Reducing Exclusion from Secondary Schools: The Role of Teacher Efficacy and Student-Teacher Relationships

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Declaration

This thesis is being submitted for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. I declare that this work is my own and has not been previously submitted for any other purpose. I have acknowledged where material used is the work of others.

Overarching Abstract

This thesis explores ways in which exclusions from mainstream secondary schools might be reduced. It contains four chapters: a systematic literature review, a critical consideration of the methodology and ethics, an empirical research project, and a reflective synthesis, which outlines the personal and professional implications of the thesis.

Chapter 1: The systematic literature review explores the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary schools. Five key papers were analysed, and findings suggest that school wide interventions may contribute to a reduction in exclusions in mainstream secondary schools, however the evidence is not clear. Implications were discussed, which underpin the focus for the subsequent empirical project. This paper is written in the style of the nominated journal: Educational and Child Psychology.

Chapter 2: This chapter outlines the link between the systematic literature review and the empirical research project. It discusses the rationale for chosen methodology, methods, and analysis. Ethical considerations are also explored.

Chapter 3: The empirical report explores the role of student-teacher relationships in teacher collective efficacy and the management of difficult behaviour. A two-phase sequential mixed methods design was utilised and teachers from four mainstream secondary schools in North East England participated. Firstly, a questionnaire was used to ascertain teachers' Collective Efficacy (CE) beliefs. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with ten teachers were conducted, with both high and low CE. The interviews were analysed using inductive thematic analysis. Findings are discussed in relation to how student-teacher relationships might influence teachers' beliefs about CE and their views about how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour. Limitations and implications for practice and further research are also discussed. This paper is written in the style of the nominated journal: British Journal of Educational Psychology.

Chapter 4: This chapter provides a reflective synthesis about what I have learned during the research process and the implications of this for myself and others. It offers an opportunity to consider how the research has influenced my thinking and future practice. It also considers the implications for further research and wider practice.

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Chapter 1: School-wide Interventions for Reducing Disciplinary Exclusion from Mainstream Secondary Schools: A Systematic Review

Abstract

Aim: This systematic literature review aimed to explore the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary schools.

Rationale: In England, head teachers have government support to use exclusion as a disciplinary sanction if deemed necessary (Department for Education, 2017a). Research has suggested that disciplinary exclusion is associated with an array of negative long-term outcomes; despite this, the latest statistics indicate that the rate of fixed period exclusions are increasing in England.

Method: The seven-stage systematic review process described by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) was employed. A database search, grey literature search, hand search and reference harvesting were carried out, yielding five studies for in depth review. The EPPI Centre Weight of Evidence tool (Gough, 2007) was used to assess study quality.

Findings: All studies were conducted in the USA; four studies implemented School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports, and the remaining study implemented a restorative approach. Most studies reported a small effect of the intervention on reducing exclusions.

Limitations: All studies were conducted in the USA and differed considerably, possibly compromising the generalisability of the findings and making reliable comparisons difficult.

Conclusions: School-wide interventions may contribute to a reduction in exclusions in mainstream secondary schools, however the evidence is not clear. Further research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn regarding what type of intervention should be implemented.

Key Words: discipline, exclusion, school, interventions, behaviour, schools, education

Following examination, this study will be submitted to Educational and Child Psychology and therefore it is presented in the style of papers typically published by this journal.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Behaviour and Discipline in Schools

Student behaviour is a substantial concern for schools, given the negative impact it can have on children, young people and teachers (O'Connor, 2010). It has been reported that the concerns held by parents and teachers about loss of learning due to persistent disruptive behaviour are justified (Ofsted, 2014). Working to improve student behaviour has been high on the government agenda in England for the last six years (Department for Education, 2015a). In 2017, the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, commissioned Tom Bennett, Lead Behaviour Advisor, to undertake an independent review and develop training for teachers on how to manage disruptive behaviour in schools. He suggested strong school leadership, and the skills base of staff, play a crucial role in improving standards of behaviour, and disciplinary exclusion is necessary as a last resort (Bennett, 2017).

To address behaviour in England, the Department for Education (2016) advises head teachers to adopt a robust behaviour policy which outlines the discipline procedures and supports staff in managing behaviour. This may include a stepped consequence system, loss of privileges, and disciplinary exclusion. The government advises that policies should include the use of rewards alongside sanctions (Department for Education, 2016), however, emphasis often tends to be placed more on extinguishing unwanted behaviours than on developing wanted behaviours.

1.1.2 What is Disciplinary Exclusion?

In England, head teachers have government support to exclude pupils if they severely and continually contravene the school behaviour policy, or if allowing them to remain in school would negatively impact other pupils' welfare or education (Department for Education, 2017a). Disciplinary exclusion is the process whereby a pupil is temporarily removed from school, up to a maximum of 45 days per school year (fixed period exclusion), or permanently removed from school (permanent exclusion). The use of exclusion as a punishment to extinguish undesirable behaviour is underpinned by behaviourist psychology (Skinner, 1938). According to government documents, the decision to exclude a pupil must be responsible and lawful, and schools should consider the fair treatment of pupils who are at risk of exclusion (Department for Education, 2017a). However, Munn et al. (2000) propose exclusion is being used as a routine disciplinary approach in schools rather than as a last resort. Though legislation and terms vary, such as exclusion, suspension and expulsion, removal of pupils from school is a widespread disciplinary procedure across numerous countries.

The term exclusion within the current review will refer to the temporary or permanent removal of pupils from their classroom or school, because of behaviour that is deemed disruptive in relation to school behaviour policy.

1.1.3 Disciplinary Exclusion in England

Using exclusion as a disciplinary sanction has been argued to have become a 'widely accepted and normalised approach across the English education system' (Gazeley et al., 2015, p. 488), with exclusion rates higher in England compared with Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (Duffy et al., 2021). The data indicates that exclusion rates in England have fluctuated over time. The Department for Education (2020) reported that the rate of permanent and fixed period exclusions followed a downward trend from 2006/07 until 2012/13 when the rates for both began to rise until 2016/17. The latest government statistics for 2018/19 reported that, although the rate of permanent exclusions in England has remained stable since 2016/17, the number and rate of fixed period exclusions are increasing (Department for Education, 2020). This indicates that fixed period exclusions may be being progressively used as an alternative to permanent exclusion. The most common reason for fixed period and permanent exclusions was reported to be persistent disruptive behaviour (Department for Education, 2020).

In 2019, a large-scale review into school exclusions in the UK was published, which emphasised the need for schools to consider how they manage exclusion, suggesting schools should be held accountable, and permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort (Timpson, 2019). It also highlighted the variation in exclusions practice across different schools and local authorities, along with the disproportionate use of exclusion in certain groups of children, such as those with special educational needs or from particular ethnic groups (Timpson, 2019).

It is suggested that exclusion rates data should be interpreted with caution due to concerns regarding continuing patterns of over-representation and unofficial exclusions not being recorded (Demie, 2021; Gazeley et al., 2015). The importance of contextualising the data within the social and educational systems within which they are generated and situated has also been highlighted (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). It is proposed that the use of exclusion might be influenced by differing and changing national and local policies and agendas, funding, societal issues, school cultures and behavioural norms (Cole et al., 2019; Hayden, 2003). Power and Taylor (2020) argue that the 'marketisation' of education in England, which has seen a growth in academies operating outside of local authority control, might have contributed to the increased use of exclusion as a means of enhancing performance

data. It is apparent the context of disciplinary exclusion in England is likely to be shaped by an interaction of a range of social, educational, and political factors.

1.1.4 Outcomes Associated with Disciplinary Exclusion

Research has suggested that disciplinary exclusion is associated with an array of negative long-term outcomes. For many of the young people affected, exclusion has been linked with wider social problems, such as social exclusion from society and future offending behaviour and criminal activity (Daniels & Cole, 2010; McAra & McVie, 2010; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Novak, 2019; Skiba et al., 2014). Research has suggested that school exclusion is also associated with prolonged periods out of education, unemployment, and poor mental health (Gazeley, 2010; Hallam & Castle, 2001; Pirrie et al., 2011). The Department for Education (2019) states that the longer a young person has been out of mainstream education, the more difficulties they will experience during reinclusion, which can also be impacted by the stigma attached to being excluded from school.

It is argued that school exclusion results in great financial cost to public services and the cost of preventing exclusion and maintaining young people in mainstream education is likely to be much lower and more beneficial in the longer term (Parsons, 2018; Parsons & Castle, 1998). However, Gazeley et al. (2015) highlight that the growth of state-funded schools operating outside of local authority control, and the delegation of government funding to individual schools, has impacted the centralised resources at local authorities' disposal to support young people at risk of exclusion.

While caution must be applied when inferring causation, the above findings suggest that exclusion contributes to serious, negative long-term outcomes for those involved. The exclusion of young people is thought to have dire, wide-ranging, and long-standing consequences (Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Parsons, 2018). The negative outcomes discussed provide warrant for the current review as it is apparent the reduction and prevention of exclusion could provide advantages at an individual and societal level.

1.1.5 Aims and Rationale

The current review addresses the question:

What is the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary schools?

The Department for Education (2020) reported that the rising number and rate of fixed period exclusions in England is mostly driven by secondary schools and that exclusions peak at age 14. The SEND Code of Practice (2015b) highlights the need for early intervention and

prevention; as such it is important to consider how disciplinary exclusion within this context can be reduced or averted. This, together with the increasing rates of exclusion, suggests disciplinary exclusion in secondary schools is an important area of study and research focusing on secondary pupils only may be necessary.

This review focuses on school-wide interventions, which are designed to target change at a school level, in terms of their disciplinary practice and response to student behaviour, promoting systemic change, rather than change at the individual level. Drawing on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), there is perhaps merit in exploring factors beyond the individual level and considering how factors within the wider school environment might contribute to the use of exclusion by secondary schools. This gives warrant for reviews which investigate the effectiveness of interventions that involve the whole school system, to examine how they might decrease exclusion, improve behaviour, and promote inclusive practice.

Previous published reviews have investigated interventions designed to reduce exclusion. In her review, Spink (2011) explored interventions aiming to reduce disciplinary exclusion from both primary and secondary school, however excluded school-wide interventions. Valdebenito et al. (2018) completed a meta-analysis exploring interventions targeted at all levels and included data from primary and secondary schools; their review was limited to studies published up until December 2015. Initial searches suggest there are no previously published reviews in which the effectiveness of school-wide interventions for reducing disciplinary exclusion exclusively from secondary school have been explored. Furthermore, there have been no published reviews with searches conducted in the last five years, therefore this review provides an up-to-date exploration of the evidence.

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Review Process

Petticrew and Roberts' (2006) systematic review process was employed, following the stages summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Petticrew and Roberts (2006) systematic review process

1.	Clearly define the review question in consultation with anticipated users
2.	Determine the types of studies needed to answer the review question
3.	Carry out a comprehensive literature search to locate the studies
4.	Screen the studies found using inclusion criteria to identify studies for in-depth review
5.	Describe the included studies to 'map' the field, and critically appraise them for quality and relevance
6.	Synthesise studies' findings
7.	Communicate outcomes of the review

1.2.2 Locating the Studies

To locate relevant studies, electronic databases were searched using the comprehensive search strategy shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Search terms used

Setting Terms
School* "secondary school" "high school" "middle school" "junior high school" "senior high school"

Intervention Terms
Reduc* improv* prevent* decreas* lower declin* less*

Outcome Terms
Exclu* expel* expul* suspen* disciplin*

Figure 1 shows the search process followed, including the electronic databases searched and the number of studies yielded in each. Published and unpublished literature from January 2016 onwards was included; a rationale for this date range can be found in Table 3. Following a database search, hand searches were completed in 'Educational and Child Psychology' and 'Educational Psychology in Practice'. To locate relevant unpublished literature, grey literature was searched using the Open Grey database and the Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS). A search of unpublished literature was undertaken to minimise publication bias in an attempt to provide a more balanced interpretation of the evidence (Paez, 2017). These searches yielded no relevant results. Following this, reference harvesting was completed, and two further studies were found. All searches were completed between September and October 2020.

Database	Number of Studies
ERIC	177
PsycInfo	226
Scopus	223
British Education Index	30
Web of Science	223
Child Development & Adolescent Studies	43
Education Abstracts	120
ProQuest	154
Medline	28
EMBASE	50
Total	1274
No. of duplicates	758
Total following removal of duplicates	**516**

Number of studies relevant after first screening (titles and abstracts) = 18

Number of studies relevant after second screening (full text papers) = 3

Studies obtained through hand searching = 0

Studies obtained from grey literature search = 0

Studies obtained through reference harvesting = 2

Number of studies ultimately identified for in-depth review = 5
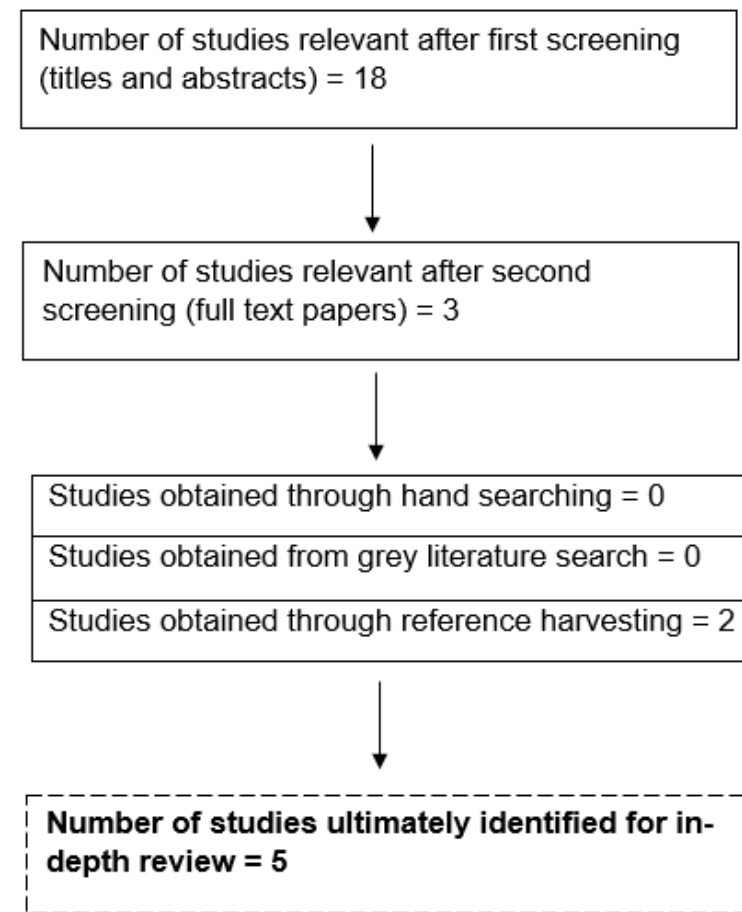
Figure 1: The Systematic Review Search Process

1.2.3 Screening the Studies

Inclusion criteria are agreed conditions that describe the characteristics of studies eligible for inclusion in the review, based on the review question (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The inclusion criteria used to screen the 516 studies identified from the database search is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Inclusion Criteria

Setting	Mainstream secondary school or equivalent, for pupils aged 11 – 18 years
Intervention	School-wide approaches addressing disciplinary practice and response to student behaviour, aimed at reducing or preventing disciplinary exclusions from secondary school
Study Design	Empirical studies reporting outcome data concerning disciplinary exclusion following the implementation of an intervention
Time, place, and language	Studies published in English Studies conducted in any country Studies completed between January 2016 – December 2020. This is because Valdebenito et al's (2018) systematic review conducted searches up until December 2015; therefore, this review is providing up to date evidence and not replicating what has been previously published

The screening took place in two stages. Firstly, titles and abstracts of the 516 studies were screened to determine whether they met the inclusion criteria. This identified 18 eligible studies. Full text papers were then examined, applying the exclusion criteria in Table 4. This left 3 studies for inclusion in the review. Following additional hand searches and reference harvesting, five studies were identified for in-depth review. Data extracted from the five studies, with relevance to the review question, is summarised in Table 5.

Table 4: Exclusion Criteria

Setting	Studies that carried out the intervention across stages (e.g., across primary and secondary schools or a mix of different stages) and did not report separate results for the secondary school stage.
Study Design	Studies where outcome data was only reported regarding 'office discipline referrals' and no data was reported regarding exclusion. Office discipline referrals (ODRs) are a disciplinary procedure used in the USA whereby teachers complete a form to refer a student to an administrator to be disciplined. The disciplinary action taken following an ODR would not include exclusion. Therefore, this data would not have been relevant in answering the review question.

Table 5: Description of Studies

Study	Participants	Context	Aims of the Study	Intervention	Design	Outcome measure of exclusion	Statistically significant gains made?	Effect Size and Magnitude
Augustine, C. H. et al (2018)	44 elementary, middle, and high schools 13 middle and high schools, 7 in the treatment condition	Pittsburgh, USA	To examine how restorative practices impact school climate and exclusion rates	"SaferSaner Schools" whole-school change program	Randomised Control Trial Matched pairs of schools Across 2 years of implementation	Days of out of school exclusion during the year, obtained from the district. Primary outcome = Days excluded during Year 2 of implementation (out-of-school exclusion)	Middle schools = No High schools = Yes (*p*=<0.01)	Middle schools d=0.047 (small) High schools d=0.251 (small)
Childs, K. E. et al (2016)	1122 elementary, middle, and high schools 248 middle schools 150 high schools	Florida, USA	To examine whether there is a decrease in the frequency of student discipline outcomes across time for schools implementing school-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports	School-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)	Post-test over time (4 years)	Days of in school exclusions and days of out-of-school exclusions obtained from Florida's Department of Education (per 100 students)	Yes	*In school exclusion:* Middle schools d=0.17 (small) High schools d=0.25 (small) *Out of school exclusion:*

Study	Participants	Context	Aims of the Study	Intervention	Design	Outcome measure of exclusion	Statistically significant gains made?	Effect Size and Magnitude
								Middle schools d=0.04 (small) High schools d=0.28 (small)
Pas, E. T. (2019).	1316 elementary, middle, and high schools across 24 districts 437 middle and high schools	Maryland, USA	To examine the effectiveness of school-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports on a range of student outcomes, including exclusion	School-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)	Quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design Across 6 years	Exclusion rates obtained from Maryland State Department of Education	Only for Year 2 of implementation	d=0.03 for Year 2 (small)
Sahakian, E. (2018	8 middle schools across two districts	California, USA	To determine the degree to which School-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports strategies impact middle school student office referrals, exclusions, and truancy rates.	School-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)	Pre and post (2 years)	Rate of in school or out-of-school exclusions obtained from California Department of Education (% of students who had at least one in school or out-of-school exclusion)	Not reported and insufficient data provided to calculate the effect.	Not reported and insufficient data provided to calculate the effect.

Study	Participants	Context	Aims of the Study	Intervention	Design	Outcome measure of exclusion	Statistically significant gains made?	Effect Size and Magnitude
Sprague, Biglan, Rusby, Gau & Vincent (2017)	35 middle schools (18 in the treatment condition)	Oregon, USA	To experimentally evaluate the impact of school-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports on reducing the level of in-school problem behaviour	School-wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)	Randomised Control Trial (waitlist control design) Across 3 years	Rate of in school exclusions, out-of-school exclusions, and expulsions obtained from Oregon Department of Education (rate per 100 students per day)	No	In school exclusion: g= 0.13 (small) Out of school exclusion: g= 0.05 (small) Expulsion: g=0.19 (small)[1]

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[1] **Effect Size Key:**
- d= Cohen's D: small= 0.2, medium= 0.5 and large= 0.8
- g= Hedges g: small= 0.2, medium= 0.5 and large= 0.8

1.3 Findings

Each study was conducted in the USA and sample sizes ranged vastly from 8 – 437 schools. All studies used opportunity samples, meaning participants were drawn from populations convenient to the researchers. The duration of interventions ranged from two to six years and all studies evaluated the effectiveness of interventions.

1.3.1 Interventions

All interventions aimed to reduce disciplinary exclusion. Four studies looked at School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS). SWPBIS is a systems approach implemented consistently across all school settings, aimed at reducing student problem behaviour (Pas et al., 2019). It intends to improve school ethos by promoting positive staff and student behaviour (Sahakian, 2018). The core features of SWPBIS include school-wide expectations for behaviour, teaching of these expectations, positive reinforcement, consequences, and data driven decision making (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Two used schools already implementing SWPBIS (Childs et al., 2016; Sahakian, 2018), and the remaining two studies used schools that had not yet been trained in the implementation of SWPBIS (Pas et al., 2019; Sprague et al., 2017).

The remaining study looked at the "SaferSanerSchools" whole-school change programme; a restorative approach aimed at improving relationships, behaviour, and school climate (Augustine et al., 2018). It requires all school staff to implement the key elements, which include responding restoratively to disruption, affective statements, proactive circles, restorative conferences and using a restorative approach with families (Augustine et al., 2018). The intervention incorporates both proactive and reactive practices, with a focus on implementing increased proactive practices.

Both interventions were designed to improve school climate. They are both systems approaches involving interactions between multiple systems, as opposed to targeting the intervention at an individual level, therefore they could be considered to draw upon ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Both interventions are also based on the notion of implementing behaviour change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), and could be argued to draw upon aspects of positive psychology. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggest that to establish a thriving community, individuals need to move towards improved responsibility, citizenship, and nurturance, each of which are key elements of the interventions.

1.3.2 Experimental Design

Two studies used randomised control trials (RCTs) with schools assigned to either a treatment or control group (Augustine et al., 2018; Sprague et al., 2017). Augustine et al. (2018) took further measures to ensure internal validity by utilising a matched pairs design. Sprague et al. (2017) used a waitlist control design, meaning schools in the control group were assigned to a waiting list to receive treatment after the treatment group. Pas et al. (2019) adopted a non-equivalent control group design. The controls employed in these studies should increase their internal and external validity and may therefore be deemed more trustworthy when answering the review question and attributing any reduction in exclusion rates to the intervention implemented.

The remaining studies did not utilise controls within their experimental design. One used a pre-post design (Sahakian, 2018) and the other used a post-test design and measured exclusion across four years to examine outcomes across time (Childs et al., 2016). The lack of control in these studies may have resulted in threats to internal and external validity; as such, they may be deemed to be less methodologically rigorous and limited in their degree of trustworthiness in answering the review question.

1.3.3 Outcomes and Effectiveness

The way in which disciplinary exclusion was measured differed across the studies, as detailed in Table 5. Two studies used number of exclusions as the outcome variable (Augustine et al., 2018; Childs et al., 2016), and three studies used exclusion rates (Pas et al., 2019; Sahakian, 2018; Sprague et al., 2017), however the calculation for these differed, as can be seen in Table 8. The Department for Education (2017b) suggests that measuring exclusion rates is more appropriate than measuring the number of exclusions when making comparisons over time as they account for any changes in the overall number of pupils on a school's roll. Conversely, exclusion rates are suggested to be unreliable data due to varying practices across different contexts and inconsistent recording, which may limit the studies' generalisability to UK settings (Gazeley et al., 2015; Hayden, 2003). Gazeley et al. (2015, p. 492) propose that rates of exclusion should be contextualised as the 'tip of the iceberg'. Therefore, some of the studies in this review may not have considered the influence of wider processes that may have impacted the effectiveness of the interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion.

Information about the type of exclusion can also be found in Table 5. Most of the studies referred to fixed period exclusion, in the form of in or out of school exclusions. Only one study referred to permanent exclusion, defining exclusion as 'removing a student from the

regular school for the remainder of the school year or longer' (Sprague et al., 2017, p. 3). Pas et al. (2019) did not state the type of exclusion measured. Data was obtained in each study from the local Department for Education, as outlined in Table 5, and researchers were explicit about how this data was collected. Researchers in all studies relied on secondary data, which may have resulted in a lack of insight into this data. However, Sahakian (2018) acknowledged that using secondary data enabled them to reduce threats to internal validity, such as experimenter bias.

All studies that reported significance levels reported at least one significant effect of the intervention on exclusion rates, except for Sprague et al. (2017). For the studies that did not provide an effect size, Lenhard and Lenhard's (2016) spreadsheet was used to calculate Cohen's *d.* This was selected because Cohen's *d* is a measurement used when comparing two independent means (Coe, 2002). It should be noted that, although they reported that the rate of exclusions decreased following the intervention, the information provided by Sahakian (2018) was insufficient to accurately calculate effect size.

It is suggested effect sizes are needed, alongside statistical significance, for results to be fully understood and when attempting to draw firm conclusions (Coe, 2002; Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Cohen's *d* has clearly defined benchmarks: 0.2 is a small effect, 0.5 medium and 0.8 a large effect (Cohen, 1992). Ellis (2010) suggests effects that do not meet the small effect threshold should be deemed trivial. Although they are arbitrary, these thresholds provide qualitative understanding to quantitative data and enable researchers to compare effect sizes across studies (Ellis, 2010). Effect sizes for all the studies were small, with some falling well below the benchmark deemed to signify a small effect (see Table 5).

1.3.4 Ethics

Sahakian (2018) was the only study to explicitly discuss ethical issues in some depth. Sahakian (2018) stated they had obtained ethical approval before commencing data collection and demonstrated regard for confidentiality by stating that the identities of students who received exclusions were never released. Childs et al. (2016) indicated that outcome data was kept anonymous and secure using a unique school identifier and encrypted password.

Of the studies which utilised control groups (Augustine et al., 2018; Pas et al., 2019; Sprague et al., 2017), Pas et al. (2019) and Augustine et al. (2018) did not state whether control schools were offered the intervention at a later date. In Sprague et al. (2017), control group participants were assigned to a treatment waiting list, possibly implying some ethical consideration.

All studies used secondary data, meaning direct contact with participants was not required, however, only Sahakian (2018) explicitly stated they had permission to obtain and use this data. Sprague et al. (2017) was the only study to state they fully briefed school staff on the study and its requirements; no studies mentioned informing students about their participation. This raises possible ethical concerns concerning implementing interventions without the consent and involvement of those likely to be impacted, such as school staff and students. These ethical limitations may somewhat limit the studies' trustworthiness in answering the review question.

1.3.5 Weight of Evidence

The studies' quality, and appropriateness and relevance for answering the review question, were critically assessed using the EPPI Centre Weight of Evidence (WoE) tool (Gough, 2007). The WoE ratings given to each study can be found in Table 6.

Table 6: Weight of Evidence Ratings

Study	A How trustworthy are the study findings in terms of answering the study's question?	B How appropriate is the design and analysis in terms of answering the systematic review question?	C How appropriate is the focus of the study in terms of answering the systematic review question?	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?
Sprague et al. (2017)	High	High	Medium	High
Pas et al. (2019)	High	High	Medium	High
Augustine et al. (2018)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Childs et al. (2016)	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Sahakian (2018)	Low	Low	Medium	Low

Sprague et al. (2017) and Pas et al. (2019) were given high overall WoE as they utilised control in their designs and demonstrated high experimental rigour. All studies received a medium rating regarding their focus in terms of answering the review question due to their USA context.

Two studies were given a medium overall WoE rating (Augustine et al., 2018; Childs et al., 2016). Although Augustine et al. (2018) utilised control in their design, they had a small

sample size of secondary schools and stated that there was a lack of baseline equivalence for these schools. Although Childs et al. (2016) had a large sample size, they did not provide any information about the significance of the effect of the intervention.

Sahakian (2018) received a low overall WoE rating due to their small sample size and lack of control and statistical analysis. Consequently, this limits the degree of trustworthiness in answering the review question. It is suggested that selection bias may be introduced, and generalisability reduced, if studies of low quality are excluded from a review (Suri & Clarke, 2009). As such, the decision was made not to exclude Sahakian (2018) from the review synthesis.

1.4 Discussion

This review aimed to summarise what the research tells us about what effect school-wide interventions have on reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary schools. This was with the purpose of informing education professionals about how these school-wide interventions can be utilised to reduce exclusion, improve behaviour, and promote inclusive practice in schools. The strength of gains from each study are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Strength of Gains

Weight of Evidence		No effect size/significant gains reported	Small	Medium	Large
	High		Pas et al. (2019) Sprague et al. (2018)		
	Medium		Augustine et al (2018) Childs et al (2016)		
	Low	Sahakian (2018)			
		No effect size/significant gains reported	Small	Medium	Large
	Effect Size				

The studies identified in this review highlight that, since 2016, research investigating the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary school has taken place in the USA. This is comparable with Valdebenito et al's (2018) review, in which many of their studies came from the USA.

Caution should therefore be applied when attempting to generalise the findings to a UK context, due to differing education systems. The interventions have focused on improving school climate using an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and drawing on aspects of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), adopting a preventative rather than punitive approach. Similarly, in her review Spink (2011) suggested a holistic approach involving multiple systems, that targets school ethos in a preventative way, can impact on the success of interventions.

Inconsistencies and differences between the studies in the review mean it is difficult to make comparisons and draw firm conclusions. The studies varied greatly both in terms of their methodology (such as differences in design and sample size), intervention duration, and whether they reported middle and high school data separately or combined.

The way in which disciplinary exclusion was measured differed across the studies; some referred to number of exclusions and some referred to rate of exclusions. Additionally, effect sizes were not provided by all studies. Therefore, this makes data between the studies difficult to compare. Studies were therefore further coded by how they measured disciplinary exclusion as an outcome measure to try and illuminate any patterns within the studies, as summarised in Table 8. The main foci were number of days of out of school exclusion, which was measured in two studies. Of the studies that reported significance levels, all, except for Sprague et al. (2017), reported at least one significant effect of the intervention on exclusion rates, according to the research question posed and the outcome measure utilised by each study. This suggests reductions in exclusions can likely be attributed to the intervention implemented.

Where effect sizes were given or calculated, all were small, with some falling well below the value considered to indicate a small effect, implying that most interventions had some effect on reducing exclusions, albeit a modest effect. This is consistent with Valdebenito et al's (2018) findings, in which school level interventions were found to have small effect sizes, particularly in comparison with those targeted at student level. Ellis (2010) suggests small effects may be meaningful in the right context. In education, small effect sizes resulting in low-cost change can still be significant (Coe, 2002). It could be argued that, given the adverse consequences of disciplinary exclusion explored at the beginning of this review, it could be valuable to implement interventions that result in even a small reduction in exclusion rates. Pas et al. (2019) suggest that although effect size was small, the reduction in the risk of students not completing secondary school equates to high-cost savings for schools implementing SWPBIS.

Table 8: Studies Coded by Outcome Variable.

Outcome Variable	Study	No. of years of implementation	Significant gains made?	Effect Size
Number of days of in school exclusion	Childs (2016)	4	Y	Middle schools d=0.17 High schools d=0.25
Number of days of out of school exclusion	Augustine (2018)	2	N (middle schools) Y (high schools)	Middle schools d=0.047 High schools d=0.251
	Childs (2016)	4	Y	Middle schools d=0.04 High schools d=0.28
Rate of exclusion events per 100 students	Pas (2019)	6	Y (year 2)	d=0.03
Rate per 100 students with at least one in or out of school exclusion	Sahakian (2018)	2	Not reported	Not reported
Rate per 100 students of in and out of school exclusion events, and expulsion events	Sprague (2017)	3	N	In school exclusion g=0.13 Out of school exclusion g=0.05 Expulsion g=0.19

Interestingly, in the studies where data for middle and high schools was reported separately, effect sizes were larger, though still small, for high schools (Augustine et al., 2018; Childs et al., 2016). This could suggest school-wide interventions, incorporating restorative or positive behaviour practices, are marginally more effective within a high school context, with young people aged 14-18 years. However, these studies were rated as medium WoE, somewhat limiting their trustworthiness in answering the review question.

Rated as high WoE, greatest gains can be taken from Pas et al. (2019) and Sprague et al. (2017), which both implemented SWPBIS. This could be considered as evidence for the

effectiveness of this intervention. However, although Sprague et al. (2017) found a small effect size, this effect was not statistically significant, which limits the attribution of the findings to the intervention, though, this may have been due to their smaller sample size (Ellis, 2010). Additionally, Pas et al. (2019) only found significant gains during year two of six years of implementation, suggesting effects may not be sustainable over time. This is consistent with Valdebenito et al's (2018) review findings that effects of interventions were not sustained beyond 6 months post intervention. Pas et al. (2019) had a large sample size; Coe (2002) suggests a significant result is likely to be found with a sufficiently large sample, even if the effect size is small. The findings should therefore be interpreted cautiously when answering the review question. These mixed findings mean that, although small reductions in exclusions may be achieved by implementing the interventions, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about their effectiveness.

In convergence with Valdebenito et al's (2018, p. 62) findings, common features of successful interventions included an aim to create a 'positive environment with clear rules promoting good behaviour', with a duration of several years. Elements of SWPBIS that might have contributed to the success of the intervention could be considered to draw upon the behaviourist paradigm, such as using positive reinforcement to increase desirable behaviours (Skinner, 1938). Interventions delivered by school staff, following training from external facilitators, was a common approach. This indicates that schools putting resources into the intervention process can bring about positive change, possibly by increasing feelings of competence and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

1.5 Conclusions

In answering the review question, "What is the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing disciplinary exclusion from mainstream secondary schools?", the studies identified in this review suggest school-wide interventions might have a modest effect on reducing exclusions, however, the evidence is not clear. The limitations and inconsistencies between the studies reduce confidence that any particular intervention explored within this review should be implemented, and further research is needed before conclusions can be drawn with certainty.

1.6 Limitations
By following Petticrew and Roberts (2006) systematic review process, this review is transparent and reproducible. Piloting the search strategy, and supplementing database searches with hand searching and reference harvesting, of both published and unpublished

literature, allows confidence that the arising conclusions are based on synthesis of all available evidence. However, the limitations of this review are acknowledged.

Although a thorough search was conducted, it is still possible that studies could have been missed despite meeting the inclusion criteria. The search process ceased when 'saturation' had been reached, when searches in key databases and grey literature no longer yielded additional papers (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Additionally, this review was carried out by a single reviewer, which may have limited the degree of criticality and rigor, and introduced unintentional bias, in the review process.

While the inclusion criteria stipulated studies conducted in any country, all studies were conducted in the USA, therefore caution should be made when generalising the findings to a UK context with a different education system. Larsson (2009) argues that transferability, in terms of similarity between contexts, can be viewed as a form of generalisability. Thus, it could be argued that elements of the interventions used in the studies could be transferable to UK schools. Moreover, although stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to try to promote homogeneity, the studies varied considerably making reliable comparisons difficult, further emphasising the need for caution in attempts to generalise the findings. This highlights a lack of coherence in research that explores the effectiveness of school-wide interventions in reducing exclusion.

Lastly, some studies used exclusion rates as outcome data, which can be considered to be somewhat unreliable and so should be analysed with caution (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). Regarding how school-wide interventions might contribute to a reduction in disciplinary exclusion in mainstream secondary schools, it is conceivable that this review can only provide limited insight.

1.7 Implications

To add to the current knowledge base regarding school-wide interventions that might reduce disciplinary exclusion within a UK context and education system further research is needed. Regarding the difficulties in drawing firm conclusions in this review, further research utilising control in the design and focusing on a more homogenous set of outcomes is needed. As it is unclear whether the effects of interventions are maintained over time, it would be beneficial for future research to include longitudinal studies.

Interestingly, Sahakian (2018) also used a structured survey to identify what teachers perceived to be the most important elements of SWPBIS that support a reduction in exclusions. Positive relationships between teachers and students were rated as the most important element that contributed to success. The importance of relatedness as a key

psychological need for growth, and in enhancing motivation, is highlighted in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Augustine et al. (2018) surveyed staff about the perceived impact of the intervention and what facilitated the use of restorative practices. Staff reported that their relationships with students had improved and found that staffs' knowledge and confidence in implementing the intervention resulted in a higher use of restorative practices, which could relate to Bandura's (1997) concept of efficacy. This possibly provides some insight into what might contribute to the success of interventions or the use of exclusion and could be a helpful consideration for future research.

Qualitative methods, such as interviewing teachers or pupils, may help to provide a richer understanding of how secondary schools can try to reduce disciplinary exclusion. However, it is important that the experiences of teachers and young people are considered as unique to each individual and school context.

Finally, this review has highlighted how schools might adopt a preventative, ecological approach that aims to promote positive behaviour and school climate, which is targeted at the whole school level, to reduce the use of disciplinary exclusion. Feasibly, Educational Psychologists could be well placed to support schools with implementing these approaches and may have a role in exploring and understanding the factors and processes within school that might contribute to the use of disciplinary exclusion and how this can be reduced.

Chapter 2: Critical Considerations of Research Methodology and Ethics

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the rationales for decisions made throughout the research process. I will introduce the context for the chosen topic area and link this to the implications of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). I will then critically discuss the philosophical underpinnings and rationale for the chosen methodology, methods, and analysis. Finally, ethical considerations are explored.

2.2 Identifying an Area of Research

My interest in this topic area was influenced by my experiences of working as an Assistant Psychologist, during which I worked directly with numerous young people (YP) who were deemed as presenting with difficult behaviour in school. In most instances, it was apparent that my role was viewed as working with the YP to help them change and manage their own behaviour in school. Drawing on Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I began reflecting on the interacting systems around a child and how they might influence the situation. My interest developed further within my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). When working with my secondary schools, I noticed a large proportion of EP case work were YP who had received repeated fixed-term exclusions, were at risk of permanent exclusion, or were described as presenting with persistent disruptive behaviour. This encouraged me to reflect on how EPs might be involved in preventative work to help reduce exclusions and I was intrigued by how school staff might be supported to think differently about these YP. I became interested in what might influence teachers' views and experiences of working with YP who present with difficult behaviour, more specifically what might influence how a teacher responds to difficult behaviour when it occurs in their classroom.

My decision to research this area was also influenced by the wider context. The latest government statistics reported that the number and rate of fixed term exclusions in England are increasing, which is mostly driven by secondary schools (Department for Education, 2020). Additionally, preventing and reducing exclusions is high on the agenda within the Local Authority that I am working in, suggesting this topic is highly relevant at the current time, both at a local and national level. Both professionally and personally, I value relationships with others. As a TEP, I place high importance on developing positive working relationships and my work is influenced by strength-based and solution-oriented approaches; I value the strengths and existing resources people bring and how these can be

built upon to create change. It is likely these values and experiences have influenced the direction of my research; it was important to remain reflexive, particularly to the implications of my axiology and assumptions, throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

2.3 Formulating the Research Question: From SLR to Empirical Research

The interventions used in my SLR papers (Restorative Approach and School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports) shared a key element of establishing positive student-teacher relationships. It is argued that positive student-teacher relationships should increase connectedness and mutual respect, which should subsequently lessen difficult behaviour and the need for exclusionary discipline (Augustine et al., 2018). Two of the key papers surveyed teachers about what they perceived to be the most important elements of the interventions that support a reduction in exclusions (Augustine et al., 2018; Sahakian, 2018). Positive student-teacher relationships, along with teachers' confidence, were found to be related to intervention success (Augustine et al., 2018; Sahakian, 2018). This possibly provides some insight into what might contribute to the use of exclusion as a disciplinary sanction.

Additionally, despite this not being stipulated in the inclusion and exclusion criteria, all the final SLR papers were quantitative. This empirical research aims to contribute to the emerging literature base concerning what might contribute to a reduction in exclusions in secondary schools, using qualitative methods to explore the views and experiences of teachers. More specifically, it aims to explore the concepts of teachers' beliefs about their ability to manage difficult behaviour successfully and student-teacher relationships, and how they might influence how difficult behaviour is responded to and subsequently the use of exclusion as a sanction.

The research question to be explored is:

What do secondary school teachers tell us about the role of student-teacher relationships in teacher collective efficacy and the management of difficult behaviour?

Within this study, I conceptualise difficult behaviour as being behaviour that is deemed problematic from the perspective of teachers and school staff. I sought to generate knowledge-for-action and knowledge-for-understanding (Wallace & Wray, 2021), in the hope of gaining a greater understanding of these processes, and to help improve existing practice and policy to contribute to a reduction in exclusions. Similar to the SLR, I aimed to draw upon on solution-oriented principles by exploring 'what works' and how EPs can work systemically to support the development of practice and policy within education (Rees, 2017; Roffey, 2013).

2.4 Ontology & Epistemology

Ontology refers to researchers' assumptions about the nature of existence and what constitutes reality (Crotty, 1998; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge, specifically how knowledge can be acquired and communicated (Cohen, 2007; Scotland, 2012).

This research adopts a critical realism stance. Critical realism is based on the assumptions that some truth does exist and reality is complex, numerous, and constructed, while also recognising the value of scientific explanations (Robson, 2011; Scott, 2014). It 'combines the realist ambition to gain a better understanding of what is 'really' going on in the world, with the acknowledgement that the data the researcher gathers may not provide direct access to this reality' (Willig, 2013, p. 11). Within critical realism, the researcher seeks to interpret the data and its underlying meaning to generate further knowledge, rather than presenting a concrete reality (Willig, 2013). I hold the assumption that Collective Efficacy (CE) is a concept that 'exists' and that can be measured, however, I recognise that the knowledge sought by the research questions assumes that CE will be experienced in varying ways by different individuals.

A researcher's chosen methodology derives from their ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2002); this will be explored below.

2.5 Methodology

My research utilised a two-phase sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Mixed methods design allows for triangulation and can provide a pragmatic approach to explore complex research questions (Driscoll et al., 2007; Robson, 2011). Hesse-Biber (2010) proposes that mixed methods designs can increase the validity and reliability of findings while also enabling researchers to explore any contradictions between quantitative and qualitative findings. Adopting a mixed methods methodology enabled me to gather data that robustly answered the research aims. Using a questionnaire, I was able to address research aim one (see Table 10 in section 3.1.4) by collecting quantitative data determining the CE beliefs of staff. This data was used to test for associations with exclusion rates and staff roles and was also used to identify interviewees for phase two. Qualitative research enables researchers to generate meaning and obtain thick descriptions of individuals' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore teachers' views about how student-teacher relationships might influence their beliefs about CE and their views about their practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour.

It was important to me to give voice to the participants by privileging their lived experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2010), so that I could contribute to a deeper understanding of the possible underlying processes within the suggested relationship between teachers' CE beliefs and how behaviour is managed within schools. Below is a critical reflection upon decisions I made during the research, to provide more context to the processes outlined in Chapter 3.

2.6 Method

2.6.1 Phase 1 - Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed to ascertain participants' CE beliefs, and to identify participants who may be willing to participate in Phase 2. An adapted version of Goddard's (2002) 12-item CE scale was used to gain individual staff members' perceptions of the CE of all staff in their school regarding the management of difficult behaviour (see Appendix A). The wording and language were amended to ensure it was appropriate for a UK context and some questions were adapted to relate them to management of difficult behaviour and relationships, to make them relevant in answering my research question. I conducted a pilot trial of the questionnaire to check that the revised wording and administrative procedures were appropriate, and to check for errors.

The decision was made to distribute the questionnaire to all school staff who had regular contact with students. As CE refers to teachers' shared beliefs about their combined ability to manage difficult behaviour, I felt that by involving all staff roles I would be able to gain a richer sense of the overall CE of each school. I chose to create an online questionnaire using Microsoft Forms to increase accessibility (it can be accessed using a range of technologies) and to hopefully increase the number and speed of responses, as I recognised that school staff are under significant time pressures. To increase the number of responses, I sent weekly reminders to schools, reinforcing that it was short and not time intensive, while also reiterating that participation was voluntary. I also contacted a senior member of staff to try and promote my questionnaire and think about how staff could be encouraged to complete it, however this was not always possible or successful.

2.6.2 Phase 2 – Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' views about their relationships with students in their school and what might influence the quality of these relationships. Also, to explore teachers' views about how student-teacher relationships might influence their beliefs about the CE of staff and their views about their individual practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour. Semi-structured interviews can be used to

provide rich, in-depth information about participants' experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This approach is coherent with my epistemological beliefs as well as my research question and aims. I decided to interview teachers only, due to the influence they have regarding the implementation of consequences for difficult behaviour. I felt that teachers have the most interactions with a range of students overall, in terms of developing relationships and dealing with day-to-day behaviour. Also, from a pragmatic perspective it would not have been possible to interview a range of roles due to time constraints placed on my research.

I chose to conduct interviews instead of focus groups due to the sensitive nature of the topic. It was felt that in interviews teachers might feel more able to be honest, particularly those with low CE beliefs. In a focus group, teachers might be less likely to say if they don't have positive relationships with students or that they don't feel confident in staffs' ability to successfully manage difficult behaviour, which could have affected the data I was able to gather. Recruiting participants for this phase was more challenging than expected. My intention was to recruit an equal number of participants from each school who had high and low CE beliefs, as indicated by the questionnaire data. However, I needed to be flexible as some participants from Phase 1 who indicated that they would be willing to participate in Phase 2 chose not to or did not respond when approached. This means that, although I had equal numbers of participants with high and low CE, these were not equally distributed between the four schools.

A funnelling technique was used to design the interview schedule (see Appendix B), whereby the interview begins broadly to initiate the participant's descriptive experience and progressively narrows to specific questions of importance to the research questions and aims (Smith, 2003; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). This technique enables rich data to be gathered and can encourage participants to feel more confident and comfortable when discussing sensitive issues (Ogden & Cornwell, 2010; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). It is acknowledged that the data generated could have been shaped by the interview prompts used and that certain questions might appear to lead participants to speak about particular issues (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, I was careful to only use prompts when necessary and related to the research question and was cautious in my language not to make assumptions or form leading questions.

2.7 Data Analysis

After considering a range of different qualitative approaches to analysis, I deemed that Thematic Analysis would be most suited to my research question, aims, and stance as a

researcher. My consideration of different data analysis methods is summarised in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Analysis Methods Considered (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Howitt, 2019; Willig, 2013)

Type of Analysis	Key Features	Reasons for Appropriateness / Inappropriateness
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	• Analysis is an interpretation of participants' experiences • Focuses on how phenomena are experienced • Focuses on the quality and texture of individual experience; how individuals make sense of their experience of a phenomenon • Questions should be open ended and nondirective; questions should be about participants' experiences • Sample should be homogeneous and less than 6 participants	• Inconsistent with my aim to work with teachers about their experiences and practices • Inconsistent with my research question, which does not focus on how teachers experienced a phenomenon • Incompatible with the questions in my interview schedule • My sample of teachers from different settings, and with varying lengths of service/collective efficacy is inconsistent with the homogenous sample prescribed by IPA *Decision = method deemed inappropriate*
Grounded Theory	• Sets out to construct theory from the data • Focuses on understanding social processes • Is a time intensive and complex process; can be complex for novice researchers • Suggests that the researcher should not have any prior engagement with relevant literature before data analysis	• I am not aiming to construct a theory from my data • My aim and research question are not focused on understanding social processes • I am a relatively novice researcher • As I have completed a systematic literature review, engagement with relevant literature is inevitable *Decision = method deemed inappropriate*
Discourse Analysis (DA)	• Focuses on the meaning and constructive role of language • The DA process is less clearly defined	• Inconsistent with my aim and research question • Inappropriate for a relatively novice researcher

	• Often used to analyse naturally occurring conversations • Examines how ideas are socially constructed	• Inconsistent with my use of semi-structured interviews • Inconsistent with my epistemological position *Decision = method deemed inappropriate*
Thematic Analysis	• Provides a flexible approach to analysing data that can provide rich, detailed, and complex accounts • Not tied to a particular theoretical approach or epistemological position • Allows the researcher to compare differences in knowledge between groups • Uses data with detailed textual material, such as interviews • Accessible to novice researchers	• Consistent with my aim to provide a rich account of the data • Suitable for my adopted epistemological position • Consistent with my aim to compare differences between teachers with high and low collective efficacy and between high and low excluding schools • Consistent with my use of semi-structured interviews • A suitable approach for my current level of research experience *Decision = method deemed appropriate*

Thematic Analysis offers a flexible method for data analysis that can provide rich and detailed accounts of individuals' perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In accordance with my research question and aims, an inductive approach was used, following Braun & Clarke's (2021) six-step process. This meant that analysis could be conducted using a bottom-up, data-driven approach in which themes were derived from the data rather than existing literature and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021). It is suggested that the separation of semantic and latent analysis in qualitative research is ambiguous, and that some degree of interpretation is likely to be involved (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In line with this view, my analysis involved both semantic and latent methods by focusing on explicit statements made by participants along with interpreting underlying meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Considering underlying meaning and assumptions also aligns with a critical realist approach (Willig, 2013). Although using an inductive approach meant that I gained meaning from the data without referring to previous research, it was recognised that I would have an active role in interpreting the data in relation to my research questions (Willig, 2013). Tables showing the themes, sub-themes, and related codes, can be found in Appendix C.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical practice is inherent in my work as a TEP and as a researcher. My research was given full ethical approval by the Newcastle University Ethics Committee and BPS ethical guidelines were followed (British Psychological Society, 2018, 2021).

2.8.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent was gained during both stages of the study. Participants were provided with an information sheet detailing what their involvement would entail (Appendix D), and written consent was gained (Appendix E). Duncombe and Jessop (2002) suggest that it is almost impossible for consent to be entirely informed as participants have no prior knowledge of the interview questions, the direction the discussion may take, or how much personal disclosure may be required. I endeavoured to approach informed consent with as much transparency as possible. Participants were informed, and reminded, that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw up to the point of analysis. Participants were given my contact details, and those of my supervisor, should they choose to do this or have any further questions regarding the process or their involvement.

2.8.2 Risk

During the interviews, I reminded participants that they did not have to answer any question if they did not feel comfortable. Together with the participant, an appropriate room in which the interviews could take place was identified to enable them to talk freely and confidentially, with specific arrangements made to ensure YP were not present, due to the potential sensitive nature of the discussions. Recognising ethical considerations as an ongoing process, I regularly checked in with participants, and remained mindful of any verbal or non-verbal signs of discomfort, to ensure they were happy to continue.

2.8.3 Power

When planning my research, I was aware of potential power dynamics that might be present in my relationships with participants. An example of how I tried to eliminate power imbalances was to give participants ownership regarding choosing rooms that were familiar and comfortable for them. However, as participants were aware that I am a TEP, I was mindful that their views of the EP role may have contributed to a power imbalance and impacted how they perceived me as a researcher and shaped the data I collected (Gunasekara, 2007). In an attempt to reduce this I was mindful of the language I was using and adopted an approachable manner. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) suggest that an interviewer promotes rapport by how they present themselves in an interview. I established

rapport by engaging in informal discussion prior to the interview, maintaining eye contact, and showing genuine interest.

Ramcharan and Cutcliffe (2001) propose that a researcher must remain attentive to the ongoing ethical dimensions intrinsic to the research process. When devising the interview schedule, I was mindful of the ethical implications of asking people to discuss situations that could raise uncomfortable thoughts and feelings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The use of semi-structured interviews was hoped to increase the likelihood that participants would feel comfortable discussing their experiences with me. However, I acknowledge that this relies on a level of trust between participants and myself to enable them to feel able to be honest and open when discussing sensitive issues. Consequently, this may have had an impact on the findings I was able to gather. I am aware of power imbalances associated with interviewing when this requires participants to reveal sensitive and personal information to the researcher. I recognise that this may impact the genuineness of responses as, for instance, participants may provide responses that they think the researcher wants to hear, which may introduce some bias and affect the validity of the findings.

Duncombe and Jessop (2002) discuss how power imbalances may occur if the interviewees' agenda differs from the researchers. Ethical tensions can arise when rapport may lead to an interview taking a therapeutic direction; as such it is important for the interviewer to establish clear boundaries, which can require great skill (Birch & Miller, 2000). I used my interpersonal skills to establish rapport and create a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere; I took the stance of an active listener and, when necessary, only steered the interview in directions relevant to the research question. By establishing good rapport, interviewees are encouraged and more likely to explore and disclose their intimate experiences and may be at risk of disclosing feelings which, on reflection, they might have preferred to keep to themselves (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). I remained mindful of my right not to know and was aware of not misusing my perceived power to fulfil my own agenda (Kvale, 2006). I also engaged in debriefing discussions with participants following interviews to reflect on how they found the process.

Chapter 3: Teacher Collective Efficacy and the Management of Difficult Behaviour: The Role of Student-Teacher Relationships

Abstract

Background: Student behaviour is a substantial, ongoing concern for schools. Teachers may not feel equipped in how to effectively manage difficult behaviour, resulting in lower job satisfaction and teachers leaving the profession. Teachers' efficacy beliefs, related to the management of student behaviour, can serve as a protective factor against stress and burnout, thus there is merit in investigating what might enhance these beliefs.

Aims: This study aimed to determine whether there is an association between school staffs' Collective Efficacy (CE), regarding difficult behaviour, and rates of exclusion from school. It aimed to explore how student-teacher relationships (STRs) might influence teachers' CE beliefs and their views about how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour.

Sample: Teachers from four mainstream secondary schools in North East England participated.

Methods: A two-phase sequential mixed methods design was utilised. A questionnaire was developed to ascertain school staffs' CE beliefs. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews with ten teachers were conducted, with high and low CE, and analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

Results: A significant association was found between school staff members' perceptions of CE and the rate of fixed term exclusions. Interview data revealed three overarching themes regarding how STRs might influence teachers' CE beliefs and the management of difficult behaviour: Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs, Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches and Greater Tolerance of Behaviour.

Conclusions: A cyclic relationship between STRs, CE, and behaviour is proposed. Positive STRs enable teachers to provide an environment in which behaviours are more respectful, reducing the need for disciplinary approaches, such as exclusion.

Key Words: Efficacy, behaviour, exclusion, discipline, relationships, schools, education

Following examination, this study will be submitted to the British Journal of Educational Psychology and therefore it is presented in the style of papers typically published by this journal.

3.1 Introduction

Student behaviour is a substantial, ongoing concern for schools, affecting children's achievement and the experiences of teachers (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; O'Connor, 2010). Teacher stress and burnout can be attributed to dealing with students' difficult behaviour (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010). In turn, teachers may not feel equipped in how to effectively manage difficult behaviour, resulting in lower job satisfaction and both newly qualified and experienced teachers leaving the profession (Giallo & Little, 2003; Sciuchetti & Yssel, 2019). Exclusion from school may be used to address behaviour, which has dire implications for student outcomes and incurs great financial cost to public services (Parsons & Castle, 1998). It is proposed that greater teacher efficacy beliefs, regarding behaviour management, might help to mitigate some effects of student behaviour on teachers' negative feelings (Aloe et al., 2014).

3.1.1 Teacher Collective Efficacy

Collective Efficacy (CE) refers to teachers' shared beliefs about the staffs' combined ability to execute courses of action required to produce student success, or the group's ability to execute a task effectively (Goddard et al., 2004). It is a construct rooted in social cognitive theory and is derived from Bandura's (1997) construct of self-efficacy. CE represents teachers' beliefs about their ability to facilitate positive change among students, being persistent in their efforts (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Within this study, teacher CE refers to teachers' shared beliefs about their combined ability to manage difficult behaviour successfully.

There is some research that explores the sources of efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1997) proposes that there are four sources that shape the development of efficacy beliefs: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective state. Mastery experience refers to experiencing own success and vicarious experience refers to observing others' success (Goddard et al., 2004). Social persuasion signifies feedback from others and affective state is interpreting feelings and the ability to tolerate pressure (Goddard et al., 2004). Mastery experience is suggested to be the most powerful contributor to teachers' efficacy beliefs (Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Goddard et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Though thought to be of lesser importance in their contribution than master experience, professional development activities involving vicarious experience and social persuasion have still been found to enhance teachers' efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Beauchamp et al. (2014) also found that social persuasion in the form of feedback from colleagues was a powerful influence on teachers' CE beliefs.

Klassen et al. (2011) suggest that Bandura's four sources of efficacy beliefs lack ecological validity due to insufficient evidence and that little is known about how they operate in practice, particularly in relation to teachers. Interestingly, research exploring possible sources of efficacy beliefs has been in relation to teachers' efficacy in influencing student achievement. It is possible that sources of CE beliefs regarding the successful management of difficult behaviour differ from those outlined above.

As teachers do not operate in isolation, the sources of individual efficacy beliefs are also thought to operate at the group level because teachers are influenced by the context surrounding them (Dimopoulou, 2012; Goddard et al., 2004; Klassen et al., 2011). It is suggested that, although they are distinct constructs, individual and collective efficacy have similar sources, provide similar functions, and operate through similar processes (Bandura, 1997). A mutual relationship is proposed between teachers' views about their individual capabilities and their beliefs about group capability, suggesting that in a school where CE is high, the majority of teachers will have high beliefs about their own efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004; Guidetti et al., 2018). In an investigation of teachers' beliefs, Goddard and Goddard (2001) found that CE beliefs were predictive of individual efficacy beliefs and proposed a nested relationship between the two.

There is a wealth of literature suggesting teacher efficacy is related to student academic achievement (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard et al., 2004), however a dearth of research into how teachers' efficacy beliefs are related to behaviour. It has been noted that in most research in this area, there has been a focus on individual efficacy beliefs and how these might influence student and teacher behaviour, and that the construct of CE has been somewhat overlooked (Klassen, 2010).

3.1.2 Teacher Collective Efficacy and Student Behaviour

There are some studies exploring teacher self-efficacy with regard to student behaviour; for instance, Almog and Shechtman (2007); Emmer and Hickman (1991); Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016); Malak et al. (2018). However, there is little empirical research investigating the association between teachers' CE beliefs and the management of students' behaviour. In research investigating the association between teacher CE and the prevalence of students difficult behaviour, a strong, reciprocal relationship was found; in schools with higher CE beliefs, teachers reported fewer behaviour problems (Sørlie & Torsheim, 2011). Furthermore, an increase in prevalence of behaviour problems was associated with decreased CE. In a study of the relationship between teacher CE and student behaviour it was found that in schools with higher CE beliefs, fewer students were excluded due to their behaviour (Gibbs & Powell, 2012).

While caution must be applied when inferring causation, it is suggested that teachers with lower self-efficacy beliefs are less tolerant of difficult behaviour (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003). It seems reasonable to suggest the same might apply to the CE beliefs of staff in a school, given the nested relationship between individual and collective efficacy beliefs described by Goddard and Goddard (2001). Due to the associated stress and burnout experienced by teachers when dealing with student behaviour (Betoret, 2006; Hastings & Bham, 2003), they may be more quick to resort to disciplinary practices, such as removing students from the classroom or formally excluding them from school. Teachers' efficacy beliefs related to the management of student behaviour can serve as a protective factor against stress and burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010), thus there is merit in investigating what might enhance these beliefs.

3.1.3 Student-Teacher Relationships and Student Behaviour

In government policy documents, the importance of positive student-teacher relationships (STRs) in supporting behaviour is emphasised (Ofsted, 2019; Scottish Government, 2018). Positive STRs have been found to be associated with positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for children and young people (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Newberry, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011). Additionally, supportive STRs are suggested to increase student resilience, acting as a protective factor against negative outcomes, such as disengagement, poor academic performance, and exclusion (Hughes et al., 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Therefore, how teachers respond to difficult behaviour, and how this might be influenced by STRs, is an important issue for educationalists.

The behaviour of both teachers and students can affect the quality of the relationship, suggesting a reciprocal interaction (Longobardi et al., 2021; Sutherland et al., 2013). This implies that students' perceptions of teachers, and consequently the STR, can be affected by how teachers respond to students' behaviour. It is suggested that the STR subsequently increases mutual respect between teachers and students, which should lessen difficult behaviour and the need for exclusionary discipline, thus resulting in fewer exclusions (Augustine et al., 2018).

3.1.4 Summary

There is some emerging literature exploring the possible relationship between teachers' CE beliefs and the management of difficult behaviour. However, more research is needed focusing on the underlying processes within this relationship and to establish what might support staffs' positive CE beliefs (Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Sørlie & Torsheim, 2011).

It is proposed here that when teachers have positive relationships with students this enhances teachers' beliefs about their combined ability to manage difficult behaviour successfully. As a result, this will influence their responses, and reduce the use of disciplinary practices and exclusion to manage difficult behaviour. This is explored through the research question: 'What do secondary school teachers tell us about the role of student-teacher relationships in teacher collective efficacy and the management of difficult behaviour?' The purpose of this study is threefold, as outlined in Table 10.

Table 10: Research Aims

1.	To ascertain individual staff members' beliefs about the CE of all staff in their school in order to compare the CE, with regard to difficult behaviour, of different staff roles, and to determine whether there is an association between CE and exclusion rates.
2.	To explore teachers' views about their relationships with students and what might influence the quality of these.
3.	To explore teachers' views about how student-teacher relationships might influence their beliefs about CE and their views about their practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour.

Study 1

A two-phase sequential mixed methods design was utilised (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Firstly, a questionnaire was developed to ascertain school staffs' CE beliefs (Study 1). Subsequently, semi-structured interviews with ten teachers were conducted (Study 2).

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Participants

Four mainstream secondary schools in a Local Authority in North East England participated, all of which were academies within urban settings. The aim was to include schools with both relatively high and low exclusion rates to enable comparison across contexts. Table 11 outlines the demographic information for each participating school.

Table 11: Demographic Information Pertaining to Each Participating School.

School	No. of pupils on roll	% FSM	No. of staff	No. of Questionnaire responses	Questionnaire Response Rate
1	1436	23.5	191	40	23.7%
2	794	57.3	104	29	27.6%
3	1205	36	131	16	13.9%
4	906	45.8	86	16	20.5%

3.2.2 Measures

A slightly adapted version of Goddard's (2002) 12-item CE scale was used to gain individual staff members' perceptions of the CE of all staff in their school regarding the management of difficult behaviour. This questionnaire was adapted for a UK context with items relating to managing difficult behaviour. Participants were asked to show the extent to which they agreed with the statements, using a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Each response was scored from one to six and a total score for all 12 items was calculated to give an overall CE score for each participant: the higher the score, the higher the CE (Goddard, 2002). Participants also received a score for each of the two domains of CE as described by Goddard (2002): Group Competence (GC) and Task Analysis (TA).

3.2.3 Procedure

A pilot trial of the questionnaire was conducted, and minor revisions were made, as required. Following this, online questionnaires were sent to participating secondary schools for voluntary completion by all staff. This research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and full ethical approval was granted from Newcastle University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (British Psychological Society, 2018, 2021). At each stage, participants were provided with an information sheet and informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw up to the point of analysis. Following a discussion about the research purpose and processes, written informed consent was gained for participation.

3.3 Results

101 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 21.6%. Cronbach's alpha indicated good reliability (.82). Following the process outlined by Goddard (2002), individual CE scores were aggregated within each school, via the group mean of all staffs' individual responses, to provide a school-level measure of group-referent CE. To determine whether there is an association between CE and exclusion rates, spearman's correlation

coefficients were calculated using individual staff members' total CE scores, group-referent CE scores, fixed term exclusion (FTE) rates, and permanent exclusion (PEX) rates. Table 12 below shows the number and rate of exclusions, and group-referent CE scores, for each school. Exclusion rates were calculated by dividing the number of exclusions recorded across the whole academic year by the number of pupils on roll and multiplying this by 100 (Department for Education, 2017b). The school with the lowest FTE rate was found to have the highest group-referent CE.

Table 12: School Group-Referent Collective Efficacy Scores and Exclusion Rates Per School, Based on 2018/19 Data (Department for Education, 2020).

School	No. of FTE	FTE Rate	No. of PEX	PEX rate	Group-Referent CE	Standard Deviation
1	94	6.58	7	0.49	55.6	6.39
2	141	19.61	8	1.11	52.2	7.44
3	920	77.51	4	0.34	49.3	9.71
4	1625	214.66	13	1.72	52.1	7.07

There was a weak negative correlation between individual staff members' total CE scores and FTE rates, which was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.218$, $p = 0.032$. This indicates a modest relationship; as individual staff members' perceptions of the CE of all staff in their school regarding the management of difficult behaviour increases, the rate of FTEs decreases. There was strong negative correlation between group-referent CE scores and FTE rates, which was statistically significant, $r_s = 0.947$, $p = 0.00$. This indicates that as group CE regarding management of behaviour increases, the rate of FTEs decreases. There were no significant relationships found between PEX rates and individual staff members' total CE scores or group-referent CE scores. The correlation coefficients are shown in Table 13 below. As found by Goddard (2002), the two domains of CE (GC and TA) are highly congruent; they were also found to be consistent with individual and group-referent CE suggesting that no further analysis related to the sub-domains is necessary.

Table 13: Correlations of individual and group collective efficacy (CE), group competence (GC), task analysis (TA), fixed-term exclusion (FTE) and permanent exclusion (PEX)

	Total Individual CE	Group-Referent CE	GC	TA	FTE	PEX
Total CE	-					
Group CE	.246*	-				
GC	.899**	.232*	-			
TA	.862**	.225*	.602**	-		
FTE	-.218*	-.947**	-.195	-.209*	-	
PEX	-.005	-.117	.015	-.027	.397**	-

Questionnaire responses indicated that, across the four schools, assistant head teachers had the highest CE, followed by support staff. Trainee teachers were reported to have the lowest CE of all the roles, as shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Mean Average Collective Efficacy Score for Each Staff Role.

Role	No. of respondents (%)	Mean Average CE score
Assistant Head Teacher	8 (7.9)	56.3
Support Staff	20 (19.8)	55
Teaching Assistant	13 (12.9)	54.8
Teacher	50 (49.5)	52.2
Pastoral	6 (5.9)	51.8
Trainee Teacher	4 (3.9)	45.8

3.4 Discussion

The findings indicate a negative association between school staffs' perceptions of CE, regarding the management of difficult behaviour, and the rate of FTEs. This is in line with Gibbs & Powell's (2012) findings, who also found a relationship between CE and exclusions. In the current study, the school with the lowest FTE rate was found to have the highest group-referent CE. These findings suggest that in schools where staff feel more able to manage difficult behaviour successfully, it is possible the incidence of difficult behaviour will be lower and consequently there may be fewer children formally excluded. This relates to the suggestion of Jordan and Stanovich (2003) that teachers with higher efficacy beliefs are

more tolerant of difficult behaviour. This is perhaps related to enhanced feelings of competence and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012), or to perceived school climate (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). It is beyond the scope of this study to determine what supported staffs' positive CE beliefs; however, some research has determined that, within a primary school setting, these beliefs can be enhanced by leadership practices and collaborative ethos (Collie et al., 2012; Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016; Powell & Gibbs, 2018). This highlights a potential research gap in exploring what might support staffs' CE beliefs regarding behaviour management within a secondary school context.

Interestingly, there was no association found between CE and PEX. This is perhaps linked to PEXs often being the result of a serious isolated incident (Department for Education, 2017a), therefore possibly less likely to be impacted by efficacy beliefs. Trainee teachers were found to have the lowest CE of all surveyed roles. Research suggests that trainee teachers feel less efficacious in relation to behaviour management (Giallo & Little, 2003). Given the nested relationship between individual and collective efficacy beliefs suggested by Goddard and Goddard (2001), it seems reasonable to suggest that, in the current study, trainee teachers' perceptions of their school's CE might have been influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs. Assistant headteachers were found to have the highest CE. This relates to research indicating that teachers with additional responsibilities and senior roles have higher CE (Strahan et al., 2019). The lower CE reported by teachers may be attributable to the stress and burnout experienced from dealing with students' difficult behaviour (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010). Future research could explore what might enhance or diminish CE beliefs related to behaviour management for different staff roles.

Study 2

3.5 Method

3.5.1 Participants

In Phase 1, 27 teachers (54%) indicated they were willing to be approached for interview. 15 of these were identified as having high CE and 12 as having low CE. Those with a total CE score above the group-referent CE score for that school were considered to have high CE and those with a total CE score below the group-referent CE score for that school were considered to have low CE. Teachers were chosen as the role to be interviewed as they have the most interactions with a range of students overall, in terms of developing relationships and dealing with day-to-day behaviour. Purposeful stratified sampling was used to identify teachers with both high and low CE beliefs. Participants who indicated in Phase 1

that they would be willing to be interviewed were approached via email and semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten teachers: five with high CE and five with low CE. Participant characteristics are detailed in Table 14 below:

Table 15: Participant Information

Participant	School	Gender	Length of Service	Collective Efficacy (score)
1	1	Male	13 years	Low (47)
2	1	Female	20 years	High (58)
3	3	Female	32 years	Low (38)
4	2	Female	3 years	High (57)
5	4	Female	10 years	Low (51)
6	2	Female	26 years	Low (50)
7	1	Female	1 year	High (56)
8	2	Female	2 years	Low (49)
9	4	Female	12 years	High (55)
10	2	Male	4 years	High (56)

3.5.2 Measures

The semi-structured interview schedule was designed using a funnelling technique, beginning with broad questions to initiate the participants' descriptive experience and progressively narrowing to specific questions of importance to the research questions and aims (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The interviews were designed to explore teachers' views about their relationships with students and what might influence the quality of these, and to explore teachers' views about how STRs might influence their beliefs about CE and their views about their practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour.

3.5.3 Procedure

The semi-structured interviews took place between June and July 2021 in school, in a quiet, private room, at a pre-arranged time considered convenient for the teachers. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and later deleted.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, using semantic and latent coding, as a way of seeking meaning across the whole data set rather than attempting to identify pre-existing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Although meaning was gained from the data without reference to prior research, it was recognised that the researcher would

play an active role in interpreting the data (Willig, 2013). Table 15 outlines the process followed.

Table 16: Thematic Analysis Process (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 35).

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing the data. Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each potential theme.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. Generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells. Generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature. Producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3.6 Results

Research aims 2 and 3 (see Table 10 above) were addressed using semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers: five with high CE and five with low CE. Although participants were classified as having high or low CE, analysis was conducted across the whole data set. As the analysis was inductive, it was important that themes were derived from the data and not by finding evidence that fits theory. Additionally, participants were categorised based only on their completion of the questionnaire at a single point in time. Thus, the themes identified are drawn from both high and low CE data sets and, where applicable, any significant differences in the data are indicated within the discussion.

Research Aim 2	To explore teachers' views about their relationships with students and what might influence the quality of these.

Thematic analysis led to three themes being identified in relation to research aim 2, outlined in Table 16: 'Authenticity', 'Opportunities for Connection' and 'Teaching Style'.

3.6.1 Authenticity

Sub-themes that were grouped as 'Authenticity' were drawn from codes that referred to the influence of teachers being perceived as being genuine and valuing individual students.
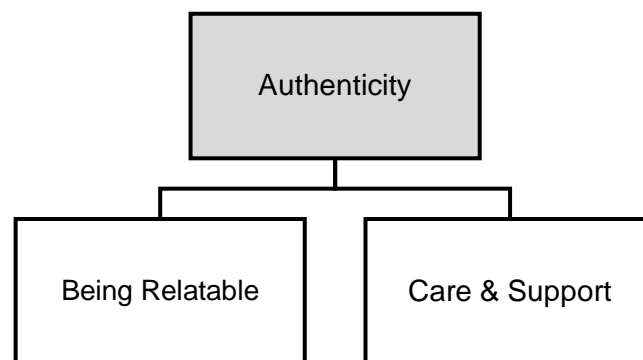
Figure 2: Thematic Map for Authenticity

<u>Being Relatable</u>

Participants spoke of the importance of teachers appearing relatable, as 'real' people to students.

> *P1: You've got to be a human and relate to these kids.*

Participants commented on needing to have a *"personality"* and being *"approachable"* to students.

<u>Care & Support</u>

This sub-theme relates to comments indicating the importance of students feeling genuinely cared for and supported by teachers.

> *P2: That relationship I've developed with him has totally been through making sure he knows somebody cares about him.*

Participants' comments suggested that by demonstrating genuine care, students felt recognised and valued by teachers. This enables students to feel like they can talk to

teachers when they need support. Participants also referred to the importance of *"showing empathy"* and *"listening to students"* as well as acknowledging their strengths and believing in them.

> *P5: Telling them how brilliant they are because, some of them, that will be the only time in the day they hear that.*

3.6.2 Opportunities for Connection

This theme was derived from data referring to factors within the environment that can impact upon teachers' opportunities to develop connections and relationships with students.
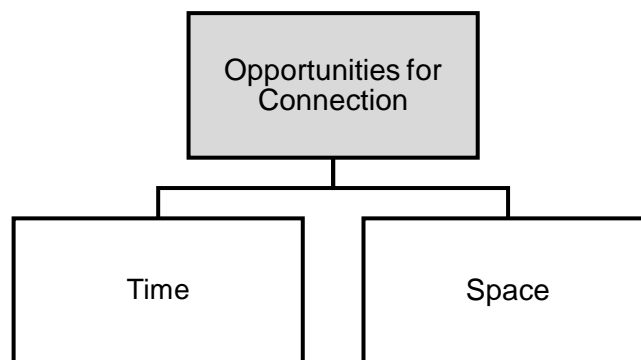
Figure 3: Thematic Map for Opportunities for Connection

<u>Time</u>

This sub-theme referred to participants' comments about the influence of time on the quality of relationships. Participants referred to students respecting teachers who give up time in their day to make connections, such as giving up *"some of your free time, like breaks and lunches."*

Some participants spoke of struggling with the lack of time to dedicate to their relationships with students due to competing responsibilities. It was noted this was only mentioned by participants with low CE beliefs, perhaps suggesting this contributes to diminishing CE beliefs.

> *P3: You haven't got the time in that lesson to spend the time with that student you're trying really hard to keep a relationship with.*

One participant suggested there *"should be more time for teachers to get to know students."* Others referred to the amount of time they see students having an impact on the quality of relationships.

P6: And if you see them once a fortnight or once a week, there's the issue, you can't build that relationship with them.

Participants' comments alluded to the length of time that teachers are employed in a school having an influence on STRs. They indicated students accept and respect teachers who stick around as it suggests they are committed, and can feel abandoned by teachers who leave. This is illustrated by the comment below.

P10: The kind of shock when kids are like, you're staying another year? That buy in; the longer you're here, the more they buy into you, the more you're seen as a fixture in their life. A life that often has a lot of inconsistencies in it.

Space

This sub-theme refers to codes about teachers providing a space for connections to be built, and the influence of the physical space of the school. Participants' comments referred to being present around school, enabling teachers to become a *"friendly face"* to students.

P9: Because if they see you out on the corridor, and they know you're about and present, that massively helps relationships.

Participants spoke of making space for small interactions, such as welcoming students, acts of kindness and speaking to them outside of lessons. They also referred to the influence of adopting an open-door policy.

P8: That just makes such a difference sometimes, just like, you know where my door is, and then actually, even the kids you think are the most hard-to-reach, they'll open up to you and you'll find out more about them, which makes it quite good.

Some participants suggested the size of classes and the school can affect how well you know students and how easy it is to support and connect with them. It was noted that this was only mentioned by participants with low CE beliefs, perhaps suggesting this contributes to diminishing CE beliefs.

3.6.3 Teaching Style

'Teaching Style' was conceptualised to include data referring to the way teachers interact with students in the classroom and how this impacts the quality of relationships.
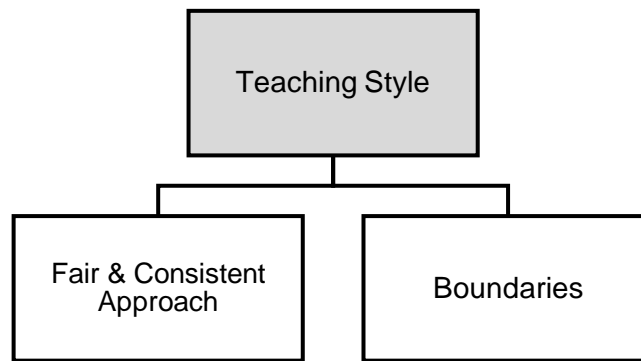
Figure 4: Thematic Map for Teaching Style

Fair & Consistent Approach

This sub-theme refers to the influence of teachers being fair and consistent with students.

> *P7: I think being that person who is consistent…kids just want consistency, and they just want to know where they stand, and I think that's the main thing.*

Participants spoke of the importance of maintaining clear expectations, for example by following through with sanctions and rewards. It was suggested that students appreciate teachers who are fair because students are *"justice driven"* and they dislike teachers who are strict. They also spoke about students holding grudges against teachers who implement consequences and how this can damage positive relationships.

> *P2: Maybe you have to C4 them on the system, which means that they are removed, and then you lose that trust with them for that little bit of time.*

Boundaries

This sub-theme relates to codes indicating the importance of maintaining strong boundaries.

> *P1: Because if you give a clear sort of message, you give them a boundary, they know that they can't cross it, you have a much more positive relationship.*

This included comments about students being aware that the relationship is not a friendship, *"showing that you're human, but also professional."*

Table 18: Research Aim 3

Research Aim 3	To explore teachers' views about how student-teacher relationships might influence their beliefs about collective efficacy and their views about their practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour.

Thematic analysis led to three themes being identified in relation to research aim 3, outlined in Table 17: 'Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs', 'Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches' and 'Greater Tolerance of Behaviour'.

3.6.4 Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs

Sub-themes grouped as 'Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs' were developed from codes indicating that positive STRs resulted in teachers having enhanced efficacy beliefs regarding staffs' ability to manage difficult behaviour successfully.
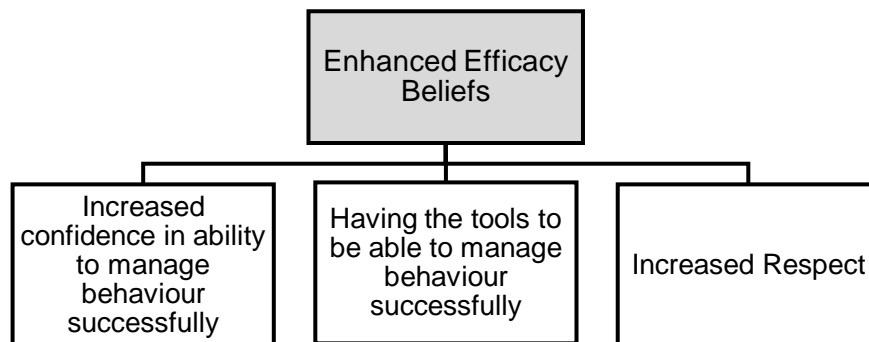
Figure 5: Thematic Map for Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs

<u>Increased confidence in ability to manage behaviour successfully</u>

This sub-theme refers to participants feeling that positive STRs increased their confidence in staffs' ability to manage behaviour successfully. They suggested that when teachers invest in positive STRs, students will be less likely to display difficult behaviour because they like them, and teachers will feel more confident to challenge behaviour when it occurs. This cycle is illustrated in the comment below.

> *P1: If you have a good relationship with your students, that will breed confidence in your ability to manage any difficult behaviours, and they would be less likely to be difficult with you because they like you. It's very much a circle.*

Participants spoke of behaviour management feeling easier when staff across the school have positive STRs. It means that behaviour won't *"escalate to a point where it's unmanageable"*, there is *"less trepidation"* and staff do not need to rely on the consequence system so readily.

> *P4: I think the more positive relationships you've got across the school, the better the behaviour management. As the relationships improve, and the confidence, then behaviour management feels easier because you've got more students on the right*

side of you, therefore it's easier to manage those little things and nip them in the bud quicker.

<u>Having the tools to be able to manage behaviour successfully</u>

This sub-theme relates to comments about positive STRs equipping teachers with tools and strategies that can help them to feel better able to manage difficult behaviour successfully. Participants indicated that when teachers have good relationships with students it gives them the knowledge about how to respond effectively when they present with difficult behaviour.

P6: If you've got a relationship with a student, you can predict what the outcome of a situation is going to be a bit more; so, if you challenge that child for equipment, you know what to expect. And I think if you expect it, then you can deal with it.

They suggested that good relationships provide teachers with an awareness of individual needs and, as such, they know what strategies to use when faced with difficult behaviour, due to being familiar with students and how they respond to different approaches.

P9: If you know that he's got autism and you know what his triggers are, you know how to deal with it… I suppose the only way you know how to take those different approaches is because you've taken the time to get to know to know them.

<u>Increased Respect</u>

Participants proposed that positive STRs foster increased mutual respect between students and teachers, which lessens difficult behaviour as students are less likely to be difficult for teachers that they like and are intrinsically motivated to please them.

P2: You can have the naughtiest kid in the world; if that kid likes you, they will generally behave for you. Because they don't want to upset you, they've got that respect for you.

Participants suggested that when teachers have positive STRs, students will listen and respond better, which reduces the likelihood of behaviour escalating to a level that requires use of the consequence system. Consequently, efficacy in managing behaviour successfully increases, related to the previous sub-theme.

P10: Even the worst teacher that has that has no strategies whatsoever, no routines, but has good relationships with the class will cope because those kids will want to behave, so you don't need to go down that line of consequences.

3.6.5 Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches

'Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches' includes sub-themes which illustrate data referring to teachers adopting alternative approaches to managing difficult behaviour, other than discipline and consequences, because of positive STRs.

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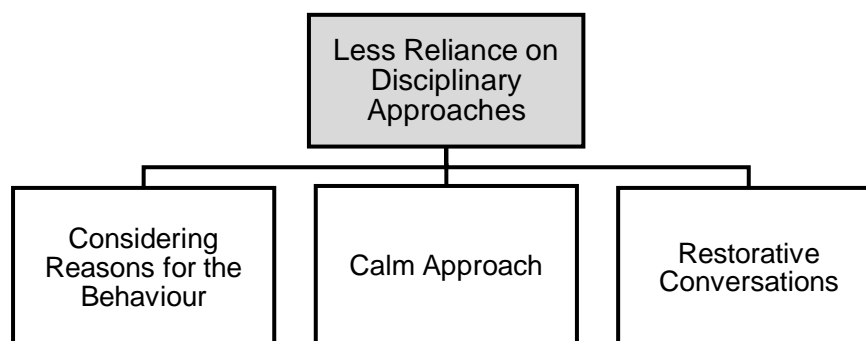
Figure 6: Thematic Map for Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches

Considering Reasons for the Behaviour

Participants spoke of their initial response to difficult behaviour being to consider *why* the student might be presenting this way. They spoke of a desire to find out why by taking the students to one side and talking to them, rather than immediately using the consequence system to discipline them.

> *P4: You can explain to the student or try and understand why they acted in that way. I think that does help teachers' confidence in their ability to manage difficult behaviour.*

Participants spoke of wanting to understand possible underlying reasons for behaviour, knowing when it is out of character for students, and considering external influences, such as home life. They suggested that knowing underlying reasons can enable them to intervene successfully before behaviour heightens.

Calm Approach

Participants commented that positive STRs enable teachers to remain calm when faced with difficult behaviour, rather than shouting.

> *P8: Good relationships with difficult behaviour, I would say you're a lot more calming and understanding and I think that leads to less difficult behaviour; I think they feel like they're probably more comfortable.*

They suggested that shouting is not a constructive or effective strategy as it tends to exacerbate behaviour and decrease respect, whereas a calm approach fosters a *"positive atmosphere."*

> *P10: Kids aren't going to leave school being motivated by a teacher that shouts and screams at them, they're going to be motivated by somebody that has been there for them, has been kind to them, has understood them.*

<u>Restorative Conversations</u>

Participants proposed teachers with positive relationships tend to respond to difficult behaviour by engaging in restorative conversations instead of relying on the consequence system. This involves speaking to students one-to-one about their behaviour, asking them to reflect on the implications of this and how it can be improved.

> *P7: Talking to them about their behaviour and getting them to think about their behaviour and how they could improve it before you then start getting through your consequences. I think having relationships massively helps with that doesn't it, trying to redress that behaviour in a friendly way.*

This allows students and teachers to move on from the behaviour quickly and consider how it could be prevented in the future, such as having an opportunity to ask students what teachers could do to help support them.

3.6.6 Greater Tolerance of Behaviour

The sub-themes here refer to participants suggestions that positive STRs enhance teachers' tolerance for difficult behaviour when it occurs.
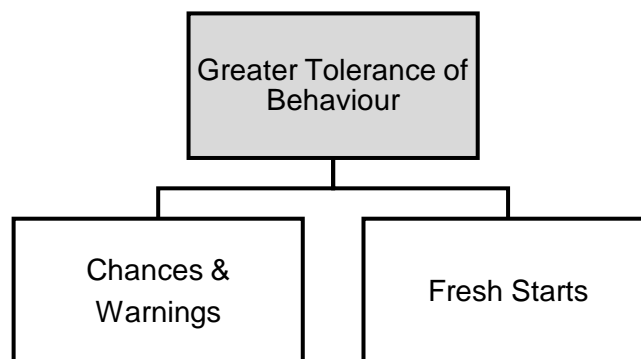

Figure 7: Thematic Map for Greater Tolerance

<u>Chances & Warnings</u>

Participants indicated that students who have good relationships with teachers are given more chances to turn their behaviour around before consequences are given, such as ignoring behaviour or giving warnings.

> *P3: Give them chances before you just get fed up…give them a few minutes to sort themselves out and a bit of space to turn it around…giving them a chance to do what you've asked rather than getting grumpy with them straight away.*

It was suggested that immediate use of the consequence system can *"sabotage relationships."*

<u>Fresh Starts</u>

Participants spoke of positive relationships enabling teachers to not hold grudges against students who present with difficult behaviour and consider each day a new day. They can move on quicker and are less likely to perceive the behaviour as personal.

> *P5: It's never personal with kids. It's just you're the teacher and will get whatever they've had to deal with from anywhere else, where they've perhaps not had a good relationship.*

3.7 Discussion

To address a gap in the extant literature, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' views about how STRs might influence their beliefs about CE and their views about their practice in terms of how they respond to and manage difficult behaviour. Contrary to predictions, there were no marked differences in participants' views whether they had high or low CE beliefs. It is possible that those interviewed had high self-efficacy beliefs, though this contrasts with the nested relationship between individual and collective efficacy beliefs described by Goddard and Goddard (2001). Additionally, there were no marked differences in participants' views in high and low excluding schools. However, although there were equal numbers of participants with high and low CE, these were not equally distributed between the four schools. Those interviewed all described having positive STRs; it is possible that the study attracted teachers who value relationships and so were more willing to discuss their experiences. This poses an interesting question of why there are marked differences in the outcomes (the numbers of students excluded) and the perceived quality of teachers' relationships with students in these schools. However, as this study only included a small sample of teachers from each school, this may not be representative of the quality of STRs across the whole school.

Current findings indicate that positive STRs enable teachers to provide an environment in which behaviours are more respectful, and their confidence in staffs' ability to manage behaviour successfully is enhanced. This links with Sørlie and Torsheim (2011) findings that in schools with higher CE beliefs, teachers reported fewer behaviour problems. It may be surmised that if CE is higher, teachers may be less likely to perceive some behaviour as difficult. Findings suggest that positive STRs make behaviour management less onerous for teachers; it could be argued that this contributes to a reduction in the use of exclusion, as behaviour is less likely to escalate to this level and can be managed using alternative approaches. These findings add weight to claims that teachers' efficacy beliefs, related to the management of student behaviour, can serve as a protective factor against stress and burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010). In the current study, positive STRs enhance CE beliefs by equipping teachers with tools and strategies that enable them to feel more able to manage difficult behaviour successfully. This suggests teachers' experience of positive STRs might provide them with a stronger sense and belief about what they can do to support good behaviours, which relates to Bandura's (1997) conceptualisation of efficacy, and might also relate to enhanced feelings of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2012). This is coherent with previous research that suggests when teachers have higher efficacy beliefs, they adopt more helpful, proactive strategies, such as praise and reinforcement (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Sørlie & Torsheim, 2011).

Consistent with suggestions made in previous research (Augustine et al., 2018; Roache & Lewis, 2011), positive STRs can foster increased mutual respect. This enhances students' intrinsic motivation to please teachers by demonstrating good behaviour, which subsequently reduces the need for disciplinary approaches; this is informed by self-determination theory and the idea that people will have an increased desire for change if they are intrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 2012). The findings here are consistent with previous literature which proposes that positive STRs are linked with fewer incidences of difficult behaviour (Longobardi et al., 2021; Schwab et al., 2019; Yassine et al., 2020). This reflects the reciprocal interaction between the behaviour of teachers and students (Sørlie & Torsheim, 2011; Sutherland et al., 2013); when teachers invest in relationships with students, students are more likely to demonstrate good behaviour as they respect them. The findings of the current study propose a possible cyclic relationship between STRs, CE, and behaviour, as outlined in Figure 8.
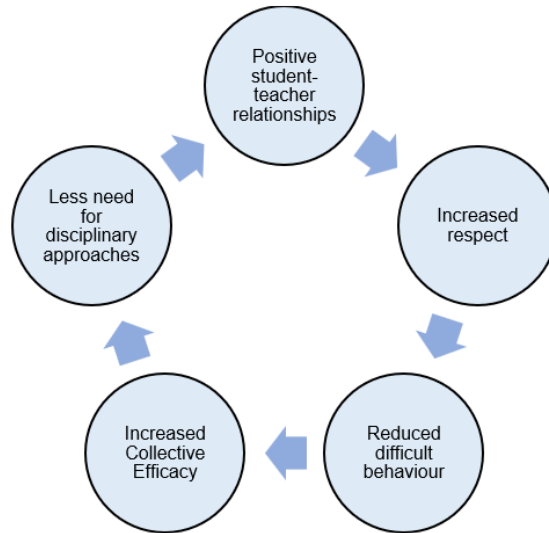
Figure 8: Cyclic Relationship between Student-Teacher Relationships, CE, and Behaviour

Previous research suggests that using supportive strategies, such as talking to students regarding their behaviour and what they could have done differently, can help to lessen difficult behaviour, reduce the need for exclusionary discipline practices, and facilitate positive STRs (Lewis et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). In accordance with this, current findings indicate that positive STRs enable teachers to respond to difficult behaviour by engaging in restorative conversations rather than relying on the consequence system, reducing difficult behaviour and the need for exclusion, while also strengthening relationships. Restorative approaches can promote respect and enable teachers and students to develop trust (Augustine et al., 2018; Clawson, 2017; Gregory et al., 2016). Therefore, it could be reasoned that providing an environment where positive relationships are nurtured can lessen difficult behaviour by enabling students to develop mutual understanding (Gallagher et al., 2019), and learn about how their behaviour impacts those within their social system, underpinned by an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The restoration of relationships may contribute to students' sense of connectedness in school, a crucial human need for wellbeing according to psychological needs models (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Tyrell & Griffin, 2003).

Current findings indicate that positive STRs influence teachers' responses to difficult behaviour, in that they talk with students about why the behaviour is occurring and build emotional literacy, rather than immediately using disciplinary approaches. It seems reasonable to propose that positive relationships might encourage teachers to adopt an empathic mindset, which can enable them to intervene successfully before behaviour deteriorates. This relates to previous research by Okonofua et al. (2016) who found this resulted in fewer exclusions.

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In accordance with previous literature (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003; Malak et al., 2018), positive STRs, that result in higher CE, enhance teachers' tolerance for difficult behaviour when it occurs. It is plausible to suggest that teachers with higher CE beliefs might be more persistent in their efforts to manage difficult behaviour, as proposed by Sørlie and Torsheim (2011). It could be argued that enhanced CE beliefs, facilitated by positive STRs, might reduce stress and burnout experienced by teachers when dealing with behaviour (Betoret, 2006; Hastings & Bham, 2003), therefore they are less likely to resort to disciplinary practices, such as using the consequence system or excluding students from school. It could be reasoned that greater tolerance resulting from positive STRs can increase CE beliefs and help to mitigate stress (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010). The findings here indicate that when teachers experience less stress related to student behaviour, they may be less likely to perceive behaviour as difficult and are more likely react in a calm manner because they feel more able to manage difficult behaviour successfully, which subsequently reduces the need for exclusion.

3.8 Limitations

This research was carried out with a small number of schools in one Local Authority in NE England, which might constrain the generalisability of the findings. However, it is argued that transferability, in terms of similarity between contexts, can be viewed as a form of generalisability (Larsson, 2009; Smith, 2018); it could be reasoned that the findings of this study could be transferable to wider contexts.

When measuring CE beliefs, it was not possible to gain the responses of all staff in each school; as such, it is conceivable that the views of non-responders might not have been consistent with the mean CE scores employed in this study. However, respondents were representative of a range of roles, which supports a richer sense of staffs' shared beliefs about their combined ability to manage difficult behaviour in each school. Additionally, the questionnaire was a self-report measure of CE beliefs; it is possible that some participants' responses may have been impacted due to social desirability bias.

Lastly, it is possible that the teachers who agreed to complete the questionnaire and be interviewed may have resulted in a possible response bias. For example, teachers who espoused high CE beliefs, and those with perceived positive STRs, may have been more inclined to participate in the study. To minimise bias, purposeful stratified sampling was used to identify teachers with both high and low beliefs in the staffs' CE (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.9 Implications for Practice and Further Research

This study highlights how positive STRs can influence how difficult behaviour is responded to. Positive STRs may support inclusion in schools (Crouch et al., 2014). As supporting inclusion within schools is an integral part of the Educational Psychologist (EP) role (Farrell, 2006), EPs could work collaboratively at individual, group and systemic levels by applying psychological theory to develop policy and create a school environment that facilitates and values positive relationships, to help reduce exclusions. As well as enhancing teachers' CE beliefs, as suggested by this study, environments that foster positive relationships also have benefits for students through improving wellbeing (Roffey, 2008). The government's Green Papers highlight the importance of meeting children's emotional needs to enable them to thrive (Department for Education, 2017c, 2022).

Drawing on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it is important to consider the relationships beyond the STR along with wider factors that can influence this relationship and the management of behaviour. For example, the socio-economic status (SES) of students and the level of deprivation within the context that a school sits can be significant influences. It is suggested that student SES and socioeconomic deprivation can affect teachers' CE and the number of children excluded (Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Gibbs & Powell, 2012). Within the interviews in this study, participants alluded to students' home lives influencing efficacy beliefs and the relationships they are able to build with students' parents. Klassen et al. (2010) propose that in schools where teachers report high CE beliefs, parents are generally more supportive. This indicates that the home-school relationship is key in mitigating the effects of a school's socio-economic context. When teachers believe that it is possible to address the adverse influence of home and community, fewer children will be excluded as a consequence of their behaviour (Gibbs & Powell, 2012).

Establishing a positive relationship with parents is suggested to help teachers develop an understanding of students' social and emotional needs (Axup & Gersch, 2008) and increasing parental involvement and home-school communication can help to reduce the prevalence of difficult behaviour, particularly in schools located in low SES areas (Avvisati et al., 2014; Cox, 2005). EPs are in a unique position to enhance home-school collaboration, helping to establish and maintain positive and productive working relationships between families and schools in the interest of promoting the academic and social development of children (Cox, 2005; Graham-Clay, 2005). EPs could play a role in supporting families and schools to repair fractious relationships and develop effective communication, while being mindful of the individual situation and the need to be flexible in their approach (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Graham-Clay, 2005). Applying their knowledge of how different systems

can impact on and interact with each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), EPs can use collaborative consultation approaches to support ongoing communication and collaboration between families and schools, recognising the distinctive expertise that individuals can bring to a situation (Wagner, 2017).

Given the number of teachers who are leaving the profession due to stress and burnout, which can, at least partly, be attributed to dealing with difficult behaviour (Griffith et al., 1999; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Sciuchetti & Yssel, 2019), it is imperative that consideration is made to how this can be ameliorated. Positive STRs have been found to influence teachers' motivation and affect (Klassen et al., 2012). Furthermore, teachers' efficacy beliefs related to the management of behaviour can serve as a protective factor against stress and burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen, 2010). This study goes some way to highlighting what might influence the quality of STRs and demonstrates how positive STRs can promote an environment in which behaviours are more respectful, which might mitigate against negative feelings. There is scope for future research to explore additional factors that help to increase CE beliefs in secondary school settings. This study explores how STRs might influence teacher CE and how difficult behaviour is responded to and managed from the perspective of teachers. Future research could explore this from the perspective of other roles, such as teaching assistants, and compare this with the views of teachers outlined in the current findings.

3.10 Conclusions

The findings indicate that in schools in which staff espouse greater CE, it seems possible that fewer children may be excluded because of their behaviour. This study addresses a gap in the extant literature by exploring possible underlying processes within the relationship between teachers' CE beliefs and the management of difficult behaviour. It found that positive STRs enhance teachers' beliefs about their combined ability to manage difficult behaviour successfully. The findings provide some indication of what might influence the quality of STRs and proposes a cyclic relationship between STRs, CE, and behaviour. Positive STRs enable teachers to provide an environment in which behaviours are more respectful, reducing the need for disciplinary approaches, such as exclusion.

Within a mainstream secondary school setting, positive STRs can influence how teachers respond to and manage difficult behaviour. They facilitate a calm, empathic response, and restorative conversations, rather than relying on disciplinary approaches. This further strengthens relationships and helps to reduce incidences of difficult behaviour, further indicating a cyclic interaction. The study suggests that positive STRs, resulting in higher CE, can enhance tolerance for difficult behaviour. It is suggested that this might help to mitigate

stress experienced by teachers regarding behaviour, therefore the need for exclusion as a means of managing behaviour is diminished.

Exclusion is associated with an array of negative long-term outcomes for young people, such as social exclusion, unemployment, and poor mental health (Gazeley, 2010; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Novak, 2019). The current findings provide insight into how exclusions in secondary schools might be prevented or reduced, which is vital given the great financial cost to public services (Parsons & Castle, 1998).

Chapter 4: Reflective Synthesis

This chapter provides a reflective synthesis about what I have learned during the research process and the implications of this for me and others. It will outline how the research has influenced my thinking and future practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and how I will carry this forward into my role as a qualified Educational Psychologist (EP). Implications for further research and wider practice are also discussed.

4.1 Skills Learned During the Research Process

This section reflects on some of the skills I have acquired during the research process, which have implications for me as a future researcher.

Following completion of my Systematic Literature Review (SLR), I have learned skills in searching databases, selecting papers, and synthesising information for new knowledge to be obtained, and gaps in research to be identified (Mahtani et al., 2019). I have developed skills in conducting quality assessment to increase reliability of findings and being comfortable in making subjective judgements as a solo researcher.

From engaging in this thesis, I have learned the importance of being flexible and adaptable during the research process. As a person, I can sometimes be drawn to linear processes, much like the SLR process, however I now recognise the iterative nature of research and that it is important to learn how to sit with the uncertainty that it evokes. I found keeping a research journal throughout the process helped with this by providing a space for reflection and reflexion. This also helped me consider what data is most valuable in answering the research question; at times I struggled with this tension as I had such a rich data set but could only include so much within the scope of the project.

Willig (2013) highlights the importance of having a clear research question and ensuring that the approach is meticulously planned. From completing my empirical research project, I have learned skills in refining research questions and aims to ensure coherence with my adopted approach. I have also learned to base my research on a thorough rationale and how to articulate this to defend my stance. Writing up my research to be disseminated and submitted for publication to a journal has developed my skills in writing for a particular audience.

4.2 Implications for Practice

This section outlines the implications of completing this thesis for my practice as a TEP and EP.

4.2.1 Dissemination of Research Findings

Gersch (2004, p. 144) proposes that 'applying research to real-life problems' is a core function of the EP role. This thesis highlights how positive student-teacher relationships can enhance teacher CE, related to the management of difficult behaviour, and can influence how this behaviour is responded to. It offers an understanding into how exclusions from mainstream secondary schools can be reduced and prevented; thus, my research has significant eco-systemic implications. Exclusion rates continue to be a cause for concern in England (Duffy et al., 2021), and the number and rate of fixed term exclusions are still increasing, largely driven by secondary schools (Department for Education, 2020). Furthermore, the North East is the region with the highest permanent and fixed term exclusion rates in the country, with figures well above the national average (Department for Education, 2020). The Local Authority (LA) in which I am working in as a TEP, and where I will begin my career as a qualified EP, has preventing exclusions high on the agenda and has adopted an Inclusion Strategy. I have recently presented the findings of my research to the working group that meet regularly. The purpose of this working group is for professionals working with children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs to share good practice and think together about how to improve inclusive education across the locality. By disseminating my findings, I hope that my research will be able to inform policy at a LA level and will contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the prevention of exclusions. See Appendix F for feedback and discussion points raised from this presentation.

Following on from this feedback, I plan to work with the inclusion team within the LA to think about how to take my findings forward. This could include devising a practical workshop for senior leadership in secondary schools to discuss the issues raised within my research and how inclusion can be improved. I also plan to devise training for schools regarding practical and accessible ways to implement my findings within a secondary school context, that can be delivered with all staff roles. This will incorporate my findings regarding what might influence the quality of teachers relationships with students, followed by how these relationships can enhance collective efficacy and influence how behaviour is responded to. Hart (2010) suggests EPs can play a significant role in supporting schools with issues regarding behaviour through the training of staff. I recognise that this would need to be individualised to each school context; I intend for it to spark thinking and reflections about what adjustments could be implemented to facilitate positive change. It will be important to also consider how my research findings could be disseminated to primary schools to facilitate change and think about preventative approaches. I also plan to create and disseminate a one-page summary of the key highlights from my findings to all schools and encourage school staff to contact the EP team should they be interested in considering how

they could be supported to implement these within their setting. For wider dissemination nationally and internationally, I plan to look for opportunities to present my research at conferences (such as AEP, DECP) and will submit my work for publication.

4.2.2 The Influence on my Thinking and Practice

EPs are frequently asked to support schools in addressing issues related to student behaviour, for example through consultation relating to individual CYP who are presenting with difficult behaviour (Hart, 2010). This resonates with my experiences as a TEP on placement; I have found that much of my work in secondary schools has been of this nature. It is important for EPs to keep up to date with research and for their work to be underpinned by both research and practice-based evidence (Fox, 2011). Carrying out this project has enhanced my understanding of how positive student-teacher relationships can influence teacher collective efficacy and how difficult behaviour is responded to and managed. Drawing on implications of my research when working at an individual level, the findings will inform my consultations with parents, CYP and school staff through discussions and the questions that I pose within these. For example, questions about relationships and how they might be influencing the behaviour of both the student and teacher, reflecting on the cyclic interaction between student-teacher relationships, efficacy, and behaviour, and problem-solving a way forward in collaboration.

Cameron (2006) argues that EPs have a distinct role in recommending evidence-based strategies and fostering ideas that are grounded in psychological theory and research. The findings of my research will inform the recommendations I make to settings. I could also draw on implications from my research to work with individual CYP and their teachers when relationships have broken down, which should help to facilitate a respectful and trusting environment, underpinned by humanistic principles such as empathy, in which children and teachers can feel heard and understood (Rogers, 1951). Furthermore, I could draw on my findings with individual, or groups of, teachers, using consultation or supervision, to explore how to foster positive student-teacher relationships to enhance efficacy beliefs, which might help to mitigate stress experienced by teachers regarding behaviour (Klassen, 2010). All these avenues of EP practice help to facilitate positive outcomes for CYP and contribute to the wider agenda of preventing or reducing exclusions in secondary schools.

EP work can also take place at an organisational level (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Drawing on implications of my research at this level, I could support schools or LAs to revise their policies or implement whole school approaches. The empirical paper adds weight to the claim that punitive disciplinary behaviour approaches appear to be of limited usefulness in promoting desirable behaviour in schools (Lewis et al., 2008). It supports the idea that

engaging in restorative conversations, talking to students regarding their behaviour and what they could have done differently, can help to lessen difficult behaviour, reducing the need for exclusionary discipline practices (Lewis et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). A restorative approach to managing behaviour may be a more useful method for secondary schools to adopt, providing an environment where positive relationships are nurtured. It is argued that implementing a restorative approach as a whole school approach is preferable and likely to make it more effective (Moir & MacLeod, 2018; Skinns et al., 2009). Therefore, I could have a role in supporting schools with embedding a restorative approach within their ethos to facilitate wider change and support positive outcomes for all CYP. In my role as an EP, I could use my research findings and psychological expertise to educate schools about the benefits and constraints of different approaches to managing behaviour within schools and how this might impact outcomes for CYP, while also foregrounding the effects on teachers' stress and wellbeing (Aldrup et al., 2018; Betoret, 2006). Challenging school discipline procedures and suggesting alternatives could cause tension; it will therefore be important to consider how I negotiate this with schools. When working with schools, I would need to be mindful of my relationships with staff; forming and maintaining positive relationships is a key aspect to the EP role (Woods & Farrell, 2006).

4.3 Implications for Future Research

This section will detail the implications of this study on future research; carrying out and writing up this paper has illuminated several potential research gaps that could be explored.

In the empirical project, I took a unilateral view of relationships from the perspectives of teachers. Given the reciprocal interaction between the behaviour of teachers and students, which can affect the quality of relationships (Longobardi et al., 2021; Sutherland et al., 2013), there is merit in carrying out research from the perspectives of students. Students' perceptions of teachers, and consequently the student-teacher relationship, is affected by how teachers respond to students' behaviour (Longobardi et al., 2021). Future research could explore secondary school students' views about what might influence the quality of relationships and how student-teacher relationships might influence their behaviour. This could provide further insight into how exclusions could be prevented or reduced by privileging the voice of children. The SEND Code of Practice highlights the importance of determining CYP's views (Department for Education, 2015b). Furthermore, EPs are well placed as advocates for CYP or to encourage those who know CYP well, such as parents and teachers, to consult with CYP on their views (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). As there are adverse outcomes for CYP associated with negative student-teacher relationships and exclusion (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Munn & Lloyd, 2005), there is value in eliciting

their views on this regarding the discipline practices used within schools. This could help to shape future practice and policy in secondary schools.

It would have been interesting to interview additional roles, along with teachers, to gain the perspectives from a range of staff within a secondary school context. However, this was not possible due to time constraints and the scale of the project. Future research could explore the research questions from the perspective of other roles, such as teaching assistants, and compare this with the views of teachers outlined in my findings. Within the interviews, some teachers alluded to ways in which their collective efficacy beliefs might be influenced, both positively and negatively. It was beyond the scope of the current project to explore this any further, however, future research could investigate this in relation to the management of difficult behaviour. Finally, my findings highlighted that there were marked differences in the outcomes (the numbers of students excluded) and the perceived quality of teachers' relationships with students in participating schools. This discrepancy is intriguing and warrants further exploration. Future research could be conducted with headteachers and senior leaders to explore risk and protective factors for exclusions.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has outlined the implications of carrying out this research on my practice and for future research. The research process has been one that I have thoroughly enjoyed and that has shaped me both as a researcher and an EP. It has illuminated potential opportunities for further research that I can consider in my journey as a qualified EP. Importantly, I aim to publish the SLR and empirical research to disseminate my findings more widely and contribute to a greater understanding of how exclusions can be prevented or reduced in secondary schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Collective Efficacy Questionnaire

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Questionnaire - Investigating teachers' experiences of working with young people with difficult behaviour and the student-teacher relationship.

Job Role:	
Subjects taught:	
Year Groups taught:	
Length of time (years; months) in this school:	
Length of time (years; months) as a qualified teacher:	
Male / Female / Prefer not to say:	

Instructions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by ticking the relevant response in the columns on the right-hand side, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6).

Please respond to each of the questions by considering your *current* beliefs about the ability of the teaching staff in your school to do each of the following.

Question	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
Q1: Teachers in this school are able to develop positive relationships with pupils considered to be presenting with difficult behaviour						
Q2: Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with pupil behaviour problems						
Q3: Teachers here are confident they know how to motivate pupils who they consider to be presenting with difficult behaviour in class						
Q4: School life provides so many advantages these pupils are bound to learn						
Q5: If a pupil presents with difficult behaviour in class, teachers here give up						
Q6: Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult pupils						

Q7: Teachers in this school really believe that every pupil who they consider to be presenting with difficult behaviour in class can learn					
Q8: Pupils who present with difficult behaviour in this school just aren't motivated to learn					
Q9: Teachers at this school do not have the skills needed to gain the respect of pupils who they consider to be presenting with difficult behaviour in class					
Q10: Pupils who are considered to be presenting with difficult behaviour in class come to school ready to learn					
Q11: The relationships that teachers have with pupils here help to ensure that pupils who are considered to present with difficult behaviour will learn					
Q12: The school environment here makes learning difficult for pupils presenting with difficult behaviour					

Would you be willing to be approached to take part in a 45-minute interview to share your views and experiences about these issues to further explore them? (please circle)

Yes / Maybe / No

If you are willing to be interviewed, please provide an email address or mobile phone number…

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Researcher's contact details:

Becci Dean
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King George VI Building,
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Appendix B – Interview Schedule

Area	Questions
Background Information	*Question:* What is your role in school? *Question:* How long have you been a teacher/in this role? *Question:* How long have you worked in this school?
Student-teacher relationships	*Question:* How would you describe your relationships with students in this school? *Question:* What affects the quality of these relationships? *Question:* Can you tell me about a positive relationship you have with one of your students? *Prompts:* What makes it a positive relationship? *Question*: Can you tell me about a negative relationship you have with one of your students? *Prompts:* What makes it a negative relationship?
Efficacy	*Question:* How confident do you think staff as a whole in this school feel about successfully managing students' difficult behaviour? *Prompts:* What factors might impact / influence their confidence? What might cause staff to have low confidence? What might cause staff to have high confidence? *Question:* Can you please give me an example of what you believe you can do to positively influence students' behaviour? *Prompts:* Why do you think this positively influences students' behaviour? In what way?
Management of difficult behaviour	*Question:* Could you tell me about a recent time when you have had to manage difficult behaviour from a student? *Prompts:* What happened? How did you respond? Why did you respond in this way?

	Question: Is this typical of how you normally respond to difficult behaviour in the classroom / in school? *Prompts:* What do you do to try and manage difficult behaviour successfully? How do you respond when a student is displaying difficult behaviour? Why do you respond in this way? *Question:* What are your views about exclusion as a way of managing difficult behaviour? *Prompts:* Why do you feel this way?
Possible interrelations between the three key issues	*Question:* Do you think these three things we have been talking about (teachers' relationships with students, teachers' confidence in their ability to manage difficult behaviour, and how difficult behaviour is managed) are related in any way? *Prompts:* How do you think they are related? Why might this be? *Question*: Do the relationships you have with students affect: - How you view difficult behaviour from students? - Your confidence in staffs' ability to be able to manage difficult behaviour successfully? - How you respond to difficult behaviour when it occurs in your classroom / the school?
Additional Thoughts	Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix C – Themes, Sub-Themes and Codes

Theme	Sub Theme	Codes
Authenticity	Being Relatable	Teachers as human Being yourself Approachable manner Teachers as real people
	Care & Support	Teacher as a role model Students need to know teachers genuinely care Being empathetic Treating students according to their needs Students can talk to you Listening to students Help with students work Believing in them Acknowledging their strengths A desire for students to do well
Opportunities for Connection	Time	Offering/giving up time Lack of time Students accept/respect teachers who stick around Students feel abandoned by teachers who leave How long you've known the students How often you see students How long you've been teaching at the school

Theme	Sub Theme	Codes
	Space	Being present Open door policy Small interactions Conversations outside of lessons Giving students space to be open Teachers with big classes can find it difficult to build relationships The size of a school affects how well you know students
Teaching Style	Fair & Consistent Approach	Clear expectations Teachers being fair Consistent approach Students don't like strict teachers Students holding grudges regarding consequences
	Boundaries	Boundaries The relationship is not a friendship

Theme	Sub Theme	Codes
Enhanced Efficacy Beliefs	Increased confidence in ability to manage behaviour successfully	Good relationships = increased confidence Good relationships = better behaviour management Good relationships make behaviour easier to manage Poor relationships = rely on consequence system You know each other so you don't feel apprehensive about how to deal with it Increased confidence = better behaviour
	Having the tools to be able to manage behaviour successfully	Knowing how to respond Knowing what strategies to use Awareness of needs Knowing it is out of character for them
	Increased Respect	Mutual Respect If they like you, they will behave better Good relationships = increased respect If you have respect, you won't need to rely on consequences Respect = less difficult behaviour Respect = increased confidence
Less Reliance on Disciplinary Approaches	Considering Reasons for the Behaviour	Finding out why Thinking about why Thinking about external influences on behaviour Knowing them means you know it's not their usual behaviour
	Calm Approach	Calm approach Shouting doesn't work Shouting doesn't de-escalate the situation Talking to them to deescalate the situation Not shouting = more positive atmosphere Shouting exacerbates behaviour Shouting escalates the situation

	Restorative Conversations	Take them to one side Talk to them about their behaviour Ask them what could help Talk to them to encourage their usual behaviour Talk to them about why
Greater Tolerance	Chances & Warnings	Given chances Given warnings
	Fresh Starts	New day, new start New lesson, new start Not taking things personally Not holding grudges

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Investigating teachers' experiences of working with young people with difficult behaviour and the student-teacher relationship

My name is Becci Dean, Trainee Educational Psychologist working in Middlesbrough Psychology Service. I am undertaking this research project as part of my Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology Qualification at Newcastle University, under the supervision of Professor Simon Gibbs. Please read the following information and consider whether you would like to take part in the project.

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

It is widely known that when teachers hold more positive beliefs about their capabilities, this can bring about desired outcomes for student's academic achievement. At present, there is little known about how these beliefs are applied in practice, particularly in relation to managing difficult behaviour successfully and the role that teachers' relationships with their students may play within this. Therefore, the current project aims to explore this in greater depth. It is hoped that the findings can be used to inform training and practice for other teachers and schools.

I appreciate that teachers are under huge amounts of pressure, exacerbated by the current Covid-19 pandemic. It is hoped that taking part in this project will give you the opportunity to have a voice around your experiences of working with young people, managing their difficult behaviour and the relationships you have with students in school. Given that student behaviour is often a substantial concern for schools, it is anticipated that the information from this project will help to support teachers and schools in successfully managing difficult behaviour, reducing the negative impacts on both teachers and students.

I am extremely grateful for you taking the time to read this information sheet and should you choose to take part, your time and contribution will be greatly appreciated.

What will it involve?

Firstly, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire, which should take approximately 10 minutes. This is to explore your views and beliefs about working with young people with difficult behaviour and staffs' experiences of managing unwanted behaviour in school.

Secondly, I will be looking for volunteers to take part in a semi-structured interview, which will be facilitated by me and should last approximately 45 minutes in total. This will be to further explore your experiences of working with young people with difficult behaviour and will give you an opportunity to tell me about the relationships you have with students. Importantly, if there are any questions which feel uncomfortable to answer you may decline to respond.

Once research has been completed, I will debrief you on the main findings of the research via email or another meeting if you wish. You will also be given a full copy of the research

paper that I aim to produce.

What happens to my information?

During the interview, conversations will be recorded and later transcribed to allow for data analysis. Your information will remain entirely confidential, and your head teacher or colleagues will not be made aware of your participation or answers. Any personal information (i.e., from consent forms or information from the discussions) will be kept securely and either locked away or password protected.

The audio recording of your interview will be deleted after the interview is transcribed and anonymised. Only the researcher, project supervisors and those employed to transcribe the data will have access to the interview recordings. After the project is completed (approximately September 2022) the rest of your information will be securely destroyed. We would like to publish the findings of our study to inform future practice, however, your name, school and local authority will not be identified.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You can withdraw at any time without reason if you change your mind. If you decide to withdraw either contact me on the contact details below or let me know on the day.

Should you choose to, your participation and time will be much appreciated.

What happens next?

Please read this document carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study. If you would like to take part in the study, please read and sign the consent form. If you do not wish to be involved, thank you for your attention.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University (date of approval: 05.01.2021).

For more information, or to discuss any concerns, please contact:

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Appendix E – Participant Consent Form

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Investigating teachers' experiences of working with young people with difficult behaviour and the student-teacher relationship

Declaration of Informed Consent

Please read each statement carefully and tick to show you consent:

- ☐ 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 I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, without giving a reason
- ☐ I understand that any information recorded in the project will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- ☐ I understand that the conversations in the interview will be audio-recorded and only the researcher, project supervisors and those employed to transcribe the data will have access to the interview recordings.
- ☐ I understand that my interview will be anonymised and that all my information will be destroyed upon completion of the project (approximately by September 2022).
- ☐ I understand that the interviews will be analysed and presented in a research report as part of the researcher's thesis, which may be put forward for publication in the future.
- ☐ I consent to being a participant in this project

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee, Newcastle University via email to ecls.researchteam@newcastle.ac.uk

_____

Date   Participant Name (please print)   Participant Signature

_____

Participant Job Title   Participant Email
Address

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

_____

Date   Signature of Researcher

Appendix F – Inclusion Strategy Working Group Presentation

The following statements were feedback and discussion points raised after disseminating my research findings to the Inclusion Strategy Working Group.

"Thank you; it was powerful and inspiring."

"This is incredibly important and highly relevant to the challenges in our schools currently."

"What can we do about it? How can we take it forward? This could have a real impact at several levels."

"Thanks so much. Excellent research and really valuable for senior leaders in secondary schools to be aware of. Get the message out there! Thank you."

"Feel like we'd benefit from a practical workshop with schools focused on improving inclusion/reducing exclusions with schools using this research as a basis."

"Thank you, this is fantastic evidence what a positive effect respect can have on a young person's interaction in school. They might not be receiving respect at home or in the community, so it is so important they experience this in school."

"Thank you for doing this and for sharing with us. Really important and valuable work."

"It was really interesting - thank you."

"A huge thank you for sharing this with us. There is so much we can use and build upon. You've sparked lots of ideas."

"We need to think about how we get the message out there. How can we do this sensitively? We need face to face time with key people"