Exploring mainstream secondary school leaderships' views and practices on the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with social, emotional and mental health needs: a tension between performative pressures and inclusive practice.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Child, Community and

Educational Psychology

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February 2022

Abstract

In the academic year 2019/2020, 6,500 children and young people (CYP) were permanently excluded from school; almost one-third of this population were identified with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs (Department for Education [DfE], 2021a). For many, this disciplinary sanction leads to academic, social, health and financial disadvantages in addition to exacerbating their mental health needs (DfE, 2021a; Ford et al.,2018; Gill et al.,2017). The responsibility for decisions made to permanently exclude rests mainly with school leadership (DfE, 2012, 2017; Kulz, 2019).

Therefore, this research explored the views and practices of senior leadership teams (SLTs) concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion (PEX) of students with SEMH needs, using focus groups from three mainstream secondary schools in a local authority (LA) with a high PEX rate (DfE, 2016a, 2021b). A thematic analysis identified the overarching theme that 'SLTs grapple with their sense of agency over the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs'. The discussion has been framed within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and has highlighted the tension between performativity and inclusion at various levels in the ecosystem. Within the macrosystem and exosystem, inclusion is inhibited by academic pressures, covert deficit discourses of disability and limited distribution of LA funding. Nevertheless, members of SLTs seek to promote inclusion within the mesosystem and microsystem by pursuing collaborative inter-organisational relations and facilitating containing relationships between the young people (YP) and significant others. Implications highlight that complex interactions within the ecosystem affect senior leaders sense of collective agency to promote the inclusion of students with SEMH needs, contributing to PEXs (Bandura, 1985, 2018).

Recommendations include the DfE to perhaps acknowledge the systemic causes of PEX then provide policy and funding to support inclusion. At the school level, SLTs may wish to share effective strategies and utilise educational psychologist support for training, supervision and the development of inclusive systems.

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Abbreviations

Acronym	Terminology
BESD	Behavioural emotional social difficulties/disabilities
BPS	British Psychological Society
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CYP(s)	Children and young people(s)
DECP	Division of Educational and Psychology
DfE	Department for Education
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties/disabilities
ECM	Every Child Matters
EHCP(s)	Education health care plan(s)
EP(s)	Educational psychologist(s)
EPS	Educational psychology service
FAP	Fair access panel
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education
LA	Local authority
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEX(s)	Permanent exclusion(s)
SEBD	Social and emotional behavioural difficulties/disabilities
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCo(s)	Special educational needs coordinator(s)
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SLT(s)	Senior leadership team(s)
YP(s)	Young person/people(s)
PHE	Public Health England
UK	United Kingdom

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

In the 21st century, students with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are still marginalised in the educational system. This population are permanently excluded at a disproportionate rate to children and young people (CYP) with other special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) areas and those without identified needs (Department for Education [DfE], 2021a; Parsons, 2018). A critical realist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology were utilised to explore secondary school senior leadership teams (SLTs)[1] views and practices.

This chapter sets out the context and justification for conducting the research; it begins by highlighting the researcher's interests and positioning before outlining key terminologies and the prevalence of SEMH and permanent exclusion (PEX). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory is the theoretical framework used to support this research and the chapter is structured to reflect this. Considerations are made regarding national legislation and guidance, in addition to local authority (LA) structures that affect inclusion and PEX. This is followed by illuminating schools' interactions with support services and the role of SLTs. Next, an outline is provided of the intersecting characteristics and adverse life outcomes of young people (YP), most frequently identified with SEMH needs and in receipt of a PEX. The chapter closes with the objectives, rationale and anticipated benefits of the study.

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[1] *Senior leadership teams (SLTs) – a group of school staff with headship, managerial and/or leadership roles and responsibilities as decided by school personnel. The terms 'leaders', 'leadership' and 'senior leadership' are used interchangeably to refer to SLT as a collective group.*

1.2 Researcher's Motivations

This thesis is inspired by the researcher's experiences as a trainee educational psychologist (EP) within the focus LA to illuminate this, the section will be written in the first person. I noticed that students with SEMH needs were frequently permanently excluded from secondary schooling and viewed this as an injustice to some of the most marginalised YP in society. Therefore, I developed a keen interest to explore the LA systems that facilitated and hindered inclusion and PEX. I joined a SEMH special-interest group and attended a fair access panel (FAP)[2]. There, I noticed that leaders across schools varied in their conceptualisation of SEMH, reasonings for PEXs and description of inclusive practices, and the pressures inhibiting this. These observations enabled me to appreciate that observable and tangible experiences such as PEX are perhaps governed by unobservable structures, processes and mechanisms; this realisation aligns with the critical realist stance of this research (Bhaskar, 1978).

1.3. Definitions

In accordance with this critical realist stance, the following definitions of SEMH, inclusion and PEX emphasise the social context of these key terms. In addition, definitions from alternative perspectives are provided.

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[2]*A government required termly meeting among the LA's head of education, school admissions personnel and a senior leader from each secondary school to reach a binding agreement on placements of students at risk of or in receipt of a PEX. This protocol is designed to facilitate suitable placements for students needs and equal distribution of these students across schools, also known as a placement panel (DfE, 2021b).*

1.3.1 Social, Emotional and Mental Health

SEMH may be considered as a harmonious synergy between YP's social context (e.g., school, home, community) and their psychological state, whereby they can successfully navigate and thrive in their environment whilst feeling fulfilled in themselves. Therefore, disruptions to SEMH can be understood as a response to the conflict between a YP's environment and their emotional wellbeing, thereby causing distress for themselves or others. This socially informed understanding of SEMH contrasts with the definition provided by the SEND Code of Practice (2015) which aligns with a medicalised conceptualisation of needs (Caslin, 2014; Goodley, 2016; see Table 1).

The term SEMH is used to describe CYP who were formally referred to as having 'social emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEBD)', 'emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and 'behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)' and other disparaging descriptors, including 'mentally defective', 'troubled' and 'maladjusted' (Caslin, 2021; Committee on Maladjusted Children, 1955; Department for Education and Skills, 1994; Parsons, 2009c; Rose et al., 2018; SEND Code of Practice, 2015; Warnock Committee, 1978). These definitions failed to consider the underlying causes of students' actions and behaviour as the communication of psychological states (Norwich & Eaton, 2014). Whilst the new (SEMH) descriptor and definition does recognise this, the medicalised language (e.g. 'mental health' and 'disorder') and the omission of environmental influencers pathologises students by reinforcing a deficit discourse and an individualistic responsibility for needs (Goodley, 2016; Lehane, 2017). In addition, its description fails to state what constitutes positive mental health; this contrasts with definitions offered by the National Health Service (2020), Mental Health Foundation (2021) and World Health

Organisation (2014) which adopts a holistic approach by acknowledging YPs needs and environmental contributors (see Table 1). This debate around SEMH discourse 'suggests that defining such behaviour is complex and problematic'; this argument is central to this research and is explored throughout (Rose et al., 2018, p. 271).

Table 1

Descriptors and Explanations of SEMH Difficulties and Mental Health

Descriptor	Explanation	Source (Year)
Social, emotional and mental health difficulties	'Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or attachment disorder' (Section 6.32).	SEND Code of Practice (2015)
Mental Health	'For our children and young people, the bedrock to positive mental health is growing up in a stable, secure, loving home, in a safe, supportive community, where parents, family, friends, schools and the community can provide access to the opportunities needed to enable the person to reach their physical health, academic, creative, and positive mental health and resilience potential, and feel a sense of belonging and contribution to their communities.'	National Health Service (2020)
Mental Health	'Mental health problems . . . include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder (a type of behavioural problem) and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.'	Mental Health Foundation (2021)
Mental Health	A state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community	World Health Organisation (2014)

1.3.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is the meaningful engagement of all CYP in the school community, a human right often denied to those from marginalised groups, including YP with SEMH needs (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2017). Inclusive education requires national, local and school leaders to develop shared beliefs, practices and policies that value difference and promote equity (Ainscow et al., 2012; Booth, 1996). With this ethos, leaders can 'dismantle barriers to education . . . [to facilitate] . . . optimal academic and social outcomes' (Ainscow et al., 2012; Slee, 2018, p. 2). Inclusion is a transformative process that varies in the extent and degree one is included or excluded (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2017).

1.3.3 Permanent Exclusion

At its core, PEX is a school leader's declaration of their organisation's inability to meet the needs of students (Kulz, 2019). The DfE permits the sanction as a 'last resort' disciplinary measure for CYP who 'breach… the school's behaviour policy' (2017. p6, p.10). It is to be enforced when leaders believe that 'maintaining the child in school would jeopardise or 'seriously harm the welfare and education of …others' (DfE, 2017, p10). Thus, the school leader has the authority to terminate a student's school placement indefinitely, denying them access to teaching, relationships and a sense of belonging in their host school (Booth, 1996). Slee (2011) regards this sanction by the DfE, enacted by school leaders, as perpetuating social inequality by 'separat[ing] and sort[ing] children into their allotted tracks, into the streams that assign them to unequal destinations' (p. 151). This 'allocation' is achieved by locating blame within the child, thereby absolving society of responsibility;

consequently, the child becomes criminalised by the education system (Giroux, 2009; Parsons, 2018).

1.4 National and Local Prevalence of SEMH Needs and PEX

Over a million CYP have recognised SEND, and 18 per cent (237,294) of this population have been identified with SEMH needs making it the third most common SEND area (DfE, 2021c). There has been a steady increase in this population of students since the term was introduced in 2015. These students with SEMH needs frequently experience challenges with school inclusion resulting in disproportionately high rates of PEX (DfE, 2021a, 2021b). School leaders permanently exclude those with SEMH needs at a rate five times that of those without identified needs (DfE 2021c). Furthermore, this population of students with SEMH needs accounts for 61% of all SEND PEXs (DfE, 2016a, 2021a; see Appendix A). This sanction is more prevalent in secondary than primary or special schools; 83% of all PEXs relate to YP aged 11 to 16 in mainstream schools (DfE, 2021d; see Appendix B). Accordingly, in 2018/2019, this sanction affected over 1,300 students, a high proportion of whom were in year nine (DfE, 2019a, 2021a).

The local picture appears more problematic than the national one as the borough's rate of SEMH and PEX exceeds England's average and is increasing (DfE, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; see Appendix C). Specifically, the identification of SEMH has risen by approximately a third between 2015/2016 and 2020/2021[3] (DfE, 2021c).

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[3] Low PEX SEMH needs in 2015 may also represent the gradual shift from BESD to SEMH following the introduction of the term to the SEND Code of Practice in 2015.

It is evident that schools within the LA are struggling with this level of need as the rate of PEX for CYP with SEMH needs (with and without an Education, health and care plan (EHCP)) exceeds that of most neighbouring boroughs and the national average (see Appendix B for national comparison) [4].

These numbers are likely higher given the PEX of those with unidentified needs and unaccounted students due to off-rolling (Cole, 2015; DfE; 2019c. p19; Done & Knowler, 2020) [5]. The PEX of CYP with SEMH needs is at a crisis point and will likely worsen should the rising trend in PEXs continue over the past two decades.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

To explore the mechanisms surrounding the PEX of students with SEMH needs, it was vital to identify a theoretical framework that could comprehend the complexities of one's social environment. This is particularly pertinent given that educational psychologists (EPs) are advised to move away from individually orientated 'deficit model' approaches' towards collaborative solutions by considering the involvement of the adults and systems around a YP (British psychological

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[4] *A binding document resulting from the statutory assessment of a student's needs, which outlines the required support that the education, health, or care establishment provides.*

[5] *The illegal process of schools removing CYP from their school role indefinably without going through the official processes and giving the family a right to challenge the leaders' decision (DfE, 2021a).*

Society (BPS); Division of Educational and Psychology (DECP), 2019.p.8). These elements are encompassed within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory.

1.5.1 Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1988) denoted that the multifaceted interaction between children and their environment affects their development, a position influenced by mentor Kurt Lewin and developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Bronfenbrenner's theory evolved from his realisation that social policy marginalised individuals from disadvantaged groups because policymakers relied on within-child theories generated by artificial laboratory experiments (Bronfenbrenner, 1973, 1975, 1977). Therefore, he aimed to advance scientific understanding by illuminating a child's social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1973, 1974, 1975).

Thus, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory can be applied to better understand the PEX of students with SEMH needs by taking a holistic view of the CYP in their context. At the macrosystem (the sphere most distant from the child), inclusion, PEX and SEMH can be understood concerning global and national sociopolitical cultures and legislations that relate to education disability and elitism (Harvey, 2005). This sphere also encompasses covert belief systems about these topics that govern society (Aston, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1988). The macrosystemic agenda typically influences activities in exosystemic structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); these include organisations that are independent of the child yet still affect inclusion, such as the LA's distribution of funding to schools and support services (Hanley et al., 2019). The microsystem is where the child actively participates and builds relationships; examples include home and school environments (Anderson et

al., 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The interaction between these systems occurs within the mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1988) emphasised that although these layers are distinct, they are interdependent; a change in one layer may affect another. Additionally, the child's ecosystem develops over time depending on their stage of life and the connections they make (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). Figure 1 is a visualisation of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems adapted by Mat Saad et al. (2017), tailored to this topic.

Figure 1

Pictorial Representation of a YPs Ecosystem.
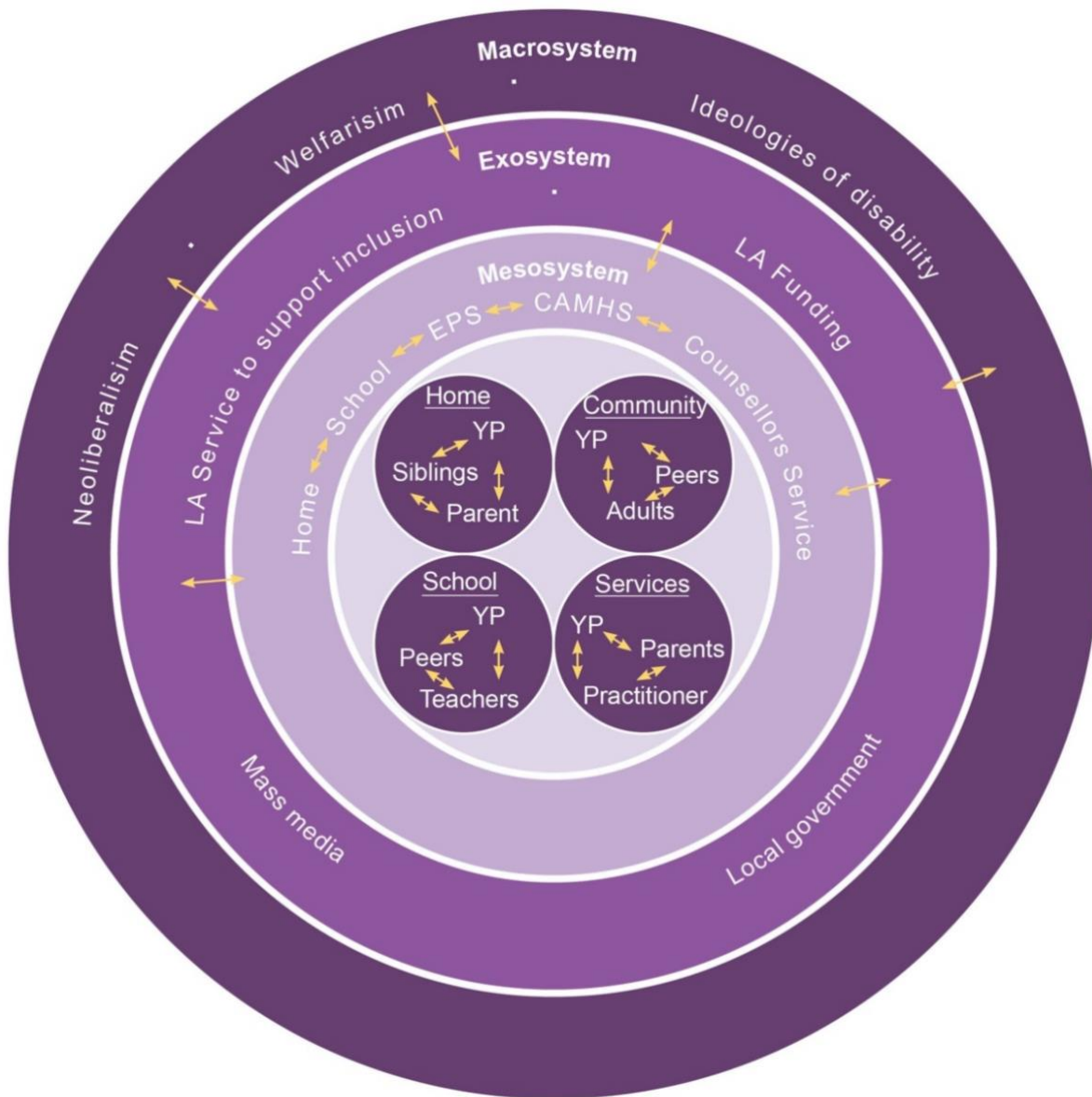
1.5.1.1 Relevance of Theoretical Framework to SEMH and Inclusion

Bronfenbrenner's theory is particularly valuable for the present study because it allows for an exploration of complex social systems concerning the YP, such as central government, local authorities, schools, services and home; thereby, SEMH and PEX can be analysed from a holistic perspective (Gazeley et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2017). Yet, as Anderson et al. (2014) stated, 'it does not attempt to neaten the messes [of] school environments' (p. 26) and, as a result, offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the system to illuminate the issues associated with PEX. Ainscow et al. (2012) refers to this as the appreciation of the 'ecology of equity', highlighting that YPs educational experiences are not simply dependent on school but rely on the whole ecosystem of interacting factors. This enables professionals to address the topic from a more informed, encompassing position.

1.5.2 Adaptations to Bronfenbrenner's Models

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework has undergone several adaptations (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Later (1980–2005), models revert to a within-child perspective at the expense of environmental factors by reconceptualising the microsystem to emphasise the child's biological and psychological characteristics (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Eriksson et al., 2018). Conversely, the original ecological model of 1979 has a dual focus: the child's social context and personal attributes that consider development, which makes it particularly suited to exploring mental health (Eriksson et al., 2018). Tudge et al. (2009, 2016) stated that it is reasonable for researchers to draw on earlier or partial versions of Bronfenbrenner's theories and warn that later versions

include the chronosystem (development over time) require longitudinal research. This approach was not methodologically viable for the present study and would exceed the objectives of this research.

1.5.3 Relevance of Ecological Model to SEMH and PEX

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory has been used in various studies to explore the role of the ecosystem in creating an inclusive school ethos (Aston, 2014; Gordon, 2015; Kane et al., 2009; Langford et al., 2014). Furthermore, the framework has illuminated the impact of sociopolitical factors on YPs mental health and wellbeing (Hanley et al., 2019). In addition, the model has been applied to conceptualise staffs perspectives on their role in inclusive practice (Dobson & Douglas, 2020). Furthermore, Eriksson et al. (2018) conducted a systematic analysis of 25 studies using various versions of Bronfenbrenner's model and concluded that the 1979 ecological model was Bronfenbrenner's most effective and widely used framework to explore mental health policy and practice.

1.6 Macrosystem: Legislation and Guidance

Over the past 40 years, successive governments' decentralisation of the LA's role in schools has increased SLTs' autonomy and responsibility to promote the inclusion of students with SEND whilst giving increased power to leaders to permanently exclude students (Davies et al. 2021; DfE, 2017). Some macrosystemic contributors relating to the disproportionate rate of PEX for YP with SEMH needs are presented next in a thematic rather than chronological manner.

1.6.1 School Leaders' Autonomy

The Education Reform Act (1988) transferred strategic and operational autonomy from the LA to school leaders, increasing their independence over budget, curriculum, assessment, teachers' conditions of service and school management (Davies et al., 2021). By 2009, in England, leaders of schools were positioned amongst the most independent in the world for having the ability to make decisions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011). This increased even further following the mass academisation of schools, which peaked in 2017 (Davies et al., 2021).

However, leaders' autonomy was bound by the government's performativity measures that held schools publicly accountable for their academic performances and made them responsive to, and reliant on, parental choice (Done & Knowler, 2020). This had already been instigated by Thatcher's neoliberal agenda and the implementation of the 1980 Education Act, which aimed 'to prepare young people for the world of work' and contribute to the global economy (Williams-Brown & Jopling, 2020, p. 227). This was known as the marketisation of education and was enacted by raising academic expectations and enforced through market-based practices that placed schools and students in direct competition through the ranking of published league tables in 1993 (Harvey, 2005).

The pressure on schools was exacerbated by introducing various accountability measures (see Appendix D) and guidance encouraging schools to 'self-improve' by enhancing academic performance (DfE, 2020 p.6; Gill, 2016). These measures incentivised leaders to enhance or maintain high-performance results by reducing the number of lower-achieving students, many of whom were from the most marginalised

groups in society (e.g., ethnic minorities, low socioeconomic groups and those with SEND) as cited by DfE (2019b) and Leckie and Goldstein (2019). This created tension between performativity and inclusion.

1.6.2 PEX as a Tool for Performativity

The formal use of PEX was authorised under the Education Act in 1986, and since then, the DfE has gradually increased leaders' decision-making powers to use this sanction. As of 2012, a PEX could no longer be overturned by LAs; subsequently, there was gradual disassociation with preventative behavioural support and increased directives for school leaders to adopt punitive approaches to behaviour management (DfE, 2017). These included permission for staff to 'punish', remove or use 'reasonable force' for students who disrupt learning, whilst advocating for the use of 'seclusion' and 'isolation rooms' (DfE, 2013, 2016b. p.12, 2017; Slee, 2013; Parsons, 2018). This punitive approach is furtherer enforced by the DfE as school leaders are encouraged to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to challenging behaviour. This feature is often reflected in school behaviour policies; responding to pupils in this way results in unnecessary permanent exclusions for behaviour that can be managed in school (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). Despite their increased powers, school leaders are given the guidance for a PEX to be 'lawful', 'fair', 'proportionate'; furthermore, it must 'not be due to additional unmet needs or poor academic attainment' (DfE, 2017, p. 8); however, in many situations, this may well be the case (Kulz, 2019). The DECP opposed this approach to behaviour management, and O'Hare remarks that the government's authoritarian approaches are political rather than evidence-based; and

contradict key principles of positive behaviour change and mental health initiatives (BPS, 2019).

1.6.3 Legislation Promoting Inclusion for SEMH needs

Current and historical inclusive policies, such as those in the Underwood (1955) and Warnock (1978) reports instigated inclusive education and more recent initiatives such as Every Child Matters (ECM) in 2003 (Committee on Maladjusted Children, 1955; Warnock Committee,1978). The governments drive to reduce inequalities was promoted through equality legislation in policy, namely the Disability and Discrimination Act (2005) and the Equality Act (2010). Furthermore, the Children and Families Act (2014) also promoted joined-up working between education, health and social care; in theory, this facilitates the holistic support for CYP with SEMH needs, although the actualisation of this had been debated (Lehane, 2017). Statutory guidance specifically related to mental health, such as 'Mental health and behaviour in schools' (2018) and 'Counselling in schools' (2016), emphasises the importance of providing students' with mental health support. Other guidance highlights that YPs wellbeing facilitates academic achievement (Public Health England (PHE) 2021). However, many of these legislations are contested by the government's agenda to increase the rigour of academia, which conflicted with inclusivity for low-achieving or disruptive CYP, who required additional resources and provided little financial return to schools (Fuller, 2018; Kulz, 2019). Thus, many of these students were removed from mainstream education through PEX (Cole et al., 2019).

1.7 Exosystem: The Economy of SEMH and PEX

The cost of untreated mental health needs is the UK's largest bill and the most common need for disability allowance (PHE, 2016). Furthermore, following a PEX, the government expends £370,000 towards an individual's education, unemployment, healthcare and the criminal justice system, equating to £2.1 billion per year (Gill et al., 2017). These costs can be circumvented by adequately funding inclusion to prevent PEX and improve students' wellbeing during school years.

1.7.1 Limited Mental Health Services; Nationally

Nationally, 75% of CYP who require mental health support do not receive it (PHE, 2016). Accordingly, additional funding has been invested in improving the school-Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) communication (DfE, 2021f). The systemic effects of COVID-19 have led to a 28% increase in referrals, treatment and urgent or emergency crisis mental health support (The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021).

At the school level, the increased number of students with SEMH between 2015 and 2019 had been met with a 57% decrease in LA spending per SEND pupil. As such, 94% of school headteachers experienced greater challenges resourcing SEND in 2018 than in 2016 (National Association of Head Teachers, 2018). The reduced funding provided to SEMH was highlighted by Norwich and Eaton (2014) and Thompson et al. (2021), who maintained that the government strategically reduced inclusion expenditure through the re-categorisation of BESD to SEMH. They argued, during the transfer of statements of special educational needs (SEN) to EHCPs, many students were not

issued a plan because their 'behaviour' difficulties were not viewed as 'mental health needs' (Norwich & Eaton, 2014). Lehane (2017) explained, 'just as "behaviour" disappears, the potential is for those children, or at least those not deserving of an "autism" or other clinical diagnoses, to also "disappear" as they lose the support that accompanied the label' (p57). Whilst DfE (2021f. p6) explain the removal of a student's SEN label as a resulting from a 'more accurate identification' of needs; Daniels et al., explains that 'the move away from official recognition of some needs has led to unrecognised patterns of marginalisation' (2019. p4). Accordingly, those on the cusp of SEND support, *without* an EHCP, are more than twice as likely to receive a PEX than those with a plan; this finding is consistent with the data within the focus LA (DfE, 2021b).

1.7.2 Focus Local Authority

The focus LA is within the top ten Greater London boroughs for deprived LAs in relation to resources that affect children from birth to 15 years old (Office for National Statistics, 2020). There have been reductions to critical services for those with SEMH needs, including behaviour support and speech and language services. Partridge et al. (2020) note that the national reductions into LA services have resulted in LAs having to compensate or 'prop up' mental health services (p.28). Accordingly, LAs and schools are being positioned as commissioners and providers of mental health services, particularly in light of the reduction in services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (Lally, 2020).

1.8 Mesosystem: Schools Working with Services

1.8.1 Nationally

Despite the limited funding of services from the LA at the exosystemic level, the mesosystemic government guidance has consistently promoted inter-organisational (ECM, 2003, NICE, 2009; PHE and DfE, 2021) collaboration to promote inclusion. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) emphasises the importance of the parental voice and the collaboration between education health and care services to promote inclusion. Under this ethos, schools are expected to commission appropriately qualified and experienced external professionals to undertake assessments, diagnoses and specialist interventions for those with unmet or unidentified needs SEMH to avoid a PEX (DfE, 2016a, 2017; 2018; Nurture UK, 2019). Multiagency staff play a crucial role in preventing a PEX and promoting the inclusion of all students, especially those with SEMH needs (Ainscow, 2020; DfE, 2019; Parsons, 2009c). In particular, the role of CAMHS practitioners, EPs, counsellors and behaviour support services have been identified as essential however the reduction in funding may impede school leaders' abilities to commission these services and therefore threaten inclusion (Davies et al., 2021).

1.8.2 Locally

Within the focus LA, efforts have been made to improve the situation for these vulnerable students. The educational psychology service (EPS) has taken the lead in rolling out borough-wide nurture groups, implementing the Sandwell whole-school approach to SEMH and jointly commissioned integrated services with Child and

Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). However, PEX rates continue to rise and exceed the comparative national rate (DfE, 2021a).

1.9 Microsystem: School and the Role of School Leadership

Schools are one of several significant microsystems for developing CYP; its values, ethos and style of leadership influence the extent to which students are included and their life outcomes (DfE, 2016a; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; PHE & DfE, 2021). Therefore, school leaders are vital to promoting a whole school approach to wellbeing and meeting the mental health needs of YP. This culture is achieved by staff facilitating access to specialist services, equipping CYP to be resilient and providing early identification and support of mental health needs (PHE, 2021).

Challenges to promoting inclusion appear to be more prevalent in secondary schools than primary schools; this may be related to the unique academic, social and organisational pressures of this microsystem (Leckie & Goldstein, 2019; McKeon, 2020). These struggles may be compounded by the challenges of adolescents, such as identity formation and hormonal changes. The government has pledged to invest £17 million into mental health to equip staff better (DfE, 2021e). As such, mental health coaching will be offered as part of teachers initial training and their continuing professional development (PHE, 2021). In addition, the DfE and the Department for Health encourage schools to identify and equip a designated senior lead for mental health by 2025 (2018).

SLT's have a vital role in promoting positive well-being, and an inclusive ethos wherein mental health is discussed and not stigmatised (DfE, 2018; Nurture UK, 2019; Shogren et al., 2015). As strategic leaders, SLT's are central to developing principles to promote a whole school approach to mental health and possess the responsibility to oversee the implementation of inclusive practice (National Institute of Clinical Excellence, 2009; PHE, 2021). Furthermore, school leaders are well placed to dismantle inequalities and address the links between PEX and other forms of marginalisation by ensuring that behaviour policies and practices are not enforced indiscriminately, thereby perpetuating inequalities, particularly for groups who receive disproportionately high rates of PEX (Children's Commissioner, 2013; DfE, 2017; Gill et al., 2017; PHE, 2015). SLTs strategic oversights make such tasks possible, allowing them to monitor equity and influence local commissioning arrangements (Ainscow, 2020; PHE, 2021). Furthermore, the unique values, behaviour management strategies and tolerance of the leadership in each school may result in disparities in PEX rates between schools is because 'different heads have different ends of the road' (Dix, 2017; Parsons, 2009b p.43; Rendall & Stuart 2005; DfE, 2019b). This authority and decision-making power can have adverse consequences for the most marginalised YP in society (Parsons, 2018).

1.10 Individual CYP: SEMH and PEX Demographics and Outcomes

YP from some of the most marginalised communities are most likely to have SEMH needs and are overrepresented in PEX data (DfE, 2021b, 2021d; Cole, 2015., 2018; Parsons, 2018). In support of this, O'Hare from the DECP explains that the

government's authoritarian approaches to behaviour management disproportionately affect those from marginalised groups, including SEND populations (BPS, 2019). These are individuals with the following intersections: low socioeconomic status, Black and Caribbean, Roma Gypsy travellers, looked-after children, and boys (DfE, 2021a, 2021d). Furthermore, there is a bidirectional relationship between SEMH and PEX, whereby the disadvantages of one compound the risk of another (Ford et al., 2018).

The cycle of disadvantage for these students is perpetuated because they often feel rejected by education, leading to academic and social disengagement (Slee 2013; Parsons 2018; PHE, 2014). This creates or exacerbates mental health distress and lowers academic outcomes (DfE, 2019c; Thomson, 2020). As these individuals enter adulthood, they have limited social mobility; many bypass employment, education or training, thus increasing their dependency on public services (Gazeley et al., 2015; Gill et al., 2017; Holt, 2016; Parsons, 2009a). These students also have a higher propensity to become involved with the criminal justice system owing to antisocial behaviour, drug use, gang and violent crime involvement and increased vulnerability to grooming and sexual exploitation (Gill et al., 2017).

In summary, despite the moral, academic, social and financial ramifications of PEX for students with SEMH needs, the argument for inclusive education remains multilayered and complex and yet crucial to understanding how to reduce existing inequalities.

1.11 Objective, Rationale and Benefit of this Research

Although school practice regarding SEMH needs and PEX is evident, at least to some degree, there is limited insight into how SLTs perceive and experience this. As such, the objective of this research is to explore the views and perspectives of senior leaders regarding the PEX of students with SEMH needs. The research also aims to illuminate the intersecting factors regarding the topic to generate new insight into a developing body of literature. These objectives are achieved by asking and answering the following research question: *What are the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs' concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with social, emotional and mental health needs?*

This topic is deemed timely and significant owing to the high and increasing national and local prevalence of SEMH needs and PEXs. The research is also necessary given the ramifications of this sanction on young people's life outcomes and the subsequent costs to society. It is deemed most prudent to focus on secondary schools, given the unique academic pressures of this phase of education that appear to challenge inclusion especially. Within this context, SLTs have been strategically selected based on their autonomy and responsibility for inclusion in addition to their irreversible decision to permanently exclude students. The research is situated within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory because it facilitates the exploration of the dynamics between and within complex systems.

The hoped-for benefit of this research is to develop insight regarding the interconnecting ecosystems surrounding the PEX of students with SEMH needs within education and psychology. By illuminating how these various drivers impact PEX, the

research aims to increase awareness and potentially affect policy and practice for SLTs and other stakeholders. Ultimately, this research seeks to broaden the understanding around PEX by reducing the within-child discourse to disrupt the cycle of inequity for marginalised CYP and thereby improve their life chances.

1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the context and justification for this research by utilising Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to situate the interplay of various factors involved in the PEX of students with SEMH needs. Key aspects regarding the objectives, rationale and hoped-for benefits of the research have been highlighted. The following chapter will illuminate the current knowledge on this topic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

Given the context described in Chapter 1, this chapter explores what is already known in the literature about SLTs' views and practices concerning the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs in mainstream secondary schools.

The methodology of the search criteria is presented along with the process used to identify relevant literature. Following this, the process of the critical appraisal is described. The main body of the chapter presents an interpretation of the key themes that are identified within the literature to answer the review question. The chapter closes by highlighting a gap in the knowledge base and identifying how the current study provides a unique contribution to the field.

2.2 Search and Selection of Papers

This review aims to answer the following question: *What does the literature tell us about the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with SEMH needs?*

2.2.1 Databases

To answer the review question, an EBSCOhost database was utilised to conduct a comprehensive literature search of the following educational and psychological databases: APA PsychINFO, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection,

Education Resources Information Center and Education Source. This was conducted

prior to data analysis, between January 2020 and September 2021.

2.2.2 Search Terms

An extended refining process was conducted to secure the most relevant

synonyms for the following key terms: 'social emotional mental health', 'permanent

exclusion', 'senior leadership team' and 'secondary school'. Appendix E presents the

synonyms and relevant alternatives for each search term.

2.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were included or excluded by publication type and relevance to provide

sufficient focus for the review question. See Appendix F and G for tables that illustrate

this.

2.2.3.1 Publication Type

Publication type controls were used to ensure the relevancy of literature to the

review question. Research written in English and published in the United Kingdom and

Ireland was selected to ensure that articles were deemed contextually relevant, as

opposed to international studies, wherein the culture, terminology and practices may

differ. Peer-reviewed, published and academic journals were considered because this

literature is subjected to rigorous peer review through the editorial boards prior to

publication. Additionally, articles published during or after 1994 (to 2021) were selected

to recognise the publication of the first Code of Practice (1994) on the identification and

assessment of SEN. This documentation was significant for inclusive education

because it was published under the premise that it should be the norm for mainstream schools to accommodate students with SEN, including those with what was then known as EBD.

2.2.3.2 Relevance

Articles which might answer the review question were included based on their relevance. Specifically, literature that focused on SEMH needs instead of other SEND categories was selected. In addition, research that focused on the inclusion or PEX of these students was evaluated. Studies had to be conducted with mainstream secondary schools; therefore, studies whose authors examined solely other settings (i.e., primary schools) were omitted. Finally, selected participant groups included school staff with leadership positions thereby, excluding studies with solely non-SLT staff (i.e., teachers). Based on these criteria, the relevant presence of each term was assigned a score of one; this was used following the abstract and title search. Papers that scored three or four out of four were reviewed.

2.2.4 Selecting Articles

A title search followed by an abstract search was conducted using the aforementioned key terminology (see 2.2.2) with Boolean search commands and operators (AND, OR, brackets, asterisk and quotation marks) to yield the most relevant results.

2.2.4.1 Title Search

An initial title search yielded 39 articles, five of which met the publication type inclusion criteria. However, upon reading their abstracts, none were relevant to answering the literature review question because they scored one or two out of four for relevance (see Appendix H). The selection process is presented in an adaptation of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow chart (see Figure 2; Page et al., 2020).

Figure 2

Number of Articles Identified at Each Process of the Title Search

39	• <u>Identification</u>: total articles from search
5	• <u>Eligibility:</u> met 'publication type' inclusion criteria
5	• <u>Eligibility</u>: title related
0	• <u>Eligibility</u>: abstract met 'relevance' inclusion criteria
0	• <u>Included</u>: answers the review question

2.2.4.2 Abstract Search

Additional relevant publications were sought by searching the abstracts of articles. This process yielded 3,551 articles, of which 1,157 met the publication type criteria. The titles of these (1,157) articles were read, thereby excluding 754 of them.

The remaining 403 were exported to a spreadsheet and analysed with the 'relevance' indicators. A total of 65 articles were scored at least three of the key terms relevantly discussed within the abstract (some had to be read to decipher the exact score); the full text of 65 were read. A total of 56 articles used the four terms in ways that were not relevant to the review question, and thus, these papers were excluded. Finally, nine articles were appropriate for answering the review question. This process is depicted in Figure 3. See Appendix I for the scoring of the 65 papers and Appendix J for a summary of the title and abstract searches.

Figure 3

Number of Articles Identified at Each Process of the Abstract Search

3,551	• <u>Identification</u>: total articles from search
1,157	• <u>Eligibility:</u> met 'publication type' inclusion criteria
403	• <u>Eligibility</u>: title related
65	• <u>Eligibility</u>: abstract likley met 'relevance' inclusion criteria
9	• <u>Included</u>: answers the review question
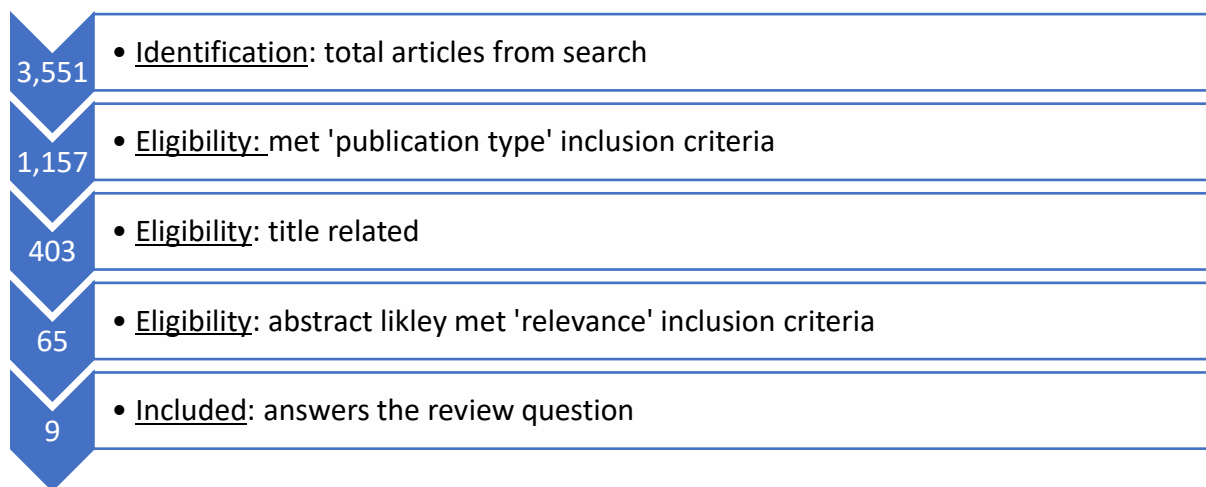
<u>2.2.4.3 Snowballing</u>

Finally, the reference lists of the aforementioned nine articles were reviewed by applying the same publication type and relevance inclusion criteria. Of the 283 references, 19 articles appeared relevant from the title. Upon reading the abstracts, four

met the publication type and two met the relevance inclusion criteria. However, neither

scored four out of four after reading the full text. This process is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Number of Articles Identified at Each Process of the Snowballing Search

206	• <u>Identification</u>: total articles from search
19	• <u>Eligibility</u>: title related
4	• <u>Eligibility:</u> met 'publication type' inclusion criteria
2	• <u>Eligibility</u>: abstract met 'relevance' inclusion criteria
0	• <u>Included</u>: answers the review question

2.2.5 Final Selection

Nine papers were identified, all were obtained from the abstract search (see

Figure 5).

Figure 5

Selection of Articles Yielded at each Search
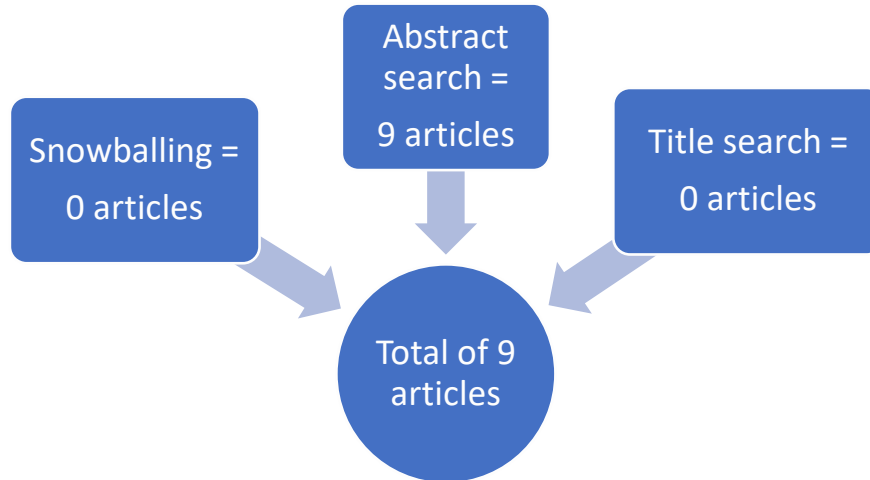
2.3 Critical Appraisal

The final nine articles were critically appraised. A critical appraisal informs how studies are interpreted and determines what judgements can be made regarding the appropriateness of the evidence to contribute to the body of knowledge (Aveyard, 2018). The methodological quality of qualitative papers were critically analysed using the qualitative version of the 'Critical Appraisal Skill Program Checklist' ([CASP] 2018; see Appendix K). This was adapted to include relevant quantitative checks for the mixed methods study (see Appendix L). The CASP is a predesigned tool used to facilitate a rigorous approach to assessing the methodological quality, trustworthiness, relevance and results of research articles (CASP, 2018). A critical appraisal for each paper was conducted; this, along with the aims, methods and key findings, can be found in Appendix M. All papers met an appropriate level of quality and relevance as measured against their respective tools.

Next, a synthesis of the literature will explore what is already known about the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. Reference is made to the methodological quality and relevance of the papers throughout.

2.4 Themes Within the Literature

The nine articles are presented thematically to answer the research question. Identifying salient debates, conflicts and contradictions enables the literature to be organised around the topic inductively (Aveyard, 2018). Four literature review themes were generated according to key points across the articles, this was achieved through a process of rereading and synthesising the texts. Themes were based on interaction at various levels of YPs environment: (1) nationally (2) locally (3) between the school and other organisations and (4) within the school. The researcher drew on previous knowledge of theoretical frameworks and noticed that these systems correspond with the four layers within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, as such the themes were identified as the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem. It is important to note that several articles overlapped into more than one theme given the multifaceted nature of the topic. Table 2 depicts the studies within the sphere of the ecosystem in which the findings are most dominant.

Table 2

Literature Review Articles situated within the Ecosystemic Framework

Dominant theme within the findings	Author(s) (Year)	Title
Macrosystem: Tensions between inclusion and academic policy	Martin-Denham (2021)	Defining, identifying and recognising underlying causes of social, emotional and mental health difficulties: thematic analysis of interviews with headteachers in England
	Dimitrellou et al. (2020)	Assessing the inclusivity of three mainstream secondary schools in England: challenges and dilemmas
	Corcoran and Finney (2015)	Between education and psychology: school staff perspectives
	Burton et al. (2009)	Are the contradictions and tensions that have characterised educational provision for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties a persistent feature of current policy?
Exosystem: LA funding	Spratt et al. (2006a)	'Part of who we are as a school should include responsibility for well-being': links among the school environment, mental health and behaviour
Mesosystem: collaborative work	Spratt et al. (2006b)	Interprofessional support of mental well-being in schools: a Bourdieusian perspective
Microsystem: school-based strategies to support inclusion	McKeon (2017)	Emotional and behavioural difficulties: the effects of structures, ethos and understandings on provision in Irish post-primary schools
	McKeon (2020)	'Soft barriers': the impact of school ethos and culture on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Ireland
	O'Reilly et al. (2018)	Whose responsibility is adolescent mental health in the United Kingdom? Perspectives of key stakeholders

2.4.1 Macrosystem: Policy, Guidance and Beliefs about SEMH and Inclusion

The macrosystem is the outer layer of the ecosystem; it inhabits overarching societal beliefs and laws that penetrate all other systems (microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem) as denoted by Bronfenbrenner (1988). Within this sphere, four studies emphasise the cultural and political understandings of SEMH, inclusion and PEX. At the outset, it is vital to understand how SEMH and inclusion are conceptualised because this has a bearing on the way students are identified and supported. In an effort to define SEMH, Martin-Denham (2021) recognised a political root to the misunderstandings and misuses of the term. Next, Dimitrellou et al. (2020) explored the social conceptualisation of inclusion. Two other studies were focused on policy. School leaders from Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study considered the impact of inclusive policy on whole-school wellbeing. Finally, Burton et al. (2009) adopted a more specific focus on policy by relating it to students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD).

2.4.1.1 DfE Descriptor of SEMH

Martin-Denham (2021) investigated the definitions and identification of SEMH from the perspective of headteachers (as part of a more extensive unnamed study). Headteachers participated in semi-structured interviews, and the author analysed data using thematic analysis. Findings of the study revealed that the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) descriptor of SEMH was viewed as ambiguous and poorly understood by headteachers. Leadership members were unable to reach a consensus on the term's definition; instead, they spoke about the manifestation of behavioural difficulties as a

SEND, despite the removal of 'behaviour' from the 2015 documentation. Martin-Denham (2021) noted that unlike the government's definition the World Health Organisation (2014) provides helpful examples of positive wellbeing in its mental health description (see Table 1 in Section 1.3.1).

Comparable with Martin-Denham's (2021) findings, McKeon (2017, 2020) found that principals (headteachers) had a limited understanding of EBD and SEBD. They viewed students with all types of SEN as a homogeneous group.

2.4.1.2 Central Government's Within-child Conceptualisation of SEMH Needs

A proportion of leadership in the studies of Spratt et al. (2006a), Burton et al. (2009), McKeon (2017, 2020) and Martin-Denham (2021) perceived SEMH needs as rooted within the child. The authors believed that these needs emanated from psychiatric difficulties such as autism or adverse childhood experiences from family issues. Little to no consideration of the environment's impact on the child was provided. Educators in the study by Burton et al. (2009) noted that the stance of staff and the central government as viewing behaviour in isolation was contradictory to the ECM (2003) policy that encouraged educators to identify environmental explanations for student behaviours.

This behavioural and within-child conceptualisation of needs, reported by senior leaders and depicted in government guidance, has negative implications for inclusive practices within the school microsystem. First, Spratt et al. (2006a) noted that this viewpoint may have relieved some educators of the necessity to adapt practices and organisational systems. Additionally, McKeon (2017, 2020) reported that a deficit model

of needs limited the development of an appropriate school behaviour policy suitable to the needs of those with SEN and restricted provisions that supported students.

Overlooking the environmental aspect of needs caused staff to rely on agencies to 'mend' students of their perceived deficits. To remedy these issues, McKeon (2017) recommended that secondary schools ought to 'reconsider their presumptions and understanding of the nature of EBD' (p. 234). Although McKeon's (2017) recommendation have some merit, Martin-Denham's (2021) findings highlight that staff's presumptions and understandings are closely aligned with the DfE's descriptors; therefore, it would be prudent to address this at the macrolevel first.

2.4.1.2.1 Statutory Obligation to Identify SEMH Needs

Additional findings from Martin-Denham (2021) revealed that systems and processes to recognise and identify SEMH needs lacked urgency; this ultimately increased students' risk of PEX. Delays existed in identifying SEMH needs despite headteachers gathering information from school staff, multi-agency professionals, feeder schools and parents. The author attributed these delays to a lack of health professionals present to provide formal diagnoses, leaving some headteachers to simply follow their instincts. Martin-Denham regarded the unidentified needs of students to be an issue rooted in the macrosystem. She explained that government statutory advice suggests but does not compel schools to identify SEMH needs, even when a student is at risk of PEX. The author recommends that the DfE amend the terms 'should' and 'could' to 'must' within the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) and 'Exclusion from Maintained Schools' guidance (DfE, 2017). This change could compel schools to identify and provide interventions for students' needs. In addition to these

macrosystemic solutions, other authors identify microsystemic and mesosystemic

strategies to increase educators' abilities to recognise mental health needs. This

process includes the presence of staff to develop caring relationships with quiet and

withdrawn students (given the needs of those students often went undetected), as

stated by Spratt et al. (2006a). School staff also required basic mental health training

(O'Reilly et al., 2018) and support to understand the link between behaviour and mental

health (Spratt et al., 2006b).

To review Martin-Denham's (2021) study, the transparency of thematic analysis

coding provided confidence in the validity of these findings. Furthermore, the author

clearly differentiated among the voices of headteachers from secondary schools,

primary schools and nurseries. Moreover, headteachers explicitly shared their views

and practices related to the macrosystemic barriers inhibiting the inclusion of students

with SEMH needs, affecting students at the microlevel. These findings have

sociopolitical relevance because the study was recently conducted within a similar

timeframe to the researcher's study. The recent paper by Dimitrellou et al. (2020) is

similarly relevant and seeks to define an equally important term: 'inclusion'.

2.4.1.3 Inconsistent Measure of Inclusion

In their effort to define inclusion, Dimitrellou et al. (2020) compared inclusivity

across three mainstream secondary schools. Questionnaires gathered views on the

ethos of the schools from senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, other

professionals and students. The authors interviewed each school's EP to verify school

staff views. Additionally, they obtained statistical data from each school's census

metadata (i.e., free school meal eligibility, ethnicity, SEND, attendance and exclusions)

and the LA (SEND and PEX statistics). The authors compared staff views on school ethos with measures of inclusivity (high percentage of SEND students and relatively low proportions of PEX). Findings revealed that the school with higher numbers of students with SEND and lower rates of PEX portrayed that their school was very inclusive. However, questionnaire data revealed that the school scored lower on school ethos (school's valuing of students, autonomy, encouragement, praise of academic attainment and effort) and effective behaviour management (consistency, clarity and fairness) as reported by participants. Another school that appeared less statistically inclusive (higher PEX rates and fewer students with SEND) scored higher on ethos and behaviour management according to participants' questionnaire results. Such findings highlight the differing experiences of staff across schools with a variety of PEX rates, warranting further explanation of this.

These findings also have important implications for the central government, which has historically implemented policies to reduce PEX rates under the premise that lower PEX rates result in more inclusive practices (Burton et al., 2009). However, findings from Dimitrellou et al. (2020) highlight that this is not the case. Without an agreement on what inclusion is, how can school leaders be expected to create it? Hence, a school leader in Burton et al.'s (2009) study requested that central government develop a success criteria of inclusive practice to work towards.

This study stands out as the only mixed-method study in this literature review. It provides an interesting contrast against the others, highlighting that measurable data may not represent the views of those within the school; this alone is important for central and local governments to understand when evaluating inclusive practice. The

study provides a valuable perspective by problematising the taken for granted concept of inclusion. However, this article is considered less helpful in answering the review question because the primarily quantitative findings do not provide insight into leaders views and practices on inclusion. Dimitrellou et al.'s (2020) challenge of reaching a consensus on inclusion from educationalists and government statistical data highlights that this concept is problematic and complex. The following study by Corcoran and Finney (2015) demonstrates that this complexity is echoed by the central government's idealistic inclusion policies.

2.4.1.4 Tension Between Inclusive and Performative Policies

Corcoran and Finney (2015) explored staff views on the role of UK educational policy in promoting and facilitating inclusive practice for students' mental health across primary and secondary schools. Participants included headteachers, deputy headteachers, SENCos, inclusion managers and other coordinators.

Discourse analysis revealed that staff felt that the political idealism of promoting mental health and viewing students holistically –as advised by ECM (2003) was inhibited by the government's performative pressures for schools to meet academic targets. Staff experienced these performative policies as overly prescriptive and likened them to 'regimes' (p. 104). Educationalists alluded to the marketisation of education enacted by the following: rising assessments, increased data crunching, the intensity of regulations, preoccupation with outcomes and the politics of Ofsted. They reminisced about a former time when they truly valued their daily interactions with students. One SENCo felt that this culture created a 'menacing cycle', wherein the pressure to assess academic performance increased mental health difficulties and stress for students and

adults alike (p. 105). Similar findings were identified by Spratt et al. (2006b), Burton et al. (2009) and O'Reilly et al. (2018). Staff in Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study fantasised about a preferred reality or an ideal role whereby they could both educate and manage the wellbeing of students, balancing their purpose to make a difference in students' lives. However, having to engage in administrative tasks that were 'peripheral to the purpose of education' left educators feeling unfulfilled and in a state of 'disenchantment' (p. 105).

The views of participants in Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study must be considered cautiously because participants were recruited from a 'warm network' of staff who had undergone training with the researcher (p102). The implications of this are twofold: first, participants' views may not represent the average staff group who have not received such training; secondly interviewees may have adapted their responses according to professional pressure to appear studious and maintain future relationships. The lack of mention regarding the researcher–researched relationship and the existence of any power dynamics leads to questions about the researcher's reflexivity. Nevertheless, most participants were members of SLT, and findings illuminated their views on how policy can promote or hinder wellbeing. However, these findings provide a helpful overview of the broader challenges of wellbeing at the whole school level, which indeed affect those with SEMH needs.

The study by Burton et al. (2009) takes a more specific focus on social-emotional needs than Corcoran and Finney; this 2009 study considered the impact of the political tension on students with BESD. They considered the inconsistencies and contradictions between policies that affect the practice and provision for students with BESD.

Unstructured interviews were utilised to obtain the views of secondary phase staff from mainstream schools and alternative provisions. These included senior and middle managers, practitioners, subject teachers and pastoral staff. Practitioners from children's services within the LA also participated. Key findings identified that school staff felt that the government's over-emphasis on raising academic standards was incompatible with the inclusion agenda of accommodating those with BESD without compromising the learning of the rest of the students.

2.4.1.4.1 Inclusive Government Policy Increased Exclusionary Practices

Staff in the study by Burton et al. (2009) reported that this tension between policy and practice ultimately increased exclusionary practices for those with BESD. This view is also supported by participants from Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study and that of Dimitrellou et al. (2020). Specifically, staff from the study by Burton et al. (2009) reported that the government's performance indicators for schools were insensitive to the progress of low-attaining students, including those with BESD, making it difficult to motivate them. In addition, the staff in the three aforementioned studies worried that accommodating students' SEMH difficulties would jeopardise the other students' academic development and staff performance targets. As such, educators in Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study suggested removing students with mental health needs from the classroom to enable educators to meet attainment requirements.

Likewise, educationalists in Spratt et al.'s (2006a) study felt that the school system no longer welcomed students with mental health needs because they had limited engagement with the curriculum. Leadership felt pressured to focus on the measurable attainment of pupils and less on those who were experiencing emotional

difficulties. In another Spratt et al. (2006b) study, departmental heads felt the need to prioritise academia over taking up wellbeing training. These examples demonstrate that the application of paradoxical policies may perpetuate the cycle of exclusion that the social inclusion agenda discourages.

Participants in Burton et al.'s (2009) study indicated that other inclusion policies, which had adverse effects for students with SEMH needs, were government initiatives to reduce PEX rates (as per the Education and Inspections Act (2006)). In some cases, leadership were expected to reduce exclusion rates whilst adopting a zero-tolerance approach to challenging behaviour. Substantial fines were dispensed to schools for administering PEX; one headteacher welcomed this policy because it resulted in the desired outcome of reducing exclusions. However, this did not improve inclusion; fixed-term (temporary) exclusion rates continued to rise. Burton et al.(2009) surmised that headteachers were keeping students off-site until the placement panel (every three weeks); this was in the hopes of sending CYP to an alternative provision. Such findings support the conclusion of Dimitrellou et al. (2020) that lower PEX rates do not necessarily equate to inclusive practice.

To summarise, the literature has highlighted that senior leadership believed that the central government's statutory guidance initiatives and policies perpetuate PEX. It is argued that the within-child deficit conceptualisations of need and performative pressures are fueled by neoliberal ideologies at the macrosystemic level. These values filter through the remaining systems, and the financial implications are evident in the exosystem.

2.4.2 Exosystem: LA Policies and Systems

Values and policies inherited from the macrosystem influence how LAs promote and fund inclusion at the exosystemic level. A continuation of findings from Burton et al. (2009) highlights that governmental pressures filter down to the LAs' processes, compromising senior leaders sense of agency to promote inclusion. Next, Spratt et al. (2006a) identified that fragmented or ill-funded LA policies on inclusion impede multi-agency support.

2.4.2.1 LA Systems Undermine Leaders Sense of Agency

In Burton et al.'s (2009) study, staff reported that the central government's pressure on LAs to reduce PEX or receive a fine was transferred to school leadership during the FAP. Therefore, headteachers were reluctant to accept these students into their schools. Some felt forced to admit those with needs despite their lack of capacity to accommodate them. One headteacher reported feeling powerless, as though the process removed their 'professional autonomy' (p. 149). Conversely, another headteacher in the same LA felt that they *had* the authority to refuse the placement of a child with BESD, demonstrating that headteachers can resist LA pressures and be autonomous. These opposing views highlight that headteachers within the same cluster area respond to LA pressures differently, and thus further exploration into a variety of views in this regard would be advantageous.

Further, staff in Burton et al.'s (2009) study reported that the FAP was ineffective; it was seen as a 'revolving door' for hard-to-place vulnerable students who did not belong to any one school (p. 149). Staff reported that these meetings had little integrity and questioned whether they were set up to serve the best interests of young people or,

rather, for the convenience of the school – possibly to 'dispose' of students whose social-emotional needs they could not meet. Findings from McKeon (2020) may offer an explanation here: he argued that students with additional needs were less likely to be enrolled in mainstream schools because they negatively affected the school's academic reputation. Thus, headteachers analysed by Burton et al. (2009) may have been reluctant to accept students who were likely to disrupt the learning process for themselves and thus reduce the school's positioning on league tables. Preventing admittance into school is one of the 'soft barriers' to inclusion that schools erect, according to McKeon (2020, p. 159). Such findings suggest that schools are not working together (by accepting students from neighbouring schools) but rather competing against one another owing to the marketisation of education. This illuminates how central government pressure manifests at the LA level and is transmitted to headteachers to the detriment of those at risk of PEX.

2.4.2.1.1 LA Schools Working Collaboratively

Burton et al. (2009) also considered how schools within the same LA pooled their resources. Despite an LA's desire for schools to develop shared ownership for students' social-emotional needs, the performative pressures of league tables made this challenging. An assistant headteacher recognised that schools became insular and relatively autonomous, failing to share human expertise or pooling their budgets to purchase traded services. Tension grew as other school leaders perceived that the LA disproportionately allocated funding: high-performance schools received proportionately less funding than lower-performance schools. These illustrate how neoliberal pressures disrupt efforts to create inclusive practice in educational environments.

To conclude, the findings of Burton et al. (2009) illuminate the impact of political agendas on the exclusion of students with BESD and highlight implications for the inconsistencies in provision. Considering the political focus of the research aims and question from the outset, a statement defining the researcher's sociopolitical stance would have been helpful, given that their position may have influenced the objectivity of the research. Nevertheless, a considered argument was included throughout the findings, demonstrating a somewhat balanced stance. These features provide a significant contribution to the current research and can increase the political consciousness of readers and spur social transformation within this field, this catalytic validity is a key strength of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This study included the perspectives of secondary phase leadership (on the barriers to inclusion of those with BESD); however, their views are somewhat diluted by the perspectives of non-leadership staff, educators from alternative provisions and LA employees who were not school-based.

2.4.2.2 LA Policies Create Pressure for Educators and Affect Funding for Inclusion

Spratt et al. (2006a) considered the impact of LA policies on the school environment (i.e., ethos and culture) and its ability to promote students' wellbeing. They interviewed secondary school leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and external professionals. School staff reported that the LA failed to develop coherent policies for schools to promote mental wellbeing at a strategic level. Instead, the few existing policies were fragmented and did not provide schools with a framework to promote student positive mental health. The implications of this were twofold. First, educators felt

that these ill-thought-out policies were poorly funded; consequently, mental health positions were short-term and of limited hours. Similar findings were identified in the following three studies, the implications of which are detrimental to inclusion: Burton et al. (2009), Martin-Denham (2021) and O'Reilly et al. (2018). Headteachers from Martin-Denham's (2021) study reported that a lack of external staff increased the prevalence of SEMH and PEX because students' needs were unidentified and unmet. Likewise, headteachers studied by Burton et al. (2009) struggled to support students without the help of specialists. However, the LA challenged headteachers' decisions to impose PEX without multi-agency involvement, leaving school leaders in a paradoxical predicament. Staff studied by O'Reilly et al. (2018) felt that mental health was poorly funded in society. They reasoned that this was owing to commissioners' failure to recognise the severity of mental health needs, which was considered widespread and debilitating and, in some of the most severe cases, led to suicide.

The second implication of these fragmented LA policies reported by Spratt et al. (2006a) is that the schools' initiatives were equally disjointed. School wellbeing programmes were described as 'bolted onto existing systems' (p.16). They were often only surface level, such as the declaration of an anti-bullying week, instead of implementing robust, well-planned mental health policies and procedures. Staff felt that school initiatives lacked a strategic, operational plan for supporting students. It is reported that disjointed inclusion initiatives created tension within schools' academic cultures, inhibiting mental health promotion.

To summarise, school staff believed that inconsistent central government policies at the macrosystem result in disjointed LA policies, systems and funding streams at the

exosystemic level, thereby inhibiting inclusion. Next, the impact of limited multi-agency support staffing within the mesosystem is considered.

2.4.3 Mesosystem: Collaboration Between Organisations

The mesosystem considers the interaction between two microsystems (or organisations) in which the YP actively participates. A continuation of Spratt et al.'s (2006a) study highlights challenges experienced between school staff and multi-agency professionals. Additionally, findings from a subsequent Spratt et al. (2006b) study illuminated the theoretical implications.

2.4.3.1 Working Collaboratively with Multi-Agency Staff

Educators across several studies highlight the vital role of multi-agency staff to support students with social-emotional difficulties and prevent PEX. These professionals include but are not limited to school counsellors, social workers, EPs and CAMHS (Burton et al., 2009; Martin-Denham, 2021; McKeon, 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Spratt et al., 2006a; Spratt et al., 2006b). Furthermore, Burton et al. (2009) explained the benefits of the team around the child, highlighting increased professional communication, accountability and joined-up working. Despite the benefits of multi-agency staff, educators studied by Spratt et al. (2006a, 2006b) reported challenges working collaboratively.

Spratt et al. (2006b) explored the impact of support services on school staff capacity to respond to students' mental health issues and displays of challenging behaviour. They conducted interviews and focus groups with members of senior leadership, teachers, pupils, parents and agency staff (health and social services and

voluntary sector organisations). Leadership also identified their role in promoting interprofessional work by welcoming agency staff into the school to work collaboratively with teachers. Though teachers welcomed agency input, they were reluctant to take advice from or work jointly with these external professionals. Instead, they became dependent on external support staff to 'mend' students' mental health needs (p. 19) and return them to the classroom when they could learn. Thus, recommendations were rarely embedded into the school ethos or pedagogy, acting somewhat as a stand-alone intervention, thereby reducing their effectiveness (Spratt et al., 2006a).

Consequently, staff had no better understanding of students' needs and felt less responsible for these students as a result (Spratt et al., 2006a). Spratt et al. (2006b) referred to this as simply reinforcing teachers' existing within-child professional habits; this Bourdieusian concept refers to a group maintaining its practice, thereby reproducing the current sociocultural conditions. Spratt et al. (2006a) urged staff to draw on the skills of specialists to build new school cultures. This was the case for a selection of schools in the study by Spratt et al. (2006a): they collaborated well with agencies, learning from their advice rather than becoming reliant on them. These types of schools also assumed ownership of mental health, including restructuring support teams to improve pastoral care available to students and their families. In turn, this enabled 'more effective detection of difficulties and rapid responses' (p. 19).

In both papers (Spratt et al., 2006a, 2006b), the participant sample lacked clarity and transparency, although a brief list of the participants' roles was provided (i.e., teachers, staff from health and social services). However, the authors do not specify the role that each leader held. Without this information, interpretative judgements about the

respondents' views cannot be made in context. Furthermore, it is necessary to use caution when applying the findings of the studies to current day practice; the 2006 studies are set in a different social, cultural and political context. This is particularly important when referring to policies, initiatives and values regarding mental health because government and educators were at earlier stages of addressing mental health in schools at that time. The following section considers more recently published studies.

To conclude the discussion of the mesosystem, it is evident that school leaders and teachers value external agency staff. However, as seen in the following section, school organisations face challenges supporting these students, which may be ascribed in part to the conceptualisation of the school's role and its staff, including determining who is responsible for supporting SEMH needs.

2.4.4 Microsystem: School Practices

Three studies were primarily focused on senior leaders' views and practices that affected the inclusion of students with SEMH needs within the schools' microsystems. McKeon (2017) considered schools' behaviour policies and in his later paper (2020), explored school ethos; O'Reilly et al. (2018) investigated adults' accountability for adolescent's mental health.

2.4.4.1 School Behaviour Policy.

McKeon's (2017) study showed that impractical governmental policies on inclusion and discipline were mirrored in school behaviour policies. Questionnaires and interviews were administered to headteachers, teachers and guidance counsellors regarding their understanding and management of EBD and the use of their schools'

behaviour policy for this group of students. Findings revealed that staff regarded behaviour policies as inflexible and 'very formal' with little or no consideration for the needs of students with EBD (p. 232). They reported that policymakers (presumably school management) had a poor understanding of SEBD and that input from the SEN department would have made the policy applicable to a diverse range of students. There was also an implicit understanding that enforcing the behaviour policy would jeopardise the inclusion of students with SEMH needs (Burton et al., 2009; McKeon, 2017; Spratt et al., 2006a). Therefore, to mitigate against exclusion, some educators from the aforementioned three studies reported forgoing the procedures of their behaviour policies and using a more lenient approach based on staff's judgement and the child's needs. Leadership from Burton et al.'s (2009) study reported that this was particularly important when considering a PEX because the guidance parameters were deemed unfavourable for those with BESD.

Furthermore, some staff from McKeon's (2017) study viewed their school's behaviour policy as inconsistent with its SEN policy. The former was deemed disjointed and implemented out of obligation to comply with government agendas rather than being based on the practicalities of the classroom environment.

In McKeon's (2017) study, the semi-structured interview method of data collection appeared justified and appropriate, and questionnaire data to inform interviews were suitable. In McKeon's (2017) study, the semi-structured interview method of data collection appeared justified and appropriate, and questionnaire data to inform interviews were suitable and appropriate. However, the analytical process lacked rigour: there was limited depth of analysis and themes in data were the same as the

findings from the questionnaires that led to the interviews. In addition, there were few

direct quotes from participants, thereby limiting the authentic expression of participants'

voices. It is also concerning that contradictory data are not presented. Overall, the

article's focus on the conceptualisation of EBD provides relevance to the review

question. However, it is weakened by non-secondary school settings, non-leadership

participant groups and the sociopolitical context in 2010. McKeon published additional

findings from this study in 2020 in which he considered another microsystemic issue of

the school ethos.

2.4.4.2 School ethos

An inclusive school ethos is vital for students with SEMH difficulties; this is

characterised by a nurturing environment that promotes caring practice and an adaptive

approach that flexibly responds to students' needs (McKeon, 2017; Spratt et al., 2006b).

Senior leaders note that they are responsible for creating an inclusive ethos; however,

they stipulate that producing this culture can be challenging owing to broader systemic

performative pressures (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; McKeon, 2017; Spratt et al., 2006b).

McKeon (2020) illuminated these issues within the following study.

In this later article, McKeon (2020) investigated the influence of school ethos on

inclusive practice in mainstream primary and secondary schools; he also sought to

explore staffs understanding and students' responses to SEBD. Findings revealed that

secondary schools had yet to create deep systemic change within their traditional

academic ethos, unlike primary schools, which were more advanced in inclusive

thinking and practices. Respondents from this later phase of education described their

school as having an overly academic focus that strove towards performativity over

inclusivity. Accordingly, these schools focused on students' acceptance into university, which was prioritised over establishing inclusive policies. McKeon suggested that this was fuelled by the 'apprehension of being compared with other . . . schools' within educational market practices (p. 169). He proposed that this academic ethos erects 'soft barriers' to inclusion; these exist covertly in stakeholders' attitudes and overtly in visible organisational structures (p. 169). For instance, labelling students with SEBD separates them from the rest of the school population both physically and in the minds of the school staff, which in turn increases SEN-only classes to minimise disruption to the existing educational culture. Similar findings were identified by Burton et al. (2009) and Corcoran and Finney (2015). Teachers reported that the school systems adopting an academic focus made it difficult for staff to develop an individualised approach to students with mental health needs.

2.4.4.3 School Interventions

McKeon (2020) believed that these 'soft barriers' also exist among the type of support available to students with SEBD. Headteachers' reported that these students are restricted from accessing support from the school-based guidance counsellor owing to fears that these professionals would become too closely aligned with behaviour management. Instead, they were referred to CAMHS. The author argued that these accommodations are superficial forms of inclusion that only serve to maintain the academic status quo of the school. Likewise, Burton et al. (2009), Dimitrellou et al. (2020) and McKeon (2017) shared concerns about schools implementing surface-level inclusion through extracting students from class to place them in individual and group interventions that require students to conform to the school culture and segregate those

who do not. McKeon (2017, 2020) found that this compliance with a performativity-based school culture (including behaviour policies) is heavily promoted, even for those whose needs challenge their ability to cooperate.

Furthermore, Spratt et al. (2006a) and McKeon (2017, 2020) found that school leaders gave little or no consideration to the potential negative impact of the school environment and how it can adapt to meet the needs of students. This stance is aligned with the deficit model of needs, which locates the 'problem' within the student; thus, it is believed that only the student needs to change, as discussed earlier by Spratt et al. (2006a), McKeon (2017, 2020) and Martin-Denham (2021). Although schools appear to implement these interventions to increase inclusion and reduce exclusion, they do not. Such intervention perpetuates social and academic exclusion because students are separated from their classroom, peers, curriculum and qualified teachers (Burton et al., 2009; Dimitrellou et al., 2020; McKeon, 2020). Arguably, this maintains the school's public academic reputation to the detriment of inclusivity, suggesting that leadership succumb to neoliberal performative pressures by default as they are part of a wider system. Therefore, McKeon (2020) recommended that schools deviate from a strong academic ethos to allow the effective inclusion of students with SEBD. He suggested that this requires deep systemic cultural changes rather than 'cosmetic, surface-level changes' that maintain traditional structures and attitudes about academia (p. 159). In agreement, Spratt et al. (2006b), stated that organisational changes are necessary: they made 'calls for schools to fundamentally re-examine how their structures and culture affected the wellbeing of pupils, especially those experiencing mental health difficulties'

(p. 16). In the proposed study, the researcher aims to take initial steps towards this by exploring the school's practices, from the perspectives of SLTs.

Critical analysis of McKeon's 2020 study reveals that many of the same criticisms in his 2017 study exist concerning recruitment strategy and theme emergence and ethics. The article produces insightful findings concerning the practice and policies regarding students with SEBD. The author used systemic thinking to explain that leaders established social constructs and practices and what is required to create deep-rooted systemic change. However, such changes require leadership to assume the responsibility of supporting mental health needs; this is explored in the following section.

2.4.4.4 School Staff Views of Inclusion

O'Reilly et al. (2018) explored the responsibility of providing mental health support for secondary school students as part of a more extensive study (reference not shared). They used semi-structured focus groups to collect data from headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants, mental health practitioners and adolescents.

2.4.4.4.1 Parental Responsibility for Mental Health

Educators reported that parents ought to assume responsibility for their child's mental health needs, stating that parents are highly influential in the development and recovery of students' mental health issues (O'Reilly et al., 2018). However, there was a recognition that some parents are either oblivious or unsympathetic to their children's emotional needs. To remedy this, educators recommended parent training. In support of these findings, staff also identified the important role of the family in providing emotional stability for children in McKeon's (2017, 2020) studies.

2.4.4.4.2 School Staff Responsibility for Mental Health

Additional findings from staff in the O'Reilly et al. (2018) study revealed that staff felt that students with mental health needs were not the responsibility of mainstream schools. One participant stated that if students were not 'mentally stable' or 'ready to take on the challenges of school', then school was not the right place for them (p. 454). Another believed that those with mental health difficulties should be taught in a separate unit dedicated to mental health with appropriately trained staff. Related to this, staff felt that their primary role was to educate and only secondarily to support mental health needs. This view is similar to findings from Spratt et al. (2006a, 2006b), Corcoran and Finney (2015) and McKeon (2017, 2020), who found that some staff viewed wellbeing as an addendum to the curriculum, if included at all. To extend this point, a headteacher from McKeon's (2017) study reported that emotional behaviour disrupts the school's primary aim of educating students. Educationalists in the study by O'Reilly et al. (2018) stated that they were not medically trained, explaining, 'It's not our job to cure it [mental disorder]' (p. 454). They felt they lacked the necessary time, contextual training, skill, confidence, resources and supervision to intervene; they believed their role was simply to signpost. It was unclear whether leaders shared the same views. However, opposing views were not provided.

Despite feeling unequipped for assuming mental health duties, leaders and non-leaders in this study and others reported feeling pressured to do so, which threatened their wellbeing (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Spratt et al., 2006b). For instance, responding to a suicide disclosure triggered secondary traumatic stress for staff (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Staff in Spratt et al. (2006a) stated that their wellbeing

subsequently increased with the introduction of specialist mental health support in school; they no longer felt responsible for supporting these students. However, there was agreement in the focus groups (including among headteachers) that teachers were responsible for having general discussions about mental health (O'Reilly et al., 2018).

In contrast to these findings, Corcoran and Finney (2015) reported that approximately 75% of educators felt that meeting students' academic and emotional needs was their role, whereas the minority believed that it was not their responsibility to promote mental health but to deposit intellectual knowledge via the curriculum. A SENCo and inclusion manager from the same study felt that the ideal role for educators is not only to impart knowledge but also to promote wellbeing through inclusive practice. Likewise, a deputy headteacher spoke about her commitment and desire to positively impact students' wellbeing. Participants also spoke about being an emotionally aware practitioner who is empathetic and understanding.

However, the differing views of staff (as already presented) in the studies of Spratt et al. (2006a, 2006b), McKeon (2017, 2020) and O'Reilly et al. (2018) may reflect what participants believed they were capable of within the constraints of the school structures and wider political system. In contrast, the ideal role described by some participants in Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study represents a fantasy that they acknowledge cannot be actualised. Both perspectives may reflect staff's limited sense of agency due to wider systemic constraints. Yet, educators from Corcoran and Finney's (2015) study remain hopeful.

2.4.4.4.3 School Leaders Sense of Agency

The literature shows that leaders' desire to help – combined with the inability to do so – creates a moral dilemma, leaving them feeling disempowered by the system. In support of this assumption, a headteacher from Burton et al.'s (2009) study spoke about permanently excluding a student because no other solutions were available while knowing it was not the best option for them. They regarded it as giving up on the student. Other staff members in the same study described these tensions as creating a moral 'dilemma' (p. 143); they acknowledged that sending a pupil to a referral unit did not resolve the issue but merely moved it.

Returning to the study by O'Reilly et al. (2018), there were also differences in views of inclusivity based on the status of the staff members. Leaders' viewed their school's inclusivity more positively than teachers; this might have been due to leadership taking a more strategic stance on inclusion, considering policies around inclusion, intake of students with additional needs, and reducing PEXs. Teachers, by contrast, may experience challenges implementing inclusion at a classroom level whilst striving to meet the needs of other students. Such discrepancies highlight the unique perspective of leaders' regarding inclusion, a perspective that warrants further exploration.

Although insightful, the findings of O'Reilly et al. (2018) must be read with caution. The authors do not differentiate between headteachers' views and those of the other staff, nor do they state what proportion of the sample were senior leaders. Nevertheless, the study demonstrates rigour. The researchers provide a clear rationale for using focus groups, emphasising the importance of sharing ideas and commenting

on the contribution of others – an appropriate design to meet the research objectives. Reference is also made to the active role of the moderator. Clear justification and explanation for using an inductive thematic analysis was provided with mention of the use of a team of coders.

2.5 Conclusion

2.5.1 Overview of What is Known

This literature review aimed to explore the views and practices of SLT's regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs in mainstream secondary schools. The findings indicate that school leaders' views and practices are complex and multilayered, affecting all levels of the ecosystem. At the macrosystemic level, it appears that the PEX of students with SEMH difficulties was fueled by strategic government policies to raise academic standards. This filtered down to the exosystem as LA initiatives and funding systems failed to truly support inclusion, thus negatively affected the option to work with agencies. However, this cannot all be attributed to professional availability, given that some school staff found it difficult to accept support from external mental health experts available to them. At the microsystemic level, schools appear to have created an overly academic ethos that arguably generates interventions rooted in conformity and segregation; this is further fueled by restrictions within the schools' behaviour policies. Leader's desire to be inclusive but challenges actualising this results in their limited sense of agency to create change. Therefore, they view the PEX of CYP with SEMH needs as a by-product of performative pressures.

2.5.1.1 Gaps in the Research Literature

Despite this insight, gaps in the knowledge base persist. There are unanswered questions regarding what systems and processes enhance inclusion or contribute to PEX for students with SEMH needs. For instance, understanding the nature, quality and development of relationships that support students may be of use; this may facilitate a strengths-based approach to addressing the topic. Leaders' discussion of feeling conflicted about supporting inclusion is an interesting and worthwhile concept to explore; further insight into this may also provide awareness to support them. With this additional knowledge, a more informed understanding of the PEX of students with SEMH needs can be gained.

2.5.2 Relevance of the Literature

To develop this insight, specific research is required. It is hoped that this will contribute to a body of knowledge and improve practice. Focusing on the literature obtained, it is essential to recognise that this topic is largely under-researched, given that only nine studies were identified. Hence, the researcher found it necessary to seek papers outside of the immediate focus of this research (i.e., descriptors other than SEMH, studies including non-leadership participants. Although the literature overview had been primarily focused on policy, many have been updated or become extinct (i.e., ECM, Exclusions Act, Healthy Schools' Programmes). New statutory guidance has emerged regarding SEMH and PEX, which was unavailable when most of these studies were undertaken. This shift in the educational and sociopolitical landscape is likely to influence senior leaders views and practices.

Another consideration of the literature is that several scholars ascertained only headteachers' views, rather than the collective views of SLTs'. This provides limited information because leadership members (i.e., SENCo, inclusion manager, deputy head) may take a lead role in implementing interventions and liaising with students and staff regarding the inclusion and PEX of those with SEMH needs. These members may be more knowledgeable about the intricacies of inclusion than headteachers. Other authors do not differentiate between their voices and the voices of non-leaders, thus diluting the responses of leaders' and raising questions about whether the authors value the importance of SLTs' (collective) role and how they relate differently to the topic compared to non-leaders. Only one of the nine studies (Dimitrellou et al., 2020) featured this distinction.

2.5.3 Rationale for the Present Study

The current study will build on the growing knowledge base of research that is critical to developing the understanding of views and organisational processes pertaining to the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. It will also seek to address the aforementioned limitations by providing up-to-date information within the current sociopolitical climate. This research intends to privilege SLTs' views and perspectives by seeking their voices exclusively. This will be achieved by asking the following research question: *What are the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs concerning the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs?*

By exploring the nature and development of SLTs' views and practices, this research can provide insight into influencing inclusion from the macrosystemic to the microsystemic levels. It is hoped that understanding these narratives will influence

practice and policy at the government, local and school levels. The following chapter will

describe the methods used to answer the research question.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

The objective of this chapter is to explain and justify the methodological actions taken to investigate the research question. It begins by explaining the philosophical foundations of the study, including the researcher's critical realist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and the assumptions that follow. This informs the foundation of the research and the research question. The research process is described and critically analysed in relation to the qualitative research design, thematic analysis method and focus groups. Ethical considerations are explained, followed by the process of purposive sampling for participant selection. Next, the justification and process of data analysis is addressed. Finally, the trustworthiness of the research is explained before closing with a summary.

3.2 Philosophical Underpinnings and Assumptions

A post-positivist paradigm was adopted for this research; this was concerned with subjectivity and removed from a purely objective stance (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This can be best understood by considering the philosophical underpinnings of ontology (i.e., the nature of reality) and epistemology (i.e., how knowledge of reality is obtained), as stated by Guba and Lincoln (1994).

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology relates to the perception of reality and truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). A realist ontology considers truth to exist independently of perceptions theories or constructs, conversely, a relativist ontology deems reality to be finite and subjective to human experience; part way between the two is critical realism, this is the ontological stance adopted for the current research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) this ontological spectrum is depicted in Figure 6.

Figure *6*

Ontological Spectrum

Critical realism proposes that observable and tangible experiences at an empirical level are governed by unobservable structures, processes and mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008). These elements are 'multiply determined' with no single feature defining the whole result (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 67). Instead, 'multiple causes must be teased out from detailed explorations of the setting' (Edward et al., 2014, p. 10). Thus, in relation to the present study, the PEX of students identified as having SEMH needs is perceived as a tangible, observable event that happens independently of participants'

views, for which there are quantifiable data. However, there are multiple, complex influences of PEX that are unobservable, and circumstances may not be as they appear on the surface.

Bhaskar (1978) warned against examining the surface or superficial level of a situation, advising rather to consider the causal mechanism of a phenomenon. This requires researchers to explore beyond the empirically observed events to what Bhaskar terms the 'real' domain: a deeper level of ontological depth that generates changes materialising at the surface level. What occurs at the deeper level is not fully explanatory but rather exploratory because it provides insight into tendencies or causative agents. Edward et al. (2014) concurred that critical realism is suitable for analysing social problems and suggesting solutions to begin social change; this makes the approach suitable for this study. This stance is well suited to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as it highlights the importance of understanding the systems around an individual to explore the meaning of tangible life outcomes.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of how knowledge is acquired and constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Therefore, the epistemological stance employed in research dictates the kind of claims it can make. The present study adopts an interpretivist stance (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). This is the belief that 'knowledge is relative to the knower' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33) because it is socially constructed through ones' consciousness, values, experiences and context (Hiller, 2016). This epistemological subjectivity contrasts with a positivist stance which considers objective knowledge to

reside 'in the world independently of consciousness waiting to be identified' and collected (Collins, 2010, p. 142; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017;).

Through adopting an interpretivist epistemology, this research explored the views of three SLTs' from their perspective, thereby ascertaining their versions of truth whilst appreciating that the views of others may differ and no individuals' interpretation is privileged over another (Hiller, 2016). However, there are multiple realities, all of which are equally justified. Therefore, this research has produced one of many possible interpretations of knowledge regarding this topic (Willig, 2008).

As a critical realist, operating with an interpretivist epistemology, the researcher was an active agent within the study; therefore, interpretations of participants' views were influenced by the researcher's perspective and assumptions (Edward et al., 2014). To understand participants perspectives and behaviour, a researcher must seek to grasp participants contextual factors, interpretations of their reality and the meaning that they ascribe to situations (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). Thus, the findings were co-constructed by the researcher who brought their beliefs and experiences to the interpretive process (Hiller 2016).

3.2.3 Researchers Assumptions

This philosophical stance, combined with the researcher's experiences, have formed and framed several assumptions about the research. As Willig (2008, p. 38) stated, 'we cannot ask questions without making assumptions'. Particularly influential professional interactions include discussions with colleagues to plan the research, initial reading around the topic and experiences on placement at the LA FAP. These experiences influenced how this study was perceived and which aspects were

emphasised; another researcher with different experiences may emphasise different elements or gather the same data and interpret them otherwise. The researcher's assumptions are outlined in Table 3, points one to four are supported by literature in the introductory chapter, and point five was established during the pilot study.

Table 3

Researcher's Assumptions

	Researcher's Assumptions
1	Schools with different rates of PEX may differ in their views and practices of inclusion for students with SEMH needs.
2	SLTs have decision-making powers regarding inclusion and the authority to PEX students with SEMH needs.
3	PEX rarely benefits the child and is carried out to maintain the equilibrium in the school.
4	The identification of students with SEMH exists, although meanings attributed to it may differ.
5	Generally, there is a shared meaning of language between SLT and the researcher, although nuances may exist

3.3 Research Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research was to explore the views and practices of SLTs' regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. As decision-makers, school leaders are instrumental in inclusive practice, including administering the sanction of a PEX (see Chapter 1). However, as concluded from the literature review, a lack of research exists regarding their views and experiences of the practice. Therefore, through the exploratory nature of this research, a more comprehensive understanding of this topic was ascertained by investigating perspectives and relating the findings back to

the literature to produce new insights and extend the knowledge base (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This may be viewed as preliminary research in that it was not an attempt to provide conclusive results but rather to fulfil the LA's and researcher's curiosity for greater understanding, leaving scope for explanatory research to follow. This approach to the present study was applied by asking the following research question: *What are the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs' concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with social, emotional and mental health needs?*

3.4 Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative approaches are most suited to the exploratory nature of this research because it allows a topic to be understood based on the meaning that participants assign to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This method was achieved by gathering rich descriptive data, which are also vital for a critical realist's exploratory stance (Edward et al., 2014, p. 4). This approach contrasts with quantitative methodologies, which in instances provides 'thin' descriptive approaches and constrains the data by inhibiting the emergence of new information (Patton, 2015). For the present study, it was vital that participants shared their novel views rather than being limited by predetermined variables. In addition, although qualitative research methodologies are widely critiqued for their lack of generalisability, the researcher intended to understand the perceptions of the selected SLTs' within the context of the focus LA and therefore was not concerned with generalising findings to large populations; however, the prospect of considering these findings in comparable context is explored in Section 3.8.2.

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis Method

A thematic analysis was selected as the qualitative method to conduct this study, although a grounded theory approach, the limitation of which is discussed later, was considered. Thematic analysis systematically identifies, analyses, organises and describes the most salient patterns discovered within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Common threads of meaning are categorised into themes and subthemes that capture significant constructs in the data related to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4.1.1 Schools of TA

In Clarke and Braun's (2018) more recent work they differentiate between three schools of TA which vary according to their 'guiding philosophy' and 'analytic procedures'; these are 'Big Q TA', 'medium Q TA' and 'small Q TA' (p108). 'Big Q TA' was selected as the most appropriate method for the present study for two reasons. Firstly, 'Big Q TA' (in addition to medium Q TA') is founded on a qualitative paradigm, this is consistent with the critical realist ontology and interpretivist epistemology of the study; by contrast, 'small Q TA' is based on a positivist ontological framework (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Secondly, 'Big Q TA' adopts an organic approach to coding and theme development, thus coding is a creative and emergent process (Clarke & Braun, 2018). This approach is fitting to the present study because, discovering new meaning based on participants experiences is important to gain ontological depth, a feature that is fundamental to critical realism. Using this approach enabled the researcher to deeply engage with the data and identify new themes. This method contrasts with more rigid

approaches adopted by 'medium Q TA' and 'small Q TA' which code data using multiple independent coders and a codebook framework for analysis to generate inter-rater reliability scores (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun, & Clarke, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2018). These methods rely on the premise that 'truth' and 'meaning' resides in the data waiting to be objectively located and reported, a stance which conflicts with the philosophical positioning of this research (Willig, 2017).

3.4.1.2 Strengths and limitations of TA

Thematic analysis is an advantageous method because of its theoretical independence. Unlike interpretive phenomenological or discourse analysis, it is not associated with a specific theoretical or epistemological approach (Clarke & Braun, 2018). The selected method allows for its adaptation to the needs of any study. It is important to acknowledge that some scholars have criticised this method's theoretical flexibility (Robson, 2011). However, Willig (2008) stated that researchers ought to assume responsibility for identifying the study's theoretical positions and independently state how this informs the interpretation of data.

Furthermore, an effort to apply a theoretical position to a thematic analysis can contribute to the coherence and consistency of the data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017); therefore, a 'researcher['s] subjectivity [is] a resource (rather than a problem to be managed)' (Clarke & Braun, 2018, p. 107). Another strength of this method is its ability to summarise various data levels to tell a story about the 'so what' of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2018, p. 109). This rebuttal counters Sandelowski and Barroso's (2003) critique that TA allows for only a simplistic low-level interpretation, given it has been used to offer a rich and detailed description of participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Finally, TA is useful for research that seeks to answer questions about group conceptualisations of a phenomenon (Joffe, 2012, p. 212).

3.4.1.3 Grounded Theory

Initially, a grounded theory approach for the present study was considered owing to its unique capability to generate a theory that explains complex social and psychological situations (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser, 1978, 2002; Sutcliffe, 2016). Given that there were no known theories regarding SLTs' views and practices concerning the PEX of students with SEMH needs, this may have been a valuable contribution to the knowledge base (Urquhart, 2013). However, this decision was revised when the study's purpose changed from explanatory to exploratory. This shift was motivated by the literature review, which highlighted the limited exploration of leaders' stance on this topic. Thus, it was necessary to lay this foundation by exploring the topic rather than attempting to explain an under-researched subject (Willig, 2008).

3.4.2 Method of Data Collection: Focus Groups

It was hoped that senior leaders from each school would engage in critical discussion regarding the PEX of students with SEMH needs to illuminate a range of issues and ideas. Therefore, focus groups (rather than individual interviews) were selected to facilitate this process. This data collection method is frequently used to gain an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon from a purposely selected group of individuals (Nymba et al., 2017). Krueger and Casey (2015) stated that focus groups are useful to understand differences in perspectives between groups because

information can be compared and contrasted between them. This strategy is appropriate for the present study, for which some comparisons are made between the views of senior leaders across schools. The distinctive feature of focus groups is the social interaction because participants' responses to questions spark agreeable and disagreeable conversations, causing them to contribute comments beyond their initial responses or thought processes. This collaboration could enhance the meaningfulness of the data and advance the understanding and complement the 'storytelling' feature of thematic analysis (Patton, 2015). In addition, recognising omissions, silences, and how narratives are told in the group may provide insight into the organisations' sensitivity about certain topics (Patton, 2015). This level of depth is fitting for a critical realist stance because it provides context for a deeper level of awareness into surface-level actions.

However, some critics consider these strengths of focus groups as limitations because participants are susceptible to within-group dynamics such as 'groupthink[ing]' which occurs when members express similar opinions to maintain team cohesion (Mukherjee et al., 2015, p.1099). This dynamic could challenge the critical discussion that was desired. Additionally, the notion of the 'halo effect' may occur whereby high-status individuals may have an overbearing influence on the discussion, resulting in those with less privileged positions being reluctant to challenge those with a (perceived) higher social status (Mukherjee et al., 2015, p.1099). In the present study, these may relate to each team's formal or informal hierarchy; for instance, a SENCo may be unwilling to challenge a headteacher's view of inclusion, leading to perceived agreeableness.

However, Robson (2011) addressed this potential limitation by warning that reduced or nonparticipation such as silence should not be confused with agreement but may indicate 'unwillingness to express dissent' (p. 297). To mitigate against this, the researcher was attentive to group dynamics and became aware of the formal seniority of the hierarchy between senior leadership members whilst appreciating that there may be less apparent hierarchal dynamics. Also, knowledge of the topic was developed, which enabled enquiry through asking in-depth questions about alternative opinions, often using examples to prompt less agreeable or alternative viewpoints. Thus, an active yet passive role was adopted by the researcher by promptly posing questions and steering the conversation. Many of these skills developed from EP training enabled the researcher to build rapport and remain curious.

Focus groups are a resource-efficient method of data collection. This was evident in the present study: data gathering took place in participants' workplaces, and the researcher joined an existing team meeting from an established group. This group of convenience reduced the artificiality of data collection, minimising environmental interferences that can affect group dynamics (Liamputtong, 2011).

3.4.2.1 Focus Group Questions

Braun and Clarke (2013) advised that focus group scripts should begin with questions that are generic, narrowing to ones that are more specific to the topic in question. Therefore, the first questions were to gain a broad conceptualisation of SEMH needs and end with a specific question about patterns in year nine (see Table 4). In addition, Braun and Clarke (2013) proposed asking questions that would inspire debate: hence, question three asks about the association between SEMH and PEX. In line with

a critical realist stance, the researcher not only asked what was happening but also asked questions to identify the reasons and processes behind participants' attitudes and practices (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Table 4

Purpose of Focus Group Questions

Purpose of Question	Focus Group Question
Insight on the phenomena	What behaviours would you expect to see in a student with SEMH difficulties?
Information about influential factors	What are the causes and contributing factors to permanent exclusions?
Approaches used	What roles do outside agencies have in supporting students with SEMH needs?

3.4.2.2 Pilot focus group.

Focus group questions were trialed, discussed and revised with the support of two EPs, senior leaders of a nonparticipating school and the researcher's supervisor, to ensure the questions were developed following considerable reflection (Krueger & Casey, 2009). This process led to several alterations; there was a change to question four. The original question was, 'What are the causes of permanent exclusion?'. One staff member stated that she was unaware of the causes but was happy to speak about the contributing factors. Therefore, the question was changed to, 'What are the causes and contributing factors to permanent exclusions?' The initial and final focus group schedules can be found in Appendix N.

Data were collected from SLTs across three mainstream secondary schools. Before explaining how these participants were recruited, it is essential to consider the ethical measures employed.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

'Research ethics' relates to the moral principles that underpin a study from the outset to the publication of results (BPS, 2021. p5). Conducting research in an ethical manner requires a researcher to be transparent about the intentions, process and outcomes of a study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Therefore, this study was designed, conducted, and analysed according to the ethical guidance documented in Table 5.

Table 5

Key Documentation Used for Ethical Consideration

Ethical guidance documentation
BPS—Code of Human Research Ethics (2021)
BPS—Code of Conduct and Ethical Practice (2018)
BPS—Code of Human Research Ethics (2014)
British Educational Research Association (2018) guidelines
Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)—Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016)
Health and Care Professionals Council - Code of Human Research Ethics (2016)

3.5.1 Ethical Approval

This research has been ethically approved by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix O).

3.5.2 Informed Consent

The BPS (2018, 2021) principle of respect relates to consent, privacy and confidentiality. Valid informed consent includes the researcher explaining the nature of the research so that participants know what they are being asked to partake in (BPS, 2021). The following process achieved this. Following a discussion with the headteacher to answer preliminary questions, they read the information sheet (see Appendix P) and signed the consent form for their school to participate in the study (see Appendix Q). The headteacher of each school introduced the study to the remaining members of their SLT and invited them to the information session with the researcher. There, the study was discussed, and questions were answered. Each member of the SLT read the information sheet (see Appendix R) and signed the consent form (see Appendix S). As the BPS (2014) advised, participants retained one copy of the consent form, and the researcher stored the other.

3.5.3 Withdrawal

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without providing a reason (see Appendix Q and S) as advised by the British Educational Research Association (2018).

3.5.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality

In line with BPS (2014, 2021) and Data Protection Act (1998, 2018) guidance, the anonymity of schools and participants was maintained by assigning them pseudonyms. Accordingly, leaders' pseudonyms have not matched job titles; however, a separate list of roles for those who participated is provided. Furthermore, LA and

school statistics were omitted because this would make the borough and organisation easily identifiable. This was particularly important given the potentially controversial nature of some of the discussions.

Regarding confidentiality among participants, Liamputtong (2011) stated that focus groups have an added ethical risk because there is the potential for participants to disclose information learned during the focus group to someone outside of the session. In addition, senior leaders' continued to work together following the focus group within the current study, which increased the likelihood of such discussions. This element of confidentiality was discussed before and after each focus group; participants agreed to maintain confidentiality unless it was to protect others from harm (BPS, 2014, 2021).

3.5.5 Data Protection

The data was handled in line with the Data Protection Act (1998, 2018) and audio recordings from the focus groups were recorded on a password-enabled Dictaphone. Notes written throughout the focus group were locked away securely and destroyed upon completing the thesis.

3.5.6 Protection of Participants

Protocols were implemented to identify, assess and mitigate against risks; this was in line with research guidance to minimise harm and maximise benefits to participants (BPS, 2014, 2021; HCPC, 2016). Given that the setting and context did not differ from the usual duties of the SLTs no threats were identified here. However, two possible risks were acknowledged relating to the content of discussions that may be sensitive in terms of values about disability, social exclusion or fairness, and

participants recall of students' violent, sexual or illegal acts. First, the possibility existed that during the focus group discussions, participants may have overtly or covertly disagreed with one another, potentially affecting how members view one another and causing conflict within the professional team. A second possible risk was individuals regretting their views and decisions over permanently excluding students with SEMH needs, resulting in heightened emotions of remorse and disappointment either during or after the focus group.

To mitigate against this, these risks were discussed with the participants during the information sessions, and a debriefing process followed each focus group (BPS, 2014,2021). During the debriefing process, SLTs received greater detail about the researcher's interest and intentions with the topic, creating an open atmosphere for discussions; they also had the opportunity to share their reflections (Allen, 2017). Another reasonable step taken to manage risk was providing participants with the researcher's contact details, a qualified senior EP, and relevant support services within the borough to access practical or emotional support. Another mitigating factor was that the researcher was committed to interpreting their views with integrity (BPS, 2021).

3.5.7 Integrity

Research integrity enables trust and confidence in the findings and conclusions made. This was achieved by the manner and methods used to conduct research (BPS, 2021) and relates to the researcher being 'honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in one's actions, words, decisions, methods and outcomes' (BPS, 2018, p. 7). Table 6 shows various elements of integrity deemed important in the literature and how this

research has met each standard, many of these were lifted from the BPS (2014, 2018)

and Universities UK (2019).

Table 6

Elements of Research Integrity

Element of Integrity	Met by the Current Research
Integrity of participants	Congruence among information session, information sheet, consent form debrief and write-up
Trust and confidence in methods	Chosen and alternative methods described and justified Procedures clearly stated to enable readers to follow and replicate
Trust and confidence in findings	The coding and analysis were counterchecked for congruence by an EP colleague and then reviewed following adjustments. All transcripts are enclosed for transparency. Procedures clearly stated to enable readers to follow and replicate
Aims of research are as transparent as possible to ensure clarity regarding what the researcher intends to achieve.	Aims are clearly outlined at the beginning of each section, consistent with the aims of the ethical approval and information sheet given to participants.
Caution in making knowledge claims; within research ensures that they are in the scope of the research.	Implications of the research are tentative, and reasonable claims are made from the findings.
Transparency and open communication in declaring potential competing interests	Dual role of the researcher as a trainee EP within the focus LA has been stated at the outset and is reflected on in the discussion chapter.

Given that the ethical consideration have been stated, the school and participant

selection process will be outlined next.

3.6 School and Participant Selection Procedure

The collective views of senior leaders were selected from three mainstream secondary schools using purposive sampling, a selective technique used to identify participants based on the characteristics that are important to the study (Starks & Trinidad, 2008). This method ensures that the most relevant data are gathered (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

3.6.1. School Selection and Recruitment

To ensure the appropriateness of those who participated, inclusion and exclusion criteria were necessary (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Several secondary schools were excluded on the following bases (the exact number is not reported to help preserve the anonymity of the LA). The following inclusion factors were important to the research, see Table 7.

Table 7

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for School Selection

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale for Exclusion Criteria
LA-maintained mainstream secondary schools	Primary schools, primary or secondary academies, independent schools, special schools and pupil referral units	Substantial differences from secondary schools concerning the following: behaviour policy, number and level of students with SEND; resources available for students with SEMH needs; staff skill and/or confidence working with those with SEMH; and the different academic expectations of the school.
Available PEX data	Unavailable or incomplete PEX data	These schools could not be reliably categorised to gauge the PEX rates for selection.
Schools with which the researcher did not have a former relationship	Schools where the researcher had been the school's link trainee EP	Interviewing staff who had worked closely with the researcher may have led to the social desirability effect, whereby participants present socially desirable views and behaviours to maintain a positive relationship (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

3.6.1.1 Selection of Schools with a Variety of PEX Rates

Once schools met the aforementioned criteria, they were viewed comparatively to identify schools with different rates of PEX to ascertain a variety of views. Several scholars have found that the views and practices of staff in high-, medium- and low-excluding schools differ (Dimitrellou et al., 2020; Hatton, 2013; Malmqvist, 2016; Munn et al., 2000; Parsons, 2009c). The LA admissions team had previously circulated a ranked list of schools and their PEX rates, information that was also publicly available (DfE, 2016a). Data were available for the academic years from 2005/2006 to 2016/2017, although the level of accuracy of these data may be questionable owing to off-rolling. Their high-, medium- or low-excluding status was in relation to the national

average of 0.17 in secondary schools in the academic year 2016/2017 (DfE, 2018).

Prior to registering their interest, participants were informed that PEX data would be

considered (see Appendix P and R). Reflections on this can be found in Section 5.7.

3.6.1.2 Sample Size and Recruitment Process

It was intended for the researcher to secure approximately three to four schools

that were pre-categorised as above, below and average to the national PEX rates. This

amount was in line with advice from Braun and Clarke (2013), who recommended that

two to four focus groups are appropriate for research within a thematic analysis. Six

schools with a range of PEX rates were invited to participate by email and follow-up

phone calls were made. These six schools were contacted to allow for participant

attrition and participant noncompliance, which occurs when a participant (groups) drop

out or do not agree to the terms of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). They were

provided with initial information sheets and consent forms to complete (see Appendix P

and Q, respectively). Only one school responded in the affirmative.

The researcher attended a FAP meeting in the hope of obtaining additional

participating schools. There, the nature of the study was explained, and school leaders

had the opportunity to ask questions. Leaders from seven additional schools showed

interest and, thus, were handed the aforementioned forms. A total of eight leaders

demonstrated an interest; this number was reduced to three because the remaining five

were unavailable to commit within the given time frame, feared judgement or their PEX

rates were too similar to other schools that had already been accepted to the study.

Participants were informed of the possibility of this at the FAP meeting. Finally, one

higher-, one medium- and one lower-excluding school that participated in this process is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Overview of Participant Selection Procedure
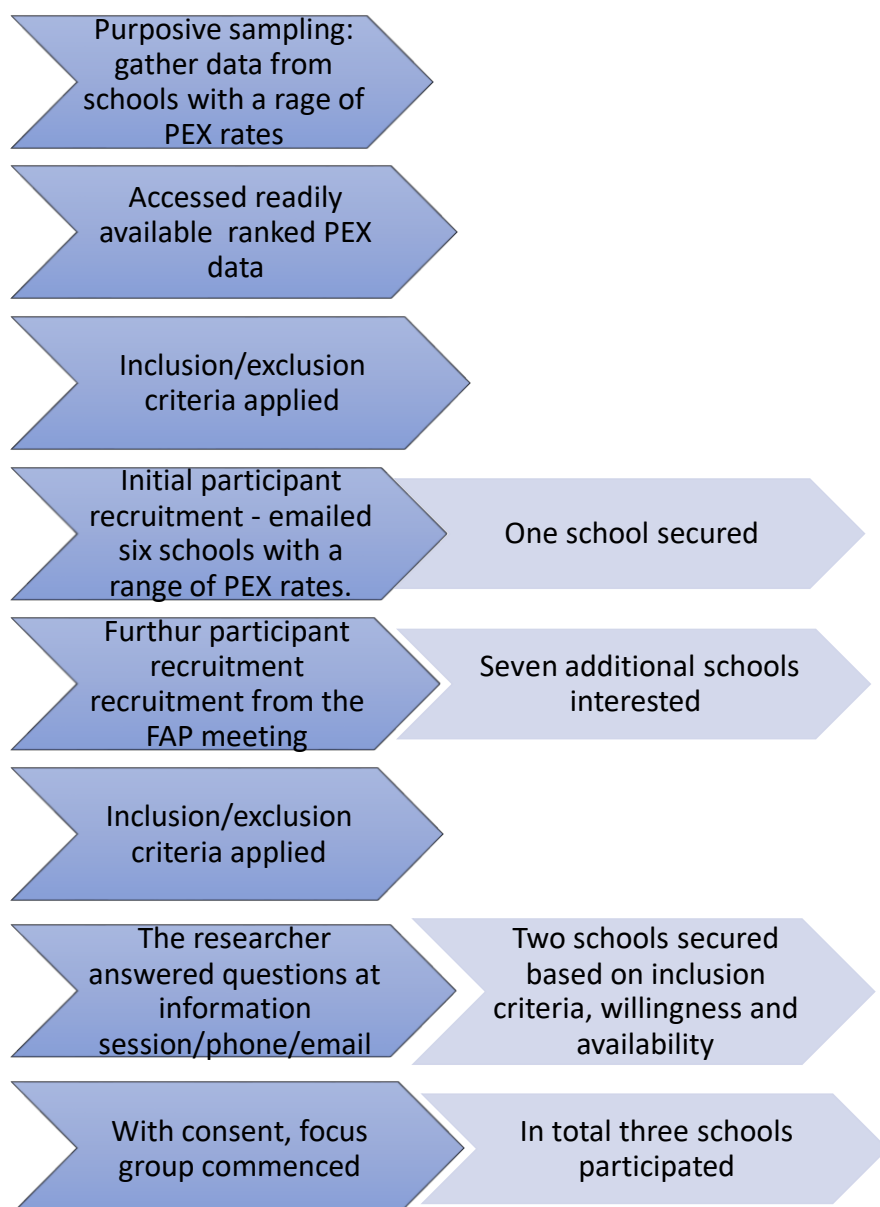
3.6.1.3 Contextual Information Regarding Schools

Participating schools were randomly assigned 'A', 'B' and 'C' labels. Table 8 illustrates some essential characteristics of the schools (whilst maintaining anonymity) from (DfE 2021d); this enables the findings to be placed in context (see Chapter 1 for information about the borough).

Table 8

Contextual Information for Participating Schools

School	PEX Rate in relation to national average – 0.17	CYP With EHCP (Within 25)	EHCP primary area of need SEMH (Within 5)	Support Primary Area of need SEMH Within 25)	No. of CYP on Roll (Within 500)	Five or More GCSEs[6] at A*–C Above or Below the National Average 61%	Free School Meals Above or Below the National Average 29.1%
A	Low	0-25	0-5	0-25	1,000–1,500	Above	Below
B	High	25-50	5-10	0-25	1,000–1,500	Above	Below
C	Medium	25-50	5-10	25-50	1,000–1,500	Below	Below

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[6] *'GCSE' - General Certificate in Secondary Education, a system of public exams taken by students, typically from year 10 to 11.*

3.6.2 Participant Selection and Recruitment

After participating schools had been secured, purposive sampling was again employed to select participants.

3.6.2.1 Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

As intended, the participant pool consisted of shared characteristics across focus groups and differences within it; this is referred to as homogeneity and heterogeneity, respectively, based on features that are important to the study (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The three focus groups were relatively homogenous because all participants were senior leaders (see Table 9).

The heterogeneous nature of the roles within focus groups enabled the inclusion of different views and, therefore, produced a more diverse discussion (Liamputtong, 2011). Each team had a considerable level of heterogeneity that was important to the study because roles and responsibilities about SEMH and PEX varied. For instance, only headteachers could PEX; others (e.g., behaviour manager and SENCo) may have had involvement leading up to the exclusion; the financial manager may be able to explain how budgets affect inclusion, and the achievement leads could provide insight into the academic progress of various groups of students.

When reflecting on the variety of participants in each SLT, it is worth noting that the inclusion of SENCo and therapeutic personnel (as seen in Schools A and B) is uncommon within school leadership. Had all staff from school C participated, the inclusion manager and therapeutic lead would have been present also. This atypical composition of SLTs in the focus LA may be in response to the borough wide concerns regarding inclusion.

Furthermore, differences in age, gender and length of experience, amongst other factors, may also be relevant to the study. From observation, leadership primarily comprised of Caucasian males. There were few females and an even lower number of males or females from ethnic minority groups. It appeared that participants' ages ranged from the 30s to 60s, the researchers-researcher dynamics are reflected on in Section 5.7.3.

3.6.2.2 Sample size

The recruitment process was unique in that established groups of SLTs were approached to participate in the study, rather than the researcher selecting members from the school. It was the researcher's intention and request to have all willing members of SLTs participate in the focus group to ascertain a fair representation of the team. In each school, this did not exceed 12 members of staff. This intention was aligned with Liamputtong (2011) advice, who suggested that focus groups should comprise 6 to 12 individuals, which is deemed enough participants to create diversity, but not too many such that individuals feel uncomfortable sharing their views. Therefore, School A and B had 12 and eight senior leaders' members, respectively. However, only two members from School C attended owing to an in-school emergency (the limitations of which are discussed in Section 5.7.3). Small focus groups (between two to five participants) have been endorsed by Kamberelis and Dimitradis (2005) and Krueger (1994;), particularly for participants such as senior leaders who have specialised knowledge of PEX. However, Morgan (1997) cautioned that a low number could lead to less diverse viewpoints (Krueger, 1994).

3.6.2.3 Duration of focus groups

In line with the advice that it is optimal for focus groups to last between one and two hours (Morgan, 1997), the intended length of each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes. This was achieved by Schools B and C, although schools A's focus group lasted only 41 minutes. Table 9 summarises the participants and the duration of focus groups in each school.

Table 9

Composition of Focus Groups

School	Participants' Job Titles	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group (Minutes)
A	headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher/safeguarding lead, SENCO, business manager, behaviour support lead, inclusion manager, head of year x 3, head of department x 2	12	41
B	headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, head of behaviour support, inclusion manager, finance officer, head of year, school counsellor	8	77
C	headteacher, deputy headteacher	2	65

3.7 Data Coding and Analysis

A description of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure is provided to exemplify the process of generating findings (see Figure 8). This process was supported by Braun and Clarke's (2013) 15-point checklist (see Appendix T).

Figure 8

Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Phases for Thematic Analysis

Phase one: Data familiarisation

Phase two: Generating initial codes

Phase three: Searching for themes

Phase four: Reviewing themes

Phase five: Defining and naming themes

Phase six: Producing a report
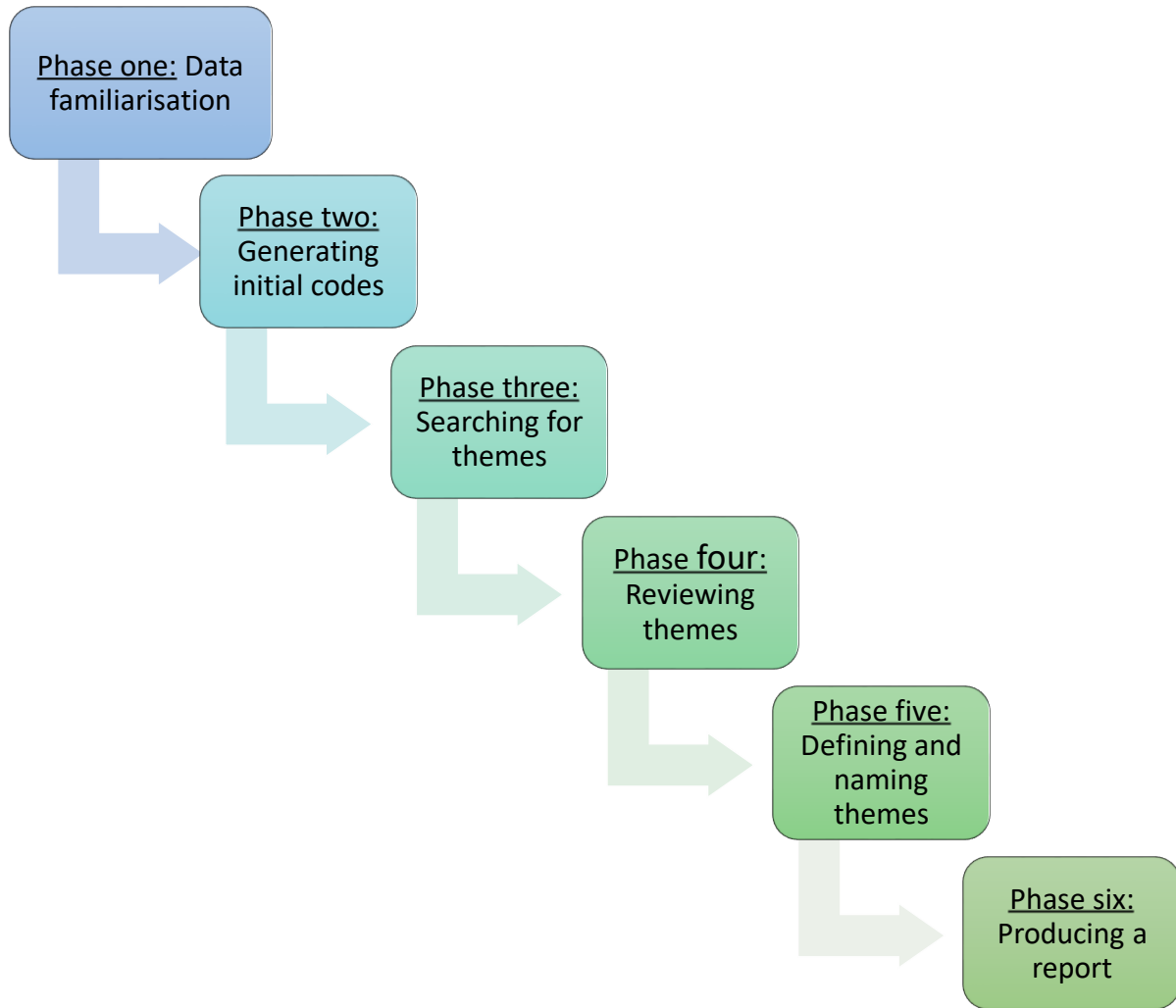
3.7.1 Phase 1: Familiarising of Data

The professionally transcribed data were checked for accuracy and then
exported to MAXqda (2020), a computer software system that supports qualitative data
storage, management, and analysis (VERBI Software, 2019). Its range of sophisticated
annotating tools supported the labelling and clustering of data into codes, then themes.
The program's interface facilitated the comparison of data across schools and the
seamless transition of data to Microsoft Word to facilitate drafting the findings chapter.
This was the beginning phase of interpreting these findings to generate analytical
insights (Willig, 2013). Here, the active role of the researcher was evident because
relevant data are identified based on one's professional perspective (Braun & Clarke,
2013). Multiple data readings facilitated the reflexive process to inform the generation of
initial codes for phase two of the process.

3.7.2 Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Line-by-line analysis was conducted to identify phrases and sentences that
appeared important and relevant to the research question and objectives, an example of
this is evident in Appendix U (Robson & McCartan, 2016). A total of 2,065 codes were
created. Descriptive labels known as 'codes' were generated and applied to segments
of the transcripts to capture the essence and significance of the data (Braun & Clarke,
2013). This was carried out by adopting an inductive approach whereby new and novel
meanings are derived from the research, rather than a deductive approach that looks for
predetermined codes by content based on theoretical assumptions. For this reason,
data were not analysed within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory

because this would have led the researcher to search for data that confirmed (or refuted) the theory's preexisting frame of reference.

In addition, the coding process utilised a latent (in-depth) rather than semantic (surface level) approach to participants' views by identifying, describing and interpreting the meaning of data to give a detailed account of perceptions and experiences, as opposed to an overarching description of the whole dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Willig (2013) highlighted that 'the researchers' knowledge and expertise impact the analysis' (p. 203). Therefore, it is acknowledged that every researcher has their preconceptions. Regarding the present research, these preconceptions were influenced by the researcher's role as a trainee EP within the focus LA; this provided an insider-outsider position as a researcher (Corlett & Mavin, 2017). This contextual knowledge has been used to understand the data better.

3.7.3 Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Given that all data were initially coded, related codes were clustered to create a condensed overview of 21 main themes (see Appendix V). As Braun and Clarke (2006) advised, an initial thematic map helped provide a visual representation of the relationship between themes. At this stage, categorisation was tentative because themes continued to be 'combined, refined, separated or discarded' (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 91).

3.7.4 Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

During their refinement, themes were checked for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. This process refers to enough similarities within a theme and

appropriate differences to separate one theme from another (Patton, 2015). Individual themes were checked to ensure they functioned to answer the research question (see Appendix W).

3.7.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming Final Themes

The final superordinate themes were refined and finalised to highlight a narrative for each theme and its contribution to the story of the data to answer the research question. At this stage, some themes were renamed using in vivo titles (participants' words) to capture the essence of their meaning. The thematic map was then finalised to confirm the relationships between codes and between themes which can be found in the analysis section; this resulted in six superordinate themes (see Appendix X).

3.6.6 Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final stage of thematic analysis presents compelling data extracts to exemplify the findings concerning the research question and literature. This was an illustrative rather than analytical process whereby extracts were used to illuminate participants' views rather than a conceptual approach to provide a covert meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 252).

3.8 Trustworthiness of Research

Trustworthy research is established by researchers providing detailed explanations of their investigative process, including the rationale and assumptions that inform analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). This provides confidence that a study is worthy of attention, legitimate, acceptable and useful to various stakeholders. This is achieved by

conducting rigorous research (Nowell et al., 2017). The present study hopes to have established trustworthiness through the key elements of credibility, transferability, dependency and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

3.8.1 Credibility

Several measures were taken to ensure that this research was credible. This refers to data gathered and interpreted to reflect the actual research findings (Nowell et al., 2017). As Denzin and Lincoln (2017) recommended, the researcher engaged in regular peer debriefing and supervision regarding the research process to ensure that conclusions reflected the data. This was further supported by discussing focus group questions, coding and analysis with an EP colleague. Robson and McCartan (2016) referred to this process as analyst triangulation. However, concerning 'Big Q TA' thematic analysis, Clarke and Braun (2018) emphasised that thematic analysis, 'do[es] not advocate . . . an approach to coding based on developing a singular "consensus" and coding reliability measures . . . [b]ecause these do not cohere with the qualitative sensibility that underpins and shapes [the] approach' (p. 108). Thus, the purpose of this was to ensure that conclusions were congruent with and reflective of the participants' accounts (Yardley, 2008). Overall, the EP concluded that there was a high level of alignment between what the participants conveyed and the researcher's interpretation. However, in instances where assumptions were made beyond the data, this was discussed with the EP and re-coded, and these adjustments were reviewed again with the colleague. Credibility was also achieved by presenting thick descriptions to *show* rather than *tell* the reader about the data, enabling the reader to interpret, check meaning and decipher the legitimacy of the claims (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore,

within the discussion section, tentative claims were made rather than hard assertions that are unchangeable, allowing for the possibility of revision to acknowledge that the data are open to interpretation (Joffe, 2012).

3.8.2 Transferability

This research did not aim to unearth definitive, generalisable answers to questions within the critical realist ontology but instead sought to explore perspectives. Therefore, the study's findings do not claim to be broadly generalisable. This stance is in line with the critical realist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, which appreciates that knowledge is relative to the situations from which and people from whom it derives (Hiller, 2016). However, there is scope for the transferability of the results to similar settings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The contextual information enables readers to identify a comparable participant group, school and LA setting. Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1985) highlighted that successful transferability of findings is supported by conducting research within participants' natural settings. Additionally, thick descriptions of participants' accounts and interpretations have been provided throughout Chapter four, this supports readers to ascertain whether insights from this research can help others understand similar situations.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to confidence in the research process; it is the assurance that it is logical, traceable and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is hoped that the use of an audit trail increased the study's dependability by promoting transparency regarding how the data were selected, collected and analysed (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2017; Joffe, 2012; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Table 10 shows the evidence of an audit trail and where the data are located within the thesis:

Table 10

Credible and Confirmable Evidence

Credible and Confirmable Evidence	Location
Excerpts of all six stages of the TA process as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006).	Section 3.7; Appendix T, U, V, W, X
Evidence of completion of Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis.	Section 3.6, Chapters 4, 5; Appendix T
Reflections of coding reviewed by a colleague to check for congruence with participants accounts	Section 3.8.1
Openness to the researcher's personal and professional reflections and assumptions	Sections 1.2, 1.11, 3.2 5.7
An explanation of the coding process with diagrams to facilitate clarity	Section 3.7; Appendix U, V, W, X
Transcripts provided	Appendix Y

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the total of credibility, transferability and dependability; this is achieved when the researcher evidences how their interpretations and conclusions are derived from the participants' data, as opposed to the researcher's own motivations or interests (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Nowell et al., 2017). Theoretical, methodological and analytical considerations have been discussed throughout this chapter about philosophical stance, methodology and, more specifically, approaches to using thick data, analyst triangulation, audit trail and reflexivity.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained the procedures taken to explore the views and practices of mainstream secondary school leadership regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. This was achieved by stating the justifications, rationale and limitations for adopting a qualitative methodology and thematic analysis method to analyse focus group data. Further, within the remits of anonymity, a description of the LA and school context and the process of securing participants was provided. Transparency regarding the pilot study, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research was presented. The following chapter presents the findings of these methods.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter aims to tell the story of the focus group data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The text presents a thematic analysis of SLTs data across three mainstream secondary schools. It opens with a reminder of the research question followed by illustrations of the findings. The body of this chapter will relay participants' views and practices concerning the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. An array of themes and subthemes are presented and interpreted with illustrative quotes to answering the research question. The chapter closes with a summary of the key findings.

4.2. Research Question

This chapter provides data to answer the following research question: *What are the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs' concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with social, emotional and mental health needs?* To support answering this question, transcripts of data are provided in Appendix Y.

4.2 Thematic Chart

A thematic chart provides an overview of the themes see Table 11.

Table 11

Thematic Chart Illustrating Overarching, Superordinate, Subordinate and Remaining Themes

Overarching Theme	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Themes
SLT's Grapple with Their Sense of Agency Over The Inclusion and PEX of Students with SEMH Needs	(4.4.1) SLT's Feel Disempowered by SEMH Needs and Systemic Pressures	(4.4.1.1) SLT's Lack Confidence	(4.4.1.1.1) 'We Are Laymen, Trying to Intellectualise . . .'
			(4.4.1.1.2) ' . . . Sticking Plaster Approach . . .'
			(4.4.1.1.3) Dilemma Exerting Authority to Permanently Exclude
			(4.4.1.1.4) PEX is ' . . . A Cry For Help . . .'
		(4.4.1.2) Complexity of SEMH	(4.4.1.2.1) SEMH is Deep-Rooted
			(4.4.1.2.2) ' . . . The 'S' Out of SEMH'
			(4.4.1.2.3) ' . . . Quiet But Mighty'
			(4.4.1.2.4) '. . . Self-Fulfilling Prophecy . . .'
		(4.4.1.3) Dominant External Systems	(4.4.1.3.1) 'We Rarely Exclude Kids from the Top Sets'
			(4.4.1.3.2) The Power of Parents
			(4.4.1.3.3) Local Authority ' . . . Cutbacks . . .'
	(4.4.2) SLT's Pursue Inter-Organisational Engagement and Containing Relationships	(4.4.2.1) Establishing Initial Relationships	(4.4.2.1.1) Primary–Secondary Transfer
			(4.4.2.1.2) Within Year Admissions
		(4.4.2.2) Developing Caring Relationships	(4.4.2.2.2) Relationships Prioritised Over Systems
			(4.4.2.2.2) '. . . Tutors Who'd Notice . . .'
			(4.4.2.2.3) Communication with Heads of Year
			(4.4.2.2.4) Parents as Facilitators of Inclusion
			(4.4.2.2.5) ' . . . Positive Male Role Model . . .'
		(4.4.2.3) Responsive Therapeutic Relationships	(4.4.2.3.1) Adaptive Role of the School Counsellor
			(4.4.2.3.2) CAMHS Inflexible Service Delivery
			(4.4.2.3.3) EPs Limited Time to Create Relationships

4.3 Thematic Map

A thematic map is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Thematic Map at all Levels

Central theme

SLTs grapple with their sense of agency over the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs

SLTs pursue inter-organisational engagement and containing relationships

Establishing initial relationships
- Primary - secondary transfer
  - Sharing information supports inclusion
- Within year admissions

Developing caring relationships
- Relationships prioritised over systems
- "...tutors who'd notice..."
- Communication with Heads of Year
- Parents as facilitators of inclusion
  - Home school communication
  - Supportive families
- Relating to role models and mentors
  - Trained mentors
- "...positive male role models..."

Responsive therapeutic relationships
- Adaptive role of the school counsellor
  - From counselling to CAMHS
- CAMHS inflexible service delivery
  - Referral process forms and waiting lists
  - Responding to families needs
- EPs limited time to create relationships
  - EPs are viewed positively
  - "...really difficult to get EP time..."
  - Relationships versus assessments and reports
  - Bureaucracy of EPS
  - EPs should be in schools

SLTs feel disempowered by SEMH needs and systemic pressures

SLTs lack confidence
- "We are laymen, trying to intellectualise..."
- "Sticking plaster approach"
- Dilemma Exerting authority to permanently exclude
- PEX as a "...cry for help..."
  - "... absolutely bend over backwards..."
  - Accumulation of incidents

Complexity of SEMH
- SEMH is deep-rooted
  - Understanding the aetiology of SEMH
  - Attempt to investigate SEMH
  - Difficulty exploring the depth of SEMH
  - Barriers to looking deeper
- "...the 'S' in SEMH"
- "...quiet but mighty..."
- "...self-fulfilling prophecy..."
  - Emotional impact of low ability sets

Dominant external systems
- "We rarely exclude the kids from the top sets..."
  - Political root of the marketisation of education; league tables
  - The marketisation of education and special educational needs
  - Year nine academic pressure
- The power of parents
  - Complex home life
  - Parents in denial
  - Parents failure to implement boundaries
- Local authority "...cutbacks..."
  - Enormity of the need
  - Reduced services for autism and speech and language needs
  - Reduced courses for students at risk of PEX

4.4 Overarching Theme: SLTs Grapple with Their Sense of Agency Over the Inclusion and PEX of Students with SEMH Needs

The overarching theme of this analysis is that the participating SLTs' grapple with their sense of agency over the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. For this study, agency is defined as SLTs' belief in their ability (knowledge, skills and resources) and authority to make decisions and take positive actions regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs (Bandura, 2000). Data showed that collectively, these members of staff oscillated between feeling disempowered and empowered; two superordinate themes demonstrate this, which is illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Overarching Theme and Two Superordinate Themes
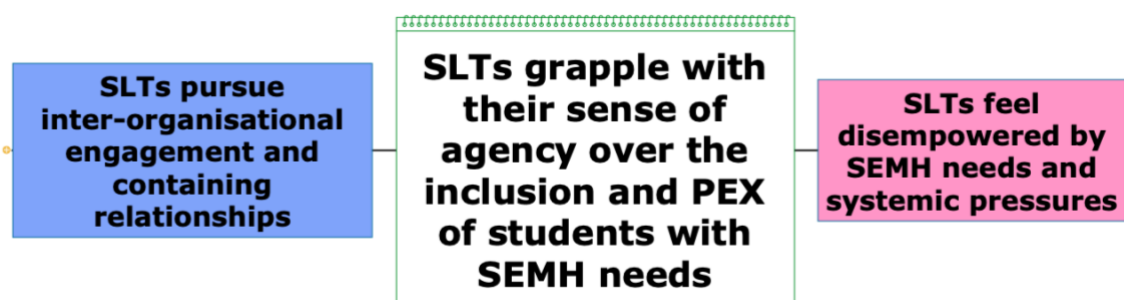
School leaders experience a sense of disempowerment from SEMH needs and systemic pressures, this is the first of two superordinate themes. It is characterised by SLTs' lack of confidence that their school system can prevent a PEX for these students. This belief was further compounded by their notion that SEMH is deep-rooted and complex. They believed that it was beyond what they can

comprehend, involving issues that exceed the remits of their skill set. Not only did senior leaders feel powerless, but they believed that there are dominant external systems that affect inclusion more than the influence of the school system. This perceived lack of control over inclusion resulted in SLTs feeling they had exhausted all available strategies and have no other option but to PEX.

The second superordinate theme brings a sense of balance to the narrative. It describes senior leaders' belief that their sense of agency was improved by developing relationships. They felt that students were more likely to be included than excluded when the school organisation created positive relationships with other organisations and the YP could build, develop and maintain a caring relationship with adults and peers. Their rationale was that when students had appropriate support, their needs were more likely to be met. Some members of the SLTs alluded to feeling satisfied that these positive relationships could promote inclusion. It perhaps gave them a sense that they were fulfilling their duty to students rather than being left with no option but to impose a PEX. Nevertheless, there were instances in which it was difficult to form or maintain positive relationships; in this case, their sense of agency appeared to be reduced.

4.4.1 SLTs Feel Disempowered by SEMH Needs and Systemic Pressures

This overarching theme depicts that SLTs felt that they and the school system lacked the power to support students with SEMH needs effectively. Within the data, this was illustrated through three themes as indicated in Figure 11. The section begins with the theme 'SLTs lack of confidence', which describes their perception of being disempowered to make a positive change (4.4.1.1). Another obstacle hindering their sense of power was the perception that SEMH was complex. This theme

describes their awareness of the multifaceted nature of SEMH, which diminished

their confidence (4.4.1.2). Furthermore, an external barrier to SLTs' sense of agency

was that they felt constrained by 'dominant external systems', which they perceived

as limiting their freedom to make their own choices regarding how students and the

school were supported to manage SEMH (4.4.1.3).

Figure 11

Superordinate Theme One: 'SLTs Feel Disempowered by SEMH Needs and

Systemic Pressures
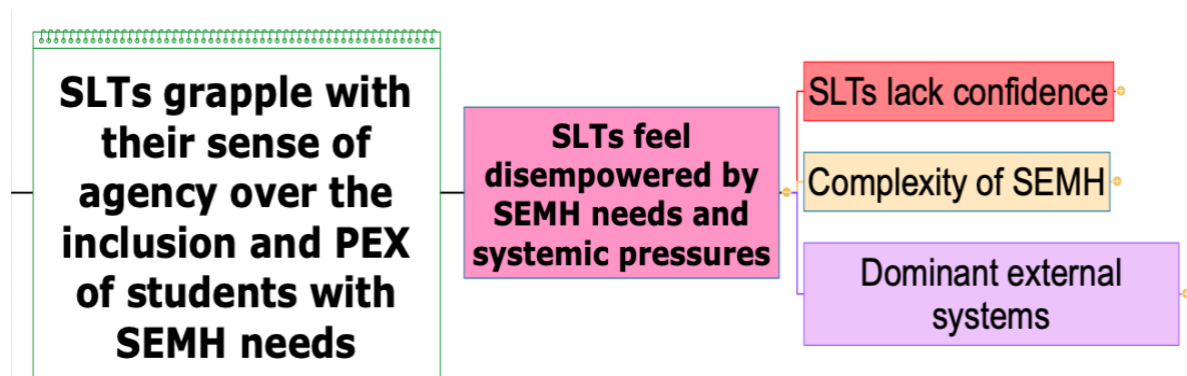
4.4.1.1 SLTs Lack Confidence.

This subordinate theme highlights the lack of assurance that senior leaders

felt in supporting CYP with SEMH needs. They viewed themselves as novices in

understanding the SEMH needs of students (4.4.1.1.1) and felt that as an

organisation, they could do little more than 'hold' the students (4.4.1.1.2). Their lack

of confidence may also manifest in their reluctance to enforce rules and sanction

behaviour (4.4.1.1.3). This subordinate theme is presented first as it underpins all

other themes within this superordinate theme. Ultimately, the leaders' decision to

PEX a student was a cry for help (4.4.1.1.4). These four themes are depicted below in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Subordinate Theme 4.4.1.1: 'SLTs Lack Confidence' with Subsequent Themes
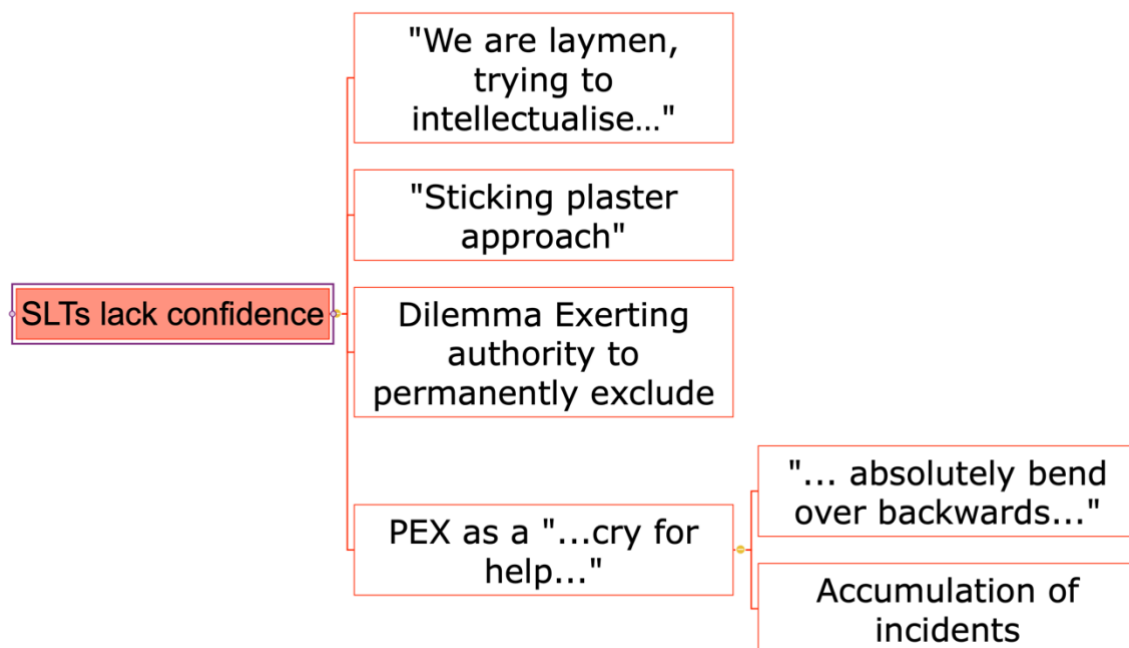
4.4.1.1.1 'We are Laymen, Trying to Intellectualise . . .'.

The title of this theme emerged directly from the data (Andrew, School B, Position 72)[7]; it represents leaders' belief that they lack the expertise to understand and support students with SEMH needs. It also encapsulates the notion that comprehending SEMH is beyond their ability. Several quotes highlight senior leaders' self-doubt; it appears as though they perceive themselves as amateurs regarding SEMH needs. This idea is illustrated by David, who rhetorically asks

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'Position' refers to the section within MAXQDA where the text has been listed from.

whether SEMH is within the boundary of the leadership role: 'We're . . . trying to make informed, intelligent comments on this, but actually, is it not beyond our expertise what social, emotional, mental health is?' (David, School B, Position 71).

Some leaders lack of understanding leads them to make a desperate plea for expert help: '[W]e are laypeople; we don't . . . really understand this [SEMH] to the extent that we need to understand it. So actually, anything that could help us as well as helping the students would be advantageous' (Andrew, School B, Position 160).

This lack of confidence extended beyond the leadership role to the school as a whole system. When discussing the association between SEMH and PEX, SLTs believed that the school lacked the expertise to work through certain family issues, highlighting the situation's complexity and ultimately alluding to hopelessness.

4.4.1.1.2 ' . . . Sticking Plaster Approach . . .'.

In keeping with the idea of SLTs lacking expertise in SEMH, they felt that they were simply using a 'sticking plaster approach', which alluded to the temporary and superficial nature of support offered to these students (Alex, School C, Position 64). They also talk about just managing the 'symptoms' to enable students to feel safer (Rick, School C, Position 66). Leaders were aware that SEMH is complex and deep-rooted (see Section 4.41.2). Furthermore, staff emphasised that they could 'hold' students' mental health rather than 'fix' it, implying a level of brokenness (Alex, School C, Position 63). This also alludes to the surface-level nature of support as 'holding' students could be seen as stopping them from combusting. Ultimately, he expressed that school staff were doing a disservice to these students: *'Kids with mental health issues, kids with emotional issues, they need that holding . . . And there's nothing wrong with doing that . . . But it's not making those kids' lives necessarily . . . any better [than] where they are now'* (Alex, School C, Position 69).

SLTs' lack of confidence in staffs' ability to do much but hold students created a predicament when the containment offered no longer provided adequate support. Leaders then experience the dilemma of PEX, a decision that was not taken lightly nor with conviction that it provided what the student required.

4.4.1.1.3 Dilemma Exerting Authority to Permanently Exclude

This theme evidences a discrepancy between school's concerning how SLTs' utilise their authority to permanently exclude students. The leaders in Schools B and C demonstrate hesitancy to enforce their school policies of sanctioning students with PEX for serious incidents. In comparison, leadership in School A appears to take a more consistent approach:

> [W]e normally say, 'two fights and you're gone' . . . we might not always stick to that . . . if there were mitigating circumstances, but it doesn't hurt for the children to believe that if they [have] more than two fights, then they go—it certainly keeps down the number of physical incidents . . . *(Andrew, School B, Positions 84 and 87)*

Alex spoke about the importance of taking a flexible approach to sanctioning behaviour, saying, '[I] personally have to give myself space that I am able to make a decision not to permanently exclude . . .' (Alex, School C, Position 20).

> *I do have zero tolerance on blades, but I've had kids that . . . are absolutely terrified because they've been threatened at knifepoint, and they've put a penknife in their bag . . . I think you have to look at each case, and . . . reflect . . .. (Alex, School C, Position 90)*

Contrastingly, SLT in School A appeared to have a more consistent approach to exerting authority to sanction behaviour. James referred to rules that triggered a harsher sanction:

> *But we do have very high expectations of behaviour in the school, and it's because of that I think that students know [the] consequences and they know precisely what the sanctions are, and*

we do have . . . the trip-wire things . . . that will bring about a greater sanction, so I think they respond. (James, School A, Position 84)

4.4.1.1.4 PEX as '…A Cry for Help…'.

SLTs' sense of helplessness was further demonstrated within this theme as they described PEX as a sanction from a place of desperation. This occurred when they could see no other option—it was the ultimate loss of control. James considered it as staff reaching a 'breaking point' of what they can do to help a child; it was the 'last step' (School A, Position 179). The title of this theme is from Alex; he stated that a PEX was a plea for an alternative setting.

> *Occasionally, permanent exclusion, [is] when there is nothing else, and you've tried [a] managed move [or] college and . . . coming back here isn't the right thing for him. Occasionally, it is . . . a bit of a cry for help [from schools] that actually we need something different for this kid. (Alex, School C, Position, 260)*

4.4.1.1.4.1 '. . . Absolutely Bend Over Backwards . . .'.

However, before the decision was made to PEX, staff described doing more than was expected to implement interventions and various forms of support. They spoke passionately about going above and beyond their role to include these students.

This was highlighted by Andrew in the title of this subtheme (School B, Position 60) and Rick, who stated that they 'try every single thing' (School C, Position 54). In addition, James concurs that students receive a PEX because all other options have been exhausted.

> *[E]verybody goes the extra mile to avoid it [PEX] unless it's a last, last, last resort for children with SEMH needs. . . . [PEX is a last resort] because each strategy has been exhausted and another one been put in place, so it actually becomes cumulative. (James, School A, Position 61 and 76)*

4.4.1.1.4.2 Accumulation of Incidents.

Throughout the data, staff spoke about the issue of 'persistent disruptive behaviour', 'persistent breach of the school rules' and 'persistent disruptive defiance' (Sarah, School A, Position 70; Andrew, School B, Position 57; Alex, School C, Position 50). This accumulation of non-compliant behaviour was quantified using behaviour points. Rick described the process of identifying year seven students who presented challenging behaviour; he spoke about scrutinising behaviour data: 'Behaviour wasn't up to scratch—we've got behaviour points, and they were analysing those' (School C, Position 241). Overall, this subordinate theme highlights SLTs' perceived lack of confidence, authority and agency to promote the inclusion of students with SEMH needs. The following subordinate theme highlights how SLTs' conceptualise SEMH.

4.4.1.2 Complexity of SEMH.

This subordinate theme is characterised by themes that illuminate SLTs' view that SEMH was challenging to comprehend, let alone support (see Figure 13). Staff described feeling overwhelmed by the intricacies of SEMH, causing them to lose their sense of control. Responses suggested a state of helplessness. There was an implicit sense that this complexity prevented them from providing support, which caused schools to give up by excluding students. This highlights the paradoxical position; although they are in authority as decision-makers, they felt little agency over the type of decisions they can make.

The first theme highlights that students' needs are deeply rooted within such difficulties, causing SLTs' challenges to uncover them; this is labelled 'SEMH is deep-rooted' (4.4.1.2.1). As leadership staff attempted to demystify SEMH, they

explored the intricacies of the label, focusing on the social norms and behavioural expectations. This was explored in the second sub-theme entitled the 'S in SEMH' (4.4.1.2.2). The third theme considers YP with SEMH needs who were viewed as 'quiet but mighty', this in vivo phrase exemplifies leaders' trepidation of passive students with SEMH needs who display less disruptive behaviours but may internalise their difficulties (4.4.1.2.3). The final theme entitled 'self-fulfilling prophecy' illustrates the deterministic aspect of PEX for some students with SEMH needs (4.4.1.2.4).

Figure 13

Subordinate Theme 4.4.1.2: 'Complexity of SEMH' with Subsequent Themes
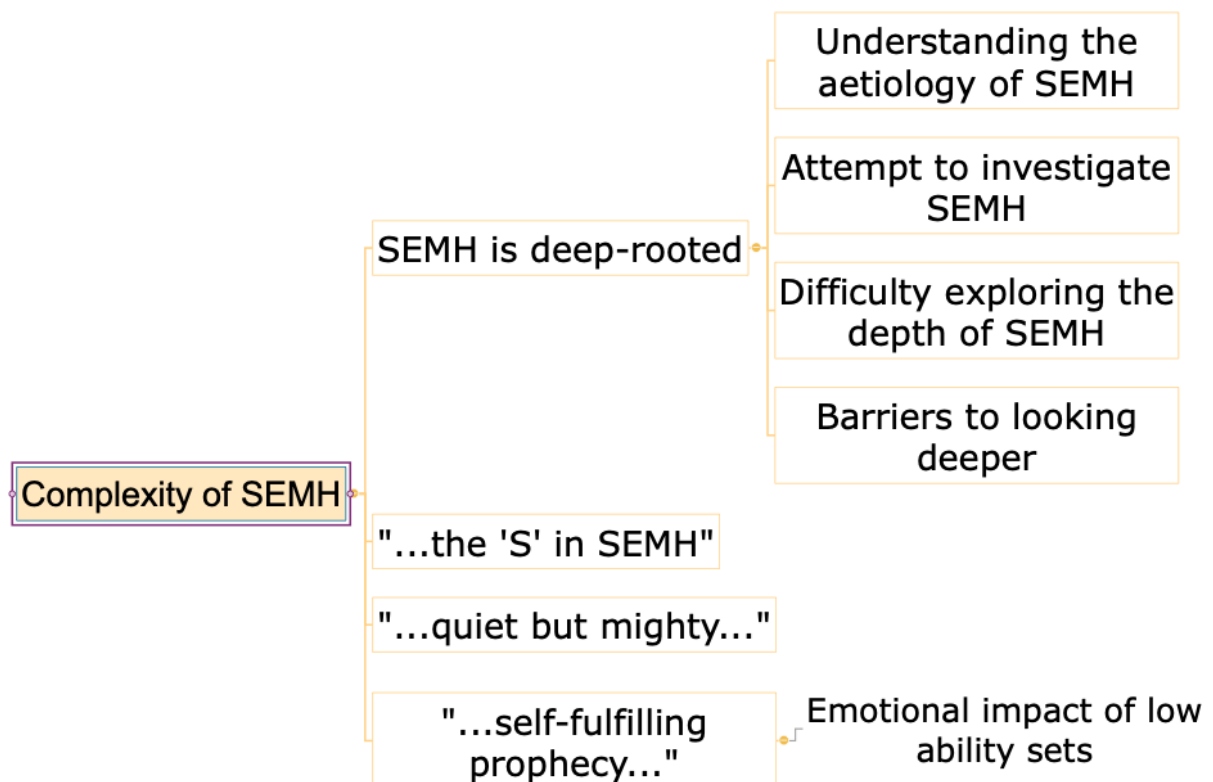
4.4.1.2.1 SEMH is Deep-rooted

Members of all three SLTs acknowledged the depth and complexity of SEMH needs. Participants articulated their attempts to comprehend the descriptor, yet they proclaimed that despite best intentions, challenges persist. Not only was SEMH deep-rooted in nature, but it was also considered to be deeply rooted within the child (or family). Few remarks were made regarding the impact of the environment when exploring the complexity of students' needs.

4.4.1.2.1.1 Understanding the Aetiology of SEMH.

Staff in School C wondered about the 'root' cause and 'underlying issue' of SEMH difficulties (Alex, Position 213; Rick, Position 77). They were keen to explore students' unmet needs that may warrant a PEX and encourage teaching staff to do this. Rick asked, 'if they've got some social and emotional problems, they . . . maybe produce some challenging behaviour, but what's the stem of that behaviour?' (Position 9).

There was consensus that SEMH needs were deeply located within the child, opposed to being an environmental concern. Staff made references to 'underlying issue[s]' that may lead to 'looking underneath' these statements, highlighting that some staff view SEMH needs as entrenched and fixed within the child (Rick, School C, Position: 61; Dorothy, School B, Position 18).

4.4.1.2.1.2 Attempt to Investigate SEMH.

Some members of the SLTs emphasised the importance of early intervention by exploring 'before something big happen[s]' (Rick, School C, Position 23). Staff who took up this role were typically tutors and pastoral members (their role is considered further in section 4.4.2.2). These explorations aimed to 'investigate' and

'break . . . down' issues by going 'a bit deeper' (Laura, School B, Position 38; Rick, School C, Positions 23 and 31). This process was often governed by professional judgment instead of any specific training.

Staff described using a staggered approach to exploring the depth of needs for students with SEMH difficulties. They first engaged in informal methods to exploring the situation such as talking and listening. These 'soft skills' were tried before escalating to a more official referral system (Rick, School C, Position 10). These skills were thought to be vital in School A. Samantha spoke about attending training whereby staff were taught 'to properly listen to kids when they're trying to tell you . . . their issues' (Position 150). Other resources, such as time and the ability to examine the issue, are also required.

> *And it's [especially] time because a lot of this needs to be not just mentoring but actually sitting and having detailed conversations and being able to fact-find and look into what support is needed.*
> *(Laura, School B, Position 159)*

More formal school systems to investigate needs include students being referred to pastoral teams:

> *[A]nyone who we really are concerned with goes up to ILG [inclusive learning group] officially. That gets logged. We actually start a process. We have quite an in-depth form, a learning profile, which has a little picture of them, and there's literally everything, all the interventions, and we start off [with that]' (Rick, School C, Position 30).*

A similar process occurred in School B as explained by Andrew.

> *The SNAP[8] assessment tool is . . . quite interesting . . . it raises some issues that we don't always notice . . . so we will refer to*

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[8] Explanation of SNAP not provided

the SENCo, they will then assess, well it's a whole spectrum; actually, it's a very interesting assessment. (Andrew, School B, Position 26)

4.4.1.2.1.3 Difficulty Exploring the Depth of SEMH.

Leadership spoke about the toil of exploring the depth and complexity of students' needs. They referred to the process of unpacking as 'tough' and 'digging' (Alex, School C, Position 39; Simon, School B, Position 68); such terms illuminated the struggle of the task. When discussing the PEX of students with SEMH needs, Andrew responded: 'It's a very complex picture you can imagine we're juggling' (School B, Position 114).

4.4.1.2.1.4 Barriers to Looking Deeper.

Despite attempts to explore the depth of SEMH, several barriers prevented the SLTs from getting to the root of the issue, including complex family dynamics, limited external support, peer groups and less visible external influences.

Some leaders referred to students' difficult home lives, stating that students are part of 'dysfunctional families', whereby the child was a 'symptom bearer' of issues at home (David, School B, Position 65; Simon, School B, Position 147). School staff had limited confidence in their ability to manage this, thus proposed that family therapists and the Health and Wellbeing Services should intervene. However, even with the input from experts, SLTs felt that this intervention needed to be consistent over a long time for it to be effective, something they believed was not possible due to a lack of financial resources borough-wide. Rick explained the dynamics of this as he stated, 'We deal with the symptoms . . . but the deep-rooted issues sometimes are to do with the parenting… unless you have . . . family therapy, which was incredibly hard to put into place at … with ongoing support…[these issues will remain]… ' (School C, Position 66).

Conversely, other staff thought that some students were from good families but attributed the complexity of the needs to other external factors invisible to the school and therefore rendering them powerless to help. These external dominant forces are illuminated in section 4.4.1.3.

4.4.1.2.2 The 'S' out of SEMH.

Several members of SLT explained that the PEX of students with SEMH needs was due to their social inability to conform rather than their mental health need.

> *Well, I think for many of our kids, they end up getting excluded because they do not have the social bit, the S [social needs] . . . But the bottom line is that nobody gets permanently excluded for having a mental health issue, but if the mental health issue is unresolved and it has an impact on their social functioning ability within a community like ours, where you have that persistent disruption . . . So yeah, every single one of them really is the 'S' out of SEMH because they're no longer able to function socially within this community, and that, I guess, is what permanent exclusion is, isn't it? (Alex, School C, Position 59–60)*

Building on Alex's point, Samantha offered further insight into students who received exclusions for being socially 'out of control' and not conforming to 'social norms':

> *[I]n the broadest sense of some kind of social, emotional or mental health difficulty, any child [whose] behaviour has got so out of control that they obviously haven't learnt to fit in with social norms yet or they haven't learned to conform so in that sense . . . I suppose it depends how broadly do you mean definition . . . does that mean they have a definite pin-down-able mental health condition? Possibly not. But have they got social difficulties where they haven't learned to conform and function as part of our school community? Then, probably, yes. (Samantha, School A, Position 65)*

Staff also grappled with identifying SEMH needs, specifically differentiating between challenging behaviour and a SEND descriptor. This was evident by Ricks

extract, 'So, when does a kid who's a bit of a pain in the arse become an SEMH learning need? It's about bridging that gap' (School C, Position 40).

Generally, SLTs believed that many of the social difficulties experienced by these students could be addressed through mentoring and other positive relationships; this is considered in section 4.4.2.

4.4.1.2.3 ' . . . Quiet but Mighty . . .'.

The title of this sub-theme is taken from Samantha, who described an intervention for students who present as having internalised SEMH behaviours, such as appearing withdrawn in their communication with staff and students (School A, Position 119). These behaviours were described as contrasting to a student's usual demeanour and created a cause for concern. This may include avoidance of speaking in groups or neglecting their physical appearance.

It is important to note that during focus groups, participants commented on externalising behaviours as the main reason for the PEX of students with SEMH needs specifically disruptive behaviour. They found outwardly displayed behaviour more manageable than internalising behaviour because verbal exchanges enabled staff to gauge YPs intentions and respond accordingly. However, some staff describe the quieter interaction as more worrisome, causing them to feel disempowered.

> *I don't mean just cooperative. I just mean engaging with them. Even when you are having a negative discussion, there's an engagement there or an acceptance, or an 'I'm not doing it'. So, it's a reaction I'm looking for, and sometimes when you don't get a reaction, that's when I say, 'Well, what's going on?' That worries me more than someone kicking off . . . when I'm telling them off. (Rick, School C, Position 9)*

4.4.1.2.4 ' . . . Self-Fulfilling Prophecy . . . '.

The title of this theme is taken from participants across two schools (Simon, School B, Position 124; Alex, School C, Position 139). It illuminates the perception that PEX may be inevitable for some students, whether self-imposed or inflicted by others; either way, the outcome was beyond SLTs' control. Simon worries about how staff can impose a deterministic view of students on them. He comments that examining the data for students who are more likely to lead to PEX could lead to 'stigmatising groups', by causing staff to adopt low expectations of students.

4.4.1.2.4.1 Emotional Impact of Low Ability Sets.

Conversely, staff within School C believed that a deterministic attitude was something that students internalise. Alex talked at length about the adverse effects of setting[9] for low ability classes; he referred to students experiencing disaffection from lower ability sets, suggesting that these classes were a 'breeding ground' for disaffection, particularly for boys (Position 132). Rick discussed the 'psychology of boys and girls', explaining that boys feel the need to present themselves in a more macho way than girls (Position 149). Therefore, they will not tolerate feeling inferior, which they do in the lower set classes.

> *I think you become a self-fulfilling prophecy, don't you? You are low ability; you are worthless, I am worthless, I am low ability, what's the bloody point? It'd make me cross. It'd make me defiant. It would make me stick my fingers up and say, 'I'm not doing this'. It's like we're imprisoning kids before they've even started. (Alex, School C, Positions 139, 141, 143)*

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[9] Setting - assigning students to classes based on their academic ability

The challenges expressed by school staff that make them feel disempowered are further compounded by external dominant systems, which were deemed more influential than the school. This is explored in the following theme.

4.4.1.3 Dominant External Systems

This subordinate theme describes how external systems impede the inclusion of students with SEMH needs (see Figure 14). Many members of SLTs perceived outside influences as strong enough to overpower leadership's sense of agency to promote inclusion. Systems include the over-academisation of schools that work in opposition to inclusive practices (4.4.1.3.1), the dominant force of parents (4.4.1.3.2) and limited LA funding during a time of austerity (4.4.1.3.3).

Figure 14

Subordinate Theme 4.4.1.3: 'Dominant External Systems' with Subsequent Themes
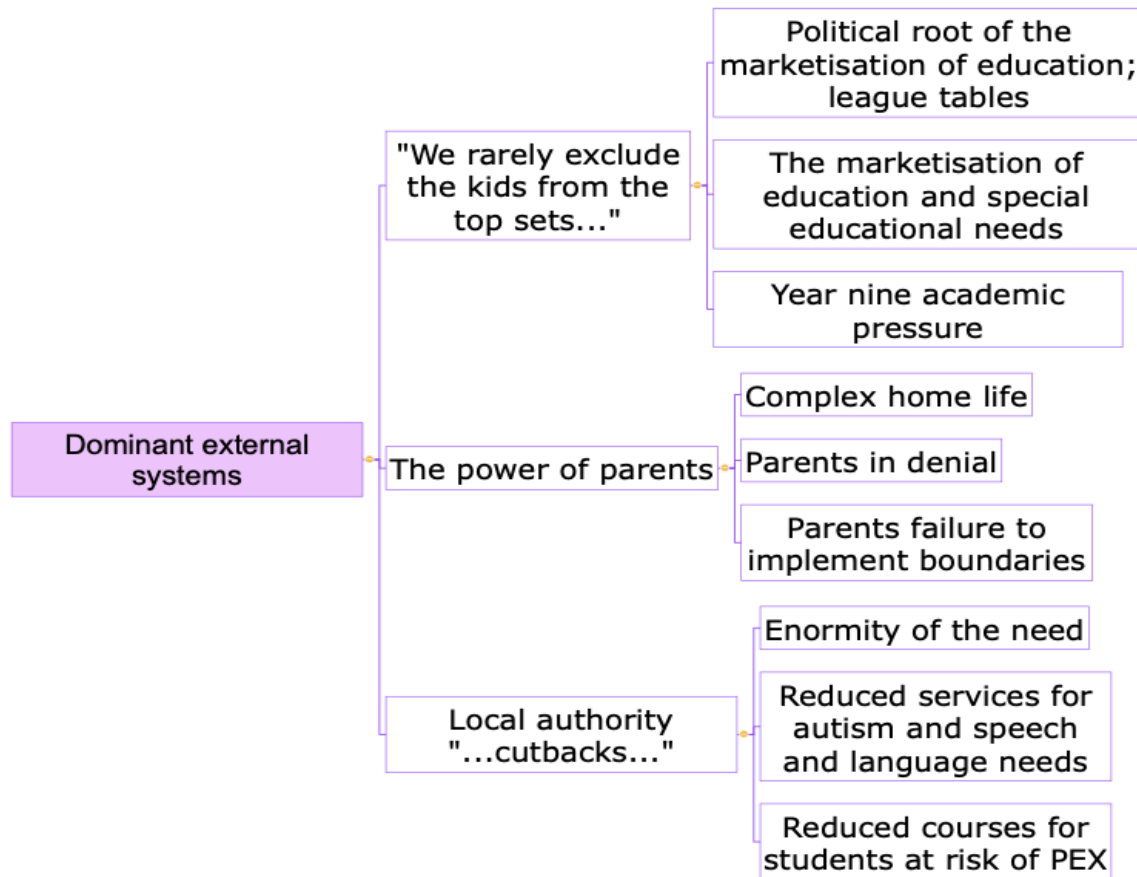
4.4.1.3.1. 'We Rarely Exclude Kids from the Top Sets'.

One illustration of a dominant system that decreases SLTs' sense of agency was the central government's marketisation of education. Leadership state that this political force encourages competition within and between schools, disadvantaging academically underachieving students. Members of the SLTs reported feeling compelled to implement this system, which impeded the organisations' ability to be inclusive. Ultimately, behaviour that challenged the school's academic success was not welcomed. Conversely, as highlighted in the above title, students who can navigate the academic system well are less likely to receive a PEX. Alex explained that this was because they are too engaged in the curriculum to display challenging

behaviour, indicating that the difficulties of the curriculum were a barrier to engaging in learning (School C, Position 132).

4.4.1.3.1.1 Political Root of the Marketisation of Education; League Tables

Alex communicates his gripe with the national government setting unreasonably high expectations of students, highlighting the lack of accommodations for students with different needs. He stated that this system does not align with his principles, alluding to feeling trapped:

> *Mr Gove [the then Education Secretary] has made that really hard for us. So, the English GCSE, it's a bloody nightmare for those kids … that kind of academic rigour—I've got nothing [against] high expectations, but, you know, the fact that we are all being judged on it, so schools are being pushed down a road where all kids are doing the same curriculum, that's fundamentally against what I believe, that actually we need to meet the needs of our individual learners as opposed to doing a one-size-fits-all, so it looks good . . . . (Alex, School C, Position 158)*

In addition to this, Anne explained that the competitive nature of league tables encouraged schools to withhold potentially useful placements for those at risk of PEX because they do not benefit the school. This suggests that the value of students to a school was in their academic potential.

> *They don't count on the [league] tables, so schools don't want to put them on. Whereas in the past you might have sent someone to college to do hair and beauty for one or two days a week, but now you're sacrificing that kind of curriculum for something that's not going to count for the school, it might count for the child but not necessarily count for the school. So, there's a tension between what's good for the child and what's good for the school. (Anne, School A, Position 184)*

Both extracts highlight the negative impact of the marketisation of education on staff members, which disempowered SLTs'. They recognise that pressure for

students to perform well academically was filtered down from central government to SLTs' and then passed to class teachers. Simon stated that teachers are under 'phenomenal pressure' to deliver and perform to maintain the school's academic reputation (School B, Position 164).

4.4.1.3.1.2 The Marketisation of Education and SEND.

Staff reported that those with SEND could not cope with the increasing academic demands of the school; the rigidity of the curriculum resulted in frustration and PEX for many.

> *[What] our kids who are excluded often have in common, though, is that they are known to us to have additional learning needs, many of whom struggle with or without support to access the curriculum. I think there are levels of frustration there that go alongside that. That's becoming more and more difficult as the curriculum becomes more rigid and so on . . . . (Alex, School C, Position 125)*

Jerry believed that academic pressure induced mental health issues for those with SEND.

> *I think there were some particular issues, for example, high-functioning autistic girls who don't present with mental health issues particularly until they get to. . . exam stress, which is an ever-increasing issue, and then they can't cope . . . the stress that brings often leads to self-harm and other issues. (Jerry, School B, Position 151)*

Some members of the SLTs' believed that the government agenda made mainstream settings unsuitable for SEND students. Respondents suggested that students either need to build resilience or be removed from the mainstream classroom and taught separately. School B respond to this by dedicating additional resources to those experiencing exam stress.

4.4.1.3.1.3 Year Nine Academic Pressure.

Leaders explained that the school's desire to maintain a favourable ranking required underachieving students to be removed before their grades could negatively affect the organisation's position. Sarah provided this as a rationale for why year nine students are locally and nationally more likely to receive a PEX than any other year group.

> *Some schools don't want these things going into key stage four . . . some schools might be trying to offload those students before they get into key stage four . . . that will be something to do with the pressure there is year on year for results in schools. Even ourselves, we think if we've got naughty kids, we've done everything we can, but they don't get to key stage four. (Sarah, School A, Position 180)*

Likewise, Alex stated that schools recognise that a child will not be successful during key stage four, and therefore, they no longer felt that they could offer support.

> *[T]here's no other way of saying it, but actually giving—not giving up, but coming to the end of what they're able to do at key stage three, recognising that actually, this child is not going to be successful in key stage four. (Alex, School C, Position 260)*

In addition to political pressure, members of SLT felt that parents were a powerful force that influenced students.

4.4.1.3.2 The Power of Parents.

Leaders believed that parental influence and the challenges of home life are more dominant than the school organisation to affect students with SEMH needs. At times, they perceived parents as preventing school staff from initiating, providing and maintaining student support. Some leaders believed this occurred because parents had their own needs, refused support or failed to implement boundaries.

4.4.1.3.2.1 Complex Home Life.

Staff believed that families are complex, and Alex supposed that 'dysfunctional fragmented families' produced students with SEMH needs (Alex, School C, Position 67). This incidentally acted as a barrier to parents supporting their children. Therefore, Simon referred to students as the 'symptom bearer of . . . a family that's falling apart' (Simon, School B, Position: 174). Some participants considered this a product of unresolved complex family dynamics resulting in childhood trauma:

> [I]n almost all cases … there has been some form of breakdown of parenting needs in the home, or there has been some form of issue which has taken place, which has never necessarily been resolved, from often the child's early life, and it hasn't been picked up. (Alex, School C, Position 24)

Furthermore, other staff spoke about parents' inability to access the support available such as CAMHS. There was a sense that families had their own needs, and some could not provide a nurturing climate for healthy child development.

4.4.1.3.2.2 Parents in Denial

Laura explained parents' 'reluctance' to admit that their children's needs are often intertwined with parents' other difficulties that may be hard to accept (School B, Position 150). David explained that parents' denial of SEMH needs exacerbated challenging behaviour leading to a PEX.

> [S]tudents with SEMH problems have been either [been] protected, or it's been a denial by the family quite often . . . there was a girl that had been adopted but [her parents thought she] wasn't aware . . . we think she was aware but the parents . . . were in denial . . . it became a very big moment of seeking attention . . . in the most inappropriate [and] dangerous ways that were really manifesting itself, and we were very concerned for her safety. (David, School B, Position 55)

Serval members of SLT believed that some parents' failure to accept students' needs led parents to divert the blame to the school. Staff typically disbelieved parents who stated that there were no issues at the former school or home and that problems only existed in that particular school. Laura stresses her frustration with getting parents to accept the issue with little or no success; ultimately, she advised them to find an alternative school.

> *Some parents who just think it's all our [the school's] fault,*
> *'They were never like it until they came here'. To which we [respond*
> *by] encourag[ing] them to look for other schools. (Laura, School B,*
> *Position 197)*

Some leaders reported that denial also manifested in parents refusing support. One parent declined 'all support' from the educational psychology, behaviour support services, and school counsellor; the student was ultimately permanently excluded (Sarah, School A, Position 166)

4.4.1.3.2.3 Parents' Failure to Implement Boundaries

Leaders reported that some parents also failed to put boundaries in place; this directly affected learning and behaviour. Laura expressed considerable frustration with parents' lack of awareness regarding social media laws, confiscation of phones and failure to implement an evening curfew. She recalled a conversation with a parent who failed to implement a bedtime routine: '…could you not allow them [to be] on the computer until two o'clock in the morning, and perhaps then they wouldn't come in grumpy and get told off by their teachers all day long?' (School B, Position 191).

Jerry highlighted the different boundaries implemented at home and school. He spoke about parents' failure to support schools by giving advice that contradicts the school's ethos and could warrant a PEX:

> *[N]ot saying certain things in front of the students; the parent's view is: Oh, if you've got a problem with someone [to] batter them, and that clearly doesn't fit in with our school ethos . . . 'Your daughter has just had a fight.' 'Well, exactly, I told her to'. (Jerry, School B, Position 193)*

This theme demonstrated a sense that SLTs perceive that parents are working against them, whether directly through refusing the support or indirectly due to their limited capabilities. Staff believed that parents ultimately overpower the school.

4.4.1.3.3 Local Authority ' . . . Cutbacks . . .'.

The title of this theme is from Anne and refers to the reduction of LA financial investments for students with SEMH needs at risk of PEX (School A, Position 182). Multiple members of the SLT articulated that they could no longer offer previously available SEND support. They perceive this as having a direct impact on their ability to be inclusive.

4.4.1.3.3.1 Enormity of the Need.

Rick explained the high level of needs of families in the borough. He stated that there were not enough resources in the LA to meet this and adopts a rather bleak perspective, indicating a sense of hopelessness: 'I think the resources [are what it] comes down to . . . which in this school certainly, in [LA name], I don't think [there are] enough resources to the depth that we need it' (School C, Position 77). Likewise, Dorothy stated that 'we don't have the resources to pay for it [expert help for speech and language needs]'. Lack of funding; budgets are so tight.' (School B, Position. 69-70). Furthermore, Sarah spoke about the tension between the disparity between the required needs and available resources:

I think we're seeing students coming to school with more social, emotional mental health issues than they perhaps have done in the past, right from year 7. But coinciding at the time . . . [when] we've got to make magic budget cuts and we've got less support for those students and that is not a good mix. (Sarah, School A, Position 149)

This theme illuminates SLTs' view that at a time of austerity, the reduction in the LA investments into inclusion create harsher circumstances for students with SEMH. Ultimately, SLTs allude to feeling powerless.

4.4.1.3.3.2 Reduced Courses for Students at Risk of PEX

The reduction of resources also affected those at risk of exclusion. Anne spoke about not providing a suitable curriculum for the students reminiscing of a better past: '[W]ith the cutbacks as well, we haven't necessarily got courses that . . . we can provide for these kids that may have been available in the past' (School A, Position 182). The reduction of services was further illuminated within the following superordinate theme.

Prior to presenting the second superordinate theme, it is vital to explain the interrelationship between superordinate themes one and two. Within the first superordinate theme, it has been demonstrated that SLTs believed they lack the agency to provide an inclusive schooling experience for students with SEMH needs. This was because they have reduced confidence in their ability, find SEMH too complex and believed that dominant external systems overpower them. Overall, this highlights SLTs' perceived sense of hopelessness; however, the second theme brings optimism. Containing relationships are considered facilitators of inclusion for students with SEMH needs; therefore, SLTs believed that students who engage in these relationships are less likely to face a PEX. This inclusivity appears to increase SLTs' sense of agency to promote inclusion.

4.4.2 SLTs Pursue Inter-Organisational Engagement and Containing Relationships.

Overall, SLT members reported that relationships were vital to promote the inclusion of students with SEMH needs. Across the interviews, these relationships were characterised by transparency, care, longevity and flexibility, thus providing reliability for SLT and containment for students. These relationships occurred at various levels in the school organisation, including with other students, parents, staff and external professionals. Both SLT and students built relationships with these aforementioned groups. Leaders appear to find relationships the most valuable element of identifying needs, providing interventions and ultimately preventing a PEX.

Leaders appeared to prioritise staff knowing CYP and talking to them over the use of their intricate referral systems for interventions. When asked directly about processes that supported inclusion, members of the SLTs named a range of referral systems such as the inclusive learning group and the School Welfare Inclusion Forum Team. However, when speaking about challenges more generally, it appeared that these systems were not as instrumental as relationships that helped identify and support students. It appeared that once relationships were developed, leaders felt that students had access to adequate support, whether informal (i.e. adequate parenting) or formal (i.e. CAMHS). They felt that when students have good enough relationships, they could survive and even thrive within mainstream education.

Ultimately, members of the SLTs' believed that these valuable relationships surrounding a student could contain their complexity of needs, enabling the school system to manage students with few additional resources. Without relationships of

this nature, students were more likely to struggle with their unmet needs and face a PEX. This sanction has been described as SLTs' cry for help, illustrating a loss of control (see 4.4.1.1.4); therefore, adequate relationships enabled SLTs to regain their lost sense of agency.

These types of relationships have been categorised into three subordinate themes. First, SLTs thought relationships were significant for YP when transitioning into the school. Leaders also felt that it was vital to know the existence and nature of students' SEMH needs; failure to have this information created a turbulent beginning to their secondary school experience (4.4.2.1). Second, YP developing positive relationships with peers, families, key staff and external therapeutic experts were deemed important to students' wellbeing (4.4.2.2). The final element to developing quality relationships was for therapeutic workers to respond flexibly to students' needs (4.4.2.3). See Figure 15.

Figure 15

Superordinate Theme 4.4.2: 'SLTs Pursue Inter-Organisational Engagement and Containing Relationships' with Subsequent Superordinate Theme
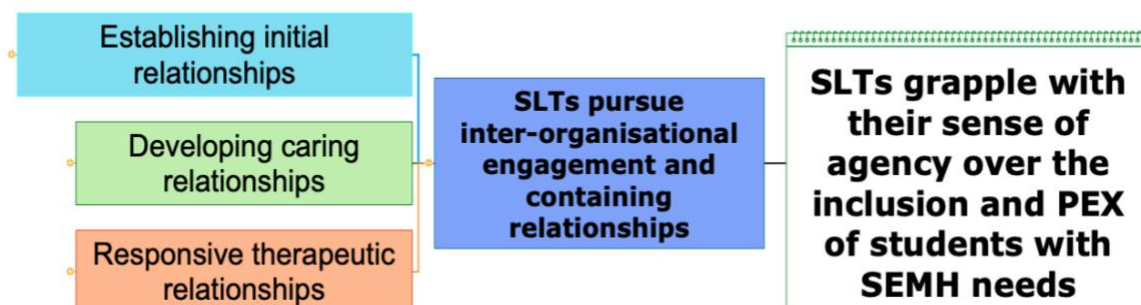
4.4.2.1 Establishing Initial Relationships

Senior leaders believed it was vital for them to have prior knowledge of students' SEMH needs ahead of them joining the school, whether ahead of the primary-secondary transfer (4.4.2.1.1.) or the less frequent, but equally important, mid-year transitions (4.4.2.1.2). See Figure 16.

Figure 16

Subordinate Theme 4.4.2.1: 'Establishing Initial Relationships with Subsequent Themes
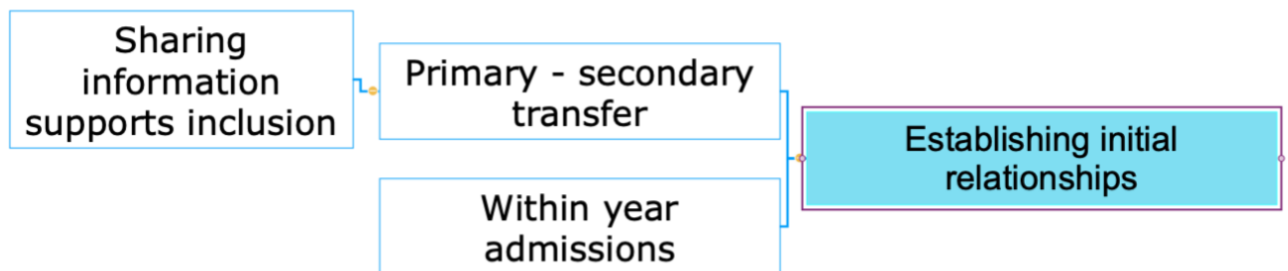
4.4.2.1.1 Primary–Secondary Transfer

This theme oscillates between schools having information and not having information about students SEMH needs when they join the school in year 7. It highlights the contrast between schools; School A's process of accessing information better prepares them when the YP joins the school. In contrast, School's B and C often struggle to get information and feel blind-sighted by students needs.

4.4.2.1.1.1 Sharing Information Supported Inclusion.

All schools stated that it was beneficial to receive information on students' SEMH needs prior to joining secondary school. This came from various sources,

including the LA SEN Department, parents and primary schools in a file or shared during a visit. Leaders in School C reported that being forewarned about CYPs' needs enabled them to share information amongst staff

> *Our inclusion manager . . . lets everybody know, gives a potted history of all students new to . . . year seven, based on information from primary schools, so if the primary school passes on the information, my esteemed colleague . . . makes sure that it's written down for everybody to look at. (James, School A, Position 43)*

James showed some apprehension regarding secondary schools receiving information from primary schools in the above extract. Likewise, in School B, Laura remarked, 'primaries were a bit reticent to let us know' information ahead of a transfer (Position 206). Andrew raised a similar issue and explained the school's process of seeking information from the primary school once a challenging situation presented itself in the new school.

> *It's quite common for us; we'll get a child who will transfer to us, we'll hear nothing about SEMH, nothing about previous behaviour difficulties and then . . . we start to experience problems. We then contact the primary school, and [they] go, 'Oh, they're an absolute nightmare here.' (Andrew, School B, Position 207)*

In addition to primaries not sharing information, leaders in School B highlighted their lack of proactivity in seeking information. They expressed their failure to be proactive. Schools B and C spoke regretfully about their management of the transfer process, acknowledging that it needed improvement and that they should to give more attention to sourcing this information from primary schools by visiting all children who have needs. As Andrew says, 'But we could do more; I think getting into the primary schools to visit the . . . child who is transferring to us . . . ' (Andrew, School B, Position 39).

In contrast, staff in School A generally spoke positively about the transfer process. It appears that they devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to the process; for instance, they created and shared detailed information of each child using 'a booklet called pen portraits . . . which gives all the information that we know about [students]' (Susan, School A, Position 44).

4.4.2.1.2 Within Year Admissions.

Laura spoke about receiving incomplete information for mid-year official and unofficial managed moves, calling the process 'flawed' because staff often felt blindsided (School B, Position 38). Additionally, she explained that many of these students moved because of difficulties in their previous provision. '[W]e now have students, in-year admissions, that don't know very much about it, and quite often [that is] just the nature of the beast; in-year admissions tend to have an issue, which is why they've moved school potentially' (Laura, School B, Position 36).

4.4.2.2 Developing Caring Relationships

This theme highlights the importance of students developing relationships with peers and adults who care and can notice and advise them accordingly. Leaders believed that these relationships could prevent a PEX because these significant others could notice difficulties early on and relate to the CYP to improve their behaviour. This theme begins by highlighting the value that leadership place on relationships over referral systems to promote inclusion (4.4.2.2.1). These relationships were with the following individuals' tutors (4.4.2.2.2), heads of year (4.4.2.2.3), parents (4.4.2.2.4) and peer mentors (4.4.2.2.5) as indicated in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Subordinate Theme 4.4.2.2 'Developing Caring Relationships' and Subsequent

Themes
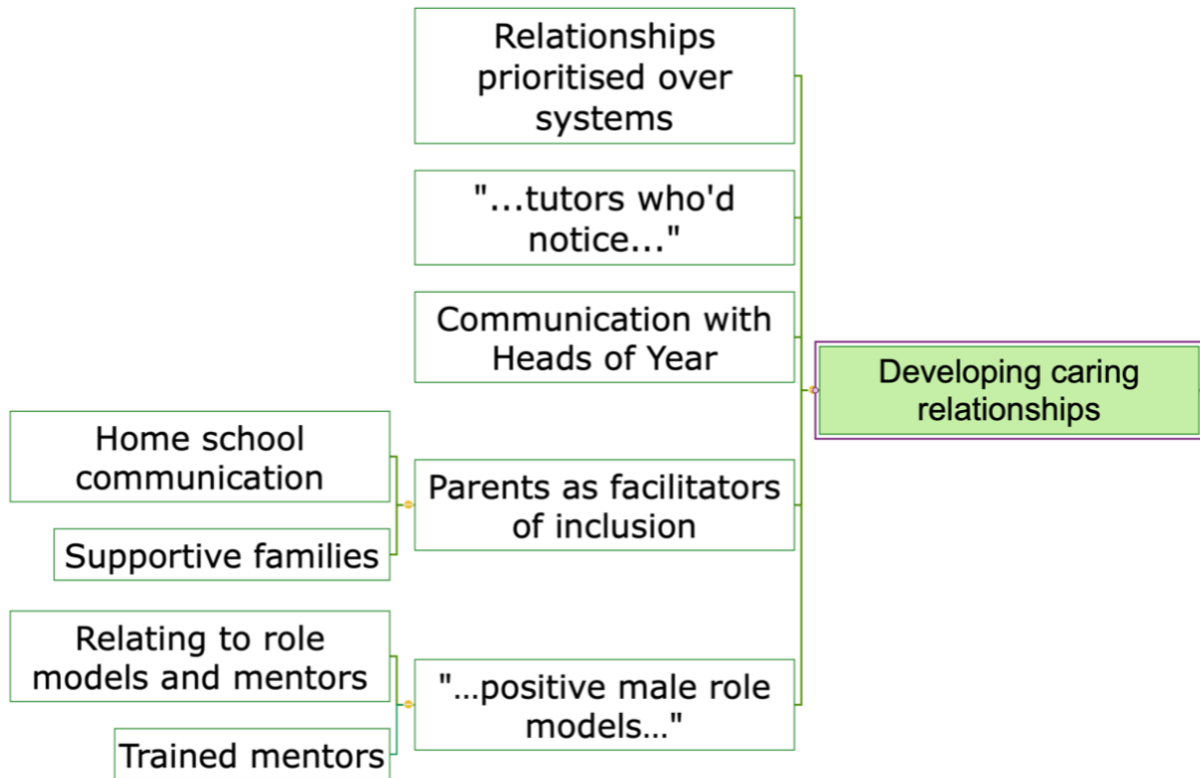
4.4.2.2.2 Relationships Prioritised Over Systems

Members of the SLTs ranked relationships as more influential than referral

systems and processes to identify needs provide intervention. Each school listed

their various referral processes, some more complex than others, consisting of

several forms and (progress) meetings and safeguarding training and protocols.

However, as stated by Simon, having a relationship with students and

communicating with them was deemed most effective at identifying needs and

promoting inclusion:

> [I]dentifying different signs and symptoms and if we go back to
> the keeping children safe in education so you've got the physical

neglect, the sexual, the emotional that prevent possible indicators.
But I think ultimately, we say that it's the dialogue, so it's the head of
year knowing that the family, the children, and myself and this team…
talking, talking, talking, so we can identify reasonably reliably what
those signs and symptoms are (Simon, School B, Position 25)

4.4.2.2.2 ' . . . Tutors Who'd Notice. . . '

Within school, form tutors (also teachers) developed a close, meaningful relationship with students. This consistent tutor–student contact enabled tutors to observe changes. Rick views them as vigilant and able to notice early signs and symptoms of SEMH difficulties, as highlighted in his statement, which has formed the title of this theme (School C, Position 241). Furthermore, Alex commented that 'the tutors see it early on because they see it day to day' (School C, Position 245).

Students were also advised to contact tutors as their 'first point of call' (Simon, School B, Position 134). Given the frequency and proximity of this relationship, leadership in School B deem it to be the tutor's responsibility to identify and investigate early signs and symptoms of SEMH difficulties (Jerry, Position 48; Laura, Position 38). These leaders indicated that they relied heavily on tutors to trigger a process of support by sharing this information with other educationalists such as heads of year, pastoral members, heads of learning, behaviour support team, the SWIFT [10]and SEN.

Simon stated that tutors appeared ill-equipped to explore SEMH issues which left them open to criticism from the family (School B, Position 176). He acknowledged that further training was required to manage these complexities but ultimately suggests investigations should be managed by pastoral personnel or a therapist

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[10] 'SWIFT' is an acronym for School Welfare Inclusion Forum Team in School B

4.4.2.2.3 Communication with Heads of Year

Heads of year were also key staff members who developed relationships with students and families to identify and respond to needs. In School A, they had a purely pastoral role, allowing them to be readily available to address difficulties as they arose

> *I think we have a very good grasp of those things [behaviours that require a sanction], and I would say it's because we have non-teaching heads of year that can deal with those issues as soon as they happen. (James, School A, Position 84)*

Another valuable aspect of the heads of year role was communicating with the students and their families to notice difficulties.

4.4.2.2.4 Parents as Facilitators of Inclusion

SLTs felt that, at times supportive parents could be an asset to inclusion. They believed that the staff's ability to develop a harmonious relationship with parents could prevent a PEX. This was primarily achieved by having good reciprocal communication. Furthermore, SLTs believed that some family members could offer containment to students.

4.4.2.2.4.1 Home School Communication

Leaders in all schools articulated that parents were informed as soon as possible when concerns arose— 'from the outset'—long before the threat of a PEX (Susan, School A, Position 165). School staff articulated that an open-door policy facilitated the flow of communication.

> *[During] induction meetings in year seven, we say to the parents very clearly if they have an issue, please come and talk to us, and we'll take a balanced view. [T]he expectation is the parents will*

come to us, and we do reach out to them as much as we can. (Simon, School B, Position 186)

Rick explained School C's process of informing parents of concerns; this included a messaging service followed by a meeting.

[W]e do text every time the pupil's sent out [of class] an automatic text, but actually, when it becomes a trend, that's when the heads of learning, the tutors will be able to support him, and that parent will be called probably within a couple of weeks. (Rick, School C, Position 241)

Parents' responses when concerns arise appear to be positive from the staff's perspective within School A: 'When we are concerned, we let them know, and generally, they are quite supportive. Many of our parents really wanted their children to come here, so they are really on board with most things' (Samantha, Position 165).

In School A, the communication between the school and some parents appeared to be reciprocal. Parents who were concerned about their child or other children notified the school of possible SEMH needs or behaviours that may warrant a PEX. This ranged from academic worries to concerns about the threat of terrorism.

4.4.2.2.4.2 Supportive Families

Senior leaders believed that effective parenting could produce resilient children. In Rick's experience, a student's immediate or extended family members have the potential to provide nurturing support for students. This familial containment has the potential to prevent a PEX: '[O]r you can find the uncle or the brother or whoever that you never knew was around, and you can draw in, and that can stop that person going to that permanent exclusion' (Rick, School C, Position 163).

4.4.2.2.5 '. . . Positive Male Role Models . . . '.

Peer mentors and role models were alternative relationships to help counteract the various challenges in students' lives, including family difficulties. Leaders believed that the right peer support could counter the adverse effects of SEMH needs. James mentioned that students often requested this mode of support, which was 'very successful' (School A, Position 111). Rick argued it was crucial for schools to actively seek role models, although this was not without its challenges.

4.4.2.2.5.1 Relating to Role Models and Mentors

Staff felt that students required support from relatable individuals. For instance, David spoke about those with SEMH needs engaging in small group work with positive male 'role models from the SEN department' (School B, Position 65). Additionally, staff in School A provided examples of students with challenging histories becoming mentors. Samantha felt that this relatability could act as a preventative measure to future difficulties or as a form of early intervention.

> *A student . . . who [was] a managed move, and I was concerned . . . she might start bubbling up a bit, so I already spoke to a sixth form student who was a behavioural issue . . . I said to her, 'I might get you to come and talk to this student . . . about the way she behaves . . . it's much better coming from the student who has experienced it than from the adult, it's much more effective. (Samantha, School A, Position 129)*

4.4.2.2.5.2 Trained Mentors

Student mentors in School A were relatable and trained to take up their role; Samantha says, 'The younger students can come and talk about problems and things worrying them. But the ones who are running that group . . . themselves have training . . . ' (Samantha, School A, Position 112).

4.4.2.3 Responsive Therapeutic Relationships

Members of the SLTs believed that it was crucial for students with SEMH needs to access a therapeutic intervention (see Figure 18). This required practitioners to respond flexibly and adjust to accommodate the complexity of the students' needs. Conversely, a rigid response was believed to be a contributing factor or a catalyst to exclusion. According to leadership, school counsellors offered appropriately responsive support as they adapted to the schools and students needs (4.4.2.3.1). However, CAMHS (4.4.2.3.2) and the EPS appeared to be bound by rigid systems (4.4.2.3.3). School leaders described feeling bound by the limitations of the systems at times, stripping them of their sense of agency to access adequate support on behalf of students.

Figure 18

Subordinate Theme 2.3 'Responsive Therapeutic Relationships' and Subsequent

Themes
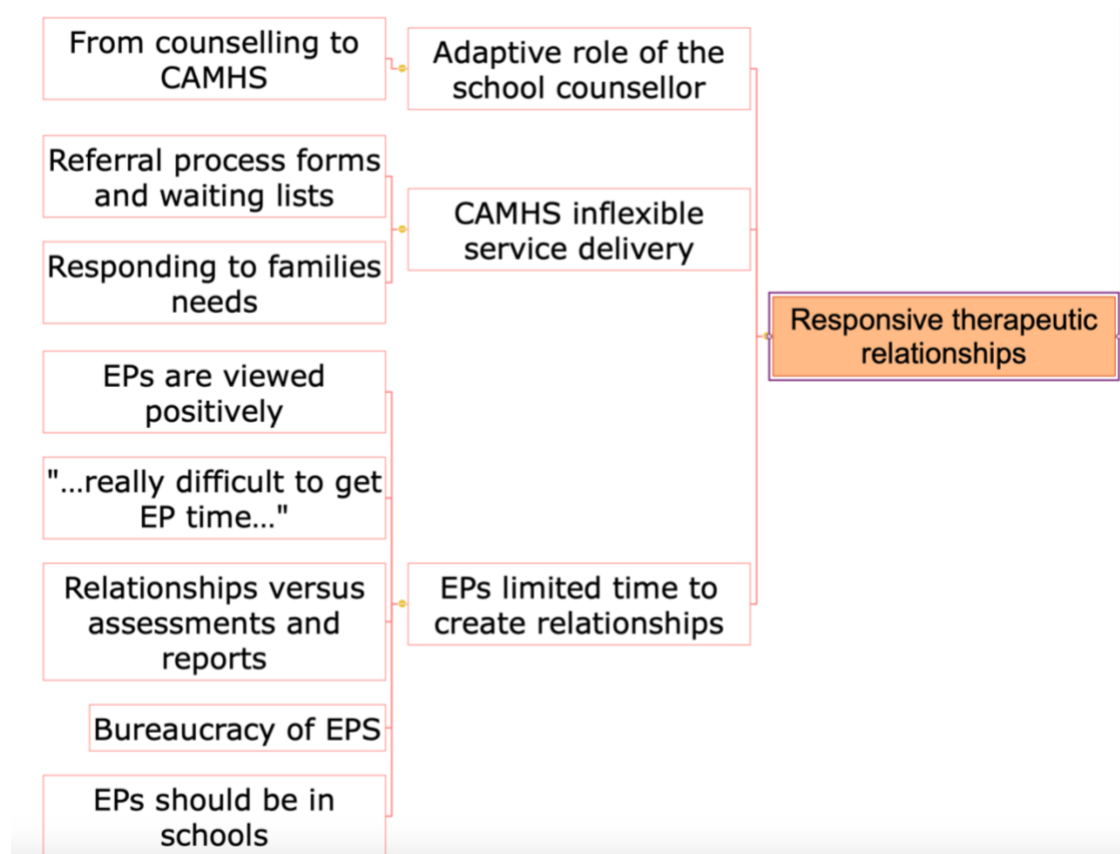
4.4.2.3.1 Adaptive Role of the School Counsellor

All three schools had on-site school counsellors, including art and drama

therapists. Members of the SLTs regarded them highly because they were adaptable

and flexible to meet the needs of students and were also deemed essential for the

school's survival. Leaders referred to them as 'fantastic' and 'brilliant' (Jerry, School

B, Position 170; Alex, School C, Position 63). Leadership across all schools

accepted the role of these professionals as a therapeutic service was to offer the

'holding' and not 'fixing' of students SEMH needs because wider systemic family

therapy may require more in-depth work to complete this latter task (Alex, School C,

Positions 69 and 63). Given that this role was school-based, counsellors see students swiftly, and some students were able to self-refer:

> [M]y school counsellor adapts to the needs of the kids within the time frame that she's got. So yeah, so if this kid needs some work with their family, she'll get the parents in. If this kid needs cognitive therapy, she'll do that with them. If they haven't got time to do cognitive therapy, she'll do something else . . . . (Alex, School C, Position 201)

Despite members of the SLTs reporting positively on school counsellors, there were limitations to the position, mainly the lack of funding, which creates a 'waiting list' (Laura, School B Position 79).

4.4.2.3.1.1 From Counselling to CAMHS

Furthermore, staff also acknowledged that counsellors were limited in managing long-term, entrenched mental health difficulties; other therapeutic services were required, such as CAMHS. '[W]e might refer them to our counsellor, who might do one session and say, "This should be CAMHS. This isn't necessarily a school problem; it should be taken to the next level"' (Susan, School A, Position 109).

4.4.2.3.2 CAMHS Inflexible Service Delivery

The transition from school counselling to CAMHS was not without its challenges. SLTs experienced CAMHS as having an archaic method of service delivery that was rigid in its referral process and its ability to respond to the needs of families.

4.4.2.3.2.1 Referral Forms and Waiting Lists

Leaders explained that CAMHS referral process, forms and lengthy waiting lists were cumbersome.

> *I think CAMHS waiting lists are the hardest to navigate. The amount of time we wait for some of our kids to be seen by that team it's ridiculous, sometimes we just end up getting our counsellor to do some of the work, but often they need more than what she can provide. (Susan, School A, Position 159)*

4.4.2.3.2.2 Responding to Families' Needs

CAMHS was also viewed as unresponsive to the very needs for which families were referred. Alex protests that the service was archaic and needed updating.

> *CAMHS has got a bit better, but it still works on a system where they're expecting parents to . . . access their services and have a level of get up and go to be able to do that. CAMHS never come to us . . . actually, our families do not have the wherewithal [or] confidence . . . to be able to continue to work—and CAMHS is . . . quite slow, quite cumbersome and a one-size-fits-all. (Alex, School C, Position 196)*

Likewise, Mary stated that CAMHS would be more accessible if based in school: 'But it would be ideal if CAMHS would do their sessions here [in school]. That way, more of them [students] would attend' (School A, Position 161). Despite the skills of these CAMHS practitioners, their reported lack of flexibility left SLT members feeling frustrated and powerless to recommend support that was accessible for students with SEMH needs. The EPS was another service school leaders felt needed to be more flexible.

4.4.2.3.3 EPs Limited Time to Create Relationships

Despite EPs being viewed as beneficial in promoting the inclusion of students with SEMH needs, some leaders felt that the profession had some barriers (4.4.2.3.3.1). These include EPs' limited time in school (4.4.2.3.3.2) and the bureaucratic SEND system (4.4.2.3.3.3). Respondents provided solutions that

included a school-based EPs (4.4.2.3.3.4) and building relationships within the school community (4.4.2.3.3.5).

4.4.2.3.3.1 EPs were Viewed Positively.

EPs were viewed as skilled experts and well placed to support students with SEMH needs. Sarah and Jerry referred to their respective school EPs as 'great', and David spoke about staff using EP recommendations to inform inclusive practise (School A, Position 160; School B, Position 178). However, EPs were less good at building relationships due to limited availability.

4.4.2.3.3.2 '. . . Really Difficult to Get EP Time . . .'.

A salient theme within the data was that EP time was limited; the financial parameters of this was also noted: 'Yeah, it's really difficult to get EP time. Well, it's money' (Fiona, School A, Position 152). It was also reported that EP availability was especially limited for those with SEND, which negatively affected inclusion: 'We have a very limited amount of educational psychology time related to our health care plans' (Andrew, School B, Position 79).

Members of leadership felt that the lack of EP availability affected the thoroughness of service delivery; they thought that more EP time would assist with the implementation and review of professional recommendations; Jerry explained this as in the following way 'We'll get really good [EP] recommendations, but what we could really do with [is] some help . . . to actually put that in place—walk us through some of it, and they haven't got time; it's not the EPs' fault' (Jerry, School B, Position 183).

Furthermore, some leaders predicted that additional EP time would solve deep-rooted, systemic family issues concerning students with SEMH needs:

> *The time it would take to do that for some of our families would exhaust all of our hours of EP time, and we don't have many of those. And if we had more [EP time] and we had that option, maybe we could fix some of the issues in our work with families . . . (Rick, School C, Position 77)*

4.4.2.3.3.3 Relationships Versus Assessments and Reports

Alex spoke passionately about EPs' practice of conducting assessment and writing reports, regarding it as futile and preventing them from developing relationships with the students. He raised a concern about the effectiveness and longevity of the profession: 'And I worry about EPs in the future because—are you going to make relationships with kids, or are you going to be doing lots of assessments . . . There's got to be better ways of working' (Alex, School C, Position 204).

Instead, Alex recommends EPs be school-based. He desired to include them within the school community to work with children and build relationships, moving away from a model dominated by statutory assessments.

> *If EPs were actually based in schools—if I had an EP in school for two or three days a week, who went and actually worked with kids rather than just, '… I do a one-hour assessment, then I do one hour writing a report,' … [the EP] could actually become part of this community's life, then I think that would have so much impact. (Alex, School C, Position 200)*

4.4.2.3.3.4 Bureaucracy of EPS

Alex felt that the bureaucracy of using EP assessments and reports to obtain an EHCP was another aspect of EP practice that hindered the inclusion of students with SEMH needs. He felt this process was time-consuming and did not meet the needs of students.

> *It's the way the whole funding system works, isn't it? I have my EP allocation, so I've got [the] needs of my kids. I need to prioritise*

the assessments that get done so that I can rubber-stamp the form to be able to get things through. And it actually means that it goes to [the] panel, it comes back, and it's a piece of paper. It's really not what that child needs there and then. (Alex, School C, Position 210)

There was a sense that staff felt forced to be part of the statutory assessment system to get the required funding for students with additional needs.

4.4.2.3.3.5 EPs Should be in Schools

Alex's passion for this topic led him to offer a solution that the EPS ought to be modernised in part by demolishing the LA building, enabling EPs to be permanently positioned in schools. He said, 'EP service should be in schools. Why should they have to go to that bloody building—they should knock [building name] down . . . ' (School C, Position 196). In the same spirit, another participant spoke about occupying EPs full time if they were school-based. They said, 'Well [with an extra hundred hours of EP time], I would employ someone in the school full-time . . . and I guarantee I could fill every hour of that time if I had an Ed Psych at school constantly' (Jerry, School B, Position 181).

Leaders reported that this archaic practice prevented EPs from forming relationships, thereby creating a barrier to sharing their expertise, leaving school staff without the skill set or knowledge to manage the psychological needs of students with SEMH difficulties. This theme highlighted that despite the knowledge that therapeutic practitioners were highly skilled, systemic factors inhibit their response to CYP with SEMH needs.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In response to the research question, the findings revealed the tension between systemic pressures that cause SLT to feel disempowered and their pursuit

of relationships for the YP and the organisation. It appears that this tension faced by

leaders affected their sense of agency to promote inclusion resulting in PEX for

many YP with SEMH needs. The following chapter will connect the aforementioned

findings with literature to further illuminate the data.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss SLTs' views and practices concerning the inclusion and PEX of CYP with SEMH needs based on the findings presented in Chapter four. This chapter is framed within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to demonstrate how a series of complex and interrelated features in and outside the school system contributes to the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. This is considered in relation to theory and literature to demonstrate this study's contribution to the education and psychology knowledge base. Recommendations for policy and practice are also evaluated. Subsequently, the dissemination strategy is presented, and methodological considerations are made. The chapter ends with the researcher's reflections, directions for future research and concluding remarks.

5.2 Objectives and Research Question

This research aimed to explore the perceptions and actions of SLTs, relating to the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. To achieve this, the views of senior leaders across three mainstream secondary schools were obtained through focus groups. The discussion has answered the following research question: *What are the views and practices of mainstream secondary school SLTs concerning the inclusion and permanent exclusion of students with social, emotional and mental health needs?*

5.3 Summary of Findings

Findings indicate that local and national governments' academic pressures and financial barriers inhibited SLTs' sense of agency to promote inclusion for students with SEMH needs, increasing the likelihood of PEX. It appeared that leaders attempted to alleviate this by striving to develop inter-organisational systems and positive relationships between students and supportive adults at the school level.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory was applied to frame SLTs' views and practices within a critical realist interpretivist approach. The multiple systems surrounding the young person highlight the range of environmental influences on their development. In the context of this research, these are the macrosystem (sociopolitical policies and culture), exosystem (local community), mesosystem (inter-organisational interactions) and microsystem (students' interpersonal relations; (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Although much of this chapter is structured in a linear approach, it is important to recognise the bidirectional nature of the influential factors within each system as the original theory denotes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Interpreting the study's findings within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory highlights that at the macrosystem, SLTs reported that government-imposed performative pressures influenced schools to develop a more competitive academic ethos that was less conducive to the inclusion of low-achieving or disruptive students with SEMH needs (see Section 4.4.1.3.1). This type of ethos was the overemphasis on grades and standards which hampered students and staffs' wellbeing. Additionally, most SLTs appeared to adopt views aligned with a deficit discourse of YPs SEMH needs, thereby expecting YP to conform with or be removed from

mainstream school (see Section 4.4.1.2.2.). At the exosystemic level, SLTs reported that the decrease in LA funding of specialist services to support inclusion hindered the school's ability to accommodate students within the confines of the rigid education system, increasing students' likelihood of PEX (see Section 4.4.1.3.3). Leaders explained that these political-financial barriers inhibited the support of specialist services that are most skilled to support inclusion. They suggest that this was a causal factor of PEX for many students. Thus, due to macrosystemic and exosystemic barriers, leadership allude to having a reduced sense of collective agency to promote inclusion.

School leadership referred to the importance of developing relationships within the YPs school microsystem and mesosystem, perhaps as an antidote to the political–financial issues at the exosystem and macrosystem. Within these inner spheres, inclusion was pursued by SLTs implementing proactive practices to engage LA therapeutic services, the student's former school and the student's home. Likewise, containing relationships between CYP and tutors, role models and therapeutic practitioners are believed to promote inclusion and deter a PEX.

5.4 Discussion of Findings

The interpretation of findings illuminates the crucial premise that leaders collective sense of agency appeared to mediate the tension between performative pressures and inclusive practice for students with SEMH needs. Within Bandura's (1985; 2018) social cognitive theory, collective agency is explained as the 'shared beliefs in the accumulative power [knowledge, skills and resources] of a group to reach a common intention' (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). A team's disbelief in its power can affect its 'motivation, utilisation of resources, invested effort and dedication

through times of adversity' (Bandura, 2000. p75). This mindset can hamper a group's incentive to act. Using this definition, it is proposed that senior leaders limited sense of collective agency is evident primarily in the macrosystem and exosystem as they contend with performative pressures and diminishing preventative services for students with SEMH needs.

Nevertheless, leaders in some schools demonstrated a regained sense of collective agency by implementing practices and relationships at the mesosystemic and microsystemic levels. However, these were not without their challenges. Each system will be discussed in turn. A visual representation of these key findings is summarised in Figure 19.

Figure 19

Factors Related to the Inclusion or PEX of Students with SEMH Needs Within

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory
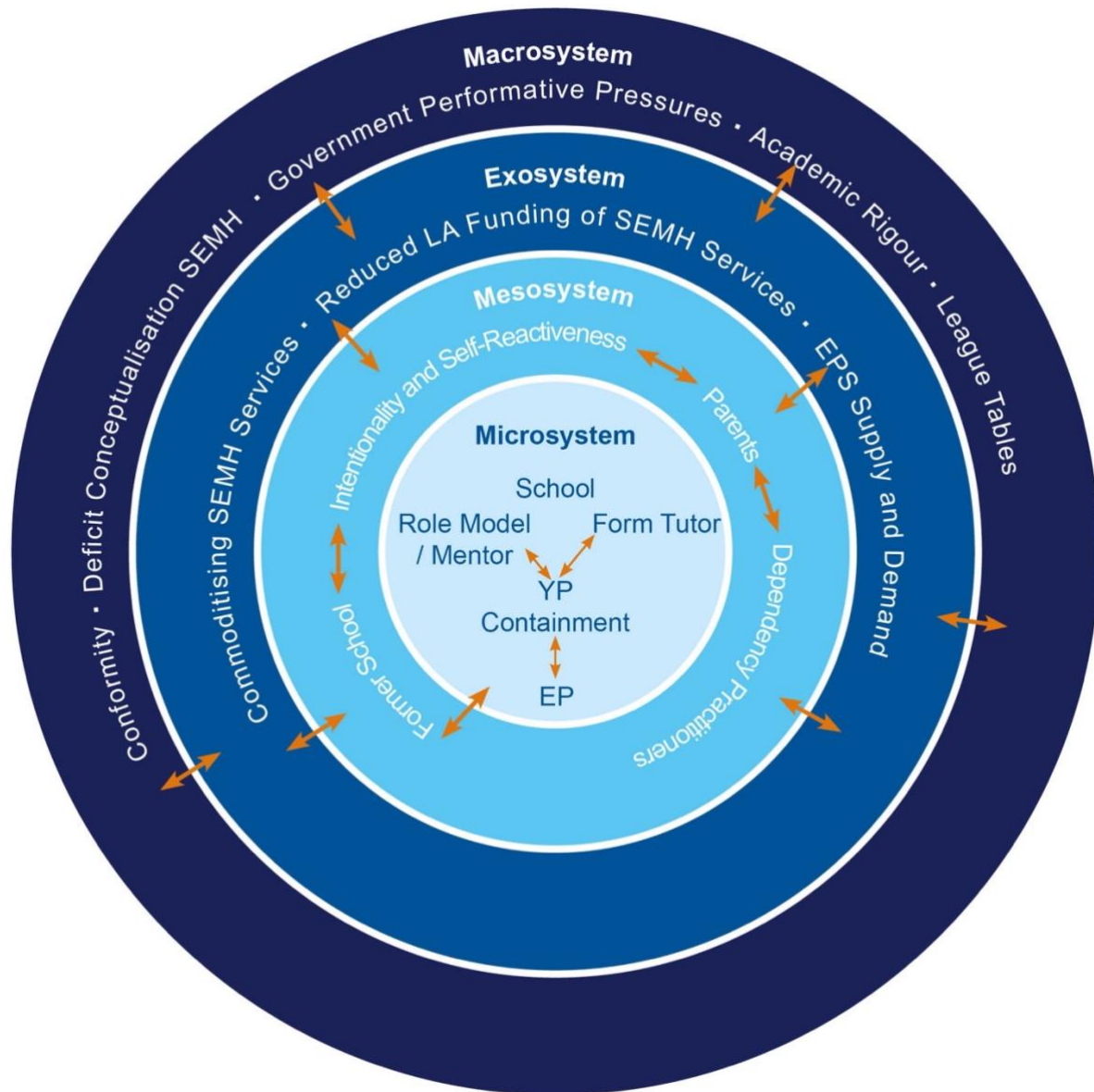
5.4.1 Macrosystem: Performative Pressures and Deficit Model of Needs

The interpretation of findings highlights two macrosystemic factors that restrict SLTs' ability to promote inclusion and contribute to the PEX of students with SEMH needs. These are the overt socio-political structures, which promote performativity and the influence of DfEs' within-child deficit model of needs (see Figure 19). Whether inadvertently or intentionally, overt and covert performative pressures create 'soft barriers' to inclusion to minimise disruption to the overly academic school environment (Joseph, 2020; McKeon, 2020, p. 160).

5.4.1.1 Performative Pressures Compete with Inclusion

The interpretation of findings illuminates the constraints of governmental performativity on SLTs' ability to promote inclusion for CYP with SEMH needs, resulting in PEX (see Section 4.4.1.3.1). This tension hampered leaders' sense of collective agency as they operated within an oppressive educational system.

5.4.1.1.1 Academic Rigour

The UK government's performativity focus and a zero-tolerance approach to behaviour disadvantaged those with SEMH needs (Ford et al., 2018; Parsons, 2018). This ethos was pursued under the premise of creating high-achieving students who promote national economic growth and become financially independent of the state (Parsons, 2009b). This warrants an increase in standardised testing, a less diverse curriculum and a school ethos that promotes social conformity at a school level (Davies et al. 2021; Partridge et al. 2020). These views marginalise students with SEMH needs, resulting in various forms of social and academic exclusion, including PEX. As such, Alex criticises 'Mr Gove [then Education Secretary, for] . . . academic rigour . . . where all kids are doing the same

curriculum, that's fundamentally against what I believe, . . . actually we need to meet the needs of our individual learners as opposed to doing a one-size-fits-all, so it looks good . . . ' (School B, Position 158). Likewise, leaders in Burton et al. (2009) study found that the government's drive to raise academic standards were insensitive to low-achieving students to improve their rankings on league tables. These findings have been supported by Partridge et al. (2020), who identified that the increased academic rigour results in academic disengagement, increase students risk of PEX. As such, The Education Select Committee's review of exclusions attributed the increase in PEX rates to the effects of a narrowing curriculum (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

5.4.1.1.2 League Tables

Under the neoliberal performative pressures, schools developed a business-like model whereby competition was promoted within and between schools to increase their funding and status to attract further high-achieving students (Gill et al., 2017). Leaders adopt desperate, immoral, and even illegal measures to enhance their school's academic reputation on publicised league tables (Caslin, 2021). This practice was evident in the present study whereby Sarah stated that on occasions, lower-achieving students in year nine were 'off-load[ed]' to avoid poor grades on the school's league tables (School A, Position 180). Similar practices driven by institutional desires but detrimental to students with social-emotional needs were also identified throughout the literature (Burton et al. 2009; Hill, et al. 2016; McKeon 2020; Thomson, 2020). Such practises explain why local and national PEX rates consistently peak in year nine prior to the publication of year 10 and 11 GCSE results (DfE, 2016a, 2019a, 2021a). While some schools remove students using the formal process, others use illegal measures of off-rolling to 'enhance school

performance data' for financial gain; senior leaders are viewed as the initiator of this process (Children's Commissioner, 2019; DfE; 2019c. p19; Done & Knowler, 2020). Partridge et al. (2020) referred to these practices as being motivated by government-induced 'perverse incentives' to increase academic successes for financial gains (p. 31).

SLTs practice of feeling defeated and thus relinquishing responsibility for CYPs when they realise a student will not succeed in key stage four (see Section 4.4.1.3.1.3) opposes the DfE's (2017) guidance that it is unlawful to PEX a student because of a school's inability to meet their attainment needs. Wilson et al. (2006) argued that this is paying lip service because 'what gets measured [academic performance], gets done' (Behn, 2003, p. 599). Giroux (2009) called this a 'war on [marginalised] youth' because many were viewed as disposable (p. 72). SLT allude to being forced into this practice as part of wider pressures thus, it is argued that SLTs may unwittingly be part of an oppressive system whereby it is in leaders' financial interest to permanently exclude rather than promote inclusion.

5.4.1.1.3 Teachers Under Pressure

Simon reported that teachers were under 'phenomenal pressure to deliver, perform and get the best results and I think the more that that is [the case], there is a squeeze on their capacity, their ability to deal with some of the things we're talking about at the moment [SEMH]' (School B, Position 164). It appears that teachers' focus on measurable attainment to meet their performance targets, this takes their attention from those who require additional support. This was also confirmed in the literature because leaders felt that accommodating students' SEMH difficulties would jeopardise other students' academic development and staff's performance targets (Burton et al., 2009; Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Dimitrellou et al., 2020). Thus,

mainstream education appeared inhospitable to those with social-emotional needs (Sprat, 2006a). Slee (2013) and Hedegaard-Soerensen and Grumloese (2018) explained that principles of teacher accountability were employed as a tool to enforce performativity in the classroom because they were encouraged to focus on competition at the expense of inclusion, differentiation and diversity.

5.4.1.1.4 Performativity Exacerbates SEMH Needs

Kulz (2019) and Thompson et al. (2021) emphasised the detrimental impact of neoliberal performative pressures that transfer into the classroom; the rigorous' curriculum and associated examinations makes education less manageable for some YP. This exacerbates students' needs and increase their likelihood of a PEX. In the present study, leaders reported that students experienced internal conflict from the dissonance between students' (learning and SEMH) needs, which impeded learning, versus the school's overly academic ethos (see Section 4.4.1.2.4). This culture was characterised by exam pressures that triggered mental health difficulties, including self-harm. Other students internalised staff's low expectations, evoking feelings of worthlessness. Consequently, disaffection and defiance festered, thereby increasing their likelihood of PEX. Two members of SLT refer to this as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Simon, School B, Position 124; Alex, School C, Position 139). This highlights the bidirectional effect between the YP and their ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Similar findings were identified by Spratt et al. (2006b) and Burton et al. (2009), whose participants reported that feelings of academic inadequacy evoked by a strong academic ethos were detrimental to students' academic motivation and self-identity. In support of these findings linking performativity to wellbeing, a survey by The State of Education (2017) found that 91% of secondary school leaders reported an increase in performance pressures

between 2015 and 2017 and felt that reforms to GCSEs detrimentally affected the curriculum, believing this increased students' fear of academic failure and created anxiety.

5.4.1.4 SLT Oppressed Under Neoliberalism

This tension between wanting to promote inclusion but feeling constrained by the system may have caused emotional turmoil for SLTs, as cited above. Kulz (2019) offered further insight into this. Leaders in his study felt as though they were expected to perform as salespeople thriving in a target-driven academic culture whilst simultaneously acting as charity workers to nurture and save vulnerable children. He suggested that as an agent of the neoliberal government, the DfE promotes the illusion of leaders' decision-making power through their mantra of endorsing 'strong leadership' and making a head teacher's decision to PEX final (DfE, 2016b. p 5). However, this is simply permission to follow the government agenda by disposing of those with less educational value. Therefore, Klutz suggested that some school leaders unwillingly become agents of a neoliberal government as, by default, they operate within an oppressed system, whereby they were permitted to do 'damage' to the most vulnerable through PEX (p.106). Freire (2005) would regard this as a form of organisational violence, whereby the oppressed (SLTs) cannot separate themselves from the oppressors (government), so they seek to identify with them and, therefore, unwittingly become sub-oppressors (of students) through permanently excluding those with SEMH needs. In addition to these overt pressures of performativity, covert influences exist in how SLTs conceptualise difference.

5.4.1.2 Conceptualisation of SEMH

Fuller (2018) argued that embedded within the performativity agenda are a covert deficit discourse of disability that blame YP for their experiences of SEMH needs with little consideration to environmental influences. As seen in the data, this individualistic approach results in medicalised assessments of student needs and justifies social conformity (see Section 4.4.1.2).

5.4.1.2.1 Performativity and Disability Discourses

Joseph (2020) suggested that students who fail to thrive within academia were associated with deficit constructions of disability. Likewise, leaders in Schools B and C emphasised that SEMH were deficits which resided within the child and family; this was attributed to entrenched, complex issues, often from poor parenting, calling them the 'symptom bearer' of difficult home life (Simon, School B, Position 147). This deficit conceptualisation of needs was also illustrated by Alex's medicalised language of students requiring their SEMH 'symptoms' to be 'fix[ed]', yet all they could provide was a 'sticking plaster approach' (School C, Positions 63–64). Thus, they felt it necessary for students to receive assessments, interventions and treatment from mental health professionals to investigate the aetiology of their needs and begin by looking 'underneath' (Dorothy, School B, Position 18; see Section 4.4.1.2.1). Similar views were identified in the literature (Burton et al., 2009; Martin-Denham, 2021; McKeon, 2017, 2020; Spratt et al., 2006a). Furthermore, these students were frequently regarded as disengaged; others are pathologised and ascribed terms such as dangerous, at-risk; or 'mad, bad and sad' (Macleod, 2006, p. 160). This medicalisation and alienation of students who do not conform to teachers' expectations was evident in Rick's question, 'So, when does a kid who's a bit of a

pain in the arse become a SEMH learning need?' (Rick, School C, Position 40). Ball and Olmedo (2013) regarded the assessment and diagnosis of students as medicalising them, making them 'the object of both political and scientific concern' (p. 52).

Giroux (2009) explained that the government had shifted responsibility from systems and powerful corporations to the marginalised, economically alienated and socially disenfranchised. This is an example of what Airthe and Oelke (2020) regarded as pathologising and decontextualising individuals experiences because it takes little account of unequal starting points or the influence of the school environment as a contributor (or providing a solution) to SEMH needs (Parsons, 2009a). Thus, the child is made liable for their success or failure, enforcing individual responsibility (Esposito & Perez, 2014), which is achieved by creating an 'arms-length approach' to inclusion (Lehane, 2017, p. 51). O'Hare concurs, stating that the government appear to pay little attention to the 'powerful determinants of wellbeing such as poverty, housing, discrimination and inequality' but instead seek to remove these YP from school in a bid to 'improve the education system.' (BPS, 2019, para 15). This individualistic stance places a greater emphasis on compliance and control, thereby giving credence to educators' quests for social conformity (Burton et al., 2009).

SLTs' limited sense of agency was recognised by their confessed ignorance about SEMH, resulting in a lack of confidence to promote inclusion. This was a feature that was particularly prominent in School B, where leaders regard themselves as 'laymen' (Andrew, Position 72), or 'amateurs', doing a disservice to their efforts to make 'informed, intelligent comments' on SEMH and rhetorically asking whether the matter was 'beyond our expertise' (David, Position 71).

Ultimately, they asked for expert help because they 'don't actually really understand this (SEMH) to the extent . . . [they] . . . need to' (Andrew, School B, Position 160). Similar findings were evident in the literature as leaders spoke about feeling disempowered by neoliberal pressures (Corcoran & Finney, 2015). Ultimately, in the present study, SLTs appear hopeless because they allude to accepting their situation, adopting a defeatist approach to inclusion (some more than others) and justifying a PEX (see Section 4.4.1.1.).

5.4.1.2.2 Conformity to Social Norms

It is suggested from the findings that PEX is weaponised by the neoliberal agenda to maintain academic and social conformity. This was enacted by school leaders (see Section 4.4.1.1.3 and 4.4.1.2.2). Students' inability to comply was regarded as a social difficulty located within the child whilst viewing the school as a static system that required students to 'learn to fit in with social norms . . . [and] learn to conform and function as part of our school community' (Samantha, School A, Position 65). For instance, all schools emphasised the necessity for students to adapt to the school community, recalling instances in which nonconformity and persistent disruptive behaviour precipitated a PEX. Similarly, Alex stated, 'nobody gets permanently excluded for having a mental health issue [unless it's] . . . unresolved and it has an impact on their social functioning' (School C, Position 59).

Despite this emphasis on conformity, schools differed in their practice. Leaders in School A applied a consistent approach to enforcing and following through with rules, which acted as a 'tripwire' that students knew not to cross (James, Position 84). However, some leaders in School B practised what Fuller (2018) regarded as everyday forms of resistance against neoliberalism, whereby leaders actively opposed the government recommendations. On occasions, senior

leaders from Schools B and C resisted enforcing the behaviour policy that would have led to a PEX in response to students' needs; they felt it was more important for students to learn from their mistakes than simply receive a punishment. They believed some school rules lacked flexibility, and conformity was not always possible for those with SEMH needs (see Section 4.4.1.1.3). This can be interpreted as SLTs trying to regain a sense of collective agency. One leader critiqued local schools that adopted a punitive approach, stating that if they adopted a zero-tolerance approach to misbehaviour, their school would be the most popular school in the borough because this was popular with parents. Leaders felt it was essential to help students make better choices, although they have minimum expectations from which they will not depart. Similar resistances were enacted in the literature. Leaders felt that behaviour policies were only implemented because of government requirements and Ofsted inspections (Burton et al., 2009; McKeon, 2017; Spratt et al., 2006b). Burton et al. (2009) stated that the inconsistency in educators' approaches was unsurprising given the DfE's contradictory policies, which oscillate between 'care and control' (p. 146). For instance, the DfE's punitive tone of implementing policies and practices with greater control and zero-tolerance to behaviour that inhibits learning conflicts with anti-discriminatory policies for those with SEMH needs and the avoidance of PEX for those with an EHCP (Bennett, 2017; DfE, 2016b; Welsh & Little, 2018; Wenham, 2019). Ford et al. (2018) regarded DfE's zero-tolerance approaches as counterproductive to inclusion. The literature highlighted that punitive approaches to behaviour management disproportionately disadvantage those with social and emotional difficulties (Burton, 2009; Dimitrellou et al., 2020; McKeon, 2017; 2020; Spratt et al., 2006b; DfE, 2019b).

5.4.1.3 Macrosystem Summary

Findings from the present study, supporting literature and government guidance suggested that at the macrosystemic level, the PEX of students with SEMH needs results from SLTs' limited sense of agency to promote inclusion for two main reasons. The first was the overtly political academic targets that pressured SLTs to ensure that their school appeared successful on league tables, which exacerbated students' SEMH needs and increased their likelihood of PEX. Second, students' inability to conform to this requirement was imposed based on the covert socio-political values that SEMH was an individual (and family) deficit. With this viewpoint, an inability to comply resulted in a PEX.

5.4.2 Exosystem: Reduction in LA Funding of SEMH Services

These macrosystemic values of performativity are reflected in the exosystem through central and local governments' limited funding. The exosystem encompasses interactions that occur independently of young people yet directly affect their local culture, community and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; see Figure 19). Some leaders in the present study suggested that reductions in LA funding of essential services led to PEX because schools lacked specialist support to promote inclusion (see Section 4.4.1.3.3). This was explained by the commodification of social services such as the EPS.

5.4.2.1 Increase in needs and decrease in LA Funding

It is evident that funding enables inclusion (Kearney, 2011, p. 89). SLTs across all schools reported a decrease in LA funding of external services to support SEMH needs; this was difficult to manage given the increase in the prevalence and severity of such needs (see Section 4.4.1.3.3.1). In support of this, The State of

Education, found that 51% of school leaders anticipated that a lack of funding would be their biggest challenge in 2017/18 (2017). Accordingly, during a time of austerity, headteachers report trading off inclusive practices for financial gains (Britton et al., 2019).

5.4.2.1.1 EPS Supply and Demand

Across all three schools, leaders viewed support from the LA EPS as instrumental for promoting inclusion. However, EPs' limited time in schools was seen as an issue of inadequate LA funding of SEND. They believed that insufficient psychological assistance resulted in reductions in identification, intervention and recommendations for students with SEMH needs. Some members of senior leaders reported that this left staff and students feeling unsupported, challenging inclusivity and resulting in PEX for some. The literature also identified these findings concerning EPs and other specialist services (e.g., school counsellors, social workers, CAMHS practitioners; Burton et al., 2009; Martin-Denham, 2021; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2021). The profession has recognised the limited EP– school contact time. Accordingly, the Association of Educational Psychologists (2019) reported that 93% of principal EPs state that the demand for EPs outweighed its supply due to limited availability. This may be related to the increased demands of statutory work reducing the variety of EP school practice. In the present study, school leaders predicted that an additional (or a full-time school-based) EP would be fully utilised (see Section 4.4.2.3.3.5). They stated that this would allow EPs to address deep-rooted family issues, investigate the link between mental health and social difficulties, teach SLTs about mental health and assist them to implement EP recommendations (see Section 4.4.1.2.1.1).

Leaders from School B viewed the limited supply of EPs as a bureaucratic issue pursued by LA SEND services that subjugated EPs to producing statutory assessments. These were deemed of little use to students (see Section 4.4.2.3.3). The longevity of the EP profession in its current form was questioned by some members of SLTs, concerned that it would become obsolete because of the limited-service offered. This concern may have some weight in light of EPS's adopting a traded service delivery model. As with any business, the service ought to meet the needs and demands of its 'customers' to remain relevant rather than being pigeonholed as gatekeepers of statutory assessments (Lee & Woods, 2017)

5.4.2.2. Limited Funding Contributes to PEX

Due to financial reductions at the school and LA level, the limited specialist support contributed to PEX. Importantly, SLT explained that this sanction of a PEX was from a place of desperation as a last resort (see Section 4.4.1.1.4.1) following an accumulation of incidents (see Section 4.4.1.1.4.2). It was an indication that a school had reached its 'breaking point' (James, School A, Position 179). Thus it was a '… cry for help . . . ' to get something different (Alex, School C, Position, 260). SLTs stated that many students receive a SEND diagnosis shortly after arriving at a pupil referral unit (following a PEX). However, in Timpson's 'Review of School Exclusions,' he explained that 'PEX was used as "a deliberate tool" [for a statutory] assessment' which the mainstream school could evade financing (DfE, 2019b, p. 39). This business-like approach that schools and LAs pursue under neoliberalism was criticised as school leaders have the means to invest in disruptive students but choose not to do so, perhaps to preserve their funding to enhance their academic ranking (Hedegaard-Soerensen & Grumloese, 2018). It would be prudent for the government to address this frequently used practice if not for moral reasons, then for

economic sense. As the reduction in initial costs for supporting YP in school does not outweigh the £370,000 deficit to the public purse per student following a PEX (Gill et al., 2017). Within the focus LA, those at risk of PEX receive a statutory assessment funded by the LA whilst in their host school. However, this new practice is not widely known, nor do members of SLTs mention it as a strategy.

5.4.3.1.1 Commoditising SEMH Services

5.4.3.1.1.1 DfE's influence

Under neoliberalism, mental health has become a commodity rather than a human right because it is accessible only to organisations or individuals who can and choose to prioritise it (Airthe & Oelke, 2020; Teghtsoonian, 2009). The practice of permanently excluding CYPs because of a lack of funding for support is an example of the government's optimisation of resource allocation (Harvey, 2005). The privatisation of public services has resulted in unequal opportunities for services for CYPs because they rely on LA budgets or leaders' decisions to fund support to have their basic needs met. This places SLTs in a contradictory position whereby they lack access to external support that the SEND Code of Practice (2015) advised them to use (DfE, 2015). However, Lehane (2017) attributed blame to the DfE, criticising the SEND Code of Practice for commissioning services and 'private sector competition and entrepreneurship in a context of austerity (p. 51). O'Reilly et al. (2018) explained that this was because LA commissioners failed to appreciate poor mental health's severity and intensity. Conversely, Burton al. (2009) and Spratt al. (2006a) reported that the enormity of students' social-emotional needs is realised, but the government intentionally provided tokenistic support by way of inclusive sentiment in policy without financial investment—perhaps to appear inclusive. This

placatory practice maintains the status quo for the elite's power by channelling investments into students with more 'academic value' to society (Harvey, 2005).

5.4.3.1.1.2 SLTs' Active Role

However, at the risk of schools blaming PEX on the government and relinquishing accountability for inclusion, it is important to highlight SLTs' responsibility and capability to promote inclusion. The increased financial autonomy of schools can facilitate them to independently commission academic and wellbeing services to support inclusion (Davies et al. 2021). However, some schools do not invest in this. This was evident in the present study whereby leaders were reluctant to make a financial 'sacrifice' and invest in college placements for students with additional needs who may be at risk of PEX, given that it would not 'count for the school[s]' league tables (Anne, School A, Position 184). In support of this, leaders in the Partridge et al. (2020) study reported that government reforms to reduce vocational qualifications contribute to rising PEX rates, this was a provision that DfE (2019d) considered a protective factor against PEX.

The actualisation of leaders successfully taking up this duty to invest in their YP was strengthened by the academic success of inclusive schools, which operate despite neoliberal ideologies and limited financial systems (Fuller, 2018). Furthermore, Williams-Brown and Jopling (2020) reported that neoliberal ideologies claim to benefit schools by promoting students' work ethic, academic success and entrepreneurialism, enabling economic growth for the country. In addition, the privatisation of public health services is said to promote individual choice and autonomy, reducing the necessity for government input (Harvey, 2005). This may suggest that performative pressures and inclusion can be compatible for those who create the structures to support them. However, it is important to note that some

headteachers who uphold their inclusive responsibilities do so to the detriment of their schools positioning on league tables because they were reportedly more concerned with improving pupil wellbeing than the school's academic reputation (Fuller, 2018). Nevertheless, these alternative perspectives may instill hope within the educational system and evoke questions about what other factors SLTs attribute to the PEX of students with SEMH needs at the school level. This is considered next.

5.4.2.2 Exosystem Summary

This section highlighted that from SLTs' perspectives, the PEX of students with SEMH needs was exacerbated by limited funding of external services, which contradicts government advice to utilise said expertise. Limited access to these services places a strain on inter-organisational relationships at the mesosystem considered next.

5.4.3 Mesosystem: Inter-organisational Practices

The mesosystem encompasses the interaction between two or more settings where students actively participate (see Figure 19). This section considers how SLTs build and maintain relationships with a student's former school, family and therapeutic professionals (e.g. EPs, school counsellors and CAMHS) to promote inclusion. Variations in school proactiveness are understood by Bandura's (2006) core principles of agency. Furthermore, the findings alluded to a possible connection between agency and SLTs' discourse of SEMH.

5.4.3.1 SLTs Proactiveness: Intentionality and Self-Reactiveness

The variation in SLTs' approaches to promoting inclusion can be understood by referring to Bandura's notion of 'collective agency' (2000). He regarded

intentionality and self-reactiveness as two core principles that empower individuals to achieve their desired outcomes. The former is the impetus to create a plan to meet *desired* actions, and the latter is the *motivation* to implement and execute them (Bandura, 2018). Analysis of findings from the present study indicates that leaders in School A allude to enacting these core principles more than those in Schools B and C.

In School A, SLT expressed their intention to engage students and parents before joining the school. It appeared that this relationship was actualised by deploying non-teaching, pastoral heads of year, which enabled them to respond to issues promptly and visit all students in primary schools ahead of transfers (see Section 4.4.2.2.3, 4.4.1.1.1). Perhaps this also supported their ability to informally engage with and relate to parents before problems arose (see Section 4.4.2.2.4). It appears that there were numerous benefits from this proactive approach. For instance, it enabled the adults at home and school to sensitively explore issues together. Their harmonious relationship may have facilitated sharing information because parents alerted members of the SLT to suspected SEMH needs of their child or their child's peers' (Susan, School A, Position 49). This engagement is crucial as parents are highly influential in the development and recovery of students' mental health issues (Kelly & Coughlan, 2019; Martin-Denham; 2021; O'Reilly et al., 2018).

In addition, SLTs in this school spoke confidently about promptly detecting needs (James, School A, Position 48) and attending training on listening to students' needs (see Section 4.4.1.2.1.2). Similarly, Spratt et al. (2006a) found that schools that restructured their support teams to improve the pastoral care available to

students and their families were better and quicker at identifying and responding to difficulties.

Conversely, School B appeared to be less intentional and more reactive to engaging with external organisations SLTs in this school claimed that their communication and engagement systems with students' former schools were poor. In School B, they reported having limited staff to visit students ahead of transfers, calling the transfer process 'flawed', leaving them feeling blindsided by the needs of students joining the school, admitting that they 'could do more' (Laura, Position 38; Andrew, Position 39). Their limited self-reactiveness was evident as they spoke about waiting in vain to receive information from schools or parents rather than actively seeking it (see Section 4.4.2.1.1.1). Implications of this have been highlighted as poorly managed primary-secondary transfers for CYP with additional needs have been found to amplify problematic behaviour and lead to a PEX (Farouk, 2017; Trotman et al., 2015).

Leaders in Schools B and C also commented on their disjointed communication with parents, referring to an 'element of dysfunctionality between the three sides of the triangle, in terms of student, school and parent' (David School B, Position 56). Thus, it was described that adults at home and school often differed in their conceptualisation and acceptance of students' needs, causing each system to blame the other (see Section 4.4.1.3.2.2). This reportedly restricted schools from implementing support and, in some instances, resulted in official and unofficial forms of exclusion. For example, Laura 'encouraged them (parents) to look for another school' (School B, Position 197). Similarly, Dix (2017) found that home–school conflict can exacerbate students' SEMH needs and propel a PEX. Staff in School B desired a school-based family support worker and had previously admired the

parenting service for 'teaching parents how to parent' (David, School B, Position 193). Because of the fragility of the home–school relationship, leadership in Schools B and C reported that families frequently withheld important information that would have changed how students were sanctioned. By their own admission, leaders in Schools B and C were primarily reactive to issues and demonstrated little intentionality. If this was the case, perhaps it was a barrier to them being self-reactive to actualise inclusive practice by their own standards.

5.4.3.1.1 Proactiveness and SEMH Discourse

Educators who adopt a less-proactive approach to inclusion hold a deficit discourse of disability compared to those who were more proactive (Skidmore, 2004). Those with a deficit discourse of inclusion were reluctant to make systemic changes regarding educational practice and professional development as opposed to individuals who adopt a model of disability that considers systemic influences. This may have parallels with findings in the current study. It is suggested that School A may hold values associated with the ecological model of needs because they were explicit about students' SEMH needs that interact with the school environment, which includes staff's knowledge, deployment, influence and authority. Although Schools B and C have some regard for the interactive nature between a child and their ecosystem, their views aligned closely to a deficit model of needs. They stressed the requirement for medicalised treatment that the school cannot provide, perhaps because they regard themselves as 'laymen' (David, School B, Position 71); additionally, they questioned whether it was possible to teach mental health in schools. Instead, leaders offer temporary holding, using 'sticking plaster approach[es]' until medicalised treatment was available (Alex, School C, Position 64).

5.4.3.1.1.1 Dependency on Therapeutic Practitioners

The deficit model of disability disempowers non-medical individuals from supporting students' needs and gives ultimate authority and capability to medical experts (Slee, 2011). For instance, SLTs dwelled on their lack of confidence in exerting their authority and referred to themselves as 'laypeople', often juxtaposing their sense of incompetency with the expertise of EPs, school counsellors and, at times, CAMHS, thereby placing these professionals in the expert role (Andrew, School B, Position 160). Hence, leaders spoke highly of the adaptive role of the school counsellor, including her responsiveness and the seamless self-referral system for students (see Section 4.4.2.3). This contrasted with the inflexible service delivery and referral process of CAMHS, although their ability to manage complexity was appreciated. Furthermore, SLTs desired EPs to be school-based full-time, become part of the school community and respond to SEMH needs as and when they occurred.

Overall, SLTs wanted these therapeutic practitioners to mend and 'rescue' students and staff (Dorothy, School B, Position 156). This may be interpreted as another example of a reduced sense of agency to promote inclusion that reduced their motivation to facilitate inclusivity. Likewise, in the literature, the input of external staff reduced the educators' sense of responsibility to support students with mental health needs (Spratt et al., 2006b). Such findings suggested an over-reliance on mental health professionals, thereby creating dependency.

Dependency can be regarded as a defense response to a perceived threatening situation, causing reliance on others for survival (Bion, 1961). Bion's (1961) theory explained that when this dependency state was unsuccessful, staff may go into 'flight mode', which refers to 'a complete avoidance, denial and giving up

of the task and of the role (Dowling & Osborne, 2003, p. 24). In the present study, this 'giving up' may exist in the form of a PEX; Alex hesitantly stated that a PEX was a school ' . . . giving up . . . coming to the end of what they're able to do . . . ' (School C, Position 260). Similar findings were identified in the literature, whereby Spratt et al.(2006b) found that dependency enables a staff group to maintain their exclusionary practice. The authors drew on the Bourdieusian notion of 'professional habitus' to explain that this reproduces the schools' sociocultural conditions (see Section 2.4.3.1). Alternatively, the Timpson Review of School Exclusions (DfE, 2019b) recommended that school staff should work alongside agencies, learn from them and jointly solve problems. This may improve SLTs' sense of agency rather than take on the role of a saviour. This practice was more apparent in School A than Schools B and C. Such discrepancies in the practices of these schools may also reflect the school context; School A had fewer number of CYP with SEMH needs that Schools B and C (see Table 8), this lower level of need may enable them to create systems that are more adaptive and cause them to be less reliant on external services.

5.4.3.3 Mesosystem Summary

Although all schools seem to value inter-organisational collaboration, School A appears to have implemented systems to accomplish this. It is proposed that this was facilitated through the core elements of agency, namely intentionality and self-reactiveness. Whilst the senior leaders in Schools B and C noted that they ought to improve their relational systems, other barriers may include their possible deficit discourse, which impedes their sense of agency.

5.4.4 Microsystem: Containing Relationships for Students

The microsystem is concerned with students' immediate environment, such as the school and includes their interpersonal relationships within this social context (see Figure 19). SLTs appear to value relationships and thus call on tutors, role models and EPs to provide emotional support for students. This is explained using Bion's (1962) notion of containment.

5.4.4.1 Theoretical Framework: Containment (Bion, 1962)

Containment is the emotional processing and returning of children's needs by a caring adult (Bion, 1962). For instance, in the original theory, an infant projects intolerable feelings of being upset or experiencing pain to its primary caregiver (mother). She offers containment by empathising and processing the feelings to return them to an adapted, healthier condition through acknowledging, reassuring and soothing the infant. The infant reintegrates the (new) emotion as its own, thus experiencing containment. A carer's failure to do this becomes uncontaining for the child resulting in feelings of bewilderment and being overwhelmed (Bion, 1962).

In the present study, SLTs highlight the importance of students engaging in empathetic, relatable conversations to make sense of confusing or overwhelming feelings that come with SEMH needs. They believed that these relationships can counteract issues related to a 'dysfunctional family', all of which contribute to SEMH. Leaders also believed that this enabled students to process their academic struggles and communication difficulties. Perhaps this can be likened to a form of containment. Supporting literature has identified that during the secondary school phase, containing relationships can allow the student to develop expressions for previously suppressed feelings and experiences, thus enabling them to develop the ability to

contain and think about their emotions and behaviour (Hulusi & Maggs, 2015). This may directly affect improving their behaviour because relationships that are nurturing or provide emotional holding can be the determining factor that prevents a PEX (Warin, 2017). Furthermore, these caring relationships have been found to help students resolve difficulties, enable them to develop trusting, safe and secure relationships, improve their academic progress, overall wellbeing and deter a PEX (DFE & PHE, 2021; Geddes, 2006; Langford et al., 2014, Razer, 2017).

Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory emphasised positive relationships between the child and significant adults to improve the CYP's development. These ought to be individuals with whom the child has established an emotional attachment (Bronfenbrenner, 1973, 1979). The benefits of this relationship were increased if the bond is reciprocal and permanent, and the adult has adequate skills to understand them and encourage them to transfer the skills to other relationships (Rosa & Tudge, 2013); this may be the role of form tutors.

5.4.4.1.1 Form Tutors

In the present study, SLTs viewed a student's form tutor as well placed to provide containment for those with SEMH needs; this was facilitated by their frequent and consistent contact, which provided familiarity, enabling them to build a bond over time (see Section 4.4.2.2.1). In support of this, Warin (2017) noted that daily contact between students and school staff leads adults to develop a form of 'deep care' (p. 196). These relationships can ultimately promote inclusion and minimise the prospect of a PEX (Lippard et al., 2018; Partridge, 2012; Razer & Friedman, 2017). In the present study, students were encouraged to confide in their tutors about difficulties as their 'first point of call' as soon as issues occurred (Simon, School B, Position 134).

Furthermore, tutors were deemed responsible for identifying and investigating the early onset of needs before sharing these emerging difficulties with their SLT to trigger a process of support (see Section 4.4.2.2.2). Consistent with these findings, government guidance suggested a growing responsibility for staff to detect the early signs of mental health needs (PHE, 2021). This was partly due to daily contact (House of Commons Health and Education Committee, 2017). Similarly, Spratt et al. (2006a) noted that developing caring relationships enable better identification of needs for a student who appears withdrawn.

However, the expectation for tutors to identify and investigate needs was not unanimous within the present study or in the literature. Some leaders in the present study spoke of limitations relating to a tutor's time, capacity, ability, confidence and role responsibilities (see Section 4.4.2.2.2). These views were also identified in the literature (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Martin-Denham, 2021; O'Riley et al., 2018; Spratt et al., 2006b). However, in isolation, training was unlikely to enable staff to become confident or have the resilience to manage the extent of SEMH needs (See Section 4.4.2.2.1). Psychologists in particular, have noted the negative impact of teachers wellbeing when supporting students social-emotional needs (Ellis, 2018; Hulusi & Maggs, 2015; Jackson, 2002; Partridge, 2012) and the negative impact that this can have on teachers thinking capacity (Moore, 2017).

5.4.4.1.2 Mentors and Role Models

Members of the SLTs in the present study alluded to trained mentors and casual role models being able to provide containment for students by being easily accessible, offering emotional safety and sharing relatable experiences (see Section 4.4.2.3.3 and 4.4.2.2.5). Leaders perceived relatable students as 'more effective' than adults at making a positive difference to students' future behaviour (Samantha,

School A, Position 129). Therefore, across Schools A and C, the helpful nature of relatives and older students was drawn on as a form of early intervention to prevent a PEX.

In School C, there was an emphasis on ensuring students had a trusted adult with whom they felt emotionally 'safe' and 'at ease' (Rick, Position 168; Alex, Position 158). Staff commented that this form of containment was used instead of formal mentoring primarily due to staff shortages.

However, challenges to this type of support may arise because untrained staff, sixth-formers and family role models may lack the skills to notice and manage entrenched issues. As noted from the data, families have their own needs and may be unable to provide a nurturing environment (see Section 4.4.1.3.1). Perhaps relying on these individuals to act as mentors was a consequence of the limited funding for LA services and the privatisation of social services, leaving the community to volunteer to tackle societal issues (Giroux, 2009).

5.4.4.1.3 Educational Psychologists

Many leaders spoke highly of EPs' skill set; however, there were barriers to their level of responsiveness (see Section 4.4.2.3.3). Leaders alluded to EPs possessing the psychological expertise to provide containment for YP by developing relationships with them. This acknowledgement of EP's therapeutic role is encouraging because they have previously been branded as primarily providing cognitive assessments, leaving clinical psychologists, counsellors and CAMHS practitioners to support wellbeing (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). However, the data showed that EPs had not adapted far from their traditional roles as providing psychological assessment. SLTs believed that EPs statutory duties meant that they were disconnected from the school organisation and its needs; this was

compounded by their physical location (off the school site). Leaders explained that EPs' inability to take up this containing role resulted in PEX for some students (see Section 4.4.2.3.3); similar findings were identified by Burton et al. (2009).

5.4.4.2. Containment for SLT

Perhaps members of SLTs also felt a sense of containment or relief knowing that teachers, mentors and EPs support students' needs. They understood that students and school staff would likely struggle with their unmet needs without relationships of this nature. Bandura (2018) referred to this as proxy agency, which is delegating duties to others (with more knowledge, influence or power) to reach the acquired goal; in this case, it facilitates inclusion. Perhaps proxy agency or outsourcing support to provide containment is the result of limited collective agency; nevertheless, it may enable SLTs to regain a sense of agency because they were nearing their goal of inclusion (Bandura, 2018).

5.4.4.4 Microsystem Summary

This section has highlighted that collectively, SLTs valued containing relationships for those with SEMH needs; they suggested that this emotional holding was an antidote to pressures at all ecosystem levels and reduced the likelihood of a PEX. However, barriers exist in teachers' emotional capacity, mentors' skill set and the limited EP time. It is suggested that difficulties navigating through these tensions contribute to SLTs' limited sense of collective agency to promote inclusion.

5.5 Recommendations for Practice

This section draws on the research implications to generate suggestions that may improve policy and practice regarding inclusion for students with SEMH needs

at risk of PEX. Here, recommendations consider the interactions between and within layers of the ecosystem; this is considered the most useful for improving mental health policy and practice, as Eriksson et al. (2018) stated.

5.5.1 Macrosystem

A radical change to UK education is required to address the tension between performative pressures and inclusion; this could be activated by a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' approach. The former approach would require dismantling oppressive government policies and practices based on neoliberalism (Fuller, 2019). This necessitates a shift in education culture to one that values performativity and inclusion equally, a feature that should be reflected in the DfE's ideologies, incentives, policies and guidance. This shift may include a language change, from that which pathologises students to more ecologically induced terms that consider YPs interaction with their ecosystem. The challenges of these adaptations were not underestimated; thus, it may be a joint task for wellbeing practitioners, educators and governed policymakers. It is also acknowledged that these are optimistic yet unlikely recommendations considering the financial benefits of neoliberalism to the elite, both nationally and globally (Harvey, 2005). Nevertheless, these changes are necessary.

Alternatively, a 'bottom-up' approach would require SLTs to pursue freedom from oppression by ejecting what Freire (2005) regarded as the internalised image of the government. This could be achieved by SLTs taking collective action to oppose neoliberal ideology through 'hidden forms of resistance' (Fuller, 2018, p. 32). Practically, this may require leaders to consider counter-discourses to performativity and to introduce new narratives through adopting more inclusive language (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). Additionally, it might involve developing a pathfinder

scheme with a school or an LA to undertake these systemic changes. This would require substantial external support and guidance, perhaps leading to action research study to further knowledge and influence practice. This may be a form of SLTs taking up their sense of autonomy and responsibility for inclusion, perhaps reducing their internal conflict regarding PEX.

5.5.2 Exosystem

Central and local governments must resource the aforementioned socio-political changes to enable implementation. This would facilitate a curriculum targeted towards creating well-rounded individuals increased contact time between schools and services, such as CAMHS and EPS, allowing for greater support for the school system. As such, the DfE pledged to fund doctorate training for an additional 600 trainee EPs each year from 2020 (Zahaw, 2019). However, this may have little impact on traded time if SEND continues to be overwhelmed with statutory work and requires EP advice. Therefore, strategic planning for the deployment of this staff is important. Additionally, the LAs' method of funding statutory assessments for those at risk of PEX whilst in their host school should be better advertised, and schools should be encouraged to utilise it; if successful, this could be rolled out nationally.

5.5.3 Mesosystem

To improve inter-organisational practices, leaders who believed their school has an effective system could share their strategies of 'what works' with other secondary schools experiencing considerable challenges. This may cover practices such as accessing pupil information from former schools, the deployment of heads of year, parental engagement and expectations of external services. Where schools face unique challenges due to variations in demographics or ethos, it may be the role

of the EP to support strategic planning, (re)building relationships and practical planning to address organisational barriers to implementing more proactive systems (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

5.5.4 Microsystem

In line with suggestions from the literature, school leaders may benefit from making deep-rooted systemic changes to their overly academic ethos that disadvantages students with SEMH needs (McKeon, 2020; Sprat et al., 2006a). As agents external to the school system but have access to the internal mechanisms, EPs can help alter the schools' homeostasis and change the status quo (Beaver, 2011; Dowling, 2018). Their unique role permits them to 'change perceptions' and 'promote awareness' within the system (BPS, 2006, p. 7). This may be achieved by challenging the within-child narrative of SEMH needs by drawing on relational (Nash & Schlosserb, 2015) and ecosystemic (Watkins & Wagner, 2001) psychological paradigms rather than behaviourist approaches. These systemic narratives can be reflected in statutory reports by including a section on 'systemic/ environmental/ contextual issues' as recommended by Buck (2015, p. 230). To improve SLTs' practice, EPs may also support the development of positive behaviour management skills and strategies and writing and reviewing policies for inclusion and behaviour (Hatton, 2013; Jones et al., 2013).

Training and supervision for SLTs may improve their understanding and confidence regarding SEMH. In turn, this may increase SLTs sense of agency to promote inclusion and reduce their dependency on external services. However, this must be combined with macrosystemic recommendations, and individuals' roles and responsibilities must be clearly stated. EPs are well placed to provide this training

and to empower staff by working closely with leadership and enhancing their sense of self-efficacy around inclusion and behaviour management skills (Hatton, 2013).

Supervision is also recommended to support form tutors process unconscious projections from students and unconscious feelings associated with the emotions of the task, this is something which EPs have successfully provided through supervision and work discussion groups which has enabled staff to reflect on their practice and feel heard (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013; Ellis & Wolfe, 2019). Complementary research states that support for teachers can reduce the risk of them becoming emotionally exhausted (compassion fatigue) and over-identified (projective identification) with students' emotional pain (Evans, 2013; Showalter, 2010). This may enable staff to feel supported and better able to provide emotional holding for students; this is referred to as container-contained (Bion, 1962). While the benefits of this have been reported, a school's capacity to provide this level of investment (in training or supervision) may be contested by macrosystemic performative pressures that prioritise attainment over inclusion.

5.6 Dissemination Strategy

The aim of disseminating this research is to raise awareness and improve policy and practice regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. To achieve this, the research will be dispersed to stakeholders at all levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory beginning with those closest to YP before sharing it with governmental policy makers. During this process the anonymity of schools and the LA will be maintained.

5.6.1 Microsystem

This research will be presented to the SLT in each participating school. Staff will have the opportunity to discuss the findings in relation to their school's policy and practice. SLTs will also have first refusal to partner with the researcher to discuss this research with stakeholders in the exosystem (LA practitioners, local member of parliament) and macrosystem (the DfE).

5.6.2 Mesosystem

This research will also be presented and discussed at the LA FAP meeting where the impetus of this research derived. It is envisaged that sharing this information may aid headteachers in their collective problem solving at a systemic rather than individual child level.

In addition, this research will be shared at the LA's service days which are attended by professionals from CAMHS, SEND service, EPS, school improvement team and behaviour support services. It is envisaged that these findings will improve collaborative practice (pertaining to inclusion) between school and agency personal. Additionally, it may enable external professionals to reflect how their organisation contributes to inclusionary and exclusionary practices creating potential for within service problem-solving.

5.6.3 Exosystem

At an LA level, it is the researcher's intention to share the research with local members of parliament in writing and/or by attending surgeries where concerns and amendments to current policies are heard. It is hoped that there will be an opportunity to present a proposed policy briefing pertaining to the PEX of YP with

SEMH needs. This may require support from individuals with experience in policy writing in addition to school leaders and EPs (particularly in the focus LA) who have a vested interest in seeing change. It would be prudent to accentuate the wider social and financial benefits of inclusion so that the findings resonate with stakeholders in the political sphere who operate within the neoliberal market. It is hoped that the support from a member of parliament will champion a change in policy and practice locally and then nationally when approaching the DfE.

5.6.4 Macrosystem

Presenting this research to the DfE is fundamental to action policy change at a national level. Therefore, this research will be shared with the Minister for Children and Families who is responsible for SEN, mental health, disadvantaged and vulnerable children. In addition, the Secretary of State for Education who oversees school improvement and the curriculum will be contacted. It is hoped that DfE will reconsider the conflicting policies which simultaneously promote PEX and support for those with SEMH needs under a neoliberal government. It is envisaged that the traction gathered by stakeholders in the microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem throughout the aforementioned dissemination process will further support the need to revise contradictory policies (and therefore practices) which disadvantage those with SEMH needs.

Finally, it is the researcher's intention to publish a condensed version of this research in a peer-reviewed journal. Appropriate journals relating to inclusion and EP practice are the 'Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders' and 'Educational Psychology in Practice'. In addition, publishing this research in an open access journal such as 'International Journal of Leadership in Education' will likely maximise

the articles discoverability and increase readership of the article. It is envisaged that disseminating the research in this way will benefit a range of professional who work within the education, psychology, political spheres, and perhaps even attract the attention of funding agencies to support the future vison of this research (as cited in Section 5.9).

5.7 Methodological Considerations of Research

There were several methodological strengths and limitations of this research during sampling data gathering, data collection and reporting of findings.

5.7.1 Reflection on the Use of the Term SEMH

As cited in the introductory chapter, the term SEMH is highly debated. Therefore, its meaning may have unintentionally differed throughout the thesis. For instance, it is possible that SLTs were referring to students with unidentified needs who portrayed similar observable behaviours to those with recognised difficulties; this was raised within the data (Mary School A, Position 67; Alex, School B, Position 51). Consequently, some of the data may have reduced comparability. Nevertheless, this was expected because implicit in inclusion issues are different interpretations and conceptulisations of needs (Dimitrellou et al. 2020; Martin-Dehnam, 2021).

5.7.2 Sampling: School Selection

Selecting schools with differential PEX rates was an effective strategy that allowed for comparing the divergent viewpoints about inclusion (Dimitrellou et al., 2020; Malmqvist, 2016; Munn et al., 2000; Parsons, 2009c). This approach was particularly useful in illuminating the contrast between School A and Schools B and C, which enabled the researcher to draw on some of the practices of School A within

the recommendations. However, caution should be taken when considering the accuracy of each school's PEX rates due to off-rolling. (Dimitrellou et al., 2020; Done & Knowler, 2020).

Furthermore, although there had been some efforts to recognise the different views and practices across schools, any reports of these or suggestions that follow are tentative based on one perspective of many (Bhaskar, 2008). Thus, it is impossible to draw definite conclusions about the schools' values or practices, such supposition are beyond the philosophical stance and aims of this research.

5.7.3 Data Gathering: Heterogeneity Between Focus Groups

Caution must be taken when considering the views of School C because they may not be representative of the entire leadership team as only two members of the SLT participated (see Section 3.6.2.2). The researcher decided to continue with data gathering because rescheduling or recruiting another school at the end of the term would have had detrimental effects on the research schedule. This highlights the logistical pressures and realities involved in conducting real-world research with complex organisations (Fidan, 2017).

An implication of gathering the views of only two leaders in School C was that the views of other leadership members (e.g. heads of year and the SENCo) were not heard. This may have limited the possibility of gathering rich data pertaining to students academic progress and SEN, despite this the information provided by the two participants appeared insightful. An additional implication of conducting the focus group with only Alex and Rick is that their voices are fairly dominant within the findings and discussion chapter, these must be read with caution as they do not represent the entire SLT.

Interestingly, Table 9 shows that although School A had the most members of senior leaders (12), their focus group was the shortest in duration (41 minutes) in comparison to Schools B and C who had less staff (8 and 2 respectively), yet their focus groups lasted longer (77 and 65 minutes respectively). This variability is explained by the fact that School A had less to discuss than the other two schools. This is unsurprising given School A's low rates of PEXs and relatively harmonious relationships with systems external to the school. In contrast, leaders in Schools B and C, engaged in in-depth discussions about their numerous PEXs and the challenges they experienced with parents and agencies, this rich discussion extended the length of the focus groups.

5.7.4 Data Analysis: Quantity of Themes

In line with advice from Braun and Clarke (2006), the themes tell a good story of the data, however when taking this thesis forward to dissemination it will be beneficial to condense and synthesise the themes to enable readers to consider the key aspects of the data more holistically.

5.7.5 Findings: Contribution to the Knowledge Base

The application of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory has illuminated the interrelated dynamics that reproduces PEX for CYP with SEMH needs at each layer of the ecosystem. It is hoped that presenting the findings within this theory highlights that contributory factors towards PEX are not located within one layer of an ecosystem but include all; this may go some way to reducing the negative stigma of PEX on students. These findings invite stakeholders at all levels to reflect on the contribution of their system, thereby increasing consciousness of SEMH and PEX. In a more practical sense, this awareness may enable individuals to avoid

contributing to or being a bystander to the depoliticisation of SEMH. Instead, one may be able to problematise the social context, thereby moving away from purely individualised and medicalised narratives and intervention models. This is an important finding for the focus LA in the context of their objective to address the high rates of PEX for those with SEMH needs.

The findings of this research have also addressed gaps in the literature (see Section 2.5) regarding SLTs views and practices concerning relationships as facilitators of inclusive practice at the mesosystemic and microsystemic levels. The findings of this research have also confirmed features within the literature about macrosystemic and exosystemic pressures but within the current sociopolitical climate. These confirmatory findings indicate that despite the reforms to inclusive policy and practice, many of the issues that hindered inclusion in 2006 and 2009 as per Sprat et al.'s (2006a, 2006b) and Burton et al.'s. (2009) studies are present approximately a decade later.

5.8 Researcher's Reflections

Reflections will be written in the first person to illuminate the experiences of conducting this research. In line with BPS (2018) practice guidelines that EPS ought to be aware of their belief systems, I developed a reflexive stance through ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal to understand the impact of self on the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This subjectivity is innate in qualitative research because I am not a 'blank slate'. My research is influenced by my identity and shaped by personal and professional thoughts, assumptions, values and experiences (Dey, 1999). To consider how my positionality affected the research–researcher dynamics (Corlett & Mavin, 2017), I reflected on the work of Burnham (2013). He discussed

social graces, owing to one's gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality. Of particular pertinence were my education, employment, gender, and race. My position as a black Caribbean female instructing and facilitating discussions with predominantly Caucasian male participants challenged society's ethnic and gender power discourses; white males are typically in a position of authority over black females (Marshall, 2001). I was mindful that this social disruption of me leading the focus groups could be challenged, resulting in my feelings of inferiority, losing control and SLTs dominating the direction of the focus groups (Odendal & Shaw, 2002). I also wondered how these dynamics affected leaders responses to me—for instance, whether my marginalised position mirrored that of students with SEMH needs. I remained critically reflexive about the dynamics between our different cultures and how it may influence the research process (Thambianathan & Kinsella, 2021). I also remained in control by preparing and being knowledgeable about my topic and the situation I found myself in.

Conversely, I wondered whether members of the SLTs may have viewed my professional role as one of power, influencing them to respond positively about the EPS to maintain positive inter-agency relationships. Related to this, they may have provided pro-inclusion responses due to a presumption that this aligns with my professional views. To mitigate against these potential power dynamics, I emphasised my curiosity as a student and enabled participants to take the expert role to inform me about their views and practices, thus seeking to adopt and maintain an authentic, non-judgmental stance to promote honesty and openness (Schein, 2004). I also drew on the teaching of Reed (2001), who proposed that roles need to

be searched for rather than found; thus, I utilised supervision to help me navigate the emotional turbulence of developing a new role (Woods et al., 2015) as a researcher.

5.8.1 Personal and Professional Learning

I have gained a wealth of knowledge regarding the value of conducting research and the necessity of diligence and critical thinking at each stage, skills that will aid future research. This has taken me on a teachable journey of grappling with new ideologies such as neoliberalism and collective agency, which has increased my awareness of the sociopolitical factors within EP practice as advised by BPS (2018). In particular, the notion of SLTs' lacking collective agency contrasts with my initial assumption at the outset of the study that SLTs were autonomous and powerful. Therefore, the findings that leaders may be disempowered was unexpected. Through this, I have learned the importance of being willing to challenge my assumptions and uncertainty until meaning emerges (Etherington, 2004). Overall, the research journey has highlighted the importance of remaining focused and determined despite difficulties.

5.9 Directions for Future Research

As an exploratory study, this research has provided insights into the PEX of students with SEMH needs. Further explanatory research may enhance the findings and provide more conclusive results to this preliminary research. This may include an ethnographic approach into the practices of School A to explain what they do to promote inclusion, given their low reported PEX rates and reportedly effective and proactive systems. Using a grounded theory approach to generate an explanatory theory to develop a theoretical framework for practice may be of use. Nilholm (2020)

states that it is important to have theories about inclusion to improve practice and promote the use of case studies of particular schools to achieve this.

Finally, given the increased global attention on mental health following the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be insightful to replicate this study to understand whether and or how the pandemic has shaped or contributed to SLTs' views and practices on this topic and whether new research and government policy on SEMH and PEX influence SLTs' views practices (DfE,2021f; UK Parliament, 2020).

5.10 Chapter Summary

This study set out to explore SLTs' views and practices regarding the inclusion and PEX of students with SEMH needs. Key findings highlight the tension between performative pressures and inclusion. Framing the findings of this study within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model reveals how a complex series of factors from both outside and within schools, impact on SLTs' perceptions and practices concerning this topic. This research has found that SLTs primarily view PEX due to macrosystemic performative pressures that restrict the schools' inclusive ethos. This is exacerbated by a decrease in LA funding of services to support inclusion at the exosystem. It appears that these macrosystemic and exosystemic factors reduce SLTs' sense of collective agency to promote inclusion. They attempt to regain this by establishing systems and containing relationships at the mesosystemic and microsystemic levels. The mesosystem includes building inter-organisational relationships between the school and therapeutic practitioners, the student's former schools and students' homes. Schools that have a proactive approach to communicating with these systems appear to report more engaging relations and report lower PEX rates than schools that appear more passive or

reactive in their approach. Although interesting, it is beyond the remit of this research to determine a causal link here. At the microsystem, SLTs state that by containing relationships between students and form tutors, role models therapeutic professionals can prevent a PEX. Whilst this may support some students, others remain vulnerable to PEX due to wider sociopolitical, financial and organisational limitations experienced within the exosystem. This highlights the tension between inclusion and neoliberal pressures.

From a critical realist reflexive stance, it is evident that the PEX of students with SEMH needs is more intricate and layered than it appears, leaders are influenced by a host of factors, both observable and unobservable. This leads to further questions as to whether the punitive sanction of a PEX is appropriate for a CYP given the plethora of dynamics involved in this decision, many of which are out of the student's control. Thus, within a multifaceted ecosystem, YP with SEMH needs become 'collateral casualties' of political, financial and social effects resulting in them being pushed to the social margins of society via PEX – a practice enacted by SLT although governed by multiple complexities beyond their control (Bauman 2011 p 136; Slee, 2011; Thompson et al. 2021).

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<u>Appendices</u>

Appendix A

Table A

PEX by Primary Area of SEND - Secondary Schools 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 (DfE, 2021c)

SEND primary area of need	2019/2020		2018/2019		2017/2018		2016/2017		2015/2016 **	
	Number of YPs excluded	PEX rate	Number of YPs excluded	PEX rate	Number of YPs excluded	PEX rate	Number of YPs excluded	PEX rate	Number of YPs excluded	PEX rate
Autistic spectrum disorder	52	0.106813467	78	0.18329221	87	0.224661	66	0.184843	62	0.184546
Hearing impairment	8	0.081061911	15	0.158478605	11	0.119539	15	0.164908	9	0.0999334
Moderate learning difficulty	243	0.266289697	412	0.45308084	356	0.388007	377	0.393783	352	0.343612
Multisensory impairment	1	0.095328885	1	0.121212121	2	0.280899	1	0.15748	0	0
No specialist assessment	41	0.349829352	52	0.485527544	79	0.795569	75	0.639168	76	0.72776
Other difficulty disability	52	0.207941776	92	0.373695114	108	0.430108	105	0.402592	100	0.370316
Physical disability	4	0.030241173	12	0.095602294	10	0.0828089	10	0.0852079	3	0.0258242

Profound and multiple learning difficulty	0	0	1	0.25974026	3	0.668151	0	0	0	0
Severe learning difficulty	6	0.294261893	4	0.20746888	6	0.2886	1295	1.76611	1188	1.57859
Social emotional and mental health	902	0.991372204	1302	1.602994226	1306	1.73138	111	0.257284	88	0.210733
Specific learning difficulty	128	0.145350488	269	0.315014111	6	0.2886	4	0.19802	4	0.187178
Speech language and communications needs	79	0.154053158	107	0.224912767	124	0.274963	263	0.312563	201	0.231056
Visual impairment	8	0.137646249	7	0.124444444	11	0.207391	13	0.248804	7	0.134486
		55%		61%						

Note

*Data covering the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years included PEX rates during the COVID-19 pandemic where many schools were partially or entirely closed thus comparisons to previous years should be treated with caution.

** Low PEX data may reflect the transfer from statement of special education needs to and EHCP, may students with social emotional difficulties may have been using previous descriptor as per Code of Practice 2001.

Appendix B

Table B

Proportion of PEXs from Secondary Schools (DfE, 2021a)

Academic year	PEX from all school types (primary, secondary and special)	PEX from secondary schools	
		Number of students	Percentage of PEXs from secondary school
2019/2020*	4269	5057	84.77
2018/2019	7894	6753	76.58
2017/2018	7905	6612	83.64
2016/2017	7719	6384	82.71

Note

*Data covering the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years included PEX rates during the COVID-19 pandemic where many schools were partially or entirely closed thus comparisons to previous years should be treated with caution.

Appendix C

Table C

National PEX rates and Comparative LA Rates (DfE, 2021b)

Academic Year	PEX Rates by Region	Total Rate f PEX (Primary, Secondary and Special Schools)	Secondary Schools
2019/2020	National	0.06126	0.12522
	LA	Higher↑	Lower↓
2018/2019	National	0.09651	0.20292
	LA	Lower↓	Higher↑
2017/2018	National	0.09768	0.20292
	LA	Higher↑	Lower↓
2016/2017	National	0.09619	0.19807
	LA	Lower↓	Higher↑
2015/2016	National	0.08443	0.17054
	LA	Higher↑	Higher↑

Note

- Number anonymised to preserve LA's identify

Appendix D

Table D

Schools' Accountability Measures (National College for School Leadership, 2012; DfE, 2020a).

Accountability measures	Year introduced
Ofsted	1992
Programme for International Student Assessment	2000
Performance-related Pay	2013
Progress Eight Assessments	2016
English Baccalaureate	2017

Appendix E

Table E

Synonyms and Relevant Alternatives for Literature Review Search Terms

Social emotional mental health	Permanent exclusion	Senior leadership team	Secondary school
SEMH "emotional and behavioural" EBD "social, emotional and behavioural" SEBD "behavioural, emotional and social" BESD "mental health" "well-being" "well being" wellbeing	exclusion* exclud* suspen* expell* inclusion inclusive promotion barriers response*	"school leaders" management* senior* headship leadership* Principal* Teach* staff* headteacher "educational practitioners" "educational professionals"	school "secondary phase" "secondary schools" "high school" "high schools" "secondary education"

Appendix F

Table F

Literature Review: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Publication Type

Publication type	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Year of publication	All published literature between 1994 and 2021	Literature published prior to 1994
Source type	Peer-reviewed academic journals	Dissertations, books, magazines, discussion papers, other papers with no research methodology papers, systematic literature review
Language	Journals written in the English language	Journals written in languages other than English
Geographical location	Studies conducted in the British Isles (United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland)	International studies

Appendix G

Table G

Literature Review: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Relevance

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Type of publication	All published literature between 1994 and 2021	Literature published prior to 1994
	Peer-reviewed literature	Various types of literature such as magazines, dissertations, books, systematic literature reviews
	Journals written in the English language	Journals written in languages other than English
	UK studies	International studies
Focus of study	Social, emotional, mental health (or equivalent term) And or Permanent Exclusion (or equivalent term) and inclusion	Other groups of needs e.g sensory and physical, cognition and learning, communication and interaction. Fixed term exclusions, other disciplinary programs and interventions
Educational context/ setting	LA maintained mainstream secondary school, may also include other types of educational establishments	Academies, non – mainstream secondary school e.g primary school only, special school, alternative provision, pupil referral unit, day units etc.
Participants	Senior leadership team (may include others) Teachers, teaching assistants	Involvement of non senior leadership team e.g students, parents, other professionals etc.

Appendix H

Table H

Scoring of Title Search Results

Article Title Author Publication Year Volume Issue	SEMH	PEX	SLT	Secondary school	Total score out of 4	Included or excluded
Hind, Kristie; Larkin, Rebecca; Dunn, Andrew K. Assessing teacher opinion on the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties into mainstream school classes. 2019 66 4	1	1	0	0	2	Excluded
Nye, Elizabeth; Gardner, Frances; Hansford, Lorraine; Edward, Classroom behaviour management strategies in response to problematic behaviours of primary school children with special educational needs: Views of special educational needs coordinators. Vanessa; Hayes, Rachel; Ford, Tamsin 2016 21 1	1	1	0	0	2	Excluded
Lehane, Teresa 'Cooling the mark out': Experienced teaching assistants' perceptions of their work in the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream secondary schools. 2016 68 1	1	1	0	0	2	Excluded

Kelada, Lauren; Hasking, Penelope; Melvin, Glenn A. School response to self-injury: Concerns of mental health staff and parents. 2016 32 2	1	0	0	1	2	Excluded
Brady, Jude; Wilson, Elaine Teacher wellbeing in England: Teacher responses to school-level initiatives. 2021 51 1	1	0	0	0	1	Excluded

Appendix I

Table I

Scoring of Abstract Search Results

	Author	Article Title	Journal Title	Publi-cation Date	Volume	Issue	SEMH	PEX	SLT	SS	Total Decision
	Armstrong, David	Educator perceptions of children who present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties: a literature review with implications for recent educational policy in England and internationally.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Jul 2014	18	7	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Avramidis, Elias; Bayliss, Phil; Burden, Robert	A Survey into Mainstream Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Education Authority.	Educational Psychology	Jun 2000	20	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Blandford, Sonia	The Impact of 'Achievement for All' on School Leadership.	Educational Management Administration & Leadership	Jan 2013	41	1	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Burton, D.M.; Bartlett, S.J.; Anderson de Cuevas, R.	Are the contradictions and tensions that have characterised educational provision for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties a persistent feature of current policy?	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	Jun 2009	14	2	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	Burton, Diana; Goodman, Ruth	Perspectives of SENCos and support staff in England on their roles, relationships and capacity to support inclusive practice for students with behavioural emotional and social difficulties.	Pastoral Care in Education	Jun 2011	29	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Byrne, David; Carthy, Aiden;	A review of the role of school-related factors in the promotion of student social	Irish Educational Studies	Dec 2020	39	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	McGilloway, Sinead	and emotional wellbeing at post-primary level.									
	Caslin, Marie	They have just given up on me' how pupils labelled with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) experience the process of exclusion from school.	Support for Learning	Jan 2021	36	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Coates, Janine Kim	Teaching inclusively: are secondary physical education student teachers sufficiently prepared to teach in inclusive environments?	Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy	Sep 2012	17	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Cole, Ted; McCluskey, Gillean; Daniels, Harry; Thompson, Ian; Tawell, Alice	'Factors associated with high and low levels of school exclusions: comparing the English and wider UK experience'.	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	Dec2019	24	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

Corcoran, Tim; Finney, Dave	Between education and psychology: School staff perspectives.	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	Jan 2015	20	1	1	1	1	1	4 Included
Croll, Paul; Moses, Diana	Ideologies and utopias: education professionals' views of inclusion.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Mar 2000	15	1	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
Day, Thérèse; Prunty, Anita	Responding to the challenges of inclusion in Irish schools.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	May 2015	30	2	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
Devecchi, Cristina; Rouse, Martyn	An exploration of the features of effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants in secondary schools.	Support for Learning	May 2010	25	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Dimitrellou, Eleni; Hurry, Jane; Male, Dawn	Assessing the inclusivity of three mainstream secondary schools in England: challenges and dilemmas.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Sep 2020	24	10	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	Dimitrellou, Eleni; Male, Dawn	Understanding what makes a positive school experience for pupils with SEND: can their voices inform inclusive practice?	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Apr 2020	20	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Dobson, Graeme; Douglas, Graeme	Factors influencing the career interest of SENCOs in English schools.	British Educational Research Journal	Dec 2020	46	6	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Done, Liz; Murphy, Mike; Watt, Mia	Change management and the SENCo role: developing key performance indicators in the strategic development of inclusivity.	Support for Learning	Nov 2016	31	4	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Done, Liz; Murphy, Mike; Watt, Mia	Change management and the SENCo role: developing key performance indicators	Support for Learning	Nov 2016	31	4	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded

		in the strategic development of inclusivity.									
	Ellins, Jean; Porter, Jill	Departmental differences in attitudes to special educational needs in the secondary school.	British Journal of Special Education	Dec 2005	32	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Emam, Mahmoud M.; Farrell, Peter	Tensions Experienced by Teachers and Their Views of Support for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Mainstream Schools	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Nov 2009	24	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Farrell, Peter; Dyson, Alan; Polat, Filiz	Inclusion and achievement in mainstream schools.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	May 2007	22	2	1	1	1	0	3 Excluded
	Fernandes, Lisa	Could a Focus on Ethics of Care within Teacher Education Have the Potential to Reduce the Exclusion of Autistic Learners?	Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal	20190101	11	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Fitzgerald, Johanna; Radford, Julie	The SENCO role in post-primary schools in Ireland: victims or agents of change?	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Aug 2017	32	3	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Florian, Lani; Rouse, Martyn	Inclusive Practice in English Secondary Schools: lessons learned.	Cambridge Journal of Education	Nov 2001	31	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Flynn, Paula; Shevlin, Michael; Lodge, Anne	Are You Listening? I'm Me!	Reach	Jun 2011	25	1	1	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Golder, Gill; Norwich, Brahm; Bayliss, Phil	Preparing teachers to teach pupils with special educational needs in more inclusive schools: evaluating a PGCE development.	British Journal of Special Education	Jun 2005	32	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Goodman, Anna; Ford, Tamsin	Validation of the Ford Score as a Measure for Predicting the Level of Emotional and Behavioural	Research in Education	Nov 2008	80	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

		Problems in Mainstream Schools									
	Goodman, R.L.; Burton, D.M.	The inclusion of students with BESD in mainstream schools: teachers' experiences of and recommendations for creating a successful inclusive environment.	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	Sep 2010	15	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Hardiman, Sharon; Guerin, Suzanne; Fitzsimons, Elaine	A comparison of the social competence of children with moderate intellectual disability in inclusive versus segregated school settings.	Research in Developmental Disabilities	March/ April 2009	30	2	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Hastings, Paula; Logan, Anna	An Investigation into the Attitudes of Teachers towards Inclusion in a Post-Primary School in Ireland.	Reach	Jun 2013	27	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Humphrey, Neil; Lewis, Sarah	What does 'inclusion' mean for pupils on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools?	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Nov 2008	8	3	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded

	Jørgensen, Clara Rübner; Allan, Julie	Education, schooling and inclusive practice at a secondary free school in England.	British Journal of Sociology of Education	Jun 2020	41	4	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Kane, Jean; Head, George; Cogan, Nicola	Towards Inclusion? Models of Behaviour Support in Secondary Schools in One Education Authority in Scotland.	British Journal of Special Education	Jun 2004	31	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Kelly, Aine; Carey, Sean; McCarthy, Siobhan; Coyle, Ciaran	Challenging Behaviour: Principals' Experience of Stress and Perception of the Effects of Challenging Behaviour on Staff in Special Schools in Ireland	European Journal of Special Needs Education	May 2007	22	2	1	1	1	0	3 Excluded
	Kerins, Pauline	Dilemmas of difference and educational provision for pupils with mild general learning disabilities in the Republic of Ireland.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Feb 2014	29	1	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Kugelmass, Judy; Ainscow, Mel	Leadership for inclusion: a comparison of international practices.	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Nov 2004	4	3	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded

	Lawson, Hazel; Norwich, Brahm; Nash, Tricia	What trainees in England learn about teaching pupils with special educational needs/disabilities in their school-based work: the contribution of planned activities in one-year initial training courses☆.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	May 2013	28	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Liasidou, Anastasia; Svensson, Cathy	Educating leaders for social justice: the case of special educational needs co-ordinators.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Aug 2014	18	8	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Mac Farlane, Kate; Woolfson, Lisa Marks	Teacher attitudes and behaviour toward the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties in mainstream schools: An application of the theory of planned behavior.	Teaching and Teacher Education	20130101	29	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Maher, Anthony	Consultation, negotiation and compromise: the relationship between SENCos, parents and pupils with SEN.	Support for Learning	Feb 2016	31	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Martin-Denham. S	Defining, identifying, and recognising underlying causes of social, emotional and mental health difficulties: thematic analysis of interviews with headteachers in England.	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	Jan 2021	26	2	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	Mc Cluskey, Gillean	Education (additional support for learning) (scotland) act (2004): what does it mean for the way teachers work together?	Scottish Educational Review	Nov 2008	40	2	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Mc Keon, David	Emotional and behavioural difficulties: the effects of structures, ethos and understandings on provision in Irish post-primary schools.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	May 2017	3	2	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	McKeon, David Mc	'Soft barriers' – The impact of school ethos and culture on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Ireland.	Improving Schools	July 2020	23	2	1	1	1	1	4 Included

	Author	Title	Journal	Date							
	Moran, Anne	Embracing inclusive teacher education.	European Journal of Teacher Education	Jun 2007	30	2	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Mowat, Joan Gaynor	Towards the development of self-regulation in pupils experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD).	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	Sep 2010	15	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Mowat, Joan Gaynor	Inclusion of pupils perceived as experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD): affordances and constraints.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Sep 2010	14	6	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	O'Reilly, Michelle; Adams, Sarah; Whiteman, Natasha; Hughes, Jason; Reilly, Paul; Dogra, Nisha	Whose responsibility is adolescent's mental health in the UK? Perspectives of key stakeholders.	School Mental Health: A Multidisciplinary Research and Practice Journal	Dec 2018	10	4	1	1	1	1	4 Included

	Paliokosta, paty; blandford, sonia	Inclusion in school: a policy, ideology or lived experience? Similar findings in diverse school cultures.	Support for Learning	Nov 2010	25	4	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Pearson, Sue; Mitchell, Rafael; Rapti, Maria	"I Will Be 'Fighting' Even More for Pupils with SEN": SENCOs' Role Predictions in the Changing English Policy Context	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Jan 2015	15	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Price, Alan	Improving school attendance: can participation in outdoor learning influence attendance for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties?	Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning	Jun 2015	15	2	1	1	1	0	3 Excluded
	Rechten, Frances; Tweed, Alison E.	An exploratory study investigating the viability of a communication and feedback intervention for school children at risk of exclusion: analysis of staff perspectives.	Educational Psychology in Practice	Jul 2014	30	3	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Richards, Gill	"I Was Confident about Teaching but SEN Scared Me": Preparing New Teachers for Including Pupils with Special Educational Needs	Support for Learning	Aug 2010	25	3	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Robinson, Deborah	Effective inclusive teacher education for special educational needs and disabilities: Some more thoughts on the way forward.	Teaching & Teacher Education	Jan 2017	61		1	1	1	0	3 Excluded
	Sheffield, Emma L; Morgan, Gavin	The perceptions and experiences of young people with a BESD/SEMH classification.	Educational Psychology in Practice	Mar 2017	33	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Smith, Aoife; Prendeville, Paula; Kinsella, William	Using preferred interests to model social skills in a peer-mentored environment for students with special educational needs.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Aug 2018	22	8	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Spratt, Jennifer; Shucksmith, Janet; Philip, Kate; Watson, Cate	Interprofessional support of mental well-being in schools: A Bourdieuan perspective.	Journal of Interprofessional Care	2006	20	4	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	Spratt, Jennifer; Shucksmith, Janet; Philip, Kate; Watson, Cate	'Part of Who we are as a School Should Include Responsibility for Well-Being': Links between the School Environment, Mental Health and Behaviour.	Pastoral Care in Education	Sep 2006	24	3	1	1	1	1	4 Included
	Standing, Vicky; Fearon, Colm; Dee, Tim	Investigating the Value of Restorative Practice: An Action Research Study of One Boy in a Mixed Secondary School	International Journal of Educational Management	20120101	26	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded
	Standing, Vicky; Fearon, Colm; Dee, Tim	Investigating the Value of Restorative Practice: An Action Research Study of One Boy in a Mixed Secondary School	International Journal of Educational Management	Jan 2012	24	4	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Stanforth, Alex; Rose, Jo	'You kind of don't want them in the room': tensions in the discourse of inclusion and exclusion for students displaying challenging behaviour in an English secondary school.	International Journal of Inclusive Education	Dec 2020	24	12	1	1	?	1	3 Excluded
	Szwed, Christine	Remodelling Policy and Practice: The Challenge for Staff Working with Children with Special Educational Needs	Educational Review	May 2005	59	2	1	1	1	0	3 Excluded
	Tucker, Stanley	Pupil vulnerability and school exclusion: developing responsive pastoral policies and practices in secondary education in the UK.	Pastoral Care in Education	Dec 2013	31	4	0	1	1	1	3 Excluded
	Turner, Claire	How Effective and Inclusive Is the School's Behaviour Policy?	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	20030101	8	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

	Webster, Rob; Blatchford, Peter	Making sense of 'teaching', 'support' and 'differentiation': the educational experiences of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans and Statements in mainstream secondary schools.	European Journal of Special Needs Education	Feb 2019	34	1	1	1	0	1	3 Excluded

Appendix J

Table J

Numerical Results of Title Search and Abstract Search

Stage	Search	Number of articles	
		Title search	Abstract search
Database selection	APA PsycINFO, Education Source, ERIC and Psychology and behavioural sciences collection	N/A	N/A
Title search of key terms and related words/synonyms	Social emotional mental health and permanent exclusion and senior leadership team and secondary school	39	3,717
Apply inclusion/exclusion criteria: Type of publication	1994-2021	36	3,551
	Academic journal	29	2,436
	English language	28	2,372
	UK\Republic of Ireland	25	1,157
	Read titles, exported relevant ones to spreadsheet	5	403
Apply inclusion/exclusion criteria: Relevance	Read abstracts and assign score out of four (SEMH, PEX, secondary school, SLT).	5	403
	Scored one out of four	1*	76
	Scored two out of four	4*	262
	Scored three out of four	0*	56**
	Scored four out of four	0*	9**
	Read full manuscript	0	9 (of four out of four) 32 of (three out of four)
Final selection		0	9

Note

*see Appendix H ** see Appendix I

Appendix K

Original CASP Qualitative Checklist (2018)

CASP
Critical Appraisal
Skills Programme

Paper for appraisal and reference:	

Section A: Are the results valid?

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Yes ☐
Can't Tell ☐
No ☐

HINT: Consider
• what was the goal of the research
• why it was thought important
• its relevance

Comments:

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

Yes ☐
Can't Tell ☐
No ☐

HINT: Consider
• If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
• Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal

Comments:

Is it worth continuing?

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

Yes ☐
Can't Tell ☐
No ☐

HINT: Consider
• if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)

Comments:

CASP
Critical Appraisal
Skills Programme

4. Was the recruitment
   strategy appropriate to
   the aims of the
   research?

   Yes ☐
   Can't Tell ☐
   No ☐

   HINT: Consider
   • If the researcher has explained how the
     participants were selected
   • If they explained why the participants
     they selected were the most
     appropriate to provide access to the
     type of knowledge sought by the study
   • If there are any discussions around
     recruitment (e.g. why some people
     chose not to take part)

Comments:

5. Was the data collected in
   a way that addressed the
   research issue?

   Yes ☐
   Can't Tell ☐
   No ☐

   HINT: Consider
   • If the setting for the data collection was
     justified
   • If it is clear how data were collected (e.g.
     focus group, semi-structured interview
     etc.)
   • If the researcher has justified the methods
     chosen
   • If the researcher has made the methods
     explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there
     an indication of how interviews are
     conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
   • If methods were modified during the
     study. If so, has the researcher
     explained how and why
   • If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape
     recordings, video material, notes etc.)
   • If the researcher has discussed
     saturation of data

Comments:

CASP
Critical Appraisal
Skills Programme

6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes	
	Can't Tell	
	No	

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
- How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design

Comments:

Section B: What are the results?

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes	
	Can't Tell	
	No	

HINT: Consider

- If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained
- If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)
- If approval has been sought from the ethics committee

Comments:

CASP
Critical Appraisal
Skills Programme

8. Was the data analysis
sufficiently rigorous?

Yes ☐
Can't Tell ☐
No ☐

HINT: Consider
- If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process
- If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data
- Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process
- If sufficient data are presented to support the findings
- To what extent contradictory data are taken into account
- Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation

Comments:

9. Is there a clear statement
of findings?

Yes ☐
Can't Tell ☐
No ☐

HINT: Consider whether
- If the findings are explicit
- If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments
- If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)
- If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question

Comments:

CASP
Critical Appraisal
Skills Programme

Section C: Will the results help locally?

10. How valuable is the research?

HINT: Consider
- If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature
- If they identify new areas where research is necessary
- If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

Comments:

Appendix L

Table L

Adapted CASP for Mixed Methods Methodology:

Qualitative CASP criteria	Yes, Can't tell, No
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal? Is quantitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal? Does it seek to look for relationships between variables?	
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	
School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part) Was the sample size stated?	

Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	
Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	
Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	

Analysis

Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process

If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data

Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process

If sufficient data are presented to support the findings

To what extent contradictory data are taken into account

Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation

Is there a description of the type of data analysis chosen?

Are effect sizes reported?

Are confidence intervals reported?

Is the significance level reported?

Discussion

Is there a clear statement of findings?

If the findings are explicit

If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments

If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)

If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question

Conclusion: Contribution to the field

How valuable is the research?

If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature

If they identify new areas where research is necessary

If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

Adaptations for mix methods are indicated by a bullet point x

Appendix M

Table M

Overview of Selected Articles for Literature Reviews and Critical Appraisal

Aims, methods and key findings followed critical appraisal for each article are presented.

Martin-Denham (2021) Defining, identifying, and recognising underlying causes of social, emotional and mental health difficulties: thematic analysis of interviews with headteachers in England, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 26:2, 187-205.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To explore how headteachers define, identify, and recognise the underlying causes of SEMH difficulties	Data collection Qualitative: Individual semi-structured phenomenological interviews 30–90 minutes Context: England – Sunderland. September 2018 – June 2019 41 Schools with Ofsted rating ranging from 'inadequate' to 'outstanding' Various types of educational settings: mainstream nursery (n=2), mainstream primary school (n=24), mainstream secondary (n=9). Specialist school (n=4), alternative provision (n=3) Participants: Purposive sampling: Headteachers (n=41) Data analysis: Latent Thematic analysis	No consensus amongst headteachers regarding a definition for SEMH 3 themes To define SEMH difficulties headteachers gauged students managing school routine, aggression and anxiety, social difficulties. To identify SEMH needs information gathered multi-agency professionals, feeder schools, caregivers, staffs observations. Ultimately YPs needs were identified too late Needs were recognised by headteachers identifying behavioural 'problems and difficulties' as a SEN knowledge of students exposure to adverse childhood experiences

	Ethically approved	Recommendation for DFE ought to compel schools to identify students needs by revising language from 'should' and 'could' to 'must'

Martin-Denham (2021) Defining, identifying, and recognising underlying causes of social, emotional and mental health difficulties: thematic analysis of interviews with headteachers in England, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 26:2, 187-205.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes, Can't tell, No
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Relevance and importance made clear Goal of research explicit	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Valid questions, used critical reference group (academics and external professionals) to evaluate proposed questions Transparency of TA process coding with examples and explanation.	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Research design appropriate to address the aims of the research	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Participants were appropriate and rational explained Recruitment process and school phase clearly outlined	Yes
Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Method of data collection deemed appropriate, justified and clear	Yes
Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	Objectivity Mention of three researchers but no explanation of their positioning	Can't tell

Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	Ethics explained, mentioning informed consent, information sheets, consent forms, data process and retention periods, sharing arrangements, privacy information, right to withdraw, Secure storage	Yes
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Clear examples of thematic analysis, with charts and initial phases	Yes
Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Clear discussion with data to support claims Demonstrates strengths and limitations of the study	Yes

Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Insightful Differentiates between the results of the analysis and the conclusions drawn by the authors Relevant social political climate	Yes

Dimitrellou, E., Hurry, J., & Male, D. (2020). Assessing the inclusivity of three mainstream secondary schools in England: challenges and dilemmas. International Journal of inclusive education, 24(10), 1097–1113.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To investigate an agreed definition of inclusion within across three mainstream secondary schools in England	Data collection Mixed methods Objective data - school census meta data from DFE (2013) numerical characteristics about individual pupils and schools (free school meals eligibility, ethnicity, special educational needs, attendance and exclusions) Subjective data - perceived inclusivity was measured by the completion of self-report school ethos questionnaire completed by educators, students. Phone interview by school EP Schools selected based on (1) difference in percentage of SEND pupils with average four LA (2) percentage of exclusions (3) OFSTED reports, (4) social economic background (5) ethnicity Context England 3 mainstream secondary schools from suburban metropolitan area Purposive selection Participants EPs (n=3)	Objective and subjective measures of inclusion failed to agree; discrepancies in perceptions of inclusion School three - deemed the most inclusive by school census data but scored low on inclusivity, positive ethos, positive behaviour management subscales from school ethos questionaries completed by educational professionals and students. Conversely, schools one and two which had less inclusive objective data were deemed more inclusive by based on questionnaire outcomes. Staff perceptions of a school's inclusivity varies between educational practitioners; teachers view school as having a low level of inclusivity, followed by SLT and TAs who considered schools to have high rates of inclusion. Inclusion is hard to define, 'slippery' and 'subjective' construct. Recommendations to establish shared definition of inclusion with government expectations and school staff.

School staff (n=104); SLT (n=10), teachers (n=54), teaching assistants (n=16), other professional roles (n=24) - 80% response rate Students (n=1486), year 7-10 boys (n=807), girl (n=587) and unspecified (n=92) 19% identified as SEND, 78% no SEND and 3% unclassified. 96.9% response rate Data analysis Range of statistical measures; Chi – squared, one way ANOVA,	

Dimitrellou, E., Hurry, J., & Male, D. (2020). Assessing the inclusivity of three mainstream secondary schools in England: challenges and dilemmas. International Journal of inclusive education, 24(10), 1097–1113.		
Mixed methods CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes, Can't tell, No
Was there a clear statement of the objectives of the research? What was the goal of the research? It was thought important Its relevance (Transparency from the start)	Clear aims of the study Clear rational for why the research is important. Context provided No date of data collection provided	Yes

Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal Is there congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology? Is quantitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal? Does it seek to look for relationships between variables	Method of data collection appears appropriate to illuminate objective views. Relationships between variables explored	Yes
What is the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) (was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? Is there congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives?	Research design congruent with study objectives. Methods explained.	Yes

Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? (What was the selection pool?) If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part (How were p's identified? / by who? (How were p's approached? / by who? (Rational for participant selection clear (Participant selection just or unjust (Staff position in school clear (Clear role definition / differentiation / pseudonyms assigned? (Reflective of population (School section - Location, Context, deprivation, SEN (Age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and educational level of participants) Was the sample size stated?	Clear rational for selecting schools with detailed information or process used. No rational for the exclusion of year 11 students. Appropriate methods used to communicate with schools and appropriate research methods used to gain data from participants. Clear role definition of participants. sample size stated	Yes

Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data (Transparency) (Rigor? – transcript) (Participant opportunity to review their data) (Who collected the data) E (Where were data collected) E (How trustworthiness, reliability and validity of data collection methods or tools were established) E Is there congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data?	Appropriate method of data collection made explicit.	Yes

Has the relationship between researcher and participants been considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location. How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	No explanation of the researchers role or interest, influence or bias.	Can't tell
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee (Anonymity, confidentiality, pseudonyms, data storage)	No mention of ethics	Can't tell

Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings –(does the summary match the) (findings should match/answer the question) To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation (Makes it plain how knowledge/claims was generated) Is there congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data? Are participants, and their voices, adequately represented Is there a description of the type of data analysis chosen? Are effect sizes reported? Are confidence intervals reported? Is the significance level reported?	Limited information of EP view Rigorous analysis conducted. Contractionary data taken into account. Makes it plain how knowledge was generated. Description of the type of data analysis provided Confidence intervals reported Significance level reported	Yes

Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit (Critical – strengths and limitations:_ If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments – opposing view considered If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question Is there a clear so what? Accuracy - all assertions, conclusions and recommendations are based data Is there congruity between the research methodology and the interpretation of results? Do the conclusions drawn in the research report flow from the analysis, or interpretation, of the data?	Clear statement of respondents findings and implications for practice. Assertions, conclusions and recommendations are based in the data.	Yes

How valuable is the research? (Insightful?) If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research- based literature If they identify new areas where more research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used Useful Implications for practice New novel information Easy to understand Match Clear link between findings and discussion with no major leaps or assumptions in information (Differentiate between the results of the analysis and the conclusions drawn by the authors Ensure that conclusions follow from the results Include a statement about the generalisability of the findings Was the study informed by, or linked to, an existing body of empirical and/or theoretical research?	Research is valuable - includes the views of SLT and is recent 2020 Clear implications for practice highlights the difference between different types of data and flags up the credibility of data typically used viewed as valid/accurate. Relevant to answering the review question. Cautions readers about generalisability.	

Corcoran, T., & Finney, D. (2015). Between education and psychology: school staff perspectives. Emotional and behavioural difficulties, 20(1), 98–1113.		
Aim/purpose	**Methodology**	**Key findings**
To explore school staff perspectives on how they experience their role in relation to education policy and practice surrounding students mental health needs.	Data collection Qualitative; Semi- Structured interviews – 13 questions Context Northern England LA Conducted between April and June 2010 Wide range of economic and ethnic diversity. 15% Asian, 20% SEN, 2.8% statement of SEN Primary and secondary school Participants Selected from 30 educators who attending training on mental health; Educators (n = 17) Aged 35 - 50 Female (n=16), Male (n=1) Primary school headteacher (n=2), deputy headteacher (n=1), SENCO (n=2) and SEAL coordinators (n=4) Secondary school – 1 deputy headteacher (n=1), inclusion manager (n=2) and SENCo (n=4) Data analysis : Discourse analysis Audio recorded, transcribed, cross reference to individual questions.	Staff viewed policy directed educational practices imposed by government restrictive 'regimes' imposed upon them leading to staff disenchantment. The formalisation of policies (ECM (2003)) lead to additional pressure on staff and left them feeling patronised but did not make schools more inclusive. Staff spoke about an idealised role (combine education and well-being within the classroom), although they thought this was not possible due to the pressures of raising academic attainment.

Corcoran, T., & Finney, D. (2015). Between education and psychology: school staff perspectives. Emotional and behavioural difficulties, 20(1), 98–1113.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No / Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Goal and focus of the study made clear at the outset Data collection period stated. Relevant contextual background provided regarding UK and international framework. Significance of study outlined	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Qualitative approach, appropriate to illuminating experiences. Congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology.	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Examples of interview questions provided were helpful. Research design not justified although appears appropriate to address the objectives of the study.	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Local context information provided (Location, Context, deprivation, SEN) Detailed information about staff roles provided Justification provided for unbalance male to female ratio provided Sampling process unclear, rational for to reduce from 30 to 17 based on convenience and availability. Names were 'indiscriminately drawn", justification for this not presented. Limited generalisability. sample not representative of school staff (drawn from a warm network) - all participants had taken part in previous training Interviewer bias, participants received training from the interviewer regarding mental health, participants may not have reported accurate perceptions due to wanting to appear more desirable to the interviewer who had previously trained them. Bias sample who chose to participate.	Can't tell

| Appropriate methods to collect data
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
If the setting for the data collection was justified
If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why
If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)
If the researcher has discussed saturation of data | Semi-structured interview deemed appropriate.
Examples of questions given
Congruity between the semi-structured research design and ontological position. | Yes |
| Role of the researcher/ interviewer
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?
If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design | Participants recruited from a 'warm network' - researcher previously provided training for them– no further reflection on possible limitations and bias. | No |

Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity briefly mentioned – more detail would have been useful Pseudonyms given to participants.	Yes
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Data were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interview responses were cross- referenced to individual questions to consider emergent themes. participants, and their voices, adequately represented - direct quotes used to form the discussion- categories/themes were derived from the data. Contradictory data are taken into account Makes it plain how knowledge/claims was generated) Discourse analysis helpfully illuminates participants voices.	Yes

Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments Accuracy - all assertions, conclusions and recommendations are based data strengths and limitations: not included no discussion regarding credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)	Yes

Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Clear differentiate between the results of the analysis and the conclusions drawn by the authors New novel information. Good use of psychological and philosophical theories to explain key concepts within the data Researchers have not discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research Reduced relevance - data collected in different sociopolitical climate to the current day. -responses under a different government. Combination of primary and secondary schools – reduces relevance for review question Partially relevant - link education policy and practice	Yes

Button, D. M., Bartlett, S. J., & de Cuevas, A. (2009). Are the contradictions and tensions that have characterised educational provision for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties a persistent feature of current policy? Emotional and behavioural difficulties, 14(2), 141–1155.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To "describe the differing interpretations of English education policies for young people displaying BESD from the perspective of the professionals who work directly with them, the contradictions they encounter and the consequences for local	Data collection Qualitative -unstructured interviews Pilot study LA and school policy documents and provisions. Case studies Context: England Cluster area within a medium sized UK local authority Rural and urban areas 24% of children living in poverty, higher than average Secondary phase educational settings 4 special schools (1 for students with BESD) 3 state schools (2 foundation schools, one faith school) 3 alternative provisions (2 secondary pupil referral units (PRUs), one unit for students with medical conditions) LA reduce PEX by 60% compared with the average over the preceding three years. Ofsted ratings for behaviour in all secondary schools satisfactory or better Participants: Purposive sampling Behaviour support teacher selected participants (n=20)	Difficulty translating policy of ECM (2003) increase communication into practice within schools due to teacher's time constraints and lack of expertise. Inconsistencies in policy regarding the inclusion of students with BESD. Contradictions in UK education policy between target setting and social inclusion under the Labour government. School leaders' felt pressured to attain high grades - may overshadow attempts to address the needs of students with BESD. Confused and contradictory messages regarding the approach BESD, resulting in variability in local policy and practice. Thresholds for PEX varied between schools.

| policy, practice and provision." | School - Senior and middle managers (including headteachers), practitioners, subject teachers and pastoral staff
LA Children's services - Practitioners from Youth Inclusion, Family Support, Children's Centre Outreach, Behaviour Support, Education Welfare and Children and Adolescent Mental Health services.
Behaviour Support Teacher was interviewed at the beginning and end of the study
Data analysis:
LA and school policy documents and provisions
Unstructured interviews – one hour
Interviews were recorded and transcribed.
Data coded by theme | |

Button, D. M., Bartlett, S. J., & de Cuevas, A. (2009). Are the contradictions and tensions that have characterised educational provision for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties a persistent feature of current policy? Emotional and behavioural difficulties, 14(2), 141–1155.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Aims set out as description of study Transparency from the start, strong rational. Relevant legislation, political background and research context Importance of study clearly stated No date of data collection	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Congruity between qualitative research methodology and the research goal	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	No rational or example of research design, alternative designs (semi-structured) may have been equally appropriate Pilot study	Can't tell

	Sufficient detail of the local authority context. Clear rationale for focus on secondary school's phase provide No information on the proportion of school staff versus LA staff, just an overall total provided No information on the demographics of participants other than being selected purposely for their diversity. Unable to tell whether it was reflective of population Unclear of participants knowledge base on policy before the interviews information/transcript of the interviews would be helpful	Can't tell
School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)		

		Can't tell
Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Method of data collection appears appropriate, although no rational provide, was a topic guide used transcripts would have aided this. Unable to assess trustworthiness of data collected as no extracts or indication of questions asked are provided No rational provided for behaviour support staff to select participants provided	
Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	Relationship between the researcher and participants not addressed Relationship between the participants and behaviour support teacher who assisted with selection and analysis not addressed. No reflection or explanation of implications (e.g bias) of this staff members participation Given the political agenda of this research, a statement locating the researcher's social-politically position would be helpful as this may have influenced the objectivity of the research and researcher	No

Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	No mention of ethics, anonymity, confidentiality, pseudonyms, data storage No mention of how the research was explained to participants	Can't tell
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Contradictory information has been included demonstrating an unbiased stance Clear how knowledge/claims were generated Appears that a deductive approach was used – although not explicitly stated. Limited information on analysis – other than that data was coded by theme. More specific reporting of participants job roles would be useful on occasions where 'respondents' is used.	Yes

Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Authors mentions limited generalisability Findings are clear and explicit Conclusions drawn flow from the analysis of the data Clear role definition required - unclear whether "senior manager/ middle manager" role is the same as headteacher	Yes
Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Study makes a significant contribution and spur on social transformation within this field. The focus, participant group and phase of education is relevant to answering the review question Clear link between findings and discussion Large portion of the findings are from non-school staff Different social political climate given the different government and the polices and initiatives that emanate from them.	Yes

Spratt, J., Shucksmith, J., Philip, K., & Watson, C. (2006a). 'Part of who we are as a school should include responsibility for Well-Being': Links between the School Environment, Mental Health and Behaviour. Pastoral Care, 24(3), 14-21.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To explore the challenges that school staff encounter when seeking to promote a positive a mental health approach within secondary schools. Low-level mental health difficulties	Data collection Qualitative Part of a larger study (Spratt et al, 2005) Phase 1; Scoping interviews - semi-structured telephone interviews Phase 2; six case studies of innovative practice – face-to-face interviews Context Study conducted in Scotland Secondary school Participants Phase 1: representatives of the LA (N = 30), representatives of health boards (N = 18) and employees of voluntary sector organisation (N=18) Phase 2; pupils, parents, teachers and other school workers, school managers and into agency staff 4 group interviews with pupils and two group interviews with parents Data analysis Interviews recorded and transcribed	Links between the school environment and mental well-being: School ethos (structure and culture) affecting well-being should be re-examined Fragmented policies and initiatives promoting mental health Funding for mental well-being is patchy and short-term SLT under pressure to focus on attainment over well-being Teachers find it difficult to create an individualised approach for those with mental health needs Focus of intervention was for students to conform, difficulty located within-child Intervention categories: Export (support from outside agencies), import (introduce support within the school) or ownership (develop a whole school approach to mental health) Strategies to address changing behaviour varied from one teacher to another effecting staff confidence, competency and well-being Support staff were more approachable Withdrawn students difficult to detect

	Manual analysis of data involving a research team Interpretive qualitative methods to identify key themes that emerged from the data A grounded approach used to ascertain key themes emerging	

Spratt, J., Shucksmith, J., Philip, K., & Watson, C. (2006a). 'Part of who we are as a school should include responsibility for Well-Being': Links between the School Environment, Mental Health and Behaviour. Pastoral Care, 24(3), 14-21.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Significance of topic outlined	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Qualitative research appears an appropriate methodology for addressing the research goal	Yes

Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Research design appropriate to address the aims of the research	Yes
School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	No information on demographics of schools, participants or selection procedure. Participant selection appears just	Can't tell
Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Semi-structured interviews appeared appropriate Not clear who collected the data or where were data collected	Yes

Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	The author's position of interest not made clear	Can't tell
Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	No mention of ethics, although this may have appeared within the original study	Can't tell
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Findings answer the question Themes were derived from the data Congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data	Yes

Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Assertions, conclusions and recommendations are based data No strengths or limitations of the study offered No headings for methodology and findings.	Yes
Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Useful findings Contribution to field Different sociopolitical context	

Spratt, J., Shucksmith, J., Philip , K., & Watson, C. (2006b). Interprofessional support of mental well – being in schools: A Bourdieuan perspective. Journal of International care, 20(4), 391–402.

Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To examine how school staff have developed their capacity to respond to mental health by considering interactions between professional groups	Data collection Qualitative Phase 1; Scoping interviews - semi-structured telephone interviews with representatives from 66 organisations Phase 2; six case studies: face-to-face interviews followed by group interviews Context Study conducted in Scotland Secondary school Participants Purposive selected Phase 2; pupils, parents, home – school workers, classroom support staff, school managers, staff from health and social services and voluntary sector organisations. Each case study (n=20) total (120) Group interviews; students (n=4) and parents (n=2) Data analysis Interviews recorded and transcribed Manual analysis of data involving a research team	Despite policy and guidance, a holistic approach to well-being is not achieved. Mental health is compartmentalised from learning, change to the school ethos and culture is required. Interprofessional working issues - Significant impediments to communication between classroom teachers and other workers, at formal and informal levels Effective strategies of management and professional development to improve awareness and commitment to the mental well-being of pupils in schools

	A grounded approach used to ascertain key themes emerging	

Spratt, J., Shucksmith, J., Philip , K., & Watson, C. (2006b). Interprofessional support of mental well – being in schools: A Bourdieuan perspective. Journal of International care, 20(4), 391–402.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Part of a larger study Aim of this study clearly stated Clear rational for why the research is important.	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Methodology appropriate. Limitations of chosen approach discussed, however no alternative methods suggested.	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Research methods appropriate for responding to the study objectives. Rational for selected method provided.	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Recruitment strategy unclear, part of a larger study. Exact number of schools and participants not stated, only approximate number given. Purposive selecting	Can't tell
Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Methods are explained, justified and appropriate.	Yes

Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	External funding of original study stated, however conflict of interest was not mentioned.	Can't tell
Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	Ethics confidentiality and power dynamics mentioned.	Yes
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Data transcribed Used a grounded approach – more information would be helpful Clearly answered each research question	Yes

Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Clear statement of findings and implications for practice	Yes
Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Good use of theory to explain findings No date of study Does not claim to be representative.	Yes

McKeon, D. (2017). Emotional and behavioural difficulties: the effects of structures, ethos and understandings on provision in Irish post-primary schools. European Journal of special educational needs, 32(2), 221-237.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To explore how EBD is understood by practitioners, what influences their understanding and how such influences impact provisions in school.	Data collection Qualitative Postal questionnaires (n=36) followed by semi-structured interviews (n=10) 14 questions Context secondary schools (20%) vocational and community colleges (50%) and comprehensive community schools (30%) Ireland Participants Interviewees consisted of; principals (n=3), teachers (n=3) and guidance counsellors (n=4) Thematic analysis Analysed within a social constructivist framework	Behaviour policies appear unsuitable for CYP with EBD, incompatible with SEN policies and practices. SEN teachers are responsible for EBD, counsellor dissociates from CYP with behavioural issues. Variations in the conceptualisation of EBD, development and application of school behaviour policy impact school ethos and how staff respond to students. Resulting in an overly academic school ethos. Language used towards students differs based on gender

McKeon, D. (2017). Emotional and behavioural difficulties: the effects of structures, ethos and understandings on provision in Irish post-primary schools. European Journal of special educational needs, 32(2), 221-237.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,

Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Context and background outlined - study appears relevant Aim of research explicitly stated, Issue of transparency - part of a larger study (reference not shared) so it is not clear to see why these areas were researched.	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Methodology appears appropriate.	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Research design appropriate to address the aims of the research Semi-structured interview appears appropriate for ascertaining perspectives. Research design appears suitable, although lacks transparency, no rational given for questionnaire followed by interviews.	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Clear rational and details regarding selection of settings. Profile of participants who completed questionnaires not given although this information was provided for participants presented for those who completed interviews. Some information provided on questionaries which were posed. Lacks information on recruitment strategy (why or how participants were selected, contacted or interviewed). No rational on why principals, teachers and guidance counsellors were selected opposed to others such as inclusion manager. No local context given regarding deprivation or SEND population of settings. Trustworthiness undetermined due to lack of information.	Can't tell

Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Semi-structured interview method of data collection appeared justified and appropriate. Categories of interview questions helpfully provided. Clear Indication of topics discussed in interview given, although no examples of actual questions. Suitable connection between how data from questionnaires were used to inform interviews Limited detail on method of analysis	Yes
Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	Role of the researcher in relation to the study not highlighted. Disclosure statement of no potential conflicts of interest. Researcher does not comment on whether or not they are involved in the original study.	No

Ethics	No comment of ethics, anonymity,	Can't tell
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	confidentiality or data storage. However, this	
If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained	may be in the original study.	
If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)		
If approval has been sought from the ethics committee		
Analysis	Thematic analysis used appears appropriate for social constructivist framework.	Can't tell
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Limited depth of analysis as themes in data were the same as findings from questionnaire which led to the interview.	
If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process		
If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data	Limited direct quotes from participants, however explanations of participants views appear detailed.	
Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process	Author communicated that findings from semi-structured interviews only will be presented, rational for this is unstated.	
If sufficient data are presented to support the findings	Contradictory data are not presented – all data agreeable.	
To what extent contradictory data are taken into account	Summary match the quotes.	
Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?		

	Most assertions and conclusions are based within the data, except one (which claims staff have a holistic perspective of SEMH – this is not seen within the data, page 233). Author frequently refers to Irish context in which the study is placed, it is helpful to read as outside of this context. Little evidence for opposing arguments given Researcher does not discuss the credibility of the findings or limitations.	Yes
Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question		
Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Insightful contribution regarding behaviour policies. Discusses the contribution study makes literature. Author suggests further research (into the role of guidance counsellors and gender). Focus of article provides relevance to review question, although weakened by mixture of settings, participant groups and sociopolitical context.	Yes

Mc Keon, D. (2020). 'Soft barriers' – The impact of school ethos and culture on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Ireland. Improving Schools, 23(2), 159–174.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To investigate the influence of school ethos on inclusive practice in mainstream post - primary schools in relation to adolescence with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)	Data collection Qualitative Questionnaires Semi-structured interviews Context Ireland Primary and Post primary (secondary) mainstream schools Participants Purposive sampling initial questionnaire principals (n = 19), special education teachers (n = 19) and guidance counsellors (n = 9). 53 percent female and 47 percent male. From the above participants semi-structured interviews principals (n=5), teachers (n=8) and guidance counsellors (n=4) Data analysis Inductive thematic analysis social constructivist framework	Strong academic school ethos and labelling CYP with deficit descriptions of needs creates obstacles or 'soft barriers' to inclusion. Little to no regard for the impact of the school environment on students needs Secondary schools focus on performativity, primary schools appear more nurturing Secondaries ought to make deep-rooted systemic change in the ethos for the benefit of students with SEBD CAMHS deemed responsible for supporting SEDB opposed to guidance counsellors not responsible for supporting students with SEBD

Mc Keon, D. (2020). 'Soft barriers' – The impact of school ethos and culture on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Ireland. Improving Schools, 23(2), 159–174.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Clear aim and justified purpose of the research early on in the article. Relevance justified by highlighting context and background. No date of data collection	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Appropriate research method used to address the research question congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Justified research and appropriate design	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Rational for participants selected Purposive sampling Part of a larger study, initial recruitment strategy lacks detail. Little information regarding context of the schools, regarding levels of deprivation or the measure of students with SEN. Clear information on number and role of respondents within each phase. Profile of participants not provided Lacks information on recruitment strategy (why or how participants were selected, contacted or interviewed). Some information provided on questionaries which were posed. Trustworthiness undetermined due to lack of information.	Can't tell

Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Appropriate and justified methods used to collect data. Clear how data were collected. Part of a larger study, information regarding original study and any possible modifications not discussed. Form of data collection not explicitly stated	Yes
Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	Relationship between researcher and participant not discussed.	Can't tell

Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	No mention of ethics, Anonymity, confidentiality, pseudonyms, data storage	Can't tell
Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Detailed information regarding how data from phase one (questionnaires) was used in phase two (semi structured interviews). Findings are closely linked to initial research question Congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data Findings answer the question	Yes

Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Clear statement of findings provided Limitations of study provided Claims appear to be accurate -grounded in the data	Yes
Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Valuable data to answer in the review question, Despite geographical differences. Insightful findings are considered in relation to practice and policy	Yes

O'Reilly, M., Adams, S., Whiteman, N., Hughes, J., Rilley, P., & Dogra, N. (2018). Whose Responsibility is Adolescent's Mental Health in the UK? Perspectives of Key Stakeholders. School Mental Health, 10, 450–4 161.		
Aim/purpose	Methodology	Key findings
To ascertain whose responsibility is adolescent mental health within UK secondary schools.	Data collection Qualitative: Focus group semi-structured Context: England: Leicester and London 2016/2017 Secondary school Participants: 10 focus groups were conducted; 2 focus groups with educational professionals (N = 16). Headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants. Aged from 23 to 59 years. Males (n=6) and females(n=10). White British (n=11), South Asian (n=4) and Eastern European (n=1). 2 focus groups with mental health practitioners (N = 8). Males (n=2) and females(n=4). Aged 30–54 years. White British (n=2) and South Asian (n=4). 6 focus groups with adolescents aged 11–18 years (N = 54). Males (n=30) and females (n=24), predominantly from White British and South Asian Duration: 45 minutes and one hour, 15 minutes Data analysis: Data were transcribed verbatim Thematic analysis	Teachers role is to educate students rather than supporting their emotional well-being and mental health of a Teacher Staff are not trained or supervised to support complex mental health difficulties Adolescence reported a lack of mental health promotion, they frequently relied on the teacher Parents are responsible for their children's mental health, they need to be educated that they can provide support

O'Reilly, M., Adams, S., Whiteman, N., Hughes, J., Rilley, P., & Dogra, N. (2018). Whose Responsibility is Adolescent's Mental Health in the UK? Perspectives of Key Stakeholders. School Mental Health, 10, 450–4 161.		
Qualitative CASP criteria	Examples within the data	Yes / No /Can't tell,
Aims Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? Its relevance	Aims stated Clear rational for research Clear background and context Date of data collection provided	Yes
Methodology and design Is the methodology appropriate? If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants Is qualitative methodology the right methodology for addressing the research goal?	Appropriate qualitative methodology to address the research goal	Yes
Design match aims Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? If the researcher has justified the research designs (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use) Was the sampling procedure made explicit and was it appropriate? Has the researcher explained the recruitment strategy?	Clearly stated and justified reason for design, although no other methods explored	Yes

School and Participant section Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Justification for geographical locations Limited information on rational or process of school or participant selection Clear demographics on participants in relation to age, gender and ethnicity. Diverse ethnic population Number of participants clear Sample reflective of the population selection procedure of participants was not articulated	Yes
Appropriate methods to collect data Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? If the setting for the data collection was justified If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) If the researcher has justified the methods chosen If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.) If the researcher has discussed saturation of data	Methods of data collection congruent with answering the research question Clarity on methods of data collection	Yes

6.Role of the researcher/ interviewer Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	No mention of the researcher's role or possible bias.	Can't tell
Ethics Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	Ethical approval granted. Reference to ethical principles and consent, and anonymity explained. Compliance with ethical standards documented.	Yes

Analysis Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process If sufficient data are presented to support the findings To what extent contradictory data are taken into account Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	Details of how themes emerged inductively from thematic analysis, process described in detail with rationale. Examples would be helpful. Transcription process explained. Clear a reporting on the role/ job title of participants would be helpful Contradictory information taken into account	Yes
9.Discussion Is there a clear statement of findings? If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Does not differentiate views of Principals from other staff Adequate discussion in relation to aims and objectives of the research No statement of strengths and limitations provided	Yes

10.Conclusion: Contribution to the field How valuable is the research? If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used	Conclusion follows smoothly from results Insightful and useful Implications for practice at a systemic level Views from SLT and focus on systems level makes it relevant No statement of generalisability given Suggestions for further research made Relevant: geographical location, timeliness and contribution to answering the literature review question	Yes

Appendix N

Initial Focus Group Schedule

1. What does social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties mean?
2. How are students with SEMH needs brought to the attention of the senior leadership team?
3. Is there a link between students with SEMH needs and permanent exclusions? Please give reasons for your answer.
4. What are the causes of permanent exclusion?'
5. Who are the main group students that face permanent exclusion? Why these groups?
6. How do you promote inclusion for students with SEMH needs?
7. What are the processes and approaches in the school that hinder students with SEMH needs?
8. What outside agencies do you collaborate with to support students with SEMH needs? and how can this be improved upon?
9. Are parents involved where there are concerns about children at risk of permanent exclusion?

Final focus group interview schedule

1. What kind of behaviour would you expect to see in a student who has social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties?
2. How are students with SEMH needs brought to the attention of the senior leadership team?
3. Is there a link between students with SEMH needs and permanent exclusions? Please give reasons for your answer.
4. What are the causes and contributing factors to permanent exclusions?
5. Who are the main group students that face permanent exclusion? Why these groups?
6. What are the processes and approaches in school that supports students with SEMH needs?
7. What are the processes and approaches in the school that hinder students with SEMH needs?
8. What role do outside agencies have in regards to supporting students with SEMH needs? and how can this be improved upon?
9. at what point are parents involved where there are concerns about children at risk of permanent exclusion?
10. What may be the reason for year nines having higher than average permanent exclusion rates than other year groups both locally and nationally?

Appendix O

Letter of Ethical Approval

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699
https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/

Anthea Flanders

By Email

3 August 2020

Re: Research Ethics Application

Title: "Secondary school senior leadership teams' perspectives on social, emotional mental health needs and permanent exclusions, an exploratory study"

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation for retrospective approval. Please take this letter as written confirmation that the Trust Research Ethics Committee has approved your project.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: academicquality@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

cc.   Course Lead, Supervisor, Research Lead

Appendix P

[Header removed]

Dear [Headteacher name],

I hope you have had a successful start to the new academic year.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in my final year of my doctorate training and am employed part time on a bursary scheme in [LA name] Educational Psychology Service.

I am required to complete a doctoral thesis in an area of research and academic interest. The research also aims to increase understanding of issues relevant to [LA name] and have a positive impact on the development of the borough's future policies and procedures.

Through discussions with colleagues in [LA] including [name] (Assistant Director, Education Services) and [name] (Principal Educational Psychologist/HOS) the focus of my research has been developed and will focus on:

> **'Exploration of staff's perception of student's social and emotional mental health (SEMH) needs.'**

The research will also look at:

- the impact SEMH may have on behaviour
- how SEMH and behaviour is understood and managed in the classroom
- the relationship between SEMH and exclusion data

I plan to work with a number of schools in order to better understand the process surrounding exclusions of students and hope that you will agree to your school's participation in this.

What is required:

Senior leadership team partaking in a group discussion about understanding and practice relating to students with social and emotional mental health issues.

Confidentiality of the school and staff will be maintained. In the write up of the thesis [LA name] will not be specified and all schools will be given pseudonyms. Individuals will be referred to using generic terms such as; "teacher", "teaching support, "pastoral support" and "senior leadership" to protect their identity.

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. Please note should your school or individual staff wish to participate you have the right to withdraw at any point before the submission of this research.

This research is being organised by myself as a student at the Tavistock and Portman NHS trust. Funding for this research is from the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

The project has received ethical approval from the Psychology Research Ethics Committee of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. I also have the approval from [name] and [name].

Once all data has been gathered, I will offer a consultation to feedback the results to each school that takes part. This information therefore has the potential to improve each school's understanding of how school staff understand and perceive SEMH. This can help tailor support for children who experience SEMH difficulties. Ultimately, it is my intention that the research thesis will be published and available for public access.

If your school would be prepared to take part in this research, please contact me by phone on [phone number] or email at [email address].
I would be happy to meet with either yourself or a member of your team. Initially this would be an opportunity to share further information and answer any queries you might have.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kind regards

[Signature]

[Name]

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix Q

<u>Consent Form for Headteachers</u>

<div align="right">[Header removed]</div>

Dear [Headteacher name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Research title: "Exploration of staff's perception of student's social and emotional mental health (SEMH) needs."

This consent form relates to;

Senior leadership team partaking in a group discussion about understanding and practice relating to students with social and emotional mental health issues.

Confidentiality will be maintained in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality. The research findings will be published and shared with professionals, parents, students and the general public.

Involvement in the project is voluntary and you free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

There are no partner institutions or funding bodies involved in the research.

There is no foreseeable imminent harm to self and/or others that should occur as a result of completing the questionnaire.

1. Please read the statements below and delete 'yes' or 'no' as appropriate.
2. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet sent in the first email. **Yes/No**
3. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered. **Yes/No**
4. I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that the school, staff and students cannot be identified (except as might be required by law or imminent harm to myself or others.) **Yes/No**
5. I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored anonymously and securely, and may be used for this research thesis. **Yes/No**
6. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. **Yes/No**
7. I agree for school staff to take part in this study. **Yes/No**
8. I agree for the anonyms research findings to be published and disseminated **Yes/No**

School name:_____

Headteacher print name: _____

Headteacher signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher print name: _____
Researcher signature: _____
Date: _____

Kind regards
Kind regards

[Signature]

[Name]

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix R

Information Sheet for Senior Leader Staff Member

[Header removed]

Dear School staff,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in my final year of my doctorate training and am employed part time on a bursary scheme in [LA name] Educational Psychology Service.

I am required to complete a doctoral thesis in an area of research and academic interest. The research also aims to increase understanding of issues relevant to [LA name] and have a positive impact on the development of the borough's future policies and procedures.

Through discussions with colleagues in [LA name] including [name] (Assistant Director, Education Services) and [name] (Principal Educational Psychologist/HOS) the focus of my research has been developed and will focus on:

'Exploration of staff's perception of student's social and emotional mental health (SEMH) needs.'

The research will also look at:
- the impact SEMH may have on behaviour
- how SEMH and behaviour is understood and managed in the classroom
- the relationship between SEMH and exclusion data

I plan to work with a number of schools in order to better understand the process surrounding exclusions of students and hope that you will agree to your school's participation in this.

Your headteacher has agreed to School staff participate in this study.
What is required:
- Senior leadership team partaking in a group discussion about understanding and practice relating to students with social and emotional mental health issues. This will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Confidentiality of the school and staff will be maintained. In the write up of the thesis [LA] will not be specified and all schools will be given pseudonyms. Individuals will be referred to using generic terms such as; "teacher", "teaching support, "pastoral support" and "senior leadership" to protect their identity.

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. Please note should you wish to remove yourself from the study you have the right to withdraw at any point before the submission of this research (Summer term 2018).

This research is being organised by myself as a student at the Tavistock and Portman NHS trust. Funding for this research is from the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

The project has received ethical approval from the Psychology Research Ethics Committee of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. I also have the approval from [name] and [name].

Once all data has been gathered, I will offer a consultation to feedback the results to each school that takes part. This information therefore has the potential to improve each school's understanding of how school staff understand and perceive SEMH. This can help tailor support for children who experience SEMH difficulties. Ultimately, it is my intention that the research thesis will be published and available for public access.

I would be happy to meet with either yourself or a member of your team. Initially this would be an opportunity to share further information and answer any queries you might have.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kind regards

[Signature]

[Name]

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix S

Consent form Senior Leader Staff Member

Dear Staff member,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Research title: "Exploration of staff's perception of student's social and emotional mental health (SEMH) needs."

This consent form relates to;
Senior leadership team partaking in a group discussion about understanding and practice relating to students with social and emotional mental health issues. This will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Confidentiality will be maintained in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality. The research findings will be published and shared with professionals, parents, students and the general public.
Involvement in the project is voluntary and you free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

There are no partner institutions or funding bodies involved in the research.
There is no foreseeable imminent harm to self and/or others that should occur as a result of completing the questionnaire.

Please read the statements below and delete 'yes' or 'no' as appropriate.
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet. **Yes/No**
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered. **Yes/No**
3. I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that the school, staff and students cannot be identified (except as might be required by law or imminent harm to myself or others.) **Yes/No**
4. I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored anonymously and securely, and may be used for this research thesis. **Yes/No**
5. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. **Yes/No**
6. I agree to take part in this study. **Yes/No**
7. I agree for the anonyms research findings to be published and disseminated **Yes/No**

School name:_____

Staff member print name: _____

Staff member signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher print name: _____
Researcher signature: _____
Date: _____

Kind regards

[Signature]

[Name]

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix T

Table T

*Braun and Clarke (2006) 15-point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis*

Process	No.	Criteria	
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.	☒
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.	☒
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.	☒
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.	☒
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.	☒
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.	☒
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed interpreted, made sense of rather than just paraphrased	☒
	8	Analysis and data match each other the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.	☒
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.	☒
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.	☒
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.	☒
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.	☒
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.	☒

	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.	☒
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.	☒

Appendix U

Figure U1

Phase 2 of; Example of Line-by-line Coding (School A, Position 148 - 152)
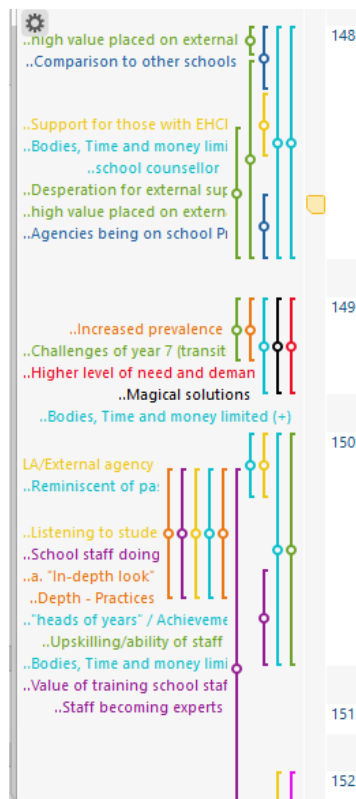
James: Our counsellor who is very experienced, she's here 2 days a week; I would absolutely love to say that we could have her here 5 days a week but like many schools we just can't. And also, the amount of the way our budget is, with other resources it's just impossible to resource. And the extra money we get for certain needs just keeps going down but I would like to be able to say we can have the counsellor for 5 days a week but we've got her for 2 days a week and as far as I'm concerned if something had to go that wouldn't. We would do our **damn hardest** to do everything, cut what we would need to keep [Counsellor's name] here for a minimum of 2 days but it is a problem.

Sarah: I think we're seeing students coming to school with more social, emotional mental health issues than they perhaps have done in the past, right from year 7. But coinciding at the time of we've got to make magic budget cuts and we've got less support for those students and that is not a good mix.

Samantha: And then the **budget constraints** also affecting things like training, so there are some great companies out there that we've had them in the past and there's one called Learning to Listen. So we've had our achievement leader team provided with [Learning to listen training], it was quite a significant chunk of training how to properly listen to kids when they're trying to tell you what their issues and problems are and for you to help work through them or help direct them to what to do next. But it comes at a cost and the more your budget is cut the less you're able to afford to buy-in assistance like that to provide people with that level of expertise to deal in-house with those situations. The local authority services are being cut as well.

Jacob: Other services are being cut too

Fiona: Yea, its 'really' difficult to get EP time. Well it's money.

Figure U2

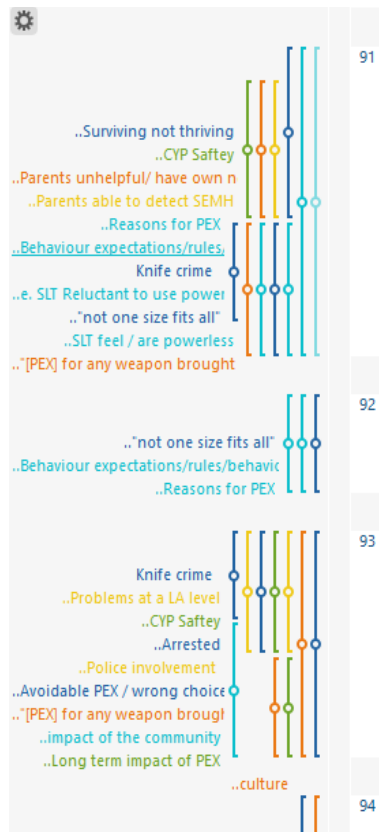*Phase 2 of; Example of Line-by-line Coding (School B, Position 147-156)*

Figure U3

Phase 2 of; Example of Line-by-line Coding (School C, Position 91 - 94)

91 Alex: No, I've avoided it [zero tolerance policy] like the plague. I just think you get yourself knotted up in it. I personally have to give myself space that I am able to **make a decision not to permanently exclude** a child. I do that [sanction behaviour] with fixed term exclusions if I know that, you know, a child would ordinarily have a fixed term exclusion for some form of behaviour, **if I know that I would be sending them home to a position where they wouldn't be safe or they wouldn't be able to thrive.** I couldn't do that. I know schools that have a zero tolerance on blades. I do have zero tolerance on blades, but I've had kids that have been whittling with their grandad, and I've had kids that are absolutely terrified because they've been threatened at knifepoint and they've put a penknife in their bag and so on. I think you have to look at each case and you actually have to reflect on each case as it comes along.

92 The zero tolerance bit is generally for the one-off type of permanent exclusion, and whilst I would use some of those issues for permanent exclusion, I wouldn't want to tie us down, because I just don't think that's inclusive for the children. Every story actually is different. You do actually have to weigh up every story.

93 Rick: We've got a pupil I think who did bring a blade in. It was a small blade. It was a carving kind of – but actually he did that because of all the knife crime that was going on around him, people getting stabbed, people dying in [borough name], and he genuinely did that. And he's got special needs and there's lots of – and actually we did a lot of work with the police – we always get the police involved. They always get arrested and they always go through that process. However, to permanently exclude that pupil would have been detrimental to his life, actually, because he'd probably have been **sent back to his country,** and that was a threat he's always had. And actually, he's still – you know, I think there is each case, but –

94 Alex: Some schools do it [zero tolerance policy] with drugs, and I understand why they do that and that's their

Appendix V

Figure V1

Phase 3 Continued; Generating Initial Codes, List of Codes Condensed into 25

Preliminary Themes (Pre-revision)

Figure V2

Phase 3: Searching for themes Codes into themes: grouping similar codes under one theme

Document	Coded Segments
School A, Pos. 17	refusing to communicate
School A, Pos. 65	I kind of think that in the broadest sense of some kind of social emotional or mental health difficulty, any child that's behaviour has got so out of control that they obviously haven't learnt to fit in with social norms yet or they haven't learned to conform so in that sense ... but I suppose it depends how broad do you mean definition? If we're just talking about you know, does that mean they have a definite pin-down-able mental health condition? Possibly not. But have they got social difficulties where they haven't learned to conform and function as part of our school community then probably yes.
School B, Pos. 60	I think sometimes with the ones who consistently don't follow our expectations, yes I think that is the case [SEMH and PEX link].
School B, Pos. 112	I think we work less with zero tolerance and more with our minimum expectations; if it doesn't fit in with that that's when we won't tolerate it at all because if it doesn't fit with our minimum expectations it's not [School B].
School B, Pos. 113	It's all to do with your compliance with the minority or majority and I think over the years at [School B], our compliant majority has increased and increased and that group that are not compliant have become more isolated and easier for us to deal with.
School B, Pos. 113	As I say, your compliant majority increases and that helps an awful lot to bring down those levels of exclusions, be they fixed term or permanent.
School C, Pos. 7	but we'd be looking at distance and anxieties, but also that they're not working with school systems and working with people in the school, and also their peers as well.
School C, Pos. 9	I don't mean just cooperative. I just mean engaging with them.
School C, Pos. 60	So yeah, every single one of them really is the S out of SEMH, because they're no longer able to function socially within this community, and that I guess is what permanent exclusion is, isn't it?
School C, Pos. 61	We have pupils who do have challenging behaviour but they are remorseful and they apologise, or they understand and they know not to do it again,

Appendix W

Figure W1

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes for Similarities and Differences, List of Themes with Quantities of Codes (Pre- revision)

Code System	2064
EP	0
a. EPS are valuable but the system is broken	0
EPS are stuck/blameless	1
Positive view of EP	1
Usage of EPS	2
b. "more Ed Psych time"	7
EPS don't build relationships	1
Impact of more EP time	3
c. Usefulness of EP reports	4
d. EP not cost effective	1
EP funding system and bureaucracy	1
EP role limitted to assessmnets and reports	7
e. Concern about the future of the EP role	2
Ideal EP model – EPs in school	6

Figure W2

Phase 4 continued: Reviewing themes for similarities and differences, visual map of themes and codes
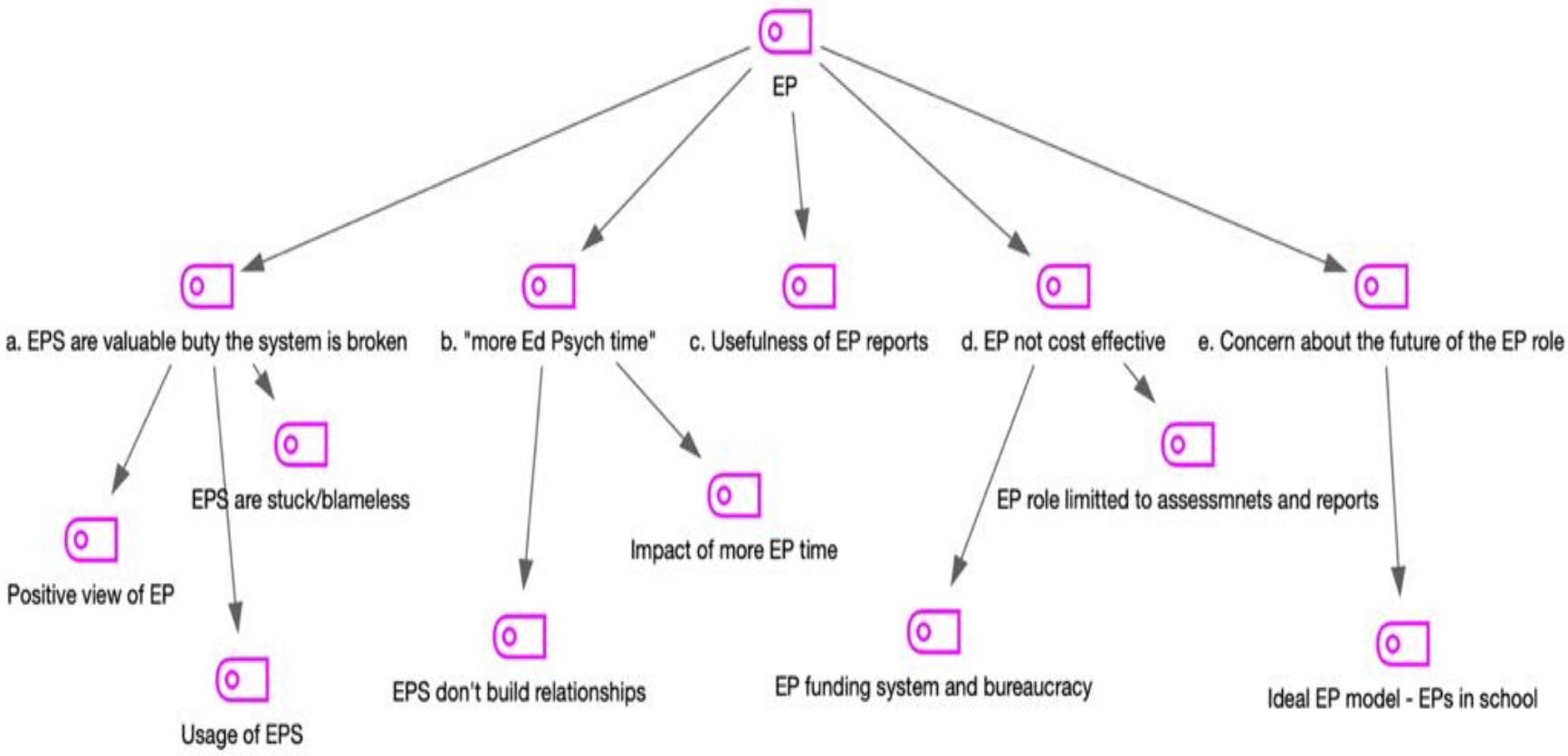
Figure W3

Phase 4: Redefine Themes: Initial coding of theme 4.4.1.3.1: "We Rarely Exclude Kids from the Top Sets"
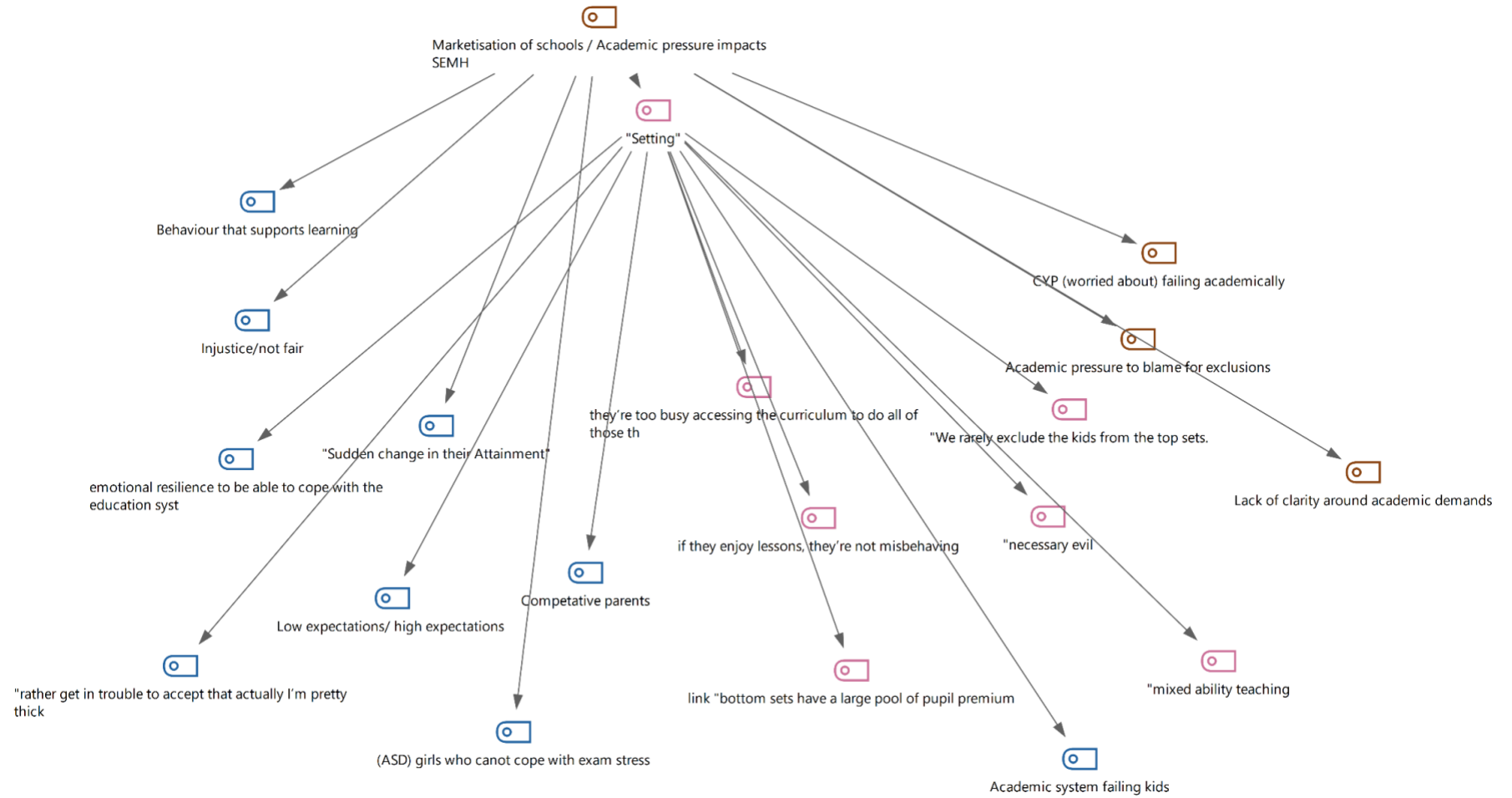
Appendix X

Figure X1

Phase 5 : Theme 4.4.1: SLTs fee Disempowered by SEMH Needs and Systemic Pressures

Code System	2066
1.1 SLTs lack confidence	0
What is SEMH?	402
Role, paramaters of the school	4
SLT power and authority to act	252
1.2 Complexity of SEMH	0
Intervention for students with SEMH needs to prevent PEX	66
Safeguarding	9
School systems to support SEMH needs	60
Unidentified/unreported needs	9
Staff remain in control/coolheaded	15
Reasons for PEX	10
Failing in friendships	5
Rules	16
Conceptualisation of PEX	165
1.3 Dominant external systems	0
Knife crime	6
"school community"	27
Other schools	6
Parents & home life	136
Marketisation of schools / Academic pressure impacts SEMH	40

Figure X2

Phase 5: Theme 4.4.2: SLTs Pursue Inter-Organisational Engagement and Containing Relationships

⌄ 2.1 Establishing initial relationships ⊕ ✕	0
› Adults relationships with CYP	15
› Transition into the school	30
⌄ 2.3 Responsive theraputic relationhips	0
› LA/External agency support and hope	204
⌄ 2.2 Developing caring relationships ⊕ ✕	0
› Key Staff who support SEMH	107
Staff becoming experts	1
› Training staff on SEMH	99
› Student voice - reporting own/others needs	30
› How staff support students with SEMH needs	20
› EP	36

Figure X3

Phase 5: Themes within Over Arching Theme SLTs Grapple with their Sense of Agency over the Inclusion and PEX of

Students with SEMH needs

> 1.1 SLTs lack confidence	256
> 1.2 Complexity of SEMH	757
> 1.3 Dominant external systems	209
> 2.1 Establishing initial relationships	45
> 2.3 Responsive theraputic relationhips	204
> 2.2 Developing caring relationships	293
> Unanalysed data	4
> Coded but unused data	198
FG Questions - Sch A	10
FG Questions - Sch B	10
FG Questions - Sch C	10
Buzz word	58
Favourite quotes	12
∨ Sets	**18**
> Set 1	18

Appendix Y

Transcripts

School A

1   School A

2   Key:

3   Interviewer

4   1   Mary

5   2   Sarah

6   3   Susan

7   4   James

8   5   Samantha

9   6   Frank

10   7   Fiona

11   8   Jacob

12   9   Sally

13   10   Anne

14   11   Maria

15   12   Tom

16   Interviewer: [Q1] I have several questions; the first question is: what kind of behaviours would you expect to see in a student with social emotional mental health difficulties?

17   Mary: A range of behaviour from being withdrawn to possibly having behavioural issue, anger, un-controlled, refusing to communicate or just normal like no-one notices.

18   Sarah:Or non-attendance.

19   Susan: Lack of focus; lack of concentration, distracted.

20   James: I've just come from a year seven lesson where there was one particular individual who this body [SLT] is perfectly aware of, and her particular issue is attention seeking that's how she presents herself that every five minutes or so she finds it very difficult to remain on task and she's envious of the fact, or she finds it difficult to actually engage with the fact that everybody is on task and focused.

21   Mary: Friendship issues.

22   Interviewer: Can you say a bit more about that?

23   Mary: They want to be friends with everyone but **can't sustain it** because they may come across as irritating or want to be friends but say the wrong things.

24   Samantha: Sometimes as well you notice that girls with difficulties around mental health they might have a group of friends that are outside of their age group, so either significantly younger or older than they are so the year 7's that haven't settled in their own year group but you'll always find them with a bunch of year 9's or the year 9's are always with the year 7's.

25   Susan: Or sometimes you notice going on from that point they associate more with the staff and not really at all with the students.

26   Sarah:I think some of the older ones avoid exams.

27   Samantha: That kind of avoidance behaviour things that make them uncomfortable, six formers especially they disappear and things like that.

28   Susan: Their whole presentation, just in terms of how they look and how they appear in terms of their uniform etc. can often be a reason for underlying [SEMH]

29   Sarah:And sometimes they avoid large groups of people, particularly where they might be expected to speak in front of other people, so they will avoid that situation so they don't have to be there and be under pressure in that way.

30   James: I think that's actually quite a relevant point about it to a lot of people where it's not always those who outwardly display signs of X, Y and Z who may in fact have social emotional and mental health issues, so they can quite blend in but yet they're not seen with those issues, or more difficult to identify but they exist.

31 03:44

32   Susan: And others, I mean we've noticed, there's not many, but losing weight in particular.

33 Mary: I think the opposite can be said as well.

34 Susan: The opposite can be said yes, absolutely.

35 Mary: If you're not looking after your appearance.

36 Sarah:I think poor punctuality is another one because they find it difficult to get themselves into school and it's a struggle maybe for the parents to get them out of the house if they're suffering from depression for example so they might have a regular pattern of being late to school all the time.

37 Interviewer: [Q2] So we've done the first question. The following question is: how are students with SEMH needs brought to the attention of the senior leadership team?

38 Susan: Through the **achievement leaders** and that's our heads of years and **Director of key stages and SENCo.**

39 James: Form tutors; subject teacher assessments.

40 Susan: Me?

41 Sarah: Yes thats our **SENCO**

42 Susan: Would bring it to most probably the inclusion team and the achievement leaders and then **primary schools** sometimes.

43 James: Our **inclusion manager** sitting next to you **lets everybody know**, gives a potted history of all students new to key stage three coming into year 7, based on information from primary schools, so **if** the primary school passes on the information my esteemed colleague to your right make sure that it's written down for everybody to look at.

44 Susan: And that's via a booklet called Pen Portraits. So, Pen Portraits of year seven which gives all the information that we know about.

45 Sarah:And sometimes it can be **other students;** students quite often will tell you they're worried about their friends.

46 Mary: Sometimes **parents** actually you know if their child is worried about a subject and so forth and a quick whip round the teachers to just know if anyone noticed anything.

47   Sarah: We use the **Sharp system** where the s**tudents can report anonymously** online with any difficulties they're having or any concerns they've got and sometimes they will say, "I'm **really worried about my friend because** X, Y, Z." And that happens quite a lot.

48   James: They also in a sense, (inaudible 00:02:00) through the **student suggestion** box and we can get messages through about if somebody's worried about somebody because of whatever it may be.

49   Susan: I know we've said parents but parents not of the students who have the issues with; the child will go home and tell their parent, "I'm worried about so-and-so in my class," and that parent will inform us.

50   Interviewer: And what would you say is the most popular way of finding out the concerns, is there one method or is it quite varied?

51   Sarah: Are SLT finding out the concerns?

52   Interviewer: Yes.

53   Sarah: I would say that mainly came through the **achievement leaders**, the heads of year.

54   Interviewer: [Q3] So the next question is: do you think there is a link between social emotional mental health needs and permanent exclusions?

55   03:04

56   Susan: Sometimes but not-

57   Sarah: Do you mean exclusively? Because exclusively I would say no but it can be linked but not exclusively.

58   Mary: But is there a higher proportion of those students getting exclusions than other students?

59   Sarah: I don't think we've looked at the data.

60   Susan: We keep a spreadsheet of all of it but it's a case of analysing it but I don't think so, I think when OFSTED have been in and we have looked at things like that, no.

61   James: I think the opposite occurs which is everybody goes the extra mile to avoid it [PEX] unless it's a last, last, last resort for children with SEMH needs.

62   Susan: I can't think at the moment; the permanent exclusions that we've done have been for things like bringing a **knife into school, alcohol into school**, certainly last year.

63   Sarah:But they're so few and far between anyway and we just have so few permanent exclusions, it's kind of unusual things really isn't it?

64   Susan: There was one permanent exclusion last year and I would say that she had SEMH. I think what we have to remember here as well I should have said this maybe at the beginning but **in terms of SEN needs the word 'behaviour' doesn't exist, so if you're thinking behaviour you just have to think of social emotional and mental health that covers behaviour,** so I should have said that maybe that we're not just looking at mental health needs, although in some respects I know a lot of people say that all poor behaviour is as a result of a mental health issue – that's debateable.

65   Samantha: I kind of think that in the broadest sense of some kind of social emotional or mental health difficulty, any child that's behaviour has got so out of control that they obviously haven't learnt to fit in with **social norms yet or they haven't learned to conform** so in that sense … but I suppose it depends how broad do you mean definition? If we're just talking about you know, does that mean they have a definite pin-down-able mental health condition? Possibly not. But have they got social difficulties where they haven't learned to conform and function as part of our school community then probably yes.

66   Interviewer: It can be. The definition, what I want to hear is how broad do you view the definition in your school because there is no absolute, even if you look at all the statutory guidance there is no absolute, yes there are clear mental health needs but there are also social emotional issues that are not as easily defined.

67   Mary: Well then there's the question of is anyone diagnosed with anything? Because we might feel in the way that they behave in school and with teachers and so on that they have, let's say, social issues, which are usually quite easy to pinpoint in a classroom but that doesn't mean if there's no **label attached there's no record of history there.**

68   06:18

69   Interviewer: [Q4] I think we were coming onto this actually anyway through discussions: what are the causes and contributing factors of permanent

exclusions?

70   Sarah:We don't have very many and where we have them they've been varied; we had someone excluded last year for persistent disruptive behaviour.

71   Interviewer: And what did that entail?

72   Sarah:Daily arguing with other's, being unkind to other students, ignoring instructions.

73   James: Interfering with other friendship groups; going back and forth between different groups and causing tension with groups that way. Manipulation.

74   Sarah:Refusing to follow instructions in class; basically behaviour that carried on all the way through primary school.

75   Susan: Social media issues.

76   James: But it's also when a range of strategies have been put in place and there has always been a range of strategies, it's not that this individual's needs have suddenly had to be met, it's because each strategy has **been exhausted and another one been put in place so it actually becomes cumulative** because you know every former strategy has been exhausted.

77   Sarah:I would say that [range of strategies have been put in place] is usually true but in this case that wasn't the case because the parents refused to allow us to refer to the EP, or the support service or go to our counsellor-

78   Susan: Refer to our learning mentor; everybody – refused everything.

79   Sarah:Last time I've excluded I think was because somebody brought alcohol in.

80   Susan: We had the lighting incident.

81   Sarah:**Silly behaviour** that could have been avoided. But we don't have many.

82   Interviewer: Anything else; any other behaviours that you notice or anything else that leads up to it, maybe not the final permanent exclusion but behaviours that lead up to fixed term that end up being permanent?

83   09:50

84   James: I think you have to take into consideration the culture of the school and the culture of the school is a very supportive environment, and the students know it's a very supportive environment and they know all the things that we said already in terms of people that they can turn to; we regularly ask them if they are clear about who they can share a problem with etc. so they know that people are there to help. But we do have very high expectations of behaviour in the school and it's because of that I think that students know consequences and they know precisely what the sanctions are and we do have things, **the trip-wire things, we do have things that will bring about a greater sanction so I think they respond. I**f you look at the question the other way round, I think we're very good at managing issues which perhaps in other schools could get out of hand; I think we have a very good grasp of those things and I would say it's because we have non-teaching heads of year that can deal with those issues as soon as they happen.

85   Interviewer: [Q5] Now again this question may be more relevant for some schools than others but who are the main groups of students who face parent exclusions?

86   Sarah:What do you mean by main groups, are you talking about their ethnic groups or what?

87   Interviewer: It could be ethnic groups; It could be year groups, it could be social economic groups.

88   Mary: I'm not sure there's enough of them to make any kind of [group]

89   Susan: No, I was going to say we don't have any groups really.

90   Interviewer: Or do you notice any patterns; are there any year groups of the few exclusions that this school has had, are there any year groups that are more prominent than in others?

91   Mary: Would you say in year seven they tend to not deal well with social media and they get a few exclusions, not permanent and not even external, just internal?

92   Sarah:I would say you're talking about such small numbers.

93   Mary: Yes the small numbers.

94   Sarah:Year groups; we've got a difficult year eight I would say, that a little cohort but last year we had a terrible year 11.

95   Mary: But if it's just permanent exclusions there aren't enough to say a particular group.

96   Interviewer: And what about internal exclusions on the other hand then?

97   Susan: Again, it's sort of spread across the year groups I would say, I wouldn't say there's a particular year group.

98   Mary: And they're not all behavioural as such. Well they're not all behavioural in school; it can also be things they've done out of school which brings the school into disrepute – it's not common either, it's quite rare.

99   Susan: And the social media stuff that goes on, its outside of school.

100   Interviewer: [Q6] What are the processes and approaches in school that support students with SEMH needs?

101   12:55

102   James: All the kids that join the school are 'made' very aware of the fact that as a school it's very approachable in terms of staff so you kind of know exactly who you will have on both sides if you have got a concern or an issue that you wish to talk about.

103   And kids also know, like for example today I have kids from a particular year group have come to me, although I'm not a head of year, in relation to a concern that they have about another student, so it's very much an open feeling within the school that you can approach anybody to deal with or to try and deal with any concerns that you may have.

104   Mary: And we are committed to do that strongly; we say, "If you don't feel comfortable with your achievement leader or someone, just speak to someone else."

105   Susan: Students know that we have a learning mentor who has a drop-in policy as well, so they don't have to be referred necessarily they can go and speak to somebody.

106   Sarah: Sixth form can self-refer to the counsellor.

107   Susan: But the achievement leaders and myself are available always at break and lunchtimes for anybody to come into either to see me in the playground or come into my room to talk about anything and support them.

108   Sarah: It's the support that comes from external agencies like the

behavioural support service.

109 Susan: Obviously we would then, depending on the need, we would contact the parents, if that's appropriate and that might be all that's needed. Or else yes we might think that it would be a CAMHS referral and sometimes, the student, we might refer them to our counsellor who might do one session and say, "This should be CAMHS, this isn't necessarily a school problem, it should be taken to the next level." Or it could be that we would involve the behaviour support service, the secondary behaviour support service, or it could be Ed Psychs you know. with the police, parent support workers, 'change and challenge' in [borough name] – there's lots of groups that are there to support. It might be a referral to the SPO, it might be EWO, as I say, from the first meeting and whatever the issue is we would then decide which agency would be appropriate.

110 Samantha: We have posters up for the sixth form and we give leaflets out so if students present to their achievement leader or to me then we've got leaflets, we've got posters up because obviously we've got 18 year olds. but if it's a child protection issue we refer it through the child protection channels.

111 James: The other thing that's very successful that we often use and the kids actually ask for it sometimes is actually peer mentoring. So particularly with kids, I'm thinking of one particularly in year 10, with particular difficulties and it is a strategy she's actually requested **because she got through yet**, so I think it's something they do benefit from.

112 Samantha: We have 'growing girls' who have done that sort of thing they have a group where the younger students can come and talk about problems, things that are worrying them. But the ones who are running that group they themselves have training in how to manage those situations.

113 17:05

114 Mary: And I think to help with transient emotional issues that teachers need to be aware in order to **cut a bit of slack with students**, you write in our weekly bulletin that all staff get a list of students saying they may have had a loss in the family and could we just keep it in my mind and that helps teachers in lessons, being aware of possibly acute needs for a few weeks.

115 Sarah: Also, I was going to say, fundamentally we have got very good teaching and learning in school so there is a lot of work that goes on in the classroom amongst teachers to help students to learn, a lot of scaffolding,

other strategies that teachers use and that really helps those students cope in the classroom.

116   Susan: Again just something that [name] mentioned there with regard to referring to the counsellor – sixth formers can self-refer, so they can do it anonymously, they might not want to speak to [inclusion manager], I don't know why they wouldn't but they might not want to, or the achievement leader for sixth form, so we leave self-referral forms with our receptionist so she can just hand them the self-referral form; it would normally eventually involve sixth form staff but they know it's confidential

117   Fiona: And their [sixth formers] parents don't have to be told

118   Susan: And they can just self-refer themselves. Year 7-11 obviously we invite the parents.

119   Samantha: There was another sixth form run group as well wasn't there for like the shy, quiet ones, I think it was called something like 'quiet but mighty' and that was about getting the ones that maybe don't feel that confident or have anxiety around talking to people and that was sixth form run as well.

120   There are a lot student working with each other, student groups within the school and it happens right through the school and a lot of mentoring and support from other students as well.

121   Interviewer: And is that something you've done for quite a while here at [School A]?

122   Sarah:Yes.

123   Interviewer: Would you say what the last five years?

124   Sarah:Longer than that probably.

125   Interviewer: It's something that I haven't heard much about but it sounds like it works, it sounds quite unique.

126   James: Sorry, what's unique?

127   Interviewer: Having peer mentoring and peer groups; I mean there may be some other schools that do it-

128   20:11

129   Samantha: I have a student who I teach who is a managed move and I was concerned, she's not been in the school very long so I was a bit

concerned she might start **bubbling up a bit**, so I already spoke to a sixth form student who was a behavioural issue throughout the school and I said to her, **"I might get you to come and talk to this student to talk to her about the way she behaves and why it is really probably in her best interests to change her behaviour now."** And there are a lot of students who are prepared to do that sort of thing in the school and it's much better coming from the student who has experienced it than from the adult, it's much more effective.

130   Susan: Which shows that some of the students who have had quite severe behaviour issues usually turn themselves around and even end up in the sixth form.

131   Interviewer: Yes. And it also no doubt empowers them as well.

132   Sarah:We've also had external adult mentoring for the young (inaudible 00:21:06) girls group.

133   Susan: Yes, Safer London, they come in – it's called Empower and it's through Safer London.

134   Samantha: And we do it through assemblies as well don't we? We have guest speakers in who come in, for example this morning the sixth form, year 12 did a mental health assembly and they address these in groups, **basically to promote confidence in students to feel that they can speak out;** I thought they did a very good assembly this morning. And we have guest speakers who come in and talk about mental health issues that I know they're throughout the school but they [Mental health issues] do seem to become quite prevalent in the sixth form, it all seems to have hit a head around year 12-13.

135   Interviewer: And what kind of issues do you notice of that age group?

136   Samantha: Well, all different issues; there can be all different reasons for it.

137   Susan: A lot of anxiety maybe, stress and anxiety sometimes [in year 12-13].

138   Samantha: It can be family circumstances, it can be bereavement, it can be workload, it can be pressure, it can be pressure of the family.

139   Susan: Our Safer Schools Officer comes in often and again talks about behavioural issues.

140   Samantha: I'd say here as well like the chaplaincy team probably plays a role in this as well.

141   Frank: And we have the reconciliation as well where they get a chance to air their concerns don't they?

142   Susan: Yes, the priest.

143   Sarah: That's not quite the same.

144   Samantha: Well it is in a way. Their first point of call would always be their RE teacher or the chaplain.

145   Interviewer: [Q7] What are the processes and approaches in the school that hinder students with SEMH needs?

146   24:06

147   Mary: Well, we're limited with what we can do. There are so many times that the counsellor she's x amount of date, x amount of time and budgets, it's limited.

148   James: Our counsellor who is very experienced, she's here two days a week; I would absolutely love to say that we could have her here five days a week but like many schools we just can't. And also, the amount of the way our budget is, with other resources it's just impossible to resource. And the extra money we get for certain needs just keeps going down but I would like to be able to say we can have the counsellor for five days a week but we've got her for two days a week and as far as I'm concerned if something had to go that wouldn't. We would do our **damn hardest** to do everything, cut what we would need to keep [Counsellor's name] here for a minimum of two days but it is a problem.

149   Sarah: I think we're seeing students coming to school with more social, emotional mental health issues than they perhaps have done in the past, right from year 7. But coinciding at the time of we've got to make magic budget cuts and we've got less support for those students and that is not a good mix.

150   Samantha: And then the **budget constraints** also affecting things like training, so there are some great companies out there that we've had them in the past and there's one called Learning to Listen. So we've had our achievement leader team provided with [Learning to listen training], it was quite a significant chunk of training how to properly listen to kids when they're trying to tell you what their issues and problems are and for you to

help work through them or help direct them to what to do next. But it comes at a cost and the more your budget is cut the less you're able to afford to buy-in assistance like that to provide people with that level of expertise to deal in-house with those situations. The local authority services are being cut as well.

151   Jacob:Other services are being cut too

152   Fiona: Yea, its 'really' difficult to get EP time. Well it's money.

153   Susan: Same with behaviour support services, their service has been cut

154   Anne: We had an email last week telling us not to expect-

155   Sarah:A lot of our students have speech and language difficulties and it's very very hard to get the support for the students.

156   Susan: The secondary SLCN services have been cut drastically from what they were a little while ago when it was very good; it was very poor when I first came here then it became very good and now we've gone back again. They only come in to see students who have got a [Education health and care] plan and we have very few of those so we don't get much time allocated at all.

157   Maria: But also I think we're at a time when our students are under enormous pressure with these uncertain new specifications and a lot of pressure and news around high grades. And I think that, it's all come together at a time and the students seem to be quite anxious about this, even otherwise, you know, mentally well students are struggling sometimes to manage all of this [academic pressure] and to keep that anxiety under control and it can sometimes spread a bit, the ripple, once somebody starts to kind of panic a bit about it.

158   Interviewer: [Q8] What role do outside agencies have in regards to supporting students with SEMH needs? And how can this be improved upon?

159   Susan: I think we have addressed most of them. But in terms of improvement, I think CAMHS waiting lists are the hardest to navigate. The amount of time we wait for some of our kids to be seen by that team it's ridiculous, sometimes we just end up getting our counsellor to do some of the work, but often they need more than what she can provide.

160   Sarah:There are so many good services in [borough name]. We have

regular contact with our Ed Psych, although these hours don't go very far, I mean we buy, what we buy end up being used for the assessments and report writing. We have spoken about doing some training, but we have other agencies to come in and do that who are quite frankly more cost effective. But our Ed Psych is great.

161   Mary: Once we get into CAMHS were in, but the referral process is really tricky, you need to write the right thing on the form to get the right kind of help. I think we've got the hang of it, I hope it doesn't change. Some of our kids find it difficult to get to appointments, so we go with them, you know for a bit of moral support. But it would be ideal if CAMHS would do their sessions here (in school). That way more of them would attend.

162   James: It's tough, without salt services. We've been talking to schools about buying some in, for that well look at next years budget.

163   Jacob:At a time of austerity it's not easy for the needy kids. I dread to think of how it will be in a few years from now.

164   Interviewer: [Q9] At what point are parents involved where there are concerns about children at risk of permanent exclusion?

165   Susan: Well for the few who we have excluded they've been involved from the outset. When we are concerned we let them know, and generally they are quite supportive. Many of our parents really wanted their children to come here so they are really on board with most things.

166   Sarah:Apart from that one who refused all support and then the child left, could you say that contributed to it? Well we'll never know, but we are really keen on working with parents. Our achievement leadears are avaliable to talk and meet throuout they day and the do regulary contact parents, and are even on first name basis with many of them.

167   Interviewer: [Q10] Okay, thank you for that. The next question reads; What could be the reasons for year 9's having higher rates of exclusions than other year groups both locally and nationally?

168   28:44

169   Jacob:I'm not so sure it's true now as it used to be when we had the year nine SATs because that was they saw it as the end and not a process towards the end and there was that down time between the SATs in May and the breakup of school in July.

170   Sarah: But are you saying [Interviewer] that that is a fact?

171   Interviewer: Yes nationally and in this local authority.

172   James: I don't think that [year 9's most likely to be excluded] applies in this school.

173   Interviewer: It may not apply in this school but I just wondered given that you're all in schools, I wonder if you see anything in year 9's?

174   James: I would challenge that and say that needs to be the norm I think and I think it's changing but I think that's something peculiar to our school. I think we're very good at dealing with, as I say, all behaviour and that's particularly my hat. And I do think I would have agreed with that a long time ago, I think year nine were often, you know, people would say the worst year group. But I think because of lots of factors and the geography of the school I think you've also got to take into consideration we're a split site school, we deal with things in different ways on both sides. So I think if we're going to have **poor behaviour I think it peaks at year eight** and we deal with it extremely successfully but by the time of year nine when you would be perhaps thinking about that actually it's going in the other direction.

175   Sarah:But she's asking us why we think it peeks locally and nationally at this age.

176   Jacob:Could it be that a lot of schools now are starting to teach their GCSEs in year 9, so year nine have got more purpose now?

177   Sarah:Well no. Could it be that they're starting their GCSEs that's true in lots of schools and maybe trying hard to cope with that pressure?

178   Maria: Maybe they're [year nine students] not emotionally right for it [exams] yet. Maybe they're just too young for it.

179   James: Also, I mean this is just experience of dealing with exclusion appeals and I've seen quite a lot over the years where a permanent exclusion is the last step and there's been an accumulation of things so there's been two years of the school trying to cope with lots and lots and lots of effort and you see the list of all the behaviours; two years the third year, and this is the problems start in year seven and by the time they are 13 or 14 there have been so many or there's a serious trigger that's built it up that it impacts on in year 9. I can remember seeing some where there was just 50 incidents in year 7, it might have gone down or up in year 8; by the time the student was in year nine the school just didn't know which way to turn, it was a total accumulation of things [behaviour] and they had to

take into account the effect this was having on all the other students. And perhaps it's the breaking point – I'm looking at other schools, not necessarily ours.

180   Sarah:Some schools don't want is things going into key stage 4. So a lot of schools might be trying to, I'm not saying a lot of schools but some schools might be trying to offload those students before they get into key stage four and cause problems in key stage four and that will be something to do with the pressure there is on year for results in schools. Even ourselves we think if we've got naughty kids, we've done everything we can but they don't get to key stage 4.

181   32:43

182   Anne: And also with the cutbacks as well, we haven't necessarily got courses that even nationally we can provide for these kids that may have been available in the past.

183   Susan: Although some might be available for key stage four students, but they are so expensive, it could be.

184   Anne: They don't count on the tables so schools don't want to put them on. Whereas in the past you might have sent someone to college to do hair and beauty for one or two days a week but now you're sacrificing that kind of curriculum for something that's not going to count for the school, it might count for the child but not necessarily count for the school. So there's a tension between what's good for the child and what's good for the school.

185   Samantha: I wonder as well if there's something about that kind of age for the children as well and I know that boys are permanently excluded at much higher rates than girls. Maybe more girls are getting excluded and because they hit their peak in the eight, so earlier than boys and so the boys are hitting puberty at about year nine and their behaviour is really peaking at that point. I mean that could be an explanation.

186   Tom: I would have said that it's an age where you start to separate from your parents, you start to hide things from home, you want to create a distance and in that distance it might be relationship and so on and so forth so they are all these things playing on your mind at actual school. Also, if you've not done much work by year nine and you've been living on your knowledge of primary school it starts to show and then you want to hide it; often we have students whose behaviour is more to try to hide the fact they can't do the work and that might show in all kinds of outrageous behaviour

in the classroom and possibly you're less afraid of adults to some extent, therefore you might want to say something quite challenging and just see what happens.

187   Interviewer: Thank you for your time that's it. Any final questions or comments? Do you have any questions for me or any comments you want to add that I haven't asked?

188   Sarah:Will you share the findings with us?

189   Interviewer: Yes, I will share the finding with each individual school and then I will share the findings collectively; I'm discussing with [Head of education] about how I will do that to share the findings collectively so it might be at the Heads meeting but I also want to feedback to the rest of the senior leadership teams.

190   Interviewer: Thank you all for your time and all of your comments and it's really helpful to go into each school and hear the different perspectives of staff, so thank you very much.

School B

1	**File name: School B**	
2	Key:	
3	**Interviewer**	
4	1	Laura
5	2	Simon
6	3	Jerry
7	4	Andrew
8	5	David
9	6	Joshua
10	7	Dorothy
11	8	Derek
12	**Interviewer:I'll read the questions out and then I will just put it in the middle of the table just so you can glance at it; roughly about 4-5 minutes**	

per question ideally, some will go over because some you will have more to talk about than others. is that okay?

| 13 | Laura: | You may have to stop us. |

| 14 | | **[Q1]The first question is: what behaviours would you expect to see in a student with social emotional and mental health difficulties? There are no right or wrong answers.** |

| 15 | Laura: | One example would be that they're quite withdrawn potentially. |

| 16 | Simon: | Or the other way: attention seeking.   It can manifest itself as well in different ways; you've got ones that are the life and soul of the party in school and ones that will say nothing but then they will be life and soul on social media outside of school in terms of what their projected personality is as opposed to their actual personality. |

| 17 | | Jerry: They could be an isolate or they could be isolated and so there's a kind of on their own-ness about it and withdrawing from a group. |

| 18 | Dorothy: | I actually think it's [SEMH] a very difficult thing to identify quickly; I think it's an area where any numbers of behaviours could lead to it but it [SEMH] would certainly be a pattern of behaviour that was out of the ordinary which would lead us to start looking underneath. I think one of our struggles would be to identify initially who has social emotional mental health difficulties and that often takes us, maybe that's one of our issues, it takes to us too long to make that identification from the evidence in front of us because even then it [SEMH] would often be linked to other difficulties and I spoke a bit about speech language communication difficulties; I think that will often lead to social emotional mental health difficulties and I think we can sometimes be perhaps confused with all the (inaudible; over-talking 00:02:18)- |

| 19 | Simon: | Absolutely. I don't think there's a single child who has got social emotional mental health on their SIMS it wouldn't have another underlying need beyond that so very complex. |

| 20 | David: | I think that that change in pattern and behaviour is perhaps key; when we are talking about child protection being a sort of categories of risk, it may not come over as one particular thing, it could be an unusual behaviour; it could be a mood swing- |

| 21 | Andrew: | -that's a sign particularly with a child where quite often the child has been very withdrawn then absolutely lose it. |

| 22 | **Simon:** | I was going to say, the change that's something that you look for isn't it, a sudden change potentially, where they used to be somebody who was quite quiet and all of a sudden they are not or somebody who loses their temper and before they have been quite placid, so sometimes a change in someone's state physically and mentally or the way they're dressed, if they |

suddenly start dressing in a different way that can be the sign of something as well.

23	Andrew: Yes, often social issues with peer groups; we often see children with social emotional and mental health needs or difficulties who are very good with adults for example but absolutely hopeless with their peers. It's a particular group of students we have had in school and some of those have been extremely needy.
24	**03:59**
25	Simon: We do work this out don't we in identifying different signs and symptoms and if we go back to the keeping children safe in education so you've got the physical neglect, the sexual, the emotional that prevent possible indicators. But I think ultimately we say that it's the dialogue, so it's the head of year knowing that the family, the children, and myself and this team as a Child Protection Team, talking, talking, talking, so we can identify reasonably reliably what those signs and symptoms are.
26	Andrew: The SNAP assessment tool is quite good isn't it, the SENT? I don't know if you have seen this – it's SNAP – that's quite interesting that it raises some issues that we don't always notice, so we don't notice some of the things that we're listing so we will refer to the SENCO, they will then assess, well it's a whole spectrum actually, it's a very interesting assessment, I remember one child we did it, but that was incredible that uncovered a whole range of activities-
27	David: It talked about his emotional self-esteem and his education self-esteem and he held himself to be very high educationally self-esteem where as in fact his ability was very low level and it was very interesting about what we were saying there in terms of how a student sees themselves compared to their natural ability as well and how that manifests with SEN.
28	**Interviewer:[Q2] How are students with SEMH needs brought to the attention of the senior leadership team? How do you get to hear about what the concerns are?**
29	Laura: Do you mean in terms of formally?
30	**Interviewer:Any way; whether it's informally or formally, how do you get to know?**
31	Simon: SWIFT, it would come through SWIFT, so that's the School Welfare Inclusion Forum Team. So basically SWIFT is a group within the school that's made up of the main pastoral leaders so the Heads of Year, the Attendance, [SLT member], myself and we will meet on a regular basis and the SENCO, to make sure that no child who has got a special need slips through the net that's the idea. So if there's a learning difficulty across the school it will probably come through the SENCO. If there's a problem at home it might come through attendance and the Attendance Officer; if it's a pastoral need it will come

through Head of Year, but the referral would be through SWIFT and if it's a significant referral it would be the pink form, which is a CP [Child protection] form, I'll show you a bit later on, which is a standard CP form and then if we think we need to get an external provider and we need to send them to Children's Services, to Social Services, then we will do that, so it would be a member of staff through to one of the Pastoral Leaders, unless it's directly CP in which case it would come to me and I send it back down to the Heads of Year.

| 32 | But I think our referral procedure is pretty watertight and we do a lot of induction and every time we have an induction meeting we go through concerns that could put a child at risk, we go through signs and symptoms and different categories and we say, "Is this clear? Are there any other channels we could be using to refer a problem of the nature that you've just mentioned?" |

| 33 | **07:56** |

| 34 | Andrew: Yes but I think also obviously we get the ones we get from primary transfer, so if there's already an identified special educational need, and some of those will come through as SEMH with primary transfer files. There's increasingly we're getting the route where Heads of Faculty will refer to Heads of Year who will then refer onto [SLT member] group at SWIFT which is important so you've got the element of academic progress, okay the stretcher we use is following progress checks; there are progress meetings and key stage 3 with [SLT member], key stage 4 with [SLT member], Key Stage 5 with [SLT member], and if a student was under-performing in a number of subjects that might well indicate some kind of social emotional mental health need or special need and intervention might be indicated. But that information only comes through once you start to meet as groups and you have a number of people feeding back that a particular individual is not performing and that then feeds into the structure that [SLT member] was talking about as well. |

| 35 | So, is it fool-proof? No. Do we think we pick up most of the cases? Yes. Is it early enough? I can't answer that; obviously we would love it to be as early as possible whenever possible. I still think the big weakness for us is the primary/secondary transfer actually, I still think sometimes the information isn't … or sometimes the thresholds are different from different primary schools. |

| 36 | Laura: I would say transfer in general actually because we now have students in-year admissions that don't know very much about it and quite often just the nature of the beast, in-year admissions tend to have an issue, which is why they've moved school potentially. |

| 37 | Andrew: [with in-year admissions] Quite often the parents are moving the school without- |

| 38 | Laura: Without prior information given to the school or the school they've moved from don't send you information. We have a managed move system, I know you know about from coming to the [Fair access panel] meeting the other day and [name of local authority] schools are quite good at sharing |

information but it's not always full so actually sometimes when students move here members of staff flag it up very quickly when they've joined their classes and either let the Behaviour Team know or myself or the SEN Department. So one of our counselling staff is already for example, working with somebody who only joined us a couple of weeks ago because we've noticed then very quickly but that wasn't brought with their file for example, it was something that was discovered by staff within 10 minutes of the boy being in school – so it's professional judgement and being able to tell that there's something going on a little bit deeper that needs to be investigated and looked into but I think that's, like I say, sometimes a flaw of transfer.

| 39 | Andrew: | I think the whole of the transfer process could be looked at; we're not pointing any fingers by definition primary schools are different and we welcome that in a way. The difficulty for us is where the thresholds are applied so differently in terms of what constitutes and I do appreciate that in a primary school you've got 50% of the children have some kind of special educational need that's much more difficult sometimes in a primary school where you've got 3 children who have got a special educational need and there is that variation so they're not necessarily working with the same baselines so work to moderate that might be really useful from our point of view as SENCOs. But we could do more I think getting into the primary schools to visit the children – we're not too bad but we tend to spend a lot of time where there are children who have very significant need. So where you've got a child who is transferring to us who we believe doesn't really have any significant additional need we might not even send someone to the primary in that case, we might just be admitting we've got [number anonymised] this year going to be admitted, so we can't physically get somebody to everyone. |

| 40 | **11:27** | |

| 41 | Simon: | Or they [primary school children] may be traumatised by the transfer itself it triggers all kinds of things. I think it was a case of self-harming across the school or if someone was becoming very withdrawn I think it does come to us, I feel reasonably secure that I think we are pretty good, as I say, talking to staff about what they need to refer onto us to keep an eye out for anything that could put them in harm's way, any child in harm's way and then to refer it on. |

| 42 | Dorothy: | Self-harm is a big one; we talked about social media, live prime, the gangs, all those things coming from outside. Prevent is particularly interesting at the moment because it would be the parent that will bring information to us and that will alert us to it. FGM would come from the Attendance Officer and the police will let us know. |

| 43 | Andrew: | It's an interesting one actually because I think one of the groups, so the really defined things I think we're dealing much better with the harder to find things. So in terms of I think we're less good at dealing with the child who might present as being over-aggressive and particularly I'm thinking |

with some of the boys, we're dealing with one at the moment the sort of gangster type behaviour or wannabe gangster type behaviour; they're clearly not gangsters by the way, but they obviously have this model, they really want to appear to be. Often we're looking and we're really struggling to see what's going wrong because to all intents and purposes they seem to come from a family that's very caring; they have a really good set of values and yet there's something that we're not quite able to manage because of some influences outside and it's often peer group and it's often not in this school and I think perhaps the invisibility of that is making it harder to manage.

| 44 | Laura: | Because the weekends happen, the evenings happen and we're not there at that time. It's always noticeable on a Monday morning if they've not turned up for school on Monday morning because that means something has happened over the weekend. |

| 45 | Andrew: | Some of our recent permanent exclusions have fallen into that category [Overaggressive, wannabe gangsters]. |

| 46 | **Interviewer:Does anybody else want to add anything, I know there are some people who haven't said anything. No pressure.** |

| 47 | Joshua: | I think from a progress point of view I think it was touched on in terms of the progress, in Key Stage 3, it's similar that teachers will come to me or the other progress leaders have got issues with this student and they're not engaging and the work is ongoing and ongoing and then for us it's looking is it across all subjects or is it just a couple of subjects and obviously if it is just one or two subjects it's sometimes difficult to identify if there is a bigger issue or it's just with that one teacher but again it's working with the pastoral team to find out if there is a bigger issue. |

| 48 | Jerry: It's identifying if there's a pattern or underperformance across a range of subjects or if there's a sudden change in their attainment and progress in a number of subjects and if there's any specific reasons for that that's just liaising with Head of Year or Form Tutors to identify a reason for that. |

| 49 | **15:31** |

| 50 | Andrew: | The previous 2 academic years have been interesting because we've had 2 groups of really poorly behaved boys who have not made the progress they should have despite- |

| 51 | Joshua: | One was a lot worse, 2 years ago was worse; I think he was more involved with gangs and things like that, whereas last year I think he was just being loud and appearing to be like that but actually not, so I think it gets difficult how to identify if there is actually an issue or if they are just being lads and boys together. |

| 52 | Andrew: | Two years ago there were significant arrests in that group; some of them just weren't with us long. |

53	**Interviewer:[Q3] Is there a link between SEMH needs and students who receive permanent exclusions? Give reasons for your answer. So you've already gone into a bit but just a bit more of a focus on the link between SEMH and permanent exclusions.**
54	Laura: I think there can be [a link between SEMH and PEX] but if I'm thinking of the people that we permanently excluded; I've only been in role since September and the students that we've permanently excluded I would say didn't really have any SEMH this year. Last year, well at the beginning of this year there was one student but I don't think there's always a direct link. But I think the students that do have that link it's without a doubt sometimes the fact that it's been untapped to get to that stage or that there's outside influences that have caused that to happen.
55	David: And I think quite often what we found is the students with SEMH problems have been either protected or it's been a denial by the family quite often as well; maybe who you're thinking of, there was a girl that had been **adopted** but wasn't aware that she was adopted for example but we think she was aware but the parents, well the adoptive **parents were in denial** of the fact that she was aware and it became a very big moment of **seeking attentio**n and seeking it in the most inappropriate **dangerous** ways that was really manifesting itself and we were very concerned for her **safety.**
56	Every case is individual but quite often there are links where you can see that situation or that dynamic really isn't helping a situation get better or the message isn't being reinforced at home in terms of what we're expecting at school. We will always inform parents but some are really hard to get, not because they work but there is resistance;there's some sort of element of dysfunctionality between the 3 sides of the triangle, in terms of student, school and parent.
57	Andrew: I'm just thinking about the patterns over the last few years. I think where we've permanently excluded a student for consistent and persistent breach of the school's code of conduct I think there is a link, you know, they've often scored very high in terms of behaviour points and we felt in the end we had no choice but to remove the student from the school because of the **damage they are doing to others** and the fact they are not making progress themselves.And I've got a handful of students right now who I know will not make it to the end of this academic year, and that's the saddest thing, what do I do with them
58	**18:48**
59	Where it's a one-off serious incident, no I don't think there is any [SEMH] need at all. I'm not saying we couldn't perhaps have predicted some of the one-off serious incidents, maybe, I don't know. I wish we could that would be a great gift to have.
60	I think sometimes with the ones who **consistently don't follow our**

expectations, yes I think that is the case [SEMH and PEX link]. Now, having said that, the common response from our governing body when we do get to that point is: why did we wait so long? You've both been in those meetings where, because we do absolutely bend over backwards and the structures, we try very hard but we're obviously not getting the right thing, so we do a lot of things that look really good to me and I look at it thinking this is great, we take them to Behaviour Panel, members of the Behaviour Support Service, we have the Governing body there, we have the parents there and we put pressure on them but I wonder if sometimes, and if does work for some by the way but not all of them, and sometimes we seem to be saying all the right things and the parent feels the pressure and the child feels absolutely no pressure at all and those are the cases where we don't seem to ever succeed with them.

| 61 | Laura: | I think you're absolutely right and I think sometimes [SLT member] and I will be in a meeting with a parent and a child and [name's] saying, "You're not going to be coming back." And they still even at that point it's the parent who is begging but even at that point the child and we've got one at the moment that we're dealing who just actually does not seem to understand that this is going to happen. |

| 62 | **Interviewer:** | **And do you think there's a social emotional mental health difficulty underlying that?** |

| 63 | Laura: | I think there's a level of understanding that just is not there for whatever social reason. |

| 64 | Andrew: | I know I keep going on about it, I still think there's a speech, language communication (inaudible; over-talking 00:20:51) and I still think that's there and I still think the inability to engage and some of the issues we're talking about with persistent disruptive behaviour are I think down to a speech language communication difficulty, I think that's a very complex area by the way, it could be any number of issues. We did try if you like almost an experiment and [SLT member] will remember 2-3 years ago and we said every child who we know is at risk of permanent exclusion because of their behaviour we will put onto the SEN register, because it's pretty much guaranteed there's going to be a special educational need and it may well be SEMH. Very artificial I know and it didn't actually meet with regular success but you can see that we're trying to find ways of engaging. |

| 65 | David: | I think it [experiment of putting every child at risk of PEX on the SEN register for SEMH] worked with a couple of the students in SEMH because what it led to is it led to small group work with a couple of role models from the SEN Department and it gave those students a positive male role model that perhaps because of again the dysfunctionality of their family situation they didn't have at home so that made an impact on a couple of students but it was not one size fits all and that's the point. |

| 66 | **22:05** | |

67	Andrew:	You're right and it [experiment of putting every child at risk of PEX on the SEN register for SEMH] works with the very high level SEN. So we had a group of SEN students who had healthcare [Education, health and care] plans and it [Small group work and positive male role models] was actually quite successful with them as a group, they were the group it had a really big impact on but they're not really, okay, they [SEN students who had healthcare [Education, health and care] plans were making themselves borderline risk of permanent exclusion but that wasn't really the group, it was the group who had educational needs, well less defined educational needs and I think that's what we still keep going back to, it's this group on the edge where we can't define exactly what the need is. If I could wave a magic wand: more Ed Psych time, more use time, bring it into school. But for those who do get excluded, the staff expertise in the PRU is what many of the kids need, you know it's more specialised. Sometimes sending them there unlocks a whole range of provisions that we just don't have access to in the mainstream. It's not necessarily what they need, the PRU but they get the support.
68	Simon:	I do think there's an interesting idea here that if you look at social emotional mental health and the link with prisons, you know that a lot of inmates in prisons do suffer from social emotional mental health issues. And so in terms of behaviour and sanction perhaps that applies to schools as well – well it doesn't really, does it? I mean first of all because schools really do believe in fresh starts, a clear canvass and we've had a programme called Fresh Starts and Social Plus project, real focus on rehabilitation within the schools, so it's a nurturing environment not a punitive environment and this kind of sense of redemption as well in schools so it's a really difficult question to answer. I think if you're looking at it from a prisons and adult point of view you could make quite a simple link that somehow our prisons are full or not full but have a disproportionate number of people with those kind [SEMH] of problems. In schools to relate mental health to exclusions requires a bit more digging and thinking, I would think because the context is different.
69	Andrew:	I think prisons are interesting because it's the speech and language communications isn't it? 90%+ of inmates I think is that right? I'm sure I've been told that recently, which is scary stuff but the pointers are there for us all. Okay, so more expert help in schools please.
70	Dorothy:	But I can answer that: we don't have the resources to pay for it [expert help for speech and language needs]. Lack of funding; budgets are so tight.
71	David:	I think the bigger picture here is actually we're doing something and trying to make informed intelligent comments on this but actually, is it not beyond our expertise what social emotional mental health is?
72	Andrew:	We're laymen, trying to intulectulise we don't have the skills to work with children with such complex needs

| 73 | David: | Which comes back to what you were saying we need more expert input. |

| 74 | Andrew: | More expertise. |

| 75 | Laura: | More of the exsisting agencies. |

| 76 | **Interviewer:** | **More of them working with your school?** |

| 77 | **25:33** | |

| 78 | Andrew: | Yes, we buy Health Education Wellbeing Service, he was in for a day a week, we would like to increase that to a day and a half but we could fill that time 3 times over but we're struggling for the finance to do that. We have a very limited amount of educational psychology time related to our healthcare plans, we would really like to buy extra and we can't afford it. We have been looking at models with other schools of buying jointly, you know, an educational psychologist who we would employ between us but again it's just not feasible financially at the moment. |

| 79 | Laura: | Heads of Year ask me all the time if they can refer somebody else to counselling for our sessions that we have but there's a waiting list at the moment. |

| 80 | Andrew: | We could use a speech and language therapist every day; we get our allocated time and that's it and that's what dictated by the healthcare plans and again we've restructured all our support staff, we're restructuring our teaching staff right now so financially times are tough. |

| 81 | **Interviewer:** | **[Q4] We've spoken a bit about this already so hopefully we won't be on this one too long but what are the causes and contributing factors to permanent exclusion? So maybe in addition to what we've already spoken about so I've heard a bit about you know knife crime and other aspects.** |

| 82 | Andrew: | One off serious incidents would be our biggest group at the moment. |

| 83 | Laura: | So (inaudible; over-talking 00:26:43) [PEX] for any weapon brought into school, any form of drug brought into school, any physical act of violence- |

| 84 | Andrew: | So physical act of violence against staff they wouldn't come back from once but we normally say 2 fights and you're gone. |

| 85 | Laura: | And then [cause of PEX] persistent disruptive behaviour. When you look at persistent disruptive behaviours for most of the ones who we let go [PEX] they don't have SEMH needs they are just being terrors, day in and day out. Teachers constantly come to us saying that it makes it impossible to teach or learn. I'm sure most of them don't want to be here, but still we try with |

		them, we never just let them go, it our job.
86	David:	Although that's [persistent disruptive behaviour] contributed to a relatively high number of permanent exclusions I think it's worth saying what [SLT member] said right at the start there, that that actually contributes massively to our behaviour management policy, the knock-on effect of the threat of that is found.
87	Andrew:	We might not always stick to that [PEX after two fights] by the way if there were were mitigating circumstances but it doesn't hurt for the children to believe that if they more than 2 fights then they go – it certainly keeps down the number of physical incidents we have.
88	David:	Although that's [physical fights] contributed to a relatively high number of permanent exclusions I think it's worth saying what [SLT member] said right at the start there, that that actually contributes massively to our behaviour management policy, the knock-on effect of the threat of that is found.
89	Andrew:	It's very popular with the parents and the children actually that's interesting, because they like the sense that they are safe in schools.
90	Laura:	And they [students] will always tell us if there's ever anything, whenever we have ever found a weapon or anything like that the children are the ones who have told us, the students tell us, always, every single time I've ever known because they like to feel safe and they know that that is our rule and that's why they tell us because they don't want to be a part of that.
91	David:	It's a violation of their space and they know that.
92	**28:10**	
93	Laura:	It is. I'm in charge of the trainee teachers that come here and I had some students in with them last week on their induction day and when they asked the students what's the best thing about coming to this school they said that it's a safe place to be and everyone respects everyone and that was out of their mouths not mine. And the fact that they used safety first was fantastic for me.
94	Simon:	It's got to be laying down those expectations first and foremost. I can go through them all with you now?
95	Derek:	We have them in assemblies; we go through assemblies in tutor time and very often if we have, if there's a one-to-one we will reinforce them there. We also have the home-school agreement which embodies that but getting the expectations down and making sure that's kind of built into the culture of the school is really important.
96	Laura:	And the students that I had in there were some Year 7s so who hadn't even been here for that long really, some Year 9s who potentially are

a bit challenging and then Year 13s who are nearly leaving us and they all came up with the same thing and again weren't prepped for it and the trainee teachers were very impressed with the fact that they obviously had the school ethos running through them without us even, well we are doing it every single day, but I hadn't prepped them for it.

| 97 | Andrew: We always say when they come into the school it's a telling school and it is and it's interesting. |

| 98 | **Interviewer: I've heard a lot about what goes on in school what about outside of school, what could happen outside of school whether it's from the streets or in family homes that might contribute to permanent exclusion?** |

| 99 | Jerry: Similar sort of types of things in terms of one-off instances; we had a situation where a student threatened another student allegedly with a scaffolding pole and a knife outside of school last year that came to us via families, we investigated it, we asked the police for some support and once we established the facts that student ended up being permanently excluded because again it was a danger to the school community and obviously bringing the school into disrepute. |

| 100 | There was another incident where it was a parent I think came and confronted some of our students; our students unfortunately reacted badly and because quite aggressive towards the parent, again caused a big problem for our school's reputation and those students didn't return. So I think in terms of permanent exclusions it's a relatively small number but if we extend it to students that end up being managed moved or finding a different school which is essentially the same sort of thing, we as a school, certainly took what happened in school and what happened outside of school as if it was in our school community – it reflected badly on us so it wasn't that much of a distinction between the 2. |

| 101 | **31:12** |

| 102 | Simon: It's a real challenge for any school, particularly when the children are in school uniform on the way to and from school – they're beyond our control but still our responsibility, so again, it kind of comes back to the messages and importance of good behaviour on the way to and from. In terms of parents and what's going on in the home we've got to be seen to be an open school and open to parents and that's not easy because parents feel nervous about coming into school, children don't want their parents involved, teachers aren't always keen to have the parents involved as well, but it's something we work on and getting feedback from parents at all times so they feel that they can come and talk to us, particularly the feedback we have from the office staff and if you've got a problem can you bring it to the school our door is open and we will listen to parents and talk to parents. |

| 103 | But if we were able to get a family support worker that would be |

really helpful within the school.

104	Andrew:	I think an interesting one here there's a slight contention with some of the permanent exclusion stuff because we all know that if I stand in front of the parents at open evening and say, "Right, we're not going to tolerate anything, anyone who disrupts a lesson is going to be permanently excluded," we're going to be very popular and if I stick to that we're going to be the most popular school in the borough. And whether it's the right thing but we have to stand up for, or at least tread a line where we feel it's a reasonable line because nobody should take an education away from someone else but we also meet the needs of the students and reasonably so within the school. So I think we're often treading quite a difficult path; you've probably gathered we're really inclusive by the way and we use that as far as we can to make sure that everybody gets the possible outcomes educationally.
105		I think it is an interesting one because now I'm going to talk slightly more broadly about [LA name] as a whole now: there are some schools which are really in-transitioned and they make themselves, the ones I'm thinking about, there's a new school opened up the road who have absolutely no tolerance for anything; children walk on lines in the corridor in silence-
106	Laura:	If their ties aren't straight they're put in internal exclusion for the day.
107	Andrew:	-we've had children removed from the school with parents up in arms because they can't be quiet walking down the corridor and that's very popular with parents by the way; huge numbers flocking until it goes wrong.
108	David:	Or unless it's your child.
109	**Interviewer:**	**So would you consider [School B] to be a school that has a zero tolerance policy to exclusion?**
110	Andrew:	Our approach is different: we want children to make good choices so we have to educate them to make good choices, there's no point in a sanction without a child understanding what they've done wrong and the reason for that sanction because it doesn't lead to better choices in the future, it doesn't lead to any improvement or understanding of the behaviour. So yes, we don't want to tolerate unpleasant behaviour, we won't tolerate it or aggressive or violent behaviour. However, it's not: write a child off; we will work to try to get them to understand why we won't tolerate that and try to moderate that. For some it's a hard system to navigate through, it's tough and not everyone survives it, especially those with difficult backgrounds.
111	**34:16**	
112	Laura:	I think we work less with zero tolerance and more with our minimum expectations; if it doesn't fit in with that that's when we won't tolerate it at all because if it doesn't fit with our minimum expectations it's not [School B].

113   Simon: It's all to do with your compliance with the minority or majority and I think over the years at [School B], our compliant majority has increased and increased and that group that are not compliant have become more isolated and easier for us to deal with. But absolutely key to that is good teaching and learning and a sense of success in the classroom because if the children are feeling successful, esteem goes up, community esteem goes up and that really helps. And then on top of that it is the expectations and above all I think at [School B] the equal opportunities that we have, so we will not tolerate discrimination, prejudice; we've had very few incidents of racial prejudice. I think, we will not tolerate homophobia and when you have those messages going out and you have that sense of more successful learning. As I say, your compliant majority increases and that helps an awful lot to bring down those levels of exclusions, be they fixed term or permanent.

114   Andrew: It's a very complex picture you can imagine we're juggling.

115   **Interviewer: [Q5] Who are the main groups of students that receive permanent exclusions and why these groups?**

116   David: I'm not sure there is. If we're talking strictly permanent solutions the last 3 years it's been 7 or 8 students and that's not a big enough sample size out of a [amount anonymised] per year group to come up with patterns; there's no pattern for ethnicity, there is possibly a gender pattern in one of the few years but then in other years you don't get that.

117   Laura: They tend to be slightly older I would say for the last year and a half.

118   David: Around Year 9, Year 10 [get more PEX]. very rare to get a Year 7 or Year 8 student in that position. But in terms of SEN profile, in terms of ethnicity, free school meals, there's not been any real pattern.

119   Andrew: I think the only group you could say there were too many excluded were EHCP students and that's based on 2 very serious incidents, based on safety basically; acts of violence that were too extreme for us to manage but other than that there's no particular pattern to it. Actually it's interesting one rather like [SLT member] was saying about our progress groups, actually in terms of ethnicity it never really stays the same other than white British boys don't do as well as they should do, that's probably the one consistent within the school. Within that you're probably aware that our black African boys do better than other ethnic groups but not as well as black African boys nationally which is an interesting pattern but that tends to be dependent because we don't have any dominant groups within the school is very balanced that tends to be dependent on the region the boys come from. So for example if we have lots of Somalian boys then the black African achievement will tend to be lower in that group. If we have lots of Nigerian and Ghanaian boys it will tend to be very high, so it's more dependent on the makeup of that group than it is on the ethnicity: it's too crude a measure to say black African boys, it doesn't work out that way. In

general our black Caribbean boys are variable, some years they do really well, some years they don't do so well and it's more dependent on the cohort I think.

120	**38:04**
121	Joshua: Cohort subjects as well.
122	Andrew: Which is great actually, so we're quite comfortable we haven't got any consistent themes of groups doing badly: boys do worse than girls but that's the case nationally and the gap closed the last year, I don't know what's going to happen this year but let's hope it keeps closing, so we're broadly in line with national average; disadvantaged children do better than similar children we hope, they did last year, the year before wasn't so good but those gaps seem to be closing.
123	So in terms of picking patterns out we are so balanced as an intake I don't think there are particular patterns within that.
124	Simon: We used to do a lot of work on that, we used to filter the data and I sometimes wondered if it was a self-fulfilling prophecy and stigmatising a group. You've got to be cautious of that but we do the analysis that certainly through progress and I think that seems to be more successful, remember we did the MEAP – the Minority Ethnic Achievement Project with Turkish and Somalian children and that was through science if I'm not mistaken and English if I've got that right and it did help to erase attainment to improve teaching in science for those children. So I go for analysis through progress very cautious to do it in terms of say mental health or behaviour, unless something obvious was coming through.
125	Dorothy: What about gender?
126	Laura: More boys generally, this year, slightly not always, this year it was 3-1 this year.
127	Andrew: It's always based on the incident; we can't run the school thinking hang on is this (s.l. your anchor? 00:40:18). If the incident warrants it we'll (inaudible; over-talking 00:40:20). If the behaviour record is consistently poor we'd be looking at it all. I think one of the things we always try to do is make sure that we've explored, particularly if it's somebody who has been permanently excluded for persistent and consistent disruptive behaviour then we would be looking to make sure we have done everything we can to make sure that doesn't happen. Our Governing body are very tight on us about that as well. They will tell us if they feel we haven't done enough. I think one of the vindicators factors is the policies, we've never had a permanent exclusion overturned, you know, where they've gone to an independent (inaudible; over-talking 00:41:02) certainly not in my time. And that's an important check and we welcome that. I know we're saying permanent exclusions are too high and I suppose philosophically I would say any permanent exclusion is one too many. I suppose given the challenges faced, I think [SLT member] touched on it, we are an incredibly diverse school

and we come from some pretty disadvantaged backgrounds and actually I think given that when you start to look at the progress and you look at the number of exclusions I think it's actually relatively low in that; we certainly know that HMI when they came in to look at us, the HMI doesn't agree with the zero permanent exclusion policy, he felt that was counterproductive and he felt that didn't actually, we ought to manage behaviour and didn't improve behaviour. He also felt that if you had a good reason you should permanently exclude because of the message sent – he didn't feel the quotas were helpful, which was interesting, he felt that our behaviour was certainly very good as a result of our exclusion policy. But I think we had quite a good debate, we all shared in this in that if the incidents are serious enough we will exclude for the good of the school community because we're responsible for an awful lot of students and staff and families and the wider community. Would we ever want to? No. But it's about balancing that at the right level.

128	**41:38**
129	**Interviewer:[Q6] What are the processes and approaches in the school that support students with SEMH needs?**
130	Andrew: That's universal through SEN the small group work.
131	David: We have also now for Key Stage 4 and 5 specific time devoted to students that are feeling exam stress, and the stress of assessments because that seems to be quite a prevalent thing at the moment so that's identifiable through the Heads of Year or through Development SEN Department.
132	**Interviewer:Can they self-refer?**
133	David: I don't believe so. They can say they're struggling and then obviously we can make a decision on whether it's appropriate or not, obviously again there's a waiting list for that provision.
134	Simon: You start from all our induction material; we talked about primary transfer and you say, you drill it in as much as you possibly can, they don't always get it that if you have an issue your Tutor is your first point of call. And then from the Tutor it will be the Head of Year and then through the Head of Year we talked about the SWIFT group and it could be through SEN and then we've got the provision through the behaviour team who are increasingly having a more nurturing role to their tasks.
135	Laura: In our behaviour team one member of the behaviour team is attached to each year group. So for example, if there are outside agencies involved with any of our students which we do have social workers and things like that, the social worker then liaises with the member of the Behaviour Team in that year group. We had a meeting earlier on today, a social worker who came in just had her meeting here in the Behaviour Team, we're just aware that they're here, if there's any information that needs to be passed forward or the police are involved or anything like that then they've got their little person that they know

they can talk to and then obviously that comes back to me and I keep an eye on it and I let [SLT member] know if there's anything that he needs to be aware of.

136	**44:43**

137	Jerry: And for anyone with an identifiable [need], so somebody who is on the SEN register for SEMH there will then be the information which is logged, strategies that can help which are all on the SIMS and staff are expected and have monitors with the SEN team that teaching staff are using those strategies in lessons because quite clearly it's very easy to do absolutely nothing and then you've got a child and so-and-so is not behaving in my lesson again, we've got to ask the question: did you try this? Because it's here, making sure that that information is being accessed is being used and is being incorporated into the planning of lessons.

138	**Interviewer: And is it monitored, or is it monitored?**

139	Jerry: Well that's done really via [SLT member] and the team. Okay, I think where it's least formal is monitored by looking at the progress and the behaviour record. So, if a student was coming up then it would come through [name's] team very quickly, if somebody is picking up 3 behaviour points in a day. So that will tell you very quickly and then you start asking those questions straight away, so that would be the least formal way monitoring is when [SLT member] says, "I want to see in the lesson plans that this information is there."

140	David: We do have more bespoke information on SIMS as well. If there's been an EP report then alongside the generic strategies that staff can access. Also, we've said previously we have the one day of [SLT member]'s input for one to one support particularly for students for counselling, we also have an in-school counselling service in terms of art therapy and sometimes drama therapy but I think it's worth saying that an awful lot of input in terms of SEN is often tied up with other aspects, it's actually underlying issues speech and language or specific learning difficulties or cognition or whatever it might be, it's often intertwined with something else so the intervention may not be specifically SEMH necessarily.

141	David: SEN would monitor and evaluate it through the data process system anyway. If it's beyond that if you go back to the SWIFT group and so for every year group the Head of Year will meet with the SWIFT team and that will be once a half-term and then I will see the whole group for the second half of that term so every child with a pink form should be at least monitored, even very briefly twice a half-term, and as I say it could be for those where it's a stamp, it's a green, that's fine, we'll keep monitoring or it could start and say, "We need to find some alternative intervention." So we do evaluate and we look to see if something's not working can we set other targets. It's slightly different for sixth form isn't it – there can be stresses there because obviously the mental and social health needs at the sixth form can be different from obviously lower down the school and that's something that [SLT member], myself and [Andrew] and

[behaviour support] will talk about perhaps on a more individual basis.

142	Jerry: So where a child is on the SEN register if they're at school support, if they're a K student there will be a list of interventions. I know when I look I'm quite often surprised at just how many there are, so you're a student who is SEN support and we have a member of staff who is directly responsible for those students, not just the SENCO we have another member of staff, so just the SENK students is a member of staff, for the EHCP students there's a member of staff as well. And there are a list of interventions that go with each child [with an EHCP], I'm not saying they're all the right ones but they're there so that any member of staff at a click of a mouse can see exactly what's available for that student currently and they can see the strategies that are likely to have an impact.
143	Our member of staff for the K students, there are a lot of K students by the way, so to the best of their ability we will monitor that progress, so come progress check time they will be talking to [SLT member] and [SLT member] about the progress those students are making, so we will get an insight into whether the strategies are working or not there but there are obviously students who will be receiving more input on a day to day basis at any one time, which as you know, K, isn't a fixed for life thing, sometimes students go in and out of K in their school career and some of them do very well.
144	**48:39**
145	**Interviewer: Do you have learning support plan reviews or individual learning plans?**
146	Jerry: There are [support plans or individuals learning plans], depending on what the status the children are. So all of the looked after children have PEPs as you know. We have learning plans for they're not called IEPs anymore, the EHCP takes the place of that but for the healthcare plan students there are targets which are set which are monitored and they are often linked very closely to their progress but they will be set, so for a lot of those I can tell you it's social, communication and interaction that is for a surprising number of our healthcare ones actually it's a key issue – I only know that because I've been reading them all this weekend, so there's loads of reviewing going on and I've been getting them all to read.
147	**Interviewer: [Q7] This one is linked to the previous one: what are the processes and approaches in the school that hinder the effective management of students with SEMH?**
148	Derek: Time, money, resource, professional support.
149	David: It was what we said earlier about identifying because quite often it's a pattern of behaviour that eventually sort of says: right, this is a child with SEMH needs and it's triangulating all of that information and we went through a period of time a few years ago where not all staff were recording

behaviour incidents on our monitoring system, it's far better now and we are getting that staff are also recording interventions and things that they're doing to sort of support so that makes our job a lot easier but in the past it has been about information sharing and gathering that has slowed things down.

150   Laura: I think as well sometimes there's a reluctance from parents to admit that there are those kind of needs and like [Andrew] said already some of that is often intertwined with other needs that they've got so they don't want to recognise any of those needs so that can be an issue.

151   Jerry: I think one of our big ones recently has been high-functioning autistic students who are not identified or recognised or whose parents don't want to recognise. I think our eyes have been open; we have a very close relationship with [school for children with autisim] schools, the autism specialist school, in fact we have an ARP here, a resource for autistic students who can access some mainstream and that's been fantastic having that relationship with [school for children with autisim] but it's opened our eyes to some students who we would never ever have spotted before. We've certainly kept a number of students [with autisim] who we would never have been able to keep as a result of their [school for children with sutisim] expertise. I think there were some particular issues for example, high-functioning autistic girls who don't present with mental health issues particularly until they get to say exam stress, which is an ever increasing issue and then they can't cope for want of a better stereotype: the girl who can't cope with the fact that she's not going be the very best in the exams and that realisation and the stress that brings often leads to self-harm and other issues.

152   High-functioning autism in general is an issue throughout the authority because there's a real lack of provision and we've certainly moved at least one child who is high-functioning autistic.

153   **52:09**

154   **Interviewer: Thinking about that child, what was it about the system that you had here maybe that didn't enable you to support her – what happened?**

155   Jerry: Well this one was a boy actually. 2 cases: one the boy was much harder to predict or know about. The boy bought a knife in which he was, in his words, 99% certain he would use because he knew it was the only way he could win a fight with a boy who was going out with a girl that he liked and that was his logic. That was very difficult to predict or see coming in any way actually. So that one I don't think we could have done anything. I'm thinking about the girl now who took a few rooms apart and wanted to stab a pregnant member of staff with a pair of scissors, I think perhaps we could have foreseen that one but we just didn't get enough expert help and that was because at primary there hadn't been a healthcare plan put in which didn't allow us to access any funding; we were desperately trying to get a healthcare plan into place at the time at which this

manifested itself in stuff that was just too dangerous for us to deal with. But I think had we been able to have a specialist on site ready to deal with that we could have dealt with that situation probably.

156	For me it always comes back to the same thing: if I could access all the professional support I wanted and have that on site I think it would make a monumental difference.
157	**Interviewer:[Q8] So moving on; you've already kind of started speaking about it but the question is what role do outside agencies have in regard to supporting students with SEMH and what can be improved upon?**
158	Jerry: Same again: more money, more resources.
159	Laura: And it's the time because a lot of this needs to be not just mentoring but actually sitting and having detailed conversations and being able to fact-find and look into what support is needed.
160	Andrew: But also empowering staff in that as well, as I said before we are lay people, we don't actually really understand this to the extent that we need to understand it. So actually anything that could help us as well as helping the students would be advantageous.
161	**Interviewer:Okay, so training for staff?**
162	Andrew: Training for staff, yes. We have had some of that little bits, but-
163	**55:27**
164	Simon: Particularly Tutors [need training] we talked about a time of austerity; we also talk about a time when teachers are under phenomenal pressure to deliver, perform and get the best results and I think the more that that is there, there is a squeeze on their capacity, their ability to deal with some of the things we're talking about at the moment [SEMH] and so we've got to build that capacity on 2 levels; first of all so they are able to give the children time to come to them so issues aren't overlooked, but also, that time is given for teachers themselves to recover and put themselves in a position where they can help and feel confident about that.
165	Laura: And it's the confidence isn't it, being able to think that they have got the capacity to be able to deal with the situations because sometimes I think some staff will feel like well actually I'm not sure how to deal with that.
166	Andrew: Or being proactive and actually making it part of the process that they're planning, actually I think planning for SEN is quite a challenge for most people. We say, "You must do it," and even people who religiously do it, how do you do that? How do you anticipate these problems? How do you improve it? What's the best approach?

167	Dorothy: We're lucky enough most of us we get training, simply because of the [senior] roles, probably more so than the main scale teachers, which is perhaps wrong. I think it's only of recent years that we've all learned, I say we've all learned, hopefully, that teaching autistic students and teaching students who have got ADHD the needs may not be the same but the teaching strategies that can be used for both groups are very similar and actually there is no detriment to the rest of your class using those strategies, most of them are just bloody good teaching and I think that's a key realisation sometimes and empowering people to do that makes a very big difference to what they're able to do in the classroom.
168	So for us to be able to teach people, I'm going to speak specifically about autism because we started down that route and it is a very specific mental health need within our school community. For an autistic student knowing what the triggers are for that student is incredibly important, knowing that it's very unlikely to be a good thing to start shouting at an autistic child that's very likely to trigger something, but knowing that that child is autistic that might be a trigger, so again with the information, the expertise, the professional expertise, but what I would really like then is for when you get, so let's say we get to the point where the trigger's gone, the temper is lost, there has been an outburst, really we need to get that child in for a safe environment where they can calm down a professional that's what we don't have so where we could we take it? That's what we need: bigger access to the professionals and more opportunity to learn from the professionals in terms of mental health needs. We desperately need these professionals to come in and rescue these kids.
169	**Interviewer: Sorry to interrupt but what professionals are we talking about specifically, are there any specific agencies?**
170	Jerry: HEWS [Health and well-being service], Ed Psych, actually specialist trained autism staff are fantastic in my experience. We need professional counsellors as well, so the schools have tended to run without them. Amatur counsellors are I think they're incredibly damaging.
171	**59:11**
172	David: [Counsellors] Can be [damaging]. Some swear by them.
173	Jerry: In the best cases they're [counsellors] great; in the worst cases they are absolutely atrocious. I'll give you an example: we've removed some of our counsellors after we were told by an NHS psychiatrist that what they were doing was the wrong thing. Now we wouldn't have known that but instinctively we were uncomfortable and that was 3 years ago now we changed the staffing structure because that was brought to our attention. Now, we need more of that kind of input.
174	Simon: If you've got also something going on at home and the Tutor is the first person to find out about that and to "investigate" in inverted commers and if the child is a symptom bearer of I don't know, a family that's falling apart

then that tutor has got a heck of a responsibility and are leaving themselves very open to all kinds of criticism from the family saying, "Why are you getting involved? What business is it of yours?" And so the tutor is more likely to close rather than open to find out what's going on and I have to say managing that kind of information [family falling apart] because you're dealing with a family problem, not just a child problem is better dealt with by a therapist and someone who is trained in that area [rather than the tutor]. But the well-meaning amateur can do a huge amount of damage and young teachers don't quite understand what they can be letting themselves in for when they start going down that initial investigation.

| 175 | Andrew: | But above all it's to protect then [staff]. |

| 176 | Simon: | But we can't just say the tutor should be dealing with this and they have good intentions, the tutor should be having more mentoring, being more of a therapist, we've got to be very careful because that is a skill that is separate and distinct from what they are originally trained to do. They [teachers] can't manage what these kids come in with. If they wanted to be social workers or therapists, they would have applied for that job. We just don't have the expertise, so we really need to get them training, not to that level [of experts], but something. |

| 177 | **Interviewer:** | **And is there anything in particular, I'm thinking more about the EPS, but is there anything in particular that is helpful or less helpful that EPS could…?** |

| 178 | Jerry: | I think the educational psychology service is great we just want more of it. |

| 179 | **Interviewer:** | **And what would you do with more of it; if you were given an extra 100 hours tomorrow what would you do?** |

| 180 | Jerry: | Well [If I was given an extra hundred hours of EP time tomorrow] I would employ someone in the school fulltime because I think you can't always predict when it's going to happen. We can react well to the stuff we know about it's what we don't know about yet and I guarantee I could fill every hour of that time if I had an Ed Psych at school constantly. |

| 181 | Laura: | We have our constant referral (inaudible; coughing 01:02:00) students that need to see it happen but then sometimes there's for example, a tragic event will happen that's happened recently and we could really use dedicated professionals to help us with those situations but we don't have it. |

| 182 | Jerry: | I think what we'll get sometimes as well, we'll get really good recommendations [from the EP] but what we could really do with some help with is how to actually put that in place – walk us through some of it and they haven't got time, it's not the EP's fault. |

| 183 | **1:02:33** | |

184	Laura:	And also follow-up, once we've put some of the things in place, is that in then it just sort of goes up into the ether and obviously we follow it back up but we need to check that we've done it right and that it's actually been followed through that's really useful to us.

185	**Interviewer:[Q9] At what points are parents involved when there are concerns about children at risk of permanent exclusions?**

186	Simon:	Well as a starting point again is all the induction meetings in Year 7 we say to the parents very clearly if they have an issue please come and talk to us and take a balanced view. So again, the expectation is the parents will come to us and we do reach out to them as much as we can so I think that needs to be stated first.

187	Andrew:	If there's somebody who is at risk of exclusion the parent will be in no doubt whatsoever about that; obviously where there's a one-off incident the parent (inaudible; over-talking 01:03:43)-

188	Laura:	So if there's someone who is receiving a lot of behaviour points on SIMs for example the Head of Year will contact them [parents] to get them to come in for a meeting and we'll review how they're getting on, they'll be put on monitoring conduct which I check every day. If they're not improving then we had what [Andrew] hadcribed before as Level 2 Behaviour Panel where we have a series of people who come in and we talk to them about the fact that they're at risk of exclusion and they're given set targets which often does result in improvement, not always, or improvement for a while and then they have to come back again but the parents are informed every step of the way.

189	**Interviewer:And is there anything that you think you could be better at in terms of working with parents?**

190	Andrew:	You can always be better. If I could wave a magic wand the parents accepting that there is an issue would really be a big one. The number of parents where we're really concerned and they want to blame the school, "They were never like this at the primary school; they're never like this at home." You're just trying to get through saying, "Look, I'm trying to work with you here; there's an issue, your child is not behaving well." Just that acceptance would be a huge step forward.

191	Laura:	I think for me the parents understanding the laws of social media; parents understanding the laws of what time they're allowed out of an evening and all those sorts of things that would be really helpful. Because the conversations I've had recently where even so much as having 12-year-olds having mobile phones that are more expensive than mine – just take away the phone. [SLT member] and I have had numerous conversations with parents where we're having to say, "As a punishment could you take away their phone? Could you not allow them on the computer until 2 o'clock in the morning and perhaps then they wouldn't come in grumpy and get told off by their teachers all day long and that would really help?" So it's having a bit of awareness of the fact

that the things that they allow them to do at home have a direct impact on what they do at school, particularly with mobile technology and social media at the moment. and then there are those who don't share crucial infomation and when we find out its so late in the day I've been in meetings where I say to parents 'why didn't you tell us that was going on?'. You know it's really hard to keep up with it.

192	**1:05:33**
193	David: It also goes back to what [SLT member] was saying about other agencies; the Parent Support Service who are part of the Behavioural Panel have been brilliant at getting through to some of our hard to reach families because they're not the school they're someone else, so they go in and they almost tell the parents how to parent and often it's things like not saying certain things in front of the students; the parent view is: oh, if you've got a problem with someone batter them and that clearly doesn't fit in with our school ethos and yet that's what the message they're getting at home from the mum and dad and there's conflict there in terms of when we're trying to have the conversation with the parent about, "Your daughter has just had a fight." "Well exactly, I told her to."
194	Jerry: We probably have parents who fit into 2 groups don't we, there are the ones [parents] who are in complete denial and everything is the school's fault and the teachers are all picking on their child. We're thinking about permanently excluded or routinely excluded children here and then you've got the other group who are absolutely fantastic and sit there and apologise for their child-
195	David: But don't have any effect either.
196	Jerry: Yeah but the child doesn't listen to a word they say. And there's not that much in between I don't think.
197	Laura: We have occasionally, there's a couple of parents I'm thinking of who do what they think they should say in front of us and then they promptly get in the car and give them back the phone and we see that every now and again which is very frustrating. But no I completely agree with [SLT member], some parents will sit and you just feel absolutely devastated for them because you can see that they're trying everything but it doesn't seem to work. But then you have got some parents who just think it's all our [schools] fault, "They were never like it until they came here." To which we encourage them to look for other schools.
198	Simon: - We do signpost them don't we to Parental Support Group?
199	Laura: Yes. I hand out leaflets out leaflets in the Behaviour Panel to Parent Support Services and we've got (s.l. PARS 01:07:50) have been involved recently with us on 2 cases. We've got our police officer who is in regular contact with a few of our parents at the moment; she's leaving so that's another resource that we're losing.

200	**Interviewer:Is she being replaced?**

201	Laura: No, she's [police officer] taking adoption leave, it's fantastic for her, not so fantastic for us and she was already only part-time so that's a concern for us as a school that we have someone 2 days a week and at the moment it looks like we're not going to have anyone for a period.

202	**1:08:22**

203	Jerry: The problem is we're deemed low risk because we don't have many incidences of criminal behaviour relative to the other local schools, it's a lovely position for us but we say, "You have a very high impact here because of that," so that's if you like a disproportionately large impact.

204	Simon: I think it's important to say we do have, we talked about the induction and we have transition and I know we have quite regular faculty curriculum meetings, so our doors are very much open to parents coming to find out more about the learning, again on the preventative aspects of the work. We don't have a huge PTA do we? But then we have a kind of winter wonderland to raise money for the Ecuador trip – very well attended, so there is a social element to our parents but they don't really network together as some schools might. The parents' evening turnout is always very high and transition evenings are incredible.

205	Andrew: We've talked about transition a lot. So parents coming in and families that tended to be challenging often the primary schools will say the same; so perhaps we could be smarter in doing more when they transfer and getting that information.

206	Laura: I think sometimes primaries are a bit reticent to let us know though, sometimes and not always. And sometimes we know the names before they even get here because certain primaries will tell us but I think that's quite difficult, we can get their log, we can get what their behaviour has been like but you don't know necessarily whether the parent has engaged with the primary school that sort of information isn't always forthcoming.

207	Andrew: It's quite common for us, we'll get a child who will transfer to us, we'll hear nothing about SMEH, nothing about previous behaviour difficulties and then once we start to experience problems. We then contact the primary school and go, "Oh they're an absolute nightmare here." And the parents will be saying to us, "There were never any problems until they came here." But the primaries say, "Oh that parent was really…" so I guess that transfer of information would be really helpful. And it's not many children, again, we're talking about less than 20 children in the whole school here, sorry, that's not just for SEMH but in terms of SEMH and at risk of exclusion, we're talking about less than 20 in the school and that's [number of students anonymised] children so that's a small percentage, so to get that information transferred across isn't that big an ask. I think maybe we're not doing enough transfer time to pick that up.

208	**Interviewer:[Q10] So, what could be the reasons for Year 9s having higher exclusion rates than other Year groups that's nationally and in [this LA] by the way?**	
209	Laura:	Hormones!
210	Andrew:	Hormones is a very good answer.
211	Laura:	That's exactly what it is; they're not sure if they're a child anymore or an adult, they want to be treated like an adult, their aggression raises, they're not sure in their bodies, their bodies are changing, they are mentally changing, some cope with it some don't.
212	Andrew:	[reasons for year 9 PEX] Physically and mentally.
213	**1:11:57**	
214	Laura:	Absolutely. And children up until Year 9 who have been very placid and calm suddenly, particularly the boys, get this massive rush of testosterone and don't know what to do with it so they fight each other that's what it comes out as.
215	Simon:	I think the options process must also have something to do with it.
216	Laura:	It's not just hormones.
217	Simon:	And that kind of growing sexual identity-
218	Laura:	It's pressure isn't it? There's so much going on in Year 9 in terms of the options process, in terms of they've got to start making decisions, the pressure that they're feeling about the fact that they're moving into a new Key Stage, friendship group changes all those sorts of things because suddenly they change into sets and things like that, there's a lot I think in Year 9.
219	Joshua:	Yes and then this pressure starts building up for exams, obviously courses starting in Year 9 for GCSEs, moving into sets, competition that sort of thing.
220	Laura:	And that affects friendship groups and all sorts of things.
221	Jerry:	It's also the case they would have been here for 3 years now so we start talking about patterns, so maybe students who have maybe been identified earlier these things have now been developing over 3 years so sometimes it can be a culmination of what we don't want at that stage.
222	David:	I think issues outside of school: body image would be one, homophobia would be another. It is dependency so I think this is when you are going to see is there alcohol, is there is smoking coming in? It is a crossroads for a lot of children, I suppose the question is what do we do to compensate for that in Year 9? But I don't want to give you another question.

223	Andrew:	It's not our highest exclusionary (inaudible 01:13:55) it varies from year to year, it's more cohort dependent for us, so year groups I think have a huge impact but it's-
224	Simon:	I'd put that question to marketing companies and say, "Of your teenage years, where do we move in most quickly and in particular way to mould the behaviour that the marketing people want from a particular year group?" I wonder what kind of profiles are done in the big marketing groups about for example Year 9.
225	Derek:	In social media companies they've put the legal limit at 13 for the majority of them now: Snap Chat and Instagram which the students are on but the majority of our students go on it at 11 which is a pressure in itself, so I think once they get to Year 9 the parents who are enforcing that all of a sudden they're allowed to do it and I think that's sort of information overload in itself because they're now at the age where they have that little bit of independence potentially which some can cope with and some absolutely can't.
226	**1:15:03**	
227	Jerry:	France are going for a nationwide ban on mobile phones in school; the government say they're going to enforce it.
228	**Interviewer:**	**Well thank you, those are all of my questions. Thank you all so much for contributing and your different aspects it was really interesting. Is there anything else that I haven't asked that you would like to say or any questions that you have for me?**
229	Andrew:	I think we're really interested in seeing what you come up with in the research. Really interested to hear if there are some patterns across [borough name] if we can learn from each other because we don't always talk like this and it is quite challenging. You will find when you go round some schools are more open than others; we hope people are really open so we can get some really useful research out of it.
230	**Interviewer:**	**Well that's it, the more open people are the better the data and the more we can learn from each other.**
231	Andrew:	Thank you.
232	**Interviewer:**	**Thank you very much. Thank you for your time; thank you for letting me take over your meeting.**

School C

1	School C	
2	Key:	
3	I:	Interviewer
4	1	Rick
5	2	Alex
6	I:	[Q1] Right, so I've got some questions. I'm going to ask them and yeah, feel free – they should be straightforward, but if they're not, let me know. Okay, so the first one is what kind of behaviours would you expect to see in a child with social, emotional, mental health difficulties?
7	Rick:	Really good question. So personally, as a school what we look for is either a change in that pupil's normal behaviour. Normal being whatever that is beforehand, happy, sad, quiet, what have you. Or we've seen some behaviours where we feel that actually they are not engaging with other pupils and other staff, and that engagement may cause altercations, but also they maybe are distant from school and they are not working with us in other ways when we are trying to [chivvy 0:00:55] pupils along. Most of them actually are positive, but sometimes I think our social and emotional pupils don't react in the way we want to and they take more[effort] – and then I think personally, it's when we contact home, and then we don't get the support possibly, or that everything's fine at home, it's not a school thing. And then that really will start to worry me because then it's a social, emotional – not just at school, it's at home. For me, it's a social, emotional issue [in the child], not an issue at school which we need to rectify, which is separate to home. Or it's the other way round sometimes, where they're difficult at home but they're pretty good at school, but then we find that out. So, for me, it could be either or both those issues, but we'd be looking at distance and anxieties, but also that they're not working with school systems and working with people in the school, and also their peers as well.
8	I:	Okay, so maybe not being cooperative with adults.
9	Rick:	Yeah, well, no, I don't mean just cooperative. I just mean engaging with them. Even when you are having a negative discussion, there's an engagement there or an acceptance, or an, "I'm not doing it." So, it's a reaction I'm looking for, and sometimes when you don't get a reaction, that's when I say, "Well, what's going on?" That worries me more than someone

kicking off, basically, when I'm telling them off. And the other side of that is actually, if they've got some social and emotional problems, they will, you know, maybe produce some challenging behaviour, but what's the stem of that behaviour? Is it for a normal reason or is it for something which actually is quite trivial and it's accelerated to be them really losing their temper or being upset or angry?

10	So, it's any of those feelings, which are out of the norm for that pupil and out of the norm for us I suppose as a school as well, so we kind of look out for those. And we use our tutors and heads of learning, we've got counsellors in school, we've got mentors. We try and use lots of soft skills or soft attributes to find out actually what the problem is before, I suppose, saying there is a problem or something [inaudible 0:02:47] more seriously. So, we're really lucky here to have that type of ethos. I think we're lucky to have that.
11	I: And how long did you say you'd been here, sorry?
12	Rick: Since last Easter, but I came because I knew the type of school, the feel of the school, and I knew I'd be able to fit in with that. For me, that's my vision for behaviour. And I brought in the new behaviour policy. That literally is not even two terms now. Very different to the old one.
13	I: How so?
14	3:14
15	Rick: There wasn't a policy. There was an action [inaudible 0:03:16] policy.
16	I: And what are your views [Alex]
17	[knock at the door - interview paused – interruption]
18	Alex: Okay, what was the first question again?
19	I: [Laughter] So, what behaviours would you expect to see in a student with social, emotional and mental health difficulties?
20	Alex: Yeah I think you've covered a lot of it, sorry I was distracted
21	Rick: No rest for the wicked, ay?
22	Alex: Not at all
23	Rick: We talked about the difference in their actual reactions and the way they are, and then also talking about parents as well and engagement with them. But also the way they react to situations that we would find there's not

that reaction, and we look at those softer things early on before something big happens and try and break those down.

24	Alex: Yeah. I would also – well, you kind of mentioned it, but I would talk about parenting. I think in almost all cases where I have – there has been some form of breakdown or parenting needs in the home, or there has been some form of issue which has taken place, which has never necessarily been resolved, from often the child's early life, and it hasn't been picked up at primary or hasn't been disclosed. So, we've had permanently excluded students who have made that final disclosure following the permanent exclusion, a couple of years later. But unresolved complex issues from the past often. Parenting is one. Resilience is another one, and emotional resilience. Some dont have the emotional resilience to be able to cope with the education system and to be able to cope with a mainstream setting.
25	And that whole kind of blanket of where that forms into those more unreported SEND kind of needs, you know, the speech and language ones, the ones that aren't necessarily very easy to diagnose or to be able to spot, and go underreported, I guess is often the case. I mean, you don't have to look very far to see that almost all the permanent exclusions then, once they get to the PRU here, are put through an assessment, and often that [unreported needs] is the case. But being able to really – so yeah, resilience and parenting, and they kind of go hand in hand, really.
26	I: Okay, thank you. And you kind of started speaking a bit about my next question, which is about how are the –
27	Alex: Big writing.
28	I: [Q2] I know, because usually it's a table full of members of staff, so I have it at one end of the table so everyone can see it, but I don't suppose you need that because there's only three of us [laughter]. So, how are students with SEMH needs brought to the attention of the senior leadership team?
29	10:34
30	Rick: So, they're brought to our attention – we actually have an inclusive learning group, which meets every week, and part of that inclusive learning group is attendance, behaviour, child protection. All the heads of learning are there as well. And actually, that is an official way to raise a concern. There's a referral form for that, and then the team work together, and [name] from SENCO works, to find out – it could be counselling or it could be actually parent support. It could actually be mentoring support. So, it could be a string

of issues, but actually anyone who we really are concerned with goes up to ILG officially. That gets logged. We actually start a process. We have quite an in-depth form, a learning profile, which has a little picture of them, and there's literally everything, all the interventions, and we start that off when that happens, because actually we've got some serious concerns there.

| 31 | But lower down actually, as we talked about earlier, our tutors actually, we put a lot of emphasis on what they do, are they picking up that change or an issue, and actually that then dripping up to heads of learning being informed, then looking a bit deeper and supporting them. And then actually, if there is a real need there, it'll get referred or we find out about it, and it goes to ILG. And if it is something, obviously, which is child protection-esque, it'll come straight to myself or one of my colleagues, if it's something which we really think's important. But that's kind of the stream, and we look for those softer...But really there's a lot that goes on that we don't get to find out until things have gone really bad for the student, and I mean really, really bad, like they're about to leave the school, and by then it's almost too late. |

| 32 | Alex: The inclusive learning group is where those issues are managed and where those students are managed. That's where we're able to start talking about next steps and referrals outside. But I mean, it really does come up through line management when we are reviewing data. |

| 33 | Rick: Very good point, yeah. |

| 34 | Alex: So, any data which is highlighting that kids are struggling in school for whatever it be, so it could be attendance, it could be behaviour monitoring that we have in school. With the younger ones, it might be the regular diaries that we're using and so on, to be able to recognise where there are early issues and where those first steps, you know, [sl people are paid 0:12:48] a middle leadership role, whether that be form tutors or heads of learning, to be able to start to manage that. That's where we are cross-examining that as it goes along, and that's where we may say, "This one needs to go to the inclusive learning group and it needs a bit more of a hold." |

| 35 | The other way they come through is through SEN, so students that have been assessed. It may be that primary schools have already put those assessments in place. It may be that primary schools have, at transition, flagged it up as being a concern, so we would then put them in for some extra assessment. It might be some close watching, it might be some extra assessments. But our SENCO would obviously then also bring those back into the loop as well. And then the other way [we identify needs] is we meet them |

[laughter]. I mean, just because we're senior leaders doesn't mean that we don't go into classrooms, we don't teach lessons ourselves, we're not in the corridors, we're not meeting these families and these parents, and being able to see ourselves. And we've got quite a bit of experience in being able to see where kids are struggling to thrive in school, so being able to recognise that.

| 36 | 13:46 |

| 37 | I: Okay, great. And do you think the system that you have at the moment is effective? |

| 38 | Rick: I think it's [system to bring SEMH needs to SLT] not as effective as it can be. We brought in a new system so we'll know exactly which pupils have been sent out of lessons, which lessons, which member of staff, and we're working with the member of staff and those pupils, but I don't think we're there yet in terms of the next steps. And we're working with their parents, we're working with pupils, but actually I think there's more we can do. And we are changing our provision slightly – well actually, quite [inaudible 0:14:21], because some pupils that we don't think have significant learning difficulties, or they're part of the art provision, so they've got speech and language difficulties, but actually those who just cannot cope in a mainstream big lesson type environment, where we can actually give them some more nurture work or small group, same subject but actually in a smaller setting, and then give them some of the nurturing, the mentoring, just the life skills actually. So, we're starting them in September and [name] is leading on working with that, and we can use our TAs, who do lots of teaching in small groups anyway. But we're using the data and we're using the [name 0:14:54] to try and have more of that provision. |

| 39 | Alex: We need to put the provision in place and really hone the provision, and actually look at the provision, and that's getting tougher in secondary schools where, you know, you're expected – the English baccalaureate [inaudible 0:15:06] and that sort of thing. There's less freedom in the curriculum that we would ordinarily be able to offer those kids. So, the provision side of it, yes, we need to get better at identification and use of data. We've got new systems in place, we've got loads of data, but have we got a consistent kind of use of triggers to be able to recognise these are where we need to go and we need to be. |

| 40 | Rick: And the other area I think we probably need to keep chipping away at is staff training, and that's staff training across the school. So, when does a kid who's a bit of a pain in the arse become an SEMH learning need, and it's |

about bridging that gap. Because, you know, when you're at the chalk face and you are actually delivering, I think teachers want a magic, "Let's sort out behaviour," and not necessarily, "Let's have a look at addressing the underlying needs which are leading to those behaviours." And that's tough, that's really tough, because if you're teaching a lesson, you want the behaviour and not necessarily recognising the time and the work that needs to be done underneath to be able to give the behaviour.

41		So, I think it's ensuring that [training] what happens – and I'm pleased, we've got a new appointment as a SENCO. It's ensuring that there's a joined up approach so that it isn't behaviour and SEMH.
42	I:	And do you think it's been like that historically?
43	Alex:	Yeah. I think previously, we had a SENCO who was very much, "This is my domain, I will work with these kids," but not necessarily SEMH. And I think it's about bringing them all together and ensuring that there's a whole school capture of it, once we manage behaviour as well, because you also have to manage processes and systems on a daily basis while we're trying to get to the bottom of what are the key factors for these kids.
44		16:41
45	I:	[Q3] Okay, thank you. Is there's a link between SEMH needs and permanent exclusions? Please give reasons for your answer.
46	Rick:	Yes, there has to be a [SEMH - PEX] link.
47	Alex:	Yeah, not always. Occasionally, I would exclude a child for those one-off serious incidents, which you couldn't necessarily plan for. They can be a child who doesn't necessarily have SEMH or any other learning needs, who makes a serious – and when I say serious mistake.
48	I:	Give me an example.
49	Alex:	I'm talking about a child who came in and was dealing drugs or something like that, who came in and – yeah, or, I don't know, for whatever reason – and we do have kids who are scared in this local community, who might come in and they might have a bladed article. There are kids, and there always will be, who occasionally make bad choices, often breaking the law with those bad choices. And whilst I don't have a permanent exclusion rule for, you know, drugs and that sort of thing, I do have it in the policy that we will consider permanent exclusion. I think I do have it in the policy that says dealing of drugs. So, there are occasional one-off incidents, yeah.

50	For the vast majority of my exclusions though, it's for persistent disruptive behaviour. I don't particularly want to hold over on the kid that's made one mistake in his or her lifetime, but occasionally it happens, you know. Whatever happens, if something goes horribly wrong,
51	if a child swings for a pregnant teacher he hasnt necessarily got SEMH needs. Maybe he has SEMH needs on that day at that moment, but he made that choice and there are consequences. By the way it doesn't necessarily mean that they are ongoing SEMH needs. I don't have much of a choice really about where I am to go.
52	But for the vast majority of children that are permanently excluded at this school and every school that I've worked at, they are unresolved SEMH and learning needs, and they are for persistent disruptive defiance, where the systems that we have within a mainstream setting and the interventions that we have have not been able to affect real change.
53	Rick: And that includes working with families.
54	Alex: And other agencies.
55	Rick: And other agencies, and that's deeply. And this school certainly will try every single thing before we would consider permanent exclusion. We exhaust ourselves, actually, but we know that's the right thing to do. We had quite a high number last year, but they were for extreme persistent poor behaviour.
56	19:27
57	Alex: But if you've got to that point that it is extreme – I mean, it depends which of those letters you are taking out of SEMH, doesn't it?
58	I: Yeah, of course. Which letters would you –
59	Alex: Well, I think for many of our kids, they end up getting excluded because they do not have the social bit, the S. Now, the reason they don't have the social bit is going back to the first question that you asked, when we come to **parenting**, when we come to **fragmented pasts** in their lives and that sort of thing, and that has an impact on their emotional and their mental health. But the bottom line is that **nobody gets permanently excluded for having a mental health issue, but if the mental health issue is unresolved and it has an impact on their social functioning ability within a community like ours, where you have that persistent disruption and so on, that's where it's coming out from.**

60	So yeah, every single one of them really is the S out of SEMH, because they're no longer able to function socially within this community, and that I guess is what permanent exclusion is, isn't it?
61	Rick: We talk about the reaction or no reaction, and that's when I know there's an issue, when a pupil is not reacting when you are trying to engage with them however, or actually their reaction is, in terms of weighting, well out of scale in terms of their reaction. And sometimes that's what the exclusion's for, and that picture builds up to be a permanent exclusion. We have pupils who do have challenging behaviour but they are remorseful and they apologise, or they understand and they know not to do it again, but there'll be some who unfortunately don't change their behaviours, and that's probably because the underlying issue why they're showing that or reacting in that way is to do with deeper issues.
62	Alex: But I'm sure you're going to ask some more questions about what these children need to prevent exclusion, but in case you're not…
63	I: Additional questions, go for it.
64	Alex: Emotional and mental health, yeah, what we're trying to do is work with agencies and work with the professionals that we have in school to fix some of this stuff. There isn't enough out there to fix what some of these kids need in a joined up way. So yeah, I've got a counsellor in school, she's brilliant, and she works also pretty well with CAMHS, who are not quite so brilliant, in my view, to be able to hold kids' mental health. I'm not saying she fixes kids' mental health, but she helps address and holds kids' mental health and their emotional wellbeing. However, she's not doing a fix on that, because unless there is a whole joined up approach of working with the family, working with parents, actually coming to the underlying issues, yeah, then we're not going to fix how that is impacting on the S, the social side of it.
65	What we do is we hold kids, but it's a sticking plaster approach. It really is kind of holding their hand as long as we possibly can until they are able to actually really engage with the support themselves or face the issues. But there doesn't seem to be enough joined up to be able to take the problems and deal with –
66	22:36
67	Rick: The root. We deal with the symptoms, and actually we do a great job here in making sure those kids feel safer than they did, but the deep rooted issues sometimes are to do with the parenting, and actually unless you have a

	family therapy, which is incredibly hard to put into place at the level with ongoing support –
68	Alex: With quite dysfunctional and fragmented families as well in many cases. Yeah, what we're doing is just holding.
69	Rick: But that's the only thing we can do with what we have in hand.
70	Alex: And often that's enough, actually. Sometimes, you know, kids with mental health issues, kids with emotional issues, they need that holding, and actually that holding actually sees them through. And there's nothing wrong with doing that, and actually I'm very happy for my counsellor to be holding these kids and working with them, because it may be that, you know, in 10, 20 years' time, that's got them far enough that they can actually go and deal with whatever they need to deal with, and actually get the therapy that they want when they're ready for it. But it's not making those kids' lives necessarily, for many of them, any better where they are now.
71	I don't know, I've worked in [borough name] a very long time, I don't know whether they are many functioning agencies who have a track record of being effective with that, however I don't know whether there is nationally, for some of those really, you know, disadvantaged issues, families with substance abuse, families with –
72	Rick: Child protection issues is probably the vast –
73	Alex: But also bereavement, the whole thing.
74	Rick: Or domestic violence actually as well.
75	Alex: Domestic violence is pretty big.
76	Rick: It's massive, yeah.
77	I: So, you've spoken a lot about the SEMH label, as it were, and breaking it down. Do you think there needs to be more of a breakdown of – more of a separation of the S from the MH?
78	Rick: I think there's link [between SEMH and PEX] – we use those words as they are, but actually there's a link – as [name] said before, the mental health could be the underlying issue, but that's caused by the social. I think that link – but do you know what, the time it would take to do that for some of our families would exhaust all of our hours of EP time, and we don't have many of those. And if we had more [EP time] and we had that option, maybe we could fix some of the issues in our work with families, but that's long term. These aren't

short term fixes. These are long term, deep rooted issues, which take a long time to fix, and I don't think we have the ability to do that actually. I don't think [borough name] do either actually, because we have so many vulnerable – I came from a very leafy school in [another borough], and an even leafier school in [a different borough], and we had issues, we had troubled families, but because we had less of those issues, our resources and our budgets, etc, we could put a lot – we had one dedicated person for five families who were literally living in caravans around the corner. That was someone who was there for them and that need, and they kind of managed that and knew the whole structure. But actually we couldn't do that here because we have so many different issues. I think the resources comes down to it, which in this school certainly, in [borough name], I **don't think there's enough resources** to the depth that we need it, but there are in other schools which do have a lower number of vulnerable pupils with SEMH issues, and their families as well. That's just a fact, unfortunately. We work the best we can with them. But our staff are not trained in the expertise that these outside agencies have, like the Ed psychs You know you have gone through all of that training, so you know what to do.

79	25:06
80	Alex: But SEMH is quite new, isn't it?
81	I: Yes, as a label.
82	Alex: As a label. I'm not a great fan of labels. I welcome it in that it's not a behaviour label. I guess we are in a period of time where mental health is very much in the news, in the media and so on, and I think mental health issues for kids is an issue, whether it's always been an issue or whether actually the spotlight is now on mental health and we're in a position where people are more likely to talk about them. No, I don't have an issue with that as a label. I think it covers all sorts of things. I think they are joined up. You can't have a mental health issue without also struggling with your emotions, which would have an impact on your social ability. However, you can have issues with being able to survive in a social setting without necessarily a mental health issue. Whether it is useful to put them [the letters of SEMH] all together, I don't know. I could spend a lot of time thinking about this.
83	I: We could, couldn't we?
84	Alex: It's not going to fix it, is it? And I'm not going to change it [laughter].
85	I: [Q4] You never know, start somewhere [laughter]. Okay, thank you. So,

the next question is, What are the causes and contributing factors to permanent exclusions?

86	Alex: Okay, so it [PEX] will be for **persistent disruptive defiant behaviour.** In many cases, that will – I mean, I've got a lot of kids who are occasionally defiant, occasionally disruptive. I've got kids who have periods of persistence in that as they are going through changes in their lives, **puberty** and the things that go on.
87	But for the vast majority, if I'm looking back on the kids that I permanently excluded, it will be where that persistent disruptive defiant behaviour actually is risking other students of physical harm, or emotional harm actually, where it is preventing the learning of themselves and others.
88	Rick: Yeah, that's what we do it [PEX] for anyway, don't we, or the one-off instances, which we've kind of covered.
89	28:30
90	I: Yes. And you touched on this a bit earlier, but is there a general policy around – some schools have a zero tolerance policy.
91	Alex: No, I've avoided it [zero tolerance policy] like the plague. I just think you get yourself knotted up in it. I personally have to give myself space that I am able to **make a decision not to permanently exclude** a child. I do that [sanction behaviour] with fixed term exclusions if I know that, you know, a child would ordinarily have a fixed term exclusion for some form of behaviour, **if I know that I would be sending them home to a position where they wouldn't be safe or they wouldn't be able to thrive.** I couldn't do that. I know schools that have a zero tolerance on blades. I do have zero tolerance on blades, but I've had kids that have been whittling with their grandad, and I've had kids that are absolutely terrified because they've been threatened at knifepoint and they've put a penknife in their bag and so on. I think you have to look at each case and you actually have to reflect on each case as it comes along.
92	The zero tolerance bit is generally for the one-off type of permanent exclusion, and whilst I would use some of those issues for permanent exclusion, I wouldn't want to tie us down, because I just don't think that's inclusive for the children. Every story actually is different. You do actually have to weigh up every story.
93	Rick: We've got a pupil I think who did bring a blade in. It was a small blade. It was a carving kind of – but actually he did that because of all the

knife crime that was going on around him, people getting stabbed, people dying in [borough name], and he genuinely did that. And he's got special needs and there's lots of – and actually we did a lot of work with the police – we always get the police involved. They always get arrested and they always go through that process. However, to permanently exclude that pupil would have been detrimental to his life, actually, because he'd probably have been **sent back to his country,** and that was a threat he's always had. And actually, he's still – you know, I think there is each case, but –

94	Alex: Some schools do it [zero tolerance policy] with drugs, and I understand why they do that and that's their community. I do not want drugs in this community, I do not want my kids using drugs, and I don't want drugs being brought across the threshold. However, **I know that one mistake should not cost somebody their education.**
95	I: [Q5] Okay, thank you. Who are there any main groups of students who face permanent exclusions? Why these groups?
96	Alex: It's really difficult to say. I mean, we peaked last year – there was a new head, new [room 0:31:06] and all that sort of thing, we peaked at – was it three or four we finished on?
97	Rick: Five.
98	Alex: Four or five, there you go.
99	Rick: Four year sevens.
100	31:12
101	Alex: Whenever you're talking about numbers, we average normally around about two or three. When you've got such small numbers, anything is statistically invalid, isn't it, really? I mean, if I normally do three and, you know, two of them are boys and one of them's a girl, you could say boys are more likely. So no, I wouldn't say there is an ethnicity [main groups who recieve PEX].
102	Rick: Not here there isn't.
103	Alex: No, I wouldn't say there was an ethnicity. Boys probably a little bit more than girls. And we do check it, and we check it probably more with our fixed term exclusions because statistically you've got more numbers.
104	I: So, what about your fixed term, are there any groups?

105	Rick:	Boys.
106	Alex:	Three years ago, black Caribbean was, I would say, sticking out, given the number of black Caribbean kids we had. That isn't the case anymore. Whether that is that that group of boys has actually moved through, because it was a group of boys, actually, whose behaviour was [inaudible 0:32:16] each other. But no, that no longer is the issue.
107	Rick:	Our inclusion manager has got a spreadsheet with literally every exclusion, boy, girl, and the backgrounds aren't on there, but their names are in there if we need them, so I can then work that out. But we buck the trend on the national picture, and actually our permanent exclusions this year was white working class –
108	Alex:	Well, I was going to say, most of our kids who are permanently excluded or fixed term excluded are white working class, but then most of my kids are white working class.
109	Rick:	But there are schools which are predominantly white working class, like my last school we were talking about, and the pupils who were permanently excluded or moved on were African Caribbean background.
110	Alex:	In your last school, they weren't working class.
111	Rick:	It was Watford, the majority were [laughter].
112	I:	Posh working class.
113	Rick:	Posh working class. Is it new money, is that what it's called [laughter].
114	Alex:	Working class [inaudible 0:33:09] houses [laughter].
115	Rick:	I call them working class. Am I not allowed to say that anymore?
116	I:	Not in this school, you're not [laughter].
117	33:19	
118	Alex:	I've got an O level in sociology, no, you're not.
119	Rick:	Okay. So, we don't have the same – I know there's lots of –
120	Alex:	No, it isn't, and we keep an eye on it.
121	I:	Okay, but in terms of gender, boys –
122	Rick:	Yeah, we're probably about 80/20, but per year group's different as well depending on the families we have and the pupils we have in those year

groups.

| 123 | I: | And why boys more than girls, do you think? |

124 Rick: That's a good question. I think boys demonstrate challenging behaviour in a different way to girls at different times. And I've worked in a boys' school, and actually if you said to me what would you rather, who, i'd rather deal with fights and, you know, all that kind of stuff that boys do, actually, I think boys demonstrate that and the way you deal with that, the way you deescalate that, is really important. So, for me, and I think about – you can put the ante with boys very quickly by your body language or your tone, or the way you're looking at them, the way you confront them. You can deescalate boys very quickly as well. I find that really easy to do because I've done it before with boys. But actually, you can get into a situation which can go from here to here with a boy if they think you are trying to be bigger than them or the alpha, whatever, but actually there's quite a lot of psychology behind that as well, but there's ways to deescalate that really, really quickly. And those skills I think maybe – I don't know, are they taught? I was taught how to deal with it, but if you use that in a heated situation without the emotions, that's the bit which I think can happen quite quickly.

125 We can look at teaching and learning styles and all that, but actually I think managing behaviour, you can deescalate if you know how to and if you're in the right frame of mind, but I think sometimes staff don't. And you put emotions in there and you put emotions in there, then your judgement kind of goes out the window and things escalate. And I've done it before, I've let things escalate because I've got emotionally attached to that situation, but I try not to now, with experience, because there's no point in shouting and screaming, getting into their face. I've just stepped to the side and if they want to walk off and have a hissy fit, I'll let them do that and I'll deal with it later. I'm not worried about them getting one up on me, because I'm bigger and older and uglier, you know, I've been there. But I think sometimes at that point, staff sometimes have a clash, and boys will clash back straight away, while girls will maybe not. They'll get you back a different way [laughter], or they wouldn't get into that male ego versus that – you know, machoism.

126 Alex: What our kids who are excluded often have in common though is that they are known to us to have additional learning needs, many of whom struggle with or without support to access the curriculum. I think there's levels of frustration there that go alongside that. That's becoming more and more difficult as the curriculum becomes more rigid and so on. And I think often that is the case for boys as well, that it is a frustration about their access to

learning and their feels of self-worth because of that.

127	36:19
128	Rick: And then they [boys] don't listen. They show challenging behaviour by not doing work, and that member of staff might challenge them on that, and then they'd rather be sent out or get aggressive or try and be chucked out because it's easier to do that than I suppose to show that you can't do that question or you can't do that work. I think that is probably the key issue, and I've seen that in posh St Albans schools too, and that doesn't change. I think I was one of those boys who'd rather get in trouble to accept that actually I'm pretty thick at that and I need to work harder or whatever, whatever my feelings were then. But I think when we speak to boys one on one, they'll tell you that actually they find that really hard, and they'll tell you that they can't access it. They'll never say that in the public domain. It's easier to get chucked than to accept that, than to accept that you can't do something in front of your peers. So yeah.
129	I: Okay, thank you. Really interesting insight into boys.
130	Rick: Our boys [laughter], yeah.
131	Alex: Our boys, not all boys.
132	I: No, no, you can only speak about the ones that you know.
133	Alex: And I think if you take that and I think if you put into the mix, we have more than pretty much any school I know "mixed ability teaching here, because I've held onto it and I know about the research and so on. But lower ability sets, **I think, are a breeding ground for that sort of disaffection from boys.** It'll be interesting to see your research, I mean, if that was something you were interested in, looking at bottom sets. I mean, they're a necessary evil, I'm afraid, in subjects like maths and science to a certain extent, but I do worry because I think that level of disaffection – that kind of frustration, you know, that you are trapped in this lower set, that you're not able, and that lack of aspiration that comes out of that. We rarely exclude the kids from the top sets.
134	Rick: Yeah, yeah [laughter].
135	Alex: It's true though, isn't it? And that may be that they [high achieving boys] actually have a certain amount of self-esteem, they have a certain amount of self-control and all of those things, and actually they're too busy accessing the curriculum to do all of those things. But I really worry about them [low Achieve

and boys who receive PEX] – I mean, I think there is an interesting piece of research, not necessarily for you but for somebody, about linking setting and exclusion.

136	Rick:	But also there's setting and are they pupil premium, are they from vulnerable backgrounds. And I'm not saying all – we've got pupils who are in the top set - but in terms of a percentage though, I'd probably put some money on it that actually a lot of the bottom sets have a large pool of pupil premium or pupils from vulnerable backgrounds, however you want to describe that. We haven't looked at that, but just naturally, the aspirations, the homework, all those things which are drummed into the middle class or whatever you want to call them – and most of our kids at the top are from a different type of background to the ones who are in the bottom set, if you want to call them the bottom set, yeah.
137	39:04	
138	I:	That's really interesting.
139	Rick:	But setting is massive. And having worked at schools which do different types of setting, when we changed setting for a particular – we changed it for science in my last school, we went from bottom to top set and we had ten sets, because it was a big school. We even had an extra special set for the ones which were really, really – you know, and we changed it and they were all mixed ability. Our behaviour went better. The results have actually improved now to the highest they've been last year. But actually, that was done because, you know, we decided here in the department to just trial it because it just wasn't working. But in terms of the way the pupils feel about it, they just enjoyed lessons more. **So, if they enjoy lessons, they're not misbehaving.** I think that's key to whichever set you did. But they were setted and they did know that. They were just setted in a band of three or four –
140	Alex:	I think you become a self-fulfilling prophecy, don't you?
141	Rick:	You do, yeah.
142	Alex:	You are low ability, you are worthless, I am worthless, I am low ability, what's the bloody point?
143	Rick:	But they were mixed up in three tiers of sets.
144	Alex:	It'd make me cross. It'd make me defiant. It would make me stick my fingers up and say, "I'm not doing this." It's like we're imprisoning kids before they've even started.

145	Rick:	But there's ways of setting. So, we did three tiers of setting. It went to nine sets, because that's how many form groups we had, but they went to three tiers. So, they were setted with three cohorts, and the kids didn't really know what that was, but the kids never felt like – there was none of the naughty boys and naughty girls. They were all in the same thing, because they were technically between a middle set, which they would never dream of being in actually, being in the old system, to being the top of the middle set, to pupils at the bottom of the bottom set.
146	Alex:	The only children who like setting are the top set.
147	Rick:	Exactly, and all the parents who like setting are the ones in the top set [laughter].
148	I:	Then you're wanting to get there but probably never –
149	Rick:	I think the boys would get [inaudible 0:40:49] at that point, "I can't get there," because they're more fickle, and I think they look at it now and [inaudible 0:40:52] look at that long-term, and I think that's the difference between maybe the psychology of boys and girls there possibly.
150	I:	Yeah, which is a whole other thing.
151	41:02	
152	Rick:	Which is a whole other thing [laughter]. You've got more questions though.
153	I:	So, why do students in this group – so, the group you've identified is boys and children with SEN. Why are some of them more successful and they remain and don't receive permanent exclusions? What do you think?
154	Rick:	Parenting
155	Alex:	Parenting, resilience, personal resilience, and actually I guess personal resilience equals – I mean, mental health is – going back to the bloody SEMH, aren't we? But there is such a thing as actually having positive mental health, isn't there?
156	I:	Yes.
157	Alex:	And actually having good mental health. And actually, if those children do have good mental health and that positive reinforcement of themselves, often are involved in things in school and outside of school, which gives them that sense of self-belief, and are from a loving home, all of those things, a lot

of that – some of it's down to personality. Some people have a more resilient personality than others. I think we can help teach it, but…

158   Rick: But can we teach it in school? So, we've got two members of staff who are – Mental Health England, you probably know, are doing a big campaign. Two of us are trained up for that and they are kind of dripping that down, the [inaudible 0:42:05] algi theory and all that, about the resilience. But actually, can we teach mental health? I don't think so. We can teach them skills when you feel certain ways, trigger-points, but I think that's really hard to do, because actually if you go home to that still then that's never going to work at home because you're never going to be able to have that conversation about that. That's where I think the family therapy, if you're going to call it that – until we get that right, I think this is not a changeable thing quickly.

159   Alex: But going back to it, so boys, thinking about the teaching, thinking about things like mixed ability, thinking about setting and actually how that has a negative impact, thinking about the support that we put in by identifying what those needs are, and then good use of support either by teacher or by other adults, thinking about the curriculum offer – yeah, so there's lots of stuff that you can do externally to ensure that the diet that kids are coming into, whether that be a curriculum diet or whether it be a community diet for the kids, is something which is going to make them feel at ease and is going to make them feel more comfortable and confident in themselves, because that generally is where it goes.

160   The vast majority of kids that are permanently excluded tend to be lost, you know, lost in themselves and lost in services and in families where things have not worked for them. So, I guess it is about identifying those needs and making sure that there's quality teaching and services for those kids in school. But Mr Gove has made that really hard for us. So, the English GCSE, it's a bloody nightmare for those kids. I mean, they're expected to write four one and a half hour papers where they're expected to write solidly for that period of time, using language and remembering all their quotes. They have to memorise stuff. The return to that kind of academic rigour – I've got nothing wrong with high expectations, but, you know, the fact that we are all being judged on it, so schools are being pushed down a road where all kids are doing the same curriculum, that's fundamentally against what I believe, that actually we need to meet the needs of our individual learners as opposed to doing a one-size-fits-all so it looks good on the PISA test.

161   43:56

162	Rick:	But we're forced do to that because we can't do the –

163	Alex:	Yeah, then we question ourselves as a society about why mental health is in the state mental health is in for kids, when we are not necessarily giving them the diet – but then I'll get accused for having low expectations of kids when I say that.

164	Rick:	There is another side. So, there are pupils who I think would be permanently excluded at other schools, but with the support here, and in several of the schools I worked at, actually there can be just sometimes a perfect person they can work with, a keyworker, or just actually the parent comes and steps in, or you can find the uncle or the brother or whoever that you never knew was around and you can draw in, and that can stop that person going to that permanent exclusion. But it's **damn hard** to do sometimes. You've got to know a lot about that kid. We do know about pupils, one of the key things about what we do. But sometimes you haven't got that person that they can bond with, that that can just **deescalate** the situation. No matter how high they are, we've got pupils who, when they come see you, me, actually we can just go, "Come on, let's have a chat," and they'll be fine. They've sworn at a member of staff, **or they've sworn at you five minutes before, you can bring them back down.** But sometimes there's just not that person around for them and that relationship, or that person then becomes alienated to being [their them 0:45:27].

165		And I'm thinking about our young man who we had to permanently exclude, there was a point where actually no one could deescalate him, that he had to be restrained physically, and that's including all of our skills, everything we were using. And at that stage, when we went to – and he was harming other pupils and he was a danger to himself. But actually, generally, most of our boys and our girls, there's someone they can go to, and they want to see someone when they're feeling like that, and it can help. But I think schools need to do more of that, know who that is and look for that person, and then try to link – find someone at home who can carry on that positive role modelling and whatever you want to call it. But it's hard with some families. Sometimes there isn't someone at home.

166	I:	So, relationships are key.

167	Rick:	Yeah, at home and at school. But sometimes, if you get it right, you can stop a pupil from being at risk to being –

168	Alex:	If I'm honest, there's less money in schools because there's less people in schools, because there's less money to pay people in schools. So, you

know, when I started out, in schools, you used to have learning mentors, and there would be more people – there's fewer adults in schools now, which means that actually getting that together is going to be less likely, and there's fewer services outside the schools now. That's about the funding that's gone over the last few years.

169	46:35
170	Rick: But we're using outside businesses now to do mentoring. We have people in schools, who are not mentors but are people who these pupils can go to, that they feel safe with. And it goes back to that enjoyment in lessons, feeling safe. And actually, if you enjoy school, you're not going to do all the other kind of stuff. But some of these kids just don't enjoy school, enjoy life, apart from maybe the pocket that they shouldn't be enjoying, because it's really, really dysfunctional, the bit that they enjoy.
171	[Interruption – colleague entering room]
172	Rick: This is us trying to avoid permanent exclusion.
173	Alex: Doing everything we can.
174	Rick: The management in the [inaudible 0:47:41] we've got now, haven't we? I think you'd want to hear this. You can record that [inaudible 0:47:47].
175	Alex: How did we do it? We manage moved him, that failed. That was at another local school. Alternative provision, paid for him to go to college, that's failed, permanently excluded from there.
176	Rick: Don't forget the football course that we paid for before he was manage moved.
177	Alex: Of course, before that, that failed. I said that he can't come back here, but I don't want permanently exclude him. He'll be lost. Trying another managed move at the moment.
178	[Discussing noise]
179	Alex: Have you got more?
180	I: Yes, I have, so I've got three more. I'm going to try and get through it because I know you've got –
181	Alex: You're going to run out of batteries [laughter].
182	Rick: You can see I've been [inaudible 0:48:50], and I'm just bored.

183	I:	Are you glad to be back?

184	Rick:	Definitely, definitely glad to be back.

185	I:	[Q6] Okay. So, what are the processes and approaches in school that support students with SEMH needs?

186	49:02

187	Alex:	I think we mentioned quite a few of them. But it's also going to be the staff that we've got in place. So, it'll be form tutors, heads of learning, and then the behaviour support team, who are working with them. We have PSPs. We have reports. We have groups or one to one work, where we're trying to fix students. We have that SEN assessment that goes alongside. We've got a counsellor in school. We've got referrals to external agencies. Yeah, I mean, it's a combination of any of those, really.But, these agencies have extensive training and skills to know how to manage these kids, we simply don't.

188	Rick:	Whatever we think could work. We have behaviour panels when it's not working, which [inaudible 0:49:36] into, and then we have a discipline committee, if it gets to that stage where we are really, really –

189	Alex:	And thinking about working with other schools, fresh starts, managed moves and so on, alternative provision where we feel mainstream school isn't necessarily – SEN referrals, you know, for kids who actually probably shouldn't be in mainstream provision, so looking at specialist provision. So yeah, I mean, it's a range of options, isn't it?

190	Rick:	We've got all those on a document on that learner profile, if you ever want me to share that with you in the future.

191	I:	[Q7] Okay, thank you. And the other question is what processes and approaches hinder students with SEMH?

192	Alex:	Don't get me started.

193	Rick:	You're going to hear the downsides [laughter].

194	Alex:	Clearly, money. CAMHS, EP service, other referrals.

195	Rick:	That's it, nothing more.

196		[Q8] What role do outside agencies have in regards to supporting students with SEMH needs? And how can this be improved upon?

197	Alex:	Okay, so CAMHS has got a bit better, I'm going to be fair, CAMHS has

got a bit better, but it still works on a system where they're expecting parents to have a level of – they are able to access their services and they have a level of get up and go to be able to do that. CAMHS never come to us. CAMHS ought to be in school. **EP service should be in schools**. Why is it they should have to go to that bloody building – they should knock [LA building that houses CAMH, EP and social services] down, but they should be in schools, because actually our families do not have the wherewithal, confidence, any of those things to be able to continue to work – and CAMHS is often, it would appear, quite slow, quite cumbersome and a one-size-fits-all.

198	I find the whole EP thing – that's not the EP service's fault. Actually, I haven't got a real issue with the EP service, but the SEN service and the SEN provision and the way it works, it's like a whole kind of cranking machine, and it **does not meet the needs of the kids.** It is about pushing files – you've seen them.
199	I: Yes.
200	51:38
201	Alex: Files about that thick, down to forums so they can have the right words on them so they're pushed back. Do you know what, if **EPs were actually based in schools** – if I had an EP in school for **two or three days** a week, who went and actually worked with kids rather than just, "I do **assessments**, I do a one hour assessment, then I do one hour **writing a report**," and that sort of thing, could actually become part of this community's life, then I think that would have so **much impact**. And if I see how my school counsellor works, she **adapts** to the needs of the kids within the timeframe that she's got. So yeah, so if this kid needs some work with their family, she'll get the parents in. If this kid needs cognitive therapy, **she'll do that** with them. If they haven't got time to do cognitive therapy, **she'll do something else** with them. But actually, it's about **getting these kids engaged** and learning and safe.
202	And I think to me, there's too many bloody forms, if I'm honest, it's too much bureaucracy going through. And I get why it's got to where it is and where it is, but it doesn't work, you know. In CAMHS, it's all well and good – you know, if so and so's mum, who struggles with domestic violence and substance abuse, doesn't turn up to two appointments because she can't read the letter in the first place, CAMHS say, "Sorry, we're not seeing you anymore." Actually, how is that meeting the needs of the kids where they are and those families where they are?
203	Rick: But also we've got the family which know how to do the paperwork,

they can actually get whatever support they need, but we've got a lot of parents wouldn't even – you know, it's not the paperwork and the reading of it, they [parents who attend CAMHS] want someone to come back to them and be able to **understand their cultural issues**, etc, or they don't know how to fill in the paperwork in the right ways, in the right language, the right steps, to follow up with a phone call, with an email, and therefore they don't get the support.

204	Alex: And because of the pressures that are out there, **work is time limited**, I get that, I understand that, but that doesn't give time for the relationships. I think **social care has improved** significantly. I've worked in [borough name] for 23 years and I've seen social care and CAMHS at rock bottom, but I think that's improved significantly, but staffing issues that they have – you know, **social workers change, relationships aren't being formed**. I mean, at least, if we can keep hold of kids, we have them for five or seven years and, you know, we will work and hold those families and really make a relationship with them. I think those other **agencies are just so transient.** They're waiting to see if they've got resources next year and where they're going to be.
205	And I worry about EPs in the future because – are you going to make relationships with kids or are you going to be doing lots of assessments and so on? I don't know. There's got to be better ways of working. Personally, I believe that we can transform kids' lives through the relationships that we make with them and that we reflect for them, and work with their families. I mean, you talked about relationships, it's all about relationships, and that is how – if I have a mental health issue in my life, I'd expect the relationships that I have to be able to support me through that, and that's how it works, isn't it? That's what my family do. That's what my poor old wife is going to have to do probably tonight when I go home and moan about this week [laughter]. But that's got to be the most loving and effective way of keeping people safe, healthy and proactive.
206	54:50
207	You have to build relationships, not interview children, do an assessment, fill in a form. And I worry about you because, you know, you sound as though you've had some fantastic opportunities to really work with kids, fall in love with kids, you know, be passionate about these kids. Are you going to be able to do that as an EP in the standard EP model?
208	I: Well, I think it depends. Each EP works very differently. The way I am trying to work at the moment is I'm trying to encourage schools to use me for

therapeutic work. So, yesterday I was in one of my special schools and I do an hour of therapeutic work with a certain child, and I've been doing that over a course of a few months.

209	Alex:	See, that's brilliant [EPs working theraputically], but schools don't get to do that enough because there's just no money to do it, is there?
210	I:	That school has decided to pay for that for that student because they feel they need it, and other schools decide not to pay for that. I'm not saying it's the school's fault.
211	Alex:	No, no, but it's the way the whole **funding system works**, isn't it? I have my EP allocation, so I've got my needs of my kids, I need to prioritise the assessments that get done so that I can rubberstamp the form to be able to get things through. And it actually means that it goes to panel, it comes back and it's a piece of paper. It's really not what that child needs there and then.
212	I:	No, it's not. But there are other services, like HEWs [Health and wellbeing service]– do you have a HEWs service?
213	Alex:	We do.
214	Alex:	Some cases are more effective than others in their ability to be able to make **lasting change** within families. What I see often is being able to make **very short term changes** but things tend to often go back. Often, some of the **root causes** of the issues aren't necessarily – I mean, it's not HEWs' fault, they don't necessarily come out. There's a lack of –
215	Rick:	I'm just going to make a quick phone call, apologies.
216	Alex:	Remember, you're being recorded [laughter].
217	I:	Do you want me to pause it?
218	Rick:	No, no, it's fine, honestly.
219	Alex:	There's a lack of resources often to really be able to [go deep]. Schools are different. I have the privilege of actually spending eight hours a day with these kids, and it's different, isn't it? It's different. I meet with a child once a week, I go and visit the family twice a week, and it's a real privilege to work with those kids for that period of time. And things will go wrong, won't they? Sometimes things will break down in that period. But I guess I get frustrated that other people aren't able to work in that way.
220	57:12	

| 221 | I: | Right, okay, thank you. |

| 222 | Alex: | [Inaudible 0:57:22] [laughter]. |

| 223 | Rick: | I thought I was doing all the talking. |

| 224 | Alex: | It presses my buttons. I just think it's not a very loving way to work with children. |

| 225 | I: | No, and it is all down to resources. If I had my way, I would do therapeutic work with students – that's the work that I actually personally enjoy the most, more than the going in and the doing an assessment, then writing a 25 page report. |

| 226 | Rick: | But social care is going the same way [assessment then report]. So, my wife went out of social care because – she went to deal with child protection issues, actually, but by the time she qualified, she was just writing the forms in the right way to either get the children taken away or not taken away, and [sl going to court 0:57:59]. Then she had someone else she passed it onto to do the home visits, etc. And that's what we were saying, actually. Yes, you can write reports, **but actually the skills that you have, the knowledge and all that in-depth stuff, is actually with the child, directly with the family**. And she didn't get through that, she went out. But actually think our EP, we've got to use them to get the assessments written up otherwise we can't get the plan and we can't get the money to help that child, so we actually have to tell our EP to get on with it and get us the assessment done, and we give them a short amount of time with that pupil, their family – |

| 227 | Alex: | And sometimes we've got a stopwatch on it. |

| 228 | Rick: | Well, we do, because we've got [inaudible 0:58:36] literally a short discussion. |

| 229 | I: | Who's your EP? |

| 230 | Alex: | [Name 0:58:37]. |

| 231 | I: | Oh right, yes, okay. |

| 232 | Alex: | He [inaudible 0:58:37], actually. |

| 233 | I: | Ah yes, yeah, he did. |

| 234 | Alex: | But yeah, I think it is about that amount of time that we spend with the kids. |

235	Rick: And the family actually.
236	58:50
237	I: [Q9] Okay. Sorry, I've got two more questions left. At what point do you get parents involved when there is a concern of a child who may be at risk of permanent exclusion?
238	Alex: Long before there's a risk of exclusion.
239	Rick: That child will get a phone call if they are sent out of lessons on a regular basis.
240	Alex: So, long before the risk of exclusion.
241	I: So, there's lots of contact with the parents.
242	Rick: Oh, massively, yeah. From the start, we give them a school calendar with dates, uniform information, rules, everything they need. We do **texts** every time the pupil's sent out, an automatic text, but actually when it becomes a **trend**, that's when the **heads of learning**, the tutors will be able to support him, and that parent will be called probably within a **couple of weeks**, actually. So, some of our **year sevens** who demonstrated some challenging behaviour early on, within week two, the tutors who'd noticed whatever was going on in terms of their behaviour wasn't up to scratch – we've got behaviour points and they were analysing those. So actually, really, really, really early, within weeks, [inaudible 0:59:41] school. And we know exactly who they are very quickly, because we take them on a trip as well in year seven. It's like a camping trip. We know exactly who they are, don't we, at the end of that [laughter].
243	I: Okay. So you can predict who the children are going to be who are most likely to be at risk or…?
244	Alex: I think it's the ones which we're going to have to do work with.
245	Rick: It's coming back to your first and second question, senior leaders. We've got the experience to be able to see where kids are – you know. That's one way of phrasing it, the ones who are likely to be excluded, okay, the kids who are struggling.
246	Alex: Are going to struggle. And we put work in. And the tutors see it **early on**, because they see it day to day. But that's the soft things that we talked about, and when we see those, we react to those, we put stuff in place. And

247	When I took my year sevens, I knew exactly who'd be the ones which probably we could not hold onto actually, if you gave me a class, **I could tell you** exactly, exactly which ones probably would get excluded.When I took my year sevens, I **know** who'd be the ones which probably we couldn't hold onto. So, we do extra work with them. That's experience you have as well to work at a **deeper level**. And we don't have the resources to do that, but we try and do it in school.
248	I: [Q10] Okay, alright. Then the final question is about year nine students. What may be the reason for year nine is having higher than average permit exclusion rates than other year groups both locally and nationally?
249	Alex: It's not the case here, actually.
250	Rick: No, it's not the trend here.
251	1:01:01
252	Rick: Is it year tens?
253	Alex: No, it's not [year nine or 10] actually, recently. It's been our year sevens and eights, if you look at the figures, our permanents.
254	Rick: Oh no, sorry, I'm thinking about fixed terms, apologies. So no, it's the younger ones, yeah.
255	I: The permanents.
256	Rick: Permanents are the younger ones, yeah.
257	Alex: Permanents has been our younger ones most recently.
258	I: Okay, so years sevens and eights.
259	Rick: Yeah.
260	Alex: However, if you want me to give a gut reason why year nines might be –
261	Rick: Hormones [laughter].
262	Alex: There's going to be hormones, yeah. Hormones are going to be a big one in there. I think also what schools are doing is probably – there's no other way of saying it, but actually giving – not giving up, but coming to the end of what they're able to do at key stage three, recognising that actually this child is not going to be successful in key stage four. Occasionally, permanent exclusion, when there is nothing else and you've tried – you know, I talked

about that kid that's been on a managed move, that's been to college and has been to – actually, coming back here isn't the right thing for him. Occasionally, it is from schools a bit of a cry for help that actually we need something different for this kid. I'm not saying that the PRU is that something different they need, but he or she needs that provision, because they're not going to be able to cope and it's a ticking timebomb, and we're doing the kid no favours actually by kind of, I don't know, keeping them for an extra two years when they're actually not going to be successful, not going to be happy, and actually might damage themselves and others. So, I think year nine is that kind of crunch time where people are thinking about GCSEs going forwards as well.

263	Rick:	Also, I think the options process – after the options process happens in March, we see a significant increase in behavioural issues in the subjects they're not taking.
264	Alex:	Is it a national phenomenon?
265	I:	Yes.
266	Rick:	I didn't know that.
267	1:02:43	
268	Alex:	I guess the vast majority is going to be puberty, to be honest, and that period of time where parents sometimes find parenting more tricky than others, because of puberty, I guess.
269	Rick:	I've got one at home.
270	Alex:	You've got a long way to go before you start [inaudible 1:02:58] [laughter].
271	I:	Are they very young?
272	Rick:	Yeah, five and eight.
273	I:	Okay, you've got some time.
274	Rick:	Yeah, but I'm sure he's going through puberty.
275	I:	The five year old?
276	Rick:	He's eight years old [laughter].
277	I:	Okay. Well, thank you. That's all the questions I have. Do you have any questions for me?

278	Alex:	No.
279	I:	I always get no [laughter].
280	Rick:	We've given you so much extra that –
281	I:	I know, we've gone through so much. It's fine if you don't. I just want to give you the opportunity to –
282	Alex:	Was it useful?
283	I:	That was really, really useful, very useful. Some interesting points. Thank you
284		1:04:27
285	Alex:	I think probably there's two forums for that. I reckon it should go to secondary heads. The other one is the behaviour network meeting.
286	Rick:	I mean, that's not – well, maybe [inaudible 1:04:40] [FAP 1:04:42] and the heads.
287	Alex:	[FAP] might be a good thing.
288	I:	Yeah, that's where I got my schools [laughter].
289	Rick:	That's right, yeah. So, [FAP's] the biggest forum, plus the heads. You get good turnout, don't you? You get everyone turning up, virtually, yeah.
290	I:	Yeah, so either of those meetings, that's what I'm hoping to share back.
291	Alex:	Switch off now.