviews within periods of time where one would normally meet and discuss with the stakeholders. For example, I interviewed staff during outcome reflections, during inset training, and children during parent- days. This approach proved effective, in terms of time management but also in the familiarity of the setting. I think that by ensuring the participants were relaxed in the interviews, they were more forthcoming and honest.

It may not be novel, but I strongly recommend that part-time doctoral students research an area within their own setting, particularly those interested in qualitative case study. To conduct a similar study outside of your professional setting within the same time frame, whilst continuing to attend to your own responsibilities, would not be possible. I would highly recommend teachers in senior roles that are interested in exploring large scale change within a small setting, conduct case study research, if they have capacity to do so. They could do this through an MA programme or at doctoral level.



## 9.2 My development as a researcher

Completing this research project has added considerably to my research skill set. My targeted questioning, and my planning of semi-structured interviews, evolved considerably. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to the participants about issues that we were all aligned on improving. Importantly, I developed my ability to conduct interviews effectively, thorough thematic analyses of interview transcripts within the necessary timeframe, which led to refined questions for subsequent interviews. This skill was vital to ensuring I narrowed the focus of my questioning, to better understand the minutiae of what was causing the children to react positively to learning interventions.

Secondly, I felt the single biggest factor in ensuring the research was completed in a timely fashion was an almost 'militaristic' approach to reading journal articles, making analytical notes on these, and later the same thoroughness with transcription, thematic analysis and refining my interview questions. To achieve this, I timetabled Sunday mornings throughout the academic year and weekdays throughout school holidays to a rigorous study programme. The biggest surprise in this research project was that I was able to stick to this!

## 9.3 Reflection on the research findings

I am very pleased with the successes identified in this research and have continued to see the positive influence learning interventions have had in academic year 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Success is seen through the participation and outcomes of the children, but almost as important was the rejuvenation of the support staff. Prior to the change of deployment, they had seemed fatigued by their roles, but the autonomy and independence granted to the teaching assistants saw them flourish. They are a small, but mighty, team. Several participants have since achieved internal promotions into pastoral roles, as detailed in my conclusion. Some of these roles were created to reflect their skillsets, which would not have been possible without this research shining a spotlight on these individuals. Others have moved on to initial teacher training programmes. I am grateful to the team, and particularly to those who chose to participate in the study.

I have reiterated throughout my thesis that SEND provision is cohort specific, and

that cannot be understated. As someone devoted to a unique group of children in a very unique setting, I am happy that this new direction has had such a seemingly positive influence. I'm looking forward to seeing the progress continue into 2021-22 and the return of public examinations.

SENCOs should be supported in reviewing, and then designing and introducing, a method of support that best meets the needs of their children. research project has brought together teaching assistants and teachers, who have carefully collaborated on the learning intervention programme to ensure its ongoing improvement. I am very grateful to have been supported by these colleagues throughout the research period, and beyond.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Declaration Of Originality

Students are reminded that the work that they submit for assessment must be their own. Please read the following statements and sign and date at the bottom of this form to show that you have complied:

1. This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of your own efforts. Any ideas, data or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to the originator in the text, bibliography or footnotes.
2. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification at this or any other institution.
3. Any chapters that describe the outcomes of joint research should be clearly identified as such with a statement inserted as a footnote on the first page and contributors named. Significant data, images or text resulting from the input of other researchers should be identified as such and attributed to the persons concerned by means of a footnote within the chapter.
4. It is usual to acknowledge the help and guidance of others who have assisted you during your research and preparation of your thesis. Such acknowledgements do not replace or obviate the need for individual attribution as discussed in points 1 and 3.
5. The University reserves the right to submit electronic versions of your draft documents for assessment of plagiarism using electronic detection software such as 'turnitin'. In addition, whether or not drafts have been so assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment.

SIGNED:.....Sam Edmondson.....

PRINT NAME:.....Sam Edmondson.....

DATE:.....11/09/2021.....

## Appendix 2: Request for Ethical Approval including all consent letters



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

St Mary's University

Ethics Sub-Committee

Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and clearly entitled with your **Full Name, School, Supervisor**.

Please note that for all undergraduate research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

**Please note:**

**In line with University Academic Regulation the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an Appendix to the final research project.**

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or School Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).



### St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application.

Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Document	Enclosed? (delete as appropriate)		Version No
	Yes	Not applicable	
1.Application Form	Mandatory		
2.Participant Invitation Letter	/		
3.Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory		
4.Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory		
5.Parental Consent Form	/		
6.Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of Posters, newspaper adverts, website, emails			
7.Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct the study on the premises)	/		
8.Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	/		
9.DBs if required (to be provided separately)			
10.Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)			
11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)			

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format: **Full Name, School, Supervisor.**

Signature of Applicant:

Signature of Supervisor:



Ethics Application Form

1) Name of proposer(s)	Sam Edmondson
2) St Mary's email address	<a href="mailto:093500@live.smuc.ac.uk">093500@live.smuc.ac.uk</a>
3) Name of supervisor	Jane Chambers/Christine Edwards-Leis

4) Title of project:  How do Teaching Assistants and Children with Special Educational Needs respond to learning interventions delivered outside of the classroom when this model replaces in-class TA support.
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5) School or service	Faculty of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences
6) Programme (whether undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research)	EdD
7) Type of activity/research ( staff/undergraduate student/postgraduate student)	Postgraduate student

8) Confidentiality	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998?	YES

9) Consent	
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?	YES

10) Pre-approved protocol	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	YES/NO/Not applicable Date of approval:

11) Approval from another Ethics Committee	
a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	NO
b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	YES

12) Identifiable risks	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	NO
b) Are participants over 65 years of age?	NO
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	YES one sample required are children with SEND, although these children are in a mainstream secondary school. The appropriateness of their participation will be discussed with parents as well as the child, and the gatekeeper.
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	NO
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	NO
f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	NO
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	NO
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the	NO



research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	
i) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	NO
j) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	NO
k) Could the relationship between the researcher/supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	NO
l) Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?	NO

13) Proposed start and completion date
<p>Please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the study is due to commence. 28<sup>th</sup> Aug 2019</li> <li>• Timetable for data collection. One year (365 days)</li> <li>• The expected date of completion. Aug 2020.</li> </ul> <p>Please ensure that your start date is at least 4 weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.</p>

14) Sponsors/Collaborators
<p>Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.</li> <li>• Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.</li> </ul>
None

### 15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

- Please indicate whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee).
- Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.
- Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

No

BERA (2011) & St Mary's University Code of Practice for Research (available at: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/docs/2017-nov-code-of-practice.pdf> last accessed Jan 29th 2019 at 18:21)

No

### 16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. [100 word limit]

To track the implementation of a program of external interventions (1:1/small group learning outside of the classroom) led by TAs and delivered to children with SEND. These learning interventions are 20-25 minutes in length and focus on the development of key skills for learning, rather than complimenting the curriculum in specific lessons where support is presently deployed. They take place during the school day, with the children withdrawn during lesson time. The model that is being replaced is that of the in-class TA who supports the children from lesson-to-lesson. The project will document at 4 points throughout the school year the experiences of the TAs, the children and the teachers. To use interview data and focus groups to ascertain the effectiveness of this change in provision.

### 17. Study Design/Methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- c) You should also include details regarding the requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- d) Please include details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.
- e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

The study will create qualitative interview data from 3 samples: TAs, children and teachers. These will be generated at 4 points throughout the academic year; the start of the school year, and after each Assessment Point in December, April and July. The interviews will be 1:1 or focus group, dependent on how the interventions are being delivered in the professional setting. E.g. a group of 2 children taking part in an intervention will be interviewed together, whilst a child working 1:1 would be interviewed independently. All interviews will be conducted by myself as the researcher-professional. The interviews will be recorded on an audio recording device and transcribed. No additional/unfamiliar persons will be present during the

interview process. There will be no videoing. The children are all familiar with the proposed interview room (the SENCo office) and all participants know and trust the interviewer due to our professional relationship. I do not anticipate any adverse effects on the children nor any anxiety towards participation as unstructured conversations in private happen between the proposed participants and myself on a daily or weekly basis already. If this was to occur the interview would be paused or terminated and the distress to the child that had been caused discussed with parents as an urgent professional matter. It is the intention that throughout the research, a professional paradigm change (from in-class to external support) will be documented with an academic, and rigorous, lens. The professional aspect of the work has been designed to benefit the children in a more targeted way (addressing key skills) than the existing model of in-class support. The requirement of the participant, if they chose to opt in to this research, is to share their thoughts on the new professional paradigm. Not electing to participate in the research will not mean that the children revert to the in-class support model. It is important to note that SEND support within the school will change; the academic study is focusing on the children's experiences during the implementation of this new approach.

The research period is one academic year. This will take place within my professional setting, a secondary school in North London. All materials are my own, however the interview process is based closely on Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011).

The interview process has not been piloted for this study but will reproduce procedures used for my Master's degree (St Mary's University) and National Award in SEND Coordination (UCL).

## 18. Participants

Please mention:

- a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
- b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
- c) The inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
- e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.
- f) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.

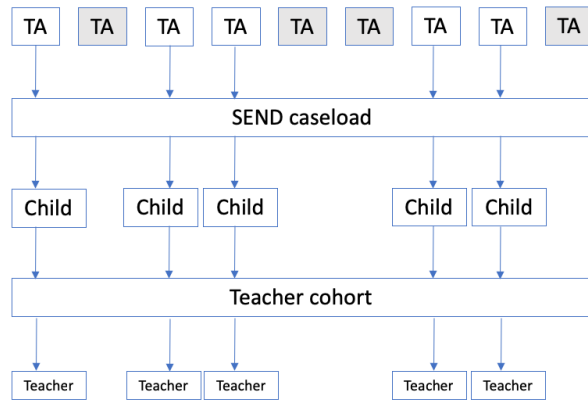
The total purposive sample of TAs and children will be:

- 5 TA's (c50% TAs); there are 9 TAs employed by the school who will be invited to participate in the study. The gender split is 3:6 male:female.
- 5 children or groups of children with SEND (>25% children with EHCPs/>10% children with formal diagnosis of SEND), drawn from KS3 and Year 10.

The purposive sample of 5 teachers will be drawn up using the following exclusion criteria. The teachers' subject is not a factor in their eligibility:

- Taught child in preceding academic year? Yes/No
- Had TA support in-class in preceding academic year? Yes/No
- Teaches child during period of study? Yes/No

The recruitment process will start with requests for volunteers from the TAs working within the setting. Subsequently their allocation of SEND children will be invited to participate. Consequently these children's teachers will be approached:



The letter to Gatekeeper (school Principal) is included in the appendices.  
I am employed by the school within which I propose to complete this research.

## 19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

- a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done
- b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?
  - Children under 18
  - Participants with learning disabilities
  - Participants suffering from dementia
  - Other vulnerable groups.
- c) If any of the above apply, does the researcher/investigator hold a current DBS certificate undertaken within the last 3 years? A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.
- d) How will consent be obtained? This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

a) I do not believe so. I am documenting the views of participants during a period of professional transition. I believe it is important to give those enacting the professional changes a voice to document the effects on their day to day work and the children's school experience. Knowing the members of the TA department, who I line manage, I do not feel that anyone would feel pressurised in to participating as they are very actively engaged in the outcomes of the children. Likewise, the children have all been taught by myself at some point in their school career and I feel have developed a high level of trust. This extends to the parental relationship as well. The Principal is fully informed of the goals of the research and is fully supportive, demonstrating a high level of professional trust.

b) Yes – under 18 & with learning difficulties.

c) Yes – DBS included in the appendices.

d) Yes – written consent via letter to parents with an offer to meet in person and discuss any concerns about their child's participation in the study, requested initially through a phone call to explain to parents, a conversation with the children, once interest is established, to be followed by a detailed letter detailing the processes and the request to participate.

20. Risks and benefits of research/ activity

- a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- b) Please explain where the risks/effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks /effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- c) Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?
- d) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.
- e) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- f) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- g) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

- a) n/a
- b) n/a
- c) n/a
- d) n/a
- e) I do not anticipate any adverse effects on the children nor any anxiety towards participation as unstructured conversations in private happen between the proposed participants (children, TAs and teachers) and myself on a daily or weekly basis already. If this was to occur the interview would be paused or terminated and the distress to the child that had been caused discussed with parents as an urgent professional matter. Concern may be caused by the children discussing their additional needs, however in my professional experience this has not been an issue. The children are great advocates for additional- and special- needs support and are aware of what support they require to make progress in school academically and pastorally. However, there could be a possibility that discussing their additional needs could result in a participant or participants becoming upset.
- f) If this were to happen the interview would be paused or terminated. Depending on the nature of the concern, the researcher-professional is Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and well aware of the threshold for safeguarding concerns. Further, as a professional in the role of SEND coordinator, regular additional parental contact is made via phone call, email and at the school pick-up. An adverse reaction to an academic interview would be dealt with within the professional context, which normally would be through parental contact and monitoring throughout the school day and at home. Safeguarding concerns will be raised if the threshold is met.
- g) the research will actually grant an additional level of rigour to the changing professional processes for supporting children. By documenting the changes that are planned for the next academic year the University's ethical guidelines protect the participants in a more formal way than just the professionalism of setting staff. The organisation will have full access to the outcomes and will be informed of better/more effective practice in SEND support. It is hoped that the students will also have better academic outcomes through the approaches being recorded.

21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

- What steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality?
  - Please describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
  - *If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.*
  - Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
  - *Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.*
  - *You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publically available once the project has ended.*
  - *You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.*
  - Who will have access to the data? Please identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).
  - Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?
  - Explain what information will be identifiable.
  - Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
  - Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.
- a) TAs/students/teachers will be assigned a numerical code e.g. TA-01, child-01, teacher-01. Neutral pronouns will be used where appropriate when discussing the children. E.g. they stated rather than he/she stated.
  - b) All data will be stored on St Mary's University servers. Due to the relatively small sample and my working knowledge of the potential participants, it will be a straightforward process of maintaining confidentiality and ensuring that names or identifiable traits are not present in the research.
  - c) All participants will have the right to withdraw from the process at any point during the research, at which point all information will be deleted and removed from the study. This will be stressed during the recruitment phase. Again due to the small sample size I will be able to identify their data sets for removal.
  - d) Data collection and management will be completed using an audio recording device and transferred to St Marys Servers for the process of transcribing.
  - e) Myself and Jane Chambers.
  - f) For those working within the setting it may be possible to identify the children though their SEND, e.g. we only have one student with a visual impairment in the school, and if that student agrees to participate it will be evident if they are referred to. However, with the exception of setting staff it will not be possible to identify the participants.
  - g) The Principal is fully informed of all elements of the research proposal. The school will not be identifiable.
  - h) Consent forms are included in the appendices.

## 22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable to format, e.g.a summary of findings appropriately written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

- a) The Principal is aware of the proposed project and is supportive. A summary will be provided to all participants
- b) Feedback will be made to the Principal as gatekeeper of the organisation.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Signature of Proposer(s) Sam Edmondson	Date: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jun 2019
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects)	Date:



Approval Sheet

<p>Name of applicant:</p> <p>Name of supervisor:</p> <p>Programme of study:</p> <p>Title of project:</p>
--

Supervisors, please complete section 1 or 2. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the School Ethics Representative for their records.

<p>SECTION 1</p> <p>Approved at Level 1</p> <p>Signature of supervisor (for student applications).....</p> <p>Date.....</p>
<p>SECTION 2</p> <p>Refer to School Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3</p> <p>Signature of supervisor.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>
<p>SECTION 3</p> <p>To be completed by School Ethics Representative</p> <p>Approved at Level 2</p> <p>Signature of School Ethics Representative.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>



SECTION 4

To be completed by School Ethics Representative.

Level 3 consideration is required by the Ethics Sub-Committee.

Signature of School Ethics Representative.....

Date.....

Level 3 approval – confirmation will be via correspondence from the Ethics Sub-Committee


## Appendix 3: Letter to Gatekeeper



2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019

Re: Permission to Conduct Research

Dear 

I am writing to you to request permission to conduct my doctoral research at  throughout academic year 2019-20.

The research question is: *How do Teaching Assistants and Children with Special Educational Needs respond to learning interventions delivered outside of the classroom?*

The benefit to the academy will be the academic rigour provided to the professional changes in motion for next year. I feel that this process will continue to inform better and more effective practice for SEND support in the school.

I hope to recruit a sample of 5 Teaching Assistants, 5 children with SEND, and 5 of their teachers, to triangulate the effectiveness of the intervention programme. I also hope to grant a voice to the TAs by documenting their views on the changes to SEND support that we will be providing the children.

Once your permission is secured, I will proceed to recruit TA-participants. Once achieved, I will consult with parents and SEND children over their suitability to participate. I am aware that some of our children may not wish to participate and that is their prerogative. Subsequently, once a sample of children have given their permission to participate, I will approach their teachers to ensure that they are also represented in my research findings.

Throughout the process of researching and reporting, the school and all of the participants shall be anonymised. The setting will be referred to as an academy in Wembley, North London. Participants will be referred to numerically, e.g., TA-01, child-01 and teacher-01.

**As the gatekeeper, you have the right to withdraw your consent for my research to take place in the academy at any time.** Should you wish to do this, you can inform me verbally or in writing. If given a notification to cease researching, all existing data will be deleted.

Following completion of the research, a summary will be provided to you detailing my findings. I will be able to update you on the research process at any given time throughout the academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Edmondson

## Appendix 4: Letter to Child & Parent



2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019

Re: Recruiting Participants for Research

Dear Parent of

I am writing to request your permission to participate in my doctoral research.

The research question is: *How do Teaching Assistants and Children with Special Educational Needs respond to learning interventions delivered outside of the classroom?*

I hope that your son or daughter will be happy to participate by completing 4 interviews throughout the coming school year. It is very important to me that we ensure we are providing the best SEND support possible to the children, and the children's experiences play a part in identifying what is working well. Underpinning the research is a desire to ensure we are providing better and more effective interventions for the children in the academy.

Interviews will be recorded on an audio-recording device, using a script of questions. The children's views and opinions will inform my research findings. Their contribution will be kept anonymous, meaning only I will know who is participating in the research.

**As a volunteer, the children have the right to withdraw their consent to participate at any time.** Should you or they wish to do this, you can inform me verbally or in writing. If given a notification to cease researching, all existing data will be deleted.

I would be happy to meet with you prior to your consent to explain this proposal in more detail. A meeting can be arranged via email: s.edmondson@[redacted]

Following completion of the research, a summary will be provided to you detailing my findings. I will be able to update you on the research process at any given time throughout the academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Edmondson

.....  
Please return the form below if you consent to your child's participation:

My name:		
Child's name:		
Give permission for my child to participate in the research proposed by Mr. Edmondson, including participating in 4 interviews. I understand that should my child no longer wish to participate in this process, they can withdraw at any time without any prejudice. To do this I will notify Mr. Edmondson by phone or email, at which point their data will be deleted.		
Signed:		Date

## Appendix 5: Letter to Child & Parent



2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019

Re: Recruiting Participants for Research

Dear (Student's name)

I would like to explain the research that I have asked you to participate in.

At [REDACTED] I feel we can support you in your learning in better ways. This can be achieved through you focusing on key skills with the Teaching Assistants in Pupil Support for short periods of time each week instead of attending a lesson.

I think it is very important to have student voice and opinion as part of this approach. If you would like to participate by giving your opinions in 4 interviews throughout the school year, then please sign the letter below.

**As a volunteer you can tell me or another member of Pupil Support that you do not wish to take part in the interviews at any time.**

If you are happy to take part, I will discuss the process in more detail with your parents.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Edmondson

.....  
Please return the form below if you consent to your child's participation:

My name:		
I am happy to participate in Mr. Edmondson's interviews.		
I understand that I can tell Mr. Edmondson that I no longer wish to participate at any time, and would not receive any negative sanction or concern if I do so.		
Signed:		Date

## Appendix 6: Letter to Participant (18+)



2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019

Re: Recruiting Participants for Research

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to request your permission to participate in my doctoral research.

The research question is: *How do Teaching Assistants and Children with Special Educational Needs respond to learning interventions delivered outside of the classroom?*

I hope to recruit a sample of 5 Teaching Assistants, 5 children with SEND, and 5 of their teachers, to triangulate the effectiveness of the intervention programme.

I feel it is important to document the participants' views in the delivery of the new SEND support model we will use in school in 2019-20. I believe this will add a level of criticality that will benefit all of the participants. Underpinning the research is a desire to ensure we are providing better and more effective interventions for the children in the academy.

Throughout the year, I will conduct 4 interviews. These will be recorded on an audio-recording device, using a script of questions. Your views and opinions will inform my research findings. Your participation will be anonymised, meaning that only I will know to whom the data will be attributed. In practice, you will appear as TA-01 or teacher-01 in my written report.

**As a volunteer, you have the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.** Should you wish to do this, you can inform me verbally or in writing. If given a notification to cease researching, all existing data will be deleted.

Following completion of the research, a summary will be provided to you detailing my findings. I will be able to update you on the research process at any given time throughout the academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Edmondson

## Appendix 7: Supervisor coding for accuracy and emerging themes

CEL coding of transcript 7/10/20

Coloured text: focus of question

Shaded text: codes emerging

<p>Interview 3 with [REDACTED]</p> <p>1. SE - um okay on reflection how has the <b>transition</b> from mainly in-class support to mainly intervention-based work affected the children</p> <p>SS – um I think it's put a lot <b>more focus</b> on their <b>specific needs</b> so that they - so we've been able to <b>identify</b> what <b>where</b> they might be lacking and we've been able to <b>focus</b> on that so I think being able to <b>strengthen</b> their foundation like if it's for example an English and if a problem is struggling to understand basic English, or struggling to understand concepts like metaphors and things we can - we've been able to work on that which then they've been able to I think <b>taken to their lessons</b> and used usefully</p> <p>2. <b>my next question</b> was if you feel it has been <b>better</b>, and what evidence can you suggest supports that feeling?</p> <p>evidence would be all forms of the <b>work that they've produced</b>, I think from things like essays that some of the kids have written where the answers have been um either directly <b>more linked to the question</b> or <b>specifically talking about concepts</b> that they've learned that they only would have learned because <b>we've broken it down for them for enough for them to understand</b>. <b>so</b> with the work they've produced at least in my interventions some of the <b>work that they've produced has reflected their understanding</b>, um and in some cases as well that's also been <b>reflected in their classrooms</b> as well, where the work produced in class has been um of a <b>higher standard</b> and hopefully of a <b>better understanding</b> as well</p> <p>3. and have you been able to interact with the teachers to um compare - <b>compare</b> what you've seen develop in your interventions with the class work?</p> <p>some other teachers - here - <b>some</b> of the teachers that have been a little bit more um uh <b>interactive</b> with <b>with</b> the work that we've been doing I've, I've been able to talk to them and see what differences have been made, some of the <b>others that aren't</b> so much, perhaps, um or maybe they just <b>don't understand the actual work that's being done outside</b> enough to know how it's <b>contributing</b> to what they're doing</p> <p>4. I think that's definitely an emerging theme from talking to people in this way is um... great works happening in the <b>interventions</b> and more often than not there's also great <b>teaching</b> but the – the two things <b>aren't</b> necessarily as aligned as they could be</p>	<p>Transition</p> <p>Identifying student specific needs focus strengthen core understandings taken back to class lessons</p> <p>better?</p> <p>Evidence in work produced more linked to the core understandings</p> <p>higher standard better understanding</p> <p>compare</p> <p>variation of understanding knowledge of interventions contribution being made by intervention</p> <p>interventions teaching aren't aligned</p>
<p>yeah, I think there needs to be more of a first of all <b>clarification</b> of what's actually happening in <b>interventions</b>. I think um teachers will probably see it as anything between <b>20 minutes to an hour</b> of them just sitting and reading to <b>doing something</b></p>	<p>knowledge of interventions</p>



<p><b>completely unrelated</b>. like I think there needs to be maybe even <b>some input from the teachers</b>, or like some kind of <b>"this is what they're doing, what do you think about it"</b></p> <p>5. um how would you how would you <b>how would you achieve that</b> if you had to come up with-</p> <p>the intervention that I've just been working on I've been working closely with one of the English teachers, who's told me a little bit about what the syllabus is um and seeing it's telling me <b>where she thinks</b> I can put input into it or what I could <b>change</b> and what I should - what you should add to it but in the reverse - what that's doing is making her aware of what's actually going on interventions so that in class you can then use that to further support the kids as well so it's <b>playing off the back of each other</b> otherwise we're doing work and they're doing work neither of us, nobody knows what's going on in the other classrooms and then you could ultimately be <b>working two parallels without realizing</b> then it definitely needs to be more, more, talking with the teachers, the English department particularly</p> <p>yeah-</p> <p>so, I think it's almost a <b>mirror or an inversion of the in-class support model</b> where it was just another parallel within the classroom</p> <p>yeah</p> <p>a lot of repeating what the teacher was saying but not understanding the needs</p> <p>yeah</p>	<p>how would you achieve <b>that</b></p> <p>working more closely negotiate input around syllabus</p> <p>Knowledge of interventions Student support</p> <p>mirror or an inversion of the in-class support model</p>
---	--

<p>the only thing that I'd say that I - I'd sort of be wary of in that situation is that it doesn't just become another English lesson, like another copy of the syllabus because the whole point is that we're working to break down the content and to like get to the core understanding of things- um but if we just start copying a syllabus, word for word, and just or even just make it a little bit simpler it's still not and it's still not kind of hitting the core of what we're trying to do</p>	<p>we're working to break down the content get to the core understanding of things</p>
<p>6. and you mentioned um the teachers understanding of the intervention - but do you think it's clear do you think there's - do you think you have had a clear understanding of why each child received the intervention that I've asked you to deliver?</p>	<p>understanding of intervention</p>
<p>I think yeah on to begin with on a more basic level, yeah so a lot of the kids may be struggling with English in some form but it was only after working with them in small groups as well when you actually understand what specifically their problem is and that way even if you've got like a generic interventions for them when they say generic something that we've produced for the English classes, for the English</p>	<p>small groups understand students' needs identify different students' needs</p>

<p>lessons um it's only after you've begun, if you started working with the students that you start to identify where specifically they're struggling, and I think then you can in the in that time in that one-on-one time you can start to focus on that even, either through talking through with them, um like getting through the work with them, trying to understand those specific needs that they each have like, I can have a class of two students and they'll both present very very similarly in maybe struggling to understand what a book is talking about, but when you actually when you actually start to work with them you'll see that one actually just struggles with understanding the English language and another might just struggle in writing, and when you start to see those differences then what will still present itself as a level 2 maybe in English is actually two very different needs</p>	
<p>that's really that's a really interesting insight actually</p>	
<p>I think that's why the interventions are so useful because you can only really identify that when you work on them with them one-on-one</p>	
<p>7. um and would you agree then the next step would be to get the insights you are taking - like that was really powerful - what you just said and ensuring that the teachers</p>	<p>next step</p>
<p>yeah so that goes back to having that conversation with the teachers so that they actually know that the work we're doing isn't to just repeat syllabus to them but it's to kind of get to those core that's called um like that core level of understanding and if there is something that the teachers can then take like for example if metaphors are all expressive language, it's something that a particular student struggles with then bear that in mind when creating the classroom's [focus] or even maybe focus a lesson around it um and yeah so I think there's like little - those little bits that the teachers might not particularly know and I think - I don't think it's easy to understand until you work with a student one-on-one</p>	<p>shared planning understanding of intervention core level of understanding</p>
<p>8. so do you think and like so for developing it next year, is that something that can be done casually, because one, one approach could be that you just rely on good relationships with different teachers or do you think it would be benefit from being something that systematically put in place</p>	<p>be done casually or systematically put in place</p>
<p>as much as let's say that casually would be it - would be great, I don't think that it's going to work that simple on a bigger scale, I think that teachers there will always, be some teachers who will just kind of pour it off as um, just another kind of intervention that, that is wasting their time, or and other teachers might be a little bit more involved I think it's something that needs to be kind of systematically put in and the only way I - like this year because it was the first year of doing this um - the start of next year we will have enough of the information, all the kind of the numbers and the understanding of what the interventions are actually trying to achieve for us to be able to present it more like with a unified front about what they're trying to achieve and then the teachers will be, if anything forced to recognize it because it's powerful yeah no I agree do you so okay - I'm still kind of pitching how this so, say for example we we or I on your timetables protected, Friday, last lesson, for use for feedback to teachers - so emails often give you greater accountability because you can show you've done something, but</p>	<p>systematic planning of intervention experiential evidence shared planning and understanding of intervention protect planning time accountability</p>



I would, I would say perhaps maybe not even weekly but I'd say the key would be to start before you start the book or the text or whatever it is like have like a meeting perhaps with all of the LSA's leading the intervention and the teachers teaching their students to go over page by page sort of what what kind of things we are covering and if they think that there's anything specifically that needs to be addressed, um and also a chance for the LSA to specifically say, for such-and-such student this is what we are trying to achieve? I think the fact that teachers might not even know what the goals are for certain students absolutely this is something that gets lost along the way - um so setting those goals for particular students and keeping, because if you do that at the beginning of a syllabus then you can you always, have, you can have that in the back of your mind so the weekly checks if you decide to do weekly checks will be more effective um so maybe a combination of the two

yeah

I think even like like once every two weeks or something just like so that it's not um it doesn't get too repetitive and it's essentially lose effectiveness somewhere on the way because that that's bound to happen as well if you are going over the same booklet

yeah of course

every week is gonna - yeah - um

9. so, I - I feel like most of our discussions revolved around your literacy interventions but you also had um attention development, and we, you came and asked if it could stop basically y

yeah

because it wasn't - well you take over

well yeah so we started the attention development intervention with two students who um well when we started they were keen to do something but I think it was actually because I wanted to partly get out of lessons partly have an excuse to kind of play around for a bit, um and I was I was juggling between what kind of activities to do for them, and at the end it came about that neither of them knew how to play chess, but I thought that we can teach and maybe have a game just see how much focus they can show in the game um and yeah so so I taught them how to play and very quickly it turned into a little bit of a competitive like I beat you this time, I'll be like watch I'll beat you next time and they start to get really, really excited by the idea of coming to chess so much so that they'd come and wait for me and go in and play um and I mean one of the, one of the guys even went to the chess tournament then-

Shared planning for intervention

Students' needs inform goals

Regular checking

Regular checking

attention development

Motivation for intervention

play games

competition

excitement motivation

yeah, yeah

-they do upstairs, so they, so they started to really show that they could sit for those 20 minutes and focus on one game and then leave and they, it was never an issue there was no, there was no instances of them you know creating any kind of difficult behaviour that they might present in class which is why I thought partly that this is, it might be a good respite for them for the week because in that time they might also talk to me about how that week's been, what they've been struggling with, what they'd like to do et cetera et cetera, so I think it was good for them to be able to just have that release as well talking to a teacher, um but after that they'd go back to lesson and they just continue on with the week, so the reason I said stop it was because um they both were I could see that they both um got what they could out of the intervention I don't think for them to come to see me once a week for 20 minutes was going to do much more benefit apart from them having someone to talk to

yeah

um and if that was if that was okay then I would have as if that's fine then I don't think there's a problem with that either I think sometimes some of the students do need just that the check-in chat and checking um

but it's sort of you - you were happy that it had achieved its-

yeah, I think it was more just to kind of see what where their focus was, how it could can they be focused for a significant amount of time

and they were learning whilst focusing as well weren't, they?

yeah the fact that they could retain the information, they could use it, they could start to get creative with it means that they do have the ability to set their minds on something and focus on the task and we did speak about that as well, um, like some of them said that they get distracted with other students when other kids get involved - one of them said that it's more when he gets bored - if something just starts to get a little bit boring he just loses focus and he starts to his mind starts to um trail off, so even that like understanding what specifically it is that like affects the students and how we can perhaps use that to make classrooms more effective - like those things need to be reported back to the students as well it's very good just doing -just doing interventions for teachers in classrooms um isn't working as well and...

10. and do you think with interventions such as that which are less um less linked to the core curriculum there needs to be - and we need to we or I need to - develop a clearer exit criteria so that people can be confident to stop the interventions?

perhaps yeah -not- maybe not so much um, maybe a review that is more of a conversation with a student to ask them, as well. um there's - it's a tough one because like, if it's not strictly in the curriculum then there's a, there's a harder it's harder to say if they achieve what they need to achieve, but I think that's why setting up perhaps at the beginning of an intervention what the aims of the

Motivation

Students' needs

Focus for learning

Pastoral needs

Non curricula planning

Pastoral needs

Focus for learning

Focus for learning

Motivation

Shared planning for intervention

Shared planning for interventions

Non curricula planning



## Appendix 8: Pre-2019 training for delivering interventions

[+]	[REDACTED]	Reading comprehension		
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (SLCN)		
[REDACTED]	Positive reinforcement (building self-esteem)			
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (ASD*)	[REDACTED] (SLCN)	[REDACTED] (ASD)
[REDACTED]	Spelling			
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (SLCN)	[REDACTED] (SLCN)	
Sam Edmondson	Social Skills			
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (ASD)		
[REDACTED]	Attention			
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (ASD)	[REDACTED] (ADHD)	
[REDACTED]	Emotional literacy			
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] (SEMH)	[REDACTED] (MLD)	[REDACTED] (SLCN)

### Purpose of Trial:

We have four weeks to trial withdrawal interventions (WC 01/04, 08/04, 29/04, 06/05).

At the end of the trial I need to know: that the processes are easy to follow; that we have stress-tested these processes; what balance between reactivity and pro-activeness is necessary to make these interventions successful; that the What To Do guides are useful and not restrictive; that the parents can be engaged with; most importantly, that they have some positive impact on the students.

### What To Do:

[ ] On 29/03, review your assignment and contact parent(s) using the draft [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Report to SED any difficulties with parental contact.

[ ] On 29/03, print your What To Do and resources. Familiarise yourself with these. CONSIDER: we have four weeks for the trial and the WTD's give detail for six week interventions. *How are you going to adapt these?*

[ ] On 29/03, review your free periods against your student(s) timetable. Which lesson can they be withdrawn from? Note: we will lose one Monday to staff training, and one Wednesday to Parent-Tutor day. Use the draft Pupil Support Handbook for further guidance.

[ ] On WC 01/04, start your intervention. This period of time is designed to iron out any and all issues – you should 100% be engaging with me around problems and concerns. From Sept. there will be far more responsibility placed on yourselves to find solutions: therefore access me now, whilst you can!

### Consider:

This is an opportunity to show off your resourcefulness **BUT** the power behind these interventions is that they are brief, and target the students' core needs. Think KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid. **Do not** devote your remaining PPAs to this time. **Do not** devote your evenings and weekends to this. Each intervention should last 22 minutes from collection at the classroom to returning to their seat.

## Professional standards and conduct:

---

This is written in the draft Pupil Support Handbook but I will address this directly: it will **never** be acceptable for a student to 'meet you in Pupil Support'. Even if you are in the twelfth week of the intervention. **It is your professional duty to be at the teacher's door, at the start of the period, before the student has entered the class, and to take them to their intervention.** You must always return the student to the classroom, saying goodbye at the door as they enter, 22 minutes in to the lesson. You will be absolutely responsible for their conduct in the corridor.

From September, there will be an absolute division between office working space and appropriate spaces for interventions. During the trial, **no intervention should be taking place in the LSA office.** Use your PPA time to identify where you are going to deliver the intervention, e.g. spare classrooms on the Pupil Support corridor, the connexions office, or my office. You will be required to fully engage with the intervention and not use this as quasi-computer time where you type and talk, or similar misuse of time.

I am absolutely committed to this model and its implementation for the benefit of our students **and** for the empowerment of my team. This will be the only opportunity we have to do something truly unique. The success of the trial depends on the engagement and professional standards that I have come to expect from you.

### Anticipated issues:

Students not wanting to attend: **we should never respond to a student not accessing their intervention with a sanction.** This will not lead to engagement. If they do not want to come, say that is okay, and inform me/parent, or proceed with those students who have been collected.

This shouldn't become an issue because you will have fully informed the parent of the purpose of the intervention, and prepped the student in Form Time before the intervention is due to start. You also have the huge advantage of knowing these students, and knowing that they like you. Give out LOTS of merits.

Imbalance between students participating in the intervention: if this has happened, something has gone wrong at the referral/allocation stage. In the immediate situation, ask the stronger student to coach the weaker student. Address with myself and via your planning.

### The Review Process:

Please keep notes on successes and failures, in response to the points made in the **'Purpose of Trial' section.** If huge swathes of the WTD's need re-writing it is essential that we learn this now. If the routines I expect to be put in place are completely unrealistic, I need to know this now. We need to roll this programme out without any wriggle room in September, hence the trial.

I will meet with you each individually to review the successes and areas for improvement at the end of the trial. I am of course available to address concerns throughout the trial period.

# A Christmas Carol



## Charles Dickens

Name: .....

Year 7 – Literacy

# Contents

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# Word reading test 01

## GREEN WORD READING LIST

A B O S E R T H U P I V Z J Q 15

see red milk was then jar letter 7

city between cliff listen wrap plot 13

grunt sour huge privilege license humidity 19

gadget tough residence urge clarify rancid 25

suspicion conspiracy deny miscellaneous quarantine 30

Date of test:		<p><b>Delivering the word reading test:</b> pass the page to the child, and ask them to read the letters and words to you. Start at the letter A.</p> <p>Count the number of correctly read letters and words, and give a total score out of 45.</p>
No. of Letters read correctly:	/15	
No. of Words read correctly:	/30	
Total:	<b>/45</b>	

# Sentence Comprehension test 01

## GREEN SENTENCE COMPREHENSION CARD

### STARTING POINT A

1. Dee is having a birthday party for her brother. He will be seven \_\_\_\_\_ old.
2. As soon as Jenny put the food on the table, the rest of the family sat down to \_\_\_\_\_ it.
3. My friend is not allowed to go into deep water. He doesn't know how to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. When her brother walks the dog at night, he uses a flashlight so that he can \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The children were playing in the park. They took turns throwing and catching the big yellow \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Always wait for the red light to change to green before you cross the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Brad plays with his train more than with his other toys. The train is Brad's favorite \_\_\_\_\_.
8. She took off her coat because she felt too \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The birds made their \_\_\_\_\_ high in the tree.

### STARTING POINT B

10. The boy jumped over the puddle to keep his feet \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The noise was so loud that the woman covered both her \_\_\_\_\_ to block out the sound.
12. "Be sure to take your umbrella," Tonya's mother shouted. "It looks like \_\_\_\_\_ today."
13. When someone turns on the lamp, \_\_\_\_\_ fills the room.
14. Our friends stayed until the concert was over, but most of the audience had already \_\_\_\_\_.

**STARTING POINT C**

15. Shana enjoys working with numbers more than anything else, so it is not surprising that her favorite subject is \_\_\_\_\_.
16. By following the sound of its screeching and squawking, the children were able to \_\_\_\_\_ the missing parrot.
17. "Please remain quiet," the principal warned the students, "because if you talk, nobody will be able to \_\_\_\_\_ these instructions."
18. Ali wanted to buy a toy truck, so instead of spending his money for other things, he \_\_\_\_\_ it for the truck.
19. Kyle raised the binoculars to his \_\_\_\_\_ so that he could get a better look at the stage performers.

**STARTING POINT D**

20. Carlos began to lag behind Trisha, who walked much too \_\_\_\_\_ for him.
21. At the last minute, the passengers were told that they would have to take a five-hour bus ride to reach their destination because their flight had been \_\_\_\_\_ due to heavy fog.
22. Because of the sweltering heat from the afternoon sun, the cows crowded together in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the lone tree.
23. Most of the doctors who practiced in the area attended the medical society's annual meeting, which took \_\_\_\_\_ in our city last year.
24. There was no more room on the board for the teacher to write, so she asked for a volunteer to help her \_\_\_\_\_ everything on it.

Date of test:		<p><b>Delivering the sentence comprehension test:</b> pass the page to the child, and ask them to read aloud the sentences starting at 1. The child must fill in the gap.</p>
Total:	<b>/24</b>	
		Count each time the gap is correctly filled.

# Learning Objectives



Read 3 key extracts from A Christmas Carol.



Understand how the character, Scrooge, changes over the course of the novella (story).



Identify similes and adjectives that describe Scrooge's transformation.

# Activities



Read aloud to your LSA.



Explain and answer questions with your LSA.



Listen to your LSA's opinion.



Identify key words and sentences by highlighting them.



Write your answer, or practice your handwriting.



Think about your answer.



# Key Words

Adjective

Simile

Compare

Transformation

Change

Cause

Solitary

Honour

Merry



Match the key words with their definitions.

to become  
different

a significant (big)  
change

comparing two  
things using the  
word 'like' or 'as'

looking at the  
difference  
between two  
things

words that  
describe

to be happy and  
jolly

to have respect for  
something

to be alone

the reason  
something  
happens



Listen whilst your LSA explains whether they agree with your choice.



Copy the definition next to the key word.

Adjective .....

.....

Simile .....

.....

Compare .....

.....

Transformation .....

.....

Change .....

.....

Cause .....

.....

Solitary .....

.....

Honour .....

.....

Merry .....

.....

# Who is Scrooge?



Read the extract describing Scrooge at the beginning of *A Christmas Carol*.



Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from

which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.



Highlight descriptive language used by Dickens to describe Scrooge.



Explain why you chose these descriptions.



Listen whilst your LSA explains whether they agree with your choice.

# Key word: simile



Explain what a simile is to your LSA.





Write a definition of the key word: simile

.....



Use the grid below to match the similes in the text with the images.

Analyse the meaning of the simile in the final box.

Simile quote:	Simile image:	Analysis (meaning):
		
		

# Quick Test 01:



- A simile is:  using the word 'like' in a sentence.  
 comparing two things using the word 'like' or 'as'.  
 saying something is something else.



- An oyster is:  a sea creature, that sometimes contains a rare pearl.  
 a sea creature, that clusters together with other oysters.  
 a seashell, that grows in the River Thames.



- A flint is:  a stone from the olden-days, that's a brown colour.  
 a stone, which can be used to start fires.  
 a stone, which is soft and smooth.



Charles Dickens has very carefully chosen to describe Scrooge as:  
"Hard and sharp as flint... and solitary as an oyster"

**Your turn:** How would you describe Scrooge at the beginning of the novella?

**Key words:** nice nasty unpleasant foul-smelling poor cruel



.....  
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# Handwriting practice

Concentrate on your handwriting and neat presentation:



Copy: Scrooge is as "solitary as an oyster".

.....

.....



Copy: Scrooge is as "solitary as an oyster".

.....

.....



Copy: Scrooge is as "solitary as an oyster".

.....

.....



Copy: Scrooge is as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....

.....



Copy: Scrooge is as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....

.....



Copy: Scrooge is as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....

.....

# Who is Scrooge?



Read the extract describing Scrooge at the beginning of A Christmas Carol.



Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from

which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.



Highlight similes used by Dickens to describe Scrooge.



Explain what an adjective is to your LSA.



Highlight adjectives used by Dickens to describe Scrooge in a different colour.



Use the grid below to analyse three pieces of evidence describing Scrooge:

*Hint: think back to your last literacy intervention.*

Simile or adjective quote:	Language (circle):	Analysis (meaning):
	<i>simile or adjective</i>	
	<i>simile or adjective</i>	
	<i>simile or adjective</i>	



Discuss with your LSA: Why does Dickens use adjectives to describe Scrooge as cold?

Quote: "The cold within him froze his old features"



What does the use of the word cold make you think about Scrooge?





## Quick Test 02:



- A simile is:**  using the word 'like' in a sentence.  
 saying something is something else.  
 comparing two things using the word 'like' or 'as'.



- Scrooge is:**  hard like old flint.  
 hard and sharp as flint.  
 soft and smooth like flint.



- Scrooge is:**  a solitary old man with a pearl inside of him.  
 growing in the River Thames.  
 as solitary as an oyster.



- Dickens:**  uses similes to compare Scrooge to other things.  
 tells the reader that Scrooge is hard and solitary.  
 uses similes to show the reader that Scrooge is hard and solitary.



- Dickens':**  choice of simile suggests that Scrooge may possess a rare treasure inside of him.  
 choice of simile suggests that Scrooge may spark a fire.  
 choice of simile tells the reader the Scrooge looks like a stone and an oyster.



- Dickens:**  uses temperature to show the reader that Scrooge is cold.  
 uses temperature to show the reader that Scrooge is unpleasant.  
 uses adjectives to describe the weather in London in the winter.

# Handwriting practice

Concentrate on your handwriting and neat presentation:



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster".

.....  
.....



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster".

.....  
.....



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster".

.....  
.....



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....  
.....



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....  
.....



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "hard and sharp as flint".

.....  
.....

# The Ghosts



Connect the pictures to the name of each ghost that visits Scrooge.

Connect the name of each ghost to their description.



Ghost of Jacob Marley



Ghost of Christmas Present



Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come



Ghost of Christmas Past

This Ghost is a jolly giant.

He shows Scrooge how happy and merry people can be, even though they don't have a lot of money

This ghost is very kind.

He shows Scrooge his past. Scrooge cries because he has seen some very happy memories, and also some sad memories.

This ghost is very sad.

He used to be Scrooge's friend and business partner. He is tied in chains made of cash boxes and keys and finds it very difficult to move.

This ghost is very scary.

He shows Scrooge how sad and miserable his life will be if he does not change his ways.

# The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come



Read the extract describing Scrooge visiting the graveyard with The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.



"Am I that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees. The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!" The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake. "Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life." The kind hand trembled.

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"



**Discuss with your LSA:** What has happened whilst Scrooge visited the graveyard with The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?

**Key words:** transformation change caused by



What does the word honour mean?

What does the quote "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year" tell the reader about Scrooge?



**Using similes,** describe Scrooge at the beginning of the novella:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**Using a quote,** show how Scrooge feels about Christmas after he has visited the graveyard:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**Describe** what has happened to Scrooge during the visit to the graveyard.  
**Use the keywords:** transformation change caused by:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

# Quick Test 03:



- A simile is:**  using the word 'like' in a sentence.  
 saying something is something else.  
 comparing two things using the word 'like' or 'as'.



- Scrooge has:**  transformed in to a ghost.  
 changed his beliefs about Christmas.  
 removed his name from the gravestone.



- Honour is:**  another word for sixty minutes.  
 having respect for something.  
 believing in something.



- Dickens':**  description of Scrooge during the visit to the graveyard shows that he is scared of the Ghost.  
 description of Scrooge during the visit to the graveyard shows that he is scared of his future.  
 description of Scrooge during the visit to the graveyard shows that he is scared of gravestones.



- Dickens:**  shows the reader that Scrooge wishes he hadn't met the Ghosts.  
 shows the reader that Scrooge has completed a transformation.  
 shows the reader that Scrooge will never change and will always be a nasty and cruel man.

# The Change in Scrooge



Using the image, below, describe Scrooge at the end of A Christmas Carol:



Read this extract from the text to your LSA.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"



Highlight similes used by Dickens to describe Scrooge.



Explain why you chose these descriptions.



Listen whilst your LSA explains whether they agree with your choice.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"



Highlight evidence that Scrooge has changed in the extract above.



Discuss with your LSA how the language used by Dickens demonstrates that Scrooge has changed.



Use the grid below to compare similes used at the start of the novella with those used in the extract above.

Simile(s) used at the start of the novella:	Simile(s) used at the end of the novella:



# Quick Test 04:



- A simile is:  comparing two things using the word 'like' or 'as'.  
 saying something is something else.  
 using the word 'like' in a sentence.



- Dickens:  says Scrooge is so happy he is an angel.  
 describes Scrooge as "as happy as an angel".  
 describes Scrooge as "as happy as a schoolboy".



- Dickens:  shows the reader that Scrooge has changed and become "merry".  
 shows the reader that Scrooge is still as solitary as an oyster.  
 shows the reader that Scrooge is drunk.



Write down two similes describing Scrooge at the start of the novella.

.....  
.....  
.....



Write down one quote describing how Scrooge now feels about Christmas.

.....  
.....  
.....



Write down two similes describing Scrooge at the end of the novella.

.....  
.....  
.....

# Handwriting practice

Concentrate on your handwriting and neat presentation:



Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster" at the start of the novella. Dickens shows that Scrooge has transformed by the end of the novella. Scrooge becomes "as merry as a school boy".

.....

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Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster" at the start of the novella. Dickens shows that Scrooge has transformed by the end of the novella. Scrooge becomes "as merry as a school boy".

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Copy: Dickens describes Scrooge as "solitary as an oyster" at the start of the novella. Dickens shows that Scrooge has transformed by the end of the novella. Scrooge becomes "as merry as a school boy".

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# Word reading test 02

## GREEN WORD READING LIST

A B O S E R T H U P I V Z J Q 15

see red milk was then jar letter 7

city between cliff listen wrap plot 13

grunt sour huge privilege license humidity 19

gadget tough residence urge clarify rancid 25

suspicion conspiracy deny miscellaneous quarantine 30

Date of test:		<b>Delivering the word reading test:</b> pass the page to the child, and ask them to read the letters and words to you. Start at the letter A.  Count the number of correctly read letters and words, and give a total score out of 45.
No. of Letters read correctly:	/15	
No. of Words read correctly:	/30	
Total:	<b>/45</b>	

# Sentence Comprehension test 02

## GREEN SENTENCE COMPREHENSION CARD

### STARTING POINT A

1. Dee is having a birthday party for her brother. He will be seven \_\_\_\_\_ old.
2. As soon as Jenny put the food on the table, the rest of the family sat down to \_\_\_\_\_ it.
3. My friend is not allowed to go into deep water. He doesn't know how to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. When her brother walks the dog at night, he uses a flashlight so that he can \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The children were playing in the park. They took turns throwing and catching the big yellow \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Always wait for the red light to change to green before you cross the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Brad plays with his train more than with his other toys. The train is Brad's favorite \_\_\_\_\_.
8. She took off her coat because she felt too \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The birds made their \_\_\_\_\_ high in the tree.

### STARTING POINT B

10. The boy jumped over the puddle to keep his feet \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The noise was so loud that the woman covered both her \_\_\_\_\_ to block out the sound.
12. "Be sure to take your umbrella," Tonya's mother shouted. "It looks like \_\_\_\_\_ today."
13. When someone turns on the lamp, \_\_\_\_\_ fills the room.
14. Our friends stayed until the concert was over, but most of the audience had already \_\_\_\_\_.

### STARTING POINT C

15. Shana enjoys working with numbers more than anything else, so it is not surprising that her favorite subject is \_\_\_\_\_.
16. By following the sound of its screeching and squawking, the children were able to \_\_\_\_\_ the missing parrot.
17. "Please remain quiet," the principal warned the students, "because if you talk, nobody will be able to \_\_\_\_\_ these instructions."
18. Ali wanted to buy a toy truck, so instead of spending his money for other things, he \_\_\_\_\_ it for the truck.
19. Kyle raised the binoculars to his \_\_\_\_\_ so that he could get a better look at the stage performers.

### STARTING POINT D

20. Carlos began to lag behind Trisha, who walked much too \_\_\_\_\_ for him.
21. At the last minute, the passengers were told that they would have to take a five-hour bus ride to reach their destination because their flight had been \_\_\_\_\_ due to heavy fog.
22. Because of the sweltering heat from the afternoon sun, the cows crowded together in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the lone tree.
23. Most of the doctors who practiced in the area attended the medical society's annual meeting, which took \_\_\_\_\_ in our city last year.
24. There was no more room on the board for the teacher to write, so she asked for a volunteer to help her \_\_\_\_\_ everything on it.

Date of test:		<b>Delivering the sentence comprehension test:</b> pass the page to the child, and ask them to read aloud the sentences starting at 1. The child must fill in the gap.
Total:	<b>/24</b>	

Count each time the gap is correctly filled.

\*\*\* Back Page for LSA use \*\*\*

Checklist pre-intervention					
Eng. teacher informed?		Parent informed?		Parent pack sent?	
Monitoring pre- and post- intervention					
Word reading test 01		Word reading test 02		Improvement?	
Sentence comp. test 01		Sentence comp. test 02		Improvement?	
General comments on the child's literacy development during intervention:					
Postcard home?					
Silver merit?					

# How am I feeling?



Name: .....

# Learning Objectives



Be able to talk about how you are feeling with an adult.



Think about how you can feel happier in school.



Think about how your emotions affect other people.

# Activities



Read aloud to your LSA.



Explain and answer questions with your LSA.



Listen to your LSA's opinion.



Identify key words and sentences by highlighting them.



Write your answer, or practice your handwriting.



Think about your answer.

# Strengths & Difficulties

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Date of test:</b>	<b>Score:</b>	<b>Delivering the SDQ test:</b> pass this page to the child, and ask them to self-assess.  Younger children may require an explanation for Not True, Somewhat True and Certainly True.
Emotional problem scale		
Conduct problem scale		
Hyperactivity scale		
Peer problems scale		
Prosocial scale		

Interpreting Results:	Score:	Close to average	Slightly raised	High	Very high
Emotional problem scale		0-4	5	6	7-10
Conduct problem scale		0-3	4	5	6-10
Hyperactivity scale		0-5	6	7	8-10
Peer problems scale		0-2	3	4	5-10
Prosocial scale		7-10	6	5	0-4



# Myself School Adults Children



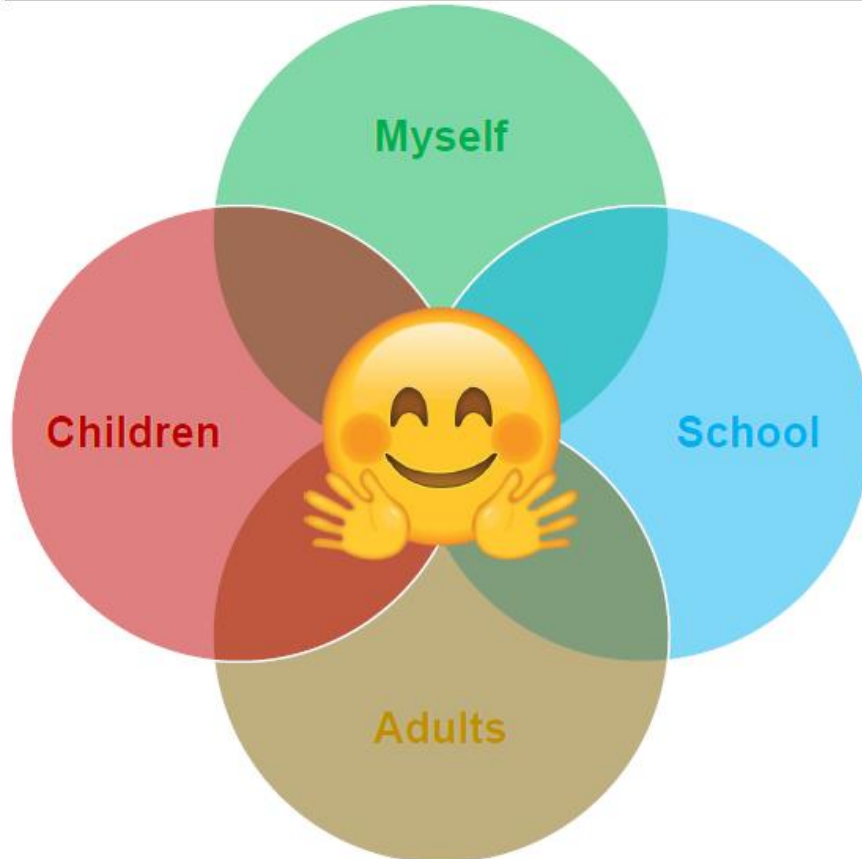
In this booklet we will think **ALL ABOUT YOU**.

You will be able to think about how your emotions affect your learning.

There are four sections: **myself** (you), **school** (Ark Academy), **adults** (teachers and support staff) and **children** (your classmates).

These four elements **combine to make you happy at school**.

*Remember that if you have any questions you can ask the LSA to stop and explain.*



# All About Me



Think about the prompts below.



Answer each sentence aloud to your LSA.

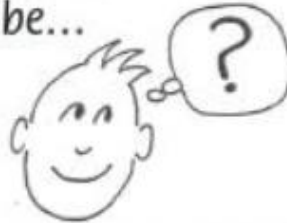
I get angry when...



I am happiest when...



I would most like to be...



My favourite place is...



I am looking forward to...



If I was an animal, I'd like to be a...





Highlight three emotions from the chart below that you have felt at school this week.

Feeling happy 	Feeling tired 	Feeling angry 
Feeling out of sorts 	Feeling bored 	Feeling fed up 
Feeling excited 	Feeling low 	Feeling sad 
Feeling worried 	Feeling hurt 	Feeling unwell 
Feeling loved 	Feeling embarrassed 	Something else... 





Explain to your LSA when and why you felt each emotion.

# It's good to be...



Use two different colours to highlight whether “it’s good to be...” or “it’s bad to be...” the following adjectives.

It's good to be...	It's bad to be...
 Kind	 Selfish
Talkative	Quiet
Funny	Serious
Mean	Generous
Thoughtful	Loner
Popular	Sensible



Explain your decisions to your LSA.



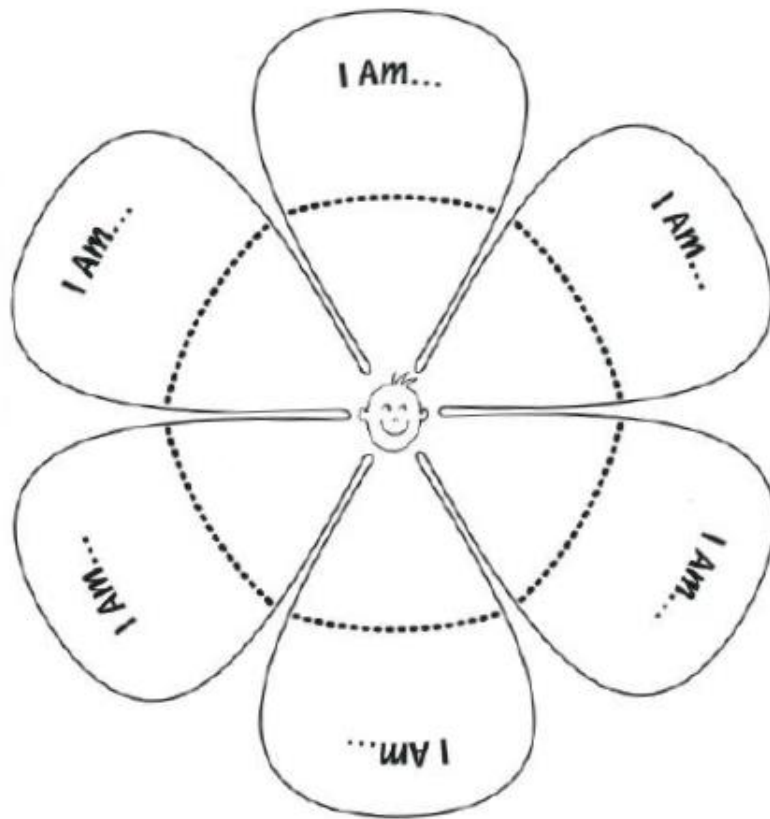
Listen to your LSA's opinion.



Think about the qualities you have just discussed.  
Which best describe you?



Write your answers in the chart below.



Do you think this is what your Form Tutor and your teachers see in you? Explain to your LSA.

# Things I Find Hard

It is likely that the reason you are completing this intervention is that you have found following a school rule difficult recently.



Listen to your LSA. They will explain that **now is a time to talk**.

This is a **safe place**.

However, you must still **be respectful when talking about adults that work in this school**.

Your LSA may also **inform a senior member of school staff**, if they are concerned about the discussion.

However this will not be to get you in trouble; only to **keep you safe**.



Think about what you've been **finding hard** at school lately. It may be:

**A particular rule or expectation**

**A particular teacher**

**A particular lesson**

**A particular friend or group of people**



Discuss with your LSA possible solutions to this issue/these issues.

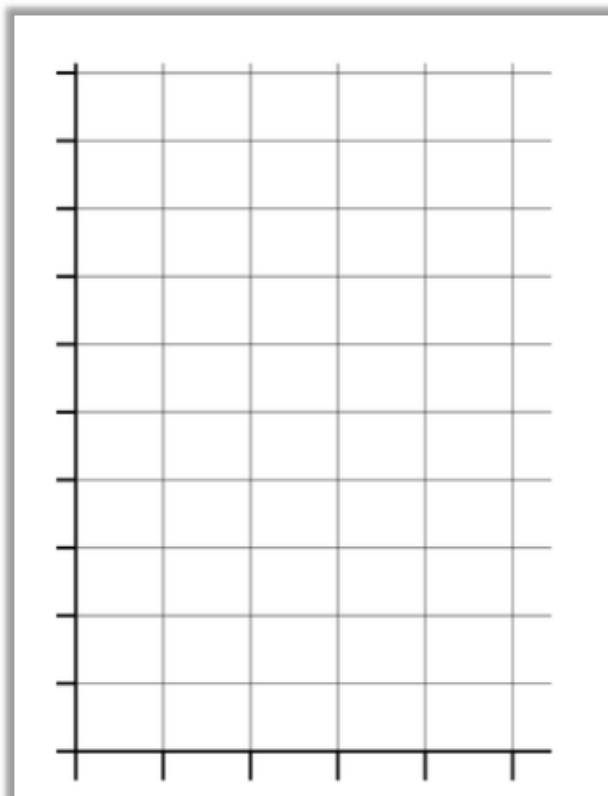


Your LSA will tell you how many merits and how many negatives you have received over the half-term.



Draw a bar chart of your merits and negatives.

My behaviour



Discuss the difference between your merits and negatives with your LSA.

# School rules

## CODE OF CONDUCT

IN THE COMMUNITY OF [REDACTED], I MUST:



BE POLITE TO ALL I ENCOUNTER:  
STAFF, VISITORS AND FELLOW  
STUDENTS & TREAT ALL PEOPLE  
AS I WOULD WISH TO BE TREATED



**GO STRAIGHT  
TO LESSONS,  
HOLDING DOORS  
OPEN FOR OTHERS  
WHEN CORRIDORS  
ARE BUSY**



*Be an active learner*  
**ENGAGING**  
*with all activities*

SHOW RESPECT FOR  
MY OWN LEARNING  
AND THAT OF OTHERS  
BY BEING SILENT  
WHEN REQUESTED



**ENTER THE  
CLASSROOM**  
*quietly,*

**GREET  
THE  
TEACHER**

**SAY THE  
SCHOOL  
PLEDGE**

**&  
SETTLE  
DOWN  
TO THE**

**DO NOW  
ACTIVITY  
STRAIGHT  
AWAY**

## RESPECT

OTHER PEOPLES' RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS,  
LEARNING FROM THEM BY ACTIVE LISTENING  
AND FOLLOWING THE SPEAKER WITH MY EYES

\*@!/?&

DO NOT INSULT,  
UNDERMINE OR SWEAR AT  
ANY MEMBER OF STAFF,  
VISITOR OR STUDENT

## LISTEN

TO MEMBERS OF STAFF &  
FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS  
POLITELY AND CALMLY



**KEEP MY HANDS  
AND FEET TO MYSELF  
AND DON'T TOUCH  
OR INTERFERE WITH  
OTHER PEOPLES'  
PROPERTY**



## WALK

IN A SINGLE FILE IN  
CORRIDORS & STAIRS,  
KEEPING TO THE

**LEFT**  
AND NO  
RUNNING  
OR  
SHOUTING



**BRING MY PLANNER,  
WATER BOTTLE AND  
ALL OTHER EQUIPMENT  
NECESSARY FOR  
SCHOOL EVERY DAY**



# What do they mean?



We have rules at [redacted] make sure that all of our children can learn.

These rules will also keep you safe, in the corridors and in the playground.

Sometimes, when rules are broken, it can be difficult to understand what has gone wrong.

When things go wrong, it is okay to become upset. But you must also reflect and learn, so that it doesn't happen again.

We understand that getting detentions is one of the biggest concerns our children have.

We do not enjoy giving children detentions.



**Do you understand the school's rules?  
Are there any you are worried about?**



**Ask questions to your LSA about the school rules.**



**Listen to your LSA as they explain the answers to your questions.**

# When Something Goes Wrong



Think about the most recent time “something went wrong” with a teacher. What happened?

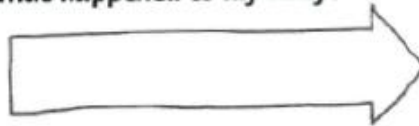
The situation...

What did I think?



What did I feel?

What happened to my body?



me

What did I **choose** to do?

choices

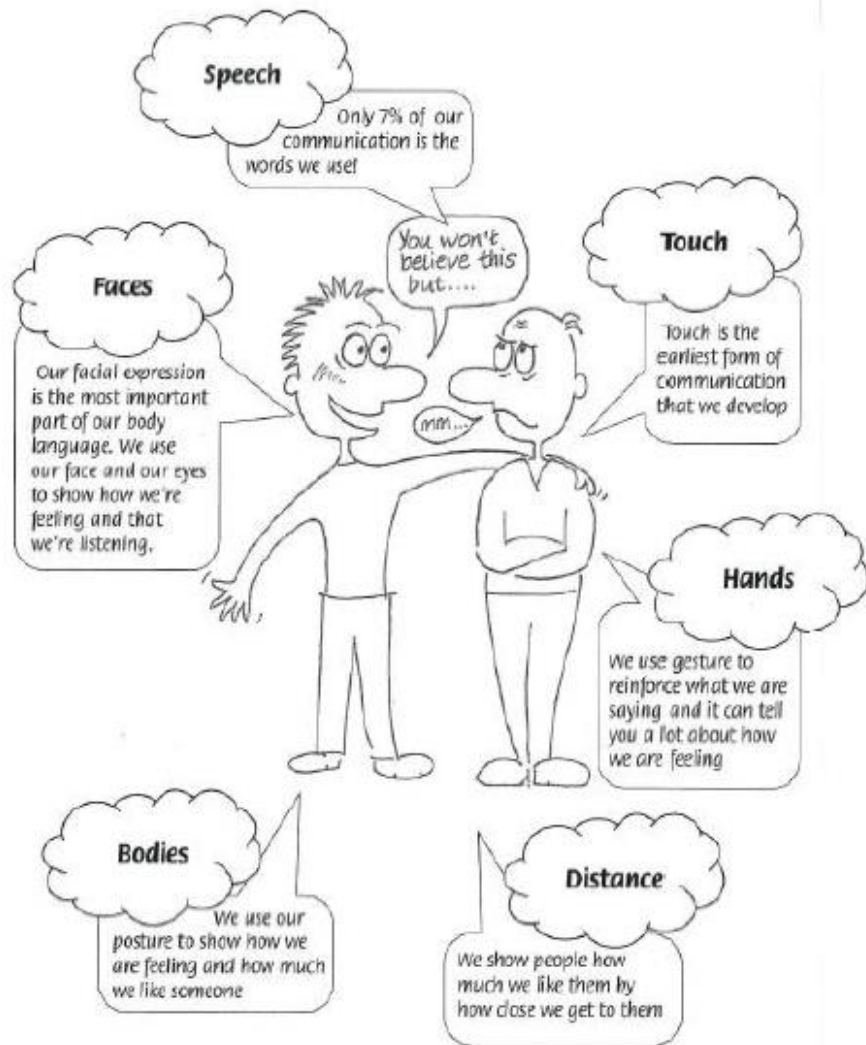
What were the consequences?



Is there anything I could have done differently?



# When Something Goes Wrong



Read aloud to your LSA.



Think about “what went wrong”.



Describe the situation to your LSA: What went wrong?



What did you choose to do?



What did my body language look like?

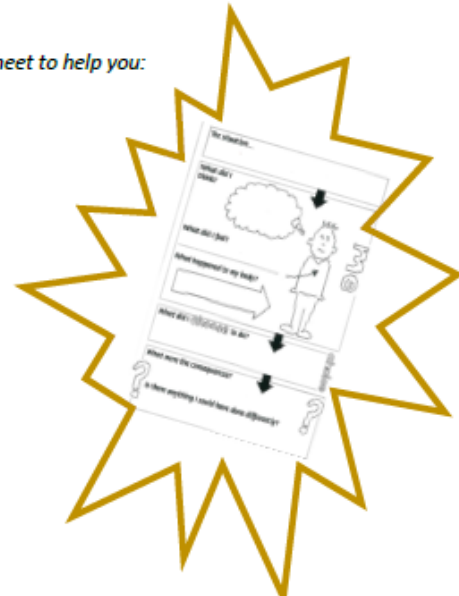


What could you have done differently?



Listen to your LSA as they help you understand “what went wrong”.

Use your sheet to help you:



# Next Time



**Read how to avoid things going wrong** aloud to your LSA.

If that situation were to happen again, we want to make sure you are ready to deal with it in a way that doesn't make you upset, or get in to trouble.

## Ask for Help



You may recognise that a situation is going wrong, but not know what to do about it.

### **If you are in a classroom:**

You should first try and tell an adult by putting up your hand.

### **If you are in the corridor or playground:**

Find the nearest adult and ask them for help.

### **If you are upset about something that has already happened:**

Tell your Form Tutor the next day, and your parent at home.

## Count to 10



If you can feel yourself becoming **angry, cross or upset**, you should walk away from the situation immediately.

If you are in a classroom, and you become angry, cross or upset, **you should get up and walk to the nearest adult.**

Sometimes teachers **may not have understood** how urgent the situation is for you. It is okay to tell them.

## Time Out



Very occasionally when we are extremely angry, cross or upset, you may **need to take a time out.**

A member of staff may come and take you to the reflection room to allow you to calm down. Whilst here, they might also ask you to write down what happened.

This is an **opportunity for you to feel better** and to make sure the teachers know what has happened.

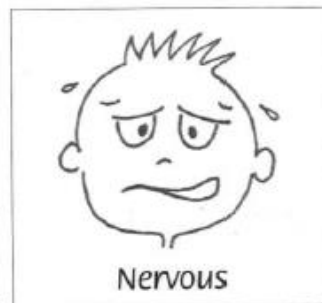
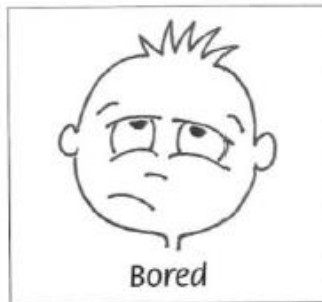
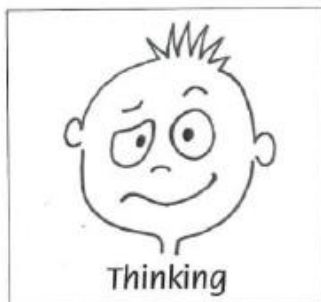
# Getting Along With Others



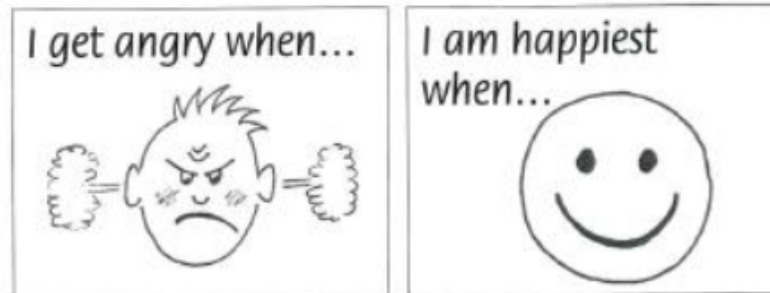
Why is recognising **other people's body language** important?



Discuss with your LSA how you should react when you see **another child showing these different emotions**.



# Getting Along With Others in Class



**Think about what makes you angry and what makes you happy in class. It is likely these feelings are linked to your classmates.**



**Discuss with your LSA how you should react when another child makes you angry.**



**Listen whilst your LSA explains how the teacher can help you manage your behaviour in class.**



**Discuss with your LSA how you should react when another child makes you happy.**



**Listen whilst your LSA explains how the teacher can help you manage your behaviour in class.**



# Being kind

There are **many different children** and adults in Ark Academy.

Some children may look and sound the **same** as you.

Some children may look and sound **different** to you.

Whether someone is **similar or different**, we must always try and **be kind**.

Being kind means **treating someone else the way we would like to be treated**.

If you don't want someone to be mean to you, you **must not be mean first**.

Being kind also means **being patient**.

If someone is mean to your first, you should be patient and tell an adult.

If someone is mean to you first, you **should not be mean back**.

At Ark Academy, we always say: **Work Hard and Be Nice**.

This is the perfect motto for anyone who wants to be kind and successful at school.





# Why it's important to be kind



Read the paragraph on being kind aloud to your LSA.



**Think about being kind.** How does being kind ensure that everyone can learn and be safe?



Discuss with your LSA a time when you have found it hard to be kind to another child at Ark Academy.



Listen whilst your LSA explains what you could do differently next time to be kind in this situation.



# Space for Questions



You may think of some questions that you'd like to ask an adult.

Use this space to write them down.



In your next intervention, your LSA can answer your questions.



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# Strengths & Difficulties

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**REFRESHERS**

## Quality First Teaching

**Differentiation** 😞

What does the term mean to you?

1. How do you differentiate at the **planning stage**?
2. How do you differentiate **within the classroom**?

**What is DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION?**

Differentiation means tailoring instruction to meet individual needs.

Differentiated instruction aims to:

- Improve learning outcomes
- Increase engagement
- Inspire a love of learning
- Increase self-awareness
- Help students learn more efficiently and with deeper understanding

**REFRESHERS**

## Quality First Teaching

How do the **█** 😞 **Pillars** enable **high-quality differentiation**?

**REFRESHERS**

## Knowing Every Child

**FACT:** It is not realistic to know every child in your classes at **this** point in the year.



**REFRESHERS**

## What does it mean? 🤔

Prior Attainment Group

Attainment at Year End

Target Attainment

EAL Y/N

SEND & need

Pupil Premium

Subject: English Assessment 1  
Last assessment: 75Jun12 - Age Related  
Teaching group: 7EN-TU (Mr S Edmondson)

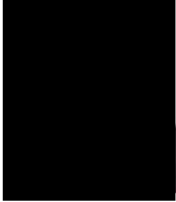
Comp	Tutor	Prior Att	Grp	Reading Age	Exp Attnd	KS1 Base	Year Bass	Aut2	Spr2	Sum2	EoY Targ	EoKS Targ	Aut2 CIX	Spr2 CIX	Sum2 CIX	Eth	EAL	Lang	SEN	Need	SPH	P Premium	CPA	Prestd	Exp
M	07-CD (18/19) [FCO]	Low	05:07	3.063	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				ACOT	Y	PAT	K	SLCN	N	N	N	94.8	0.0
M	07-HC (18/19) [TCB]	Low	06:10	2.195	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2				BAFR	Y	SOM	K	SEMH	N	Y	N	83.8	0.0
F	07-KH (18/19) [JFI]	Low	09:00	2.571	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				MWOC	N	ENG	K	MLD	N	Y	N	90.8	0.0
F	07-KP (18/19) [AME]	Low	08:08	2.571	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BAFR	N	ENG	K	SPLD, SLCN	N	Y	N	98.3	0.0
M	07-KP (18/19) [AME]	Low	06:05		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				MWOC	Y	RFN	N		N	N	N	98.3	0.0
M	07-SA (18/19) [RSA]	Low	09:01	2.571	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BAFR	N	ENG	K	SEMH, PD, SLCN	Y	Y	N	92.8	0.0
M	07-PI (18/19) [NAV]	Low	05:10	2.571	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BAFR	N	ENG	K	SEMH, SLCN, SPLD	Y	Y	N	96.0	0.0
F	07-KH (18/19) [JFI]				2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2				AIND	N	ENG	N		N	N	N	89.9	0.0
M	07-KR (18/19) [DAL]	Low	06:11	3.423	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BAFR	Y	SOM	N		N	Y	N	91.6	0.0
M	07-LI (18/19) [SMT]	Low	07:07	3.063	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BAFR	N	ENG	N		N	Y	N	91.9	0.0
M	07-KH (18/19) [JFI]	Low	09:03	3.423	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				MBOE	N	ENG	N		N	Y	N	100.0	0.0
M	07-KH (18/19) [JFI]	Low	10:05	3.063	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				NOBT	Y	RFN	N		N	N	N	95.7	0.0
M	07-HC (18/19) [TCB]		07:05		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2				AOTH	Y	PAT	E	ASD, PD	Y	Y	N	99.4	0.0
M	07-SH (18/19) [RSA]	Low	05:00	2.126	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2				AIND	N	ENG	K	SLCN	N	N	N	98.3	0.0
M	07-KR (18/19) [DAL]	Low	09:07	2.571	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				BCRB	N	ENG	K	SLCN, PD	N	N	N	100.0	0.0
F	07-KR (18/19) [DAL]	Low		1.344	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				MWOC	Y	RFN	K	SLCN	N	N	N	92.8	0.0
F	07-SH (18/19) [RSA]		07:07		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				NOBT	Y	ZZZ	E	SLCN	N	Y	N	96.5	0.0

**REFRESHERS**

## Differentiation & Knowing Every Child

Pre – day #01 preparation

- ✔ Seating plans – are they populated?
- ✔ Has register data been engaged with?



- ✔ Week 1 lessons – are they accessible?
- ✔ Have IEP's been engaged with?
- ✔ Have physical disability needs been met and resources printed in advance?


**REFRESHERS**

## Differentiation & Knowing Every Child

So you've taught them all once...


General strategies for differentiation are sorted by SEND group and can be found in the Pupil Support drive and in the bulletin.

**PDF**




GEP - COGNITION AND LEARNING

**PDF**




GEP - COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

**PDF**



GEP - SEMH

**PDF**



GEP - SENS or PD

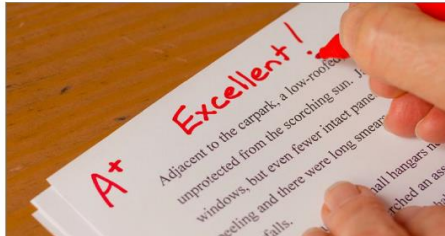




# Differentiation & Knowing Every Child

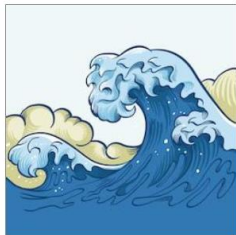
So you've taught them all once...

Mark their work! There's no better way to know what they have understood...



# Differentiation & Knowing Every Child

Further support:



**Wave 1 - Quality  
First Teaching**  
Teacher-led



**Wave 2 – SEND  
Interventions**  
Pupil Support-led




**Wave 3 –  
External support**  
Professional-led

## Appendix 12: Staff training for adapting online lessons during Covid-19 lockdown

### Meeting the needs of all learners

✓ **Quality-first teaching** is the most important factor in ensuring all children make progress.

✓ Many of the strategies discussed here are appropriate for **low-prior attaining children**, regardless of their SEND status.

 **No thrills** or fancy teaching techniques required; just a simple checklist.

**Planning to support Children with SEND Checklist**

Use this checklist to remind you to consider the needs of SEND learners when lesson planning.

Lesson Resources	<p>Have I considered how to overcome barriers to learning when preparing my lesson resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are my resources <b>dyslexia-friendly</b>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colours are high contrast</li> <li>Sans-serif fonts (e.g. arial, like I use ☺)</li> <li>Lots of spacing</li> </ul> </li> <li>Have I provided a <b>resource list</b> of what children will need for this lesson on slide 1 or within the Team? (e.g. you will need: exercise book, black pen, red pen)</li> </ul>
Activation	<p>Have I considered how to overcome communication barriers in the <b>demonstration phase of planning</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is my activation broken down into manageable chunks? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I provided any of the following scaffolds to support children's understanding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary definitions</li> <li>Word banks</li> <li>Relevant examples</li> <li>Illustrative pictures</li> <li>Clear visual models</li> <li>Graphic features</li> <li>Use of headings, highlighting, colour/bold text, brackets, inset points</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Are there any key concepts that children would benefit from having a short 'explainer' video or handout that they can return back to? Could this go on OMR or within the Team's Files?</li> <li>Have I restricted content of key facts and statistics they will need for the next task from the previous lesson?</li> </ul>
Demonstration	<p>Have I considered how to overcome cognitive barriers in the <b>demonstration phase of planning</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are my instructions clearly broken down into simple bullet points? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are tasks broken down into manageable steps?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Am I regularly checking for key understanding using short tasks (e.g. the clear one, a question, a quiz or all memory)?</li> <li>Have I given children with SEND enough thinking time before answering? Have I paused?</li> <li>Have I checked for understanding in the most efficient way possible? (e.g. multiple-choice, a table, or mini-map etc.)</li> </ul>
Independent Practice	<p>Have I considered how to overcome communication and cognitive barriers to learning in the <b>independent practice phase of planning</b>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I provided clear instructions about <b>how</b> to complete each task? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I considered a range of options for how children can answer their answers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>graph responses</li> <li>tables</li> <li>paragraph scaffolds</li> <li>sentence starters</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Have I considered how to overcome children with low confidence issues when asking children to submit work?</li> </ul>

### Lesson Resources

Lesson Resources	Have I considered how to overcome barriers to learning when preparing my lesson resources?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are my resources <b>dyslexia-friendly</b>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colours are high contrast</li> <li>Sans-serif fonts (e.g. arial, like I use ☺)</li> <li>Lots of spacing</li> </ul> </li> <li>Have I provided a <b>resource list</b> of what children will need for this lesson on slide 1 or within the Team? (e.g. you will need: exercise book, black pen, red pen)</li> </ul>



In your department you could consider:

- Creating a common "slide 1" that contains this information
- Listing this information in the Teams channel or the calendar event



# Demonstration

Demonstration	Have I considered how to overcome <b>cognitive barriers</b> in the <b>demonstration phase</b> of planning?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are my <b>instructions</b> clearly broken down into simple bullet points?</li> <li>• Are tasks broken down into <b>manageable steps</b>?</li> <li>• Am I regularly checking for <b>key understanding</b> using <i>short tasks</i> (e.g. the chat box, a quiz on SMHW, a poll in MS Forms)?</li> <li>• Have I given children with SEND enough <b>thinking time</b> before answering? Have I pre-called?</li> <li>• Have I checked for <b>understanding in the most efficient way possible</b>? (e.g. multiple-choice quiz, a table, a mind map, etc.)</li> </ul>



How can you get the best out of the demonstration phase?

- Are step by step bullet points or a check-list included during demonstrate activities.
- Have you considered checking other routes to check for understanding, beyond writing tasks?

# Independent Practice

Independent Practice	Have I considered how to overcome <b>communication and cognitive barriers</b> to learning in the <b>independent practice phase</b> of planning?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I provided <b>clear instructions about how to complete each task</b>?</li> <li>• Have I considered a range of options for <b>how children can present their learning</b>?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I included a <b>range of scaffolds</b>?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ graphic organisers</li> <li>▪ tables</li> <li>▪ paragraph scaffolds</li> <li>▪ sentence starters</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have I considered how to overcome children with SEND's confidence issues when asking children to <b>submit work</b>?</li> </ul>



How can you get the best out of independent writing tasks?

- Are step by step bullet points or a check-list included during demonstrate activities.
- Are other, shorter, methods of harvesting knowledge complementing your writing activities?
- Have you used the most tech-friendly method for work submission?