

Including pupils who are perceived to have  
challenging behaviour within mainstream schools:  
exploring the impact of exclusion interventions and  
SENCOs' efficacy beliefs.

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## **Dedication**

To Kevin, Mum, Dad, Mhairi, Rhys, Gran, Grandpa, Margaret, Hayley, Kieran and Liz. I would not be the person that I am today without your support. Thank you.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank a number of individuals and groups that I have met over the past three years. This includes the research participants, the tutor team, my fellow Trainee Educational Psychologists across the cohorts, my former colleagues from all three Educational Psychology Service placements, the children and young people, parents/carers, school staff and external agencies. Each one of you has helped me develop my thinking, skills and knowledge through teaching, questioning and challenging me and reflecting with me. I have learned more about myself, the world and your own lived experiences, and for that I will always be grateful. I hope that I, in return reciprocated this support to you all along the way.



## Overarching abstract

A mixed-methods integrated systematic review explored the effectiveness of psychological interventions designed to reduce disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools. Little evidence was found to suggest that any one form of intervention can reduce exclusion rates. However, there was some evidence to suggest some interventions may change perceptions of behaviour and/or the incidence of inappropriate behaviours and, in consequence reduce exclusion rates. There was also some evidence to suggest that factors such as 'notions of power in the classroom', 'life scripts', 'gender', 'sharing thoughts feelings and experiences' and 'treatment readiness' may impact on intervention success. The majority of studies focused on intervening therapeutically at the individual child/group level and the general focus of disciplinary exclusion intervention literature is on transfer to alternative provisions. As there is a dearth of research exploring school factors such as the sources of teacher efficacy beliefs in relation to difficult behaviour to inform intervention, the empirical research project explored this. Five primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) participated in a semi-structured interview and the data was subjected to thematic analysis. Findings suggested that efficacy beliefs in relation to perceived challenging behaviour are developed by 'mastery experiences', 'social persuasion', 'cognitive reframing' and 'support from team'. Subsequently, barriers to developing efficacy beliefs included 'lack of experience', 'lack of appropriate Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities', 'perceived limitations of teachers' role', 'lack of access to psychological support' and 'lack of success'. Recommendations for future research and Educational Psychology (EP) practice were discussed.

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## **Chapter 1. Systematic literature review: What are the effects of psychological interventions designed to reduce disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools?**

### **Abstract**

Disciplinary exclusion is linked to negative long-term outcomes, suggesting a need for effective intervention. Intervention often involves the transfer of pupils to an alternative provision where the quality of education, long-term outcomes and inclusive practice can be questioned. The present systematic review explored the effectiveness of interventions targeted at British mainstream secondary schools, which did not involve the transfer of pupils to an alternative setting, to explore whether some interventions can effectively decrease exclusions, improve behaviour and promote inclusive practice. The seven stage systematic review process described by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) was employed to undertake a mixed-methods integrated systematic review, yielding seven studies that were judged to have medium-medium/high overall weight of evidence. Little evidence was found to suggest that any one form of intervention can reduce exclusion rates. However, there was some evidence to suggest some interventions may change perceptions of behaviour and/or the incidence of inappropriate behaviours and, in consequence reduce exclusion rates. There was also some evidence to suggest that factors such as 'notions of power in the classroom', 'life scripts', 'gender', 'sharing thoughts feelings and experiences' and 'treatment readiness' may impact on intervention success. Recommendations for future research and Educational Psychology (EP) practice were discussed.

## Introduction

### Background and context

British Government policy gives schools more autonomy than ever including increased disciplinary powers (Department for Education, 2012a). Schools can either permanently exclude, where the child is removed from the school's roll, or exclude for a fixed-term, where the child remains on the school's roll but is prohibited from entering the premises for a defined period, when justified. However, disciplinary exclusion is linked to negative long-term outcomes. The majority of permanently excluded pupils (85%) will not return to education (Children's Commissioner, 2012). Approximately 40% of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training have been excluded from school (Department for Education, 2005) and 86% of 15-18 year olds in custody report being excluded at school (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2011). Although, correlation does not infer causation these findings suggest that pupils at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded are at increased risk of negative long-term outcomes.

Though the number of children being excluded from school in England is allegedly decreasing (Department for Education, 2014a) some schools have been known to exclude children without formally registering them as such and many Local Authorities (LAs) have adopted a 'zero exclusion' policy whereby alternatives to permanent exclusions are used (Children's Commissioner, 2012). Alternatives to exclusion often involve: the child being either temporarily, permanently or on a part-time basis being placed in a small unit or base within their current school's grounds (Gilmore, 2012; Turner & Waterhouse, 2003); offered a college placement or alternative curriculum out with school (Charlton, Panting, & Willis, 2004; Rogers, Hallam, Shaw, & Rhamie, 2009); offered a 'managed move' to a new mainstream school (Harris, Vincent, Thomson, & Toalster, 2006); transferred to an alternative provision such as Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to undergo further assessment to inform future educational provision (Schnelling & Dew-Hughes, 2002) or transferred to other suitable alternative or specialist provision (Children's Commissioner, 2012).

All of the above studies imply that alternatives to exclusion effectively reduce formal exclusion rates. However, as pupils are still being moved from their original

mainstream school to an alternative provision on either a temporary, part-time or permanent basis as a result of difficult behaviour, it may be argued that in doing so these interventions still meet the exclusion definition and therefore may not represent inclusive practice or effective intervention for behaviour.

Indeed, research suggests that children who are offered alternatives to exclusion are unlikely to be re-integrated back in to mainstream education (Pilay, Dunbar-Krige, & Mostert, 2013) and in recent years there has been increasing concern about the variation in the quality of education provided by, and the low attainment levels of pupils in alternative provisions (Department for Education, 2012b). Subsequently, one could question the extent to which alternatives to exclusion produce successful outcomes for children and young people, as well as how inclusive they are from a child's rights perspective.

### **The present review**

To the best of my knowledge only two systematic reviews have explored the effectiveness of interventions which aim to reduce disciplinary exclusions in British schools, in general: (Boyd, 2012; Spink, 2011). Spink (2011) suggested that parental involvement, taking a holistic approach, multi-agency work and positive school ethos may decrease disciplinary exclusions. Similarly, Boyd (2012) suggested there was some evidence to suggest that positivity and motivation on the part of both pupils and schools, as well as effective communication including therapeutic support using cognitive-behavioural and solution-oriented approaches, and positive home-school relationships were factors that influenced the success of interventions.

Whilst these systematic reviews add to the literature, there are still contentious areas which require further exploration. Firstly, reviews are needed which investigate the effectiveness of interventions which do not involve the transfer of pupils to an alternative setting in order to examine what interventions can effectively decrease exclusions, improve behaviour and promote inclusive practice. Boyd (2012) and Spink (2011) considered data from all types of interventions. Secondly, reviews which focus on secondary school pupils only are required as secondary school pupils account for 84% of permanent exclusions (Department for Education, 2014a).

Boyd (2012) and Spink (2011) included data from both primary and secondary schools. Thirdly, reviews are required that assess the best available evidence. In doing so, all study designs will be considered at least in the initial stages, as it was deemed more important to investigate and synthesise the existing evidence base, however flawed, and extract strengths, than to conclude at the end of the review simply that better studies are required (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Spink (2011) excluded case and whole school-level studies and Boyd (2012) excluded action research studies. Finally, Boyd's (2012) literature search was completed in December 2010 and it was considered important to include any studies published since then.

The present review will therefore address the question: What are the effects of psychological interventions designed to reduce disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools? In doing so, this review will examine the short- and long-term impact of these interventions on disciplinary exclusions and perceived difficult behaviour as well as the factors that either facilitate or inhibit the effects of an intervention.

## Method

The method section is structured according to the seven stage systematic review process described by Petticrew and Roberts (2006): see Table 1, below.

**Table 1. The seven stage quantitative systematic review process adapted from Petticrew and Roberts (2006, p.27)**

Phase	Step	Details
Phase one: searching	1	Clearly define the question that the review is aiming to address, or the hypothesis that the review will test.
	2	Determine the types of studies that need to be located in order to test answer the question
	3	Carry out a comprehensive literature search to locate those studies
	4	Screen the results of the search by sifting through the retrieved studies, deciding which ones look as if they fully meet the inclusion criteria, and thus need more detailed examination and which do not.

Phase	Step	Details
Phase 2: mapping	5	Critically appraise the included studies by extracting data from studies and assessing quality
Phase 3: synthesis	6	Synthesise the studies and assess heterogeneity among the study findings
	7	Disseminate the findings of the review

### Phase one: searching

#### Clearly define the review question

The present review comprises a mixed-methods integrated systematic review that addresses the question: What are the effects of psychological interventions designed to reduce disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools? In doing so, this review had three sub-questions:

- (1) Are there psychological interventions that can effectively decrease disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools?
- (2) What effects do these interventions have in general on the perceived difficult behaviour of pupils?
- (3) What factors (if any) are evident in the papers that either facilitate or inhibit the effects of an intervention?

#### Determine the types of studies that need to be located

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented below:

#### Inclusion criteria:

- Language: English.
- Operational definitions and outcome(s): the study must refer to, and quantify, disciplinary fixed-term and/or permanent exclusion(s) from school.
- Population targeted and setting: secondary age pupils aged 11-18 educated within British mainstream schools.
- Intervention: the nature of the intervention must be defined.

Exclusion criteria:

- Interventions: interventions that involved pupils being removed from their current mainstream secondary school on either a temporary, dual-placement or permanent basis were excluded. Any study in which the intervention was intended to reintegrate already excluded pupils was also eliminated.

Carry out a comprehensive literature search

A systematic literature search of published and unpublished research was undertaken between October 2013 and May 2014. Electronic databases were searched using the combination of search terms detailed in Table 2, below. These terms were developed by considering the review question and the terms used in the literature.

**Table 2. The combination of search terms used in the electronic database search**

<b>Intervention terms</b>	No terms were used in this category as the systematic review aimed to locate different types of interventions.	
<b>Intervention target/outcome terms</b>	(reduc* OR prevent*) AND (exclu* OR expel* OR expul* OR suspen*)	
<b>Context/target population terms</b>	school* <table border="1" data-bbox="1024 1157 1138 1209"><tr><td><b>AND</b></td></tr></table> AND (pupil* OR student* OR child*)	<b>AND</b>
<b>AND</b>		

To identify published literature, the electronic search engines/electronic databases used were Scopus, Web of Knowledge (WoK), Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) and Zetoc. Subsequently, a hand search of journals that were frequently returned in the search results from the electronic database searches was undertaken because electronic database searches are known to be fallible at times, potentially omitting relevant articles. The journals hand searched were *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* and *Pastoral Care in Education*. *The Educational and Child Psychology* journal was also hand searched manually as this journal is not available electronically. This search produced 2711 studies.

A search of unpublished dissertations and theses was undertaken to reduce publication bias or the 'file drawer' problem where studies producing significant results are more likely to be published than studies with inconclusive or null findings (Rosenthal, 1979). To identify relevant unpublished literature, the electronic search databases used were the Newcastle University Library Search, Index to Theses and the Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS). As the search term input box was restricted only the search terms 'exclu\* AND school\*' were used for Index to Theses and EThOS and the term 'exclu\*' was used to search the Newcastle University Library database. This search yielded 1192 studies.

Screen the results of the studies according to inclusion/exclusion criteria

All papers located were screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria yielding eight studies. A citation and reference section search of these articles yielded one further study. A citation and reference section search undertaken on this article yielded no further studies. It was possible to access the full text of all papers. In total, nine studies were found that met the inclusion criteria. These were taken forward to Phase two. A flow chart of the searching process, adapted from the one used by Harden et al. (2004) is detailed in Figure 1, p.16.

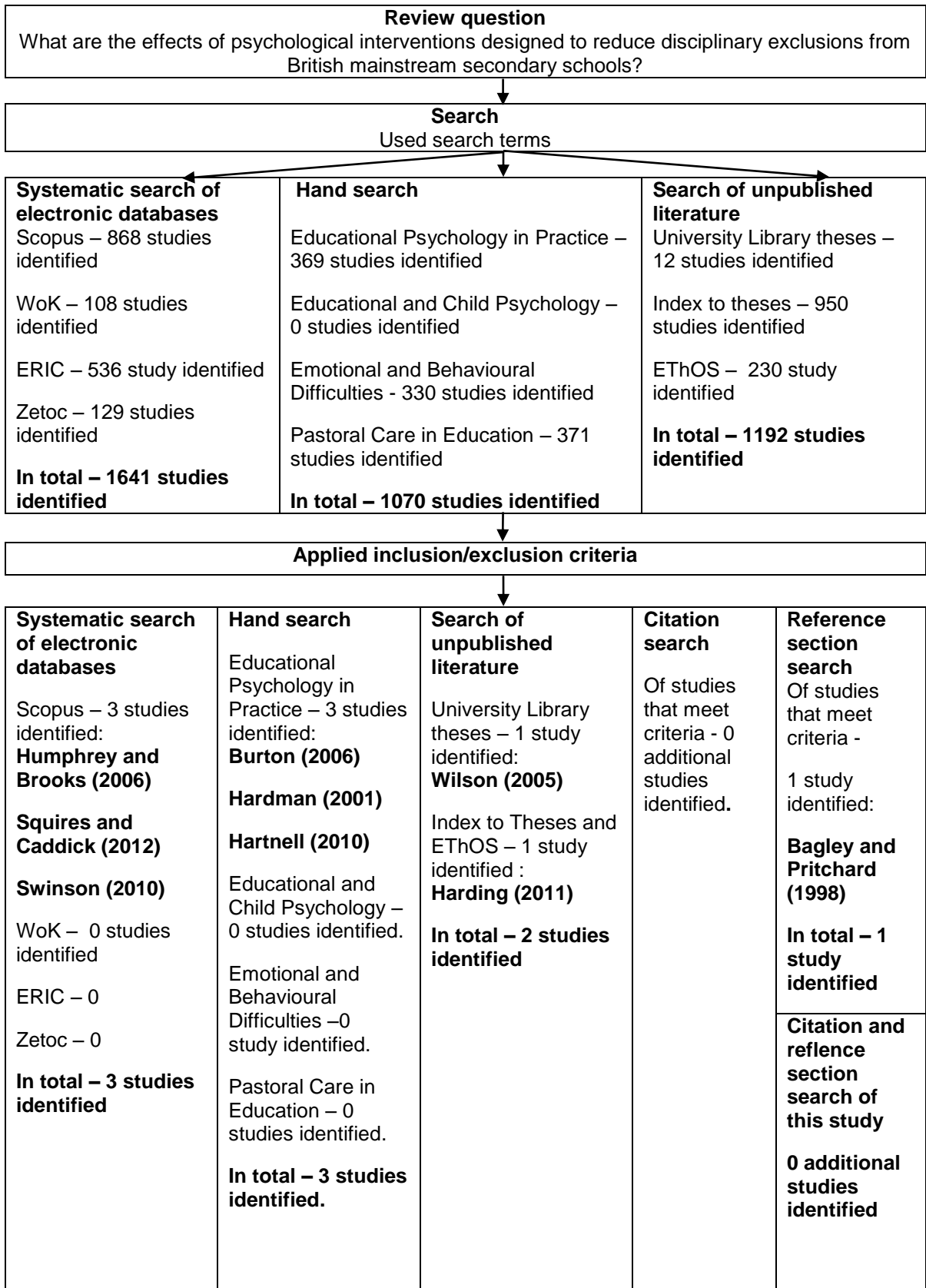
**Phase two: mapping**

Critically appraise the included studies

Data relevant to the review questions were extracted from the nine studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and summarised in Table 3, p.18. Following data extraction, the studies were critically appraised in relation to their quality and relevance. The EPPI Centre Weight of Evidence (WoE) framework (Gough, 2007) was employed (See Table 4, p.38) in order to assess the extent to which each study was affected by bias and whether this bias was large enough to make the study unusable, as well as relevance of study to review question (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).



**Figure 1. Searching process**



### **Phase three: synthesis**

#### Synthesise the studies, assess heterogeneity and disseminate findings

The seven studies deemed to have medium-medium/high overall weight of evidence were further synthesised to address the review question.

## **Findings**

### **General characteristics of the nine studies located via the systematic literature search**

Data extracted from the nine studies relevant to the review questions are summarised in Table 3, p.18. All nine studies were conducted in England. Four studies focused on group work, two adopted an individual approach, two had a multi-level focus and one used a school-level approach. However, eight studies had a therapeutic focus on the pupils, implying the assumption of within-child deficits. All studies used purposeful sampling as they had a particular focus on either supporting children who were perceived by school staff as having challenging behaviour and were at risk of exclusion or specific schools, communities or LAs in need. As studies provided limited information on the demographics of participants this information cannot be summarised accurately and is hence not given here.

Seven studies were conducted by educational psychologists or trainee educational psychologists. Of the two remaining studies, one was conducted by a research director within the field of education research and the other was conducted by a social work university department and funded by the home office. They implied that cost effectiveness of intervention was of importance and suggested that educational psychologists would incur more costs (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998). Specific details of the studies, grouped by systemic level targeted are detailed from page 34 onwards.

**Table 3. Data extraction**

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Social workers and commissioned teachers facilitated multi-agency work: provided therapeutic support– using counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Approaches (CBA) - and social work support to children and families; delivered targeted class lessons; suggested strategies to teachers; altered the bullying and truancy procedures; and facilitated and engaged	Schools in deprived area. High rates of unemployment, poverty, crime, school exclusion rates, social deprivation and delinquency. Does not report the number or characteristics of pupils in secondary school or number of pupils who would have received targeted support.	Multi-level: individual and family, classroom, whole school and community levels. Focus of intervention appears to be based on needs. Three year project.	Mixed-methods, pre/post, controlled study. Control group received standard school support. Purposeful sample.	14–16 year old pupils completed non-standardised questionnaire School records, multi-agency reports and semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and pupils also used.	None.	truancy*, fighting with peers* hard-drug use* theft* bullying NS  No difference in exclusion rates.  However the net rate of retention of difficult pupils was higher: project school accepted more difficult transfers. In doing so they were considered to have saved the Local Authority £168,500.	Not provided. Did not provide sufficient data to calculate effect sizes.

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Bagley and Pritchard (1998)</i> cont.	<p>in multi-agency collaboration to address wider community issues in the housing estate/ community.</p> <p>Intervention based on ecological systems theory. This theory proposes that a child's behaviour results from the interactions between the child and at least four environmental systems including their culture, family history and</p>							

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Bagley and Pritchard (1998) cont.</i>	immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore targeting intervention at these different levels is thought to increase positive outcomes.							
Burton (2006)	'Over to You' programme. Used CBA and counselling techniques.  CBA uses principles of cognitive behavioural therapy which has roots in cognitive therapy and behaviourism (Beck, 1967).	5 pupils in year 8, 12-13 years old. 2 female, 3 male. Participants were defined as being at risk of exclusion as decided by school. They were frequently in trouble as a result of their behaviour. They were chosen for frequency of being in	Group run by EP and assistant head teacher for six 50-60 minute sessions over 6 weeks.	Mixed-methods, pre/post, uncontrolled study. Purposeful sample. No attrition regarding programme but one pupil missed follow-up interview.	Pupils and teachers completed non-standardised questionnaire Pupil interview. Group co-worker's progress report and verbal feedback.	Half a term and at 7 months.	As Burton (2006) only provided descriptive statistics and raw data in relation to their quantitative findings, two related-samples Wilcoxon signed rank tests were undertaken to test the significance of the difference reported: <b>Pupil report: Social skills*</b> <b>Teacher report: Social skills*</b> Qualitative findings: 5 pupils better at paying attention when spoken to and 4 pupils rated selves better at expressing their emotions, and asking for help. Teachers rated 4 as better at using appropriate body language and following rules of play, and 3 better at speaking in pleasant tone of voice. Children also reported improvements in interview: control of	<b>2.97</b> <b>1.51</b>

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Burton (2006) cont.</i>	It proposes that feelings, thoughts and behaviours are linked in a cyclical, but also mutually dependent and reciprocal fashion (Beck, 1967). In turn, the therapist's role is to support the client: understand the link between these components, identify and correct cognitive - or thinking - distortions as well as identify and correct maladaptive behaviours. Questioning and activities are used which are based on	trouble/abusive to pupils/staff. However, group dynamics were also considered.					anger, concentration, better relationships, less arguments at home and school, confidence, talking/shouting out in class when not supposed to, accepting responsibility, less teasing, improved ability to handle failure, responding to teachers with respect and cooperation with teachers. The 2 girls in particular showed considerable reduction in confrontational behaviour, although it was sometimes difficult to ignore provocation from peers. The 2 girls developed stronger relationships with each other. 7 months later pupils were not permanently excluded nor had they received any temporary exclusions. Behavioural improvements were maintained. Continued positive relationships with Assistant Head. 2 girls were completely different in terms of behaviour progress. 3 boys continued to show occasional difficult behaviour in terms of responding with confrontational manner and silly behaviour but were continuing to avoid major incidents and hence had not been referred to Assistant Head.	

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Burton (2006) cont.</i>	classical and operant conditioning, problem-solving, logic and hypothesis testing in real world situations (Cole, 2008).							
Harding (2011)	'Over to You' group work programme.  See Burton (2006) above for details of intervention and underpinning theory.	43 pupils in Year 8 (maximum of 8 in each group), 12-13 years old, 20 experimental, 23 control.  Pupils with behavioural needs who scored Borderline/High for the Behavioural Symptoms subscale on SDQ. Due to attrition the demographics of the final sample were not stated.	Group run by TEP/ researcher and school TA, six one-hour sessions. Two schools.	Quantitative, pre/post, randomised control trial.  Control group: delayed intervention. Purposeful sample. Attrition of 5 children's completed responses	Pupils and teachers completed Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ: R. Goodman, 1997) and Emotional Literacy Checklist (ELC: Faupel, 2003).	6 months for exclusion rate only.	behaviour NS emotional literacy NS <u>Specific findings:</u> <u>Intervention group pupil ratings:</u> <b>Behaviour - total difficulties (SDQ total) NS</b> <b>Behavioural problems (SDQ) NS</b> <b>Emotional literacy – total difficulties (ELC) NS</b> <b>Emotional symptoms: Statistically significant increase suggested*.</b> However, this finding is unlikely to be attributable to the effects of group membership as the groups' scores pre-intervention were significantly different. No further analysis was completed.	<b>0.28</b>  <b>0.03</b> <b>0.24</b>  <b>0.77</b>

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
Harding (2011) cont.							<u>Control group pupil ratings:</u> <b>Behaviour - total difficulties (SDQ total) statistically significant decrease suggested *</b> <b>Behavioural problems (SDQ) statistically significant decrease suggested **</b>  <b>Emotional literacy – total difficulties (ELC) NS</b>  <b>Emotional symptoms (SDQ) NS</b>  <u>Intervention group teacher ratings:</u> <b>Emotional literacy – total difficulties (ELC) NS</b> <b>Empathy (ELC) NS</b> <b>Motivation (ELC) NS</b> <b>Self-regulation (ELC) NS</b> <b>Social skills (ELC) NS</b> <b>Pro-social behaviour (SDQ) NS</b> <b>Behavioural problems (SDQ) NS</b>  <u>Control group teacher ratings:</u> <b>Emotional literacy – total difficulties (ELC) significant decrease suggested*</b> <b>Empathy (ELC) significant decrease suggested*</b> <b>Motivation (ELC) significant decrease suggested*</b>	0.61  1.21  0.15  0.37  0.17 0.53 0.10 0.04 0.04 0.47 0.40  0.87 0.63 0.65



Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Harding (2011) cont.</i>							<p><b>Self-regulation (ELC) significant decrease suggested **</b></p> <p><b>Social skills (ELC) significant decrease suggested*</b></p> <p><b>Pro-social behaviour (SDQ) significant decrease suggested*</b></p> <p><b>Behavioural problems (SDQ) NS</b></p> <p>However, the significant reduction in scores in control group could not be attributed to group membership after further analysis using ANCOVA. ANCOVA was used because between group scores significantly differed pre-intervention.</p> <p>At 6 months follow-up, exclusion rates between experimental and control groups were equal. Both groups had one permanent exclusion, one participant with two fixed-term inclusions and three with one fixed-term exclusion.</p>	<p><b>0.90</b></p> <p><b>0.89</b></p> <p><b>1.06</b></p> <p><b>0.36</b></p>
Hardman (2001)	Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) approach.	Individual, male, year 10, likely to be 14 or 15 years old, considered by school to be at risk of	Individual, 8 week intervention, once per week, 40 minute sessions,	Qualitative Single case study.	Verbal and written reports from child, school staff, parents.	4 months For exclusion only.	Pupil had a more positive view of his behaviour. Motivated to become ideal self. Wanted family to believe he could change. Keen to meet small steps targets. Recognised he could 'be cool' and have a 'good attitude'. At 4 month follow-up pupil was not excluded.	Not applicable as qualitative design and only one participant

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Hardman (2001) cont.</i>	This theory proposes that an individual's sense of self is comprised of core constructs. Through exploring these constructs and alternatives, via questioning and tasks, individuals can be encouraged to experiment with alternative behaviours and reflect on the impact of these to promote positive change (Kelly, 1955).	permanent exclusion.	facilitated by EP.					
Hartnell (2010)	Multi-disciplinary behaviour	Secondary school aged children. No	Multi-level: individual and group work for	Mixed-methods, pre/post,	National and local permanent	None.	LA data - 3.03 exclusions per 1000 in first year of project, 2.6 previous year and 2.83 the year before.	Not provided. Did not

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Hartnell (2010) cont.</i>	support team open to a number of schools in one LA. Provided assessment, consultation, advice, training and intervention. Included individual (counselling) and group therapeutic support to pupils; parenting support; training and support to schools with behaviour policy development; multi-agency meetings for individual cases, classroom, whole-school and community	further information provided.	pupils; parenting skills work; classroom; whole-school; and community levels. Focus of intervention appears to be based on needs. Evaluation over first year project ran. Compared this to data from previous two years.	purposeful sample, uncontrolled	exclusion data per year.			provide sufficient data to calculate effect sizes.

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Hartnell (2010) cont.</i>	<p>issues. Multi-agency team comprised of two specialist EPs (one was team manager), two teachers with specialism in behaviour management, family support workers and primary mental health worker.</p> <p>Intervention is based on ecological systems theory. See Bagley and Pritchard (1998) for details of theory. Intervention is also based on the proposal that a multi-agency team brings</p>							

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Hartnell (2010) cont.</i>	together a range of professionals with different backgrounds and skills in order to collaborate and meet a shared goal (e.g. H. Daniels et al., 2007; Halsey, Gulliver, Johnson, & Kinder, 2005; Hughes, 2006; Leadbetter et al., 2007). In doing so, a multi-agency team can be viewed as an activity system (Leadbetter, 2007).							
Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Short Cognitive-behavioural Anger Management (CBAM)	12 pupils, 4 female, 8 male, aged 13–14 years old (M =14.2 yrs., SD = 5 months).	Group, six one hour sessions over 4 weeks.	Mixed-methods, Single-group Phase change	Teacher completed Revised Rutter Scale for Teachers	4 weeks.	<b>Total difficulties *</b> <b>Emotional outbursts*</b> <b>Behavioural conduct *</b> <b>Pro-social behaviour *</b> <b>Inattentive/hyperactive behaviour</b> <b>N/S</b>	<b>0.4</b> <b>0.48</b> <b>0.52</b> <b>0.62</b> <b>0.2</b>

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Humphrey and Brooks (2006) cont.</i>	intervention.  See Burton (2006) for details of underpinning theory.	Perceived by staff to have anger problems and were at risk of exclusion. Females were black British. Males: 2 boys were African, 3 White British and 3 Black British.		design: baseline – intervention-follow-up, pre/post. Purposeful sample.	(RRST: Rutter, 1967), Naturalistic observation by independent observer familiar with CBAM. Semi-structured interviews with pupils.		At 4 week follow-up behavioural improvements were maintained for emotional outbursts, behavioural conduct and pro-social behaviour. Participants were not excluded.	<b>Mean 0.51</b>
Squires and Caddick (2012)	Low-level CBA based on Penn Resiliency Programme (Gillham, Jaycox, Reivich, Seligman, & Silver, 1990) and Think Good Feel Good books (Stallard, 2002).	12 pupils: 6 experimental, 6 control. 12-13 year olds with externalising behavioural difficulties. 5 girls, 7 boys. Low to average end of expected ability range across range of subjects. At risk of exclusion due to externalising behaviour difficulties with a t score of 60+ on BASC-2.	Group, eight, one hour weekly sessions. Run by second author/EP and school pastoral manager.	Quantitative pre/post, randomised control trial, Matched pairs design. Control group: delayed intervention, continued with normal school support. Purposeful sample.	Children and teachers completed sub-scales of the Behaviour Assessment System for Children (BASC-2: Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).	None.	<b>CBA group pupil rating: School problems stayed similar N/S</b> <b>CBA group pupil rating: Inattention/hyperactivity*</b> <b>Control group pupil rating: reported increase in school problems. Did not report whether statistically significant.</b> <b>Control group pupil rating: reported increase in inattention/hyperactivity. Did not report whether statistically significant.</b> <b>Teachers' rating: reported decrease in school problems for both CBA and control groups respectively. Did not report whether statistically significant.</b> <b>Teachers' rating: reported decrease in externalising behaviour for both CBA and control groups</b>	<b>0.06</b> <b>0.82</b> <b>0.29</b> <b>0.67</b> <b>1.16</b> <b>1.39</b> <b>0.39</b> <b>0.81</b>

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Squires and Caddick (2012) cont.</i>	See Burton (2006) for details of underpinning theory.	Referred by school's pastoral manager.		Attrition of 2 pupils' data. These pupils were excluded.			<b>respectively. Did not report whether statistically significant.</b> One pupil from each group excluded by end of intervention.	
Swinson (2010)	External multi-agency team facilitated consultations with pupils, parents and school staff in one secondary school in order to modify the school's behaviour policy. Team comprised of EP, advisory teacher and behavioural consultant.  See Hartnell (2010) for details of underpinning theory. Pupils were also included in the	1200 pupils on roll but unclear the extent to which each child was involved.	Whole school approach implemented over one school year.	Mixed, pre/post uncontrolled study. Purposeful sample.	Classroom observation schedules. Pupil, teacher and parent interviews. School records.	3 years.	On task behaviour of year 9s*  Reduction in permanent exclusion: one exclusion in third year of project as opposed to 5 in year project introduced.	Not provided. Did not provide sufficient data to calculate effect sizes

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Swinson (2010) cont.</i>	consultations/ decision-making processes that impacted on them. Research suggests this increases the success of school policies as pupils take ownership and understand the underlying philosophy and purpose (e.g Rowe, 2006).							
Wilson (2005)	Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) approach.  SFBT is based on the theory that problems exist in a social context. In turn, attempting to	8 pupils: 2 girls, 6 boys, in year 7: 11-12 years old. At risk of permanent exclusion. Already had fixed-term exclusions at primary and in first term at secondary school.	Individual. Intervention ran over one term. Pupils had 3 sessions minimum: most received between 4-10 sessions depending on needs, for 50 minutes.	Mixed-methods. Action research paradigm, pre/post. Purposeful sample. Attrition of 4 pupils: originally 12 pupils referred.	Pupils completed solution-focused scaling questions regarding individual targets, teachers completed non-standardised	At about 14 weeks post therapy (at end of school year) for exclusion only.	<b>school reports: Fighting incidents*</b> <b>school reports: Disruptive incidents**</b> <b>school reports: Temporary exclusion incidents**</b> <b>7 of the 8 pupils improved significantly in relation to individualised targets*</b> <b>Teacher ratings of pupil behaviour towards more in keeping with class expectation**</b>	<b>1.08</b> <b>1.50</b> <b>1.90</b>  These effect sizes were not provided. Did not provide sufficient data to



Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Wilson (2005) cont.</i>	understand the causes of problems may not support solutions. Instead clients can be supported, via questioning and tasks, to: identify exceptions to the problem and do more of what works; identify personal goals; and recognise strengths and solutions. SFBT proposes that individuals can be supported to: recognise that they have the resources to resolve their own difficulties; that they are competent	Nominated by school SENCo or year leader as in need of additional support due to presenting behavioural difficulties.	Facilitated by EP.	Only 83 out of a possible 142 (58%) teacher responses were returned.	solution-focused based questionnaire Case notes, researcher diaries, school records, verbal feedback on pupils progress at weekly meetings. Parents completed unstructured interview.		Qualitative findings: All pupils identified improvement in at least one target. One pupil only set one target. 5 out of 8 reported improvements in all targets. One pupil progressed in 2 out of 3 targets. One pupil reported improvement in only one target with no change in others. Overall, 21 problem behaviours were identified by pupils. 18 of these behaviours were rated as improved by the final session. At approximately 14 weeks post-intervention (at end of school year) none of the pupils had been permanently excluded.	calculate them.

Study	Details of intervention tools and underpinning theory	Participants'/ Schools' characteristics	Focus of intervention and duration	Design	Sources of evidence	Follow-up	Gains made * = statistically significant effect, p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, NS = no significant gains made	Effect Size (d)
<i>Wilson (2005) cont.</i>	and in control of their behaviour; and a small change can lead to wider changes within an individual's ecosystem (de Shazer, 1985).							

## **General characteristics of the nine studies located via the systematic literature search (continued)**

### Studies intervening at individual level

Two studies intervened at an individual level. Hardman (2001) employed a Personal Construct Psychology Approach (PCP: Kelly, 1955) and Wilson (2005) used a solution-focused brief therapy approach (SFBT: de Shazer, 1985), to provide one-to-one therapeutic intervention. Although the studies focused on the individual pupils, both stated they suggested strategies for school staff (Hardman, 2001; Wilson, 2005), and Hardman (2001) additionally assisted parents, to help the child effectively using information gained during therapeutic sessions.

Sample size varied from one to eight participants. The length of sessions varied from 40 to 50 minutes, the number of sessions varied from three to ten sessions and duration of programme ranged from eight weeks to sessions spread over one school term. The studies provided follow-up data for between approximately fourteen weeks to four months post-intervention.

### Studies intervening at group level

Four studies evaluated group work programmes which adopted a cognitive-behavioural approach (CBA). Sample size varied from five to 43 participants. The length of sessions varied from 50 minutes to one hour, the number of sessions varied from six to eight sessions and duration of programme ranged from four to eight weeks. Three studies provided follow-up data for between four weeks and seven months post-intervention.

### Study intervening at the school level

Swinson (2010) studied the impact of an external multi-agency team who facilitated consultations with pupils, parents and school staff in one secondary school in order to modify the school's behaviour policy. Although Swinson (2010) detailed the number of pupils on roll, it was not stated how many were involved at each stage of the project. The project was evaluated over the period of one year and follow-up data were provided each year for three years post introduction of intervention.

### Studies intervening at a multiple levels

Two studies intervened at multiple levels. Bagley and Pritchard's (1998) study details how social workers worked with commissioned teachers to facilitate multi-agency work and provide therapeutic and social work support at the individual pupil and family level, delivered targeted class lessons, suggested strategies to teachers and altered the bullying and truancy procedures at a school level; and facilitated and engaged in multi-agency collaboration to address wider community issues, at the housing estate level. The project was run and evaluated over a three year period. A sample size for the secondary school was not specified.

Hartnell (2010) evaluated the impact of a LA multi-agency project which provided assessment, consultation, advice, training and intervention at a number of systemic levels. Pupil and parent level support included individual and group therapeutic interventions for children, support for individuals and groups of parents and the facilitation of multi-agency meetings for individual cases. School level support included staff training, support with behaviour policy development and facilitating multi-agency meetings for classroom and whole-school issues. Multi-agency meetings also addressed wider issues at a community level. A sample size was not provided. The project was evaluated over the period of one year.

### **Design characteristics of the nine studies**

Four studies employed a pre-post experimental design, three were controlled studies, one was qualitative and one was a single-group phase change design. In terms of steps taken to increase internal validity, of the three controlled studies two (Harding, 2011; Squires & Caddick, 2012) randomly allocated participants to conditions and two (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Squires & Caddick, 2012) employed a matching process: the control and intervention schools were matched according to similar deprivation characteristics, and participants were matched according to scores on a behavioural questionnaire, respectively.

The control groups received standard school support. Two studies' control groups acted as delayed intervention groups (Harding, 2011; Squires & Caddick, 2012). Bagley and Pritchard (1998) did not report whether their control group eventually

received intervention. Additionally, two controlled studies reported that they took steps to maximise intervention fidelity (Harding, 2011; Squires & Caddick, 2012).

Six studies did not employ a control group. This makes it difficult to say with confidence that any positive change post-intervention was due to the intervention. Other factors that may explain a positive change include spontaneous remission, time, selection effects or socialisation of school.

Nevertheless, five of the six remaining studies which did not use a control group presented as being designed with research and publication in mind. The majority had made attempts to ensure experimental rigour and reduce bias by triangulating data and using mixed-methods for example, albeit with varying success. They also acknowledged their studies' limitations and the conclusions that could be drawn as a result. The remaining uncontrolled study by Hardman (2001) appeared to be a retrospective reflective account of a piece of successful casework. Although Hardman's (2001) paper met the inclusion criteria for the present review it was clearly designed for practice only and therefore lacked methodological rigour.

Additionally, all studies used purposeful sampling which can limit external validity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Nevertheless, purposeful sampling was appropriate in this context as researchers focused on specific populations; either pupils at risk of exclusion<sup>2</sup> or schools and communities where it was deemed that there was a high risk of pupils being excluded from school. Furthermore, as four studies were deemed not to have provided adequate demographic information their generalisability is unknown. Although the population is clearly not a homogenous group in terms of their individualised characteristics as well as school staffs' views of their characteristics and what is considered acceptable behaviour, providing more information on participants' characteristics would have been helpful to inform generalisability.

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<sup>2</sup> Studies described participants as being at risk of exclusion as determined by either a subjective view of school staff, based on a descriptive criteria set by the researcher (e.g. Burton, 2006), or by using a psychometric measure where the child's score was used to inform risk (e.g. Harding (2011)). Please see Table 3, column labeled 'Participants'/school's characteristics', p.16 for each study's 'at risk' criteria if provided.

Moreover, in terms of sample size, three studies did not specify their exact sample size (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Hartnell, 2010; Swinson, 2010). Five studies were small scale studies with low sample sizes ranging from one to 12 participants. Although many of the small scale studies' findings were significant, small sample sizes can increase the likelihood of inaccurate results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Hence, the small sample size of the majority of studies limits both their internal and external validity.

### **Findings from the application of the Weight of Evidence (WoE) tool**

Table 4, p.38 presents the findings from the application of the WoE tool (Gough, 2007). The WoE tool subjected each study to twelve questions in relation to methodological soundness. Then these answers were considered when answering four further questions. This table suggests that seven studies were deemed to have medium-medium/high overall WoE. Harding (2011) had medium/high overall WoE, as it was judged to have had medium/high experimental rigour and more closely addressed the review questions.

The six studies with medium overall WoE tended to have medium/low experimental rigour which was mainly because of low or unreported sample sizes, and limited reliability and validity of measures, which limits internal and external validity. Although, Bagley and Pritchard's (1998) study was controlled the control school was deemed to be incomparable to the intervention school, measures were unstandardised and there was a lack of detail in terms of data collection and analysis.

**Table 4. Weight of evidence findings**

	A How trustworthy are the study findings in terms of answering the study's question(s)?	B How appropriate is the design and analysis in terms of answering the systematic review question(s)?	C How appropriate is the focus of the study in terms of answering the systematic review question(s)?	D Based on the answers to questions A – C, what is the overall weight of evidence this study provides to answer the systematic review question(s)?
Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Burton (2006)	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Harding (2011)	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High
Hardman (2001)	Low	Low	Medium/Low	Low
Hartnell (2010)	Medium/Low	Low	Low	Low
Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Squires and Caddick (2012)	Medium	Medium/High	Medium	Medium
Swinson (2010)	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Wilson (2005)	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

The two studies that had low overall weight of evidence were Hardman (2001), which has already been discussed as a study with low experimental rigour, and Hartnell (2010). Although Hartnell (2010) had medium/low trustworthiness in terms of their study's questions, it provided minimal information of relevance for the present review. The study mainly combined both primary school and secondary school data, the section that was relevant to the present review was limited and the outcome measure used to evaluate the impact of the project on secondary school exclusion rates were LA data on exclusion rates. However, as 88.5% of pupils within the LA who were excluded did not access the project, it is argued that Hartnell

(2010) could not link their findings to the LA exclusion rates. Both Hartnell's (2010) and Hardman's (2001) studies were eliminated at this point.

### Addressing the systematic review questions

The remaining seven studies were further coded according to the outcome variables of relevance to each question:

Addressing question: (1). Are there psychological interventions that can effectively decrease disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools?

The observed difference made in terms of reducing the number of exclusions in each study are detailed in Table 5, below.

**Table 5. Exclusion outcomes by study**

Outcome variable	Study	Difference observed?	Time period post introduction of intervention	Effect size(d)
Number of permanent exclusions	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	N	3 years	
	Burton (2006)	Y	7 months	
	Harding (2011)	N	6 months	
	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Y	4 weeks	
	Swinson (2010)	Y	3 years	
	Wilson (2005)	Y	2 terms (approx. 25 weeks)	
	Squires and Caddick (2012)	N	8 weeks	
Number of fixed-term exclusions	Burton (2006)	Y	7 months	
	Harding (2011)	N	6 months	
	Wilson (2005)	Y	One term (approx. 14 weeks)	1.90
Net gain <sup>3</sup>	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Y	3 years	

<sup>3</sup> Retention of difficult pupils: the difference between difficult students being transferred into the school as a result of the schools' willingness to include these pupils and pupils who were permanently excluded.



Only Wilson (2005) undertook statistical analysis. The other studies had very small incidences of exclusions and hence statistical analysis was not appropriate. In terms of the three studies that measured fixed-term exclusions, two suggested that a cognitive-behavioural approach (CBA) group and SFBT individual intervention reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions, respectively (Burton, 2006; Wilson, 2005). In addition, Wilson's (2005) calculated effect size of 1.90 suggested that the intervention had a large impact. The remaining study by Harding (2011) suggested that the same CBA intervention Burton (2006) used did not reduce the likelihood of fixed-term exclusions.

Of the seven studies that addressed permanent exclusions, four suggested the following interventions had a positive impact: CBA group work (Burton, 2006; Humphrey & Brooks, 2006); a revision of a school's behavioural policy in consultation with stakeholders (Swinson, 2010), and individual sessions of SFBT (Wilson, 2005). In contrast, three studies implied their interventions did not have an impact: CBA group work (Harding, 2011; Squires & Caddick, 2012) and a school social work project (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998). Nevertheless, Bagley and Pritchard (1998) reported that although exclusion rates were similar between project and control school, the project school was more willing to accept transfers of difficult pupils and hence net gains were made in terms of the retention in mainstream schools of difficult pupils, i.e. preventing exclusion.

Overall, it is important to interpret these findings with caution because of the limited number of studies; the majority had only a Medium overall WoE, and had relatively small follow-up periods which limit the attribution of the findings to the interventions. In addition, as pre-post designs can inflate effect sizes by up to a third (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), Wilson's (2005) large effect size may be inaccurate. The three studies that suggested there were no differences in permanent exclusion rates were the three controlled studies. Harding's (2011) study was considered to have medium/high overall WoE and hence to be more trustworthy than the other two controlled studies. Similarly Harding (2011) was the only study that suggested there were no changes in the rate of fixed-term exclusions. However, there is the possibility that the interventions may have had noticeable effects if the

implementation of the intervention was altered, such as the length of the programme, and/or the subsequent follow-up periods were increased.

***Summary answer to question 1: Are there psychological interventions that can effectively decrease disciplinary exclusions from British mainstream secondary schools?***

At present, few studies provide sound evidence that any one form of intervention is likely to reduce exclusion rates.

Addressing question: (2). What effects do these interventions have in general on the perceived difficult behaviour of pupils?

This section details the short- and long-term quantitative and qualitative behavioural outcomes.

*Short-term effects*

Table 6, p.42 details the short-term quantifiable outcomes by study and shows that the foci were: 'general behaviour' (measured on 10 occasions, significant changes suggested on 4 occasions), 'engagement in learning' (measured on 6 occasions, significant changes on 4 occasions), 'emotional literacy' (measured on 6 occasions, significant changes on 1 occasion), 'social skills' (5 occasions, significant changes on 2 occasions), 'conflict with peers' (3 occasions, significant changes on 2 occasions) and 'illegal/risk taking' behaviours (2 occasions, significant changes on all occasions). Fifteen of the 32 outcomes measured were significant. Harding (2011) was the only study that did not suggest significant effects for any outcome variable.

Effect sizes were provided, or could be calculated, for 23 outcomes. Of these, six were large (greater than 0.8), three were medium (greater than 0.5), eight were small (greater than 0.2) and six suggested no effect.

**Table 6. Quantitative behavioural outcomes (short-term)**

<b>Outcome variable</b>	<b>Specifics</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Significant gains made?</b>	<b>Effect size (d)</b>
General behaviour/ conduct	Problem behaviours– total	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Y	0.40
	Total difficulties	Harding (2011)	N	0.28
	Personalised behaviour targets	Wilson (2005)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated
	Conduct	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Y	0.52
	Acceptable behaviour in class	Wilson (2005)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated
	Behavioural problems	Harding (2011)	Pupil – N Teacher - N	0.03 0.40
	Externalising behaviour	Squires and Caddick (2012)	Gains made but did not report whether significant.	0.39
	School problems	Squires and Caddick (2012)	Pupil – N Teacher- Gains made but did not report whether significant.	0.06 1.16
Engagement with learning	On-task behaviour	Swinson (2010)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated
	Motivation	Harding (2011)	N	0.10
	Truancy	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated.
	Inattention/hyperactivity	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	N	0.2

<b>Outcome variable</b>	<b>Specifics</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Significant gains made?</b>	<b>Effect size (d)</b>
	Inattention/hyperactivity	Squires and Caddick (2012)	Y	0.82
	Disruptive/ uncooperative incidents	Wilson (2005)	Y	1.5
Emotional literacy	Emotional literacy - Total	Harding (2011)	Pupil – N Teacher - N	0.24 0.17
	Self-regulation	Harding (2011)	N	0.04
	Emotional symptoms	Harding (2011)	N	Not provided as not considered accurate by Harding (2011)
	Emotional outbursts	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Y	0.48
	Empathy	Harding (2011)	N	0.53
Social skills	Social skills – total	Burton (2006)	Pupils – Y Teachers – Y	2.97 1.51
	Social skills	Harding (2011)	N	0.04
	Pro-social behaviour	Harding (2011)	N	0.47
	Pro-social behaviour	Humphrey and Brooks (2006)	Y	0.62
Conflict with peers	Fighting	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated
	Fighting	Wilson (2005)	Y	1.08
	Bullying	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	N	Not provided. Could not be calculated
Illegal/risk taking behaviour	Theft	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Y	Not provided. Could not be calculated
	Hard drug use	Bagley and Pritchard (1998)	Y	As above

In terms of short-term qualitative findings only Burton (2006) is relevant here given the study's design. Table 7, below provides a summary of these. The additional outcomes include: 'positive relationships', 'respect for others', 'self-help skills' and 'taking responsibility for behaviour'.

**Table 7. Qualitative outcomes (short-term)**

<b>Outcome variable</b>	<b>Specifics</b>
Social skills, in general	Better relationships with peers, family and assistant head teacher (group co-leader)
	Responding to teachers with respect
	Paying attention when spoken to
	Speaking in pleasant tone of voice
	Following rules of play
	Using appropriate body language
	Better cooperation with teachers
	Asking for help as appropriate
	Sometimes difficult to ignore provocation from peers
Positive relationships	Better relationships with peers, family and assistant head teacher (group co-leader)
Respect for others	Responding to teachers with respect
	Paying attention when spoken to
	Speaking in pleasant tone of voice
	Following rules of play
	Using appropriate body language
	Better cooperation with teachers
Self-help skills	Asking for help as appropriate
Taking responsibility for behaviour	Accepting responsibility for behaviour
Attention and concentration skills	Paying attention when spoken to
Emotional literacy	Improved ability to handle failure

Long-term effects

The long-term quantitative impact of interventions is detailed in Table 8, p. 45. Only Humphrey and Brooks (2006) undertook follow-up of quantitative behavioural outcomes. Table 8 suggests that Humphrey and Brooks (2006) observed improvements in prosocial behaviour, behavioural conduct, and emotional outburst had been maintained to a certain extent; effect sizes had reduced, but that pupils' reduction in general problem behaviours had not been maintained.

**Table 8. Quantitative behavioural outcomes (long-term)**

<b>Outcome variable</b>	<b>Significant gains made?</b>	<b>Effect size (d)</b>
Total problem behaviours composite	N	0.04
Emotional outbursts	Y	0.22
Behavioural conduct	Y	0.31
Prosocial behaviour	Y	0.51
Hyperactivity/inattention	N	0.00

In terms of long-term qualitative findings only Burton (2006) is relevant here given the study's design. Seven months post-intervention Burton (2006) suggested that the behavioural improvements had been maintained for all five participants; although the three male pupils continued to present occasional difficult behaviour in terms of responding in a confrontational manner and presenting immature behaviour these were reduced and were not of significance to be a major cause for concern. In addition, the two girls' behaviour presented as completely changed for the better.

Taking this entire section as a whole, it is important to interpret the findings with caution because of the small number of studies; the majority of which had medium overall WoE, were of pre-post design, had small sample sizes and lacked follow-up data.

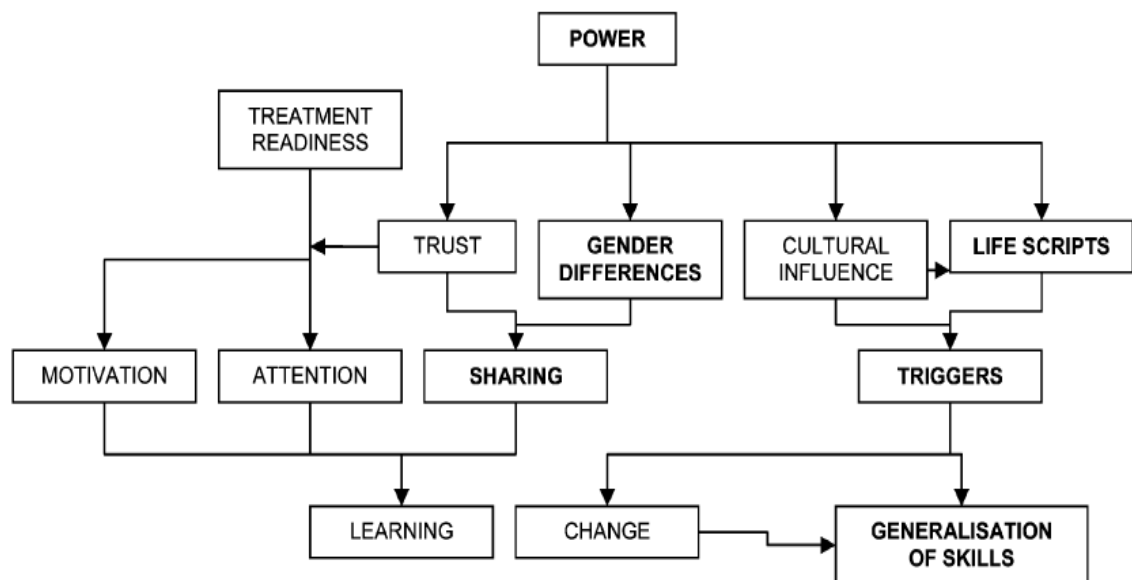
***Summary answer to question 2: What effects do these interventions have in general on the perceived difficult behaviour of pupils?***

There is some evidence that different ways of working with children may change perceptions of behaviour and/or the incidence of inappropriate behaviours. However the limitations of the studies reduce confidence that any particular intervention should be applied.

Addressing question (3). What factors (if any) are evident in the papers that either facilitate or inhibit the effects of an intervention?

As Humphrey and Brooks (2006) alone set out to address this by using qualitative research just their findings are reported here. Other studies only postulated facilitatory and/or inhibitory factors. Figure 2, p.47, provides an overview of Humphrey and Brooks (2006) themes and the relationships between them. The key themes are in bold.

**Figure 2. Overview of Humphrey and Brooks' (2006) findings in relation to facilitatory/inhibitory factors, taken from Humphrey and Brooks (2006, p.15).**



As it is a study of a specific intervention, in which the sample size was small and the majority of pupils were of non-white ethnic origin, the findings are unlikely to be generalisable. In addition, as the researcher/co-facilitator conducted interviews pupils may not have been as honest as they would have had an independent interviewer conducted them. Nevertheless, these findings are of importance and provide a useful starting point for further exploration in future studies.

Humphrey and Brooks (2006) suggested that *Notions of Power* in the classroom was an important factor that influenced the success of intervention. Pupils perceived that teachers would deliberately attempt to trigger anger outbursts and the general perceived power of teachers impacted on the pupils' ability to generalise skills and created feelings of inferiority which in turn triggered behaviour.

Furthermore, *Life Scripts* about how pupils expected to be treated or respected by others was another important factor. Life scripts or core beliefs are thought to develop over time, are resistant to change and can be passed onto children and young people from significant others (Steiner, 1990). Pupils suggested that behaviour could be triggered by perceived insult to their identity or perceiving that a

situation or comment from others conflicts with their life scripts. Life scripts were influenced by the shared street *Culture* of maintaining respect for self and from others.

Other important factors included: *Gender*; the girls expressed they found it difficult to participate in a group that included males for fear of being laughed at, *Sharing*; opportunities to share thoughts, feelings and experiences with others was important to the success of group, and *Treatment Readiness*; the acknowledgement by pupils that their behaviour is problematic and readiness to change and participate in therapeutic group work.

***Summary answer to question 3: What factors (if any) are evident in the papers that either facilitate or inhibit the effects of an intervention?***

One paper suggested that 'notions of power in the classroom', 'life scripts', 'gender', 'sharing thoughts feelings and experiences' and 'treatment readiness' impacted on the effects of intervention. However given that this was only one study, with a number of limitations and with a specific focus on CBA, these findings may not be reliable and/or be generalisable.

## **Discussion**

The present review explored the effectiveness of psychological interventions aiming to reduce school exclusions in order to inform educational psychology practice and identify gaps within the literature for future research. The limited number of studies and their limitations suggests caution is required when interpreting the findings. Nevertheless, there was some evidence to suggest that interventions including CBA, SFBT, multi-agency work at both a school and community level; providing advice to staff, social care support, targeted class lessons, and/or modifying school behavioural policy and procedures may impact on exclusion rates and behaviour. There was also some evidence that factors such as 'notions of power in the classroom', 'life scripts', 'gender', 'sharing thoughts feelings and experiences' and 'treatment readiness' may impact on intervention success.



Limited evidence does not necessarily mean that interventions are in-effective. There is the possibility that these interventions could be effective but limitations of the studies, and the lack of consideration of factors that may impact on intervention success result in insignificant findings. For example, measuring exclusion rates as an outcome measure may not be accurate, pupils at risk of exclusion are not a homogeneous population and it is increasingly being recognised that implementation factors as well as the type of intervention impacts on success (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Therefore, for an intervention to be successful a flexible approach that meets the needs of individual pupils may be required (Lloyd, Stead, & Kendrick, 2003). Future research should take this information into consideration.

Nevertheless, there is some support for the review's findings. Boyd (2012) similarly suggested that solution-oriented and CBA interventions as well as motivation in the form of treatment readiness may impact on exclusion intervention success. Similarly, Spink (2011) suggested that taking a multi-systemic approach and multi-agency work impacted on the success of intervention. Furthermore, Cole (2008) suggested that CBA is a successful intervention for teenagers with anger-related behavioural difficulties but group dynamics and gender may impact on success. This supporting evidence, suggests that the findings in the present review warrant further exploration.

### **Limitations of review**

The review's conclusions could be limited by only having one reviewer. Having only one reviewer increases the likelihood of data extraction bias, where the reviewer unintentionally biases the review by extracting data from studies that correspond with their own views, makes biased judgments on studies weight of evidence or is more critical of studies that contradict their views (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Wortman, 1994). However it was not practically or financially possible to have multiple reviewers. Instead, in order to minimise the likelihood of bias the author remained consciously aware of this type of bias and attempts were made to undertake the review systematically and transparently using the process detailed in the Method section, p.12.

The review also focused on British studies only. This decision was made to increase confidence that the findings would be of practical relevance to the schools where I work. On the other hand, studies from out with the UK may have informed intervention that could be applied in Britain. However, given the number of non-UK studies in this area, reviewing this large number of studies would have been unmanageable for a single reviewer.

### **Recommendations for practice**

Although there is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of psychological interventions designed to reduce exclusions, there is the possibility that they are effective but not for all pupils, as pupils are a heterogeneous population, and/or their effectiveness can be increased by considering potential facilitatory/inhibitory factors such as gender, group dynamics, life scripts, power, sharing, and readiness to engage. In addition to these individual and group work factors, this review also highlights wider school factors to consider including the school behaviour policy, multi-agency work, staff training and targeted class lessons.

If an EP or school were to consider using the interventions, then I would firstly suggest caution as there is limited evidence to suggest that they will be effective. However, no intervention is guaranteed to be effective and there may be no other suitable interventions currently available to meet the needs of the given pupil(s). If schools decided to go ahead, I would suggest careful monitoring and evaluation after each session, as well as being flexible in implementation in response to individual/group needs.

### **Recommendations for future research**

This review has a number of implications for future research. Improvements that could be made include: an increase in the number of studies and participants, ensuring longer term follow-ups, providing more details of participant demographics, adopting mixed-methods designs, triangulating data and further exploration of the factors that may impact on intervention success (Gough, 2007; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Further research could also consider the individual needs of participants by considering whether some of them may require further intervention sessions or

support (Wilson, 2005), and whether measuring individualised goals and outcomes using Goal Attainment Scaling or Targeted Monitoring and Evaluation methods may be more helpful and accurate than applying the same measures to all participants (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009).

In addition, the majority of studies focused on intervening therapeutically at the individual child/group level only and the general focus of disciplinary exclusion intervention literature is on transfer to alternative provisions. This suggests that challenging behaviour is often attributed to internal factors or characteristics at the child-level. In other words the assumption is that the root of 'problem' is located firmly within the child, underplaying or ignoring the impact of environmental factors (Lindsay, 2003).

There is a dearth of research exploring school factors such as the sources of teacher beliefs in relation to difficult behaviour to inform intervention. Teachers' self-efficacy<sup>4</sup> beliefs in relation to working with difficult behaviour (Gibbs & Powell, 2012) and the school ethos (Children's Commissioner, 2012; Hatton, 2013; Munn, Lloyd, & Cullen, 2000) have been found to be associated with exclusion rates. Indeed, transfer to alternative provision may reflect teachers' beliefs that they cannot meet the needs of children who present with challenging behaviour. To the best of my knowledge, there is no research which has explored the sources of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs to inform intervention at the classroom and school level (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Consequently, this will be explored in my empirical research study.

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<sup>4</sup> Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs refer to an individual's beliefs about his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Bandura, 1977). It has been suggested that teacher self-efficacy beliefs are domain specific. In the Empirical Research Report, teachers' self-efficacy in relation to working effectively with children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour will be examined.

## **Chapter 2. Bridging document**

This chapter was produced to serve a number of functions. One of the purposes was to explain my rationale for the: overall topic, systematic review and empirical research project. In doing so, I will explain both my own personal and professional reasons for engaging in the research in addition to the rationale provided in the literature.

Second, this document will also explain my epistemological stance. Last, it will discuss the research process in greater detail than is provided in both chapters one and three in terms of the rationale for my decisions, points where my perspective may have changed, as well as the challenges I came across and how these were addressed.

### **Deciding on the research topic: exploring general challenging behaviour literature**

I first decided on the general area: 'interventions for challenging behaviour in mainstream school settings for a number of reasons. However, firstly it is important to define what I mean by 'challenging behaviour' and 'interventions'. I take a critical realist stance towards the definition of challenging behaviour. In line with Purdie, Hattie, and Carroll (2002) who described the medical model of disability, which proposed that behavioural norms and expectations exist, I believe that there are behaviours that children can display that can be perceived as challenging to all adults. For example, if a child is physically and verbally aggressive, demonstrates refusal behaviours and causes ongoing low-level disruption in the presence of the majority or all adults they come in contact with, I think most, many teachers would find this is challenging. However, for the majority of cases, in line with McLeod (2010) and Purdie et al. (2002) who stated that behaviour can be interpreted in different ways, I believe that challenging behaviour can also be an individual adult's perception within a given context [e.g. it is likely that the adult's view of the child's perceived behaviour has resulted from a complex interaction between a range of within-child and physical and psychological environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner,

1979; A. Daniels & Williams, 2000; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Williams & Daniels, 2000)].

Thus, behaviour that challenges one adult may not challenge another. For example, a girl who was reluctant to speak was described to me as being 'naughty' and 'defiant' whereas I viewed her refusal to speak as a means of communication which needed to be understood. In addition, there are also situations where the same child may display challenging behaviour in one context to a particular adult but not to another, perhaps because there are adults or environmental factors that are better at supporting the given young person. In sum, I would define challenging behaviour as: behaviour that an individual adult perceives has a negative impact on them, the child and/or other children. I produced my own definition in light of insufficient definitions within the wider literature.

In turn, I would define intervention within a behaviour context as psychological-based involvement that is facilitated or delivered by an adult to promote positive change in relation to the function and/or cause of the child's given behaviour whether that be social, emotional and mental health; communication and interaction; cognition and learning; and/or physical and sensory difficulties within a given context (Andersen, 1992; Cole, 2008; LaGreca & Varni, 1993; Michael, 2011; Schwanz & Barbour, 2004; Smith, 2012).

In terms of the reasons for choosing this topic I wanted to choose an area of high relevance to my current and future practice. Over the past three years on placement a large proportion of referrals for educational psychology involvement were for challenging behaviour. In addition, the perceived negative impact on the child, school staff and/or other children and the emotive nature of the topic was highly evident. These anecdotal observations and reports correspond with literature (Children's Commissioner, 2012; A. Daniels & Williams, 2000; Faupel & Hardy, 2013).

In addition, there is a personal reason why I chose this topic. I do not think I fully recognised this until I started writing this bridging document. Prior to starting the course I worked as a support worker with children who had additional support needs.

If I perceived a child to have challenging behaviour in the form of physical and verbal outbursts, particularly more so at the start of my working career, I found this very difficult to deal with. I can remember feeling frightened that a child could physically harm me and powerless to help them and myself. I thought 'I'm not the sort of person suited to working with children like this'. I felt that my strengths lay in working with children who did not present with challenging behaviour and my supervisors often placed me on a 1:1 or small group basis with children who were unlikely to present challenging behaviour.

I remember going on training sessions and having discussions in supervision about behaviour and thinking 'I don't know how to apply this to the real world' and asking 'how do I help these children?' and never getting a helpful answer. For one particular child my supervisor said 'ignore him' though the more I ignored this child the more their behaviour escalated and I felt helpless. I remember often being in situations where I froze and could not apply anything and called for back-up from my colleagues. In sum, during this time I would describe myself as having extremely low self-efficacy in terms of supporting children's behavioural development.

Then one day during a summer playscheme my supervisor asked me to work on a 1:1 basis with a boy. I was aware that he had a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and general learning difficulties. My supervisor explained that no one else working that day had the level of experience I had to work with him effectively. She said she believed I could do it. I felt unsure but then I thought my supervisor had given me some encouraging words and if I did not work with this boy and someone else did there could be an incident where someone could be harmed and/or the child would not enjoy his day. On reflection, my approach to working with him did not significantly differ from my approach with other children. I am a generally calm person who talks to children about their interests and keeps them busy with lots of structured and unstructured individual and group activities. There were times where I encouraged him to have a break when I noticed he was becoming highly excitable. Therefore in general I used a similar approach but was more exhausted than I usually was due to the more effort required.

At the end of the day my supervisor commented on how happy this boy presented throughout the day and how well I supported him. She also commented that no other member of staff had been able to develop a positive working relationship with him like I had. This was a moment that challenged the pre-existing beliefs I held about my capabilities to work effectively with children who were likely to demonstrate aggressive and physical behaviours. My supervisor had supported me to develop my self-efficacy beliefs by offering me positive feedback, which has been suggested to be one of four sources of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, I recognised the importance of building relationships and interacting with children effectively to support behaviour (e.g. Bomber, 2008; Hart, 2010; Kennedy, Landor, & Todd, 2011; Mowat, 2010). Since that occasion, I have worked with a number of children in similar circumstances. In addition to staff making positive comments and seeking advice from me, I also recognised through personal reflection on experience that my self-efficacy in relation to challenging behaviour was increasing. This has continued to develop throughout my working career.

Consequently, when I visit mainstream schools as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in relation to challenging behaviour referrals and observe the situation and have discussions with school staff, what I see and hear about their lived experiences often strikes a chord with me. Experiences do shape us. I will inwardly acknowledge my personal beliefs and experiences. However, I am professional and objective in my approach to any given situation.

In addition to my interest in challenging behaviour, I am also interested in how children with perceived challenging behaviour can be included successfully within mainstream settings. I support inclusion from a rights perspective (e.g. Education Act, 1996; Equality Act, 2010; UNESCO, 1994). In doing so, I would like to acknowledge my bias towards mainstream education for all children. However, I am aware that children with challenging behaviour can be perceived to be the most difficult to include within mainstream settings (Armstrong, 2014; Cook & Cameron, 2010; Faupel & Hardy, 2013).

Consequently, I explored the general area in a scoping exercise considering 'How can children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour be supported in

mainstream school settings to behave appropriately and progress across all aspects of development, in order to advise and support school staff, parents and the children themselves?’

### **Deciding on the focus of the systematic review**

When conducting preliminary searches based on the initial question I had, I recognised that the question: ‘How can children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour be supported in mainstream school settings?’, was too vast given the number of papers produced. I reflected that even a team of researchers might struggle with this. Therefore, I considered the following areas within the topic to focus the question: school-wide interventions; reintegrating pupils from specialist provision back to mainstream schools; teachers’ or schools’ collective views, attributions, self-efficacy, ethos in relation to challenging behaviour; teachers’ self-efficacy promotion and the relationship between teacher beliefs and exclusion rates. There was a dearth of papers in each of these areas to produce a systematic review of literature. I thought I would keep these topics in mind for my research but I realised that time was getting on and I would have to decide on a question soon that would give me a sufficient yet manageable number of papers.

At this point I decided to look back at my original aim, which was to provide advice and support to schools in relation to behaviour, and I considered disciplinary exclusion interventions. Disciplinary exclusion to me was the complete opposite of inclusion and was definitely a significant topic within the local authority where I was on placement. Therefore, I decided to focus upon the more specific area of disciplinary exclusion interventions for my systematic review.

However, in deciding upon my specific questions, I think I was naïve at the beginning and I also think I am heavily influenced by the post-positivist stance my undergraduate and to a certain extent, my Masters degree adopted in terms of the fact that I was determined to find the one answer or the truth, and that this was largely achievable and overall had a relatively reductionist view. In doing so, I had supported the view that randomised controlled trials are the ‘gold standard’ of



research, being the best means of establishing effectiveness (Fox, 2003; Frederickson, 2002; Robson, 2002; Turner, Randall, & Mohammed, 2010). However, in taking a step back I also considered a critical realist view in which exclusions occur in a context and that implementation factors and the individual strengths, needs and situations of the individual young people may affect how effective a given intervention is (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). I also considered that it has been suggested that gold standard research methods are either difficult to use and/or do not apply to social science studies (Biesta, 2007; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). In addition, it has also been suggested that qualitative methods should be considered just as valuable and with as much confidence as randomised controlled trials (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008).

Taken this as a whole, I considered that an integrated mixed-methods review which considered 'what works' as well as factors that may facilitate or impede the intervention would be helpful, in accordance with my critical realist perspective that I have always held, but has been suppressed in many ways both by the significant influence of my former degree courses and the medical model and associated beliefs that dominates the world-view of today (Faupel & Hardy, 2013; McLeod, 2010).

### **The research process: the systematic review**

I considered whether my views may have changed throughout the systematic review process. My rationale for the systematic review was, in part, based on the suggestion that children with perceived challenging behaviour should be included within mainstream schools both from a child's rights perspective (e.g. Education Act, 1996; Equality Act, 2010; UNESCO, 1994) and to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes (e.g. Children's Commissioner, 2012; Department for Education, 2005, 2012b; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2011). However, from undertaking this review and from placement experiences I have developed the view that mainstream school provision may not be suitable for all children. I have come across a number of children who struggle to cope within a mainstream school despite reasonable adjustments and a high level of support over a period of time.

In addition, towards the end of the systematic review, I recognised that I had taken a much more positivist stance to the review than I originally thought I had. I recognised that I was looking for the truth or answer. In other words I wanted to advise schools on what intervention to deliver to 'at risk' children. However, I recognised that an individualised approach is required based on the needs and context of each child as well as research evidence, which is the approach that I do use in practice. However on reflection, I think I do this to a greater extent now as a result of the systematic review.

### **Deciding on the empirical research questions: bridging the project**

My systematic literature review confirmed that disciplinary exclusion literature typically focuses on transfer to alternative educational settings and that psychological interventions are mainly targeted at an individual and group level. Nevertheless, I was pleasantly surprised that there were some papers that had a more systemic focus. Indeed, five of the seven studies synthesised in Chapter One did discuss the importance of whole school systemic change (e.g. Burton, 2006; Humphrey & Brooks, 2006; Squires & Caddick, 2012; Swinson, 2010; Wilson, 2005) despite only one (Swinson, 2010) actively attempting to do so. The majority of the papers in my systematic review detailed pupils being offered a short-term therapeutic programme often run by an external professional and/or a member of staff from the school. In my view and experience combined with evidence in literature I would suggest that this approach suggests the child is to 'blame', needs to be 'fixed' and that spending time completing therapeutic individual or group sessions will 'cure' them (Humphrey & Brooks, 2006; Lindsay, 2003; Squires & Caddick, 2012; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Wilson, 2005).

In turn, this may remove responsibility from teachers and schools to reflect on and change their behaviour management approach. It could be argued that class teachers are the most important factor in determining the success of inclusion (Miller & Todd, 2002; Swinson, 2010). From experience, any suggestion for the teacher or school to try a different approach or persevere with the one they have can be met with unhelpful comments such as 'we've tried that', 'we can't do that because we have other children', 'we don't have the resources (human, psychological and

physical)' or 'this child should be in a specialist school'. These views have also been mirrored in literature (Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010). Although I empathise with their difficulties given the emotive, political and financial context, I often wondered on placement how teachers could develop more positive beliefs in their ability to manage challenging behaviour.

In considering my research question I considered school and teacher factors that can impact on the perceptions of pupils' challenging behaviour. As highlighted in the previous sections, I was interested in exploring these issues in my systematic review but the literature was limited, highlighting a research gap. Furthermore, in considering literature about teacher beliefs, there are many studies that suggest a link between teacher self-efficacy and perceptions of challenging behaviour (e.g. Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). Indeed, it has been suggested that school staffs' beliefs may influence the success of a behavioural intervention (Head, Kane, & Cogan, 2003; Humphrey & Brooks, 2006).

However, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no research carried out to investigate the sources of teacher self-efficacy in order to inform intervention to support practice in this context. I also considered my own experiences on placement where I have interpreted school staffs' statements and actions as indicative of their ability to support children to behave appropriately. Consequently, I chose the research question 'what are the sources of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in relation to supporting children with perceived challenging behaviour?'

### **The research process: the empirical research**

In accordance with a critical realist perspective I believe that an objective reality exists independent of ourselves, yet our knowledge and experience of that reality is influenced by our interpretations, experiences and abilities. Therefore we can only partially know reality (Willig, 2008). The choice of methodology for this project which consisted of semi-structured interviews followed by thematic analysis corresponds with this viewpoint (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

I found the most difficult part of the empirical research process was worrying about the audio recorder not working. For my first interview I was relatively relaxed. However, I lost my second interview audio recording as only three minutes of recording time remained. For my remaining three interviews, I carried spare batteries and I ensured I saved the interview on my computer before deleting it from the recorder. However, during the interviews I was not as relaxed as what I was during my first interview. I continually looked and checked it was still recording. I feel it is important to acknowledge that this was at the forefront of my mind throughout the interviews and may have affected my performance.

So far in this bridging document, I have explained my rationale for the overall topic, systematic review and empirical research project; my epistemological stance and discussed the research process. However, I also felt it is important to reflect upon how this project has influenced my practice and the knowledge and skills I have gained. I have gained knowledge and skills including the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. I have also developed my understanding of my epistemological beliefs. In terms of practice, I feel that teacher efficacy beliefs have been at forefront of my mind. In undertaking this project I have become more aware of these beliefs and their relative importance. This includes how they may be formed and barriers to their development.

### **Chapter 3. Empirical research – exploring SENCo's efficacy beliefs in relation to working effectively with children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour: What can they tell us in order to inform intervention to support other school teachers?**

#### **Abstract**

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have been linked to perceptions and inclusive practice in relation to working effectively with children with perceived challenging behaviour. However, there is a dearth of research which explores the sources of these beliefs to inform professional development and practice. Consequently, the present study investigated the sources of teacher self-efficacy beliefs. The study comprised of a qualitative research design. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data from five mainstream primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo's) from a Local Authority in North East England. Subsequently, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step analytical procedure for inductive semantic thematic analysis was employed. Findings suggested that efficacy beliefs in relation to perceived challenging behaviour are developed by 'mastery experiences', 'social persuasion', 'cognitive reframing' and 'support from team'. Subsequently, barriers to developing efficacy beliefs included 'lack of experience', 'lack of appropriate continued professional development (CPD) opportunities', 'lack of access to psychological support', 'perceived limitations of teachers' role' and 'lack of success'. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research and Educational Psychology (EP) practice were discussed.

## **Introduction**

As previously stated in Chapter One and Two, in general disciplinary exclusion literature focuses on transfer to alternative educational settings and if psychological interventions are used the majority are targeted at an individual child or group level. In doing so, this literature generally discounts other important psychological and environmental factors that may impact on perceived challenging behaviour, inclusion and positive outcomes for children such as those related to teachers, school, community and local authority/government policy (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cooper & Upton, 1991; A. Daniels & Williams, 2000; Hatton, 2013; Williams & Daniels, 2000).

The present study focuses on one of these factors: teacher self-efficacy beliefs in relation to pupils' perceived challenging behaviour. This focus was chosen based on the following three proposals: teachers are considered the most important factor in determining student outcomes (Miller & Todd, 2002; Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006; Swinson, 2010); there is a positive association between teacher's self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions and management of challenging behaviour (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Shillingford & Karlin, 2013; Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010); and there is a dearth of studies which explore the sources of self-efficacy beliefs in order to inform professional development and practice; particularly qualitative studies (Klassen et al., 2011; Wheatley, 2005; Wyatt, 2014). The following sections explore what is meant by the term self-efficacy in general, and within this particular context, and discuss the proposed sources of these beliefs, prior to discussing the research question and rationale further.

### **What are self-efficacy beliefs and how are they developed?**

Efficacy beliefs are defined as beliefs about one's competency on a given task or area of learning (Bandura, 1997). In turn, efficacy beliefs are considered to be both context and subject matter specific and are relatively stable over time. However the level of specificity is unclear and there is some evidence that they may generalise to other similar situations and may fluctuate over time (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk

Hoy, 2001). According to efficacy theory, an individual with high efficacy beliefs is likely to perceive that they have the competence to engage in a particular task successfully and are more likely to persevere when faced with barriers. In contrast, an individual with low efficacy is likely to perceive that they do not have the necessary competence and is, therefore, less likely to persevere when faced with similar challenges (Bandura, 1997). Consequently, efficacy beliefs are thought to influence an individual's goals, effort and choice of activities.

Teacher efficacy beliefs have been defined as an individual teacher's beliefs about his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Bandura, 1977). In the current research project, teachers' self-efficacy in relation to working effectively with children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour will be examined.

There is evidence that there is a positive association between teacher's self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions and management of challenging behaviour (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Shillingford & Karlin, 2013; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Teaching efficacy has also been found to be associated with a number of related factors such as student outcomes and teacher performance (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Penrose, Perry, & Ball, 2007); inclusive practice (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009); teacher well-being, including resilience (Brown, 2012; Egyed & Short, 2006; Gibbs & Miller, 2014; Tsouloupas et al., 2010; Zee, Koomen, & Van der Veen, 2013); and commitment to teaching (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). This evidence suggests that promoting and sustaining teacher efficacy beliefs is important in order to increase teacher well-being, their teaching performance and the likelihood that they remain within the profession, for example. In turn, promoting teachers' self-efficacy beliefs may be important to improve children's academic outcomes and their inclusion within mainstream school settings, for example. However, there is a dearth of research which explores the sources of teacher efficacy beliefs to inform professional development and practice.

Although Bandura (1997) suggested that efficacy beliefs are formed from four sources: enactive mastery experiences (experiencing success is considered the

most important source of efficacy beliefs), vicarious experiences (i.e. observing the successes of others); social persuasion (feedback from others); and physiological and affective states (interpreting feelings about a task), these may not apply to the development of teacher efficacy beliefs (Klassen et al., 2011). Indeed, it has been suggested that Bandura's suggestions regarding the sources of efficacy were developed experimentally, and therefore may not have ecological validity, and there is also insufficient evidence to support his proposed sources in general (Klassen et al., 2011).

### **The present study**

The present research aims to explore the sources of teacher efficacy in order to inform professional development and practice. To achieve this aim it was decided to interview primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), who are responsible for coordinating Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision within a school, as it was felt that they may be able to provide insight into how their own efficacy beliefs developed, how they support other teachers develop their individual beliefs and barriers to developing individual efficacy beliefs within a school context. In summary the question this study aims to address is; exploring SENCOs' efficacy beliefs in relation to working effectively with children who are perceived to have challenging behaviour: What can they tell us in order to inform intervention to support other school teachers?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

In order to recruit participants I contacted the Head Teachers of the ten schools I support as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) within a Local Authority in the North East England to request their permission to invite the SENCOs within their school to participate in the study. With their permission I then contacted the SENCOs to invite them to participate. Six agreed. I used email and then a follow-up phone call to request participation. Ethical protocols were used throughout this project (See 'Ethical considerations' section, p. 66). Unfortunately due to technical



difficulties data from one of the participants were lost, leaving five participants' data to be analysed.

Of these five remaining mainstream primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), their demographic information is as follows. They had been qualified teachers for between six and 19 years and had been SENCOs for between one and six years. Two held additional roles as assistant head teachers and one taught in a specialist unit within the mainstream school for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. In terms of their school demographics, the school rolls were between 210 and 420 pupils, approximately 19-26% of pupils were on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Register and all schools were classed as being within the bottom 10-30% of the most deprived areas in England with approximately 60-70% of the school populations being entitled to free school meals.

## **Design**

The study comprises of a qualitative research design which used a semi-structured interview to gather data (See Appendix A, p.87), and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step analytical procedure for inductive semantic thematic analysis in order to identify the sources of efficacy in relation to challenging behaviour. A qualitative research design was employed as this study aimed to gather data from the participants' perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Howitt, 2013; Willig, 2008). When considering the analysis, there were six qualitative analyses options: narrative, discourse, conversational, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), grounded theory and thematic analysis. Narrative analysis was deemed unsuitable as it is used to analyse life stories, and discourse and conversational analysis were eliminated as they are used to analyse the language used by participants (Howitt, 2013). IPA and grounded theory were deemed unsuitable as they did not correspond with my epistemological stance. For instance IPA is considered when the aim of research is to establish participants' subjective experiences, and it has been argued that grounded theory adopts a positivist stance (Willig, 2008).

When considering thematic analysis, inductive semantic thematic analysis was chosen as it is data-driven and is concerned with the explicit or surface meanings of

the data, in accordance with the current study's research aims and question and the critical realist stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Materials**

The interview guide, which I produced in order to explore sources of efficacy beliefs consisted of open questions and probes, can be found in Appendix A, page 87. In developing the interview questions, I considered my research aim and determined that in order to achieve this I would start with descriptive questions which prompted the interviewee to provide a general account of their practice and efficacy beliefs in relation to working with children with perceived challenging behaviour. Then I would move on to structural questions (Willig, 2008), which prompt the interviewee to identify how they gained these efficacy beliefs. This was achieved through starting my questions with 'what' and 'how' respectively to support participants' reflections (Lee & Sabatino, 1998). In addition, when determining what probes to use I added four probes to the question 'what do you do to help children learn appropriate behaviour and engage in learning?' These probes were based on research literature which suggests that positive relationships between children and staff and clear expectations support positive behaviour (R. L. Goodman & Burton, 2010; Mowat, 2010; Swinson, 2010). The interviews were recorded via Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

### **Procedure**

As previously stated, ten mainstream primary school Head Teachers were contacted via email and then a follow-up phone call to request their permission to invite SENCOs within their school to participate in the study. Following this the SENCOs were contacted in the same way (See Appendix B, p.89, for the information sheet). Six SENCOs agreed.

I agreed a mutually convenient time in which to undertake a semi-structured interview with the six participants who agreed to take part. Prior to commencing the interview I talked through the information sheet and consent form, asked if they had any questions and reiterated that they were under no obligation to take part. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes each and were recorded via Dictaphone.

Afterwards, participants were debriefed verbally and offered a written debrief account.

### **Ethical considerations**

As previously stated, ethical protocols were used throughout the current project. The information sheet (See Appendix B, p.89) detailed the purpose of the study and what participation involved in terms of the task requirements and time commitments. The information sheets also emphasised that they were under no obligation to participate. If they did not wish to participate this would not compromise future involvement from the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). In addition, the data protection protocols including confidentiality were also detailed.

I sought written consent via consent form (See Appendix C, p.91) from teachers on the basis that their data will be kept secure and confidential in a locked filing cabinet and on a password protected computer and their data will not be accessible to anyone out with the research project. Participants were also informed that after the interviews have been transcribed and anonymised the Dictaphone recordings will be permanently deleted. They were also assured that any personal information that may identify them, their school, the children they work with or the Local Authority where they work will not be included in any of the transcriptions or in my write up of my thesis. I explained that I planned on reporting short excerpts from interviews but these will be anonymised. Teachers were informed that their data will be given a number. The code to match their number to their name will be kept on a password protected computer. This will be destroyed once the project is completed along with any other participant data. Participants were debriefed upon completion of the interviews.

### **Analysis**

As previously stated the present study employs inductive semantic thematic analysis to analyse the data in accordance with a critical realist stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Consequently, the analysis followed the six staged process detailed in Braun and Clarke (2006). The first stage involved familiarisation with the data via repeated reading and making notes and highlighting points of interest relevant to the research question. The second stage involved the generation of initial codes, which are labels

to describe the contents of a line or two of transcript (Howitt, 2013). In stage three the codes were categorised into meaningful groups of codes to produce provisional themes. During the fourth stage the themes were reviewed in relation to considering whether: there were sufficient data to support each theme, some themes may need to be divided into separate themes or sub-themes and whether new theme(s) may need to be created if some data does not correspond with a given theme. Stage five involved finalising the labels for each theme. Stage six involved the production of the 'Method' and 'Findings' sections of this thesis.

## Findings

### **Sources of Efficacy beliefs**

Prior to discussing the potential sources of efficacy beliefs I felt it was important to firstly detail the context in which they may be developed. Participants talked about gaining knowledge and skills in relation to working effectively with children who can present with difficult behaviour via various means such as: reading and training, observing colleagues in practice, discussions with colleagues (particularly those who have taught the given child previously) and support from external agencies. This was described as an ongoing professional learning process where they may never gain all the answers. Consequently teachers apply the strategies they have learned, as appropriate. In doing so, they consider that the strategies may not work for every child, that trial and error is often involved and may only lead to small steps of success. Following this there may be a process of reflection whereby teachers evaluate their performance either independently or with support from a colleague. This support may either be sought or offered. Four themes were produced from the data analysis process which related to the development or sources of efficacy beliefs. These were: '*mastery experiences*', '*social persuasion*', '*cognitive reframing*' and '*support from team*'.

### 'Mastery experiences'

Participants highlighted the importance of experiencing success in their own practice with children who present with difficult behaviour. Success was defined by the participants as positive change in behaviour and general engagement in learning,

even if these improvements were relatively small. Participants suggested that success was recognised through ongoing personal reflection on their practice where they considered incidences of personal accomplishment. These incidences may comprise of positive comments from children or observing children engaging relatively well in class in comparison to how the children previously presented:

*'you really do get emotionally drained by it and you think, "What am I doing?" But at the same time you think, "No you are making a difference," and it's days like they say, "Oh I love coming to School. Oh I'm dreading the holidays, I just want School to stay open." ...it's the things like, "Oh I really love School," and you can see you're making a difference there...when they're settled and they're calm and you can see them kind of trying to keep a hold of their worst' (Participant 3).*

#### 'Social persuasion'

Participants suggested that significant others such as work colleagues and external professionals making positive comments on their performance in working with children with perceived difficult behaviour, based on their observations and knowledge of the teacher's competency were important to them. Participants suggested that the teachers may not have recognised their strengths in a particular situation independently and therefore required someone else to highlight their successes to them:

*'Oh I noticed in assembly such and such was brilliant, you must have had a really good day, you must have been doing some really good stuff with him,' (Participant 2).*

*'You are the most qualified person in the room.'(Participant 2)'*

*'(External professional) observes the teachers and their strategies and points out to them all the positive things that they are doing well. "I liked how you did this." And the same as with the children, sometimes the staff need to hear that as well. Like "You are doing a good job. When you do this, that's brilliant, that's really good. You've really made a difference' (Participant 1).*

### 'Cognitive reframing'

Participants implied that the cognitive reframing of difficult situations was crucial to developing efficacy beliefs. Teachers were likely to internalise difficult situations leading to an emotional impact. However with self-reflection or with support from a colleague to reflect on particular events they may be able to re-attribute the behaviour to the situation, rather than themselves. This results in them gaining empathy for the child, developing their relationship and having positive future interactions in order to meet the needs of the child:

*'It is quite easy myself I've found that, to take it personally and feel like a bit defeated and a bit irritated by it and I think you've got to get that empathy back, if you've lost that. And again I think it's separating them for a while and going back and saying, look, explaining the situation, getting that clearance and that knowledge, and supporting the teacher as well in saying, "Look, it's not personal, don't take it personal, remember what they've been through or what they're going through or what they're coming from. When they behave this way, you're the person there but it's not directed at you per se."' (Participant 1).*

### 'Support from team'

Participants highlighted that when they recognised they were unsure of what to do they sought support from colleagues: *'I think that that's where you look to others for support' (Participant 2)*. Participants implied that a team ethos was emphasised within their schools where it was acceptable to ask for support and offer support to others in terms of advice, reflection, discussion, short breaks and inquiring if they are okay:

*'Teachers who come at the end of the day and it's, "Can we just have a chat about...?" Or, "Can we just have some advice about...?" Or, "This is what I did, it seemed to be okay, what do you think? Is that the right way to approach a child?' (Participant 2).*

*'(The Head Teacher) is brilliant because you can approach her on anything and she's very fair; like if you need time out, she will give you time out and she will just*

say, "Go and get five minutes, ten minutes just to get yourself together" (Participant 3).

In addition, although the researcher did not aim to explore participants' perceived collective efficacy beliefs, participants implied that these beliefs were important. Perceived collective efficacy beliefs refers to the judgement of teachers in a school that they can organise and execute the courses of action as a team required to have a positive effect on students (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). For instance, participants highlighted that they work as a team where they use each other's individual strengths to support children with difficult behaviour. In doing so, they recognised that some staff may have a better relationship or approach with any given child and that instead of perceiving this as failure on their part, this is an indication that as a team they can support children. In other words, they have developed perceived collective efficacy beliefs:

*'I think with behaviour you can...Staff can feel like it's a personal failure of theirs if they can't manage the behaviour but someone else can then they've done something wrong. So we're very much trying to put across as a school that we are in it together and that sometimes you do need to be able to step... if you're feeling that you can't, you can't manage your own emotions because you're getting frustrated and you're getting cross, that it is okay to step out and say someone else can. A bit like a tag-team really, while you have a breather and then support each other. And you're always going to have children who respond really well to you but not to others and vice versa...So it is picking our strengths as a school and working as a team to do that.'* (Participant 1).

### **Challenges to developing efficacy beliefs**

Five themes were produced from the data analysis process which related to the challenges that teachers face in developing positive self-efficacy beliefs. These were: *'lack of experience'*, *'lack of appropriate Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities'*, *'lack of access to psychological support'*, *'perceived limitations of teachers' role'* and *'lack of success'*.

### 'Lack of experience'

Participants explained that student teachers or newly qualified teachers are less likely to have developed the knowledge and skills and have had the experiences, discussed in the previous section, to cope with the emotional impact of working with children with challenging behaviour and work successfully with them, than more experienced teachers do, due to limited teaching experience and the perceived time required to develop these skills:

*'She hasn't got the experience to be able to realise, actually it's not her... it's good to be reflective, and to think, right I'm gonna try this tomorrow. Tomorrow is a new day, and I'm just gonna try this, and let's see if that works. Or I'm gonna come in and I'm not gonna say anything negative at all for the first hour, everything's gonna be positive. You can have that, but actually, that takes quite a long time to get there. Because at first, you're gonna be like, it's because they hate me, it's because I haven't done this" (Participant 4).*

### 'Lack of appropriate Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities'

Participants discussed the lack of access to appropriate CPD opportunities in order to support children presenting with mental health difficulties and challenging behaviour. This was discussed in light of the new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and the increased emphasis on supporting mental health effectively within school settings (Department for Education, 2015; Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015):

*'I mean it's kind of getting ahead around mental health but again, I haven't got the skills. Like just because they've changed the title I haven't had the training yet and kind of think, Well where are you meant to get it? Because it is so new'. (Participant 3).*

### 'Lack of access to psychological support'

Lack of support from external agencies particularly mental health professionals as a result of lengthy waiting lists was a barrier to developing efficacy beliefs. Participants suggested that the waiting time for a mental health professional to advise on the child's needs and strategies for support and contribute to multi-agency working is a



barrier. Consequently participants did not feel they had the strategies, skills or advice required to support the child effectively without specialist input to contribute to the full profile of needs:

*'there isn't that link up here, because The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) is separate from ed(ucational) psychology. And I think, we're creating our own backlog, because you're only getting half the picture from ed(ucational) psychology. And the CYPS, and the clinical psychologist is totally overstretched, you know, as you want it. So the process of taking these kids through is hugely cumbersome, because you're going to different agencies' (Participant 4).*

#### 'Perceived limitations of teachers' role'

In addition, there is a belief that teachers are unable to support some children with mental health difficulties who present challenging behaviour given the perceived complexity of their needs. Hence there is a view that specialist support in the form of mental health professionals and alternative provision is required as opposed to mainstream provision. The use of 'we' in the following extract may indicate that this belief is shared with other staff. In other words it may be a collective efficacy belief:

*'But we haven't got the skills - we can offer them support, we can offer them love, to a certain degree, we can offer them help - but we haven't got the skills. We're not therapists, we're not counsellors, and we just can't do that extra bit' (Participant 4).*

#### 'Lack of success'

Participants suggested that if they did not see evidence of success or if success was small yet effortful then perhaps the child should be transferred to an alternative provision as they did not believe they could support the child effectively:

*'And there has to be strategies that work. And if there's no strategies, you know, that's not working, despite these difficulties, well it's perhaps not the right place for them' (Participant 4).*

## **Discussion**

The aims of this study were to explore the sources of teachers' efficacy beliefs in relation to supporting children with challenging behaviour and potential barriers to

the development of these beliefs. Findings suggested that individual efficacy beliefs in relation to perceived challenging behaviour are developed by the following processes: mastery experiences, social persuasion, cognitive reframing and support from team. Support from team may also develop collective efficacy beliefs. Challenges to developing efficacy beliefs include: lack of experience, lack of appropriate Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, lack of access to psychological support, perceived limitations of teachers' role and lack of success.

Two of these findings: mastery experiences and social persuasion support Bandura's (1997) assertions to a certain extent, providing further evidence that these sources are important to developing teachers' efficacy beliefs. Consequently, if mastery experiences are crucial to developing efficacy beliefs, then this could also explain at least in part why lack of success and lack of teaching experience were found to challenge the development of efficacy beliefs. Indeed, if participants have had limited experience of teaching and success then they are less likely to experience mastery. In addition, the finding that support from the wider school team is a source of efficacy is consistent with collective efficacy research which proposes that school staff develop beliefs about their collective ability as a team to support children successfully (Goddard et al., 2004).

However, the present study did not find evidence for Bandura's (1997) assertions that; vicarious experiences and physiological/affective states were also sources of efficacy beliefs. Participants did report that they observed colleagues' practice and explained the emotional impact of working with children who presented challenging behaviour. However, this was not linked to the development of their efficacy beliefs. For example, Participant 2 reported that observing colleagues informed her knowledge of helpful strategies which she could then apply herself, leading potentially to success (or 'mastery experiences') rather than to inform efficacy beliefs directly. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that the present study may not have found evidence that vicarious experiences and physiological/affective states were sources of efficacy beliefs as an artefact of the interview design.

In addition, the present study suggests that there may be two other sources of teachers' efficacy beliefs: cognitive reframing and support from team. Cognitive reframing is a cognitive behavioural therapy technique which cognitive behavioural theory proposes improves mental health and behaviour (Beck, 1967). The finding that cognitive reframing is a source of efficacy is consistent with studies which suggest that cognitive reappraisal of unhelpful or negative thoughts to more positive or helpful thoughts can reduce teachers' stress and unhelpful responses to children (Robertson & Dunsmuir, 2013). In addition it has been suggested that reinterpreting unhelpful thoughts decreases teachers' negative emotions and improves their social interactions and general health (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

Furthermore, the finding that cognitive reframing is a source is also consistent with research that explores teacher attributions for challenging behaviour. For example, Reyna and Weiner (2001) suggested that teachers were more likely to have sympathy and support pupils learn how to behave if they attributed the child's behaviour to causes outside of the student's control. Similarly, the findings of the present study suggested that attributing the children's difficulties to their situation or context as opposed to internalising this, created increased empathy and promoted effective support.

The present study suggested that there may be five barriers to developing efficacy beliefs including lack of success and lack of experience. The three remaining challenges related to working successfully with children with mental health difficulties who presented with difficult behaviour: lack of appropriate CPD opportunities, lack of access to psychological support and perceived limitations of their teaching role.

The finding that lack of appropriate CPD opportunities is a barrier to developing efficacy beliefs is consistent with research which suggests that training in behaviour management is positively related to teacher efficacy levels and negatively related to burnout, as it increases their knowledge and skills and reinforces existing ones. In turn, the application of these skills increases the likelihood of mastery opportunities (Egyed & Short, 2006). Furthermore, studies have suggested that teachers reported they had little or no specialist training in working with pupils with behaviour,

emotional and social difficulties and they requested suggestions for more practical strategies for working with this population (R. L. Goodman & Burton, 2010).

In terms of the finding that lack of access to psychological support is a barrier to developing efficacy beliefs is consistent with the findings of R. L. Goodman and Burton (2010). In their study, teachers suggested that long waiting lists for educational psychologists and other external agencies prevents appropriate and timely assessment of pupils' needs to inform successful strategies that teachers can apply, comprising successful pupil outcomes. Finally, in relation to the finding that perceived limitations of teachers' role is a barrier to developing efficacy beliefs is consistent with research which suggests that teachers' may perceive children with behavioural, emotional and social needs are particularly unsuitable for inclusion within a mainstream setting (e.g. Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013).

In summary, the present study suggested that individual efficacy beliefs in relation to perceived challenging behaviour are developed by the following processes: mastery experiences, social persuasion, cognitive reframing and support from team. In addition, it was suggested that challenges to developing efficacy beliefs were: lack of experience, lack of appropriate Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, lack of access to psychological support, perceived limitations of teachers' role and lack of success.

Consequently the present study has a number of suggested implications in relation to what teachers may need to develop efficacy beliefs in relation to challenging behaviour:

- to experience and recognise successes via personal reflection on practice (i.e. mastery experiences)
- to have positive feedback on their practice from other school staff and external professionals (i.e. social persuasion)
- to reappraise unhelpful thoughts such as self-blame either independently or with support from colleagues (i.e. cognitive reframing)

- to seek support from colleagues in the form of advice and working effectively as a team to support particular children in accordance with the school ethos (i.e. support from team)
- to support student, newly qualified and teachers with less experience in particular develop their skills
- to have access to appropriate CPD opportunities focusing on mental health and behaviour
- to have appropriate and timely support from external agencies particularly around supporting children's mental health and behaviour
- to develop an understanding of what their role is in relation to teaching and supporting children with both mental health and behavioural difficulties.

### **Limitations of study**

One could suggest that the findings and conclusions of the study may not be widely generalisable or transferable due to the small sample size. It is helpful that the findings of the present study are partially supported by Bandura (1997) which consequently supports their transferability to a certain extent. However, this study comprised of exploratory research which aimed to increase insight and in-depth understanding as opposed to being generalisable (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Howitt, 2013; Willig, 2008). Nevertheless, it might be helpful to undertake similar investigations in the future in order to support or challenge the findings.

In addition, the conclusions may be limited by only having one researcher. However it was not practically or financially feasible to have further researchers. My knowledge and beliefs about the topic area is likely to have influenced the data analysis and subsequent themes created. However in qualitative research this impact cannot be minimised. Instead, researchers should acknowledge this as I believe I have done in my bridging document (See Chapter 2, p. 51).

### **Recommendations for practice**

In terms of recommendations for Educational Psychologists' (EPs') practice, there are a number of suggestions. These include EPs highlighting to teachers via training and consultation the importance of advancing their efficacy beliefs, and the potential

ways in which they might be able to do so, in relation to working effectively with children who present challenging behaviour. In doing so, EPs could also support teachers' understanding of potential barriers to the development of their efficacy beliefs and facilitate consultations or training sessions on how to potentially overcome these challenges. Following initial training and consultation sessions teachers, including student teachers and newly qualified teachers, may wish to form peer support groups where they can support each other to reflect on the development of their own efficacy beliefs and that of the school community. Educational psychologists could support the introduction of these groups and provide individual coaching too, as appropriate. They may wish to use a framework such as a reflective tool based on the present research and positive psychology (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) to support this process. Particular focus might have to be given to student and newly qualified teachers, and teachers who are working with children with mental health difficulties as suggested by the findings of the present study.

### **Recommendations for future research**

In terms of recommendations for future research, further exploration of the sources of teachers' efficacy beliefs including the relative importance of and the quality and quantity of each source is required. In addition, to extend the present study it may be beneficial to further explore the sources of collective efficacy beliefs and explore the sources of efficacy beliefs in student teachers, newly qualified teachers, teaching assistants or secondary school teachers due to the different roles and contexts involved. Further research could also explore the impact of the new special educational needs category, Social Emotional and Mental Health (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) on teachers' efficacy beliefs and means to increase efficacy beliefs in this area. It may also be helpful to evaluate the training, consultation, peer support groups and the reflective tool ideas suggested in the 'recommendations for practice' section.

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## **Appendix A. Interview schedule**

### **(1) Demographic information about the school and yourself**

- Nature of school population (number of children on roll, SEN, SES)
- How long have you been a teacher?
- How long have you been a teacher in this school?
- How long have you been a SENCo?

**I'm interested in learning about what can help teachers help children who might present with challenging behaviour and how they gain belief in their ability to manage challenging behaviour more successfully.**

### **(2) Tell me about the ethos and beliefs of this school in relation to challenging behaviour.**

### **(3) What do you do to help children learn appropriate behaviour and engage in learning? How do you do this?**

- Behaviour policy
- Relationships
- Messages given to children, parents and staff
- Effectiveness of approaches.

### **(4) How have you developed your beliefs in your ability to support children with difficult behaviour successfully?**

- Thinking back to a time when you've been concerned/ worried by a particular child's behaviour.
  - What did you do?
  - How did you learn that?
  - What helped you do this?
- If not, what could you do? What would help you know what to do?



**(5) How have you supported other staff to develop their beliefs in their ability to support children with difficult behaviour successfully?**

## Appendix B. Information sheet

**School of Education,  
Communication and Language  
Sciences**

**Investigating teachers' experiences  
of working with children with  
difficult behaviour**

### **Introduction**

My name is Kate MacFarlane, Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently undertaking this research project as part of my Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology Qualification at Newcastle University, under the supervision of Dr Simon Gibbs, Head of Education, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences. I can be contacted at: [k.macfarlane@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:k.macfarlane@newcastle.ac.uk).

### **What is the purpose of this project and why have I been invited to take part?**

It is widely known that schools who hold a positive school ethos and teachers who hold more positive beliefs in their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of pupil engagement and learning, even among those pupils who may be difficult or unmotivated, can further advance the inclusion of these children within mainstream environments. In the case of this project we are focusing specifically on children who present with difficult behaviour.

At present, there is little known about how these beliefs are applied in practice and the sources of teachers' beliefs in relation to managing difficult behaviour successfully. Therefore the current project aims to explore these concepts in greater depth. It is hoped that the findings can be used to inform training and practice for other teachers and schools.

### **What will it involve?**

You will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, which will be undertaken/facilitated by me, and should last no more than 45 minutes on total. The questions will have a positive focus. However, if any questions are asked which you feel uncomfortable answering you may decline to respond. The interview will be audio recorded via Dictaphone.

You are under no obligation to take part in the project and there are no potential risks to you taking part.

### **What happens to my information?**

Your information will remain entirely confidential. Your information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer. Your head teacher or colleagues will not be made aware of your participation or answers.

The audio recording of your interview will be deleted after the interview is transcribed and anonymised. After the project is completed (approximately by September 2015) the rest of your information will be securely destroyed. We would like to publish the study if our findings are significant. However your name, school and local authority will not be identified.

**Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.**

**What happens next?**

If you would like to take part in the study please read this information sheet and consent form. If you do not wish to be involved in the project thank you for your attention.

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences.

If you have any questions/concerns during or after the project please contact:

Researcher contact details:

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## Appendix C. Consent form

**School of Education, Communication and  
Language Sciences**

**Investigating teachers' experiences of  
working with children with difficult  
behaviour**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to the interview being audio-recorded via Dictaphone. I understand that my interview will be anonymised and that all my information will be destroyed upon completion of the project (approximately by September 2015).
- I consent to being a participant in this project

I \_\_\_\_\_(PRINT NAME) hereby agree to take part in the above project.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_