

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NURTURE GROUPS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Nurture groups are small, discrete classrooms on the mainstream school site where two staff, with specific training, deliver individualised programmes to students who are struggling to cope with the demands of the mainstream classroom. Nurture group intervention is designed to be both temporary and part-time, with the aim of returning all students to full-time mainstream education as soon as they are ready to engage and succeed.

An increasing amount of empirical evidence from the primary phase is suggesting that nurture groups can make a “considerable difference to the behaviour and social skills of children who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion” (Ofsted July 2011). However, empirical research into the development of nurture groups in secondary schools is currently very limited.

This study has sought to contribute to the development of nurture groups in secondary schools in two ways:

1. by investigating the perceptions of professionals, students and parents regarding the practical effects of nurture group provision in the secondary school.
2. by making specific modifications to the nurture group’s Boxall Profile assessment instrument for use with an older age group.

The study confirms that secondary school stakeholders perceive nurture groups to be effective in enhancing the school’s continuum of support and in promoting positive student progress. Based on the findings of this study, the *Boxall Profile for Young People* was published in 2010.

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Abbreviations

ASEBA:	Achenbach System of Empirically-Based Assessment
BASC-2:	Behaviour Assessment System for Children
DCSF:	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES:	Department for Education and Skills
DfE:	Department for Education
DfEE:	Department for Education and Employment
DfES:	Department for Education and Skills
NGN:	Nurture Group Network
QMA:	Quality Mark Award
SDQ:	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SEBD:	Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
SENCo:	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TPCert:	Nurture Group Theory and Practice Certificate

Chapter 1 Introduction

Nurture groups are classrooms in mainstream schools where small groups of students with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are offered specialist support (Bennathan and Boxall 2000). Advocates of nurture group intervention suggest that this temporary and part-time intervention serves to maintain educational engagement (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007) while removing a variety of barriers to learning including aggressive behaviour, temper tantrums and withdrawn behaviour (Bishop 2008). A range of government reports also suggest that nurture groups can be effective in reducing school exclusions (Ofsted 2011; Ofsted 2009; Estyn 2007).

Ofsted (2011) describes nurture groups as providing a safe, comfortable, home-like environment with clear routines and with adults modelling positive relationships. A core purpose of the group is said to be the improvement of students' behavioural, social and emotional skills through the setting of individual targets and access to a range of strategies to help the students improve their behaviour. In the best practice seen by Ofsted (2011), the targets and strategies developed in the nurture group were used in the students' mainstream classes and at home by their parents and carers. Typically, the students improved their behavioural, social and emotional skills as a result of the nurture group provision (Ofsted 2011).

A wide range of evidence exists to suggest that nurture groups represent a promising intervention in the support of primary aged children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (see Seth Smith et al 2010; Reynolds et al 2009; Binnie and Allen 2008; Cooper and Whitebread 2007). However, evidence regarding the development of nurture groups in secondary schools is under-represented in the literature, largely due to the fact this is a relatively new intervention in secondary education.

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the development of nurture groups in secondary schools and to contribute to the empirical evidence available regarding this new initiative.

1.1 Defining social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

Nurture groups aim to support students with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) who are at risk of school exclusion and failure (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007; Bennathan and Boxall 2000). For the purposes of this study, SEBD will be defined by the presenting behaviours described in the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001).

In the Code, SEBD is described as being:

- student behaviour that disrupts the smooth running of the classroom
- withdrawn behaviour
- a marked and persistent inability to concentrate
- frustration or distress in relation to their learning difficulties
- difficulties establishing and maintaining balanced relationships with their fellow students or with adults
- a significant delay in the development of life skills and social skills

(DfES 2001 para 7:43, p83).

This definition of SEBD provides a clear boundary for the study but it should be acknowledged that any definition of SEBD will have its limitations. In this case, the definition is context-specific referring, as it does, to the mainstream school classroom in Britain. SEBD must therefore be understood and accepted as a social construction based on current school expectations. Unfortunately, it is beyond the remit of this study to explore the social construction of SEBD in the detail that it requires. The study has its definition of SEBD and will now focus on interventions that may support students experiencing these difficulties.

1.2 The scale of the problem.

It has been estimated that the prevalence of SEBD stands at between 10-20% of all students in the 4-16 age range with one in ten students now suffering from a diagnosable mental health disorder (Young Minds 2011). With such a significant percentage of students experiencing SEBD, the management and education of students with these difficulties continues to cause great concern to teachers, parents and to the general public (Brown and Beckett 2006). Indeed, it is significant that within months of acceding to power in May 2010, the coalition government in the UK issued guidance to schools in papers entitled 'Ensuring Good Behaviour in Schools', 'Behaviour and Discipline in schools', 'Use of Reasonable Force' and 'Screening, searching and confiscation guidance' (DfE 2011).

The behaviour of 'unruly' students in schools continues to make headlines ('Pupils are becoming more unruly, teachers reveal' Guardian 18/4/2011 p.6; '1,250 Four year olds kicked out of school – shocking violence figures' Daily Mirror 30/7/2010 p.20) and the nascent coalition government has responded with a White Paper stating that:

The greatest concern voiced by new teachers and a very common reason experienced teachers cite for leaving the profession is poor pupil behavior. The number of serious physical assaults on teachers has risen. And poorly disciplined students cause misery for other pupils by bullying them and disrupting learning. It is vital that we restore the authority of teachers and head teachers. So, we will increase the authority of teachers to discipline pupils by strengthening their powers to search pupils, issue same day detentions and use reasonable force where necessary.

DfE 2011: 10

Evidence would suggest that the prevalence of SEBD issues is continuing to rise. For example, Layard and Dunn (2009) cite UNICEF research evidence that shows that levels of emotional stress and behavioural disturbance are increasing in the UK and the USA. This evidence is qualified by the permanent exclusion figures for England in 2009/10 that records the permanent exclusion of 5,740 students from school in a 12 month period (DfE 2011). This follows statistics from the period 2008/09, where primary schools issued 17,000 suspensions for acts of violence in school while secondary schools issued 63,300 suspensions for violent behavior (DfE 2010).

Although 2009/10 permanent exclusion numbers have fallen from those recorded in 1996 (13,581 cited by Castle and Parsons 1997), the numbers of students facing exclusion remains a major issue for schools in both the primary and secondary sectors. Nurture groups are said to represent one possible response to this challenge and this study will consider how nurture groups might be developed in secondary schools to meet the needs of students presenting with SEBD and reduce the risk of permanent school exclusion.

1.3 Nurture groups and developmental theory.

Nurture groups were first developed in 1970 by Marjorie Boxall, an educational psychologist employed by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). During the 1960s, an increasing number of children were entering primary school in Hackney, East London with such severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that the rates of referral to schools for the maladjusted were unprecedented (Boxall 2002). In response to this challenge, Boxall developed nurture groups based on her observations in the field. In the course of her work with teachers, children and families, Boxall's observations suggested that the behavioural problems being presented by

increasing numbers of school aged children stemmed from an “erosion of early care and support” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000:21).

Boxall worked intuitively from her observations, developing nurture groups as an essentially a-theoretical intervention in the first instance. As a result, Boxall’s seminal pamphlet ‘Nurture Groups in the Primary School’ (Boxall 1976) makes little attempt to “work with existing theories” (Boxall 2002:ix). But as the 1970s progressed and the nurture group movement gained momentum, Marjorie Boxall herself acknowledged that “connections (with existing theories) have become apparent” (Boxall 2002: ix). These theories provide an important context within which nurture group intervention can be best understood. To understand the concepts associated with nurture group intervention it is important to evaluate the range of developmental theories that may be said to have informed nurture group theory and practice (Seth-Smith et al 2010).

1.3.1. Attachment Theory.

Attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980) is described by Holmes (1993) as being one of the major theoretical developments in psychoanalysis over the last half-century. Emerging from the psychodynamic paradigm pioneered by Sigmund Freud (1920), Melanie Klein (1932) and Anna Freud (1966), Bowlby’s attachment theory harnessed the scientific rigour of both evolutionary biology and ethnology with the subjective insights of psychoanalysis (Holmes 1993), resulting in:

an enormous impact in the fields of child development, social work, psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry.

Holmes 1993: 1

This impact has included the way in which children are now cared for in hospitals; the way that parenting training programmes have developed (see

the Solihull Approach 1996) and the way that support systems within education have developed, including the nurture group initiative.

Key concepts that are embedded in Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980) and inform nurture group theory and practice include:

- that the root of all human personality lies in the earliest childhood relationships
- that an intrinsic, evolutionary component for all children is the need to attach to a primary care-giver
- that the survival instinct has a biological function that seeks proximity to the care giver and 'staying close' (proximity-seeking).
- that a psychological function of attachment is in offering love, security and the sense of safety from which exploration and learning can develop.

Pringle (1975)

Attachment theory suggests that, through the earliest relationships, children develop feelings of self-worth, a personal identity and a model of how others will react to them as individuals (Pringle 1975). It is suggested that future behaviour, future relationships and future choices will all be linked to the quality of relationships that a child enjoys in the earliest years (Sroufe 1983).

Where a child has enjoyed love and security within an intimate and continuous relationship with a primary care giver, Ainsworth has suggested that an 'affectional bond' develops that represents a long and enduring tie to a uniquely viewed care-giver (Ainsworth 1989 cited in Bee 1995). Within that bond, it is argued that 'attachment' develops as an internal state within the child (but not within the adult who enjoys a 'care-giving bond'), offering a sense of security and comfort to the child. The quality of the earliest childhood relationship is reflected in the degree to which the child

experiences the secure or 'safe base' through the relationship with the care-giver.

Attachment theory has identified a feedback loop that begins with exploration from the safe base (Holmes 1993). Normal, healthy exploration is often followed by uncertainty as the child confronts new situations, objects or experiences during the exploration of the environment. The reassurance on offer from the attuned care-giver will help the child to contain the anxiety aroused by this normal and healthy uncertainty. The care-giver may help resolve the difficulty or encourage the child to resolve the difficulty. Learning then takes place and the success that is experienced by the child produces euphoria, excitement and increased agency as part of the successful feedback loop. Pringle (1975) suggests that the physiological and social gains that result from the positive experience represents a basic psychological need for all children (Pringle 1975). The excitement, achievement, praise or recognition that result, reinforce further exploration from the safe base and an emergent sense of responsibility. This secure attachment cycle is illustrated in Fig 1.1.

Attachment theorists suggest that the quality of a child's attachment to a primary care-giver can be deduced by observing the existence of 'attachment behaviours' (Ainsworth 1978). Attachment behaviours include the way in which the child maintains close proximity to the care-giver, the use of eye contact and the child's vocalisations that elicit a response in the care-giver.

Ainsworth et al (1978) developed a procedure for assessing attachment security in young children aged 18 months to 3 years, comprising a 20 minute sequence in which the child is exposed to an unfamiliar place, an unfamiliar person, separation from the primary care-giver and the experience of being alone. The Strange Situation procedure focused on the quality of the reunion between the child and the care-giver as the basis for the assessment. Classification of the attachment relationship included:

- Secure attachment: when infants used the care-giver as a secure base from which to explore, responding positively to reunions, returning rapidly to exploration
- Avoidant insecurity: when infants explore with little reference to the care-giver and ignore or avoid the care-giver on reunion
- Resistant insecurity: when infants fail to move away from the care-giver, show little exploration and cannot settle on reunion

The classification has since been augmented by Main and Solomon (1990) to include:

- Disorganised insecurity: when infants display an inconsistent pattern of attachment behaviours e.g. proximity seeking followed by avoidance; undirected displays of anxiety; behavioural freezing

Fig 1.1 The secure attachment cycle.



For Bowlby and Ainsworth, attachment behaviours were said to be the external manifestation of what attachment theory describes as an 'internal working model'. The 'internal working model' (IWM) is said to be the child's representational model of both the care-giver and of the child's sense of self, based on repeated patterns of interactive experience (Holmes 1993). If the child's IWM has developed a representation of the care-giver as being available, responsive and helpful, Bowlby suggested that the child's sense of self would be one of being of value and worthy of love (Bowlby 1969). In Bowlby's view, the child would then be armed with the confidence to tackle new challenges and manage the uncertainty and frustration that is part of exploration and learning in the social world.

Conversely, Bowlby suggested that where the care-giver has been unpredictable or neglectful then insecure attachment results. The insecurely attached child might develop an IWM that views the world as a dangerous place where people are to be treated with caution and that the child's self-perception may be one of being ineffective and unworthy of love. Bowlby's fearful cycle, experienced by the insecurely attached child, is represented in Fig 1.2.

Fig 1.2 The insecure attachment cycle.



In the cycle represented by Fig 1.2, Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980) is suggesting that while the insecurely attached child begins to explore from a base, the base is neither secure nor safe. The uncertainty that follows the normal and healthy exploration of the environment is not assuaged by the care-giver nor is reassurance offered consistently. When reassurance in the face of frustration is not offered, the child learns that regulation of their felt frustration will not be on offer; that his or her needs will not be met by the care-giver. For Bowlby, the child may then avoid exploration in an effort to avoid this negative experience (expressed as withdrawn behaviour) or the child may erupt into emotional outbursts following the overwhelming feelings of uncertainty (expressed as tantrums or aggressive behaviour).

Through the theory of attachment, Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Ainsworth (1978, 1989) offer an insight into what might be at the root of a child's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in school. Where a successful attachment to a primary care-giver in the early years has taken place, it is argued that the child develops a sense of self-worth and an expectation that adults are fair, consistent, warm and helpful. The new experiences of the classroom and the challenges of the curriculum are there to be embraced with hope and resilience. But where the attachment to the primary care-giver has been insecure or lacking, the child is fearful of failure and adopts powerful strategies to avoid this experience recurring. This might take the form of very withdrawn behaviour and disengagement while actively avoiding new experiences. Or it might take the form of unregulated frustration such as lashing out, running off, temper tantrums or disruptive behaviour. In short, the kinds of behaviours listed in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001) as descriptors of SEBD (see section 1.1).

Following the innovative research of Ainsworth (1978, 1989) that built on the theory of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980), attachment theory became a rich and fertile area for research and investigation. By way of example, Cassidy and

Shaver (2008) have edited a Handbook collating over 40 chapters of attachment-related empirical research. Through the research of recent years, alternative assessment instruments have been developed to offer insights into attachment difficulties (see George, Kaplan and Main 1996; Main, Goldwyn and Hesse 2002; Ward and Carlson 1995) but the research area of particular relevance to this study concerns the investigations into attachment issues and adolescent students (i.e. young people of secondary school age).

Allen et al (1998) explored the meaning and function of attachment organisation during adolescence using the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan and Main 1996). Results suggested that the adolescents' organisation of discourse about attachment experiences related to their competence with peers (as reported by peers), to lower levels of internalising behaviors (as reported by the adolescents) and to lower levels of deviant behavior (as reported by peers and by parents/carers). An adolescent's preoccupation with attachment experiences, demonstrated in the angry or unfocused discussion of attachment experiences, was linked to higher levels of both internalising and deviant behaviors. The research of Allen et al (1998) therefore suggested that attachment issues continue to impact on a wide array of aspects of adolescent psychosocial development.

These conclusions were further supported by Doyle et al (2006) whose research concluded that secure attachment during adolescence resulted in fewer mental health problems including lower levels of depression, anxiety and feelings of personal inadequacy. Securely attached adolescents were less likely to engage in substance abuse, antisocial and aggressive behaviour and were more likely to enjoy positive relationships with family and peers. They demonstrated less concern about loneliness and social rejection than did insecurely attached adolescents and they also displayed more adaptive coping strategies.

Clearly, attachment theory in 21st century draws together research from a variety of age ranges and a variety of perspectives but the theory has been criticised on a number of levels. The role played by the child's temperament is largely ignored by the theory and while evidence on the connections between temperamental characteristics and attachment security is limited, research does now suggest that a temperamental dimension reflecting negative emotionality may be associated with insecure attachment (Thompson 1998; Vaughn et al 1992). This evidence connecting temperament and attachment style is something that Bowlby's attachment theory has yet to acknowledge.

Rutter (1995) also disputes the claim made by Bowlby (1969) that attachment is under the control of a biologically based behaviour system suggesting instead that mechanisms determining proximity-seeking behaviours

may well not be the same as the mechanisms involved in determining the qualities of a selective attachment relationship.

Rutter 1995: 551

Ainsworth et al developed the Strange Situation procedure (1978) to measure attachment security in young children, however this claim to 'measurement' is limited by the assumption that brief separations and reunions between infant and care-giver will have the same meaning for all children (Lamb et al 1984). In addition, while the procedure has been important and influential in the assessment of infants, the alternative procedure that has been developed for older children (Belsky and Cassidy 1994) has been described as 'dubious' (Rutter 1995:552).

In relation to nurture group theory and practice it should be noted that Bowlby's attachment theory does not support the notion that 'missed early experiences' (Boxall 2002) can be ameliorated through later experiences in school. The idea that school-based relationships and the systematic teaching

of social, emotional and learning skills might rectify attachment difficulties is an interpretation of attachment theory that is not entirely in keeping with Bowlby's original theory.

A further criticism of attachment theory involves the concept of the internal working model that is central to the theory. This internalised representation of complex relationships is said by Hinde (1988) to be too all-encompassing to have much testable explanatory power while Dunn (1988, 1993) questions the ability of an infant to represent internally both sides of a discrepant relationship.

Despite these criticisms, key concepts described in Bowlby's attachment theory appear to be gaining increasing support from the world of neuroscience. While still at an early stage, neuroscience research into the development of the human brain has suggested that:

- the newborn infant is biologically predisposed to make strong emotional bonds with a significant another.
- the infant will seek safety in the presence of the significant other (a safe base)
- the safe base will 'contain' otherwise overwhelming emotional experiences
- attachment behaviours will emerge to promote contact and proximity
- empathic attunement is developed through the sensitive responses of the carer to the needs of the infant

(Schorre 2001)

Research by Sroufe (1983, 1985, 1988) describes how the human infant is highly responsive to human interaction, particularly the face-to-face interactions which mark early attachment experiences (see Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1989). While Bowlby hypothesised that attachment to a primary care-giver was vital in healthy child development (Bowlby 1969), Schorre and others now offer scientific evidence supporting this claim. The core

experience of adult and infant engaging in a rich and reciprocal series of interactions has been shown to actively stimulate the production of biochemicals in the brain that promote healthy development (Schoore 2000).

The entire period of infancy is dominated by right brain development, which is the seat of affect regulation. In this hemisphere of the developing brain, feelings are experienced and emotional responses processed and developed. It has been suggested that emotional intelligence (Goleman 1996) emerges in the context of a 'mutual dance of responsiveness' between infant and carer (Gerhardt 2004).

Within a secure and supportive relationship that provides safety and regulates overwhelming experiences, it has been argued that the infant brain will develop a dense network of neural connections (Field 1985). The most frequent and repetitive experiences will form pathways of connected neurons and the brain will learn to anticipate likely outcomes based on that experience (Siegel 1999). As the brain begins to take shape it will categorise experiences and hold the knowledge of the environment (Gerhardt 2004).

Neuroscience research indicates that children of school age who have experienced secure attachment are able to relate to their teacher as well as their peers and find the world outside the primary relationship worth exploring (Geddes 2006). But where an infant has experienced sustained anxiety through abuse, trauma or insecure attachment to a significant other, neuroscience research has recorded a significant impact on brain development. For example, where a child feels unsafe and unregulated by the primary care-giver, high levels of the stress hormone cortisol can develop (Gunnar and Donzella 2002). This has been shown to affect the development of the orbitofrontal cortex responsible for reading social cues and adapting behaviour to social norms (Lyons et al 2000).

High cortisol levels have been linked to relatively high activity in the right frontal brain (Perry 2006). That is linked to hyper-vigilance in children that generates fearfulness, irritability and withdrawal from others. In environments where adults may be unpredictable or unreliable caregivers, this highly developed part of the brain promotes an alertness and sensitivity to the non-verbal signals of the parents that might lead to an anticipation of events. Schore (2001) has established strong links between high cortisol and many emotional dysfunctions such as depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies, but cortisol also damages the child physiologically by compromising the immune responses and blood glucose levels.

Research by Dr Bruce Perry (1998, 2006) on the impact of neglect on brain development has confirmed that neglected children, as defined by the Child Protective Services in the USA, have a much higher probability of emotional, behavioural and cognitive delays (Perry 1998). Research on animals raised in sensory depriving situations resulted in a host of abnormalities in both neuron-chemical and neuron-architectural organisation (e.g. Cragg 1975) and Perry suggests that the implications for human development are comparable.

With an increasing volume of evidence supporting the crucial role played by attachment in positive human development, two major developments then took place. In 1994 the influential Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) recognised the existence of insecure attachment in what it termed Reactive Attachment Disorder (APA 2000) and in 1999 an international journal entitled *Attachment and Human Development* was established in response to the increased world-wide interest in the theory.

It is important to acknowledge that nurture groups are not the only school-based intervention to be informed by Bowlby's attachment theory. For example, Louise Bomber (Bomber 2007; 2011) has helped develop the Attachment Project in Brighton, UK, whereby the understandings of Bowlby's attachment theory are central to the school-based interventions offered by

the team. The Attachment Project and Bomber's own publications claim to illustrate how attachment difficulties can affect a student's ability to learn and offers advice on how to 'get alongside' students who have experienced trauma or loss. Significantly, Bomber is arguing for the provision of an 'attachment figure' to work alongside the students in the mainstream classroom. While no research evidence exists to help evaluate this model, Bomber's approach contrasts with the nurture group model that withdraws students from mainstream classes for regular sessions each week.

A further example of attachment theory informing current classroom practice is provided by the work of Dr Heather Geddes (2006). In her publication 'Attachment in the Classroom', Geddes sets out the key understandings regarding attachment theory and 'pupils who trouble us' (Geddes 2006: vii). Significantly, Geddes describes the classifications of insecure attachment alongside their implications for learning in the classroom. In this way, readers are offered practical advice and guidance on supporting students with specific attachment needs in the mainstream setting and not in an alternative setting such as that offered by the nurture group.

To summarise, attachment theory seeks to understand SEBD (DfES 2001) in terms of a student's disrupted early life experiences, poor attachments and negative internal working models. Bowlby's theory (1969, 1973, 1980) is not without its limitations and critics (see Rutter 1995), but it has received support from neuroscience research over recent years (Schoore 2000; Perry 1998, 2006; Gerhardt 2004) and the authoritative DSM-IV has recognised Reactive Attachment Disorder as a classified mental disorder. While nurture group intervention is not derived from Bowlby's attachment theory, it is centrally informed by the theory (Seth-Smith et al 2010, Reynolds et al 2009) and the way in which the 'classic' nurture group attempts to resolve attachment difficulties will be described in the next section (1.4). Suffice to say at this stage that Bowlby's attachment theory and the practice in the

'classic' nurture group are both inextricably linked (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009).

1.3.2 Piaget, Vygotsky and Maslow.

The theories developed by Jean Piaget (1951), Abraham Maslow (1954) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) contributed significantly to the developmental theory that was emerging during Marjorie Boxall's formative years as a psychologist. Without in any way being focused on the needs of students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, their approaches to understanding childhood as part of a *developmental process* would inform the way that nurture group intervention was to evolve.

Piaget sought to describe and explain the development of a child's cognitions as a form of adaptation to the environment that was analogous with species evolution (Butterworth and Harris 1994). By actively 'taking in' or assimilating a new experience, the child accommodates the experience by changing the 'scheme' or mental category that they hold prior to the new experience. Equilibration satisfies the need for an overall balance or coherence to human understanding and, with equilibration achieved, the child is ready to engage with the next new experience.

Piaget described a child's cognitive development as proceeding through four key stages from the sensory-motor stage (birth–2yrs) to the formal operational stage (achieved at around 12 yrs), with the preoperational stage and concrete operational stages sitting in between the two. Each stage is described as consisting of increasingly complex representations in the mind, which again alludes to the notion of an internal world within the child.

For Piaget, the sensory-motor stage is dominated by sensory and motor schemes that respond in the immediate and present without planning or intention. No internal representations of objects are said to exist at this stage.

The preoperational stage of development (2–6 yrs) sees an increasing use of symbolism in play and an egocentrism that prevents the child from de-centering or seeing the perspective of others (Flavell et al 1981). The children at this stage are invariably unable to recognise conservation in number, weight or quantity tasks.

At the concrete operations stage (6–12 yrs), Piaget suggests that the child discovers a set of immensely powerful and abstract general rules for examining and interacting with the environment. Addition, reversibility, serial ordering, categorisation - all these skills commonly emerge at this stage along with an inductive logic that allows personal experience to be generalised into a common principle.

Piaget described the formal operational stage as one that allows the teenage child to apply complex mental operations to objects, experiences and now ideas and thoughts - searching systematically and methodically for solutions to problems.

For nurture groups, a central theme of the intervention is that a student's learning is understood developmentally (Lucas et al 2006). The cognitive stages described by Piaget offer staff practical ways of planning activities that meet developmental stages rather than chronological ages. In other words, where nurture staff perceive an 8 year old child to be functioning at a preoperational level due to missed early learning experiences, they can generate developmentally appropriate tasks for the child, based on Piaget's theory, thereby assisting the child to progress from the point at which they are developmentally located. For Piaget (1951, 1954), knowledge and cognition were qualitatively different for students at each of the four stages and progress to the next stage could not take place until the child was ready to do so. For this reason, Piaget argued, development would always precede learning. The widespread acceptance of Piaget's developmental stage theory has had a profound effect on the way schools, particularly Primary schools,

are run (Bee 1995). Teachers were encouraged to view students as actively *constructing* an understanding of the world while passing through qualitatively different sequential changes in the form of their thinking as the years progressed.

Nurture group theory would claim to uphold the pedagogical assumptions generated by Piaget's work and would support the Piagetian view that students cannot move on to new skills until the earlier skills have been mastered. By addressing the gaps in the cognitive developmental process described by Piaget, nurture groups claim to improve students' engagement with learning in the mainstream classroom.

Critics of Piaget have disputed his timing of skill development as well as the breadth and generality of the stages themselves (Bee 1995). Vygotsky challenged Piaget's notion of the child as a lone thinker, following the path of self-initiated discovery where development precedes learning. For Vygotsky, cognitive development in students is dependent upon a dialectical process of shared experiences, where social learning is the catalyst for development, not vice versa. Nurture group theory and practice has been informed by Vygotskian theory and it to this that we now turn.

For Vygotsky (1978), a child's culture, be it the family, community or wider society, is the prime determinant in the development of each individual. Culture is said to determine both the content of a child's thinking (leading to knowledge) and the process of thinking (creating the tools for intellectual adaptation). Vygotsky acknowledged the work undertaken by Piaget and agreed that human development was made up of stages and the reorganization of mental structures over time (Lee and Gupta 2001). But where Vygotsky disagreed with Piaget - and where the impact of his work has been most strongly felt in education - relates to his emphasis on the cultural context that supports cognitive development. Nurture group theory and practice places great emphasis on how the 'cultural context' of the home

impacts on a child's cognitive development. Indeed, Boxall is explicit about the role of the nurture group in attempting to "relive with the child the missed nurturing experience of the early years" (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 21).

Like Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) developed his theories through the empirical study of infants and children. Vygotsky observed that infants are born with two innate and yet separate abilities:

- the practical abilities that move objects, point or coordinate hand-eye movements and
- the communicative abilities that includes gazing, imitating, vocalizing and gesturing.

The critical period of the early socialisation process is when the two abilities come together and a practical ability is deliberately employed to communicate. At this point, a thought process has begun and this new and powerful process separates humans uniquely from the animal world: the use of language.

Nurture group theory accepts Vygotsky's assumption that language then becomes the primary form taken by the dialectical process and intellectual adaptation as the child develops. For this reason, nurture group theory has enshrined the importance of language as a vital means of communication as one of its core principles and the nurture curriculum ensures that language is assessed and developed in all aspects of the curriculum (Lucas et al 2006). Nurture staff ensure that there is time and opportunity for students to express and explore the stages of language development and practitioners use every opportunity for extended conversations, recalling and planning for future events (Lucas et al 2006).

For Vygotsky, social learning precedes every stage of child development, explaining that:

... every function in the child's cultural development appears twice; first on the social level and later on the individual level. First between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

Vygotsky 1978: 57

While very different perspectives and motivations lay behind the developmental theories of Bowlby and Vygotsky, an overlap begins to emerge when Vygotsky describes higher functions originating as actual relationships between individuals (Vygotsky 1978). For Bowlby, an individual's internal working model originated in its entirety from the relationship between the child and the primary care giver. Nurture group theory and practice embraces the assumption that relationships are at the heart of healthy social development and individual growth.

A further concept developed by Vygotsky and of central importance to understanding nurture group intervention is the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978). At a time when transmissionist or instructionist models of teaching were the norm, Vygotsky was arguing that learning was fundamentally an interactive activity. Students needed to be engaged and to participate; to be active in their learning while being guided by 'more knowledgeable others' such as teachers, support assistants or peers. Group work, paired work, interactive problem solving and mixed ability groupings in class were all educational structures that developed as Vygotsky's developmental theory began to impact on western educational practice in schools. His identification of a 'zone of proximal development' was described by Vygotsky himself as being:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Vygotsky 1978:86

Given the assumptions of Vygotsky's theory, educationalists were encouraged to assess where a child was placed in terms of their cognitive learning and then set tasks and provide support that would offer 'scaffolding' for the learner as they negotiated the zone of proximal learning. Nurture groups that are working well have assimilated this assumption into their practice and will adjust support as the learner progresses (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009).

A third developmental theory that is said by theorists to influence nurture group practice (see Cooper and Whitebread 2007; Kearney 2005) is Abraham Maslow's work on human motivation (Maslow 1954). Maslow described a five level hierarchy of basic human needs which, like Piaget's theory, required the successful completion of one stage before progress could be made (see Fig 1.3 below).

At stage one, Maslow described physiological needs as being essentially biological, consisting of the need for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature. Physiological needs are literally the requirements for human survival and would be prioritised by human behaviour at all times.

The safety needs described by Maslow as the second stage are sought when all physiological, survival needs are satisfied and when drives for air, food and water are no longer controlling and dominating thoughts and behaviours. While Maslow suggested that adults have little awareness of their security needs, except in times of emergency, he observed that students often display

the signs of insecurity and the need to be safe (Maslow 1954). This observed need supports the assumptions described in attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980).

Fig 1.3 Maslow's hierarchy of basic human needs (1954).



The third stage in Maslow's hierarchy involves the need for love, affection and a sense of belonging. When the human needs for physiological and safety needs are satisfied, the third basic human need for love, affection and belonging can be sought. Maslow suggests that people seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation through the giving and receiving of love, affection and the bonds of belonging.

Once an individual is secure in the knowledge that they are loved and can love in return, the hierarchy of needs has a focus on the need for esteem. This stage involves the need for both self-esteem and the esteem a person receives from others. For Maslow (1954), humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect and respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, Maslow suggested that humans feel self-confident and of

value. Conversely, when these needs are frustrated, humans are said to feel inferior, weak, helpless and worthless.

When all of the foregoing needs are satisfied, then and only then are the needs for self-actualisation activated. Maslow described self-actualisation as a person's need to respond to 'their calling' in life stating that "a musician must make music, an artist must paint, and a poet must write" (Maslow 1954: 46)

Nurture group theory embraces the assumptions of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs and the theory represents a central concept covered in the four-day certificate of training in the theory and practice of nurture groups (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). Many of the features of nurture group practice are located within the context of Maslow's hierarchy including, for example, the nurture group breakfast. This activity offers a number of experiences to the students participating but a key feature of the breakfast is that it ensures that the physiological needs of the students are met should any students have missed the opportunity for sustenance that morning.

In addition, the nurture group actively promotes a sense of safety for all students and establishing the nurture room as a safe-base is recognised as a core principle of nurture (Lucas et al 2006). The slow-moving, predictable routine of the nurture room is a deliberate measure that emphasises order and promotes a sense of safety. Clear boundaries - both physical and emotional - are set and maintained for the students and the modelling of appropriate dialogue, negotiation and humour between the two staff members aims to reassure the students that they are safe in the nurture room both physically and psychologically.

A child's basic social needs of experiencing affection and gaining a sense of belonging are encouraged in the nurture group through group activities, high levels of appropriate praise (Connor and Colwell 2003) and a sense of warmth and affection as expressed by the nurture group staff. As social skills improve,

the child is more able to generalise their skills into the playground and the mainstream classroom. From an increasing number of successful interactions within the wider school, students generate a sense of belonging to the wider community and not just the school's nurture group.

Self-esteem is defined by Dweck (2000) as being "a positive way of experiencing yourself when you are fully engaged and are using your abilities to the utmost in pursuit of something you value" (Dweck 2000: 4). Nurture teams are encouraged to plan activities that promote self-esteem development through challenges met (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009) while praise and affirmation are regular features of the nurture group (Bani 2011).

It could be argued that Maslow's final stage of self-actualisation, or the fulfillment of potential, requires a return to the mainstream classroom on a full time basis and this is the clearly stated aim of all nurture groups. As Cooper and Tiknaz confirm, the nurture room is a "temporarily separated transitional setting which enables students to cope more effectively with the demands of mainstream schooling" (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007:15). Nurture groups are not designed to be either full-time or long term interventions; they are temporary and transitional, providing the support required to meet the student's physiological, safety, social and esteem needs. With these needs attended to through nurture group support, nurture group staff encourage students to fulfill their own potential, or to self-actualise, within the mainstream setting wherever possible.

In summary, nurture group practice claims to have a structure and framework that is informed by sound psychological theory (Colley 2009). The developmental psychology of Piaget, Vygotsky and Maslow offers invaluable insights into the developing child that overlap with the attachment theory of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980). Piaget's model of cognitive development alludes to internal concept formations at an early age, while Vygotsky emphasises the

cultural context in which learning takes place. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivation offers an additional model of how human needs are sequential in their nature and that the full potential of every child in school cannot be achieved without a range of other needs being met successfully in the first instance. Nurture group theory takes full cognisance of these assumptions as will be illustrated in the description of the 'classic' nurture group in section 1.4 of this chapter.

1.3.3 Social Cognitive Theory.

A further context in which to best understand the development of nurture group theory and practice is provided by the psychological understandings underpinning social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory takes into account both the multiple causes of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the environment, the person and the behaviour. Developing from the behaviourist movement led by B.F. Skinner (1947), social cognitive theory acknowledges that behaviour is shaped by controlling and consequential forces within the environment but departs from Skinner's framework by accepting the importance of internal cognitive processes.

Social learning theorist Albert Bandura used experimental studies to illustrate how learning is acquired by students (Bandura and Walters 1963). He found that by copying behaviour from models that are around them, students imitate what they see. In Bandura's view, behaviour is learned through the use of schedules of reinforcement which may reinforce positive behaviours but may also, inadvertently, reinforce 'maladjusted' behaviour.

For example, if a child is acting in a way that is concerning and mildly aggressive, this may be ignored by the adult. But if the aggression persists or escalates, the adult may be forced to pay the child attention and intervene. For Bandura, this intervention has inadvertently served to reinforce the

aggressive behaviour because the 'maladjusted' child has received the reinforcer that he or she has craved, namely the attention of the adult. Many parents of maladjusted students have confirmed that there is a pattern of problem behaviours being gratified within the home for the sake of 'peace and quiet' (Laslett 1977: 21).

Social cognitive theory has influenced the way in which general, school-based reward and consequence systems are employed and nurture groups implement their own systems to reinforce positive behaviours. The rewards and incentives in the nurture group described by Sonnet (2008) are designed "to be empowering and to raise a child's status" (Sonnet 2008: 49). These structures include the visual rewards of earning parts of a picture that, when complete, lead to whole group game or activity. Consequences for "maintaining discipline" (Sonnet 2008: 50) involve only one sanction in Sonnet's nurture group: that of time-out. For Sonnet, this consequence for negative behaviour is an established response in the nurture group and one that encourages the students to reflect on their behaviour before returning to the group after a specified time.

A further concept developed by social cognitive theory is that of triadic reciprocity (Bandura 1977, 1978). Triadic reciprocity is a type of reciprocal determinism that understands social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to be the result of behaviour, environmental influences and various personal factors (i.e. cognition, temperament, biology), all of which are simultaneously interconnecting and acting as determinants of each other. An example might be an infant whose environment has been neglectful in the early years. This environment will impact on internal cognitive processes within the child and concepts of self-worth, trust in others and models of future relationships. These internal concepts will then impact on behaviour (i.e. lacking trust with new adults), which may determine how well the child settles in school with new adults and teachers. Nurture group practice anticipates that students with poor models in the early years will join the school community with

preconceptions regarding those in their social circle, be they peers or adults. On this level, Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1967, 1973, 1980), with its emphasis on early relationships and the impact of the environment, clearly overlaps with Bandura's references to internal cognitive processes as part of social learning theory.

Of further relevance to nurture group practice is Bandura's concept of observational learning and the way in which learning takes place in a social context. For Bandura, this process is not simply mimicry but the acquisition of specific skills and the learning of rules. Bandura (1986) describes five effects that guide the process of modelling (observational learning, inhibitory effects, disinhibitory effects, environmental enhancement effects and arousal effects), as well as defining four related cognitive processes that determine how effectively we learn (attention, retentional, production and motivational processes). This emphasis on observational learning is given a high priority by nurture group practice in both the staffing structure of the 'classic' model and the roles played by the nurture team. Nurture groups are deliberately staffed by two adults and this dyad seeks to replicate a positive 'home-like' situation with the adults modelling co-operation, conversation, problem resolution and good humour for the students in a natural, unaffected but deliberate and pre-planned way. The importance of learning through observation and modelling, espoused by social cognitive theory, is therefore a central assumption of nurture group practice.

Having couched nurture groups within a theoretical context and described the psychology that has informed this intervention, it is time to consider in detail the 'classic' nurture group that was pioneered by Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s and developed further through literature and training over the last 40 years.

1.4 The 'classic' nurture group.

The 'classic' nurture group is described as being a small, discrete class within a mainstream school where a teacher and a specially trained support assistant work with 10-12 students who are unable to manage the demands of a large class (Holmes 2000). The student's difficulty in managing the demands of a large class may be expressed through the presentation of challenging behaviour, withdrawn behaviour or developmentally inappropriate behaviour. The espoused aim of the 'classic' nurture group is to offer short-term, structured intervention that allows all students to return to a successful, full-time education in their mainstream classrooms (Bennathan and Boxall 2000).

When Marjorie Boxall first set up nurture groups in inner-London during the 1970s, the label 'classic' nurture group was not required because only one model of the intervention existed. But as the decades advanced and the nurture group model became more widespread, empirical research by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (1999) identified that a number of 'variant models' had developed around the nurture group theme. The authors therefore recommended that a distinction be made between the 'classic' nurture group, functioning as Boxall had described it in her 1976 pamphlet (Boxall 1976), and the variant nurture groups that did not maintain all the distinctive features of her original model. For the purposes of this study, the focus will remain on the 'classic' Boxall nurture group and this will now be described in detail.

It has been suggested that the 'classic' nurture group seeks to help students to develop positive feelings towards school, based on the following:

- a feeling of safety in the school setting
- the experience of being cared for by the nurture group staff
- the experience of success in getting along with other students

- the experience of achievement in learning activities

Cefai and Cooper 2009: 137

The philosophy of the 'classic' nurture group recognises that students who present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are often experiencing emotions and exhibiting behaviours that are inappropriate for the developmental stage inhabited by the majority of their same age peers (Cooper and Lovey 1999). Here the assumptions of developmental psychology described earlier in 1.3 begin to emerge from the espoused philosophy of nurture groups. When a child is two years of age, extreme egocentrism and a disregard for the needs and feelings of others may be perceived as normal or expected behaviour but the mainstream classroom expects that this developmental stage will have given way to higher levels of social competency on entry into school. Indeed, it is Boxall's view that schools hold an implicit assumption that children entering school will have already experienced a close and trusting relationship in the early years that will allow them:

- to quickly feel secure in school, extending trust to their teachers
- to be biddable and responsive to peers
- to have a sense of cause and effect
- to be eager to extend past experience through learning
- to tolerate frustration and disappointment
- to find the school day stimulating but not overwhelming.

Boxall 2002:1

But to achieve this required level of social and emotional competency, the pre-school child must go through a set of early learning experiences in the home that enable him or her to locate themselves as distinct individuals in relation to other people (Cooper and Lovey 1999). Where this developmental progress has not taken place, nurture group philosophy suggests that children are likely to present as bewildered and/or frightened on entry into school,

which may then lead to disruptive or withdrawn behaviours that concern staff. Again, there is an assumption within nurture group practice that when a child is presenting with aggressive and disruptive behaviours in the classroom, an explanation can be found through the understandings provided by attachment theory, developmental theory and neuroscience. The presenting SEBD is not indicative of a 'bad' child or a 'naughty' child. For the nurture group practitioner, the child is clearly in need of a secure relationship with a warm and caring significant other. Within this relationship developmental stages might be revisited with the child to ensure that gaps in learning have been addressed. By reducing anxiety through the nurture group model, new neural pathways might be forged, allowing the development of the frontal cortex that governs behaviour regulation, reflection and choices.

The 'classic' nurture group seeks to respond to this developmental delay and "emotional disorganisation" (Boxall 2002: 3) by re-creating the process of early learning within a discrete, school-based classroom. It is suggested that the nurture teacher and support assistant provide a restorative experience of early nurturing care by being available to the students - just as parents might be (Boxall 2002).

The 'classic' nurture group offers a relaxed setting that facilitates close physical proximity and eye contact. The small group sizes allow students to learn quickly - and often for the first time - about the meaning of adult facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice (Bennathan and Boxall 2000). Simple tasks are broken down into structured stages to help students achieve success and the choices in the classroom are deliberately limited until the students have the skills to exercise choice positively, rather than being overwhelmed by the experience.

There is an emphasis on tidying up and putting away to develop a sense of order and organisation within the student that, in Boxall's view, will promote a sense of security, confident anticipation, prediction and a sense of time

(Bennathan and Boxall 2000). The teacher builds in 'braking techniques' and reassuring routines that help put controls on a student's unchanelled energy or unregulated behaviour. The routines provide a structure that 'holds' the student, allowing the student to give attention, to feel reassured and to feel satisfied. As the student's ability to self regulate increases, so the routines and the teacher's control is relaxed over time (Bennathan and Boxall 2000).

At the heart of 'classic' nurture group intervention is the relationship between a key adult and the student (Boxall 1976; Bennathan and Boxall 2000; Holmes 2000) that seeks to replicate the attachment dyad of Bowlby's attachment theory. The small group size of the 'classic' nurture group is said to promote the development of positive relationships. For Greenhalgh (1994), high quality relationships:

help students to take greater responsibility for their behaviour and learning, to become more autonomous. This involves supporting students to be more in touch with their own feelings; to be better able to respect the feelings of others and to be more reflective and able to think about problems and talk about them rather than act them out ... and to be better able to appreciate and seek effective support.

Greenhalgh 1994: 108

The central aim of 'classic' nurture group practice is to develop high quality relationships that enable students to value themselves through the experience of being valued and cared for by others. Nurture staff are encouraged to express warmth towards the students in the nurture group; to spend time with and to listen to the students and to provide specific targeted attention (Cefai and Cooper 2009).

It is argued that a well run nurture group will provide affirmation for students in a variety of contexts and that planned learning experiences and social

interactions will be both positive and rewarding (Cooper and Lovey 1999). Students are encouraged to express themselves within the formal curriculum and also in relation to their own personal, social and emotional functioning. It has been suggested that the dialogue and reflection that is central to nurture group intervention offers a means of sharing ideas and understandings between staff and students. Through this dialogue it is suggested that group cohesion is promoted, a sense of belonging is encouraged and personal validation is nurtured (Cooper and Lovey 1999).

The classroom environment of the 'classic' nurture group is a key characteristic and a distinct feature of the intervention (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007). Typically, the room is comfortably furnished with a sofa and a carpet, soft toys, a dressing up box, a full length mirror, a play house and desks for more formal work (Holmes 2000). Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) suggest that the 'homely' and cosy atmosphere generated by the nurture group environment plays an important role in helping students to feel sufficiently emotionally secure to engage with the social and educational activities.

A kitchen and dining area allows for the preparation and sharing of snacks and meals which is the single most popular aspect of nurture group routine identified by the students (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007). In Boxall's view:

food is fundamental to the mother-child relationship and has special symbolic value. With few exceptions the children appear to experience the family-food occasions as the expression of the adults' attachment to them in a loving and caring relationship.

Bennathan and Boxall 2002:28

Where a student has negative associations with school furniture, perhaps following their experiences in mainstream classroom environments, the breakfast table can also serve as a formal workspace drawing upon more informal and positive associations such as sharing, chatting and laughing.

Within the 'classic' nurture group it is argued that staff facilitate student engagement with the curriculum through careful attention to students' needs for positive recognition and the experience of genuine social and academic success (Cooper and Lovey 1999). The mainstream curriculum is delivered within the small group environment of the nurture group with an emphasis on differentiation that allows access to learning at the appropriate developmental level. The nurture team has the flexibility to structure and pace the lesson in accordance with the needs of the small group and in relation to each student's 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978). 'Thinking time' can be built into the lesson allowing the students to process the demands of the task and connect new knowledge with their existing understanding (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007). While this may also be the goal of mainstream teaching, the nurture team have a group size that can ensure that this crucial learning experience is on offer to students who might ordinarily miss this opportunity - or be missed themselves - in a large mainstream class.

Typically, students are assessed for nurture group intervention through the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998). The Boxall Profile is a diagnostic developmental assessment instrument that has close links with nurture group practice, the details of which will be described in section 1.5.. Suffice to say that the results of the Boxall Profile assessments combine with direct classroom observations, teacher feedback and parent/carer liaison to indicate whether or not a student might benefit from nurture group support.

Nurture groups are not designed solely for students who exhibit disruptive or challenging behaviour and a balance of student needs within the group is an important feature of the successful nurture group (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007). When there is an over abundance of students with acting-out behaviours, nurture staff become so preoccupied with managing the behaviour that they are prevented from creating the safe, supportive environment that defines the nurture provision (Cooper and Tiknaz 2005). Following assessments, staff

must consider not only how nurture group intervention might impact on a student, but how the student might impact on the group. By striking the right composition and balance within a well-managed nurture group, introverted students might be offered positive role models with lively, extrovert peers, engaging enthusiastically with tasks and activities. Equally, those with challenging behaviour might learn quickly and effectively from peers who manage their emotions relatively well and express their needs relatively calmly.

Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) note that “parental involvement is extremely important to the success of the nurture group provision” (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007: 138) and the nurture group environment is ideal for less formal discussions with parents/carers regarding student progress. The nurture team’s approach is one of “we’re in this together” (Boxall 2002:165) and this attitude transmits to the family as a commitment despite the challenges posed. In this way the students themselves receive a powerful message that “home and school visibly become one” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000:34).

Relationships with parents/carers was identified as a particular strength in the ‘classic’ nurture group by the Ofsted survey of nurture group provision across the UK (Ofsted 2011). Of the 95 parents and carers interviewed by Ofsted, the vast majority expressed their appreciation of how the nurture group intervention had helped their children. Parents/carers spoke of their children being calmer, happier and more confident, both at school and at home and of their own greater confidence in managing their children’s behaviour. One parent stated that ‘without the group our children would be expelled or lost’ (p.37), while another described the difference that attending the nurture group made to her child: ‘He is much calmer now and there are no problems getting him to school. He is keen to come now. (p.37)

Many nurture groups were found by Ofsted to operate successful ‘drop in’ sessions where parents/carers could meet informally with nurture group staff

to talk about their child, including asking for support with managing their behaviour or supporting their learning (Ofsted 2011).

When students are assessed for nurture group placements the information that parents/carers can provide is crucial and influential (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007) and, when motivated, the parents carers can participate in supporting the nurture group with their own time and resources. Feedback from parents regarding the development of nurture groups in secondary schools will therefore feature as a primary source of data in the course of this empirical study.

1.5 Assessing students through The Boxall Profile (1998).

Formal assessment for nurture group intervention is central to the work of the 'classic' nurture group. Guidance suggests that students should not be sent for nurture group support without formal assessment and referral procedures being followed, because the intervention is not ad hoc or random (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). Nurture group intervention is a structured educational package that is informed by the results of the Boxall Profile assessment instrument. For reference, an example of the original Boxall Profile instrument can be found on CD1/BoxallProfile(1998). The CD is housed on the back cover of the thesis.

It is significant that the pioneer of nurture groups in the 1970s was also the co-author of the Boxall Profile Handbook for Teachers (Bennathan and Boxall 1998), for one is inextricably linked with the other. Marjorie Boxall and her co-author Marion Bennathan claim that the Boxall Profile (1998) was developed as part of the nurture group approach because teachers began to express a need for a more robust way of assessing students for nurture group intervention, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence (Bennathan and Boxall 1998).

Indeed, teachers wanted something “that would quantify their impressions, that would alert the class teacher to features to look for and would provide a means of evaluating progress” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 36). As a result of the expressed needs of teachers, Boxall began work on a nurture group assessment instrument with a team of colleagues including teachers, support staff and head teachers. To begin with, the team set out to record behaviours that were developmentally appropriate in the pre-school years, thereby generating the descriptions of age appropriate behaviours for children aged 3 to 8 years. The descriptors were then refined through discussion among the team and arranged “in a rough and ready developmental sequence following that seen in normally developing children (Bennathan and Boxall 1998: 36).

Here, the developmental theories of Bowlby and Piaget are seen to inform the development of the Boxall Profile assessment instrument, although the structure and content of the Boxall Profile also relied on the ‘intuitive’ responses of staff involved without the need for lengthy theoretical training (Bennathan and Boxall 2000). Emerging from the descriptions and group discussions among practitioners were a series of behaviours that were collectively claimed to provide a comprehensive picture of a well functioning school age child; a child that was responsive to the teacher, aware of other students and could ‘give and take’ in the group (ibid).

The team settled on 34 individual descriptors of the well-functioning child and these formed Section I of the Profile (published as the Diagnostic Developmental Profile between 1972-1998). Section II brought together 34 descriptors of child behaviours observed by practitioners in classrooms that were developmentally inappropriate for the classroom.

Here the Profile is seeking to understand ‘problem behaviour’ as being *developmentally inappropriate* rather than being deliberately aggressive, petulant or destructive. The behaviour was understood in the context of

'missed early experiences' (Bennathan and Boxall 2000) and this understanding dovetailed with the solution to the problem, namely, to provide the student with opportunities to revisit those missed experiences in an environment that was safe and secure, with a predictable routine and reliable adults. This solution was to become known as the nurture group.

1.5.1. Completing the Boxall Profile.

The Profile assessment instrument comprises two sections, referred to as the Developmental Strands (Section I) and the Diagnostic Profile (Section II). It is recommended that both sections of the Profile be viewed together when considering the needs of the student because, as the evolution of the Boxall Profile has described, the two sections of the Profile have been developed to assess contrasting cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural needs (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009).

In Section I, the Developmental Strands set out to assess the degree to which a student is in possession of the social skills, behavioural regulators and cognitive engagement that would naturally lead to success in the classroom (based on Boxall's observations). Section I has 34 items or sentences that describe a variety of behaviours and attributes that Boxall and her team identified as being typical of well-functioning children in school within the age group 3 years 4 months to 8 years. For example, item 1 of the Developmental Strands section states:

Listens with interest when the teacher explains something to the class.

Bennathan and Boxall 1998

At this point, the assessor (who may be the teacher, SENCo or support assistant) reflects upon their own observations of the student over a period of time and rates the item with a score between 0 and 4, as described in Table

1.1. If the student usually 'listens with interest' then a score of 4 would be recorded; if the student virtually never listened with interest, the score would be 1. The assessor then proceeds to rate the remaining items in a similar way based on their own observations of the student.

Table 1.1 The Boxall Profile rating scale.

Section 1	Score each item in turn according to the key	4 –Yes usually	
Developmental Strands		3- At times	
		2 - To some extent	
		1 – Not really or virtually never	
		0 – Does not arise, not relevant	
Items		Score	Column
1. Listens with interest when the teacher explains something to the class			A
2. Takes appropriate care of something s/he has made or work s/he has done			F
3. Appreciates a joke or is amused by an incongruous statement or situation			D
4. etc			

To complete the Boxall Profile correctly, the authors state that it is vital that the assessor knows the student well. Completion of the Boxall Profile may be undertaken by an individual or it may be that the team of staff working with the student consider a group response to each item.

When all 34 items in Section I have received a rating score between 0-4, the assessor is asked to return to item 1 and note that a column letter between A

and J has been assigned to each item. Following a cluster analysis described in the Handbook, all items labelled column A are said to have a 'sub-cluster' focus on how well the student 'gives purposeful attention'; all items labelled B are said to have a sub-cluster focus on how well the student can 'participate constructively'. A summary of the column letters and their sub-cluster focus is provided in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Section I sub-cluster areas.

Section I: Developmental Strands
Column A: Gives purposeful attention
Column B: Participates constructively
Column C: Connects up experiences
Column D: Shows insightful involvement
Column E: Engages cognitively with peers
Column F: Is emotionally secure
Column G: Is biddable and accepts constraints
Column H: Accommodates to others
Column I: Responds constructively to others
Column J: Maintains internalised standards

The assessor is required to tally all the item scores relating to column A, of which there are five, and present this graphically by marking the student's score for sub-cluster A (gives purposeful attention) on the Profile's histogram column. As Table 1.3 illustrates, sub-cluster A has a maximum score of 20. If a student scores 12 out of 20, a line is drawn onto the Profile at the point 12. This process is then completed for the remaining sub-cluster columns in Section I. For a complete example of the Boxall Profile please see CD1/Boxall Profile (1998).

It should be noted that the green shaded area on the Section I histograms represents what Bennathan and Boxall describe as “the range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in five age groups from 3 years 4 months to 8 years”. To be succinct, if a student were to score within the shaded range across columns A to J then it is highly likely that the student has the skills to succeed in class and make good progress in school.

In practice this assessment result is rarely recorded because students who are succeeding in school are unlikely to require an assessment through the Profile. Where the Profile is said to come into its own is through the insight it can give into the world of the student presenting with SEBD that might otherwise be overwhelming for staff.

Testimonies from practitioners such as the then General Secretary of NASEN Sue Panter, claim that the Boxall Profile “is unique in the way it helps teachers in mainstream school to understand the emotional problems behind difficult behaviour” (Bennathan and Boxall 1998: 50). In addition, a teacher in a secure unit is quoted as saying “ This Profile gives us structure to look at young people’s behaviour, to discuss it positively and to plan together what we can do about it. We have not discussed our pupils as positively as this before” (Bennathan and Boxall 1998: 5).

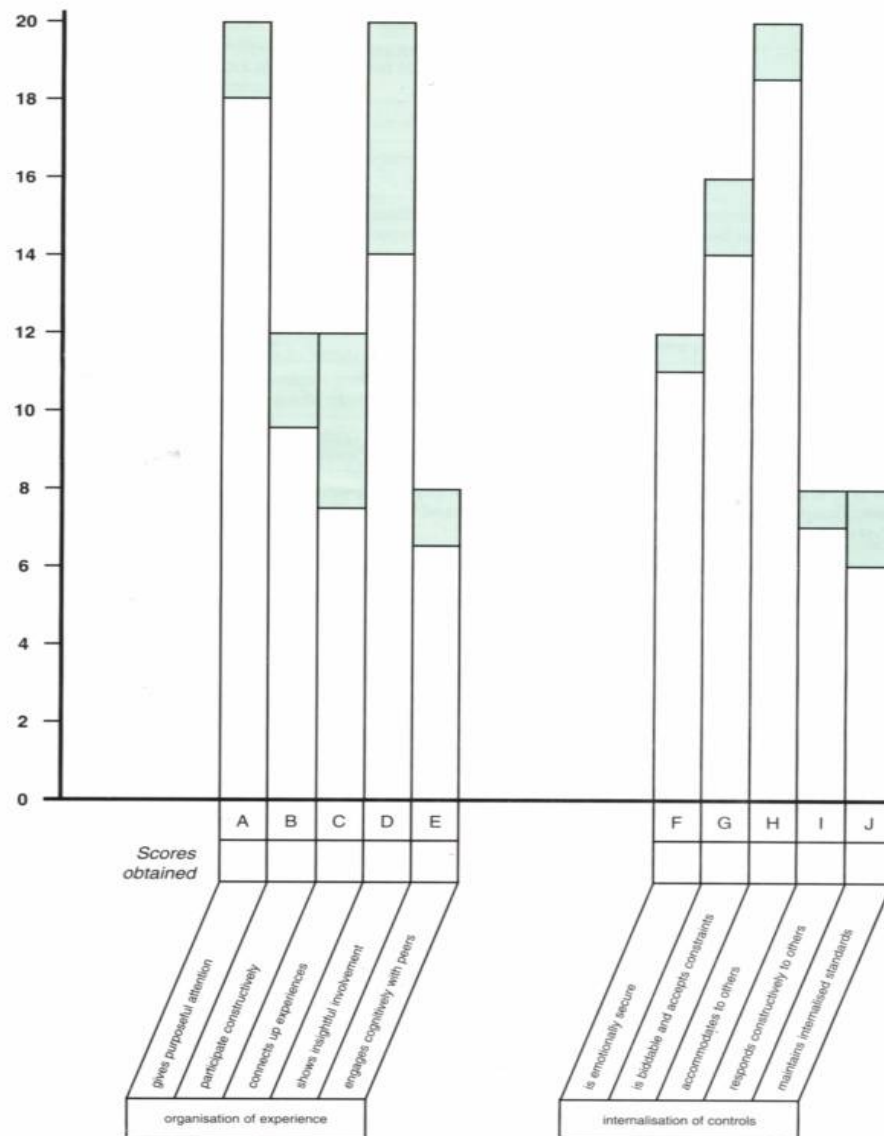
The student scores displayed on the Profile offer staff the opportunity to break down the needs of the student into manageable parts; to identify areas of developmental need; to prioritise target areas; and to monitor progress through a repeat of the assessment after a period of time (Bennathan and Boxall 1998).

Table 1.3 The Boxall Profile histograms.

Section I DEVELOPMENTAL STRANDS

The scores for the items in Section I are entered in the histogram below in the column indicated by the relevant letter (A, B etc ...J). The outline is irregular because the number of items varies from column to column.

The shaded green areas indicate the range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in five age groups from 3 years 4 months to 8 years.



It should be noted that the sub-cluster columns A to J have been drawn into two cluster areas identified by Bennathan and Boxall following data analysis and these are summarised in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Section I cluster areas.

Section I: Developmental Strands

Cluster 1 – Organisation of Experience

Column A: Gives purposeful attention

Column B: Participates constructively

Column C: Connects up experiences

Column D: Shows insightful involvement

Column E: Engages cognitively with peers

Cluster 2 – Internalisation of Controls

Column F: Is emotionally secure

Column G: Is biddable and accepts constraints

Column H: Accommodates to others

Column I: Responds constructively to others

Column J: Maintains internalised standards

Columns A-E are described as representing a student's overall 'Organisation of Experience' while columns F-J cluster around a student's 'Internalisation of Controls'. It is suggested that high scores on the Organisation of Experience cluster would describe a student who is organised and attentive and who is involved purposefully and constructively with events, people and ideas. Cooper (2007) elaborates to suggest that the organisation of experience also refers to the student's capacity for connecting new knowledge, understanding and skills linked to existing concepts.

For Boxall and Bennathan, the Internalisation of Controls cluster describes levels of personal development and a student's awareness of others. High scores on this cluster describe a student who is emotionally secure, can make

constructive, adaptive relationships and has the internalised control necessary for social functioning (Bennathan and Boxall 1998). The student's sense of self worth is assessed through several items along with the degree to which the student can accept constraints central to the lesson, activity or group work. Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) highlights how the items relating to the Internalisation of Controls also reflect the student's ability to express his or her own needs and accept the needs of others.

Having completed Section I of the Boxall Profile, the assessor is then required to complete Section II the Diagnostic Profile. Again, 34 items are listed and a score between 0 and 4 is recorded for each item by the assessor. The item scores link to ten sub-cluster areas (Q-Z) that are summarised in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Section II sub-cluster areas.

Section II: The Diagnostic Profile

Column Q: Disengaged

Column R: Self-negating

Column S: Makes undifferentiated attachments

Column T: Shows inconsequential behaviour

Column U: Craves attachment, reassurance

Column V: Avoids/rejects attachment

Column W: Has undeveloped insecure sense of self

Column X: Shows negativism towards self

Column Y: Shows negativism towards others

Column Z: Wants, grabs, disregarding others

The scores for each sub-cluster column are then calculated and recorded onto the Diagnostic Profile histogram. The ten sub-clusters in Section II relate to three key cluster areas on the Diagnostic Profile that are summarised in Table 1.6.

Where a student scores highly on Self-limiting Features, Bennathan and Boxall (1998) suggest that this will reflect a lack of motivation or a lack of the normal thrust for growth. Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) suggest that Self-limiting Features also indicate a degree of student disengagement and an inability to relate to or be sensitive to others. The student's self-image may be fragile and personal insecurity may be high, resulting in self-conscious and /or self-negating behaviours such as struggling to take on unfamiliar work or failing to complete tasks.

Table 1.6 Section II cluster areas.

Section II: The Diagnostic Profile

Cluster 1 – Self-limiting features

Column Q: Disengaged

Column R: Self-negating

Cluster 2 – Undeveloped behaviour

Column S: Makes undifferentiated attachments

Column T: Shows inconsequential behaviour

Column U: Craves attachment, reassurance

Cluster 3 – Unsupported development

Column V: Avoids/rejects attachment

Column W: Has undeveloped insecure sense of self

Column X: Shows negativism towards self

Column Y: Shows negativism towards others

Column Z: Wants, grabs, disregarding others

According to Bennathan and Boxall (1998), High scores on the Undeveloped Behaviour cluster would indicate that the student makes inappropriate attachments and has an immature level of behavioural control while for Cooper and Tiknaz (2007), inappropriate social responses or reading of social

situations are another indication of undeveloped behaviour that is assessed through the Boxall Profile.

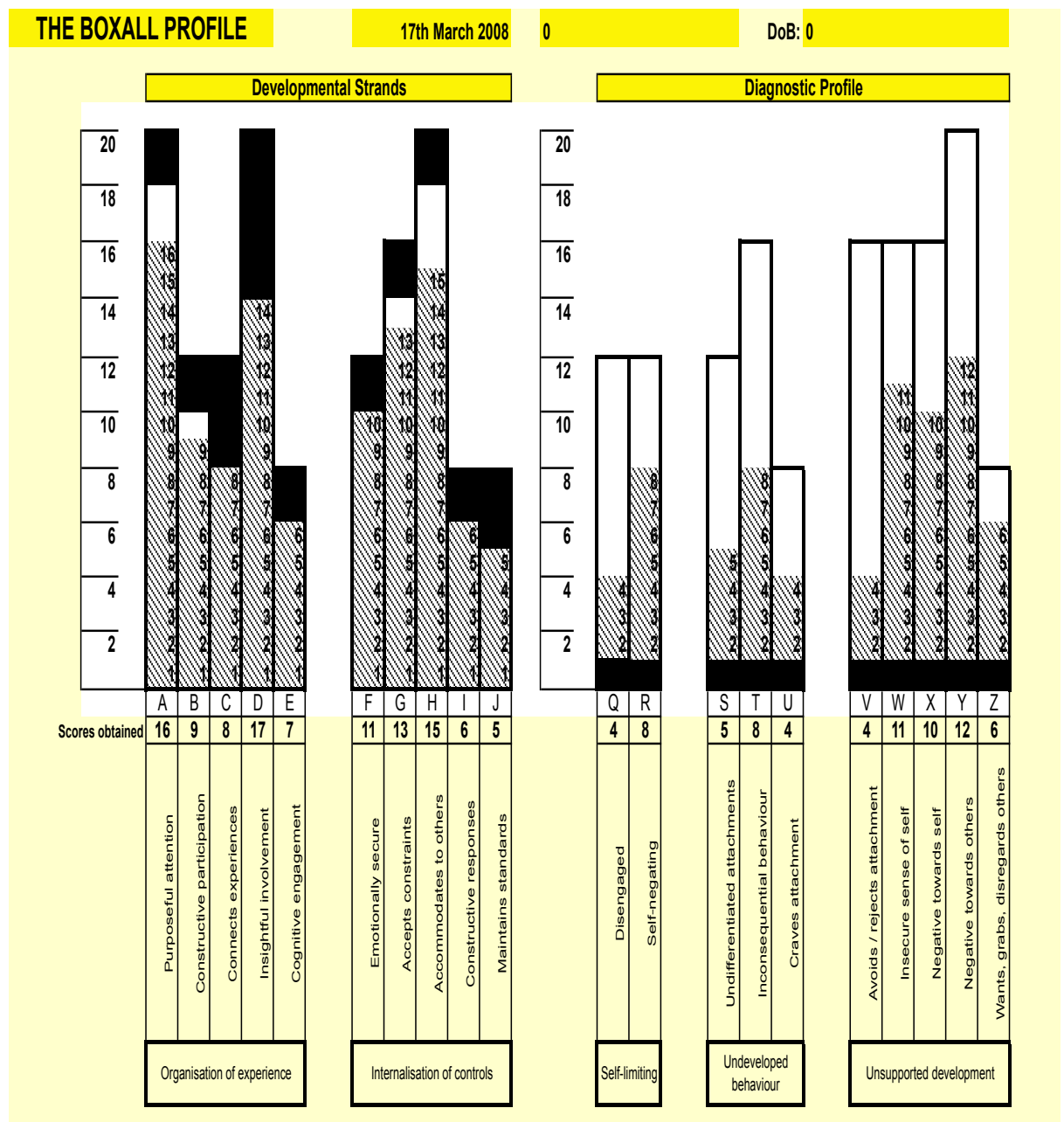
Bennathan and Boxall suggest that high scores on the final cluster in Section II, described as Unsupported Development, will indicate a profound lack of early nurturing care (Bennathan and Boxall 1998). As a consequence, students may lack trust in adults and have difficulty forming any kind of attachment. Negativity towards the self is highlighted by Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) as being an significant feature of Unsupported Development, along with negativity towards others.

It is recommended that practitioners consider both Section I and Section II of the Boxall Profile together when deciding on priorities for intervention and an example of a completed Boxall Profile is included as Fig 1.4, for information.

Generally speaking, Nurture Group Network (2001/2009) recommend that intervention should focus on sub-cluster areas from A-E and then F-J with the rationale being that developing skills in these sub-cluster areas will impact positively on the areas Q-Z. For example, any improvements over time in sub-cluster H 'accommodates to others' is, by definition, likely to result in a reduction in subcluster Y 'shows negativism towards others'.

Having identified a sub-cluster to focus upon as a priority, practitioners are encouraged to review the specific scores on the individual items that make up the sub-cluster score. Therefore, if the priority was sub-cluster H, a review of items 5, 7, 8, 11 and 33 would be required. The publication *Beyond the Boxall Profile* (Evans 2006) provides strategies and resources that might support intervention around specific sub-clusters and items. This can be augmented by additional ideas developed by staff in relation to individual students or the needs of the group.

Fig 1.4 Example of a completed Boxall Profile.



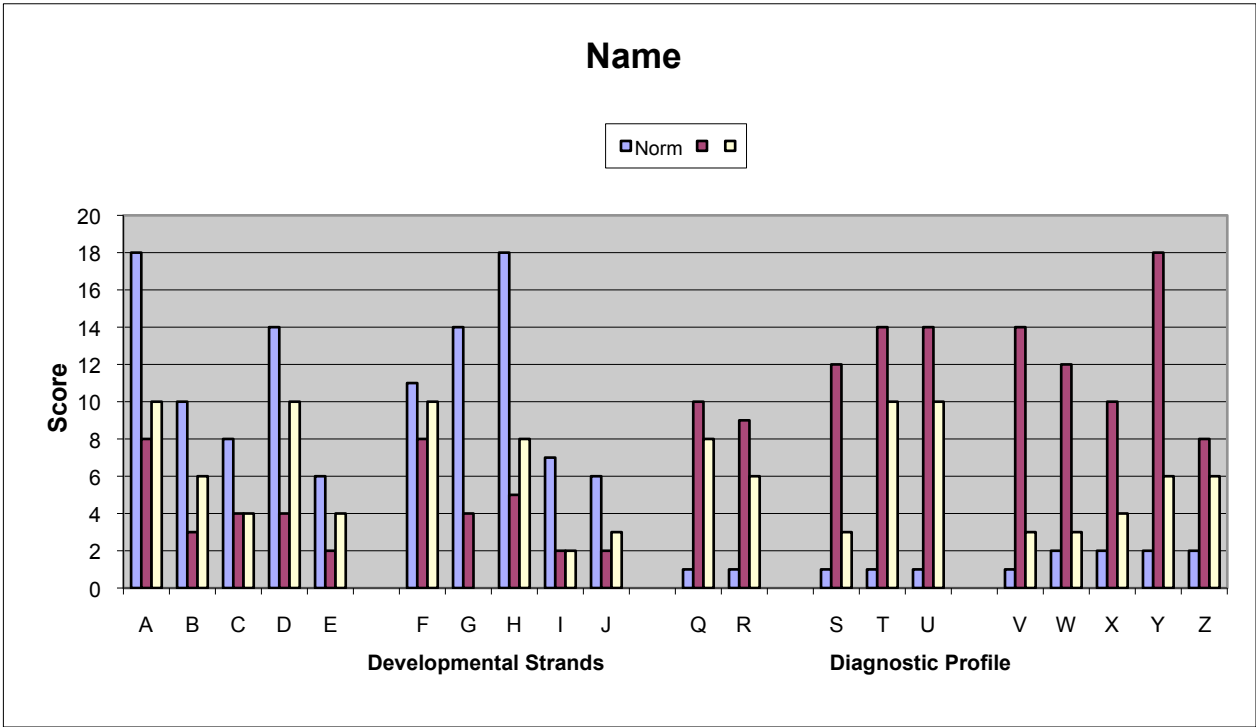
The black areas indicate the range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children in the primary school age range.

The rating scale that is employed by the Boxall Profile translates the summary judgments of practitioners into a numerical value. In this way, a strong agreement with an item (e.g. 'yes, usually' or 'like this to a marked extent') is allocated a value of 4 out of 4. The translation of practitioner impressions into

numerical values is central to the majority of behaviour rating scales, including the Boxall Profile, and the arguments for and against this method of assessment will be considered in detail in Chapter 2. At this stage it is suffice to say that the numerical values generated by the perceptions of staff allow the Boxall Profile histograms to be drawn which then forms the basis on which student progress is monitored over time.

Typically, a Boxall Profile is completed as part of the initial assessment process and the first profile serves as one base line measure (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). A further Boxall Profile will be completed after a term and again after a further term. Software exists that allows the results of successive profiles to be compared and an example is displayed in Table 1.7.

Table 1.7 Comparing Profiles.



In Table 1.7, the blue columns represent the norms for the competently functioning group, the maroon column represents the baseline Profile score and the cream column represents the second Profile score after a period of

intervention over one term. In general, positive student progress is recorded across the sub clusters A-J with the cream columns increasing when compared with the maroon base line scores. There are also perceived reductions in the negative behaviours described through Q-Z on the profile, with the cream columns reducing when compared with the baseline scores.

1.5.2 What does the Boxall Profile claim to offer?

The Boxall Profile claims to be a diagnostic instrument that offers “a precise way of assessing need, planning intervention and measuring progress” (Bennathan and Boxall 1998:4). Unlike a screening tool such as the Goodman’s Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997, 1999), which seeks to predict the presence of psychiatric disorders, the Boxall Profile claims to provide the basis for a diagnosis of an individual’s functioning with a view to planning an individual intervention programme (Bennathan and Boxall 1998).

While the histograms on the profile provide norms that relate the scores to a larger population, it is the planning of intervention based on the diagnostic assessment that sets the Boxall Profile apart from the SDQ and other screening instruments.

By way of illustration, the Boxall Profile Handbook (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) includes four case studies where an initial Profile assessment informs the intervention that is planned and delivered for specific students. In case study 2 (Bennathan and Boxall 1998: 26), Robert is assessed through the Profile and scores poorly across the organisation of experience and internalisation of controls, with a particular weaknesses in sub-cluster I ‘responds constructively to others’. As a result of this assessment, the staff then plan an intervention that has a focus on promoting positive interactions within the group while Robert learns to accept group routines. As Robert settled in to the group and began to trust those around him, the nurture team

focused more precisely on areas highlighted by the profile assessment, namely Robert's concentration levels and his ability to co-operate with other students. By breaking Robert's presenting behaviour down into the clusters and sub-clusters offered by the Profile, staff had a point at which to start. They identified a particular area for intervention, planned and delivered activities to meet a defined need and monitored progress through a second assessment five months later.

The results of the follow up Profile indicated that Robert had shown significant improvements in 'giving purposeful attention' in class (sub-cluster A) and 'accommodating to others' (sub-cluster H) but still presented with high scores in the three cluster areas of the Diagnostic Profile (sub-clusters X, Y and Z). Consequently, the planned intervention was adapted to focus on anger management and alternatives to hurting other students.

The authors of the case study emphasise that the Boxall Profile did not provide the sole means of assessing Robert's progress. Classroom observations, logs and academic progress all served to inform planning and intervention. In an interesting observation however, the Profile was reported as giving "greater precision to the multi agency discussions on what could be done to support him while he remained in his home, or indeed whether or not he should remain there" (Bennathan and Boxall 1998: 27). Here, the espoused 'insight' provided by Boxall Profile assessment is taken out of the classroom to inform broader discussions about the child's welfare and future.

In summary, it has been claimed that the Boxall Profile is central to the development of nurture group intervention in primary schools, offering "a more precise way of assessing need, planning intervention and measuring progress" (Bennathan and Boxall 1998:4). The assessment instrument is always considered alongside other classroom observations and feedback from staff and carers, but the unique way in which the Profile was developed "makes everybody think about what lies behind the behaviour and what we

might do next with a child in serious difficulties” (p.5). Given the centrality of the Profile to nurture group development, an age-appropriate version of the instrument would clearly be required if nurture groups were to be developed successfully in secondary school settings.

1.6 Theoretical Framework for the study.

The research paradigm for this study requires a set of beliefs that are in sympathy with the assumptions underpinning nurture group practice, for it is this educational intervention that sits at the heart of the research project.

As has been described, the pioneer of both nurture groups and the Boxall Profile assessment instrument that informed nurture group intervention was Marjorie Boxall. As a practising educational psychologist in a deprived area of London in the 1960s and 70s, Boxall applied herself to “ameliorating a desperate situation in schools” (Boxall 2002: viii) in a way that was intuitive, flexible and grounded in action. Improving outcomes for students, their parents and their schools was the primary motivation for Boxall and any evaluation of the worth of nurture groups was to be considered in terms of the practical consequences and benefits of the intervention.

While Boxall herself was essentially a-theoretical in her approach to effective intervention, it will be argued that a post-hoc rationalisation of her work finds a natural home within the theoretical framework provided by American pragmatism.

At the turn of the 20th century, when the ‘foundationalist’ philosophy of the rationalists and empiricists held sway, an alternative understanding of truth and knowledge was provided by the classic pragmatists C.S. Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952).

Foundationalism had united the rationalist and empiricist approaches to philosophy through the core belief that indubitable knowledge existed. For the rationalists, typified by Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the infallible and non-inferential knowledge that he 'existed' and that he had 'ideas' provided the foundation upon which all other justified belief was then grounded. In contrast, the empiricists such as David Hume (1711-1776) saw experience, sensation and careful observation as providing the secure foundations on which all true epistemological propositions might be built. Despite the contrasting approaches to uncovering knowledge and truth, both the rationalist and empiricist philosophies had an implicit commitment to a strong and realistic correspondence-conception of truth. Foundationalism held assumptions that non-inferential knowledge existed independently and that these justifiable beliefs represented the truth.

As a scientist who originally came to philosophy as a hobby, the original pragmatist, Charles Peirce, insisted that true meanings could only relate to something that actually happens, or could happen, and that inquiry represented the foremost method of testing hypotheses about reality. Peirce went beyond the deduction/induction approaches of foundational science and proposed an active process of theory generation with no prior assurances of the 'truth', followed by the application of theory with a view to developing practical consequences. For Peirce, an evaluation of the function and effect of the theory would lead to prediction and control.

This radical, pragmatic approach to understanding meaning and truth was developed by another early pioneer of the pragmatism, William James, who was a professor of psychology and philosophy at Harvard University. James challenged the Cartesian focus on the *origin* of experience by directing attention towards the meanings and connections *between* experiences. For James, all knowledge was 'pragmatic' in that something was 'true' insofar as it had a successful application in the world and so long as "to believe it is

profitable to our lives” (James cited in Russell 1946:844). In other words, for pragmatists, an idea is made true by events.

At the heart of the pragmatic paradigm is the ‘pragmatic maxim’ that all meaning is afforded to an object, phrase or situation, based on the effect that it has. For something to have meaning, its use must designate a change in something, which then defines its meaning (Peirce in Magee 1987). As such, an idea is true if it works well in practice and the true meaning of an idea is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting the idea. For the pragmatists, the truth of an idea should to be tested to prove its validity and all impractical ideas should be rejected. The ‘cash value’ or usefulness of an idea helps to support the ‘warranted assertion’ that it is true – but from the pragmatic point of view this remains fallible and open to revision in the future.

Knowledge is described by pragmatic theory as being a dynamic social activity where meanings that are determined by function and effect, adapt and grow based on the testing of hypotheses or theories with action (Dewey in Magee 1987). Theories then become instruments through which effects may be tested and the concept of ‘truth’ is inherent in ideas that work, ideas that are useful or ideas that have a successful application in the real world.

This study into the development of nurture groups in secondary schools finds the theoretical framework provided by pragmatic theory to be a natural companion because nurture group intervention is driven by its successful application in the real world. This resonates with pragmatic theory that seeks to ask:

- Does the action address the problem?
- What are the practical consequences of the action?
- What is the ‘cash value’ of the action?

These key questions posed by pragmatic theory in order to establish truth and meaning can be interpreted quickly and easily by the key questions of nurture group intervention, namely:

- Does the nurture group address the problems faced by students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in school?
- What are the practical consequences of the intervention?
- What is the 'cash value' of the nurture group?

Pragmatic theory and the dynamic, interpretive, reflective, action-based intervention of nurture groups would therefore appear to be natural allies.

Within the pragmatic paradigm, 'truth' is described as being fallible and there is a preference to refer to 'warranted assertibility' over stubborn facts or utter certainty.

Peirce challenged the foundationalist position succinctly by arguing:

Science is not standing on the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog and can only say 'this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay till it begins to give way.'

Peirce 1905: 589 cited in Hartshorne 1958

For Peirce, positive science could only rest on experience and experience could never result in absolute certainty, exactitude, necessity or universality.

William James developed Peirce's ideas further suggesting that humans 'carve out' reality to serve human purposes, "just as we carve out the constellations in the night sky" (James 1907, lecture VII, para 22). Humans are not the passive spectators described by foundationalist epistemologies but active agents in the formulation of knowledge. Pragmatism repudiates the idea that the passive human mind merely copies or duplicates a ready-made world in

the way that a mirror generates a reflection. For pragmatists, the mind is not passive but sifts and sorts facts in relation to the truths we predicate. The facts are beliefs that cohere with the beliefs that we hold.

For John Dewey, the “spectator theory of knowledge” represented the cul-de-sac into which the search for ‘certainty’ inevitably led (Dewey 1929). In a world where human experiences cannot be halted for the benefit of objective analysis, reality is said to be ‘still in the making’ rather than complete for eternity and it is the dynamic, problem-solving process of inquiry that defines the pragmatic paradigm’s theory of knowledge.

For Dewey, claims of certainty and truth were likely to stifle human progress, for:

the history of science shows that when hypotheses have been taken to be finally true and hence unquestionable, they have obstructed inquiry and kept science committed to doctrines that later turn out to be invalid (Dewey 1938: 145)

Dewey built on the ideas of Peirce and James still further and described knowledge as being the settled state where beliefs (or habits of action) have proven successful up to that point in the real world. Inevitably, life will provide experiences that challenge that settled state (or homeostasis) and the concept of what is known must be re-evaluated, in Dewey’s view, through reasoning. Dewey suggested that there were five phases to this reasoning process which involved acknowledging the challenge to the established belief, formulating a problem solving exercise, generating a new hypotheses, ordering the hypotheses and then testing the hypotheses in the real world through what pragmatists describe as ‘inquiry’. The end result is a new hypothesis that works in the real world and this, Dewey suggested, provided the only ‘warrants’ for anything resembling a correspondence with reality or a “truth” (Magee 1987).

In this study, which seeks to explore the development of nurture groups in secondary schools, the five phases of reasoning as set out by Dewey will be employed to guide the investigative process in Chapters 3 and 4.

Dewey had a keen interest in the success of science and technology in shaping human existence (Magee 1987) and sought to broaden the approach to other areas of human existence, replicating this success where possible. He recognised that our need for knowledge was closely linked with our drive to survive. For Dewey, knowledge led to understanding, which in turn led to mastery. Through mastery, humans had improved the circumstances in which they lived over time (e.g. farming food effectively, harnessing technology or developing housing and construction), but Dewey emphasised that the truth involved in this process was dependent on function and effect with the implication that, were the effect to change then 'truth' would also change.

In this sense, the 'truth' of nurture group theory and practice must also be prepared to adapt and change if the function and effect of current training and structure proves to be less than effective in the new environment of the secondary school. Research, to be discussed, indicates that the effect of nurture groups in primary schools has been significant in terms of individual outcomes (e.g. attendance, emotional functioning, cognitive functioning). But the challenges of the secondary school environment to be explored by this study may require the 'truth' of nurture group theory, practice and training to change.

Dewey took a great interest in the institution of education and developed theories that supported the natural enthusiasm of students to learn through action at a time when pedagogy imposed education 'on the child'. With a focus on growth, direction and support for students in schools, Dewey encouraged educationalists to reorganise schools to meet real needs and face the problems that were current in society (Magee 1987). Dewey was dismissive of the free-school movement that allowed students complete

autonomy in learning and encouraged learning through action, engagement and instruction that had a lasting effect on the modern schooling system.

But the theories that Dewey developed were designed to be instruments for action and change in the real world and the pragmatic position would argue that the validity and value of a theory, assessment instrument or educational intervention is determined by its success in enabling us to act, problem solve and predict outcomes. And for pragmatists, the best way of understanding human behaviour was to observe them in a practical interactive relation with their environment.

Clearly, pragmatic philosophy provides an important framework for the perceptions, assumptions, understandings and beliefs on which this research project is based, for at the heart of nurture group practice are practical solutions that yield advantageous results for students, schools and their families. James described truth as an idea that, when believed, is “profitable to our lives” (1904:42) and this is the very maxim with which secondary school nurture groups and the development of a revised Boxall Profile are concerned.

Pragmatists accept that all statements of truth (or justifiable belief) are fallible and are likely to be revised in the future based on the strongest warrants available. Nurture group practice also accepts the fallibility of current theory and practice but it is argued that the intervention currently in place is based on the strongest warrants available and is supported by evidence from case studies, feedback from schools and, increasingly, by empirical research evidence. With the development of nurture groups into new areas such as secondary schools and alternative settings (care homes, secure units etc.), it is necessary to re-evaluate nurture group theory and practice through inquiry. As stated, this research project represents such an inquiry and the recommended actions will feature strongly in the concluding chapter.

The fallibility of the Boxall Profile is also accepted, given that the assessment provides a measure of an adult's perception and an impression of a student's presenting behaviour, based on a combination of subjective observations, records, logs, diaries, knowledge, memories and intuitive responses. The Boxall Profile offers a "guide" to intervention and not a precise, definitive or certain profile of the student. It is fallible, but testimonies and sales suggest that it is of practical use, offering "insights and points of entry into the child's world" (Bennathan and Boxall 1998:4). And when used in conjunction with other assessment information, the Boxall Profile is designed to 'yield advantageous results' by informing planning and deepening the understanding of students' needs.

In keeping with pragmatic philosophy, new experiences and new developments in secondary school nurture provision requires a revision of the original Boxall Profile to respond to the needs of older students. Through this study the research project sets out to address this matter through the process of inquiry.

1.7 Rationale and motivation for the study.

Nurture groups were developed by Marjorie Boxall and her colleagues as a service to schools; the principles of the intervention were not derived from existing theories but were simply designed to help large numbers of early years students who were facing a "disastrous future" (Boxall 2002:ix). While the popularity of nurture groups faded in the 1980s, the intervention has enjoyed something of a renaissance following the publication of key texts, articles and research papers during the 1990s (e.g. Cooper and Lovey 1999, Iszatt and Wasilewska 1997, Bennathan and Boxall 1998, Lucas 1999). Significantly, the renewed interest in nurture groups has included practitioners from secondary schools as well as the more traditional infant and junior school settings.

The demand for training in nurture group practice from secondary schools was initially discouraged by the training provider, Nurture Group Network, because the focus of the four-day Certificate in the Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups continued to be the primary phase. But secondary school staff insisted on attending the courses and the number of nurture group facilities now established in secondary schools has blossomed. Indeed, as Table 1.8 demonstrates, secondary school membership of the Nurture Group Network (NGN) has increased significantly since 2004.

Table 1.8 Secondary school membership of the Nurture Group Network.

Year	Secondary School Membership of Nurture Group Network
2004	2
2005	4
2006	7
2007	27
2008	46
2009	54
2010	68

Source: Nurture Group Network (2010)

These figures represent a growth in secondary school nurture group numbers of almost 48% over the period 2008-2011. But while interest in nurture groups is clearly growing, current research on nurture group provision in

secondary schools is limited to only two published articles (Cooke et al 2008; Colley 2009) and the motivation for this study has been to contribute to the critical evaluation of nurture group provision in secondary schools through evidence-based research. The specific research questions for the study were derived from a review of the current literature relating to nurture group practice, to which we now turn.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The aim of this Literature Review is to select and critically evaluate the literature that is currently available regarding the development of nurture groups, in order that clear, crisp research questions can be generated. By conducting empirical research in response to the Literature Review, it is hoped that this study will contribute to new understandings in the development of nurture groups in secondary schools.

In the course of the Literature Review, the views of nurture group advocates will be considered and contrasted with six key criticisms of nurture group intervention. Alternative, school-based approaches will be evaluated against the nurture group model to allow nurture groups to be understood in the context of a range of other support systems that might be available within the secondary school.

Published empirical research relating to nurture group practice will be reviewed and a distinction will be drawn between the theoretical literature of the advocates of nurture groups (e.g. Boxall 1976, Bennathan and Boxall 2000, Lucas et al 2006, Sonnet 2008, Bishop 2008) and the empirical data that is also available (e.g. Ofsted 2011, Seth-Smith et al 2010, Scott and Lee 2009, Cooper and Whitebread 2007).

Finally, the Literature Review will consider the Boxall Profile assessment instrument in the context of alternative assessment tools. A wide range of behaviour rating scales are available to professionals working in the field of SEBD and their reliability and validity will be evaluated against the claims made for the Boxall Profile.

Following the review of literature, two clear research questions will be formulated for the study.

2.1 Nurture Groups: The Advocates' Perspective.

The views of nurture group advocates such as Boxall (1976; 2002), Bennathan and Boxall (1998; 2000) and Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) have been well documented in Chapter 1 through the elucidation of the 'classic' nurture group model (see 1.4). But the coordinating nurture group charity, Nurture Group Network (NGN), have progressed the model of best practice in nurture groups over recent years through the development of two important initiatives. The first is the Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups 4-Day Certificate (NGN 2001) and the second is the Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award (NGN 2006). Both initiatives are said to help define 'best practice' in nurture group facilities, as perceived by the advocates of nurture groups.

2.1.1 The Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups Certificate (2001-09).

The Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups Certificate (TPCert) takes delegates through four days of training based on the practice of the 'classic' primary school nurture group developed by Marjorie Boxall (Bennathan and Boxall 2000). To date, over 1000 delegates have attended and completed the four-day training programme since 2001 (Nurture Group Network 2010). The objective of the course is to enable staff in schools to return to their settings and develop well-led and well-run nurture groups for the benefit of students, parents and the school community as a whole.

A review of the TPCert will serve a dual purpose:

- to illustrate how the advocates of nurture groups currently perceive the training needs of staff
- to inform future discussion of how the training might be adapted for staff working the secondary school setting

The four-day TPCert was first developed in 2001 and updated in 2009 (Nurture Group Network 2010). The course is arranged in two parts and both parts consist of two consecutive days. There is a gap of several weeks between parts one and two in order that delegates might begin to put into practice some of the information covered in the first two days of the course. Course leaders at Nurture Group Network suggest that this time gap should also be used to begin to collect information for a student case study and to reflect on professional development issues raised by Days 1 and 2. The time between training sessions is therefore regarded as an important element of the training process (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009).

At the end of the fourth day of training, delegates are required to develop aspects of the course content into a case study and assignment which is essential for the successful completion of the course and certification. The submission of a 4,000 word assignment within three months of completing the training is necessary to illustrate how the training has helped develop an understanding of student development, nurture group practice and effective assessment and intervention. The TPCert will not be awarded without the assignment submission and successful completion of the training can contribute 30 credits towards a foundation degree for non-graduates. For graduates, the assignment can be augmented to 8,000 words, gaining 60 credits towards a Post Graduate diploma or Masters qualification.

The broad headings and content of the four day TPCert are described in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

The course claims to offer guidance to delegates on student assessment and referral to nurture, parental involvement and home-school communication. These areas, highlighted by the review of the course contents, will be explored further through the empirical investigation into the perceptions of stakeholders (professionals, students and parents).

Table 2.1 Four-Day Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups Part 1.

<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture Groups: <i>Origins, Growth, Rationale, 6 Principles of nurture and Background</i> • Risk and Protective Factors • Attachment Theory • Observation and measurement techniques • Interpreting the Boxall Profile 	<p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What a Nurture Group looks like • The Key Characteristics of a Nurturing School • Developing a Nurture Group Curriculum • The involvement of parents and home-school communication • Writing a student study assignment
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Table 2.2 Four-Day Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups Part 2.

<p>Day 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment Theory and Neuroscience • The Boxall Profile in depth • Discussion group (Your student study) • Practical strategies 	<p>Day 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resettlement • Research: The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups • Language and communication • Managing Emotions
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At this stage of the thesis, an in-depth evaluation of the six principles of nurture group practice, referenced in Day 1, is required. The six principles of nurture group practice help to define the pedagogical assumptions involved in nurture group intervention and articulate 'best practice' in nurture group provision from the advocates' perspective.

2.1.2 The six principles of the 'classic' nurture group.

The 'classic' Boxall nurture group is said to adhere to six fundamental principles that underpin the context, organisation and curriculum accessed by students (Lucas, Insley and Buckland 2006).

Principle 1. Learning is understood developmentally.

As discussed above, nurture group theory and practice claims to have been informed by the developmental psychology of Piaget, Vygotsky and Maslow. Nurture groups understand that certain students may have skill sets and emotional needs that are not necessarily commensurate with their chronological ages. Nurture staff are therefore trained to respond to students not in terms of national curriculum expectations, but in terms of the student's developmental progress. The response to the individual student is 'as they are', underpinned by a non-judgemental and accepting attitude (Bennathan Boxall and Colley 2010).

Cefai and Cooper (2009) point out that:

Students who benefit most from being in nurture groups are those who seem to have particular difficulty in engaging with classroom learning and getting along with other students in their age group, and who becomes anxious or angry when in learning situations. The nurture group provides a comfortable and caring environment in which opportunities are given to students that allow them to engage in activities according to their particular (developmental) level of need.

Cefai and Cooper 2009: 136

Principle 2. The classroom offers a safe base.

A central aim of 'classic' nurture groups is to provide students with a secure and safe environment that provides the conditions necessary for them to develop emotionally, socially and cognitively (Boxall 2002). This principle is clearly informed by Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980), where the safe and secure base is described as being the cornerstone of secure attachment and of positive mental health (see 1.3.1).

A sense of safety and security within the nurture group is developed for students through a variety of means:

- Relationships between students and staff are forged through a balance of educational and domestic experiences
- Double staffing is a key non-negotiable in the 'classic' nurture group and staff model good relationships for students. At all times staff seek to reassure students in a variety of ways that the nurture environment is both physically safe and free of psychological fear and anxiety.
- The working day is deliberately predictable with slow-moving, established routines and an emphasis on order and repetition.
- Boundaries for behaviour are set clearly and maintained firmly with warmth, care and empathy.
- Great attention is paid to detail and the adults are expected to be reliable and consistent in their approach to the students
- A trusting relationship is established which offers reassurance, constancy, interest and commitment that in turn models constructive relationships and appropriate interactions (Lucas et al 2006).

Principle 3. The importance of nurture and self-esteem.

Research has found that a common feature of students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is low self-esteem (Reynolds et al

1980; Lund 1987; McKeon 1994; Margerison 1996) and the link between self-esteem and success in school has also been the focus of much research (Coopersmith 1967; Lawrence 1988; McCall, Evahn and Kratzer 1992).

Environments that are supportive of student autonomy have been found to be associated with higher self-esteem (Deci and Ryan 1995; Hoge, Smith and Hanson 1990) and nurture groups seek to promote student autonomy through the implementation of student choice in activities and opportunities for co-operative learning (Nurture group Network 2001/2009).

Witter (1988) found that students with low self-esteem valued a structured, well-controlled environment and the need for planned success, warmth and personal contact has also been highlighted in research (Quayle and Holsworth 1997; Greenhalgh 1994). The nurture group's emphasis on routine, pace, relationships, student engagement and positive self-regard is perceived to be at the heart of high self-esteem (Lucas et al, 2006) and it is suggested that nurture practitioners acknowledge that the most powerful reward for any student is a sense of genuine achievement (ibid).

4. Language as a vital means of communication.

The theory and practice of nurture groups pays particular attention to the crucial role played by language development in promoting quality relationships and the expression of feelings, be they positive or negative (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). Research by Colwell and O'Connor (2003) confirmed that the verbal and nonverbal communications made within the nurture group were more positive than in the mainstream and more likely to enhance the self-esteem of students. This research was later confirmed by the work of Bani (2011).

For Bennathan, Boxall and Colley (2010), language is more than a skill to be learnt, it is the way of putting feelings into words. They suggest that nurture group students often 'act out' their feelings, lacking as they do the vocabulary to 'name' how they feel. In nurture groups the informal

opportunities for talking and sharing that include welcoming the students into the group or having breakfast together are as important as the more formal lessons that explicitly teach language skills.

In the 'classic' nurture group, words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations and imaginative play, to better understand the feelings of others.

Language is assessed and developed in all aspects of the nurture group curriculum at the appropriate developmental level of the student. Nurture staff share feelings and put feelings into words both with the students and with the other adults in the classroom. Students are encouraged to explore language through a reflection on past and future experiences and the nurture breakfast provides a relaxed social context in which to develop self-expression through natural conversation and interaction (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007).

5. It is understood that all behaviour is communication.

Nurture group theory and practice suggests that when a student is presenting with negative or problem behaviour, it is vital that staff separate the behaviour from the student and seek to understand the underlying messages contained within the behaviour (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009).

Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties may be understood from a variety of psychological perspectives but for nurture group staff the principle remains that all behaviour is to be understood as a form of student communication. Staff will therefore endeavor to remain vigilant as to the causes and drivers of problem behaviour, asking 'given what I know about this student and their development, what is this student trying to tell me?' (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010).

It is argued that understanding the messages that a student is trying to communicate through their behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way without being provoked or discouraged. If the student can sense that their feelings are understood, it is suggested that this can help to diffuse difficult situations, as the adult makes the link between the external /internal worlds of the student. A variety of strategies may then be employed by nurture staff to de-escalate challenging situations and behaviour will be "understood rather than judged" (Lucas et al 2006).

6. The importance of transition.

Colley (2009) reports that nurture groups have been found to be particularly successful in supporting the transition of students from primary school into secondary school. But nurture groups also recognise that the less obvious transitions occurring regularly throughout the school day can cause certain students anxiety and precipitate behavioural problems. Nurture staff are therefore trained to pay particular attention to the subtle transitional periods in the school day that might involve the student changing from one activity to another in the nurture group; going out to play or break; lunchtimes or the return from lunch; and preparing for entry or egress from school.

In preparation for any transition, be it major or minor, the nurture team anticipates the problems posed by the change in routine and prepare the students accordingly and school transitions between lessons and sessions are given time and prepared for (Lucas et al 2006).

2.1.3 The Quality Mark Award.

Nurture Group Network's Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award (QMA) offers a further example of how advocates of nurture groups define best practice (Nurture Group Network 2006). The QMA is fundamental to Nurture Group

Network's attempts to uphold the 'classic' nurture group model developed by Marjorie Boxall and described in Chapter 1.

The QMA was developed in response to the preliminary findings of the Nurture Group Project Report (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd 2001) that had discovered that a number of variants on the 'classic' nurture group model were developing in England and Wales that challenged the integrity of the model pioneered by Marjorie Boxall.

'New variant' nurture groups were found to retain the principles underpinning the 'classic' model with double staffing and small group sizes but differed in their structure and/or organisational features. This included nurture groups serving a cluster of schools rather than one specific school.

The next variant was found to be a nurture group that was 'informed by nurture group principles' but departed radically from the classic and new variant groups. In these cases the nurture group took place after school hours and was run by individual staff members.

The final variant was described as 'aberrant' because the nurture group in this category did not appear to adhere to nurture group principles as set out in the 'classic' model and had a focus on control and containment above educational and developmental growth. 'Aberrant' nurture groups were found to ignore, contravene, undermine and distort the defining principles of nurture group intervention.

By defining the 'gold standard' in nurture group practice through the Quality Mark Award, the advocates of nurture group practice have sought to rescue the concept of nurture groups from what Bennathan has described as "disrepute" (Boxall and Bennathan 2000: 128).

A review of the QMA process will serve a dual purpose:

- to illustrate how the advocates of nurture groups assess best practice.
- to inform future discussion of how the QMA might be adapted for the secondary school setting .

To apply for the QMA, a school must first be a member of the Nurture Group Network. Each application currently costs £350 per school and the award is achieved by submitting a comprehensive file of practice, followed by an external assessment of the nurture group facility itself. For full details of the current application form see CD1/QMA.

The file that is submitted to NGN is required to show evidence of how the nurture group has responded to a set of quality standards derived from Nurture Group Project Report (1999) and arranged in three parts. Part I of the file provides basic information about the school and the nurture group, while Part II outlines six key areas on which evidence of practice must be collected and presented. The six key areas are:

1. Whole school management and staffing
2. Attendance
3. Assessment, resettlement and evaluation
4. Classroom environment
5. Curriculum and activities
6. A nurturing approach

In Area 1 (Whole school management and staffing), external assessors will be seeking to establish that the nurture group is located clearly within the whole school policies and that the involvement of mainstream staff in the nurture group is promoted and encouraged in both policy and practice. Appropriate staff training in the four-day Theory and Practice Certificate is confirmed through the QMA and protocols that protect nurture staff from covering for absent colleagues must also be in place. The QMA states that nurture group staff must have a positive attitude towards parents/carers and encourage their

involvement in activities that support the nurture group programmes. Parents would be expected to join activities on-site on a regular basis and offer their own feedback on how their student is progressing with nurture group support. Evidence that successful strategies employed in school have been shared with parents/carers for use in the home would indicate to the assessor that a sense of collaboration and teamwork exists between home and school. Parents will be consulted during the assessment period along with the views of students and mainstream colleagues. Evidence would also be required that indicated the quality of multi-agency liaison between the nurture group and other agencies such as social services, Student and Adolescent Health teams and the police.

In Area 2 (Attendance), clear timetables, planning and patterns of pupil attendance should be recorded. The nurture group should offer short or medium term placements (usually between 2 and 4 terms) depending on the student's specific needs. Each student should have an individual timetable that maintains strong links with their mainstream class teacher and peers. All nurture students should register with their mainstream peers and join the nurture group after registration only.

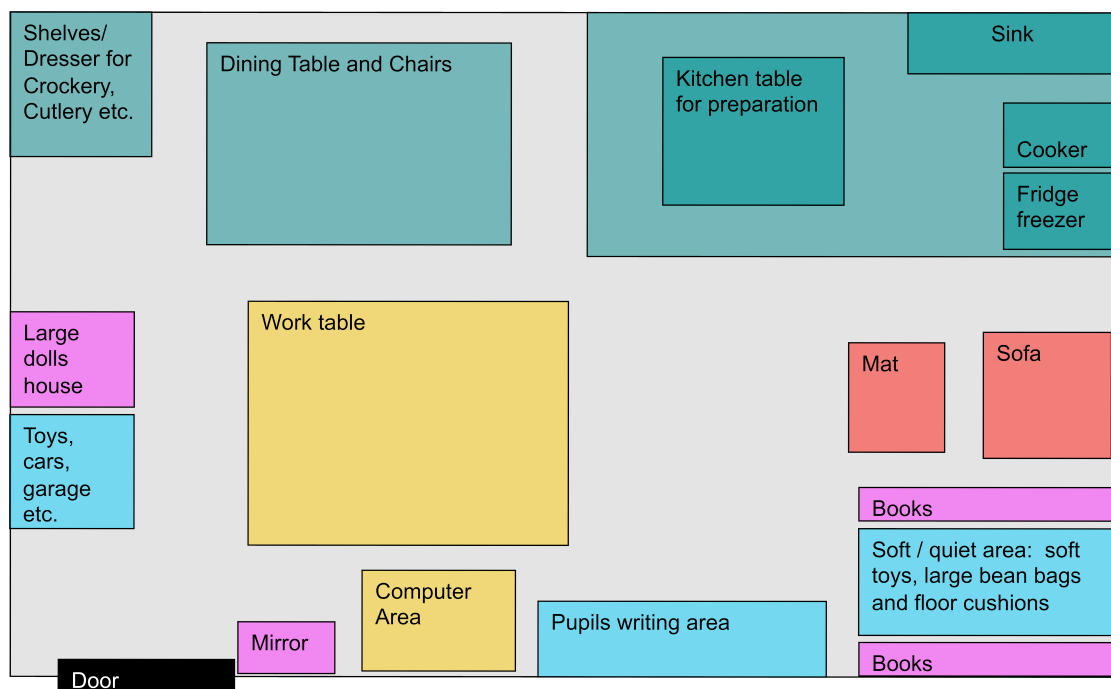
In Area 3 (Assessment, resettlement and evaluation), the QMA criteria emphasises that mainstream staff and nurture staff share planning, communicate clearly and work towards consistent targets for individual students. Placements in nurture are to be determined on the basis of systematic assessments and diagnostic, evaluative instruments such as the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) and the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997) and the assessor for the QMA will focus on clear assessment evidence.

Clear targets are expected to be set for each individual student entering the nurture group, based on the diagnostic assessments. Evidence of a planned programme of intervention with key activities that address the assessed

needs is expected, along with 'exit criteria' that indicates when a student might be ready to return full time to mainstream education. The tracking of progress over time should be recorded and Individual Education Plans adapted to reflect assessed progress over time. Parental views and the views of mainstream colleagues would again be expected as evidence by the QMA assessor.

In Area 4 (classroom environment), the nurture group classroom is expected to provide a warm, welcoming and educational environment that incorporates aspects of both home and school and where the students are accepted and valued. Typically the nurture group classroom may be set out as in Fig 2.1 (see below), including a formal work area, a role play area, a soft seating area, a kitchen and breakfast area.

Fig 2.1 A typical nurture group classroom plan.



The QMA criteria, upon which the nurture group practice is assessed, requires that the room in which the nurture group is based supplies a setting in which missing or insufficiently internalised early learning experiences are provided.

This is to be delivered through a variety of stimulating activities, planned around the identified individual needs. Staff are to respond flexibly to the needs of the students while demonstrating an interest in and enthusiasm for students' learning needs. There is an emphasis on the sharing of social experiences, one aspect of which is the sharing of food at an agreed and regular time each day.

In Area 5 (curriculum and activities), the QMA requires evidence that the requirements of the national curriculum have been fulfilled, alongside a nurture curriculum that places an emphasis on the developmental needs of the student. Joint planning with mainstream staff, a sound knowledge of NC attainments and the regular reinforcement of basic skills in numeracy and literacy should be central to 'gold standard' nurture group practice. Evidence should be made available to the assessor regarding the opportunities students have for social learning through cooperation and play in a mixed group of peers. Staff should model good relationships, appropriate language and acceptable behaviour at all times while explicitly teaching students about school routines and social expectations in small incremental steps.

In Area 6 (a nurturing approach), evidence of how the nurture group places an emphasis on communication and language development through intensive interaction with adults and peers should be provided. This might include examples of how students are explicitly taught the words that reflect emotions and feelings as well as being given the opportunity to reflect on how they are feeling. Resilience is promoted through encouragement and praise, as students are encouraged to persevere when faced with challenges - be they in the context of school work or in social situations. Evidence of programmes that encourage students to reflect on choices and learn alternative responses to aggression or negative behaviour would also be expected by the assessor.

Part III of the QMA involves a written submission that outlines how the nurture group operates and how the nurture group practice incorporates the six principles of nurture, as described earlier in 2.1.2.. When the nurture file submission is received by NGN, the nurture group will then receive a visit from an external assessor on an agreed date. The nurture group assessor will spend at least one full day on-site to confirm aspects of the submission through the visit while discussing in detail issues that may have emerged. The nurture group assessor would be expected to meet with nurture staff, nurture students, mainstream staff and parents in an effort to establish a rich and holistic view of the quality of nurture provision offered by the school.

If the nurture group meets the standards set by the Boxall Quality Mark Award application, then QMA status is received by the school in the form of a certificate and plaque that is valid for two years.

It is important to note that the QMA was developed by the advocates of nurture groups with the primary school setting in mind and there is no literature available that evaluates how the current QMA might be adapted for the secondary school setting. Addressing this gap in the current literature will form an important aspect of this study.

2.2 Nurture Groups: The Critics' Perspective.

Marjorie Boxall's pioneering and practical response to meeting the needs of students exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties through nurture group intervention (Boxall 1976; 2002; Bennathan and Boxall 1998, 2000) has been criticised on a number of levels. These criticisms may be considered and evaluated under six subheadings:

1. Nurture groups and educational inclusion
2. Preserving the integrity of the 'classic' nurture group
3. Nurture groups and the 'deficit' model

4. The cost of nurture group provision
5. Nurture groups and the development of student self-esteem
6. Nurture groups and the therapeutic model

2.2.1 Nurture groups and educational inclusion.

As this study has already described in Chapter 1, a defining feature of the 'classic' nurture group is the way in which students access a separate, specialist learning environment away from the mainstream classroom. While students attending nurture group sessions each day register with their mainstream class and attend mainstream sessions on a daily basis (Bennathan and Boxall 2000), the intervention clearly separates a small group of students from their mainstream peers for specific periods of the school day.

The notion of separating or segregating students with disabilities or 'maladjustment' was commonplace when nurture groups first evolved in the 1970s, with special schools or schools for the maladjusted being integral to the provision made for students at that time (see Laslett 1977). But latterly, a drive towards 'inclusion for all' (Booth and Ainscow 2000) has brought the notion of separating students through 'alternative educational environments' such as the nurture groups into sharp focus.

The root of educational inclusion for all students should be understood as part of an international movement and comprehensive ideal where tolerance, social diversity and equity were to be valued (Skidmore 2004) and where inclusion in education was simply one aspect of inclusion in society. Literature on inclusive educational practice describes how 'inclusion for all' emphasises the way in which a school or community welcomes students as full members of the group and values them for the contribution they make (Farrell and Ainscow 2002).

In 2000, the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) published the Index for Inclusion to support the inclusive development of schools. This focused on a set of values that included:

- Fairness
- Rights
- Compassion
- Community
- Respect of diversity and
- Participation and Sustainability.

Booth and Ainscow 2000

The CSIE suggested that the materials in the Index for Inclusion were designed to build on school-based knowledge and experience with the phrase 'special educational needs' being replaced with the term 'barriers to learning and participation'. The Index invited schools to reduce barriers to learning by working through a cycle of activities to gather information and set new priorities for development which the schools themselves design, based on their situation. Given this framework, Farrell et al (2002) concluded that, "on a day to day basis, a nurture group is not an inclusive mode of provision" (Howes et al in Farrell and Ainscow 2002: 102).

The authors argued that students who are withdrawn from their mainstream class each day are separated from peers whose potentially positive influence on them is reduced. They suggested that this separation may lead to negative labeling and a perception by the rest of the school that these are a group of students whose behaviour warrants their isolation. The authors also warned that alternative educational environments such as nurture groups may reduce the sense of responsibility that mainstream staff have in differentiating their planning and teaching to meet the needs of all the students in their mainstream class (Howes et al in Farrell and Ainscow 2002).

Nurture group theorists have countered that these critics assume the students accessing the nurture group provision would otherwise be fully engaged with learning in the mainstream setting (Bennathan in Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010). In reality, teachers or support staff have already identified that a student is in difficulty and struggling with the demands of the mainstream classroom. Advocates would argue that the aim for a short-term nurture group placement would be to enhance the student's confidence, developmental attainment and engagement with the learning process to allow a successful return to full time mainstream education. In this sense, nurture groups could be said to be an inclusive model because they are designed to reduce educational disengagement at an early age and remove the aforementioned barriers to learning (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007).

This issue of stigma and labelling that is raised by Howes et al (in Farrell and Ainscow 2002) is one that has subsequently been explored through this study. The Literature Review identified this as a contentious area and one that is central to the debate around alternative educational settings such as nurture groups. As a consequence, a starter code for the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with professionals, students and parents has been the heading "Do nurture groups stigmatise students?". Interview questions were then included in the semi-structured interview plan to generate data around this issue from three perspectives (see CD1/Appendices/2).

2.2.2 Preserving the integrity of the 'classic' nurture group.

Where advocates of nurture group provision (e.g. Cooper and Tiknaz 2007) and critics (e.g. Farrell and Ainscow 2002) concur is when they reiterate that the single most important challenge for the nurture group is to ensure the facility is not used by the school as a means of excluding troublesome students from mainstream classrooms as a social control measure. But preventing this outcome relies entirely on the quality of the individual nurture group. Maintaining the consistency and integrity of the 'classic' model across

all nurture group facilities represents a real challenge for, as Bennathan recognised, “if (nurture) groups are not properly set up and fail, first, there is a waste of resources, secondly, the whole concept may be brought into disrepute” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 128).

Unfortunately - and despite the best efforts of the Nurture Group Network – the quality of intervention provided by nurture groups continues to be a variable that cannot be entirely controlled. While Ofsted (2011) suggested that the most successful “classic” nurture groups place a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, they found that this was not always consistent. This observation supported the findings of HMIE (2008) when they described the academic attainment standards in nurture groups as being “too variable” (p.13)

The Nurture Group Network’s Boxall Quality Mark Award (QMA) claims to provide a ‘gold standard’ for nurture group provision (NGN 2011) and any facility displaying the QMA award will have been externally validated relatively recently by a representative of NGN. But the QMA is entirely optional. Schools are able to claim that they have a nurture group even if their facility functions as an ‘aberrant’ variant on the nurture group model and distorts or ignores the defining principles of the ‘classic’ nurture group.

As nurture groups become increasingly widespread both in the UK and internationally, Cooper and Tiknaz have expressed concern that the number of “bastardised” nurture groups will increase (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007). While school performance and mainstream teaching performance in schools can be assessed robustly through nationally implemented strategies, the principles governing the self review and evaluation of a school’s nurture provision is less clearly structured and this could be said to be an inherent weakness in the provision made by nurture groups at the present time.

2.2.3 Nurture groups and the 'deficit' model.

Bennathan and Boxall go to great lengths to emphasise that nurture groups are about "growth not pathology" (Boxall 2002: 10). It is argued that when a student's difficulties are recognised and understood, teaching staff are able to respond more positively towards the student, adapt their teaching and develop greater confidence as the student makes progress (Boxall 2002). Emotional development is described as a 'forward-moving, unitary learning process' (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 22) and nurture group theory and practice sets out to enhance the lives of students, parents, teachers and peers (Bennathan in Cooper and Tiknaz 2007).

However, nurture group practice originally developed in response to students and families that were perceived to be severely deprived (Bennathan and Boxall 2000:8) and where stress and adversity had severely limited or disturbed the nurturing processes of the earliest years (Boxall 2002). In Marjorie Boxall's seminal pamphlet 'The Nurture Group in the Primary School' (1976), Boxall describes the students who might typically attend nurture group provision:

Many of these students lived under conditions of hardship and stress, in overburdened and fragmented families where relationships were eroded and strained, sometimes destructive and even violent ... the mother was under stress and this could affect the child from the beginning. In the early days she may have been too preoccupied or depressed to respond to her baby's mood and needs (with) sudden harsh weaning often coinciding with a restriction on exploration and play, punitive management and sometimes neglect.

Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 19

Boxall paints a bleak picture of the environments in which students attending nurture groups might reside and continues to make generalisations regarding parental deficits that include being “difficult to engage” (Boxall 2002: 2), living under extreme personal stress, managing feelings that are too chaotic to disentangle and being submerged in anger or depression (ibid).

In the original publication (Boxall 1976), Boxall even suggested that parents of children requiring nurture group provision had become punitive, erratic and over-controlling in their behaviour towards their children as a result of their own deprived childhoods (republished in Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 20). It is therefore no surprise that Boxall’s understanding of children’s behaviour in terms of parental deficits has been interpreted as apportioning ‘blame’ to parents.

Interestingly, current texts regarding nurture groups (e.g. Cooper and Tiknaz 2007; Cefai and Cooper 2009; Rose 2010) make no explicit reference to parental deficits that lead to nurture group intervention, nor do they focus on the “harsh social circumstances” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: vi) that are alluded to so frequently in the seminal publications on nurture groups.

Similarly, the four-day Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups training course makes only fleeting reference to the social conditions that precipitated nurture group development. However, a key session on Day 1 of the training has a focus on ‘risk and protective factors’ that include homelessness, poverty, poor housing and parents with relationship problems (Bishop 2008). In addition, responding to ‘missed essential early learning experiences’ (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: vi) continues to be a central theme of the training course.

As a consequence of these factors, the perceived assumption that nurture groups respond to “the deprived student at home and school” who are “at risk of failure” (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 19) has drawn criticism. For example, Bailey argues that nurture group practice dis-empowers students,

staff and parents through its “multiple positions of vulnerability” (Bailey 2007: 11). For Bailey:

The nurture group seeks to intervene to construct a web of esteem and attachment where it perceives there is a deficit .. therefore this intervention requires positions of vulnerability to be already in place.

Bailey 2007: 10

To illustrate this point, Bailey describes an activity observed within a nurture group where a student is given a list of emotional states and asked to describe how she is feeling that day and why. As the adults engage in discourse with the student around the emotions of the day, Bailey suggests that the nurture staff can impose content or interpretations that “ultimately may cast the student as more vulnerable” (Bailey 2007: 7)

Bailey goes on to challenge the assumption that he feels is implicit in the writings of Bennathan and Boxall (1976, 2000, 2002) when they suggest that social change creates dysfunctions in the family which can then be read in the overt behaviour of students. Bailey disputes this assumption and the assumption that overt behaviour necessarily reflects a private trauma or that individual student difference naturally means individual student deficit.

It is worth noting that Bailey’s paper is based on a relatively brief experience of nurture group provision in two facilities in the East Midlands. Over the period September 2006 to March 2007 Bailey undertook participant observation and field notes in one nurture group for a 6-week period and only three days in the second. While he writes from a position of relative inexperience, his observations and criticisms raise issues around nurture group practice that require further investigation and discussion through this study.

2.2.4 The cost of nurture group provision.

The 'classic' Boxall nurture group is staffed by two adults, one of whom is a teacher and the other, a nurture support assistant. The joint salary cost for staffing a full-time nurture group would therefore be in the region of £30,000 + £20,000= £50,000 p.a. at the time of thesis publication (2011). The set up costs to furnish a nurture room and invest in initial resources would be in the region of £5,000 and the ongoing costs for consumables and learning resources might be in the region of £1,500 p.a. (Nurture Group Network 2010). Variations on these costs might include part time facilities and/or staffing with two support staff rather than a teacher.

Table 2.3 describes the possible cost variations involved in setting up and maintaining nurture group provision.

Table 2.3 Nurture group cost variations.

Nurture Group	Set up costs	Staffing	Annual Staffing Cost	Annual Resource Costs	Total
Fulltime	£5,000	1 x Teacher 1 x Support Officer	£30,000 £20,000	£1,500	£51,500 (excluding set up)
Fulltime	£5,000	2 x Support Officer	£20,000 £20,000	£1,500	£41,500 (excluding set up)
Part time (0.5)	£5,000	0.5 x Teacher 0.5 x Support Officer	£15,000 £10,000	£750	£25,750 (excluding set up)
Part time (0.5)	£5,000	2 x 0.5 Support Officer	£10,000 £10,000	£750	£20,750 (excluding set up)

Comparative costs of nurture groups against other forms of provision was undertaken by the Enfield education committee in 1996, which reported that

the cost of nurture provision was between 10 and 30 times less than residential placements and a quarter of the average costs attracted by Statements for pupils with EBD (cited in Bennathan and Boxall 2000). These findings were reiterated in the Cooper, Arnold and Boyd study (1999) that reported the following per annum costs:

Placement in EBD residential school:	£20-60,000
Out of school tuition from EBD support service:	£4,000
Nurture group placement:	£ 2,845.53

Bennathan (2004) suggests that nurture groups cost around £3000 per student placed in nurture (over an average of 3 or 4 terms) while residential intervention fees have increased to the point where it is likely to cost around £3000 per week per student.

The difficulty in comparing costs of nurture provision with residential, referral unit or Statement provision is that very little research with comparative control groups is currently available. But based on Table 1.3, the basic cost of setting up and running a part time (0.5) nurture group is likely to be in the region of £25,000 per annum with £5,000 setting up costs. For many schools, under pressure to make savings in the current economic climate, such a cost is prohibitive and a nurture group is not something they can afford to run.

2.2.5 Nurture groups and the development of student self-esteem.

The 'classic' nurture group describes itself as an educational intervention (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007:15) and claims to provide a safe base for students, offering high levels of adult attention in a slow-moving and routinised environment. Through the six principles of nurture described in Chapter 1.4.1, the understanding of behaviour as communication and the development of self-esteem in students are seen to be fundamental to the theory and practice of nurture group provision. But what is meant by "self-esteem" and what

assumptions are being made by nurture group practice about how student self-esteem should be developed or, indeed, *whether* this should be developed?

Self-esteem has been defined as “how much individuals value themselves as a person” (Harter 2006: 314) and low self-esteem is said to be associated with almost every ill that afflicts society (Furedi 2004). The rise of “self-esteem” in common parlance is evidenced by the references made to ‘self esteem’ in UK newspapers over the period 1986-2000, rising as it did from only three references in 1986 to 3,328 references in 2000 (Furedi 2004).

As we have seen, nurture staff in the ‘classic’ nurture group deliberately make time to reflect on events with the students and engage in discussions around feelings, choices and the development of social and emotional skills to enhance self-esteem. For nurture group practitioners, self-esteem is linked to the development of the ‘internal working model’ (Bowlby 1969) that views the self as worthy of love and of value.

But these kinds of activities have been criticised by Bailey (2007) who suggests that discussions around feelings can cast a student as being yet more vulnerable and if such activities are poorly handled, the experience of reflecting on feelings can be disempowering for both the teacher and the student. Craig (2007) also questions the evidence base on which the teaching of social and emotional skills is based and suggests that a focus on self and feelings:

can easily encourage narcissism and self-obsession thereby undermining the young people’s well-being rather than improving it.

Craig 2007:2

Craig goes on to suggest that there is no robust, independent evidence that making students and young people express their feelings in formal rituals at school or in nurture groups will develop self esteem and she is critical of psychological interventions that remain untested, comparing the implementation of, for example, the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative to "a large scale psychological experiment on young people which could actually backfire" (Craig 2007:4)

At present, the assumptions made by nurture group practice regarding the development of self-esteem are not clearly articulated by the four-day TPCert nor indeed by the seminal texts on nurture group practice (e.g. Bennathan and Boxall 2000; Boxall 2002). The degree to which nurture teams are aware of the inhibiting outcomes and vulnerability promoted by the misuse of praise (see Dweck 2000) is also poorly defined and these are important issues regarding the pedagogy of nurture practice.

2.2.6 Nurture groups and the therapeutic model.

While nurture groups are said to have a focus on educational growth and learning, the use of therapeutic techniques to attend to student feelings and emotions has been widely encouraged by Lucas et al (2006; 13) and by practitioners such as Sonnet (2008), who have developed resources to support these aspects of the nurture curriculum.

These resources include visual 'expressions' cards (Sonnet 2008:126) and activities such as the acting out a quarrel with puppets and asking the students how the puppets are feeling after the argument are also recommended (Sonnet 2008:87). During this activity practitioners are encouraged to emphasise the negative feelings such as anger, worry and sadness before the students are asked to show facial expressions that relate to such feelings. To conclude the activity, the students are asked to consider how the quarrel might be resolved. The Beyond the Boxall publication (Evans

2006) also illustrates the degree to which nurture staff are encouraged to undertake activities that probe the feelings, reflections and experiences of the students.

This focus on interventions that reflect on feelings and emotions and has led Bailey (2007) to suggest that nurture groups represent a good example of the rise of “therapeutic discourse in education” (Bailey 2007:1). This increase in therapeutic education has been described as “dangerous” by Ecclestone and Hayes (2009), who argue that constant references to ‘vulnerable learners’ ‘fragile identities’ and ‘the hard to reach’ maintain the emotional deficits that the interventions are seeking to ameliorate.

Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) also suggest that a curriculum that encourages students to reveal their vulnerable selves may actually serve to lower their expectations of themselves while seeing others as similarly flawed and vulnerable. And having encouraged students to reveal their vulnerable selves, to what degree are nurture group staff trained in managing the possible outcomes of what Bailey (2007) describes as “digging” into a student’s experience? Indeed, where is the professional supervision for the nurture teams undertaking this kind of work?

Nurture groups may purport to be an educational intervention but developments and publications over recent years are clearly encouraging staff to undertake what might be described as a therapeutic, or at least a counselling, role with the students attending the nurture group. The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy is very clear in requiring professional supervision to take place for all counsellors and therapists to ensure that their work is professionally reviewed and that their professional development monitored. There is also an ethical imperative to make sure that those managing therapeutic interventions have the opportunity to discuss the emotional content of their work with a supportive colleague.

There is no question that nurture staff, in the course of the work described in the 'classic' nurture group, encourage students to discuss their feelings and actively teach students ways of addressing their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The relationship of support and trust that is actively encouraged between nurture staff and students provides the perfect point from which deep seated emotional traumas can be explored, understood and managed within the safe environment of the nurture group. By describing the nurture group as an educational provision (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007) and discouraging references to the 'pseudo-therapeutic' role of the nurture group intervention, it could be argued that nurture group theory and practice has an inherent weakness. While nurture teams embark on the exploration of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with students in schools, the professional qualifications and skills of the trained counselor or therapist are not required. Furthermore, the professional supervision expected and required in other professions undertaking similar interventions to the nurture teams is not on offer.

Embarking on what might be described as 'pseudo-therapeutic' interventions with students in the nurture group without the appropriate training, qualifications or supervision could potentially prove to be harmful, dangerous and unethical. The risks for all may be heightened in the secondary setting where issues around adolescence, gender, sexuality, self-harm and other mental health issues begin to emerge. The literature review would suggest that nurture group theory and practice has done little to address these important matters and, as such, clarity over the role of nurture group staff on these matters will form a key aspect of the research study.

2.3 Alternatives to nurture group provision in the secondary school.

In order that the development of nurture groups in secondary schools can be placed in an educational context, a review of a sample of alternative approaches will be undertaken. The review cannot consider the complete range of alternative approaches available to secondary schools because the range and variety of interventions that exist are too numerous. But a sample will help distinguish the distinctive features of nurture group provision from a number of alternatives.

A central feature of the alternative approaches to be discussed is that, unlike the nurture group model, the majority of these strategies do not involve the separation of students from their mainstream peers. Most are universal and involve whole school or whole class interventions with the following advantages over nurture group provision:

- More students than the 10 or 12 accessing nurture group provision may benefit from the whole school strategies
- Students do not have their entitlement to the national curriculum compromised by attending the nurture group
- Students are not identified as being 'vulnerable' or 'in deficit' through their attendance at a non-mainstream provision

Bailey 2007; Karagiannakis and Sladeczek in
Cooper and Cefai 2009

2.3.1 The recommendations of Ofsted (2008).

In 2008, Ofsted published the results of a survey involving 29 secondary schools, where sustained good practice in the support of SEBD students had been identified (Ofsted 2008). In marked contrast to the nurture group model that seeks to support students in a separate transitional setting for specific periods of the day, the Ofsted recommendations highlighted universal, whole-school characteristics which included

1. The whole school ethos.

Ofsted highlighted the importance of the head teacher and senior staff sending clear messages that all students, including those disaffected, were valued and were welcome members of the school community. The school pastoral system dealt consistently with all students and the rewards and sanctions systems were owned by the community who had also contributed to the structure. Staff focused on the cause of disaffection rather than the effect and staff understood the dangers of labelling students. Critics of nurture groups (Bailey 2007; Farrell et al 2002) have expressed concerns about the labelling of students as being 'in deficit' through nurture group attendance. Here, the Ofsted report recommends a whole school ethos that does not single out the disaffected from the successful.

2. Monitoring.

Ofsted found that effective secondary schools employed quantitative and qualitative data to monitor student progress in terms of academic performance and attendance. The views of students, parents and carers were sought through discussion and questionnaires and statistics on detentions, engagement, motivation, parental attendance and teacher feedback informed the monitoring process in an effective and efficient way. Such monitoring would be familiar to nurture group practitioners running an effective nurture group facility. Liaison, communication, attention to detail and proactive responses following careful monitoring are all central to best practice in the well-functioning nurture group. But Ofsted are suggesting that this can be undertaken by the whole school; that the whole school is capable of monitoring students with the intensity and detail of the nurture group, given the right leadership and ethos.

3. Support staff deployment.

In successful secondary schools, support staff were carefully matched to the needs of the students and would undertake much of the transitional work with

primary schools. Support staff established a 'personal link' with the student and acted as friend, advocate, supervisor, critic and motivator. The nurture group team aim to undertake this task within the setting of the nurture room, developing the kinds of relationships that promote safety and trust. But here Ofsted suggest that this role is undertaken within the mainstream setting wherever possible in a way that mirrors the model promoted by Louise Bomber and the Brighton based Attachment Project (Bomber 2007; 2011). Ofsted go on to offer evidence in support of the claim that, in many cases, this model is possible to achieve and in over half the schools visited, support staff acted as the first point of contact for parents and effectively managed the school's pastoral system.

4. Mentoring.

In all the schools surveyed, mentoring was reported to have improved behaviour and attitudes. Linked to the role of support staff, adult mentors and coaches provide one to one support both in lessons and outside the class. Peer mentors or 'buddy' systems were also found to be effective when students were carefully matched with an appropriate peer. Meetings around the mentoring system found that parental attendance at meetings more than doubled from 40% to 85%, thereby promoting parental engagement.

5. Parental engagement.

A key feature of a nurture group's Boxall Quality Mark Award application is the submission of information relating to the involvement of parents in the facility. Nurture staff offer support and guidance to parents so that a consistent approach is applied both in the home and in the school. Given the relatively small numbers of students attending the typical nurture group (10-12 per session), the numbers of parents receiving this specialist support, advice and relationship building is also relatively small. A far greater number of parents might be engaged when the whole school recognises that "working in partnership with parents or carers is the most powerful process that we have in schools for bringing about lasting and effective change" (Head teacher,

Ofsted 2008: 11). The development of home-school liaison teams that support the pastoral managers was cited as being effective in promoting positive relationships with parents and improved attendance among the most vulnerable students.

6. Relationships with other organisations.

Schools that took the lead in working closely with psychologists, behaviour support teams, CAMHS teams and welfare services were found to be most effective. Nurture teams undertake this role for the students with whom they work but on a whole school level, multi agency working of a high standard can impact on a wider range of students.

Ofsted's 2008 recommendations on universal, whole-school characteristics do not rule out the need for discrete, specialist support such as a nurture group within the secondary school. Indeed, the report recommends the development of:

dedicated areas where students with difficulties are able to have some respite from their peers and receive early, short term intervention for behavioural, academic or emotional problems before being reintegrated.

Ofsted 2008: 14

But it is the investment in universal, whole-school initiatives and developments that provides the main focus for the report.

2.3.2 Universal Behavioural Approaches.

Nurture groups employ a range of strategies to support educational engagement, improved social competencies and growth but the intervention is informed by psychodynamic theory and continues to have a focus on how attachment, internal working models and early life experiences can impact on

a student's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. An alternative to this model is to develop a range of whole school strategies based on the assumption that all behaviour is learnt. The range of behavioural strategies commonly used with students who present with SEBD are described in detail in Ayres et al (2000) and in Farrell and Ainscow (2006) and they include:

- Positive reinforcement. Students are encouraged to increase the behaviours that are desired (by the teacher, the school, the parents) by receiving something that will increase the occurrence of that behaviour in the future. This may be teacher praise, access to an activity that is enjoyed or a complimentary letter home to parents.
- Negative reinforcement. Students are encouraged to increase the behaviours that are desired (by the teacher, the school, the parents) as something is removed following the desired behaviour. For example, when behaviour improves, the teacher's displeasure reduces.
- Extinction. This involves withdrawing reinforcement from an undesirable behaviour e.g. ignoring attention-seeking behaviours
- Time out. Offering the student with SEBD a brief period in isolation and away from all sources of reinforcement.
- Punishment. This may involve teacher reprimands and school based detentions, suspensions and exclusion.
- Report Cards. Students have their behaviour evaluated by the teacher on a daily basis or sessional basis. This then links in to the rewards and consequences system.

Behavioural approaches have also been introduced at a whole school level where consistent expectations and reinforcement through rewards and sanctions are written into the school's behaviour policy. The 'Assertive Discipline' approach (Canter and Canter 1992) promoted the structured, disciplined classroom and a proactive approach to student behaviour. Teachers were encouraged to devise a discipline plan that included all the routines and behavioural procedures needed in the classroom. Canter and

Canter suggested that the discipline plan would suffice for 90-95% of students in class. Where a small number of students persisted in their disruption or inappropriate behaviour, assertive discipline recommends putting in extra time to build a positive relationship through one to one problem solving conferences, displays of empathy and concern, agreeing a course of action and finally an individualized behaviour plan or contract.

But what are the students learning about desirable behaviour when assertive discipline is the universal approach of the school? Will the behavioural strategy ensure that behaviours improve within a context that has a social meaning or will the desirable behaviours be learnt in a rote fashion risking the return of the undesirable behaviour once the reward is removed? Research by Nicholls and Houghton (1995) has shown that assertive discipline can result in increased on task behaviours for an initial period at least but Evans et al (2004) are less convinced, suggesting that the evidence is weak and that this approach requires further evaluation and more robust empirical research.

2.3.3 Peer Tutoring Approaches.

Class wide peer tutoring (Greenwood, Delquadri and Carta 1997) represents another alternative approach in the secondary school and involves a teaching strategy based on reciprocal peer tutoring and group reinforcement. Through the approach an entire classroom of students is actively engaged in the process of learning and practicing basic academic skills simultaneously in a systematic way. Students with identified SEBD are not singled out by this process as the entire class is involved (Karagiannakis and Sladeczek in Cooper and Cefai 2009). Components of the approach include behaviour management techniques, reinforcement of correct behaviour, student recognition of praise and peer-mediated contingencies. Beaumont et al (cited in Cooper and Cefai 2009) observes that students with SEBD are often the recipients of support but are rarely given the opportunity to experience how self-actualising the helping of others can be, since this role is more commonly

offered to more socially competent peers. But research has confirmed that by being placed in the role of peer support, students can develop their self-esteem, their communicative and empathy skills, a sense of responsibility and their own problem resolution strategies (Casella 2000; Corriveau et al 1998; Beaumont et al 2006 all cited in Cefai and Cooper 2009). Further research over 25 years suggests that this approach has been found to have a positive impact on students with and without SEBD (e.g. Bell et al 1990; Hughes and Frederick 2006).

2.3.4 Restorative Justice Approaches.

Restorative Justice in education (Watchel 1997; Hopkins 2004; Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2004) represents a further whole school response that seeks to rethink approaches to managing behaviour. Based on the principle that harmful behaviour is a fundamental violation of interpersonal relationships that creates obligations and liabilities (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2004), restorative justice seeks to heal and repair the harm that has been done. A key feature of the approach is that the harmed individual is brought together with the perpetrator of the harm in a carefully organised and supportive meeting.

Restorative Justice is not concerned with a student's assessed SEBD or label of special educational needs; it claims to appeal to the fundamental human need to be heard, to have harm acknowledged and then to be released from the anxiety associated with the harm.

A secondary colleague cited in Hopkins (2004) suggests that:

Restorative Justice in schools provides empowerment for staff, teachers and students to have their needs voiced, their feelings heard, to heal harm if caused and to be included in the process of repairing damage

Hopkins 2004: 115

Restorative Justice approaches focus on dynamic progress and solutions rather than dwelling on 'missed early experiences' or 'attachment deficits' as excuses to explain harmful presenting behaviour. It offers a level playing field for all participants, be they adults, students with SEBD or students without SEBD. Restorative Justice appeals to a common desire for fairness and transparency in decision making. As we have seen in our reference to the neuroscience of high anxiety in students (1.3.1), hyper-vigilance to hostility can result in many students with SEBD genuinely believing that the school system is unfair and that they are being victimised. The Restorative Justice approach provides the perfect opportunity for students with poorly developed empathy and social understanding to see and hear first hand the impact of their behaviour on other students and the families of those students. This experience may be emotional and difficult but the power of the experience may also have a profound impact on students who rarely get to see the real impact of their behaviour.

Evidence from the City of Hull Riverside Project (2008) recorded major reductions in classroom exclusions (down 98%) and improvements in lunchtime behaviour and punctuality (up 86%) in one primary school, following the introduction of Restorative Justice practices. In one secondary school a significant reduction in a whole range of negative behaviours (verbal abuse, physical abuse, disruptive behaviour, theft) was recorded after introducing Restorative Justice practices and, significantly, staff absence was also down by 65% over a one year period (Spring 2007- July 2008)

2.3.5 Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL).

Perhaps the most significant national initiative that has offered a strong and explicit focus on promoting the well being, emotional intelligence and social responsibility of students has been national implementation of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (DCSF 2007). SEAL is said to be

a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools

DCSF 2007:4

For Frerickson and Cline (2009), SEAL represents a universal, preventive programme at school that is accessed by all students and the DfE report that this is currently being implemented in around 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools (DfE 2010).

It is claimed that SEAL is designed to promote the development and application to learning of social and emotional skills that have been classified under the five domains proposed in Goleman's (1996) model of emotional intelligence, namely:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation (managing feelings)
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

Unlike the Primary school version of SEAL that comprises seven key themes delivered by classroom teachers to all their students, the secondary version is described as a 'loose enabling framework for school improvement' (DfE 2010) rather than a structured package that is applied to schools uniformly.

An attempt was made to evaluate the impact of SEAL within secondary schools (Humphrey et al 2010), involving 22 schools employing the SEAL approach and 19 comparison schools. The findings of the empirical research

described “a very mixed picture” (Humphrey et al 2010:2) and in terms of impact and student-level outcomes the research suggested that “SEAL failed to impact significantly on pupils’ social and emotional skills, general mental health difficulties, pro-social behaviour and behaviour problems” (ibid).

The outcomes of the SEAL in secondary schools national evaluation (Humphrey et al 2010) sits in contrast to the recent Ofsted survey on the impact of nurture group provision in primary schools which was published in July 2011. ‘Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach’ (Ofsted 2011) represents the latest example of empirical evidence supporting nurture group intervention in schools and it is to this that we now turn.

2.4 The empirical evidence in support of nurture group intervention.

As described in Chapter 1, the theoretical framework for this study is provided by the American Pragmatism of John Dewey. For Dewey, truth is defined by the successful application of an idea in the real world; if an idea has a practical effect in the real world then this determines whether the idea is true. With this assumption in mind, the effect of nurture group intervention in the real world will be evaluated through a critical review of published research. This will be arranged in terms evidence from Key Stages 1 and 2 (Primary) and will then be followed by a review of the limited empirical evidence regarding nurture groups at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Secondary).

2.4.1 Evidence from Key Stage 1 and 2 (Primary).

Research evidence from a variety of studies and reports would suggest that the pragmatic effect of nurture groups in the real world is extremely positive for students, parents and schools (Farrell and Billington 2009). From oft quoted studies (e.g. Iszatt and Wasilewska 1997) to the latest school inspection reports (e.g. Ofsted 2011) nurture group intervention is

recommended as offering “high quality support to pupils with additional social and emotional needs” (Ofsted Report 2011: 4). But evidence in support of nurture group intervention that is both academically robust and carefully presented is out weighed by small scale and anecdotal research papers.

To identify relevant research articles a comprehensive search of the available evidence was conducted using the Educational Resource Index Abstracts (ERIC) in July 2009 and again in July 2011, using the term ‘nurture groups’ to lead the search. Table 2.4 lists the published research papers and evaluation reports generated by the ERIC search and a brief summary of the focus and methodology employed by each paper is also provided.

Table 2.4 Evidence for the effectiveness of nurture groups.

	Study	Year	Sample Size	Focus and Methodology
1	Jaffey	1990	1 Nurture Group	Analysis of student-teacher interaction Classroom observation
2	Iszatt and Wasilewska	1997	308 students	Retrospective analysis of student outcomes (interviews) 288 former NG students interviewed 20 non-matched students interviewed.
3	Cooper, Arnold and Boyd	1999	25 Schools	National, 2 year longitudinal study on the effectiveness of nurture groups 2 matched comparison groups; progress measured and compared. Assessments through Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Boxall Profile, interviews, National curriculum levels.
4	Cooper and Lovey	1999	35 Nurture Groups	Staff attitudes towards and beliefs about Nurture Groups

				Questionnaire to NG specialists
5	Lucas	1999	Variety of NGs	Nurture groups and the impact on whole school practice Reflection on practice
6	Bishop and Swain	2000a	1 Nurture Group	Qualitative evaluation of 1 NG Interviews
7	Doyle	2001	1 Nurture Group	Using a readiness scale to reintegrate pupil 2 case studies
8	Savage	2001	1 Nurture Group	Nurturing attention and listening skills 6 students, pre and post measures on the Boxall Profile
9	Soames	2002	1 Nurture Group	The effectiveness of a KS2 Nurture Group Questionnaires, attendance figures, SEN register, anecdotal reports
10	O'Connor and Colwell	2002	3 Nurture Groups, 68 students	Measuring pupil progress on the Developmental Diagnostic Profile pre nurture, post nurture and two years after nurture 68 students assessed. Only 12 students re-tested after 2 year period
11	Doyle 2003	2003	1 Nurture Group	Developing the nurturing school Reflection on practice
12	Colwell and O'Connor 2003	2003	1 Nurture Group and 1 mainstream classroom	Comparing self esteem strategies in NG and mainstream classes Observations, categorisation of behaviour, frequency counts
13	Cooper and Tiknaz 2005	2005	3 Nurture groups, 28 students	Perceptions of staff regarding NGs (nurture staff and mainstream) Progress recorded against scores on SDQ and Boxall Profile. Interviews.
14	Gerrard	2005	13 Nurture Groups, 133	The impact of NGs on the lives of staff and pupils.

			students	SDQ, Boxall Profile, two control schools (weak match)
15	Kearney	2005	1 Nurture Group 1 matched control group 14 students	The impact of NG on self esteem Pre and post assessment using the Behavioural Indicators of self esteem (BIOS)
16	Hawkes	2005	3 Nurture Group	Report re: Review of provision (Somerset)
17	Wilson-Storey	2005	1 Nurture Group	Evaluation on a pilot 6 students over 3 terms Boxall Profile assessments x 3
18	Doyle	2005	1 Nurture Group	Case study 1 five year old pupil
19	Bailey	2007	3 Nurture Groups	Do nurture groups disempower staff and students? Observations and reflections
20	Cooper and Whitebread 2007	2007	359 students	NGs and pupil progress; how progress is generalised into mainstream; NG impact on the whole school. 187 matched students in four comparison groups. Assessed through SDQ and Boxall Profile
21	Sanders	2007	3 Nurture Groups	NG pilot evaluation 17 students attending NG, 9 students without NG access as control measure One year period Pre and Post assessment through Boxall Profile
22	Binnie and Allen 2008	2008	6 Nurture Groups, 36 students	NG evaluation Within group repeated measures (Boxall Profile, SDQ)
23	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (Scotland)	2008	Nurture Groups	NG evaluation Case studies supporting the impact of NGs
24	Goldman and Cook	2008		Views of NG practitioners Messages from evaluation studies

25	Connolly, Hubbard and Lloyd	2008	3 Nurture Groups ,46 students	NG Pilot evaluation 2007-08 2 year pilot study Pre test and post test with Boxall Profile and SDQ
26	Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney	2009	16 Nurture Groups, 16 control schools	Glasgow City council 179 students Pre and Post assessments through Boxall Profile, SDQ, BIOS,Base Line Assessment and Parental questionnaire
27	Mikare Wallis	2009	6 Nurture Groups	Developing NGs in New Zealand Report
28	Scott and Lee	2009	4 Nurture Groups, 25 NG students, control group of 25 matched by age and degree of difficulty	Evaluating part-time, cross age NGs Boxall assessments, academic assessments. Pre, mid and post assessments
29	Farrell and Billington	2009	Various	Developing a framework for the evaluation of Nurture groups Report
30	Seth Smith et al	2010	10 Nurture Groups, 5 control groups	Pre-test /post-test design and a non randomised between groups design
31	Bani	2011	4 Nurture Groups	Event sampling (verbal and non verbal praise in the NG)
32	Ofsted	2011	29 Nurture Groups 379 students 95 parents/ carers	Survey of provision 96 case studies What makes NG provision successful? What is the impact on students and their families?

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed against the 32 papers to discern those studies with the highest weight of evidence. Inclusion criteria taken from Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002) included:

- The intervention studied must be classified as a full time or part time Nurture Group and be underpinned by the six principles defined in the introduction.
- The study must involve empirical evidence and seek to measure the relationship between the implementation of a nurture group and social, emotional and behavioural and academic outcomes.
- The study must be primary in nature and not a review paper.
- The study must have a control group to help strengthen the validity of the results.

Of the 32 studies and reports summarised in Table 2.4, only six could be said to meet the inclusion criteria (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd 1999; Cooper and Whitebread 2007; Sanders 2007; Reynolds et al 2009; Scott and Lee 2009; and Seth Smith et al 2010), and it is to the arguably more robust studies to which we turn first. Each paper will be considered within the boundary set by the theoretical framework of American Pragmatism (Peirce 1905; James 1904, 1907; Dewey 1910, 1929, 1938). Evidence will be considered against the 'practical effects' that the intervention has had in the real world of the school, the classroom and the home and the benefits this has or has not generated for students. All evidence will be held lightly and viewed as 'assertible beliefs' or warrants rather than concrete truths. This is because the theoretical framework in which this study is located accepts the fallibility of truth and that truth will "be made true by events" (James 1909: 2).

The first empirically robust, national and longitudinal study to be undertaken with regard to nurture groups explored the nature, distribution and effectiveness of nurture groups with academic rigour (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd 1999). Eight local education authorities and 25 schools in England and Wales engaged in the project over a two-year period and the study found evidence supporting the strong and positive effect of nurture groups in primary schools. Quantitative data was described as being "very encouraging" in terms of the perceived added value that nurture groups offered schools in

their support of students with SEBD. It was argued by the report that Nurture groups also offered wider benefits to the school, such as expanding their capacity to cater for SEBD in general. Research data also indicated that parents benefitted from the positive progress being made in school with improvements in student-parent relationships being recorded.

In 2007, the national nurture group study by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) sought to compare students with access to nurture group provision (Group 1) against those without access (Group 2) and did so with a cohort of 546 students. The study asked questions around the effects of nurture groups in promoting social, emotional, behavioural and educational improvements while accessing nurture group support; the extent to which such improvements are generalised into the mainstream setting; the impact of nurture groups on whole schools and the impact of nurture groups on parent-student relationships.

Group 1 was made up of 359 students while Group 2 had 187 students, subdivided into four different comparison groups, namely:

- students with SEBD and attending nurture (n=64)
- students with SEBD and not attending nurture (n=31)
- students without SEBD and attending a school without nurture groups (n=27)
- students without SEBD and attending a school with a nurture group (n=65)

Using qualitative data from interviews as well as numerical data from assessments, the study collected data each term over a two year period. The results of the national survey found that students improved significantly in their social, emotional and behavioural functioning following access to nurture group provision. The study went on to find that schools with nurture groups also achieved significantly higher gains for pupils in mainstream education when compared with pupils in schools that did not have nurture group

provision. Qualitative data indicated that mainstream teaching staff adopt a more nurturing approach to their teaching and classroom management as a result of their contact with the nurture team and overall it was found that a school with a nurture group will deal with mainstream SEBD issues more effectively than a school without this facility.

Providing further 'warrants for assertible beliefs' regarding the practical effects of nurture groups at Key Stage 1 and 2, Glasgow City Council undertook a formal evaluation of nurture group provision in the city, the results of which were published as a council report (Glasgow City Council 2007) and a journal article (Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney 2009). The study matched 16 control schools with 16 nurture groups and the council report concluded that nurture groups represent:

an extremely effective intervention strategy to identify and address additional needs which fall into the category of social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Glasgow City Council, Nurture Groups Report 2007: 4

Quantitative assessment tools including the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997, 1999), the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) and the Behavioural Indicators of Self Esteem (Burnett 1998) were employed to monitor student progress along with attendance statistics, curricular progress and the views of parents, students and staff. Students accessing nurture groups were found to make significant changes in both their behaviour and their ability to access the national curriculum when compared with the control group. This encouraged the City Council to invest further in the provision with an additional 11 nurture groups established in January 2010 to complement the 58 nurture groups already in place in the city.

Further empirical evidence supporting nurture group provision at Key Stage 1 and 2 was provided by Sanders (2007), who described a nurture group pilot project that took place in three schools in Hampshire where a t-test was used to compare the Boxall Profile scores for students attending nurture groups against the scores attained by students without this support. Sanders found a significant difference at the 0.05 level, indicating that the students accessing nurture group provision had made significantly greater gains (Sanders 2007). It should be noted, however, that the sample of 17 students in Sander's nurture group pilot and the 9 students in the control group represents a relatively small sample. In addition the research noted that the control group was poorly matched and tended to have higher entry scores on the Boxall Profile, thereby limiting the usefulness of the comparison results.

Scott and Lee (2009) explored the impact of nurture group intervention in four primary schools where 25 children accessing the provision were matched with a control group of the same age, size and degrees of difficulty. The investigation took place over the course of one year and all children were assessed at three points during the year: pre-, mid- and post-nurture group intervention. The assessment measures employed included the Boxall Profile, the Concepts of Print (Clay 1985) and The Simon Strategy (1989). Analysis of the results showed that children accessing the nurture group provision had made statistically significant gains in the areas of development assessed by the Boxall Profile (e.g. giving purposeful attention, participating constructively, connecting up experiences etc). Gains were also made in the areas of literacy, numeracy and motor skills when compared with the control group but these were not found to be statistically significant.

In 2010, Seth Smith et al investigated changes in social, emotional and behavioural functioning in students within both a nurture group and a comparison condition. The results found significant changes in nurture group students' Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire scores, along with an increase in 'pro-social' behaviour, a decrease in 'peer difficulties' and

'hyperactivity' when compared with to the comparison group. Given that Caprara et al (2000) have demonstrated that prosocial behaviour is a significant indicator of future school achievement, the improvements noted by the research could be said to have far reaching implications for the students involved. Significant changes were also found by the study in most strands of the Boxall Profile whilst ratings of nurture group students' academic levels also improved significantly when compared with the control group.

It could be argued that the evidence provided Seth-Smith et al (2011), Scott and Lee (2009), Reynolds et al (2009), Cooper and Whitebread (2007) and Cooper et al (2001) have offered methodologically sound evidence for the positive effect of nurture group intervention in the real world of schools and classrooms. But while all the studies included control groups as part of the research study, none went the extra step of building in an 'attention placebo' to indicate whether other factors such as additional attention or small class size might have contributed to the improved outcomes. A further weakness in the most rigorous studies supporting nurture group intervention is the lack of triangulation in the studies. Only Sanders (2007) seeks to collate the views of parents, teachers and students to create a holistic picture of the effects of nurture group intervention.

In addition to the six studies discussed, a range of less rigorous surveys, studies and report evaluations also exist that inform our understanding of nurture group provision. Most are supportive of nurture groups but one (Bailey 2007) is highly critical of the provision and this paper featured prominently in section 2.2 of the study.

While the remaining research evidence and papers are positive about nurture group intervention there are deep-seated methodological weaknesses within these studies that includes the lack of triangulation, a lack of matched control groups, a retrospective approach or a sample size that constitutes little more than a reflection on the practice of one singular provision. While a sample of

the findings of these studies remains worthy of consideration and evaluation, the weaknesses of each study must also be acknowledged.

In an early and frequently quoted research study, Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) reported that of the 308 primary aged students placed in nurture groups between 1984 and 1996, 87% of the students had been able to return to mainstream classrooms full time within a year. In 1995 this group was revisited and it was found that 83% of this group had retained their mainstream placement without receiving any additional support in class (with only 4% requiring additional support in class). Of the original group of 308, 13% were granted Statements of Special Educational Need and 11% were referred to special school provision. The study also reflected on the progress of 20 students with comparable difficulties but with no access to nurture group provision during the same period. The outcomes for these students are summarised in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5 Student outcomes (Iszatt & Wasilewska 1997).

Group	Provision	Numbers	% return to mainstream education without support	Special school placement
1	Nurture Group access	308	83%	11%
2	No Nurture Group Access	20	55%	35%

The absence of adequate matching measures in this study is an acknowledged weakness (Farrell and Billington 2009) and the discrepancy in sample sizes between Groups 1 and 2 makes the % weighting per student

difficult to compare in terms of overall outcome (ie in Group 1 each student represents 0.3% of the total outcome whereas in Group 2 each student represents a much bigger proportion of the total at 5%). But while there is a discrepancy in sample sizes and weak matching measures within Iszatt and Wasilewska's study, the broad outcomes suggest a largely positive performance among the nurture group cohort. This outcome has since been supported by the results of other studies exploring self-management skills, skills for learning and confidence building among students that have accessed nurture provision (Boorn 2002; Cooper and Lovey 1999; Doyle 2001, 2004).

Extensive views of nurture practitioners were formally collated and published by the Nurture Group Network in the paper 'Making Our Experience Count' (Goldman and Cook 2008). Qualitative evidence supporting nurture group intervention included comments from staff at Alderman Bolton Community Primary School:

The changes in the student's willingness to work and tackle difficulties has been remarkable. They are much happier, more relaxed in school and when they are anxious or worried they confide in adults more readily.

Goldman and Cook 2008: 7

Staff at Howden St Andrew's Primary School in West Lothian noted that students were better behaved, more settled and more confident while at Moorlands Primary School in Reading, staff observed an increase in the frequency of 'on task' behaviours and a reduction in aggression among students accessing nurture group provision (Goldman and Cook 2008).

These benefits appeared to extend to the staff themselves with staff at Gors Community School, Swansea, reporting that they felt more relaxed, less stressed and freed from the frustration of feeling that they were doing nothing for the most vulnerable students in their community (Goldman and Cook

2008).

Evidence regarding the impact of nurture groups has also been ascertained from students themselves. Research by Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) identified four key positives derived from student feedback following interviews. Students identified:

- The quality of interpersonal relationships within the nurture room and the students' fondness of the nurture group staff as the first key theme emerging from student feedback. Given the theoretical importance of attachment and the 'safe base' in nurture group practice, staff endeavour to undertake work with patience and tenacity in building strong relationships with students as the starting point for effective nurture group intervention. Students are quoted as reporting "I like the teachers, they help you" and "I play with my friend and my teachers help me. They talk to me. They're good" (p.66). This aspect of nurture group provision will be explored further through the empirical research of this study.
- The frequency and quality of adult support saw students refer to the way in which nurture group staff have the time to offer repeated explanations and "show you what you need to do" (p.66) without students feeling "stupid". "Even if you can't understand and can't do things I don't feel bad, I feel successful here. They help me a lot" (P.67).
- The opportunities for fun activities and play was highly valued by the students interviewed. Making things, access to games and activities, cooking and making friends were all cited as positives gained through the nurture group: "I actually look forward to going there" (p.68).
- The quietness and calmness of the nurture group environment was found to be highly beneficial to many students who expressed the need for a sense of safety and security in school: "In the nurture suite I can concentrate, it is very quiet", "They make you feel comfortable" (p.68).

Doyle (2003) points out that the success of nurture groups has been recognised in key government documents (DES 1978; DfEE 1997, 1998, 1999; DfES 2002a; DCSF 2008) and the 2005 Ofsted report 'Managing Challenging Behaviour' (Ofsted 2005) reflected that "nurture groups ... have proved effective in helping younger pupils to improve their concentration, behaviour and ability to learn" (Ofsted 2005:14)

Again in 2005, as Sir Alan Steer (DfES 2005) drew together the report of the practitioners group on school behaviour and discipline for the Department for Education and Skills, the growing research evidence in support of nurture group intervention encouraged him to state:

Nurture Groups are an important early intervention for emotionally vulnerable children, providing a safe and supportive environment for those who lack confidence and enthusiasm at school. Nurture Groups offer a safe and contained environment, where a pupil can spend much of the school day, while also keeping in contact with their class. By offering pupils more intensive support to overcome particular obstacles to emotional development, Nurture Groups help children re-establish good relationships with adults, and begin to see school as a place where they experience success.

DfES 2005:70

This acknowledgment of nurture group provision was developed further in Steer's updated report 'Learning Behaviour:Lessons Learned' (DCSF 2009):

The early identification of learning and behavioural difficulties among students followed by effective intervention would present many subsequent problems occurring.....Head teachers report that nurture groups can be important in supporting pupils who display poor behaviour. Building on previous research DCSF should undertake an assessment of

the impact of nurture groups in schools situated in areas of high deprivation.

DCSF 2009:54

Steer's call for a robust, government sponsored assessment of the impact of nurture groups in schools reflected a concern about the level of methodological rigour in the research that supports nurture group intervention (Farrell and Billington 2009). The variety of methodologies and measures used within the research already cited and the largely retrospective nature of the studies made it difficult to gain a consistent and national view of the impact of nurture groups. This perceived weakness was addressed by the Universities of Manchester and Sheffield who developed a framework for the evaluation of nurture groups (Farrell and Billington 2009) to be employed at a national level. Led by Professor Peter Farrell and Dr Tim Billington, the framework set out to develop an agreed protocol for the ongoing formative and summative evaluation of nurture groups which would allow staff in schools to reflect on their own practice while allowing Nurture Group Network to gain a nationwide view of the impact of nurture group intervention.

Aspects of the framework are reflected in the recently published Ofsted survey entitled 'Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach' (Ofsted 2011). The survey examines the use of nurture groups in a small sample of 29 infant, first and primary schools and considers what it is that makes nurture group provision successful while evaluating their impact on the students and families. Inspectors considered contextual information in relation to each nurture group and undertook observations in the nurture groups along with staff interviews and parental interviews. Inspectors also reflected on Boxall Profile data and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire data as part of their case study analyses.

Key findings from the Ofsted survey (Ofsted 2011) included the following:

- When nurture groups were working well they made a considerable difference to the behaviour and the social skills of the students who attended them.
- The nurture groups gave parents practical support.
- Nurture groups can generate academic progress where previously there had been none.
- All students retained contact with their mainstream classes.

The survey also draws attention to weaknesses in the nurture group model that includes variations in how effectively literacy, numeracy and other academic skills were taught and weaknesses in the curriculum planning in certain facilities. Of the 29 facilities surveyed, 24 followed the 'classic' model but five did not, confirming that variant models of nurture group practice continue to prosper alongside the 'classic' model. None of the 29 facilities surveyed had thoroughly evaluated the progress of former nurture group students as a separate cohort in order to analyse the long-term impact of the intervention.

Despite these criticisms, Ofsted recommends that the DfE should take into account the "substantial value" (Ofsted 2011:7) of well-led and well-taught nurture groups in relation to early intervention and targeted support for students in Key Stages 1 and 2 with SEBD.

2.4.2 The evidence from Key Stage 3 and 4 (Secondary).

Research evidence regarding the effect of secondary school nurture groups is relatively scarce but Ofsted reports, professional testimonies and papers on small-scale research projects based in secondary schools do exist and will be reviewed accordingly.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) included three secondary schools within their research sample of 34 schools and Cooper Arnold and Boyd (1999) included

two secondary schools in the their national survey. But the predominance of primary schools within the data set of both studies precludes any trustworthy conclusions being drawn about nurture groups in secondary schools. Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) undertook a preliminary investigation into the views of students at Key Stage 3 regarding the nurture group provision in their school and found that students could articulate aspects of the support that they found most helpful. This included the anger management programmes, the organised environment as well as the 'safe base' and the individual attention that was on offer. But with only 14 extracts included within the research report and little information on the research methods employed, the findings from this study are again weak and unreliable.

A stronger piece of research into secondary nurture group provision was undertaken by Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008) and gave an account of a Key Stage 3 nurture group in action. The study recorded significant improvements for a Year 7 group over a one-year period where students accessed nurture group provision each afternoon. The investigation also describes a case study where a young person described as 'an emotional time bomb' made dramatic progress following planned activities in the nurture group that focused on the development of her self-image and her ability to engage with others. Inherent weaknesses in the study are its reliance on anecdotal evidence and its failure to include a comparison group in its methodology. Furthermore, the research based its evidence on the Boxall Profile assessment tool that has a specified norms age range of 3 years to 8 years 3 months. This does not preclude the use of the Boxall Profile with students aged 11-12 years but it does undermine the claims that Cooke et al might make from the results.

In an unpublished thesis, Garner (2010) sought to explore how nurture groups are implemented in the secondary school and whether they can represent a beneficial intervention for students with SEBD. By researching the implementation of three secondary school nurture groups, the views of 17

secondary school staff and eight parents (using focus groups) were examined along with the views of six students who had attended the provision. Garner's findings suggested that secondary school nurture groups could be a valued resource and have benefits for young people with SEBD. However, she argues that the secondary model often has a different emphasis from those originally devised by Marjorie Boxall because of the developmental differences between the primary and secondary sectors.

Steer (DCSF 2009) reports that secondary head teachers have indicated the importance of nurture groups in supporting pupils at Key Stage 3 who display poor behaviour. Steer also provides an illustration of how nurture groups at KS3 can support those most at risk supporting a range of Ofsted inspection reports that have recognised nurture groups at Key Stage 3 as representing successful intervention for secondary aged students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

At Hawkley Hall High School, Wigan, (Ofsted Report 2006) Ofsted found that the nurture and inclusion centres at the school were providing additional support for pupils identified as being most vulnerable and the Inspection Report confirmed that this was having a very positive effect on improving student behaviour and self-esteem. When Ofsted returned to Riverside Community College, Leicester, they found that the school's nurture group was contributing to meeting the needs of individual students:

Since the last inspection the college has adapted its curriculum further so that it can better meet the individual needs of students, and it is now good. In Year 7 successful 'Nurture Groups' have been formed for students who need to improve their social, literacy and numeracy skills and to enhance their self-esteem.

Ofsted Report 2007 : 6

Shevington High School, Wigan, has hosted a series of Conferences on

Secondary Nurture Group practice and Ofsted (Ofsted Report 2008) highlighted the 'exceptional' support provided to students by the 'Diamonds' Nurture Group, particularly over the transition periods from Primary to Secondary, stating:

this is an inclusive school that places a great emphasis on ensuring that all pupils are known well and supported effectively. The school provides outstanding pastoral care to its pupils and its emphasis on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable is exemplary. There is very effective liaison with primary schools to identify pupils who are likely to face difficulties in making the transition to secondary school. These pupils are supported exceptionally well within a 'diamond' nurture group that provides a programme of support in a centre within school. This support is greatly valued by pupils and they clearly enjoy the twice weekly lunch that is provided in the centre to extend social skills.

Ofsted Report 2008: 4

The existing empirical research evidence regarding the development of nurture groups in secondary schools is clearly limited and restricted to specific Ofsted reports, unpublished papers and one journal article. A review of the literature would suggest that an empirical study that illuminated how stakeholders perceived the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school might be both helpful and timely.

2.5 Generating Research Question 1.

The Literature Review has established that an increasing volume of empirical evidence now suggests that nurture groups in primary schools work. That is to say, many students accessing nurture group support in the primary school improve their attendance, their behavioural regulation and their engagement with learning. The area where empirical research is currently lacking relates

to the development of nurture groups in secondary schools. There have been small scale projects into the impact of single case interventions but there is no research into the effects of nurture group provision from the perspective of professionals, students and parents. Research Question 1 therefore asked:

What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?

a) What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

b) What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?

The empirical research involved semi-structured interviews with a small sample of professionals, students and parents. The interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed commencing with starter codes generated by the Literature Review and then developing into richer themes as the analysis progressed. These starter codes generated by the Literature Review included:

- The nurture group offers a 'safe base'.
- How the nurture group connects with other support systems within the school.
- Assessment and referral structure
- Do nurture groups stigmatise students?

2.6 The Boxall Profile.

Research Question 2 will be formulated following a review of literature regarding to the Boxall Profile and related assessment instruments.

The Boxall Profile Handbook for Teachers (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) was developed to assist nurture groups with assessment, planning and the monitoring of progress (ibid). Co-authored by the pioneer of nurture groups, Marjorie Boxall, the Profile represents a central resource in effective nurture group practice (Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). But the Boxall Profile represents only one assessment instrument available to practitioners in the support and assessment of a student's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. For the purposes of this thesis, three alternative SEBD assessment instruments will be described and evaluated against the Boxall Profile.

2.6.1 Alternatives to the Boxall Profile.

Achenbach System of Empirically-Based Assessment (ASEBA)

Achenbach's Student Behaviour Checklist 6-18 and the Teacher's Report Form 6-19 represent two rigorously trialled behaviour rating scales forming part of the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (Achenbach and Rescorla 2001). Originally developed in 1991, both checklists contain 120 items and informants are required to rate behaviour on a three-point scale that is then given numerical value. The checklists focus on specific behavioural and emotional problems that are then categorised into internalising behaviours (anxiety, depression, somatic complaints) and externalising behaviours (rule breaking, aggression).

ASEBA represents "one of the best constructed and widely researched instruments currently available" (Merrell 2008: 104) and has drawn over 6,000 studies in 64 cultures across the world. Test-re-test reliability has been found

to be in the .80/.90 range and interrater reliability had a median correlation of .66 (Achenbach et al 1987). Strong construct validity has been inferred for ASEBA from a range of studies and convergent construct validity has been demonstrated through significant correlations between the two checklists (Merrell 2008). Both rating scale assessments have been found to be powerful predictors of present and future SEBD (Verhulst et al 1994) and highly useful in assessing student psychopathology (Elliott and Busse 1990; Myers and Winters 2002).

The Boxall Profile has nothing like the rigorous research base that supports the ASEBA assessment instruments, nor can it compare with the normative sample taken by ASEBA to construct its score banding (6,747 students against the Profile's sample of 880 students). But the ASEBA assessments may not always be ideal for the teacher or the classroom environment. Many of the behavioural symptoms described in the checklists are clinical or psychiatric in nature (e.g. hearing voices, bowel problems, masturbation in public) all of which are helpful for extreme SEBD or psychopathology but less appropriate for the more general classroom assessment. The Boxall Profile was developed from classroom practice to support classroom practice and, as a consequence, every item relates directly to the classroom experience.

Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) 1997

The Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is widely used in educational and mental health settings to assess positive and negative behavioural attributes of students and adolescents (Goodman 1997, 1999). The 25-item behaviour screening questionnaire measures five subscales:

- Emotional Symptoms Scale.
- Conduct Problems Scale.
- Hyperactivity Scale.
- Peer Problems Scale.
- Prosocial scale.

For each sub-scale the SDQ provides five items and respondents are asked to rate each item on a three point scale (not true/somewhat true/certainly true). Significantly, there are different versions of the SDQ to be filled in by parents, teachers and students themselves (for 11 years and older) providing an excellent opportunity to collate views on student behaviour from a variety of perspectives – including the student's own viewpoint (Cooper and Tiknaz 2007).

Goodman and Scott (1999) compared the SDQ with the ASEBA Student Behaviour Checklist on a sample of 132 students aged 4-7 years. Scores from the SDQ and CBC were highly correlated and the SDQ was significantly better than the CBC at detecting inattention and hyperactivity, and at least as good at detecting internalising and externalising problems. The research also reported that mothers of low-risk students were twice as likely to prefer the SDQ as an assessment instrument.

The SDQ has the advantage of being available on line at sdqscore.net with ratings collated and scored instantaneously by the website. A report is generated by the scores which is used to predict how likely a student is to have emotional, behavioural or concentration problems severe enough to warrant a diagnosis according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) classifications (APA 2000). For each diagnostic grouping (any diagnosis, emotional disorder, behavioural disorder and hyperactivity disorder) there are three possible predictions: 'low risk', 'medium risk' and 'high risk'. It is suggested by the website that, in general, these predictions agree fairly well with what an expert would say after a detailed assessment of the student. Research suggests that around 25-60% of students who are rated as 'high risk' by the SDQ assessment do turn out to have the relevant diagnosis according to experts. This would also be true of 10-15% of 'medium risk' students but only true of about 1-4% of students identified as being at 'low risk' (Goodman 2001).

Guidance on conducting the SDQ is made available online but this does not compare to the depth of direction that is on offer through the Boxall Profile Handbook. The SDQ generates a report that makes a diagnostic prediction based on the responses received but there is little in the way of guidance to school based practitioners on how the assessment might contribute to intervention in the classroom.

Interestingly, the SDQ and Boxall Profile are often used together to assess students for nurture group placement (Cooper and Tiknaz). The SDQ offers data from a brief and rigorously trialled screening instrument that can draw in the views of parents/carers and students (over 11years) to complement the views of school based staff. The Boxall Profile can then offer a richer insight into the nature of the presenting difficulties with its refined focus on specific developmental needs.

Research has confirmed that Robert Goodman's SDQ is a useful outcome measure for students referred to student and adolescent mental health services (Mathai, Anderson and Bourne 2002, 2003) and correlates highly with other behaviour rating scales including the ASEBA Student Behaviour Checklist (Goodman and Scott 1999) and the Rutter Behaviour Scales (Goodman 1997). Significantly, in the only study of its kind, the Boxall Profile has been shown to correlate highly with the SDQ in an unpublished study that explored the concurrent validity between the two assessment instruments (Couture 2001). This correlation was later confirmed by the research study to generate the Boxall Profile for Young People (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010).

Behaviour Assessment System for Children (BASC-2)

An alternative to the ASEBA or SDQ behaviour rating scales is the Behaviour Assessment System for Children (Reynolds and Kamphaus 2004), originally developed in 1992. The BASC-2 was designed to facilitate the educational

classification of behaviour and learning problems and includes both parent and teacher rating scales and a self-report for students. The instrument is relatively long with up to 160 items compared with 68 on the Boxall Profile and only 25 on the SDQ. In common with the Boxall Profile, the content of the BASC-2 items was generated through in depth consultation with experts in the field and pilot assessments that then led to deletions and refinements over time (Merrell 2008). Four rating points focus on the frequency that behaviour is perceived to occur (never/sometimes/often/almost always) and the raw scores from respondents are converted into T scores (or standardized scores) and percentile ranks. BASC-2 provides a comprehensive set of rating scales that measure areas important for DSM-IV classifications and offers an extensive view of adaptive and maladaptive behavior. Incorporating a Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ), a Self-Report of Personality (SRP) form for ages 6-7, a training video and a BASC-2 Portable Observation Program, BASC-2 provides a unique form of triangulation by analyzing student behaviour from three perspectives: the student, the teacher and the parent. While the SDQ collates information from three sources, it does not aggregate the data in the way that the BASC-2 seeks to do. BASC-2 is school focused with learning interventions central to the purpose of the assessment. The Boxall Profile shares the BASC-2 focus but cannot aggregate the views of parents and students in the same way.

2.6.2 What do ratings scales actually measure?

As we have seen, the Boxall Profile is diagnostic assessment instrument that employs a rating scale of between 0 and 4 across two sections. It is recommended that all behaviour rating scales, including the Boxall Profile, are completed by individuals who know the student well. But what do behaviour rating scales actually measure?

The authors of the Boxall Profile go to great lengths to emphasise that the Profile assessment must be seen as a 'guide' to intervention and not a finite or

complete descriptor of a student's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (see front cover of the Handbook). In keeping with the pragmatic philosophy that frames this study, staff are encouraged to be reflective and intuitive while viewing the Profile results alongside complementary assessments. These assessments might include direct observation, self reports, interviews and screening instruments such as Goodman's SDQ.

It is acknowledged that, in common with many assessments that rate social, emotional and behavioural functioning, the Boxall Profile translates the subjective opinion of an informant into a specific symbolic numerical value; that is to say, an opinion is transferred into a score. This score does not relate to an observable, verifiable, replicable event such as the time run or a distance thrown, rather, it relates to an estimate, a perception and an impression. And yet once a numerical value is applied to this subjective opinion, 'measurement' follows. But is this a genuine measurement of a student's progress or simply a measurement of the informant's perceptions?

To be clear, the Boxall Profile measures the perceptions of those working closely with the student against the developmental milestones set out by the Profile. When viewed alongside complementary assessments (such as direct observation, self-reports and interviews) the measurements offered by the Boxall Profile provide strong indications regarding the direction of student progress. But a major disadvantage of all behaviour rating scales including the Boxall Profile is that no observable data is generated by the assessment process. Issues around bias of response and error variance can therefore undermine all rating scale assessments if their impact is not minimised (Martin 1988).

A further variation in the reliability and validity of all rating scale assessments is the time period on which the assessment should be based and the quality of relationship that qualifies an informant to rate a student's competencies and problems. Many scales, including the guidance within the Boxall Profile

handbook, do not stipulate the time period to be covered by the assessment despite the research by Worthen, Borg and White (1993) that suggests that there is a tendency for recent events and behaviour to be given a disproportionate weighting when the informant completes the rating scale.

A further vulnerability in the behaviour rating process is the assumption that those completing the assessment will do so with integrity and honesty. While a variety of response biases may exist and may feature unwittingly in results, it is assumed that the researcher, the informant and the student being assessed will not attempt to consciously skew the results. Unfortunately the behaviour rating scale is particularly vulnerable to manipulation of this kind because no actual observable data is generated by the assessment and no evidence is required by the informant to justify their summary judgements.

But support exists for the value of rating scales such as the Boxall Profile. Merrell (2008) notes that the use of behaviour rating scales as a method of collecting data, assessing SEBD, planning intervention and monitoring progress has increased dramatically since the mid-1980s and such scales are frequently employed as the primary component in a battery of assessments. For others, the numerous advances in research on rating scale technology has strengthened the desirability and use of this form of assessment (Elliott, Busse and Gresham 1993; Merrell 2000a, 2000b)

Merrell (2008:98) goes on to argue that the behaviour rating scale can represent an objective method with a good deal of technical precision, yielding more reliable data than either unstructured clinical interviewing or projective-expressive techniques such as drawing and story telling (Martin et al 1986; Merrell 2000a). This is perceived to be particularly true following numerous advances in rating scale technology and reliability in recent times (Elliott et al 1993; Merrell 2000a, 2000b).

In addition, behaviour rating scales are said to have a number of further advantages over other assessment methods:

- They can provide data on low-frequency/high-impact behaviours such as outbursts of violence that are rarely captured by time-limited direct observation assessment
- They capitalise on the judgements and knowledge of 'expert' informants (parents, teachers)
- The rating is based on observations and interactions over substantial time periods and in a variety of social settings with data derived from the student's 'natural' environments such as home or school
- At their most sophisticated, rating scales can help provide objective, reliable and socially valid information on broad and narrow dimensions of SEBD

Merrell (2008)

For clarity, the position taken by this study is that the Boxall Profile and associated behaviour rating scales can and do offer a legitimate measure of students' social, emotional and behavioural functioning, as perceived by informants who know the students well. It is acknowledged that this form of assessment is based on the subjective perceptions of informers and should always be considered alongside data from complementary assessments such as direct observation, interviews and self-reports.

But the Boxall Profile provides a framework for structured observation in the classroom and generates a rich source of information regarding the student that is generated over a significant period of time. The Boxall Profile creates a numerical value that describes the degree to which a student is perceived to be functioning against a specific developmental item. By establishing the magnitude of an attribute through the rating system, the numerical value equates to a measure (of informant perception) and it is significant that rating

scales have now been clinically proven to screen for student psychiatric disorders (e.g. Goodman 1997, 1999).

While the debate remains ongoing regarding the stand-alone validity of assessments employing rating scales such as the Boxall Profile, Merrell (2008) has promoted a form of multi-assessment that moves this argument on. In Merrell's view, a variety of nomothetic and idiographic methods which might include a combination of direct observation, interviews and self-report measures must sit alongside the behaviour rating scale to ensure that a full and aggregated description of student needs can inform intervention and monitoring. This form of complete assessment has been described by Merrell as the 'multi-method, multi-source multi-setting assessment' (Merrell 2008). The multi-assessment approach is described as being supported by the vast majority of current professional thinking (Merrell 2008) and involves the co-mingling of the nomothetic and idiographic approaches that traditionally have been dichotomous terms and separate approaches. Within the context of the multi-assessment approach to SEBD, it could be argued that the Boxall Profile and behaviour rating scales like it make a significant contribution to understanding the needs of students from a range of assessment perspectives.

2.7 Generating Research Question 2.

Merrell's description of a multi-source, multi-method, multi-setting assessment process confirms the importance of behaviour rating scales such as the Boxall Profile and the part they can play alongside additional assessment methods. Despite the range of SEBD assessment instruments that have been referenced, Nurture Group Network (2001/2009) suggest that the Boxall Profile offers unique insights as an assessment tool with its focus on the developmental milestones of each individual students and the classroom context that informs the Profile items. The Profile mirrors the nurture group's

particular understanding of student development and continues to be inextricably linked with the work of the nurture group.

If nurture groups are to continue to flourish in secondary schools then it is clear that the original Boxall Profile (1998) will require specific modifications to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age.

Emerging from the review of literature relating to the assessment of students presenting with SEBD, the study's Research Question 2 will be:

What specific modifications to the Boxall Profile are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age?

2.8 Literature Review: Conclusion.

In summary, the research questions (RQ) generated by the Literature Review were:

RQ1: What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?

a) What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

b) What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?

RQ2: What specific modifications to the Boxall Profile are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age?

The study therefore has two distinct research questions requiring two distinct research methodologies. For clarity, the thesis will now progress with the methodology and findings following a qualitative investigation into RQ1 and this will be contained within a single chapter (Chapter 3). The study will then turn to the research methodology and findings following a quantitative investigation into RQ2 and this will also be presented in a single chapter (Chapter 4).

Chapter 5 will then draw together the findings of both research questions with key aspects of the Literature Review to evaluate how the study has contributed to an understanding of the development of nurture groups in secondary schools.

Chapter 3

Research Question 1: Methods and Findings

Chapter 3 will focus on the empirical research undertaken to investigate Research Question 1 that is summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Research Question 1.

What do stakeholders perceive to be practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?

- a) What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?*
- b) What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?*

In the context of this study, the term 'stakeholders' refers to the head teachers, teachers, parents and students interviewed for the study. All twelve stakeholders had either managed, led, attended or been involved with a nurture group in their secondary school. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken and recorded with the consent of those involved, generating nine transcripts for analysis.

Chapter 3 will begin by setting out the focus and boundary for the study followed by a discussion of the ethical issues that were managed by the study. The research design and the research methods employed by the study will then be set out, followed by the research findings pertaining to Research Question 1.

3.1 The focus and boundary for the research.

A focus and boundary for Research Question 1 is provided by the Dewey's pragmatic paradigm and the parameters of the research question itself. Dewey's conceptual framework, discussed earlier in this thesis (see 1.6) touches upon Dewey's description of five logical steps in the reasoning process (Dewey 1910: 72). These steps are summarised in Table 3.2 and provide a boundary for the research.

Table 3.2 Dewey's Logical Steps of Reason.

Step	The Logical Steps of Reason (Dewey 1910: 72)
1	Identifying the difficulty
2	Defining its location
3	Suggesting a possible solution to the difficulty
4	Applying reason to generate a hypothesis
5	Experimental corroboration and conclusion

This conceptual framework that is based on Dewey's pragmatic approach will provide parameters for the research design to be employed. In keeping with the pragmatic paradigm, findings emerging from the data will be held lightly and judged against their successful application or effects in the real world. Concepts of truth and knowledge will be perceived as being both fallible and open to revision. Any claims made by the research findings in relation to the

perceived benefits of nurture groups in secondary schools will be described as 'warrants to assert a belief', rather than a conclusive truth.

A second boundary for the study is provided by the overarching research question which asks 'what do stakeholders perceive to be practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?'. The phrasing of the question suggests that the research study holds an inherent assumption that nurture groups in secondary schools will be found, in some part, to cause effects. This assumption is acknowledged by the study and is founded upon early evidence of nurture groups in secondary schools e.g. Cooke et al (2008) and the increased prevalence of nurture groups in secondary schools (NGN 2010). The published reports of Ofsted following inspections of secondary school nurture facilities also supports the assumption that nurture groups in secondary schools are having an effect where they are located (see Ofsted 2006, 2008). But it is the detailed views of stakeholders that is under represented in the current literature and, through a small-scale study, this gap in the field will be attended to.

A further boundary for the study has been provided by the methods of transcript analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). As this aspect of the research study has employed semi-structured interview methods, Braun and Clarke's six-phase process of thematic analysis has guided the interpretation of interview transcripts. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke, serves as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. By exploring the distinctive features of nurture group provision and its impact on a specific set of stakeholders, the study aimed to unearth authentic meanings regarding the practical effects of nurture groups in secondary schools. Braun and Clarke's six-phase process of thematic analysis (2006:87) is illustrated in Table 3.3

Table 3.3 Braun and Clarke's Six Phase Approach to Thematic Analysis.

	Phase	Process
1	Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing, reading, re-reading, making notes, initial ideas
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data across the data set, collating data relevant to each code
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes
4	Reviewing themes	Checking themes against coded extracts and the entire data set; generating a thematic map of the analysis
5	Defining and naming themes	Refine the specifics of each theme; refine the overall story told by the analysis; clearly define each theme
6	Producing the report	Relating analysis back to the research questions and literature; producing a scholarly report with vivid and compelling extract examples

3.2 Research Ethics.

The Research Ethics Framework (ERSC 2005:1) asserts that all research should be designed and reviewed to ensure integrity and quality and that all participation should be voluntary and free from coercion. An Ethical Approval Checklist was submitted and confirmed by the University of Leicester's Senate (see Appendix i) including the study's Ethical Code generated for both aspects of the research (see Appendix ii).

The research design for this part of the study ensured that all interviewees were aware of the purpose of the research and that the researcher's

professional position and research status were also made explicit. CD1/Appendices/1 provides an example of the letter of invitation to professionals and CD1/Appendices/2 illustrates the interview plan that was shared ahead of the interview. Interviews with students and parents were negotiated through the school's nurture team and all participants were made aware of the interview plans in advance (CD1/Appendices/3 and 4).

Opportunities for 'rapport building' were created from the outset in all interview designs. In the interviews with professionals, interactions around the recording process (e.g. the loudspeaker arrangements, sound levels etc.) provided opportunities to interact informally ahead of the formal questions. This allowed the researcher to gauge mood, accents and pace of interaction ahead of the recording. In the student interviews and the parent interviews, this took the form of informal questions about student hobbies, attributes and interests. Responses from students and parents were then elaborated upon with opportunities for laughter or indications of mutual interest and respect taken with every opportunity.

As one might expect, the relationships developed within the interviews with the professional interviewees were more formal than in the student interviews and the parent interviews. During the professional interviews, power relations were relatively balanced with head teachers remaining relatively un-phased by the process. During the student interviews, the reality was that students were being subjected to an interview in a school by an adult with a particular role and their response to the interview situation was relatively subdued and passive. Parents, on the other hand, were interviewed within their own home environments and this promoted a more balanced and equal relationship during the interview process.

Throughout the nine interviews the researcher endeavoured to enact an appropriate relationship with interviewees at all times. Confirmation was sought with regard to the recording of the interviews and assurances were

given with regards to confidentiality and anonymity. However, anonymity was waived with consent in the case of certain professionals to allow an article on secondary nurture groups to be published in the SEBDA journal (see Colley 2009), based on the initial findings.

Arrangements were made to ensure that professionals, parents and students had access to post-interview support systems should the research process elicit any unforeseen consequences such as turmoil or upset. For professionals, this took the form of immediate and direct access to the researcher via email or phone while for the students and parents, access to professionals within the school nurture group was confirmed and made available.

3.3 Research Design.

The research design followed the Logical Steps of Reason set out by Dewey (1910: 72) and described earlier in Table 3.2. Dewey's steps of reason are therefore used to provide a framework for the research design as set out below:

- *Step 1 and 2: Identifying the difficulty and defining its location.*

Dewey's five steps of reason begin with the need to acknowledge a "felt difficulty" (Dewey 1910:72) that exists within a particular social or scientific framework, before identifying the location and definition of the difficulty through observation.

In the context of secondary school nurture groups the "felt difficulty" is clear: we currently do not know the effect that nurture groups are having in secondary schools in any detail or from the perspective of any key players (i.e. staff, students or parents). The Literature Review concluded that while a limited range of published sources have suggested that the promising benefits

of nurture groups in primary schools might be repeated in the secondary school environment (Cooke et al 2008, Cooper and Tiknaz 2007, Cooper and Whitebread 2007), other sources discussed in the literature review have questioned the benefits of nurture groups (Farrell and Ainscow 2002; Bailey 2007). This discrepancy in views and the lack of evidence around secondary school nurture groups in the literature therefore represented the 'felt difficulty' and the location of the problem that generated this research investigation.

- *Step 3: Suggesting a possible solution to the difficulty.*

In formulating a possible solution to the difficulty, the study elected to generate the evidence it required to respond to the 'felt difficulty' by employing a semi-structured interview technique. Interviews were planned with 12 stakeholders over the course of nine recorded interviews.

Locating potential participants for interview and negotiating access to them presented the study with its first challenge as the vast majority of secondary schools in the UK do not have nurture groups. This fact immediately reduced the sample universe for the study from all secondary schools in the UK to a relatively small number of secondary schools with active nurture group provision.

To secure at least five professional interviewees with the relevant experience of nurture group provision, a request was made to the Nurture Group Network (NGN) in London which coordinates the national membership database. NGN approached several secondary schools from within their membership and, with their permission, passed on the contact details of those schools willing to join the research. Five schools agreed to join the research and six colleagues contributed to the interviews undertaken with professionals. The professionals interviewed included four head teachers, one

pastoral head and one nurture group teacher. Together the perceptions of these stakeholders were labelled by the study as 'Professional' (Prof).

To secure the participation of students and parents in the research and to help negotiate access to them, a secondary school nurture group on the Isle of Man was approached. The school's nurture team were able to approach parents and students internally and secure permissions. The school then submitted the contact details of two sets of parents and two students to the researcher. Of the two students, one student was being supported by the Key Stage 3 nurture group while the second student received support from the Key Stage 4 facility.

Any relationship between the parents and students was not stipulated by the research study (to allow the nurture team more flexibility in securing participants) and it was anticipated that the students involved in the study might have no relationship with the parents involved. However, it transpired that the students interviewed for the research were also the children of the parents that were to be interviewed. This opened an additional avenue of research investigation that had not been anticipated, for not only might the data be analysed as a collective group of stakeholders (i.e. students and parents combined) but the data could potentially be analysed as the perceptions of the family as a unit (i.e. combining the perceptions of student A with the perceptions her parents and likewise for student B).

After careful consideration, it was decided that the data analysis of parent/student contributions would not be subdivided into family units given the size of the sample. With only a limited number of students and parents participating, it was felt that the richest and most authentic conclusions might be drawn from a data set that combined the perceptions of all six stakeholders. However, analysis of this kind might offer a fruitful area for research in the future.

Together, the perceptions of these stakeholders were labelled by the study as Students and Parents (SAP).

- *Step 4: Applying reason to generate a hypothesis.*

For Dewey, the generation of a hypothesis required “a leap, a jump... which cannot be absolutely warranted in advance” (Dewey 1910:75). The hypothesis for this research investigation suggested that stakeholders would perceive there to be a range of practical effects and benefits in having nurture groups in secondary schools while difficulties or disadvantages might also become apparent through the investigation. It was tentatively predicted that stakeholders would perceive there to be features of nurture group provision that are distinctive and that the impact of the intervention would be generally positive at an individual and whole school level. But in keeping with Dewey’s pragmatic view, this hypothesis was held lightly.

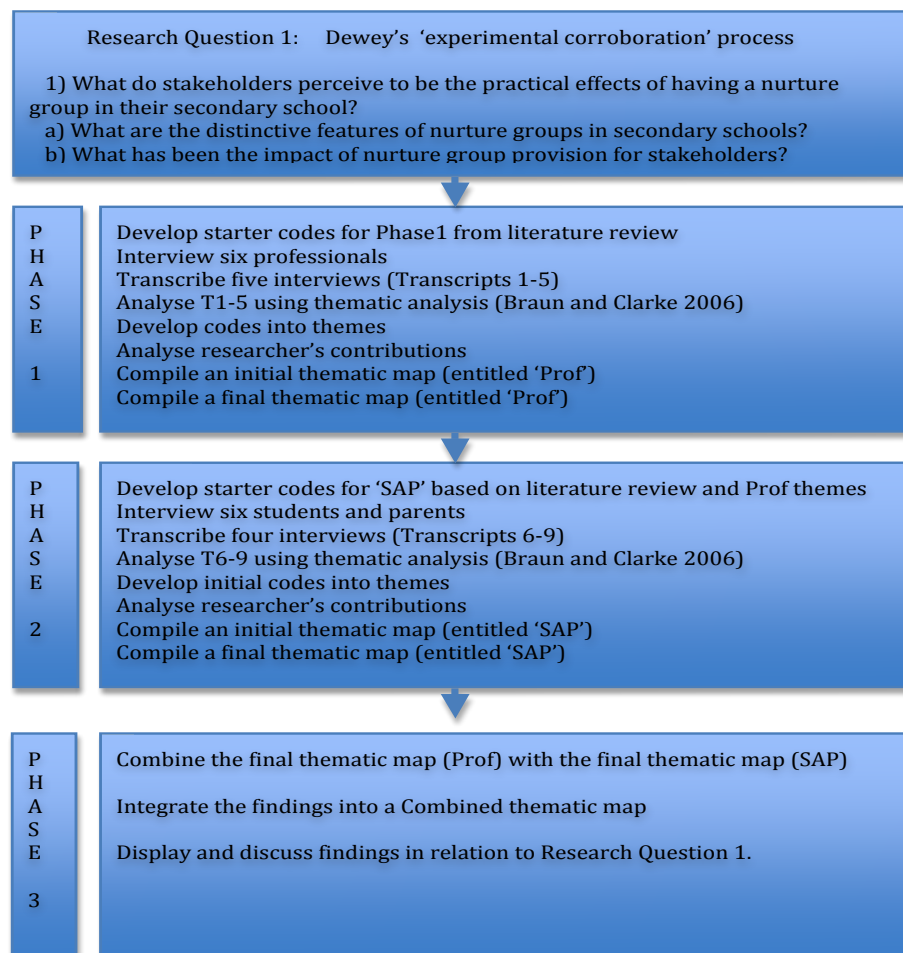
This hypothesis was generated through a study of research evidence and literature currently available and through the factual statistics recording the current growth in numbers of nurture group provision in secondary schools (Nurture Group Network 2010). Through the application of reasoning, the implications and consequences of this evidence was ‘traced out’ (Dewey 1910:76) to provide a hypothesis to be tested.

- *Step 5: Experimental corroboration and conclusion.*

A three-phase design was generated to test the hypothesis as part of the experimental corroboration process and this is illustrated in Fig 3.1, below. In the initial phase (Phase 1), the study would analyse the five interview transcripts of six professionals against a small number of ‘starter codes’ generated by the Literature Review. Additional codes would be generated and condensed into themes emerging from the data. In the following phase (Phase 2), interviews with students and parents would take cognisance of

Phase 1 themes while remaining open to new and unique themes that may emerge. This represents an important feature of the research design because the qualitative themes generated by the Phase 1 interviews with professionals shaped the Phase 2 interview process with students and parents.

Fig 3.1 Research Question 1: A three phase design.



Through this design, it was anticipated that the themes emerging from the interviews with professionals during Phase 1 could be explored in greater detail through the interviews with students and parents at Phase 2.

In the final phase of analysis (Phase 3), the themes emerging from all nine interviews were combined to answer Research Question 1 and a thematic map was constructed to succinctly compress and display the themes that had emerged from the interviews at Phases 1 and 2. In keeping with Dewey's pragmatic reasoning, all conclusions were understood to represent 'assertible warrants' rather than proven truths. By combining the thematic maps at Phase 3, the study design anticipated that a rich and authentic meaning might be drawn from the integrated findings of interviews with twelve stakeholders on the practical effects of nurture groups in secondary schools.

3.4 Research Methods.

The methods employed for this section of the research study were semi-structured interviews. At Phase 1 these were conducted over the telephone with Professionals and recorded. At Phase 2 the interviews were conducted with students and parents in person and recorded. The details of the research methods employed at each phase will now be outlined:

3.4.1 Research Methods at Phase 1: Interviews with Professionals.

Phase 1 of the research investigation involved a number of telephone interviews with professionals with experience of secondary school nurture groups. This involved head teachers, SEN Coordinators and nurture group teachers from across the Britain (including the Isle of Man, Wales and Scotland).

A pilot for the telephone interview was undertaken by approaching a local head teacher with a nurture group and negotiating a 30 minute pilot

interview. This interview was undertaken as an informal process involving discussion, note taking and reflection. Feedback from this pilot led to the formulation of a plan for the semi-structured interviews (see CD1/Appendices/2).

Six secondary schools with nurture group facilities were then formally approached in writing (see CD1/Appendices/1) and the interview plan was shared with them. One head teacher declined to participate due to workload commitments but five schools agreed to participate allowing five telephone interviews to take place during April-May 2009. The interviews were then transcribed, recording a verbatim account of each interviewee's central verbal utterances. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis does not require the same level of detail in the transcripts as discourse analysis or narrative analysis. For this reason, a decision was made that non-verbal utterances (such as coughs) would not be logged in the transcripts and on occasions the closing interactions with no bearing on the research questions (e.g. votes of thanks, informal closing interactions etc) would also summarised rather than recorded in full.

An extract from Transcript 1 is included as Appendix 1 but for full transcripts for all five interviews are please refer to CD1/Transcripts1-5.

Following the initial transcription from the recording, each transcript was then divided into numbered paragraphs to allow a clear identification of extracts during the coding process. In this way, each extract of text could easily be identified through a reference to the transcript number and the paragraph number. If, for example, a transcript extract was labelled T2/16, this would indicate quickly and concisely that the extract referred to in the study could be found in paragraph 16 of transcript 2.

Having transcribed all five interviews, the research design followed the six-stage thematic analysis guide described by Braun and Clarke (2006: 87) and

summarised earlier in Table 3.3. By following the guide to thematic analysis, the research set out to simplify, abstract and transform the raw data corpus into a coherent and authentic report on the findings of the qualitative study.

At stage one, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that an in depth familiarisation with the data corpus is required as a starting point and to this end Riessman (1993) advocates the active participation of the researcher in the interview and transcription process. Further immersion in the data was then achieved through the repeated reading and re-reading of the transcripts. During this process, active searches for patterns and meanings took place at a broad and general level.

- *Starter Codes*

The Literature Review had already generated four starter codes to assist with the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to extracts or 'chunks' taken from the transcripts and codes are used to retrieve and organise data as the process of data reduction commences (Braun and Clarke 2006). The four starter codes represented patterns and meanings identified through the literature review as being relevant to the study and likely to feature in the thematic analysis. But the starter themes were held lightly and offered only a starting point for the analysis and generation of additional codes. Table 3.4. summarises the starter codes employed as a starting points for the analysis and suggests why these codes were chosen.

Table 3.4 Phase 1 Starter Codes.

<i>Phase 1 Professionals</i>		
<i>T1-5</i>	<i>Starter Codes for Transcripts 1-5</i>	<i>Justification for the code</i>
Code 1	The nurture group offers a 'safe base'	The literature review has identified attachment theory and the need for a 'safe base' as a central feature of the nurture group.
Code 2	How the nurture group connects with other support systems within the school	Nurture groups in secondary schools are not being developed in a vacuum. A range of support systems already exist in schools including exclusion rooms, shelter groups, teaching assistant support, behaviour units etc. How the NG binds into this range of support is likely to require a code
Code 3	Assessment and referral structure	The literature review suggests that assessment and referral procedures are central to effective NG provision in the primary school. How the secondary school organises and undertakes assessment and referral to nurture is likely to require a code
Code 4	Do nurture groups stigmatise students?	The literature review has identified criticism of NGs for separating, segregating and effectively excluding students from mainstream opportunities. To what degree is this recognised by the interviewees?

- *First Level Coding*

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a series of First Level codes should be generated in a broad and general sense. Each transcript should be considered against the starter codes and additional codes emerging from the data should be recorded. The transcripts were therefore considered in order, commencing with Transcript 1 and moving through to Transcript 5. From the outset, the analysis consisted of a concurrent flow between the tasks of data reduction, data transformation and data organisation. While the structure of the analysis would begin with Transcript 1 and move through to Transcript 5 in order, the process was deliberately iterative and involved the continuous reappraisal of transcripts in the light of emerging themes from the data.

Initially, notes were made by hand in the margin of Transcript 1 with full and equal attention given to each data item. At this stage, the coding often took phrases or words from the transcript verbatim to label individual codes. Having made a first coding of Transcript 1, a total of 17 codes were identified. As anticipated, all four of the provisional codes were confirmed as being required in the analysis of Transcript 1. But the initial 17 codes were held lightly. Transcript 2 was then analysed and codes 1-17 were considered against Transcript 2, where appropriate. The data within Transcript 2 augmented the total number of initial codes required from 17 to 35 codes at which point Transcript 1 was re-analysed against these additional codes.

Transcript 3 was then analysed in a similar way, augmenting the total number of codes generated by transcripts 1, 2 and 3 to 47 codes. A further analysis of Transcripts 1 and 2 in the light of the new codes generated by Transcript 3 took place before Transcript 4 extended the number of identified codes to 63.

Interestingly, Transcript 5 did not advance the number of codes required in any way as all the data items identified within Transcript 5 could be accommodated by the existing 63 codes. However, a further review of all five

transcripts generated a further 13 initial codes bringing the total number of first level codes to 76. The First Level codes generated by the thematic analysis of Transcripts 1-5 are included as Appendix 2.

- *Reorganising Transcripts against the First Level Coding*

At the next stage each transcript was again considered individually. In Transcript 1, each individual data extract was colour coded and formally linked to one of the codes between 1-76. Each data extract was then reorganised within the Transcript 1 data set based on the allocated code. In this way, all data extracts relating to a specific code (e.g. Code 1: 'The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support') were displayed together in a new data display entitled 'Code Table'. A similar process was then undertaken for transcripts 2, 3, 4 and 5 until all the transcripts generated by the five interviews had been reorganised into code tables according to the initial 76 codes. An extract from the Transcript 1 First Level Code Table is included as Appendix 3 and full details of all five code tables can be found on CD1/Codes/1-76.

The process of sifting and sorting the data from the First Level coding process then required the generation of a Master Code Table that combined the data extracts from all five transcripts in relation to the 76 First Level codes. The Master Code Table drew together the complete range of extracts from all five interviews into the 76 First Level code headings. In this way the extracts from all five interviews relating to, for example, Code 1 ('the nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support') could all be housed together and in this example, four of the five interviews provided extracts relating to this Code 1. Appendix 4 provides for an extract from Master Code Table (A) as an example and full details can be found on CD1/Master Code Table/Table A.

- *Second Level Coding*

Having generated a Master Code Table that housed extracts from all five interviews together under 76 codes, refinement of the code descriptors was required to better reflect the range of ideas held within each collection of extracts.

To achieve this, all the extracts from the five transcripts that had been combined and located within specific data code headings were now re-read in detail and reviewed in the context of the First Level heading. Where the first level codes needed certain refinements to capture more accurately the content of the whole data set, this was undertaken. The refined code heading was labelled Second Level Codes and a summary of the changes made in the light of this analysis is included as Appendix 5.

An analysis of the researcher's contribution to the development of codes and themes was then undertaken. Any semi-structured interview represents an interchange of ideas between individuals where the interviewer typically initiates the discourse and responds over a period of time to the contribution of the interviewee. The interview plan (CD1/Appendices/2) describes the flexible structure for the interview and indicates the kinds of contributions to be made by the researcher (as interviewer). Influencing and shaping the discourse is an inevitable feature of this kind of qualitative research but being clear on how the researcher influenced the data set is equally important.

The data analysis of the researcher's contribution recorded 79 separate contributions from the researcher during the course of the five interviews and this data base is included on CD1/Researcher/T1-5. The researcher contributions were grouped into four categories:

- a) Requesting basic info (Basic)
- b) Introducing a discussion area or theme (IT)

- c) Developing a discussion area or Theme (DT)
- d) Reflecting or summarising a discussion area (Ref)

Requesting basic information related to the way in which the researcher asked the interviewee about whether the facility was full time or part time; when their secondary nurture facility opened; and recorded the important formalities of thanking the participants. A total of 16 contributions were made by the researcher with reference to requesting basic information. Of more significance to the research outcomes were the way the researcher introduced a discussion area or theme. The data analysis noted that the researcher had introduced 34 areas for discussion across the five interviews. Eight of these contributions related directly to the research questions (see Transcript 1/30, Transcript 2/7) while 12 other contributions introduced areas that would later feature as initial codes in the thematic analysis process. Issues around the stigma of attending nurture group provision were initiated by the researcher on two occasions for discussion and the cost of running a nurture group was initiated by the researcher on five occasions. Interestingly, while the costs of running a nurture group featured in the initial thematic analysis as a strong theme in the data, this emerging theme did not ultimately contribute to the final data set. As the compression of themes progressed, it was decided that issues around setting up costs, securing funding and value for money were not sufficiently relevant to the clear focus of the research question to be included.

The researcher was found to be developing discussion areas on 20 occasions and summarising the dialogue on 9 occasions. The concept of the 'safe base' (see Transcript 1/12) and the structured educational programme offered by nurture groups (see Transcript 3/33 or Transcript 4/45) were actively developed by the researcher over the course of the five interviews. While the researcher's contribution to the development of the interviews is inevitable and a fundamental aspect of the interview research method, claims for the

themes emerging from the data must be held lightly and understood in the context of the researcher's contributions to those themes emerging.

- *Themes emerging in relation to the Research Question*

Having refined the 76 code headings into Second Level Codes and taken cognisance of the researcher's contribution to the semi-structured interviews, Braun and Clarke's guide to thematic analysis (2006) suggests that a search for themes within the data can begin. Guided by the parameters set by the research question, a search for themes within the data saw the 76 Second Level Codes re-organised in terms of their relevance to either:

Research Question 1a - What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

or

Research Question 1b - What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?

Where a Second Level Code clearly related to 'features of the secondary school nurture group' (i.e. Research Question 1a) this was noted by hand on the Master Code Table. Where a code related to the 'impact that the nurture provision had had' in relation to individual progress or whole school developments (i.e. Research Question 1b) this was also noted by hand. Many of the Second Level Codes were found to map onto the research questions comfortably, but emerging from the data were a number of themes that did not relate to the research questions directly but were clearly strong patterns within the data. These themes were identified as relating to:

- nurture group costs
- training issues
- the nature of student difficulties
- plus miscellaneous ideas and subjects.

Table 3.5 indicates the way in which Second Level Codes 1-76 were re-organised in relation to both the research question and the additional themes that had emerged from the data analysis. For an example of the thematic analysis process please see Appendix 6 but for full details of how Second Level codes were reorganized into themes please see CD1/Themes1-5/RQ1a/Codes; CD1/Themes1-5/RQ1b/Codes; and CD1/Themes1-5/Other Themes.

Table 3.5 Second Level Code Reorganisation (Phase 1).

Phase 1: Interviews with Professionals		
Research Questions and Themes	Second Level Codes relating to the RQ/Theme	Number of Codes
RQ 1a) What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75	44 Codes
RQ 1b) What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?	9, 11, 23, 29, 33, 40, 42, 46, 47, 48, 59, 61, 66, 67, 68	15 Codes
Nurture group costs	16, 38, 44	3 Codes
Training issues	45, 50, 57, 60, 70	5 Codes
The nature of student difficulties	1, 5, 13	3 Codes
Miscellaneous range of ideas and subjects	10, 20, 25, 49, 56, 76	6 Codes

- *Third Level Coding*

At the Third Level of coding it was important to compress the Second Level codes still further to develop thick and rich themes in relation to the distinctive features of the nurture group in the secondary school, the impact of the provision for stakeholders and the additional themes that had emerged. This process would involve returning to the second level codes and discarding weak codes, collapsing codes into broader themes and reinforcing codes with additional extracts where appropriate. A detailed description of how this was undertaken in relation to Research Question 1a will now follow.

In total, forty-four codes were found to inform Research Question 1a and Table 3.6 indicates how the Second Level codes were compressed into themes that related to the Research Question.

Table 3.6 Second Level Codes and the Research Question.

Transcripts 1-5

re: Research Question 1(a): What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

Developing themes from second level analysis codes by reinforcing codes with additional extracts, collapsing codes into broader themes and discarding weak codes.

Summary thematic analysis and selection:

- Reclassified as weak codes:
3, 7, 14, 22, 26, 43, 51, 52, 53, 62, 73, 74, 75
- Codes that were collapsed into other codes :
First round: 19 into 12, 28 into 17, 39 into 4, 55 into 28, 58 into 54, 63 into 4, 69 into 4, 72 into 4, Second round: 18 into 8, 24 into 8, 34 into 8, 9 into 32, 37 into 71, 27 into 65, 35 into 32
- Codes moved to a new theme : 'Miscellaneous features of the NG'
30, 35, 54, 64, 65, 71

Codes were collapsed into neighbouring codes where one code could be broadened into a theme to accommodate both. For example, code 19 'the nurture group can offer support to students with medical illness' was collapsed into code 12 'nurture group support for school-refusers' to generate a theme entitled 'managing specialist cases'. 'Managing specialist cases' was then confirmed as one of the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school, based on the thematic analysis of the views of the professionals.

Other themes were confirmed through the Third Level analysis without necessarily changing the name of the code. For example, Second Level code 2 'the nurture group as a safe base' was confirmed as a theme due to the number of transcript extracts that supported this theme and the number of interviewees that cited the 'safe base' as a key feature. In total, nine extracts supported this theme as a feature of nurture group provision in the secondary school in three of the five transcripts analysed.

An important aspect of the Third level analysis was to discard codes that the thematic analysis had identified as being 'weak'. Codes in this category would include those where the number of extracts supporting the code was low (i.e. one extract) or if the content of the extract was considered insubstantial or incoherent.

For example, code 52 'understanding the attachment issues that may feature for students' was supported by only one extract that read:

T4/9: understanding that negative attachments may have been created or lack of attachment.

As a single extract that lacked both coherence and links with other codes, code 52 was identified as being a 'weak code' and removed from the data set into a separate data set labelled 'weak codes' (see

CD1/Themes/RQ1a/WeakCodes). Additional indicators of a potentially 'weak' code included codes with only one transcript contributor. For example, Second Level code 3 'access to a dedicated room for nurture group work' was supported by six extracts but all by one contributor (Transcript 4). As such the content was reviewed and a decision made to relocate the code into the weak code data set. It is important to note that the 'weak code' data set would be reviewed again as part of future analysis stages to ensure that subtle themes had not been overlooked.

The Third Level Coding allowed completely new themes to be confirmed to ensure that codes without the strength to stand alone as individual themes made a contribution to the final data analysis. For example, a theme entitled 'Miscellaneous features of the nurture groups' was created to ensure that codes such as Second Level code 30 'the nurture group breakfast' and code 54 'aspects of the nurture group curriculum' that were well supported with data extracts could make distinct contributions to make to the research findings. By incorporating these codes into the miscellaneous theme, the content of the codes could be bound into the final data analysis

- *Confirmation of the strong themes emerging from the data analysis re Research Question 1a*

Table 3.7 summarises the strong themes emerging from the data in relation to Research Question 1(a) and the distinctive features of nurture groups in secondary schools, as perceived by six professionals.

Table 3.7 Strong themes emerging from the data in relation to Research Question 1(a).

<i>Phase 1 (Professionals)</i>
<i>Strong themes emerging from the data re Research Question 1(a) 'the distinctive features of NG provision'</i>
2. The nurture group as a 'safe base' for students
4. The nurture group employs dedicated, specialist staff with appropriate training and skills
8. The nurture group offers an immediate response in emergencies for students and parents
12. The nurture group manages specialist cases for the secondary school
17. The nurture group has detailed assessment and identification processes
28. Nurture group intervention offers a structured, organised, and planned educational programme
32. The nurture group complements a professional 'continuum' of care, support and provision.
36. The nurture group offers support over lunch times and break times
41. The nurture group supports the transition of students from primary school into secondary school
plus Misc features of the nurture group (combining the following 6 codes):
30. The nurture group breakfast
64. The nurture group staff have the time to spend with students
65. The nurture group offer space to students.
35. Considerable student numbers access informal nurture group support
54. The nurture group has a distinct curriculum
71. The nurture group that has open access and can function as a drop in facility

Appendix 7 describes provides an extract illustrating the way in which strong themes emerging from the data have been developed in relation to Research Question 1a. For full details please see CD1/Appendices/5

- *Thematic analysis methods in relation to Research Question 1b*

A similar process was then undertaken to analyse the Third Level codes relating to Research Question 1(b) (i.e. the impact of nurture provision for stakeholders). The relevant codes (9, 11, 23, 29, 33, 40, 42, 46, 47, 48, 59, 61, 66, 67 and 68) were reviewed, analysed and compressed into broader themes as described for Research Question 1a. This included the generation of a new theme (Miscellaneous Impact) and the creation of a data set for 'weak codes' based on the analysis. Full details of this process can be found on CD1/ThemesT1-5/RQ1b but Table 3.8 summarises the strong themes that emerged from the Third Level analysis of codes relating to Research Question 1b.

Table 3.8 Strong themes that emerging from the data in relation to Research Question 1b.

<i>Phase 1 (Professionals)</i>
<i>Strong themes emerging from the data re Research Question 1(b) the impact of NG provision for stakeholders</i>
11. Labelling and stigma issues around attending the nurture group
23. The impact of nurture group provision on the long term outcomes for students
66. The positive impact of nurture groups on individual student progress
67. The overall impact of the nurture group provision for the schools

Plus Miscellaneous Impact of the nurture group combining the following 2 codes:

33. Attendance and exclusion issues.

47. The nurture group as an extension of whole school ethos

- *Reviewing the 'weak codes' data set*

Having unearthed a range of strong themes from within the data relating to the Research Questions 1a and 1b and having compressed them into two summary tables (Tables 3.6 and 3.7), a further review of the data sets labelled 'weak codes' was required to ensure that no nuggets of meaning had been over-looked during the thematic analysis process thus far. Significantly, a particular code initially labelled as 'weak' stood out as being of potential significance to the research. Code 29 'the limits of the nurture group's capacity to meet all needs' had been initially removed to the 'weak codes' data set for Research Question 1b (see CD1/Themes/RQ1b/WeakCodes) because the code had only one extract in support of it, provided by Transcript paragraph 22:

T1/22: In a sense we almost failed those kids by withdrawing the provision in Key Stage 4 and we were fairly rigid about it. Other kids in Key Stage 3 needed the support and we couldn't stretch it but we let them down and those kids were quite distressed.

But a theme around 'criticisms of nurture group provision' was emerging from the broader analysis emerging from the data, for example Code 56 ('mainstream teachers who relinquish responsibility for SEN students) had an extract that stated:

T4/ 15: We have an autism unit in the school and the danger is that colleagues will relinquish responsibility with 'they're your kids' if set up a facility that has a dedicated space, room or base. That's a key point.

In addition, Code 21 (examples of unsuccessful nurture group provision) had three extracts reporting dissatisfaction with nurture group provision:

T1/17: At one level I don't think nurture has been entirely successful.

T1/18: The first generation of children that then went into KS4 and had had 3 yrs of nurture support really didn't cope at all because they had had a level of support that was suddenly withdrawn from them, effectively.

T3/22 : We are not always successful, but the nurture group is a critical aspect.

For this reason, Code 29 (the limits of the nurture group's capacity to meet all needs) was retrieved from the 'weak code' data set helped to form a new theme: Criticisms of nurture group provision

- *Revised themes at Phase 1 (Interviews with Professionals)*

The revised themes relating to the Research Question 1 are displayed in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Themes relating to the Research Question 1 (Phase 1).

Phase 1: Professionals			
Research Question 1: What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?			
Themes relating to RQ 1a: What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?	Themes relating to RQ 1b: What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?	Other Themes emerging from the data	
Safe Base <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open in unstructured times/breaks/lunchtimes • Supporting transitions 	Overall impact	Criticisms of nurture group provision (possible dangers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 'relinquishing responsibility' • Insufficient capacity • Stigma issues 	
Specialist Staff	Positive individual progress	Nature of student difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues within the home • Typical difficulties of students referred to NG 	
Immediate response	Long term student outcomes	Training issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSET training • Attending conferences • Professional networks • Visits to secondary school NGs in action • Mainstream staff visits to the school NG 	
Managing specialist cases	Miscellaneous Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school 	Costs of nurture group provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money 	

	ethos • Attendance and exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funding • The costs of running a NG
Detailed assessment		Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating the initial idea • Visitors to the NG • Teacher intuition • The size of the secondary school
Structured educational programme		
The continuum of care • Options before NG intervention was available		
Miscellaneous features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspects of the nurture group curriculum • Nurture group staff with the time to spend with students time • The nurture group breakfast • The nurture group that has open access and a drop in facility • Student numbers accessing nurture group support • Nurture groups offer space 		

The guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that at this stage the revised themes emerging from the data might be displayed as a visual representation to assist with clarity. An initial thematic map was therefore

generated based on the themes summarised in Table 3.8. and is included as Appendix 8.

In order that priority was given to the themes relating directly to the Research Question, a further review of the themes illustrated in the initial thematic map was required to distil the research data still further. It was noted that several themes emerging from the research data had mapped directly onto Research Questions 1a and 1b which was encouraging. However, a number of themes had emerged that had less direct relevance to the focus of the research questions while remaining of great significance to how nurture groups might be developed in secondary schools (e.g. themes around training and the costs of running a secondary school nurture group). To keep the research focused and crisp it was decided to remove the extraneous themes that did not map directly onto the Research Question. Themes around training, costs, and the nature of student difficulties were removed from the data set at this point. The only additional theme to be retained was the emerging theme around 'criticisms of nurture group provision'. This theme was retained and merged into the 'features of nurture group provision' section as it was felt that this theme would offer an important balance in the discussion around the perceived features of nurture groups in secondary schools.

Following these decisions, a final thematic map for Transcripts 1-5 (Professionals) was generated and is included as Appendix 9.

3.4.2 Research Methods at Phase 2: Interviews with Students and Parents.

Phase 1 of the research saw semi-structured interviews with Professionals recorded, transcribed and analysed to generate thick layers of meaning in relation to the research question. This process has been described in some detail and, in many respects, the same research methods are repeated at Phase 2. Phase 2 involved four semi-structured interviews with students and

parents to investigate their perceptions of nurture group provision in their local secondary school. The interview questions for students and parents were designed to investigate the research question but also to enrich the themes that had been generated by the interviews with Professionals at Phase.

In the interviews with students and parents, the interview plan (see CD1/Appendices/3 and CD1/Appendices/4) sought to explore the themes of the 'safe base', student outcomes and the possible stigma issues associated with nurture provision as these themes, among others, had emerged from Phase 1 of the research. The student/parent perspective on these themes would therefore contribute to the overall strength of the claims made regarding these themes.

However, to provide opportunities for new themes to emerge from the interviews with students and parents, a key question in the students' interview plan was deliberately open-ended with each student being asked to choose five words to describe the nurture group. In this way, the interview was then led by their responses for if the students described the nurture group as "fun", this would then precipitate a number of questions around that descriptor thereby providing a rich and thick description of the impact of nurture group provision on their school lives.

The questions to parents did not have an open-ended approach but explored home-school contact, support during transitions and the management of specialist cases in more detail.

All four interview transcripts (T6-9) can be found in full on CD1/Transcripts 6-9 and an extract from Transcript 6 is included as Appendix 10. Transcript 6 describes the interview with a male, year 8 student (Student B) while Transcript 7 records the views of a female, year 10 student (Student A). Transcript 8 describes the interview with the parents of Student B while

Transcript 9 records the views of the parents of Student A. Employing Braun and Clarke's six-step process (2006), the transcripts were read and re-read to promote an initial familiarity with the data. During this process, active searches for patterns and meanings took place at a general level. The specific themes that had emerged in Phase 1 (Professionals) were incorporated as starter codes for Transcripts 6-9 in Phase 2 of the research and these codes are summarised Table 3.10.

Table 3.10 Phase 2 Starter Codes.

T6-9	Starter Codes for Transcripts 6-9	Justification for the code
1	The nurture group as a 'safe base'	Interviews 1-5 identified the 'safe base' aspect of the nurture group as a strong theme. This code may also be required for the parent/student interviews
2	The nurture group's role in supporting the transition from primary to secondary school	Interviews 1-5 identified the nurture group's support in transition arrangements as a strong theme. This code may also be required for the parent/student interviews
3	Alternative outcomes had nurture group provision not been available	Interview 1 raised the issue of letting students "sink or swim in the old system" (TI/7). How do students and parents view the alternative outcomes had nurture not been available to them; if they had been allowed to 'sink or swim?'
4.	Home- school contact and communication	Given the literature review and the status of the stakeholders, home-school communication is a likely area for discussion
5	Does attending the nurture group stigmatise students?	The literature review has identified criticism of NGs for separating, segregating and effectively excluding students from mainstream opportunities. To what degree is this recognised by the interviewees?

- *First Level Coding*

The four transcripts were analysed using the iterative methods described in detail at Phase 1. The study does not propose to repeat this description of the research methods employed but rather, to highlight the key features of the thematic process at the different levels of analysis. Overall, the thematic analysis at the First Level coding stage generated 49 initial codes including the five starter codes (see Appendix 11). Each transcript was then re-organised in relation to the 49 codes producing Code Tables for Transcripts 6, 7, 8 and 9. An extract from Code table (T6) can be found in Appendix 12 while full details of the Code Tables can be found on CD1/Codes/1-49.

When all four transcripts had been re-organised in this way, Master Code Table (B) was created from the data involving the collation of extracts from all four transcripts under the 49 First Level code headings. An extract from Master Code Table (B) is included as Appendix 13 and can be found in full on CD1/Master Code Table B/(T6-9).

At this point, the contribution of the researcher was considered ahead of the search for themes. All interviews with students and parents were conducted on the Isle of Man and the fact that the researcher was an Isle of Man resident and employed as a senior manager for special needs education (including nurture group development) had potential implications for the research project that should be acknowledged. To minimise these implications, the researcher ensured that the students and parents interviewed for the project had had no professional or personal links with the researcher historically. The tone of the interviews was deliberately informal and no reference was made to the professional role of the researcher. The interviews were then structured in such a way as to ensure that a non-participant research model was established and there was, for example, no attempt to participate in nurture group tasks with the students present, nor join family based events to investigate themes emerging from the interviews.

As a non-participant researcher, empirical evidence was generated from the raw interview transcripts only, without any additional evidence involving participatory research methods.

In terms of the analysis of the raw interview transcripts, it was important to acknowledge that the researcher's contributions to the semi-structured interviews would inevitably have an influence on themes emerging from the data. Restrictions were built into this process through the interview plans (see CD1/Appendices/3 and CD1/Appendices/4) and the full transcripts illustrate how the researcher sought to follow the contributions of the interviewees rather than to impose ideas and themes onto the data directly (CD1/Transcripts 6-9). But an analysis of the researcher's contributions would serve to place the themes emerging from the empirical research in the context of reciprocal interaction.

In the four semi-structured interviews with students and parents the researcher made 157 separate contributions and the details are included on CD1/Researcher/T6-9. The contributions were again grouped into four categories:

- a) Requesting basic info
- b) Introducing a discussion area
- c) Developing a discussion area
- d) Reflecting or summarising a discussion area

Interestingly, the number of researcher contributions when interviewing students and parents was considerably higher than when interviewing professionals with 157 contributions in four interviews against the 79 contributions made in five interviews with professionals. This increase in contributions could be said to reflect the greater effort that was required by the researcher to maintain positive interactions, good humour and encourage participation with this interview group. By contrast, the professionals were

ready and willing to lead the dialogue and 'fill the gaps' allowing the researcher to play a lesser role in terms of direct contributions.

The way in which the researcher introduced themes is the crucial area for analysis ahead of the search for themes from Master Code Table B. Themes such as peer relationships, the nurture group as a safe base and the alternative outcomes had nurture not been available were all generated by the researcher intervening to ask specifically about these areas. Issues around stigma and individual student progress were also raised by the researcher and this is acknowledged by the research methods and findings.

- *Second Level Coding*

Having generated Master Code Table B, a search for themes within the data then began. Guided by the parameters set by the research questions, the Master Code Table B was analysed and codes relating to either (RQ1a) the distinctive features of nurture groups or (RQ1b) the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholder were identified and grouped. As the thematic analysis progressed, four additional themes emerged from the data. These themes were identified as relating to:

- Nature of student difficulties
- Technical issues
- Whole School Systems
- Criticisms of nurture group provision

Table 3.11 indicates the way in which Second Level Codes 1-49 were reorganized in relation to both the research question and the additional themes that had emerged from the data analysis. For an example of the thematic analysis process please see Appendix 14 and for full details please see CD1/Themes6-9/RQ1a/Codes; CD1/Themes6-9/RQb/Codes; or CD1/Themes6-9/Other Themes.

Table 3.11 Second Level Code Reorganisation (Phase 2).

Phase 2 Students and Parents		
Research Questions and Themes	First Level Codes	Number of codes
RQ 1(a) the distinctive features of nurture groups	10, 11, 12, 13,15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 32,33, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49	20 Codes
RQ 1 (b) the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholder	20, 22, ,23 , 26, 28, 29,	6 Codes
Additional Theme 1: Nature of student difficulties	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 27, 30, 38, 39,	9 Codes
Additional Theme 2:Technical issues	1, 2,3, 21, 45,	5 Codes
Additional Theme 3:Whole School Systems	19, 24,	2 Codes
Additional Theme 4:Criticisms of nurture group provision	35, 42, 43	3 Codes
Discarded (i.e. without extracts)	9, 14, 31, 36, 37, 40,	6 Codes

- *Third Level Coding*

At the Third Level of coding it was important to compress the Second Level codes still further to develop thick themes reflecting the perceptions of students and parents. This process would involve returning to the second level codes and discarding weak codes, collapsing codes into broader themes and reinforcing codes with additional extracts where appropriate.

In total, twenty codes were found to inform Research Question 1a and Table 3.12 indicates how these twenty codes were compressed into rich themes.

Table 3.12 Code Compression.

Transcripts 6-9

Re: Research Question 1(a): What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

Developing themes from second level analysis codes by reinforcing codes with additional extracts, collapsing codes into broader themes and discarding weak codes.

Summary thematic analysis and selection:

- Reclassified as weak codes: 13
- Collapsed codes : 11 with 10, 49 with 15
- Sub-divided codes: 10
- Refined Codes: 10, 33, 48, 12, 25, 32
- Codes moved into another theme: 18 and 44 to Nature of student Difficulties. 24 from NOSD into 32
- Codes amalgamated into new code: 42,43 and 35 combined to create Criticism of NG

For full details of how codes were compressed into themes with regards to RQ1a, RQ1b and the Other Themes please refer to CD1/Themes 6-9/RQ1a/Themes; CD1/Themes 6-9/RQ1b/Themes; or CD1/Themes 6-9/RQ1a/OtherThemes.

Having derived third level codes from the thematic analysis process, the codes were again reviewed based on the Braun and Clarke model. Each code heading was reconsidered against the content of the extracts allocated to the code. By reflecting on the extracts and the code headings, refinements were made to ensure that the code headings accurately reflected the content of the extracts. At this point for example, code 10 ('Features of nurture group provision') was subdivided into two codes named 'a place to go for students to calm down and collect themselves' and 'less like a classroom'.

Weak Codes were again identified and withdrawn from the data set where insufficient extracts supported the code or where the code lacked relevance

to the research question. For example, code 41 ('Private service support versus public service support') was allocated to the weak code data set because the issue around professionals in public practice working privately with families was not central to the research investigation nor was it a well supported code (one extract only). An example of weak codes removed from the Research Question 1a data set is included as Appendix 15.

- *Confirmation of the strong themes emerging from the data analysis re Research Questions 1a and 1b*

Table 3.13 summarises the strong themes emerging from the interviews with students and parents regarding the distinctive features of the nurture group in the secondary school and the impact the facility has had.

A further review of the themes generated by interviews with student and parents refined the strong themes still further. For example, the themes of 10a 'a place to go to calm', 25 'transitions' and 46 'it's a big school' were all subsumed into the 'safe base' theme while 33 'attracts parents' was adjudged too weak to be retained (with only one transcript in support of this theme). In the criticisms of nurture group provision theme, school links and referral to nurture were subsumed into the home-school communication theme. In keeping with the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006) an initial thematic map was developed based on the themes summarised in Table 3.11 and this is included as Appendix 16.

Table 3.13 Strong themes emerging from the data in relation to Research Question 1(a) and 1 (b).

Phase 1: Students and Parents		
Research Question 1: What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?		
Themes relating to RQ 1a: What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?	Themes relating to RQ 1b: What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?	Other Themes emerging from the data
10a) A place to go for students to calm down and collect themselves	26/28. Enjoyable schooling	Nature of student difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4. Absence from school • 5. Typical difficulties • 6. Case history • 7. Medical illness and GP contact • 18. Students attending nurture 'are different'
10b) Less like a classroom'	26/28. Promoting normal day to day contact with school	Technical issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Introducing the interview through initial discussion of student hobbies and interests. • 21. Explaining the research purpose, research structures, anonymity and confidentiality of the interview, appreciation and thanks. • 45. Interviewees' misunderstanding

		the researcher's question (poor interview technique?)
48. Safe base	29. Positive progress for students	Whole School Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3. Progress in Mainstream: staff, GCSEs, classroom environments, Head of Year • 19. Improving whole school understanding of NG provision
12. Specialist staff with training	20. Alternative outcomes?	Criticism of nurture group provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33. Home-school communication • 35. School links with parents • 42. Referral to nurture • 43. The capacity of nurture provision
15. Open access and flexible timings	26/28. Overall Impact	
25. Primary to secondary transition		
32. The NG and a continuum of support		
33. Attracts parents		
50. Criticism of NG		
46. It's a big school		

Again the overall themes were considered against the clear focus of the study, namely, to answer the research questions 1a and 1b. Where themes had mapped onto the research questions they would be naturally be retained in the research findings to help answer the research questions. But where a theme was adjudged to be insufficiently relevant to the research questions, the theme and the extracts associated with the theme were removed from

the final data set. This included data relating to the technical issues theme, the nature of students' difficulties theme and the whole school systems theme. While all contained data that was of interest in general, the process of distilling the data to answer the research questions precluded the data from these themes being retained. The additional theme generated by the research that was retained for the final stage of analysis was the criticism of nurture groups theme. This was retained to support the theme already featuring as part of the Phase 1 analysis of Professionals where criticisms of nurture groups also emerged as a theme.

Following these decisions, a final thematic map for Transcripts 6-9 (Students and Parents) was generated and is included as Appendix 17.

3.4.3 Research Methods at Phase 3: Combined data.

Phase 3 of the research brought the final thematic map generated through the interviews with professionals (see Appendix 9) together with the final thematic map generated through interviews with students and parents (see Appendix 17). The final thematic map was entitled 'Combined Thematic Map Transcripts 1-9' and is included as Appendix 18.

The method used to combine the two sets of data was relatively simple. Where both maps had a common theme (e.g. safe base) the two sub-themes generated by professionals (open lunch times and break times, supporting transitions) was augmented by the two sub-themes generated by the students and parents (a place to calm, it's a big school). Two sub-themes from the Miscellaneous theme (Professionals) were also compressed into the 'safe base' theme, namely, 'offering space and time' and the 'NG breakfast'. The final 'safe base' theme was therefore supported by six sub-themes and a rich array of interview extracts to be considered in the discussion of findings section.

A full summary of research findings following the interviews with stakeholders will now follow.

3.5 Research Findings.

This small-scale, empirical research study set out to investigate how the practical effects of having a secondary school nurture group were perceived by three sets of stakeholders: professionals, students and parents. In keeping with the pragmatic framework for the study, all findings are to be held lightly. The research question was divided into two sub-questions. While RQ1a was concerned with the 'distinctive features' of nurture group provision RQ1b focused on the perceived impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders. Table 3.14 summarises the empirical findings from the research study. The discussion section of this chapter will now explore the empirical research findings in detail.

Table 3.14 Summary of empirical findings.

<u>Research Question 1:</u> <i>What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?</i>	
RQ1(a): <i>What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?</i>	RQ1(b): <i>What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?</i>
Research Findings:	Research Findings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nurture group offers a 'safe base' for students • The nurture group operates with specialist staff • The nurture group enhances the school's continuum of support to students • The nurture group is a structured and organised educational intervention • Nurture group provision has identified weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture groups have supported positive individual progress • Nurture groups have impacted upon long term student outcomes • Nurture groups have impacted upon student attendance, the whole school ethos and enjoyment of school • Without the nurture group support, the projected outcomes for students were perceived to be poor.

3.6 Discussion re Research Question 1(a): What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

The findings for research question 1(a) that are set out in Table 3.14 will be discussed as individual subsections. Each finding is supported by extracts from the interview transcripts and the reader is reminded that these transcripts can be found in full on CD1/Transcripts 1-5 and CD1/Transcripts 6-9.

- The nurture group offers a 'safe base' for students

A clear theme to emerge from the analysis of interviews with nine stakeholders suggested that the nurture group in the secondary school offers a 'safe base' for students and that this represents a distinctive feature of the provision. Head teachers describe the nurture group as being "a place of safety and security" (T2/8) or a "haven" (T2/8) while offering both "stability and a reference point that has helped (students) to be successful in school" (T1/17). The nurture group environment is deliberately arranged to promote a homely and welcoming atmosphere with its slow-moving and predictable routines. The students know that "there will always be someone there to welcome us" (T2/16) and that staff within the nurture group will have "the time to spend with children which most class teachers and pastoral staff do not have" (T1/10)

The nurture group is described by one head teacher as having "the ability to make children feel safe and secure" (T1/11) while parents of student B regarded the facility as being "like a security blanket in school" (T7/23). Parents reported that "the children actually feel safe there" (T9/19) and that their child had "felt secure" within the provision (T9/13).

From the students' perspective, the distinctive environment provided by the nurture group allowed them to reduce their own anxieties about being in

school. For student B, the nurture group provided an environment where he could “calm down” (T6/10, T6/13), while student A described the facility as “relaxing” (T8/11, T8/13) and somewhere that she could collect herself in the face of increasing anxiety or panic attacks:

It gives you somewhere just to, not forget about school, but take two steps back and put everything into perspective (T8/12).

The students interviewed for the study both referenced the size of the secondary school as being a challenging and significant issue for them. Student A talked of the “chaotic people pushing in the corridor” (T8/26) and the fact that she used to be “terrified of big Year 11s barging past” (T8/26). Student B alluded to being “picked on” (T6/13) beyond the safety of the nurture group and the fact the secondary school was “a big school with Year 8s and Year 11s who I don’t know the name of” (T6/21).

Supporting the transition of primary school students into the ‘big school’ was identified by several stakeholders as representing a distinctive feature of the nurture group. For one head teacher, the safe base on offer to students through nurture group had “basically helped them to settle into school” (T7/12) and “adapt to the transition” (T4/14). Where primary liaison had raised concerns about particular students who were “not ready for secondary school” (T3/19) or whose “emotional baggage” (T5/7) might undermine the transition into secondary, the nurture group’s role was “to act as a bridge of transition for young people who had been identified” (T4/4) and to “help with the transition process” (T3/19).

With its specialised environment, consistent staffing and open access at lunch and break times, parents expressed their confidence in the provision which allowed them to send their child off to school in the expectation that the day would be successful:

because we knew that (nurture) support was there for him, that protection, we could let him go (to school) with ease (T7/20).

A further feature of the nurture group that was said by research participants to promote a sense of the 'safe base' was the availability of nurture provision across lunch times and break times on a daily basis, from Monday to Friday. Stakeholders reported that they particularly valued this feature of the provision which "hosts different kids everyday – it's a lot of children" (T1/31) and which "impacts throughout the school" (T1/31). Open access to the nurture group over the breaks and lunch time periods saw the numbers of students enjoying the facility in one school increase to 250 students per week (T2/16), a number which represents almost 17% of the school's population. Tea, toast and the refreshments were served at break times with the sharing of food promoting the sense of safety and care that is central to the nurture group philosophy.

Clearly, there is evidence to suggest that stakeholders perceive one of the practical benefits of having a nurture group in the secondary school is that it provides a 'safe base' for students. But to what degree can this sense of safety be generated in schools without nurture group provision?

Generally speaking, secondary school students are allocated to tutor groups in mainstream settings and it could be argued that a well-developed pastoral system might offer a sense of safety and security to all its students and not just those attending the nurture group. If strong attachments are generated between form tutors and students it may be that the form room itself becomes the safe base that stakeholders have identified as being a distinct feature of the nurture group. Alternatively, 'buddy-systems' are employed in many secondary settings that offer a peer-mentoring and support network to all students and these interventions do not separate or stigmatise the students requiring additional support. Teaching assistants may also be employed as an alternative to the nurture group model. Staff can be allocated

to support students with their social, emotional and behavioural needs without recourse to withdrawal periods that may be perceived as focusing on and indulging a student's vulnerability.

But within this model of whole school responsibility for pastoral care, one head teacher suggested that for students with high anxiety, emotional problems or attachment difficulties:

we just let them sink or swim in the old system. We knew of the issues but there was nothing we could do about it (T1/7).

And the extract from T1/7 represents a crucial point in the discussion around nurture groups in secondary schools. For most students, a well-defined and vigilant pastoral system will provide the necessary safety and security for the student to enjoy a successful secondary school education. But for a small number of cases, this system will not be successful. The safety offered by the mainstream form room will not suffice, despite the best efforts of the highly skilled form tutor or the well-developed peer mentoring system. Certain students are doomed to "sink" without the unique support offered by the nurture group in the secondary school because the anxiety that they endure prevents them from entering a mainstream form room complete with 25-30 peers. As one head teacher explained:

We have a number of school refusers that nurture is working with to get them to come into school (T1/35).

And student A described the difficulties she had returning to school after an absence following anxiety attacks and illness:

See, my place in (nurture) kinda gives me a chance to, if I feel too anxious, it gives me somewhere to come. It provides a lot of support (T8/8).

For the parents of student A, the nurture facility provided the safe base that she needed to begin her return to school:

If she would go into a classroom of children she would be overawed. (The nurture group provided) somewhere where she could go, where she could be quiet and she could kinda compose herself again (T9/11).

In providing a distinctive safe base with its own location and staffing, stakeholders suggested that the nurture group offers students “the space to feel more confident in themselves” (T1/28) which “a normal conventional school just does not have the space to do” (T1/37).

In a succinct phrase, student A confirmed that a defining feature of nurture group provision in the secondary school is the safe base that is on offer to students:

It definitely does make you feel safe (T8/26).

- The nurture group operates with specialist staff

A second distinctive feature of nurture group provision, as perceived by the research participants, refers to the specialist skills of the staff operating the facility. In common with best practice in mainstream classrooms, the effective nurture group practitioner will enjoy a natural rapport with students and their parents while delivering high quality learning experiences within the nurture group. Lessons will be planned, delivered and evaluated in accordance with best practice and the development of students’ social, emotion and behavioural skills will be monitored and nurtured by the team. Where the skills of the nurture practitioners are distinct from their mainstream colleagues lies in the “critical aspect of appropriate training” (T3/9).

In one secondary school contributing to the study, a head teacher had ensured that he had “trained staff effectively through attendance at all relevant courses so we had an expert and a suitable person” (T3/9). The NGN certificate in the Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups that has been described in detail earlier in the thesis and constitutes one such specialist course. All schools that engaged with this study had ensured that their staff had attended the specialist training provided by the Nurture Group Network and the Certificate course. This specialist knowledge and understanding was recognised as an important and distinctive feature of the nurture group in the secondary school with one head teacher reporting that:

(The nurture group provides) specialist staffing with the time to spend with children (T1/10).

The specialist skills of the nurture group staff were also recognised by parents interviewed for the study:

Its just having qualified people who understand the different emotional needs of different types of children (T9/17).

and

If they do have a little wobble there’s someone there fully qualified to help them, rather than a teacher who doesn’t understand who would maybe get frustrated and maybe think that they’re being a little bit unruly (or awkward) (T9/19).

But to what degree does the nurture group operate with “specialist staff”? Are parents justified in claiming that the nurture group has “qualified people” managing the emotional needs of different students? And to what degree

does the four day certificate in nurture theory and practice constitute “specialist training”?

Nurture group intervention is essentially a form of special educational needs provision and practitioners are likely to have qualifications that include Qualified Teacher Status, NNEB or NVQ qualifications. Working in SEN is a career choice and many nurture group practitioners will have had a breadth of experience in SEN before undertaking the challenging and rewarding role of nurture group teacher or support officer. The four-day certificate training in nurture group practice seeks to build on the experience, knowledge and skills that the delegates bring to the training. The training deliberately draws on the professional and personal experiences of the delegates across the four days and has a focus on professional development. By undertaking the course, delegates will receive training in a range of nurture group theory and practice approaches from attachment theory and neuroscience research to the assessment, planning and evaluation of interventions employing the Boxall Profile assessment instrument. Nurture group activities that promote the social and emotional aspect of learning will be introduced that support and complement the national curriculum. But four days of training remains a relatively short period of time and it could be argued that to make claims for the ‘specialism of staff’ after such a limited training period is to exaggerate the skills developed by the course. For example, to complete a specialist course in behaviour management through SEBDA, a trainee would be expected to undertake one year’s study, while a diploma in counselling through Chrysalis would also require a year’s commitment and engagement with practice. In this context, four days of training would appear to be an introduction to the nurturing approach rather than a specialist qualification.

And this would be the case if the certificate in nurture theory and practice was complete after four consecutive days. But the training is delivered in two blocks of two days allowing delegates to reflect on the initial two days training before undertaking the final two days. When the fourth day is

complete, delegates are then required to begin a case study in school that will require engagement with assessment and intervention using nurture group approaches over a 12 week period. Delegates will be required to reflect on key texts (Bennathan and Boxall 1998, 2000; Boxall 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz 2006) and develop their skills in a practical and beneficial way. The assignment task that is compulsory for all is externally assessed through Edge Hill University and can contribute towards NVQ, degree and Masters qualifications. It is not uncommon, therefore, for the completion of the certificate to require a full academic year. In this sense it could be argued that the four day certificate in nurture group theory and practice with its case study and assignment does indeed represent specialist training for those that have seen the course through to its conclusion.

But specialist training through the four day certificate is not the only feature of the specialist staff identified by stakeholders. The credibility of the individuals leading the nurture group in the secondary school was highlighted as a key quality of the successful nurture team:

The staff leading nurture must have credibility with students and colleagues so that the facility they run is associated with high standards (T4/37).

In addition, it was suggested that nurture staff must have personal and professional skills that include drive, passion and high quality interpersonal skills. In one example, a nurture support officer was described as sharing

.. a passion, vision and enthusiasm for the work which is key. We work closely together and that makes it successful. We model dialogue and ways of resolving conflict for students (T4/18).

Students acknowledged that the staff within the nurture room operated in a significantly different way from their mainstream colleagues.

(The nurture staff) are teachers and obviously (pause) you can talk to any teacher – but the (nurture) teachers are there more to understand your problems, rather than teach you, so they listen a bit more (T8/10).

If nurture staff 'listen a bit more rather than teach you', to what degree are nurture staff offered guidance and specialist training in listening to students, counselling and managing the outcomes of the listening process?

Professional counsellors undergo specific training and have formal supervision to ensure that their work is appropriate, effective and ethical. The supervision also offers support to the professionals involved as they manage the issues that emerge from their work with clients. The nurture teacher's role as listener, counsellor or manager of the school's "traumatised students" (T2/14, T2/25) is poorly defined. The four-day certificate offers no specific guidance on how, when and where the role of listener or counsellor should be undertaken by nurture staff. It is assumed that such interactions are just part of the normal school day and as such should be managed by the general protocols and procedures of the school. But as has been described, certain features of the nurture group in the secondary school are distinctive and unique including the promotion of strong relationships and significant attachments, a safe base and the space to talk. These distinctive features of nurture group practice appear to encourage students and staff to engage in dialogue around feelings, perceptions and ideations. The course and outcomes of such discussions will require skillful management by staff, particularly when the students involved in the nurture group are, by definition, struggling with significant social, emotional and or behavioural issues during their adolescence. And yet the four day certificate as it stands leaves nurture staff to manage these discussions using only their intuition, their life experience and their best-guesses.

This gap in the training and professional supervision for nurture teams in the secondary school is due in part to the fact that nurture groups originated in infant schools. While listening or indeed counselling young children may have featured in the early nurture groups, the secondary school with its adolescent students experiencing the particular problems of this developmental stage, represents a very different context. Depression, anxiety, self-harm, drugs and alcohol and sexual issues become more prevalent areas of concern for the school community when the nurture group is based in the secondary school rather than at Key Stage 1 or 2. And yet the training for nurture group teams has not kept pace with the demand for nurture groups in secondary schools. Without a clearly defined set of guidelines for nurture staff listening, supporting and guiding vulnerable students in secondary schools, nurture groups and their intervention will remain vulnerable to criticism.

Essentially, the nurture group movement needs to make a decision. If the role of the nurture group team involves the counselling of students, then appropriate training needs to be built into the continuing professional development of the staff involved. Formal supervision needs to be arranged and a close alignment with the code of conduct for counsellors should be acknowledged. If nurture teams are to draw back from this role, then the difference between formal counselling and the supportive dialogue undertaken by all school staff (including general interaction and reflection on choices) needs to be more clearly defined. Nurture teams should be clear and confident about which adolescent issues they can manage as educators and which issues will need to be managed or transferred to trained counsellors, psychologists or CAMHS teams.

According to the research participants, the staff operating the nurture group had outstanding skills and were able to offer tips to parents:

*The nurture teacher there is fantastic. They've been great
(T7/115).*

They've given us tips as well because at the end of the day it's new to us and they are trained (T7/24.)

The specialist nature of the nurture group staff and the nurture group intervention allowed the school community to respond quickly and effectively to emergency situations:

For individual kids who have experienced trauma it has been fantastic; somewhere where we could immediately offer succour and support which we couldn't do in the normal course of events. And we have done that on a number of occasions (T1/34).

The nurture group's distinctive feature of having "dedicated staff" (T5/23) with "the time to spend with children that most class teachers and pastoral staff do not have" (T1/10) extends the capacity of the school to manage and support a range of student needs. For example, stakeholders felt that this feature built flexibility into the school's response to an emergency situation or a sudden and traumatic event. In one school where a student's suicide had greatly impacted on the community and specifically on key friends, the nurture group offered "a lot of support and without the facility we couldn't have done it" (T1/34).

In another school, the long term commitment of the nurture team's dedicated staff to the needs of a year 13 student had been acknowledged by parents in a letter to the head teacher

I've just had a lovely letter from a parent thanking us and saying that without the continued support (from nurture) they don't think their son would have survived in school or even been a functioning member of society (T2/6).

This example again illustrates the way in which nurture groups in secondary schools can promote 'swimming rather than sinking' for a small but significant number of students. Had this young man not survived in school and had he ceased to be a functioning member of society, what impact would this outcome have had beyond the student's immediate family?

The answer is that if this student were to have refused to attend school the impact on the school community and society is likely to have been minimal. The loss of one student from the school roll in the context of a school managing the needs of 1500 students might simply be perceived as an unavoidable outcome for certain students in certain situations. What the nurture group in the secondary school appears to be doing for the school community is to pay particular attention to students that require time, security, encouragement, one to one support, careful monitoring, gentle cajoling, specific links with parents and delicately structured programmes. The findings of this research study would suggest that the specialist nature of a dedicated nurture team allows students such as this a chance to succeed while ensuring that, within the secondary school with nurture group provision, "we have a school where no student will be lost" (T2/14).

- The nurture group enhances the school's continuum of support to students

Of the five secondary schools involved with the research study, two were based on the Isle of Man where an island-wide continuum of support, care and provision for students with SEBD is described in Appendix 19. Nurture groups are integrated into a continuum of care for all students that begins with a call for high quality teaching and learning experiences for all; a consistent approach to teaching, learning and behaviour management from all staff; and a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students. The continuum of care on the Isle of Man recognises these factors as being crucial

in reducing social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in the mainstream classroom. Where difficulties emerge despite these factors being in place, the continuum of care suggests that SENco involvement, Boxall Profile assessments and links with the school's nurture group might be considered at the School Action level. Home-school links would also increase in an attempt to intervene successfully.

Where additional support was required at School Action Plus or at 'Higher Level Needs' the continuum of care suggests that the school might consider an increase in the student's formal contact with the nurture group, further assessments (e.g. functional behavioural analysis, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), Educational Psychology involvement or links with CAMHS team. In class support from allocated teaching assistants might be secured at this stage along the continuum and access to the school's behavioural unit might also feature. In extreme and challenging cases, the continuum of care support and provision on the Isle of Man includes access to the off-site Education Support Centre (PRU) or off-island residential care.

It interesting to note that in both schools the nurture group sits alongside but is separate from the school's behavioural unit. In its original format in infant schools and at key stage 2, nurture groups would manage a balanced group of children with social and emotional needs that included behaviours that might be termed 'acting-out', challenging or externalised behaviours. In both secondary schools on the Isle of Man, the nurture groups were more focused on individual students with internalised difficulties such as withdrawal, depression, anxiety or poor social skills. This group did not join the students with more challenging behaviour and the nurture group had stronger links with the school's pastoral and tutor teams than they had with the behavioural units.

For one head teacher on the island, the nurture group was perceived as being "very much an integral part of the school" (T2/17), offering one of many

support systems available to students (T2/11). By integrating the nurture group support into the school's continuum of care, the nurture group was perceived as being:

just another part of the school ... its not somewhere where strange little people go; its somewhere that everyone can access and do (access) (T2/12).

In the second school based on the island, the head teacher described the continuum of support as a Flexible Learning Area (FLA) which was subdivided into FLA 1 (learning support), FLA 2 (nurture KS3), FLA 2a (nurture KS 4), FLA 3 (Behavioural Unit) and FLA 4 (the special unit for profound and multiple difficulties). In the context of a continuum of support to meet a variety of students needs, the head argued that:

*It's not a label to go to nurture, its just going to FLA2a (T1/31)..
everybody knows that students go to FLA for a variety of reasons.
It's not a big deal and no stigma is attached to it (T1/32).*

The head again refuted the idea of students being stigmatised by contact with nurture and claimed that in his school

The kids don't use the term special needs, its just 'I'm going to the FLA' – and that expression doesn't have stigma attached to it at all, or I don't think it does (T1/48).

Of the UK based schools, one head teacher reported having identified a gap in the school's range of provision (T3/4) which already included a Youth Inclusion Programme worker (T3/11), an on-site counsellor (T3/16), a school based social worker (T3/17) and a community police officer (T3/17). For this school, the nurture group added to the continuum of support on offer and:

... fitted in nicely; a part of the jigsaw that slotted in and gives more support to our children. And it has enhanced our support; it is an asset to what we do now (T3/34).

Parents reported the value of integrated support systems of which nurture was just one. Through contact with the nurture team one parent noted that “because of the nurture team we got a referral to the education psychologist that came through just like that” (T7/15) while adding “we got occupational therapy help as well from the nurture group, that was brilliant” (T7/28)

In Scotland, one head teacher rejected the idea of having a behavioural unit on-site which he felt would stigmatise the students (T5/19) but was happy to develop the secondary school’s nurture group as “a long term addition to our strategy” (T5/15).

In summary then, the research study suggests that the nurture group in the secondary school might be most effective when couched in a continuum of care, support and provision that runs across the school. Working alongside learning support teams, community policing, youth offending teams and social care professionals, the nurture group can enhance support and “make sure we don’t let anyone out of the net” (T3/17). Where the current political agenda is dominated by the phrase ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES 2004), the research study suggests that the nurture group in the secondary school can make a distinctive contribution to that agenda by “addressing the issues that individual children have got” (T1/7)

- The nurture group is a structured and organised educational intervention.

According to one research participant, a distinctive feature of nurture groups in secondary schools relates to the intervention being “a programme based on education; it is a social programme” (T5/19). Unlike the more general

classroom-based behaviour support or ad hoc programmes (such as 'anger management') that may be delivered to students over a short period, the nurture group can plan, deliver and evaluate such programmes in a cohesive way; it can bring form, structure and longevity to these interventions:

So nurture provides the theoretical framework on which 'cwtch' can be based? Absolutely. It articulates the process (T3/33).*

**'cwtch' is a Welsh language word for 'care'*

Student assessment through the Boxall Profile provides a further example of a distinctive feature of nurture group intervention in the secondary school and the assessment tool is referenced by the majority of participating schools (T1/41, T3/6, T4/4, T4/28, T5/9). In many ways, the Boxall Profile assessment defines the nurture group approach for as students are assessed against the developmental milestones set out in the Profile, a number of organisational matters are resolved. For example, the assessment indicates whether nurture group intervention is necessary and appropriate for the student and stakeholders all indicated clearly that their structured and organised referral systems rely heavily on the Profile to inform the decision making process. Following the assessment, the Boxall Profile suggests target areas for intervention and guides the curriculum and activities that may be undertaken with students in the nurture group sessions. When a further Boxall Profile assessment is completed after the intervention, a student's progress against the targets set can then be evaluated:

We don't get random referrals to nurture; we have a process that all are aware of involving the Senco, heads of year and the Boxall Profile assessments to determine whether nurture is the right thing for that child. It is an organised process rather than a random process (T1/41).

Overall, the study found that nurture group theory was perceived by research participants as providing a framework for the programme of intervention, based on clearly defined educational principles. As one head teacher explained:

(the nurture group) was putting systems of practice into place that articulated (the school's) philosophy (T3/32).

- The identified weaknesses of nurture group provision

A further feature of nurture groups in secondary schools to emerge from the research data related to the fact that nurture group intervention was not always successful:

At one level I don't think nurture has been entirely successful (T1/17).

We are not always successful (T3/22.)

In certain cases, the nurture group provision was perceived by research participants as being insufficient, with the limited capacity of the provision proving to be detrimental to students:

In a sense we almost failed those kids by withdrawing the provision in Key Stage 4.... other kids in KS3 needed the support and we couldn't stretch it. But we let them down and those kids were quite distressed (T1/ 22).

I get the distinct impression it's a lack of resources within the (nurture) unit as to how many children they can actually have in there (T9/15).

Regret was expressed by two stakeholders that nurture group provision was not more widely available to students whose needs clearly required this form of intervention:

I look at some of our students in years 3 and 4 who did not have access to the All Stars (nurture group) and I can see that had they had access to the support then their potential to be more successful in terms of the risk taking, their learning and general life skills could have been altered (T4/4).

Personally, I work a couple of nights a month at (a care home) and I feel that if all these schools had had these (nurture group) resources going back, a lot of these children wouldn't be where they are now, cause they're at the point now where when they've got the help, it's too late and they need these resources. They need more of them maybe (T7/23).

One set of parents alluded to poor nurture group practice as a feature of their experience. They reported having to fight to get help (T9/15) while never having met a nurture practitioner despite their daughter having received support from the facility (T9/24, T9/25)

A final weakness of nurture group provision that was suggested by the research findings relates to the possible danger of mainstream staff disengaging from the student and their programme once the nurture group intervention has commenced. Interestingly this potential weakness was identified in the Literature Review with both Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) and Farrell and Ainscow (2002) identifying this as a risk. By definition, students with special educational needs require additional planning, thought and provision from staff. For busy and pressurised mainstream staff there may be a temptation to off-load this additional work onto the nurture group should a

student be successfully referred to the provision. As one professional described it:

the danger is that colleagues will relinquish responsibility with 'they're your kids' ... that's a key point (T4/15).

Clearly, the research findings suggest that nurture groups are not always successful in secondary schools and this was acknowledged by key participants in the study. Staffing levels and access to resources automatically places a capacity limit on the provision and this was shown to have a detrimental effect on students for whom the provision had to be withdrawn. Parents expressed dissatisfaction with communication structures and access to the support and regrets about the breadth of nurture provision were also recorded. A further danger posed by accepting students into a structured and organised educational programme such as nurture was that mainstream staff might perceive this as an opportunity to relinquish their responsibilities for the case.

3.7 Discussion re Research Question 1(b): What has been the impact of nurture groups for stakeholders?

The findings for research question 1(b) have been summarised in Table 3.14 (above) and will now be discussed as individual subsections:

- Nurture groups support positive individual progress

The theory and practice of nurture groups is driven by the individual needs of students and nurture group interventions are designed to relate directly to the students' assessed developmental levels. This approach is described in the six principles of nurture and the Boxall Profile assessment instrument provides the means by which individual targets are planned and evaluated. Given this intensive focus on individual needs, it is no surprise that stakeholders

involved with nurture groups in secondary schools were able to describe the positive progress made by individuals following the intervention.

In one case, a head teacher described a letter from a parent acknowledging the role played by the nurture group in her son's success:

I've just had a lovely letter from a parent of a Year 13 student thanking us and saying that without the continued support (from nurture) they don't think their son would have survived in school or even been a functioning member of society (T2/6).

In another example, a head teacher described the progress of one student over a two year period:

One student, two years ago was socially isolated and withdrawn. Last week he received a prize for work related education. He tapped be on the shoulder in the corridor and said "Sir! I've just won this prize!" – that wouldn't have happened without that 'cwtch' (nurture support and care) (T3/21).

Progress towards a return to full time mainstream education is a stated objective of nurture group intervention and one head teacher reported successful progress towards this goal for a number of individual students:

At this stage, two of the pupils have been allowed to return to the mainstream curriculum with the other 10 remaining in nurture, although we are weaning them off and we hope that next year perhaps half of them will go into a full second year and half will have a limited programme (T5/11).

By definition, nurture group practitioners engage with their students on a regular basis and observe their progress in great detail. As a consequence,

they are able to recount the positive progress of individual students in detail and across significant periods of time:

One young man in primary school with low confidence and resilience, managed to hide it in primary school, very much exposed in secondary school. He has gone from hating every teacher to playfully not liking teachers. We were in the Home Economics room a few weeks back and he was messing with some ingredients required for the next lesson. The class teacher told him off for this. Eight months ago he would have exploded; he wouldn't have had an internal dialogue. But what he did is he calmly accepted what the teacher had said. The first thing he did was that he moved away from her and sought me out sat next to me. With all the concepts of attachment theory and making reciprocally meaningful attachments that is such a small thing (for him to do) but it says so much and its those kind of micro-behaviours that you feel well that's definitely different (T4/25).

Relatively small steps towards positive social engagement, articulating feelings and reflecting on choices are monitored and celebrated through the provision made by the nurture group:

The very last session we did with the group this year was in the library. They took a sweet and had to write something on a flip chart about what they felt about this last year. One student articulated a quality of another student for the first time ("you are very brave, you always have a go at things first"). This was unprecedented and blew staff away. This is not at a level that would convince staff who have not been involved - but within the context of the group, this was very positive at an individual level (T4/25).

For one student, the nurture group intervention had allowed him to develop positive peer relationships within the school community:

Its helped me get more friends (T6/12) .. because we'd be having sessions with kids that I never knew and then we'd be good friends (T6/22).

And parents also acknowledged the progress made by their son in terms of his improved communication (T7/9), his increased ability to be more open about his feelings (T7/11) and the development of opinions that are his own:

He seems to communicate a lot more since going (to nurture) as well (DC: With you?) With all of us in general yeah, the whole family (T7/9).... He seems to be a lot more open about his feelings and able to discuss things that he didn't want to talk about normally, that we've noticed (T7/11)... He is slowly starting to come out of his shell now, and expresses opinions about things, which, you know, he never used to. (DC: That's a sign of confidence) Yeah, he didn't have any at all (T7/16) (and) he'll disagree about something, or you know, it's good to see that because at least, he knows his opinions are always important as well (T7/17).

Overall, both sets of parents felt that the individual progress made by their children with nurture group support had been positive

Once nurture was all brought into place, she's never looked back (T9/14).

The school's been the making of him; the support there is phenomenal (T7/8).

Nurture groups work with small groups of students and developing relationships that are strong, reciprocal and trusting is at the heart of the intervention. The research findings suggest that a practical benefit of nurture groups in secondary schools might be the impact that the intervention can have for individual students and their families. The research data indicates that within this small sample, nurture group provision has clearly supported positive progress for individual students.

- Nurture groups impact on long term student outcomes

Several stakeholders participating in the research alluded to long term outcomes for students as being central to their understanding of nurture group support in the secondary school. The goal of students participating in wider society and making a positive contribution as adults links the nurture group intervention with the aims of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2004):

You can't just look at (successful nurture group intervention) in the school context. If this child does not access a mainstream education or is forced through the cracks because of some trauma, it's the cost to society, the loss of a positive contribution, it's the other support services that would have to come in. If they miss out on education, they have a narrower choice as an adult (T2/21).

While nurture group intervention is designed to be time-limited before a student returns to mainstream education, the intervention was to be considered as "a long term gain not an overnight intervention" (T4/44) with the nurture group providing students with "support and strategies to be successful both in school and in life. And that is as important as academic qualifications" (T4/43)

In summary, the nurture group's impact on the long term outcomes of individual students was perceived to be invaluable by research participants, with one head teacher declaring:

I hope that they will become more active participants in society as they get older, in a way that they might not have been able to had we not given them that support. You can't put a value on that (T1/28).

- Nurture groups impact on attendance, whole school ethos and enjoyment

Many of the schools involved in the research study acknowledged that the theory and practice of nurture groups complemented an existing whole school ethos and as a consequence "nurture was not a big step for me as a manager and my staff (T3/31).. In this school the philosophy behind nurture was already in place so I didn't have a lot of work to do (to establish the nurture group provision)" (T3/24)

Developing a whole school ethos around the nurturing of students was the goal for one nurture practitioner but the difficulties in bringing all staff on board with this was also acknowledged:

The idea (has been) that we become more of a nurturing school. The majority of staff will affirm the nurturing approach but not all and that is an issue for the school as a whole (T4/31).

Both of the students interviewed for the research study described the nurture group provision as being "really good" (T6/27, T8/8) with one student reflecting on the enjoyment that he had in nurture through a variety of activities (T6/11) and the confidence that the provision had given him (T6/27). Parents described the nurture group as being "an invaluable place

within the school" (T9/17) and urged the local authority to maintain this provision for the benefit of future students:

All I can say is, it is so important to keep those (nurture) groups going because they help so many children don't they? (T9/25).

Head teachers noted that improved attendance at school was linked directly to the nurture group provision, observing that:

They have attended well. There have been very few exclusions and we would have experienced attendance and exclusion issues with these young people if they hadn't have had this intervention (T5/15).

Overall, one head teacher declared that she had "absolutely nothing but positive things" to say about the nurture group provision in her secondary school (T2/14) while another concluded that nurture "has been very worthwhile; very beneficial" (T5/15) while being "delighted with the progress made. I think the young people have definitely gained from the experience" (T5/23).

- Without nurture group support, projected outcomes were negative

During the course of the interview process, students and parents were asked to consider a hypothetical outcome for the students had the nurture group not been available to support them in school.

One family suggested that their son would have "missed a lot of education" without the nurture group provision (T7/24) and they doubted that he would have coped with the demands of school life (T7/23), adding:

If we didn't have (the nurture group) there we'd be lost. Very lost (T7/30).

Their son confirmed that without access to the nurture group the outcomes for him would be “not really that good; not really that good at all. I’d feel quite down” (T6/19).

The second family described the nurture group as offering their daughter “a life line back into school, without a shadow of a doubt” (T9/19) without which:

I think she would have really struggled; she would’ve really struggled to get back in (T9/20).

Their daughter confirmed the difficulties that she would have faced without access to nurture group provision and stated:

Well in my opinion, I can’t say for sure because I don’t know, but I don’t think I’d be in school right now. I don’t think I’d of been able to come back in, and if I had, I definitely would not be in for all my lessons... I don’t know what I’d do if I couldn’t come here, to be honest (T8/27).

3.8 Research Limitations.

The study undertook empirical research to explore the perceptions of professionals, students and parents regarding nurture group provision in secondary schools but a research sample of only 12 research participants is a major limitation of the research study. A sample of this size could not be used to make universal generalisations about the practical effects of nurture groups in secondary schools and the research findings should be ‘held lightly’. It should be noted that the students and parents interviewed for the study represented the views from one school on the Isle of Man and that the

researcher's professional role on the island may also have had an impact on the research data. The sample of professionals did not include one representative from the English education system (although two heads were approached) and again this represents a limitation of the study. With a larger pool of between 50-100 participants from across the UK, the response to the research question, made through the thematic analysis of data, would have offered a richer and more trustworthy set of results. An investigation of stakeholder perceptions on this scale might be something to consider for the future.

The length of each semi-structured interview was between 20 and 45 minutes depending on the time available to the interviewees and the quality of the discussions that took place. A greater period of time in each interview might have generated more information and thicker descriptions of perceptions of stakeholders.

The research design set out to deepen the understandings derived from the data by building themes from Phase 1 (interviews with professionals) into the Phase 2 interviews (interviews with students and parents). But a series of return interviews with professionals, perhaps after the complete set of stakeholder interviews had been completed, would have provided the opportunity to pursue the strong themes that emerged in more detail and in more depth.

A further limitation of the study involves the way in which codes were compressed into themes and the way themes were discarded as being 'weak'. While these decisions have been made transparent in the study, this method still required high levels of subjective decision making on the part of the researcher. The themes are inevitably an abstraction constructed by the researcher, and therefore subject to the researchers perspective and Miles and Huberman warn that this form of abstraction is a 'potentially dangerous tool that can be used to mislead as well as inform' (1994: 83).

Chapter 4

Research Question 2: Methods and Findings

Chapter 4 will focus on the empirical research undertaken to investigate Research Question 2 that is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Research Question 2.

RQ2: What specific modifications to the Boxall Profile are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age?

The Literature Review established that the Boxall Profile assessment instrument is central to the theory and practice of nurture groups (Bennathan and Boxall 2000). Its use in the assessment of student needs, the planning of programmes and the monitoring of progress is a cornerstone of nurture group intervention (Boxall 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz 2007; Nurture Group Network 2001/2009). Testimonies recorded within the Handbook itself (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) suggest that the insight offered by the Profile can be of particular value to professionals and the volume of research papers employing the Profile to help evaluate interventions also suggests its standing among professional researchers is high (see Seth-Smith et al 2010; Scott and Lee 2009; Reynolds and Kearney 2007).

And yet it could be argued that the development of nurture groups in secondary schools has rendered certain aspects of the original Profile to be both unreliable and invalid. There is a “felt difficulty” (Dewey 1910) regarding the original Boxall Profile in a secondary school context in terms of two major

areas: the language employed by the original Profile and the shaded areas of the histogram norms that relate to a much younger age group.

Devised originally for children at Key Stages 1 and 2, the language of the original Profile includes references to nursery rhymes (DS 28), the 'play house' (DS 25) cooing and babbling behaviours (DP 8) and various references to children and playgrounds. Such references are clearly inappropriate for students of secondary school age. In addition to this 'felt difficulty' around the language of the current Profile, the term 'teacher' is employed consistently by the Profile when referencing any adult with whom the child is said to be interacting. In the Literature Review, attention was drawn to the fact that schools are now populated by many staff who are not teacher qualified but who also play a significant role in the life of the school community. Of equal importance, nurture groups are now extending beyond the school gates and into secure provision and care settings in the UK (Nurture Group Network 2010). The Boxall Profile is also being employed in these settings where many adults interacting with the young people being assessed are not teachers. With this 'difficulty' in mind, modifications to the language and adult references made in the Profile became a focus and boundary for the research.

The second area of 'felt difficulty' when employing the Boxall Profile in the secondary school setting concerned the Profile's histograms. In the original, the histograms have shaded areas representing the average scores in a sample of competently functioning children aged 3 years 4 months to 8 years. Personal experience had taught me how this feature of the Profile could undermine the instrument's potential in the secondary school. In January 2003 I was asked to deliver a presentation at a local secondary school regarding the value of nurture groups. In the presentation, I had planned to give an overview of nurture group practice and to provide an introduction to the use of the Boxall Profile as an effective guide to intervention. As the presentation to my secondary school colleagues progressed, a key question was posed by a member of the audience and it concerned the Boxall Profile. I

was asked loudly and clearly from the floor, “how can secondary school staff take this Boxall Profile seriously when the histograms relate to children aged 3 to 8?”.

I had to concede that this represented a weakness in the Boxall Profile when considered in the secondary school context and this stark, practical experience served to define the character of the difficulties posed with even greater clarity. It was clear that unless a research project undertook specific modifications to the Boxall Profile to enhance its reliability and validity for secondary schools then the potential value of Boxall Profile assessments (and perhaps the progress of secondary school nurture groups as a whole) might be undermined. A clear aim for the research project was therefore to address this weaknesses in the Boxall Profile and to ensure that the growing interest in nurture groups at Key Stages 3 and 4 would be supported by an age-appropriate version of the Profile.

4.1 The focus and boundary for the research into RQ2.

The initial ‘felt difficulty’ described in Dewey’s logical steps of reason (Dewey 1910) confirmed that the research projec was required to:

- rephrase the items within the Profile for an older age group without altering the original meaning and focus area of each item.
- revise the shaded norm areas on the Profile histograms to indicate the scores of a sample of competently functioning secondary aged students.

An immediate boundary for the research investigation was provided by the inherent assumptions of the original Boxall Profile which could not be disputed, challenged or altered by the study. This investigation was undertaken to focus solely on producing a version of the original Profile for use with secondary age students. Any challenge to the Profile’s structures and

assumptions, developed over time by Marjorie Boxall and her colleagues, was acknowledged as being beyond the remit of the present study.

A further boundary for the study involved the age group that would constitute the sample of competently functioning secondary aged students. Secondary schools typically cater for the 11-18 age group and a decision was made to focus on the 11-14 age group as a boundary for the study for the following reasons:

1. 11-14 encapsulates the Key Stage 3 age range in secondary schools
2. 11-14 is a manageable, three year age span
3. 11-14 keeps a focus on students in transition from primary to secondary school (and the literature review suggested this was an important area for nurture group support)
4. The potential exists for a future study to generate a Profile for the 15-18 age group
5. The new 11-14 Profile might offer an overlap with the original i.e. it might be more appropriate to assess a 10 year old student with the new Profile than with the original

The theoretical framework provided by Dewey's pragmatism again offered a focus and boundary for the research. Pragmatism holds all findings from research lightly and judges 'warrants of assertibility' against the practical application of the assertion in the real world. Does it work? Does it have an effect? These are questions that resonate with nurture group philosophy and the Boxall Profile itself where a focus on growth and not pathology remains driving force behind all intervention (Bennathan and Boxall 2000: 12).

4.2 Research Design.

Dewey's Logical Steps of Reason (Dewey 1910) had established two clear areas for investigation, namely, rephrasing the original Profile and revising

the Profile histograms for the 11-14 age group. The research design would therefore require a phased approach where research into the Profile rephrasing would be undertaken alongside preparations to revise the histograms. The rephrased Profile would then be employed in the empirical research to revise the histograms. This research design is summarised in Fig 4.1 below.

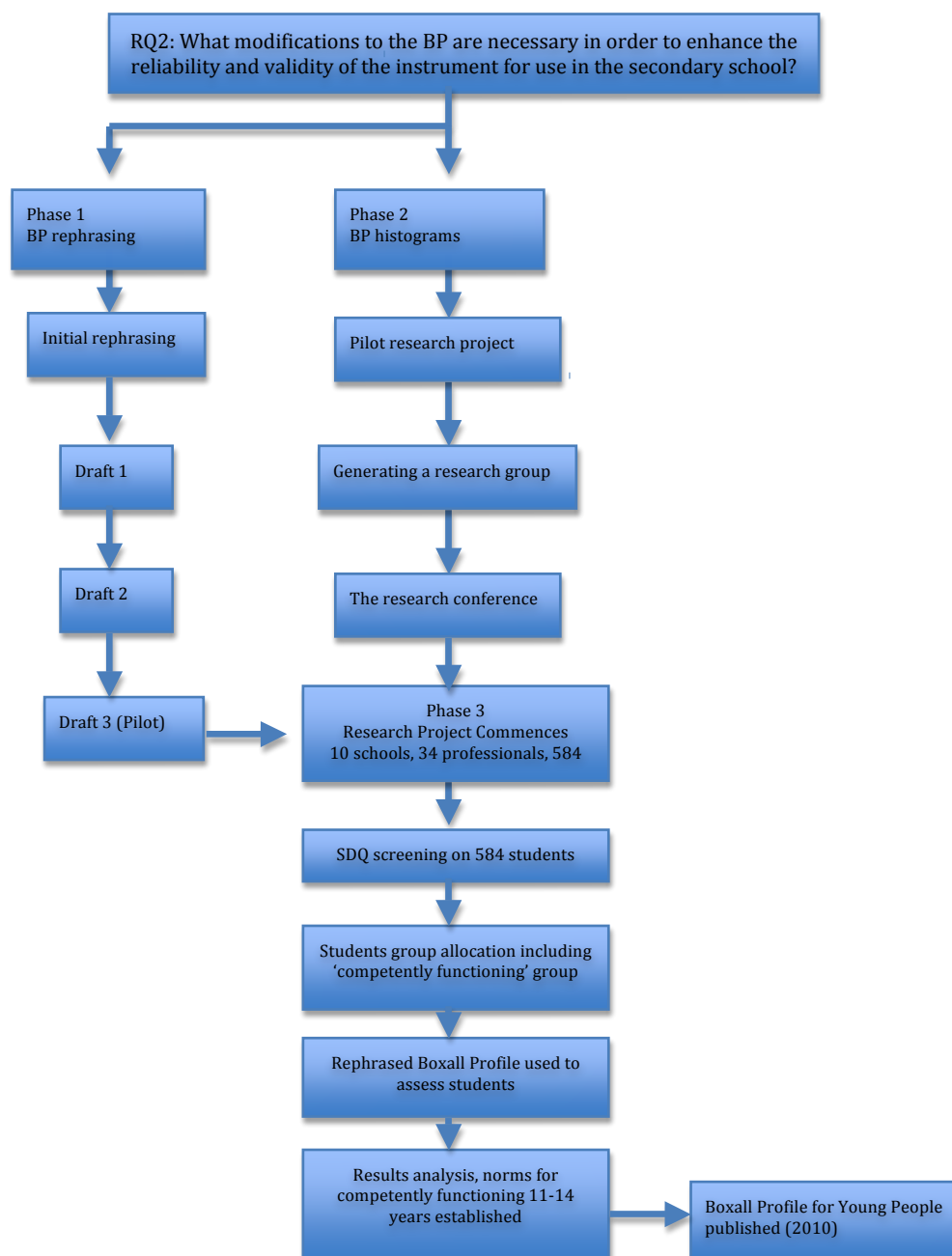
To expand on the research design illustrated in Fig 4.1, Phase 1 of the research had a focus on rephrasing the language of the Boxall Profile for the secondary school age group. This followed a survey method and the views of a sample of colleagues across the UK, working in the area of nurture group intervention and SEBD, informed how the Boxall Profile was rephrased.

Phase 2 saw the process of generating a research group for the purposes of redrawing the Profile's histogram norms. A pilot project is arranged and initial attempts at defining 'competently functioning' students are introduced and refined through this process. Ultimately a research team comprising nine secondary schools across the UK, 34 participating colleagues and 584 students aged 11-14 is drawn together.

Phase 3 saw a final draft of the rephrased Profile employed in a quantitative study that established norms on the Boxall Profile for students aged 11-14 years.

It is important to note that the rephrasing the Boxall Profile for the secondary school age group at Phase 1 was an essential precursor to the research into the histogram norms at Phase 3. If the rephrasing had not been undertaken first, the 584 students participating in the research would have been assessed through the original (and therefore inappropriate) Boxall Profile. This would have undermined the reliability and validity of the final publication because the new norms would not have been based upon the newly rephrased items.

Fig 4.1 Research Question 2: A two phase design.



4.3 Rephrasing the Profile for the 11-14 age group.

4.3.1 Research Methods

A survey design was employed to rephrase the Boxall Profile for a secondary school age group. In total, a sample of 60 professionals working in the area of nurture group intervention and SEBD support were asked questions about draft versions of the Profile that had been rephrased for the secondary age group. The key question for Drafts 1 and 2 concerned whether the rephrased items maintained the same sub-cluster focus as the original Profile, despite the changes made for the secondary school age group. The data that was returned concerning Draft 1 and 2 resulted in a third draft version that was employed in a research pilot in 12 secondary schools across the UK. Following the results and feedback from the pilot survey, the final version of the rephrased Profile was confirmed.

A summary of the research design for the rephrasing phase is described in Table 4.2. with information regarding the surveys and appendices.

Table 4.2 Rephrasing research design.

Survey Design	Appendices on CD1	Participants (n)
Colley,Haskayne,Rose rephrasing	CD1/Appendices/6 CD1/Appendices/7	3
Draft 1 Survey	CD1/Appendices/8 CD1/Appendices/9	20
Draft 1 Survey Data	CD1/Appendices/10 CD1/Appendices/11	
Draft 2 Survey	CD1/Appendices/12 CD1/Appendices/13	14

Draft 2 Survey Data	CD1/Appendices/14 CD1/Appendices/15	
Draft 3 Survey (Pilot) and Survey instrument	CD1/Appendices/16 CD1/Appendices/17	23
Draft 4 (Final Version)	CD1/Appendices/18	
'Boxall Profile for Young People': Final publication		

The rephrasing process began in consultation with two experts in the field of nurture groups and SEBD. At an initial research meeting with the then Director of the Nurture Group Network, Jim Rose, and the Network's national training manager, Martin Haskayne, two experienced colleagues joined me in considering each of the 68 original Boxall Profile items in turn. With the secondary age group and secondary school context in mind, an initial rephrasing began that would form the basis for the Draft 1 survey of colleagues across Britain. The Colley, Haskayne, Rose rephrasing identified 31 items that required rephrasing for the secondary school age group, the details of which can be found on CD1/Appendices/6 and CD1/Appendices/7.

Having established a first draft rephrasing, a survey of the views of 20 nurture group colleagues across the UK was prepared. Cresswell's survey method checklist (1994: 118) was employed to prepare the survey correctly:

- The purpose of the survey: The purpose of the survey for Draft 1 would be to ascertain the views of an initial sample of 20 professional colleagues working in the area of nurture group intervention. The survey would ask colleagues whether or not the changes made to the phrasing of the new Profile had changed the sub-cluster focus of the item. By way of example, in the original Profile, item DS 5 'makes and accepts normal physical contact with others (e.g. when holding hands

in a game)' has a focus on sub-cluster H (accommodates to others). Draft 1 rephrases DS 5 to read 'Participates in normal social interactions with peers (e.g. in corridors, playgrounds, to and from school)'. Do colleagues believe that the changes made to the phrasing maintain a focus on sub-cluster H 'accommodates to others' or has the rephrasing altered this focus in their view? This question was posed by the survey in relation to the 31 rephrased items out of a possible 68 (i.e. 37 items did not require any changes).

- The reasons for the survey design: This design was chosen to survey the views of a sample of professionals working in the area of nurture group intervention so that their views could be generalised to reflect a larger body of opinion (i.e. a broader spectrum of colleagues working in nurture group facilities or supporting students with SEBD).
- The survey sample: The survey has three phases (Drafts 1, 2 and 3) and involves a total population of 60 participants across the phases. The sample is non-random and has been selected on the basis that all individuals making up the sample have experience of nurture group practice and, by definition, a working knowledge of the Boxall Profile. It was felt that receiving survey data from those already familiar with the original Profile would strengthen the validity and reliability of the survey findings.
- What instrument will be used in the survey? The instrument employed in the survey for Draft 1 is included on CD1/Appendices 8 and 9 and the survey returns are included as CD1/Appendices 10 and 11. Essentially, the survey questionnaire placed the original item next to the rephrased item and the focus sub-cluster area. The survey then asked 'Is the rephrased item consistent with the focus of the original with regard to the sub-cluster area?'
- What scales will be used in the survey? Participants were offered a three point rating scale in the survey, responding to each rephrased item with either Yes/No/Unsure.

- What are the content areas to be addressed by the survey? The survey asks whether the rephrasing of an item has altered the sub-cluster focus of the item.
- What are the variables? The independent variables are the 31 rephrased items that will be contained within the survey questionnaire. The dependent variable is the degree to which the participants agree that each rephrased item has maintained the sub-cluster focus.

Where rephrased items in Draft 1 received full support from the survey data (i.e. 100% of returns agreed that the rephrased item retained the same focus as the original), the rephrased item was retained for Draft 2. Where rephrased items in Draft 1 met with less than 100% support from the survey data, the phrasing was reconsidered.

The survey design regarding Draft 2 is included on CD1/Appendices/12 and CD1/Appendices/13. The survey method repeated the methods employed for Draft 1 but with amendments to the phrasing based on the survey data from Draft 1. The population employed in this phase of the survey was 14.

Following an analysis of survey data from the Draft 2 rephrasing (see CD1/Appendices/14 and CD1/Appendices/15), a pilot 'Secondary Boxall Profile' was generated (as Draft 3) and this is included on CD1/Appendices/16. 23 participants from 12 schools with nurture groups across Britain contributed to the survey data returns for the pilot 'Secondary Boxall Profile'. This survey also questioned the participants on a number of issues including how appropriate the language of the Pilot Profile was for secondary school; the relevance of the items for secondary school; the helpfulness (or otherwise) of the changes made by the pilot; the value ascribed to a secondary school version of the Boxall Profile and any 'other comments'. This survey instrument is included on CD1/Appendices/17.

Following data analysis of the survey data from the Pilot Profile and liaison with co-author of the original Profile, Marion Bennathan, a final version of a rephrased Boxall Profile for use with students of secondary age was generated (see CD1/Appendices/18).

4.3.2 Research Ethics.

The Ethical Code for the research is included as Appendix (ii). The Framework for Research Ethics (ERSC 2005) asserts that all research should be designed and reviewed to ensure integrity and quality and that all participation should be voluntary and free from coercion. Throughout this phase of the research study, participants were advised clearly and in advance as to the guiding research questions; the roles played by participants and the data collection process. Participation was voluntary and participants were made aware that withdrawal from the research process could take place at any point without reprisal or penalty. Examples of the covering letters shared with survey participants at different stages of the research process are included on CD1/Appendices/19/20/21/22. Guarantees were provided regarding the confidentiality of information supplied by survey subjects and the anonymity of respondents was respected at all times (ERSC 2005).

It is the researcher's obligation to protect research participants from harm during or after the research process. During the research to rephrase the Boxall Profile for an older age group, a structure was built into the research design whereby any issues raised by the research process could be addressed through correspondence with the researcher directly.

4.3.3 Research Findings and Discussion.

As has been explained, an initial rephrasing process was undertaken with the Director of the Nurture Group Network and the National Training Manager, both of whom were familiar with the original Boxall Profile. This process was

termed the 'Colley, Haskayne, Rose' rephrasing process and focused on the need to rephrase the Profile for a secondary school age group.

CD1/Appendices/6 records the changes that were made at this initial stage to Section I of the Profile. In Section I, the first three items were regarded as being appropriate for a secondary school age group and required no rephrasing. Avoiding the reference 'child' and replacing this with 'pupil' (although this would later be rephrased to 'young person') featured in changes to several items (e.g. 8, 11, 13, 17, 30, 32) and avoiding child-like reference to toys, playgrounds, play, games, news and taking turns also featured in items 6, 10, 11, 13 and 33. Where examples of the behaviours described in the original Profile required a secondary school setting, this was provided (e.g. items 5, 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 26, 27) and where examples were felt to be unnecessary or unhelpful, they were removed (25, 19). Several Profile items were felt to be appropriate for the secondary version without rephrasing (9, 22, 24, 29, 34) but a further eight items in Section I were substantially rephrased by the Colley, Haskayne, Rose rephrasing (5, 14, 16, 21, 25, 26, 28, 31). Full details can be found on CD1/Appendices/6

Colley, Haskayne and Rose applied a similar rephrasing method to Section II of the Profile which is included as CD1/Appendices/7. Interestingly, a greater number of items in this Section remained undisturbed by the rephrasing process; that is to say, items that described barriers to learning and progress for children aged 3-8 years were regarded by the team as being appropriate descriptors for students aged 11-14 years. In Section I, eight of the 34 descriptors remained unchanged whereas in Section II, 21 of the 34 items were accepted as being age appropriate descriptors by the Colley Haskayne and Rose rephrasing process. Some changes were made in Section II to the meter and structure of items without a full rephrasing (e.g. item 9) and others only removed references to 'play' (e.g. item 14). Significant rephrasing was undertaken in 11 items (3, 6, 8, 18, 19, 20, 22, 26, 27, 32, 33) and full details can be found on CD1/Appendices/7.

A survey of professional views regarding the 'Colley Haskayne Rose Draft 1' was then progressed employing the survey instrument included on CD1/Appendices/8 and CD1/Appendices/9. The key question for participants was whether the changes made to specific items on the Profile had, in their view, maintained the sub-cluster focus of the item. In other words, if item 5 in Section I had a focus on sub-cluster H (accommodates to others), had the changes made in the rephrasing of item 5 maintained a focus on 'accommodates to others'?

Hard copy of the survey instrument was sent to 24 nurture group professionals working in secondary schools who had agreed to take part. The participant sample was generated through membership to the Nurture Group Network and survey data returns were received from 20 participants.

Findings from the Draft 1 Survey

20 participants responded to the survey questions that are described on CD1/Appendices/8 and CD1/Appendices/9. Full details of the survey data returns are included on CD1/Appendices/10 and CD1/Appendices/11 but in summary, the findings of the Draft 1 survey found that of the 31 items that had been rephrased for an older age group:

- 7 rephrased items received 100% support from respondents.
- 15 rephrased items received 95% support from respondents.
- 5 rephrased items received 90% support from respondents.
- 2 rephrased items received 85% support from respondents.
- 2 rephrased items received 80% support from respondents.

Where rephrased items were supported 100% by the survey data, they were forwarded to Draft 2 without further rephrasing (apart from item 10 in Section 1 which received 100% approval but was augmented by some

example activities in Draft 2). Where survey data offered only 90-95% approval, further rephrasing was considered based on feedback from the survey (e.g. Sec I items 5, 15, 26) and in some cases a return to the original wording was implemented based on survey data (e.g. Sec I items 14 and 23; Section II 26, 27, 33).

Where items received only 80 or 85% approval by the survey, Draft 2 saw a significant rephrasing take place. By way of example, the rephrasing of item 8, Section II is illustrated in Table 4.3. Item 8 was originally phrased “Relates and responds to the adult as a baby would; enjoys baby-level pleasures; may happily babble and coo, call out or crawl about, or mirror the others” with a focus on Profile sub-cluster S (makes undifferentiated attachments). The phrasing of this original item is clearly inappropriate for the secondary school age group and was rephrased by the Colley, Haskayne, Rose process. Only 85% of the survey agreed that the focus on sub-cluster S had been maintained by the rephrasing. A second rephrasing then took place.

Table 4.3 Draft 2 Rephrasing (example).

	Section II Item 8
Original phrasing	Relates and responds to the adult as a baby would; enjoys baby-level pleasures; may happily babble and coo, call out or crawl about, or mirror the others
Draft 1 rephrasing	Relates and responds to the adult as a young child would (E.g. demands attention, immature language and behaviour)
Draft 2 rephrasing	Relates and responds to an adult in an immature way (i.e. as a young child would, immature language, behaviour, interests)

As well as recording a Yes/No/Unsure rating for each rephrased item, the Draft 1 survey encouraged the 20 participants to augment their data with thoughts and comments written onto the draft document. Key comments that affected the Draft 2 included two colleagues who questioned why item 23 in

Section I had been rephrased and another who felt that the phrasing of item 26 in Section II was not necessary. As a result of this feedback, these items were returned to their original state for Draft 2.

A suggestion was made that the term 'pupils' might be replaced with 'young people' and other suggestions were made around examples that might be provided by Draft 1. As a result, examples of how a student might 'participate in adult led group activities' (item 20 Section I) were included where the original has none. In addition, the survey data included encouraging comments from nurture group colleagues participating in the survey such as:

The (rephrased) statements in bold are much easier to read and take in. A simplified version. Great. (DG)

Good translations from primary to secondary needs. (LC)

A limitation of the research was that not all comments and suggestions could be accommodated by Draft 2. For example, one colleague (BK) suggested that the rephrasing of item 6 in Section II had "not captured the quality of being bizarre". Ultimately a decision had to be made as to how items would be adapted based on the survey data that was returned and not all suggestions could be accommodated. Decisions were made 'on balance' and through an ongoing discussion involving Colley, Haskayne and Rose. In this case, item 6 was not adapted to respond to BK's suggestion because 95% of the survey regarded the rephrasing as retaining the sub-cluster focus of the item. Decisions therefore took into account the percentage of approval recorded by the survey data as well as specific comments relating to item rephrasing. Decisions were made on balance and through the application of pragmatic intuition. At the heart of the rephrasing process were questions around how the rephrased Profile would work in practice; how appropriate the wording would be 'in the real world' of the classroom, the school department (or indeed in the care setting or secure unit). With the practical

effect of the Profile assessment in mind, the rephrasing process led to a second draft of rephrased items being returned to a sample of 14 colleagues, 7 of whom had participated in the Draft 1 survey and 7 of whom had not.

Findings from Draft 2 Survey

The full details of the Draft 2 survey data findings are included on CD1/Appendices/14 and CD1/Appendices/15 but in summary, the findings of the Draft 2 survey found that, of the 31 items that had been rephrased for an older age group:

- 22 rephrased items received 100% support from respondents.
- 5 rephrased items received 93% support from respondents.
- 2 rephrased items received 86% support from respondents.
- 1 rephrased items received 79% support from respondents.
- 1 rephrased items received 72% support from respondents.

When survey participants were presented with the Colley, Haskayne, Rose Draft 1 rephrasing version, only 7 of the 31 rephrased items received 100% support from the survey participants. An immediate finding from the Draft 2 survey data was that 22 of the 31 items included in the survey (either rephrased items or returned to the original) now received 100% approval from the survey participants. While this represented encouraging progress, concerns remained with regards to specific rephrased items.

Four items in Section II met with less than 100% survey approval (although none fell below a 93% approval rating) and a further rephrasing was undertaken in preparation for the Draft 3 to be employed as a pilot with a working title of 'The Secondary Boxall Profile'.

Comments on the Section II returns suggested that the "is into everything" reference in item 27 might be weak and that the final phrase in item 18

("gets very excited and may become out of control") could be more objective. As a result these items were rephrased for the Draft 3 Pilot and Table 4.4 illustrates the process with item 18.

Table 4.4 Draft 3 Rephrasing (Section II example).

	Item 18 Section II
Original phrasing	Over-reacts to affection, attention or praise; gets very excited and may become out of control
Draft 2 rephrasing	Over-reacts to warmth, attention or praise; gets very excited and may become out of control
Draft 3 Pilot rephrasing	Over reacts to warmth, attention or praise and responds inappropriately

Rephrasing Section I of the Profile for Draft 3 again proved more contentious than addressing the changes required in Section II and four items reviewed by 14 participants dropped below a 93% approval rating (see CD1/Appendices/14 and CD1/Appendices/15). This represented considerably more disagreement from survey participants than was found in Section II. This pattern again suggested that the rephrasing of items that attend to engagement, progress and emotional security (i.e. Section I) was more problematic than the rephrasing of items that focus on self-limiting features, insecurity and negativism (i.e. Section II).

The four rephrased items in Section I that fell below the 93% approval rating in the survey were items 5, 21, 28 and 31. Following reflection on comments made in the returns (e.g. "item 21: awkward wording – too complex" –CM) these items were rephrased in preparation for the Draft 3 pilot version of the 'Secondary Boxall Profile'.

Table 4.5 summarises the changes made to Draft 2 items 5, 21, 28 and 31 in preparation for a version of the 'Secondary Boxall Profile' to be piloted in schools.

Table 4.5 Draft 3 Rephrasing (Section I example).

	Section I Item 5
Original phrasing	Makes and accepts normal physical contact with others (e.g. when holding hands in a game)
Draft 2 rephrasing	Makes and accepts normal physical contact with others (e.g. in corridors, break times, to and from school)
Draft 3 Pilot rephrasing	Makes and accepts normal physical contact with others (e.g. in drama, dance, PE, group games)

	Section I Item 21
Original phrasing	Shows genuine interest in another child's activity or news; looks or listens and gains from experience; does not intrude unduly; does not take over
Draft 2 rephrasing	Shows genuine interest in what another pupil relays a personal experience; pays attention and gains from experience; does not intrude unduly; does not take over
Draft 3 Pilot rephrasing	Shows genuine interest when another young person relays a personal experience; pays attention and gains from experience; does not intrude unduly; does not take over

	Section I Item 28
Original phrasing	Responds to stories about animals and people with appropriate feeling; appropriately identifies the characters as good, bad, funny, kind etc. (disregard response to nursery rhymes or fairy stories)
Draft 2	Is able to describe and identify different characteristics found in

rephrasing	characters from both fictional and non fictional texts
Draft 3 Pilot rephrasing	Responds to narrative stories with appropriate feeling; is able to identify characteristics in fictional texts.

	Section I Item 31
Original phrasing	Looks up and makes eye contact when the teacher is nearby and addresses him by name i.e. heeds the teacher; does not necessarily pay attention
Draft 2 rephrasing	Looks up and makes eye contact when the teacher is nearby and addresses him/her by name (i.e. responds to the teacher; does not necessarily comprehend the request)
Draft 3 Pilot rephrasing	Looks up and makes eye contact when an adult is nearby and addresses him/her by name

Feedback and comments from participants from the Draft 2 survey were again encouraging. CM stated that "I'm really looking forward to your publication. Very well done", while others responding to the survey described the rephrasing as "good work" (CS) and "brilliant" (CC)

Draft 3: A Pilot version of the Secondary Boxall Profile

The pilot version of the 'Secondary Boxall Profile' is included on CD1/Appendices/16. The pilot was undertaken during the Autumn Term 2007 and involved 23 staff from 12 secondary schools across Britain. The schools were approached through the Nurture Group Network membership database and joined the survey voluntarily. The Draft 3 pilot involved each participant employing the pilot Secondary Boxall Profile in their own secondary school environments and completing a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire is included in full on CD1/Appendices/17 but is summarised in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 Pilot Questionnaire.

Pilot Secondary Boxall Profile Survey Questionnaire	
Q1: I confirm that I have completed a draft Secondary Boxall Profile (SBP) in a professional capacity	Yes/No
Q2: I found the language employed by the SBP to be appropriate for the Secondary age group	Yes/No
Q3: All the items (i.e. sentences) on the Profile were relevant to the assessment of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the Secondary age group.	Yes/No If 'No', please note the specific items and explain the difficulty with the item
Q4: Overall , I found the changes to the Boxall Profile helpful in my assessment of Secondary aged young people	Yes/No
Q5: What value would you ascribe to the publication of a Secondary version of the Boxall Profile?	Great Value Valuable No value

The Draft 3 pilot survey questionnaire was designed to confirm from the outset that all 23 participants had employed the pilot Secondary Boxall Profile and that, overall, they had considered the language used in the Profile to be appropriate for the secondary school context. When 2 participants indicated that they had not actually employed the pilot Secondary Boxall Profile in their school settings, their data was removed leaving 21 full participants in the pilot survey.

The survey sought to confirm that 21 participants had regarded each Profile item to be relevant to SEBD issues in the secondary school for future research purposes. In addition the views of participants was sought regarding how helpful and valuable the Profile might be to them in their work with secondary

aged students. A summary of findings from the survey following the pilot Secondary Boxall Profile is included as Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Pilot Questionnaire Findings (Summary).

Pilot Secondary Boxall Profile Survey Questionnaire	Findings
Q1: I confirm that I have completed a draft Secondary Boxall Profile (SBP) in a professional capacity	21 confirmed Yes 2 confirmed No (Survey data from participants stating 'No' was removed from the research. Total number of survey participants now reduced to 21)
Q2: I found the language employed by the SBP to be appropriate for the Secondary age group	19 confirmed Yes 1 No 1 ?
Q3: All the items (i.e. sentences) on the Profile were relevant to the assessment of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the Secondary age group.	19 confirmed Yes 2 No
Q4: Overall , I found the changes to the Boxall Profile helpful in my assessment of Secondary aged young people	15 confirmed Yes 3 No 3 ?
Q5: What value would you ascribe to the publication of a Secondary version of the Boxall Profile?	18 Great Value 2 Valuable 1 No value

A review of the data calculated that 86% of the participants in the pilot project involving the Secondary Boxall Profile found the updated version to be of 'great value' to them with over 90% approving of both the language employed and the relevance of the rephrased Profile items to SEBD issues in the secondary school.

Several respondents criticised the layout of the pilot version of the Profile stating that they found this unhelpful (e.g. Q4 return – JP see CD1/Appendices/23) and requested a return to the original format that involved Section items being followed by histograms in a four page, fold out document. (This had always been the plan for the final published version but for the pilot, participants had received the Profile as a sheaf of single pages, which met with disapproval).

Three participants from the same school made almost verbatim comments about Section II item 21, suggesting that the behaviour described (e.g. 'functions and relates to others minimally and resists or erupts when attempts are made to engage him/her further') should be split into two items rather than one. The nature of the comments and the verbatim phrasing suggests that this was a group-view rather than being an issue raised by three separate and unconnected participants from different schools. As such the comments were rejected as being of interest but without sufficient support to action a change to item 21 at this pilot stage.

One participant (GT), a mainstream teacher in a secondary school had completed the draft Profile and found the language to be appropriate and the items to be relevant. But he did not find the Profile helpful and rated the Profile as being of 'no value'. With more time and opportunity, the research might have explored the views of GT in more detail. However, his view represented only 4.7% of the survey return and greater attention was required to the additional comments articulated by survey participants. For example, CW noted that "the publication of the new Boxall Profile will be of great value to colleagues working within secondary schools", while VE wrote encouragingly "Well done! This is excellent and will be of great use" (see CD1/Appendices/23).

JM was supportive of the Pilot version but included a caveat for its use:

It is valuable, however, in secondary school a teacher may only see a pupil once a week so this could cause problems in the accuracy of the profile (see CD1/Appendices/24).

Following a review of the survey data generated from the 12 school pilot programme, a final version of Section I and Section II was generated through discussion with co-author of the original Boxall Profile, Marion Bennathan. Convening at Bennathan's home, the final version was refined through a series of meetings and discussions and is included on (see CD1/Appendices/18).

This final version ensured that the term 'young person' replaced all references to 'pupil' or 'peer' in a consistent manner (e.g. item 25 Section I) and that 'adult' replaced teacher across the Profile (e.g. item 31 Section I). The final rephrasing fine-tuned small errors and typos ('accommodates' to 'accommodating' in item 11 Section I) and finally removed all references to 'class' and 'classrooms' to encourage the use of the Profile in settings beyond the school (e.g. item 1, 26 and 33 Section I).

The final version included on CD1/Appendices/18 was later to be published in the *Boxall Profile for Young People* (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010).

4.3.4 Research Limitations.

A limitation of this study rests on the premise that the original Boxall Profile, with its inherent assumptions, could not be challenged or changed by the study. The purpose of the study was to generate a version of the original Profile in response to the Research Question 2 and it was therefore beyond the remit of the study to question the assumptions, reliability and validity of the original Profile itself. With this limitation in mind, the multi-phase survey design accepted the inherent assumptions of the original instrument in order

that the primary goal of rephrasing the instrument for an older age group might be achieved.

The study was also limited by the number of participants involved in the survey to rephrase the Boxall Profile for an older age group. 60 professionals responded in total but there were phases in the survey where only 14 respondents contributed. This meant that judgements made on the rephrasing at the Draft 2 stage could be said to be over-reliant on the decisions of the researcher. A further limitation was that the total of 60 participants in the survey were not contributing at every phase. Some responded at the Draft 1 phase and also contributed at Draft 2 but others were not willing to maintain contact with the survey over the significant period that the drafts were undertaken. It could be argued that the variety of views at different phases has contributed to a strength within the research with individuals coming to the rephrasing at different phases without prior knowledge of the changes. For example, a school involved at the final pilot stage without any prior experience of the rephrasing made at Draft 1 and Draft 2 brings a fresh perspective to the survey and the feedback is about immediate impressions of the rephrasing, not evolved impressions.

4.4 Revising the Profile histograms for the 11-14 age group.

4.4.1 Pilot Study.

In the original Boxall Profile, the green shaded norms on the histograms were said to indicate 'the range of average scores in a sample of competently functioning children' aged 3 to 8 years (Bennathan and Boxall 1998). But how the original research had defined 'competently functioning children' was not clearly recorded. Before a pilot study could commence to enhance the reliability and validity of instrument for use in secondary schools, it was incumbent upon the research project to begin by defining what it meant by 'competently functioning' students.

- Defining the term 'competently functioning' students

A first and short-lived attempt to define the competently functioning student aged 11-14 years is described in Table 4.8

Table 4.8 Pilot definition of 'competently functioning' students.

	Pilot definition of 'competently functioning' student –November 2006
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student is not on the school's SEN register 2. The student is not on the school's Gifted and Talented register 3. The student does not have EAL 4. The student has not endured a traumatic event in recent months (e.g. bereavement) 5. The student has not been suspended or undertaken a Senior Detention over the previous term 6. In the view of the teacher the student is 'doing well' (e.g. responds well in class, engages with learning, is socially competent, has a friendship group)

This definition is clearly inadequate and was to change significantly as the research design developed but at the point at which a pilot project was undertaken it was this definition that informed the study.

- Pilot study design.

The pilot study was undertaken at one large secondary school in the Isle of Man and an open invitation was extended to all teaching staff working with students in years 7 to 9 (i.e. 11-14 year old students) and seven staff attended the pilot research meeting. At this stage, the names of all school students in years 7, 8 and 9 were made available to the research project. The

students were then screened by Heads of Year against the 'competently functioning' criteria set out in Table 4.8 resulting in a list of students in years 7, 8 and 9 who met the initial criteria for being 'competently functioning'.

Ahead of the research pilot, staff were taken through a briefing and explanation included on CD1/Appendices/25. Staff were then asked to choose 5 students from the list of students defined as 'competently functioning' and complete a Boxall Profile assessment on each student. When this was completed, staff were asked to complete an evaluation form to assist with the future research design which is included on CD1/Appendices/26.

- Pilot study findings.

The findings from the research pilot resulted in major changes to the definition of 'competently functioning students' and to the research design. These changes are summarised in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Revised definition of 'competently functioning' students.

	Pilot	Research revision
1.	'Competently functioning' defined by a pupil not featuring on SEN register, EAL register, Gifted and Talented register etc and verified by a 10% SDQ screening.	'Competently functioning' students to be defined entirely by screening through the Goodman's SDQ
2.	All students in years 7, 8 and 9 to be screened	Specific year 7, 8 and 9 tutor groups/ classes to be screened, depending on the colleague participating
3.	Participating colleagues complete 5 Boxall Profiles only	Participating colleagues complete SDQs on whole class (e.g. 30 students) and Boxall Profiles on whole class (e.g. 30

		students)
4.	Research will establish the norms for 'competently functioning students aged 11-14 years	Research will establish the norms for 3 screened groups: 'competently functioning'; mid range students and SEBD students aged 11-14 years. By collating data on 3 groups, the validity and reliability of data relating to the 'competently functioning' group can be enhanced.
5.	The research sample will involve 20 schools, 12 staff from each school (60 participating colleagues) and 1200 students approx.	The research sample will involve 10 schools, 34 participating colleagues and 584 participating students.
6.	Generic permissions were sought regarding all students in years 7, 8 and 9	Specific permissions would be sought in relation to the specific students participating

- Pilot study and research ethics.

In addition to the changes summarised in Table 4.9, the pilot also highlighted issues around ethical considerations. The Research Ethics Framework (ERSC 2005:1) requires research designs to be reviewed regularly to ensure the integrity and quality of the research being undertaken. Following the research pilot, the research design was completely overhauled and a large unwieldy design was refined into a tight, workable project. Ethical considerations in the pilot had been planned to an acceptable level with reference to the staff involved. They were made aware of the key research questions and their roles within the pilot was explained clearly. Their attendance was voluntary and pilot participants could withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The participants were safe from harm through the research design

and any issues raised by the research process could be managed between the researcher and participant should that be necessary.

However, ethical considerations that were less clear in the pilot involved the degree to which students named in the year 7, 8 and 9 student lists were aware of their involvement. A generic letter had been sent to every parent of year 7, 8 and 9 students informing them that research was being undertaken in the school but by offering the staff a choice of student names in the pilot design, research ethics would demand that every student in year 7, 8 and 9 should have been informed directly and overtly about the pilot and their potential involvement in it. They were not. This ethical consideration then drove major changes in the research design.

To ensure that all students were fully aware of the research project proper and their involvement with it, specific classes were identified in school year groups rather than every student in years 7, 8 and 9. In this way, informed consent could be sought from a class of students in year 7 (i.e. 30 students) rather than the whole year group of 150 students. This made the research would make the research design more feasible, more manageable and ethically sound.

In the research proper, when a school class was identified as potentially joining the research project, each parent/carer of students in that class was sent a letter clearly stating the purpose of the research and confirming the research questions. Clarity over their child's anonymity and their rights to withdraw without penalty were also stipulated. Participating colleagues then explained the research process to the class and fielded any questions. Parents could have access to any data relating to the child by contacting the 'Link Colleague' who would then contact the researcher directly. This facility was accessed on one occasion and a total of four students elected to withdraw from the process as the research project progressed. Data relating to the students that withdrew did not contribute to the final data set.

The Ethical Code guiding the complete research project is included as Appendix (ii).

4.4.2 Research methods.

With the support of Nurture Group Network, 15 secondary schools with active nurture groups were approached to participate in the national research study to produce a version of the Boxall Profile for use in secondary schools (see CD1/Appendices/22). Of the 15 schools approached, eleven agreed to attend an initial research conference in London on 19 October 2007 where 'Link Colleagues' from the eleven schools would be taken through the research project's methodology, time scale and timeline. The participating schools were located across Britain and conference set out to bring a sense of unity and purpose to those participating. It was hoped that this sense of joint purpose generated by a research conference would promote high levels of participation and high completion rates for a project scheduled to cover a 6-month period (Oct 2007-March 2008). Details of the presentation are included on CD1/Link Conference.

The investment of time and resources in calling a research conference proved to be justified when nine of the eleven schools that attended the conference saw the research project through to its conclusion and are credited in the final publication.

The research methods then focused on the recruitment of participating colleagues in each of the schools; the screening of participant students and the allocation of students to Groups 1, 2 and 3.

- Recruiting 'Participating Colleagues'.

The nine Link Colleagues (LCs) who attended the London conference in October 2007 and had confirmed their involvement were set the task of recruiting 3 mainstream colleagues from their school with classes/tutor groups in years 7, 8 or 9. The LC was then required to guide the three Participating Colleagues through the research project as set out by the October conference and provide additional support where required. The LC also undertook a pivotal role in ensuring that, from an ethical point of view, all parents and students were aware of the research being undertaken and they able to withdraw from the research at any point. The LC was also 'support on the ground' for any ethical issues raised for participant colleagues involved in the research project.

The relative detachment of the LC from the research project itself also provided a safety net for securing high numbers of student participation in that, if a Participating Colleague became unavailable, the LC might step in and provide the research data themselves (or coordinate an alternative solution).

By December 2007 I had confirmation of 26 Participating Colleagues from the nine schools involved and a list of the Participating Students. One school could only provide two colleagues while another was able to provide four colleagues. Of the 26 participating colleagues that embarked on the project, 24 were able to see their commitment through to its conclusion.

A balance of age groups and gender was successfully sought within the sample, the details of which will feature in the research findings section.

- Screening the participant students

Following pilot project it was decided that 'competently functioning' young people aged 11-14 years would be defined through pre-assessment screening using the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Teacher's Form. This form was completed electronically by the Participating Colleagues and the data generated an SDQ report on each of the 588 young people contributing to the initial research sample. Each young person was assessed on the following areas by the SDQ:

SDQ1. Overall stress

SDQ2. Emotional stress (emotional symptoms scale)

SDQ3. Behavioural difficulties (conduct problem scale)

SDQ4. Hyperactivity and attentional difficulties

SDQ5. Getting along with others (peer problems)

SDQ6. Kind and helpful behaviour (pro-social)

The Link Colleague ensured that the SDQ data was forwarded by the Participating Colleague to the researcher within the agreed time frame set out by the research conference.

To support the research reliability analysis and validation it was decided that a further two groups of students would be identified through the screening process as well as the 'competently functioning' group. While Group 1 would indicate the 'Competently Functioning' group, the SDQ analysis would also identify a Mid-Range Group 2 and an SEBD Group 3 from the 588 SDQ reports.

- Student group allocation through the SDQ screening

The criteria for screening the 588 young people into one of three groups is described in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Criteria for screening students into three groups.

Group	SDQ Code	SDQ Report on SDQ1-6
GROUP 1 (A,B,C): COMPETENTLY FUNCTIONING	A	Scores of zero on SDQ1-5 Score of 10 on SDQ6 (pro- social)
	B	Scores within Normal Ranges on SDQ 1-5 Score within Normal Range on SDQ6
	C	1 x Borderline SDQ score. 5 x Normal Range SDQ scores
GROUP 2 (D,E): MID-RANGE	D	1x 'High' SDQ score (Abnormal range) 5x Normal Range SDQ scores OR 2x Borderline SDQ scores.
	E	1x 'High' or 'Very High' SDQ score PLUS 1x Borderline SDQ score
GROUP 3 (F,G): SEBD	F	Minimum SDQ score to include 1x 'High' PLUS 1x 'Very High'
	G	Minimum SDQ score to include 2x 'Very High'

A simpler method of screening students for the three groups identified would have been to take the SDQ1 score (overall stress) and define the three groups according to this single score. But the overall stress score takes no account of the pro-social scores on SDQ6 which, on occasions, were within

the borderline or abnormal range. Overall stress is calculated as simply the sum of SDQ 2, 3, 4 and 5. In an attempt to take account of the pro-social score and to take account of other borderline or high scores that would not take the overall stress score out of the normal range, the criteria represented in Table 4.10 were used consistently to screen the 588 young people

Having allocated the young people to one of the three groups, Participating Colleagues were required to complete the rephrased Boxall Profiles for all the students in their class or tutor group. Boxall Profile data taken from the 'competently functioning' group of students (Group 1) was then analysed to generate the revised histogram norms for the new Profile.

4.4.3 Research Findings.

While 588 students were screened by the SDQ, four students subsequently withdrew from the research leaving a final total of 584 students. Of this number, 395 were screened as being 'competently functioning (Group 1), 101 were screened as being in the Mid-Range (Group 2) and 88 were screened as being SEBD (Group 3).

A Master Data Set is included on CD2. The Master Data Set was created in SPSS and includes identification numbers for the 584 participating students; identification numbers for the Participating Colleagues; SDQ screening groups (1, 2 or 3); school years (7, 8 or 9) and gender information.

In order to generate the Boxall Profile norms for competently functioning young people aged 11-14 years, a mean score for each sub-cluster area (e.g. a mean score for the columns A, B, C etc) was generated from the screened Group 1 sample of 395. This data is included on CD2/Histograms. A decision was then made to calculate one standard deviation from the mean on each sub-cluster (A, B, C etc). The rationale for this decision was that by incorporating one standard deviation from the mean the shaded area on the new histograms would then represent 84.1% of scores in a sample of

competently functioning young people aged 11-14 years. Whether the original Profile histogram norms were calculated in this way, no evidence remains. But the new histogram norms were now clear and unequivocal about what they represent; empirical research has confirmed that over 84% of competently functioning young people aged 11-14 would score within the shaded norms of the revised Profile, henceforth to be referred to as *The Boxall Profile for Young People*. Table 4.11 summarises the sub-cluster means for Group 1 ('competently functioning') with one standard deviation from the mean also calculated.

Table 4.11: Group 1 (mean scores and 1 s.d.)

Boxall Subcluster Sec I Dev Strands	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Maximum Score per subcluster	20	12	12	20	8	12	16	20	8	8
Comp.Functioning - Mean Score	18.1	10.2	10.3	16.7	6.8	10.9	14.2	18.0	6.8	7.2
1 Std Deviation	2.1	2.3	1.9	3.6	1.7	1.5	2.0	2.7	1.5	1.2
Revised Histogram (11-14) Shaded area	16 to 20	7.9 to 12	8.4 to 12	13.1 to 20	5.1 to 8	9.4 to 12	12.2 to 16	15.3 to 20	5.3 to 8	6.0 to 8

Boxall Subcluster Sec II Diag Prof	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Maximum Score per subcluster	12	12	12	16	8	16	16	16	20	8
Comp/Functioning Secondary Boxall Mean Score	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.3
1 Std Deviation	1.0	1.3	0.9	1.5	0.7	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.7	0.8
Revised Histogram (11-14) Shaded area	0 to 1.4	0 to 1.8	0 to 1.2	0 to 2.0	0 to 0.9	0 to 1.6	0 to 2.1	0 to 1.8	0 to 2.3	0 to 1.1

- The Research Sample

Standardisation allows the measurement of an individual's performance on the *The Boxall Profile for Young People* to be compared with a population of similar individuals. The standardisation of the *The Boxall Profile for Young People* followed from the analysis of data generated nine schools from across Britain. The research sample of participating students was generated by virtue of the teachers with whom the students happened to be linked. To this extent the 584 young people contributing to the research study were randomly selected.

The age range and gender split of the random sample is included in Tables 4.12 and 4.13 and can also be found on CD2/Age Range and Gender.

Table 4.12 The age range of the random sample.

Year	Age	Frequency	%
7	11-12	176	30
8	12-13	229	39
9	13-14	179	31

Table 4.13 The gender split of the random sample.

Gender	Total Sample	%	11-12	%	12-13	%	13-14	%
Male	298	51	86	49	112	49	100	56
Female	286	49	90	51	117	51	79	44

The sample of 584 young people were screened using the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and allocated to one of three groups for the purposes of the research. Full details are described in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Group allocation figures.

Group	Descriptor	N	11- 12yrs	12- 13yrs	13- 14yrs	Male	Female
1	Competently Functioning	395 68%	113 27%	154 39%	128 32%	176 45%	219 55%
2	Mid-Range	101 17%	42 42%	36 35%	23 23%	60 59%	41 41%
3	SEBD	88 15%	21 24%	39 44%	28 32%	62 71%	26 29%

To summarise the *The Boxall Profile for Young People* has been standardised using a randomly selected research sample of 395 young people aged 11-14 years, all of whom have been screened by the Goodman's SDQ and identified as being "competently functioning". Of this sample, 45% were male and the balance between students from years 7, 8 and 9 was relatively stable within the sample.

- **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the degree to which the research to generate *The Boxall Profile for Young People* is consistent and replicable over time. Relevant reliability co-efficients range from 0 to 1 where 1 represents perfect reliability. A reliability co-efficient where $r=0.7$ is recognised as representing 'good' reliability. A reliability analysis of the standardised data was undertaken to address the level of stability and internal consistency within the *Boxall Profile for Young People*. In this section the stability of the data set will be considered first before the internal consistency of the data is analysed at four levels to establish correlations:

1. Between Sections I and II (e.g. an inverse or negative correlation might be predicted).
2. Between Clusters and Sections (e.g. Clusters 1 and 2 with Section I and Clusters 3, 4 and 5 with Section II).
3. Between Sub-clusters and Clusters (e.g. Sub-clusters A, B, C, D and E correlating, as they make up Cluster 1).
4. Between Items and Sub-clusters (e.g. Items 1, 6, 12, 16 and 20 correlating, as they make up Sub-cluster A).

- *Stability*

Stability is a reliability measure of consistency over time and over similar samples. A split half analysis was undertaken for both sections of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* to address the extent to which stability existed within the data set. Section I (Developmental Strands) was found to have a Cronbach's Alpha within group reliability co-efficient of $\alpha = 0.88$ while Section II (Diagnostic Profile) had a Cronbach's Alpha within group reliability co-efficient of $\alpha = 0.94$ (see CD2/Stability). This represents a high degree of stability.

- *Internal Consistency*

Internal consistency refers to the degree to which structures that claim to measure the same general constructs actually produce scores that are similar and/or related. Statistical significance relates to the likelihood of the results occurring by chance and is recorded as a probability value (p). Where $p < 0.05$ the probability of this result occurring by chance is less than 5%. Where p decreases (e.g. $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$) the reliability increases.

The internal consistency of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* has been analysed at four levels:

1. Correlations between Sections I and II.

Section I (Developmental Strands) and Section II (Diagnostic Profile) focus on very different aspects of child development. Section I describes a young person's developmental strengths while Section II has a focus on developmental difficulties. Using the Pearson's product moment test, a bivariate reliability analysis of the standardised data found that a significant negative correlation existed between Section I and Section II ($r = -0.61$ $p < 0.01$). For full details please refer to CD2/InternalConsistency/Section-Section.

2. Cluster and Section Correlations.

The correlation matrix (Table 4.15) employs the Pearson's product moment test and indicates the degree of correlation between the two clusters found within Section 1 of the Profile (Organisation of Experience and Internalisation of Controls).

The Pearson r correlation between clusters in Section I is recorded as being $r = 0.88$, which was significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$).

Cluster correlations between the three clusters in Section II (Self-limiting Features, Undeveloped behaviour and Unsupported Development) record Pearson r correlations of between $r = 0.87$ and $r = 0.93$, all of which are significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$).

For full details please refer to CD2/InternalConsistency/Cluster-Section.

Table 4.15 Cluster to Section Correlation Matrix.

		Cluster 1 Organisation of Experience	Cluster 2 internalis ation of Controls	Cluster 3 Self- limiting Features	Cluster 4 Undevelo ped Behaviou r	Cluster 5 Unsuppor ted behaviou r
Cluster 1 Pearson organisation Correlation / experience Sig. (2-tailed) N		1.000	.884** .000 584	-.574** .000 584	-.519** .000 584	-.513** .000 584
Cluster 2 Pearson intern'ation Correlation Of controls Sig. (2-tailed) N			1.000	-.630** .000 584	-.621** .000 584	-.633** .000 584
Cluster 3 Pearson self-limiting Correlation features Sig. (2-tailed) N				1.000	.873** .000 584	.882** .000 584
Cluster 4 Pearson undevelope Correlation d Sig. (2-tailed) behaviour N					1.000	.933** .000 584

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2
tailed).

3. Sub-cluster to Cluster Correlations.

The internal consistency of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* was then considered in terms of how the sub-clusters (A,B,C etc) correlated with their respective clusters. Table 4.16 describes the correlation coefficients recorded using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 4.16 Sub-cluster to Cluster Correlations.

Subclusters	Cluster	Cronbach's Alpha
A – E	Organisation of Experience	0.891
F - J	Internalisation of Controls	0.896
Q – R	Self-limiting Features	0.867
S – U	Undeveloped Behaviour	0.873
V – Z	Unsupported Development	0.953

For full details please refer to CD2/InternalConsistency/Subcluster-Cluster.

4. Item to Sub-cluster Correlations.

Further internal reliability co-efficients were established through the analysis of correlations between the individual items used in the *Boxall Profile for Young People* and their respective sub-clusters. Table 4.17 describes the internal consistency coefficients recorded using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 4.17 Item to Sub-cluster Correlations.

Section	Items	Sub-cluster	Cronbach's Alpha
1	1, 6, 12, 16, 20	A	0.803
1	14, 21, 26	B	0.708
1	15, 23 ,27	C	0.576
1	3, 24, 28, 29, 34	D	0.724
1	25, 30	E	0.471
1	2, 18, 31	F	0.556
1	4, 9, 13, 32	G	0.723
1	5, 7, 8, 11, 33	H	0.734
1	17, 22	I	0.405
1	10,19	J	0.533
2	4, 14, 25	Q	0.774
2	2, 12, 22	R	0.878
2	8, 18, 29	S	0.825
2	6, 16, 27, 33	T	0.927
2	10, 19	U	0.852
2	1, 11, 21, 30	V	0.875
2	3, 13, 23, 31	W	0.871
2	5, 15, 26, 32	X	0.873
2	7, 17, 24, 28, 34	Y	0.900
2	9, 20	Z	0.901

For full details please refer to CD2/InternalConsistency/Item-Subcluster.

- *Reliability in summary*

The internal consistency reliability analysis confirmed high levels of stability within the data set and addressed the extent to which the Profile Sections I and II, the clusters, sub-clusters and individual items were measuring the same underlying concepts. The results suggest that, overall, the arrangement of the sections, clusters and sub-clusters within the *Boxall Profile for Young People* are reliable. Indeed, in 15 of 20 sub-clusters (A-Z), data analysis suggests that the Profile items relating to the sub-clusters also show internal consistency, suggesting that they are addressing the same idea or construct (where Cronbach Alpha Reliability is greater than 0.7). But the analysis suggests that care should be taken when interpreting the scores on the Developmental sub-clusters C ('connects up experiences'), E ('engages cognitively with peers'), F ('is emotionally secure'), I ('responds constructively to others') and J ('maintains internalised standards'). The Cronbach Alpha for these items was found to be below 0.7 which suggests that the items linked to these sub-clusters may be tapping into slightly different (although linked) characteristics, rather than a single sub-cluster construct.

- **Validity**

Having considered the reliability of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* through an analysis of its stability and internal consistency, the findings of the empirical research now focus on the validity of the instrument. Validity refers to the degree to which the Boxall Profile for Young People measures what it purports to measure and this will be considered against three forms of validity measures:

1. Face Validity
2. Content Validity
3. Concurrent Validity

- *Face Validity*

The original Boxall Profile (1998), on which the *Boxall Profile for Young People* has been based, has high degrees of 'face validity'. As a successful publication moving into its tenth reprint, the Boxall Profile has been widely employed in schools and other settings and has recorded strongly supportive professional testimonies (Boxall Profile Handbook for Teachers 1998, p.4-5). The Secondary Boxall Profile covers the same developmental domains as the original and would appear, at 'face value', to assess what it is designed to assess.

- *Content Validity*

As the Literature Review has described, the items found in the original Boxall Profile were derived by Marjorie Boxall and her colleagues from observations made 'in the field' and through consultation with practitioners. The original Boxall Profile ensured that many key developmental factors relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were included in the content of the Profile. By reducing the original number of Profile items from 174 to the current 68, certain content areas were inevitably removed (i.e. 'Is fractious and complaining for trivial reasons or no reason') and content suggestions from psychotherapist Dr Kavel Mehra, such as a child's expressions of guilt or excessive food fads, were not included in the Profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998).

When rephrasing the original Profile for use with young people, draft versions were shared with practitioners and leaders in the field of SEBD for their views. Respondents were encouraged to be critical of the content of the Profile and a content weakness identified in the feedback included the difficulty of certain subject teachers to reflect on specific items (i.e. a science practitioner recorded a degree of difficulty in assessing young people in terms

of item 28 on the Developmental Strands: 'Responds to narrative stories with appropriate feeling. Is able to identify characteristics in fictional texts').

Overall however, the feedback on three draft versions of the revised Profile items from 60 respondents over a six month period supported the view that the current content of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* represents a fair and comprehensive coverage of SEBD issues for young people of secondary school age.

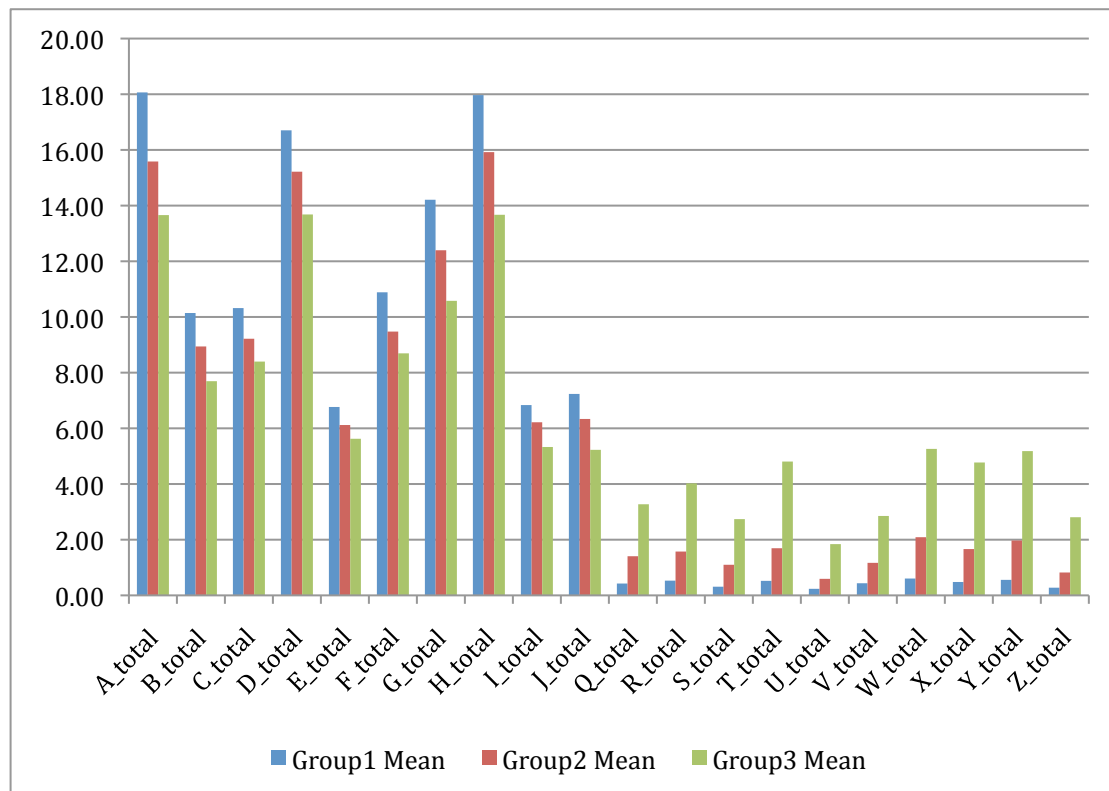
- *Concurrent Validity*

The *Boxall Profile for Young People* has high degrees of 'concurrent validity' with the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which, in itself, is a rigorously trialled screening instrument (Goodman 1997, 1999; Mathai et al 2002, 2003). The 584 young people assessed during the research were first screened by the SDQ and grouped according to the SDQ results (Group 1: Competently Functioning, Group 2: Mid Range, Group 3: SEBD).

Table 4.18 illustrates how the Group mean scores for each sub-cluster on the *Boxall Profile for Young People* confirm – without exception on every sub-cluster – the SDQ screening results.

For full details please refer to CD2/ConcurrentValidity

Table 4.18 Concurrent validity graph



4.4.4 Discussion.

Research Question 2 asked:

What specific modifications to the Boxall Profile are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age?

In response to this research question, specific modifications to the Boxall Profile were made in a three-phase research design. At phase 1, the language of the original Profile was modified through a series of surveys that brought together the thoughts and opinions of over 60 professional colleagues working in the field of SEBD and secondary school nurture groups.

Following an initial draft rephrasing, colleagues were asked to reflect on the changes and consider whether the changes retained the item's focus on the

relevant sub-cluster area (e.g. A, B, C etc.). Decisions over the rephrasing in Drafts 1 and 2 involved analysis of participant approval, intuition, knowledge of the secondary school and pragmatic reasoning. Ultimately, decisions were made in the context of 'what would work best' in a practical and pragmatic sense, on the ground and in the secondary school.

A pilot version of the Profile explored more general themes about the broad language of the profile and its value in the secondary school. Specific modifications were again introduced including the removal of references to teachers, classroom and schoolwork to encourage the use of the Profile in settings beyond the school gates, such as care homes and secure units.

While specific modifications were being undertaken to the language of the original Profile, Phase 2 saw a separate research project engage 584 students and 34 professionals in research to generate histogram norms for competently functioning students aged 11-14 years. This was achieved over a 6 month period and involved an SDQ screening process to establish the students sample into three research groups, namely:

- 1) Competently functioning
- 2) Mid-range
- 3) SEBD.

Boxall Profiles were undertaken on all students using the rephrased version developed in Phase 1 of the research. By increasing the research data base into the analysis of 3 groups, the reliability and validity of the competently functioning mean scores were supported by the results for Groups 2 and 3. Where the SDQ screening had identified competently functioning, SEBD or mid-range students, this was supported without exception by the student mean scores on the Boxall Profile assessments across the three groups (Table 4.21).

With the language of the Profile appropriately rephrased for the secondary school and the Profile histograms now ready to reflect an 11-14 age range, Marian Bennathan re-wrote the handbook introduction and case studies from secondary schools were collated. The *Boxall Profile for Young People* was then published in March 2010.

4.4.5 Research Limitations.

The research project to generate the *Boxall Profile for Young People* histogram norms for 'competently functioning' students aged 11-14 years was limited by the size of the sample. With only 584 young people in total, the number of students contributing to the 'competently functioning' sample following an SDQ screening process numbered only 395. Had the research been double the size (e.g. 20 schools, 1000+ students in total with 800 contributing to the histogram norms), the reliability and validity of the results would have been enhanced.

Investigations into the construct validity of the Profile itself was ruled out by a boundary set for the research. The study aimed to produce a version of the Boxall Profile instrument for an older age range and it was beyond the remit of the study to challenge the assumptions of the original instrument. A clear limitation of the study is that it inherited the strengths and weaknesses of the original Profile.

No data on the ethnicity of the sample was collated. A late attempt to extrapolate this information was proposed but an insufficient number of responses from participating colleagues meant that gaps in the information rendered the data invalid. Had this request been part of the initial Link Colleague conference in London, then the data may have arrived in full. Seeking the data as an additional task for colleagues to complete was not met with enthusiasm and an opportunity to consider student ethnicity within the data analysis was therefore lost.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 The purpose of the study.

With over 279,000 fixed term exclusions in English secondary schools in 2009-10 (Statistical First Release 17/2011), secondary schools in increasing numbers have been exploring nurture group intervention as a means of reducing exclusion, promoting educational engagement and transforming troubled lives. The growth in secondary school membership figures at the Nurture Group Network confirms interest in this provision is growing (Nurture Group Network 2010).

While evidence supporting the success of nurture groups in secondary schools is growing (Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes 2008; Colley 2009; Ofsted 2006, 2007, 2008), research into the effects of secondary school nurture groups as perceived by stakeholders did not appear to have been empirically investigated. A review of key literature sources (e.g. Bennathan and Boxall 2000; Boxall 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz 2007) and a literature search through the Educational Resource Index Abstracts (ERIC) confirmed that a research study investigating the perceptions of stakeholders into the effects of secondary school nurture groups would contribute uniquely to the body of evidence currently available.

Following a review of the literature available Research Question 1 was formulated and asked:

What do stakeholders perceive to be the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school?

1a) What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

1b) What has been the impact of nurture group provision for stakeholders?

Research Question 2 had a focus on the Boxall Profile assessment instrument (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) which the literature review had established as being most closely associated with the assessment of students for nurture group intervention. Developed for the 3-8 years age group, the original Boxall Profile was being actively employed in secondary nurture group settings despite the fact that the language and phrasing of the Profile was often inappropriate and that the histogram norms continued to relate to the 3-8 age group.

To support the burgeoning development of nurture groups in secondary schools (Nurture Group Network 2010), the study set out to undertake specific modifications to the Boxall Profile in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age. Research Question 2 therefore asked:

What specific modifications to the Boxall Profile are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with students of secondary school age?

5.2. The influence of Dewey.

The theoretical framework for this study was provided by the American Pragmatism of John Dewey (1910) and this framework influences the claims that can be made for the outcomes of the 'inquiry'. Pragmatism's definition of truth is linked strongly with an idea's 'successful application in the real world' (Dewey 1910). This philosophy chimes perfectly with nurture group practice (Boxall 1976) and the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998) because both are primarily concerned with practical effects and positive growth in children and young people.

Where this study offers empirical evidence regarding the practical effects of nurture groups in secondary schools as perceived by stakeholders, these

claims will be held lightly because truth is still in the making and all claims are understood to be fallible (Dewey 1910). The study has offered 'assertible beliefs' based on the thematic analysis of data but these can be reviewed and reflected upon over time. If the findings support pragmatic solutions and interventions that work for children and young people then the findings are true.

Where the *Boxall Profile for Young People* offers practical insights and points of entry into the world of young people and helps staff in their day-to-day work, then this too provides warrants of assertibility for the assessment instrument. The Profile is very much a guide to intervention that sits alongside the multi-method, multi-source, multi setting assessments described by Merrell (2008). It has never claimed to be definitive or finite in the insights it offers. But if it works in the real world one suspects that both Marjorie Boxall and John Dewey would have approved.

5.3 The methodological challenges.

The qualitative methodological challenges posed by Research Question 1 included securing of a sample of stakeholders with both experience of secondary nurture group intervention and the inclination to join the research project. Happily, six professionals were willing to undertake telephone interviews around the practical effects of their nurture facilities while two students and two sets of parents agreed to undertake face-to-face interviews regarding their experiences.

A further challenge posed by the research methodology concerned the claims that could be made for the research results, given that only 12 individuals had participated in nine recorded interviews. The validity and reliability of the research methods was enhanced to a degree by employing a clear, thematic data analysis model developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). By employing this method, themes relating to the research question emerged from the

transcripts in layers of rich and thick description. These were then transferred into thematic maps for both the professionals interviewed and the students and parents. Drawing the two thematic maps together provided the study with a summary of themes that could claim to be valid and reliable given the sample size.

The quantitative methodological challenges posed by Research Question 2 were less complex than those posed by the qualitative research but more numerous. In chronological order, the challenges included:

- Designing a survey to gauge professional responses to the re-phrasing of the Boxall Profile for an older age group.
- Running a pilot for the rephrased Profile.
- Analysing feedback from the pilot.
- Confirming the content of the rephrased Profile.
- Modifying the age range focus on the new Profile.
- Defining 'competently functioning' students.
- Running a further pilot study.
- Generating a viable research sample.
- Maintaining a viable research sample.
- Organising the research project.
- Screening for 'competently functioning' students.
- Screening for mid range and SEBD students.
- Using SPSS to analyse Profile returns from 'competently functioning' students.
- Confirming the histogram norms (11-14 years) based on the SPSS analysis.
- Using SPSS to analyse Profile returns for mid-range and SEBD students.
- Using SPSS to confirm the reliability and validity of the new instrument.
- Publishing the *Boxall Profile for Young People (2010)*.

5.4 The achievements of the research study.

One of the main achievements of the research was to provide evidence from a small-scale investigation into the effects of nurture groups in secondary schools. Evidence from professionals, parents and students suggested that nurture groups might contribute to:

- pleasing social and academic progress for individual students.
- positive long term outcomes for students (in contrast with projected outcomes without the intervention).
- improved school attendance.
- a positive impact on whole school ethos.

Furthermore, the research suggested that the key features of the secondary school nurture were perceived by stakeholders to include:

- That the nurture group offers a 'safe base' for students.
- That the nurture group operates with specialist staff.
- That the nurture group can enhance the school's 'continuum' of care and support to all students.
- That the nurture group offers a structured and organised educational intervention.

The research also seemed to indicate that a stated aim of nurture group intervention, namely, to offer a 'safe base' for students, was upheld by research participants attending the facility. The nurture group was described as 'fun, enjoyable, relaxing and calming' by student B (T6/10) and 'relaxing, understanding, supporting and calming' by student A (T 8/11).

Both students acknowledged that they had faced specific challenges in attending school and succeeding in mainstream. Student A was a female in year 11 who had suffered from anxiety and panic attacks for many years. For her, the nurture group represented a 'haven' where she could collect herself,

if required, and prepare to meet the challenges of the day (T8/12). Problems could be resolved quickly and discretely through contact with her 'key teacher' in nurture (T8/13) and this meant that anxiety could be kept in check and managed effectively. Without recourse to the nurture group environment and the nurture group team, student A was unsure how she would have returned to school after her substantial absence in year 10 stating, "I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't come here to be honest" (T8/27).

Student B had struggled with peer relationships at primary school and described himself as 'feeling down' on regular occasions (T6/10). The practical benefit of the secondary school nurture group had been evident during his transition from primary school because the nurture group had facilitated the making of new friends (T6/12). By establishing strong attachments with the nurture team, student B was able to manage the stresses and anxieties posed by the new secondary school through discussions and reflections with the nurture team (T6/17). The practical activities enjoyed in the nurture room (T6/11) and the laughter that featured (T6/12) clearly boosted student B's mood and confidence as he established himself as part of the school community. Student B concluded, "its really good. It makes me much more confident in school days (pause) and it's good fun" (T6/27).

According to the parents of the students interviewed, the nurture group had been effective in offering real and practical benefits to the students themselves and to the families as a whole. Both sets of parents had experienced concerns over their children for several years. They had witnessed their children struggle to form friendships or react negatively to the challenges of the mainstream environment in a variety of ways including withdrawal, anger, panic attacks and tearful outbursts. For parents such as this, their preoccupation appeared to be not the GCSE grades of the future but the mental health issues of the present. Their children had been displaying patterns of behaviours that have set them apart from their peers

(T7/14, T9/3) and the overriding concern for the parents was around avoiding long-term absence from school and the social isolation that invariably follows. Direct contact with professionals managing the emotional needs of their child was therefore perceived to be of enormous benefit to the family. This was confirmed with statements such as:

Well, with us both communicating to each other, everyone knows what is going on and the best help is provided through it (T7/22)

When we liaise with FLA (nurture) they give us reassurance 'well actually its okay we can do this, we can do that (T7/24).

The parents also appeared to value the specialist skills that the nurture team had to offer

They've given us tips as well because at the end of the day its new to us and they're trained (T7/24) ...It's the experience that's the advantage of everything from the FLA (nurture group). They're experienced in these kind of situations and there's nobody better to help really (T7/25).

If they do have a little wobble there's somebody there fully qualified to help them, rather than a teacher who doesn't understand, who would maybe get very frustrated and maybe think that they're being a little bit unruly (P1: Or awkward) (T9/19).

And finally, it could be said that parents perceived the practical effect of offering a 'safe base' as being crucial to their child's success in school:

Well, I think the biggest thing of it was that it was somewhere she could go. If she would go into a classroom of children and she would get overawed ..because it was too much for her (T9/11).

For professionals, the practical effects of having a nurture group in their secondary school appeared to centre on the structured and organised educational programme that defines nurture group intervention. Dedicated staff, that have been trained through the four-day certificate in theory and practice, are provided with the resources and time to undertake nurture group intervention effectively. Professionals participating in the research regularly emphasised the importance of this distinctive feature of nurture group intervention (T1/10, T3/9, T5/23).

The practical effect of nurture group intervention in the secondary school as articulated by professionals also focused on the positive progress made by individual students (T1/34, T2/6, T3/21, T4/25, T5/11) and the hope that students who might otherwise have been left to 'sink in the old system' (T1/7) are able to complete their education and contribute positively as adults in the wider community (T2/21). Furthermore, the nurture group was seen by professionals as enhancing the whole school ethos (T3/31) while improving attendance and reducing exclusions (T5/15)

The research study also identified weaknesses in secondary school nurture group provision, as perceived by stakeholders. This included having to 'fight' to secure access to the provision and poor communication between home and school on occasions. The intervention is not seen as being universally successful and where capacity constraints limit the provision, students have seen nurture support withdrawn (T1/18). While head teachers have argued that no stigma exists in attending the nurture facility, student A felt that there was a sense of being "different" if you attended nurture (T8/21). While this difference did not precipitate any incidents of bullying or negativity in this case, it could be argued that this separation of students works against the principles of 'inclusion for all'. A further concern raised in the literature review (see Cooper and Tiknaz 2007; and Farrell and Ainscow 2002) was confirmed by the empirical investigation when it was suggested that a referral to the

nurture group might encourage staff to relinquish responsibility for the student (T4/15).

It could be argued that a key achievement for the research study has been the publication of the *Boxall Profile for Young People* (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010). Staff working in secondary school nurture groups now have access to an assessment instrument that is worded and phrased for the secondary school environment and with histograms norms that refer to the 11-14 age range. Unlike the original Profile, the *Boxall Profile for Young People* employed a research design that is replicable and that defined the term 'competently functioning' clearly through the SDQ screening process. Professionals employing the instrument can be confident that the norms on the *Boxall Profile for Young People* histograms now represent 84.1% of scores from a sample of 395 competently functioning young people aged 11-14.

The *Boxall Profile for Young People* was rephrased with settings beyond the school environment in mind. Care settings, secure units and other alternative settings are now employing the assessment instrument because of the developmental insights that it offers (Nurture Group Network 2010).

5.5 The limitations of the study.

The findings with regard to Research Question 1 must be viewed in the context of the small research sample. A research sample of five or ten times the figures used would have generated themes with thicker descriptions and more authenticity had they been derived from 120 interview participants rather than just 12. Indeed, a future research project might return to this issue and explore the perceived effects of secondary school nurture groups with a larger stakeholder sample.

Other limitations included the length of the interviews and the failure of the research to return to the strong themes generated by thematic analysis and explore these in more detail with the original interviewees.

The research limitations regarding Research Question 2 included a research sample that might ideally have been closer to 1000 participating students rather than the 584 that finally took part. A larger sample would have strengthened the claims made by the assessment instrument that 84.1% of competently functioning students would score within the revised histogram norms of each sub-cluster (e.g. A, B, C, etc). Furthermore, while the data generated by the research included school year and gender information, an opportunity was missed to gauge the impact of ethnicity on Boxall returns (and indeed on SDQ screening data). Future research might wish to revisit this topic and explore the impact of ethnicity on Boxall Profile scores.

An additional limitation regarding Research Question 2 is the age range on which the research chose to focus. Secondary schools attend to the needs of students up to 18 years and to limit the research sample to the 11-14 year age group has limited the reliability and validity of the instrument with young people aged 14 years plus. Again, a future research study might choose to replicate the research design for the 15-18 age group.

5.6 Nurture Groups and whole-school change.

Evidence from this study's semi-structured interviews with professionals, parents and students has suggested that nurture groups in secondary schools can have a positive impact on the broader ethos of the whole school (see 5.4). For one head teacher, the idea of establishing a nurture group was with the aim of "becoming more of a nurturing school" (T4/31). But could nurture groups in secondary schools inadvertently represent a barrier to fundamental whole-school change?

It could be argued, for example, that having a specialist on-site facility with a focus on the 'safe base' and the developmental needs of students might release the school as a whole from the responsibility of offering nurturing care across the school and in every classroom. In this sense, the emergence of nurture groups in secondary schools might be accused of diluting the demand for fundamental reform in education by offering a sop or compromise on the changes required.

While this remains a pertinent question, the research evidence generated by this investigation would suggest that nurture groups in secondary schools can be catalysts for significant and positive change in secondary education, particularly when viewed alongside a growing number of student-centred initiatives currently being developed, including peer tutoring, SEAL and restorative justice approaches in education (see section 2.3)

Where mainstream staff have access to the nurture group and observe successful outcomes for students and their improvements in attendance and behaviour, the theory and practice of nurture can begin to influence the way in which mainstream staff manage social, emotional and behavioural difficulties across the school (see Cooper and Whitebread 2007).

However, in order to maximise the impact of nurture groups on whole school practice and to promote a fundamental move towards nurturing schools, significant changes should be considered in terms of the training on offer from the Nurture Group Network. The Theory and Practice Certificate might be adapted significantly in terms of its content to reflect the secondary school environment and a secondary-specific in-service training day might be developed so that any school seeking to establish a nurture group can access training for the whole staff. By investing in whole-staff training on the principles of nurture, assessment through the Boxall Profile for Young People (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley 2010) and the theory of attachment, the emergence of nurture groups in secondary schools can be seen as a vehicle

through which significant and meaningful training can be introduced to even the most curriculum-focused of the secondary teaching staff.

Indeed, the natural progression from training secondary school staff during in-service days would be to ensure that teacher training courses in colleges and universities across the UK adopted the principles of nurture group theory as fundamental to effective pedagogy. In this way, newly qualified teachers would join staff teams with classroom practice already infused with ideas of developing the safe base, understanding behaviour as communication and the importance of language, self-esteem and developmental learning. With nurturing approaches built into teacher training courses, fundamental whole-school change would surely follow.

5.7 Research implications for the future.

Suggested areas for future research have emerged from the study that include a larger scale investigation into the perceptions of stakeholders; an updated primary version of the Boxall Profile (ages 3-8 years) with research methods replicating the *Boxall Profile for Young People* research design; and a Key Stage 4 version of the BPYP (ages 15-18) with research methods replicating the *Boxall Profile for Young People* research design. Findings from the research study also recommend that any new research study into the Boxall Profile ensures that data regarding the ethnicity of the sample is analysed along with data relating to the age and gender of the sample.

In addition the research has raised a number of issues around the content of the 4-day Certificate in the Theory and practice of nurture groups.

- *Revising the 4-Day Certificate in Nurture Group Theory and Practice for Secondary Schools*

At present, the 4-Day Certificate in Nurture Group Theory and Practice has a focus on the needs and demands of the primary school. This is, of course, inevitable given that the roots of nurture group practice originated in the Infant and Primary schools of East London in the 1970s. Table 5.1 briefly summarises the current structure of the 4-day course to assist with the discussion:

Table 5.1: Resume of current 4-day training course.

Day 1 Nurture Groups: Origins, Growth, Rationale and Background Six Principles of nurture Risk and Protective Factors Nurture Groups and Attachment Theory Observation and measurement techniques Interpreting the Boxall Profile	Day 2 What a Nurture Group looks like Nurture Routines eg. breakfast The Key Characteristics of a Nurturing School Developing a Nurture Group Curriculum The Involvement of parents Writing a child study assignment
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Day 3 Attachment Theory and Neuroscience The Boxall Profile in depth Discussion group (Your child study) Practical strategies	Day 4 Selection, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resettlement Research: The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups Language and communication Managing Emotions
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As has been suggested, the content of the 4-day certificate requires more case examples from secondary school practice and more reference to the secondary environments. In addition, this research has indicated that

secondary school nurture group teams are dealing with issues around bereavement and student illness as much as attachment based difficulties. This reality should be reflected in the content of the 4-day course as secondary teams need specific guidance through the 4-day certificate on managing these demands.

Indeed guidance around the role of 'counselling' in secondary schools is something that needs greater thought and transparency in relation to nurture group provision in the secondary school.

The research project's Literature Review highlighted criticism of nurture group practice regarding the way staff were observed to be "digging" into a child's experiences in the home (Bailey 2007). Certainly, discussing experiences with children, reflecting on the child's emotional states and addressing the causes of negative behaviours are features of nurture group practice (e.g. Sonnet 2008; Evans 2006). In the secondary school, issues around adolescence and puberty lead nurture teams into very different terrain when compared with our KS1 or KS2 colleagues. Bereavement, trauma, self harm, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies and depression may be features of the lives of the young people supported by the nurture group and nurture teams. Nurture teams across all phases explicitly encourage the development of trusting relationships with their students and this inevitably leads to the sharing of information and in-depth, personal conversations between staff and students. And yet clear guidance about the nurture team's role in managing the complex psychological and psychiatric needs of secondary age students is simply not in place. Professional counsellors have specific training and also have access to professional supervision. In the nurture group, staff may be drawn into a role that verges on the counselling role unless the line that separates educational support and formal counselling is made clear to all involved.

It could be argued that nurture groups are essentially an educational provision and not a psychiatric or psychological intervention. At least, the psychological benefits of the intervention could be said to be a by-product of educational focus. This focus is on promoting educational engagement and learning requires the teachers and teaching assistants making up the nurture group teams to have training as educators, but not necessarily as psychologists. It is therefore incumbent on the Nurture Group Network to offer nurture teams clear guidance in relation to staff-student conversations that pass into areas beyond the remit of educators. In such scenarios, the case should transfer to a professional with the required training to manage the issues (e.g. an educational psychologist) and handling this transfer is something that requires thought, sensitivity and practice.

The 4 day training course does not yet offer guidance or training around this issue and, as a consequence, the whole concept of nurture groups remains vulnerable to criticism that staff 'do not have the skills' to manage the student emotions that are invariably uncovered through the nurturing, trust-building process.

It could be argued that a revised 4 day certificate that is of relevance to secondary teams and to staff from alternative settings might also consider embracing new initiatives such as restorative practices in schools and the delivery of parenting courses from within the nurture group team.

Restorative Justice approaches in education (Hopkins 2004; Wachtel 1997) represents a relatively new development in schools that fits well with the nurture group model. The repairing of harm done as opposed to a culture of blame and punishment supports the principle of 'growth not pathology' described by Bennathan and Boxall (2000). Nurture group teams could be introduced to this powerful approach in the 4 day Certificate, providing an additional skill to the staff team and another approach to conflict resolution.

Advertising this aspect of the training might also draw in more interested parties.

Training in the delivery of parenting courses may not form a complete component of the 4-day Certificate as they are 2 and 3 day courses in themselves (e.g. Solihull Approach to Parenting 1996) but the 4-day Certificate could promote this as an additional goal for nurture facilities to promote early intervention and strong home-school links. In the Isle of Man, the Solihull Approach parenting training courses (1996) are being delivered by nurture teams from the school's site. The course has been made available to any parent with a child at the school (i.e. not just parents of nurture group children) and a pilot found that parents felt comfortable attending the school setting for the training (rather than a CAMHS or social services setting). The parenting training course involves ten weekly sessions from 1.30-3pm meaning that parents simply came to school early once a week, undertake the course and then leave with their children at home time.

Early feedback regarding the impact of the intervention (as reported by head teachers) suggests that a significant and positive improvement has been experienced by the parents involved by the children and the school community as a whole. It made sense to the head teachers that, having provided appropriate support in school through nurture group intervention, the next proactive step was to engage with the parents through a structured and evidence based parenting programme. If the 4 day certificate were to describe and recommend a number of approaches to be delivered by nurture teams, the advantage of this would be to enhance the skill set of the nurture teams; to enhance home-school links; to promote early intervention in the management of behavioural problems in the home (thereby reducing SEBD in school); to promote the nurture group's role as being integral to the school and to offer support to parents who might not otherwise have any contact with the nurture group team.

The model for delivering the 4-day Certificate to accommodate the specific needs of secondary teams need not follow the conventional 2 x 2 day structure and Table 5.2 illustrates a range of alternatives.

Table 5.2 Alternative models for Nurture Group Training.

	Model	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	4 day training Cert for secondary staff only	All examples are from secondary settings Highly relevant for secondary colleagues A secondary specific course	Is there currently enough demand in the regions or areas that will result in full attendance on courses?
2.	4 day training split into 2x2 days: Days 1 and 2: General NG practice delivered to Primary and Secondary colleagues together Days 3 and 4: Specific training in relation to either the primary or secondary school setting.	Much of the content of days 1 and 2 will be the same for all practitioners. Delegates receive 2 intensive days focused on their setting	Trainers run 6 days instead of 4 with logistical and cost implications By definition, days 3 and 4 will have approx half the delegate numbers as Days 1 and 2
3.	Revised 4 day training Cert is open to Primary and Secondary staff. But an additional 6-hour INSET day is delivered to the secondary school	Course completed in 4 days Secondary nurture teams are supported by an INSET day to help embed the philosophy across the school	4 day course remains a hybrid: neither primary nor secondary specific

Model 1 describes a course in which all delegates are working with the 11-16 age range whether in mainstream schools, special schools, care or secure settings. The major features of the standard course are retained by illuminated by examples from secondary practice at every opportunity. Each of the four days are secondary school specific and the sharing of experience and ideas with colleagues based in similar settings will enhance the

opportunities for learning. In reality, however, generating the numbers to run the course in one location might prove difficult at the present time. While nurture groups are growing in numbers across the UK and are being championed by Ofsted and in the House of Commons (2010), interest from secondary school practitioners remains limited. Therefore, if a course is arranged at a venue in Liverpool, would there be sufficient interest in Liverpool as a region to make a Secondary 4-day Certificate course viable (with 20-30+ delegates)?

Model 2 suggests offering a joint training package for primary and secondary teams over days 1 and 2 of the course and then a delivering a setting-specific package for days 3 and 4. This would acknowledge the common features of nurture group practice across the phases and settings and promote the healthy exchange of ideas and experiences between staff teams as part of days 1 and 2. During days 3 and 4 the teams would be offered setting-specific training. Primary teams would not have to tolerate exploration of new models in secondary schools while secondary teams would receive in depth guidance on the secondary school nurture group model without this being diluted by references to practice only relevant for the primary school. This disadvantage of this model is that it requires 6 days of trainer time to complete the course (i.e. 2 days intro, 2 days primary, 2 days secondary) and this might increase the costs of attending the training. Also, by definition, the numbers of delegates on days 3 and 4 will be approximately half the attendance on days 1 and 2 as the cohort splits into two groups.

Model 3 is perhaps the most viable structure at the present time. It retains a joint 4 –day certificate training programme that adapts the core presentations and content to meet the needs of both primary, secondary and alternative settings practitioners. By including more examples of secondary practice, secondary case studies and the use of the Boxall Profile for Young People, the 4 –day training will be less primary specific and more generic. But to respond to the added size of the secondary school and the scale of its staff team and

school roll, it is suggested that a 6 hour secondary INSET package be designed and offered to secondary schools that are developing nurture group provision. This INSET would be delivered to 20-30 staff working at the school and would serve to help establish the purpose and practice of the nurture group in advance. The content of the INSET day would take the key features of the 4 day training and include:

- Background, origins and Marion Bennathan's intro to BPYP
- Attachment and neuroscience
- 6 Principles
- The NG and the continuum of care
- Assessment
- Referral
- Whole school approach

Schools taking up the INSET training are likely to have a nurture group in their school with the staff having already undergone the 4 day training. It is important to note that this proposal is not an alternative to the 4 day training but a means of helping embed the NG into the school. Indeed, the NG staff from the school may also contribute to the training day.

What is important is that Model 3 recognises that in a setting of 1500 students, the NG team may need additional help in delivering the NG message in such a large setting. By involving 20 staff from the same staffroom, an understanding of the purpose and value of the NG as a unique aspect of care, support and provision in the school might be precisely what Senior Management Teams across the country require to boost the investment they have already made in their NG provisions.

The advantage of this model is that it would be easy to organise, easy to deliver and it would offer additional support to secondary school teams. In short, it would acknowledge that the development of nurture groups in

secondary schools requires adaptations to the present menu of training that is on offer and future research into how this might be structured would be of great benefit to all those involved.

- Revising the Quality Mark Award for secondary schools

A further area for future research and development involves the modifications required to the Quality Mark Award (QMA) for secondary school nurture group facilities and the current application and guidance form is included on CD1/QMA.

The strength of the current QMA is that it sets the 'gold standard' for nurture group practice in the primary sector. Responding to the threat posed by emerging 'variants' on the classic nurture group model theme (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd 2001; Cooper and Whitebread 2007), the QMA is providing guidance to primary nurture groups around best practice in nurture group intervention but, in its present form, does not reflect the needs and experiences of the secondary school setting.

To ensure that secondary school nurture groups are also clear on the standards required to achieve the award an immediate revision of aspects of the language of the QMA application and guidance is required. For example, references to 'children' needs to be changed to 'children/young people' consistently throughout the QMA (see 1c, 1d, 2b, 4a, 5c, 6a). In addition the QMA application form might consider The following adaptations:

Section 1a – consider a reference to 'the nurture group is understood and supported by the school's Senior Management Team'?

Section 1b – consider 'nurture group staff also contribute to the life of the mainstream school'?

Section 2b – secondary nurture groups are offering support on a long-term basis to specific students. Should this be acknowledged?

Section 3a – consider ‘clear communication between the nurture group staff and key mainstream staff’ as the nurture group staff in secondary cannot meet with all the teachers working with the young person

Section 3b – consider ‘ensures that the core placements are determined etc’. Secondary nurture groups are supporting tens of students informally over break times but these are not the core students that require systematic assessment. Consider distinguishing between core students and students with access?

Section 3b – ‘clear referral, selection and resettlement procedures’. Research suggests that having a robust referral structure within secondary is key to a successful facility to avoid knee-jerk decisions, an overload of challenging cases or a ‘sin bin’ developing.

Section 4a does not read well. Consider separating the ‘setting in which missing... experiences are provided’ from the relationships aspect? Perhaps ‘provides relationships that promote a sense of safety and trust’?

Section 5a – reference to ‘national curriculum work being provided by the mainstream secondary teacher and completed in the nurture facility’ as this is often the case due to the specialist nature of secondary course work.

Section 5c – consider ‘recognises the importance of quality play experiences in the development of learning for both children and young people’

Other issues for consideration for the secondary QMA include whether an explicit area that references planning and targets linked to the 6 principles might be appropriate and supportive of nurture group practice. This might be located in Section 5d and read ‘Curriculum planning and targets reflect the 6 principles of nurture group practice’ (evidence: 6 principles displayed in environment, 6 principles referred to in planning and targets etc)

Similarly, in Section 6. ‘A nurturing approach’, a new Section 6c might read ‘the six principles of nurture are understood by mainstream staff and permeate the whole school’ with evidence provided by principles being displayed around school, discussion with mainstream staff etc.

The degree and detail of how the QMA is updated for the secondary school nurture groups is yet to be confirmed. But research that recommends adaptations to the Award for secondary settings will reiterate the message already sent through an updated training programme, that nurture groups in secondary schools have a future - and that nurture groups in secondary schools may indeed *be* the future.

- *Beyond the Boxall Profile for Young People*

With the publication of the Boxall Profile for Young People (2010), an additional area for future research might involve the development of a publication that supports the BPYP assessment. The original Profile has a sister publication entitled 'Beyond the Boxall Profile' (Evans 2006) which offers pragmatic, practical suggestions on interventions and activities that respond to the needs identified through the Boxall Profile assessment. The publication allows nurture group practitioners to look up the particular sub-cluster area that is shown to be of concern by the Profile assessment (e.g. sub-cluster C: connects up experiences) and consider a range of activities, tasks and games that may promote learning in this area (e.g. p.17 of the publication).

Naturally, many of the tasks and ideas have a focus on the primary age range and while this does not preclude secondary staff from using some of the ideas in *Beyond the Boxall Profile* (indeed the developmental stage of the secondary school student might require strategies at this level), a sister publication that supports the Boxall Profile for Young People with tasks, games, ideas and suggestions for secondary age students would be a welcome area for research and development.

Initial work that has commenced on such a publication is included on CD1/Beyond BPYP and this will be developed further through workshops at the Nurture Group Network Conference on 14 October 2011.

Appendices

Appendix (i) Senate Approval

Appendix (i): Senate Approval for Research



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Professor Janet Ainley
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6th May 2009

David Colley
Rheast Cottage
5 Meale
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To whom it may concern:

This is to confirm that Mr David Colley is registered at the above named University. He has been recommended by the School of Education to be transferred from APG to a PhD student after having undergone the Departmental transfer procedures in October 2008.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Busher'.

Dr Hugh Busher
Postgraduate Tutor

Appendix (ii): Ethical Code

1. Informed consent sought from all participants invited to join the study
2. Complete confidentiality given and adhered to for all interviewees
3. Complete confidentiality given and adhered to for all students and staff participating in the quantitative research
4. Respectful of individuals wishes concerning participation and their contributions
5. Respectful of parental wishes concerning participation of their child
6. Open and transparent purpose to the research
7. Researcher identity and background supplied
8. Warm responses given during interviews and quantitative research process
9. Verbal thanks given to interviewees and acknowledgements in the *Boxall Profile for Young People* for all staff and schools contributing to the quantitative research study

Appendix 1

Example Extract (for full transcript see CD1/Transcripts1-5)

Para	Transcript 1
1	<u>Transcript</u>
2	DC : David could you confirm the year that your NG opened please?
3	DT: September 2003
4	DC: How did you become aware of NGs as an initiative?
5	DT: I am chairman of the national inclusion committee of the Association of School and College Leaders (a UK SEN body) so I was probably aware of it before anyone else on the Isle of Man. If anything I think I was instrumental in introducing it into people's consciousness.
6	DC: What was it about nurture that appealed to you as a secondary mainstream provision?
7	DT: I am very conscious that children by the time they get to us (at secondary age) they are already severely damaged goods. The children with problems that emanate from their background, if they have not been solved by the time they are 11 its is almost too late. And we just let them sink or swim in the old system. We knew of the issues but there was nothing we could do about it. We needed a better way of addressing the issues that individual children have got and try to support them through difficult times both past and present and nurture seemed to be the obvious way of doing that.
8	DC: What does it provide that is different from a school that doesn't have nurture?
9	DT: A base. Somewhere that is set up specifically to give that nurture support which is specially furnished and equipped to do that and which is quite different from a classroom for instance. Most schools don't have anywhere like it really.
10	Specialist staffing with the time to spend with children which most class teachers and pastoral staff do not have;
11	The ability to make children feel safe and secure in a way that perhaps in a large secondary school they don't feel. They are just a part of a tutor group wandering from lesson to lesson

Appendix 2

Transcripts 1-5 First Level Codes Key 1-76

1. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support
2. The nurture group as a 'safe base' for students
3. Access to a dedicated room for nurture group work
4. The effective nurture group has dedicated, specialist staff with appropriate training and skills
5. Life experiences and their effect on students
6. Whole school support systems and responding to the needs of students as individuals
7. Delivering nurture group support across the key stages
8. Supporting students and parents through trauma and/or emergencies
9. Addressing difficulties to promote learning and mainstream contact
10. Encouraging guests to the nurture group to widen the whole school understanding of it's remit
11. Labelling and stigma issues around attending the nurture group
12. Nurture group support for 'school refusers'
13. Home background
14. The groupings and staffing of the nurture group
15. The referral system to access nurture group intervention
16. Nurture groups represent "value for money"
17. Assessment and identification for nurture group intervention
18. The nurture group provides opportunities for students to talk
19. The nurture group can offer support to students with medical illness
20. The size of the secondary school environment poses particular problems when compare with the primary school.
21. Examples of unsuccessful nurture group intervention
22. Addressing difficulties from a developmental perspective
23. The implications of successful intervention in schools for the community and the wider society
24. The nurture group can offer immediate support following trauma
25. Alternatives to nurture group provision
26. Nurture groups and the development of life-skills
27. Limits of mainstream in meeting student needs
28. Nurture group intervention as an organised, planned educational and social programme
29. The limits of the nurture group's capacity to meet all needs
30. The nurture group breakfast
31. The nurture group and the mainstream curriculum
32. The way in which the nurture group joins a professional 'continuum' of care, support and provision.
33. Nurture group provision and students attendance issues.
34. School support and links with parents
35. Student numbers accessing nurture group support

36. Lunch times and break times
37. The nurture group 'drop in' facility
38. Securing funding for nurture group provision
39. The importance of nurture group staff having credibility with colleagues and students
40. Feeling included
41. The nurture group and its role in supporting the transition of students from primary school into secondary school
42. Developing a coherent response system to the challenges of modern society
43. Staffing arrangements for the nurture group
44. The costs of running a nurture group
45. Getting mainstream staff on board: INSET, awareness raising and concrete data evidence
46. Overview of NG provision
47. The nurture group as an extension of whole school ethos
48. Students who missed the opportunity to access nurture group support
49. Employing professional 'intuition' as a nurture group practitioner
50. Linking up with other schools with nurture group provision
51. Nurture group intervention must be 'age appropriate'
52. Understanding the attachment issues that may feature for students
53. The structure of the nurture group sessions
54. Aspects of the nurture group curriculum
55. Flexibility of response to trauma and bereavement
56. Mainstream teachers who relinquish responsibility for SEN students
57. Meeting with other nurture group professionals
58. Planning off-site activities
59. Focusing on the long term gains for students
60. Laying the foundations for effective nurture group provision in the school
61. Getting it right in the first year of secondary school
62. Understanding the attachment issues that may feature for students
63. What is behind the poor behaviour?
64. Nurture group staff with the time to spend with students time
65. Nurture groups offer space .
66. Reflecting on the practical benefits of nurture group provision to students
67. The impact of nurture group provision for students and the whole school
68. Evaluating how well the nurture group is functioning
69. Nurture group staff with 'multi functions'
70. Staff attendance at training
71. The nurture group that has open access and a drop in facility
72. The nurture group personnel must be right to be effective
73. Counsellors in school
74. Tracking student progress in the nurture group
75. Relying on goodwill to allow nurture group provision to continue
76. How the idea for developing a nurture group originated

Appendix 3 (EXTRACT) For full details refer to CD1/Codes/1-76(T1)

Code Table (T1)

Code Table illustrating code headings 1-76 with extracts from Transcript 1

First Level Code Headings	Extracts from transcript 1 with paragraph reference (e.g. T1/para7)
1. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support	<p>T1/7: children by the time they get to us (at secondary age) they are already severely damaged goods.</p> <p>T1/13: Unsafe may be the wrong word- it could be unsettled, unhappy.</p> <p>T1/32: Our NG sees a lot of children and in some cases they are children who are quite obviously different either because of their appearance (eg pop type cultures) or because they behave differently not in terms of bad behaviour, but in terms of 'they're different'. Or because they may have very few friends or a strange group of friends; a whole series of reasons that pick them out as not being part of the mainstream.</p>
2. A safe base	<p>T1/9: A base. Somewhere that is set up specifically to give that nurture support</p> <p>T1/11: The ability to make children feel safe and secure</p> <p>T1/17: for those students it has been successful- they have had stability and a reference point that has helped them to be successful in school.</p>
3. The NG room and resources	<p>T1/9: specially furnished and equipped to do that and which is quite different from a classroom for instance. Most schools don't have anywhere like it really.</p> <p>T1/15: but the conventional environment that we provide does very little to address those feelings</p>
4. Specialist staff with training	T1/10: Specialist staffing
5. Past experiences	T1/7: children with problems that emanate from their background
6. Individualistic approach	T1/7: We needed a better way of addressing the issues that individual children have got

	<p>T1/48: They may be withdrawn from some lessons to attend nurture or they may attend only in unstructured times before school or during breaks. It depends on the individual.</p>
7. KS 3,4 and 5	<p>T1/20: We have now made a successful bid to pilot a KS4 NG and that is just about to start.</p> <p>T1/24: To a point I think it is fairly important to separate youngsters from older kids. I think the older kids have different issues and in a close knit environment like nurture it won't work very well.</p>
8. Trauma and emergencies	<p>T1/26: There are often emergency situations. Take one child.(with chronic traumas within the family). We gave her an enormous amount of support and sustained her education.</p> <p>T1/34: We had a child commit suicide a few years ago and nurture was very closely involved with hat boys circle of close friends for quite a long period of time. They were KS4 and we broke all our own rules at that time. We were able to give a lot of support and without that facility we couldn't have done it.</p> <p>T1/34: For individual kids who have experienced trauma (like the one discussed earlier) it has been fantastic, somewhere where we could immediately offer succour and support which we couldn't do in the normal course of events and we have done that on a number of occasions.</p>
9. Promoting educational engagement, learning, the school community and survival	<p>T1/37: So for the school as a whole the knock on effect is that difficulties that we might not be aware of but that inhibits their learning are being addressed and so enabling them to be part of the normal mainstream side of school and to succeed in classrooms.</p>
10. Whole school involvement	
11. Stigma issues	<p>T1/31: Its not a label to go to nurture its just going to FLA2 (the school has a flexible learning area with a range of support offered at FLA 1, FLA 2 etc). Its not a big deal.</p> <p>T1/32: Everybody knows that students go to FLA for a</p>

	<p>variety of reasons. It's not a big deal and no stigma is attached to it.</p> <p>T1/48: In this school it is not a stigma and secondly the children are not separated from their mainstream peers. They still continue to go to tutor groups and mainstream lessons.... they are certainly not separated from their mainstream peers and in this school there is no stigma in having special needs what ever they may be. The kids don't use the term special needs its just "I'm going to the FLA" and that expression doesn't have a stigma attached to it at all or I don't think it does</p>
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Appendix 4

Extract from Master Code Table A- For full details refer to CD1/MasterCodeTable/Table A

Master Code Table A (Transcripts 1,2,3,4 and 5)

Master Code Table linking extracts from transcripts 1-5 with second phase code headings 1-76. (T1 –yellow, T2 –grey, T3 –purple, T4 –turquoise, T5 – green)

Second Phase Code Headings (T1-5)	Extracts from transcripts that support code headings
1. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support	<p>T1/7: children by the time they get to us (at secondary age) they are already severely damaged goods.</p> <p>T1/13: Unsafe may be the wrong word- it could be unsettled, unhappy.</p> <p>T1/32: Our NG sees a lot of children and in some cases they are children who are quite obviously different either because of their appearance (eg pop type cultures) or because they behave differently not in terms of bad behaviour, but in terms of 'they're different'. Or because they may have very few friends or a strange group of friends; a whole series of reasons that pick them out as not being part of the mainstream.</p> <p>T3/ 4: relating to certain vulnerable young people</p> <p>T3/14 : The nurture group tends to cater for the socially excluded children with particular issues at home,</p> <p>T3/ 14: others might be referred to the YIP by the police so it's a mix and match.</p> <p>T3/ 19: they have a lack of social skills, their self confidence is low</p> <p>T4/ 4: who had been labelled in such a way.</p> <p>T5/ 7: we had in our school a number of students who were finding the change between primary and secondary quite a difficult change,</p> <p>T5/7 : With the emotional baggage that many were carrying made this a difficult transition.</p>

2. A safe base	<p>T1/9: A base. Somewhere that is set up specifically to give that nurture support</p> <p>T1/11: The ability to make children feel safe and secure</p> <p>T1/17: for those students it has been successful- they have had stability and a reference point that has helped them to be successful in school.</p> <p>T2/ 8: I think its just an environment where they can go and they can be comfortable.</p> <p>T2/8 : it's a place of safety, its security</p> <p>T2/8 : there is a haven</p> <p>T2/16 : there will always be someone to welcome us.</p> <p>T3/10 : Cwtch is a welsh word which means 'put an arm around the children' in appropriate way, looking after them.</p>

Appendix 5

Summary of codes emerging in Transcripts 1-5 from Starter codes to First and Second Level Codes

Starter Codes	First Level Codes	Second Level Codes
The nurture group offers a 'safe base'	1. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support	1. Descriptors of the difficulties typically presented by students accessing nurture group support
How does the nurture group connect with other support systems within the school	2. A safe base	2. The nurture group as a 'safe base' for students
Assessment and referral structure	3. The NG room and resources	3. Access to a dedicated room for nurture group work
Do nurture groups stigmatise students?	4. Specialist staff with training	4. The effective nurture group has dedicated, specialist staff with appropriate training and skills
	5. Past experiences	5. Life experiences and their effect on students
	6. Individualistic approach	6. Whole school support systems and responding to the needs of students as individuals
	7. KS 3,4 and 5	7. Delivering nurture group support across the key stages
	8. Trauma and emergencies	8. Supporting students and parents through trauma and/or emergencies
	9. Promoting educational engagement and learning	9. Addressing difficulties to promote learning and mainstream contact
	10. Whole school involvement	10. Encouraging guests to the nurture group to widen the whole school understanding of it's remit
	11. Stigma issues	11. Labelling and stigma issues around attending the nurture group
	12. School refusers	12. Nurture group support for 'school refusers'
	13. Home background	13. Home background

	14. NG structure	14. The groupings and staffing of the nurture group
	15. Referral system for NG intervention	15. The referral system to access nurture group intervention
	16. Value for money	16. Nurture groups represent "value for money"
	17. Assessment and identification	17. Assessment and identification for nurture group intervention
	18. Opportunities to talk	18. The nurture group provides opportunities for students to talk
	19. Supporting medical illness	19. The nurture group can offer support to students with medical illness
	20. the size of the secondary school environment	20. The size of the secondary school environment poses particular problems when compared with the primary school.
	21. Unsuccessful NG intervention	21. Examples of unsuccessful nurture group intervention
	22. Developmental issues	22. Addressing difficulties from a developmental perspective
	23. Wider society	23. The implications of successful intervention in schools for the community and the wider society
	24. Immediate help from the NG	24. The nurture group can offer immediate support following trauma
	25. Alternatives	25. Alternatives to nurture group provision
	26. Life-skills	26. Nurture groups and the development of life-skills
	27. Limits of mainstream	27. Limits of mainstream in meeting student needs
	28. NG as an organised educational programme	28. Nurture group intervention as an organised, planned educational and social programme
	29. Capacity of provision	29. The limits of the nurture group's capacity to meet all needs
	30. Food and the NG	30. The nurture group breakfast
	31. the mainstream curriculum	31. The nurture group and the mainstream curriculum
	32. A continuum of care, support and provision	32. The way in which the nurture group joins a professional 'continuum' of care, support and provision.
	33. Attendance	33. Nurture group provision and

	issues	students attendance issues.
	34. Parents	34. School support and links with parents
	35. student numbers	35. Student numbers accessing nurture group support
	36. Lunch times and break times	36. Lunch times and break times
	37. Homework	37. The nurture group 'drop in' facility
	38. Funding for NGs	38. Securing funding for nurture group provision
	39. Credibility of NG staff with colleagues and students	39. The importance of nurture group staff having credibility with colleagues and students
	40. Inclusion/exclusion issues	40. Feeling included
	41. Primary to secondary transitions	41. The nurture group and its role in supporting the transition of students from primary school into secondary school
	42. Coherent responses	42. Developing a coherent response system to the challenges of modern society
	43. NG staffing	43. Staffing arrangements for the nurture group
	44. NG costs	44. The costs of running a nurture group
	45. INSET training for mainstream staff	45. Getting mainstream staff on board: INSET, awareness raising and concrete data evidence
	46. Overview of NG provision	46. Overview of NG provision
	47. NG as an extension of whole school ethos	47. The nurture group as an extension of whole school ethos
	48. Potential for others	48. Students who missed the opportunity to access nurture group support
	49. Intuition	49. Employing professional 'intuition' as a nurture group practitioner
	50. Links with other schools with NG provision	50. Linking up with other schools with nurture group provision
	51. Age appropriate intervention	51. Nurture group intervention must be 'age appropriate'
	52. Attachment	52. Understanding the attachment issues that may feature for students
	53. NG sessions	53. The structure of the nurture

		group sessions
	54.NG curriculum	54. Aspects of the nurture group curriculum
	55. Flexibility	55. Flexibility of response to trauma and bereavement
	56. Mainstream teachers who relinquish responsibility	56. Mainstream teachers who relinquish responsibility for SEN students
	57. Professional support networks	57. Meeting with other nurture group professionals
	58. Other educational contexts other than the school site	58. Planning off-site activities
	59. Long term gains	59. Focusing on the long term gains for students
	60. Starting as a small pocket that then drifts out	60. Laying the foundations for effective nurture group provision in the school
	61. NG as a proactive intervention	61. Getting it right in the first year of secondary school
	62. Missed experiences	62. Understanding the attachment issues that may feature for students
	63. The 6 principles of nurture	63. What is behind the poor behaviour?
	64. The time	64. Nurture group staff with the time to spend with students time
	65. The space	65. Nurture groups offer space .
	66. Positive progress for students	66. Reflecting on the practical benefits of nurture group provision to students
	67. Impact of nurture	67. The impact of nurture group provision for students and the whole school
	68. Evaluation	68. Evaluating how well the nurture group is functioning
	69. NG staff with multi functions	69. Nurture group staff with 'multi functions'
	70.NG Conference attendance	70. Staff attendance at training
	71. Open access/drop in facility	71. The nurture group that has open access and a drop in facility
	72. NG personnel must be right	72. The nurture group personnel must be right to be effective
	73. NG teams and	73. Counsellors in school

	the counselling role	
	74. Tracking student progress	74. Tracking student progress in the nurture group
	75. Relying on goodwill	75. Relying on goodwill to allow nurture group provision to continue
	76. How the idea originated	76. How the idea for developing a nurture group originated

Appendix 6

Transcripts 1-5

Second Level Codes that relate to Research Question 1(a):What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

Codes: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75

<p>2. The nurture group as a 'safe base' for students</p>	<p>T1/9: (the nurture group is) A base. Somewhere that is set up specifically to give that nurture support</p> <p>T1/11: (the nurture group has) the ability to make children feel safe and secure</p> <p>T1/17: for those (Key Stage 3) students (the nurture group)has been successful- they have had stability</p> <p>and a reference point that has helped them to be successful in school.</p> <p>T2/ 8: I think (the nurture group) is just an environment where they can go and they can be comfortable.</p> <p>T2/8 : (the nurture group is) a place of safety,</p> <p>its security</p> <p>T2/8 : there is a haven (in the nurture group)</p> <p>T2/16 : (in the nurture group) there will always be someone to welcome us.</p> <p>T3/10 : (the nurture group contributes to 'cwtch') Cwtch is a welsh word which means 'put an arm around the children' in appropriate way, looking after them</p>
<p>3. Access to a dedicated room for nurture group work</p>	<p>T4/10 : We have not been able to set up a (dedicated) nurturing room.</p> <p>T4/12 : We would never get a dedicated space because of funding but it seems to work.</p> <p>T4/13 : I don't know if (not having a dedicated space) has a negative effect but it seems to work at the moment.</p>

	<p>T4/15 : I like the fact that (nurture) is across the school</p> <p>T4/ 37: The moveable setting may also discourage a stigma around a particular room or setting developing. Its not a place they go to, its situated across the school.</p> <p>T4/ 38: It does not create stigma if you are creating a free flow; a reciprocal kind of exchange of experience, either at a teacher level or at a pupil level when they invite other guests</p>
4. The effective nurture group has dedicated, specialist staff with appropriate training and skills	<p>T1/10: (the effective nurture group has) specialist staffing</p> <p>T2/14 : (in school) we know that people who are traumatised can go there and be with staff who are a calming influence.</p> <p>T2/25 : quite often you need to have very intensive work with these people (who are traumatised).</p> <p>T3/ 9: (to set up an effective nurture group) the critical aspect is appropriate funding and training.</p> <p>T3/9 : (to set up an effective nurture group) we trained staff effectively through attendance at all the relevant courses so we had an expert and a suitable person</p> <p>T4/4 : (in learning about nurture groups) I had been undertaking a diploma in SEN with a focus on SEBD</p> <p>T5/ 23: (Dedicated staff is central to the effective nurture group)We looked at other types of units that I was not comfortable with involving non dedicated staff</p>
7. Delivering nurture group support across the key stages	<p>T1/20: We have now made a successful bid to pilot a KS4 NG and that is just about to start.</p> <p>T1/24: To a point I think it is fairly important to separate youngsters from older kids. I think the older kids have different issues and in a close knit environment like nurture it won't work very well.</p> <p>T2/6: Its mainly KS3 but it goes up to KS5.</p> <p>T5/6 : Our focus was first year students in secondary school aged 12</p>
8. Supporting	<p>T1/26: There are often emergency situations. Take one</p>

students and parents through trauma and/or emergencies	<p>child.(with chronic traumas within the family). We gave her an enormous amount of support and sustained her education.</p> <p>T1/34: We had a child commit suicide a few years ago and nurture was very closely involved with that boy's circle of close friends for quite a long period of time. They were KS4 and we broke all our own rules at that time. We were able to give a lot of support and without that facility we couldn't have done it.</p> <p>T1/34: For individual kids who have experienced trauma (like the one discussed earlier) it has been fantastic; somewhere where we could immediately offer succour and support which we couldn't do in the normal course of events. And we have done that on a number of occasions.</p> <p>T2/ : Some head teachers have said that the NGs ability to deal with bereavement or trauma very flexibly, quickly in an organised way is one of the strengths AB: Absolutely.</p> <p>T2/23 : Parents turn to the school for support following trauma because we have a positive relationship with them.</p>
12. Nurture group support for 'school refusers'	T1/35: We also have a number of school refusers that nurture is working with a getting them to come into school
14. The groupings and staffing of the nurture group	<p>T5/ 9: The two groups have a focus on 6 pupils each with a mix of male and female</p> <p>T5/17 : This nurture unit is being managed by one qualified English teacher with a support assistant. Two double sessions of nurture take place but in class support by the nurture staff is also available during the week.</p>
15. The referral system to access nurture group intervention	<p>T1/41: We don't get random referrals to nurture; we have a process that all are aware of involving the Senco, heads of year and the Boxall Profile assessments to determine whether nurture is the right thing for that child.</p> <p>T1/45: It was made clear that sending a child out of class to go to nurture was not appropriate</p> <p>T3/16 : we have a referral system which again is multi purpose.</p>

Appendix 7

Transcripts 1-5

re: Research Question 1(a): What are the features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

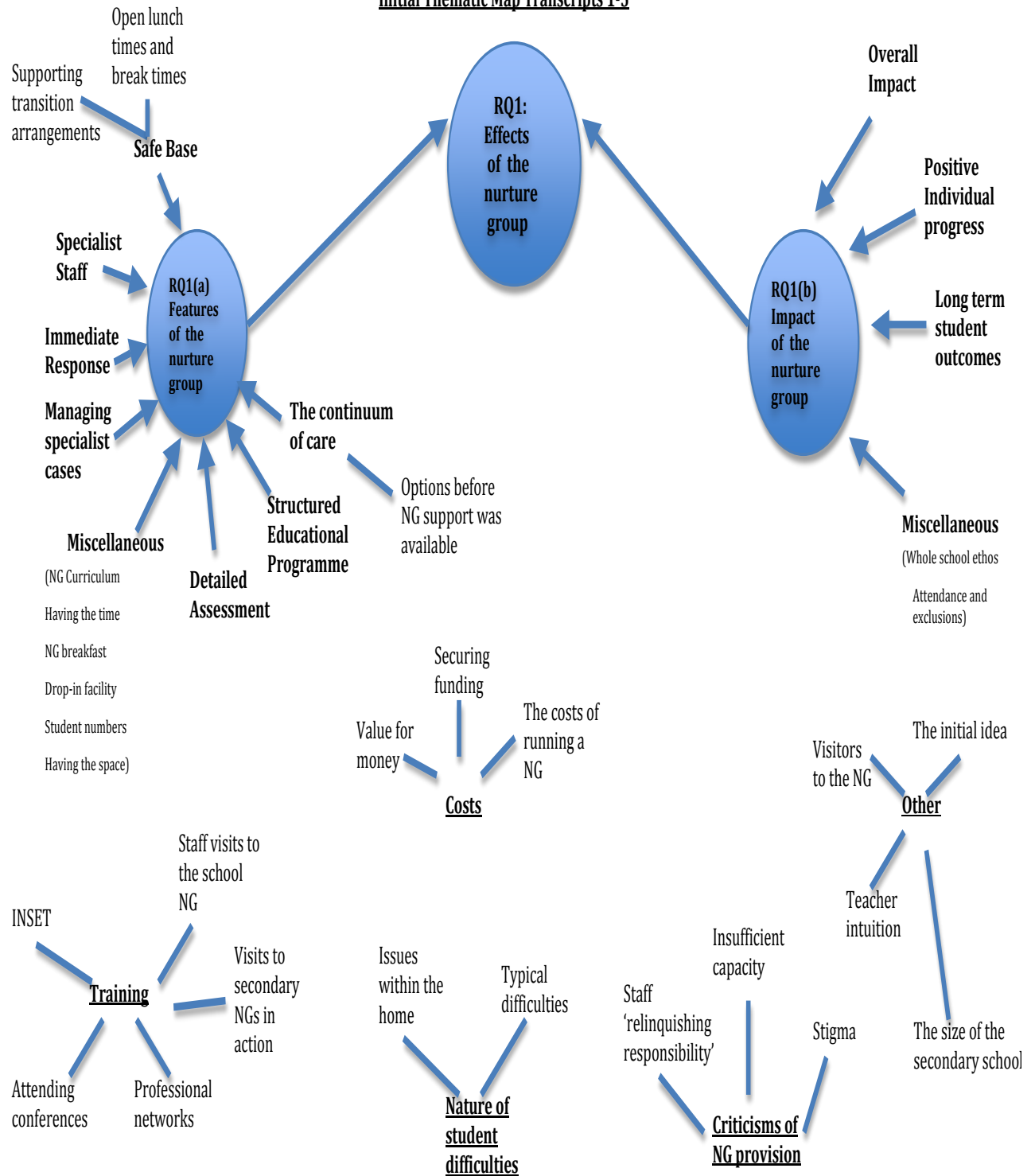
Strong themes emerging from the data	DATA EXTRACTS
2. The nurture group as a 'safe base' for students "SAFE BASE"	<p>T1/9: (the nurture group is) A base. Somewhere that is set up specifically to give that nurture support</p> <p>T1/11: (the nurture group has) the ability to make children feel safe and secure</p> <p>T1/17: for those (Key Stage 3) students (the nurture group)has been successful- they have had stability</p> <p>and a reference point that has helped them to be successful in school.</p> <p>T2/ 8: I think (the nurture group) is just an environment where they can go and they can be comfortable.</p> <p>T2/8 : (the nurture group is) a place of safety, its security</p> <p>T2/8 : there is a haven (in the nurture group)</p> <p>T2/16 : (in the nurture group) there will always be someone to welcome us.</p> <p>T3/10 : (the nurture group contributes to 'cwtch') Cwtch is a welsh word which means 'put an arm around the children' in appropriate way, looking after them</p>
4. The effective nurture group has dedicated, specialist staff with appropriate training and	<p>T1/10: (the effective nurture group has) specialist staffing</p> <p>T2/14 : (in school) we know that people who are traumatised can go there and be with staff who are a calming influence.</p> <p>T2/25 : quite often you need to have very intensive work with these people (who are traumatised).</p>

skills "SPECIALIST STAFF"	<p>T3/ 9: (to set up an effective nurture group) the critical aspect is appropriate funding and training.</p> <p>T3/9 : (to set up an effective nurture group) we trained staff effectively through attendance at all the relevant courses so we had an expert and a suitable person</p> <p>T4/4 : (in learning about nurture groups) I had been undertaking a diploma in SEN with a focus on SEBD</p> <p>T5/ 23: (Dedicated staff is central to the effective nurture group)We looked at other types of units that I was not comfortable with involving non dedicated staff</p> <p>T4/ 33:DC You have to have credibility with your colleagues to make things work. RR: I would more than agree with you. I have been told that I have credibility across the school.</p> <p>T4/37 : The staff leading nurture must have credibility with students and colleagues so that the facility they run is associated with high standards.</p> <p>T4/ 42: (staff who understand) what have these young people not experienced?' Where is this behaviour coming from?</p> <p>T2/25 : Some students might have all there GCSE lessons in the nurture room so you need staff that have multi functions if we are going to make sure that we give the students the best service that we can.</p> <p>T3/ 9: The personnel and the environment must be right to be effective</p> <p>T4/18 : L is the pupil support officer in nurture and has been for the two years. She shares a passion, vision and enthusiasm for the work which is key. We work closely together and that makes it successful. We model dialogue and ways of resolving conflict for the students.</p> <p>T4/ 33: I have been told that I have credibility across the school.</p> <p>T4/37 : The staff leading nurture must have credibility with students and colleagues so that the facility they run is associated with high standards.</p>
8. Immediate response in emergencies for	<p>T1/26: There are often emergency situations. Take one child.(with chronic traumas within the family). We gave her an enormous amount of support and sustained her education.</p>

<p>students and parents "IMMEDIATE RESPONSE"</p>	<p>T1/34: We had a child commit suicide a few years ago and nurture was very closely involved with that boy's circle of close friends for quite a long period of time. They were KS4 and we broke all our own rules at that time. We were able to give a lot of support and without that facility we couldn't have done it.</p> <p>T1/34: For individual kids who have experienced trauma (like the one discussed earlier) it has been fantastic; somewhere where we could immediately offer succour and support which we couldn't do in the normal course of events. And we have done that on a number of occasions.</p> <p>T2/ : Some head teachers have said that the NGs ability to deal with bereavement or trauma very flexibly, quickly in an organised way is one of the strengths AB: Absolutely.</p> <p>T2/23 : Parents turn to the school for support following trauma because we have a positive relationship with them.</p> <p>T2/8 : (The nurture group is) a place where they can go and talk about concerns or worries.</p> <p>T2/16 : It shows that here is a place where we can talk</p> <p>T1/34: For individual kids who have experienced trauma (like the one discussed earlier) it has been fantastic, somewhere where we could immediately offer succour and support which we couldn't do in the normal course of events and we have done that on a number of occasions.</p> <p>T4/41 : how do we tackle this problem here and now</p> <p>T2/23 : we have to look at support to parents, which is substantial.</p> <p>T2/23 : Parents turn to the school for support following trauma because we have a positive relationship with them.</p> <p>T4/34 : I'd like to develop hosting small staff lunches and greater carer/parent input.</p>
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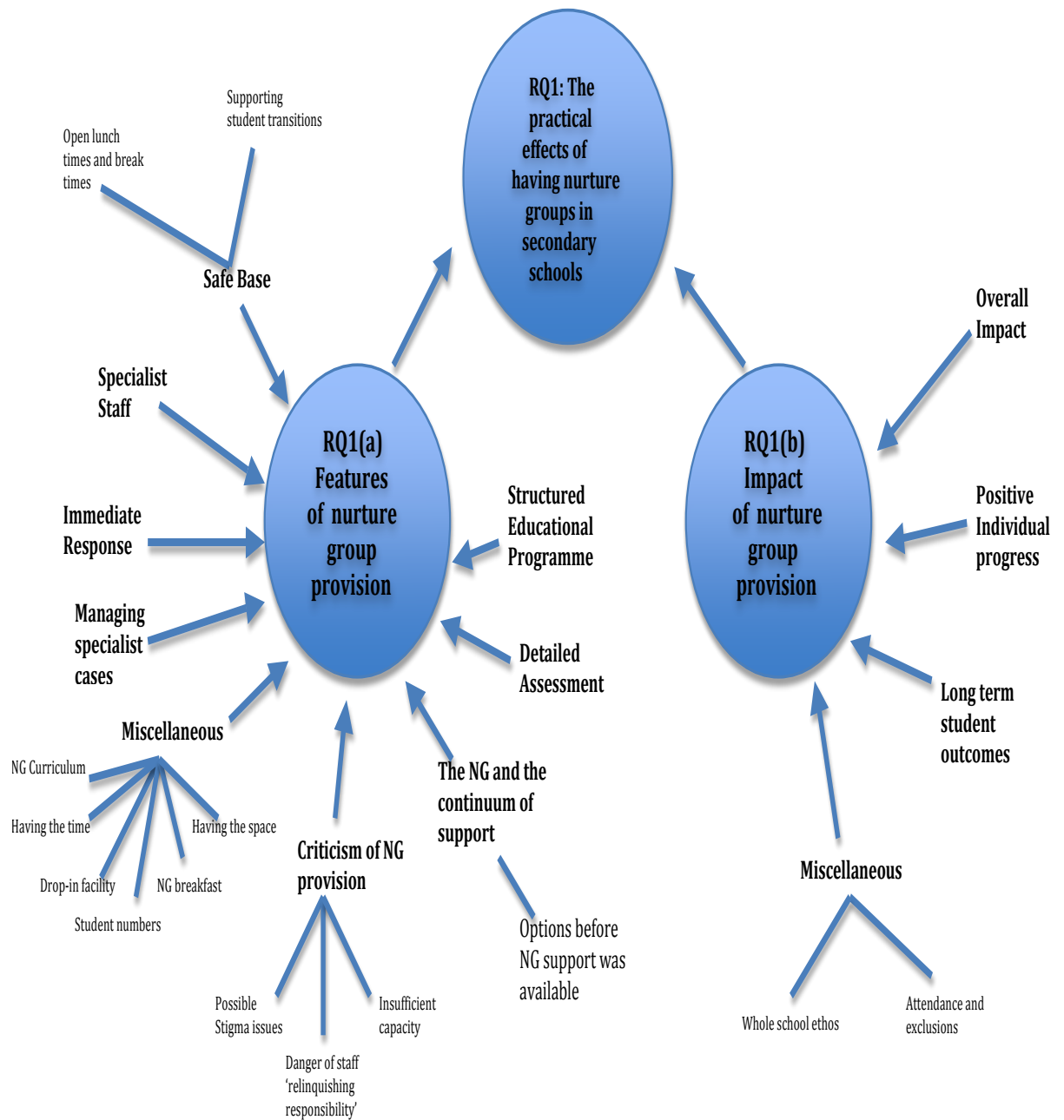
Appendix 8

Initial Thematic Map Transcripts 1-5



Appendix 9

Final Thematic Map Transcripts 1-5 Professionals



Appendix 10

		<p>Transcript 6</p> <p>Student B (Yr 8)</p> <p>*FLA2 and FLA 2a refers to the school's Key Stage 3 and 4 nurture groups</p>
Para		<u>Transcript</u>
1	DC	<p>Good morning. B. My names Dave. How's it going? Come on in. Do take a seat. My name's Dave Colley I'm a teacher, really but erm... I'm sure Mrs H explained that I'm doing some research into how places like FLA2, FLA2a can help students (B: right) I'm talking to teachers, I'm talking to mums and dads I'm talking to students about it.</p> <p>Now, are you sure that its ok that we have you know 20mins talking about FLA2? (B: yeah)</p> <p>Are you sure that its ok that its recorded? (B: yeah)</p> <p>What I can confirm, B, is that when I use our conversation in the research there will be no reference to you by name. (B: right)</p> <p>You will be referred to as student B ..said this and that and felt this about FLA2</p> <p>But I really appreciate you meeting with me so thanks very much</p> <p>So, B, I wonder if we could start by finding out a little bit about your hobbies really. If it's in school or out of school what do you really enjoy doing?</p>
2	B	Erm.. at the moment I'm into army cadets, (DC: oh right) and I erm like swimming (DC right). That's about it really, I'm not a sporty kind of person
3	DC	OK. And so what do you do at army cadets that you enjoy?
4	B	Well we do shooting and stuff like that
5	DC	OK Are you a good shot?
6	B	Yeah (DC: laughs)
7	DC	What kind of guns do you use? Is it like air rifles?
8	B	They do air rifles, 2.2, which is like a little tiny bullet about that big. They do SL80 Mark 2 erm (pause), and there's a bolt action sniper rifle that they do
9	DC	OK that sounds good. Do you watch any telly at home? Are you interested in any particular TV programmes?

10	B	Myth busters I like. I like Mythbusters
11	DC	What is that?
12	B	It's where they take myths like (pause) like somebody managed to blow up a (pause) cement truck and there was no bit bigger than the wheel, so they tried it and it was confirmed that (DC: right) it was possible
13	DC	So which subjects do you enjoy most at school, and which one's don't you like so much?
14	B	Erm (pause) I like the FLA of course(DC is there anything that you like) Maths is alright (pause) I'm not really a sporty kind of person so Games isn't really my thing
15	DC	So what year are you in now?
16	B	8

Appendix 11

Transcripts 6-9 First Level Codes Key 1-49

1. Student hobbies
2. Building rapport with interviewees
3. Mainstream issues (lessons, staff, head of year)
4. Absence from school
5. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support
6. Case history
7. Medical illness and GP contact
8. Issues in the community
9. What the NG offers
10. Features of NG provision
11. Descriptors for NG provision
12. Specialist staff with training
13. Student access to nurture
14. Contrasting mainstream provision with NG provision
15. Open access to all
16. Mainstream perceptions of nurture including (17) any stigma or negativity
18. Students attending nurture 'are different'
19. Improving understanding of how the Flexible Learning Areas function
20. Contemplating student outcomes should nurture have been unavailable to them
21. Research purpose, research structures, anonymity and confidentiality of the interview, appreciation and thanks.
22. Friendship within the NG
23. Transferring positivity from the nurture environment into the mainstream environment
24. Other support systems in school
25. Primary to secondary transition
26. The impact of NG support
27. The personality traits of the students
28. An overview of NG provision
29. Positive progress for students
30. Experiences of personal trauma
31. Transitions – (REPEAT CODING OF 25)
32. The involvement of other agencies: a continuum of support
33. Home-school communication
34. The potential for others to be supported by nurture intervention
35. School links with parents
36. Schools, learning and nurture group support
37. Students learning to express their own views
38. Bullying issues

39. The involvement of G.P.s
40. The prescription of medication for SEBD
41. Private service support v public service support
42. Referral to nurture
43. The capacity of nurture provision
44. A gap in the continuum of care?
45. Interviewees misunderstanding the researcher's question
46. The size of the secondary school environment.
47. NG curriculum
48. Safe base
49. Flexibility

Appendix 12: Extract

Code Table (T6)

Code Table illustrating code headings 1-49 with extracts from Transcript 6

First Headings	Level	Code	Extracts from Transcript 6
1. Student hobbies			<p>T6/1 : I wonder if we could start by finding out a little bit about your hobbies really. If its in school or out of school what do you really enjoy doing?</p> <p>T6/4 : at the moment I'm into army cadets, (DC: oh right) and I erm like swimming (DC right). That's about it really, I'm not a sporty kind of person</p> <p>T6/ 4: OK Are you a good shot? Yeah (DC: laughs)</p> <p>T6/ 5: Do you watch any telly at home? Are you interested in any particular TV programmes?</p> <p>T6/5 : It's where they take myths like (pause) like somebody managed to blow up a (pause) cement truck and there was no bit bigger than the wheel, so they tried it and it was confirmed that (DC: right) it was possible</p>
2. Building rapport with interviewees			<p>T6/ 1: Good morning, B. My name's Dave. How's it going? Come on in. Do take a seat. My name's Dave Colley</p>
3. Mainstream issues (lessons, staff, head of year)			<p>T6/ 6: I like the FLA of course(DC is there anything that you like) Maths is alright (pause) I'm not really a sporty kind of person so Games isn't really my thing</p>
4. Absence from school			
5. The nature of the difficulties experienced by students accessing nurture group support			<p>T6/ 10: Just feel like, sometimes when I'm walking around school I feel down and that,</p> <p>T6/13 : Like (pause) if you come in and you're really feeling down, then you can come in here and just sit down (pause)</p> <p>T6/ : 13 Does that help, if you're feeling down? Yeah</p>

6. Case history

T6/ 19: So if you hadn't had access to the sessions in Year 7 and sessions in Year 8 you'd be feeling down (pause) a lot of the time? Yeah

T6/21 : It was good fun cause I knew every single person there, cause it's a small school.

T6/21 : But you were quite happy at L School in Year 5? - Yeah

T6/21 : You've mentioned a couple of times you can get a bit down, did that ever happen in Year 6 at all?

T6/ 21: Yeah there was the odd time I went down, L School's got a place called the Dolphin Room (a nurture group), and I would go and talk to the teachers in there

7. Medical illness and GP contact

8. Issues in the community

9. What the NG offers

10. Features of NG provision

T6/12 : you can always go have a laugh and that

T6/13 : Calm down;

T6/ 10: it calms you down (long pause)

T6/ 22: cause FLA2 (pause) let me have more friends and get more friends because we'd be having like sessions with kids that I never knew and then we'd be good friends

11. Descriptors for NG provision

T6/ 10: I'm wondering if you can you think of 5 words that kind of sum up FLA2, what words would they be?

T6/ 10: Fun, enjoyable, (pause) probably like relaxing

T6/ 10: but when I come into the FLA I feel all happy and want to stay here

12. Specialist staff with training

T6/ 17: So you were worried about that so you felt you could come back and who did you ask to see?

Mrs H

13. Student access to nurture

T6/ 17: I just spoke to her and she said if you do get a senior so what, you've tried, (DC:OK) It's like you've tried (pause) and it's just a senior, you're only staying back behind school; it's (pause) nothing major

T6/ 8: And how does your timetable look in terms of T6/ 8: your contact with FLA2?- I've got FLA2 on a Monday, first 2 periods

T6/ 15: Do you ever come back to the FLA2, even though it's not a Monday session, at any other time in the week?

14. Contrasting mainstream provision with NG provision

15. Open access to all

16. Mainstream perceptions of nurture including (17) any stigma or negativity

18. Students attending nurture 'are different'

19. Improving understanding of how the Flexible Learning Areas function

20. Contemplating student outcomes should nurture have been unavailable to them

T6/ 24: do any people make comments about that? When you're in school during class? No

T6/ 24: Do you think that students in Year 8 understand what the FLA is about at Ramsey Grammar?- Yeah, yeah (pause) probably most of them but there's not odd one (pause) that probably doesn't quite get it

T6/19 : if there wasn't somewhere like FLA2 how do you feel you'd be getting on now?- Not really that good, not really that good at all, I'd feel quite down

Appendix 13: Extract

Master Code Table B (Transcripts 6,7,8 and 9)

Master Code Table linking extracts from transcripts 6-9 with second phase code headings 1-49. (T6 – yellow, T7 –green, T8 – purple, T9- turquoise)

Second Code (T6-9)	Phase Headings	Extracts from transcripts that support code headings
1.	Student hobbies	<p>T6/1 : I wonder if we could start by finding out a little bit about your hobbies really. If its in school or out of school what do you really enjoy doing?</p> <p>T6/4 : at the moment I'm into army cadets, (DC: oh right) and I erm like swimming (DC right). That's about it really, I'm not a sporty kind of person</p> <p>T6/ 4: OK Are you a good shot? Yeah (DC: laughs)</p> <p>T6/ 5: Do you watch any telly at home? Are you interested in any particular TV programmes?</p> <p>T6/5 : It's where they take myths like (pause) like somebody managed to blow up a (pause) cement truck and there was no bit bigger than the wheel, so they tried it and it was confirmed that (DC: right) it was possible</p> <p>T7/1 :If we could just start with what B is interested in, things that he is good at</p> <p>T7/1 :So what's B interested in? I have had a chat with B but from your point of view, what do you think he enjoys, whether it's in school or out of school?</p> <p>T7/1 :So what's B interested in? I have had a chat with B but from your point of view, what do you think he enjoys, whether it's in school or out of school?</p> <p>T7/1 :Electronics, gadgets ..</p> <p>T7/1 :He's into technology, his Playstation, games erm(pause)</p> <p>T7/2 :But definitely electronic minded big time.</p>

	<p>T7/3 :Yeah, he likes music as well</p> <p>T7/3 :Well, he likes rock bands and he likes dance music and stuff like that. I've put some software on his computer to make music, (DC: right) so I'm trying to get him into that at the moment</p> <p>T7/3 :so trying to get him into that, he seems to take an interest in music, musical instruments and stuff like that</p> <p>T7/6 :He's in army cadets, loves army cadets.</p> <p>T7/6 :if we hadn't of sent him to cadets he wouldn't really go out and do his own social thing.</p> <p>T8/1 :Could you just tell me a little bit about yourself really A. Stuff that you're interested in; hobbies that you've got both in school, out of school</p> <p>T8/ 1:Well I don't do any after school activities or anything I'm really lazy like that!</p> <p>T8/2 :Yeah. What about out of school, are there any TV programmes you enjoy?</p> <p>T8/3 :Okay, what about reality TV things? (pause) I'm A Celebrity?</p> <p>T8/ 3:X-Factor?</p> <p>T9/ 1:. If we could just talk generally about A, positive qualities; things that she enjoys at the moment?</p> <p>T9/ 1: Things at the moment, (pause) I would say she (pause) enjoys Facebook, MSN, mobile phones, computers, and now she's got a male friend as well</p> <p>T9/2 : She does go out quite a bit</p> <p>T9/ 2: She's been to the pictures a few times and (P1: Christmas shopping up the road) Yeah, and then they just tend to hand around each others houses, or take it in turns for going for sleepovers, different things like that</p>
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Appendix 14: Extract

Transcripts 6-9

Second Level Codes that relate to Research Question 1(a): What are the distinctive features of nurture group provision in the secondary school?

Codes 10, 11, 12, 13,15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 32,33, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49

Second Level Coding	Extracts from transcripts that relate to second level codes
10. Features of NG provision	<p>T6/12 : you can always go have a laugh and that</p> <p>T6/13 : Calm down;</p> <p>T6/ 10: it calms you down (long pause)</p> <p>T6/ 22: cause FLA2 (pause) let me have more friends and get more friends because we'd be having like sessions with kids that I never knew and then we'd be good friends</p> <p>T7/8:All in all, when we picked R School; the main attraction was FLA, the resources,</p> <p>T7/23:FLA's like his security blanket in the school</p> <p>T8/8 :See, my place in the FLA kinda gives me a chance to, if I feel too anxious, it gives me somewhere to come.</p> <p>T8/8 :It provides a lot of support, (DC yeah)and gives you (pause) somewhere to just catch up on work as well.</p> <p>T8/9 :It doesn't really feel like school, it feels like somewhere you can go and chill out in.</p> <p>T8/9 :If you're struggling with work you can just sit down and get your head round it without panicking that you can't do it</p> <p>T8/ 10:Well, there're still rules (DC : yes) but they're more flexible.</p> <p>T8/ 10:listening. Listening a bit more</p> <p>T8/12 :Well it's not as busy.. and it's not so manic.</p>

T8/ 12:It gives you somewhere just to, not forget about school but take two steps back and put everything into perspective

T8/13 :afternoon there's a woman that comes in specialises in relaxation and things like that, so I see her on a Monday afternoon

T8/ 13:It's relaxing just because if you're panicking about school or about a subject, you can just forget about it.

T8/13 :everyone has their own key teacher that's allocated

T8/13 :but if I've got a problem then Miss McB is the one that I can just have a one to one talk with her.

T8/15 :the last 2 lessons it's not really to do, it's just a sit in FLA, put your iPod in and just catch up on work that you've

T8/18 :OK, is there anything the nurture team could do to improve the situation even further? Is there anything that would be helpful from your point of view that maybe they're not aware of or they haven't thought about that would make it even better? Or is it just fine as it is?

T8/18 :I can't think of anything

T8/23 :it's just about being able to have a chat with someone that isn't a teacher; that has a bit more time.

T8/25 :Have you been in the FLA2A mobile? (DC: Yeah) It's not really like a classroom it's more of a ... you've got the radio on and you can have a cup of tea. (pause) Its just a bit less.. (pause) It's not like a classroom so I think it makes you feel more willing to open up (DC:OK), cause you don't feel like you're really in a school environment

T9/ 11: Well, I think the biggest thing of it was that it was somewhere she could go.

T9/11 : it was somewhere were she could go where she could be quiet, and she could kinda compose herself again, and do a bit of work and then... try and go on like

	<p>T9/11 : So it was like a step in? Yeah, like a step up</p> <p>T9/ 14: she did actually need to be within a secure unit</p>
11. Descriptors for NG provision	<p>T6/ 10: I'm wondering if you can you think of 5 words that kind of sum up FLA2, what words would they be?</p> <p>T6/ 10: Fun, enjoyable, (pause) probably like relaxing</p> <p>T6/ 10: but when I come into the FLA I feel all happy and want to stay here</p> <p>T8/11 :Relaxing</p> <p>T8/11 :Understanding</p> <p>T8/11 :Supporting</p> <p>T8/12 :Calm</p>
12. Specialist staff with training	<p>T6/ 17: So you were worried about that so you felt you could come back and who did you ask to see? Mrs H</p> <p>T6/ 17: I just spoke to her and she said if you do get a senior so what, you've tried, (DC:OK) It's like you've tried (pause) and it's just a senior, you're only staying back behind school; it's (pause) nothing major</p> <p>T7/115 (Nurture teacher)K there's fantastic and J (Nurture support officer), they've been great.</p> <p>T7/24:They've given us tips as well, because at the end of the day it's new to us, and they're trained</p> <p>T7/25:It's the experience that's the advantage of everything from the FLA, they're experienced in these kinds of situations, and there's nobody better to help really</p> <p>T7/25 :Mr T even stated that he's gone through a similar thing to B, which he actually shared with B, to let B know you know, you're not alone, it happens to people</p> <p>T7/27 :it's down to them I think why B has constantly been in school.</p> <p>T7/28 :but I don't think they were as skilled as FLA, and it's needed, it really is needed.</p>

	<p>T8/10 :they are teachers, and obviously(pause) you can talk to any teacher but the FLA teachers are there more to understand your problems, rather than to teach you, so they listen a bit more..</p> <p>T8/17 :Well they understand what you're saying, more than the average teacher.</p> <p>T8/ 17:they're there to understand, they're not there to teach you –</p> <p>T8/ 17:and they help you</p> <p>T8/17 :And FLA, that kind of specialises with it, so they help the situation not only understand it.</p> <p>T9/14 : where there were qualified people to help her.</p> <p>T9/17 : It's just having qualified people who understand different emotional needs of different types of children,</p> <p>T9/ 19: If they do have a little wobble there's somebody there fully qualified to help them, rather than a teacher who doesn't understand, who would maybe get very frustrated and maybe think that they're being a little bit unruly (P1: Or awkward)</p> <p>T9/ 24: and then last year A, there was a lady called Mrs K (FLA teacher), absolutely fantastic with A.</p> <p>T9/ 24: because she in conjunction with the work Mrs Foreman was doing, that was absolutely brilliant.</p> <p>T9/ 25: Mrs K was one of the nurture staff at R so I'm glad that was helpful for you</p> <p>T9/25 : Yes she was brilliant with A. And Mrs Mc.</p> <p>T9/ 25: But again she's a key nurture member of staff so you probably have had contact with (nurture)</p>
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Appendix 15

T6-9 WEAK CODE DATA SET (RQ1a)

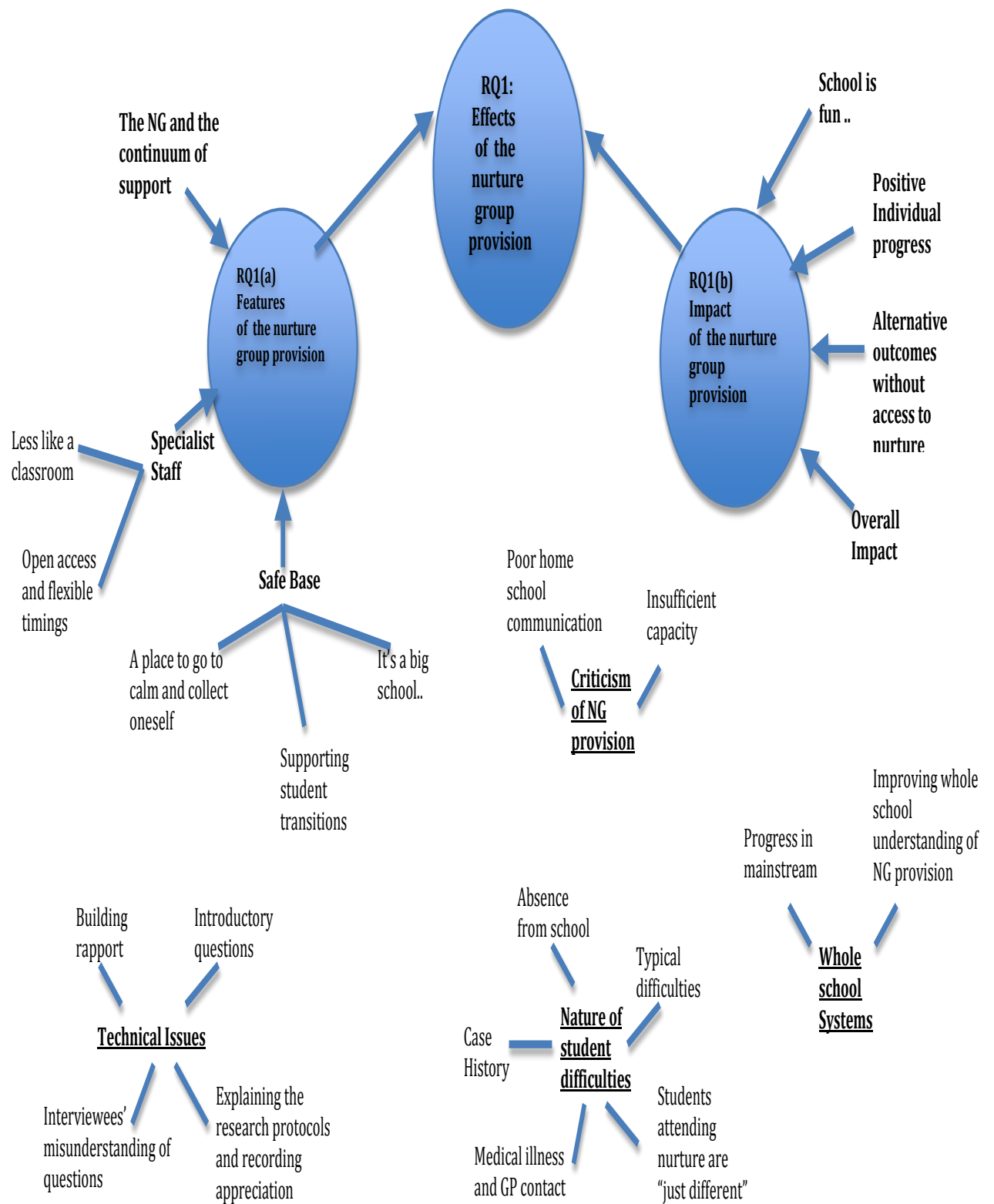
Summary of WEAK codes removed from RQ1a data set

13. Student access to nurture	<p>T6/ 8: And how does your timetable look in terms of T6/ 8: your contact with FLA2?- I've got FLA2 on a Monday, first 2 periods</p> <p>T6/ 15: Do you ever come back to the FLA2, even though it's not a Monday session, at any other time in the week?</p> <p>T8/ 14:Well on a Monday I have FLA first lesson, and then last lesson I have the lady for relaxation. Then on a Tuesday I have (pause) 3 lessons of FLA but the last 2 are more of a catch up</p> <p>T8/ 15:Wednesday last lesson, so I have one lesson on a Wednesday, then Thursday I don't have any lessons but I should be in here second lesson, but instead I do catch up work on my Rural Science with Mr Craine, but it's technically still a (DC: Yeah) and then on a Friday, this lesson and the next lesson. So (pause) 8 lessons</p>
34. The potential for others to be supported by nurture intervention	<p>T7/23:I feel that if all these schools had had these resources going back, a lot of these children wouldn't be where they are now, They need more of them maybe.</p>
41. Private service support v public service support	<p>T9/13 : So we got the help of (private psychologist) Mrs F, Healthy Minds Happy Kids. And she just turned it all round for us. So because we ended up having to pay privately, lots of the help – can you remember that nice</p>

	lady's name (P1: Jenny F) Yeah, her (CAMHS) services were actually withdrawn, cause there was obviously like a conflict of paying private,
47. NG curriculum	<p>T6/11 : Just like talking and stuff like that, probably making stuff</p> <p>T6/11 : on Monday we were making these glass things to put on the window</p>

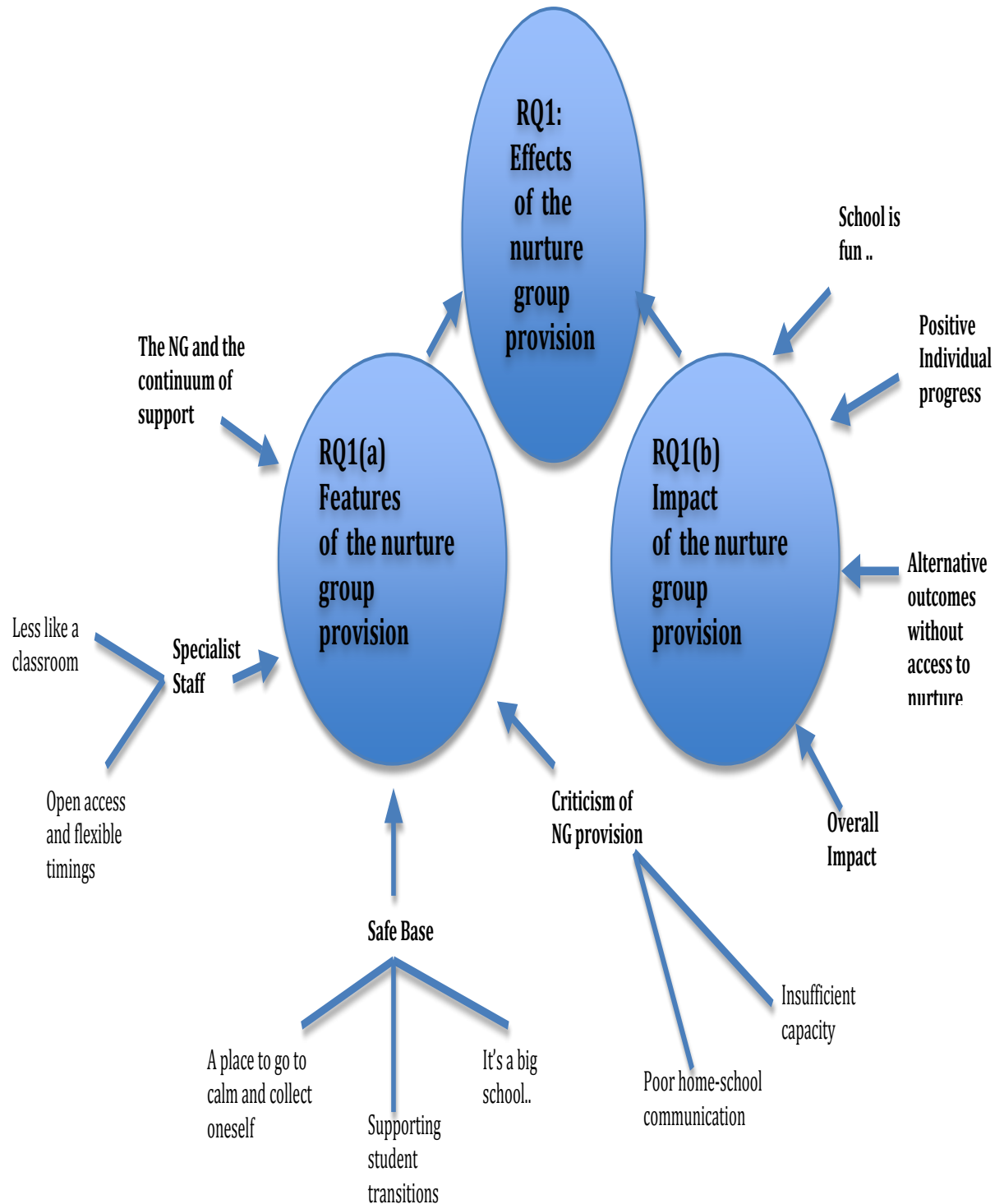
Appendix 16

Initial Thematic Map Transcripts 6-9



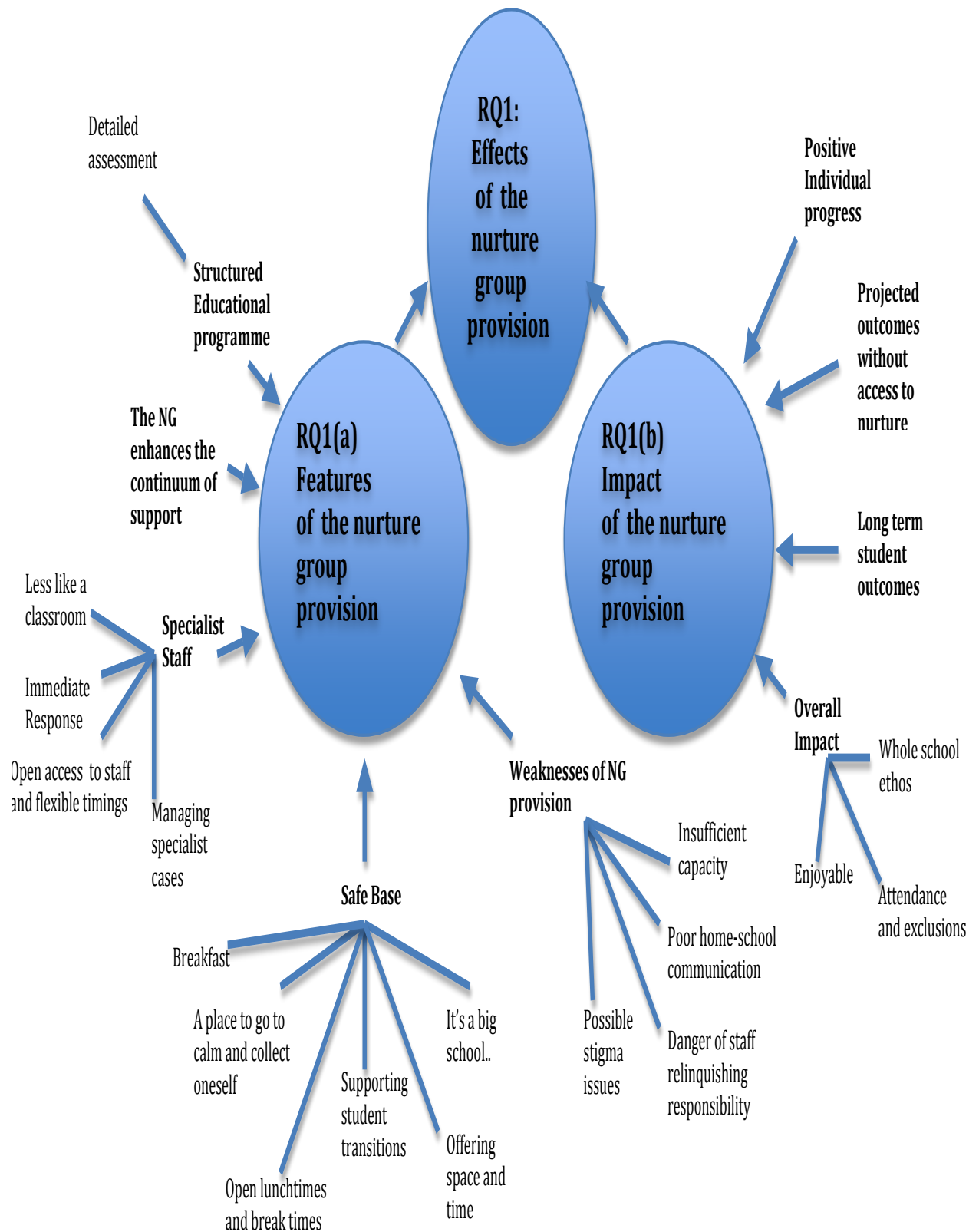
Appendix 17

Final Thematic Map Transcripts 6-9 Parents and Students



Appendix 18

Combined Thematic Map (Transcripts 1-9) Professionals, Students and Parents



Appendix 19

Table 1. The Secondary SEBD Support Plan – A Continuum of Care, Support and Provision					
SCHOOL	SCHOOL ACTION	SCHOOL ACTION +	Higher Level Need (1-5)	Higher Level Need (6-10)	Higher Level Need (10+)
<p>All secondary schools on the IOM will seek to ensure that support, care and guidance is available to all students through the provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A safe and welcoming learning environment where relationships are positive and where students have a sense of belonging * High quality teaching and learning experiences for all students * A consistent approach to teaching, learning and behaviour management * Rewards and sanctions; * Behaviour strategies and the teaching of good behaviour; * Staff development and support; * Pupil support systems; * Liaison with parents and other agencies; * Managing pupil transition; * Organisation and facilities. <p>All schools will have a Behaviour Policy that reflects the Freedom to Flourish Curriculum (6Rs) and that promotes a positive school community with a focus on the Chief Ministers five outcomes for children and young people (2005)</p> <p>Being healthy Staying safe Enjoying life and achieving Making a positive contribution Prospering</p> <p>Where concerns emerge, a Record of Concern form should be completed in the first instance.</p> <p>The Record of Concern is then considered by the Senco, Pastoral team and/or Behaviour Co. Parents should also be consulted at this stage.</p>	<p>Where a student is placed at School Action, the school should provide interventions additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * SENCo notification and advice * Assessment through the Boxall Profile and classroom observations * Appropriate targets set based on assessment data * Review of targets with parents and student * Parental links increased * Home/school log considered * Individual Reward system considered * Home/School Reward system considered * Links with Nurture Group considered <p>After an appropriate length of time (one month, one term) the school Action intervention should be evaluated by staff with parents and the student</p> <p>Positive progress, where needs have been met, will result in the student leaving School Action. Where needs remain unmet, School Action Plus interventions may be considered.</p>	<p>Referral to School Action Plus occurs when a student continues to exhibit social, emotional or behavioural difficulties that substantially and regularly interfere with the student's own learning or that of the class group.</p> <p>At School Action Plus, the school should provide interventions additional to or different from those provided at School Action</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Educational Psychology notification and advice * Additional assessment employing ABC forms and SDQ assessments * Implementing an Individual Education Plan in consultation with parents and student * Additional links with Parents (meeting frequency, email, reports, log) * Developing 'Reflection Time' sessions where the student has time with a mentor to reflect on success, choices, conflict resolution and positive behaviour strategies * Referral and advice from CAMHS/ Social Services/ Children's Centre/ Parenting Network * Phone contact with the Education Support Centre: 698305 * Additional Nurture group support * Timetable modification to avoid trigger areas <p>After an appropriate length of time (one month, one term) the school Action Plus intervention should be evaluated by staff with parents and the child.</p> <p>Positive progress, where needs have been met, will result in the child returning to School Action. Where needs remain unmet, Higher Level Need (HLN) interventions may be considered.</p>	<p>SEBD Higher Level Need should be agreed by the school, parents, the student, the EP and other agencies based on assessment evidence, attendance stats, suspension stats and other information. Guidance on SEBD assessment criteria is included below.</p> <p>At SEBD HLN, the school should provide interventions additional to or different from those provided at School Action Plus</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Prioritised ESO support through the HLN ESO team * Revised IEP that is agreed between school, parents, student EP, other agencies (CAMHS, Social Services) * Risk Assessment completed * Behaviour Management Plan to manage violence/challenging behaviour * Request for additional staffing (if required) * SEBD HLN confirmed with Education Support Centre * Nurture group – strategic long term support * Shared support with ESC * Annual HLN Review * CAMHS intervention * Social Services intervention * Parenting Network intervention * Multi agency Team (MAT) contact <p>SEBD HLN 1-5 represents challenging difficulties that are still being managed within the mainstream school setting. Where a student's presenting SEBD requires off-site support the scaling 6-10 is employed.</p>	<p>The move to scale above HLN 5 will be agreed when evidence of interventions at previous stages demonstrates little or no progress in specific areas or a specific case moves rapidly to an extreme SEBD issue, as evidenced by the Risk Assessment</p> <p>The school, together with the parents, pupil and external agencies consider attendance at off site or specialist school based provision for a fixed period of time.</p> <p>In liaison with the Education Support Centre, the school maintains its responsibility for IEPs, reviews and monitoring attendance</p> <p>Off site programme established based on individual needs.</p> <p>Progress monitored by school and Education Support Centre – reintegration programme established when appropriate progress has been made</p> <p>Placement in iOM Secure Unit automatically places a student at HLN 10</p>	<p>HLN 10+ refers to students who require off island residential placements to meet their needs.</p> <p>Students may only be placed at HLN 10+ by the Head of Services for Children with endorsement from the DEC and in conjunction with other agencies</p> <p>Representation from DEC attends Annual Reviews at the residential placement</p> <p>Students leave the school roll while placed at residential school but automatically return to the school roll if/when they return to the IOM.</p> <p>All students returning from residential placement will be assessed at the Education Support Centre in the first instance</p>
<p>Nature of Intervention: All schools on the Isle of Man are special schools. The responsibility for students with SEBD remains with the roll school, irrespective of the degree of intervention required to meet the needs of the student.</p>			<p>Education Support Centre monitoring, advice, shared care options And part time programmes led by ESC staff</p>		

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