

School as a safe place: How to support pupils' social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) – the view of school staff in a mainstream secondary school. A grounded theory study.

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Abstract

Promoting the mental health and well-being of adolescents has increasingly become a priority for legislation in the UK. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) highlights the increasing responsibility professionals have for supporting and promoting pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, a role which is especially pertinent for schools. However, there is a lack of current research exploring how school staff view promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in one mainstream secondary school to gather the views of six school staff on their experiences and views of supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The aim of the study was to explore and explain the contexts and mechanisms which facilitate or hinder how staff promote and support children and young people's mental health and well-being. The data was analysed by use of a grounded theory methodology. The theory emerging from the data suggests that school staff believe that by having a structured, clear approach to supporting and promoting emotional well-being the school is able to become a safe space in an ever-demanding society. The overarching theory is labelled '*providing containment – school as a safe place*'. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and research. Implications for secondary schools and Educational Psychologists are discussed.

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List of abbreviations

BPS	—	British Psychological Society
CAMHS	—	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CASP	—	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
CPD	—	Continued Professional Development
DECP	—	Division of Child & Educational Psychology
DfE	—	Department for Education
DfES	—	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	—	Department of Health
EHCP	—	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	—	Educational Psychologist
EPS	—	Educational Psychology Service
IEP	—	Individual Education Plan
IPA	—	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LA	—	Local Authority
LD	—	Learning Disability
NICE	—	National Institute of Clinical Excellence
OFSTED	—	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	—	Office of National Statistics
RQ	—	Research Question
SEAL	—	Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEMH	—	Social, Emotional, Mental Health
SEN	—	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	—	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	—	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SMT	—	Senior Management Team
TA	—	Teaching Assistant
TREC	—	Tavistock Research Ethics Committee

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

The present study aimed to explore the views of school staff of supporting and promoting pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) in one mainstream secondary school. The current chapter will provide the background to the study and define key terms used namely, 'SEMH' and 'emotional well-being'.

Subsequently, the current legislation and policy involving mental health in addition to an examination of the local context in which the research took place will be provided. This will be followed by the research rationale and aims.

1.2 Terminology – Defining the terms

The terms 'social, emotional and mental health' (SEMH) and 'emotional well-being' are often used as umbrella terms for a range of emotional needs (Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser & Bedward, 2003). The differing terms used and multiple definitions of mental health could reflect the complexity agreeing a definition worldwide. The Mental Health Foundation (2005) defines children and young peoples' mental health as:

“Children who are mentally healthy have the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, creatively, intellectually, and spiritually; initiate and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships; use and enjoy solitude; become aware of others and empathise with them; play and learn; develop a sense of right and wrong; and resolve problems and setbacks and learn from them”.

(The Mental Health Foundation, 2005, p 6.)

This definition assumes that mental health is not viewed as a deficit in terms of psychological problems or disorders but rather a concept focused on individual capabilities, emotions, social functioning and relationships. The term 'mental health' has commonly been associated with 'illness' and as a label for services that diagnose and intervene with the treatment of mental illness and ultimately focus on individuals' negative states (Weare & Gray, 2003). However, in recent years, definitions of mental health have become more broad and inclusive of positive attributes and positive personal developments.

Consequently, defining mental health can be a major issue (Weare & Gray, 2003). Because of this, within an educational context, the term 'emotional well-being' tends to be utilised as opposed to mental health, potentially because of the stigma attached to the term 'mental illness' (Frederickson, Dunsmuir & Baxter, 2009). Within policy and legislation guidance, the definition of the term 'well-being' is used inconsistently, which has implications for how it is understood and utilised by different systems such as within the school context (Weare & Gray, 2003).

Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, the terms 'SEMH' and social and emotional well-being are understood by the researcher as having similar meanings. They both describe positive emotional health in order to allow individuals to be able to function well as they both represent an optimal level of personal development and satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Weare, 2004). Consequently, they will be used interchangeably throughout the current research.

1.3 International context of SEMH and education

1.3.1 Children, young people (CYP) and emotional well-being

Children and young people's (CYP's) emotional well-being and mental health are increasingly becoming a cause for international concern and are frequently cited within news outlets and social media. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) states that the age of onset for half of those who experience mental health needs is 14 years of age, the majority of which are unrecognized. This is of great concern given the large negative impact emotional difficulties can have across a range of levels – on the young person themselves, on families, their schools, local communities and the wider societal context (Bennett, 2006).

Previous research highlights the impact that social and emotional well-being has on pupils' learning (e.g. Durlack, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2014; Weare, 2015). Difficulties with social and/or emotional well-being may be externalised, taking the form of aggressive or negative behaviour (Weare & Gray, 2003) or be internalized manifesting as anxiety or depression (Weare, 2015).

The long-term consequences of childhood SEMH difficulties have been well documented and include poor academic achievement (Coleman, Murray, Abbott, Maughan, Kuh, Croudace, & Jones, 2009), family/relationship difficulties (Coleman et al., 2009), an increased likelihood of SEMH difficulties later life (Belfer, 2008; Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2016) and a significant financial cost to society (Clark, O'Malley, Woodham, Barrett, & Byford, 2005). As a consequence, mental health and emotional well-being has increasingly become recognised as a critical issue in

childhood, a fact reflected in government initiatives throughout the world (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson & Goddard, 2007; Graham, Phelps, Maddison & Fitzgerald, 2011; Wolpert, Humphrey, Deighton, Patalay, Fugard, Fonagy, Belsky, Vostanis & Gilman, 2015).

1.3.2 Role of Schools

With the onset of SEMH difficulties typically occurring in childhood, educational systems are well placed to make a significant contribution by promoting positive mental health and well-being (Cooper & Cefai, 2013). Promoting positive mental health is important due to the considerable barrier to learning that SEMH difficulties can inflict on school-children (Owens, Stevenson, Hadwin & Norgate, 2012). Children and young people spend a significant proportion of their childhood in school, making it a crucial part of their cognitive, social and emotional development (McCabe, Bray, Kehle, Theodore & Gelbar, 2011). Teachers are therefore in prime position to address this recent focus on targeting SEMH difficulties alongside promoting well-being in schools. They spend a significant amount of time with their students and are therefore in a position to notice any disparities in mood or behaviour (Headley and Campbell, 2013). Yet research suggests that teachers have experienced little to no training in childhood anxiety or mental health (Gowers, Thomas & Deeley 2004; Trudgen & Lawn, 2011).

It is especially important to focus on promoting positive emotional well-being in secondary schools' due to the increased incidence of mental health problems in adolescence (Paus, Keshavan, & Giedd, 2008). As much of an individuals' life time is

spent in school, the school setting has a significant impact, positive or negative on their emotional well-being (Fergusson, Beautrais & Horwood, 2003) providing a strong argument for exploring what can be done in school settings as well as promoting positive emotional well-being for everyone (Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2010). Because of this, schools can be seen as well placed for promoting positive emotional well-being.

1.4 National context and prevalence of SEMH needs

The most widely cited prevalence data on CYP's mental health needs in the UK was published in 2005 by the Office of National Statistics. This study, 'the mental health of children and young people in Great Britain', (2005) found that 1 in 10 CYP aged between 5 and 16 years old had a diagnosable mental disorder, equivalent to three in every classroom. Gender differences were also identified, with boys described as being more likely to 'externalise' difficulties such as conduct disorders or hyperactivity problems whereas girls were more likely to 'internalise' difficulties and experience emotional difficulties such as anxiety and depression (ONS, 2005). The study also noted that children with mental disorders were more likely to have unauthorised time off school and were less likely to have a supportive network of family and friends (ONS, 2005).

A new study has been commissioned by the government to provide a more up to date view of mental health needs of CYP in the UK. Findings will not be available until 2019 and this lack of up to date information has a considerable impact on policy makers and commissioners understanding the prevalence in their area (LA,

2016). Local authorities are required to develop a local transformation plan on CYP's mental health to address these ongoing concerns, a task made difficult by this lack of accurate data. The House of Commons Health Committee (2014) also noted this a lack of reliable data regarding CYPs' social and emotional well-being. Typically figures quoted on CYP's SEMH needs stem from the aforementioned Office of National Statistics survey published in 2005.

An array of prevalence data highlighting CYP's mental health needs to continue to be reported. Research from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2017) found that 1 in 8 children reported symptoms of poor mental health between 2011 and 2012. A further report by the Education Policy Institute (2016) found that almost a quarter of CYP who are referred to specialist mental health services are unable to access the services and on average were required to wait one month for treatment. It is thought that this is due to high thresholds needed to access such resources.

In the UK, the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2015) note that 300,000 young people in the United Kingdom have an identified anxiety disorder. Similarly, government reports suggest 10% of children in schools have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008). From an educational perspective, these figures must only be the tip of the iceberg as diagnosable mental health disorders do not occur instantaneously, rather they develop over a period of time (Rutter & Smith, 1995). Indeed, research by the ONS (2015) found that just under 1 in 5 young people experience high levels of anxiety.

1.5 National legislation/ policy and schools

The legislation and guidance in the UK reflects the growing interest in the emotional well-being of CYP. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001) stated that “children with SEN are more likely to have mental health problems than those without, emphasising the importance of close links between education services and CAMHS” (p. 140).

The SEN Code of Practice introduced a new category ‘Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties’ (SEMH) instead of ‘Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties’ (SEBD) as one of the four categories of SEN (DfE & DoH, 2014, p. 85).

This development highlights the responsibilities of all individuals working with children and young people to recognise and support pupils with mental health needs in order to make the appropriate provision to adequately address these needs.

Yet the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda (DfES, 2003) highlighted that those professionals working with CYP often lack awareness of mental health and subsequent training, knowledge and skills to support children and young people’s social and emotional well-being. The introduction of the Children’s Act (2004) gave statutory force to the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda (DfES, 2003) and incorporated mental health as an element of well-being that needed to be addressed.

Subsequently, schools’ responsibility for supporting pupils’ social and emotional well-being has been highlighted in a number of legislation and policy documents. Government guidance in the UK (DfE, 2016) emphasises the need

to promote mental health in schools. This guidance is helpful in highlighting the importance of SEMH and the role that schools can have in promoting positive mental health. However, it could be argued that the guidance is not without its critique as it could be seen as advocating a medicalised focus, suggesting that school staff identify and refer children to mental health services rather than proposing how school staff may benefit from support in understanding approaches to child well-being and mental health.

In line with this, The Department of Health and the DfE recently consulted on the 'Green Paper: Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision (DoH & DfE, 2017)' which demonstrates the government's commitment to tackle the growing prevalence of mental health difficulties in the UK and the role that school settings have the potential to play. In this provisional document, it is proposed that every school has a 'designated lead' for mental health and schools will work alongside mental health support teams (including Educational Psychologists, [EPs]) to support pupils' SEMH needs. The final document is expected to be published in late 2018.

Legislation and government guidance in the UK (e.g. the SEND Code of Practice, DfE, 2015) calls for more responsibility from those working with CYP to be aware of their social and emotional well-being. Subsequently, there is an expectation for school staff to be accountable for children's social and emotional well-being as well as academic achievements. School staff are often best placed as a first port of call to intervene as children spent the significant portion of their childhood in a school

context and yet training on mental health is not currently provided on teacher training courses in the UK (Gowers et al., 2004).

The Department of Education (DfE) states that schools have a key role to play in helping pupils succeed by supporting and facilitating the promotion of their resilience and emotional well-being (Department for Education [DfE], 2016). The DfE established the Primary and Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programmes which aimed to promote the social and emotional skills that “underpin effective learning, attendance, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools (DfE, 2007, p4.)

Highlighted in the government strategy ‘No Health Without Mental Health’, was the emphasis on early intervention to create and improve SEMH outcomes for all individuals (DoH, 2011). Here it was stated that schools need to be aware of the available specialist mental health support in order for them to know when and how to access targeted and specialist services (DoH, 2012). By being aware and knowledgeable of CYPs’ mental health needs, schools are able to proactively identify CYP with risk factors for SEMH difficulties and will be able to intervene early by accessing and utilising evidence-based interventions and support.

This can be done “through creating a whole-school culture and ethos which supports good outcomes through a strong focus on high-quality teaching and learning, enriching extra-curricular activities and good pastoral care (DoH, 2012, p.

32)”. ‘Promoting Children and Young People’s Emotional Health and Well-being’ (Public Health England, 2015) advocates utilising a whole-school approach that is embedded in the physical, emotional and cultural environment. This guidance emphasises the role that senior leadership have to play in terms of implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the approach. Equipping staff with the knowledge and skills is also identified as central to understanding and identifying the pupils who need more targeted or specialist intervention for their SEMH needs.

In 2001, the Department of Education and Skills (DfES, 2001) first issued guidance and advice for schools on promoting pupils’ mental health. Subsequently, the National Service Framework for the Health and Psychological Well-being of Children and Young People was developed (DoH, 2004) which outlines the responsibility of those working with CYP to work in partnership to provide early intervention and support those with established or complex difficulties. Again, the need for professionals to receive appropriate training is highlighted in order to identify and support mental health needs at an early stage.

Additionally, in 2008 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2008) published guidelines for promoting mental health and well-being in primary and secondary schools. Again, the role schools play in supporting CYPs emotional needs is highlighted, specifically with early identification and intervention, further advocating for a whole-school approach to promoting social and emotional well-being (NICE, 2008).

To reflect these policies and legislation advocating the promotion of social and emotional well-being, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) also changed its inspection framework to include the category 'personal development, behaviour and welfare'. The OFSTED inspection also includes how mental health and well-being are incorporated within the curriculum (OFSTED, 2015). This framework holds schools accountable for securing the highest possible outcomes for each pupil in terms of both academic and personal development (OFSTED, 2015) and aims to go beyond supporting only children with specific SEMH difficulties to providing a culture of promotion of well-being for all pupils in a whole-school mental health approach.

Despite the generally accepted responsibility for schools supporting and promoting social and emotional well-being, there is no agreed consensus on how schools go about upholding this responsibility. Previous research (e.g. Connelly, Lockhart, Wilson, Furnivall, Bryce, Barbour & Phin, 2008; Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell, & Gunnell, 2009; Roth, Leavey, & Best, 2008) emphasises the need for greater training for school staff when supporting CYP's emotional well-being, particularly when working collaboratively with other services.

1.6 Local context

The current study was undertaken in a local authority (LA) in the south east of England. Within the LA, it is estimated that approximately 20,000 CYP aged between 5 and 16 years, and 29,000 young adults aged between 16 and 24 have mental health needs (LA, 2015). Additionally, social, emotional, mental health is

recognised as the most common primary need in state funded secondary schools in the local authority (LA, 2015). Recently, the provision for health and well-being has been deemed inadequate according to the Health and Well-being Board in the local authority in terms of providing the necessary support and meeting the increasing demand (LA, 2015).

Here, it was identified that while some schools were providing adequate mental health support in terms of providing appropriate pastoral staff members and having the necessary skills and support, this was not consistent across the local authority (LA, 2015). In addition to this disparity, there was a distinct lack of access to relevant professionals and long waiting times were prevalent (LA, 2015) which put growing pressure on schools to meet SEMH needs with increasing complexity.

The Future in Mind report (DoH & NHS England, 2015) provided guidance for professionals when working with CYP, their families/carers for them to be able to access mental health provision and help when required. Some recommendations included the need to address stigma around mental health, improving access to support and promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention. This guidance required local authorities to create a 'transformation plan' to meet these requirements.

The local authority in which the research was undertaken responded by creating a five-year transformation plan for CYP's mental health and emotional well-being (LA, 2015). This document set out a framework based on national and local

research and consultation with professionals and families and stated the LA's intention to address the Future in Mind programme by investing in early intervention and tackling stigma along with promoting resilience and prevention. The framework emphasised the importance of developing a whole system to address CYP's social and emotional needs rather than at an individual level. The framework understands the important role that teachers and other front-line professionals undertake when supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Similarly, the local authorities most recent business plan highlights the aim to improve outcomes for CYP's mental health and well-being.

In an attempt to understand and address the growing mental health needs, in 2016 the LA developed a 'Mental Health Task and Finish Group' in order to review the work that EPs currently undertake and potential for growth when focusing on SEMH in schools. The purpose of this group was to collect information from schools, EPs and other professionals within the LA to explore what is currently employed to support pupils' social and emotional well-being and ultimately what schools want and require in order to efficiently support these needs. The work the task and finish group is undertaking is ongoing and the researcher is involved in this work.

1.7 Research rationale and aims

As previously discussed, SEMH and emotional well-being are increasingly recognised as an area of concern internationally and locally in the UK (Belfer, 2008; LA, 2015; ONS, 2005; WHO, 2014), a fact reflected in government legislation and

policies. Such policies and guidance recognises the important role that schools and pastoral staff play when supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being, a shift following the introduction of SEMH as an additional category of special educational needs (Basra, 2014; DfE, 2015; DfE, 2016b). This is particularly pertinent in terms of secondary schools given that almost half of SEMH difficulties begin during adolescence (WHO, 2014).

The importance of having a clear approach to supporting pupils' SEMH and emotional well-being is well-established within the government legislation and published guidance. The DfE stresses this through having a "structure through which staff can escalate the issue and take decisions about what to do next" (DfE, 2016b, p. 14). This is in contrast with the inconsistent support and training school staff receive (Fox & Butler, 2009) and the lack of research exploring their views in the literature (Kendal, Keeley & Callery, 2014; Partridge, 2012).

The majority of research used to inform government guidance and policies has focused on evaluating targeted interventions for SEMH needs (DfE, 2016b; Kendal et al., 2014; Rait, Monsen, & Squires, 2010) rather than exploring the views and experiences of those working on the front-line with pupils' SEMH needs in schools. At a local level, whilst the experiences of CYP and their families are visible in policies and guidance, there is a distinct lack of information about school staffs' experiences, despite them being the individuals who are given the task of the responsibility of providing the necessary support for pupils' social and emotional well-being.

Studies on teachers' understanding about CYP mental health difficulties indicate that they have limited knowledge in understanding, identifying, and supporting CYP with these needs (Layne, Bernstein & March, 2006; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006). It is important for teachers and support staff to be aware of children and adolescents' emotional as well as academic needs in order to not only signpost/refer for further support but also to be able to facilitate teaching psycho-education to their students.

With this in mind, the current research aims to explore an individual secondary school that is thought to support and promote pupils' well-being well within the LA (see Chapter 3 - Methodology). Through a grounded theory methodology, the overarching purpose is to develop a theoretical understanding of the contexts and mechanisms central to this. Specifically, through the following aims:

Aims:

- Exploratory – the research aims to explore school staff's views about promoting CYP's social and emotional wellbeing in a secondary school and explores the contexts and mechanisms that hinder and facilitate the promotion and support of pupils' social and emotional well-being in schools.
- Explanatory – the research aims to explain the contexts and mechanisms involved when promoting and supporting pupil's social and emotional well-being in schools.

1.7.1 Research questions

These aims will be addressed through the following research questions:

- What are the views of school staff in a mainstream secondary school regarding what facilitates and hinders the promotion of their pupils' emotional well-being?
- What contexts and mechanisms facilitate and hinder the promotion of pupils' social and emotional well-being in a mainstream secondary school?

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance school staff play when supporting pupils' SEMH and emotional well-being (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2015), there is little literature understanding school staffs' views on the subject. It is hoped this research will illuminate what some of the facilitators and barriers to support and promote SEMH and emotional well-being of secondary school pupils. The research will provide the opportunity for school staff to have their views and voices heard in a context where there is increasing concern on adolescents' mental health and well-being and where there are growing demands and responsibility on their jobs. There are clear implications for EPs due to the increasingly important role EPs play in facilitating the support for school staff when supporting pupils' emotional well-being (Roffey, 2015).

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the purpose of the current research and discussed the prevalence and impact of SEMH/ emotional well-being amongst children and young

people in the UK. This was explored within the national and local contexts concluding with the subsequent aims and rationale for undertaking the study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Chapter overview

The literature review provides a description of the existing literature and the legislative context around which the research is based. It describes literature concerning school staffs' views/experiences of supporting pupils' SEMH needs and promoting positive emotional well-being. To begin, the search strategy undertaken to gain a comprehensive view of the literature will be discussed along with the method of appraisal and analysis of the literature. Finally, the chapter will present the results/themes of the literature review. The concluding section will discuss the current legislative context and policies. The aim of this literature review is to provide a clear and comprehensive analysis of the existing literature depicting gaps in the current research and where the current study fits in; its unique contribution.

Typically, research utilising grounded theory approaches undertakes a critical review of the literature after the data has been collected. This is important in order to allow the theory to emerge from the data and in an attempt to avoid assumptions and biases affecting the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, as a doctoral student it was important to have a brief understanding of the relevant literature to contextualise the research and demonstrate the rationale for undertaking the research and the chosen research methods to do so. The systematic literature review presented below was undertaken

subsequent to data collection and details the current literature on school staffs' views supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

2.2 Search strategy

An exploration of existing literature was undertaken to provide a comprehensive review of the subject area. The literature review aimed to specifically explore existing research on school staff views of promoting and supporting pupil's social and emotional wellbeing in schools. Appendix 1 details the search strategy including search terms used etc. A number of steps were undertaken to ensure that the search was as rigorous as possible. This review explored the research concerning school staffs' experiences and views about supporting and/or promoting pupils SEMH needs. The views of CYP are beyond the scope of this literature review and have therefore been omitted from this review.

The aims of the current study are to seek secondary school staffs' views supporting pupils' emotional well-being/ SEMH.

Therefore, the question explored in this literature review was:

- What is currently known about school staffs' views of supporting and promoting social and emotional well-being in the UK?

The literature search was undertaken between January and March 2018 using the EBSCO online index. Databases searched included:

- PsycINFO
- Education Source
- ERIC
- Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection
- PsycARTICLES

2.2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Exclusion and inclusion criteria are set out on Table 2.1. Inclusion criteria included publication in the English language and studies published between 2000 and 2018 due to the publication of pertinent government legislation and policies in the UK. Despite there being a considerable number of relevant studies from Australia and the United States of America, only studies from the UK were included in the literature review as the educational, social and cultural context were thought to differ significantly between countries.

Initially primary settings were not included, however a limited number of studies explored solely secondary schools and some explored both primary and secondary settings. With this in mind, the search terms were expanded to include both primary and secondary settings. Research that focused solely on educational settings other than mainstream secondary or primary schools were excluded as other settings such as pre-school, specialist provisions (e.g. special schools or pupil referral units) as they are thought to differ significantly from mainstream in terms of provision for SEMH needs but where these setting were explored alongside secondary school settings, these studies were included.

Given that an aim of the review was to inform school practice, studies were limited to those taking place in a school setting, targeting pupils of primary or secondary school age. Some studies included a range of educational settings from pre-school to further education settings along with primary and secondary settings. So as to not miss out on literature, these studies were also included in the review. A detailed account of the search strategy can be seen in Appendix 1.

Review Q	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
What is known about school staffs' views of supporting and promoting pupils' SEMH needs?	Papers focused on school staff views of SEMH needs in pupils	Papers focused on parents or pupils' views of SEMH needs in pupils
	Papers focused predominately on primary/secondary mainstream educational settings	Papers focused predominately on educational settings such as early years or specialist provisions
	Papers written in English language	Papers written in languages other than English
	Academic papers published after 2001	Academic papers published before 2000
	UK Papers	Non-UK Papers

Table 2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria of search strategy

The initial search identified a large range of papers, the majority of which discussed interventions targeting SEMH needs of pupils and less focused on

school staffs' or teachers' views of supporting pupils with their social and emotional well-being and mental health needs. Studies discussing effects of interventions were excluded as the focus of the review was on school staffs' views.

2.3 Critique of identified literature

The purpose of critically appraising research is to use a structured approach to identify strengths and limitations of research in order to assess the relevance to the literature review in question (Aveyard, 2014). The researcher employed the use of a critical appraisal tool to facilitate this process and provide a consistent method of appraising the literature. The CASP: Qualitative Research (2017) was used to do this. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2017) frameworks for examining quantitative research was also used as three of the studies were of a quantitative nature. Although a further two of the studies were mixed methods, both involved a qualitative element and therefore the CASP: Qualitative research (2017) tool was deemed appropriate in order to provide the most suitable questions.

The questions in CASP (2017) can broadly be organised into several categories; aims, sample, participants, research design, data collection, analysis and results. The strengths and weaknesses emerging from the critical appraisal of each research article were reviewed in line with these categories to understand how the studies correlate with each other (Aveyard, 2014) (see Appendix 2).

2.3.1 Research aims of identified research

The aims of each study were identified, although the extent to which they were explicitly labelled varied. Three studies focused primarily on secondary schools. Kidger et al., (2009) stated that their aim was to “examine the views of staff involved in emotional health work and students regarding current school-based emotional health work” (Kidger et al., 2009 p.3). Kidger et al., (2010) didn’t explicitly state the aim of their research but did state that they aimed to explore school staffs’ views of supporting pupils’ emotional health and well-being. Burton and Goodman (2011) stated that their aim was to explore “the perceptions of SENCOS and support staff on their roles, relationships and capacity to support inclusive practice” (Burton & Goodman, 2011 p.137).

The research exploring the views and experiences of school staff aimed to explore:

- experiences of school staff of their current provisions and mental health focused activities (Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton & Wolpert, 2013),
- views of school staff in relation to the current provision of mental health available in schools and access to support and barriers to accessing support (Sharpe, Ford, Lereya, Owen, Viner & Wolpert, 2016),
- experiences and views of school teachers in relation to their competency and self-perceived duty to identify and support pupils with mental health needs (Rothi et al., 2008),

- school staff views of helpful and unhelpful practices of supporting pupils' emotional well-being (Bennett, 2006),
- school staff perceptions of the changes in the education system related to mental health (Corcoran & Finney, 2015),
- teachers' responses to the emotional and behavioural needs of CYP (Connelly et al., 2008),
- and the perspectives of staff in education, health and social services with regard to the interactions between professional groups in order to support pupil mental well-being in schools (Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip & Watson, 2006).

2.3.2 Sampling

All of the qualitative studies used non-probability methods such as purposeful methods of sampling which are “acceptable when there is no intention or need to make a statistical generalisation to any population beyond the sample” (Robson, 2011, p. 274). The majority of the studies had a qualitative aspect to their design, which is an appropriate method when pursuing school staff views. Non-probability sampling was deemed an appropriate tool as qualitative research does not typically aim to achieve generalizability (Willig, 2013) and so was appropriate during the critical appraisal of the literature reviewed. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research as it allows acquiring of in-depth data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Of the three studies of a quantitative nature, Vostanis et al., (2013) also used purposeful sampling which was appropriate in this case as respondents were required to be members of schools that would be taking part in the TaMHS (Targeted Mental Health Support) programme. Local educational authorities selected schools to be involved in the programme and of these, all were invited to take part in the survey. Corcoran and Finney (2015) used purposeful sampling. However, they gathered their sample from participants who had previously attended training courses delivered by the researcher which may have impacted who agreed to participate.

Purposeful sampling to recruit participants was used by the remainder of the studies. Five studies stated their inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting participants (Burton & Goodman, 2011; Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Kidger et al., 2009; 2010; Rothi et al., 2008).

Two studies (Bennett, 2006; Sharpe et al., 2016) used a convenience sample of school staff. In Sharpe et al.,'s (2016) study, 10,000 schools in England were sent an email inviting participation to the survey, and staff from 341 schools completed the survey. Although widely used, convenience sampling is argued to be one of the 'least satisfactory methods of sampling' (Robson, 2011, p. 275) due to the 'unspecifiable biases' that are likely to influence who gets sampled (Robson, 2011, p. 275). Sharpe et al., (2016) recognised this imitation and in an attempt to check the representativeness of the study sample, they compared the sample to national data. It could be that schools who chose to participate in

the study had greater provision for mental health and interest in the area thus over-representing schools with more extensive support.

For the quantitative element for their research, Kidger et al., (2009) used random stratified sampling, a type of probability sampling to recruit their participants. Sample sizes varied significantly between all studies reviewed.

2.3.3 Participants

All studies reviewed involved staff working in mainstream secondary schools, although only three focused solely on secondary schools and their staff (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Kidger et al., 2009, Kidger et al, 2010). Of these only two studies focused exclusively on school staff as Kidger et al., (2009) also explored views of students in their schools although this is beyond the scope of this literature review and so the views of students will not be discussed. Kidger et al., (2010) included a psychologist along with other teaching staff and support staff. The remaining studies involved a range of participants from primary and secondary schools along with pre-school settings, special educational needs settings.

Spratt et al. (2006) study explored views of school staff and students and also included participants from outside of school such as parents and members of the health, social care and voluntary sector. Participants in Vostanis et al., (2013) study were designated members of school staff, typically a head teacher or deputy head teacher which could have had implications on the data

gathered. Head teachers could have been driven by a motivation to have their school viewed favourably. Corcoran and Finney (2015) did not include teachers in their study and hence a rich source of data may have been overlooked in this study.

In Connelly et al., (2008) study, the majority of participants were head teachers which may not represent the views of staff who work directly with pupils' in classroom settings. Furthermore, head teachers were asked to identify teachers to participate and may have chosen teachers that best represent their views.

Bennett (2006) used questionnaires to gather the views of professionals in one local authority. However, this was not limited to school staff and included local authority officer consisting of EPs, looked after children workers. 52 school staff responded and consisted of head teachers, SENCOs and class teachers. The remaining 26 participants were either support services, local authority officers or were unidentified. It could be argued that only SENCOs who were motivated in order to allow their school to be viewed as supporting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs favourably, however questionnaires were anonymous with respondents only indicating role and whether they are primary or secondary school based.

Participants in the studies included:

- a designated member of senior leadership team, a deputy head, head teacher or pastoral staff member (Vostanis et al., 2013),

- teaching staff including head teachers and deputy head teachers (Connelly et al., 2008; Rothi et al., 2008),
- any member of school staff including inclusion managers, pastoral leads, SEAL coordinators, head teachers (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Sharpe et al., 2016),
- staff members responsible for pupils' emotional well-being (Bennett, 2006; Burton & Goodman, 2011; Kidger et al., 2010).

2.3.4 Study design

Three of the included studies employed an exclusively quantitative design (e.g. Bennett, 2006; Sharpe et al., 2016; Vostanis et al., 2013). These studies used surveys and questionnaires to gather the views of school staff. In the case of Vostanis et al., (2013), this was in order to explore how schools promote emotional well-being among their pupils using a large national survey in England.

Building on from this, Sharpe et al., (2016) undertook a largescale survey of schools' work with supporting students' mental health needs in schools across England. These quantitative studies were useful for gathering large volumes of data on school staffs' views, however can be seen as limiting as there was little space for exploration or expansion when answering the questions.

The remainder of the studies reviewed adopted a qualitative design with two utilising a mixed methods approach (Connelly et al., 2008; Kidger et al., 2009). A

qualitative design is advantageous when exploring the views of participants, as it allows for gathering of rich data and understanding how participants make sense of promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being (Willig, 2001).

Kidger et al., (2009) adopted a mixed-methods design by collecting quantitative data to begin by use of questionnaires, followed by in-depth interviews in a sequential design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Connelly et al., (2008) on the other hand used a concurrent design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and collected quantitative and qualitative data at the same time.

2.3.5 Data collection

The majority of the studies used interviews as their method of data collection (Burton & Goodman, 2011; Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Goodman & Burton, 2010; Kidger et al., 2009; Kidger et al., 2010; Rothi et al., 2008; Spratt et al., 2006).

Interviews are a useful method of data collection for gathering in-depth information and in the case of the aims of the data, was deemed appropriate for gathering information about participants' views and how they make sense of the phenomenon in question (Willig, 2001). Generally, semi-structured interviews were used (with exception of Kidger et al., 2009 and Spratt et al., 2006 where the type of interview used was not made explicit).

Rothi et al., (2008) used undertook 30 in-depth interviews with teachers in a range of schools in order to explore to what extent teachers feel that it is their responsibility to identify pupils with SEMH difficulties and how they view their

capacity to support such problems. A limitation of the study was that the questions were open to interpretation and did not specify how social, emotional, behavioural difficulties and mental health were defined.

Corcoran and Finney (2015) used interviews to ask a range of school staff (e.g. pastoral staff, head teachers and SENCOs) about how they experience and understand the influence of policy on their own practice particularly in relation to the 'nexus', or focus point between psychology and education. Participants were asked questions such as 'what is it that brought you to/keeps you in teaching? Are they still the same values? What are the main challenges you envisage to mental health promotion in the classroom/school?' Semi-structured interviews are deemed an appropriate method of data collection when undertaking qualitative research as they allow the researcher to be flexible and adaptable when exploring participants views (Robson, 2011). This in-depth study allowed school staff to discuss in detail their experiences and hence provides a rich picture of participants perspectives.

The studies employing a quantitative research design all used surveys/questionnaires in order to collect data. Vostanis et al., (2013) provided vignettes to staff members discussing pupils with SEMH needs and asking respondents to discuss how a hypothetical child would be helped in the school along with who would provide the help, would support would be available to the child's parents, details of any multidisciplinary working and how progress would be assessed.

Sharpe and colleagues (2016) collected data via a large-scale survey. 577 school staff members in 341 schools across England completed their questionnaire which aimed to explore what provisions schools currently had to support pupils' emotional well-being, who provides this support and the key barriers to accessing support. The use of questionnaires lacks depth for exploration and so potentially limited responses as participants were only able to answer questions posed and not freely discuss experiences. Furthermore, the questionnaires did not allow for details of interventions to be provided and so it is not known if schools are reporting accurately.

Similarly, Bennett (2006) also employed a large-scale survey and by collecting questionnaires was able to gather school staffs' views on how best to meet pupils' emotional well-being needs. Bennett (2006) acknowledges that the use of questionnaires may limit the data collection in terms of those who have access to the questionnaire and answering questions set may not fully reflect their views. There is also the potential for questions to be misunderstood. However, it is also acknowledged that the use of questionnaires allows for gathering of large amounts of data. Surveys also allow participants to be honest and frank as their responses are anonymous (Robson, 2011).

Kidger et al., (2009) had a very low response rate (25.3%) to their questionnaires, something the authors suggest may be due to the questionnaires not reaching the appropriate person in school.

2.3.6 Data analysis

In the included studies, there was a lack of detail and clarity about the method of data analysis used to make conclusions from the data. With less detail, there is a lack of transparency about how the “evidence supports a specific descriptive, interpretive, or causal claim” (Moravcsik, 2014, p. 48).

The studies with a quantitative research design (Bennett, 2006; Sharpe et al., 2016; Vostanis et al., 2013) discussed trends in their data set providing summaries of the data. Each study detailed the frequency of questions asked, allowing for analytic transparency over their findings. This transparency also highlighted some disadvantages in questions posed to participants, for example Vostanis et al., (2013) reported that almost all participants ‘reported that the child in question would be able to see someone in school for help’ (Vostanis et al., 2013, p. 154). However, questions could be raised about the motivation of the school staff member (typically a head teacher or deputy head teacher) when answering this question.

However, for the studies with a qualitative research design, analysis was not always made explicit. For example, there was a distinct lack of information about data analysis from Spratt et al., (2006) with findings described rather than process of analysis explicitly stated. However, direct quotations which facilitate the transparency of how interpretations were made of the data collected (Moravcsik, 2014).

Connelly et al. (2008) reported that responses from the questionnaire were analysed “using the qualitative analysis package QSR N6 to allow systematic coding” (p9.) and subsequently a coding frame with key themes was identified. Several studies used thematic analysis to analyse their data (Burton & Goodman, 2011; Rothi et al., 2008). Both studies provided a description of their analytic process which goes some way to address limitations of thematic analysis such as the broad nature of thematic analysis and typical lack of detail of the procedure undertaken (Robson, 2011).

Corcoran and Finney (2015) stated that they used a discourse analysis to analyse the data in their study. It could be argued that a critique of discourse analysis rooted in discursive psychology could be the loss of participant as the focus is on understanding the varied ways of making sense of situations, as opposed to the individual participant (Robson, 2011). Corcoran and Finney (2015) provide direct quotations from participants, which may be a way to explicitly express the views of their participants and support their analysis and interpretation.

Kidger and colleagues (2009; 2010) stated that data in both studies was “analysed thematically using constant comparison techniques” (Kidger et al., 2009, p 924.) and provided details of their participant transcripts which provides support for transparency and discuss inter-rater reliability which supports their studies credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

2.4 Results

The results of the included articles are discussed below according to four broad themes:

- school staff views of available SEMH support in their schools (Sharpe et al., 2016; Vostanis et al., 2013),
- school staff view of their roles in supporting pupils' emotional well-being (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Rothi et al., 2008; Kidger et al., 2010),
- school staff views of inclusion of pupils with SEMH difficulties (Bennett, 2006; Burton & Goodman, 2011, Kidger et al., 2009),
- general experiences of supporting and promoting pupils' emotional well-being (Connelly et al., 2008).

2.4.1 Available SEMH support in schools

Two large scale studies explored what SEMH support is available in schools according to school staff. Vostanis and colleagues (2015) found that although two thirds of school approaches focused on all pupils, the majority were reactive rather than preventative measures. Additionally, these were typically not evidence-based but rather based on a plan while open to adaption. This study suggests that schools were recognising the need for mental health approaches but were not always equipped with the necessary training and support. This highlights the importance of having a systematic approach to preventative work for promoting and supporting positive emotional well-being along with staff being equipped with relevant training and having clear pathways for working with external agencies.

Vostanis et al., (2013) found that there was a considerable number of interventions reported to support pupils' emotional well-being, however it is unclear whether participants held the same definition of each intervention and if what was implemented in schools was similar. Additionally, it could be argued that the use of vignettes is a simplistic account of what is often seen as a complex issue.

Sharpe and colleagues (Sharpe et al., 2016) found that over two thirds of schools who participated reported having some specialist support available, with specialist provision more common in secondary schools. Staff training and whole-school approaches were the most frequently employed specific approaches. Support was most often provided by educational psychologists (EPs), followed by counsellors. The study found that most participating schools used similar approaches to supporting pupils' mental health specifically staff training and whole-school approaches.

It also highlighted the significance of EPs as a core external provision of mental health support consistent with Vostanis et al., (2013). Barriers and facilitators to providing support for pupils' mental health was also discussed with lack of access (due to overcapacity) of specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as being a key barrier identified. School staff in the study did not believe that staff attitudes towards mental health or lack of knowledge as barriers to providing support for their pupils. However, it is important to remember that participants in the study were head teachers or

deputy head teachers and so their motivation when answering such questions could possibly be biased due to desire for the school to be viewed favourably.

2.4.2 School staff roles in supporting pupils' emotional well-being

Research also explored school staff's views in relation to their role supporting pupil's social and emotional well-being. Rothi, et al., (2008) explored teachers' perceptions of identifying SEMH and emotional well-being needs in pupils. They found that participants believe that there is a key role for school staff in identifying and supporting pupils' mental health difficulties due to the rise in prevalence of such difficulties but they did not feel confident that they had the appropriate knowledge or training.

The authors concluded that there is an important role for class teachers when supporting SEMH but that other key pastoral staff can also play a considerable role. Consistent with Vostanis et al., (2013), this study found that teachers did not feel fully equipped to support pupils' SEMH needs. In fact, Rothi et al. (2008) found that the teachers in the study felt disempowered by the current educational climate and the pressures being placed upon them in terms of raising educational standards and reducing exclusions.

Corcoran and Finney (2015) explored the perspectives of school staff in relation to their role supporting pupils SEMH needs. This study highlights the importance of bridging the gap between policy and practice. Educators interviewed generally discussed pursuing a career in education in order to make

a difference to the lives of children and young people. Corcoran and Finney (2015) noted the moral and ethical aspect to the way language was used which demonstrates the passion the participants had for supporting pupils' well-being.

Consistent with Rothi et al., (2008) the study also noted that despite the commitment that educators bring to their role daily, they are up against constant professional challenges which impact on how they are able to perform in their roles. The authors concluded that participants in the study generally accepted that supporting pupils' emotional well-being was a new element of the role of school staff but demonstrated concerns about how to manage increasing demands on school performance.

Another study exploring school staff's role was undertaken by Kidger and colleagues (Kidger et al., 2010) who explored school staff's views of supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being. Emerging themes included a strongly held belief that teaching and emotional health and wellbeing are linked, the perception by those who participated that many colleagues were reluctant to engage in supporting pupils' emotional well-being and finally the concern that teacher's own emotional well-being needs are being neglected.

A potential limitation of this study was that all the individuals interviewed were involved in supporting students' emotional health and well-being and therefore were more knowledgeable and potentially passionate about the significance of this area than other staff members. Additionally, despite interviews discussing

the role of teachers in supporting pupils' emotional well-being, six of the participants were not working in teaching roles themselves.

Participants in both Rothi et al., (2008) and Kidger et al., (2010) studies discussed their duty of care for pupils' mental health and well-being along with an accompanying sense of responsibility. However, participants also reported inadequate access to training in relation to pupil's emotional well-being. Both studies recognized the increased pressure on school staff by legislation and policies, whether this be for emotional well-being or increasing academic attainment and school performance.

2.4.3 Inclusion

Several studies explored school staffs' views of supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing with a focus on inclusion. The studies where the primary focus was on school staffs' experiences or perceptions of supporting pupils' emotional well-being were included but where this was not the focus, the studies were excluded.

Bennett (2006) explored staff views of helpful and unhelpful practices when meeting pupils emotional and behavioural needs. The focus of Bennett's (2006) study was on exploring how staff (school and local authority) experienced their role in relation to supporting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs with the overarching aim to understand how this links to the development of behaviour policies within schools. This study found that participants perceived there to be

a significant increase in teachers being required to support emotional and behavioural well-being, something which clashes with the demands of the National Curriculum.

Kidger, et al., (2009) explored school staff (and students) views of their school's current SEMH provision by undertaking a large survey on mental health provision in their school. The authors found that all schools believed they provided some support for pupils in emotional distress, however there was typically little explicit teaching about emotional health in the curriculum. The study advocates the importance of taking the whole-school into account when supporting pupils' emotional health.

A further study concerning inclusion in relation to pupils SEMH needs was undertaken by Burton and Goodman (2011). Participants were asked about their perceptions of pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties (BESD) and how these pupils can best be included in the mainstream classroom. Participants were also asked about their experiences of working with other professionals (i.e. teachers) and parents when supporting these pupils. Burton and Goodman (2011) found that by creating a nurturing environment (by being caring and accessible), school staff were best able to meet the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. This study has implications on policies such as being aware of the importance of and clarifying the role of the staff member responsible for pupils' emotional well-being.

Consistent with findings from Kidger et al., (2009), Burton and Goodman found that school staff appeared to genuinely care about their pupils, displaying a caring attitude and concern about their well-being but felt a pressure to raise academic standards and lack of support when engaging with pupils with BESD. Similar to other studies (e.g. Kidger et al., 2009; Rothi et al., 2008) this study concluded that there is a lack of support and training for staff when working with pupils' behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The findings also suggest that efforts should be made to clarify roles of teachers and pastoral staff when supporting pupils' emotional well-being so that there is not an over-reliance on SENCOs and support staff and in order for children to participate inclusively in their education.

2.4.4 General experiences

A Scottish study undertaken by Connelly and colleagues (Connelly et al., 2008) explored teachers' responses to the emotional needs of CYP. The study highlighted the importance of systems and provides useful information for policy makers such as the barriers to accessing external agencies. Some of the studies reviewed (e.g. Rothi et al., 2008; Corcoran & Finney, 2015) also highlight the tension between school staff being passionate about 'making a difference' and being generally open to supporting pupils' emotional well-being and the contrasting challenges within the current educational climate consistent findings from Bennett (2006).

2.5 Summary of research reviewed and links to the current research

As noted above, much of the current literature discusses school staff views on supporting pupil's emotional well-being. Some studies (Bennett, 2006; Sharpe et al., 2016; Vostanis et al., 2013) took a more quantitative approach and explored school staffs' views of the provision available in their school when supporting pupils' emotional and social well-being. These studies also examined the barriers to supporting pupils' emotional well-being/ SEMH needs.

The remainder of the studies used either a mixed methods approach (e.g. Connelly et al., 2008; Kidger et al., 2009) or utilised a more in-depth exploration of school staffs' views of supporting pupils' well-being by undertaking interviews with school staff. Only four of the studies reviewed focused exclusively on secondary school contexts, with many also including an exploration of a range of professionals in a range of schools (i.e. pre-school, primary, secondary, further educational settings or specialist provisions). There is a distinct lack of research focusing primarily on a single school setting, despite findings of several of the studies (e.g. Kidger et al., 2009) advocating the importance of a whole-school approach to promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

With this previous research in mind, the research questions for this study were:

- According to secondary school staff, what are the contexts and mechanisms facilitating the support and promotion of pupils' SEMH needs /emotional well-being.
- What are the contexts and mechanisms which hinder secondary school staffs' ability to effectively support and promote pupils SEMH needs?

2.6 Summary

This chapter detailed the results of a literature review undertaken subsequent to the data gathering and analysis in line with the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) so as not to influence the findings and developing theory. Promoting the well-being of children and young people is a key area of development in the current education context within the UK with the government attempting to address this through statutory policy and supporting the role of schools in meeting pupil's SEMH needs. However, as seen in the literature review, there is a lack of research exploring the views of school staff who are essentially on the front line of implementing these changes.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an account of the researcher's orientation describing ontological and epistemological stance and the rationale for the research design. The purpose of the research is outlined and the population sample, procedures undertaken and justification of research method are all discussed. The method of data collection and analysis is outlined, along with ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness.

3.2 Purpose of Research and Research Questions

This qualitative research used a critical realist stance as a guiding ontological and epistemological position to explore school staff's views and contribute to an understanding of the contexts and mechanisms which might influence the promotion and support of children and young people's social and emotional well-being in a secondary school in the UK.

The research therefore has two key purposes:

- Exploratory – the research aims to explore school staffs' views about promoting CYP's social and emotional wellbeing in a secondary school and explores the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or facilitate the promotion and support of pupils' social and emotional well-being in schools.
- Explanatory – the research aims to explain the contexts and mechanisms involved when promoting and supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being in schools.

The research questions therefore are:

- What are the views of school staff in a mainstream secondary school regarding what facilitates and hinders the promotion of their pupils' emotional well-being?
- What contexts and mechanisms facilitate and hinder the promotion of pupil's social and emotional well-being in a mainstream secondary school?

3.3 Conceptual Framework

This section discusses ontology and epistemology and the researcher's position in relation to both.

3.3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Research is largely defined by the researcher's philosophical assumptions, assumptions about knowledge, reality and the route the researcher takes to achieve their objectives (Willig, 2013). The ontological, epistemological and methodological questions are the basis of these assumptions. Only by understanding the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher can one understand the rationale for undertaking the research. These therefore have direct implications on the research design and methodology used.

Ontology is "concerned with the nature of the world" (Willig, 2001, p. 13). It looks to understand the assumptions made about the world; what is there to know (Willig, 2001)? Ultimately an account of existence, ontology is concerned with the way in which we classify ideas and concepts and the relationship within and

between them (Hughes, 1997). Ontological positions can broadly be described as ranging from 'realist' to 'relativist' (Willig, 2001). A realist position "maintains that the world is made up of structures and objects that have cause–effect relationships with one another" (Willig, 2001, p. 13). Realists (or 'positivists') are searching for objectivity, a truth separate to human awareness (Oliver, 2012). Relativists on the other hand believe that truth cannot be separated from human awareness; people are active participants who have ideas and make meaning about the world around them.

Epistemology frames the way we make sense of knowledge (Smith, 2015); it attempts to answer the question what can we know and how we can know it (Willig, 2001). Does the researcher see themselves exploring facts/knowledge about the world or are they gathering data where they are integrated in the process (Smith, 2015)? So, where ontology can be understood as the study of the nature of the world, epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge, and how this knowledge can be gathered (Robson, 2011). Epistemology and ontology are embedded in research undertaken and the researcher's perceived relationship with knowledge. Consequently, the theoretical approach adopted by the researcher is key to how data is collected and interpreted (Robson, 2011).

3.3.2 Realism, relativism and critical realism

Epistemological and ontological perspectives can best be understood on a continuum from realist positions such as positivism which maintains that there is one true, objective reality, to relativist orientations such as constructivism, which

argues that reality is constructed by individuals in the social world (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). The researcher's perspective falls somewhere on the spectrum from realist to relativist and defines the relationship between the researcher and their data and determines appropriate methodology designs later in the research.

Researchers adopting a positivist approach are searching for 'facts' without theory (Thyer, 2001). They view the world from a position of objectivity where the focus is not on individual perspectives. These researchers are aiming to uncover the truth about the world. On the other end of the continuum are individuals who believe all reality is based on theory, that there is no one 'truth' rather multiple realities constructed from experiences and social understandings (Parton, 2000).

The realist (positivist) and relativist (constructivist) paradigms can be compared and contrasted by understanding how they view the world (ontology) and how knowledge is constructed (epistemology) (Matthews, 2003) and subsequently how research is designed around these assumptions. A positivist (realist) perspective argues that there is one 'true', objective reality, a reality which we are constantly seeking to understand. Research from a positivist perspective therefore usually involves hypothesis-testing, the more robust 'gold-standard' being randomized controlled trials (Robson, 2011). Often the variables in these experiments are not controlled 'tightly' enough to be considered perfectly robust (Matthews, 2003).

A relativist perspective on the other hand, argues that phenomenon can only be understood in the context in which it is explored (Matthews, 2003). Here, findings

cannot be generalized from one situation to the next but are unique to the current participants and context. Matthews (2003) argues that therefore both perspectives are problematic in one way or another. In contrast to both, realist and relative perspectives, critical realism argues that any attempt to observe true reality will inevitably fail (Sutcliffe, 2016). In other words, critical realists are critical of the ability to ever know reality.

Critical realism therefore lies in between the realist and relativist endpoints of the epistemological continuum. It seeks to explain external reality through an 'imperfect lens of human perception and thought' (Sutcliffe, 2016, p. 45). In line with positivism, critical realism assumes that an objective reality exists but unlike positivists, it argues that we can only view reality through our own specific perspectives. It presupposes that there exists an objective reality outside our understanding, a reality that can only be understood through the 'filters of language, meaning-making and social context', resulting in multiple versions of reality (Matthews, 2003; Oliver, 2012). Oliver (2012, p. 5) argues that "all knowledge must then be seen as tentative and fallible".

Critical realism offers a scientific explanation, without the constraints of positivism and realism (Robson, 2011) demonstrating that it is well suited to the complexities of real-world research. Indeed, critical realists often undertake research in natural settings offering an efficient method of exploring complex real-life situations (Robson, 2011). Critical realism often incorporates participants perspectives thus providing an emancipatory element to its research (House, 1991). Within the social

sciences, critical realists stress the importance of the complex and dynamic nature of the social world, arguing that any attempt by positivists to uncover 'truth', will be an oversimplified account of the variables involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

As discussed, critical realism proposes that there is an objective reality separate from the researcher, but that the research cannot be separate from the researcher's values and assumptions and that this will impact on what can be uncovered about reality (Matthews, 2003). Therefore the researcher is ultimately embedded in the research process and their values will influence what is observed (Robson, 2011).

The critical realist position fits well with the aims of the current study; to explore the contexts and mechanisms that help and hinder how schools promote and support pupil's emotional well-being in a mainstream secondary school. It aims to recognise the importance of participants' views while also encouraging the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of the interactions between individuals and the contextual mechanisms possibly contributing to their experiences.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) argue that the task for realist evaluations in order to understand outcomes, is to answer the essential questions 'what are the social and cultural conditions necessary for change mechanisms to operate and how are they distributed within and between program contexts' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 77).

Research from a critical realist perspective has the potential to enhance and develop knowledge and understanding of social phenomena (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). It is a hope that this research could therefore have the potential to influence SEMH policy and practice in schools.

Critical realism fits with the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions and is an appropriate stance for the research as the goal of the current research is to better understand views of school staff when supporting and promoting pupils SEMH needs in order to support school staff. Critical realist research aims to understand how contexts and mechanisms are integrated to create a social process (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), in this case supporting pupils' SEMH needs. The theory is a description of these contexts and mechanisms underlying actions which result in observable events and of the conditions within which these mechanisms work (Robson, 2011). By exploring participants views it is possible to identify the contexts they believe are helpful and the contexts in which they occur (Sutcliffe, 2016).

3.3.3 Conceptual framework

The current research has adopted a critical realist ontological position in an attempt to explore and explain the contexts and mechanisms that enable promotion of social and emotional well-being of secondary school students from the views of school staff.

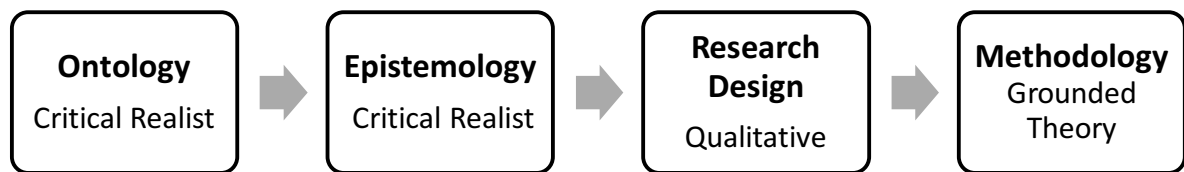


Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework of the current study

Critical realism allows mechanisms or processes to be viewed as socially constructed hypotheses (Robson, 2011) and allows the researcher to use the individual views and experiences of participants to build a meaningful theory about the social phenomena explored.

Positivist approaches were not deemed appropriate because the researcher felt they provided limited scope in exploring social phenomena such as SEMH and emotional well-being. Like positivists, realists believe that there is an external reality, however they also argue that this external reality is complex and composed of multiple layers of reality (Fox et al., 2007).

Critical realists are interested in uncovering the 'mechanisms that explains how an action affects outcomes in particular contexts' (Fox et al., 2007, p. 70). Therefore, it is only by gathering and analyzing data that it is possible to identify the contexts and mechanisms that determine the outcome (Robson, 2011). The critical realist researcher is active within the research process as they attempt to activate mechanisms to demonstrate 'how there is a pattern of outcomes' relating to

subgroups (Fox et al., 2007, p. 70). Consequently, the critical realist researcher remains open to possible connections during analysis and interpretation.

3.4 Research strategy

This section will detail the research structure, the holistic approach the researcher undertakes to uncover knowledge. The research structure ensures that research is undertaken in a systematic manner. It will discuss the research paradigm, sampling, data collection and data analysis.

3.4.1 Research paradigm

Qualitative research can be described as being primarily concerned with finding meaning from data and therefore qualitative researchers are typically interested in the experiences of individuals rather than exploring cause and effect relationships (Willig, 2001). This form of research allows for in-depth exploration of phenomenon rather than dealing with large volumes of numerical data.

Consequently, it's not prediction of outcomes that's important to qualitative researchers, rather the process itself and interpretation of events (Willig, 2001).

However, how a researcher interprets the data will depend on their theoretical and conceptual framework (see earlier).

Qualitative research methods are well suited to exploratory research that centres on the views and perspectives of participants and where social processes are being explored (Robson, 2011). As the main goal of the research was to explore the views of secondary school staff's views in one school in the UK in relation to supporting

and promoting pupils' mental health, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate in order to answer the research questions.

3.4.2 Methodology

Grounded theory was chosen as the method of data analysis for the current research. First developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory aims to develop new theory through a process of gathering and subsequently analysing new data (Oliver, 2012). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that grounded theory is a flexible, modifiable method of analysing data in order to formulate theories from data gathered. Grounded theory therefore aims to generate theory that can provide an understanding of the data (Robson, 2011). Grounded theory was deemed an appropriate method of data analysis as the aim of the research is to explore views of school staff and to explain the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or facilitate promotion of pupil's emotional well-being in schools.

Grounded theory presents a systematic and integrated approach to undertake research (Robson, 2011). It is particularly effective where there is limited theory about a subject area, fundamentally, grounded theory allows for theory to be derived from the data in contrast to testing out hypotheses. So therefore, it is believed to be appropriate for the current research where there is a lack of research exploring school staffs' views of supporting pupils' emotional well-being. However, Robson (2011) argues that it is impossible to undertake a research study without prior knowledge of the phenomenon/phenomena explored. Additionally, it may be difficult to undertake where there is ample research about a particular

research area, in such where categories are 'saturated' (Robson, 2011). Grounded theory was deemed an appropriate method of data analysis as the aim of the research is to explore views of school staff and to explain the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or facilitate promotion of pupils' emotional well-being in schools.

Other methods of data collection were considered but were deemed inappropriate in terms of answering the research questions. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which aims to explore views and meaning made by participants who have experienced an event. This form of data analysis studies how individuals make sense of their lives experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). When applied to the current research topic, IPA would allow an exploration of a school staffs' experiences of supporting pupils' emotional well-being. However, this would not enable the research to explore the perceived facilitators and barriers to supporting and promoting pupils' emotional well-being/SEMH needs according to school staff in a more holistic or systemic way.

Thematic analysis is described by Robson (2011) as a method of data analysis, not linked to any particular theoretical standpoint. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allows the identification and analysis of themes and relationships between themes in order to make meaning from data. This form of analysis was initially considered for the current research. However, grounded theory was chosen as it was deemed able to provide a greater level of interpretation when exploring school staff's views of supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being.

Grounded theory was therefore chosen as method of choice as it allows the researcher to not only study what school staff say about the facilitators and barriers to effectively supporting and promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being (exploratory) but also provides an interpretation to explain the facilitators and barriers to supporting and promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being (explanatory).

3.4.3 Types of grounded theory

Since its initial development, grounded theory has undergone a number of revisions. Glaser and Strauss parted company and argued that grounded theory be practiced in different ways (Willig, 2013). There are now considered three main strands in which grounded theory can be practiced. Glaser's grounded theory is a purely inductive approach, falling into a more positivism viewpoint, it attempts to discover theory objectively (Glaser, 2016). It can be argued that it's impossible for a researcher to be completely separate and not influence the data.

In contrast to Glaser's approach, Charmaz's (2006) constructivist version of grounded theory stresses the importance of shared interpretations between researcher and participants. Here, the individual interpretation is essential and as such there are many 'truths' to be discovered. Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory assumes that the theory emerging from the data is a result of the researcher's assumptions and interactions with the data.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose a more structured approach to grounded theory. Stemming from a critical realist position, this approach aims to explore an objective reality through the 'imperfect lens of human perception and thought' (Sutcliffe, 2016, p. 45). Corbin and Strauss's approach to grounded theory is the most appropriately suited to the epistemology and aims of the current study in its exploration of SEMH in a secondary school because it has used participants' perspectives to explore and explain the mechanisms involved in supporting and promoting social and emotional-wellbeing.

3.4.4 Grounded theory and literature review

Grounded theory begins with the data (Charmaz, 2006) and for this reason the majority of research utilizing a ground theory approach undertakes the literature search after the data has been collected and analysed. In Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original form, they stressed this was essential to ensure that the research is unbiased by pre-existing literature and theories. In line with this, the current research project did not undertake an in-depth review of the literature until data collection and analysis were underway. As a doctoral student, the researcher was required to be able to justify the rationale for undertaking the research by providing evidence of a gap in the research and what contribution the research would provide to the profession. For this reason, a brief initial literature search was undertaken to provide rationale for the research being undertaken and to ascertain the methodological approach used.

3.4.5 Sampling and participants

'The process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and then decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges'.

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p45)

The aim of the current study was to explore school staffs' views and explain the mechanisms that hinder and facilitate support and promotion of SEMH in a secondary school. Therefore, the research involved a single school, a school that was identified as 'being good at' promoting and supporting pupil's social and emotional mental health needs well. This was done by identification of schools in the local authority through discussion with colleagues in the service, experience with schools and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) reports. Through this, a mainstream academy secondary school was identified having been awarded 'outstanding' from its past two inspections. An outstanding rating is given where a school can demonstrate how they've been outstanding with regards to the long-term development of pupils. Following conversations with the senior leadership team at the school, it was decided that this would be a school that could provide rich information about the support and promotion of pupil's social and emotional well-being.

The inclusion criteria for the current study was school staff working within the identified school. This included teachers, teaching assistants, SENCO's, pastoral support staff, senior leadership team staff or any school staff member who was

interested in participating in the research. There was no requirement for participants to have a specific level of experience with social and emotional well-being working in their designated role. The contact with the school was through a member of the senior leadership team who advised they talk to staff members about the research and what it entails.

Participant	Role in school	Interview code
Participant #1	Pastoral team member	Participant C
Participant #2	Teacher	Participant P
Participant #3	Teacher	Participant D
Participant #4	Pastoral team member	Participant F
Participant #5	Teacher/ pastoral team member	Participant A
Participant #6	Pastoral team member	Participant W

Table 3.1 Table of participants and their roles

School staff were provided with a copy of the participant information sheet and participant consent form in order to decide if it was something they wanted to be involved in (Appendix 4 & 5). Identification of interested participants were identified by the contact with the school and participants contacted the researcher directly to express interest.

Theoretical sampling was undertaken in line with grounded theory approaches. Here it is decided which participants to be interviewed next depending on the emerging categories during analysis. The purpose of this is to check the emerging theory out in future interviews that may challenge or solidify it in order to further refine this developing theory (Willig, 2013). An example of this in the current

research is when questions emerged about the role of different staff members, this impacted the role of participants in subsequent interviews. Within the data collection process, 3 or more participants were interpreted as 'some' and 5 or more participants were interpreted as the 'majority' of participants.

3.4.6 Data collection

Data was gathered via semi-structured interviews, a method of data collection compatible with critical realist research (Willig, 2013). The flexibility of semi-structured was considered important for exploring the views and perceptions of participants and so fully structured interviews were rejected. Similarly unstructured interviews were not deemed appropriate as they are often seen as more suited to research looking solely at participants perspectives and the meaning assigned to phenomena (Robson, 2011). This is because the current study aimed to explore participants views of supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being and so semi-structured interviews were used to guide participants to areas pertinent to answering the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews are compatible with many methods of data analysis and is one of the most commonly used methods of data collection (Willig, 2013). This is a flexible method of data collection, where the researcher uses pre-determined questions that allow for a general structure or guidance to the interview but that also allow for flexibility to follow where participants take the posed questions. While sometimes described as non-directive, behind this style of interviewing, the researcher has clear research questions that drive the interview (Willig, 2013).

Therefore, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher some control over questioning (Creswell, 2009) and has the potential to be a rich source of data collection. This 'rich' data collection allows for analysis of participants' thoughts, feelings, desires and behaviour along with being able to explore context and structure (Charmaz, 2015).

The researcher therefore needs to find the right balance between being flexible and able to follow the interviewees thoughts and ideas in order to generate insight into the research topic while also maintaining control in order to provide some structure and guidance to the interview. Here an interview agenda or topic guide can help guide the researcher and keep in mind their research questions and what they aim to gain from the interview (Willig, 2013).

Alternative methods of data collection such as questionnaires and focus groups were considered but deemed unsuitable due to the nature of the research.

Although having the potential to gather views from a large data set, questionnaires were thought to lack the in-depth detail needed when exploring school staffs' views in relation to supporting pupils' emotional well-being in a secondary school.

Focus groups were also deemed inappropriate for the current study as participants were being asked about their individual views and experiences of supporting and promoting social and emotional well-being in schools and therefore in a group this would have been complicated by group dynamics and may have impacted how participants discussed the context of the school. Given the broad scope for

discussion about SEMH, semi-structured interviews were considered to be best suited to exploring school staffs' views on the topic while remaining focused on the research questions.

3.4.7 Interview topic guide

An initial interview topic guide was developed (Appendix 6) to keep the focus of the interview and to keep the research questions central to the interview. Robson (2011) suggested a basic interview schedule to include the following:

- Introductory comments
- Topic headings and key questions under these headings
- Prompts
- Closing comments

The introductory comments included a brief description of the research, discussion about confidentiality, anonymity, process for withdrawal and to ensure the interviewee had read through the participant information sheet. The process for recording the interviews (and how data would be stored) was also discussed and the participants consent gathered before recording began (see section on informed consent for more details). The interviewee was also given the chance to ask any questions he/she may have about the research.

The structure of the interview was broken down into topics that would aim to answer the research questions. Additional questions and prompts were asked

during the interview to follow the interviewee's thoughts/ideas to further generate ideas. The questions were discussed with the research supervisor to ensure the questions flowed and remained open, i.e. they were not leading questions. Open questions encourage rapport and cooperation and allow in-depth knowledge to be gathered or any misunderstandings to be avoided (Robson, 2011).

Probes and prompts were used to allow participants to expand on a response, where the researcher believes the participant has more information and to stimulate interesting discussion (Robson, 2011). Non-verbal techniques and active listening skills were used such as momentary silences and pauses, enquiring glances and minimal encouragement and use of reflection, repeating back what the interviewee said.

3.4.8 Transcription

The interviews were recorded via audio recording and transcribed by the researcher after each interview. This allowed the researcher to become very familiar with the data from each interview and take notes and memos after interviews and before and during coding, an important element of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Non-verbal communication such as pauses or hesitations were also noted during transcription to provide a rich detail of the interview. Transcriptions were checked together with its audio recording to confirm its accuracy and were stored alongside audio recordings on an encrypted USB.

3.4.9 Use of MaxQDA

MaxQDA 12, a data analysis software package was used to analyse and code the data. It allows for flexible coding, memo taking and theory generation. This computerised software allowed for quick and flexible ease of coding the data. A screenshot of MaxQDA 12 can be seen in the figure below.

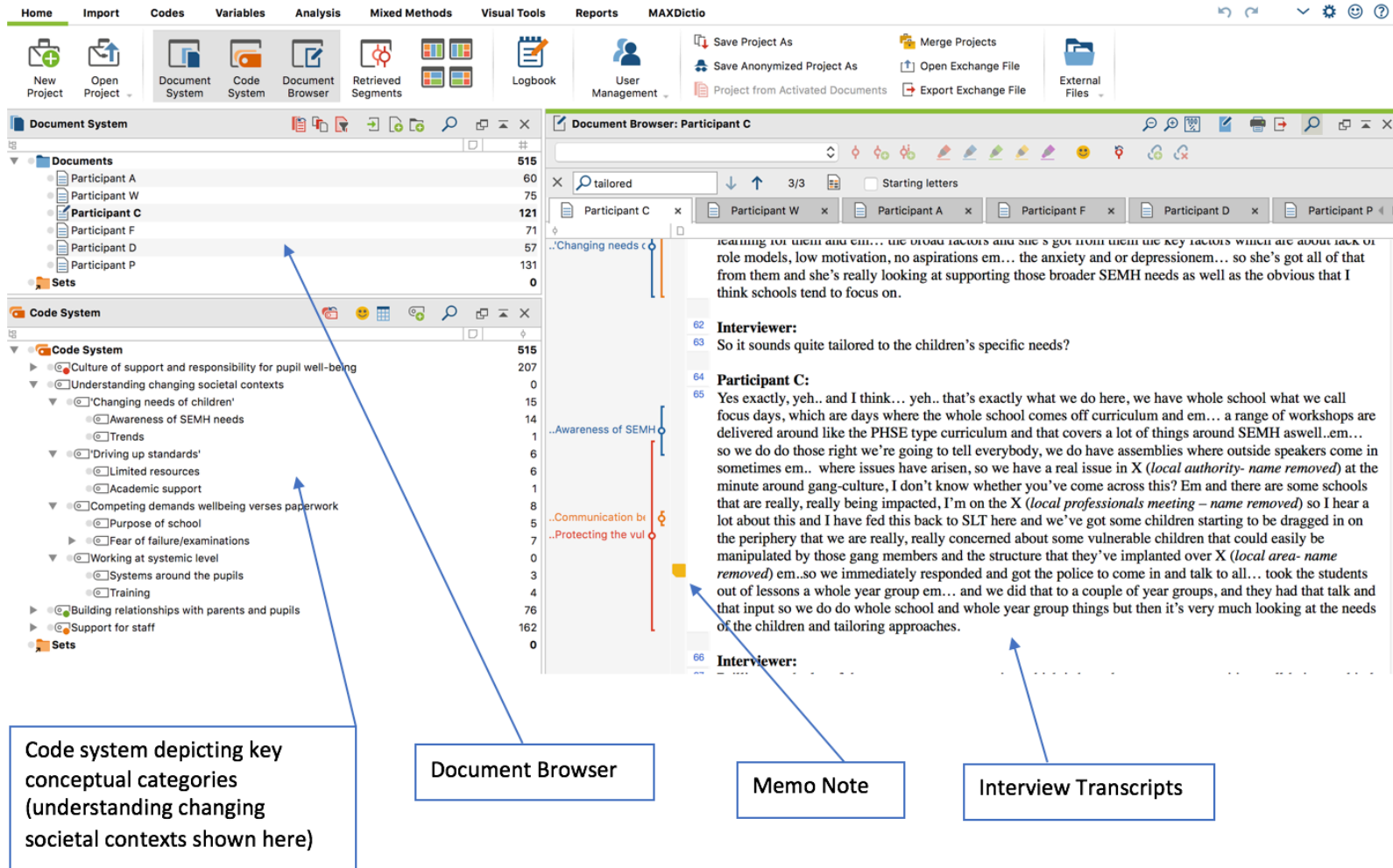


Figure 3.2 MaxQDA screenshot depicting feature

3.5 Analysis

3.5.1 Analytic tools

The researcher followed Corbin and Strauss's (1998) description of analytic tools to facilitate the data analysis and coding process by making comparisons and asking questions. These tools aid the research process by aiming to avoid pre-existing theories and pre-conceptions on data and allowing new theories to be generated from the data. These analytic tools are described below:

3.5.2 The use of questioning

Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasise the importance of questioning in grounded theory. Questioning allows the line of inquiry to be opened up and ultimately advancing our understanding of theoretical issues (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is essential during the analysis process where the researcher is able to develop emerging answers and challenge assumptions.

3.5.3 Constant comparison

Constant comparison was undertaken throughout the data analysis process in line with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparison ensures theory is generated by constantly moving back and forth between the data identifying similarities and differences emerging from the different categories within the data (Willig, 2008). This ensures that the researcher is able to not just build up categories but go back and forth between the data, making meaning from smaller parts. Willig (2008) states that the ultimate objective of constant comparison is to 'link and

integrate categories in such a way that all instances of variation are captured by the emerging theory' (Willig, 2008, p. 71).

3.5.4 Memo writing

Memo writing is an important part of grounded theory and is used to aid the process of coding and generating emerging categories and theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This involves the researcher writing notes and threads detailing theory development throughout the analysis process, helping the researcher reflect on the data and emerging categories and theory generation. This involves taking categories apart into components in order to examine and compare the data (Charmaz, 2015). During memo-writing, the researcher defines categories, linking their emerging relationships with each other and noting changes in the direction of the analytic process (Willig, 2008). It helps the researcher identify codes to be developed into analytic categories (Charmaz, 2015). By utilizing this tool, the researcher was able to summarise concepts and reflect on potential researcher biases.

3.5.5 Negative case analysis

Negative case analysis is important to ensure that the researcher is developing theory from the emerging data. It involves the researcher looking for data that 'does not fit' with emerging categories (Willig, 2008). This 'negative case' is therefore purposely sought to challenge the researcher's expectations and assumptions (Charmaz, 2006) ensuring the researcher keeps an open mind in order to add depth and density to the emerging theory. In the current study, this was evident where one participant reflected that in their view, by being aware of and supporting emotional well-being

has the potential to lead to lower pupil resilience to common adolescent situations challenging the view that all staff members would be keen to identify pupils who need support with their emotional well-being.

*I'm a bit old school, are we feeding it or do we really need it, you know?
The more we do, is it the more we need?*

(Participant W)

3.5.6 Theoretical saturation

Ideally, data collection and analysis in grounded theory continues until the point of saturation has been reached (Willig, 2008). This is the ultimate aim of grounded theory. Theoretical saturation therefore involves the researcher continuing to collect data and develop new codes until no new categories or meaningful data emerges. Strauss and Corbin (1999) define this point of saturation as “when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136). In real-world studies, particularly those under time-constraints such as doctoral research, it can be difficult to continue to theoretical saturation and Dey (1999) argues that theoretical ‘sufficiency’ is acceptable. This suggests that data sources don’t need to be fully exhausted for the research to be meaningful. In the current research, theoretical saturation began to be evident after the coding of the fifth interview. Here selective and axial coding did not create a major change to core categories or relationships between categories.

3.6 Stages of analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1998) stress that coding is a dynamic and flexible process, it is not a rigid or static sequence. They advocate for breaking the process of coding down into a sequence of stages. Analysis in grounded theory involves a thorough process of combing through data in order to identify key properties and identifying relationships and properties (Sutcliffe, 2016). During initial stages of analysis, initial categorising of properties were identified. Subsequently, the researcher moves back and forth between stages of analysis, developing and generating emerging theory through the relationships within data collection. This allows the researcher to derive strong concepts/categories from the data and development of robust theory grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

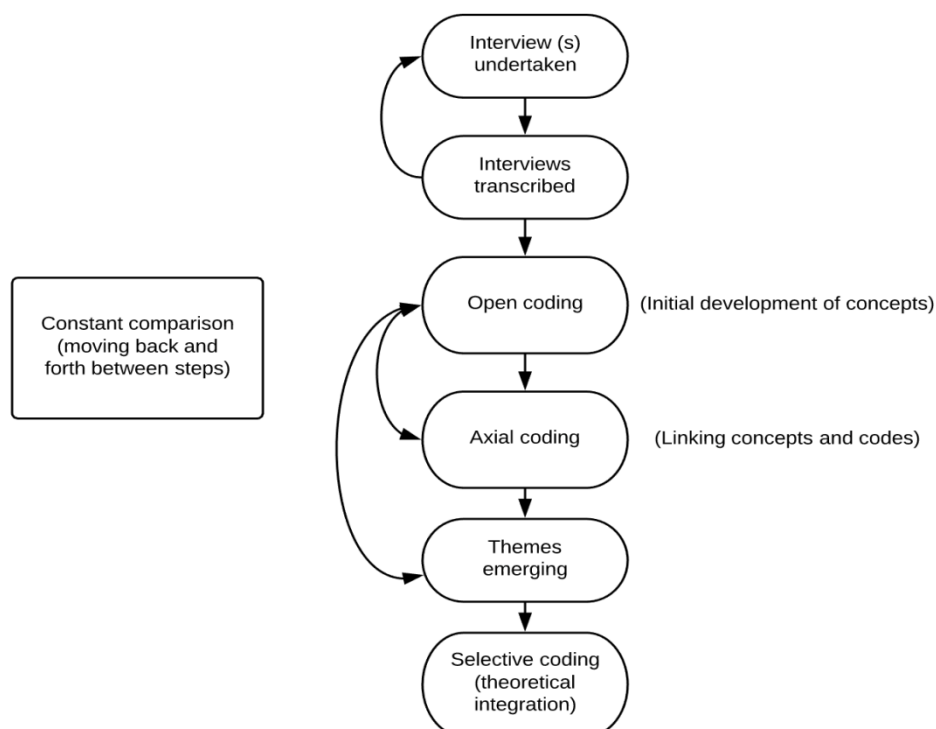


Figure 3.3 Analytic process

3.6.1 Open coding

Open coding involves developing initial categories emerging from the early data collection in order to begin breaking the data down into codes broadly describing the data. At the early stages of coding, codes are largely descriptive (Willig, 2008). The researcher read interview transcriptions thoroughly and noted sections of the text related to the research questions and assigned it a label to represent the concept (Sutcliffe, 2016). Within categories, subcategories are created (referred to as properties), and dimensions on which properties vary (Robson, 2011). (See Figure 3.4 for a screenshot depicting MaxQDA open coding).

3.6.2 Axial coding

Axial coding begins after the second interview where connections are made between emerging themes and categories identified from earlier coding stages and higher-order categories start to emerge (Sutcliffe, 2016). The purpose of axial coding is to develop an understanding of key phenomena in the data in terms of contexts, actions and relationships leading to outcomes (Robson, 2011). (See Figure 3.5 for a screenshot depicting MaxQDA axial coding).

The screenshot displays the MaxQDA software interface. The top menu bar includes Home, Import, Codes, Variables, Analysis, Mixed Methods, Visual Tools, Reports, and MAXDictio. The toolbar contains icons for New Project, Open Project, Document System, Code System, Document Browser, Retrieved Segments, Logbook, User Management, Save Project As, Merge Projects, Save Anonymized Project As, Open Exchange File, Project from Activated Documents, Export Exchange File, and External Files. The Document System panel shows a tree view of documents for participants A through P, with Participant P selected. The Code System panel shows a hierarchical tree of codes, with 'Pupils upset/distressed' selected. The Document Browser panel shows a text document with several lines of text and red brackets indicating open codes. A blue arrow points from the 'Pupils upset/distressed' code in the Code System panel to the corresponding text in the Document Browser panel. Another blue arrow points from the text in the Document Browser panel to a box labeled 'Open code'.

How the code links with sub-categories

Open code

Figure 3.4 MaxQDA screenshot depicting open coding

The screenshot displays the MaxQDA software interface. The top menu bar includes Home, Import, Codes, Variables, Analysis, Mixed Methods, Visual Tools, Reports, and MAXDictio. The toolbar contains icons for New Project, Open Project, Document System, Code System, Document Browser, Retrieved Segments, Logbook, User Management, Save Project As, Save Anonymized Project As, Project from Activated Documents, Merge Projects, Open Exchange File, Export Exchange File, and External Files.

The Document System pane on the left shows a tree view with 'Documents' (Participant A: 60, W: 75, C: 121, F: 71, D: 57, P: 131) and 'Code System' (Culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being: 207, Understanding changing societal contexts: 70, Building relationships with parents and pupils: 76, Support for staff: 162). The Document Browser pane on the right shows a document titled 'Culture of support and r... (Pupils upset/distressed)' with a list of tabs for Participant A through P. The main text area displays a transcript snippet for Participant A, with axial codes like '...Difficult to engage', '...Reaching out to p', and '...Understanding the' applied to the text. A blue arrow points from a text box at the bottom to the 'Support for staff' code in the Code System pane.

Axial codes/ 4 key conceptual categories

Figure 3.5: MaxQDA screenshot showing axial coding

3.6.3 Selective coding and grounding of theory

Selective coding involves a core category being chosen and systematically exploring its relationship with other categories (Sutcliffe, 2016). It is ultimately the process of integrating categories and data and refining the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, during the coding process, open coding allows for dimensions and properties to be identified and axial coding develops and integrates data into categories and subcategories. Selective coding occurs in the later stages of the analysis process and involves the larger categories being integrated to form one central category to ultimately develop into a theory. Here, the theory is finally generated in relation to the research question. Similar to axial coding, explanatory links were drawn between themes, to identify a core overarching category. Corbin and Strauss describe this as theoretical integration.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) identify three central criteria the core category should follow:

- All categories and themes must link with each other and the core category
- The core category needs to appear throughout the data
- The explanation for the core category and resulting theory must be logical, consistent and naturally emerge from the data.

3.7 Credibility and trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and credibility are important issues to consider when evaluating qualitative research. Debate in the realm of qualitative research argues that issues of

reliability, validity and generalizability are not appropriate for this type of research (Creswell, 2009; Fox et al., 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1981) introduced the idea of 'trustworthiness' to broaden this debate. Robson (2011) states that trustworthiness is the extent to which results and findings are believable and are in line with the data. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), there are four key indicators of trustworthiness that a researcher undertaking grounded theory needs to demonstrate; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Complete transparency in the process of data collection and analysis limits researcher bias and assumptions and enables the researcher to establish trustworthiness in their data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The following sections detail the process followed to establish credibility and trustworthiness.

3.7.1 Validity, reliability, generalizability and bias

Grounded theory allows for meaningfulness of the theory constructed from the data (Robson, 2011). The findings were checked with participants subsequent to coding and analysis in order to demonstrate testimonial validity and therefore are hoped to be meaningful to the individual experience of the school in which the study took place. All participants were invited to meet with the researcher in order to check findings and four participants took the researcher up on the offer. As the research was undertaken in one school, generalisability is limited to the participants and the school context in which the research took place. This school is a system with its own unique characteristics, culture and ethos and exists in a local authority which will differ from other areas in terms of population, socio-economic class and culture. Given the specific nature of the research, the findings are unlikely to have strong reliability, as

different findings and conclusions may emerge if the research was conducted at a different school or at a different time. However in qualitative research, these are minor issues and are thought to be outweighed by testimonial validity as discussed above (Creswell, 2009).

3.7.2 Transparency

Transparency in research ensures the methods and procedures undertaken are visible and clear in order for others to access and replicate (Creswell, 2009). The researcher demonstrated transparency during the research process by providing a detailed description of the research design and methods undertaken. This 'audit trail' is important to facilitate transparency (Yardley, 2008). The use of memo-writing as described by Corbin and Strauss (1998) was used to aid reflexivity of the researcher and develop categories from the data. Additionally, the data software MaxQDA was used to organise the data and subsequent analysis and therefore facilitated transparency by providing a clear step-by-step record of the analytic process.

The Findings Chapter 5 will demonstrate how analytic categories emerged and how interpretations of the data were generated. Screenshot examples of MaxQDA will also be shown to demonstrate how codes were established. Verbatim extracts of the transcribed interviews are also provided to illustrate how these interpretations were reached.

3.7.3 Reflexivity

Fox et al., (2007) describe reflexivity as a key feature when researching the socially constructed world. It is essential, they argue, that the researcher is able to recognise

their own position, assumptions and biases within the research (Fox et al., 2007). In other words, being aware that the research process will be influenced by the researcher's assumptions and views. Reflexivity was undertaken through all phases of the current research project to ensure the researcher was aware of their own position within the research and how their personal values, views and assumptions may influence the interpretation of findings. The researcher undertook a research diary to note views and assumptions emerging throughout the process enabling them to make explicit personal views and assumptions. The use of memo writing and research supervision helped keep the researcher's own position separate from the data, allowing information and findings to emerge from the data alone.

Constant comparison was used as per the grounded theory method to ensure the researcher remained open to interpretations and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Memo-writing was key to provide a written record of the researcher's thoughts and notes during the data analysis process. The use of supervision was also central to help the researcher identify any potential preconceptions and assumptions they may have within the research topic.

3.8 Ethical considerations

This research was informed and undertaken in compliance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychology Society, 2009). This document highlights four key ethical principles that should be adhered to and these principles underpinned all decisions made during all stages of the research.

These principles are:

- Respect – treating individuals with respect in terms of individual, cultural and role differences, taking confidentiality, consent and standards of determination into account. This was achieved by gaining participants consent before beginning data collection and ensuring confidentiality.
- Competence – having a high standard of competence, an awareness of issues in decision-making, recognizing limits of the researcher’s own competence and impairment. Use of supervision allowed the researcher to achieve this principle.
- Responsibility - working with a duty of care, valuing responsibility to clients, protecting researchers from harm and offering debriefing. In the current study, participants were offered debriefing subsequent to interviews.
- Integrity – valuing honest, accuracy, clarity and fairness in all interactions. The researcher should avoid exploitation and conflicts of interests, maintaining personal boundaries and addressing ethical misconduct. The research was approved by the Principle Educational Psychologist of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the study supports the EPS’s focus on social and emotional well-being in line with the Code of Practice for SEND.
- Ethical approval was sought by the Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC) and obtained on the second attempt following a request for further information (Appendix 3).

3.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent was sought from all participants involved in the study. Potential participants were sent a copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix 4) which

allowed participants to make an informed decision about if they wanted to take part through an understanding of the research including aims, method of data collection, and data protection procedures. The participants were also provided with a consent form containing detailed information about the research design and process and how the data would be used.

Prior to the recording of the interviews, the researcher talked through key details from the participant information sheet to ensure participants had a clear understanding of their involvement, including confidentiality and withdrawal procedures and provided the opportunity to ask any questions. The purpose of the research was also recapped at this time, along with participants rights making sure that the principles of respect and integrity were adhered to. Participants signed the consent form (Appendix 5) indicating their agreement to take part.

It was made explicit to participants that they weren't required to answer questions they weren't comfortable with and the interview could be ceased if they wished to withdraw. Participants were informed of the time limitations of withdrawing their data from the study, such as constraints withdrawing after data analysis. They were also informed that audio recordings and written transcriptions of the interview would be kept on an encrypted USB and would be deleted upon completion of the research.

3.8.2 Risk of harm

The Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010) highlights the importance of a researcher being sensitive to potential harm that research may cause participants. An

example of this would be if participants became distressed while answering the interview questions. Although it was not anticipated that participants would become upset when talking about supporting and promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being, it was none-the-less taken into account. To tackle this, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw and debriefing was given at the end of each interview. The researcher aimed to provide a safe, containing environment allowing again the participant to feel comfortable. The debriefing involved discussing the process of the interview and allowing for any questions to be asked. It also aimed to ensure the participants understood the purpose of the research and were happy for their data to be used. Interviews were scheduled to suit the participants and minimize their disruption and were undertaken in a confidential space chosen by participants.

3.8.3 Anonymity and data protection

In line with the Data Protection Act (1998), all personal details of participants were made anonymous and referred to as pseudonyms throughout the data transcription and analysis and where extracts were taken throughout the research. Interviews were audio recorded using a password protected smartphone and upon completion were stored securely on an encrypted USB to ensure confidentiality and data protection. All transcripts will be destroyed six months upon completion of the research project.

As the study concerned a small sample of participants, there was a risk of breaching participant anonymity by providing too much detail regarding participants roles. All participants were working in one school as the nature of the research involved a

whole-school study. All identifying features of the school and local authority in which the research took place were omitted. Therefore, all identifying information and details relating to the participants, school and local authority were removed to ensure they could not be identified thus ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. As the research concerned one school, care was taken to ensure that individual participants were not recognized by their role. This small risk was identified in the participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and consent form (Appendix 5) and was reiterated to the participant before the interviews began. Anonymity of transcriptions was checked by a colleague during the audit of the analysis.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter detailed the conceptual framework and methodology along with rationale for the methodology chosen. The process of data collection and analysis was also described. The chapter also detailed how the researcher used reflectivity and transparency to ensure the research adhered to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct and demonstrated trustworthiness and credibility. The next chapter will explore the findings of the research.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines findings from the current study which aimed to explore school staff's views of promoting and supporting pupil's SEMH needs in a mainstream secondary school. The overarching purpose of the study was to develop a theoretical understanding of the contexts and mechanisms central to this. Grounded theory was undertaken as a method of analysis of interview data of six staff members of a mainstream secondary school. This data was coded in order to establish how emerging themes relate and what the emergent theory postulates about how the participants in this school support and promote emotional well-being. Interlinked within the theory are the barriers and facilitators of effectively promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being according to participants.

4.2 Complete grounded theory

In line with grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and explained in detail within the Methodology Chapter (Chapter Three), concepts were identified and themes or categories emerged, called key conceptual categories. Emergent codes and sub-codes along with related quotes can be seen in Appendix 7 and provide a detailed overview of how the codes emerged from the data. Due to space constraints, every sub-code has not been discussed in detail in the findings section and are hence included in the appendices. Links between these categories were drawn to identify one core overarching theory, described by Corbin and Strauss as theoretical integration (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This theory links all the key conceptual categories and is apparent

throughout the data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that the explanation for this emergent theory must be logical and consistent, developing naturally from the gathered data. It is this process that is outlined within this chapter.

Within the current study, the theory emerging from the data suggests that by having a structured, clear approach to supporting and promoting emotional well-being allows school to be a safe space in an ever-demanding society. This falls under the core selective category “providing containment – school as a safe place”. Within this developed theory stems four key conceptual categories; *‘having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being’*, *‘building relationships with pupils and parents’*, *‘understanding changing societal contexts’* and *‘support for staff’*. Further sub categories fall within these key conceptual categories as can be seen in figure 4.1 below.

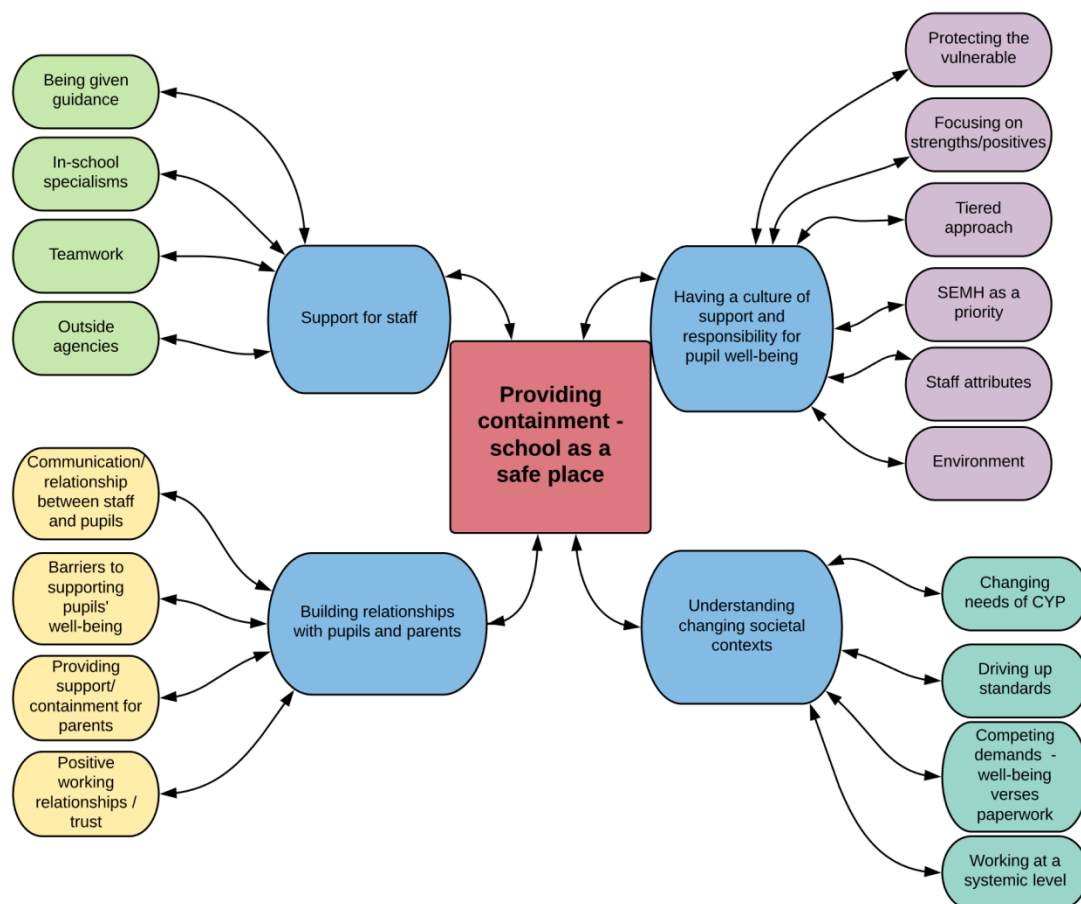


Figure 4.1 Visual representation of findings from the current study.

This theory proposes that emotional well-being is best supported by providing a containing space in the form of school and by having a model/tiered approach where the school staff around the CYP are aware of their role and have clear guidance on how best to support them. The researcher draws on the work of Bion (1962) to understand the concept of containment (this will be discussed in more detail in the Discussion Chapter (Chapter 5). To feel contained is where an individual feels their emotional experience is being held by another (Bion, 1962). As Douglas (2007) states: *“containment is thought to occur when one person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it, processes it*

and then communicates understanding and recognition back to the other person. This process can restore the capacity to think in the other person” (Douglas, 2007, p33).

The developed theory highlights the barriers to supporting and promoting pupils’ social and emotional well-being demands such as curriculum pressures, relationship conflicts and lack of collaboration and support from outside agencies. The theory also highlights the facilitators to effectively supporting pupils’ emotional well-being. Subsequent sections will explore each conceptual category in more detail and will use quotations from interviews to illustrate the developing theory.

4.2.1 Conceptual Category 1: Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being

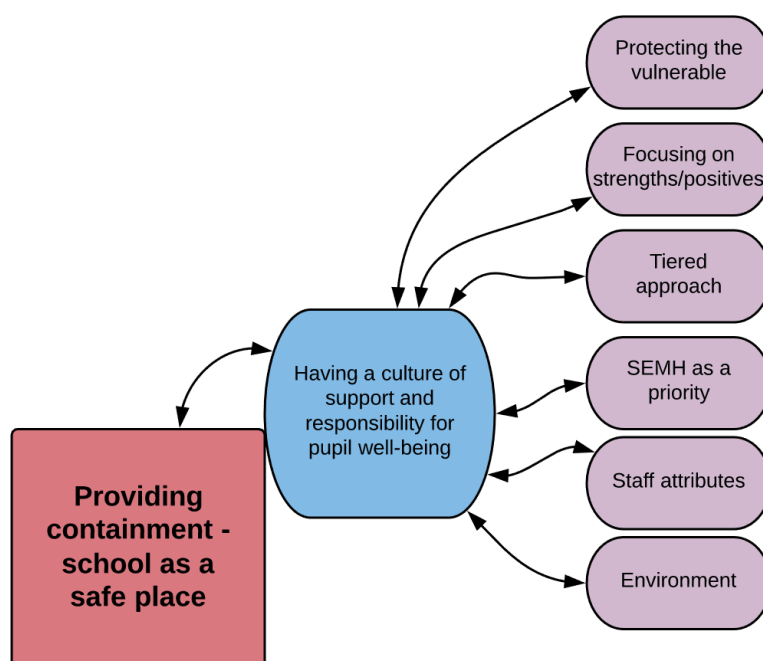


Figure 4.2 Conceptual Category 1: Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being

The culture of the school researched was viewed by all participants as an essential element to supporting and promoting pupils' SEMH needs. The ethos and culture of the school were discussed by the majority of participants and was described as 'supportive' and likened to a family or community on several occasions. In line with having responsibility for pupils and feeling the need to protect the vulnerable pupils, participants unanimously discussed school as a 'safe' place for their pupils where they can be cared for and protected.

This key conceptual category included six open-codes as identified in Figure 4.2 above. These are: protecting the vulnerable, focusing on strengths/positives, tiered approach, SEMH as a priority, staff attributes and the environment. Each open code had a number of sub codes (Appendix 7).

Protecting the vulnerable

- ▼ ● ☉ Culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being
 - ▼ ● ☉ Protecting the vulnerable
 - ▼ ● ☉ Providing containment
 - ☉ Needing to act as parents
 - ☉ Empathising with pupils/understanding their nee...
 - ☉ Awareness of pupil's needs
 - ☉ Pupils upset/distressed
 - ☉ Organisation and practical help
 - ▼ ● ☉ Reacting quickly
 - ☉ Being proactive
 - ▼ ● ☉ Responsibility for pupil's wellbeing
 - ☉ Increasing amount of responsibility put on schools

Figure 4.3 Protecting the vulnerable and sub-codes

In line with school being a 'safe place', participants generally viewed school as a mechanism to protecting the students in their care. Outside school appeared to be likened to a frightening place and the role of school staff was generally to protect their pupils. This point is illustrated by the participant below who discusses the desire to protect vulnerable pupils from dangers outside school.

"we've got some children starting to be dragged in on the periphery that we are really, really concerned about some vulnerable children that could easily be manipulated by those gang members"

(Participant C)

This open code included sub-codes such as 'providing containment' and 'being responsible for pupils' well-being'. Containment was described as just being there for pupils, a supportive person to listen to their worries/troubles as seen in the quote below:

"You just have to be the one that sits there and listens and you may not say anything in particular but it's just the fact that you're there. Sometimes that's all they need..."

(Participant W)

"If students want to come and talk to us they can, they don't have to make an appointment, they can just drop in and then if they don't want to talk there then obviously we can take them into a quiet room, whatever they feel comfortable with basically."

(Participant F)

"I think more and more often now being asked to parent, we are a place of education but we are being asked to parent"

(Participant W)

The above quote illustrates a difficulty highlighted in subsequent coding sections as the participant appears to be struggling with the balance of being a ‘place of education’ and having the responsibility of looking after and ‘parenting’ their pupils.

Focusing on strengths/positives

- ▼ ● ☐ ● Culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being
 - ▶ ● ☐ ● Protecting the vulnerable
 - ▼ ● ☐ ● Focusing on strength/positives
 - ☐ ● School viewed positively
 - ☐ ● Not pre-empting needs
 - ▶ ● ☐ ● Pupil resilience
 - ☐ ● Celebrating successes

Figure 4.4 Focusing on strengths/positives and sub-codes

Participants discussed a focus on positives and spoke of building resilience of all pupils. An emerging theme was also the appreciation for the school in which they worked.

“This is an amazing school and that why I eh... took the opportunity when it was offered to me, I saw that this was a very innovative school...”

(Participant C)

“our pan¹ has increased because we are so popular and we are very good at what we do”

(Participant F)

Most participants discussed focusing on positives and building on strengths as key to supporting pupils’ well-being. Many recognised the importance of building resilience

¹ Pan refers to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for every year group into which pupils can be administered in a school. The PAN is the maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group.

of all CYP along with identifying need of those who are more vulnerable as is

illustrated by the quotation below:

“I think we do have that embedded, focusing on the positives, I know that when the children go to the student support centre, they’re immediately welcomed, they’re getting a smile, they’re being listened to, they’re being given positive coping strategies immediately, to then go off and cope with whatever situation was the end of the world to them a minute ago”

(Participant C)

Some participants recognised that in order to promote positive emotional well-being, it is important to help foster growth of confidence and self-esteem as discussed by the participant below:

“I think to promote positive well-being, its actually getting the student to believe in themselves when they come and they’re anxious and they can’t do it, it’s making, it’s trying, it’s giving them the confidence to try and not be negative about themselves...”

(Participant F)

SEMH as a priority in the school

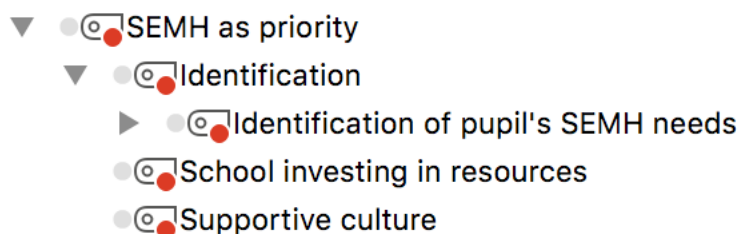


Figure 4.5 SEMH as a priority in the school and sub-codes

Participants often discussed the need for SEMH to be a priority in the school, from leadership level and investing in resources to all staff regardless of role being aware of SEMH issues. Participants discussed the need for pupil’s social and emotional well-being to be at the heart of the school culture.

“The student is very important, because we are there to help the student and that room that we are in is all about the well-being of the students in this school, myself and X (pastoral team members) don’t teach so we are here purely for students”

(Participant F)

The pastoral team was identified by all participants as being relatively unique to the school and helpful for having a range of support for pupils with varying degrees of SEMH needs. It was perceived that this demonstrated the contribution that the school was willing to invest in emotional well-being/ SEMH needs.

“...there is a large sort of umbrella of support for students rather than in most schools where you only have one SENCO em we do have an inclusion manager in X (pastoral team member²) and deputy inclusion manager plus X (pastoral lead) who oversees that as well so there is sort of quite a few people to turn to for advice, for support and there’s a large number of staff that are monitoring that area.”

(Participant A)

Additionally, identifying needs through awareness for all participants regardless of role, whether it is a pastoral role or a teaching role, identifying is an important element to supporting pupil’s emotional well-being/SEMH needs as discussed by the majority of participants. This can be seen in quotation below by a participant with a teaching role:

“Well I think because we see them so much it’s one of identification um I think we can definitely help there because we see them a lot and we see them in different circumstances um and you might see them in lessons where they don’t like the lesson so it might be more prevalent there and other people see them in different lessons where they’re...eh.. like for example academic’s not their thing but sport, drama and dance are so you can see the changes of behaviour between them”

(Participant W)

² All names have been removed to ensure confidentiality

Identification of SEMH need was noted by one participant as being able to stem from a range of sources:

“So, it can be identified by teachers that way, however if parents call in and raise concerns to the heads of year or X (pastoral team members), then the information will be shared with the necessary members of staff and we can come up with ways to move forwards”

(Participant A)

This identification was noted by one participant as being according to need rather than ‘labels’ or diagnoses.

“If we feel it is necessary and appropriate to meet their needs and then on occasions where you have students without SEN that are having those difficulties, that need sort of a high level of support in that area, we get them to come along as well eh obviously with discussions with parents, but eh they can access any intervention so students don’t have to be on the register for having dyscalculic traits, but X (clinical psychologist) would do dyscalculia interventions with them...”

(Participant A)

Similarly, although it was noted by the majority of participants that it was important to have an awareness of pupils at risk of needing extra support, it was important to be aware of needs rather than implement support before pupils require it as illustrated by the quote below:

...“some of the kids arrive and we get all of this information telling ‘they’ll never do this, they’ll never do that’ and then they come in and they almost take on a new persona and they become very independent and they do manage whereas you don’t expect them to...”

(Participant W)

There was however, some disagreement between participants about the role of school staff when supporting SEMH needs. One described staff’s role as mainly for identification or ‘detection’ of needs but not the main support as illustrated below:

“I think it’s the detection problem there’s, there’s... or the detection issue I should say, not much of a problem... it’s something that we as a school, because we see then for x amount of time per day and if you don’t include catch-ups or detentions that’s 5 hours contact time we get, including form time so in that time, I think it’s our role to a identify and then support in that. I don’t see us as the driving force, you know we’re not clinicians here, we don’t... we don’t tend to diagnose these things.”

(Participant D)

Tiered approach

- ▼ ● Tiered approach
 - ▼ ● Matching the needs of pupils
 - Understanding the underlying needs of pupils

Figure 4.6 Tiered approach and sub-codes

The idea of a tiered approach was a theme that emerged repeatedly from the data as can be seen from the quote below where the participant is discussing the pastoral care from conversations in the designated pastoral room to being escalated where necessary.

“...everything goes through there, slips for consultations dates but at the same time, minor conversations can go through there and then they can be X (pastoral team) and be talking to us within minutes so that’s a sort of detection process really of anyone who is struggling and there we can support, 95% of the problems we can support like that and then the wider or I should say, the deeper issues, like some of the things I was telling you about just now they get picked up on those and we take them forward...”

(Participant D)

The majority of participants in the study spoke of the model employed by the school in some form or another, although not always identifying it as a ‘model’ or ‘tiered approach’. Each described the system employed by the school in relation to their own role and demonstrated awareness for how pupils would receive help in a variety of ways. For example, a teacher likened the model to a puzzle as seen below:

“As a classroom teacher I only get.. only see that student for one hour, twice a week so they always call it a puzzle in X (pastoral team).. we email all the pieces and then they put it together...”

(Participant P)

The tiered model employed by the school is depicted visually by Figure 4.7 below:

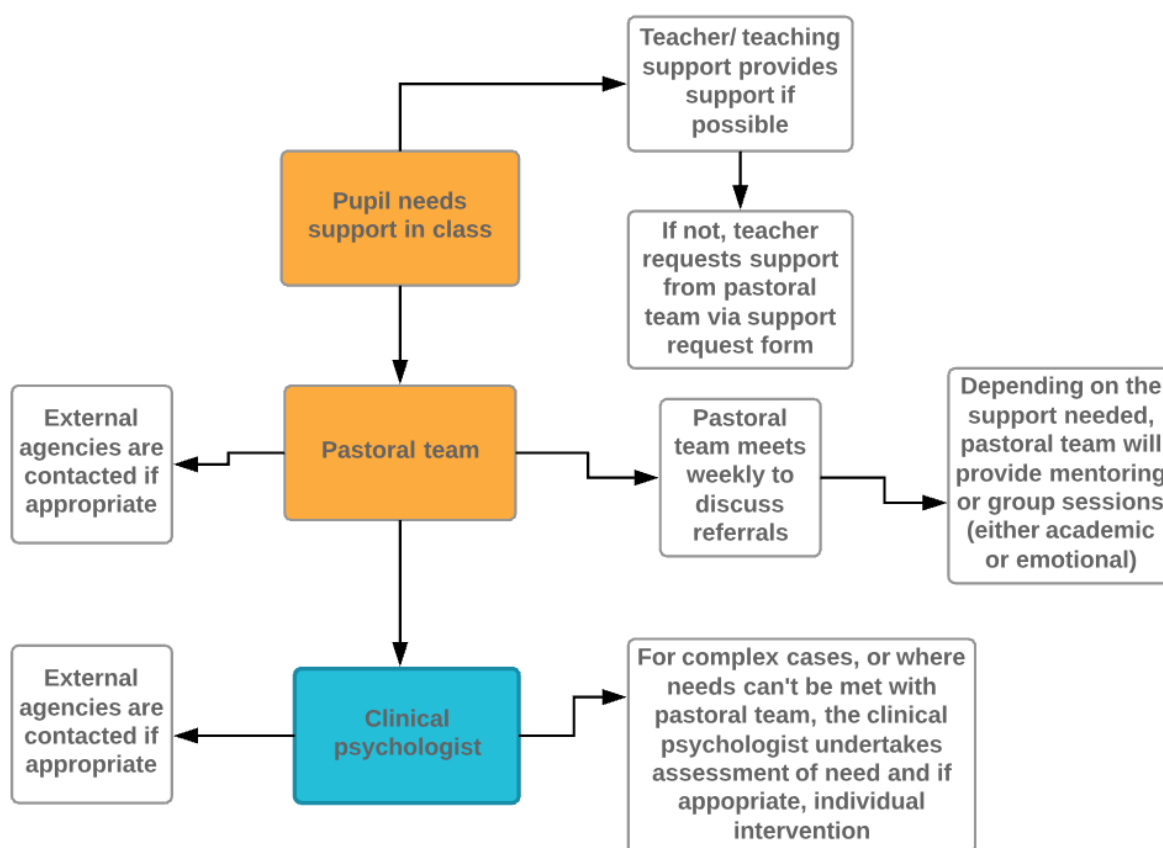


Figure 4.7: Visual of tiered model of support as described by participants

Participants described a tiered model of support, with a range of levels depending on the level of need. Teachers are at the forefront of supporting pupils both academically and in terms of social and emotional need. Any need that can't be provided in the classroom by either teaching staff or pastoral team members within class, pupils will

receive support directly from pastoral team either in group mentoring or individual mentoring. If the level of need surpasses the support the pastoral team can provide, the clinical psychologist employed by the school will become involved at the final tier of the model. The pastoral team oversee all work involved, as they have the overall picture of the pupil and the available support in school in order to provide the most appropriate level of support. This model is linked to the emergent code of working at a systemic level (as discussed in Section 4.2.2).

Staff attributes




- ▼ ●  Staff attributes
 -  Staff being passionate about job
 -  Being persistent

Figure 4.8 Staff attributes and sub-codes

Some participants discussed how the personal attributes of staff were important aspects of supporting and promoting pupils' emotional well-being. The following participant discussed how persistence and perseverance are often necessary to undertake such a role.

“Definitely between me and my line manager, between us we, we, we worked really hard with him...”

(Participant W)

In line with this persistence the majority of participants displayed a passion for supporting pupils' emotional well-being as demonstrated by a pastoral staff member below.

“It really gets to you, as a person, on a personal level, and em.. we don't have the training of being able to separate and process and know formulations and know appropriate ways forward, so we are just doing our very, very best for these children”

(Participant C)

“... as a school, we work very much as a team and it could be a head teacher, it could be a cleaner, it could be a site member, it could be one of us, we are all focused very passionately I would say... on the students.”

(Participant F)

Environment

- ▼ ● ☐ Environment
 - ▼ ● ☐ Behaviour/attitudes of pupils
 - ☐ Pupils understanding of their needs
 - ▼ ● ☐ Community/family culture
 - ☐ Staff well-being
 - ▼ ● ☐ Physical environment
 - ☐ School as safe space
 - ☐ Physical space for pupils to go to when they need...
 - ▼ ● ☐ Boundaries and structure
 - ▼ ● ☐ Behaviour
 - ▶ ● ☐ Peer Relationships
 - ☐ Consistent reponse to behaviour
 - ☐ Zero-tolerance of bullying

Figure 4.9 Environment and sub-codes

The school environment emerged as an important theme when participants discussed supporting and promoting pupils SEMH needs. This was described in terms of providing emotional safety also the physical environment for pupils to feel comfortable and supported. An example of school being seen as a safe space can be seen in the quotations below where participants describe the safety of the school environment, described here as emotional safety.

“kind of bringing them into a space that they feel safe enough to be able to do their work”

(Participant P)

“the biggest the biggest factor for me is that sense of a safe place where students feel they are comfortable to come and speak to us”

(Participant D)

The safety aspect of the school was discussed by all participants as playing a central role in the emerging theory category and was discussed as essential to providing the containment for pupils’ emotional well-being.

“They know they can come and talk to me at the office anyway if they want to, it’s like having that safety net, you might not need it but if you’re given it you can think ugh and take a breath”.

(Participant W)

“I think... making the students feel safe and comfortable in your classroom um really helps... because if they’re... if they’re anxious and they’ve already struggled with social, emotional mental health... then than anxiety is going to be multiplied... Em so trying to make them feel as safe and comfortable...”

(Participant P)

The following quote illustrates the importance of offering a containing space in order for them to be able to access their learning.

“when they come in and they’re all over the place because somethings happened at lunch or something might have happened at home and it tends to be trying to... I want to say talk them down but that makes it sounds quite drastic, not that drastic... kind of bringing them into a space that they feel safe enough to be able to do their work.”

(Participant P)

Another aspect mentioned by participants is the physical environment school provides. This may be the pastoral room that is always available to pupils as described below:

“There’s that safe place in the school, which is not hidden away, it’s right in the heart of the school “

(Participant C)

The importance of having a ‘zero-tolerance’³ school was touched on by several of the participants. It appeared to be felt that by having the structure and consistency on response, allowed the children to feel safe at school, knowing what is expected of them as illustrated below:

“I think students work really well if they feel safe, if there’s boundaries, there’s structure and even some of the children who are, who have behaviour issues, they come to school every day so that tells you that yeh they might behave badly sometimes or they em sort of quite disruptive sometimes in the classroom or it could be low level, they still come to school. So that sort of gives you an idea of em of what we do for those students”.

(Participant F)

Linked with this, the behaviour of other pupils’ and pupils supporting each other was discussed by two participants as being an important facilitator of effective support for pupils’ emotional well-being as illustrated by the quote below:

“I’ve never ever been in a school like this one where there is... very little... and I mean very little to no bullying. So, you often find that when you’re having whole class conversations, students are very willing to open up and they do support each other. Um and there’s... I don’t think I’ve ever had to deal with any sort of ridicule other than some student saying look at them and they’ll say sorry, sorry and they’ll never do it again. Um so they do support each other when they hear things like that”

(Participant P)

³ Zero-tolerance was described by the participants as the school system does not tolerate any bullying of pupils or what is deemed negative behaviour such as disruption in classrooms etc.

Consequently, the school was seen by the majority of participants as having a protective culture of support and understanding.

“Its making them feel a part of a family, because it’s very much X (name removed) school is a family – you might fall out with your family but you look after your family and that’s how we make them feel. So yeh they do fall out, they do sometimes fight each other, they do hate each other sometimes, hate is a strong word, I don’t like the word but you know kids use it, they do fall out but actually we’re all here together, we need to help each other so that’s what we do with our family.”

(Participant W)

Because of this, it is suggested that the culture of the school is one of care and support while the emotional well-being of the pupils’.

“I think the way in which the eh... the break times and lunchtimes are set-up promote because we’ve got an ethos of care, and whilst being a strict school, I think the school, the students here realise that anything we can do to help you, we will...”

(Participant D)

4.2.2 Conceptual Category 2: Understanding changing societal contexts

This conceptual category describes the wider societal contexts that impact on pupils’ emotional well-being. This key conceptual category included four open-codes as identified in the Figure 4.3 below. These are: changing needs of CYP, driving up standards, competing demands - well-being verses paperwork and working at a systemic level. Each open code had a number of sub codes, examples of which can be seen in Appendix 7.

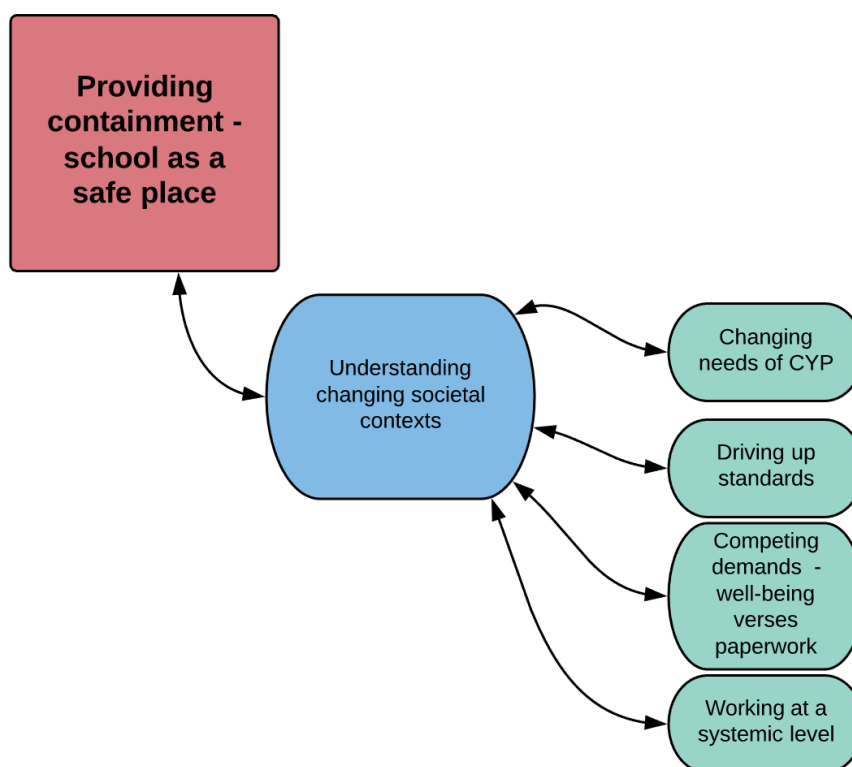


Figure 4.10 Conceptual Category 2: Understanding changing societal contexts

Changing needs of children and young people

Findings highlight the need to be aware of pupils' changing needs and 'trends' in emotional well-being.

- ▼ ● Understanding changing societal contexts
 - ▼ ● 'Changing needs of children'
 - Awareness of SEMH needs
 - Trends

Figure 4.11 Changing needs and sub-codes

These sub codes describe the need to try and understand what it's like to be a pupil at secondary school at the present time. This is illustrated by the brief quote below

where a participant discussed a pupil they had worked with:

“...to try and explain that to her is very difficult sometimes because at 12 they think they know best but they don’t and it’s very difficult to make them understand that... as I say to her I say ‘I have been twelve, I know I’m not now but I have been 12 and I know exactly what you’re going through. Social media is a big thing at the moment –it doesn’t help at all with what’s going on...”

(Participant F)

Similarly, participants acknowledged the societal changes and the different pressures on pupils at secondary schools in the UK in recent years.

“They go through adolescence comparing themselves to their peers and think well I’m not the same as that masculine or feminine portrayal so therefore I must be different and then they go through a gender or sexual identity crisis and it’s huge because of all the social media and the TV and the everything else and they need a lot of support to say, you know what, it’s normal, everybody worries about who they are at this time, relax, be yourself, don’t worry about whether you’re gay, straight or whatever else don’t worry about if you’re male, female or whatever else just be you, go through adolescence and then see how you feel... but I think there’s a lot of peer pressure and social media pressure that comes into that “

(Participant C)

Similarly, participants often discussed the curriculum demands on pupils and interestingly this was often conceptualised as not coming from school, as though the school staff are protecting the pupils from these demands as seen in the quotation below:

“I’ve got a bit more insight into what the demand of the students is coming from my curriculum perspective.”

(Participant D)

Two participants noted that where a pupil’s academic performance begins to slip, then it would appear that their well-being should be explored again linking to the idea of the role of the teacher/school staff member as responsible for identifying any well-being needs.

“I’ve got a bit more insight into their tracking so it’s more of an administrative em... benefit I’ve got there em... on from there, we tend to look at the areas which we’ve got so is it a home, is it a home issue? is it something that we are putting on them in school?”

(Participant D)

Awareness of SEMH by staff and other pupils was deemed by one participant to be important for identifying or being more supportive of their peers’ needs, and can be interpreted as creating a supportive culture within the school setting.

“I think it helps in that it makes other students aware... um... and through doing that it prevents ridicule and stuff that might be an issue. I’m not sure how much focus days⁴ would necessarily help... a student... themselves um but they do help in the sense that it makes people more aware and if the student does have an issue we find out about it...”

(Participant P)

Driving up standards

- ▼ ● 'Driving up standards'
- Limited resources
- Academic support

Figure 4.12 Driving up standards and sub-codes

In line with changing contexts, the idea of standards of workload and pressure to perform also emerged.

“schools are so accountable for so many measures now, and it’s so easy just to go em... standard, standard, standard, grades, accountability and just focus on that...”

(Participant C)

⁴ Focus days in this school were days that did not follow a curriculum, rather each year group explored lessons and whole school assemblies related to a specific topic such as drug use or gangs.

The school, curriculum and wider educational context were thought by some participants to influence this pressure to perform by continually monitoring progress.

“I mean they are regularly looking at the progress of students across their year group and we do grade rounds, four grade rounds a year within the school so we’re actually monitoring and tracking four times a year, progress of students”

(Participant F)

Competing demands well-being verses paperwork

- ▼ ● Competing demands wellbeing verses paperwork
 - Purpose of school
 - ▶ ● Fear of failure/examinations

Figure 4.13 Competing demands well-being verses paperwork and sub codes

Linked with the idea of needing to drive up standards was the conflict participants felt with supporting pupils’ emotional well-being and meeting academic needs. This was understood to be felt by pupils particularly in terms of examinations as illustrated by the quote below:

“students’ fear of failing.. seems to be their biggest issue... and it causes quite a lot of anxiety especially... um something that is recently coming, I’ve not seen it to the same level in previous years as this year... it seems to be a growing issue. ”

(Participant P)

An increased pressure on schools to be responsibility for pupils’ well-being was thought to be due to lack of support via other services and was noted to conflict with the primary purpose of school by one participant:

“...doctors are very good at the moment when someone goes to the doctors ‘oh my child’s self-harming’, yeh well you need to talk to school about that,

they need to be dealing with it well... academic, school is academic I know we do well-being but we don't always have the facilities..."

(Participant F)

This pressure to perform and meet standards wasn't thought to be limited to pupils but also felt by school and conflicted with the passion staff members had for supporting pupil's emotional well-being as illustrated below:

"you might sit there and think, I've got a load of stuff I've got to record, then I might get to my desk and there might be a child sitting there and they're crying and my attention, my attention has got to go on the child you know and then I'm like I've got to record that as well, oh I've got to do that, send them, patch them up and send them off, someone else comes..."

(Participant W)

Working at a systemic level

- ▼ ● Working at systemic level
 - Systems around the pupils
 - Training

Figure 4.14 Working at a systemic level and sub codes

Central to understanding the changing societal contexts for CYP is the idea of the systemic approach to supporting their emotional well-being. This was described by one participant as the model that is used to support and promote positive well-being and is linked to the idea of having a 'tiered approach' to supporting SEMH needs. Tiered approach refers to the referral process the school staff use to support pupils' emotional well-being, whereas the systemic approach refers to training or group work within the school.

“really overseeing that work and we’ve developed it and changed the model... em... that was in place when I started, we’ve changed it this year and it’s much more effective now em... and it’s really about working with our broad pastoral team”

(Participant C)

Training was also noted by participants as being important for equipping staff

members with knowledge of current issues and skills to support CYP’s changing needs.

“...provide staff training so for example the clinical psychologist is doing an hour and a half around anxiety and how anxiety can lead to self-harm and or anger issues because that’s what we’re seeing presented in our students”

(Participant C)

4.2.3 Conceptual Category 3: Building relationships with parents and pupils

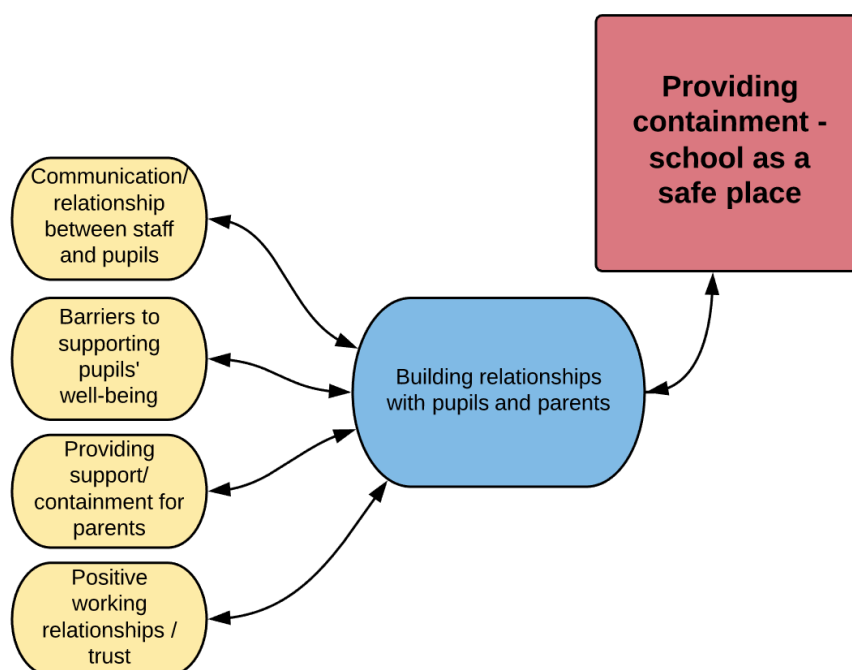


Figure 4.15 Conceptual Category 3: Building relationships with parents and pupils

This conceptual category describes the importance of relationships with pupils and parents for school staff to be able to effectively support and promote emotional well-being. This included four open-codes as identified in the Figure 4.15 above. These are: communication/relationships between staff and pupils, barriers to supporting pupils' well-being, providing support/containment for parents and positive working relationships/ trust.

Communication/ relationship between staff and pupils

- ▼ ● ☐ ● Communication/relationship between staff and pupils
 - ☐ ● In school resources
 - ☐ ● Importance of communication
 - ☐ ● Being approachable
 - ☐ ● Active listening
 - ☐ ● Getting pupil's views

Figure 4.16 Communication/ relationship between staff and pupils and sub codes

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the relationship between pupils and school staff was discussed by all participants. Approachability was thought to be important for enabling pupils to come forth with any issues or difficulties that they may have.

"I do get to know them quite well and they know that I'm there if they ever want to come and speak to me, if they don't want to speak to their head of year or their student support manager they'll come and speak to me"

(Participant F)

This was linked with understanding pupils' needs at an individual level in order to provide necessary support when required as illustrated below:

“...if you have a good understanding, the students see you have a good understanding, and are more likely to have more confidence in you and share things with you and be a bit more trusting. By having a good relationship, pupils could come forth and were able to be contained by the adults around them.”

(Participant A)

“We would talk through eh how he was feeling, we would talk through the anger, he saw a grief counsellor for a little while with somebody in school who was trained em so then it would be a case of me only dealing with him when he had a fall out you know because he would get very emotional and cry, he’s just get out and cry so sometimes he would just come and be, you’d just sit him there and just say ‘I know, I know, I know what’s going on’ and he used to just have a sob and cry and get it all out”

(Participant W)

School and school staff were identified by many participants as being able to play a big part in pupils’ emotional well-being as school staff see pupils regularly and are able to get to know them individually. This can be seen in the quote below:

“I think they play a big part because they see the students regularly and it could be that every morning, that the student has these difficulties and that specific teacher has their lesson you know three mornings a week or three mornings every fortnight so I do think it’s important for them to understand the needs of the students and to support them using the correct strategies”

(Participant A)

This idea of being available and prepared to offer a space for pupils was discussed along with the importance of pupils feeling comfortable. The following quote illustrates this idea of allowing pupils to open up in their own terms:

“you’ve got to be really careful when you’re speaking to a student, the way you say things, it’s all about not asking questions isn’t it? You really have to have open ended questions so the student will speak to you quite freely”

(Participant F)

By attempting to understand difficulties from students' points of view was associated with building that positive relationship. This was seen as essential to supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

"He does have high levels of anxiety, panic attack and things like that so that was actually really interesting and to explore as well which she's working with him and X (pastoral staff member) at the moment to try and build up a relationship but to really try to... em as a final aim to really try and understand why he is choosing not to speak to anyone"

(Participant A)

Barriers to supporting pupils' wellbeing

- ▼ ● Barriers to supporting pupils wellbeing
 - Difficult to engage parents/pupils
 - Lack of support at home

Figure 4.17 Barriers to supporting pupils' wellbeing and sub codes

Consistent with the idea of relationships with pupils and parents being important for supporting and promoting emotional well-being, where pupils or parents were thought to be difficult to engage for whatever reason such as lack of trust in school staff.

"sometimes they just don't want to talk eh so family sometimes, they put up angry barriers you know, they don't want any help, they're dealing with it themselves, em sometimes you've got to push on through that"

(Participant W)

Lack of support from parents appeared to be assumed by some participants as choice or lack of ability to engage or collaborate with staff in order to support pupil's emotional well-being.

“We are also looking after parents, you know we have parents who may have dependencies you know and I’ve heard, I certainly know I’ve heard my line manager on the phone saying: “talk to me, don’t go and do whatever it is you’re going to do, talk to me and let’s see if we can talk through it.”

(Participant W)

As previously discussed, collaboration between staff, parents and outside agencies was deemed a facilitator for supporting pupils’ emotional well-being. In line with this, one participant noted difficulties that can arise when differences in opinion arise as illustrated by the quote below:

“It’s not been easy, I have to say, it’s, there was quite a big discussion about making or asking that he go to a specialist provision school em and there was conversations and meetings with mum around that and em we are a big school, is this the right place for him and can we meet his needs and a lot of the time I don’t think it was agreed that we could meet his needs...”

(Participant A)

Providing support and containment for parents



- ▼ ●  Providing support/containment for parents
 -  Working with parents to support pupils

Figure 4.18 Providing support and containment for parents and sub codes

The idea of working collaboratively with parents was identified by participants as an important facilitator for supporting and promoting pupils’ emotional well-being.

“I was having to work very closely with parents, we had a good relationship, to make sure that they were aware...”

(Participant C)

At the same time parents were described by two participants as needing support themselves and often needing to be emotionally supported by school staff also as illustrated by the below quotes.

“The families on the whole are trying really, really hard. They don’t always know how to do that em... and they need support to be able to manage that themselves”

(Participant C)

“We often have to have quite difficult conversations with parents whereby we will say ‘look we are going to support anything you want to do”

(Participant D)

Positive working relationship and developing trust




- ▼ ●  Positive working relationship and developing trust
 -  Getting to know what works for individual pupils
 -  Reaching out to pupils

Figure 4.19 Positive working relationship and developing trust and sub codes

With the above themes in mind, the idea of developing a positive working relationship and developing trust was seen to be an essential element of working with parents and pupils to support and promote emotional well-being.

“it’s about them engaging with you, about them feeling comfortable engaging with you, it takes a long time to build a positive relationship in some situations and for them to be able to trust you, I think trust is a massive barrier if they don’t feel comfortable at the start then there can be a lot of issues when moving forward so it’s about building that positive working relationship and ensuring that through different means of support and communication that they start to trust you and respect you”

(Participant A)

Within this sub-code, emerged the idea of knowing individual pupil's needs and understanding what works for each individual pupil. For example, one participant noted:

"One student might have a completely different reaction to the same strategy that you've used before so knowing what might work with that student particularly and personally for them and was really quite helpful."

(Participant P)

In order to best support pupils' social and emotional well-being and promote positive well-being, participants also acknowledged the importance of reaching out to pupils in order to facilitate this positive relationship.

"I'm very, I think very much, that the more you talk to them in a more positive and a normal sort of way, you'll get something back and 9 times out of 10 it works. You know, it might be talking about Eastenders last night, you know did you watch Eastenders last night, you know, you've got to get in somewhere and if you've got a child who is quite withdrawn and that, if you pick on something, normally they start then its better and then they realise and come to you em they can talk to you..."

(Participant F)

By reaching out to pupils and focusing on building trust in order to develop a positive relationship, participants felt they could best support pupils' SEMH needs. By doing so, school staff felt able to overcome the barrier highlighted in the code above (barrier to support pupils' emotional well-being) by developing relationships with pupils who may be seen as difficult or reluctant to engage.

4.2.4 Conceptual Category 4: Support for staff

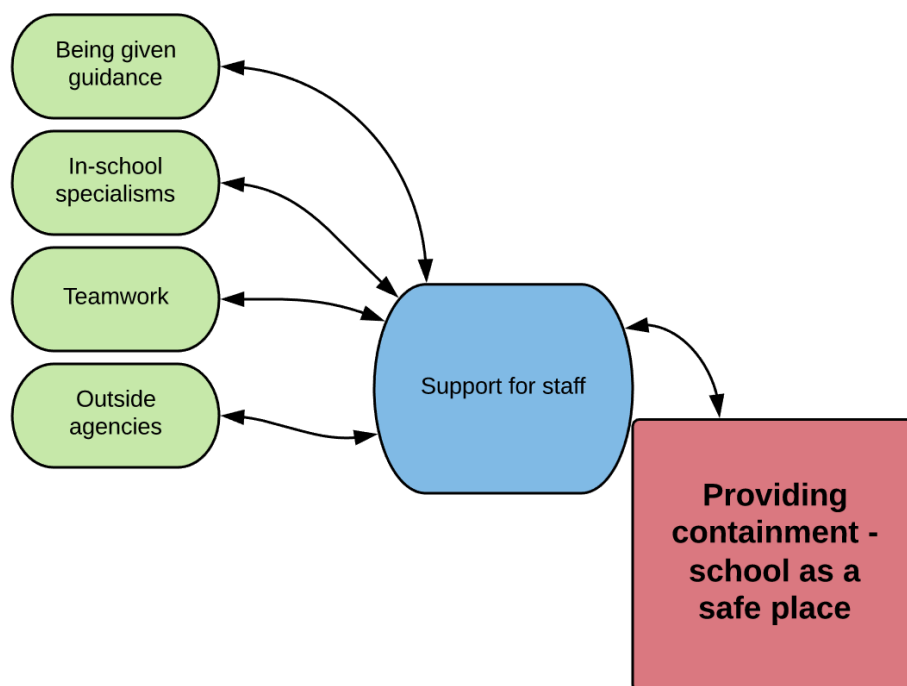


Figure 4.20 Conceptual Category 4: Support for staff

This conceptual category describes the factors that staff require in order for them to be able to effectively support and promote emotional well-being. This included four open-codes as identified in Figure 4.20 above. These are: being given guidance, in-school specialisms, teamwork and outside agencies. Each open code had a number of sub codes, examples of which can be seen in Appendix 7.

- ▼ ● ☉ Support for staff
 - ▼ ● ☉ Being given guidance
 - ☉ Training/ personal development
 - ▶ ● ☉ Professional roles
 - ☉ Being told what to do by 'experts'
 - ▶ ● ☉ Knowing what to do

Being given guidance

Figure 4.21 Being given guidance and sub codes

Being told what to do by school staff with specialist knowledge and outside professionals in order to have specialist advice and support was discussed by all participants.

“If they should say, right we need you to try these strategies, we always got ahead and use those, whatever it is that CAMHS might suggest em... of course if it massively flies in the face of whatever we’re doing here we can’t always accommodate it but we try... we bend over backwards to make sure we are using the advice we get or are given by them...”

(Participant D)

“Some teachers may struggle with that concept themselves so if we’ve got a good understanding and we’ve been given the right training, then it makes it easier to pass that on and to have more impact em and CPD sessions, courses em... going externally to different places to receive high levels of training so for mentoring what you focus on, rather than it just being a session, you have training on how to structure the sessions, how to manage it, for you to pass on the right language to support students with positive well-being”.

(Participant A)

Having a core pastoral team was identified by participants as being helpful for identifying and supporting pupils’ emotional well-being. Two participants likened this to the core pastoral team putting together a jigsaw puzzle from pieces of information and communication with all those around the child including teacher and support staff.

“...they always call it a puzzle in X (pastoral team).. we email all the pieces and then they put it together and then they speak to the outside agency and then once they’ve had that conversation with the outside agency um that’s immediately emailed to us so we know what we’ve got to do, if it’s relevant for us ‘coz sometimes obviously it’s confidential and we don’t need to know.. but we might need to know... to keep an eye on the student um and help support them if they are struggling”.

(Participant P)

Again, the idea is emerging of being able to know individual students and what is typical for them and when they may need appropriate support. This was linked to the idea of a tiered model of support (see earlier conceptual category) with pupils having low levels of necessary support initially and higher levels where there is a higher level of need as previously discussed.

The importance of personal development and having the appropriate knowledge and training was identified by some participants as being important. The ongoing need for training was discussed as important as illustrated below:

“...the clinical psychologist, she is, we’ve got a programme now over this academic year where she’s supporting the student support managers and myself in promoting well-being so we’ve had one session which was all about anxiety which was really good because it pointed out factors that possibly we knew about but didn’t quite know how to deal with so she’s given us some really good pointers on how to deal with it.”

(Participant F)

All participants spoke of training they had previously received and upcoming training with a clinical psychologist.

In school specialisms

- ▼ ● In school specialisms
 - ▶ ● Use of strategies
 - Psychology assessment/intervention
 - Availability of pastoral team

Figure 4.22 In school specialisms and sub codes

In line with SEMH being a priority in the school, all participants discussed the schools' own specialisms and the importance of having access to this kind of support.

"...then we've got access... direct access to the levels of professional input that we need for those children..."

(Participant C)

The use of strategies and access to interventions were highlighted as important.

"...it helps me know what um strategies might work so being told things like that really help because one student might have a completely different reaction to the same strategy that you've used before so knowing what might work with that student particularly and personally for them and was really quite helpful"

(Participant P)

Teamwork

- ▼ ● Teamwork
 - ▶ ● Communication between staff
 - ▶ ● Staff supporting each other
 - ▶ ● Co-workers providing reassurance

Figure 4.23 Teamwork and sub codes

Staff supporting each other, working together and reassuring each other was deemed important to participants when discussing pupils' emotional well-being.

"...we always have the capacity to go to speak to different people about that um so that's really, really good here... the support we have in school that so keep us on top of things."

(Participant P)

Supporting one other appeared to be linked to the approachability of senior staff and knowing where to go for help and support linked with the importance of a physical space discussed in earlier coded segments of texts/segments/quotes.

“...his (senior leadership team member) office is in there as well, his office is always open, so I could go in there and say ‘I don’t feel comfortable with this, or I don’t feel happy dealing with this on my own and they’re definitely, they’d definitely say ‘that’s fine’, we’ll get X (pastoral team member), she’ll handle it, we’ll all do it together, whatever, the support is there, I’ve only got to knock on the door or email then or whatever I don’t feel, I don’t feel isolated at all.”

(Participant W)

Outside agencies





- ▼ ●  Outside agencies
 -  Access to specialist resources
 -  Lack of available support from other professionals
 -  Collaboration with outside agencies

Figure 4.24 Outside agencies and sub codes

Outside agencies were generally discussed as a resource that participants wish they had more input from but were aware of the growing crisis in relation to accessing external services, specifically CAMHS which was discussed repeatedly by participants. Two participants identified outside agencies as being particularly useful for helping support and provide guidance for issues in the pupils’ home life where school are less able to be directly involved.

“X (outside agency) is really useful for the things that we don’t see or the things we can’t do, so eh where a student had issues detaching from parents when they are dropping them off to school in the mornings that was a good opportunity to refer to X (clinical psychologist) because they can look at what’s going on and give strategies to put in place”

(Participant A)

Outside agencies were also identified as having specialist knowledge and therefore are particularly useful for more complex cases. The value of outside agencies was recognised by all and can be a powerful resource as illustrated by the quotation below:

"...we've got a very good em sort of connection with the agencies, because I've been doing it for quite a long time I can always rings someone and say look I've got this issue what can I do or where can I go with it and someone will always help so no I think we've got a very good support network here".

(Participant F)

The issue identified by many participants was the lack of access to these specialist resources.

"Now it's kind of an expensive resource you know, if we had a few more places like that or I don't know, availability for that to go or you know funding for stuff like that, it's be great or even if we had something like that here you know..."

(Participant W)

Additionally, the idea of multi-disciplinary working was thought to be useful and participants were eager to be involved in.

"... things like that are really useful, really good to have, but they are extremely rare so if that was happening more often then it's just priceless how much of a positive impact that has and... with the obviously, all of the professionals putting their heads together, you get much more of a beneficial outcome for the student and positive outcome as opposed to us doing one thing, them having a conversation somewhere else and the student can't see anyone working together."

(Participant A)

It was acknowledged by some that this lack of availability was not due to choice from agencies, but rather an overcapacity and understanding that they're stretched/ 'in a crisis'.

"...the lack of responsiveness outside of school, em... we can take it so far, but we've got our clinical psychologist one day a week em.. and we've got the child with us from half past eight til three o'clock and it's outside of those times, what is available so that's a huge barrier."

(Participant C)

This was identified by three participants as being particularly important during cases where there are serious concerns over a student's well-being.

"Sometimes we've done referrals and we might not hear from them, it might be a real safeguarding, we might have a real concern about that child going home that day and they're still there in the evening and it tends to be end of term as well, because a child will, you know suddenly it gets to the end of term and children are thinking, I'll never forget one of the girls saying to me 'I must be the only person not looking forward to breaking up for summer' you know so she's got a mum who's continually trying to commit suicide you know. You've got that and you're on the phone to social services trying to get them to come in and they don't arrive and you're like what are we going to do..."

(Participant A)

"...he is not receiving any external support and for someone with such high levels of need, home is difficult as well and it's challenging for... for parents and family at home. I do think there is a big gap there."

(Participant A)

The above sections detailed the four key conceptual categories (*having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being, understanding changing societal contexts, building relationships with parents and pupils and support for staff*) and their

sub codes. The following section will discuss how these conceptual categories are linked to create the emergent theory.

4.3 Overview of Grounded Theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998) discuss the over-arching category as a story that has emerged from the data. This selective code is ultimately the 'process of integrating and refining the theory' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 161) and is interlinked by the core conceptual categories through explanatory statements of relationships. In the current study, the theory emerging from the data suggests that by having a structured, clear approach to supporting and promoting emotional well-being allows school to become a safe environment for pupils in an ever-demanding society. By doing so, school staff can effectively support and promote pupils' emotional well-being.

The selective category is further composed of key conceptual categories; *culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being, understanding changing societal contexts, building relationships with parents and pupils and support for staff*, described in detail above. Therefore, school staff in a mainstream secondary school consider that by providing containment and creating a safe place in school, they are best able to effectively support and promote pupils' emotional well-being.

Additionally, it is suggested that to do so they must create a culture and ethos of support and responsibility where each staff member is responsible for pupils' well-being in some form or another and they need to be aware of changing contexts and focus on building positive relationships with pupils' and their parents along with

providing support for each other as staff members. These processes are not static or separate and they interact and intertwine to promote pupils' emotional well-being.

4.3.1 Facilitators to promoting and supporting emotional well-being

School as a safe place was described in some form by all participants. Participants described school as a reliable, comforting place and additionally some participants described the students' potential chaotic home lives. Participants viewed the school context as important to provide this containing space and discussed the need for guidance and boundaries to do so. Guidance for the staff members within different roles, allowing them to 'know what to do' and guidance for pupils about their own needs and where to go for support was valued. Boundaries were described by several participants as being important to provide structure and clear expectations for behaviour.

Having 'zero-tolerance' for bullying was also noted as influential in order to allow pupils' to be open about their SEMH needs and not feel stigmatised for doing so. Additionally, having a physical space for pupils to go to when they felt they needed support with their emotional well-being was deemed a key facilitator by many participants. The room where pastoral staff worked was a central focus of the school and described by one participant as being 'at the heart of the school', not hidden away and something to be proud of.

Participants spoke of the rising mental health needs of CYP in the UK today and the pressures pupils faced within these changing contexts. 'Focus days' were discussed as

a way of providing an awareness of a range of issues potentially affecting pupils such as drug awareness and gang culture, issues described as being pertinent to the pupils of the local authority in which the study was undertaken.

The importance of having positive relationships with pupils and to some extent parents was viewed as imperative in order to effectively support their SEMH needs. A trusting relationship was deemed essential to supporting pupils SEMH needs and thus was discussed by participants as the reason why schools were well placed to support and promote pupils' emotional well-being.

Support for staff is interlinked with the need for guidance and the use of strategies, particularly by staff members less individually responsible for supporting pupils' emotional well-being such as teachers. By speaking to each other and providing reassurance and support for each other, participants felt able to best meet the pupils needs when they felt reassured themselves.

4.3.2 Barriers to promoting and supporting emotional well-being

Barriers to promoting and supporting emotional well-being were also identified from the key conceptual categories. Participants identified their role as protecting the vulnerable and providing a safe environment where SEMH was a priority. Where staff members were unable to identify where pupils needed SEMH support due to lack of knowledge/training this was thought to be a barrier to providing the necessary support.

The changing contexts were identified as key barriers to effectively promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The pressure academically put on pupils was not thought to come from school itself, nor explicitly parents of pupils; it was not clear from where this pressure stemmed. School was described as often struggling to balance the curriculum pressures with those of supporting pupils' well-being which were described as participants as conflicting.

In line with the importance of having a positive working relationship with pupils and parents, those pupils who were difficult to engage was thought to be a key barrier to effectively supporting and promoting their SEMH. Pupils who were 'difficult to engage' (Participants, C,B,D) were thought to be able to be supported by staff, it was crucial that it was on the pupil's terms with an attempt to develop a trusting relationship. Additionally, it was felt that parents were not necessarily helpful in supporting pupils' needs, as additional support for parents could be an added pressure for school staff.

Support from outside professionals was regarded with ambivalence by participants. Participants spoke of the value from outside agencies, but all agreed support from such external agencies were not easy to access and there was a sense of frustration from this lack of support.

4.4 Respondent validity

In order to establish respondent validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000), the findings of the current study (and emergent theory) were shared with several of the participants to gain their views on which elements resonated more or less. All participants were invited to attend a two-hour slot at the school to do so. Four participants agreed to meet with the remaining two sending their apologies.

Participants met with the researcher individually for an informal chat. Here, the emergent theory was discussed with participants (without the use of visuals) and their perceptions of the theory gathered to understand their perspectives. All participants agreed that the emergent made sense and encapsulated their sense of the school well. The emergent theory resonated with them for example one participant felt that understanding the changing societal contexts for CYP and also for schools was a key area of importance for them. The participants' comments and views support the respondent validity of the proposed theory. Three of the four participants stressed the need for SEMH needs and emotional well-being to be a priority for schools and reflected on their fortune within the school having the resources and funding that they do.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the findings from the current study, exploring the overarching theory that emerged from the data namely 'providing containment – school as a safe place'. This theory proposes that for school staff to effectively support and promote their pupils' emotional well-being, it is necessary for school to have a structured, clear

approach to supporting and promoting emotional well-being in order to create a safe place in an ever-demanding society. The core conceptual categories further enhance this theory and comprise of *“culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being”*, *“understanding changing societal contexts”*, *“building relationships with parents and pupils”* and *“support for staff”*. Barriers and facilitators to supporting pupil’s emotional well-being were identified within these core conceptual categories. The next chapter will discuss how these findings relate to the current literature.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter documented the analytic and interpretative stages of the research and the findings summarized participants' viewpoints regarding the contexts and mechanisms they believe facilitate or hinder supporting pupils' SEMH needs and/or emotional well-being. The current chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the research questions and will consider how the key conceptual categories of the emergent grounded theory relate to existing research. The findings will also be discussed in reference to relevant theoretical frameworks. Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs) and for schools will subsequently be explored. Strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed along with recommendations for future research. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the aims of the current study and the key findings that have been drawn along with personal reflections.

5.2 Research aims and research questions

In Chapter One, the aims and purpose of the current study were outlined and are summarised as follows:

- ▶ Exploratory – the research aimed to explore school staffs' views about promoting CYP's social and emotional wellbeing in a secondary school and explore the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or facilitate the promotion and support of pupils social and emotional well-being in schools.

- ▶ Explanatory – the research aimed to explain the contexts and mechanisms involved when promoting and supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being in schools.

With these in mind the following research questions were devised:

- ▶ What are the views of school staff in a mainstream secondary school regarding what facilitates and hinders the promotion of their pupils' emotional well-being?
- ▶ What contexts and mechanisms facilitate and hinder the promotion of pupils' social and emotional well-being in a mainstream secondary school?

The grounded theory has answered these questions in detail. The findings are illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. Participants discussed the importance of school being a safe, containing environment within which pupils are able to feel comfortable and supported. The findings from the study answered the research questions postulating that school acts as a safe, containing place that takes care of pupil's emotional well-being. The theory hypothesises that the physical environment allows for pupils to feel safe and contained within the school setting. Within the theory, it is thought that there are a number of barriers and facilitators to supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

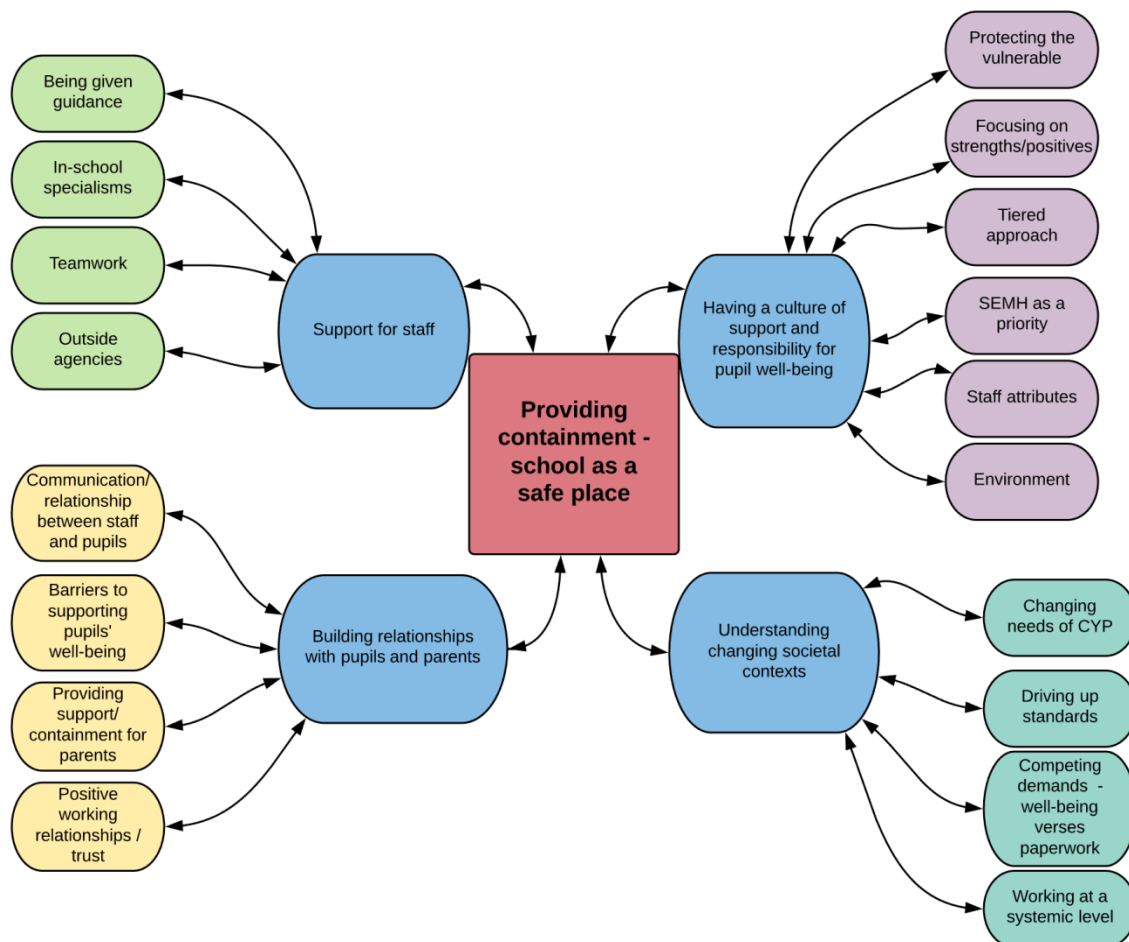


Figure 5.1 Overview of the developed grounded theory from the current study

5.3 Revisiting the literature

The following sections will detail how the findings from the current study link to existing research both from the literature review undertaken subsequent to data analysis (see Chapter Two) and a secondary literature review undertaken in light of the emergent theory (Appendix 9). This literature search focus was explored in light of the developed theory 'providing containment – school as a safe place'.

The following databases were searched for the emergent theory:

- PsycINFO

- Education Source
- ERIC
- Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection
- PsychArticles

The following inclusion criteria was used:

- Peer reviewed literature
- Primary/Secondary mainstream educational settings
- Papers written in the English language

Snowballing techniques were also used to search for relevant papers and internet search engines (Google Scholar) were also searched to identify relevant research articles. The key words and key themes were identified from the key conceptual categories. Relevant titles and abstracts were identified by linking to the key words and themes from the key conceptual categories. Papers were only reviewed if they focused on supporting pupils' emotional well-being and/or SEMH needs in primary or secondary schools. Papers were reviewed that were most relevant and included key terms from the key conceptual categories.

5.4 Discussion in relation to the literature

This section will detail how the key findings from the current study relate to the existing literature in the area. Despite the increasing recognition of the role of schools in supporting pupils' emotional well-being/SEMH needs, there is a lack of research in the UK exploring school staff or teacher views or experiences regarding pupils'

emotional well-being. The grounded theory in this study both supports and complements the existing literature on supporting pupils' emotional well-being and SEMH needs in schools.

The current findings depict several common factors school staff view as important for supporting pupils' emotional well-being:

- Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being
- Understanding changing societal contexts
- Building relationships with pupils and also with parents
- Support for staff

Each of these key conceptual codes will be explored in relation to the current literature in the following sections.

5.4.1 Having a culture of support and responsibility towards pupil well-being

Findings in the current study depict the importance of employing a whole school approach to supporting and promoting positive emotional well-being. A whole school approach is a frequently advocated approach to supporting well-being (Sharpe et al., 2009) and is emphasised by many as being essential to providing a cohesive framework for promoting positive SEMH (Weare, 2015).

School staff described school as being an environment responsible for protecting the vulnerable. They described their responsibility for pupils. This duty of care for pupil well-being is commonly recognised by teachers and school staff to be part of their role and should not be ignored by teachers or school staff (DfE & DoH, 2017; Kidger et al.,

2010; Rothi et al., 2008). Both Rothi et al., (2008) and Kidger et al., (2010) noted the degree of responsibility school staff felt to intervene in order to support pupils' mental health and well-being. However, research suggests that despite this responsibility to intervene in order to support pupils' emotional well-being, teachers and other school staff rarely feel equipped to do so (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Kidger et al., 2009; Rothi et al., 2008). This is consistent with the current study where one participant noted that:

"I haven't got training in that, formal training; I've got a lot of SEN knowledge and expertise, I worked in special schools, I've worked with children with behaviour needs and social, emotional, mental health needs but I'm not a psychologist..."

(Participant C)

All participants expressed a desire for more training and information about how best to support pupils with varying emotional well-being needs. This emerged as a core category (staff support, discussed later) where support for staff, training, team support or access to outside agencies were seen as essential facilitators to supporting and promoting positive emotional well-being.

Findings also noted a need to focus on pupils' strengths and positives. Intertwined within the culture of the school, this positive focus was viewed as important to building pupil resilience. Here, the school stressed an importance of focusing on promoting positive well-being of all pupils, rather than focusing purely on pupils with high levels of needs. This was in contrast to some studies found that schools focused

on reactive support for pupils' emotional well-being rather than preventative work (Vostanis et al., 2013).

Loades and Mastroyannopoulou (2010) explored teachers' recognition of children's mental health problems and found that teachers are generally good at recognising if pupils have mental health needs and the severity of these needs (when presented in vignette form). The current study also advocates the importance of school staff being aware of pupils' needs rather than being able to 'identify' needs. This awareness of need varies from 'identifying' need as proposed by Loades and Mastroyannopoulou (2010) and advocates a systemic rather than medicalised, within-child focus of needs.

In line with this, the notion of role has emerged as an important aspect in the literature to supporting children and young peoples' emotional well-being. As previously discussed, the current study and the current educational climate recognise the requirement of school staff to take account of pupils' emotional well-being and SEMH needs. This idea of changing role of school staff has been recognised by Rothi et al., (2008) who noted that teachers generally asserted that they are not mental health experts. Similarly, this is in line with literature presented in Chapter two (e.g. Connelly et al., 2008) who argued that teachers felt that supporting well-being was an additional element of their role, and an aspect in which they felt unqualified and unprepared.

This commitment to mental health and emotional well-being is linked to the staff attributes as identified in the current study. In the current study, adjectives used to

describe school staff working to support pupils' well-being were described as 'passionate', 'persistent' to overcoming barriers and providing support where needed and 'committed' to supporting pupils' academic and emotional well-being. Consistent with this, it is well recognised that school staff have a deep commitment to their role (Corcoran & Finney, 2015).

The physical environment was perceived in the current study as an important element of supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The use of a physical space was deemed important by participants for providing a room as a containing space for which pupils can access at any point of the day. By providing a nurturing environment (and caring attitudes) school staff can build positive relationships with their pupils enabling them to better meet the SEMH needs (Burton & Goodman, 2011). In Australia, research has shown that the school context provides essential protective factors for mental health such as positive school climate, responsibility for all, sense of belonging, focus on positives and recognition of achievement and zero-tolerance for violence (National Crime Prevention, 1999; Rowling, 2009).

The physical environment is linked to the notion of whole school issues such as school climate (Kidger et al., 2009; Sharpe et al., 2016). Such whole school approaches have recently been well advocated within the literature on supporting emotional well-being in schools (Roffey, 2016; Warin, 2017; Weare, 2015). Consistent with current findings, literature suggests that by having a supportive culture in terms of school climate and ethos allows pupils' emotional needs to be met (Weare, 2015). This supportive climate allows for pupils to feel connected to their school.

However, a recent systemic review (Kidger, Araya, Donovan & Gunnell, 2012) found that the evidence of sense of connectedness and teacher support on emotional well-being is lacking. Kidger et al., (2012) argue the need for more rigorous studies to explore this association and note in particular the lack of research exploring of the effect school level factors (as opposed to individual factors).

Within the literature 'school connectedness' and belonging emerged as key terms when discussing the relationship pupils have with their school community. In addition to school connectedness, peer attachments were found to be a positive indicator of pro-social behaviours which led to positive mental health outcomes for pupils (Oldfield, Humphrey, & Hebron, 2016). School connectedness was thought to be linked to a 'culture of care' (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010).

In addition to physical environment, findings in the current study also noted the significance of having boundaries and clear expectations for creating this supportive environment. Solomon and Thomas (2013) build on Winnicott's theory (1965) that an environment needs to be consistent, adaptive and secure and by Bowlby (1988) to build "*... a combination of emotional and structural containment that gives students an experience of a secure base.*" (Solomon & Thomas, 2013, p 50)

Participants discussed the importance of 'zero tolerance' when it came to bullying and what was deemed negative behaviour. This is illustrated in the quote below:

“We are a very zero tolerance school so we don’t accept poor behaviour, eh that doesn’t mean they’re going to be excluded on the... on the moment they misbehave, what it does mean is that there will be a consequence so things like, they might go into the seclusion room, they might have the after school catch-up or an after school detention...”

(Participant D)

Consistent with this Weare (2015) discussed the importance of having clear boundaries and robust policies to support positive behaviour management. In the current study, these clear, consistent boundaries were referred to numerous times by participants and noted to have a clear role in supporting well-being as illustrated by the quote below:

“I think students work really well if they feel safe, if there’s boundaries, there’s structure...”

(Participant F)

The secondary literature review highlighted some key studies when exploring this idea of having a safe, supportive culture within schools. Turner & Braine (2015) recognise the importance of having a ‘safe learning environment’ in their case-study research exploring class teachers’ understanding of the word ‘safe’ when talking about a safe learning environment. They found that the term ‘safe’ is commonly used to refer to emotional safety in schools. In line with the overarching grounded theory, teachers in the study used the term ‘safe’ to refer to a place where no student is embarrassed to share their opinion and are comfortable taking risks in their learning. This was thought to be a space rooted in mutual respect (Turner & Braine, 2015).

Roffey (2016) also advocated strongly for a whole-school approach to supporting children's emotional well-being. Here it is argued that in order to build pupil resilience and reduce risk factors for pupils' well-being, a whole-child, whole-school approach is necessary to best support pupils' emotional well-being. Again, this notion of 'school connectedness' is highlighted by having a sense of belonging to a school, it can act as a protective factor for positive mental health (Dfe, 2015; Roffey, 2016).

In line with Roffey (2016) and Weare (2015), Warin (2017) took this idea of whole-child, whole-school approach one step further. Warin (2017) advocated for a whole school ethos of care by employing principles of 'nurture' to achieve this. This study highlighted the importance of having strong leadership based on 'deep care' along with positive relationships with pupils (Warin, 2017). Leadership has been highlighted by several studies as key to creating a positive climate for the promotion of pupils' emotional well-being and mental health (Rowling, 2009; Weare, 2015). Findings from the current study also identify leadership as an important facilitator for supporting emotional well-being as described alongside having SEMH needs as a priority in the school. Two participants argued that it is important that this focus stems from the leadership of the school as noted by the quote below:

"It's having the commitment from the top, so we're not having to do it in secret or trying to fit it in, it's visible, it's there..."

(Participant C)

5.4.2 Understanding changing societal contexts

Mental health and well-being has increasingly become recognised as an important issue in childhood, a fact reflected in government initiatives throughout the world

(Stallard et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Wolpert et al., 2015, DfE & DoH, 2017). It is widely accepted that mental health and well-being of CYP in the UK is increasing becoming an area needing significant attention and focus.

By and large, it was well recognised in the current study that SEMH needs and emotional well-being is required to be a priority within schools in order for pupils' emotional needs to be supported. SEMH as a priority is difficult to achieve within the current educational climate where there is an increased pressure to attain certain academic standards. The constraints of the curriculum are well-recognised in the literature as a considerable barrier to supporting pupils' SEMH needs (Bennett, 2006; Corcoran & Finney, 2015) and something which school staff are constantly grappling. The competing demands of raising academic standards and supporting emotional well-being is a key factor (Kidger et al., 2010) and is linked to the changing roles of school staff as the role shifts to more responsibility of overall well-being of pupils (Loades & Mastroyannopoulou, 2010).

This pressure to increase academic standards is thought to be felt by pupils in schools and the constraints of the national curriculum in the UK are commonly thought to contribute to pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bennett, 2006). Similar to findings from Connelly et al., (2008), staff in the current study found they were constantly under pressure to move on to the next pupil to help or manage paperwork as illustrated by the quote below:

“there might be a child sitting there and they’re crying and my attention, my attention has got to go on the child you know and then I’m like I’ve got to record that as well, oh I’ve got to do that, send them, patch them up and send them off, someone else comes...”

(Participant W)

The current study identified the importance of working at a systemic level and being aware of the intertwining and interacting systems around the child. Within this is the idea of working with parents and outside agencies along with a whole school approach of working with all pupils’ rather than targeting specific pupils’. This is certainly linked to the identified literature advocating for a whole school-approach to supporting pupils’ emotional well-being (e.g. Roffey, 2016; Weare, 2015; Warin, 2017).

5.4.3 Building relationships with pupils and with parents

Relationships between school staff and their pupils emerged as an important element for supporting pupils’ emotional well-being. Where this is a positive relationship, there is an ease of communication and pupils are able to feel supported. As previously discussed, the notion of school connectedness and having a supportive culture within the school is important for supporting emotional well-being.

McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) also found that the role of relationships is significant; relationships between pupils and teachers, relationships between pupils and their peers.

Relationships and school connectedness are deemed essential for developing pupil engagement (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). This is consistent with findings in the

current study where pupils who were 'not able to engage' (Participant C) this relationship was thought to be dysfunctional or not positive and posed a large barrier to supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

Research has found that communication and relationships between staff and pupils (e.g. Kidger et al., 2009) are important elements of providing the whole-school approach to supporting emotional health. Consistent with this, the current study found that where the relationship between pupils and staff was favourable and communication was effective, school staff were better able to support pupil well-being. This is seen in the quote below:

"...the biggest the biggest factor for me is that sense of a safe place where students feel they are comfortable to come and speak to us..."

(Participant D)

Similarly, Burton and Goodman (2011) noted that by creating a nurturing environment, school staff were able to form positive relationships with students and their parents. The relationship with pupils is important alongside being available for pupils when they need additional support. Findings in the current study also link this ability to form positive relationships with the availability of a physical space (in the form of a pastoral room) for pupils to go to if they need support at any time of the day as discussed under the key conceptual category 'Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being' above.

Previous research (e.g. Bennett, 2006; Burton & Goodman, 2011) highlights the crucial role that the collaborating and having a positive relationship with parents has on supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Although this relationship with parents has emerged within the findings of the current study, the focus was on supporting and containing parents' emotional needs themselves rather than always collaborating with parents. Parents were often described as vulnerable themselves and school staff sometimes felt that they were required to provide support for parents as part of their role as described by one participant below:

"We are also looking after parents, you know we have parents who may have dependencies you know and I've heard, I certainly know I've heard my line manager on the phone saying... 'talk to me, don't go and do whatever it is you're going to do, talk to me and let's see if we can talk through it..."

(Participant W)

The secondary literature review also highlighted several key aspects to the relationship between staff and pupils'. School connectedness as discussed above, routinely emerged as an essential component for the pupil/school staff relationship (Oldfield et al., 2016; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). As indicated above, where there was a positive working relationship between school staff and pupils and additionally between school staff and parents, school staff in the current study felt better able to support pupils' emotional well-being/ SEMH needs.

Conversely, where there was a lack of engagement from either parents or more importantly disengagement with pupils', this created a barrier to supporting pupils' emotional well-being/ SEMH needs. Where there was a lack of pupil or parental

engagement, this was thought to be linked to wider systemic issues, such as complex family lives or traumatic events.

5.4.4 Support for staff

Linked to the idea of having clear and consistent boundaries for pupils, school staff in the current study also expressed that by having clear and consistent guidelines for school staff in terms of supporting SEMH needs. Guidance from specialists either within the school or outside was deemed helpful.

“...if they should say, right we need you to try these strategies, we always got ahead and use those, whatever it is that CAMHS might suggest... we bend over backwards to make sure we are using the advice we get or are given by them...”

(Participant D)

Within the literature review undertaken in Chapter Two, research (e.g. Bennett, 2006) identified having strategies such as a firm discipline structure, clear behaviour strategies along with involvement from outside agencies as helpful when supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Sharpe et al., (2016) also found that secondary schools were more likely than primary schools to have access to in-school specialisms from which to draw on as a useful resource.

The current study also found that school staff working together and having support for each other was essential to supporting pupils' emotional well-being/ SEMH needs. It was imperative, they argued that the mental health of school staff was also taken into account and more experienced staff were expected to help those who were less

experienced. In line with having a clear structure and guidance to support, school staff were able to be aware of who was responsible for support at any stage of the tiered approach.

This idea of teamwork is widely linked to being essential for those supporting pupils' SEMH needs (e.g. Connelly et al., 2008; Gamman, 2003; Kidger et al., 2010). Where staff members feel supported themselves and have access to appropriate support networks (and are subsequently able to be open about challenges they face), they are better able to support pupils and their families (Gamman, 2003).

The current study found that a lack of access to outside agencies posed as a barrier to supporting pupils' emotional needs. Consistent with previous research (e.g. Connelly et al., 2008; Rothi et al., 2008; Sharpe et al., 2016), this was thought to lead to a deep sense of frustration by school staff who were unable to access the appropriate specialist support needed to help pupils as illustrated by the quotation below.

“CAMHS is an issue, it's always been an issue since I've been here but it's gotten worse because they've got to wait for so long. 18 months is a long time and that child's then getting worse so that's not helping and then to get them back is going to take a long time isn't it? A 6 week intervention from CAMHS is no good is it? If you've had a student out of school for 18 months and you have them for 6 weeks, what's that going to do, you know in 6 weeks you might only just break down the barrier to talk em... you could do 10 weeks and they still don't talk, it just... its difficult. And I understand there's no money but that's what I would say.”

(Participant F)

Finding from the literature also suggested that routes to accessing specialist support from outside agencies wasn't always clear (Connelly et al., 2008). However, this is in contrast with the current findings which suggested that school staff were aware of how to request support from outside agencies or other professionals but rather the inaccessibility of services due to high demand (long waiting lists and high thresholds for support). It was thought that this depended on the agency involved but the most commonly cited agency was CAMHS and despite the sense of frustration of not hearing back from such services, this was thought to be a wider systemic issue as discussed by a participant below:

"... CAMHS nationally just needs to be completely reviewed and reworked, the model doesn't work as it is, CAMHS are working so hard but they're not touching the surface em.. there are so many children in crisis and what we perceive as crisis is nowhere near their criteria for crisis so we've got this huge divide and actually what we want to be do in schools, is around getting in early and we don't get any professional support with that at all..."

(Participant C)

Research depicts the importance of multi-disciplinary working and collaborating with other professional services when supporting pupils' emotional well-being and SEMH needs (Vostanis et al., 2013).

5.5 Theoretical overview – attachment and containment

This section will explore how the overarching theory emerging from the current study "providing containment – school as a safe place" relates to psychological models and

specifically attachment theory and psychodynamic concepts such as containment and emotional holding.

Findings in the current study are consistent with this idea of an 'emotionally safe place' where pupils are comfortable taking risks in their learning. The majority of participants explicitly stated that before a student can attend to the academic demands of the curriculum, they need to feel safe and secure in terms of their emotional well-being. This is linked to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) and the work of psychodynamic theorists such as Bion's (1962) concept of containment and Winnicott's exploration of 'emotional holding' (1953, 1971).

The idea of a 'secure base' was initially described by Bowlby (1988) to describe a key element of parenting; a base from where an infant can go to explore their environment, knowing that they have a safe place/person to be welcomed back to. *"In essence, this role is one of being available, ready to respond when called upon to encourage and perhaps assist, but to intervene actively only when necessary* (Bowlby, 1988, p. 11)". This concept has since been extended to other systems including schools (Paiva, 2011). There are clear parallels between school characterised as a 'holding environment' as described by Hyman (2012) and the role of staff members described in the current study as described by a participant below:

"You just have to be the one that sits there and listens and you may not say anything in particular but it's just the fact that you're there. Sometimes that's all they need..."

(Participant W)

This is consistent with Hyman's (2012) definition of a 'holding environment' as an environment that "fosters the natural maturation and development of the full potential of each child. In such an environment security is bolstered and learning is optimised" (Hyman, 2012, pp. 205). The findings of the current study are consistent with the idea of the security and safety felt by CYP in order for them to effectively learn.

"I think students work really well if they feel safe, if there's boundaries, there's structure and even some of the children who are, who have behaviour issues, they come to school every day so that tells you that yeh they might behave badly sometimes or they em sort of quite disruptive sometimes in the classroom or it could be low level, they still come to school."

(Participant F)

Webber (2017) explores teachers experiences of supporting looked after or adopted pupils' in a primary school case study in the UK. The author recognised this need for teachers and school staff to be aware of and knowledgeable in supporting pupils with varying social, emotional and mental health needs.

Existing psychodynamic literature such as Bion's (1962) work on containment, describes containment as the strong emotional experiences being made manageable through being emotionally held by another. By being able to internalise and manage difficult emotions, allows an individual to feel safe and develop personally.

Containment is emphasised as important throughout the literature: research has shown that by having the emotional availability, school staff were able to meet the social and emotional needs of CYP, colleagues and families in a more reflective way (Hyman, 2012; Partridge, 2012).

In the findings of the current study, the concept of containment emerged through the process of data analysis. The importance of containing the anxieties of CYP and those of their families developed where participants discussed their responsibility for 'emotionally holding' their pupils' SEMH.

"you just have to be the one that sits there and listens and you may not say anything in particular but it's just the fact that you're there. Sometimes that's all they need."

(Participant W)

This was supported through conversations with their colleagues and support from external agencies. This is in contrast to research that found that teachers were often reluctant to seek help (e.g. Spratt et al., 2006). This may be due to differences in context and bearing in mind participants in the current study all belonged to the same system.

Containment and being emotionally available for pupils, their families and other staff members was interlinked throughout the findings. In addition to providing support for pupils and their families, participants identified the need to provide support and ultimately contain each other when supporting CYP's emotional well-being. Hulusi and Maggs (2015) suggest that teachers cannot provide containment for their pupils if they do not feel contained or 'emotionally held' in their work themselves.

Consistent with this the current findings suggest that school staff recognise the importance of supporting each other, sometimes in the form of supervision.

Supervision was mentioned by a senior member of staff when they mentioned they had received formal supervision from an external agency. Furthermore, despite school staff being happy to support and be supported by their peers, their ability to access support from external agencies appeared to be hindered by the perceived pressure on external agencies.

5.6 Implications of the findings

5.6.1 Implications for schools

A number of implications for schools have arisen from the key conceptual categories in this research:

- Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being

Highlighted within the findings was the responsibility that school staff held for the children and young people in their care. School staff noted the personal attributes that staff members had such as commitment and passion. This can be fostered through a supportive culture and caring culture within the school and is linked to the leadership values of the school.

- Understanding changing societal contexts

The experiences of school staff within the school reflects the necessity for all school staff to be aware of pupil mental health needs, specifically those occurring within the context of individual schools. For example, the reference to issues with gang

membership in the current study reflects the context within which the study was undertaken and the attempts of school staff to address such difficulties. Although concepts arose relating to the competing demands of well-being and academic needs, school staff were aware of the impact that these wider systemic issues were having on not only themselves and their capability to support pupils' emotional well-being but also directly on the pupils themselves. This demonstrates the importance of taking into account wider systemic issues when promoting and supporting pupils' emotional well-being.

- Building relationships with pupils and parents

Relationships between staff and pupils were identified as an important element for supporting and promoting emotional well-being. Where this was working well and there existed a positive working relationship with either pupils or their families, this was thought to act as a facilitator for supporting SEMH needs. In contrast, where there was a breakdown in communication with pupils or their family or individuals who were deemed difficult to engage, this was seen as a barrier to supporting and promoting pupils' SEMH needs.

- Support for staff

This key conceptual category demonstrated the importance school staff placed on having access to appropriate support, whether it access to resources or guidance and support from other staff members. These findings illustrated the significant impact supporting pupils' well-being was having on staff members own well-being suggesting that for schools to effectively support and promote positive SEMH and well-being

though whole-school approaches (DoH & NHS England 2015), school staff's own well-being also needs to be taken into account.

5.6.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists

The role EPs play when supporting SEMH in schools varies considerably from context to context and is constantly evolving. It is considered dubious at best (Al-khatib & Norris, 2015), something that is reflected in government policy and guidance on mental health in schools (DfE, 2016), where CAMHS and other external agencies are the main focus. The recent change in legislation (DfE, 2015) has formally identified SEMH as an additional area of SEN. Furthermore, the SEND Code of Practice (2015) states that the local authority is required to seek professional advice and information from an educational psychologist when assessing if a CYP's special educational needs calls for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The sections below highlight the implications for EPs that have arisen from the key conceptual categories in the current study.

- Having a culture of support and responsibility for pupil well-being

The inclusion of SEMH into the categorical definition of special educational needs gives rise to EPs being responsible professionally (BPS, 2002; Health and Care Professions Council, 2015) for awareness and understanding of the psychological theories underpinning social, emotional mental health needs and competence in application of these theories in practice when supporting whole school approaches to supporting and promoting SEMH and emotional well-being (DoH & NHS England, 2015). EPs are well-placed to facilitate whole-school approaches to supporting and

promoting social and emotional well-being in schools by providing whole-school level training on awareness of social and emotional needs. The idea of a tiered model to support and promote positive SEMH in addition to facilitating the provision of a supportive culture is a practical role that EPs can play.

- Understanding changing societal contexts

Similarly, EPs are well-placed to highlight the increasing pressures on pupils and also on school staff. By remaining separate to the systems and individual school institutions, EPs are able to provide an unbiased overview of what pertinent issues may be impacting CYP. For example, if there is a particular issue with gangs in an area or trends such as online gaming, EPs would be able to identify these through conversations with other professionals and schools in order to provide appropriate support to schools.

- Building relationships with pupils and parents

Findings highlight the importance of a having positive relationship between staff and pupils in order to best support pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. EPs are able to provide support for this at an individual level (working individually with pupils – providing therapeutic support or interventions) or at an organisational level (through consultations with individual school staff or groups of staff or by providing training). Similarly, EPs are also well-placed to facilitate positive relationships with schools and families.

- Support for staff

This study highlights the value that school staff place on multi-disciplinary working and collaborating with external agencies despite frustration over ease of access to such agencies. EPs are well placed to provide support for school staff and specifically those at the fore-front of working with pupils with high levels of SEMH needs, and so may be able to provide a positive experience of multi-disciplinary working. Educational psychologists are often skilled in a variety of consultation approaches and so are potentially able to facilitate support for school staff in order to empower them and allow them to develop an increased sense of agency when promoting social and emotional mental health in school.

Whilst one school staff member in the present study referred to working with an educational psychologist in relation to supporting pupils' SEMH needs, the predominant focus seemed to be on utilizing clinical psychology resources and accessing other professional agencies such as CAMHS. In line with previous research (e.g. Connelly et al., 2008) all participants spoke of their frustration in accessing external specialist support. It is well-recognised that EPs are well-placed to facilitate support of pupils' mental health needs in a range of levels; individual, group and at a wider systemic and organisational levels. With this in mind, EPs have the potential to work closely with schools, CYP and their families and may need to clearly express this knowledge and skills to key staff members and policy makers to facilitate work with pupils' mental health. EPs will have to work within their own system to think about how to better bridge this gap between the wide range of support that can be provided to schools and the difficulties accessing such support as highlighted in the findings.

5.7 Strengths and limitations of the research

The critical realist approach to the research signifies that the findings of the present study are unique to the time and specific context within the research took place. The boundaries of social systems are flexible and permeable and as such it is not possible to assume that if the same research was undertaken within the same context and system in the future, the same findings would emerge (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

Furthermore, as the research took place in an individual school and although potentially a similar context to other secondary schools, particularly within its local context, it is not justifiable to generalise the findings beyond the context of the current study.

It could be argued that the small sample size is a limitation of the study and is too small a sample to demonstrate confidence in the outcomes. Within the research, six participants were interviewed as theoretical saturation had occurred by the sixth interview, where no new data was emerging. However, the aim of the present study was to explore views of school staff from one specific setting, a mainstream secondary school and therefore the sample, although small, was thought to represent a varied proportion of the staff group and varying roles.

Research bias is a major challenge in qualitative research such as this, as the researcher has a high stake in the success of the project (Robson, 2011). The grounded theory approach has potential bias where for example the researcher adapted the initial interview topic guide during the process. This was addressed by using open, tentative questioning and allowing opportunities to discuss negative as well as

positive experiences supporting pupils' emotional well-being in the school. The researcher wanted to reduce participants feeling like they were only required to talk about the positives and to pre-empt what the researcher wanted to hear.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the interview, the researcher made it explicitly clear that there was no right or wrong answers and reminded participants of the aims of the research as gathering staffs' views, whatever they may be.

The issue of reflectivity is often cited as a limitation when using grounded theory (Willig, 2013). Some argue that it does not sufficiently address the impact that the researcher's own values and assumptions have on the research in terms of analysis and interpretations (Willig, 2013). To address this, the researcher noted thoughts and reflections within a research diary and were also discussed in supervision with their research supervisor. The current study described the data process and stages of analysis through an audit trail as described in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3). One of the steps taken to address the issue of researcher bias, was to undertake the literature review subsequent to analysis of the data as per grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The current study explored the staff views of promoting and supporting SEMH needs and emotional well-being in an individual school. A limitation of the study concerns the self-selecting nature of the sample. The school that participated was identified as a school that is thought to support SEMH and emotional well-being well (see Methodology Chapter for more details). Furthermore, participants were given more

detail about the study by a link staff member who is also part of the senior leadership team.

It was anticipated that this may influence the participants enthusiasm to engage and so the voluntary nature of the study and withdrawal process was reiterated to participants at the beginning of each interview. It was also anticipated that because the school was chosen as one that works well to support pupils' emotional needs, participants may feel the need to 'show off' the school and portray it in a positive light. To account for this, questions were derived to be neutral and in order to extract a balanced view of the barriers and facilitators of promoting and supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being.

As identified in the introduction, there is often difficulty defining the terms social, emotional, mental health and emotional well-being. In the current study, these terms were not defined to participants but were left to individual staff members to determine. It is therefore worth questioning, that when talking about supporting pupils' emotional well-being and social, emotional and mental health needs, were all participants talking about the same thing? This was not deemed important in the current study as the focus was not on definition but rather school staffs' views of anything they considered to be support for pupils' emotional well-being or mental health needs. As the current research took place in an individual school with a very specific context, the restricted scope and scale of findings places limitations on how the findings may be generalised beyond this context.

5.8 Future Research

The current research has gathered evidence of the contexts and mechanisms that facilitate and/or hinder the support and promotion of social and emotional well-being in an individual mainstream setting. The current findings are cautious due to the small sample size and consequently it is difficult to establish a strong contribution to the research area. Further research could:

- Involve a large-scale study including an increased sample size and wider variety of participants in a single school to explore barriers and facilitators to supporting and promoting SEMH and emotional well-being.
- Explore the views of school staff in mainstream secondary schools with a specific focus on role.

5.9 Dissemination Process

The current research findings will be disseminated to others on a number of levels. On an individual level, the participants will receive a summary sheet of the research findings and proposed implications. Four out of six participants have met with the researcher subsequent to analysis and findings to account for respondent validity (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, participants have the researchers email address and were encouraged to contact the researcher with any outstanding questions.

At a local level, the findings will be disseminated to EPs in the local authority in terms of continuing professional development (CPD) at business meetings at conferences.

This has the potential to impact the local authority at a wider level as schools and EPs

interact. The local authority's 'Mental Health Task and Finish Group' was set up to address the transformation plan for mental health and well-being and so the researcher will also disseminate the research via the task and finish group to a range of professionals involved with the local authorities aims (LA, 2015; LA, 2016).

A further potential dissemination route for the findings of the study will be through publication in professional journals such as Educational Psychology journals and other relevant journals such as the British Journal of Special Education, Emotional Behavioural Difficulties.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The current study aimed to contribute to gaps in the literature exploring how emotional well-being in schools is promoted by empowering school staff and placing their views at the centre of the research process. The research specifically aimed to explore school staff's views about promoting and supporting CYP's social and emotional wellbeing in an individual secondary school and to understand the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or facilitate the promotion and support of pupil's social and emotional well-being in schools. Despite the school being widely viewed as being responsible for supporting pupils' well-being school staffs' views are rarely sought. Consequently, the present study employed a grounded theory approach to explore secondary school staffs' (a range of pastoral and teaching staff) views, allowing their voices to be heard.

An emergent theory was identified as 'providing containment – school as a safe place'. This theory suggests that by having a structured, clear approach to supporting and promoting emotional well-being allows school to be a safe space in an ever-demanding society. Under emergent theory stem four key conceptual categories were identified; having a '*culture of support and responsibility for pupils' well-being*', '*building relationships with pupils and parents*', '*understanding changing societal contexts*' and '*support for staff*'. The theory highlights the barriers to supporting and promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being for example; curriculum pressures, relationship conflicts and lack of collaboration and support from outside agencies. The theory also highlights the facilitators to effectively supporting pupils' emotional well-being such as having a facilitating, supportive school culture and environment,

understanding the changing societal contexts, building positive relationships with pupils and parents and having appropriate support for staff.

This theory proposes that emotional well-being is best supported by providing a containing space in the form of school and by having a model/tiered approach where the school staff around the CYP are aware of their role and have clear guidance on how best to support them. Therefore, a key implication of the research is for schools to have a clear, consistent approach for supporting a range of emotional well-being needs. This suggests that the structured approach allows school staff to feel contained themselves enabling them to create a supportive environment for pupils'. This involves a consideration for how a range of systemic factors can influence pupils' emotional well-being.

Existing research and legislative guidance for schools' advocates for the promotion of positive well-being in schools. Yet it appears that staff do not feel appropriately trained in meeting the SEMH needs of pupils' (Kidger et al., 2008) nor supported by other professional agencies (Connelly et al., 2008). The barriers and facilitators that have been identified in the current study need to be considered in order to address the ongoing rise in mental health difficulties for CYP. This study extends previous research and offers a unique contribution. Future research and practice implications were suggested, specifically support for staff, access to external agencies (and EPs) and promoting positive emotional well-being through a whole-school approach. By focusing on 'what works', schools will have the best opportunity to effectively support and promote pupils' social and emotional well-being. It is hoped that this research

has the potential to positively contribute to fluctuating national and local contexts to improve positive social, emotional, mental health for pupils in secondary schools.

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